

The University of Southern Mississippi  
Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage

Deepwater Horizon Oil Disaster–Gulf Coast Fisheries  
Oral History Project

An Oral History

with

Qui Lam

Interviewer: Linda VanZandt  
Interpreter: Linh Lam

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*An Oral History with Qui Lam, Volume 1043*

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## Biography

Mr. Qui Lam was born in 1961, one of eight children, near the city of Rach Gia, South Vietnam. His father's name was Bung Lam. His mother's name was Hui Trang. Mr. Lam is of Chinese and Vietnamese descent. At a young age, Mr. Lam traveled with his father by boat to the market to help buy merchandise to resell in his stores, which were later taken by the Communist regime. After 1975, Mr. Lam began shrimping to earn a living, in addition to growing watermelon and potatoes.

Mr. Lam married his wife, Huong Thanh Ho, at age eighteen. After being forced to cleanup bombs in Cambodia, he arranged his escape from Vietnam in 1987, leaving with his wife, their four children, and more than sixty others. Mr. Lam and his family spent time in refugee camps in Pulau Bidong, Malaysia, and the Philippines, before landing in Panama City, Florida. After three months in Florida, the family settled in Chauvin, Louisiana. Mr. Lam worked as a deckhand and in crabbing before purchasing his own skimmer boat. He has been shrimping the Louisiana waters since, primarily on his boat *Miss Sue*, named after his youngest daughter who was born in the United States. Mr. Lam and his wife became United States citizens in 2009. Together they have five children.

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## AN ORAL HISTORY

with

QUI LAM

*This is an interview for The University of Southern Mississippi Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage. The interview is with Qui Lam and is taking place on January 15, 2012. The interviewer is Linda VanZandt. English/Vietnamese interpretation is provided by Mr. Lam's daughter, Linh Lam. Also present are Mr. Lam's wife, Huong Thanh Ho, and her brother, Hung Quoc Ho.*

**VanZandt:** This is Linda VanZandt with the Center for Oral History, and I'm here in Houma, Louisiana. Today is January 15, 2012, and Linh Lam [Mr. Lam's daughter] is here, and she's going to provide interpretation for us. And if you could, please say your name.

**Q. Lam:** Qui, Q-U-I. Last name Lam, L-A-M.

**VanZandt:** OK. Mr. Lam, where were you born?

**L. Lam:** Ba, ba đẻ ở đâu?

**Q. Lam:** Việt Nam.

**VanZandt:** Where in Vietnam?

**Q. Lam:** Rạch Giá.

**VanZandt:** Rạch Giá?

**L. Lam:** Rạch Giá.

**VanZandt:** And that's spelled R-A-C-H, G-I-A, for the recording. What year were you born?

**L. Lam:** Ba đẻ năm mấy?

**Q. Lam:** Đẻ năm '61.

**L. Lam:** Nineteen sixty-one.

**VanZandt:** Nineteen sixty-one? Me, too!

[Type text]

**Q. Lam:** Cái đó là trong giấy tờ thôi.

**VanZandt:** And you showed me on the map here where you were born, near Kiên Giang.

**Q. Lam:** Kiên Giang.

**VanZandt:** So South Vietnam.

**Q. Lam:** South Vietnam.

**VanZandt:** And can you tell me your parents' names? Father and mother's name?

**L. Lam:** Tên của ba của ba, và tên của má của ba.

**Q. Lam:** Tên của ba là Búng Lâm. B-U-N-G, and last name is Lam, L-A-M.

**L. Lam:** That's his dad.

**Q. Lam:** Your [my] daddy.

**VanZandt:** Your dad's name? OK.

**Q. Lam:** And your [my] mom is H-U-I; last name T-R-A-N-G.

**VanZandt:** Trang?

**L. Lam:** Đọc tiếng Việt Nam sao ba đọc đi.

**Q. Lam:** Trâng Thị Hui.

**L. Lam:** In Vietnamese, we pronounce last name first, then middle name then first name.

**VanZandt:** Right. Thank you for clearing that up. And you are half Chinese and half Vietnamese. Is that right?

**Q. Lam:** Yes, ma'am. Half Chinese, half Vietnamese.

**VanZandt:** OK. Can you tell me a little bit about your parents? Was your father Chinese? What was his background?

**L. Lam:** Ba của ba là người Tàu hay là sao?

**Q. Lam:** à người Tàu rắc vậy đó.

**L. Lam:** Vậy ba là, giống như nói –

**Q. Lam:** Người Tiều Châu. Ở tỉnh Quảng Đông.

**L. Lam:** Well, I'll have to go look that up where that is in China. He [was from] China, but I don't know quite where in China, so I have to go find it.

**VanZandt:** OK. That's OK. Maybe, we'll look that up later, afterwards, and we'll make sure we include that in the record. So dad was Chinese? And mother Vietnamese?

**L. Lam:** Yeah. So he said full Chinese and—do you want to focus on just the dad now, then we can go to the mom?

**VanZandt:** Sure.

**L. Lam:** OK. Ba của ba là sao? Tính tình là sao? Ông làm cái gì?

**Q. Lam:** Ông thì ông qua đây thì buôn bán thôi.

**L. Lam:** So he came to Vietnam to, like a merchant.

**VanZandt:** *Ah.*

**L. Lam:** So, buôn bán gì?

**Q. Lam:** Buôn bán giống như store, cũng như tựa tựa như chợ Việt Nam đó.

**L. Lam:** So he said he was like a merchant selling like food; like a supermarket.

**VanZandt:** Supermarket? Um-hm.

**L. Lam:** Small one. Nhỏ hả?

**Q. Lam:** Thì nhỏ. Thì ở nhà cũng có chỗ bán, rồi ông đi với tàu ông bán theo dưới sông vậy nè.

**L. Lam:** And he sold at home, in the house, and he also sell it along the river, with the boat, yeah.

**VanZandt:** Oh, OK. Like the floating market?

**L. Lam:** Yeah, the floating market.

**VanZandt:** And does he know when his father came to Vietnam? What year?



**L. Lam:** Ba có biết nam mấy ba của ba qua bên Việt Nam không?

**Q. Lam:** Sao không biết được?

**L. Lam:** (speaking Vietnamese) (laughs) He doesn't know. (laughs)

**VanZandt:** (laughs) That's OK. I just wondered. (laughter)

**Q. Lam:** Thì cũng như hồi đó cũng nghe kể lại, ông có bị người Pháp bắt một lần ra hạm. Không biết năm mấy, có thể là năm bốn lăm hay gì đó. Tui nghĩ hình như là khoảng năm 30 chục là ông đã qua Việt Nam rồi đó.

**L. Lam:** So when he was, like, in his thirties, my grandfather, he got caught—a French soldier captured him, so he got captured, then I guess he was released and go over to Vietnam when he was in his thirties. Yeah. Probably in his thirties, he remembered when his dad had told him.

**VanZandt:** Your dad told you that story. Anything that you remember from that story, what that was like when his father was captured?

**L. Lam:** Ba có kể bị bắt sao không?

**Q. Lam:** Cũng như là qua bên này không có giấy tờ gì hết chơn nên bọn nó mới bắt.

**L. Lam:** Oh, because he got captured because he didn't have paperwork. See, he came illegally to Vietnam, so he got captured because he came over to Vietnam illegally.

**VanZandt:** And that must have been when the French were in control of Vietnam.

**L. Lam:** Vậy cái đó là hồi xưa là người Pháp thống trị -

**Q. Lam:** Trước năm '75, à không trước không '45.

**L. Lam:** In 1945. Before 1945.

**VanZandt:** OK. The French Vietnam war began around then. And what about his mother? Was she from South Vietnam? Does he know much about his mother?

**L. Lam:** Má của ba sao? Bà đẻ đâu?

**Q. Lam:** Bà đẻ ở Việt Nam.

**L. Lam:** Đẻ ở Việt Nam mà đẻ chỗ tỉnh nào, nơi nào?

**Q. Lam:** Thì đẻ ở Kiên Giang. Rạch Giá.

**L. Lam:** She was born in Vietnam, Rạch Giá.

**VanZandt:** OK. So she had lived there, and she was from there originally, there where he grew up.

**L. Lam:** Yeah, she was from there, originally.

**VanZandt:** Does he know any stories about how they met?

**L. Lam:** Ba có biết cái cuốn truyện tại sao họ thương nhau không?

**Q. Lam:** Đâu biết được đâu.

**L. Lam:** (laughter)

**Q. Lam:** Thì ông đâu có nói. Ba thì ông nói cái tiếng Việt không có rành.

**L. Lam:** Uh-huh.

**Q. Lam:** Ông biết Tiếng Việt. Coi như là ông hiểu hết, người Việt Nam nói là ông hiểu hết nhưng mà ông nói không có được.

**L. Lam:** So my grandfather, his dad, was a full-blooded Chinese, so he understood Vietnamese, but he can't speak it. But he understand what the Vietnamese people say. So I guess his accent, when he speak Vietnamese, is really hard, so he really didn't communicate with his dad that much.

**VanZandt:** OK. So you had trouble communicating with your father.

**L. Lam:** Ba không nói chuyện với ông Nội nhiều hả?

**Q. Lam:** Ba để ra là ông nội chết rồi. Ba là cỡ như là để ra ba. Ông chết tháng tám, ba để tháng mười sao mà nói chuyện được.

**L. Lam:** Ông nội.

**Q. Lam:** Ông nội của ba tức là ông già của ông nội.

**L. Lam:** Vậy ba của ba. Vậy ba muốn nói chuyện với ông nội luôn hả? Vậy là ông nội của ba là qua 45 phải không?

**Q. Lam:** Dẫn ba của ba qua. (Huong Thanh Ho speaks Vietnamese in background)

**L. Lam:** OK. We were confused. OK. So that meant *his* grandfather.

**VanZandt:** His grandfather.

**L. Lam:** *His* grandfather came—

**VanZandt:** From China?

**L. Lam:** From China, so he didn't communicate with him because he passed away before he was born; bring his father over, like in his thirties. OK. I was so confused.

**VanZandt:** OK. So his father, in his thirties, came with his grandfather.

**L. Lam:** Ông nội qua bên đây hỏi ông ba mươi mấy tuổi phải không? Hay là ông nội ba mấy tuổi hay là ông cố?

**Q. Lam:** Bây giờ cũng như là ba của ba, là hỏi đó ông nội dẫn ba của ba qua Việt Nam nhưng mà ông đâu biết bao nhiêu tuổi đâu.

**L. Lam:** Oh, yeah. So he didn't know. He came there when he was young, so my grandfather, so his dad was young, so he don't know how old his grandfather was.

**VanZandt:** Does he know *why* they left China, what was happening? Was there a reason they decided to come to Vietnam?

**L. Lam:** Biết lý do tại sao mà bỏ bên Tàu không?

**Q. Lam:** Ờ mà, ông nói cũng như là chiến tranh.

**L. Lam:** Chiến tranh. Thì ông nội của ba. Ba của ba là ông nội của con? Because there was war—

**Q. Lam:** Khó là ăn vậy thôi.

**L. Lam:** And it was difficult to do business so he left; they left.

**VanZandt:** So maybe thinking there would be more opportunity, better opportunities?

**L. Lam:** Um-hm.

**VanZandt:** OK. And they came all the way South.

**L. Lam:** Um-hm.

**VanZandt:** OK.

**L. Lam:** Xuống tới Rạch Giá luôn hả? Um-hm.

**VanZandt:** OK. Great! And what about his mother? Does he know much of her background? Was she from a farming family? Or just anything he might remember.

**L. Lam:** Ba có biết gia đình của bà nội là sao không?

**Q. Lam:** Gia đình của bà nội, bà nội có mấy người em mà đi lính không à. Đi lính cho mà Mỹ đó.

**L. Lam:** Uh-huh. So my grandmom, she had brothers, but they were soldiers, and they were soldiers for United States [Army]. For the United States.

**VanZandt:** OK. So your mother's brothers fought in the war?

**L. Lam:** Đánh chiến tranh Việt Nam phải không? Yeah.

**VanZandt:** With South Vietnamese Army.

**L. Lam:** Um-hm.

**VanZandt:** OK. Did you hear any stories about your uncles?

**L. Lam:** Ba có nghe nhiều về chiến tranh nhiều không từ gia đình của bà nội? Chiến tranh có kể lại không?

**Q. Lam:** Không.

**L. Lam:** No, they didn't tell anything.

**VanZandt:** OK. So what was your childhood like growing up?

**L. Lam:** Hồi nhỏ ba lớn lên sao? Hồi nhỏ tính tình ba sao?

**Q. Lam:** Hồi nhỏ, lớn lên thì ông già ổng cho đi học. Sau năm '75, tiếp thu rồi, thì trở về quê hương rồi.

**L. Lam:** When he was younger, his daddy gave him money to go to school. Đi học ở đâu?

**Q. Lam:** Học ở tại chỗ đó luôn.

**L. Lam:** Tại Rạch Giá luôn hả?

**Q. Lam:** Ừm.

**L. Lam:** So he went to school in Rạch Giá.

**VanZandt:** OK.

**L. Lam:** And then in 1975, ba học xong hả?

**Q. Lam:** Ừm vậy đó.

**L. Lam:** And then he come back home, and then start—tiếp thu là sao?

**Q. Lam:** Tiếp thu là sau năm '75 đó.

**L. Lam:** Tiếp thu?

**Q. Lam:** Tức là sau năm '75, Việt Cộng quánh lấy nước –

**L. Lam:** OK. So this means that after the war ended in 1975, right?

**VanZandt:** Yes, April 30, 1975.

**L. Lam:** I didn't know what “tiếp thu” meant, and he just told about it. And then he came back home, rồi sao?

**VanZandt:** OK. So he had been away at school.

**L. Lam:** L. Lam lúc đang đánh lộn là ba đang đi học phải không?

**Q. Lam:** Đánh lộn là đang đi học. Nhưng sau tiếp thu thì giống như là người ta giải phóng miền Nam. Giải phóng miền Nam thì không còn học nữa. Bắt đầu ông già, với ông nội bị nhà nước Cộng Sản tịch thu tài sản hết chơn nên phải về quê làm ruộng.

**L. Lam:** Oh, OK. So see he's living at Rạch Giá. And then he can't go to school anymore because the Communists took over. So they take all his stores, his merchants, so he had to go back in the country, Rạch Giá, to become farmers.

**VanZandt:** OK. But that's *after* 1975?

**L. Lam:** Sau 1975 phải không?

**VanZandt:** That he's talking about.

**L. Lam:** Um-hm.

**VanZandt:** OK. And I want to hear more about that. Can we back up to when you were *younger* though, *before* the war ended? You were born in 1961. How many brothers and sisters did you have?

**L. Lam:** Ba có bao nhiêu anh em?

**Q. Lam:** 5 anh em.

**L. Lam:** He has five brothers.

**VanZandt:** Five brothers!

**L. Lam:** (speaking Vietnamese)

**Q. Lam:** Hai người, một người chị, một người em gái.

**L. Lam:** One older sister, one younger sister.

**VanZandt:** OK.

**L. Lam:** My aunt, she actually lives in France.

**VanZandt:** Oh, *really*?

**L. Lam:** Yeah. (chuckles)

**Q. Lam:** Một người em út thì ở kế bên đây.

**L. Lam:** And then my uncle, he lives here.

**VanZandt:** He lives here? One of your (referring to Mr. Lam) brothers.

**L. Lam:** Yeah. The younger one, the baby.

**VanZandt:** OK. So where was he in the pecking order?

**L. Lam:** He's the third; third to youngest.

**VanZandt:** To youngest, OK. A lot of children in your house. Can he describe what his house was like, and just growing up? Did he help his father in the market? Just anything about—

**L. Lam:** Thì ba kể giống như hồi nhỏ ba sao? Ba có theo ông nội đi bán đồ? Ba đi phá?

**Q. Lam:** Có đi, mỗi một lần đi lần đi chợ mua đồ là đi theo ba của ba. Tức là ông nội của con đó.

**L. Lam:** Mấy tuổi? Hồi đó ba mấy tuổi?

**Q. Lam:** Cỡ khoảng 6 7 tuổi.

**L. Lam:** So he was six or seven, he'd go with his dad to go to market to buy merchandise so he could resell it, when he was six or seven.

**Q. Lam:** Đi mỗi lần đi chợ vậy là phải đi ba ngày đó. Đi là đi bằng tàu không à.

**L. Lam:** It took three days to go in town to buy the merchants. But they went by boat, not by motorcycle or cars or anything like that. It took three days.

**VanZandt:** Paint a picture for me of Rach Gia, what it's like. Is it near the Gulf of Thailand, or is it more inland, but there are canals, kind of like around here? What was it like?

**L. Lam:** Thì ba giống như là ba giải thích với bà là giống như cái Rạch Giá sao? Rồi ba đi sao? Hồi đó ba 6 tuổi ba có vui không?

**Q. Lam:** 6 tuổi đâu có biết quý ma gì đâu? (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** I have a map here. Here's your town.

**Q. Lam:** à hồ đó—

**L. Lam:** Nè nè ba nè.

**Q. Lam:** Đường lộ thì có cái đường sông ở cấp vậy nè, thì tàu nó đi chạy tới Rạch Giá. Hồi đó Rạch Giá đa số là đi tàu nhiều hơn đi xe.

**L. Lam:** Back then, they took more boats than car. I guess they didn't have roads, or proper roads.

**VanZandt:** Didn't have roads, right, so everyone took boats.

**L. Lam:** Yeah. So it was more, I guess, safe, I mean, to go by boat.

**VanZandt:** Um-hm. It's just the way people got around.

**L. Lam:** Yeah, got around by boat, water, the canal.

**VanZandt:** Wow. And this looks like a body of water here. Was it considered kind of a fishing area, too, or more rice cultivation?

**L. Lam:** Rạch Giá giống như là đánh tôm cá nhiều hơn hay là trồng gạo?

**Q. Lam:** Gạo cá tôm gì cũng có nhiều cả thầy.

**L. Lam:** I mean, it's both, equal.

**VanZandt:** OK.

**Q. Lam:** Mà hồi xưa đó thì nó không có nhiều bằng bay giờ đâu.

**L. Lam:** Hồi xưa không nhiều tôm hay là sao?

**Q. Lam:** Khổ lắm.

**L. Lam:** Back then, he said it was really hard to make a living with rice or even in the seafood industry.

**VanZandt:** Why is that?

**L. Lam:** Tại sao? Lý do tại sao mà nó khổ lắm?

**Q. Lam:** Ở đó ruộng làm không có sống được đâu tại vì nó không có phân phương vậy đó. Người ta nghèo quá, nhà cửa thì nghèo lắm. Thành thử ra đâu có làm trúng được.

**L. Lam:** So back then they didn't have proper soil, fertilizer, for the rice to grow. And then it's just, people were just so poor that they didn't have the money to invest, to make the, I guess, to fertilize the rice. Vậy lý do tại sao mà tôm cá đồ lại thấp?

**Q. Lam:** Tôm cá thất thì tại vì nó đâu có như ý muốn của mình đâu? Thì mình đâu có tiền thành thử mình đâu có làm những gì mấy móc? Máy móc thì cũ, hư hoài thì sao có ra tiền được?

**L. Lam:** Well, the seafood industry was difficult back then because they didn't have money, I mean for food even, so they didn't have the money to invest in like machines that broke down, parts were breaking and falling apart. So that's why it was so hard back then.

**VanZandt:** Right. Well, and I'm thinking about—your father had a market. So what kind of goods did he—was he a rice farmer as well, or did he strictly deal with the market? And what kind of products; where did he get the products that he sold and resold?

**L. Lam:** Thì ba của ba đi chợ mua đồ để bán là đồ đặc gì?

**Q. Lam:** Đường. Thì cũng giống như chợ store. Bán rau vậy thôi.

**L. Lam:** It was like he would buy sugar, nước mắm—

**VanZandt:** Ah, fish sauce!



**Q. Lam:** Vải đồ vậy nè. Cloth.

**L. Lam:** Oh, and then the—

**VanZandt:** Cloth.

**L. Lam:** Cloth, he sell cloth.

**VanZandt:** OK. So food, clothes, fish sauce—nước mắm.

**L. Lam:** Có bán xà bông?

**Q. Lam:** Đủ thứ.

**L. Lam:** Shampoo. So it's like a supermarket but it's really more, it's like—

**Q. Lam:** Dầu mỡ đồ nữa, đèn đuốc bán hết. Đèn dầu.

**L. Lam:** Oil. Back then, they had lantern. They didn't have electricity. So he sold that, too.

**VanZandt:** Oh, yes. You didn't have electricity then?

**Q. Lam:** Unh-uh.

**L. Lam:** No electricity.

**VanZandt:** (laughs) And so at night, when it got dark, you had lanterns? They were gas powered?

**L. Lam:** Yeah, gas, they were gas. Có ga phải không?

**Q. Lam:** Dầu thoi, đâu có ga đâu?

**L. Lam:** Oh, oil; oil lamps.

**VanZandt:** Oil lamps, right.

**L. Lam:** Oil lamp, not gas, oil.

**Q. Lam:** Chỗ của ba ở khoảng chừng coi – tới năm 2000 nó mới có điện mà.

**L. Lam:** Two thousand, Rạch Giá didn't have electricity.

**VanZandt:** Two thousand people?

**L. Lam:** No, 2000. Year 2000.

**VanZandt:** Oh!

**L. Lam:** Didn't have electricity.

**VanZandt:** *Really?*

**L. Lam:** In Rạch Giá. In Rạch Giá?

**VanZandt:** Yes. Wow. OK, we'll pause for a minute. You want to pause? OK.  
(Linh Lam goes to kitchen)

**VanZandt:** No electricity, that means, what about refrigeration?

**Q. Lam:** The city got electric.

**L. Lam:** The city got electricity. City have electricity.

**VanZandt:** City, but not where you lived. Right. OK. Sure. That was common back then. So hot! Must have been hot [with] no air-conditioning like today. (laughs)

**Q. Lam:** No nothing.

**VanZandt:** Very different.

**Q. Lam:** We got now, but then not OK!

**VanZandt:** (laughs)

**L. Lam:** They're not over(?), but right now it's OK.

**VanZandt:** Now they've got it, right. No telephones?

**L. Lam:** Có điện thoại không?

**Q. Lam:** Bây giờ hả?

**L. Lam:** Uh, back then?

**Q. Lam:** Oh, no!

**VanZandt:** Back then when you were young. So for your great-grandchildren—think about when they hear this—how was life different then?

**Q. Lam:** Năm 95 là có – cũng như là nguyên một cái kính đó đó có một hai chỗ điện thoại thôi.

**L. Lam:** In 1995, they only have—the whole province, I guess there you say “province,” only one or two places have telephones.

**Q. Lam:** Một phút gọi ở bên Mỹ gọi về bên Mỹ là 6 đô la đó.

**L. Lam:** So one minute to call—Mỹ gọi bên Việt Nam hả?

**Q. Lam:** Mỹ gọi về Việt Nam là một phút 6 đô đó.

**L. Lam:** So in the United States, if he wanted to call back to Vietnam, one minute is six dollars.

**VanZandt:** Oh wow! You’d talk fast. (laughs)

**L. Lam:** (laughs)

**VanZandt:** You’d talk fast, right? (laughter)

**L. Lam:** Ba nói nhanh quá hả ba?

**VanZandt:** That’s expensive!

**Q. Lam:** A lot of money, yeah?!

**VanZandt:** A *lot* of money. That will change though; it just takes time. (laughter)

**L. Lam:** That’s the (inaudible). It’s probably cheaper now.

**VanZandt:** Yeah, yeah, right. It’s changing so fast now.

**L. Lam:** It is.

**Q. Lam:** (laughs)

**VanZandt:** OK. So you were little boys—

**Q. Lam:** Nói với bà là cuộc sống Việt Nam đó là trước 75, sau 75 gì cũng vậy. Bây giờ mới đỡ thôi. Những mấy năm đó khổ lắm. Bom đạn, đồ chiến tranh dữ lắm. Chết dữ lắm.

**L. Lam :** He said before 1975 and after 1975 is both difficult, life in Vietnam. But he said just recently Vietnam is doing good.

**VanZandt:** Right, doing much better. Now that it's opened up to the *world*.

**L. Lam :** Yes.

**VanZandt:** Yes. Well, in staying with before 1975, you were young during the Vietnam War. Say, American troops came to Vietnam in 1965 and then left at about 1973. So almost ten years. American troops were there. And he was young; too young to fight. But can he talk a little bit about how the war, if at all, it changed his daily life in Rach Gia? What that was like living through war.

**L. Lam:** Trước năm 75 thì ba là con nít phải không? Ba nói cuộc sống của ba hồi nhỏ có chiến tranh vậy thì nó sao? Nó phản ứng như thế nào?

**Q. Lam:** Thì có ba biết một năm 1968 đó, 1968—

**VanZandt:** (heavy sigh) Uh!

**Q. Lam:** —là Việt Cộng như là lấy nước là muốn giải phóng miền Nam là ba cũng không có lớn lắm. Ba biết nhưng mà, đi chợ, ba với chú Út, cô Khên, với bà Nội đi ra chợ ăn Tết. Năm đó là ngay Tết Mậu Thân đó, là bị kẹt, đi xuống dưới tàu, quánh quá trời đạn, bắn quá chời, tưởng chết rồi đó hen. Là có người dựng làm lính, mới chạy chiếc xe Jeep mới xuống tới bến tàu chở về nhà.

**L. Lam :** Vậy là ba chạy trốn trong cái tàu?

**Q. Lam:** Không có, mình đi về nhà, Tết mình đi dzia nhà mình thì thành thử ra mình ra đây mình chơi thôi. Bây giờ mình đi dzia, mà Việt Cộng nó quánh vô, rồi đi về không được. Đi tới đi lui, trên đường toàn Việt Cộng với lính không, đi lạng quạng là bị nó bắn chết nữa. Còn người dựng mới lấy xe chở về nhà dựng ở.

**L. Lam:** So in 1965 [1968], that's when, right when Tết, the holiday Tết—

**VanZandt:** Nineteen sixty-eight, yes. The Tet Offensive happened.

**L. Lam:** Nineteen sixty-five hay 1968?

**Q. Lam:** (speaking Vietnamese)

**L. Lam:** Nineteen sixty-eight.

**VanZandt:** Yes.

**L. Lam:** And then—

**Q. Lam:** New Years Vietnamese.

**VanZandt:** Yes. Tet Offensive. North Vietnamese came; surprise attack.

**L. Lam:** Yeah. So my dad and his younger brother and his younger sister and his mom went to celebrate Tết, and then but they got stuck, because they were bombing. And then they thought they were going to die, because all the bombing. But then luckily, my grandma had a brother that was in the war, he was a soldier, so he picked them up on a Jeep and then bring him back to his house. That's how they were safe.

