

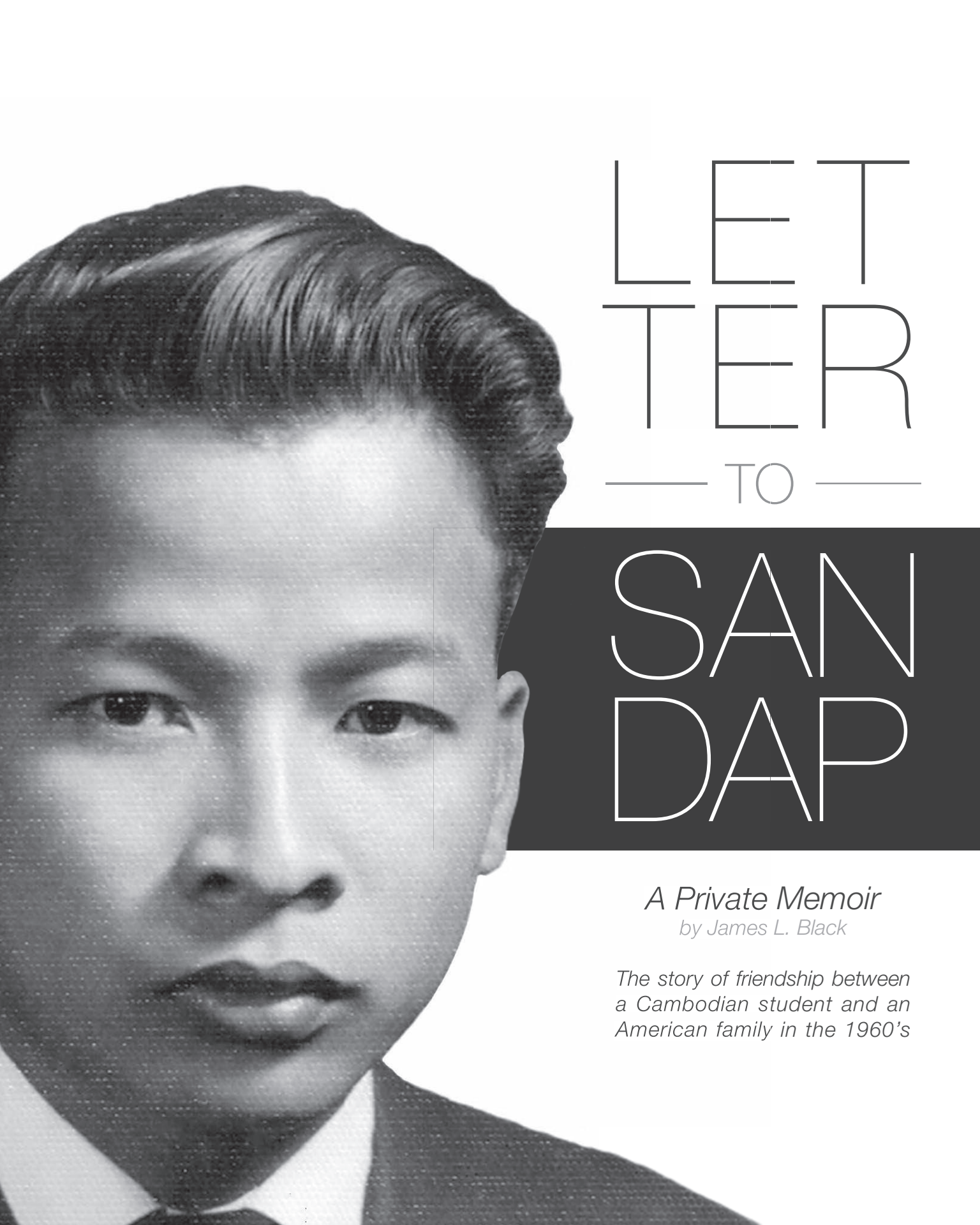
LET TER — TO —

SAN DAP

A Private Memoir

by James L. Black

*The story of friendship between
a Cambodian student and an
American family in the 1960's*



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The Land of Might-Have-Been

Lyrics: Edward Moore

Music: Ivor Novello

Somewhere there's another land different from this world below,
Far more mercifully planned than the cruel place we know.
Innocence and peace are there. All is good that is desired.
Faces there are always fair; love grows never old nor tired.

We shall never find that lovely land of might-have-been.
I can never be your king nor you can be my queen.
Days may pass and years may pass and seas may lie between.
We shall never find that lovely land of might-have-been.

Sometimes on the rarest nights comes the vision calm and clear,
Gleaming with unearthly lights on our path of doubt and fear.
Winds from that far land are blown, whispering with secret breath.
Hope that plays a tune of love, love that conquers pain and death.

Shall we ever find that lovely land of might-have-been?
Will I ever be your king or you at last my queen?
Days may pass and years may pass and seas may lie between.
Shall we ever find that lovely land of might-have-been?

This work is a memorial to the life, character, and accomplishment of Ith Sareth and recognizes the love that existed between him and Linda Gale Black.

It is dedicated to the Ith Family.

The memoir, unpublished, is intended to reside with the Ith family and the Documentation Center of Cambodia.

Acknowledgements

There are many people in the United States and Cambodia to whom this writer is indebted. I extend my profound gratitude to all. Their understanding, encouragement, suggestions, and insights made this document more expressive of my intent, easier for the reader to understand, and more factually accurate than it would have been otherwise.

My first acknowledgement must be Ith Sareth whose friendship, character, and life made me a better person by inspiring me to hold in my heart the human values for which he stood, to remember the example of respect and forgiveness he set, to find the best in others, and to relentlessly turn calamity into opportunity. I believe it was his spirit which made certain that scores of photographs, letters, artifacts, and pages of handwritten notes remained intact and in my possession for fifty years. Without them, writing this memoir would have been impossible.

I thank Mr. Ken McCullough and Mr. U Sam Oeur for sharing the story of Sam's survival during Democratic Kampuchea and escape from Cambodia in their book "Crossing Three Wildernesses," for immediately identifying with my desire to determine the fate of my friend Sareth, for their many thoughtful suggestions, and for recommending me to others who might be helpful.

U Sam Oeur's friend Jim Mizerski, Sareth's niece Ith Khunnary, his sister Ith Siveth, and his brother Ith Sandap are to be thanked for critical information which clarified Sareth's activities after his return to Cambodia in 1970, specifically between 1975 and 1979, making it possible to draw better informed conclusions.

His Excellency Mr. Hem Heng, Cambodian Ambassador to the United States, and Mr. Peang Gafour reviewed my packet of materials, referred me to Minister Chhang Song in Long Beach, California, and then alerted him to expect my call. Minister Song described Sareth's work life between 1972 and 1975, explained the general political atmosphere in Cambodia at the time, and detailed histories of the major players in this drama. Minister Song also read the draft and made valuable suggestions.

The Documentation Center of Cambodia is central to this entire effort. Mr. Socheat Nhean wrote and published articles in English and Khmer requesting information about Sareth and his family, even placing Sareth's likeness on the cover of an issue of *Searching for the Truth* which was instrumental in leading me to Sareth's family. The Documentation Center of Cambodia is one of the most important institutions in the world today in my opinion. My gratitude extends to every staff member, intern, and associate whose daily efforts, in addition to having touched my life, are making the world a better place by providing opportunities for understanding, forgiveness, and reconciliation to millions. The vision and dedication of Executive Director Youk Chhang is unparalleled and an example to all people of good will. Without the support of the Center I would never have found the Ith family.

Lt. General Mâm Sâm reached out to me immediately after my first visit in 2011. He and his family, especially his wife Ith Bophaphalkun, made certain I was able to visit the places in Cambodia important in the history of the Ith Family. Their daughter Srey Pich sent gifts to my son Michael and his wife Krystle and taught me to use chopsticks by eating peanuts one by one, providing me not only with a useful skill but a joyous memory as well. Their son Sothearith C. Keo and his fiancé Bopha Watey Suon showed me Phnom Penh and explained daily life, making me feel completely comfortable in what truly is “the Pearl of Asia.” I proudly claim Thearith and Bopha as my Cambodian son and daughter.

Ith Sandap was warm, forthcoming, and spent many hours explaining life during Democratic Kampuchea and giving details of his family’s evacuation, his imprisonment, and ultimate survival. I felt immediate kinship. His wife Cheang Sithan and his daughter Bopha, beautiful ladies in every way, prepared meals for us at home and picnics for our travels. I shall never forget Sithan’s smile which always greeted me and Bopha’s tireless efforts to make certain all went as planned. Thanks to her, I still reach for cold coconut water for refreshment. A special “thank you” goes to Soc, the grandson of Ith Sandap. I shall never forget my conversations with him and his knowledge of the American Civil War which still amazes me.

Ith Siveth and her family in Pursat allowed me to spend almost an entire day with them and filled it with warmth, hospitality, and critical information. The mementos they gave me will always be pleasant reminders of them. Thank you, Danoch Ke, for the stone box which you personally made and engraved for me. The Naga still emits its fragrance.



Carved, stone box from Donoch Ke, Pursat, 2012



Naga from the family of Ith Siveth, Pursat, 2012

Other members of the Ith family whom I came to know and who provided information during the many family meals we shared were Ith Sereivuth, Ith Wathana, Hgun Chanry, Viseth Thiev, Ky Socheata and Ky Leak Soursdey. Khunnary's daughter Soursdey now resides with her husband Veasna in Texas, USA. Her sister Socheata lives in France. Ith Srâs' daughter Lyna told me specifics about the days of evacuation from Phnom Penh in 1975, about the Eng family, and about Sareth's love for Eng Menea. My gratitude extends to the entire family of Ith Sandap, Ith Srâs, and Ith Siveth.

I am also grateful to Ms. Kallyann Kang of Cambodian National Television for

creating and airing her television segment in December 2011, thereby introducing Ith Sareth to her television audience.

I thank Ambassador Sichan Siv for his prompt response to me in 1989 and for his message in the elevator of the Almond Hotel in 2011.

Along with other Cambodian friends with whom I spoke during the time I worked on this project, I thank Mr. Banheang Hav and Dr. Sin Meng Srun. Mr. Banheang Hav was a member of the Cambodian delegation to the UN in 1974. I knew Dr. Sin Meng Srun as a student at the University of Georgia in the 1960's.

The 2012 visit to Cambodia was made comfortable by the efficient, friendly staff of the Almond Hotel and its manager Mr. Hem Sakana. Jim Mizerski, in addition to finding the first records about Sareth in Cambodia, helped me in many ways during that 2012 visit. I admire his love for and dedication to the Cambodian people and continue to enjoy his friendship and beautiful photographic work.

I thank Dianne Clark Godina for her quick response, "Jim, you must go back to Cambodia. You will never forgive yourself if you don't." She cemented my resolve. My thanks go as well to Evelyn Mitchell, human resources/customer service consultant, who not only taught me much professionally but who inspired me in the beginning to write this memoir.

