

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

Muoi Pham

Interviewer: Linda VanZandt
Interpreter: Khai Nguyen

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An Oral History with Muoi Pham, Volume 1043

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Biography

Mr. Muoi Pham was born, the youngest of ten children, on October 8, 1957, in Phan Thiet, Vietnam. His parents originated from North Vietnam; his father fled from the Viet Minh to Phan Thiet where he met Mr. Pham's mother. Mr. Pham quit school to begin fishing with his father, as deckhands, at age eighteen in Phan Thiet, a fishing village. Mr. Pham was imprisoned in reeducation camp in 1977 but escaped after two weeks. He went to Vung Tau and sold fish, sneaking back to Phan Thiet to visit his mother every four to six months. In 1978 he was arrested again but escaped.

In 1981 Mr. Pham escaped Vietnam on a friend's boat. They were taken to Malaysia by a Singaporean ship. Mr. Pham eventually landed in New Orleans where some of his family had previously settled and his older brother was a fisherman. Mr. Pham worked at Schwegmann's Grocery for three to four years then began fishing in 1985. At the time of the interview, Mr. Pham had worked as a deckhand for twenty-five years, primarily fishing for tuna.

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AN ORAL HISTORY

with

MUỖI PHẠM

This is an interview for The University of Southern Mississippi Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage. The interview is with Mươi Phạm and is taking place on April 12, 2011. The interviewer is Linda VanZandt. English/Vietnamese interpretation is provided by Khai Nguyen. English transcription of Vietnamese language italicized in parentheses.

Pham: (inaudible) (speaking in Vietnamese)

VanZandt: This is Linda VanZandt with the Center for Oral History. Today is April 12, 2011, and I'm here in New Orleans East in the Versailles Community at the offices of Mary Queen of Vietnam Community Development Corporation. Khai Nguyen is here, who works with Mary Queen of Vietnam; has offered his services here to help interpret. And we're here today with a gentleman who lives in the community. And if you could say your name, please.

Pham: My name M-U-O-I.

VanZandt: M-U-O-I.

Pham: Yes. Muoi.

VanZandt: Muoi?

Pham: Yeah.

VanZandt: And your last name?

Pham: P-H-A-M. Tiếng Phạm á!

(It's Phạm.)

VanZandt: Pham.

Nguyen: P-H-A-M.

VanZandt: P-H-A-M, Muoi Pham.

Pham: Yes.

VanZandt: Thank you, Mr. Pham, for being here today.

Pham: You're welcome.

VanZandt: And if you could tell me where and when you were born?

Nguyen: Chú sanh ở đâu? Năm nào?

(Where were you born? Which year?)

Pham: Sanh ngày 8 tháng 10, '57.

(I was born on October 8, 1957.)

Nguyen: He was born October 8, 1957. Sanh ở đâu?

(Where were you born?)

Pham: Phan Thiết.

Nguyen: Phan Thiết. P-H-A-N, T-H-I-E-T.

VanZandt: Phan Thiet. And that is in the north of Vietnam, correct?

Nguyen: Ở miền Bắc hay ở là đâu?

(Was it in the north or where?)

Pham: Nó nằm ở giữa thôi.

(It's in the middle [central region of Vietnam].)

Nguyen: Ở giữa. In the middle.

VanZandt: In the middle. OK, OK. Nineteen fifty-seven you were born. That's three years after Vietnam split into two: North and South.

Nguyen: Chú sanh năm '57?

(You were born in 1957?)

Pham: Đúng rồi.

(Correct.)

Nguyen: Nghĩa là 3 năm sau khi là—Việt Nam chia ra 2, 2 với cho North Vietnam với South Vietnam đúng không?

(That means three years after—Vietnam was divided into two, North and South Vietnam, right?)

Pham: Phan Thiết nằm ở giữa thôi!

(Phan Thiet is just in the middle.)

Nguyen: Nhưng mà, nhưng mà—(inaudible)—

(But, but—) (inaudible)

VanZandt: Yeah. And what did your father do for a living?

Pham: Cái gì điều tra tới ông già mình nữa?

(What? Interrogating all the way to my father?)

Nguyen: (laughs) Hỏi như vậy. Đâu có sao. Thì, bố của chú làm cái gì?

(Just asking. It's OK. What did your father do?)

Pham: Ông già của chú đó. Gốc gác sanh đẻ ngoài Bắc. Ông già chú á.

(My father. He was born in the north. My father.)

Nguyen: Ừ hứ.

(Uh huh.)

Pham: Còn bà già chú á người sanh đẻ trong Phan Thiết. Ông già chú á—Hồi đời Việt Minh đó—Chú với cháu chưa ra đời đâu.

(And my mother was born in Phan Thiet. About my father—during the Viet Minh era—you and I weren't even born then.)

Nguyen: (chuckles) Chưa..chưa, cháu biết.

(We weren't born then, I know.)

Pham: Việt Minh mà. Chùng vô trong Nam, vô Phan Thiết á, gặp bà già chú, sanh ra chú ở Phan Thiết.

(Viet Minh movement. When he went south, to Phan Thiet, he met my mother who gave birth to me in Phan Thiet.)

Nguyen: Bố của chú là người lính hả?

(Was your father in the military?)

Pham: Đòi Việt Minh, bố chú trốn chui trốn nhủi. Đi á!

(During the Viet Minh movement, my father was hiding from them.)

Nguyen: Oh, OK. Nhưng mà—

(OK, but—)

Nguyen: Well, he was saying that his father was from the North. And in the times of the Viet Minh—

VanZandt: Yes.

Nguyen: —he came down to Phan Thiet and met his mother. Nhưng mà Bố của chú làm nghề gì bên Việt Nam?

(But what did your father do in Vietnam?)

Pham: Biển.

(Fisherman.)

Nguyen: He was also a fisherman in Vietnam.

VanZandt: Your father was a fisherman, too.

Pham: Um-hm.

Van Zandt: OK. Was he escaping the Viet Minh?

Nguyen: Yes.

Pham: Mm.

VanZandt: OK. Did he fight in the war with the French?

Nguyen: Bố chú có đấu chiến tranh với người Pháp không?

(Did your father fight against the French?) Editor's note: VanZandt was asking if his father fought *for* the French, not against.

Pham: Nói với bà là—bố chú—chú chưa ra đời chú không biết.

(Please tell her that—my father—I wasn't born then, so I couldn't know.)

Nguyen: Dạ.

(Yes sir.)

Pham: Tại bố chú giờ cũng tới trăm tuổi rồi.

(Because my father would have been over 100 years old now.)

Nguyen: Dạ.

(Yes sir.)

Pham: Chú đâu biết đâu.

(I didn't know.)

Nguyen: He's, he's—by the time he was growing up here, he didn't know because he, you know, was just born.

Van Zandt: Sure. Yeah, yeah. OK.

Nguyen: Chú có biết bố chú đấu chiến tranh với người khác không?

(Do you know if your father fought in any other war?)

Pham: Không.

(No.)

Nguyen: OK, he doesn't, he doesn't know.

Van Zandt: That's fine. That's fine.

Pham: My father old, old, old, old, *old*.

Nguyen: By the time he was born, he was already—

Van Zandt: Very old when you were born.

Pham: I think over one hundred years.

Nguyen: Oh. (laughs)

Van Zandt: Oh, very old. How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Pham: About twelve.

Van Zandt: *Twelve?!*

Pham: Yes. (chuckles)

Van Zandt: Were you youngest, old[est]? Where were you in the pecking order?

Pham: (inaudible)

Nguyen: Chú là người út hay sao?

(Were you the youngest child?)

Pham: Út.

(Youngest.)

Nguyen: He was the youngest. Mấy anh chị—chú là số 10 hả?

(How many siblings—are you the tenth child?)

Pham: Đúng rồi! Số Mười đó!

(Correct. Number ten!)

Nguyen: You know his name means ten.

Van Zandt: Ah!

Nguyen: So I think he's—

VanZandt: Number ten!

Pham: Yeah. (smiles) One, two, three, four, five, six, seven—

VanZandt: (laughs)

Nguyen: Mỗi đứa tên là Một, Hai, Ba?

(Every child was named by number one, two, three?)

Pham: Không. Có tên hết. Cuối cùng có chú là tên Mười. Út hết đó.

(No. They all had names. I'm the last one, so I was named Ten.)

Nguyen: He's the youngest. Nhưng mà 12 người, 12 đứa?

(But there were twelve?)

Pham: 10 người.

(Ten children.)

Nguyen: 10 người. 10 đứa con. He says he [his family] had ten kids, not twelve.

VanZandt: Ten kids.

Nguyen: And he's the youngest.

VanZandt: Youngest, the baby. (chuckles) Did you learn how to fish from your father?

Pham: Ồ. Cái đó mình đâu biết đâu.

(Oh. I don't know about that!)

Nguyen: Không thì bà hỏi là chú có tính tập luyện nhảy cá từ, từ bố hay là ai?

(No. She simply asks whether you learned how to fish from your father or from someone else?)

Pham: Từ bố.

(From Dad.)

Nguyen: Yeah. He did.

VanZandt: He did.

Nguyen: Um-huh.

Pham: Nói bả là năm 18 tuổi á, chú vượt biển đi làm việc chung với ông già chú.

(Please tell her that when I was eighteen, I started working with my Dad at sea.)

Nguyen: Yeah. When he was eighteen, he was going fishing with his father.

VanZandt: Was Phan Thiet a fishing village? Was that on the coast?

Nguyen: Phan Thiét? Ah, Phan Thiét có phải là bố, nhiều người đi biển không? Phan Thiet.

(Ah, did Phan Thiet have lots of fishermen, like your father?)

Pham: Có.

(Yes.)

Nguyen: Ở trong, ngay bên bờ hay sao?

(Was it in land, or by the coast?)

Pham: Phan Thiét là loại vùng, vùng làm biển. Cũng như mình ở nửa vùng—(inaudible – speaking simultaneously)

(Phan Thiet is on the coast. Similar to where we are—)

Nguyen: Yeah, yeah. He says—yeah, it is a fishing village. It's like New Orleans. It's by the coast.

VanZandt: Oh, OK. Similar to here. You were eighteen, fishing with your father?

Pham: Um-hm.

VanZandt: And tell me what that was like, fishing with your father.

Nguyen: Thì đi câu với bố thì sao khi 18 tuổi.

(What was it like fishing with your dad?)

VanZandt: Just describe that life versus how different it is to here.

Pham: Mình lớn hơn 18 tuổi mình bỏ học, không đi học. Mình theo ông già đi làm biển. Từ con mực, con cá, làm này làm kia nọ. Biển mà cháu. Ông già biểu làm sao, làm vậy thôi.

(When I turned eighteen, I quit school. I followed my father to working in fishing, catching squid, fish, odd jobs. It's a sea life, you know. I did what my father told me to do.)