**VanZandt:** So even in Rach Gia where you lived, they were bombing?

**L. Lam:** Vậy Rạch Giá có nổ năm 68?

**Q. Lam:** Năm 68 đó.

**L. Lam:** Um-hm, yep.

**Q. Lam:** Cũng như là Việt Cộng đi chợ vậy đó.

**L. Lam:** They called them Viet Cong.

**Q. Lam:** Chết dữ lắm.

**L. Lam:** I mean, so many people died.

**Q. Lam:** Mấy người Việt Cộng năm đó chết nhiều lắm.

**L. Lam:** Yeah, tons of—Người Việt Cộng chết hả? Tons of Việt Cộng that year died, passed away.

**VanZandt:** Yes. They think thousands did. Yes. Must have been very frightening.

**L. Lam:** Sợ hả? Yeah, he was really scared.

**Q. Lam:** Nhưng mà còn nhỏ mình đâu có biết cái gì đâu.

**L. Lam:** But he said he was so young it didn't really register. [But] thinking about it now, he was really frightened.

**VanZandt:** Right. Didn't understand what was happening, maybe.

**L. Lam:** Yes. Ba uống đi.

**VanZandt:** Yes. Please.

**VanZandt:** I've studied a little about the Tet Offensive, and they thought that the fighting would stop, was the idea, during Tet [holiday]; that they would respect both

sides so that people could be with their families. And that was when they would launch this surprise attack. So soldiers had gone home to be with their families. So 1968, very important year. It changed attitudes even in the United States about the war. That's when many protests started here because they saw what happened and said, "No more. We need to come out; we need to get Americans out of there." What else during that time does he remember, that affected his family, about the war?

**L. Lam:** Ba có nhớ cái gì mà nó làm cuộc sống của ba khác biệt không? Hồi ba nhỏ, chiến tranh nó có –

**Q. Lam:** Chiến tranh thì trước năm 75 nó cũng đỡ đi vì ông Nội buôn bán được, sau năm 75 Việt Cộng vô thì khổ rồi.

**L. Lam:** He said that before 1975, I mean, they still have the stores and everything. It was OK; life was OK. But then after 1975, when the Viet Cong came and take over, that's when life was difficult and hard.

**VanZandt:** Yes, yes. Well, and getting to that—I just want to ask first if I can about your school, about going to school. Can he talk about that? Did he go to—he said his father paid for him to go to school?

**L. Lam:** Ông Nội có cho ba đi học? Ba muốn nói cái vụ ba đi học sao?

**Q. Lam:** Đi học thì đâu có đi học giống ở đây? Học trường làng mà, học trường mỗi tháng phải trả tiền cho người ta đâu giống như ở đây đâu.

**L. Lam:** He said it's like going to school is not like going to school over here. Even though it's like public school, but you still have to pay each month.

**VanZandt:** So only people with money, who could pay, could get an education. And your family had money. So he was lucky.

**L. Lam:** Yeah, he was lucky. Rồi đi học ba có thích không? Chứ nó ra sao?

**Q. Lam:** Học để biết chữ vậy thôi.

**L. Lam:** So he just go to school just to know how to read.

**VanZandt:** How many years did he go to school?

**L. Lam:** Ba đi học tới lớp mấy?

**Q. Lam:** Ba học tới 7 năm thì nghỉ rồi.

**L. Lam:** He said he went to school for seven years; then he quit. (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** OK. And why did you quit?

**L. Lam:** Tại sao ba nghỉ?

**Q. Lam:** Là tới tiếp thu vô rồi thì đâu còn cái ấy, đâu còn làm ăn gì được nữa đâu, đói thấy mồ, tiền đâu mà học?

**L. Lam:** Because the Communists took over, so I mean, they don't have enough money. I mean, you barely have food to eat. How can you go to school?

**VanZandt:** So 1975 is when you left school?

**Q. Lam:** Đồ đạc cũng như ông Nội buôn bán, nhà nước tịch thu hết, về quê làm ruộng ăn thôi chứ tiền bạc đâu mà đi học?

**L. Lam:** So after the Communists take over, they took all his daddy's stores, and they take everything. So that's why he had no choice but to go back to the country [in] Rạch Giá to do farming, because they don't have enough money to send him to school.

**VanZandt:** Well, let's get to that, then. April 30, 1975, when South Vietnam was lost, tell me about leading up to that. What did he know was going to happen? Did they have information coming in? Did they know that it was almost the end and that the Communists were taking over? Just kind of leading up to that famous day.

**L. Lam:** Hồi đó nó tịch thu, sao ba biết họ sẽ lấy nước của Việt Nam?

**Q. Lam:** Thì Việt Cộng chiếm vô rồi thì đâu biết nhà nước sẽ tịch thu đồ đâu. Cũng như người buôn bán nhiều lắm.

**L. Lam:** He said he didn't know the government was going to take everything. They didn't know until they took over it.

**VanZandt:** He had no idea.

**L. Lam:** Had no idea.

**VanZandt:** No warning.

**Q. Lam:** Lấy nhà lấy cửa của người ta nữa.

**L. Lam:** Take houses, take stores, take everything. The government take everything.

**VanZandt:** Did they take your house?

**L. Lam:** Nó lấy nhà của ba luôn hả?

**Q. Lam:** Nhà của ba thì không có lấy rồi.

**L. Lam:** Nhà ba không lấy hả?

**Q. Lam:** Ở trong ruộng làm sao mà lấy được?

**L. Lam:** Nhà ông nội phải không?

**Q. Lam:** Thì mấy người người ta ở chợ người ta buôn bán thì bị lấy hết rồi.

**L. Lam:** Like, if you lived in like the city, they take everything. But if you're like in the country where the rice is, they don't take it.

**Q. Lam:** Đưa mấy người đó vô kinh tế mới giống như là đưa vô trong ruộng, làm ruộng mà ăn thôi. Không cho buôn bán nữa.

**L. Lam:** They didn't allow them to do, to be a merchant anymore, so just allowed them to be a farmer.

**VanZandt:** So your father's business was taken away. He couldn't do what he'd always done. And he had to start farming. And so how did that affect his father?

**L. Lam:** Rồi sau chiến tranh ông Nội sao? Có buồn rầu? (Huong Thanh Ho speaks in the background)

**Q. Lam:** Đâu có làm gì nữa đâu? Ông Nội thì già. Bắt đầu ba lớn lên, ba mới làm nuôi ông Nội đó.

**L. Lam:** Well, by that time, his dad was old. So he don't work anymore, so my daddy got older, then he take over and take care of my grandfather.

**VanZandt:** OK. And so you started farming. And you knew many people whose belongings and property were taken away. It must have been very difficult. People lost status; they lost jobs, property. Was there talk, at that time, in your family about trying to leave at all?

**L. Lam:** Giống như mấy người đó tịch thu, Cộng Sản lấy hết đồ đạc, việc làm, tiệm, vậy trong gia đình của ba có nói là muốn bỏ đi không?

**Q. Lam:** Thì bỏ đi. Mình bỏ đi về quê.

**L. Lam:** Vậy thôi. So they just left and go to Rạch Giá in the country to be a farmer.

**VanZandt:** There were people who were planning escapes then, and leaving Vietnam. Was there any talk in his family of that?



**L. Lam:** Hồi xưa ba mẹ của ba có muốn đi vượt biên không? Tới cái khúc đó đó, có tính không?

**Q. Lam:** Lúc hồi mà ông Nội còn sống đó, ông không cho đi đâu.

**L. Lam:** Oh, when his father was still alive, he didn't allow him to leave.

**VanZandt:** OK. He was too old to leave, and he didn't want the children to leave.

**L. Lam:** To leave, yeah.

**VanZandt:** Right. OK.

**L. Lam:** Ông Nội không cho đi hả? Ông Nội chết rồi mới đi à?

**Q. Lam:** Ông Nội chết rồi thì chú Út với bà Nội đi trước.

**L. Lam:** So then when grandfather passed away, then my grandma and then his youngest baby left. They left.

**VanZandt:** OK. They left Vietnam.

**L. Lam:** They left Vietnam.

**VanZandt:** What year was that?

**L. Lam:** Năm mấy?

**Q. Lam:** Bà Nội đi năm '85.

**L. Lam:** Eighty-five. Nineteen eighty-five.

**VanZandt:** Eighty-five was when he left.

**L. Lam:** When my grandma and his youngest brother left.

**VanZandt:** OK. But not Mr. Lam.

**L. Lam:** Not my dad.

**Q. Lam:** No.

**VanZandt:** Tell me about that decision. Why did they leave and the others stay?

**L. Lam:** Lý do nào mà ba với học muốn bỏ đi?

**Q. Lam:** Tới nữa ba mâm ăn không được thì bắt đầu là 2 năm sau ba bỏ đi rồi. 1987.

**L. Lam:** Nineteen eighty-seven, he couldn't do any business anymore. It's just, no matter how much he worked, he doesn't make any money, so two years later he decided to leave.

**VanZandt:** But when his sibling left and his mother, how did they decide who would stay and who would leave, before he left?

**L. Lam:** Tại sao muốn đi? Rồi ai chọn lựa ai là người đi và ai là người ở lại?

**Q. Lam:** Máy người ta thì người ta ra riêng hết rồi. Nhưng mình mà đi đâu phải muốn đi là đi được đâu, đâu có đi tự do đâu. Phải trốn mới đi. Còn nếu mà đi, người ta đi là bắt lại hết chơn rồi đâu có cho đi.

**L. Lam:** Well, he said that his other brothers and sister, they have their own family, so that's their decision. But you cannot just up and leave, but you have to *hide, escape* and leave, because if you get caught, you will go to jail.

**Q. Lam:** Nhưng mà đi đó là chết nhiều hơn đến đảo đó.

**L. Lam:** They had more people die at sea than people that actually reached to, on land.

**VanZandt:** (whispers) Yeah. It was a very risky decision to make. Yeah. Well, he was only fourteen years old in 1975. That's pretty young. He couldn't go to school anymore. He was helping farm—was he helping farm the land after the war?

**L. Lam:** (speaking Vietnamese) Nineteen—

**VanZandt:** In '75, when they started farming?

**L. Lam:** Năm 1975, là ba gần 14 tuổi phải không? 14 tuổi thì cuộc sống của ba sao? Ba cũng đi làm ruộng thôi hay sao? Sao mà ba nuôi ông nội được?

**Q. Lam:** Bất cứ cái chuyện gì ba cũng làm hết.

**L. Lam:** He said after 1975, (inaudible) he did *anything*; he did *any* job just to help to support his family. Bất cứ việc làm là sao, ba nói cái—

**Q. Lam:** Cũng như là đi làm ruộng, như là cày đất vậy đó là ba biết làm luôn.

**L. Lam:** He'd rake the soil.

**Q. Lam:** Làm bằng tay thôi.

**L. Lam:** By *hand*, not machine; raking the soil. Rồi ba làm gì nữa?

**Q. Lam:** Làm biển.

**L. Lam:** Fisherman.

**Q. Lam:** Tròn dưa hấu, dưa leo, khoai mì, khoai bắp ba biết làm hết.

**L. Lam:** He'd grow watermelon, potatoes, everything. And he did shrimping.

**VanZandt:** And shrimping? Did you shrimp in the canals there? Where did you shrimp?

**L. Lam:** Biển ở đâu? Đánh tôm phải không?

**Q. Lam:** Vietnamese no canals.

**VanZandt and L. Lam:** No canals. (chuckles)

**Q. Lam:** All the rúp(?).

**L. Lam:** Gulf. It is like Gulf, out in the water. I guess that's what he was saying.

**VanZandt:** Oh.

**Q. Lam:** No, no in the lake, no in the lake, no the same in America.

**L. Lam:** It's not like in the United States where they have lakes. So it's like a whole entire gulf.

**VanZandt:** Gulf. So you were shrimping out in the gulf? Gulf of Thailand?

**Q. Lam:** Nooooo. (laughs)

**VanZandt:** OK. (laughs) Well, this is the Gulf of Thailand (referring to map).

**Q. Lam:** *Little* bit like that. Little bit, no, little bit like.

**L. Lam:** Small.

**VanZandt:** Yeah, OK. Just with a small boat.

**Q. Lam:** You go maybe ten mile, and three mile like that. Not ocean(?).

**VanZandt:** OK. So that was the first time you started shrimping?

**L. Lam:** Hồi ba 14 tuổi là ba bắt đầu đi biển phải không?

**Q. Lam:** Mới đầu là ba đi làm công cho người ta. Ba đi học nghề.

**L. Lam:** So he was like, um, how do you call, um, what you call when you learn a trade. And you work under the—apprentice.

**VanZandt:** Oh, an apprenticeship. Oh!

**L. Lam:** Yeah, so he was an apprentice on the boat to learn the boat, shrimping.

**VanZandt:** Oh, OK.

**L. Lam:** Ba đi làm công rồi sao?

**Q. Lam:** Làm coi cách thức họ làm thế nào để mà học hỏi thêm. Rồi bắt đầu mình mới về, hồi đó ông già ông có chiếc tàu, có cái máy, ba mua cái giỏ về làm giống người ta vậy thôi.

**L. Lam:** Cái giỏ là giống như cái tàu?

**Q. Lam:** Cái xuồng nhỏ.

**L. Lam:** So he was an apprentice to see how they work so he can go home to learn that skill and do it. So my grandfather had like a canoe, then they also had I guess—

**VanZandt:** A little motorboat?

**L. Lam:** A motor. So then he learned how to and then he did it himself. (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** OK! How did you like that?

**L. Lam:** Ba có thích đi làm biển ko? Yeah, he liked it.

**Q. Lam:** Đâu có nghề gì nữa đâu mà làm?

**L. Lam:** Well, he had no other choice, he had to like it. (laughs)

**VanZandt:** (laughs) Very practical minded, yes.

**Q. Lam:** Lúc đó là ông Nội cưới vợ cho ba đó. Là ba với má đi làm luôn đó.

**L. Lam:** And then at that time he had the boat; that's when my father married my mom. He had the boat, and then he can support himself.

**VanZandt:** *Right.* So then you could have a wife and your own family.

**L. Lam:** Right, have a wife.

**VanZandt:** So you were finally able to make a living doing that, even after the war?

**L. Lam:** Um-hm.

**VanZandt:** Shrimping was pretty good?

**L. Lam:** Ba lấy má hồi ba mấy tuổi?

**Q. Lam:** 18 tuổi.

**L. Lam:** Eighteen. So he married my mom when he was eighteen.

**VanZandt:** Wow! How did you meet?

**L. Lam:** Sao má quen ba vậy?

**Q. Lam:** Cũng như là ở xóm mà.

**L. Lam:** He said it's in the whole village; in the village, he saw her.

**VanZandt:** Ah! Did you grow up together?

**L. Lam:** Ba với má có lớn lên chung với nhau không?

**Q. Lam:** Má hồi trước là đi chỗ khác rồi sau đó tiếp thu mới về ở đó. Ba mà thấy má mà đẹp mới kêu ba a cưới.

**L. Lam:** (laughs) So after my mom come back to the village, my dad saw my mom and thought she was so pretty, and then to go home and (Mr. Lam laughs) tell my grandfather he wanted to marry her. And that's what happened. (laughs)

**VanZandt:** And he gave you his blessing? (laughs) And what did his wife's parents think about *him*?

**L. Lam:** Bà Ngoại với ông Ngoại có thích ba không?

**Q. Lam:** Bà Ngoại, bà Ngoại thích lắm á. Bà thương lắm đó.

**L. Lam:** My grandma *really* loved my dad; love, love, loved my dad.

**VanZandt:** Aw. Did she know him already from growing up?

**L. Lam:** Vậy ngày xưa bà ngoại có biết ba không?

**Q. Lam:** Biết nhưng mà cũng như ở đó mấy người ở chạng ba đó, đâu có ai làm bằng ba đâu.

**L. Lam:** So like, a teenager his age, all the boys eighteen, around his age, nobody can work like him.

**VanZandt:** Oh, you were a hard worker. So she knew you would be a good provider, a good husband. (laughter) Wow.

**L. Lam:** Yeah.

**VanZandt:** So you were eighteen when you got married. What was the wedding like?

**L. Lam:** Đám cưới thì sao?

**VanZandt:** Traditional Vietnamese wedding?

**Q. Lam:** Thì đám cưới cũng giống như bên đây thôi.

**L. Lam:** Đám cưới giống như bên đây là hỏi cưới –

**Q. Lam:** Hỏi cưới, đám nói rồi đám cưới. Nấu ăn đãi mấy chục bàn. Nhiều lắm à. Lớn lắm à.

**L. Lam:** Like a traditional Vietnamese wedding. You know, they have the engagement, and then the wedding, and then they have like, uh—mười mấy?

**Q. Lam:** Eighteen.

**L. Lam:** Eighteen table guests, for his wedding. So it was—

**Q. Lam:** Eighteen hay 20 bàn gì lận đó.

**L. Lam:** Like eighteen, twenty tables of guests.

**VanZandt:** Have you ever seen pictures? Were there pictures?

**L. Lam:** No, no pictures. I haven't seen it.

**VanZandt:** Yeah. But he wore traditional costume?

**L. Lam:** Vậy ba đám cưới ba mang cái gì?

**Q. Lam:** Thì ông bác Hai mày có đồ vét mà.

**L. Lam:** Oh đồ vét hả? He wore a suit.

**VanZandt:** Oh, a suit!

**L. Lam:** Yes.

**VanZandt:** Like a western style suit?

**L. Lam:** Yeah. So he borrowed his oldest brother's suit.

**Q. Lam:** Nói bác Hai mà học giỏi lắm á.

**L. Lam:** So his oldest brother, I mean he's very intelligent. He's a very smart man. So he had a degree; he was smart. So he borrowed his oldest brother's suit.

**VanZandt:** Nice! (Linh Lam and VanZandt laugh) Did she wear an áo dài?

**L. Lam:** Vậy má mang gì? Áo Dài hả? Yeah, she did wear áo dài. (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** Yeah, aw, beautiful. And then did you [Mr. Lam] move to have your own separate house? (asking Linh Lam) Or did they live with family?

**L. Lam:** Rồi ba có ra nhà riêng hả? Có vợ chưa? Chưa hả?

**Q. Lam:** Đâu có. Là ba cưới vợ ba nuôi nè, ông Nội bà Nội, chú Út rồi cô Khên mà. Ba take care hết luôn.

**L. Lam:** OK. So he married my mom; to go back home to live with my grandfather. He provide for my grandma, my grandfather, his youngest brother, and my aunt and his wife.

**VanZandt:** A lot of people depending on you—

**L. Lam:** On him.

**VanZandt:** —shrimping.

**L. Lam:** Because the other one is older so they have their own family.

**VanZandt:** OK. So they all lived together, yeah. Tell me any favorite stories that you have of that time. What was his happiest memory when he thinks back to that time?

**L. Lam:** Cái lúc vui nhất của ba, ba có nhớ cái gì làm cho ba vui nhất không? Hồi xưa đó, cái lúc đó đó?

**Q. Lam:** Hồi vui nhất là lúc chưa có vợ. Bạn bè đông đi chơi vậy thôi. Cũng đi đá banh. Lúc đó thì vui nhất đến chừng có vợ thì phải lo làm ăn, nuôi vợ con chứ đâu còn đi chơi nữa.

**L. Lam:** So he said that one of the happiest time was before having a family because when you have a family you have to provide for them; a lot of responsibility, so you can't have fun anymore; you have to grow up. But before he had a wife and married, he went with his friends; he would kick balls and play soccer, stuff like that.

**VanZandt:** Did you go to the beach?

**L. Lam:** Vậy ba có đi biển chơi không?

**Q. Lam:** (long pause)

**VanZandt:** No?

**L. Lam:** No.

**VanZandt:** No? OK, yeah. (laughs)

**L. Lam:** (laughs) Fishermen didn't—

**Q. Lam:** Không. Không có đi chơi đâu. Ở bên Việt Nam, cái vụ đi chơi là không có rồi. (laughs)

**L. Lam:** (laughter) They didn't go play—they just kicked balls.

**VanZandt:** (laughs) Playing ball and soccer, fun.

**L. Lam:** Yeah, they just kicked balls around.

**VanZandt:** Yeah. I wondered if they had Boy Scouts there. I've heard some of the men talk about Boy Scouts—

**L. Lam:** How would you [translate] Boy Scouts?

**VanZandt:** —in Vietnam. Yeah, would you know how to say that?

**L. Lam:** I don't know.

**VanZandt:** Scouting, where they went camping as a group.

**L. Lam:** Ngày xưa ba có đi giống như là với một nhóm con nít giống như là đi ra ngoài rừng?



**Q. Lam:** No.

**L. Lam:** No, he didn't have that. He didn't have that.

**VanZandt:** OK, OK. Yeah. Some who were in the mountains, I think, had that.

**L. Lam:** Yeah. He has no idea what you're talking about. (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** So what was the most trouble he got into when he was young?  
(chuckles)

**Q. Lam:** Ba khoảng 15 tuổi thì ba làm ra tiền rồi đó.

**L. Lam:** He said when he was fifteen, he worked and he made money.

**VanZandt:** You were just all about the work, yeah, and providing. OK, I asked a silly question a minute ago, but what was the most trouble you ever got into?

**L. Lam:** Ba, hồi nhỏ ba làm cái gì mà phá nhất mà bị bắt, hay bị gì?

**Q. Lam:** Bị anh quánh—

**L. Lam:** Ba là cái gì mà phá nhất?

**Q. Lam:** Không có. Ông anh thứ ba quánh nhất. Phá dữ lắm! Bất cứ cái gì cũng phá hết á.

**L. Lam:** (chuckles) His second to oldest brother hit him. Phá cái gì?

**VanZandt:** Oh no! (Mr. Lam reveals scar on his wrist) Oh, he is showing me this scar!

**L. Lam:** (laughs)

**VanZandt:** Wow. How did—with what [did he get hit]?

**L. Lam:** Ba bị cái gì?

**Q. Lam:** Chọc người ta, rồi đứng chơi ban đêm chắc chiều tôi cũng khoảng 7 hay 8 giờ, rồi ba phá người ta dữ lắm rồi chấp tay sau đít đầu có hay đầu. Rồi cái thằng kia đi về mới méc bác ba mày. Rồi bác ba lấy cây trúc mà nó tươi, rồi quất vào đây. Ba đầu có biết vì tay để sau đít vậy nè. Mà quất trúng ra máu luôn.

**L. Lam:** (laughs) Ba chọc ai? Chọc con gái hay chọc con trai?

**Q. Lam:** Thì mấy thằng cũng chạng chạng ba vậy nè.

**L. Lam:** So he was messing with the other boys. And you know, he teased the other boy. And when he got home his second to older brother, because he was really bad, took a bamboo stick and whipped him. But his hand was behind his back like that, so he whipped him with the bamboo so hard that he started bleeding. His brother didn't know his hand was in the back. He thought it was just his butt. (laughs)

**VanZandt:** Oh, my goodness. And you still have like a three-inch scar on your wrist, for the recording. That's deep! Ooh, bamboo cuts hurt. (laughs)

**Q. Lam:** Máu ra dữ lắm á.

**L. Lam:** Had a lot of blood.

**VanZandt:** Did you get him back? (chuckles)

**L. Lam:** Vậy ba có phá anh—bác ba lại không?

**Q. Lam:** Ông lớn, ông oánh dữ lắm á.

**L. Lam:** He said he didn't dare, because he was older, so he hit him really bad, so he didn't dare to get him back.

**VanZandt:** Oh, my goodness. (chuckles) Good story.

**L. Lam:** (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** Wow. Well, I wondered, too—just on a tangent—being half-Chinese; his father was Chinese. What was that like being of ethnic origin, Chinese ethnic origin in South Vietnam? Did that have any special kind of significance, or was there any discrimination, or was that a positive thing for his family?

**L. Lam:** Giống như là tại ba là nửa Tàu, ông Nội là Tàu, bà Nội—

**Q. Lam:** Bà Nội bên Tàu.

**L. Lam:** Bà Nội bên Tàu luôn hả?

**Q. Lam:** Ông Nội chỉ có hai người con thôi, là ông dất ba của ba qua, là ông Nội của con nè, còn bác Hai thì ở bên Tàu với bà Nội. Thì con kêu là bá cóc đó. Còn ông Nội mới qua bên Việt Nam, mới có một người vợ nữa là mới có thêm một người, là ông chú đó dưới Cần Thơ đó. Vậy thôi. Bà Nội của ba đó là ở bên Tàu.

**L. Lam:** Mà ba, ba lớn lên là ba nửa Tàu, là ba của ba là Tàu, còn má của ba là người Việt Nam. Là ba là nửa Tàu nửa Việt Nam, ba có bị kỳ thị gì không? Không có bị kỳ

thì gì hết chơn hả? Vậy ba là nửa Tàu, ba có giống như khác với người ta không? Hay là bình thường thôi? Hay là ba nửa Tàu ba—

**Q. Lam:** Thì đâu có gì đâu. Thì cũng là giống nhau thôi. Ở đó người ta không có kỳ thị gì đâu.

**L. Lam:** Oh, where he lived, there was no prejudice, no prejudice or anything. He said he was just the same like everybody else, even though he half Chinese.

**VanZandt:** Um-hm. OK.

**L. Lam:** Yeah. So they have no, like, prejudice.

**VanZandt:** Right. That's nice. I was curious. Yeah. And when we talk about April 30, 1975, what do you remember about that day?

**L. Lam:** Nineteen—

**VanZandt:** April 30, 1975, when South Vietnam fell to the Communists. Did he have word? Was it on the radio? Just if he can kind of paint a picture about—

**L. Lam:** Hồi đó Cộng Sản chiếm Việt Nam, ba sao ba nghe được tin đó là Cộng Sản lấy—

**VanZandt:** The feeling in his community and family?

**Q. Lam:** Bây giờ là ba – Hồi trước đó là con đi về quê mình á ha, là hồi đó ông Nội có cái nhà ở trong đó. Năm mà 65 mới bị máy bay của Mỹ bỏ bom cháy nhà mới đi ra ở ngoài chợ ở. Rồi nhưng mà gia đình buôn bán đó, thành thử ra lính ở nhà của ông Nội nhiều lắm. Thành thử ra mấy ông lính nói nó sắp tiếp thu vô, rồi mấy ông lính bị bắt dẫn đi hết.