Photographs and videos come from my own collection, the Ith family, Joe Newton, the Documentation Center of Cambodia, Cambodian National Television, and numerous other sources.

This memoir is the result of collaboration. Mr. Matt Flumerfelt, my long-time friend, poet and journalist, in addition to editing this work, encouraged me at every opportunity. Additional editorial assistance and advice came from Dr. Catherine Price, Dr. Michael Black, Mrs. Krystle Black, Mrs. Sally Yelland Ellis, and Minister Chhang Song. Dr. Sandra Walker, a Valdosta State University colleague and Professor of Spanish (now retired), translated the Spanish documents for me. Mr. Daniel Oppel, Valdosta State University graphic artist, designed the cover and prepared the document in its book form.

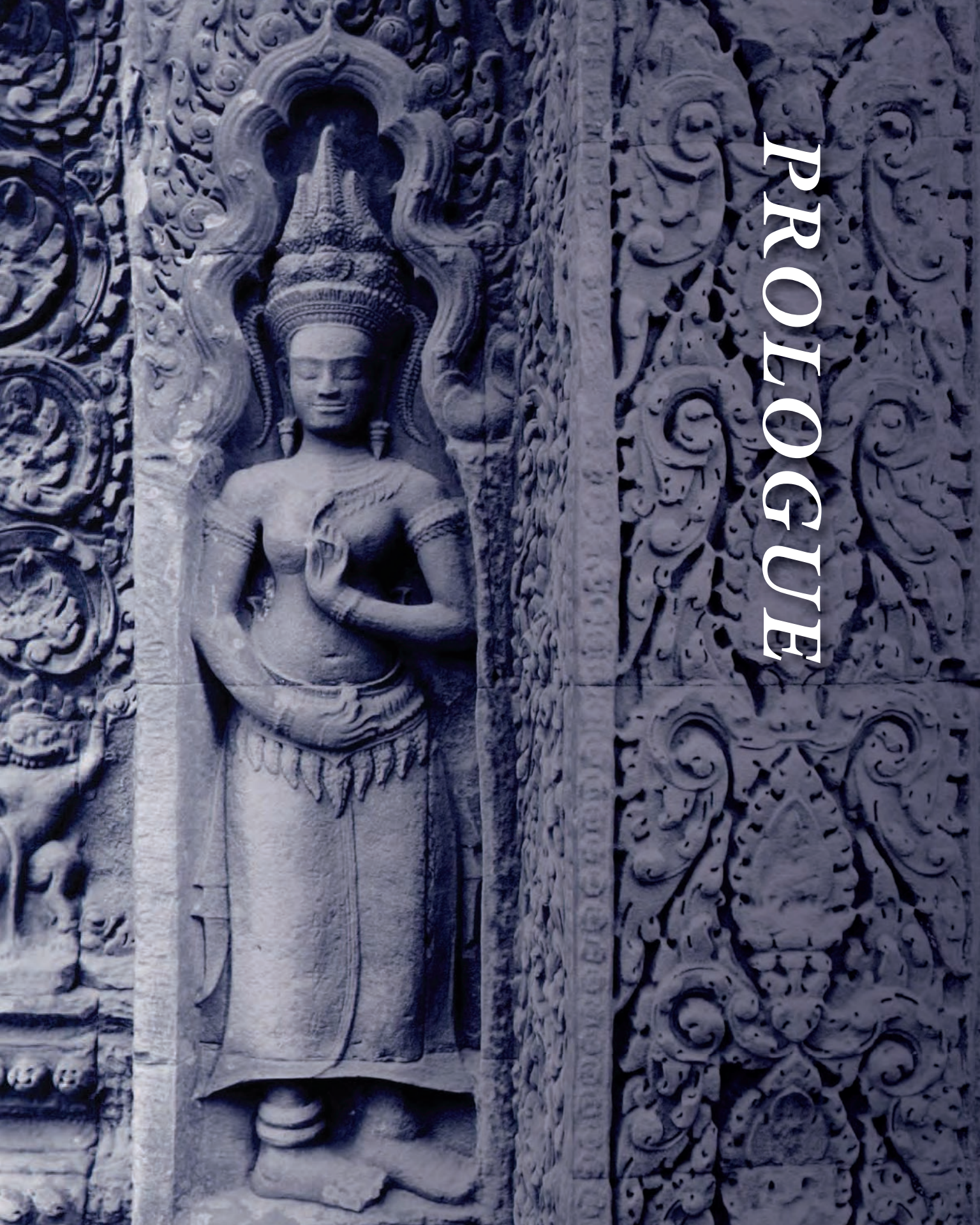
Finally, I am mindful of the presumption of writing about times and events in Cambodia about which those who endured them know so much and I know so little. I ask the reader's forgiveness for errors of fact, assumption, inference, or conclusion which I have made. The people and events in this memoir are described to the best of my knowledge and recollection. My sole intent has been to truthfully tell the story of Ith Sareth's friendship with my family and me over time, to clarify his actions and intentions toward my sister Gale, and to memorialize him as a noble, worthy individual.

This work is not intended to be published or distributed in its present form.

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PROLOGUE



Prologue

“I have been in Sorrow’s kitchen and licked out all the pots. Then I have stood on the peaky mountains wrapped in rainbows with a harp and sword in my hands,” writes the American novelist Zora Neale Hurston in her autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road*. In her youth, she had seen days filled with beauty, happiness, and promise, but in time she finds herself in deep, sustained trouble from which there seems no escape. There is no option but to lick out the pots in Sorrow’s kitchen, hope for better times, and struggle to survive. Hurston, without knowing it, describes the history of the Khmer people who in distant times formed one of the great civilizations in the history of the world but in times more recent found themselves in Sorrow’s kitchen where the unspeakable was daily fare and no breath was drawn without fear. To this day, the Cambodian people are coming to terms with what remains in those pots in Sorrow’s kitchen.

No bad times in Cambodia’s history seared the memory, tore the heart, and scarred the land like the years of Democratic Kampuchea, 1975-1979, when unworthy deeds of those who might otherwise have been worthy, following those who espoused flawed and failed ideology, left Cambodia devoid of 1.7 million of its citizens. Given the numerous occupations throughout its history, including eighty-three years by the French, the Cambodian people are accustomed to struggle, but never before like that demanded by Democratic Kampuchea.

Despite adversity or maybe because of it, individuals arise who dedicate themselves to sustaining the best aspects of their communities and to providing leadership and service to their fellow citizens and their country. These individuals take advantage of opportunities, rise above life circumstances, succeed beyond expectations, remember their origins, and work to give back to their communities and to the societies from which they came.

This historical recollection recognizes and honors the life and legacy of one such individual, Ith Sareth. It outlines some events in his life during the years he remained out of Cambodia earning a Bachelor of Science Degree in Forestry in the United States, earning the Ingénieur des Eaux et Forêts degree in Belgium, and pursuing graduate studies in Law and Economics in France. The work is not intended to, nor can it be, exhaustive; it is not a scholarly document in the strict sense. Rather, it is a memoir based upon documentary evidence and the memories of those who knew him, including surviving members of his family.

Ith Sareth, the youngest of five children was born in February 1937 to Ith An (1900-1978) and Koy Dim (1902-1965) in the southeastern province of Svay Reing, Cambodia. He had two brothers, Sandap (b1932) and Sràs (1933-1975), and two sisters, Simuoun (1925-1974) and Siveth (b1928). Ith An was a school administrator to whom villagers and schoolchildren referred affectionately as “Moniteur Laïc.” Although formal education was not routinely available to girls during that period, the sisters no doubt benefited from having been born to an educated father. He saw to it that his children took advantage of the opportunities they had to learn and go to school, but none of the Ith children took greater advantage of those than Sareth.

His family knew from his birth that he was different, somehow special, and viewed him as having promise. Sareth’s actions and attitudes at a very young age seemed to support this belief. He was a neat child

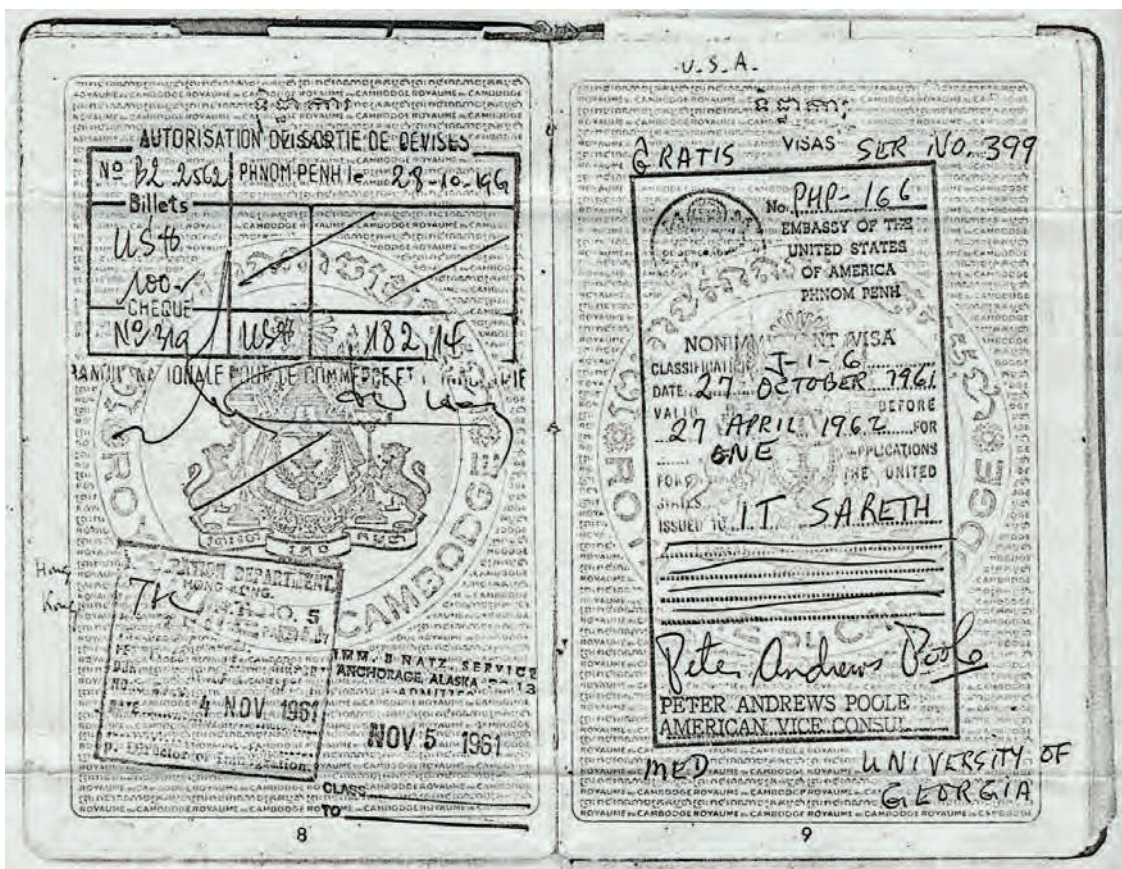
who lived his life thoughtfully, a surprising trait in one so young. Belongings and surroundings always had to be kept in order. In his mind, there was a proper and acceptable way to do things. For example, even if he were eating alone, he would set the table properly, creating one formal place setting. When his studies began, he was dutiful and interested not only in what could be learned from his texts and teachers but what could be learned from his parents, older siblings, and respected elders in the village. His penchant for order extended to his family. To their frequent amusement and occasional irritation he enjoyed organizing and managing their activities as well. As a very young boy, his inventiveness and desire for efficiency led him to develop a system for communicating with family members. Finding it a waste of time to stop what he was doing to locate the person with whom he wanted to communicate, he assigned a number to each of his family members and summoned them by the number of rings of a small bell he kept at his side. He was mindful and respectful of other people, his surroundings, and his family, traits he carried into adulthood.