Nguyen: Oh, yeah. He's just saying that, he was eighteen. He got done with school. Or I guess—bỏ học hả? Hay là sao?

(You quit school? Or what?)

Pham: Ừ.

(Yes.)

Nguyen: He dropped out of school. And he was just following his father's footsteps, you know. Catching—mực nữa hả?

(Catching squid, too?)

Pham: Cá.

(Fish.)

Nguyen: Squid, fish, all kinds of things. Just following his father.

VanZandt: OK. Did you like that?

Pham: Yeah.

VanZandt: Good life?

Pham: I like the world with fishermen.

VanZandt: What did you like about it?

Pham: Uh, fish, the shrimp.

Nguyen: Chú thích đời câu. Nghề câu—nó. Tại sao chú thích?

(You liked the life of a fisherman? Why did you like it?)

VanZandt: And if he has any stories about [fishing].

Pham: Cháu nói với bà tại vì mình là người ít học. Mình sống với nghề biển từ năm 18 tuổi đến giờ. Mình sống trong cái nghề nào thì mình đi theo nghề đó tại vì cái trình độ mình hông có.

(Please tell her that because of my lack of higher education, I've lived the life at sea since I was eighteen. Whatever trade you are exposed to, you follow that trade because I didn't have a good education.)

Nguyen: Nhưng mà chú thích mà. Chú thích đi câu thì nó vui vẻ hay sao?

(But you liked it. Fishing made you happy, or what?)

Phạm: Ờ—tại vì nói đúng ra, nói thẳng ra nếu mà trình độ của chú có, chú không tính làm việc [này]. Tại vì làm việc [này] nó quá cực nhọc. Khò lắm! Cháu biết mà. Tại vì không có trình độ, mình sống ngay biển từ nhỏ đến lớn mình đi theo nghề đó mình sống thôi.

(Yes. If I could extend my education, I wouldn't want to follow this because this is hard work, miserable life. As you know, because I didn't have enough education, I lived at sea, and so it naturally became my trade.)

Nguyen: He was saying it was kind of something that he was doing because he didn't have the education to do other things, so what he could—that's something he could do because he was growing up in that kind of environment his whole life. His father was a fisherman, so that's, it just became like, um, not, I don't want to say "easy," but like it was easy for him to get into—

VanZandt: Natural?

Nguyen: Natural, yes. It was natural that he was getting into fishing.

VanZandt: Um-huh.

Nguyen: Chú có câu chuyện gì vui vẻ hay là cái gì từ lúc bắt đầu hay là không?

(Do you have any good story to share when you first started?)

Pham: Thì bắt đầu từ—

(Well, in the beginning—)

Nguyen: Đi câu—

(Fishing—)

Pham: Làm biển hả?

(Working on the sea?)

Nguyen: Uh huh.

Pham: Nói đúng ra thì gia đình chú nghèo, OK. Mình đi làm biển thấy có đồng tiền, mình vui vẻ. Tại vì, bởi vì gia đình mình nghèo quá đi. Cháu nghĩ đúng không? Mình thấy vui vẻ tại có tiền. Gia đình có tiền chi phí trong gia đình đó; mình thấy vui vẻ. Vậy đó.

(Actually, my family was poor. OK. Being a fisherman brings in good money. Because we're so poor. Don't you agree? (Nguyen: Yes, sir) I'm happy because I make good money. We have money to help pay for family's expenses, and I'm happy. (Nguyen: Yes, sir). That's all.

Nguyen: He's saying that his family was really poor, but being able to go catch fish and make money for his house made them all very happy.

VanZandt: Yes. And did your brothers fish, too?

Nguyen: Anh em có—Mấy anh có đi câu luôn hả?

(Your brothers—did your brothers fish, too?)

Pham: Có. Gia đình anh sống vùng biển mà!

(Yes. My brothers and their families lived by the sea, too.)

Nguyen: Yeah. And his whole family was—

Pham: Whole family.

VanZandt: A fishing family.

Nguyen: Yeah, a fishing family.

VanZandt: Did your father have his own boat?

Nguyen: Có tàu riêng của mình, riêng của gia đình hay không?

(Did your family have your own boat?)

Pham: Không. Hồi đó thì ông anh thứ Hai ông có, nhưng mà gia đình không có—

(No. My family didn't own a boat. My second oldest brother did own a boat.)

Nguyen: Coi như là—anh của bố của chú—

(You mean—your dad's brother—)

Phạm: Ông anh thứ Hai của chú á. Ông anh cả đó; ông có.

(My second oldest brother, the oldest. He had [a boat].) **Transcriber's note:** In the Vietnamese culture, specifically in the South, people refer to the oldest child as “second.” For example, the oldest sister is referred to as “Chi Hai,” or second oldest sister.

Nguyen: Ông anh ruột hả?

(Your blood brother?)

Pham: Đúng rồi.

(Correct!)

Nguyen: Nhưng mà bố của chú có không?

(But did your dad have a boat?)

Pham: Không. Không. Tía đi làm thôi. Cũng như cháu có tàu; chú đi làm cho cháu vậy thôi.

(No. No. My father worked for people. Just like you have a boat, and I work for you.)

Nguyen: OK. No. They didn't own their own boat, but it's like deckhands, right now, working on other people's boats.

VanZandt: Yes. So you've been a deckhand for a long time. (chuckles)

Pham: Um-hm. Um-hm. Yeah. (chuckles)

VanZandt: OK. When you were eighteen years old, that was the end of the Vietnam War, in 1975. Do you remember the war in your village where you grew up? What did you know about the war?

Pham: Cháu nói với bà—là năm 18 tuổi chú trưởng thành thì bắt đầu cách mạng vô rồ. **Transcriber's note:** Here he referred to the North Vietnamese Communists as “revolutionary movement.”

(Please tell her that when I was eighteen, the North Vietnamese took over the country.)

Nguyen: Năm 75 là (inaudible).

(1975 was—)

Pham: Đúng rồi. Bởi vì chú không có đi lính [inaudible] gì hết. Đúng 18 tuổi là cách mạng vô rồi. Right.

(Because I did not join the Army at all. When I was eighteen, the North Vietnamese took over the country.)

Nguyen: Dạ. Bây giờ bà hỏi chú có nhớ chiến tranh không? Tại vì chú lớn lên là—yes sir.

(She asked if you remember the war. When you were growing up—)

Pham: Nhớ chứ! Biết chứ! Tại 18 tuổi là mình biết cái vị chiến tranh rồi. (Nguyen: Dạ.) I remember!

(Because at eighteen, I sure knew the taste of the war.)

Pham: (inaudible – speaking simultaneously) Không đi lính được.

(I wasn't able to join the military.)

Nguyen: (inaudible) Chú nhớ gì về chiến tranh?

(What did you remember about the war?)

Pham: Thì thấy là chiến tranh thì chết chóc, này kia nọ thôi.

(Well, war caused death, et cetera.)

Nguyen: Trong cái phố Phan Thiết có nhiều người có đi lính?

(In Phan Thiet, were there lots of people in the military?)

Pham: Thấy thì chết chóc kia nọ, rồi, rồi—đem xác—

(I saw death, and many more and people carrying corpses—)

Nguyen: (inaudible) OK. He said by the time he was eighteen, the war was coming to an end, so he didn't join the Army, but he did see a lot of things. He did see a lot of people dying, and like, bodies being carried around. And there were a lot of people from Phan Thiet that joined the Army as well, but by the time he was eighteen, it was right [at] 1975.

Pham: Nói với bà là năm 18 tuổi là chú đúng 18 tuổi là ông anh thứ Bảy—ông anh thứ Bảy nhà—ông đi lính (inaudible)—ông đi lính bị Việt Cộng bắn chết. Dzậy thôi!

(Please tell her that when I was eighteen, my seventh oldest brother who was in the Army was killed by the Viet Cong. That's all.)

Nguyen: He said his brother actually joined the Army. And he was killed, and I think—the seventh child, so a few years older than him.

VanZandt: (heavy sigh) Mm.

Nguyen: Ông anh thứ Bảy là bị bắn chết hả?

(Your seventh oldest brother was killed?)

Pham: Đúng rồi!

(Correct!)

Nguyen: Đi lính bao nhiêu năm?

(How long was he in the military?)

Pham: Hồi đó—Hông biết đâu! Ông đi lính chú không nhớ bao nhiêu năm.

(I don't remember how many years he'd been in the military.)

Nguyen: Ông bao nhiêu tuổi? Ông lớn hơn chú bao nhiêu tuổi?

(How old was he? How much older was he than you?)

Pham: Hơn cũng 1 giáp. **Transcriber's note:** The Vietnamese zodiac calendar runs on a cycle of twelve years.

(A whole cycle of twelve years.)

Nguyen: 1 giáp là?

(What does "1 giáp" mean?)

Pham: Năm nay ông sáu mươi mấy tuổi rồi.

(He would have been sixty something now.)

Nguyen: OK.

Pham: 64, 65 gì đó.

(Sixty-four or sixty-five.)

Nguyen: Dạ.

(Yes sir.)

Pham: Tại chú năm nay là năm [mươi] mấy rồi. Ông lớn hơn chú mười mấy tuổi nữa.

(Since I am fifty something now. He was ten or more years older than I.)

Nguyen: Oh, he's older than him by over ten years, so. **Transcriber's note:** He was actually twelve years older.

VanZandt: Mm, I'm sorry. (pause) Was he a member of the North Vietnamese Army? **Editor's note:** Confusion in translation with time he was in "Army" as many were drafted into the Communist army after the "American" war ended; and the fact that he was killed by Viet Cong was not translated back to VanZandt.

Nguyen: Anh của chú đánh cho người miền Nam hay miền Bắc?

(Was your brother fight for the people in the South or in the North?)

Pham: Miền Nam.

(The South.)

Nguyen: South Vietnamese.

VanZandt: South Vietnamese Army. OK. Very honorable service. Did your family, during the war, consider leaving? Tell me about the end of the war, in 1975, and how you left. What happened in those days after the war was over, how your family decided to leave?

Nguyen: Sau khi chiến tranh, gia đình chú có nghĩ nên đi, phải đi từ Việt Nam đi nước khác không?

(After the war, did your family think about leaving Vietnam to another country?)

Pham: Có chứ!

(Yes!)

Nguyen: Đi—OK. Thì đi nghĩ làm sao? Nhà chú---bố mẹ chú nghĩ làm sao?

(How did your parents think about leaving?)

Pham: Ông già ông chết trước 75.

(Dad died before 1975.)

Nguyen: Oh, his father died before '75.

Pham: Còn bà già còn sống, nhưng mà bà nói á—bây giờ—

(Mom was still living, but she said—Now—)

Nguyen: Là bà mẹ của chú?

