

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Hiep Khac Nguyen

COLLECTION: 4700.0970

IDENTIFICATION: Vietnamese refugee

INTERVIEWER: Dudley Meier, Jr.

SERIES: Americans in Vietnam

INTERVIEW DATE: 11/28/75

FOCUS DATES: Unknown

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1419, Side A

Hiep was an electrical engineer, now a draftsman at Western Electric; born in North Vietnam, left in 1954 when country split up; early education in government school, college; worked for American firms in Vietnam; left Vietnam April 29, day before fall of Saigon, in a fishing boat; many people in uncovered boat; floated on sea for almost three days; floating pier set up, too many people; lost their belongings en route; journey to Guam; heat in Guam; lived in military tent in Guam; American soldiers in Guam; came to Camp Pendleton, CA; temperature in California; cold area in Central Highlands of Vietnam; American friend he contacted who agreed to sponsor him; Nguyen's car purchases; problems for Vietnamese learning English language; good job at Western Electric; doesn't remember his move to South Vietnam as a child; 1954 evacuation plan; growing seriousness of situation in 1954, Communists taking over; family background; father died, mother tried to take care of all the children; Nguyen's brother; in US, he's never been stopped by police or asked for any papers; needed permission for gatherings in Vietnam; enjoys freedom of US; comparison of US and Vietnam governments; power of US government, Congress; good and bad aspects of freedom; Nguyen feels very old at the age of 28; have to protect your country if you want it to be free; military service unpopular with young people in Vietnam; correlations between strength and money; Nguyen loves his country, hopes to return someday to visit; governmental protection that US citizens enjoy; relatives in North Vietnam; worries he might have killed his own relatives when he was a soldier; Vietnam's dealings with stronger countries of US, Russia and China; Communists signed agreement, failed to keep promises; limited access to information; terms Viet Minh and Viet Cong; he was so happy when he was a soldier; wounds he received when he was a soldier; military buddies; hunger, shortage of food supplies in military; was very young, retired from military at age 21; how Saigon fell quickly at the end; US Army was stronger than ARVN, better air support; Viet Cong had very strong ideals; diet of Viet Cong.

Tape 1419, Side B

Finding Viet Cong bodies; Communist idea only benefits poor people; new ideas about Communism in South Vietnam different from old ideas; how young people are; Communist regime denies people right to do things; Vietnamese soldiers who stay in jungles; age of Vietnam

compared to relative youth of US; US citizens protected by constitution; US stance on corporal punishment; degree of liberation of American women; favorable opinions of American people; Vietnamese mainly farmers, agricultural country; hopes to eventually visit Vietnam, see his family; people in US can work hard, get things that weren't available in Vietnam; in Vietnam, all cash, no credit; rich people in Vietnam; wages of workers in Vietnam; cheap goods in Vietnam; his wife's work; opinions on women's liberation; gender roles, old custom of man having multiple wives; religion in Vietnam; Communism and religion; most Vietnamese refugees who came to US are Christian; church attendance in Nguyen's family; treating sickness with prayer and medicine; belief in God; strength of communists; Communists lack right to gather freely in groups; Communists indoctrinating children; changes in government in Vietnam, stability; President Thieu's accomplishments and failures; opinions on Diem, good for North Vietnamese; people traveling from North to South Vietnam in 1954; French in Vietnam; minorities in the US, prejudice; Vietnamese hatred of Chinese, comparison to Jews as businesspeople.

TAPES: 1 (T1419)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 30 minutes

PAGES INDEX: 3 pages

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