In 1945, when Sareth was eight years old, the Ith family moved from Ohum Chheute'al village in Svay Rieng to Phnom Penh where his father, "Moniteur Laic," took another post at a school and where greater opportunities were to be found for the entire family. Brother Sandap eventually became a civil servant in Phnom Penh responsible for overseeing public transportation systems. Brother Srâs joined the Cambodian National Police. Sisters Simuoun and Siveth married. After completing secondary education in Phnom Penh, following Buddhist tradition, Sareth entered a monastery where he lived, learned, and served for one year.

In 1961, by executive order, President John F. Kennedy created the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The purpose of this agency was to help people in foreign countries who were working to better their lives while recovering from natural disasters, or who were struggling to live in a free and democratic country. At age 24, Sareth applied for and was granted a USAID scholarship to study outside Cambodia. He chose to study forestry at the University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, USA.

Sareth probably chose the University of Georgia (or it was chosen for him) because it had a reputation for being advanced in such disciplines as agronomy, animal husbandry, agriculture, and forestry and because at that time expertise in such areas was one of Cambodia's greatest needs. The University of Georgia is the largest public university in the State of Georgia and claims to be the first land-grant university in the United States. In 1962, Sareth and approximately twenty other Cambodians chose to begin their university studies at the University of Georgia. Most, if not all, of these students began studies in one of the above mentioned or related disciplines.

On October 27, 1961, Sareth received a visa to enter the United States at the United States Embassy in Phnom Penh. On October 28, official permission was granted to leave Cambodia. On November 4, he left Phnom Penh and, after layovers in Hong Kong and Anchorage (Alaska, USA), arrived in Washington, DC on November 5. He had made a decision before leaving Cambodia to drop the "h" from the family name "Ith," making it easier for English speakers to pronounce.



Pages from the passport of Ith Sareth showing travel to USA

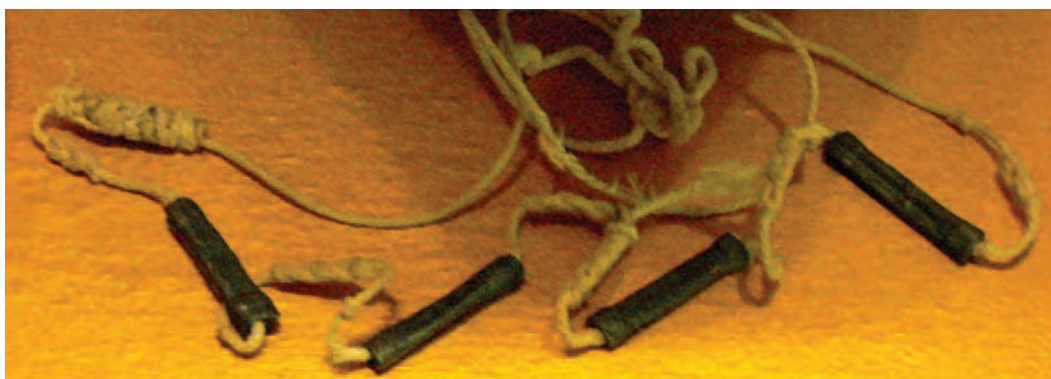
During November and December, Ith Sareth studied English in Washington, DC. He finally arrived at the University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia on Saturday, December 30, 1961, just days before the University's winter quarter began in January. His arrival time was appropriate. It was the beginning of a new calendar year, he was new to the United States, and he was beginning a new phase of his academic life.

Sareth arrived carrying one suitcase containing his clothes, each piece protected in its own basket woven by his sister Siveth specifically for this trip. She had made a dozen or more, small ones for pairs of socks, larger ones for underwear, still larger ones for shirts and pants. They all fit together like pieces of a puzzle and could be loosely locked, one atop the other.



Small basket made by sister Siveth which held one pair of socks

Around his neck was an amulet made from a small cord with knots carefully spaced between little lead scrolls. Each lead scroll had inscribed upon it prayers for his protection during the journey and for his safekeeping during his absence from his family. It had been given to him by his mother Koy Dim.



Amulet with prayers on lead scrolls given to Sareth by his mother Koy Dim

Contrasting with the dullness of the lead scrolls around his neck was a gold chain from which hung a small Buddha which had been intricately carved from one of his father's teeth. These articles were constant reminders of the deep love and affection his family held for him. "We were proud!" said his brother Sandap in a February 2011 interview. "We were proud."

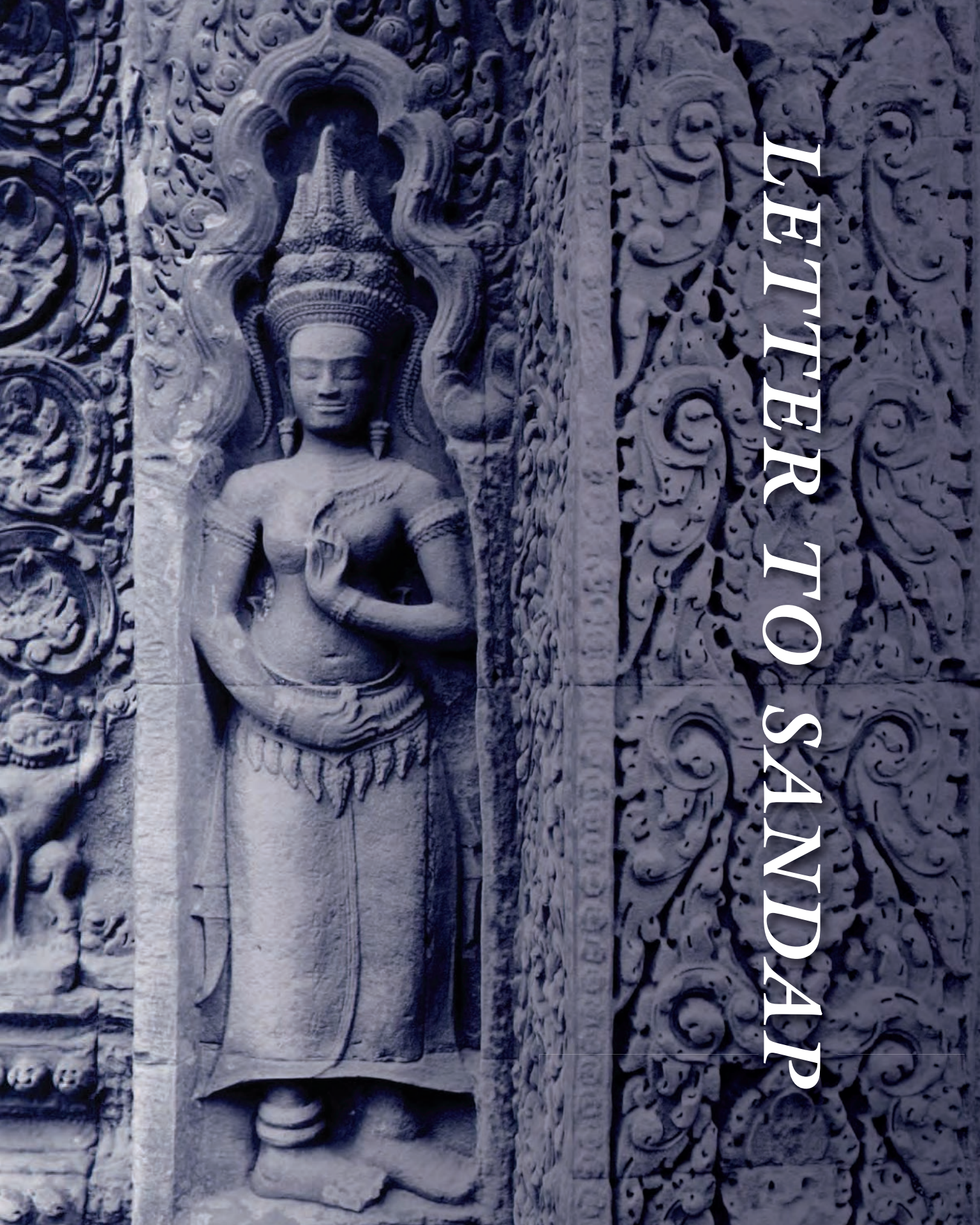
The youngest member of the family of Ith An and Koy Dim, Sareth, nicknamed the "Little Cadet," who had received such deference, love, and nurturing, arrived in the United States of America, 9,250 miles away from home, ready to begin a period of study which, with the exception of his mother's funeral in 1965, would keep him out of his beloved Cambodia for ten years.

Ici commence l'histoire du Petit Cadet au monde.



IT Smith

LETTER TO SANDAR



1709A Gornito Road, #257
Valdosta, Georgia 31601
United States of America
July 8, 2012

My Dear Brother Sandap,

The days spent with you and your family in December 2011, and again in February 2012, were the fulfillment of long-held hopes and dreams. At last and after many years, I again had a very real connection to my cherished friend, your brother Sareth. How quickly those days passed! Although we spoke of many things surrounding Sareth's life and death, those conversations did not allow us to place events firmly in time, and important details remained unmentioned either due to lack of time or because neither of us had called the events to memory in decades. By this letter I shall attempt to reframe in proper order and clarify the subjects of those conversations, adding information I have since remembered and pictures of artifacts that have remained in my possession. It seems to me so unlikely that these artifacts and records would have survived for fifty years that I am led to believe it was for a purpose. I believe the spirits of those who have gone before us and who seek to bring us to our own places of peace and atonement have facilitated our meeting and are now facilitating the documentation of this part of Sareth's story. You said to me when I left you, "My brother has been gone from us for more than thirty years. He has now sent us you." I believe you were right. I feel him beside me every day reminding me of things as I write.