Pham: Ồ. Lúc bà già còn sống, bà nói á là chế độ này sống không nổi. (Nguyen: Dạ.) Lúc chỗ cách mạng vô á (Nguyen: Dạ.) Bà nói “Tụi con có đi á, thì tụi con đi. Mẹ không đi.” Tức là bà già không đi, tại bà già sắp chết. Già rồi! (Nguyen: Dạ.) “Tụi con có đi được thì một là tụi con sống, hai là tụi con chết. Chứ mà sống kiểu này, tụi con sẽ sống không nổi, tại vì (inaudible). Rồi bà già bà chấp nhận anh cho gia đình đi. (Nguyen: Dạ.) 1 sống 1 chết á! (Nguyen: Dạ.)

(When she was still living, she said that it would be a harsh life living under this regime. (Nguyen: Yes sir.) When the revolution came. (Nguyen: Yes sir.) She said, “If you all want to leave, you should go. I am not leaving.” That means she wasn’t planning to leave because she wouldn’t be living much longer. She was old. (Nguyen: Yes sir.) “If you were able to leave, you would either live or die. But you wouldn’t make it living in this current condition because (inaudible).” So she approved for us all to leave. (Nguyen: Yes sir.) Live or Die! (Nguyen: Yes sir.)

Nguyen: He was saying that his father had already died, but his mom was also very old. So she told them that, “I’m going to stay, but if you guys want to go, you go. If you go, it’s either life or death. But if you stay, you can’t live like this under, under—

VanZandt: The Communists.

Nguyen: Northern rules.” Um-hm, yeah.

VanZandt: Um-hm. (heavy sigh) So tell me about how you decided to leave, and how you left.

Nguyen: OK. Thì chú decide, chú chấp nhận là chú đi đúng không? Hay là chú đi năm 75 hay sao? Chú đi năm nào?

(OK. So you decided to leave, right? Did you leave in 1975? When did you leave?)

Pham: Năm—Ông anh, bà chị, con cháu á đi năm '79. Chú còn sót lại. Đến năm '81 thì chú đi (inaudible). Còn anh chị, gia đình con cháu đi năm '79.

(In the year—my brothers, sisters, and their children left in [19]79. I stayed back. I left in [19]81. My siblings left in [19]79.)

Nguyen: Thì sau năm '75 thì chú với mấy anh chị nói là mình ở lại hả?

(So after [19]75, you and your brothers and sisters decided to stay, right?)

Pham: Mình từ từ tổ chức ra đi.

(We quietly planned to leave.)

Nguyen: OK. He said they didn't actually leave until—he didn't actually leave until 1981. He had a few older brothers and sisters that left in 1979. They had planned to leave since 1975, but it was a little slower. They *had* been planning to leave since 1975.

Nguyen: Thì chú đi bằng máy bay hay sao?

(Did you leave by plane?)

Pham: Đi vượt biên bằng tàu á.

(By boat!)

Nguyen: Tàu tới chỗ nào?

(By boat to where?)

Pham: Ra tới hải phận á. Lúc đó chú chỉ nhớ là mình đi chạy tàu.

(To the territorial waters. At that time, I remember we were on the boat.)

Nguyen: Mình đi trốn đi hay sao?

(Were you escaping then?)

Pham: Trốn đi đó! (Nguyen: Dạ. Dạ.)

(We were fleeing!) (Nguyen: Yes sir.)

Nguyen: Hải Phòng [hải phận] bên Việt Nam hả?

(Hai Phong in Vietnam?) **Transcriber's note:** Nguyen misunderstood “hải phận” with Hai Phong, the city in North Vietnam. Hải phận means territorial or international waters.

Pham: Không! Tức là ở Việt Nam. Ở Phan Thiết mình trốn đi. Tổ chức tàu bè, dầu (inaudible) mình đi. Rồi ra tới hải phận á, gặp tàu buôn của tàu Singapore.

(No. We fled from Phan Thiet, Vietnam. We organized boat, fuel(?), and we fled. When we got to the international waters, we saw the Singaporean trade cargo ship.)

Nguyen: Singapore?

Pham: Singapore. Họ thấy dân tị nạn, họ vớt. Nó vớt xong, nó đưa mình vào hòn đảo bên Malaysia á. Thì đảo Bidong là đảo tập trung những người tị nạn—mười mấy, hai chục người á. (Nguyen: Dạ,) Thì nó đưa mình vô trong đó. (Nguyen: OK.)

(Singapore. They saw refugees on the boat. They rescued us and took us, ten, twenty of us, to a refugee island in Malaysia. [Pulau] Bidong was the refugee camp for the refugees—(Nguyen: Yes sir.) They took us there.

Nguyen: Yeah. OK. He's saying that they just snuck out on their own, on their boats—đi tàu của ai?

(Whose boat was it?)

Pham: Tổ chức cho đi.

(The organizer's.)

Nguyen: Không, đi tàu của ai?

(No. Whose boat?)

Pham: Của mấy người bạn bè á.

(Friends.)

Nguyen: His friend's boat. And they fueled up and went out, just tried to get away, and then like a Singaporean ship spotted them and brought them to Malaysia—đúng không, tới Malaysia?

(To Malaysia, right?)

Pham: Malaysia.

Nguyen: Malaysia.

VanZandt: Malaysia.

Pham: Đảo Bidong. (Nguyen: Dạ.) Đem tới hòn đảo Bidong là của Mã lai sa.

(Bidong Island. [They] brought us to Bidong Island, Malaysia.)

Nguyen: A refugee camp.

Pham: Tập trung ở đó.

(All gathered there.)

Nguyen: Ở đó bao lâu?

(How long did you stay there?)

Pham: Ở đó 8 tháng.

(I was there for eight months.)

Nguyen: He was there for eight months.

VanZandt: For eight months in Malaysia.

Pham: Um-hm.

VanZandt: Did any of your family go with you or just friends?

Pham: Just myself.

VanZandt: Just you.

Pham: Yeah.

Nguyen: Và em chú đi năm '79 là qua Mỹ luôn hả?

(And your siblings left in '79 and went to America?)

Pham: Đúng rồi! Sau 81 là chú đi. Chú đi qua tới được trại đảo tị nạn Bidong, Mã lai sa (Nguyen: Dạ.) thì chú liên lạc được gia đình anh chị của chú ở New Orleans. (Nguyen: Dạ.) Bắt đầu làm giấy tờ bảo lãnh chú từ bên đảo qua đây. (Nguyen: Dạ.)

(Correct! After 1981, I escaped. When I got to the refugee camp on Bidong, Malaysia, I contacted my siblings in New Orleans. They applied for sponsorship paper to bring me here.)

Nguyen: OK. His family that left in [19]79, they had settled in New Orleans. And when they, when he got to Malaysia, he was able to contact them, and they began the process of trying to get him over to New Orleans.

VanZandt: To sponsor him.

Nguyen: Um-hm.

VanZandt: Were you married before you left Vietnam?

Pham: No.

VanZandt: No. OK, so just you and others. What was the trip like when you left? Were you afraid? Did you know where you were going?

Nguyen: Chú lúc đi chạy, nó làm sao? Chú có sợ hay là gì sao?

(What was it like when you were fleeing? Were you scared?)

Pham: Vụ đi vượt biên hả? Chú lúc đó phải nói là khổ quá rồi. Không sợ gì nữa hết! Một là chết, hai là sống thôi.

(You mean my escape? At that time, life was so miserable. I was not afraid of anything. Either I'd live or die.)

Nguyen: OK. Mà ở Việt Nam là khổ quá. OK.

(So life in Vietnam was harsh, difficult?)

Pham: Đúng rồi.

(Correct.)

Nguyen: He was saying that living in those conditions was already too—he couldn't bear it anymore. So the risk was worth taking for him, life or death, to take that risk to go.

VanZandt: Um-hm, yeah. Well, just briefly, what were the conditions like there [in Vietnam after the war]? If he can just kind of describe—

Nguyen: Chú có nhớ biển nó làm sao không? Lúc mình đi tàu cái chuyến đấy nó làm sao? Nó—Chú có nhớ gì về cái chuyến đi nói đi.

(Did you remember your journey at sea?)

VanZandt: —especially the brother of a South Vietnamese Army [veteran]. We hear stories about reeducation camps, and people being sent. Did he experience any persecution?

Nguyen: Oh, OK. Chú—sau khi cái chiến tranh '75, chú có vô, bị vô mấy cái camp. Chú có hiểu không? Mấy người Việt Cộng mà người ta bắt mấy người vô học lại. Chú có bị như vậy không?

(OK. After '75, did you have to go to camp? Do you understand? The Vietnamese Communists forced people to reeducation camp. Did you have to do that, too?)

Pham: Thì lúc đó là năm '75. Cách mạng vô. Đến năm '77, nó bắt chú đi bộ đội.

(That was 1975. The revolution occupied. In 1977, they made me join the Communist military.)

Nguyen: Đi bộ đội là?

(“Bộ đội” means?)

Pham: Đi bộ đội á! Cách mạng á. Đi—nó bắt chú đi bộ đội—đi, đi học trong phi trường, phi trường mấy người lính học á. Khổ quá. Chịu hông nôi.

(Enlist in the military. We were stationed in the airbase. It was rough. Couldn't handle it.)

Nguyen: Giống như đi tù hay sao?

(Was it like being in the prison?)

Pham: Giống như nó nhồi sọ mình. (Nguyen: Dạ.) Nó huấn luyện, nhồi sọ mình (Nguyen: Dạ.) Đi có 2 tuần, chú khổ quá, chú trốn luôn.

(It was all brainwashing. They trained us, brainwashed us. I was there only two weeks. I couldn't handle it, so I deserted.)

Nguyen: 2 tuần.

(Two weeks.)

Pham: Khổ quá, chú trốn luôn.

(It was rough. And I escaped.)

Nguyen: Từ '75 tới—since '75 until—

Pham: Không. Từ '75, cách mạng vô.

(No. In '75, the revolution came.)

Nguyen: Rồi năm '77—

(Then, in 1977—)

Pham: '77 nó bắt chú đi bộ đội... đi lính á. Đi lính á.

(In 1977, they forced me to join their military. Enlisted in the military.)

Nguyen: OK. Nó bắt chú đi bộ đội.

(OK. They made you join the military.)

Pham: Đi vô trong phi trường, học á. 2 tuần, khổ quá chú chịu không nôi. Nó nhồi sọ mình không hà. (Nguyen: Dạ.) Khổ quá. Rồi nó cho ăn. Một buổi, ăn 1 chén cơm với nước mắm và muối. (Nguyen: Dạ.) Cháu cũng nghe ông già cháu nói (Nguyen: Cháu cũng nghe Ba cháu nói.). Cũng cỡ đó mà. (Nguyen: Dạ.)

(In the airbase, two weeks. I couldn't handle it. It was all brainwashing. Miserable! They only fed us one meal a day with a bowl of rice with fish sauce and salt. You

heard the same story from your dad. (Nguyen: I did hear the same story from my dad.) It's all the same.