**L. Lam:** 65 phải không?

**Q. Lam:** Không, '75.

**L. Lam:** So the U.S. bomb bombed one of his house, so he had to go to town and live in my grandfather's house. But soldier were living in the house; that's how they know the news. Then the soldier have to leave the house.

**VanZandt:** Oh. So a U.S. soldier or South Vietnamese soldier?

**L. Lam:** Việt Cộng ở nhà của ông Nội hay là?

**Q. Lam:** Lính Mỹ—

**L. Lam:** U.S soldier.

**VanZandt:** Was living in his house?

**L. Lam:** Living in his house.

**VanZandt:** And why was he living in his house?

**L. Lam:** Tại sao lính Mỹ lại ở trong nhà của ba?

**Q. Lam:** Thì cũng như là đóng ở đây nè. Như là mình ở đằng trước đó có mấy cái hòn đảo, Việt Cộng ở trong đó đó. Bây giờ lính đóng ở đây nè. Lính đóng 3,4 tháng, 5, 6 tháng ở đó mà.

**L. Lam:** Đóng là sao?

**Q. Lam:** Cũng như là ở đó 3, 4 tháng cũng như sư đoàn vậy đó. Đóng ở đây. 3 tháng, nó mới đổi đi rồi mới đưa xuống sư đoàn khác. Quánh Việt Cộng ở đó không mà.

**L. Lam:** OK. So it was like they had the Việt Cộng like out there, and then so the U.S. soldier was living with them, then they switched—I mean, they changed shift to fight the Việt Cộng.

**VanZandt:** OK. So he was staying there not as security for the, but hiding out, I guess, is—

**L. Lam:** Giống như mấy người lính ở đó đặng quỳnh lộn thôi hả? Giúp dân hay là –

**Q. Lam:** Ừm.

**L. Lam:** So they was helping, helping the people.

**VanZandt:** Right. Was that common in his area that he lived, for U.S. soldiers to live in the homes?

**L. Lam:** Cái đó là bình thường lắm hả? Giống như là lính ở chung nhà là bình thường hả?

**Q. Lam:** Ở chung nhà dân vậy đó. Cũng như ở trước trước vậy nè. Cũng như hỏi bà coi bà biết cái đường đi lên chỗ đi về Hà Tiên đó không?

**L. Lam:** Do you know the road going towards Hà Tiên? Are you familiar with that road?

**VanZandt:** To where?

**L. Lam:** Hà Tiên.

**VanZandt:** (pause, thinking) No.

**L. Lam:** You're not familiar with that?

**Q. Lam:** Go to Hà Tiên. Cambodia.

**L. Lam:** Campuchia hả? Cambodia.

**VanZandt:** Oh, OK, sure!

**Q. Lam:** The road right there.

**VanZandt:** Yes.

**Q. Lam:** Yeah. It look like, you know the—

**VanZandt:** Because you were not too far from Cambodia.

**Q. Lam:** And Rạch Giá?

**VanZandt:** Yes.

**Q. Lam:** At Rạch Giá, you come and, thirty, no, no, thirty mile and maybe twenty-five, you know—

**L. Lam:** Twenty-five miles.

**VanZandt:** Twenty-five miles.

**Q. Lam:** Yeah.

**VanZandt:** Into Cambodia from where you were.

**Q. Lam:** No, no. Cambodia, you go on the road right there, a lot of the enemy live right there.

**L. Lam:** The enemy was over there.

**VanZandt:** OK.

**Q. Lam:** Three month and six month.

**VanZandt:** Um-hm. So enemy all around.

**L. Lam:** Ở 3 năm – 3 tháng, 6 tháng hả? Máy người lính ấy hả?

**Q. Lam:** Um-hm.

**L. Lam:** So the soldier live in the house for three to six months.

**VanZandt:** Yeah.

**L. Lam:** Yeah.

**VanZandt:** OK. Huh. He's the first person I've heard say that, that they had a soldier living with them.

**Q. Lam:** Thì với ông Nội mới có cái ghe hàng buôn bán, cũng như buôn bán đồ đạc rồi lính xuống đồ mua.

**L. Lam:** Yeah. So my grandfather was a merchant, so they sell like the merchandise to the soldiers, too.

**VanZandt:** Right. Sure. He had a relationship with them.

**L. Lam:** Bán súng đạn đồ hả?

**Q. Lam:** No. Bán đồ ăn cho lính. Bán bia bán rượu đồ đó.

**L. Lam:** Oh! Like sell food and beer to the soldiers.

**VanZandt:** Uh-huh. Sure. Does he remember the soldier's name?

**L. Lam:** Ba có nhớ máy người lính đó tên gì không?

**Q. Lam:** No. Nhưng mà bà có biết kêu bằng sư đoàn, như là sư đoàn 9, sư đoàn 21, vùng 4 trong này nè—

**L. Lam:** What he say, sergeant twenty-one, so like by number, so they don't have the name.

**VanZandt:** Right, OK. Just for the record, I wondered. How did he feel about that? How did he feel? People want to understand how the South Vietnamese felt about the American presence there, whether it was welcome, or—

**L. Lam:** Cảm nghĩ của bên South Việt Nam – giống như lính Mỹ, có thích lính Mỹ ở đó không hay là không thích lính Mỹ hay là nghĩ là họ không có tốt? Là sao, thì máy người Việt Nam nghĩ lính Mỹ sao?

**Q. Lam:** Đâu có tính lính Mỹ đâu. Lính Việt Nam thôi. Người Việt Nam mà, thì hồi đó lính là người Việt Nam mà Mỹ viện trợ mà.

**L. Lam:** So it's not like U.S. soldier, American soldier, but it's Vietnamese soldier fighting for, with the U.S.

**VanZandt:** Oh, so it was a Vietnamese soldier living with them.

**L. Lam:** Yeah, so a Vietnamese soldier that the United States cover and support.

**VanZandt:** Yes, OK. It was an ally.

**Q. Lam:** Thì giống như hiện giờ nó đánh I-rắc rồi nó rút vậy đó.

**L. Lam:** So it's like Iraq war right now. (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** Yes.

**Q. Lam:** Look like the same thing, right?

**L. Lam:** Same thing. (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** It is! Very much. There are a lot of parallels to that, right? OK, so that clears things up for the record. I was surprised that a U.S soldier was living in the house of a South Vietnamese soldier.

**L. Lam:** So he meant, yeah, yeah. (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** I see; working with the U.S. So did he and his father and family feel that the Americans were helping? Because, of course, the Communists said that they were foreign invaders, right? They shouldn't be there. Did the South Vietnamese [people], did they have good will towards Americans? And how did they feel when the Americans left?

**L. Lam:** Cảm nghĩ về lính Mỹ qua bên Việt Nam, họ nghĩ sao, gia đình của ba nghĩ sao? Có thích lính Mỹ ở bên Việt Nam không?

**Q. Lam:** Cái người lính mà ở bên Việt Nam đó, nó đâu có phải Mỹ nhiều đâu? Trong một cái đó là có mấy người Mỹ thôi. Chứ đâu phải nhiều Mỹ vậy đâu, đâu phải có nguyên cái Mỹ giống như qua quánh I-rắc vậy đâu? Cái này cũng giống như là mấy trăm người Việt Nam, chỉ có một người Mỹ một thôi chứ.

**L. Lam:** So he said that the soldier, the South [Vietnamese] soldier was like a hundred soldier, and then they had like one U.S., American soldier. Like that. So I guess he felt that—Vậ ba không có nghĩ là họ không có tốt, hay sao?

**Q. Lam:** Ở trong nhà ba không à, đâu có gì đâu?

**L. Lam:** So he didn't think any—Mà nó tốt vì nó đánh với người Cộng Sản? Tốt cho dân chúng hay sao?

**Q. Lam:** Thì tốt cho dân chúng. Thì bị đánh bị đốt vô hoài thì thành thử ra phải đánh giặc chứ.

**L. Lam:** Um-hm. So he's basically saying that—I mean, so it's like Vietnamese soldiers, so I mean they live at his house so he didn't think [anything] of it. I mean, they keep on fighting, and then they can't do any business; cannot make a living. So you have to fight, because it was wartime.

**VanZandt:** Right. I guess what I am trying to say—I'm not sure how to say this better. The Americans who were there helping the South Vietnamese fight, they were allies fighting together against this Communist enemy. Did the South Vietnamese—and some from the American perspective will say, you know, if the South Vietnamese could have had better government, could have been a little stronger with us, maybe we could have been more successful in fighting off the Communists. But you know there's talk about corruption in the South Vietnamese government, and politics in the United States, it was just a bad combination.

**L. Lam:** Um-hm.

**VanZandt:** I just wonder what his personal thoughts are about the war. Because many of them [South Vietnamese people] said, when we went to Vietnam [in 2003], I heard soldiers say, “Why did you leave us?” You know, the Americans pulled out and left. And then it ended up very tragically. So does he feel like the Americans should have stayed longer, that things would have turned out differently? Or just how does he feel about that?

**L. Lam:** Cái này bà hỏi cảm nghĩ của ban ha, giống như là cái chiến tranh Việt Nam, người Mỹ quay lại, họ không có thắng nữa. Với bên cái ông gì, ông gì—

**Q. Lam:** Nguyễn Văn Thiệu đó hả?

**L. Lam:** Nguyễn Văn Thiệu, bên Việt Nam giống như Nguyễn Văn Thiệu, cái ông đó, giống như cái nhà nước nó không có mạnh dạn, bởi vậy mình mới thua. Thì cảm nghĩ của ba làm sao?

**Q. Lam:** Thì họ không biết, trước năm 75 thì lính, giống như là người dân bị bắt quân dịch đi lính. Rồi gia đình người ta sợ chết chóc. Tiếp thu vô thì hòa bình rồi, không còn đi lính nữa người ta mới mừng, nhưng người ta biết cái tình trạng mà Việt Cộng tràn vô như vậy mà khổ như vậy đó thì sao mà tràn vô được? Thì người ta phải tiếc chứ. Cũng như con không có biết hiện bây giờ lính Mỹ thì con đã sợ rồi, con đã sợ chiến tranh chết chóc rồi, bây giờ hòa bình rồi thành thử ra đâu còn chiến tranh nữa.



**L. Lam:** Hòa bình rồi mà còn chiến tranh nữa hả?

**Q. Lam:** Đâu còn chiến tranh nữa. Họ đâu có biết là hòa bình rồi còn chiến tranh? Nhưng mà Cộng Sản nó vô nó lấy tài sản của con, con đâu biết trước được đâu? Tới chừng đó hối hận là muộn rồi.

**L. Lam:** Hối hận tại vì mình không có giúp hả?

**Q. Lam:** Ừ. Thì mình đâu có giúp. Mình đâu có biết chính sách nó như thế nào? Cũng như là tiếp thu vô cũng như là hòa bình thế giới, đâu còn oánh giặc nữa đâu? Ai cũng đi lo làm ăn được hết chơn, đâu còn chết chóc, đâu còn sợ nữa đâu? Nhưng mà đâu có biết cái chuyện nó xảy ra như vậy? Đó.

**L. Lam:** Um-hm. What he said is that it was miscommunication between the governments and the people. So I mean, if they had more communication with the people, that the people would help. (Inaudible) was peace time would help. Because all of a sudden everything happened; the Communists take over and take everything. That's why life was so difficult. But if the people were more informed, then they would probably pull together, and they'd fight, too.

**VanZandt:** I've never heard that before. That's really interesting. So he felt like they didn't have a chance. If they had only known, they might have been able to organize—

**L. Lam:** Were more informed, yeah. It wasn't well organized. It was so, everywhere, everything; and it just, everything happened all of a sudden.

**VanZandt:** So chaotic, yeah.

**Q. Lam:** Nói với bà là nước Việt Nam là khổ lắm. Chiến tranh hoài, triền miên. Trên thế giới này thì Việt Nam là khổ nhất. Chết chóc nhiều nhất.

**L. Lam:** He's saying Vietnam is like—he's saying of all the countries in the world, he's saying Vietnam is like the worst. It's just, so many wars in Vietnam, so many poverty. They keep fighting, keep fighting, keep fighting.

**VanZandt:** Um-hm. Chinese, (Linh Lam laughs) French, Japanese, right?

**L. Lam:** (chuckles) Yeah, keep fighting, keep fighting.

**VanZandt:** Americans.

**Q. Lam:** American (chuckles) là sau này.

**L. Lam:** No, I said later on.

**Q. Lam:** Later.

**VanZandt:** A thousand years of Chinese rule, and then, so *constant* war, constant.

**L. Lam:** Yeah, constant war.

**VanZandt:** Yeah. Well, I heard him, I think you mentioned Nguyen Van Thieu, the president of South Vietnam?

**L. Lam:** Um-hm, um-hm.

**Q. Lam:** How did he feel about him? About the job that he did as president?

**L. Lam:** Cảm nghĩ của ba về Nguyễn Văn Thiệu là sao?

**Q. Lam:** Ông đó hả?

**L. Lam:** Ờ.

**Q. Lam:** Thì cũng giống như mấy ông tổng thống khác thôi. Thì tiếp thu vô ông sợ quá –(chuckles)

**L. Lam:** Ông sợ quá thì sao?

**Q. Lam:** Cái đó ba không có biết nhiều đâu. Như mấy ông anh của ba thì biết nhiều. Còn như ba mới có mười mấy tuổi sao mà hiểu ông được.

**L. Lam:** So he said that he don't really have any opinion of him because he was still a teenager, so he didn't really understand politics. So he said his thinking of him is like every other president.

**VanZandt:** Right. I understand. OK. Well, before we get to his leaving Vietnam, is there anything else that he, as he's thinking about this, wants to share about that time before 1975? Anything at all.

**L. Lam:** Cái gì ba muốn nói không? Trước khi mà ba đi vượt biên. Mà cái này là những chuyện mà ba thích, ba muốn cho con cháu của ba.

**Q. Lam:** Đâu có gì đâu. Thì rời Việt Nam ra đi, chỉ có vậy thôi.

**L. Lam:** Vậy ba không muốn nói gì trước khi –

**Q. Lam:** Trước khi đi thì con của ba nhỏ xíu tí xiu đâu biết gì đâu. Thì cuộc sống nó khổ quá thì ba bắt buộc, một là tới, hai là chết vậy thôi.

**L. Lam:** Well, he said basically it's just leave, or stay here [in Vietnam] and die.

**Q. Lam:** Đi tìm tự do mà.

**L. Lam:** He want to have freedom, so that's his choice, so he just remember poverty and hardship.

**VanZandt:** That's what you remember.

**L. Lam:** That's all he remember. Just hardship and difficulty making a living.

**VanZandt:** Well, before we get to your escape, you're a shrimper here in Houma, and you learned how to shrimp in Vietnam. Tell me what shrimping was like in Vietnam—it's very different here in America—the actual process, what kind of tools they used; how they go about shrimping there.

**L. Lam:** Ba lên ba học nghề biển là bên Việt Nam phải không?

**Q. Lam:** Cái nghề biển bên Việt Nam nói chung ra thì không lại bên Mỹ này đâu.

**L. Lam:** (chuckles) He said shrimping in Vietnam is nothing compared to in United States. It cannot make it like United States at all.

**VanZandt:** Very different.

**L. Lam:** Very different.

**VanZandt:** How?

**Q. Lam:** Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, Vietnamese, làm biển không lại thẳng Mỹ.

**L. Lam:** All four of those countries cannot make as much as United States, shrimping.

**VanZandt:** Really?

**L. Lam:** All countries combined to United States.

**VanZandt:** You mean produce the amount of shrimp, and the money that you can make?

**L. Lam:** Um-hm.

**VanZandt:** Wow.

**Q. Lam:** Cái người mà Mỹ là họ làm đó, cái nghề biển mà đa số người Việt Nam qua đây thành tài đó là họ cố gắng làm như người Mỹ đó. Làm không bằng người Việt Nam đâu. Cái người Việt Nam thất bại có cái là tại vì họ vay tiền của nhà băng, mới thất bại. Còn người Mỹ đó, nó muốn đóng một chiếc tàu, nó hà tiện hà tặn khoảng 3 năm sau mới đóng. Còn người Việt Nam muốn làm chiếc tàu đó không cần biết, đến vay tiền của nhà băng bao nhiêu chằm cũng được hết. Bởi vậy người Việt Nam cái trận mà freezer đó là khi tôm sụt giá, trả không nổi thành thử bị nhà băng kéo hết là vậy đó.

**L. Lam:** Người Việt Nam bên Mỹ phải không?

**Q. Lam:** Qua bên này rồi.

**L. Lam:** He said that Vietnamese people cannot work as much as, I mean, think as fishermen as American fishermen. Because one reason is: Vietnamese fishermen, if they want to build like a freezer boat, so they would go [get] a loan, and it doesn't matter how many interest is, they will accept that loan and then build the boat. And then when they build their boat, then when the shrimp price go down, then they will lose profit; then that's why a lot of boat is getting bankrupt.

**VanZandt:** Repossessed?

**L. Lam:** Yeah, repossessed, and bankrupt. But then the American people that have the mindset, if they know they want to have a boat, then they're going to save money and then compare rates.

**VanZandt:** OK. Compare rates like interest rates on the loan?

**L. Lam:** Interest rate. And then—

**VanZandt:** Spend more time, maybe, and be more thoughtful about that?

**L. Lam:** Yeah, future planning. And then the Vietnamese fishermen, they were just going through it without thinking.

**Q. Lam:** Từ năm 2000 đến 2003, là người Việt Nam đã thất bại rồi. Mỗi một gia đình như vậy là người ta có một hoặc hai chiếc tàu, tháng phải trả cho nhà băng mười mấy hai chục ngàn.

**L. Lam:** So in 2000, 2003, like a family of fishermen, they owed bank from like ten to thirteen thousand [dollars] in loans. That's why in 2000 to 2003, that's why a lot of fishermen didn't make it work because all the interest and stuff.

**VanZandt:** Oh, because the rates were higher?

**L. Lam:** Um-hm. They wouldn't(?) pay. And then the shrimp price went down.

**Q. Lam:** The fuel go up.

**VanZandt and L. Lam:** Fuel went up.

**Q. Lam:** (Inaudible) you pay to bill the house.

**L. Lam:** House bill.

**Q. Lam:** Electric.

**L. Lam:** Electricity.

**Q. Lam:** New car. (chuckles)

**VanZandt and L. Lam:** New car. (laughs) Um-hm.

**Q. Lam:** Lot of money.

**L. Lam:** Lot of money.

**VanZandt:** Yes.

**Q. Lam:** The boat stop—

**L. Lam:** Stop working.

**Q. Lam:** Don't move.

**L. Lam:** Don't move.

**Q. Lam:** One day, \$300.

**L. Lam:** One day, \$300; just the boat just not working, \$300.

**VanZandt:** Phew! Yeah. *Fuel* is so expensive.

**Q. Lam:** Fifteen year!

**L. Lam:** Fifteen years.

**VanZandt:** Fifteen years?

**L. Lam:** Oh, fifteen years on the loan.

**VanZandt:** Oh, to pay off the loan, yes! Right. That's a lot of risk to take when you don't know what you're going to bring in, right? That's what amazes me.

**Q. Lam:** Không thôi ba cũng mất một chiếc tàu như vậy rồi nhưng mà ba không có credit. Ba rất là may mắn.

**L. Lam:** So he was lucky enough because when he came over, he didn't have credit, so he didn't get the loan. So he wasn't suffering like the other fishermen.

**VanZandt:** So that was a good thing, maybe. No debt.

**L. Lam:** So it was a good thing that he didn't have credit back then. So he just start working and working.

**VanZandt:** Saving a little bit, yeah. Well, let's, yeah, I want to get to that. OK. I'm sorry to go back a little bit.

**L. Lam:** No, that's OK.

**VanZandt:** And so the shrimping in Vietnam, you shrimped in, it was like the Gulf?

**L. Lam:** Like in the Gulf, the Gulf. (inaudible)

**VanZandt:** And what kind of shrimp did you catch? How was that different from the shrimp that you catch here?

**L. Lam:** Ba kể cái vụ đánh tôm ở bên Việt Nam sao đi.

**Q. Lam:** Đánh tôm bên Việt Nam cũng giống như người ta làm bên Mỹ này nhưng mà người ta có một cái miệng cào thôi. Một cái miệng cào người ta lồi ở đằng sau cũng giống bên Mỹ này. Có cái thì người ta đẩy ở đằng trước. Bên này, có người Việt Nam qua bên Mỹ cũng làm giống ở bên Việt Nam nhưng mà cái người Mỹ không cho.

**L. Lam:** Không cho hả?

**Q. Lam:** Ồ. Là cái người Mỹ nó nói là mày muốn làm như thế nào, từ cái lưới mày ra nửa chiếc tàu, ra sau, chứ không ra trước được. Con tôm đằng trước nó đang ngủ nó không có hay, chừng nào nửa chiếc tàu ra đằng sau thì mới cho làm.

**L. Lam:** Shrimping in Vietnam is like in the United States. The only difference is, in Vietnam you can actually have—they have one net. One net is at the bottom, but you can also have a net in the front.

**VanZandt:** In the front.

**L. Lam:** In the front, too.

**VanZandt:** Right.

**L. Lam:** But they also have fishermen in Vietnam come over to United States when they do like in Vietnam. But Louisiana commercial fishermen won't allow to have the net in front of the boat, because the shrimp is sleeping above it, so the net has to be half of the boat size in the back.

**VanZandt:** Ah. OK. So that was a change when you came here, getting used to different nets.

**L. Lam:** Cái đó giống như là ba qua đây ba qua đây ba phải tìm hiểu cái đó đánh tôm sao phải không?

**VanZandt:** New rules and regulations.

**Q. Lam:** Cái con tôm là nó ăn thua cái người mình suy nghĩ thôi. Một tháng chỉ trúng có hai lần thôi.

**L. Lam:** He said the way you shrimp is how you think. One month, you can actually have a good, I guess you, um—

**VanZandt:** Good catch?

**L. Lam:** Good catch. Twice a month.

**VanZandt:** Twice a month here. What about in Vietnam?

**Q. Lam:** Cũng giống vậy thôi.

**L. Lam:** It's like that in Vietnam.

**VanZandt:** OK. In Vietnam, were the nets done by machine at all, pulled up? Or how were they—

**Q. Lam:** No machine. (laughs)

**VanZandt:** No machine. (laughs) By hand. Yeah.

**Q. Lam:** Nhưng cái bên Việt Nam người ta đi biển đó là người ta bán được tất cả hết luôn.

**L. Lam:** In Vietnam, when they catch anything, they can sell *everything* in Vietnam. You can sell everything in Vietnam.

**Q. Lam:** Bên Mỹ này đó, giống như bên Việt Nam, ba chỉ làm năm năm thôi.

**L. Lam:** He said if the United States [was] like in Vietnam [where] you can sell everything, he only needs to work five years.

**VanZandt:** Wow. To make what you—

**L. Lam:** Like if United States allowed to work like in Vietnam, then he will only work five years; that's it. (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** (chuckles) Oh, my goodness. What kind of other things did you catch in your net, that you could sell?

**L. Lam:** Ba bắt được cái gì nữa? Cái tôm thôi. Ba cào rồi bắt cá tôm rồi tùm lum trong đó.

**Q. Lam:** Mỹ hả?

**L. Lam:** Bên Việt Nam đó.

**Q. Lam:** Bắt hết luôn. Cái con gì lên đều bán được hết.

**L. Lam:** He said whatever you catch is the thing that you can sell it all. Anything. (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** Well, so for people who don't know what kind of fish you can catch in Vietnam, was there squid, crab? What kind of—

**L. Lam:** Yeah. Squids, crab, fish, anything you can catch, you can sell.

**VanZandt:** Yeah.

**L. Lam:** Tôm sai nó cấm hả? Ở bên Việt Nam?

**Q. Lam:** Không có. Bởi vậy nó không được thông minh như những người Mỹ. Chẳng hạn như là cái người Mỹ, người ta muốn cho con cháu đời sau còn lại. Còn Việt Nam không có, bữa nay ăn hết luôn, chứ không để cho con cháu gì hết chơn đó.

**L. Lam and VanZandt:** (chuckles)

**L. Lam:** So he's saying in Vietnam they don't know how to preserve the seafood [industry]. So they say whatever they catch, it doesn't matter the shrimp size or anything; whatever you can catch, you can sell. Just eat today, don't even worry about the future generation. It's not smart like United States, how they preserve; they have season, open and close.



**VanZandt:** Right. So it can get *overfished* in Vietnam.

**L. Lam:** Yes, to continue—

**VanZandt:** They don't plan for the species to continue and reproduce. (laughter; speaking simultaneously) Just get it all and sell it all. Was there any refrigeration on the boat, or did they every day go out, bring it back to market and sell directly?

**L. Lam:** Ở Việt Nam bán tôm thì có tủ lạnh hay là gì không? Freezer đá hay là ba đi mỗi ngày chiều ba trở lại liền?

**Q. Lam:** Hồi mà ba làm đó là sáng khoảng 3 giờ sáng tới 12 giờ trưa về.

**L. Lam:** So when he was shrimping back then, he would leave at three o'clock in the morning and then come back at twelve o'clock noon.

**VanZandt:** OK. Did you use gas lanterns for night time?

**L. Lam:** Ban đêm sao ba thấy đường? Ba dùng đèn?

**Q. Lam:** Thì mình chạy vừa ra tới đó là hừng trời rồi.

**L. Lam:** Oh, so by the time he drive out there, it's sunrise, by the time.

**VanZandt:** Sun had come up, ah, sure. OK. (all laugh) What's your craziest fish story, shrimping story, being out there on that boat?

**L. Lam:** Khi mà ba đi biển thì cái chuyện gì là lạ lùng nhất?

**Q. Lam:** Ba đi biển có khi là, trong, hồi đó đến giờ trong cái kênh đó là người ta đi. Nhưng mà không có dính một con cá nào bị bằng ba.

**L. Lam:** Yeah. (chuckles) He said in the whole entire province they went, nobody's caught the biggest fish he did. He caught the biggest fish.