To enable you to more easily understand how and why events evolved as they did, I must present in some detail information about my own life and about the social and political climate in the United States during the 1960's. Much of the personal information is known only to me.

When we first met, the message I wanted to leave with you was that, while Sareth was away from you studying in the United States, he remembered and honored his family. In addition, he represented his family, his country, and his culture admirably and favorably. It's also important to me that you know he made good friends, some of them powerful, both inside and outside the University community. Among those friends of lesser influence was an extended family of people who loved and cared for him as their own, the Blacks. What he could not know then was the price to be paid for that love and affection and how bittersweet the journey would become.

Home Life

My father, Lee D. Black (1919-2004), was a well-meaning but poorly educated man whose parents were originally tenant farmers. He began but did not complete grade 7. My mother, Martha Perry Black (b1923), began but did not complete grade 10. I was born in 1944, my sister Gale in 1949, and my brother Tim in 1955. Our parents set examples of honesty, cleanliness, and hard work. Adequate food and clothing were provided, and the

home environment was physically safe. However, the influence of these positive aspects was offset by the overriding preeminence given to the most important thing in their lives: religion. As evangelical Christians, they believed the Bible was the inspired word of God and that every word was to be taken literally.

The Bible, as we know it, is a translated document. My parents (and their church brethren) had no concept of the problems associated with translation and saw no risk in basing even the most critical life decisions on a single word. Even had they understood the problems presented by translation, it would have made no difference. They were born-again, Pentecostal fundamentalists who believed God has every answer and that the resolution of life's problems is simply a matter of faith in God, their God. Pentecostal women of that time used no facial makeup, wore only clothing falling below their knees, and allowed their hair to grow long. In this belief system, a woman is subject in all matters to her husband's will and instructions. There is an easy comparison to fundamentalist Muslims. At least this church community did not, as some fundamentalist Christian sects do, handle snakes during their church services, a practice based upon the literal interpretation of *"And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."* (Mark 16:17) These were Jesus' last words translated from the late manuscripts into the English language of King James I of England.

Fundamentalist, conservative Christians believe Jesus was crucified, died, was buried, came back to life, and went to heaven. They also believe he will return to earth to take all good Christians back to heaven and ultimately cast all others into hell, an eternally burning lake of fire. This can be avoided if one is "saved" by inviting Jesus into one's heart and adopting the correct belief system. Believers are admonished to live without sin and the appearance of evil. The slightest doubt about whether or not one is really "saved" becomes harmfully burdensome over time because it lends a three dimensional nature to the idea of the lake of fire, and fear becomes a natural, persistent state.

Evangelism is a prime directive. Any human being living presently or deceased who has not heard the name of Jesus and been given an opportunity to invite him into his heart will be summarily cast into that lake of fire. My brother, my sister, and I were required to be in church every Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday evening. In addition, if there were special services or "revivals" at other churches on other days, we often went. We were not allowed to remain at home. Our lives consisted of school, home, and church.

Lee Black was determined that he, his family, and as many people as he could persuade, following the strictest reading of scriptures, were going to lead lives without the blemish of temptation and sin. In the summer of 1957, he bought a television but sold it three weeks later because women were showing their legs. In my youth no one in my family went to the movies or attended sporting events. He actually believed that a book with a paper back was "of the devil" and could only contain dirty stories. To him, only books with hard backs could have redeeming value. Everyone in his church believed God could instantly

mend broken bones, cure dreaded diseases, and literally move mountains. Congregants lined up before the minister, God's representative, waiting for him to place his hand on their heads and call down a miracle which sometimes induced them to dance, shout, or careen around the room flinging their arms and legs. They often fell completely unconscious on the floor in rapture. When women's dresses fell above their knees as a result, dutiful deacons and other saints of God were quick to cover those exposed legs with cloths to protect the women's virtue and prevent the men from having sinful thoughts.

No part of their practice was more arresting than glossolalia or "speaking in tongues." This practice is considered one of the nine "gifts of the Holy Spirit." These "gifts" as they are commonly understood are 1) General Wisdom, 2) Specific Knowledge, 3) Faith, 4) Ability to Heal, 5) Ability to Work Miracles, 6) Ability to Foretell the Future, 7) Ability to Differentiate Good from Bad Spirits, 8) Ability to Speak Different Kinds of Tongues, and 9) Ability to Interpret Different Kinds of Tongues. Fundamentalist Christians believe the ability to "speak in tongues" is given to a person of particular sanctity and that it is a sure sign of God's approval and presence in that person's life. It has not been traditionally understood to be the speaking of what we might consider "foreign languages." Instead, the "gift" most often manifests itself simply as unintelligible syllables. A person with the gift of tongues is said to have the "Holy Ghost."

A person with the Holy Ghost would punctuate church services by outbursts of what seemed to those without the "gift" as gibberish. However, another person present with the gift of "interpretation of tongues" could interpret. Occasionally, no one was present with the "gift of interpretation" and the message fell on the ears of people who did not understand but were nonetheless awed by the presence of God.

My parents' strict religious practices were not shared by my extended family with few exceptions, one being my paternal grandmother. Many of my mother's fourteen brothers and sisters were educated and not very religious. They used tobacco, were avid sports enthusiasts, and drank alcohol. Moreover, they went to movies! Only one or two of my father's six siblings had education beyond high school, and some of my ancestors on that side, according to my grandmother who had been "saved from all that," were actually bootleggers who illegally made and sold alcohol during the prohibition era (1920-1933) when the manufacture, sale, and import of intoxicating liquors was prohibited in the United States. Numerous ancestors in the 1800's owned slaves.

Our operative house rule was that my father's wishes had to be fulfilled and his directives met. Even at an early age I knew the world had to be a bigger place than the one I knew, populated by people unlike those I knew. My father always considered me to be "different," a belief I shared privately. He never suspected that his autocratic, self-centered behavior and excessive religious devotion might be creating division in the family and inducing people to want to be different. In a reflective mood one day, not long before he died, he commented to my brother Tim, "I did the right things. If I had it to do again, I would do exactly what I did." When I was ten or eleven he said to me, "Why can't you be one of us?" I did not know why, but I knew that I was not and could not be.

The Meeting

In June 1962, I graduated from high school and enrolled the same month at the University of Georgia, located just sixteen miles south of where I lived. Any other university would have been too expensive to consider. I lived with my parents and worked part-time at a restaurant which provided day-to-day living expenses. My father allowed me to go to college and for the first three years paid the tuition which at that time was \$83 per term. I was grateful but knew he might change his mind at any time.

He did threaten to do that. Every student was required to take courses in physical education. Those included swimming, calisthenics, golf, baseball, basketball, soccer, and many more. One choice was ballroom dancing. Dancing in his mind was “of the world” and dangerous because men and women touched and held each other in close physical contact thus tempting them to improper thoughts and acts. When he discovered that I was enrolled in a dance class, he went to bed weeping and said, “Get out of that class or I will never give you another penny as long as I live.” He had found proof that what he suspected was true: I was being corrupted by the ideas being taught at the University of Georgia. In addition, he believed my teachers were swearing in classes and using God’s name in vain, a sin. He did not believe me when I told him that was not the case. Because this was a persistent concern of his and given that classes were occasionally held on Saturdays, I invited him to attend classes with me so the matter could be settled. He could meet my professors and hear their lectures. He refused.

I was keenly aware how fortunate I was to be able to attend the University. Education was to be my ticket, my ticket to another life, my ticket out and away. Every subject was important to me because it was another brick paving the way to a different future. I rode to school each day with a neighbor who worked in Athens, and I never once regretted seeing my parents’ house disappear behind me. I was going to a place where people read, thought, conversed, and freely held differing opinions. It was my idea of heaven. For the first time in my life I felt at home.

We arrived in Athens daily before 8:00 am and returned in the afternoon at 5:30 pm. The normal class schedule at that time was three, sixty-minute classes per day. I had hours during the day to study, do errands, and work at my part-time job. Although some of that time was spent at the library, the majority of it was spent at Memorial Hall, the student union located near the center of campus.



Memorial Hall, University of Georgia, Student Union, 1946-1983

Memorial Hall was a three-story structure with a huge reading room on both sides of the main entrance. The fireplaces, comfortable chairs, and sofas located throughout these expansive spaces invited students to meet, talk, or study. Sometimes they slept. The ceilings were high with large windows allowing full view of a grassy, green square surrounded by residence halls, the nearest being Reed Hall which is the red brick building to the left in the photograph above. The student union was a comfortable, warm place to be and good for observing people. The building and especially these rooms were normally monitored by student assistants who sat at a desk to the side and often read or studied. Some were less involved and attentive than others and rarely left the desk.

Over a period of months, I observed the student monitors going about their business, only occasionally speaking. One of them was obviously different. He had coal-black hair and bronze skin which set him apart from others, but those were not the important differences. There was something more than that. It was not until several weeks into the fall term that I began to understand what it was that genuinely set him apart and made him different from the rest. Yes, he sat at his desk as they did, but he got up more. He observed the hidden spots and regularly re-positioned chairs and tables. I began to put down my books more often to study the situation. He was pensive as he walked around and would occasionally lean slightly, placing his weight on one foot as if he were just before moving. However, he often did not move in the direction he was headed, but turned and strode in another.

One afternoon the difference became obvious. Most student assistants considered it enough to be present at the desk and occasionally glance upward to verify that the drapery was not on fire. Not this student. He clearly understood that the job had responsibilities. He had a plan. He did read and study, but every hour he left his desk to make an inspection tour of both large lounge areas and the area just outside the front doors. He re-positioned the chairs and sofas that had been moved by students from their customary places. He picked up magazines and newspapers, folded them, and placed them back on their racks. Finally, he examined the floor areas looking for any debris, waste paper, or cups and properly disposed of anything he found. I was impressed, but more so when I observed him one day after he

had finished a round of inspection. He sat down at his desk, took out a chart, and made a note of the exact time of his inspection, how many chairs were out of place, how many students were in the rooms, and whether or not there was anything unusual. Thereafter I noticed him do that every hour; this was his work routine. Who was this man? Where was he from? And what was he doing in Athens, Georgia?

I was intrigued and not long after that, having overcome my initial hesitation, started a conversation with him. We began to talk every day. His name was “It!” How peculiar! “It.” I learned that he was from a small, Southeast Asian nation of which I had never heard - Cambodia. Cambodia and the Khmer culture became the topic of conversation every day for weeks. I had many questions, and he had answers. I was right. The world was bigger than the one I knew, and there were people different from those I knew, and it was possible to meet, get to know, understand and appreciate things foreign to me and my culture.