Nguyen: Yeah, um, he was saying that in 1975, I mean after the war, in 1977 they got him. They recruited him. Well, I don't know about recruit, but they made him go into military camp. And he was saying they were reeducating, but all they would feed him is some rice with soy sauce. And it was very little food. And he couldn't take it anymore, and he actually escaped after two weeks. 2 tuần là chú trốn đi hả?

(Two weeks and you escaped?)

Pham: Trốn luôn quá xá!

(I ran all the way!)

Nguyen: Trốn đi người ta không có tìm lại hả?

(Wouldn't they look for you after you escaped?)

Pham: Không. Về là bắt đầu chú trốn. Đi thành phố khác. Trong mình chú không có giấy tờ gì khác. (Nguyen: Dạ.) Trốn đi thành phố khác.

(I moved to other town/city. I didn't have any paper/ID with me.)

Nguyen: Thành phố nào?

(Which city?)

Pham: Xuống Vũng Tàu. Rồi giúp phụ cho mấy người buôn bán cá mắm dưới bến tàu á. (Nguyen: Dạ.) Rồi họ giúp đỡ mình. (Nguyen: Dạ.) Xong bắt đầu lâu lâu trốn về Phan Thiết. Về ban đêm, không dám về ban ngày. (Nguyen: Dạ.) Về thăm bà già. Xong cái, hông biết ai báo. Tụi nó xuống bắt còng liền.

(I went to Vung Tau. Then I helped the merchants at the fish market on the piers. They helped me. Occasionally, I would sneak back to Phan Thiet. Always at night, wouldn't dare to come back during the day. I came back to visit my mom. Then, someone must have informed the authorities. They caught me and arrested me.)

Nguyen: He was saying that after he fled the camp, he went to Vũng Tàu, which is another city.

VanZandt: Sure.

Nguyen: And he was helping farmers, or people selling—Bán cá, Vũng Tàu. Chú giúp mấy người bán cá?

(Selling fish. Vung Tau. You helped those merchants selling fish?)

Pham: Đúng rồi.

(That's right.)

Nguyen: He was selling fish and stuff like that. And he would sneak back into Phan Thiết to visit his mom. But he had to do it at night. Sometimes, lâu lâu mới, mới về Phan Thiết hả?

(Occasionally, you went back to Phan Thiet?)

Pham: Cũng 6, 7 tháng, 3, 4 tháng về thăm 1 lần.

(Once every six, seven month; three, four months.)

Nguyen: Every four, five, six months, he would go back to Phan Thiết to visit his mom. But at one time, he came back, I think, someone spotted him or told on him, I guess, and he was arrested. Chú bị bắt năm nào?

(When did you get arrested?)

Pham: Năm '77, '78.

('77, '78.)

Nguyen: [Nineteen] seventy-eight?

Pham: Ủa.

Nguyen: In 1978.

Pham: Mm.

VanZandt: Sent back to camp, or just—

Nguyen: Gửi chú lại vô, vô cái chỗ mà lính, lính?

(Did they bring you back to the military camp?)

Pham: Không. Nó mà—Nó bắt chú. Nó còng chúng, còng 2 tay chú. Rồi nó đưa chú vô phố. Nó chờ ngày nó chuyển mình đó. Rồi chú trốn luôn. *(laughing)*

(No. They handcuffed me and brought me back to town waiting to transfer me. But I escaped.) (laughing)

Nguyen: *(laughs)* He said he got arrested, but he got arrested I guess in the countryside, and they transferred him to the city. But before—Trước khi vô phố hả? Chú trốn trước khi—

(Before they brought you to town? Did you run away before—)

Pham: Không. Nó đưa chú vô, xong chú trốn luôn.

(No. They were bringing me to town, and I escaped.)

Nguyen: Once he got into the city, he escaped again. (laughs)

Pham: (laughs)

VanZandt: Good. You're my hero. (laughs)

Nguyen: Yeah.

VanZandt: Very brave to do that. So you'd visit your mother from Vung Tau. When you escaped, did you escape from Vung Tau or Phan Thiet?

Nguyen: Chú bị bắt trong thành phố nào?

(Where did you get arrested?)

Pham: Ở Phan Thiết luôn.

(Also, in Phan Thiet.)

VanZandt: Phan Thiet. OK. After Malaysia, when did you find out you were coming to America? If he could just talk about how he found out and what he felt about that.

Nguyen: Lúc chú bên Malaysia thì lúc nào chú biết là mình sẽ đi qua Mỹ vậy?

(While you were in Malaysia, when did you find out you'd get to go to America?)

Pham: Tại vì á. Mình ở Vietnam, mình ra đi à. Mình không biết mình đi nước nào. Mình không biết mình chết hay mình sống. (Nguyen: OK.) Tại mình ra đi, bỏ ra đi. (Nguyen: Dạ.) Không biết mình đi nước nào. Không biết mình chết hay mình sống. Trong lúc đó gặp tàu buôn của người Singapore trên đường nó đi chở hàng. Nó đưa mình vô cái đảo Bidong, Mã Lai. Rồi vô trong đó ở trại tập trung. Rồi phái đoàn Liên Hiệp Quốc, các nước đó. Nó vô nó phỏng vấn mình. Nó hỏi á. Lúc đó là chú đã có địa chỉ gia đình gia đình chú ở bên New Orleans. Tại năm '79 đi trước á. (Nguyen: Dạ.) Thì chú đưa địa chỉ là anh chị em cháu tui ở địa chỉ trong nước Mỹ. Rồi bắt đầu nó—qua mấy tuần sau—Nó về Mỹ xong, mấy tuần sau, nó, nó về lại đảo tị nạn. Thành ra chú có phỏng vấn thôi.

(When I left Vietnam, I had no idea where I would end up, whether I'd live or die. I did not know which country I would get to. Then we saw the Singaporean cargo ship. They took us to the refugee camp in Bidong, Malaysia. Then the United Nations team came to interview. At that time, I had my siblings' address in New Orleans, and I

gave it to them. They went back to America. And a few weeks later, they came back and gave me an interview.

Nguyen: He was saying that when, when he left Vietnam, he had no idea where he was going to end up. But once he got to the Malaysian camp, there were people going around interviewing. And he had told them he had this address of his siblings that are living in New Orleans, and he gave that to them. And a few weeks later, they came back and interviewed him again—rồi sau đó thì sao?

Pham: Rồi—

Nguyen: Phong vẫn lại hay sao?

(They interviewed you again?)

Pham: Phong vẫn lại. Xong là nó báo cho anh chị mình vùng bên này là “mày có đúng người em, họ tên này, vậy, vậy.” Rồi bắt đầu anh chị mình làm giấy tờ bảo lãnh qua đây.

(They interviewed again. Then they contacted my siblings and asked them “Do you have a brother with this name?” et cetera. Then my brothers and sisters applied for sponsorship.)

Nguyen: OK. And then they contacted his siblings over here, and they had to make sure, “Do you know this person?” And yeah, and then like once everything was sorted out. They began the paperwork process to get him over here.

VanZandt: Um-hm. And so you came to New Orleans. And what were your first impressions of America, and New Orleans? (laughs)

Nguyen: Chú tới Mỹ, tới New Orleans thì chú, cái gì mà chú nghĩ? Chú nghĩ gì đầu tiên? Chú thấy nó làm sao? Mỹ, cái người nó làm sao?

Pham: Chú qua nước Mỹ ngày à—là năm—ngày 26 tháng 6—ngày 29, ngày 29 tháng 6 năm ’82. Chính là mùa Hè luôn á. (Nguyen: Dạ.) Thì thấy bước chân qua tới đây thì thấy cuộc đời của chú vui vẻ lắm. Không còn chết chóc nữa.

(I came to America on the 26 of June—the twenty-ninth of June, 1982. It was the summer. As I stepped onto this land, I could sense a happier life. No more death.)

Nguyen: OK. He said he came to America in June 29, 1982. And like as soon as he stepped down, he can sense that he had a better life. He’s—yeah.

VanZandt: Freedom?

Nguyen: Um-hm.

VanZandt: How did that—(Pham gives thumbs up)—good, felt good. (gives thumbs up)

Nguyen: (chuckles)

Pham: Freedom good!

VanZandt: Thumbs Up!

Pham: Yeah.

VanZandt: (laughs) Freedom good, yes.

Nguyen: (chuckles)

VanZandt: What was it like to see your family after so many years? Who was here already? Brothers?

Nguyen: Coi, thấy gia đình chú. Máy anh, con cháu lần đầu làm sao? Lần đầu, trước khi bao nhiêu năm thì nó—chú thấy sao?

(After so many years apart, how did you feel seeing your siblings again?)

Pham: Bao nhiêu năm mình xa cách gia đình. Gặp lại lúc nào cũng là vui vẻ rồi.

(Having been separated for years, I was of course happy seeing them again.)

Nguyen: He's very happy. Có bao nhiêu người ở bên New Orleans? Lúc chú qua có bao nhiêu người ở đây?

(How many people were living here in New Orleans? When you came, how many people were living here?)

Pham: Gia đình của chú mà sống ở New Orleans này á? Hồi đó có anh chị em 4 người (Nguyen: 4 người.) mà cháu chắt thì rất đông.

(My family here in New Orleans? Then, there were four brothers and sisters, but there were lots of nieces and nephews.)

Nguyen: He had, four of his siblings were here. And they all have children, too. Most of them had children, too, so there was a lot. It was a big family.

VanZandt: Yes. So you stayed with them? And were they fishing here, any of them?

Nguyen: Chú ở—

VanZandt: Tell me about how he got into fishing.

Nguyen: Chú ở—chú qua Mỹ là ở với anh em?

(Did you live with your siblings when you came to America?)

Pham: Không.

(No.)

Nguyen: Ở một mình thôi hả? He lived by himself.

VanZandt: OK.

Nguyen: Nhưng mà anh chị em có đi câu cá không, làm nghề biển hay không?

(Did your siblings also work in the fishing industry?)

Pham: Có. Ông anh có.

(Yes. My older brother.)

Nguyen: 1 ông anh thôi? One of his brothers was in the fishing industry.

VanZandt: OK, and you—

Pham: Ông già rồi.

(He's old.)

Nguyen: Now he's old, but.

Pham: Old, old man.

VanZandt: Old man now? Not like you. You're a young man.

Pham: (chuckles) My brother.

VanZandt: Yes. Much older, because you were the baby. (laughs).

Pham: (chuckles)

Nguyen: (speaks Vietnamese)

VanZandt: Tell me about how he became involved in the fishing industry here, and what it was like then compared to now. Was it good? Was there any discrimination? Because there are stories of it being difficult for the Vietnamese fishing community here.

Nguyen: Chú qua Mỹ thì làm sao chú đi làm nghề biển? Chú đi làm nghề biển ngay hay sao?

(When you came to America, how did you get into the fishing trade? Did you start it right away?)