**VanZandt:** You *did*?! In your whole province? How big?

**L. Lam:** Bị bằng bao đâu?

**Q. Lam:** Gần bằng cái bàn này nè.

**L. Lam:** Big as this table. (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** What?!

**Q. Lam:** Coi, như vậy là cái con cá đó, là hồi đó ba bán cũng phải chừng coi 1 ký lô, cũng gần là 200 pounds.

**L. Lam:** So one kilo, he sell about 200 pounds. So one kilo's about 200 pounds, right?

**Q. Lam:** Thành thử—

**VanZandt:** What kind of fish was it, tuna?

**L. Lam:** Cá loại gì?

**Q. Lam:** Con biết không cũng như con cá đuối, nó lội vầy nè.

**VanZandt:** Flying fish?

**L. Lam:** Um, he don't know what. Umm—

**VanZandt:** That's OK. But it was kind of—he did this (making jumping motion).

**Q. Lam:** Yeah, yeah!

**VanZandt:** Kind of like a flying fish? Jump?

**L. Lam:** No—

**Q. Lam:** (speaking Vietnamese)

**VanZandt:** Oh, I don't know what you'd call it. That's amazing! You won the biggest fish. (Mr. Lam laughs) Did you make some money for catching that?

**L. Lam:** Ba có làm được tiền nhiều không? Ba bán được bao nhiêu?

**Q. Lam:** Hồi đó ba bán, con cá đó cũng nhiều tiền lắm. Ba bán cái tiền hồi đó, còn bây giờ tính thì ba không biết. Nhưng mà hồi đó, ba bán bảy chục ngàn đó. Nhưng mà cái dàn lưới của ba, ba mua tới 100 ngàn mà.

**L. Lam:** So he said it was 70,000 in Vietnamese—bảy chục ngàn tiền Việt Nam phải không? So it was 70,000 U.S., I mean Vietnam money. But his net is only about (speaking Vietnamese). But his net was only 100,000 dollar.

**VanZandt:** Oh, my gosh. I wondered if your net broke. (chuckles)

**L. Lam:** Lưới của ba có bị rách không?

**VanZandt:** No?

**Lam:** No.

**VanZandt:** Oh, my goodness. That must have been exciting! (chuckles) Let's get to leaving Vietnam. And when we talk about moving to Houma, then we'll talk more about what shrimping's like here. What year and what made you decide to leave?

**L. Lam:** Năm mấy ba đi và lý do tại sao ba muốn đi vượt biên? Năm mấy?

**Q. Lam:** (speaking Vietnamese)

**L. Lam:** [Nineteen] eighty-seven.

**VanZandt:** Nineteen eighty-seven you left Vietnam.

**Q. Lam:** Tháng 12 mới đi.

**L. Lam:** In December.

**VanZandt:** December, OK.

**L. Lam:** Lý do sao ba muốn đi?

**Q. Lam:** Khắc đó làm ăn đâu được đâu.

**L. Lam:** He said it just, working, it just, it was so bad over there.

**Q. Lam:** Tại mấy người Việt Cộng lại bắt ba hoài à. Đi lao động, đi lên Miền này kia không à.

**L. Lam:** So he means that Viet Cong keep on taking him to make him do like, I guess—how does Coast Guard, like National Guard, have to do—

**Q. Lam:** Go to, go to (inaudible), go to Cambodia, clean up.

**L. Lam:** Clean up in Cambodia.

**VanZandt:** Clean up. In Cambodia?

**L. Lam:** Um-hm, clean up.

**Q. Lam:** You know Cambodia a lot of the bomb, you know?

**L. Lam:** Bomb.

**Q. Lam:** Lot of people die, right?

**L. Lam:** A lot of people die.

**VanZandt:** So you were sent out to Cambodia—

**L. Lam:** They keep on taking him to make him clean.

**VanZandt:** —to find ordnance that was left? Very dangerous work. OK. How long did he have to do that?

**L. Lam:** Bắt ba, ba có đi không?

**Q. Lam:** Đi.

**L. Lam:** Đi bao lâu?

**Q. Lam:** Thì đi một lần ba tháng. Đi thì mình trốn về.

**L. Lam:** Said three months, but then he hide, and he went back home. He would escape and then go back home. (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** Oh, my goodness. By yourself, did you escape, or with someone?

**L. Lam:** Chỉ mình ên ba thôi hả? Có ai nữa không?

**Q. Lam:** Đông lắm.

**L. Lam:** A lot of people would escape, too. Not just—

**Q. Lam:** Đâu có đồ ăn đồ uống gì đâu. Mình tự túc mà.

**L. Lam:** They had no food. I mean, they make you go, but then you had to provide your own food and water.

**VanZandt:** So you were doing that with other people you knew from your village?

**L. Lam:** Mình đi chung với những người bạn bè ba biết hả? Trốn về hả? Yeah. With people he knew.

**VanZandt:** Was that considered being in the military service?

**L. Lam:** Cái đó giống như là ba ở trong lính không? Hay là chỉ bắt ba làm thôi?

**Q. Lam:** Ba bị bắt làm lao động, ba đâu có được đi lính đâu. Rồi người Trung Quốc, half China-half Vietnamese, cũng như là người China nó bắt đi la động thôi chứ đâu có được đi lính?

**L. Lam:** Oh. Because he's half Chinese, so they didn't allow him to go to be a soldier. They only make him do clean up work.

**VanZandt:** OK. And what was that escape like? Tell me about that.

**L. Lam:** Ba trốn đi về sao?

**VanZandt:** Leaving Cambodia?

**Q. Lam:** Đi bộ.

**L. Lam:** Đi bộ hả? Sợ không? Ba sợ không?

**Q. Lam:** Thì đi cũng chết mà không đi cũng chết thôi. Đi về nhà thôi. Cũng như mình đi về được thì là mình hên rồi.

**L. Lam:** He said where he stayed there, he'd die; he would die. It's just scary. So it's just going home, just going back home, just escaping. But he had to walk. He walked home. He walked home.

**VanZandt:** He walked. How long did it take him to get back home?

**L. Lam:** Ba đi về bao lâu? Đi bộ?

**Q. Lam:** Đi một hai ngày gì đó.

**L. Lam:** One or two days.

**VanZandt:** OK. I'll bet you were glad to see home.

**Q. Lam:** Đâu phải như bên Mỹ là có xe đi đâu.

**L. Lam:** (chuckles) He said it's not like the United States; you have a car to go home. (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** (chuckles) And is that what made you decide enough is enough, it's time to go?

**L. Lam:** Giờ phút đó nó bắt ba đi lao động là ba muốn đi vượt biên hả?

**Q. Lam:** Ừ. Đâu còn sống được đâu. Bắt hoài à. Về là bị bắt, về là bị bắt. Đi mẹ nó đi, một sống hai chết.

**L. Lam:** So he said he keep going home, he escaped, then they make him go back, and then he escape. Then he decided to just leave.

**VanZandt:** OK. Was there any kind of reprimand when he would get caught again? Was he reprimanded in any way or just sent back?

**L. Lam:** Giống như là ba đi trốn rồi nó bắt đi lại, nó có cảnh cáo ba gì không?

**Q. Lam:** Thì trốn nó bắt lại thì nó còng rồi. Cái kia là nó mời mình đi, đi tự do còn cái này về sau nó bắt là nó còng người ta lại.

**L. Lam:** (chuckles) Yeah. Like the first time, they asked him to go. Then the following time, they handcuffed him and make him go. (laughs)

**VanZandt:** (laughs) They knew you were trouble. (laughs) I wondered if he spent any time in jail.

**L. Lam:** Ba có bị ở tù không?

**Q. Lam:** Không.

**L. Lam:** No.

**VanZandt:** No? Yeah, just back over there. Well, tell me then about deciding to leave and who was going to go; making that decision. And you (Linh) were born, so we haven't gotten to that, about the children. He had children to think about, too. So if he can talk about just how he made that decision. And then preparing to leave, how they prepared to escape without anyone knowing.

**L. Lam:** Lý do làm sao mà ba đi vượt biên, nói chuyện với ai, ba nói với ai, ba bàn tính sao?

**Q. Lam:** Bàn tính giống như mình đi lên trên kia, kiếm mấy người giống như người Ba Tàu.

**L. Lam:** Lên kia là đâu?

**Q. Lam:** Là lên Sài Gòn đó kiếm mấy người Ba Tàu, rồi mình bắt mấy người khách rồi lấy tiền của họ mua ghe rồi mình đi.

**L. Lam:** OK. So he went to Saigon with people that were Chinese like him, up there to get a client that want to escape. And then they give him money, and then he buy the boat.

**VanZandt:** Oh, you bought the boat.

**L. Lam:** You have to buy the boat.

**L. Lam:** Mua tàu rồi sao?

**Q. Lam:** Thì đi thôi.

**L. Lam:** Thì đi vậy thôi.

**Q. Lam:** Thì chẳng hạn lên trên trên con kê mấy người, 5 người thì họ có tiền họ đưa trước, rồi mình mua tàu mình đi qua bên đây thì họ đi luôn.

**L. Lam:** OK. So he had five clientele. So they give him money in advance, and then he bought the boat, and then it included—and then he left, too.

**VanZandt:** OK. So you were the captain, the captain of your boat?

**L. Lam:** Ba là captain hả?

**Q. Lam:** Có người Cậu làm captain.

**L. Lam:** His uncle is the captain.

**VanZandt:** So you arranged to buy the boat, and your uncle navigated. And how many children did you have? You and your wife were married, and had how many children?

**L. Lam:** Ba đi, cậu của ba cũng đi chung chuyến ghe đó luôn hả? Mấy người trong ghe đó ba, mấy người con?

**Q. Lam:** Bốn đứa con. Yển thì qua bên Mã Lai sanh.

**L. Lam:** So I mean, there were four of us.

**VanZandt:** Four children.

**L. Lam:** Four children. And then—Má rồi thêm bao nhiêu người nữa.

**Q. Lam:** Trong ghe đó hết luôn hả?

**L. Lam:** Uh-huh.

**Q. Lam:** Sáu chục người, sáu mươi mấy người.

**L. Lam:** Like sixty-something people in the boat.

**VanZandt:** Left together.

**L. Lam:** Left together.

**VanZandt:** OK. And just in your family—why don't we for a second, for the record, list your children's names. You had five children?

**L. Lam:** Well, my baby sister, she was born in Malaysia.

**VanZandt:** She was in the womb at the time.

**L. Lam:** She was in the womb at the time.

**VanZandt:** Can you tell us your children's names?

**L. Lam:** Ba nói ên con của ba tên gì đi? Tên lớn nhất của ba tên gì?

**Q. Lam:** Tên Láng

**L. Lam:** Lang. That's the oldest. Lang.

**VanZandt:** And how—can you spell each one?

**L. Lam:** L-A-N-G.

**VanZandt:** OK. She's the oldest.

**L. Lam:** Do you want to see how old she was, by that time?

**VanZandt:** Sure.

**L. Lam:** Lúc đó chị Láng mấy tuổi?

**VanZandt:** Or if he can give their birth year, either way.

**L. Lam:** Hay là năm sinh?

**Q. Lam:** Ummmmm (thinking).

**VanZandt:** (laughter) May have to get your mom.

**Q. Lam:** (speaking Vietnamese)

**VanZandt:** What year was Lang born?

**L. Lam:** Chị Láng đẻ năm mấy?

**Q. Lam:** Chín tuổi á.



**L. Lam:** She was nine. She was nine. So was she born in '79? I think she was born in '79.

**Q. Lam:** (speaking Vietnamese) Seventy-nine.

**VanZandt:** Seventy-nine, OK. So Lang was the oldest, and then who else?

**L. Lam:** Rồi sau đó tới ai?

**Q. Lam:** Kịch.

**L. Lam:** Kịch. K-I-C-H.

**VanZandt:** K-I-C-H. And how old was he?

**L. Lam:** Bảy tuổi?

**Q. Lam:** Bảy.

**L. Lam:** Seven.

**VanZandt:** He was seven years old.

**L. Lam:** She. She. She's seven years old.

**VanZandt:** She, I'm sorry. Two girls, OK.

**L. Lam:** And then (speaking Vietnamese).

**Q. Lam:** Um, (speaking Vietnamese) Thinh Lam.

**L. Lam:** Thinh. T-H-I-N-H.

**VanZandt:** I-N-H.

**L. Lam:** Bảy tuổi?

**Q. Lam:** Five.

**L. Lam:** He was five.

**VanZandt:** All right. Ah, goodness. And then Linh?

**L. Lam:** And then me!

**VanZandt:** And then you!

**L. Lam:** Con hai tuổi ba tuổi hả?

**Q. Lam:** Ừ.

**L. Lam:** I was like two or three [years old].

**VanZandt:** Two or three, OK. And then your baby sister? Her name?

**L. Lam:** She's Yen. Y-E-N. But she wasn't born till Malaysia.

**VanZandt:** Right. So she was in the womb. OK. Wow, five children you left with. What kind of things did you take with you? How did you prepare to leave for this boat trip?

**L. Lam:** Trước khi đi ba làm cái gì? Ba sửa soạn sao? 4 đứa con nhỏ ba đem cái gì theo? Ba làm cái gì?

**Q. Lam:** Thì ba ở trên kia chạy tàu xuống. Thì má mà ở trong này, cậu mà đưa ra, vậy thôi.

**L. Lam:** Cậu 6 hả.

**Q. Lam:** Ừ.

**L. Lam:** So my mom, and my dad were separated. My dad would bring the boat down, bring it down. Then my uncle, my mama's younger brother, bring her out with us and meet up.

**VanZandt:** Ah, so you left from Saigon? From the Saigon River?

**L. Lam:** Um-hm.

**VanZandt:** OK. That's where you got your boat. And you sailed around to Rạch Giá?

**L. Lam:** Ba đi tới Rạch Giá hả? Yeah, so Rạch Giá to meet up.

**VanZandt:** We understand that it was very secretive, that you couldn't tell anyone that you were leaving. If you could talk about that, the danger that he was taking to get that boat and leave on the Saigon River.

**L. Lam:** Giống như là ba phải trốn đi. Mà ba làm sao mà nói với ta làm sao mà mấy người đó không có biết?

**Q. Lam:** Ngụy trang lên đó. Chiếc tàu mình làm sao, giống như để mấy trái dứa, giống như mình đi buôn bán thôi họ đâu có biết đâu.

**L. Lam:** So he made his boat like he's selling like fruits and stuff.

**VanZandt:** Ah. OK, you kind of acted (L. Lam: disguised) like you were a merchant. Disguised, um-hm.

**L. Lam:** Yeah, yeah. Then they don't know.

**VanZandt:** Did he know other people who had already escaped in that way?

**L. Lam:** Ba có biết những người khác mà đi được không? Có thành công không? Đi vượt biên trước hơn ba không? Có biết cái người đó có qua bên?

**Q. Lam:** Thì bà Nội đi trước đó.

**L. Lam:** He knew because my grandma left first. And his younger brother left first.

**VanZandt:** Did that help you in planning, like, did you know kind of the route you were going to take? Or had you heard about Malaysia and other camps that might be—if they could just make it. Did they know where to go, in other words?

**L. Lam:** Vậy ba đi sao mà ba biết đi hướng nào?

**Q. Lam:** Biết hết chứ. Có cái la bàn mà. Thì chú Út mày đi qua bên trước rồi bắt đầu biết hướng đi rồi.

**L. Lam:** So I mean, my uncle told him, and he had a compass. So he had a compass, and then he know the direction. And then my uncle, his younger brother, told him where to go.

**VanZandt:** Because so many people had escaped by that time, by 1987. Thousands had escaped. So I assumed that there was communication, word, about the best way to go, or how to do it.

**L. Lam:** Yeah.

**Q. Lam:** Không phải là qua tới bên đảo muốn đi Mỹ là đi được đâu đó.

**L. Lam:** I mean, he said that when you go to Malaysia, that doesn't guarantee that you can come to United States. It doesn't guarantee that.

**VanZandt:** So when you left, you didn't *know* what was going to happen, or where you would end up.

**L. Lam:** Ba không có biết chỗ nào hết chon. Ba đi vượt biên ba đi hướng nào?

**Q. Lam:** Thì biết chứ. Ba đi vô Mã Lai dễ hơn.

**L. Lam:** He said he knows that going to Malaysia is easier to go in there.

**VanZandt:** OK. That would be the easiest route.

**L. Lam:** Easiest route, yeah.

**VanZandt:** So what was that day like when they left? Was it nighttime, daytime? If he can just tell what that journey was like.

**L. Lam:** Thì ba kể giống như hồi ba bỏ đi là bàn đêm hay bàn ngày?

**Q. Lam:** Bàn đêm.

**L. Lam:** Bàn đêm. Lúc mấy giờ?

**Q. Lam:** Midnight.

**L. Lam:** Midnight.

**VanZandt:** Midnight. And that was when you (Mr. Lam) met with you all, the children? Or was that—

**L. Lam:** Là lúc đó má cũng tới đó là 12h luôn hả?

**Q. Lam:** Tới, má ở ngoài biển rồi, ba chạy ra thì lên tàu đi luôn.

**L. Lam:** (chuckles) So my mom was on a boat, and then he came, and then they left at midnight.

**VanZandt:** You got on the same boat, sixty other people, and headed towards Malaysia. And you said eight days it took to get there.

**Q. Lam:** Eight day.

**VanZandt:** And what happened on those eight days during that time?

**Q. Lam:** Hư máy chạy buồm.

**L. Lam:** Hư máy hả?

**Q. Lam:** Ừ.

**L. Lam:** So the engine broke. (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** After how long?

**L. Lam:** Bao lâu cái máy hư?

**Q. Lam:** Đi có hai ngày hai đêm là hư rồi.

**L. Lam:** Two days, two nights and the engine went out.

**VanZandt:** Oh, my goodness.

**Q. Lam:** Rồi phải chạy buồm tở.

**L. Lam:** Chạy buồm là sao?

**Q. Lam:** Là lấy cái miếng mình che lên cho gió.

**L. Lam:** Oh, so then they did that with like a sail.

**VanZandt:** Oh, you had a sail, or you made a sail.

**Q. Lam:** Um-hm.

**L. Lam:** So the engine went off, so they have to make a sail.

**VanZandt:** Oh, slow.

**Q. Lam:** Rồi tàu Mã Lai vớt.

**L. Lam:** Then a Malaysian boat came and rescued.

**VanZandt:** *Oh*, OK.

**Q. Lam:** Tàu Mã Lai đi câu cá đó.

**L. Lam:** Like a Malaysian fishing boat come and help them.

**VanZandt:** Right.

**Q. Lam:** Thì ở dưới đó mình mới kêu mấy người có vàng vòng đưa cho họ, chở mình vô, bỏ tàu mình luôn.

**L. Lam:** So they had gold then. So they had gold, so the Malaysian boat said, “How many gold do you have? I will help you come to shore.” So all the people had to give

all the gold that they have, all the possession to the Malaysian fisherman, then they help to go to Malaysia, and they abandoned their boat.

**VanZandt:** You did? You abandoned your boat. Did you trust the Malaysian fisherman when you first met him? I know there were many Thai pirates and others who took advantage and might have taken the gold and left. But did they, was that a risk?

**L. Lam:** Mà ba có tin tưởng mấy người tàu cá đó không?

**Q. Lam:** Mấy người Mã Lai thì người ta làm ăn thiệt tình thì mình hên xui thôi. Cái đó thì giống như mình hên xui thôi. Đâu có biết là họ sao.

**L. Lam:** He said it's just luck. They didn't know them. They don't know if they're a bad person; they just had to trust him.

**VanZandt:** You'd *have* to trust. You didn't have any other choice.

**L. Lam:** Choice.

**Q. Lam:** May mắn vì có người họ đi rồi, ở xứ của ba có người đi là chết nguyên chiếc tàu luôn.

**L. Lam:** He said they had another boat like him, but the whole boat died.

**Q. Lam:** Chết nhiều lắm.

**L. Lam:** Yeah, a lot of people died.

**VanZandt:** Um-hm. You were very lucky.

**Q. Lam:** Yeah.

**VanZandt:** Yeah. What kind of other challenges did you have along the way?

**L. Lam:** 8 ngày ba đi có bị trục trặc gì nữa không?

**Q. Lam:** Bị tùm lum hết á. Rồi, mình cũng như mình được may mắn vậy thôi.

**L. Lam:** Tùm lum hết là sao?

**Q. Lam:** Cũng như tàu Thái land nó cướp nó lấy tiền lấy bạc vậy thôi.

**L. Lam:** He said a Thailand boat robbed them. They stole, took their gold and stuff. So a Thailand pirate did that.

**VanZandt:** OK. So you lost a lot of the gold.

**L. Lam:** Là ba mất hết tiền hết chơn hả?

**Q. Lam:** Ừ.

**L. Lam:** Mất hết luôn hả? Nó ăn cắp hết chơn luôn hả?

**Q. Lam:** Thì mình đâu có vàng. Thì mình mua mình phòng hồ theo mấy chỉ vàng nữa lên đảo để mà mua đồ ăn. Nó lấy hết thì thôi. Qua tới bên này thì mình làm lại thôi.

**L. Lam:** Well, they took it all. But he took the gold with him just to buy food when he reached land, so you can buy food to eat. But then they took it all so I mean, you don't have anything. So he just started fresh again.

**VanZandt:** So when you got to the Malaysian fishing vessel, though, and they demanded, needed gold, so—that was after the Thai pirate, so they had some left?

**L. Lam:** Người Thái Lan cướp trước rồi mấy người Mã Lai, tàu mới giúp sau hả?

**Q. Lam:** Là mình đi cỡ khoảng chừng, để coi, 6 đêm là được Mã Lai vớt đó. Mã Lai vớt, nó chạy đâu một ngày một đêm.

**L. Lam:** Hai đêm là Thái Lan nó cướp ba hả?

**Q. Lam:** Ừ.

**L. Lam:** Two days, two nights, that's when the Thailand people that robbed him. Then six days, that's when the Malaysian—six nights the Malaysian, the fisherman helped.

**VanZandt:** Right, OK.

**L. Lam:** Yeah. Mà sao có vàng, bị nó cướp hết chơn rồi sao có vàng?

**Q. Lam:** Người ta giấu lại.

**L. Lam:** When the Thai people come and the pirate, they didn't give *all* the gold.

**VanZandt:** That's what I was—OK, yeah. So they were able to *hide* some!

**L. Lam:** (chuckles)

**Q. Lam:** Mã Lai nó nói bây giờ có vàng không, đưa cho nó đi thì nó đưa vô. Thì mình đưa cho nó. Hên xui thôi.

**L. Lam:** Yeah. So they were just lucky. Their boat was just very lucky. They just have a little gold.

**VanZandt:** And what kind of food or water did you have with you?

**L. Lam:** Ba đem theo đồ ăn đồ uống gì?

**Q. Lam:** Nước với đồ khô.

**L. Lam:** Dried food. Đồ khô là giống như tôm khô cá khô đồ hải?

**Q. Lam:** Giống như chẳng hạn như mấy cái đồ khô mà mình khỏi cần để nước vậy đó. Mì khô rồi gì đó. Rồi ăn vậy thôi. Bánh mì bánh gì đồ thôi.

**L. Lam:** So they brought like dried food. No food that had to be preserved. I mean in the freezer or recooked or anything.

**VanZandt:** Right. Did you have enough to last through those eight days?

**L. Lam:** Có đủ đồ ăn không đặng?

**Q. Lam:** Đủ đồ ăn là khi nào con đi OK, là đủ đồ ăn. Còn 8 ngày, 60 người ở trên đó thì sao mà đủ được.

**L. Lam:** (laughs) He said they didn't have enough food because you went with sixty-something people, eight days. But I mean, he said if it was a successful trip with no trouble at all, then it's enough food, but it had so much trouble with so many people, they don't have enough food.

**VanZandt:** I know you're a Buddhist; you're of the Buddhist religion. And you're a very hardworking man. To what do you attribute that—faith, luck—to making it, surviving that journey, when so many didn't?

**L. Lam:** Bả hiểu ba là người đạo Phật. Mà ba biết tại sao ba được may mắn như vậy? Tại vì ba đạo Phật, ba là người hiền lành hay là sao? Tại sao ba nghĩ là ba trong số người đang sống không bị chết ở ngoài biển?

**Q. Lam:** Đâu biết được đâu. Nhưng mà hồi đó đến giờ ba đâu có làm gì đâu, đâu làm ác gì đâu thì đâu có gì đâu. Coi như là mình không có lương gạt ai, mình không có ăn trộm ăn cắp ai, mình làm mình lấy thôi. Còn những người nào không có thì mình giúp đỡ cho người ta vậy thôi.

**L. Lam:** He said he don't know why. But he's not a—he never steal, rob, kill anybody, so I mean he worked; he worked to make his living. And when people that



need help, he helped them. So he don't know. He just don't know why he's (inaudible).

**Q. Lam:** Cũng như là mình nhờ cái đức của bà Ngoại đi. Bà là người tu hành. Bà giúp đỡ cho người ta. Nguyên cái kinh đó ai chết chóc gì bà cũng cho đồ không. Không có gạo hay cái gì ăn thì – nói chung mình được hưởng cái phước của bà Ngoại đi.

**L. Lam:** He said maybe because of karma. So it's, uh, my grandma, which is my mama's mom, she built a temple. So she helped. She help awards and stuff like; she like the Red Cross. She help the whole province. Like people who don't have rice and food and stuff, she would pass it out and then, to help those people.

**VanZandt:** Wow. Oh, my goodness.

**L. Lam:** I will show you the picture of her, the temple that—

**VanZandt:** I would love to see that.

**L. Lam:** —the temple that we, the temple that my mama helped uh—

**VanZandt:** Did she help build it?

**L. Lam:** Mama—sent the money, but not physically, OK. But the temple didn't complete until she passed away. She didn't get to see it completed.