Sareth in his room in Reed Hall, University of Georgia

The Friendship

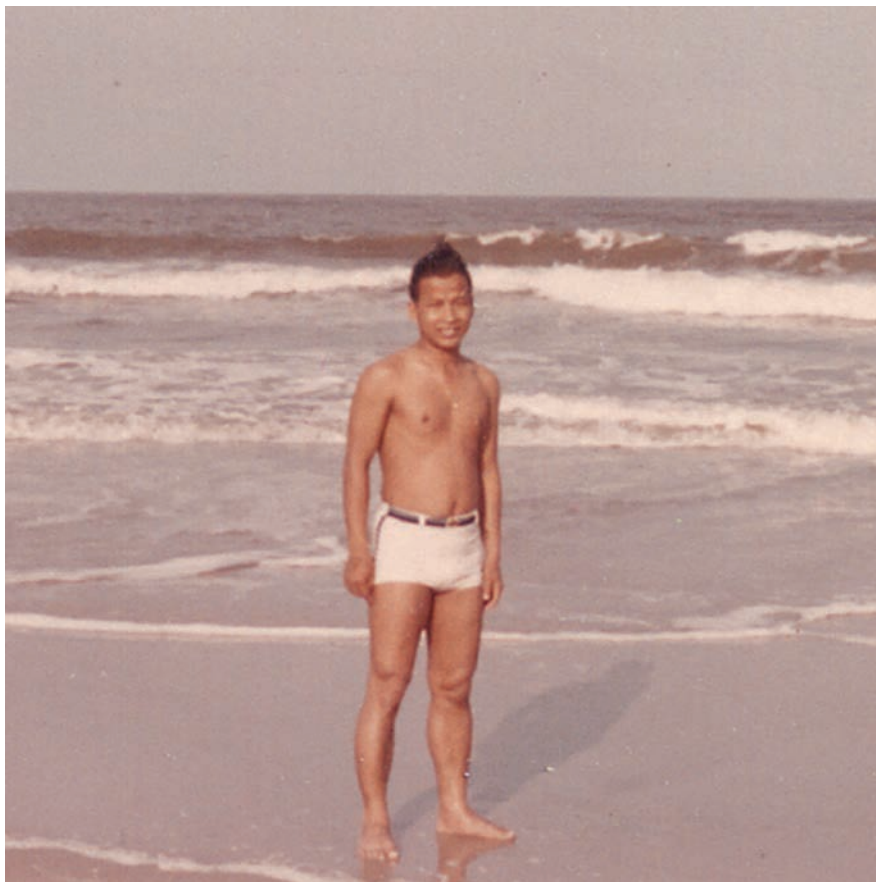
Sareth and I seldom missed a day conversing at the student union, but we did not see each other outside the union until October 1962. We bought a drink at the snack bar downstairs and went next door to his room in Reed Hall. He showed me pictures of his family and pointed out on a map of Cambodia towns and villages about which we had talked. Over time he introduced me, through our conversations, to his whole family.

On one occasion I was allowed to drive one of my father's automobiles to school because a family matter made it necessary for me to make a trip home during the day. Sareth went home with me; and for the first time, he met my family: my mother Martha, my sister Gale, and my brother Tim. My father was at work on that occasion but did meet him on a subsequent visit.



Sareth with Tim, Gale, Martha, and Jim, April, 1964

On the fourth Thursday in November every year, families and friends in the United States get together to celebrate and give thanks for the safe arrival of the pilgrims on the shores of the North American continent. Thanksgiving is a joyous holiday with lots of good food, traditionally including a baked turkey, a ham, numerous vegetables, and many sweet desserts. With permission from my parents, I invited Sareth to spend Thanksgiving with us. He accepted. He came home from the University with me on Wednesday and helped prepare for the following day. Aunts and uncles with their families, approximately thirty people in all, began arriving about 10:00 am. People were eating in the house, on both porches, and outside in the yard. Although they were interested in the food, they were more interested in meeting and talking with Sareth. It was a good, good day. That weekend was his introduction to my immediate and extended families. They liked him very much, and he liked them. Telephone numbers and mailing addresses were exchanged, and invitations were extended. I recall specifically that he was invited to visit relatives in both South Carolina and Florida and subsequently did.



Sareth visiting Perry relatives, near Palm Beach, Florida, USA, July, 1964



Sareth, South Carolina cousins Elaine, Sarah Ann, & Audrey Black, and Gale, April 1964

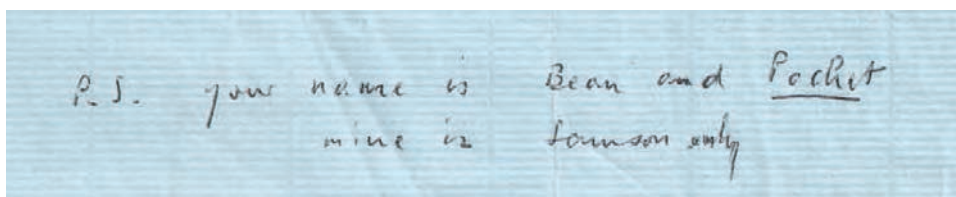
Sareth was interested in doing everything we did as a family, even the most mundane tasks. We worked in the garden, went shopping, and played games. He spent time helping Gale and Tim with their studies, and he and I even made music. It was a strange combination, a two-string Chinese fiddle and an accordion. We managed to learn to play several simple American tunes together, and he taught me one Cambodian tune which we played every time the instruments were brought out. I never knew the title or lyrics but I never forgot the melody. They were good years for me as well. Sareth's presence at home meant that everyone behaved well. He was a welcome addition to this Southern family.



Sareth picking cotton, Madison County, GA, USA, 1964

From that Thanksgiving weekend in 1962, originated a friendship with my extended family. Sareth became a regular guest in the homes of aunts, uncles, and church members, often having been invited independently of me or anyone else in my immediate family. However, he was most often at the Black family home near Ila, Georgia where he was regarded as a family member. There followed years of laughter and learning. By the end of 1964, everyone was familiar with Cambodia and knew a little about its history, something about its struggles, and a fine human being who was not like them but whom they liked and accepted. Those years were good for Sareth because, in addition to his other friends and the Cambodian students on campus, he had an intimate view of an American family which welcomed him at all times and with which he could feel at ease and free.

Sareth enjoyed assigning nicknames, especially to people he liked. Because we had a huge vegetable garden in front of our house in which we both frequently worked, he began calling me “Bean” in the early months of our acquaintance and never addressed me by anything else except the occasional “Pochet.” “Pochet” is related to the French word “poche.” The name arose when he was trying to understand the meaning of the slang phrase “to be in someone’s pocket.” He clarifies his system in the postscript of a letter of November 25, 1966 saying, “Your name is Bean and Pochet. Mine is Samson only.”



P.S. your name is Bean and Pocket
mine is Samson only

Samson is a Biblical character of great stature and strength. The comparison to his own diminutive stature was a humorous one.



Photograph with inscription on reverse, 1963

1963 and 1964 were in many ways sublime. Sareth and I spent lots of time together; and he spent many weekends and holidays with my family. He often cooked for us. Everyone's favorite was what he called "Cambodian Chicken." Delicious! I can almost taste it now and have tried with absolutely no success to cook it myself.



Sareth in the Black family kitchen, 1964

Whenever he happened to be there on Sundays, he went to church just as everyone else did. What I did not fully appreciate then was the expectation harbored by my father that Sareth would eventually come to the realization that his soul would burn forever in hell if he did not forgo Buddhism and accept Jesus. He never gave me any indication that he would consider such a move. My mother entertained the idea that my friendship with Sareth had made me want to adopt Buddhism. That was closer to the truth.

There was much publicity about the upcoming 1964 World's Fair in New York. Sareth and I went. It was spectacular. I had never before been on an airplane or to New York. I remember the day I walked out the door to leave. My father did not say "goodbye" or "I hope you have a good time." He just stared as if he did not believe it was really happening. I learned later from an uncle that my father had intimated that he had paid for the entire trip. In fact, I paid all the expenses myself using my earnings from the restaurant. My father, either by design or omission, had a way of making himself look good in the eyes of others, a trait that later proved to be a two-edged sword.

The custom at most universities was to have an adult in each residence hall, usually a mature woman, a "housemother," whose responsibility it was to know all the students who lived there and see to their residential needs. Sareth's housemother was a wonderful lady named Christine Thornton whose husband was an officer in the US Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps program at the University. They lived in an apartment in Reed Hall and came to be very fond of Sareth. I met them through him. As it turned out, they influenced my life in ways I could not then imagine. Christine, a painter, was cultured, well read, and traveled

extensively. Jim was equally cultured, without being stuffy, and a gentleman in every sense of the word. He worked in the ROTC detachment during the day and took classes toward a PhD in Spanish in the evenings. I learned a lot from both; and I had a lot to learn, especially about how to act in refined company. Jim's favorite pastime was gardening. Here he is in retirement in St. Petersburg, Florida.



Jim Thornton, 1991

Sareth and I were often invited to their place for supper, after which we would have coffee and visit. On one of these occasions as we were leaving I thanked the hosts, saying, "It has been delightful!" Christine smiled and said, "Well, Jim. . . hardly delightful. . . but nice." I have spent the rest of my life trying to avoid exaggeration and overstatement. It was a subtle but important lesson, and just one of many I learned from these gentle people. I will explain later how Sareth, through Jim and Christine Thornton, gave me the opportunity to pursue a career in higher education at Valdosta State University.