Pham: Chú qua Mỹ hồi '82. '82 thì chú về trên North Carolina. Ở trên North Carolina, chú làm cho hãng dệt, hãng dệt vải thôi. Hãng dệt áo quần. Làm có mấy tháng thôi hà. Buồn quá, ít tiền. Rồi mới nghỉ. Về đây. Mới đầu vô trong cái chợ (inaudible—sounded like Wagner's), kêu là supermarket á. Làm trong đó mấy năm. Làm mấy năm cái ít tiền quá, xuống làm biển đến giờ.

(I came to America in 1982. In [19]82, I lived in North Carolina. In North Carolina, I worked at a textile manufacturing firm. I only worked there for a few months. Not making good money, depressing life. So I quit and moved back here. In the beginning, I worked at a supermarket, Wagner's. I worked there for a few years. Not making good money, so I went to work in the fishing industry.)

Nguyen: He said he actually went to North Carolina for a few months and worked in a laundry, or—Hãng quần áo mà—

VanZandt: Clothing?

Pham: (speaking in Vietnamese)

Nguyen: A laundry place for a few months. But he wasn't making too much money. And he wasn't very happy there, so he moved back down here and worked at Schwegmann's [Grocery] for a few years. Bao nhiêu năm?

(How long?)

Pham: 3, 4 năm. Lâu quá rồi.

(Three, four years. It's been a long time.)

Nguyen: Three or four years.

VanZandt: And that was a grocery store?

Nguyen: Yes.

VanZandt: Right. For people who don't know it from—

Nguyen: Yeah. A supermarket. But then after that he quit, and—Sau—khi nào chú bắt đầu đi biển?

(When did you start your fishing life?)

Pham: Chú nghỉ là từ năm '85, hay '86 gì đó. Xuống làm biển đến giờ.

(I think since [19]85, '86. I've been doing it until now.)

Nguyen: Yeah. I think around [19]85 or '86, then he started to go fishing. Nhưng mà tại sao chú bắt đầu đi biển?

(But why did you go into fishing?)

Pham: Tại vì mình thấy làm biển có tiền.

(Because it was good pay, making good money.)

Nguyen: Because he saw that being a fisherman, you can make some money, like good money out of it. Lúc chú bắt đầu, chú có thấy là mấy người Mỹ, mấy người da khác có, có hơi, hơi—thấy người Á châu, người ta có, có—

(When you started, did you notice the Americans, people of other skin—when they saw Asian, did they—)

Pham: Không có.

(No.)

Nguyen: Không có?

(No?)

Pham: Không.

(No.)

Nguyen: Người ta có chửi, cái gì, không biết?

(Did they scold, something, don't know?)

Pham: Không. Không. Mạnh mà sống. Tao sống tao làm thôi. Không có.

(No. No. You live your life. I work; I mind my own life. No.)

Nguyen: He didn't experience any kind of prejudice or racism, personally, so. He was saying, "They do what they do. We do what we do." There wasn't a problem with that.

VanZandt: Um-hm. How many years have you been a deckhand here in New Orleans?

Pham: Chú nói là làm từ năm tám mươi—'85 hay '86.

(I said I've been doing it since eighty, '85 or '86.)

Nguyen: Từ thẳng cảng—mỗi năm nào cũng vậy?

(All the way? [You did it] every year?)

Pham: Đúng rồi.

(Correct.)

Nguyen: He said since '85, '86. So—(speaking Vietnamese)?

Pham: 25, 26 năm từ năm '85, '86.

(Twenty-five, twenty-six years since [19]85 '86.)

Nguyen: Yeah, 25—

VanZandt: Twenty-six years, that's a long time.

Pham: Yeah. Long time (inaudible). Sometime we got money, sometime no money.

Nguyen: (chuckles)

VanZandt: Sometimes it's up; sometimes it's down. Right?

Pham: Yeah. Sometime up. Sometime down.

VanZandt: Yeah.

Pham: Sometime we don't got money pay the house.

VanZandt: To pay the house, right. Like now.

Pham: Yeah. Sometimes don't got *money*.

VanZandt: Well, tell me—I want to get to the [BP Deepwater Horizon] oil spill because that's what we're here really to talk about, and how that's affected you. But can you back up to [Hurricane] Katrina because that's the other disaster that hit this community? And tell me what happened to you and your working, your livelihood as a result of Katrina? Was that a setback, or what happened?

Nguyen: Cái bão Katrina thì chú làm gì? Thì chú phải nghỉ đi biển?

(What did you do during Katrina? Did you stop going to sea?)

Pham: Cái bão Katrina vô mình chứ gì? Lúc đó chú chạy bão về bên Houston á (Nguyen: Houston.). Ở Houston á thì không có tiền. Bắt đầu có người bạn giúp chú đi vô xin đơn vô cái nhà trường—trường học này—đưa nhỏ á để làm clean up, dọn dẹp á. Ở đó được 3 tháng. Rồi chú về lại New Orleans. Bắt đầu ổn định, rồi chú về lại New Orleans. Đi làm biển đến giờ.

(When Katrina hit, I evacuated to Houston. We didn't have money, so a friend helped me apply for a job at a school, kids school. Clean up. I was there for three months. Then I went back to New Orleans. When things got settled down, I moved back to New Orleans and went back to sea, until now.)

Nguyen: He said the storm, he evacuated to Houston. And he got a job as a janitor at a—trường học phải không?

Pham: Đúng rồi. Trường học—school.

Nguyen: At a school. And that lasts for three months. And once he was able to come back to New Orleans, he immediately came back and started fishing again.

VanZandt: You missed it?

Pham: Hm?

VanZandt: Did you miss fishing?

Nguyen: Chú nhớ—Lúc chú bên Houston, chú nhớ, nhớ nghề biển không?

(When you were in Houston, did you miss your fishing life?)

Pham: (nods)

Nguyen: Yeah.

VanZandt: So you came back after being in Houston, started fishing again. Were you able to make enough money pretty soon after Katrina, back to [levels] before?

Nguyen: Ngay sau khi Katrina, lúc chú mới đi biển lại, nó có, có làm được nhiều tiền lại không hay ít hơn không?

(After Katrina and when you resumed your fishing work, were you able to make good money?)

Pham: Không.

(No.)

VanZandt: It was down. Now, it's down again.

Nguyen: Yeah.

VanZandt: For how long has it—had it got any better between Katrina and the oil spill?

Nguyen: Từ bão cho tới khi tràn dầu năm ngoái, nó có bớt hơn bao nhiêu không? Cái tiền, cái cái—cái nghề của mình á. Nó có tốt lại hay là—

(From the time of Katrina to the oil spill, did it get better?)

Pham: Từ lúc mà Bão Katrina 2005 đến giờ, đến vụ tràn dầu? (Nguyen: Dạ.) Đồng tiền làm không bằng hồi đó.

(From Katrina in 2005 until now, until the oil spill? We didn't earn as much.)

Nguyen: Không bằng hồi trước khi Katrina?

(Not like it was before Katrina?)

Pham: Đúng rồi.

(Correct.)

Nguyen: He said ever since from Katrina until the oil spill, he hasn't made as much money as before Katrina.

VanZandt: OK. High gas prices, fuel?

Nguyen: Chú nghĩ sao? Tại bị xăng nó cao hay là sao?

(What did you think? Was it because of the increase in gas prices or what?)

VanZandt: Competition with foreign imports?

Pham: Cái bão, hay vì kinh tế nó lên. (Nguyen: Dạ.) Xăng dầu cũng cao, mọi cũng cao. Vật chất bất cứ cái gì cũng cao hết.

(The storm, the economy, high gas prices, increases in bait prices. Everything is increased.)

Nguyen: Gas prices, bait, all kinds of things came up. And—nhưng mà, hay là bà hỏi về cá mà người ta import từ mấy, mấy, mấy cái nước khác, có ảnh hưởng gì không? Bây giờ Mỹ là mua cá, là mua, 70% là mua từ nước khác. Nó có ảnh hưởng cái nghề của chú không?

(But she also asked about the fish that Mercia imports from other countries. Did it impact your trade, too?)

Pham: Nói đúng, tóm tắt với bà đó. Tóm tắt bây giờ cái nghề biển không (inaudible) ngày xưa. (Nguyen: Dạ.) Cái vụ dầu tràn 2010 đến giờ đâu có (inaudible) gì đâu.

(Actually, please summarize for her. Overall the fishing industry is not like it was before. The oil spill didn't help either.)

Nguyen: Cái này nói trước khi tràn dầu. Trước khi tràn dầu cũng không bằng như ngày xưa?

(Before the oil spill, it still wasn't like before?)

Pham: Không bằng.

(Not equal.)

Nguyen: He was saying, overall—because I asked him about the importing thing. He said just overall, the fishing industry here is not as, not as prosperous, I guess, overall as it was before.

VanZandt: Used to be.

Nguyen: Yeah.

VanZandt: One year ago, almost one year ago now, last year, the Deepwater Horizon [oil rig] exploded, and oil came rushing into the Gulf. Where were you when that happened? Were you working, and had season already started? Was he shrimping then? And if he can just tell, from the time that happened, what his experience has been, how he's been impacted since then.

Nguyen: OK. Lúc chú nghe về cái tràn dầu đó, chú đang làm cái gì? Chú đang đi câu hay là sao?

(What were you doing when you heard about the oil spill? Were you out at sea fishing?)

Pham: Tại vì lúc đó á, mình đi biển. Ở biển. Cái ngày mình về tới đấy. Bữa nay mình vô tới đây chứ gì? Bữa nay, nghe vụ tràn dầu, xập ngã đầu nặng.

(I was at sea at that time. It's like I came back in today, and I heard about the explosion, collapse of the rig and oil spill.)

Nguyen: Lúc đấy chú có ra biển rồi hả?

(So you were already at sea?)

Pham: Đúng rồi!

(That's right.)

Nguyen: Mùa bắt đầu rồi hả?

(The season had started?)

Pham: Đúng rồi. Tại vì cái nghề của chú là nó đi nguyên năm. Câu cá tuna mà. Đi nguyên năm luôn.

(That's right because my work is all year-round. We fish tuna. We go out all year round.)

Nguyen: Yeah, yeah. He said, I mean, he catches tuna, so that goes all year-round. And so he was on the boat, and when he came back in, he had heard about the rig explosion.

VanZandt: OK. And were you out of work then for a while? Just tell me what happened and when you were able to work. What have been the biggest challenges?

Nguyen: Thì chú, sau khi tràn dầu thì chú mất việc. Đúng không?

(So after the oil spill, you lost your job, correct?)

Pham: Đúng vậy.

(That's correct.)

Nguyen: Bây giờ—từ đấy đến bây giờ thì chú làm, làm cái gì?

(Now—what have you been doing since?)

Pham: Stay home. A long time.

Nguyen: Yeah.

Pham: I can't go to work.

Nguyen: Can't go to work. He's been sitting at home the whole time.

VanZandt: The whole time.