**VanZandt:** Oh, my goodness.

**L. Lam:** So this is my mama's mom.

**VanZandt:** Oh, this is your mother's mother.

**L. Lam:** But I have to show you the temple.

**VanZandt:** Oh, my goodness.

**L. Lam:** On my phone, probably later, I'll show you.

**VanZandt:** Wow. Is this part of the area where the temple was?

**L. Lam:** Cái đó là cái gì? Mà hả?

**Q. Lam:** No. Cái đó hình như là cái bả đi chùa ở đâu ở trong chùa vậy đó.

**VanZandt:** It looks like an altar.

**L. Lam:** This is as she went to visit. She go to like, I guess like pilgrimage a lot.

**VanZandt:** Right.

**L. Lam:** That's not part of the temple, but I'll show you later.

**VanZandt:** OK. OK. But she had a vision to have this temple, and your mother helped send money.

**L. Lam:** She had a temple already, it's just really old and small. And my mom built it—

**VanZandt:** Built it bigger.

**L. Lam:** —not only my mom, it's just an organization that put money in and helped to build it, too.

**VanZandt:** Right. Was that after your mother was here in America, she did that?

**L. Lam:** Yeah, after.

**VanZandt:** Wow. Do you want to take a break for a minute?

**L. Lam:** Yeah.

**Q. Lam:** Cái này là bà ở Philippines.

**L. Lam:** This is Philippines (referring to photograph).

**VanZandt:** Oh, this is in the Philippines! *Oh*, my goodness!

**Q. Lam:** All the family.

**VanZandt:** I'm going to have to take a picture of this. This is all of you. OK, so Mr Lam is showing me a photograph.

**Q. Lam:** (laughs)

**VanZandt:** Look at him! (Mr. Lam and Linda laugh) This is Mr. Lam!

**L. Lam:** That's my brother, and this is me.

**VanZandt:** And here's the baby. That's Yen.

**L. Lam:** Yen.

**VanZandt:** Yen. So Lang is here. Lang. And how do you pronounce it? Kich.

**Q. Lam:** Kich. She called uh, Sue.

**VanZandt:** OK.

**L. Lam:** She call herself Sue now.

**VanZandt:** Oh, Sue! She's holding the flower.

**Q. Lam:** And the boy.

**VanZandt:** And look at him! Well, he's—this is beautiful. (laughs) So this is after Malaysia. Did you go to the Philippines after Malaysia?

**Q. Lam:** We go to live Philippine six month.

**L. Lam:** Six months.

**VanZandt:** For six months.

**Q. Lam:** Go to see, how, school.

**L. Lam:** School. They have to go to school for six months in Malaysia.

**VanZandt:** Did you learn some English there?

**Q. Lam:** Little bit, little bit (uses hand to show little bit).

**VanZandt:** A *little* bit. (chuckles) Yes. (Mr. Lam laughs) You forget; that's what happens. But you did. This is wonderful. So in this picture, Mr Lam, what were you thinking at that time? What were you feeling?

**L. Lam:** Ba đang chụp hình cái đó ba đang nghĩ gì? Lúc đó cảm nghĩ, đầu óc của ba nghĩ làm sao hồi ba chụp hình cái đó?

**Q. Lam:** Cũng như là ba cảm nghĩ là gia đình mình được đến đây là may mắn lắm rồi.

**L. Lam:** So he think that his whole family there is just so fortunate. His whole family.

**VanZandt:** To have made it through that trip?

**Q. Lam:** Là mừng giống như là mình được đi Mỹ rồi đó.

**L. Lam:** That's mean he can go to the United States.

**VanZandt:** So you found out here, in the Philippines, that you would come to the U.S.?

**L. Lam:** Um-hm.

**VanZandt:** And how did you *feel* about that?

**L. Lam:** Ba đi qua Mỹ thì ba cảm nghĩ sao?

**Q. Lam:** Qua bên này được là mừng. Nhưng qua bên này không biết cái gì mà người ta đưa ba đi lạc luôn, nguyên cả gia đình lạc luôn.

**L. Lam:** (chuckles) So he came to the United States, and people were like showing him the way, but then the whole family got lost. (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** When? What—explain that. (laughter) Can we, I hope we can take a picture of that (still looking at photograph).

**Q. Lam:** Cũng như là ba đi tới Mỹ đó là năm '89.

**L. Lam:** [Nineteen] eight-five. No, '89, '89.

**VanZandt:** OK. So let me just backtrack. So in '87, you escaped, you left Vietnam, you made to Malaysia. And how long were you in Malaysia?

**L. Lam:** Six months. Malaysia 6 tháng hả?

**Q. Lam:** ở Philippines.

**L. Lam:** Má, ở Mã Lai 6 tháng phải không?

**Huong Thanh Ho:** Ở Mã Lai ở lâu lắm.

**L. Lam:** Ở Mã Lai lâu hả? Vậy ba ở đâu 6 tháng?

**Q. Lam:** Philippines.

**Huong Thanh Ho:** ở Mã Lai đâu 7 hay 8 tháng gì đó.

**L. Lam:** Oh, no. He in Malaysia eight months.

**Huong Thanh Ho:** Để con Yến rồi mới đi qua Philippines.

**Q. Lam:** Sinh được 2 tuần—got a baby(?) two week. Got a baby(?) two week, then go to Philippines six months.

**VanZandt:** OK. So just two weeks in Malaysia.

**L. Lam:** They were, I mean after—

**Huong Thanh Ho:** (speaking Vietnamese)

**VanZandt:** So Malaysia eight months.

**L. Lam:** Malaysia eight months. So, con Yến sinh ở Mã Lai được 2 tháng hả? Hay 2 tuần?

**Huong Thanh Ho:** Mã Lai ở 9 tháng gì lận rồi mới đi qua—

**Q. Lam:** 9 tháng, hay 9 tháng mấy lận.

**L. Lam:** About nine months in Malaysia.

**VanZandt:** OK. And Yen was born there.

**L. Lam:** Nó đẻ ở Mã Lai?

**Huong Thanh Ho:** Nó đẻ ở Mã Lai.

**L. Lam:** Um-hm. She was born there.

**VanZandt:** Oh, my goodness. We'll have to hear your story, Linh. Wow.

**L. Lam:** And then in Philippines we just stay six months. Sáu tháng phải không? ở Mã Lai hả? Không Philippines hả?

**Q. Lam:** Ừ.

**VanZandt:** Do you remember the name of the camp in Malaysia where you stayed?

**L. Lam:** Camp của ba, chỗ đó, hội đó ba có nhớ tên là gì không?

**Q. Lam:** Nó kêu là Vùng 10. Giống như là Vùng 1, 2, 3 vậy đó.

**L. Lam:** He was in Area Ten.

**VanZandt:** Area Ten?

**L. Lam:** Um-hm.

**VanZandt:** Because I hear about Pulau Bidong and Galang.

**Q. Lam:** Bà hỏi giống như vô đảo ấy hả?

**L. Lam:** No. Bà hỏi cái hội bảo lãnh ba là gì?

**Q. Lam:** Uh, OSCC.

**L. Lam:** OSCC. That's who rescued. OSCC.

**VanZandt:** Rescued them?

**Q. Lam:** No.

**L. Lam:** I think sponsor has to come volunteer.

**Q. Lam:** Cũng như là cái hội nó tài trợ, cũng như là bà Nội lãnh, nhưng mà cái tiền vé máy bay là của hội USCC cho mình.

**L. Lam:** So my grandma sponsor us, but the OSCC paid for the airplane ticket.

**VanZandt:** OK, great.

**Q. Lam:** Rồi, mình qua đây có công ăn việc làm rồi mình mới gửi hội để trả tiền. Cũng như là mỗi tháng trả nhiều nhiều là.

**L. Lam:** (laughs) I remember that. (laughs)

**VanZandt:** You do? Some of these faint memories?

**L. Lam:** Well, we were in Chauvin, [Louisiana], and the OSCC paid for the ticket. So when you would come here, when you start to have a living and you make money, so you still owe money back to the OSCC.

**VanZandt:** Pay them back.

**L. Lam:** So I remember I have to write a check for fifty dollar every month to pay them back.

**VanZandt:** OK. So you make payments to repay them. OK. So what was the camp like in Malaysia?

**L. Lam:** Bên Mã Lai ba ở sao? Ở trong cái nhà?

**Q. Lam:** Thì nhà gì, thì mình ở bên đây tưởng tượng giống như là mình chạy bão vậy đi.

**L. Lam:** He's like, he's like, you're living like running from a hurricane.

**VanZandt:** Yes. Temporary housing, sure.

**L. Lam:** Temporary housing.

**VanZandt:** And did you have much privacy? What was that like—you had five children living in this camp?

**L. Lam:** Ba có sự giống như – giống như là ba được tắm riêng hay phải tắm chung, hay là—

**Q. Lam:** Thì tắm ở ngoài trời. có cái hồ nhỏ. Đàn bà thì có ba cái phòng người ta tắm vậy đó.

**L. Lam:** So the men have to shower out in the, I guess they have a waterfall. But the women can have their own bath inside.

**VanZandt:** Separate.

**L. Lam:** Separate.

**Q. Lam:** Cái đó là ở đảo

**L. Lam:** Đảo là?

**Q. Lam:** The island, the island, uh, Bidong.

**L. Lam:** Bidong.

**VanZandt:** Bidong, yes! That's what I heard.

**Q. Lam:** And come, uh, Bidong rồi vô đất liền – then go Sungai Besi [refugee camp]. Go to inside Sungai Besi, Malaysia. In Malaysia, look like New Orleans.

**VanZandt:** Uh-huh. (Linh and Linda chuckle)

**Q. Lam:** Sungai Besi.

**VanZandt:** Big city? Sungai Besi—ah! I know that name. Yes, Sungai Besi, B-I-S-I [B-E-S-I]. I know what you're talking about.

**Q. Lam:** Rồi vô trong đó là phát cho mỗi người một căn nhà, một cái một cái một, gia đình gia đình gia đình.

**L. Lam:** So each family has their own house. Each house that, so like, they give each person, they have their own residence, their own house.

**VanZandt:** OK. OK.

**Q. Lam:** Cái đó mà mình không còn nấu ăn nữa. Ở đó tự nấu cho mình ăn luôn.

**L. Lam:** So I mean, you don't have to cook anymore, so they distribute food.

**VanZandt:** Right. And you had enough food?

**L. Lam:** Đủ đồ ăn cho ăn luôn hả? Yeah, they had enough food to eat.

**VanZandt:** Was it different food, or food that you liked?

**L. Lam:** Đồ ăn Việt Nam? Đồ ăn ba thích hay đồ ăn Mỹ?

**Q. Lam:** Đồ ăn của Mã Lai nấu mà.

**L. Lam:** Oh, it's Malaysian food.

**VanZandt:** Yeah. How did you like that?

**L. Lam:** Ba có thích không?

**Q. Lam:** Thì cũng giống tựa tựa đồ ăn của Việt Nam mình thôi.

**L. Lam:** So it's similar to Vietnamese food.

**Q. Lam:** Nó có cà ri đó.

**L. Lam:** They have curry. (Linh and Mr. Lam laugh)

**VanZandt:** Oh, yum! (laughs) OK, wow. OK. So you learned a little bit of English while you were there?

**L. Lam:** Ba học một chút tiếng Mỹ ở bên đó hả?

**Q. Lam:** Cái đó là chưa có học.

**L. Lam:** He didn't go to school yet.

**VanZandt:** OK, not till Philippines.



**Q. Lam:** Được Mỹ nhận rồi mới đưa qua Phi mới học.

**L. Lam:** Oh, so if United States accept you, *then* they sent you to Philippines, then you go to school.

**VanZandt:** To process you and go to school. And what did you know about America, Mr. Lam? What were your expectations, knowing he was coming here?

**L. Lam:** Vậy cảm nghĩ của ba? Ba muốn Mỹ sao? Hồi đó ba suy nghĩ Mỹ là ra sao?

**Q. Lam:** Hồi xưa ba chỉ thấy lính Mỹ thôi chứ đâu (chuckles) có biết Mỹ là sao đâu.

**L. Lam:** (chuckles) He said back then he just only see American soldier. He just don't know how America is.

**Huong Thanh Ho:** (speaking Vietnamese)

**Q. Lam:** Còn những người ở đảo, vô tới Xangabixi, mà phái đoàn Mỹ phỏng vấn nếu mà nhận thì được đi Mỹ, còn không nhận thì phải trở ra ngoài bên đảo học 18 tháng tiếng Mỹ.

**L. Lam:** Rồi mới được đi hả?

**Q. Lam:** Mới được phái đoàn Canada, với phái đoàn Úc, trả lời rớt rớt là được đi hai nước đó.

**L. Lam:** *Oh.* So he said that, I mean, if United States accept the candidates, you know the interview accept, you get accepted, then you can go to Philippines and go to school for six months. But if you, then if he's part of the people that didn't pass the interview, then he'd have to go to school for eighteen months, those people. Then Australia or Canada, then those people would sponsor you, if you passed the interview in English.

**VanZandt:** OK, if they speak English well. What was the interview like? Was that difficult? Was he nervous about it, knowing—

**L. Lam:** Hồi ba phỏng vấn ba có sợ không? Nó hỏi câu gì?

**Q. Lam:** Ba được – ba là cái người may mắn nhất, là cái chú Út mà đi qua đảo khai những cái gì là chú Út viết một tấm giấy, gửi về ba học thuộc hết. Cái hồ sơ của ba phái đoàn nó nhận cũng như là không có gian dối đó. Khai làm sao làm sao cho trên dưới giống nhau thôi.

**L. Lam:** So he said that in the interview, that he was the most luckiest man, because his brother, when he went to interview, he tell all the questions, then his brother sent

the letter back with all the question and stuff, and he memorize it, and then he passed the interview.

**VanZandt:** Wow. So you *knew* what to expect.

**L. Lam:** Yeah.

**Q. Lam:** Lên trên phái đoàn đó là cái ông người Mỹ là – cũng như là ở bên Mỹ nhận rồi - ông được quyền không nhận. Nhưng mà ông có một người vợ Việt Nam, nhưng mà ông hỏi ba chỉ có 2 câu thôi, nếu mà nói trúng là ông cho đi. Ông chỉ nói vậy thôi. Mà nói trúng thì tao cho mày đi, còn nói xạo là tao không cho mày đi.

**L. Lam:** Hai câu đó là hai câu gì?

**Q. Lam:** Hai câu đó, chẳng hạn như ông hỏi mình ở đó, ở Rạch Giá nhưng mà đi về Hà Tiên, ba cái hòn, cũng như là hòn Me, hòn Sóc. Ông biết cái đó. Ông là người lính bên bên mà. Rồi ông hỏi là nó nằm phía tay mặt hay là tay trái mình. Nói tao nghe. Bây giờ tao đi Hà Tiên thì ba cái hòn đó nằm ở đâu? Thì mình ở đó thì mình biết rồi. Mình nói bạn đi lên Hà Tiên thì nó nằm phía bên tay trái, còn đi Hà Tiên xuống Rạch Giá thì nó phía tay mặt. Rồi ông nói mày nói đúng. Tao nhận mày. Vậy thôi.

**L. Lam:** So the person that interviewed him, he had a Vietnamese wife. So he wasn't difficult. He just asked my dad two questions. The guy that interviewed him asked him two question, "If you're honest, and you tell the truthful answer, then I will let you pass." So he said, "If you live in Rạch Giá, they have three islands. There are three small islands. Where is it? Is it on the right or the left, from what direction?" So my daddy answered him, and he let him pass, like that.

**VanZandt:** Pretty easy. (laughter) All right. *Phew!* (laughter) That's fantastic. Oh, you *are* lucky. All along the way.

**L. Lam:** (chuckles) Yeah.

**VanZandt:** Wow. So when you found out you were coming to America, did you know what city, where he was going to be settled?

**Q. Lam:** Đi chuyến máy bay đó là từ ở bên Philippines qua tới bên Cali, là rất là nhiều. Nguyên chiếc máy bay luôn, 747 mà. Là 500 người. Rồi thành thử ra là, người này thì đi về Cali, người khác thì đi về tiểu bang khác khác nữa. Ba mới đi về ở Panama City, mà không có máy bay về đó, mà nó lại chở ba xuống Pensacola. Xuống không thấy ai hết. Sao không thấy người nào hết tron trong khi phái đoàn nói có người đón dẫn mà không thấy ai hết tron.

**L. Lam:** He said, I mean, he went on an airplane from the Philippines to California, the 747. The 747, it's a big plane.

**VanZandt:** Oh, yes, big.

**L. Lam:** So then they said that you're going to fly to Pensacola, [Florida]. But they had no stop at Pensacola so they went to Panama City. And then when they stopped there, nobody was there. They said they were going to have people there to help us, you know, to meet us. They said then nobody—Không có ai rồi sao?

**Q. Lam:** Không có ai thì, đưa cái - có cái cặp xách đi đó, cái người trong đó mới gọi điện thoại về cho mình. Cũng như là gia đình mình đi bị đón lộn chỗ rồi. Wrong. Thì ba cũng biết wrong rồi. Rồi họ gọi cho chú Út mày. Chú Út mày, từ 12h chạy xuống, hồi đó chú Út mới qua Mỹ mà đâu có biết đường biết xá gì đâu, mới nhờ người ta đi rước. Tới đó là cỡ khoảng 2h sáng rồi, 2 h sáng mà chạy từ ở Panama City đến Pensacola Mà chạy đến sáng mới tới.

**L. Lam:** (laughs) So they called—he had a folder. So they called and said that that's the wrong area, so then they had to call my uncle, and my uncle come pick him up.

**VanZandt:** Where was his uncle?

**L. Lam:** I mean, *my* uncle, so then his brother, the younger brother.

**VanZandt:** Your uncle; where was this?

**L. Lam:** Ở đâu? Chú Út ở đâu?

**Q. Lam:** Panama City.

**L. Lam:** He lived in Panama City.

**VanZandt:** Oh, OK.

**L. Lam:** So he lived in Panama City, so he come and pick him up.

**VanZandt:** Oh, OK. So at least he lived there.

**L. Lam:** But he just came to America, so he's not that familiar. So he—đến sáng mới rước ba được hả?

**Q. Lam:** Rước rồi chạy tới sáng mới về tới nhà.

**L. Lam:** So it take the morning to get back to his house. (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** Oh, goodness. You must have been *tired*. What a trip.

**L. Lam:** Ba có mệt không?

**Q. Lam:** Mừng rồi còn mệt gì nữa.

**L. Lam:** No. They were not tired. They were happy. (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** (laughs) Oh, wow. What was your first impression of America?

**L. Lam:** Ba mới đầu thấy Mỹ thì ba nghĩ sao?

**Q. Lam:** Chưa có thấy, ở trong nhà không à thì thấy cái khi gì đâu?

**L. Lam:** He didn't get to see. We were inside the house. (laughter)

**VanZandt:** You were inside; straight from the plane to—

**Q. Lam:** Cái đó lạnh rồi.

**L. Lam:** So it was wintertime.

**Q. Lam:** Tháng 3, lạnh rồi.

**L. Lam:** Oh, it was March.

**VanZandt:** It was March, OK.

**L. Lam:** It was cold.

**VanZandt:** In Florida. It's still cold. But what did you think? You'd finally landed here. And what did you think about your new life? What was going through your head?

**L. Lam:** Trong đầu óc của ba nghĩ gì khi ba tới đất Mỹ rồi? Ba nghĩ sao?

**Q. Lam:** Đất Mỹ, thì ba rất là mừng rồi. Cũng như là gặp bà Nội, rồi gặp em là mừng rồi. Rồi gặp cậu mày nữa, cậu mày đi trước.

**L. Lam:** So I mean, he said that he was so happy because he saw his mom, and then he saw his brother, then his uncle. He was just so happy.

**VanZandt:** Oh, my goodness. So they were all there in Panama City? So you could all be reunited finally. Very nice. So did you start working in Panama City? Tell me—I know that we're getting long here. I want to find out how you ended up here in south Louisiana, shrimping here. So what did you do in Panama City? Did you start shrimping there?

**L. Lam:** Ở Panama ba làm cái gì đó? Ba đi làm biển?

**Q. Lam:** Ba chỉ ở đó một tháng là ba xuống đây luôn. Còn má thì đi xuống sau.

**L. Lam:** He stayed there for a month in Panama City, just by himself. He left, and he came down here.

**L. Lam:** Ba xuống đây làm gì?

**Q. Lam:** Ba xuống để đi biển cho người ta.

**L. Lam:** Sao ba biết được?

**Q. Lam:** Có người bà con ở xóm đó, cũng như người ta đi qua Mỹ trước nè.

**L. Lam:** So I mean, like, the people that he knew that came over here first, they—he just stayed in Panama City one month. And then my mama and us, we had to stay with my uncle, and then they and he came down here to shrimp.

**VanZandt:** So you heard word from maybe other people who'd already been here that said, "This is a good place to shrimp," maybe?

**L. Lam:** Yes. They come down here, and they show him the way to come down here. They help him.

**VanZandt:** Better than shrimping in Panama City?

**L. Lam:** Ở Panama City đánh tôm không được hả?

**Q. Lam:** Nó không có bằng bên này đâu.

**L. Lam:** He heard, like, this is the best.

**VanZandt:** This is it.

**L. Lam:** Yeah.

**Q. Lam:** Lúc ba qua Mỹ, cấp đó làm là tôm nhiều lắm. Chứ không phải như bây giờ đâu. Bây giờ ít.

**L. Lam:** He said when he came to United States, shrimping back then was *way* better than now.

**VanZandt:** In what ways? Tell me more about that.

**L. Lam:** Tôm nó nhiều hơn hả? Đánh nó dễ hơn hay sao?

**Q. Lam:** Nó nhiều hơn với lại ít tàu.

**L. Lam:** Ít tàu hả?

**L. Lam:** So they have more shrimp but less boats. Less boat.

**VanZandt:** *Oh.* So not as much competition.

**L. Lam:** Competition, yeah.

**VanZandt:** Easier to get more shrimp, make more money.

**L. Lam:** Um-hm.

**VanZandt:** OK.

**Q. Lam:** Tháng 3 năm 89, là đi tới Mỹ. 90, 91, 92, 5 năm sau là trở về Việt Nam rồi đó.

**L. Lam:** Five years later—just working, five years later he can return us to Vietnam, the whole family.

**VanZandt:** So you were able to pay to go back.

**L. Lam:** Yeah.

**VanZandt:** That's a huge success. And prices were pretty good then? You could get a good price for your catch? Fuel was not too expensive? Was that helpful?

**L. Lam:** Dầu không có mất với tôm giá cao phải không?

**L. Lam:** Yeah.

**VanZandt:** Yeah. Compared to now. Well, tell me, did you buy a boat here, or did you build your own boat, or how did you get started here?

**L. Lam:** Ba qua bên đây ba làm mướn bao lâu?

**Q. Lam:** Làm cỡ khoảng 7 8 năm làm mướn rồi mới bắt đầu làm tàu ghe riêng.

**L. Lam:** 7 hay 8 năm hả? So he was a deckhand from seven to eight years.

**VanZandt:** Oh, OK.

**L. Lam:** As a deckhand. Tàu freezer hả?

**Huong Thanh Ho:** (speaking Vietnamese)

**L. Lam:** A big boat. It was like an ice boat. Then he went to crabbing, crabbing.

**VanZandt:** OK.

**L. Lam:** Ba mua tàu nhỏ hả?

**Huong Thanh Ho:** (speaking Vietnamese)

**L. Lam:** The crabbing boat right here (referring to boat in their driveway), that's [what he used].

**VanZandt:** Parked in front! (all laugh)

**L. Lam:** (laughs) Parked in front.

**Q. Lam:** (speaking Vietnamese)

**Huong Thanh Ho:** (speaking Vietnamese)

**Q. Lam:** (speaking Vietnamese) Small boat and skimmer.

**L. Lam and VanZandt:** Skimmer.

**L. Lam:** He didn't save money enough money so he bought a skimmer.

**Q. Lam:** And one skimmer, one boat and twenty-seven feet.

**L. Lam:** Twenty-seven feet.

**VanZandt:** Twenty-seven feet.

**Q. Lam:** Small. Go afternoon (inaudible) and the morning time. And I got some money; I buy the big boat, a little bit big.

**L. Lam:** A little bit bigger boat.

**Q. Lam:** Thirty-one feet.

**L. Lam and VanZandt:** Thirty-one feet.

**Q. Lam:** I pick up the motor go into the boat.

**L. Lam:** And then he traded the motor and switch it to the other boat.

**VanZandt:** Ah, smart. OK.

**Q. Lam:** Before, I buy a small boat and the old motor; sometime it broke. I buy the new motor and put it in the boat. And then look like, thirty-one feet, I buy the thirty-one-foot, pick the motor go in the boat.

**VanZandt:** Upgrading.

**L. Lam:** (chuckles) Uh-huh.

**Q. Lam:** I work all the 1999.

**L. Lam:** Nineteen ninety-nine. All of 1999.

**Q. Lam:** I buy the big boat.

**L. Lam:** He bought a bigger boat.

**Q. Lam:** Forty-four feet.

**L. Lam and VanZandt:** Forty-four feet. OK.

**Q. Lam:** I have to work, work, work, work, work, work, work, work. I got some money. I buy anything, the fiber, fiberglass—

**L. Lam:** Fiberglass.

**Q. Lam:** The aluminum.

**L. Lam:** Aluminum.

**Q. Lam:** I cut the boat.

**L. Lam:** He cut the boat.

**Q. Lam:** Make long.

**L. Lam:** In half. He cut the boat in half to make it longer.

**VanZandt:** Huh! You did that!

**L. Lam:** He'll show you the picture.

**VanZandt:** Oh, please do! Oh, my goodness.

**L. Lam:** He cut the boat to make it longer.



**VanZandt:** OK, he's getting his pictures out. So he went from seventeen feet up to a forty-four foot boat, and you're along the way saving money—

**L. Lam:** Uh-huh. Saving money.

**VanZandt:** —to buy bigger, improve.

**Q. Lam:** I buy anything, and 2004, I buy anything, and the [Hurricane] Katrina come. (chuckles) Like that.

**L. Lam:** Katrina come. (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** Tell me. Well, tell me about Katrina, too. This is your picture.

**Q. Lam:** I cut it like that (showing picture).

**L. Lam:** He cut it in half.

**VanZandt:** Oh, my goodness. *Miss Sue* is the name [of his boat].

**L. Lam:** Yeah. Yeah, that's my sister Kich. Kich, she's the only one that had citizen[ship] at that time, had citizen[ship].

**VanZandt:** And so what is the advantage of it being longer?

**L. Lam:** Lý do nào mà ba cắt nó dài hơn chi? Nó cào nhanh hơn ra sao?

**Q. Lam:** Tại vì hồi đó nó cụt quá, tôm chớ ở đằng sau. Nó hồng, oánh không có được đâu. Ba có ông bạn ổng mới chi. Rồi ba thấy người ta làm rồi ba mới về làm.

