



Interview at

Long Beach

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“You took that risk, you had that courage and that resiliency to come out here, and you knew that it was a good choice for your family ...”

Kim Ing tells her daughter, Susana Sngiem, about her life in Cambodia before the Khmer Rouge Genocide, living in a Thai refugee camp, and eventually moving to Long Beach, CA and raising her family.

Susana Sngiem: So ma, can you tell me about how life in Cambodia was before you came to the United States?

Kim Ing: My life in Cambodia, the family is very poor. After a while, I get married and the Khmer Rouge come in and I really struggling with all the sickneSusana. And I had a daughter at that time, and my daughter become very sick, and I don't have no medicine to help her. In 1977, she passed away. But in 1978, I had my son. After he was born, Vietnamese took over Cambodia. We decided to go to Thailand—Thailand camp they call Khao-I-Dang.

Susana: How long were you in the refugee camps there?

Kim: I think two years.

Susana: But then we got sponsored by a family, right, from America?

Kim: Yes.

Susana: Which family?

Kim: [?]

Susana: And so [?] sponsored us? But then we went to Kansas first?

Kim: Mhm. That time, October, it was very cold and I never get that cold and I still have her phone and I call her. She said, oh you can come to Long Beach because it's not that cold.

Susana: Our whole family was living in the back room. But then there were other families living with us, three families. But after that, we finally got to move into a really nice duplex on our own. And then we moved out of the duplex and all seven of us stayed in a one-bedroom apartment. We had like, two beds and all our clothes were in there. It was super cramped, and I would sleep in the living room with daddy.

I don't know how you did it—coming here at such a young age. You were only in your early twenties, and you had two kids, you had to leave your home, everything that you knew, to a place that is so new and you didn't know the language. But you took that risk, you had that courage and that resiliency to come out here, and you knew that it was a good choice for your family, to live out here. But then you continue to grow, like you took English class, and you did hard work taking care of a family of five children. You were very creative in figuring out how to save money and you sewed clothes for a living. I can't believe how you and dad took care of us, because we always had food, you took us to school, we always felt loved and cared for. I think I'm very lucky and privileged to have you in my life. What about me, as a daughter?

Kim: I'm proud of you, because you always listen to me, what I tell you, and even if you talk back a little bit, I understand what you feel. You went to school until you got a Masters, and I'm so proud of you.

Susana: Thank you, mommy.