Pham: Yeah.

VanZandt: No work last year as a deckhand?

Pham: No.

Nguyen: Sau khi tràn dầu không có làm gì hết?

(After the oil spill, you didn't do anything?)

Pham: Hổng có làm. No money.

Nguyen: He hasn't gone out—

Pham: No money.

Nguyen: —anytime.

VanZandt: What about the claims process? Has he filed a claim for help, financial help?

Nguyen: Chú nghĩ cái gì về cái, cái vụ mình khai đơn cho GCCF [Gulf Coast Claims Facility], BP—Chú nghĩ gì về cái ấy?

(What did you think about the claim process?)

Pham: Cái phần mình không đi làm được là do BP. Từ đó làm ra, sập đổ gì đó. Mà tiền mà nó đền bù cho mình đó. Đồng tiền nó không có đúng tiêu chuẩn của mình. Tại vì, cháu nghĩ đó, BP á. Thằng BP thì nó đền rất là song phẳng, mà đến lúc nó đền được song phẳng được mấy tháng, rồi, nó gởi cho hàng tháng, rồi đến lúc—Xong rồi BP nó giao cho thằng, thằng gì—? GCCF. Ờ, thằng GCCF á. Tự thằng này nó giữ mấy chục tỉ, rồi nó úp chặt cái dân biển mình vô. (Nguyen: Dạ.) Ai low income nó cũng cho hết. Còn cái nghề ảnh hưởng dầu là biển. Cháu nghĩ con cá, con tôm (inaudible). Nó bóp chặt cái nghề biển luôn. Còn mấy người làm bờ, ai có low income, nó cũng cho. Cháu có nghe hết cái chuyện đó rồi. (Nguyen: Dạ.) Rồi làm sao cái nghề biển người ta sống đây? Cái dầu này cháu nghĩ lâu dài, chứ đâu phải 1 năm, 2 năm dứt đâu? (Nguyen: Dạ.) Có 4, 5 tháng tới nay, thằng GCCF nó không có gởi tiền cho. Hồng ai có tiền hết. Dù nó gởi vô, nó nói mình phải(?) (inaudible) \$5,000. Cháu phải biết mình làm biển từ năm 85, 86 đến giờ. A long time. Sống nhờ biển mà. Nó cho, nó gài cho mình \$5,000 (inaudible) (Nguyen: Dạ.) Từ đến giờ, \$5,000 lấy ra, không trả tới nữa. (Nguyen: Da.)

(The reason we can't work was because of BP, from the platform explosion, or whatever, but the compensation wasn't well proportioned because, you see, BP was pretty much in due fair, but only for a few months. Then they turned it over to GCCF. GCCF kept several billions dollars. Then they tightened on our fishermen and people in the fishing industry. And they compensated for people whose trades are on land and with low income. You've heard about all that. So how can the people in the fishing industry survive? This oil spill is long term. It doesn't go away in one, two years. It's been about four, five months now. GCCF did not send money. Nobody got any money. I've been in this industry since [19]85, '86. A long time. We depend on the sea. They gave us, they scammed us to take five thousand dollars. And then, they stopped paying us.

Nguyen: Yeah. He was saying that the reason that, the reason that all these fishermen are out of work is because of BP, and it was their oil spill. And the whole claims process, he's saying that the fishermen aren't getting their fair compensation. All these people that have on-shore claims, they're getting money, too. But the fishermen are getting shortchanged.

VanZandt: So maybe people—when you say “on-shore” like restaurant owners, people on the periphery of the—

Nguyen: Yeah. I guess you could say people that aren’t like fishermen or deckhands or oystermen, like that.

VanZandt: Why is that?

Nguyen: Chú nghĩ sao? Tại sao người biển người ta khó lấy tiền hơn?

(What do you think, why is it more difficult for the folks in the seafood industry to get the money?)

Pham: Thì—

(Because—)

Nguyen: Máy người trên bờ có tiền.

(Folks on land got money.)

Pham: Thì người biển là chú nói với cháu á. Thằng BP, hãng dầu BP nó đền đúng chứ không phải sai. Tức là bồi thường đúng. Tại vì cái lỗi do nó làm ra thì nó phải cung cấp hàng tháng cho người dân ngư phủ có tiền sống. Rồi nó làm đâu có mấy tháng hà! Rồi nó mới giao tiền mấy chục tỉ cho thằng GCCF, thằng gì đó.

(Just as I told you before, BP actually compensated fairly because it was their fault so they had to compensate the fishermen every month. They did it for a few months. Then they turned the billions of dollars to the whoever, GCCF.)

Nguyen: Chú nghĩ chú đồng ý với lúc BP trả mỗi tháng. Trả bao nhiêu ngàn thì chú đồng ý. Sau khi mà bỏ qua GCCF thì chú không đồng ý.

(You agreed with BP paying every month. A few thousands was OK with you. Only when they assigned it over to GCCF that you disagreed.)

Pham: Không đồng ý! Tại vì cái thằng này á, nó—chú nói lại, cái dầu á, nó ảnh hưởng người biển. Nó bác đơn. Cháu công nhận không? Còn đâu ảnh hưởng mấy người làm nails! (Nguyen: Dạ.) Đâu ảnh hưởng mấy người tự hàng. Đâu ảnh hưởng mấy người hãng bánh. (Nguyen: Dạ.) Cũng cho hết! Còn biển, dân biển, mấy người chủ tàu, nó bóp chặt vô.

(Disagreed! Because they [GCCF]—let me repeat. The oil spill impacted the fishing industry. They rejected our application. Don’t you agree? It doesn’t impact the people in the nail salon, doesn’t impact the businesses, doesn’t impact the bakeries. They gave them all. Whereas with the fishing folks, they tightened it up.)

Nguyen: He's saying that, people that have nail salons or other places, they're still getting money. But the fishermen themselves, it's pretty much like they've tightened up on them. That's what he feels. And they closed the waters. They can't do what they do for a living. And a lot of people are getting final payment offers of five thousand dollars, and that's nothing to them. You can't even pay his taxes with that. That's what he was saying earlier. And he just feels that it's very—they put aside twenty billion dollars, but they're only offering that much, five thousand dollars for most people. So that's, a lot of people—he's been doing it for twenty-six years, and five thousand dollars is not going to do too much for him, especially if it's the final offer, you can't get anything else after that.

VanZandt: OK. And for people who don't understand that, or don't know about that, this final payment that they're [BP is] offering—

Nguyen: Um-hm.

VanZandt: —means that they can't ever come back and ask; submit a claim again and ask for more. That's it.

Nguyen: Yeah. And not only just BP. If you get the final payment, there's a whole list of a hundred companies that you can no longer either sue or file claim against in regards to the oil spill.

VanZandt: Um-hm. And what about this payment over six months, and short-term money? Has he received anything at *all*, any kind of help?

Nguyen: Năm ngoái, trước khi, năm ngoái, người ta trả cho chú bao nhiêu rồi?

(Last year, before, last year, how much did they pay you?)

Pham: Năm ngoái, tổng cộng là BP. (Nguyen: BP trước khi) BP lần đầu tiên hàng tháng là nó gửi cho chú \$2,500. (Nguyen: 1 tháng?) Ồ, là—

(Last year, totally BP paid me. In the beginning, BP paid me \$2,500.) (Nguyen: Every month?)

Nguyen: In the beginning, when BP was still handling the claims, he was getting about \$2,500 a month. Tối tháng nào?

(Until which month?)

Pham: Đến lúc nó cho chú 4 tháng hay 3 tháng gì đó. Cho chú 4 tháng hay 3 tháng rồi bắt đầu nó giao cho mấy chục tỉ cho thằng GCCF. Rồi nó ra cái lệnh apply 6 tháng. Cháu cũng nghe vụ đó. (Nguyen: Dạ.) Thì chú cũng apply 6 tháng. Thì nó gửi về cho chú là \$12,000.

(They gave me up to four or three months. Then they turned it over to GCCF. Then they ordered us to apply for six month. You also heard about that. So I applied for six month. They sent me \$12,000.)

Nguyen: And he received \$12,000 for the emergency [payment], which is a six-month payment, from GCCF.

VanZandt: Gulf Coast Claims Fund.

Nguyen: Um-hm.

VanZandt: OK. What would he estimate were his losses for last year, for not having worked all year?

Nguyen: OK. Thì chú đoán, chú đoán là năm ngoái chú mất bao nhiêu?

(Can you estimate what your loss would be for last year?)

Pham: Thì chú nói với cháu là cái nghề biển này không—Đồng tiền nó lên xuống bắt từ lằm. Không phải là hăng—Có lúc chú—Cá nó nhiều, mình vô kiếm lúc là 2,000, 2 tuần á. Còn nhiều lúc mình không gặp cá—

(I told you that this fishing trade is—the earnings fluctuate. Not like companies. When we catch a lot of fish, we could make \$2,000 for 2 weeks. When we don't catch much—)

Nguyen: He says it's very hard to estimate in this industry because it all depends on the catch. And sometimes he can come back from a two-week trip with about \$2,000 or more. And sometimes if they didn't catch too much fish, it would be like \$100. Yeah. So—nhưng mà chú không đoán được?

(But you can't estimate?)

Pham: Hổng đoán được.

(Can't estimate.)

Nguyen: Thường thường chú làm bao nhiêu?

(Generally, how much do you make?)

Pham: Tại vì, thường thường, hồi đó trung bình chú làm 1 năm như vậy á—hổng đoán được. (Nguyen: Dạ.) Nhưng mà kết cuộc, cuối năm tổng kết á. (Nguyen: Dạ.) Hai mươi mấy có, ba mươi mấy có.

(Generally, on an average, every year I make—can't estimate. But at the end of the year, I can tally up to about \$20,000, \$30,000 something.)

Nguyen: But, on average, he makes about between \$20[000] and \$30,000 a year.

VanZandt: OK. And season is about to open again. When would you be able to go out? They say 99 percent of the waters are open now. Is the tuna unaffected? And could he be working? What's preventing him? Are there fewer boats out? Is there too much competition now, people afraid to hire?

Nguyen: Bây giờ tới mùa đi câu. Thường thường đi câu phải không?

(Is this the season now?)

Pham: Không. Thì chú nói cái nghề cá tuna của chú là nó đi nguyên năm. (Nguyen: Dạ.) Không cần tới mùa. Nó đi nguyên năm thôi. Mà bây giờ, con cá này, giờ dầu nó lên cao (inaudible). 2 là dầu (Nguyen: Xăng.), đồ cái gì nó cũng lên hết. Mà bây giờ mình đi, biết có hay không? Vô con cá nhiều khi nó bị ngộ độc—chất hóa học nó chìm dưới đáy biển.

(As I told you, my tuna catching job is all year-round. We don't need to wait for the season. But now, fuel costs and everything are high. And we don't know if we could catch any. Then the fish might also be contaminated due to the toxic from the chemical that settles at the floor of the sea.)