**L. Lam:** He said his boat is too short, but—đánh tôm không được hay sao?

**Q. Lam:** Chớ nhiều quá vô cạn không được.

**L. Lam:** Oh, it's too short so he can go to shallow area. So he had a friend that showed him to cut the boat in half so he can increase it and make it so he can—

**VanZandt:** Go out further?

**L. Lam:** Go out further and to go to more—

**VanZandt:** Deeper water, maybe? And fit more shrimp, offer space. Uh-huh. So you're showing me pictures. Cut in half! And this is fiberglass?

**L. Lam:** Fiberglass.

**Q. Lam:** Yeah, I fix like that. You know like the, put like that? You see?

**VanZandt:** Right. I see! Smart!

**Q. Lam:** Now you go to look on the boat, [and] you can see. You don't know the boat cut.

**VanZandt:** You would never know! You did good. (chuckles)

**Q. Lam:** I work four month.

**L. Lam:** Four months.

**Q. Lam:** No stop! Seven o'clock in the morning—

**L. Lam:** Seven o'clock in the morning.

**Q. Lam:** [To] eight o'clock in the afternoon.

**VanZandt:** Did you have help? Someone—

**Q. Lam:** One people.

**L. Lam:** One person.

**VanZandt:** One person? So this is, he's showing me he kind of patched it. But it looks like you can see through it. So maybe that's fiberglass?

**L. Lam:** Cái đó là fiberglass hả?

**Q. Lam:** Đó là miếng nhôm bỏ vô thôi.

**L. Lam:** Oh. Aluminum.

**VanZandt:** Aluminum, Oh, OK.

**Q. Lam:** Rồi mình mới gỡ ra.

**VanZandt:** Oh, I see; [it was] the reflection looked—OK.

**L. Lam:** See, he learned from his friend, then he went home and did it himself.

**VanZandt:** He did it himself. You're very enterprising, Mr. Lam. (Linh laughs)  
How many gallons of fuel would this boat take?

**Q. Lam:** Right know, maybe over twelve hundred gallon.

**L. Lam:** Twelve hundred gallons.

**VanZandt:** Twelve hundred gallons. So how much would that cost to fill it up today?

**L. Lam:** Bao nhiêu?

**Q. Lam:** One hundred gallon [the boat uses] in one day. And one hour, ten gallon.

**VanZandt:** Ten gallons an hour?

**L. Lam:** Ba đô dầu hết tron là bao nhiêu tiền?

**Q. Lam:** Four thousand dollars to go out.

**VanZandt:** Four thousand dollars.

**L. Lam:** To fill it up.

**VanZandt:** To fill this up to go out.

**Q. Lam:** The fuel, the ice.

**VanZandt:** Right, the ice.

**L. Lam:** The fuel and the ice.

**VanZandt:** To go out—for how long would you stay out?

**Q. Lam:** One week.

**L. Lam:** One week.

**VanZandt:** Four thousand dollars for one week. And how many pounds of shrimp would you hope to bring back?

**L. Lam:** Ba mong muốn đánh tôm được bao nhiêu?

**Q. Lam:** Mong muốn cũng như là được đầy tàu mới vô.

**L. Lam:** (laughs) He said flood the whole boat.

**VanZandt:** (laughs) Yeah! I know! How much would that be? How many pounds? I can't imagine.

**L. Lam:** Bao nhiêu mới đầy tàu? Mấy pound?

**Q. Lam:** One hundred thousand.

**L. Lam:** One hundred thousand.

**VanZandt:** One hundred thousand pounds. And is this the boat that you use now (referring to photograph)?

**L. Lam:** Yeah. Maybe we should go like early and come back to do the interview because it's getting dark and you can't see.

**VanZandt:** Yeah. Before it gets dark, right. Let's do that. Well, I think we're almost finished. Can I just ask a couple more questions?

**L. Lam:** Yeah! That's fine.

**VanZandt:** And then I think I'll record while we're on the boat, too.

**L. Lam:** Yeah.

**VanZandt:** We can talk a little more, since it's getting dark. That's a good idea. What does *Miss Sue* mean to you?

**L. Lam:** Ý nghĩ của *Miss Sue* là gì? Tại sao ba đặt tên là *Miss Sue*?

**Q. Lam:** Hồi đó đó, ba là ham cái tàu làm biển nè. Nhưng mà phải có quốc tịch á là mới đứng tên tàu được. Thành thử ra là trong nhà chỉ có con Kịch là có quốc tịch thôi, thì nó lấy cái tên đó đi.

**L. Lam:** So he had a dream that he would own a boat one day. But I mean, to own a boat you have to be a citizen, so the only person that had citizen[ship] in my family was my sister Kich, the second to oldest sister. And so we named the boat *Miss Sue*.

**VanZandt:** Yeah, yeah. So you were able to get the boat because she was a citizen.

**L. Lam:** So ba mua cái tàu đó tại chị Kịch có quốc tịch thôi hả? Lý do vậy hả? Yep. And now he a citizen.

**VanZandt:** And now you're a citizen?!

**L. Lam:** He a citizen!

**VanZandt:** When did you become a citizen?

**L. Lam:** My mom and my daddy become a citizen before I did, too.

**VanZandt:** *Really?* What year, do you remember?

**L. Lam:** Năm mấy ba? Ba có quốc tịch năm mấy?

**Q. Lam:** Um, 2007.

**VanZandt:** Two thousand seven?

**Huong Thanh Ho:** (speaking Vietnamese)

**L. Lam:** (speaking Vietnamese)

**Q. Lam:** Khi mà ông Obama làm tổng thống đó.

**L. Lam:** Well, what year did Obama become president?

**Q. Lam:** Two thousand eight [elected]?

**VanZandt:** Two thousand nine [officially].

**L. Lam:** Two thousand nine. Oh, then 2009 he became a citizen.

**VanZandt:** OK. (all laugh) That's easy to remember. And what did that mean to you to become an American citizen?

**L. Lam:** Ba có quốc tịch thì có ý nghĩa với ba là sao? Cảm nghĩ của ba khi có quốc tịch là sao?

**Q. Lam:** Muốn mà cái gì cũng được hết.

**L. Lam:** He say anything is possible, he can want. Anything is possible to become a United States citizen.

**VanZandt:** With hard work, you can make anything happen. You have. This beautiful house and your family. You've made it through a lot of hard times, but you've done good, haven't you?

**Q. Lam:** You got to work hard, work hard, you know. Right now, no more hard.

**L. Lam:** It's not hard anymore.

**Q. Lam:** Slow, slow. All the kids are bigger(?) and work, you know.

**VanZandt:** Yeah. You've raised some really great kids. And now you can sit back and relax a little bit? (laughs) But I don't think you would relax too much. You work too hard. Well, let's go see your boat. Is that OK?

**L. Lam:** Yeah.

**VanZandt:** And I think I've got some more questions to ask you about maybe Katrina and the oil spill, when we're on the boat. Is that OK?

**L. Lam:** That's fine. Đi coi tàu ba ha.

**VanZandt:** Is it possible, Linh, sometime for me to scan these (referring to photographs)?

**L. Lam:** I can make you a copy.

**VanZandt:** Or you can make copies; that would be wonderful.

(part three takes place driving from Houma to Chauvin to tour Mr. Lam's boat)

**VanZandt:** (turning on recorder) OK, I'm sorry. Say that again, Linh. I asked him why he is the only Vietnamese with a skimmer boat here in Houma?

**L. Lam:** He said back then they have a rumor that only U.S. citizens can own a skimmer. So he went to New Orleans to ask, to ask, and then he went down here, and he said he see people who work and can do it, so he did it.

**VanZandt:** So that wasn't true.

**L. Lam:** Vậy cái đó là không phải sự thật hả?

**Q. Lam:** Không.

**L. Lam:** No. He said that wasn't true.

**Q. Lam:** Thì ba thấy người ta mua thì ba mua.

**L. Lam:** Then the other people see him buy it; then they bought it. Because they have a rumor you have to be a U.S. citizen.

**Q. Lam:** Người Việt Nam ở Houma làm toàn bị tàu giả không à. Rồi sau này thấy ba làm vậy mới có ăn, rồi họ làm lại.

**L. Lam:** Back then, everybody wanted to have bigger boats. So bigger boat, but then they saw my daddy, he actually have profit, make money, then they (pause)—

**VanZandt:** Then they wanted to do what *he*—

**L. Lam:** Then they wanted to do what he did. (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** (speaking to Mr. Lam) You ought to be really proud.

**Q. Lam:** I'm lucky. In 2005 Katrina, the hurricane come. But *after*, *lot* of shrimp. The boat looked OK.

**L. Lam:** Two thousand and five, after Katrina, there was a lot of shrimp.

**VanZandt:** A lot of shrimp—good shrimping. But your boat was OK?

**Q. Lam:** Yeah, I'm lucky. The boat OK!

**L. Lam:** He don't have insurance on the boat.

**VanZandt:** No insurance. Oh, you're so lucky, *again*. Your life has been blessed; good karma?

**Q. Lam:** Go out for five day, six day, one hundred box(?). Five day, six day, one hundred box(?). *Lot* of money.

**VanZandt:** That's what I heard. Some of the best shrimping after Katrina. And fewer people *out* there.

**L. Lam:** Yeah.

**VanZandt:** Less competition, yeah.

(part four begins; driving to Chauvin)

**VanZandt:** Well, does he have many friends here?

**L. Lam:** Ba có nhiều bạn bè ở đây không?

**Q. Lam:** Nhiều.

**L. Lam:** Yeah, he have a lot. He have a lot of friends.

**VanZandt:** That are in shrimping, too?

**L. Lam:** Làm biển luôn hả ba? Yes.

**VanZandt:** So we're travelling just down from your house, and this is the way that you drive to the boat when he goes, to go out. Well, Mr Lam, when is the last trip that you took out shrimping? How long ago was that?

**L. Lam:** Chuyến cuối cùng là chuyến nào ba? Chuyến cuối cùng ba đi là hồi nào?

**Q. Lam:** Tháng 12.

**L. Lam:** In December 2011

**VanZandt:** OK.

**Q. Lam:** 20 tháng 12 là đóng rồi không cho làm nữa.

**L. Lam:** Twentieth, you know, twentieth day they close the season, so they're not allowed to do any work anymore.

**VanZandt:** Right. So shrimp season's closed now. When will it start again?

**L. Lam:** Chừng nào nó mở lại?

**Q. Lam:** Tháng 4 là nó mở 3 miles.

**L. Lam:** In April.

**Q. Lam:** Từ ở trong bờ ra là 3 miles đó.

**L. Lam:** Three miles Gulf, they'll open in April.

**VanZandt:** OK.

**Q. Lam:** Khoảng 12, 13 tháng 5 thì nó mở hồ.

**L. Lam:** Tháng 5 hả? June, then they open the season.

**VanZandt:** OK. Well, we are going on two years since the BP [Deepwater Horizon] oil spill. A little over a year and a half since the oil spill happened. How has shrimping been for you since the oil spill?

**L. Lam:** Nó bị cái dầu á, gần 2 năm rồi, nó ảnh hưởng tới đánh tôm sao ba?

**Q. Lam:** Năm nay là có ảnh hưởng nhiều đó.

**L. Lam:** He said just this past year, 2011, it have a lot of effect, now, he sees.

**VanZandt:** So the more time that passes, the harder it's getting?



**L. Lam:** Ba thấy giống như mỗi năm nó càng khó khăn hơn hả?

**L. Lam:** Yes.

**VanZandt:** In what way? Less shrimp, or—

**L. Lam:** Lý do tại sao? Tại vì ít tôm hơn hay là—

**Q. Lam:** Ít tôm hơn. Với giờ ra luật mới nữa rồi.

**L. Lam:** Well, he said because of less shrimp, but they have new laws, new regulation.

**VanZandt:** Oh. What are the new regulations? How have things change?

**L. Lam:** Ra luật mới là sao?

**Q. Lam:** Ra luật mới, giống như là chẳng hạn nó gắn một cái lọc cho mình để cho con rùa nó đi ra đó. Trong hồ đó, mọi lần cái tàu skimmer không có. Mà bây giờ nó bắt buộc. Tới ngày 13 này là thành lập nè.

**L. Lam:** He said they have a law that you have to have this, um, so that the turtles—

**VanZandt:** The turtle excluder device.

**L. Lam:** Yeah. So you have to have them on your boat so the turtle can be—

**VanZandt:** Is that new here in Louisiana? Because it's been in Mississippi for a while, that you had to have those.

**L. Lam:** In Mississippi? Cái luật đó là mới ở đây thôi hả?

**Q. Lam:** Mới đây.

**L. Lam:** Just here, it's only here.

**VanZandt:** Oh, OK. Interesting.

**Q. Lam:** Louisiana nó đâu có ấy đâu. Nó là đất bùn đâu phải Mississippi, Florida là đất cát mới có mấy con turtle mới đẻ chứ còn đất bùn nó đâu có đẻ đâu.

**L. Lam:** He said well, this is swamp area, different from Mississippi and Florida. And then they don't have turtle that come in and lay their eggs in the swamp, you know?

**VanZandt:** Right. So that's made it harder, having to use that device?

**L. Lam:** Vậy thì khó khăn hơn hả vì có cái luật mới đó bỏ cái lồng con rùa đó vô?

**Q. Lam:** Thì khó hơn rồi.

**L. Lam:** He said yeah, it's more difficult.

**Q. Lam:** Tại vì cái này cánh buồm mà nó đâu có phải giống như tàu giả đâu, cánh buồm người ta oánh một tiếng đồng hồ, kéo cái đuôi lên thì con rùa nào chết được. Còn tàu giả thì 4 tiếng đến 6 tiếng mới lái giả mà.

**L. Lam:** He said a skimmer is different because you only put the net out only for an hour, so every hour you pull the net in. So even a turtle, they won't drown and die. But with a bigger boat, it's four to six hours so a turtle *can* die. But as for a skimmer, it's a smaller boat, so you're pulling frequently, so the turtle [they] can release them.

**VanZandt:** Right. So do you have to have the turtle excluder device on the skimmer boats, too? Or just on the bigger boats?

**L. Lam:** On the skimmer boat now.

**VanZandt:** OK. That's what's different now; I see. Sounds like kind of a hassle to have to do that, because you do it more frequently, pulling up the net.

**L. Lam:** Actually, I should print out his certificate. He have to have a certificate. Maybe if you're interested I can show it to you.

**VanZandt:** Sure, sure.

**L. Lam:** It was a print out free, and just gave it to him. And then you have to have it on your boat.

**VanZandt:** Sure, to show that you have it. So how does that effect then—how does that turtle excluder device, having to deal with that, effect his catch and his profit?

**L. Lam:** Có cái đó đánh tôm, ảnh hưởng tới đánh tôm sao? Ít hơn tôm không?

**Q. Lam:** Nó ra tôm.

**L. Lam:** Well, the shrimp escape. The shrimp escape, too.

**Q. Lam:** Với nó khó khăn lắm chứ không phải như ở ngoài biển, cái này ở trong hồ, cũng như nó vô ba cái bẫy ghẹ đó, thành thử ra nó bị tùm lum hết trơn. Nói chung là khó lắm.

**L. Lam:** So it's really difficult because they have crab trap here, and then crab traps, he's stuck in crab traps so he's lost stock(?), and everything that's messed up together you have to undo. Yeah, so everything is stuck.

**VanZandt:** Oh. So the device he's using gets stuck in the crab traps. Everything gets tangled.

**L. Lam:** Crab traps, tangled—

**VanZandt:** Takes time just to—

**Q. Lam:** Nước nó cạn chứ đâu phải nước nó sâu đâu.

**L. Lam:** This is shallow, this is shallow water. So he's saying, he's in the shallow water. It's not like in the Gulf.

**VanZandt:** Right, right. It's very different here. And he stays within three miles when he shrimps?

**L. Lam:** Ba đi ba mau ra hả?

**Q. Lam:** Không. Thì nó mở 3 miles, thì mình đánh chừng một chút vậy thôi à.

**L. Lam:** When they open the season, when he said the three miles out, that's just you can allow to that, but he—Rồi chừng nào ba đánh ra xa?

**Q. Lam:** Đánh cách bờ ra chừng chút vậy à, nước cỡ khoảng mười mét feet ba ra đâu được đâu.

**L. Lam:** Oh, like, like, like—mười mấy? Mười lăm?

**Q. Lam:** Twelve feet là—

**L. Lam:** Twelve feet—

**Q. Lam:** Twelve feet go inside.

**L. Lam:** Twelve feet back [deep], that's all he goes. He don't go further than past, beyond the twelve feet; it's just too deep.

**VanZandt:** OK, OK. So the pictures that you showed me of the boat that he cut in half, that's the skimmer boat.

**L. Lam:** Um-hm.

**VanZandt:** OK. And the skimmer boat, you can stay out about one week at a time.

**L. Lam:** Um-hm.

**VanZandt:** OK. And go out within the state waters; you stay fairly close to the land. Right. And what kind of shrimp is he catching with that [skimmer], white shrimp and brown shrimp?

**L. Lam:** Ba bắt tôm gì?

**Q. Lam:** Tháng 5, tôm brown shrimp.

**L. Lam:** (counting to herself) January, February, March, April—May is brown shrimp.

**Q. Lam:** Tháng 8 thì white shrimp.

**L. Lam:** And August is white shrimp.

**VanZandt:** White shrimp, OK. And has he seen—since either Katrina or the BP oil spill—the size of the shrimp that he’s catching, has he seen much change in that?

**L. Lam:** Cái dầu nó ảnh hưởng ba có thấy giống như là tôm nó nhỏ hơn, bự hơn hay sao?

**Q. Lam:** Không có tôm, chứ bự hơn nhỏ hơn gì. Không có tôm luôn.

**L. Lam:** (laughs) He said, he said, they don’t *have* no shrimp. (laughs)

**VanZandt:** There’s no shrimp!

**L. Lam:** Yeah, no shrimp. (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** Wow, because I’ve heard some people say, over these past five years or so, they’re getting smaller, and there’s fewer. Yeah. I didn’t know if the size—look, so we’re passing some boats here.

**L. Lam:** Tons!

**VanZandt:** Wow!

**L. Lam:** You should be here when the boat blessing, boat—you ever heard of the boat blessing?

**VanZandt:** Oh, sure! The Blessing of the Fleet. I’ve been to the one in Biloxi, but I bet it is great here. So they travel along here (referring to canal)?

**L. Lam:** Yeah. They go crazy.

**VanZandt:** Oh, my goodness. So we're seeing different types of boats, too.

**L. Lam:** This is Chauvin.

**VanZandt:** *This* is Chauvin, OK. Are there oyster beds nearby in Chauvin at all?

**L. Lam:** I don't know. Người ta đánh sò ở đâu? Ở đây hả?

**Q. Lam:** Ra ngoài kia nhưng mà ở đây ít có người Mỹ làm sò.

**L. Lam:** Over here, not too much oyster.

**Q. Lam:** Người Mỹ làm sò không à.

**L. Lam:** He said only Mexicans that do oyster here.

**VanZandt:** What about the Indian population?

**L. Lam:** Người da đỏ?

**Q. Lam:** No. Mỹ không à. Mỹ làm sò. No Indian.

**VanZandt:** No Indian in commercial shrimping?

**L. Lam:** Well, the mixture, the—he said they're actually only Mexican, so I don't think he said they have Indian.

**VanZandt:** OK.

**L. Lam:** Or maybe he don't know.

**VanZandt:** Right. He doesn't see them much. I saw one for-sale sign back there on a boat. Have many people lost their boats due to the oil spill?

**L. Lam:** Có nhiều người mất tàu vì dầu không? Tại họ làm ăn không được mà họ bán tàu không?

**Q. Lam:** Không.

**L. Lam:** No.

**VanZandt:** No? OK.

**Huong Thanh Ho:** (speaking Vietnamese)

**Q. Lam:** (speaking Vietnamese)

**L. Lam:** With the population, even the Americans, the Americans, they [are] Cajun people, so they're in the seafood industry so they don't go to school, like, higher education. So all they know is just seafood.

**VanZandt:** Yes, they're very dependent on the seafood industry here, right. And that's a little different from the Vietnamese community, it sounds like. But you know, I don't see many of the younger Vietnamese, the children following in their father's footsteps. Does he see that very often?

**L. Lam:** Ba có thấy giống như là người Việt Nam, giống như là tuổi trẻ nó không có đi làm biển không?

**Q. Lam:** Sau này mấy người trẻ trẻ đâu có làm biển nữa đâu. Toàn là đi ăn học không à.

**L. Lam:** He said the younger generation go to school. They don't shrimp anymore.

**Q. Lam:** Thì dốt thì ba mày mới mần biển thôi chứ còn có ăn học thì ba mày đâu có mần biển.

**L. Lam:** He said the uneducated, like himself, go shrimping. Whereas if you can read or write, you have other jobs.

**VanZandt:** So if you have other opportunities, most of the younger people choose to do other things instead of carrying on the tradition like he did. Yeah. So he may be the last one in his family; may be the end of—

**L. Lam:** Shrimping.

**VanZandt:** —the fishing and shrimping industry, huh?

**Q. Lam:** À, con nói với bà là tàu này là tàu giả nè nó dựng hai cây nó lên đó.

**L. Lam:** That's the biggest boat (pointing to large boat in Chauvin).

**VanZandt:** Ah, right here we're passing the biggest boat down here?

**Q. Lam:** The small boat a skimmer.

**VanZandt:** There's a skimmer. OK.

**L. Lam:** The small boat's a skimmer.

**VanZandt:** And the *Miranda Marie*, fancy.

**L. Lam:** That's the one that they go off to the Gulf.

**VanZandt:** Way out. The freezer boat?

**L. Lam:** I don't know. I don't know, um—

**VanZandt:** Or maybe not a freezer boat, but—

**L. Lam:** But it's like, it's a bigger boat.

**VanZandt:** Yeah. Cooler [boat].

**L. Lam:** Cooler boat, yeah.

**VanZandt:** Well, we're seeing a little bit of everything here, every size.

**Q. Lam:** Máy chiếc tàu bự là tàu giả đó. Hồi xưa là không có mấy cái cánh bướm, thì người Mỹ mới làm tàu bự vậy nè.

**L. Lam:** So I mean, back then they didn't have skimmer; they just have big, big boats. They don't have the small skimmer.

**VanZandt:** Right. And why did you decide to use a skimmer boat?

**L. Lam:** Lý do nào ba muốn làm cánh bướm vậy?

**Q. Lam:** Cánh bướm nó dễ làm lắm.

**L. Lam:** Well, the skimmer is easy.

**Q. Lam:** Đi mình ên nó cũng đi được.

**L. Lam:** You can go by yourself.

**Q. Lam:** Còn cái tàu giả đó phải kêu người đi.

**L. Lam:** With the bigger boat you have to have crew member and stuff.

**Q. Lam:** Có chiếc tàu là hai vợ chồng sống được rồi chứ đâu cần kêu người ta đâu.

**L. Lam:** He said that with skimmer, he and my mom can go.

**VanZandt:** Um-hm. And when you were a deckhand, you depended on others for your work, your job. But now you are in charge of yourself and can make your own hours. What was it like being a deckhand all those years?

**L. Lam:** Hồi ba làm mướn cho mấy người, ba cảm nghĩ sao? Nó sao?

**Q. Lam:** Thì đi làm cho người ta thì phải cố gắng làm thôi. Bồn phận mình làm mướn mà.

**L. Lam:** So I mean, [when] he worked for other people, he had to work hard, because you're working for other people.

**VanZandt:** Did you have the same—did you work primarily on the same boat with the same captain that he knew? Or did he switch around to different boats through the years.?

**L. Lam:** Ba làm chung một ghe thôi hả? Hay là ba làm khác ghe?

**Q. Lam:** Thì mình thấy ghe nào có ăn thì mình mới đi. Mình đi làm mướn mà.

**L. Lam:** So he picked the one that's the most successful boat.

**VanZandt:** Smart. (Linh and Linda laugh) Stick with him, right! So he stayed with the same person for a while.

**L. Lam:** He stayed with the one who do the most.

**VanZandt:** Yeah. And as long as you're doing a good job, and it sounds like he was, then they'll keep you hired, huh? Was it pretty steady work?

**L. Lam:** Làm vậy cũng bền hả ba?

**Q. Lam:** Thì mình càng làm giỏi chừng nào thì người ta kêu. Làm biếng quá ai kêu đi.

**L. Lam:** He said, you know, if you're a good worker, then everybody will want you to work for them. But if you're lazy, nobody will want to hire you.

**VanZandt:** Right. So I'm guessing you stayed employed all the time. (Linh and Linda laugh) They called you first.

**Q. Lam:** Ba đi biển có một chuyến năm 1994, là ba nhớ suốt đời đó. Năm ngày năm đêm mà mỗi ba tiếng đồng hồ mà ba làm hai tiếng rưỡi, cứ nghỉ được nửa tiếng. Mà năm ngày năm đêm như vậy đó.



**L. Lam:** He said he remember 1994; he worked five days, five nights. He will never forget it because he worked for three hours—he would work for two hours and a half, and they only have a break for thirty minutes for five days straight like that.

**VanZandt:** Oh, my goodness. I can't imagine. Day and night, yeah. As a deckhand, what are you doing, pulling in the net, sorting the shrimp? What kind of things are you doing as a deckhand?

**L. Lam:** Deckhand ba chỉ kéo lưới lên phải không?

**Q. Lam:** Lượ tôm thôi. Máy kéo không à. Mình chỉ lượ tôm thôi. Nhưng mà ở sau lái đó, năm người ngồi nó đổ lên mà người này ngồi mà không dòm thấy người bên kia đó.

**L. Lam:** Yeah. Well, he said that as a deckhand, you just pick the shrimp. I mean, I've done that, too. You pick up the shrimp. You pick up the shrimp, but he said there's so much shrimp he cannot even see the other person. Like five people, it was so high up there you cannot even see the other person.

**VanZandt:** Wow. What does it take to be a really good shrimper? What kind of qualities, characteristics?

**L. Lam:** Cái gì làm được mà làm ăn thôi?

**Q. Lam:** Lượm tôm thôi. Lượm tôm mà tôm bự. Vừa lượm vừa ngắt cái đầu nó ra đó, hai tiếng rưỡi phải được hai giờ.

**L. Lam:** Two hours he had to pick the shrimp and peel their head off, and two hours you had to fill up two baskets, two red baskets. He will show you how to—Mà bà hỏi cái gì mà ba là người đánh tôm thành công. Cảm nghĩ sao, làm ăn sao mà thành người đánh tôm được?