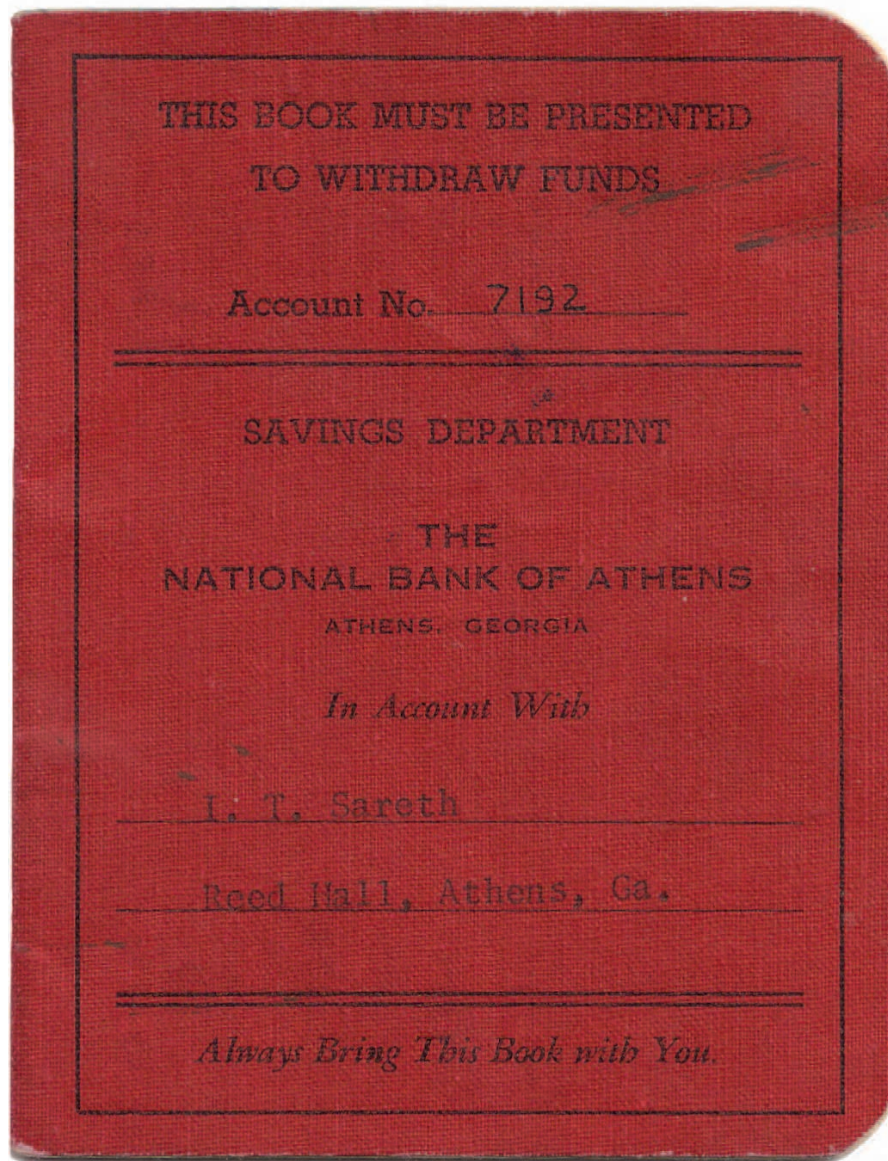
Through 1963 and 1964, Sareth continued to study, to work at the student union, and to maintain his network of friends throughout the university and the State. He spoke often of Ms. Delores Artau, foreign student advisor at the University, who had been helpful to him. He also knew very well Mr. Walter Newman Danner, University Registrar, nicknaming him Walter "Newsmen" Danner. In addition, I believe that Sareth had met, through friends in Atlanta, the then U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk. Rusk was from Georgia and served as Secretary of State from 1961 until 1969.

Sareth was careful with money, spent sparingly, accounted for it meticulously, and earned it whenever possible. For example, he was known in Reed Hall and among the Cambodians for cutting hair on demand in his room. His budget showing income and expenses from the time of his arrival in the US until summer of 1964, written in his own hand, appears below. His scholarship was reduced for the fall term 1964 creating the need for a new budget and new economics.

October 28, 1961		\$282.14	: Money from home, authorization no 82-2562 on page 2 of passport.
Nov 4	Nov 18	180.00	: 12 dollars x 15 days (First 15 days in the U.S.)
Nov 19	Nov 30	88.00	: 8 x 11
Dec 1st	Dec 28	224.00	: 8 x 28
Dec 29	Dec 30	24.00	: 12 x 2 (Moved from Washington D.C. to Athens)
Dec 31		8.00	: 8 x 1
		806.14 (A)	
1961	Nov 7	Dec 7	\$40.00 : Rent in Washington D.C.
Washington D.C.	Nov 7	Dec 7	\$50.00 Foods while going to school
	Nov 7	Dec 7	\$10.00 Stamps, Envelopes, Papers, Candy
			\$36.00 Overcoat
			136.00 (B)
	Dec 7	Dec 28	No rent : I was staying with my friend who worked in the Embassy.
	Dec 7	Dec 28	\$20.00 : Foods, because I ate with my friend.
	Dec 7	Dec 28	\$1.00 : Stamps
			21.00 (C)
			Difference : $A - (B + C) = 806.14 - (136.00 + 21) = 649.14$ (1)
U.S.G.A.	January	1962, 1963, 1964	248.00 - ($\begin{matrix} A \\ 30: \text{books} \end{matrix} + \begin{matrix} B \\ 85: \text{dorm} \end{matrix} + \begin{matrix} C \\ 45: \text{foods} \end{matrix} + \begin{matrix} D \\ 10: \text{pocket money} \end{matrix}) = 78.00$
	February		232.00 - (- - + 45: foods + 10: pocket money) = 177.00
	March		248.00 - (- - + 45: foods + 10: pocket money) = 193.00
	April		240.00 - ($\begin{matrix} B \\ 30: \text{books} \end{matrix} + \begin{matrix} B \\ 85: \text{dorm} \end{matrix} + 45: \text{foods} + 10: \text{pocket money}) = 70.00$
	May		248.00 - (- - + 45: foods + 10: pocket money) = 193.00
	June		240.00 - (- - + 45: foods + 10: pocket money) = 185.00
	July		248.00 - ($\begin{matrix} B \\ 30: \text{books} \end{matrix} + \begin{matrix} B \\ 85: \text{dorm} \end{matrix} + 45: \text{foods} + 10: \text{pocket money}) = 78.00$
	August ⁽²⁾		248.00 - ($\begin{matrix} C \\ - \end{matrix} - - + 45: \text{foods} + 10: \text{pocket money}) = 193.00$
	September ⁽²⁾		292.00 - (- - + 45: foods + 10: pocket money) = 237.00
	October		248.00 - ($\begin{matrix} B \\ 30: \text{books} \end{matrix} + \begin{matrix} B \\ 85: \text{dorm} \end{matrix} + 45: \text{foods} + 10: \text{pocket money}) = 78.00$
	November		240.00 - (- - + 45: foods + 10: pocket money) = 185.00
	December		248.00 - (- - + 45: foods + 10: pocket money) = 193.00
			(4) 1760.00
			(1) Museum visits, transportation to and from school, and pocket money are not yet taken off from \$649.14.
			(2) Every year after the 2nd session, for 15 days I get paid 12 a day, because I worked for U.S.G.A.
			(3) The pattern was almost the same for every year from 1962 'til summer 1964. After that date, scholarship has been reduced.
			(4) In the amount of \$1760.00, shoes, clothes, haircut, medical care, charity, gifts, and mail expenses are included.

Sareth's proposed budget, 1961-1964

In August 1962, eight months after arriving in Athens, Sareth opened a savings account at the National Bank of Athens. There is banking activity after he departed the U.S. in August 1965 because he left the bankbook with me requesting that I send him the remainder in specific amounts as he needed it.



Cover of Sareth's bank savings book, Athens, Georgia

I. T. Sareth						7192					
DATE	WITHDRAWALS	DEPOSIT	INTEREST	BALANCE	TELLER	DATE	WITHDRAWALS	DEPOSIT	INTEREST	BALANCE	TELLER
AUG 17 '62		900.00		900.00	1	JAN 31 '64		170.00		2,270.00	1
SEP 4 '62		100.00		1,000.00	1	MAR 2 '64		130.00		2,400.00	1
SEP 28 '62		250.00		1,250.00	1	MAR 26 '64		100.00		2,500.00	1
OCT 16 '62	750.00			500.00	1	APR 2 '64		100.00		2,600.00	1
DEC 31 '62		300.00	3.12	503.12	1	APR 6 '64		100.00		2,700.00	1
JAN 2 '63		200.00		803.12	1	APR 6 '64	50.00			2,650.00	1
JAN 31 '63		200.00		1,003.12	1	APR 27 '64	10.00			2,640.00	1
JUN 7 '63		100.00	15.79	1,218.91	1	APR 30 '64	160.00			2,800.00	1
JUL 5 '63		200.00		1,518.91	1				31.57	2,831.57	1
SEP 18 '63	40.00			1,478.91	1	JUN 15 '64	100.00			2,681.57	1
SEP 30 '63		200.00		1,678.91	1	JUL 6 '64		120.00		2,801.57	1
NOV 1 '63		240.00		1,918.91	1	JUL 28 '64	200.00			2,601.57	1
NOV 29 '63		240.00	23.27	1,942.18	1		20.00			2,581.57	1
DEC 19 '63	50.00			2,132.18	1	AUG 14 '64	181.57			2,400.00	1
DEC 26 '63	32.18			2,100.00	1	AUG 24 '64		120.00		2,520.00	1
THE NATIONAL BANK OF ATHENS						THE NATIONAL BANK OF ATHENS					
ATHENS, GEORGIA						ATHENS, GEORGIA					

7192						7192					
DATE	WITHDRAWALS	DEPOSIT	INTEREST	BALANCE	TELLER	DATE	WITHDRAWALS	DEPOSIT	INTEREST	BALANCE	TELLER
DEC 17 '64	50.00		36.05	2,586.05	1	MAR 23 '66	100.00			527.00	1
FEB 22 '65	25.00			2,561.05	1	MAR 28 '66	75.00			452.00	1
FEB 22 '65	500.00			36.05	1	APR 25 '66	80.00			372.00	1
FEB 26 '65		100.00		136.05	1	MAY 17 '66	30.00			342.00	1
MAR 8 '65	100.00			36.05	1	MAY 26 '66	90.00		5.13	347.13	1
MAR 22 '65	30.00			6.05	1	MAY 26 '66	90.00			257.13	1
JUN 11 '65		993.95		1,000.00	1	JUN 2 '66	10.00			247.13	1
OCT 18 '65	100.00			900.00	1					11.38	1
NOV 15 '65	100.00			800.00	1						
DEC 6 '65	60.00		10.00	810.00	1						
JAN 31	33.00			717.00	1						
FEB 28 '66	70.00			647.00	1						
FEB 28 '66	20.00			627.00	1						
THE NATIONAL BANK OF ATHENS						THE NATIONAL BANK OF ATHENS					
ATHENS, GEORGIA						ATHENS, GEORGIA					

Sareth's bank account activity, National Bank of Athens

Cambodian Students at the University of Georgia

There were between twenty and twenty-five Cambodian students at the University of Georgia at the same time as Sareth. Although I met all of them at one time or another, I saw some more than others. Some were less social than others, and some lived off campus and only went there to attend classes. Several, as I recall, lived together in a small house in town. At least one time, and perhaps more, every Cambodian student was invited to the Black farm for a cookout.

Sareth and I had meals with small groups of these students, most of whom could cook. Those students whom I remember specifically are Sin Meng Srun, Uk Tinal, Om Sorry, Minh Thein Voan, Chap Chamnan, Kry Trang, Ou Thouk, Chhim Him, Sor Savay, You Sambath, and Tan Mien. Dr. Sin Meng Srun has had a distinguished career as professor, researcher, and author at Humboldt State University in California and now divides his time between Cambodia and the US. He is currently Vice President for Academic Affairs at the Pannasastra University of Cambodia in Phnom Penh. Kry Trang and Chhim Him live in Long Beach, California as did Om Sorry until his death. Chhim Him at one time served as president of the Cambodian-American Association of Long Beach. Ou Thouk worked for the Voice of America in Washington, DC. I heard that Minh Thein Voan chose not to leave Cambodia and perished soon after April 17, 1975. According to what I was told by one Cambodian expatriate, Voan had become a Christian and believed that he was in no danger because he was a preacher.