Nguyen: Thì chú sợ hay chú thấy cá bị ảnh hưởng?

(But are you afraid, or you think the fish is impacted?)

Pham: Thì trước mắt mình thấy mà cháu. Tụi nó, rải chất hóa học cho chìm dầu xuống. Chất dầu trên biển chỉ chìm xuống tụi nó nằm dưới. Con cá nó nằm dưới biển, nó đâu có nằm trên đâu! (Nguyen: Dạ.) Bắt buộc nó phải ăn uống nước ở dưới, đúng hông?

(Obviously we see that they disperse the chemical to get the oil to sink. It settles at the bottom of the sea. The fish live down there. They eat and drink down there, right?)

Nguyen: Dạ. He says, well, it's, I mean, he catches tuna, so tuna's all year round, but right now everything's—one, all the expenses are really high, gas, food, everything. And also, he's saying that he's also scared that the tuna's still contaminated because when they were cleaning up the oil, I guess, he's thinking that the oil got pushed down to the sea floor, to the bottom, and that's where the fish are. They're not all by the surface. And so they have to have eaten, or at least come in contact with it. And so he's concerned with that, as well. And that's one of the reasons why him and a lot of other people have not come out yet.

Nguyen: Nhưng mà bà nói là cũng phải 99% là người ta mở cái, mở, mở nước ra rồi. Nhưng mà còn bây giờ mắc quá với lại sợ, sợ bị dầu ạ?

(But she said that 99% they open the waters. So now, is it because everything is too expensive, or are you still afraid of the oil spill impact?)

Pham: Cháu nói với bà. Bà nói bây giờ mở cửa biển ra 95%. Cháu nói với bà đó, chỉ đoán vậy thôi. Còn mà chất khoáng hóa học mà nó rải ra để dầu chìm xuống biển á, cục, cục, cục chìm dưới đáy biển á! Chất rất độc. Chất khoáng học nó rải cho dầu rơi đáy biển mà. Chất rất độc. Con tôm đó. (Nguyen: Dạ.) Con tôm—

(Please tell her. She said 95% of the water is open. Please tell her that it's only speculation. But the chemical that they used as dispersant, chunks, chunks, chunks are at the sea floor. They are toxic. The chemical that they used to push the oil down to the bottom. It's very toxic. The shrimp—)

Nguyen: Cái chất mà người ta bỏ để cái dầu nó—

(The substance that they used so the oil—)

Pham: Đúng rồi! Nó đóng cục, không còn nổi trên mặt nước. Nó nằm dưới đáy. Cục, cục, cục đây—chất độc. Chứ không phải vừa đâu.

(Correct. It doesn't float on the surface, but it solidifies at the bottom. Chunks and chunks of toxic. It's not that simple.)

Nguyen: He's saying that, yeah, they might be saying ninety-something percent of the waters are open, but the dispersants that they used to make the oil go down to the floor, it's very, very poisonous. And they can say that it's however, ninety-something percent is open, but it's still, there's still a lot of affects from it because it's very poisonous, what they've done.

VanZandt: Um-hm. Doesn't mean it's safe.

Nguyen: Yes. Exactly.

VanZandt: You might be able to catch out there and catch some, but—

Nguyen: Exactly. Yeah.

VanZandt: —they feel—

Nguyen: Yeah. Đi ra mà không phải là nó an toàn?

(You can go out, but it doesn't mean it's safe!)

Pham: Đúng vậy. Thì bà nói—Tại vì chú không biết tiếng Anh, chú nói với bà nhiều. 95%. (Nguyen: Thì bà nghe—) Bà nói 95% (inaudible). OK. Bây giờ kêu cái tụi nhà khoa học đó. Nó đi kiểm soát những con tôm, con cá coi có những chất độc này kia nọ không? Hồng ấy—

(That's right. As she said—since I can't speak much English, otherwise I would tell her more. She said 95 percent. OK. Now, let's ask the scientists to examine the shrimp, fish to see if there's toxic in there or not.)

Nguyen: Thì chú muốn thấy người ta nghiên cứu trước.

(So you want them to examine first?)

Pham: (inaudible) Cháu cũng nghe. Chất đó cũng như là chất bom nguyên tử vậy. Dầu độc. Chất độc (inaudible). Nói với bà nó còn nằm cục cục dưới đó. Nó trải chất hóa học cho dầu chìm xuống biển để không còn thấy dầu trên mặt biển nữa. Nó nằm ở dưới á. Mà lúc mà có 1 cơn bão nó vô lúc ở đây chứ gì? Cơn bão mà vô đây, bắt đầu nó cào là nó nổi y sơ lên mặt biển luôn.

(You've also heard. That substance is like nuclear bomb. Toxic. Tell her that the chunks are still down there. They pour this chemical to push the oil down so we don't see it on the surface anymore. But it's still down there. And if there's a storm sweeping in? The storm hits it and will stir up the sea floor, and those toxic chunks will resurface again.)

Nguyen: He's still reiterating the thing from before, where the dispersants making the oil disappear from the surface, but at the bottom there's still clumps that are *very, very*, poisonous. And he's also concerned that if there's a storm or a hurricane that comes up in the Gulf, it would force that to come back up.

VanZandt: That's a big concern—

Nguyen: Yes.

VanZandt: —with hurricane season.

Nguyen: Yes.

VanZandt: Right. It sounds like there's a lot of distrust. He doesn't trust when they say, "Oh, we've done testing, and it's all safe."

Nguyen: Um-hm.

VanZandt: "Very few trace amounts." And so are people not trusting that? The fishermen are not trusting that?

Nguyen: So, so—Chú không có tin tưởng mấy người nghiên cứu họ nói là hải sản thì nó an toàn, nó không có bị gì?

(So you don't trust the researchers who said the seafoods are safe, not contaminated?)

Pham: Không, chú tin tưởng! Bởi vậy, chú nói á. Muốn mà cái vùng (inaudible) an toàn những cái vấn đề seafood á, thì chỉ có tụi nhà khoa học á, tụi nhà khoa học nó khám nghiệm gì á, khám nghiệm những con cá, con tôm. Đó mới an toàn.

(No. I believe them! That's why I said that. If we want it's for the seafood, only the scientists/researchers examine the fish, the shrimp.)

Nguyen: Nhưng mà---đại học---khoa học.

(But the university—science.) **Transcriber's note:** Nguyen misunderstood “khoa học” as “university,” whereas Pham was referring to “scientists/researchers” who run tests and examine the seafood to ensure there are no traces of toxins.

Pham: Tụi nhà khoa học á! Tụi mà đi khám nghiệm những con cá, con tôm coi nó có bị độc này kia nọ không đó.

(The scientists. The folks who examine the fish and shrimp to see if they are contaminated or not.)

Nguyen: Nhưng mà nếu mấy người đây nói “OK” thì chú tin hả?

(But if those people said it's OK, then you believe them?)

Pham: Đúng rồi!

([That's] correct!)

Nguyen: Không phải chính phủ hả?

(Not the government?)

Pham: Cái đó chính phủ hay khoa học chú không sành biết điều đó. Chú chỉ nói chuyện mấy người nhà khoa học—

(Government or scientists, I don't know. I only want to say only the scientists—)

Nguyen: Khoa học là ai?

(Who are the scientists?)

Pham: Nó đó—Kiểu mấy con cá, con tôm nó bị ngộ độc kia đó.

(Those that—the fish, the shrimp that are contaminated.)

Nguyen: Nhưng mà chính phủ cũng vậy.

(But the government can do that, too.)

Pham: Cái đó chú không biết. (chuckles)

(I don't know about that.)

Nguyen: OK. Well, I mean, he would trust research from a respected, or maybe from a university or something, if they say it's safe. I mean, he would respect that. It's not, I wouldn't say that he doesn't trust that, he—thì chú nghĩ nhiều người ngành cá cũng nghĩ như vậy hả?

(So you think everyone in the fishing industry also thinks so?)

Pham: Nghĩ chớ!

(Think so.)

Nguyen: Phải chờ có người ta nói là, là nó an toàn mới—

(Have to wait for someone to say it's safe, then—)

Pham: Bây giờ chú hỏi cháu cái này há. (low voice) Vụ mà nó mở cho mọi người đi biển—nó mở biển—Y nó là không muốn cho mình tiền. Nó không cho mình tiền. Nó biểu mình đi biển há, phải không? Nhưng mình kẹt cái mình đi á—Bây giờ mình đi 1 chuyến biển. Mười mấy, hai chục ngàn tiêu siêu tốn, tại dầu cái gì cũng lên. Mà đi đánh được con cá tuna vô chứ gì? Mình dzô hăng, mình bán. Hăng nói cá nó bị ngộ độc. Mầu thịt nó dơ, đen rồi. Ngộ độc nó không mua. Mình cũng, mình cũng phải đem cá bỏ. ai mua giờ?

(Now let me tell you this. The situation that they open the waters for people to go fishing, that's because they don't want to pay us anymore. They said we can go fishing now. But our challenge is we take 1 trip out to sea. We spend ten, twenty thousand dollars because everything went up. Then we catch some tuna. Take them to the plant to sell. They say your fish is contaminated. The meat looks dark and dirty, toxic; they won't buy it. Then we'll just have to throw it away. Who would buy it?)

Nguyen: Yeah. I mean, he's saying that even though people can see that 95 percent is open, and they go, and prices are already high and they can bring some tuna in, and if the docks say, "We're not going to take this fish because there is contaminat[ion]," then they have to eat the expense. They can't sell it. So that's a big, that's one of the big barriers, in going back. And also, he was saying just before that, he thinks maybe that 90-something percent number is kind of exaggerated to make people go out again. And maybe it's from GCCF or BP, and then, so like, they go out; they both won't be able to get enough compensation from GCCF, and they run the risk of—I mean, they go out there, GCCF would recognize them as, "Oh, they're making a little bit of money, so we're not going to pay that anymore." And then they also run the risk of not making money from the catch. So—

VanZandt: Interesting.

Nguyen: Uh-huh.

VanZandt: OK. I understand. Is this a story that you hear often here [at Mary Queen of Vietnam Community Development Corporation], Khai? Is this a common story that you hear?

Nguyen: I know, I hear a lot of the not going out because of the expenses. And I know a lot of people are still afraid of possible contamination. I hadn't heard of the 90-something percent number until now. I mean, from you, as well, when you had first said it. I mean, that might be a concern. He's the first one that I've heard from that said that.

VanZandt: Um-hm. Where has he received any help at all? Who's helped him in this, this past year?

Nguyen: OK. Thì, thì cái năm ngoái này. Chẳng hiểu sao vì có ai, ai người nào mới giúp không? Chú có biết không?

(Last year, did anyone else help you?)

Pham: Giúp chú hả? Người giúp chú như thế nào? Giúp chú—

(Help me? Help me with what?)

Nguyen: Cái gì cũng được.