**Q. Lam:** Hồi đó tới giờ ba qua Mỹ nhưng mà ba chỉ ở Louisiana này thôi, cái này nó đi xuống tới Texas mà giáp ranh Mê là ba mới đi thử thôi.

**L. Lam:** Qua bên Texas hả?

**Q. Lam:** Qua bên Texas, nó qua tới bên Mê bển luôn.

**L. Lam:** Oh, so he traveled; this once he went to Texas. (speaking Vietnamese) Texas, he went to Texas, and he went all the way to Mexico. He just wanted to see how it is.

**VanZandt:** To see, right. Wow. What did you think about that? Did it make you want a bigger boat to go out that direction?

**L. Lam:** Ba nghĩ ba muốn đi tàu bự hơn. Ba đi cái chuyén đó—

**Q. Lam:** Ba đi cái chuyén đó ba muốn làm tàu bự nhưng mà ba đâu có credit gì đâu. Mới mua được cái nhà, cái này thôi. Đâu có credit mua đồ trả góp đâu.

**L. Lam:** He said back then he really want a big boat, but back then he didn't have any credit to buy it. He said just recently he was able to buy a house, buy cars, and have credit now.

**VanZandt:** Um-hm. But you're also able to be with your family more, it sounds like, when you're doing what he's doing, skimming, because you don't go out as long.

**L. Lam:** Bà nói giống như là ba đi tàu cánh bướm ba có thể ở chung với gia đình ba nhiều hơn là đi cái tàu giả. Phải không?

**Q. Lam:** Đúng rồi.

**L. Lam:** Yeah. He said yeah.

**Q. Lam:** Tàu cánh bướm thì ba đâu có cần ra ngoài biển đâu. Cái này ba ở trong hồ mà, dễ sống quá mà.

**L. Lam:** Um-hm. He said the skimmer is just an easier way of life.

**VanZandt:** Yeah. Right. What do you like best about being a shrimper?

**L. Lam:** Ba thích cái gì nhất là ba làm biển?

**Q. Lam:** Skimmer.

**L. Lam:** Cái gì mà ba thích nhất?

**Q. Lam:** Ba đâu có làm được cái gì đâu. Trên bờ thì ba đi làm hăng. Nói tiếng thì không có hiểu được nhiều mà chỉ làm biển là làm được thôi.

**L. Lam:** He said because he go on land and he go on factory, he cannot speak well the language; he don't really understand. So I mean, shrimping is just what make him help to provide for the family.

**VanZandt:** Right. I understand. Mr Lam, as we travel along and you see all of these shrimp boats, do you know a lot of these boats, or these owners?

**L. Lam:** Ba có biết mấy cái tàu, tàu của mấy người này không?

**Q. Lam:** Mấy người này là biết ba hết luôn đó.

**L. Lam:** (chuckles) Yeah, all the way down, they all know him. (speaking Vietnamese)

**Q. Lam:** (speaking Vietnamese)

**L. Lam:** Yeah, he knows them.

**VanZandt:** (chuckles) They all know you.

**Q. Lam:** Tại vì ba là người đầu tiên làm ở đây mà.

**L. Lam:** Said he was the very first one to have done it.

**VanZandt:** Right. You're well known.

**Q. Lam:** Little bit American.

**L. Lam:** A little bit, a little bit of Americans do skimmer boat.

**VanZandt:** Were doing skimming. But you were the first Vietnamese.

**Q. Lam:** I work in 1995, '96 in the lake; 30 percent of the boat American, skimmer. (inaudible) Right now, 100 percent.

**VanZandt:** One hundred percent, except for you.

**Q. Lam:** Except me. No joke.

**VanZandt:** Wow.

**Q. Lam:** Right now all the lake the skimmer.

**VanZandt:** And that's because they saw that you were having good luck, making a profit, easier work. Is that right?

**L. Lam:** Um-hm.

**VanZandt:** Ah. These are nice houses along here.

**L. Lam:** I see people—this is considered sportsman's paradise. Have you ever heard of it?

**VanZandt:** Sure! Oh, absolutely.

**L. Lam:** They say Louisiana is a sportsman's paradise. Those are actually camps. They have more—

**VanZandt:** Fishing camps.

**L. Lam:** Fishing camps.

**VanZandt:** Sure. Weekend places, and, yeah, yeah. (Linh chuckles)

**Q. Lam:** Nineteen ninety-five, [19]96, I go to one night.

**L. Lam:** One night.

**Q. Lam:** Fuel up, everything; the ice, the fuel, everything. Back then \$1000, no shrimp.

**VanZandt:** One thousand dollars and no shrimp.

**Q. Lam:** I buy the fuel, the ice, \$1000. Right now \$4000, \$5000.

**L. Lam:** His fuel and ice, it's just [used to] only cost him \$1000. Now it—

**VanZandt:** It's quadrupled, the cost. Mr Lam, what do you see is the future of this seafood industry here? Do you see it dying out, or?

**L. Lam:** Ba thấy tương lai của nghề biển là sao?

**Q. Lam:** Không còn như ngày xưa nữa đâu.

**L. Lam:** It's not the same like before. He said it's dying out. Yeah. You see that, after this trailer, you see that white trailer?

**VanZandt:** Uh-huh.

**L. Lam:** They have the brownish building, and then they have the cooler trucks?

**VanZandt:** Uh-huh, yes.

**L. Lam:** That used to be the Crab Connection. It's called Crab Connection, a crab factory. And you see that trailer over, the banana boat?

**VanZandt:** Yes, the Chiquita, uh-huh.

**L. Lam:** The Chiquita. Our house used to be over there.

**VanZandt:** Your house used to be *here*?

**L. Lam:** Used to be here. We used to live right there. And the crab factory right there.

**VanZandt:** Oh, my goodness! Right here next to the water. How did you like that?

**L. Lam:** Ba có thích ở đó không?

**Q. Lam:** Thích chứ. Cái thằng chủ đó đó, gia đình mình làm cho nó nó làm giàu luôn đó.

**L. Lam:** He said our family worked for him then and make the owner rich. (laughs)

**VanZandt:** (laughs) Yeah, I bet. (laughs) So that was your first house when you moved here?

**L. Lam:** Well, we used to live in an apartment. I can show you that. When we came to Louisiana, an apartment, then to Chauvin.

**VanZandt:** OK. [An apartment in] Chauvin to that house.

**L. Lam:** And then to that house that we live in.

**VanZandt:** And then to where you are now in Houma, I see. I can see how when bad weather comes, you better be built up high. (laughs)

**L. Lam:** (chuckles) Yeah.

**VanZandt:** Because we are level.

**Q. Lam:** Nói bả là là tháng ba đó, không biết bữa nào, mấy thằng Mỹ nó làm cái lễ, cũng như là mừng cho cái năm nó làm được cho chạy tàu dữ lắm á.

**L. Lam:** I think it's in March, is the boat blessing [Blessing of the Fleet], March.

**VanZandt:** March? Oh, OK.

**Q. Lam:** Ở Mississippi có có không.

**L. Lam:** Có ba. Bả nói ở Mississippi cũng có đó ba.

**VanZandt:** I might have to try to come. I know in Biloxi it's usually in June, like the first week in June, but it must be earlier here.

**L. Lam:** Tháng 3 hả? Nó để chờ tùm lum màu hết chơn. Tháng 3 phải không?

**VanZandt:** I guess the season—because it's supposed to be the beginning of the season when it starts.

**Q. Lam:** Từ đây nè tới dưới đó đó, là tàu Việt Nam không đó.

**VanZandt:** This is the factory?

**Q. Lam:** (speaking Vietnamese)

**L. Lam:** From here, all the way down, is all Vietnamese fishing boat. All those we saw was American boat.

**VanZandt:** Oh, so now we start the Vietnamese.

**L. Lam:** That's the boss' boat, I mean, the factory owner house.

**VanZandt:** The factory owner lives there?

**L. Lam:** Yeah.

**VanZandt:** Of the factory, the crab factory?

**L. Lam:** No, the one that my daddy sells shrimp.

**VanZandt:** Oh, the shrimp. OK.

**L. Lam:** This is Bouquet Seafood.

**VanZandt:** OK. Bouquet; how do you spell that?

**L. Lam:** B-O-Q-U-E-T.

**VanZandt:** Q-U-E-T, OK. So that's who your dad sells to. Just to him?

**L. Lam:** Just to him.

**VanZandt:** OK. Are there others in this area? Or is that the only one?

**L. Lam:** They have others, but it's just my dad, because he helps.

**VanZandt:** He has a relationship with him.

**L. Lam:** Yeah. He helps. And that's his house, too. That's the owner house, too.

**VanZandt:** Oh, this one right here?

**L. Lam:** Yeah.

**VanZandt:** OK, wow.

**L. Lam:** I don't think he live there anymore.

**VanZandt:** So this is where your boat is. So it's easy to just pull up and unload right here.

**L. Lam:** See, my uncle is here, too. That's his white truck. And my brother. That's my uncle (pointing to her uncle on his boat).

**VanZandt:** Oh, OK. Now, is this where it's processed? Or, let's see, where is it processed? (beginning to walk the dock and tour Mr. Lam's boat)

**L. Lam:** Oh, we can show you.

**VanZandt:** OK. Great!

(Linda and Linh board Mr. Lam's brother's boat while he is working on repairs.)

**L. Lam:** Cậu Bảy ngủ hả cậu Bảy? Oh, he's down here. Cậu Bảy. Đang làm làm đó?

**VanZandt:** Hi, how are you? My name is Linda. I work at the University of Southern Mississippi collecting stories. So I've been recording Mr Lam's life story—

**Hung Ho:** Yeah.

**VanZandt:** —about life in Vietnam and shrimping and all of that. So what are you doing now?

**Hung Ho:** I'm (inaudible; speaking from cabin below)

**L. Lam:** Generator.

**VanZandt:** Generator? Doing some repair?

**Hung Ho:** Yeah.

**VanZandt:** OK. (Bay chuckles) Well, I don't want to interrupt you. When are you going out again? March?

**Hung Ho:** Mở hồ tháng—

**L. Lam:** Tháng 5 hả?

**Hung Ho:** Yeah.

**VanZandt:** So now it's vacation time. (all laugh)

**Hung Ho:** No! I lost my boat. (laughs)

**L. Lam:** This is the (inaudible) who lost his boat.

**VanZandt:** Last year? Ah.

(group talking in Vietnamese)

**VanZandt:** Nha Trang—I like your shirt!

**Hung Ho:** Thanks. (all laugh)

(Linh and Hung Ho speaking in Vietnamese)

**VanZandt:** (leaving Hung Ho's boat and going to Mr. Lam's boat) Bye! It's so nice to meet you.

**L. Lam:** (passing a pen with pig) Welcome to Louisiana.

**VanZandt:** A big one. No kidding! (meeting up with Mr. Lam) Hey, guys! So this is the *Miss Sue*! I need a picture of you right there, just like that. Linh, do you want to get in. Yeah, perfect. OK, let me see if I can get the name. (Linda takes photographs of the boat) I'll do a close up, and then I'll get the whole thing.

**L. Lam:** Can you see the cut?

**VanZandt:** Can I see what?

**L. Lam:** Can you see the cut, when he cut the boat in half?

**Q. Lam:** You see?

**VanZandt:** I think. OK, is it where the chain—to the left of the chain ?

**L. Lam:** Cái chỗ, bà nói là bên trái của cái, cái lần đó phải không?

**Q. Lam:** Cái lần đó.

**L. Lam:** Yeah, he said, "There."



**VanZandt:** That is amazing. Oh my goodness, what a beautiful boat. I want to get the *Miss Sue* part in here, too.

**L. Lam:** Make sure you get the shrimp [large shrimp image painted on boat].

**VanZandt:** That's what I love. I want to get the *Miss Sue* with the shrimp. (rooster crows) OK, I'm following you, Mr. Lam. These are the coolers.

**L. Lam:** You put the shrimp in there.

**Q. Lam:** The old one, this one, put in the back. (rooster crows)

**L. Lam:** (rooster crows; inaudible) Put the shrimp all the way in the back.

**Q. Lam:** Right now go to shallow water.

**VanZandt:** Um-hm, salt [shallow] water?

**Q. Lam:** Yeah, this one put it like that. Deep water no good.

**L. Lam:** Deep water no good.

**VanZandt:** OK. So the salt for the salt water goes in here. So we're walking into the cabin. So this is where you sleep. Nice and dark (laughs) so you can sleep.

**Q. Lam:** You go (inaudible) like that, you go (inaudible) like that.

**VanZandt:** Oh, you've even got a washing machine, too. Oh my goodness. So you can wash your clothes and towels and things. So mom sleeps here. I would love this! Do you ever come here, Linh—

**L. Lam:** Yeah, I do.

**VanZandt:** —when you just want to get away from things?

**L. Lam:** Well, I used to go shrimp with them. Yeah. (inaudible)

**VanZandt:** Yeah. And you've got your bathroom. So where do you cook?

**L. Lam:** Right here.

**VanZandt:** You've got your stove, your refridgerator, you've got everything.

**L. Lam:** Microwave. (Inaudible; Linda laughs) Mainly the job of the deckhand is to pick the shrimp. (Inaudible) my mom. But you wear gloves, you wear gloves.

**VanZandt:** Yes. It could really hurt your fingers.

**L. Lam:** (inaudible) Yeah, it can cut your fingers.

**VanZandt:** Right. So you wear special gloves. Do you have the gloves here?

**L. Lam:** Ba có bao tay cho bà coi làm sao?

**VanZandt:** I see the white boots. I always wondered how thick these are. Oh, OK, just rubber. OK, rubber gloves. Oh, I see, yeah, yeah. Have you hurt your fingers before?

**L. Lam:** (Inaudible) And you just wear it.

**VanZandt:** Yeah. And that helps? Yeah, yeah.

**L. Lam:** We pick them real quick. But we pick them at an angle, so you don't pick(?) them, but sometimes you're going so fast that (inaudible).

**VanZandt:** Sure. But there's a technique, I'm sure, that you learn and (inaudible). (laughs) So you're picking the head off?

**L. Lam:** It just depends. At that time if the shrimp, if it costs a lot if you leave the head [on]. Or it costs more if you pop the head [off].

**VanZandt:** Right. So it depends on the order and who you're selling it to.

**L. Lam:** Yeah. Sometimes if you pop the head first, you might lose profit.

**Q. Lam:** One night we work and 3000 pounds, 4000 pounds easy.

**VanZandt:** Four thousand pounds in one—

**Q. Lam:** One night.

**VanZandt:** One night?!

**L. Lam:** So a lot of shrimp (inaudible).

**Q. Lam:** My brother, he (inaudible) by himself—

**L. Lam:** Said, "By himself."

**Q. Lam:** —4000 pounds all the night, easy.

**L. Lam:** Four thousand pounds just by himself.

**VanZandt:** So pretty much all that you can collect, you can sell? Do you always know that you're going to have someone to sell it to? Or are you ever turned away?

**L. Lam:** Ba bán tôm, có bao giờ họ không mua tôm của ba không?

**Q. Lam:** Unh-uh, unh-uh. No, no. (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** Never turned away. There's always demand. So the risk is only if you're going to be able to find it.

**L. Lam:** Yeah. But this season they just did not make a lot of profit. My uncle, he had, like I was telling you, thirty-four thousand [dollars] lost. My daddy, the income he make twenty-eight thousand [dollars]. He made twenty-eight thousand this year.

**VanZandt:** OK, his profit. Right. After fuel and costs.

**L. Lam:** After that, twenty-eight thousand.

**VanZandt:** OK. And how does that compare to last year and the year before?

**L. Lam:** Năm vừa rồi – Cả năm nay ba làm 28 ngàn, năm vừa rồi, nó thất ba cỡ bao nhiêu?

**Q. Lam:** Năm vừa rồi đâu có mất được.

**L. Lam:** The year before, because of the oil spill, yeah, the oil spill, you couldn't—they wouldn't let them—

**VanZandt:** Couldn't do anything. Right, right. But I guess I should have said before the oil spill, in other words—

**L. Lam:** Trước khi bão là mất được hơn hả? Gấp mấy lần?

**Q. Lam:** Nhiều.

**L. Lam:** Yeah, he said a *lot* more.

**VanZandt:** Yeah. Well, two thousand—

**Q. Lam:** Right now, no good. You know, the \$5000, you got some \$5000, the fuel, the ice, everything.

**VanZandt:** Yeah, not much profit.

**L. Lam:** Five thousand dollars fuel and ice is not good.

**VanZandt:** Right. And how much ice do you have to have? Is this your cooler where you keep the ice? Where do you keep the ice?

**L. Lam:** Đá của ba, ba để đâu?

**VanZandt:** This is where the ice is kept. Excuse me. OK, OK. Well, I remember, you know, I've heard people that I've talked to said after Katrina that it was so much better. The shrimping was great, and it's just gone downhill. And maybe you (referring to Huong Ho) can talk about that, too, if you have any thoughts [about] after the oil spill.

**Huong Ho:** (laughs)

**VanZandt:** I mean, how do you see things changing?

**Huong Ho:** Everybody say (inaudible) more, uh, the shrimp better(?).

**VanZandt:** Do you think it's just going to take a few years for the shrimp to grow up to the right size again?

**Huong Ho:** I don't know. Only one year, the last, look like the year, I think it's very bad. I don't know the oil spill (inaudible). I'm thinking if the future—I don't know exactly but the future is too bad(?). The last three trip, I lost money. I lost \$500(?) for the—nhựa kêu bằng gì?

**L. Lam:** Nhựa hả? Nhựa là cái gì?

**Huong Ho:** Là cái chuỗi này nè.

**L. Lam:** Oh, he lost \$500 for the (inaudible).

**Huong Ho:** The fuel (inaudible).

**VanZandt:** Well, how has the claims process been? How is reimbursement? Is there any help? Have you got much help from the Gulf Coast Claims Fund?

**L. Lam:** He said they lost his paperwork, and he has to resubmit it.

**VanZandt:** Just frustration, sounds like.

**Huong Ho:** And now, (inaudible) last year oil spill (inaudible) but (inaudible). But before the oil spill, (inaudible). I don't tell anything but (inaudible). But I don't know what they say (inaudible). They say that it's not enough (inaudible), but I don't know what is enough.

**L. Lam:** They always say missing paperwork; always missing paperwork.

**Huong Ho:** I think because the, look like they tell (inaudible) keep money something, you know. And I give everything for them already. And only this year, they (inaudible).

**VanZandt:** And you've got documentation to show them?

**Huong Ho:** Yeah, yeah.

**VanZandt:** You've got all of that, but they just say, "We've lost it," or, "It's missing"?

**L. Lam:** They always have something else, an excuse.

**Huong Ho:** Some look like (inaudible) something I give to them one time, something (inaudible) money (inaudible).

**VanZandt:** What do you think—is there a good alternative? Are you all thinking about any other type of work?

**L. Lam:** Yeah, they actually had a program; I mean, the government is actually helping to do, actually, farming in the backyard.

**VanZandt:** The aquaponics?

**L. Lam:** Is that what it is?

**VanZandt:** Uh-huh. I know that at Mary Queen of Vietnam [Community Development Corporation in New Orleans East] they just ordered the system, an aquaponics system, so they're going to learn how to grow the vegetables and the fish, maybe hybrid striped bass, and teach; there are like five or ten families who are interested in learning how to do that.

**L. Lam:** Well, we're interested in doing it, but we don't know how to get the information.

**Huong Ho:** I heard. I want to learn, but they didn't give for me. Go to school.

**VanZandt:** Well, you know, they're offering this training. And I'll let you know, Linh, when it's going to happen. It's supposed to be any week now; they're going to have a community meeting around Mary Queen of Vietnam in New Orleans if you're interested.

**L. Lam:** Do you remember the meeting I went to? Well, my daddy and my mom can go, but he (referring to Huong Ho) couldn't go. You know why? Because he wasn't

registered to go to selective service. When he came to America he was twenty-four, but he didn't know. He didn't know he had to register for selective service; now he's not qualified for the grant.

**VanZandt:** That doesn't make sense.

**Huong Ho:** Look like before we come United States, I have family; I work all the time, but I never go to school one day. I never go. And all the time I work, work, and work twenty-four hours.

**VanZandt:** Sure, just working to make a living.

**Huong Ho:** Some people, work the big boat, all the time I'm not be home. I don't know nothing because I don't go to school.

**VanZandt:** You were gone—

**Huong Ho:** I don't know nothing. And the future, now, they say about that. (inaudible) I sorry.

**L. Lam:** That's all they say (inaudible).

**Huong Ho:** I never go to school, you know.

**L. Lam:** But eighteen to twenty-six you have to register for selective service, but he didn't know.

**VanZandt:** Well, of course you wouldn't know, sure.

**L. Lam:** So he didn't know. And then he's not qualified for that program.

**VanZandt:** They haven't made any kind of allowances for that, it sounds like. That's bureaucracy.

**Huong Ho:** Before it look like, before I left(?) Vietnam, from the (inaudible), and when they give for me the form(?) United States, but they tell about that.

**VanZandt:** Yeah.

**Huong Ho:** They help(?). The government, the United States, they tell about that (inaudible). We can go, help(?) make me all the time. I tell them, really some people they have the record, but (inaudible) my brother New Orleans, he's same thing; he's sad(?) about that. And (inaudible) check out. He have (inaudible), and I don't have nothing. (laughs)

**VanZandt:** Well, they need to make some allowances for that; that's for sure.

**Huong Ho:** (laughs)

**VanZandt:** (noise interference) Well, I'll let you know when they're doing this training, because to me, that seems like at least something you could be doing in the meantime, especially in this off-season, working on your boat, but maybe go get some training and look into that because they're going to use it as a training facility.

**Huong Ho:** (inaudible; noise interference)

**VanZandt:** Are they having many meetings here at all, I mean, with fishermen?

**L. Lam:** Like I say, we don't get a lot of information. I don't know how to get all this information, how you get the connection to it. That's why I (inaudible) get information so help them, to notify. There's a lot—but my parents know a lot. I mean, if I'm in the place, then I would know, and I'll follow up.

**VanZandt:** Mary Queen of Vietnam would help you, the CDC. Have you ever been to their office? I need to show you that, Linh. On our way out, it's right there on Alcee Fortier, their office. And that's what they're doing there. They're doing—

**L. Lam:** I mean, I understand everything now, and (inaudible) the resource. If (inaudible) a limit, I would select like ten people that I know, to help them out, you know?

**VanZandt:** Um-hm. Well, this is for anyone who wants to do it. I mean they can buy their own systems. They can also just learn how—it's not very big. It's right next to the office.

**L. Lam:** I mean, because of my whole family is fishermen, so I mean, they would do that; my mom, my dad, and my uncle.

**VanZandt:** And that's the thing. You all have these skills to build it. It's an easy system to build. Maybe if it's not too dark, on the way back I could show you what it looks like.

**Huong Ho:** We take a (inaudible) in New Orleans one time. But (inaudible) lot of loss.

**L. Lam:** I mean, how can I—

**Huong Ho:** I'm kind of thinking (inaudible) see the future, the fishermen bad, bad future; thinking, when (inaudible) before the oil spill, I have it; I do it. But we cannot pick up a little bit. That's it. And at the bottom, they're still there. They're still there. They're *still* at the bottom. I think (inaudible) they put inside(?) the future. The future, we don't know; we don't know the future. But now, we work only the boat,

the shrimp boat; we are fishermen. And look like we are work long time, not go to school, anything. What can we do? Now, we are thinking, “OK, future, we can learn to do the farm, anything in the future. We love it; we love it.”

**VanZandt:** Right. I know, because you’ve got so many good skills, and you’re so smart, and you work hard, and you’ve got everything you need to be able to pick up and do something else like that, without the language. That’s the thing; you don’t need the language to do that.

**L. Lam:** Yeah, but they farmed when they was in Vietnam, so that’s one thing.

**VanZandt:** Right! So that’s what they’re trying to help people do, is pick up and just do, use the same skills.

**L. Lam:** I mean, that’s what I’m trying to do. I mean, Thao also said to think about having a grant or somebody to help do farm-raised shrimp. Because in Vietnam, they do farm-raised shrimp.

**VanZandt:** Oh, yeah, right. It’s huge.

**L. Lam:** I mean, because they have catfish farm raising. I mean, somehow, someway, we can start doing that.

**VanZandt:** Um-hm. Well, they’ve done a lot of research at Mary Queen of Vietnam [CDC] on that, too. And they have found that the system they’re using is supposed to be the best way that’s profitable to be able to sell, and are selling, planning on, to these local restaurants in the New Orleans area, like John Besh, the famous kind of [chef], who owns like seven restaurants in New Orleans. He’s already talked to them about buying the vegetables they’re going to grow and the fish. So they’re going to have this great market, right here in New Orleans. And then maybe if it goes well, start shipping elsewhere around the United States. But I mean, that’s the plan; that’s the hope. So we’ll see. I hope it works out.

**L. Lam:** Yeah.

**Huong Ho:** We can’t do without the—look like we are family(?) the country.

**VanZandt:** Yes.

**Huong Ho:** And everything easy for work. Before we working in Vietnam, my country, easy (inaudible). Future, it’s bad for me. (laughs)

**VanZandt:** Yeah. It’ll get better. It’s—(Linh signals it’s time to go) OK, I know your parents are waiting.

**L. Lam:** Do you want to see the, where they take the shrimp?



**VanZandt:** I'd love to take some more pictures. Yeah, yeah.

**L. Lam:** Go ahead.

**VanZandt:** (saying goodbye to Huong Ho) Good luck. It's so good to meet you. I appreciate you talking to me. (laughs)

**Huong Ho:** OK, thanks. (laughs)

**VanZandt:** Thank you for sharing.

**Huong Ho:** Thank you, Mississippi(?).

**VanZandt:** I hope it will help let other people understand and know what's going on. (leaving boat dock walking to car) Who lives here? Or is this a processing [facility]?

**L. Lam:** This is where, he used to own this. Now he's going to give it back to—the big house I showed you, the (inaudible)? He own from here all the way down there.

**VanZandt:** (touring the unloading area) OK, so the shrimp come in. Do you pull your boat up here?

**Q. Lam:** (inaudible)

**VanZandt:** Like a vacuum, sucks up the shrimp?

**Q. Lam:** I put the—

**VanZandt:** Shovel?

**Q. Lam:** Yeah, I put the line there, put the line there, go like that; go over here, and (inaudible).

**VanZandt:** Uh-huh. OK, they come in here. Oh, my goodness. Move along here.

**Q. Lam:** Right now, put them like that, more underwater. This where it go out. The boat, this let it go out.

**L. Lam:** Suck, suck it up.

**VanZandt:** Oh, this takes the water out.

**L. Lam:** No, no.

**VanZandt:** Or the shrimp? Yeah, the shrimp, right. The vacuum sucks it up through here. Oh, OK. And then it lands here in the water.