Arch at the entrance to the University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia



Minh Thein Voan, Sareth, and You Sambath, Atlanta, GA, USA, May 1963



Minh Thein Voan



Sin Meng Srun



Chap Chamnan



Kry Trang



Ou Thouk



Uk Tinal



Chhim Him



It Sareth

My relationship to the Cambodian student community was casual but on occasion I had specific dealings with them. On July 17, 1964 I purchased a 1960 red Renault Dauphine from one. The automobile was owned by Athens resident Dr. Elmo S. Corsette and sold to Sor Savay who sold it to another Cambodian student from whom I bought it for \$170. It was my first automobile.



Jim in the 1960 Renault Dauphine, Athens, GA, November 1964

1964 PASSENGER OR SUBURBAN REGISTRATION		PART 3
ANNUAL FEE <i>8.00</i>	FEE PAID	SPEC. REG. FEE
YEAR AND MAKE OF VEHICLE <i>1960 Renault</i>	BODY TYPE <i>4 door</i>	CYL. <i>4</i>
VEHICLE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER <i>10 32 252</i>		WEIGHT <i>1600</i>
NAME AND ADDRESS <i>DREIMO S. CORSETTE</i> <i>276 E Main St</i> <i>Springville, N.Y.</i>		
SIGNATURE <i>D. Elms S. Corsette</i>		
Sign name in full. If not individual owner, give title.		
PLATE NO. <i>4H 7764</i> N.Y.		
STATE OF NEW YORK		
DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES		
ISSUED BY THE N.Y. STATE DEPT. OF MOTOR VEHICLES Good until midnight January 31, 1965		
FOR CREDIT FEE USE THIS PART		
Allowable only toward a re-registration.		
You must be the owner shown on reverse side.		
To obtain allowance, check disposition of the vehicle and fill in all the information requested below.		
DATE OF DISPOSITION <i>1/1/64</i>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transferred <input type="checkbox"/> Destroyed <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle permanently removed from the State <input type="checkbox"/> Registered dealer, returned to stock <input type="checkbox"/> Stolen; right, title and interest sold		
INSPECTION STAMP		
TRANSFERRED TO: <i>SOR SAVAY</i>		
OWNER'S STATEMENT: I am the owner of the vehicle described on the reverse side, or a member of the firm or officer of the corporation owning same and have disposed of the vehicle as shown above.		
SIGNATURE <i>Dreimo S. Corsette</i> Seller, sign name in full		

Vehicle Registration, Renault, showing sale to Sor Savay

Friday, 17th July 1964.

Received from James Black

One hundred and Seventy dollars (170⁰⁰)

for 1960, 4 doors, Renault.

Receipient.

J. Immlauf

Receipt for sale of Renault to Jim, 1964

BILL OF SALE

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS.

That in consideration of One Hundred and twenty Dollars (\$) and other valuable consideration, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, the undersigned (seller) does hereby, transfer and deliver unto

Sor Savay V. of Georgia
(BUYER) (ADDRESS)

his right, title and interest in and to the following described vehicle:

MAKE Renault ENGINE NUMBER 1032252
SERIAL NUMBER 5713259 BODY TYPE Sedan
YEAR 1960 MODEL NUMBER 119601

The said seller hereby warrants that he is the lawful owner of said vehicle, that it is free from all liens and incumbrances except liens in favor of: *

\$ due no exception (NAME) *If no liens exist write "No Exceptions" in blank space
(STREET) (CITY) (STATE)

Payable in X installments of X each, Beginning X,

that he has the right to sell the same as aforesaid, that he will warrant and defend the title of same against the claim and demand of all persons whomsoever except lienholder noted above.

(Place Notary Seal Here)

Subscribed and sworn before me this 29th Signed this 29th day of May 1964

day of 19

Signature of seller P. Elmo Corsette

Witnessing Officer in and for the county

of 226 East Main St.

(ADDRESS) (CITY & STATE)

State of

Bill of Sale, Renault from Elmo Corsette to Sor Savay, May 29, 1964

The 1960's: Troubled Times

The decade of the 1960's was arguably one of the worst in US history. In my father's mind it had begun very badly with the inauguration of John F. Kennedy as 35th President of the United States. Kennedy was Catholic. The fact that Catholic churches displayed statues of Jesus, Mary, disciples, and saints was proof to my father that Catholic believers worshiped idols. He and his fellow Christians were horrified and frightened, convinced that bands of Catholics would begin roaming the country forcibly removing all Bibles from the homes of true believers. For the rest of the citizenry, the two issues most sharply dividing the country were civil rights and the Vietnam War. At that time it was common in the US for women and blacks to be paid a fraction of what white men were paid for the same work. African-Americans, no longer willing to accept the omnipresent indignities, were demanding equal protection under the law and the rights long denied them. Women were no longer willing to ignore gender inequality in laws and culture.

Young men of a certain age were required to register to be drafted into the armed services. When a man was selected, he was sent a draft card telling him to report for duty. On October 15, 1965, men began protesting the war by publicly burning their draft cards.



Burning draft cards in protest of US involvement in Southeast Asia, circa 1965

At the same time men were burning their draft cards, women were burning their brassieres and demanding equal pay for equal work. Many long-standing societal lynchpins were being challenged, and the US government was firmly stuck in a quagmire in Southeast Asia.

Students in particular were questioning and protesting US involvement in Southeast Asia. Protesters became increasingly militant; governmental responses became increasingly harsh. The civil rights movement was forcing citizens to recognize and examine for the first time the injustice in how people of color were treated in this country. The horrors of our past, slavery and lynching, and the brutality of our present, the Vietnam War, could no longer be ignored. The news of both was everywhere every day.

When Sareth arrived on the campus of the University of Georgia in December 1961, he found himself among some of the foremost thinkers and scholars in the country. The faculty was relatively stable, but the student body was refreshed each year by new students from all parts of a divided country. There were some foreign students, but their proportion to the greater student body was not as high then as it became in later years. The university environment protected and influenced students, but those students influenced each other and increasingly influenced the university and society as a whole. Each group of new students arrived with its own set of concerns, personal, social, and political. Had times been different, those concerns might have been more subjugated to academic pursuits. However, the tenor of the times was tense. There was a sense of urgency, a feeling of something impending, something menacing.



Greek revival style president's home, University of Georgia, (UGA website)

The University of Georgia was the largest university in the State of Georgia, a southern state with all the associated traditions. One of thirteen original colonies, Georgia was covered by plantations which were worked by slaves until President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. This Proclamation freed the slaves in states in rebellion. It was the thirteenth amendment to the US Constitution, passed in 1865, that freed slaves throughout the country.

Large, Greek revival homes, as idyllic as they are, serve as reminders of a very different past. For many years, the lingering belief that white people were inherently better

than people of color lurked behind the beauty of Georgia's seashores, mountains, and level plains. Until shortly before Sareth arrived, the "Jim Crow" laws kept blacks and whites separate in almost every facet of life. There was segregation in public schools, transportation, rest rooms, restaurants, drinking fountains, and hotels.



Scenes from the era of "Jim Crow," approximately 1877 through the mid-1960's

The worst part of this belief in "white supremacy" was lynching, the killing of people without benefit of the justice system, usually by mob action and for reasons as insignificant as a black man whistling at a white girl. These murders occurred throughout the United States from the early 1870's into the 1920's. However, the last recorded lynching in the United States was of nineteen-year-old Michael Donald in 1981 in Mobile, Alabama. Details of this story are to be found here on the National Public Radio web site: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=95672737>

Five hundred thirty-one people were lynched in the State of Georgia, 39 white, 492 black. Racial prejudice slowly ebbed but that change was painfully slow and forced by public demonstrations and legal battles.

After one such legal battle the University of Georgia became integrated. On January 9, 1961, twelve months before Sareth arrived, African-Americans Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes were admitted to the University. At first there were riots, and they were asked to leave; another lawsuit permitted them back. Initially they had to be escorted about campus by police, but by the time Sareth and I arrived the escorts had been discontinued. Hunter and Holmes were still enrolled and regularly seen about campus. However, sentiment remained high both for and against the recent court rulings and the presence of "colored" students on campus. The third black student and the first black citizen of the city of Athens

to enroll at the University was Mary Blackwell. She and I were both majoring in French literature. Mary was hurt and outraged when her major professor told her she would never succeed at the University of Georgia and recommended she go instead to a technical school which was, in the popular thinking of the time, a more appropriate thing for “colored girls” to do. Mary left UGA and eventually earned a PhD at Emory University in Atlanta. During her career she has received two prestigious, post-graduate Fulbright Scholarships to study abroad. She and I became friends and remain so today. She currently holds the position of Associate Professor of French at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University in Tallahassee, Florida.

The racial tension and unrest was compounded by concerns about US military involvement in Southeast Asia. Many people whose minds were not open to questioning and discussion of these issues found solace and reassurance in their own narrow-mindedness, prejudice, or religion. However, some understood that life as we knew it was changing and would never be the same. Those people tried to understand, adjust, find compromise, and embrace tolerance but the nagging questions remained. What were we doing in Vietnam? How did we get there? What were the real costs of prosecuting the war? Were we being told the truth? Why were people so upset? Why were they acting out? Why were so many people dying?

As the decade progressed, there seemed to be little other than tragedy, death and the ugliness of war in newspapers, magazines, television, and movies. It was literally hourly fare; each night on the evening news we were told how many soldiers had died that day in Vietnam, usually a few US soldiers and many, many Vietcong. For the first time in our history we could see people being blown to pieces the second it happened. There was one horrific image after another crowding minds and thoughts.



General Loan shooting guerilla officer, 1968 (Eddie Adams)

Each day we saw body bags containing our brothers, neighbors, and friends unloaded from Lockheed C-130 aircraft. My father worked at the Lockheed Aircraft Company in

Marietta, Georgia and had actually helped build these huge airplanes. Vietnamese were regularly seen running aflame out of the Cu Chi tunnels. It was a horrific litany that jolted American citizens who might otherwise have remained apathetic into forming opinions about the war, our relationship and responsibility to other peoples, and to consider how it might be possible to live in a future very unlike the present.

The US had aided the French in Indochina and worked to install Ngo Dinh Diem in 1955 as South Vietnam's first president. John F. Kennedy and other leaders believed that South Vietnam must become a democracy if the communists were to be prevented from winning in Southeast Asia. To that end, Kennedy authorized sending counter insurgency advisors to help President Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu who became Diem's most influential advisor.

The Diem regime's corruption, failed land reforms, and repression of Buddhism (Diem, Nhu, and Mme Nhu were Catholic) led Buddhist monks to protest, and thousands of Buddhists were arrested in 1963. On June 11, a Buddhist monk Thich Quaang Duc set himself on fire in the middle of a Saigon street. The outspoken Madame Ngo Dinh Nhu who was the unofficial first lady of Vietnam quipped, "What have the Buddhist leaders done comparatively speaking? The only thing they have done is to barbecue one of their monks!" The riveting image of the burning monk and Mme Nhu's callous comment were sent around the world via the news media and dominated US television for weeks.