(Anything.)

Pham: Cái gì cũng được hả? Năm ngoái, ngày vụ dầu hay tiền GCCF vậy? Chỉ Angel [Daniel Nguyen]—Angel đó. Anything? Last year, about the oil spill or applying for money with GCCF? There was Angel [Daniel]. **Transcriber's note:** Pham was referring to "Angel" but meant Daniel Nguyen of MQVN CDC.

Nguyen: Angel?

Pham: Ờ nó giúp chú để lấy được cái số tiền \$12,000 thôi. (Nguyen: Khai đơn.) Nó gọi điện thoại trên đó. Ngày nào cũng gọi. Nó nói—

(Yes. He helped me get \$12,000. He called up there. He called them every day. He talked—)

Nguyen: Làm ở đây hả?

(Does she work here?)

Pham: Ờ. Đó chú nhờ nó mà.

(Yes. I asked her to help me.)

Nguyen: Người từ—người Vietnam hả?

(Where from—Vietnamese?)

Pham: Angel, người Vietnam mình. Nó làm trong này. Tóc dài.

(Angel. Vietnamese. She works here. Long hair.)

Nguyen: Oh, Daniel [Nguyen]! (chuckles)

Pham: Ồ. Daniel á.

Nguyen: À Daniel.

Pham: Daniel á.

VanZandt: Daniel, yes. He's a good guy.

Nguyen: Yeah. He helped him file his—Daniel helped file his GCCF claim for six months [claim]. Còn ai nữa không? Hội nào nữa không?

(Was there anyone else? Any other organization?)

Pham: Chỉ có Daniel thôi.

(Only Daniel.)

Pham: He helped me last year. He called too many times, too many.

Nguyen: Yeah.

Pham: Nói bả. Daniel nó gọi nó giúp chú. Gọi người này; người này nói cái này. Gọi người khác; người khác nói cái khác. Tức quá, nó nói “tại sao tụi mày làm việc không biết?”

(Please tell her. Daniel helped me. He called this person; they told him this. He called another person; they told him that. He got so frustrated, he said, “Why don't you guys know anything about your job?”)

Nguyen: Dạ. Yeah. And he was saying that Daniel helped him, but many calls had to be made. He was wondering why that had to be the case? Why not just be straightforward. He had to call and get this number, who told him to call this number. And that was frustrating for him.

VanZandt: I'm sure.

Pham: Yeah. Tại vì cái số người 6 tháng như chú quá nhiều. Thằng GCCF nó không muốn trả. Nó không muốn cho con Angel [Daniel] nó gọi, nó nói tại sao?

(Because the number of people applying for six-month funding like me is huge. GCCF didn't want to pay. They didn't want [Daniel] to call them and ask "Why?")

Nguyen: Um-hm. He was saying that GCCF didn't want to pay his [claim] at first, but Daniel made several calls and got it [taken care of]. Let me, uh—

VanZandt: Sure. Do we need to pause?

Nguyen: —make sure to tell them not to lock us in.

VanZandt: I'll pause it.

(brief interruption; end of part one; beginning of part two)

Nguyen: It's kind of bad for the—Ken Feinberg's doing his job. He's pretty much saving BP as much money as possible, but that's unfair to the fishermen, and it's not like these fishermen are just asking to get paid because, "Oh, we can get paid without going fishing." They love fishing. They love that lifestyle, and it's BP's fault that they're not fishing. And it's just unfair to scrutinize their claims, just ask so much in their claims process that it's like—I mean, they've gone through enough for the past year, where—I don't know—it's just making it extra hard on fishermen whereas people, more power to them. They're getting money from GCCF, but some other people that don't deserve the compensation as much fishermen are getting it so much more easily.

VanZandt: And on that note, what has that done to the community, to the fabric of the community? Are there tensions between, now, groups of people who—

Nguyen: I don't think so.

VanZandt: You don't sense that?

Nguyen: I feel like—I mean, you can see where some people could be like, "Why is this person filing a claim?" But I don't really see it like manifest in any way.

VanZandt: That's good.

Nguyen: I mean, obviously I feel like he's very upset about that, but he's—I feel like people can be upset about it, but they don't, I haven't seen anything like—

VanZandt: Hold it against each other.

Nguyen: Yeah. (speaking Vietnamese)

Pham: (speaking Vietnamese)

Nguyen: (laughs) I mean, he is upset with it.

VanZandt: I got that, sure.

Nguyen: He is upset with them.

VanZandt: It's discouraging, I'm sure. And you're not able to send money to your wife and children like you used to?

Pham: (speaking Vietnamese)

Nguyen: (speaking Vietnamese)

Pham: (speaking Vietnamese)

Nguyen: No money, (inaudible).

VanZandt: Tell me where you're living now. You live in a—

Nguyen: (speaking Vietnamese)

VanZandt: Renting a trailer?

Pham: A trailer (inaudible).

Nguyen: Yeah, a trailer.

VanZandt: Renting a trailer. How long have you lived in that trailer?

Nguyen: (speaking Vietnamese)

Pham: (speaking Vietnamese)

Nguyen: (speaking Vietnamese)

Pham: (speaking Vietnamese)

Nguyen: About four or five years. (speaking Vietnamese)

Pham: (speaking Vietnamese)

Nguyen: Even before Katrina, actually.

VanZandt: Oh, I wondered. OK.

Nguyen: But just right before Katrina.

VanZandt: And if you could tell the world, the government, anyone, anything, what would you like to say? What would you like people to know? Anything that I haven't asked that you would like to share.

Nguyen: (speaking Vietnamese)

Pham: (speaking Vietnamese)

Nguyen: Ken Feinberg.

Pham: (speaking Vietnamese)

Nguyen: He said he's very upset that, (inaudible) Ken Feinberg, BP set aside twenty billion dollars for him, and he's making it so hard on these fishermen, on these captains and deckhands, and they're paying him [Feinberg] a million dollars a month, but he's making it so hard on the people that really, really need it. They put aside twenty billion dollars, and he, well, he's saying that they leave it in the bank and getting some interest on that twenty billion while these guys are suffering.

VanZandt: Just to wrap it up because you've been so generous with your time, tell me what you love about fishing. What do you miss?

Nguyen: (speaking Vietnamese)

VanZandt: What does it take to be a good deckhand?

Nguyen: (speaking Vietnamese)

Pham: (speaking Vietnamese)

Nguyen: (speaking Vietnamese)

Pham: (speaking Vietnamese)

Nguyen: He said he's been doing it since eighteen, and he's liked it since then. And it's an easygoing life. I mean, the work might be hard, but it's an easy lifestyle, easygoing lifestyle, and he gets to eat fresh shrimp or fresh fish, and it's very hard to beat.

VanZandt: Hard to beat. Do you trade? I know that a lot of the fishermen, not only fish for a living, but fish to live. And they eat their catch, and they trade and use it to barter for other things. Is he a part of that network?

Nguyen: (speaking Vietnamese)

Pham: (speaking Vietnamese)

Nguyen: He usually, I mean, he does bring seafood home, but most of his friends do onshore, but he does give them some of his catch. (speaking Vietnamese)

Pham: (speaking Vietnamese)

Nguyen: I mean, he doesn't get anything in return, but I guess he's not really asking for that. Yeah.

Pham: (speaking Vietnamese)

Nguyen: It's just like giving gifts. He's not really looking for anything in return, but there is a sizeable community that does that, though. There are a lot of people that do that, but for him, it's just gift-giving.

VanZandt: Well, I hope that you receive something from someone soon, and that you're back on the water, doing what you love to do. Thank you so much.

Nguyen: (speaking Vietnamese)

Pham: (speaking Vietnamese)

Nguyen: Feinberg.

Pham: Feinberg (speaking Vietnamese)

Nguyen: OK. He said that they're on the verge of protest right now.

VanZandt: Ah.

Nguyen: Yeah.

VanZandt: Well, is there any organization that's been helping them? I mean, sometimes these kinds of catastrophes help in that they—

Nguyen: Well, right now, it's not just the Vietnamese community. Other ethnic groups are upset as well.

VanZandt: I guess that's what I mean. Is everyone pooling together to organize?

Nguyen: Yeah. I think that's the plan. I'm not exactly sure, but April 20, coming up, so I would expect something, but one of—she's not really a coworker, but she works in this office. She's not here today, but her name is May Nguyen. She's been at the forefront of trying to get GCCF to pay subsistence claims, which is the—and we actually got them to move. Or she actually got them to move, but their methodology is really bad right now. But it's still progress. They weren't paying any—they pay like one out of ten thousand.

VanZandt: I read that.

Nguyen: And then, I think now, they're agreeing to pay, but the methodology is like—we had this one guy who went to Washington to testify in front of a Congressional hearing on how GCCF was handling the claims. And Feinberg like

spoke to him, and he was saying, “Yeah. I’ll pay your six-thousand-dollar subsistence claim,” but he hasn’t been paid yet. This was in January. And the methodology that they came up with recently, just like last week, I think their calculation was he was going to get paid two hundred instead. So it’s like, yeah, we got them to move; they moved on this subject, but it’s still—

VanZandt: It’s an insult.

Nguyen: Yeah, exactly. And these fishermen, they’re not looking for handouts. What they do, they’re very proud of what they do. There’s a certain dignity, and just I feel GCCF is trying to, yeah, insulting that dignity by saying, “OK. This is what we think about your way of life, two hundred dollars for what you bring home all year for your family, for your community.” But like Mae would be—she’s really busy, though.

VanZandt: Yeah. (laughter) I bet. Well, that’s good. She needs to keep doing what she’s doing. Well, Mr. Pham, what is the future? What do you see as the future? Is he interested in training for another kind of occupation?

Nguyen: (speaking Vietnamese)

Pham: (speaking Vietnamese)

Nguyen: He’s saying that for him, he’s about fifty-three, fifty-four, and he’s saying that he’s going to do fishing for four or five more years, but after that, he has to retire, and (speaking Vietnamese)

Pham: (speaking Vietnamese)

Nguyen: Yeah. He was thinking about retiring around that age, even before the oil spill.

Pham: (speaking Vietnamese)

Nguyen: He’s saying it’s tax season, and they’re not even giving them any money. They need money to pay taxes.

VanZandt: The IRS [Internal Revenue Service] needs to give them a break.

Nguyen: Yes, yes.

Pham: (speaking Vietnamese)

Nguyen: He’s saying that all these billions of dollars, and they can’t just help these fishermen before April 15, which is the tax deadline.

Pham: (speaking Vietnamese)

Nguyen: And it's boat captains and deckhands. It's not like all the fishermen are being, are hard on all of them.

VanZandt: Right. It's hard on everybody in the community. Well, it makes you wonder about the future of the seafood industry, if the next generation doesn't see the future as so bright and rosy, what will happen. All right. Thanks, guys. Thank you, Mr. Pham.

Pham: Yeah.

(end of interview)