**Q. Lam:** Um-hm, they go.

**VanZandt:** And then it kind of washes it, kind of closes it a little bit, and then they go up here? And what's happening along here? Are there people here taking heads off, or doing—

**L. Lam:** No. They don't do anything. It's where the water drips.

**VanZandt:** Oh, OK. The water's dripping.

**L. Lam:** Drips. And then you weigh them here.

**VanZandt:** OK. Yeah, this is a big scale.

**Q. Lam:** One hundred pounds, look like that.

**L. Lam:** One hundred pounds in the blue box.

**VanZandt:** One hundred pounds.

**L. Lam:** In the blue box.

**VanZandt:** The blue box will hold a hundred pounds. Oh, OK. So this—Linh, do you want to sit in there? (laughs)

**L. Lam:** I'm going to break it, and they'll make me pay for it. (laughs)

**Q. Lam:** The (inaudible) like that, he like small shrimp.

**VanZandt:** Very small shrimp?

**Q. Lam:** Yeah, he cook (inaudible) shrimp. You know (inaudible) shrimp?

**VanZandt:** Um-hm, um-hm. Oh, OK.

**L. Lam:** Five shrimp.

**VanZandt:** So what pound—I know there are different sizes of the shrimp.

**L. Lam:** Làm sao nó biết cái size nào?

**Q. Lam:** They count.

**L. Lam:** They count it. So they weigh it, how much it weigh, and then they count it.

**Q. Lam:** The last year, thirty-five cent, a bad year. Right now, one dollar.

**L. Lam:** Now, one dollar.

**Q. Lam:** Right now, one dollar.

**VanZandt:** So it used to be 35 cents you would get. And now it's one dollar.

**L. Lam:** So it went up; the price went up. But there are no shrimp!

**VanZandt:** So that's good, right; the price is going up, if you can find shrimp. But then also fuel has gone up a lot.

**Q. Lam:** The fuel right now, you know, \$3.30.

**VanZandt:** Now it's up to \$3.40. They crossed it out (referring to sign with price). I need a picture of that. (chuckles) What are these yellow bags?

**Q. Lam:** Salt.

**VanZandt:** Salt? Yeah. What do you do with the salt? Oh. Salt goes in here?

**Q. Lam:** Put like that, and the shrimp go down.

**VanZandt:** The shrimp goes down.

**Q. Lam:** The (inaudible) go up.

**VanZandt:** OK. So it sinks to the bottom. OK. Oh. So the salt—

**Q. Lam:** (inaudible)

**VanZandt:** And then it [shrimp] goes on the table. That's for the sorting.

**Q. Lam:** You clean a little bit.

**VanZandt:** Clean it a little bit. And sort it. OK. And there are your nets. (noise interference) So you've got two nets back here, on the back, and two on the front. Four nets?

**Q. Lam:** No, two nets.

**VanZandt:** Oh, just two. This is connected. OK. And then you crank it.

**Q. Lam:** The deck right there, me and my brother control like that (demonstrating the crank).

**VanZandt:** I see. OK.

**Q. Lam:** It's a lot of money. The whole thing, the whole thing that work like that, maybe twenty thousand dollar.

**VanZandt:** Thirty thousand dollars?

**Q. Lam:** *Twenty* thousand.

**VanZandt:** Twenty thousand, for the crank? For the machine to pull the nets up? Oh, my goodness.

**Q. Lam:** The net like that, it's Japanese.

**VanZandt:** Japanese? Oh!

**Q. Lam:** Right now, I don't know how much. The last year, \$12 a pound.

**VanZandt:** Twelve dollars a pound. OK. Do you repair these yourself?

**L. Lam:** Uh-huh.

**VanZandt:** But they're Japanese nets? He said Japanese.

**L. Lam:** Lưới Nhật hả?

**Q. Lam:** Japanese.

**VanZandt:** Oh, OK, interesting. So where would you find a net like that? Where do you get your supplies?

**Q. Lam:** That net like that, right now maybe \$1000; brand-new \$1000.

**VanZandt:** One thousand dollars brand-new? So how often do you have to buy a new net?

**Q. Lam:** I buy a web, and I cut.

**L. Lam:** He cut it himself. He do it himself. He cut his own net. People hire him to cut down their nets.

**VanZandt:** Oh, really?

**L. Lam:** You should come when they sew them. My mom and dad, they cut. The whole house is full of nets when they're sewing. (laughs)

**VanZandt:** (laughs) So you get the big net, the material, and then you cut it, different net for—

**L. Lam:** (speaking simultaneously) And then he cut it. And then he sew it together.

**VanZandt:** Oh, my goodness. How did you learn to do that? When you apprenticed in Vietnam?

**L. Lam:** Ba, sao ba học vá lưới, cắt lưới ở đâu? Bên Việt Nam hả?

**Q. Lam:** Bên này nè.

**L. Lam:** He learned over *here*.

**VanZandt:** You did?

**Q. Lam:** First, my friend he cut; I look—

**L. Lam:** His friend cut and—

**Q. Lam:** I (inaudible) how many knot(?), how many knot, I cut, cut, cut.

**VanZandt:** And you watched him.

**L. Lam:** He watched him. He watch everybody. (laughs)

**VanZandt:** You're a quick learner. (all laugh) And then everyone comes to you because you paid attention. (Mr. Lam chuckles) Is there a farmer's market here in Houma that they go to, Vietnamese market?

**L. Lam:** A Vietnamese store.

**VanZandt:** OK. I've been to the Saturday market in Mary Queen of Vietnam [community]. Have you been there?

**L. Lam:** No.

**VanZandt:** Oh, yeah! It's all out in the parking lot. They're butchering and everything. Yeah. What else, Mr. Lam, can tell me about this? Or Linh, you've spent time on this [boat].

**L. Lam:** Uh, so you (pause)—

**VanZandt:** He was telling me the salt—he puts the salt in here. And the shrimp goes on top of the salt.

**L. Lam:** Do you see how they don't organize, like my mom and my dad is; they don't lay out. You notice how they lay out, how quickly, because time is money.

**VanZandt:** Time is money. So tell me the difference then.

**L. Lam:** Ba, bà có để ý cái tàu này, nó không có gọn bằng tàu ba, tại sao mà ba lại design cái tàu ba như vậy?

**Q. Lam:** Tại vì ba đi lên.

**VanZandt:** (Mr. Lam shows something) Oh, OK. So what about the design? Point out to me what's different.

**L. Lam:** He said it's easier because he go by himself. But, you know, not ask many people. Tại sao ba để cái đó ở ngoài xa như vậy?

**Q. Lam:** Để tôm.

**L. Lam:** So he picks shrimp, so he can stand rather than sit.

**VanZandt:** Oh, OK. So it's taller, I've noticed, where you pick the shrimp; it's taller, so you can stand, and it makes it easier to get through more, probably, than sitting.

**L. Lam:** Quicker, yeah, you can move quicker.

**VanZandt:** OK. And then what do you do once—where does it go once it's—

**L. Lam:** Let's move closer. (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** Yeah. Yeah (laughs), let's do that. Once you've picked through it, (walking across boat) does it go directly into the coolers?

**L. Lam:** (noise interference) Ba giải thích cho bà? Ví dụ đi, ba kéo lưới lên thì ba để đâu?

**VanZandt:** So this is for the salt.

**L. Lam:** He's going to describe this.

**VanZandt:** Good. Thank you. So the shrimp—

**Q. Lam:** I got a GPS [global positioning system] right there, too.

**L. Lam:** GPS right there.

**VanZandt:** Oh. You have a GPS, then.

**Q. Lam:** Look, I go this side; I got another one.

**L. Lam:** Another GPS.

**Q. Lam:** (demonstrating) Like that, OK.

**L. Lam:** Pick up the net.

**Q. Lam:** I go, the net (inaudible).

**VanZandt:** So that picks up the net.

**L. Lam:** Pick up the net—(speaking Vietnamese)

**Q. Lam:** (demonstrating) Like that.

**L. Lam:** Pull the net there.

**VanZandt:** All the net, so it falls down here?

**Q. Lam:** Whole thing. Shrimp and fish, everything go like that.

**L. Lam:** Fish, everything into this (inaudible).

**VanZandt:** OK. (inaudible)

**Q. Lam:** Do you see right there (pointing to something on boat)?

**L. Lam:** The hook?

**Q. Lam:** No. Cái vợt đó, cái vợt đó.

**L. Lam:** Oh, the—

**VanZandt:** The tube?

**L. Lam:** The net, the green net.

**Q. Lam:** Like that.

**VanZandt:** Oh, the green net. I see, OK. Oh, I see, with the long handle. I hate to make you work when you're on vacation here. (chuckles)

**Q. Lam:** I pick the fish.

**L. Lam:** The shrimp.

**Q. Lam:** The fish go out.

**VanZandt:** The fish goes out. You're sorting through here.

**Q. Lam:** So the fish go at the bottom.

**L. Lam:** Go to the bottom. So the fish is up. And then my mom will pick the shrimp.

**VanZandt:** So then it goes up here for picking, right. OK, so you're sorting through, and I see here you've got two openings. Buckets go down here, two of them?

**Q. Lam:** Work like this, go all the way.

**VanZandt:** All the good stuff goes here?

**L. Lam:** Um-hm. You sort all the shrimp. And finish.

**Q. Lam:** Like that. Clean up.

**L. Lam:** You clean up, wash the shrimp. That's the hose.

**VanZandt:** OK, that are in the bucket?

**L. Lam:** Yeah.

**Q. Lam:** Yeah.

**VanZandt:** OK.

**Q. Lam:** Clean up, clean up like that.

**VanZandt:** OK.

**Q. Lam:** All the shrimp (inaudible).

**VanZandt:** And then the shrimp go in here. And where is the ice?

**Q. Lam:** (showing where) The ice, the water. Ice, the water.



**L. Lam:** Ice and water.

**VanZandt:** So ice and the water.

**Q. Lam:** Yeah.

**VanZandt:** Cold, OK.

**Q. Lam:** Cold.

**VanZandt:** (referring to cooler) And this will hold many pounds?

**Q. Lam:** This one maybe, uh, twenty-two.

**VanZandt:** Twenty-two pounds of shrimp?

**Q. Lam:** Two thousand two hundred.

**VanZandt:** I was going to say, there's got to be more. Two thousand two hundred pounds. Yeah. (chuckles)

**Q. Lam:** The whole right there, hold maybe 8000 pound.

**VanZandt:** Eight thousand pounds of shrimp, just these.

**Q. Lam:** Two twenty thousand pound [coolers], maybe 100,000 pound; that one 10,000 pound.

**VanZandt:** OK. And how long will it stay good, preserved in these coolers?

**L. Lam:** Bao lâu thì nó không hư?

**Q. Lam:** You work good, and maybe twelve days.

**L. Lam:** Twelve days.

**Q. Lam:** Twelve days and go home.

**VanZandt:** Then you better get home, OK.

**L. Lam:** Dưới đây là cái gì? Cũng để tôm nữa hả? In here you can store shrimp.

**VanZandt:** Oh!

**Q. Lam:** The whole thing is 10,000 pound and—

**VanZandt:** How does this open up? So there's an opening, on the other side?

**L. Lam:** He have a—do you see this hook?

**Q. Lam:** Ten thousand pound and(?) 100 box.

**VanZandt:** Oh, my goodness. OK, I see.

**L. Lam:** They have this hook and then he (inaudible).

**Q. Lam:** Goes like that.

**VanZandt:** Ah, so you've got ice down in here as well.

**Q. Lam:** Right there. Control like that.

**L. Lam:** Control.

**VanZandt:** I see. (referring to crank) So it's electric, and it pulls it up.

**Q. Lam:** (demonstrates electric crank he designed)

**VanZandt:** Oh, I see. He's so smart. (Linh laughs) Oh, my goodness, you're amazing.

**Q. Lam:** Look like one, the big motor.

**VanZandt:** Yeah.

**Q. Lam:** And two generator.

**L. Lam:** Two generators.

**VanZandt:** Two generators are in here.

**L. Lam:** Um-hm.

**VanZandt:** This is the motor and the generators.

**L. Lam:** Yeah, we have two generators.

**VanZandt:** Wow. So if one goes out, you have a backup, another one.

**Q. Lam:** Run all night, all day.

**L. Lam:** Run all night, all day.

**Q. Lam:** The generator.

**VanZandt:** Yeah. And so if your power goes out, you've got radio? Do you communicate by radio?

**Q. Lam:** Um-hm.

**VanZandt:** With your brother-in-law?

**Q. Lam:** Um-hm.

**VanZandt:** And you say, "There's shrimp this way!"

**Q. Lam:** Yes. (all laugh)

**VanZandt:** "Don't go that way. No shrimp that way." (laughs) Well, how is it with the other fishermen and shrimpers? Do you all help each other, work together, or is there competition that way?

**L. Lam:** Ai cũng giúp ai hết chon hết hay là mỗi người ganh ghét?

**Q. Lam:** Hồi xưa kia—

**L. Lam:** Hồi xưa ganh ghét hả?

**Q. Lam:** Hồi xưa thì mấy thằng Mỹ nó kỳ thị.

**L. Lam:** Well, back then, the American people with the kind of prejudice against Vietnamese fishermen, so they wouldn't. But now it's better.

**VanZandt:** But now it's better?

**L. Lam:** Uh-huh. Now it's better.

**Q. Lam:** They don't know. At first like that, they don't know me. Right now they know me, so doing OK.

**L. Lam:** (chuckles)

**VanZandt:** So they help you. You help them. Yeah. I would think so. So that's nice it's not so competitive with each other. Wow. Well, it's beautiful. It's a beautiful landscape around here.

**L. Lam:** Yeah.

**VanZandt:** It's so calm. I can see why you would like it.

**Q. Lam:** All the American, he work in, um, in the bayou there, too.

**L. Lam:** In the bayou, too, Americans.

**VanZandt:** OK. Americans all work along—

**Q. Lam:** A little bit. Sometime no Vietnamese, no Vietnamese. Vietnamese work in the lake, not in the bayou(?).

**L. Lam:** So the American work around here, and then the Vietnamese—there are not a lot of Vietnamese, but Vietnamese work in the lake.

**Q. Lam:** Vietnamese work in the (inaudible), sometimes (inaudible), no good.

**VanZandt:** No good. So they work more out in the lakes. So which direction, do you go that way from here?

**Q. Lam:** That way, that way, too.

**VanZandt:** Oh, both. OK. And how far out do you have to go to get shrimp? Are there shrimp right around here (pointing just off boat dock)?

**L. Lam:** Có tôm ở đây không? Ngay đây nè.

**Q. Lam:** Right there, too!

**VanZandt:** Right here, too! So you're dragging the net all along here, OK. (Linh and Linda laugh)

**Q. Lam:** You see right there all the oyster [shells attached to the dock]?

**L. Lam:** Oyster right there. Do you see it?

**VanZandt:** I see oysters on it, yeah! Clinging to it, aren't they? So the minute you take off, you're dragging the net from here, yeah. Thank you for this tour, Mr. Lam. You're my hero. You know what to do, boy. It takes a lot of skill, just to know where to go and when to stop.

(starting car; driving back to house in Houma)

**VanZandt:** This is so wonderful. Thank you, Mr. Lam, for giving me a tour.

(chatting)

**L. Lam:** Bà nói bà không phải là dạy học mà là ở chỗ đó giống như là lịch sử nói chuyện. Giống như là lịch sử mà ghi xuống đó.

**Q. Lam:** OK.

**L. Lam:** Bà chuyên là đi đây đi đó, bà lái xe nhiều qua đó, bà không có dạy.

**Q. Lam:** Vậy là bà giống như là đi tìm hiểu những người là sao là sao đó ha.

**L. Lam:** Rồi những cái lịch sử đó là ở trong cái căn phòng, rồi nếu người ta muốn tìm hiểu về lịch sử của Việt Nam thì người ta xem lại nó. Là người thiệt, không phải giống như là cuốn sách người ta đoán mò, bà hiểu không?

**Q. Lam:** Hỏi về lịch sử, bà biết về lịch sử Việt Nam. Ở cái nước Mỹ này, hỏi đến giờ nó đi oánh người ta không chứ đâu có ai oánh nó đâu phải không?

**L. Lam:** (chuckles) He said we have centralized(?) so much about Vietnam, Vietnam history, but American history, nobody ever attack. I mean, like come over here and attack us. We always go over there and attack other people.

**VanZandt:** (laughs) Yes.

**L. Lam:** I think only 9/11, that's the first one.

**VanZandt:** Nine/eleven.

**L. Lam:** Nine/eleven, 9/11.

**VanZandt:** Yes. That's right, Mr. Lam. That is so interesting that you picked that up. And that's why we can't understand, unless we were soldiers and have been to fight. I can't imagine what it would be like if some foreign country invaded and came into Hattiesburg and came into Houma and just started coming in your house and taking things and shooting people. I can't imagine.

**L. Lam:** You know, 9/11 happened, but you see how angry we were, and then we want to fight back. But we really don't like war, but that really hit them hard.

**VanZandt:** It did. You're right.

**L. Lam:** Thì hai cái máy bay nó đập vô cái tower ba nhớ không? Là một lần đầu tiên thôi.

**Q. Lam:** Ờ. Nhưng mà còn ai quánh nữa đâu? Không ai dám oánh nó hết chơn á.

**L. Lam:** Nobody would dare. Nobody would dare attack.

**VanZandt:** Nobody would dare? (laughs) Well, things are—

**Q. Lam:** And Canada, right?

**L. Lam:** Yeah, and Canada. And Australia, right? Australia, nobody would really attack Australia, right?

**VanZandt:** That's true.

**Q. Lam:** Nói với bà đó, là hồi xưa, người Mỹ nó kỳ thị Việt Nam. Nó tưởng đâu là người Việt Nam cũng như là người Indian, đi làm không đóng thuế. Nhưng sự thật đến chừng nó biết rồi đó, là Việt Nam cũng đi làm đóng thuế. Nên là những người Việt Nam bây giờ làm cho Mỹ là nhiều lắm đó.

**L. Lam:** He said, I think that he said I probably have a misconception that, Vietnamese people, like the Indian, they don't pay taxes. But the Vietnamese people *do* pay taxes. And then he also said they have a lot of Vietnamese people work for United States, you know.

**VanZandt:** That's right. I'm so glad you said that, Mr. Lam, because that's part of the reason I'm doing this is; we all have misperceptions, you know. You all had misperceptions about America, never having been there. When American soldiers went to Vietnam, they knew nothing about Vietnam; they didn't know the language, the culture, or anything. And I think that was a lot of the problem during the [Vietnam] war. But I'm curious, too, because I think something that's important for people to learn from these stories is how strong you have had to be *because* of all the wars that you've lived through. There's a certain strength and mentality that you just have to have that's survival, that changes the way you live your life.

**L. Lam:** Um-hm.

**VanZandt:** And I think we don't have that in America, because we've never had to really fight—I mean, we fought for our freedom, you could say, but—

**L. Lam:** But don't you think that American, they're really intelligent. I mean, they're really intelligent. They pick up stuff. I mean, they learn quick. Even though they are fighting for other countries like Vietnam, but they learn quick, though, you know.

**VanZandt:** Um-hm, um-hm.

**L. Lam:** Even if they don't know how to fight their own (inaudible), but they know how to pick up, you know, quick.

**VanZandt:** Right. Well, it's one thing to have experience. Like I noticed after Katrina, a lot of people were just lost; they didn't know what to do. Or they depended

on the government or FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency]. But the Vietnamese community, they just picked right up (Linh chuckles), and they started rebuilding houses; they didn't wait for anyone to come help because they had been through it before, and they knew instinctively and through experience what to do.

**L. Lam:** Well, with Hurricane Ivan, Gustav, what happened to my parents' house—well, I called the insurance company, and they told us don't touch anything, take pictures and stuff. They won't allow you—you fix something, then there's not proof; they won't pay you for it. So you have to leave stuff, you know.

**VanZandt:** Right. (laughs) It's like—strange.

**L. Lam:** Yeah, we had to put tarps on top of the roof.

**VanZandt:** Blue tarp.

**L. Lam:** Blue tarp, yeah. I mean, but they—if it's something you cannot fix right away, I mean, the adjustor have to come, and they have to look at it, adjustment.

**VanZandt:** Right. Mr. Lam, can I ask you a couple of more things while you're driving? (chuckles)

**L. Lam:** Bà muốn hỏi ba mấy câu nữa.

**Q. Lam:** Hỏi gì?

**L. Lam:** He said, "What question?"

**VanZandt:** What do you think is the reason for your work ethic and your strength and your resilience, making it through all of the challenges in your life that you have? What do you attribute that to?

**L. Lam:** Bà hỏi lý nào mà ba làm như vậy? Tại sao bao nhiêu thử thách mà trong cuộc sống của ba, nhưng mà ba cũng làm lại từ đầu miễn là, khó khăn hay cái gì đó mà ba cũng trải qua, mà sao ba làm vậy được?

**Q. Lam:** Tại vì là nếu mà ba suy nghĩ như người ta là ba không thể nào ba làm được hết. Mà ba nghĩ về ba thôi, cũng như chẳng hạn ba đi làm hãng thôi, mà ba mới làm được. Nhưng mà mình đừng có mộng ao quá. Cũng như là người ta đi làm một hãng như vậy, một tuần lễ người ta kiếm được 1 ngàn, 2 ngàn vậy đó, mà mình cũng giống như họ thôi mà mộng tưởng nếu mình may mắn thì được hơn thôi. Mình đừng có cầu mong giống như là mình ra ngoài là mình trúng liền. Mình chỉ nghĩ cầu mong một ngày mình kiếm được chừng 300 đồng thôi.

**L. Lam:** He said if he think like other people, then he won't work as hard as he does now, you know? Because he's going to think like a factory worker. I mean, he don't

dream too big. Don't dream too big, like, that is not realistic. You know, he make it a level that he is able to reach. So he think of him not as a owner, like a shrimper owner, but as a worker. So he don't think about making a thousand dollars when he go out; he only hoping to make \$300, like as a worker rather than the owner.

**VanZandt:** I totally understand. So it's just a different mentality, a harder-working mentality rather than thinking too grand and too haughty.

**L. Lam:** Yeah, too grand. He can't reach.

**VanZandt:** Been there and, right. And [thinking] you maybe deserve more. Right. Thinking like a worker.

**Q. Lam:** Mà thấy bây giờ, bà thấy người Việt Nam ở đây như vậy đó, không phải người Việt Nam nào cũng làm giống y như nhau đâu. Không có đâu.

**L. Lam:** He said don't look at him and think like, that every Vietnamese people work like him. It's not true.

**VanZandt:** And what do you think, where do you think you would be, what would you be doing if you had stayed in Vietnam?

**L. Lam:** Bà nếu ba không qua Mỹ, ba ở Việt Nam thì bây giờ ba đang làm cái gì, cuộc sống ba sao?

**Q. Lam:** Ba ngu luôn chứ sao giờ nữa.

**L. Lam:** He said he would be stupid.

**Q. Lam:** Ba không có biết cái gì hết.

**L. Lam:** He would know nothing.

**VanZandt:** How do you mean?

**L. Lam:** Tại sao?

**Q. Lam:** Ở Việt Nam là người ta ra sức người ta làm.

**L. Lam:** In Vietnam, I guess, labor, work.

**Q. Lam:** Chứ không phải ở bên Mỹ này làm chỉ có một thôi, thì ở Việt Nam làm tới 10 rồi.

**L. Lam:** Like over in United States, we work only 1 percent. In Vietnam, you have to work 10 percent.



**VanZandt:** So maybe not using your mind as much just more your hands.

**L. Lam:** The hands, physical labor.

**Q. Lam:** Cái gì nặng ở bên Mỹ là người ta lấy cái máy móc người ta làm không. Còn bên Việt Nam, người ta làm bằng tay không à.

**L. Lam:** It's like everything in heavy thing, in United States, they use machines to do all the heavy lifting. In Vietnam, they have to have the manpower.

**VanZandt:** Right. And harder on your health, isn't it?

**L. Lam:** Right, health.

**VanZandt:** Interesting.

**Q. Lam:** Bà có đi về Việt Nam bên bên thì bà mới thấy cuộc sống, bà biết rồi, nhưng mà người Việt Nam để gì làm lại bên Mỹ này.

**L. Lam:** He said, you went to Vietnam; you see how it is. He said in Vietnam the people over there aren't able to work like the people in United States.

**VanZandt:** Yeah, yeah.

**Q. Lam:** Có một thằng chủ hãng tôm mà nó có bốn chiếc tàu luôn. Bốn chiếc tàu mà nó đi vớt dâu, là lần đầu tiên nó đi vớt luôn, mà nghỉ cuối cùng luôn, mỗi một ngày 3000 đồng, con tính đi, mà nó có 4 chiếc như vậy đó.

**L. Lam:** Cái ông Bô Khê hả?

**Q. Lam:** Không. Ông khác.

**L. Lam:** He said they have a man that own a shrimp factory, but he had four shrimp boats. He was the very first person to have four boat. And he was the first person to be called on, and he's the *last* person to be released.

**VanZandt:** In the Vessels of Opportunity [BP program]?

**L. Lam:** Opportunity, and each day was \$3000.

**VanZandt:** Each day. But you were able to be a part of that program? With your boat?

**L. Lam:** Um-hm. Yeah, he was.

**VanZandt:** For how long? Did you look for oil?

**L. Lam:** Ba kiếm dầu bao lâu?

**Q. Lam:** Ba kiếm dầu được 3 tháng à.

**L. Lam:** Three months.

**VanZandt:** Three months? So you saw the oil?

**L. Lam:** Ba có thấy dầu không?

**Q. Lam:** Oh, yeah. Có. Ba có vớt dầu mà.

**L. Lam:** Yeah, he said.

**VanZandt:** Did you lay the boom?

**L. Lam:** Ba để mấy cái boom phải không?

**Q. Lam:** Um-hm. They got the boom right there, too.

**L. Lam:** The picture in the front of the small boat, where my dad came in from, go visit them down there, last weekend, yeah.

**VanZandt:** Oh. That's what they were doing.

(interview ends as family prepares for dinner)

(end of interview)