Self-immolation of Buddhist Monk, Saigon, 1963 (Malcolm Browne)

Discussions ensued between Washington and the US Ambassador to Vietnam, Henry Cabot Lodge, about the advisability of removing Nhu. Officials in Washington were hesitant to push for a coup, but Cabot Lodge, who had little experience with the Vietnamese, as one commentator put it, "ginned it up," and it occurred. In November 1963, President Diem and his brother were shot. What was essentially a Vietnamese civil war became the

“American” war. Three weeks later President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, and Lyndon B. Johnson became President of the United States.

War related protests and dissent progressively worsened up to 1968 which proved to be the worst year of that awful decade. The year began with the Tet Offensive in Vietnam which surprised western allies. In March, the My Lai massacre occurred followed by its cover-up. Between 347 and 504 unarmed South Vietnamese civilians were mass murdered by American soldiers. Continued assassinations in the United States made matters immeasurably worse. Civil Rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in April 1968. Attorney General Robert Kennedy was assassinated in June 1968.

On April 30, 1970, President Nixon announced the invasion of Cambodia by the United States and presented to the American people his rationale for expanding the war in Vietnam by 150,000 soldiers. The response was immediate. Students protested all over the country. On May 4, those protests resulted in National Guard troops killing four students and wounding nine at Kent State University in Ohio. On May 14, at Jackson State University in Mississippi, during a student protest, police shot and killed two students and wounded another nine. Over 400 colleges and universities were shut down or disrupted.

I had seen many friends and acquaintances go to Vietnam. Several members of my high school class went. Some joined voluntarily; others were drafted. Many came back disfigured, scarred mentally and physically. I remember one specific classmate whose job it was to fly a small airplane just above the tree tops to draw enemy fire so that higher-flying jets could strafe and bomb the sources. His mother was young and beautiful with coal-black hair, but her hair turned solid white within six months of his departure. My classmate was shot down and kept in a prisoner of war camp until the end of the war. He was one of the lucky ones. He survived. Many of those who survived, upon returning from the conflict, were received by US citizens and sometimes members of their own families as if they had committed crimes. Vietnam veterans who had risked their lives for their country ran full face into the maze of ambivalence and conflict surrounding the US presence there. They found it hard to forgive or forget that reception. I have friends today who are Vietnam veterans and with whom I dare not discuss those years.

It was very interesting to me to visit the War Museum in Saigon in 2011. All the displays were moving, but one I shall never forget. An entire floor of the museum was filled with large photographs and stories of the families of American soldiers who had handled Agent Orange. Not only were the soldiers themselves showing physical damages from exposure to the defoliant, but many of their children had been born with deformities and other ailments. I could not help remembering how difficult it was for returning soldiers to convince the US government that their exposure to this chemical had permanently damaged them and their families. The next exhibit was of Vietnamese soldiers and citizens, and many children affected by that same Agent Orange. It was profoundly moving.

I myself deliberately sought to avoid being drafted. At some time during 1965, I began to have disturbances in my gastrointestinal tract. One alarming symptom was the loss of blood. After a stay in the hospital, I was diagnosed as having peptic ulcers, recommendations were made regarding changes in diet, and the tranquilizer Librium was prescribed. I had to take the medication for years, and the condition allowed me to be assigned a draft classification of 1-Y which meant I could be called to serve but only as a last resort. Fortunately that never happened.

As if the racial unrest and the war in Vietnam were not enough to push people to the brink, the success of the Cuban revolution confirmed fears in everyone's mind about the threat and impending spread of communism. Fidel Castro, a communist dictator with strong ties to the Soviet Union, seized control of Cuba, an island just 90 miles from US shores. The thousands of Cuban refugees fleeing to the US in the wake of Castro's coup increased the anti-communist sentiment and were ready witnesses to its dangers.

In the minds of many US citizens, especially the less thoughtful and less educated, black people and communists were taking over; but perhaps the deepest, most pervasive insult was that white men were losing what had been long held as their rightful authority, i.e. their innate gender superiority. What was the world coming to? And to many, such as my parents and their church brethren, all these things were signs of the end times as described in the Bible. At any minute Jesus would appear in the sky as he promised and instantly take up every "saved" person on the earth. The rest would be left to deal with the blacks and communists and ultimately get what they deserved, an eternity in a lake of fire to think about their faults, transgressions, and their rejection of Him.

Romance

During the fall of 1963, after Sareth had known the Black family for about a year, a correspondence began between him and my sister Gale. I believe this correspondence began in the most innocent of ways. From November 12, 1963, until February 26, 1965, there were forty-two pieces of correspondence sent by my sister to Sareth. As fate and Sareth's own penchant for recordkeeping would have it, every piece of correspondence from her to him has survived. He gave them all to me, numbered and in chronological order, just before he left this country in June 1965.

The first letter from my sister is included here because it establishes the tone of Sareth's relationship to the family. You will remember that I said he often helped my siblings with their schoolwork. She refers in this letter to his having shown her how to square numbers differently than the way she was taught and to her having shared that with her class. She also mentions his having given her a small book rack. He customarily gave us little gifts. Another notable aspect of this letter is that she signs it in Khmer.

N^o 1

NOV 18 1963

Route 1
Hull, Mo.
Nov. 12, 1963

Dear Sareth,

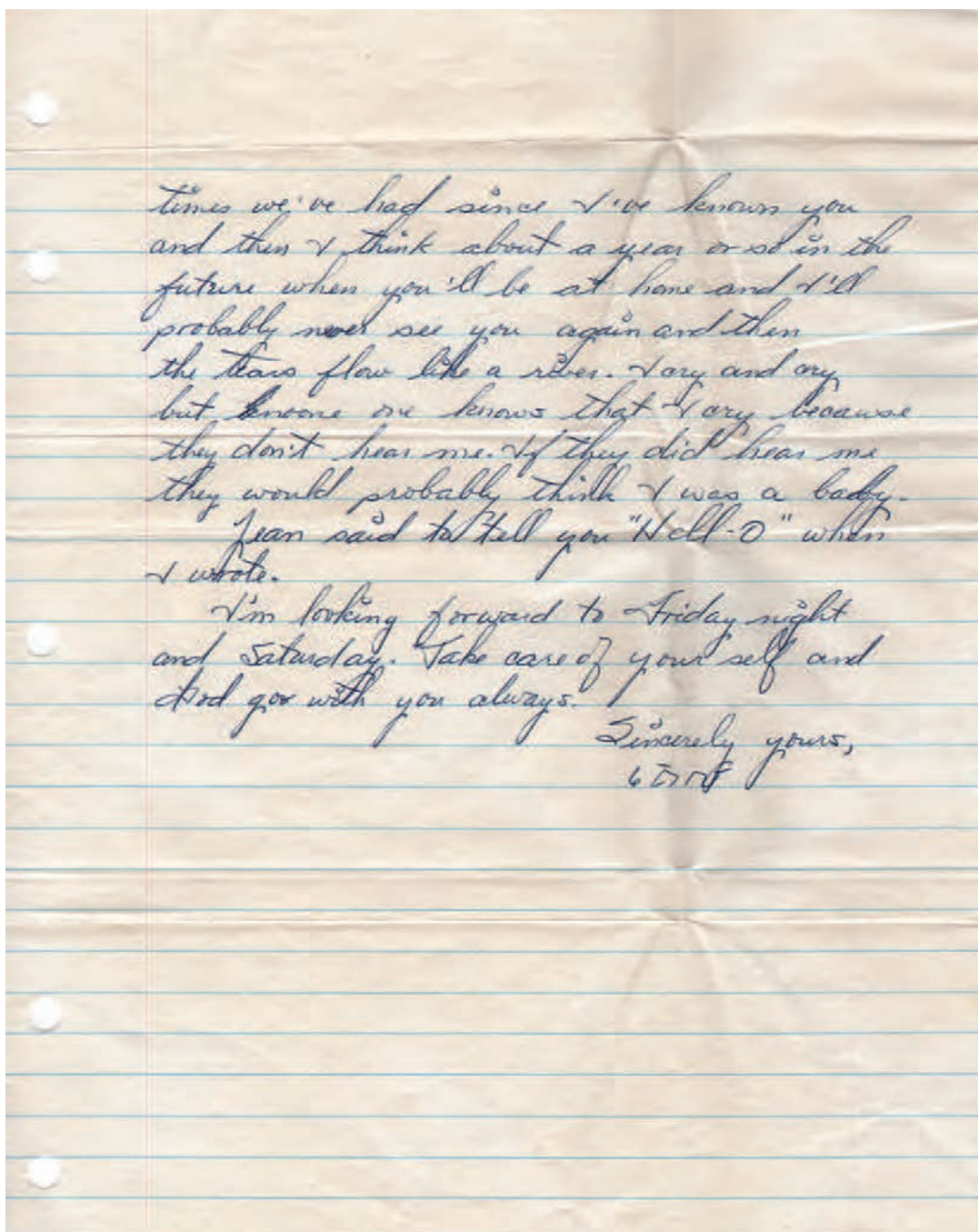
I hope this finds you well. Please excuse the notebook paper and ball point pen, but Mother has no more stationery and at this very moment my pen gave out of ink.

Sareth, you'll never know what a joy it is to have you here. I may not show it as much as I should, but I sincerely appreciate all the information and advice you've given me. Oh, and thanks ever so much for the book rack you gave me. When I show it to the kids at school tomorrow I know they'll want one. I showed my math class how to square numbers the way you taught me Monday. My teacher said I think she knew how to do that but she had forgotten how to square three numbers.

I hope you don't have difficulty reading my sloppy writing.

The only time I'm sad is when you go back to Pied Hall. I think of all the wonderful

Gale's first letter to Sareth, November 12, 1963, page 1



Gale's first letter to Sareth, November 12, 1963, page 2

Our relationship to and esteem for Sareth is also illustrated by this sweet letter from my little brother Tim, written on December 10, 1963, when he was eight years old. His letter is also signed in Khmer.

Rte. 1, Hull, Ill. Dec. 10, 1963 DEC 12 1963
11 AM.

Dear Sareth,
I am fine, how are you?
I thank you for the getwell
card.
When you come back we
will make our own to show,
and I ^{will} dance on it.
I would like to go on
that little trip we went
on.
I have to go now.
Love
Tim

Letter from Tim, age 8, December 10, 1963

We do not have any letters from Sareth to Gale. His first letters to her were sent by US mail, but the later ones were hand-delivered by me and destroyed by Gale as they were read and answered. There is no doubt that if we had access to that correspondence our picture would be far more complete. However, a careful reading of the letters from Gale to him and those from him to me will allow us to come close to a fairly accurate understanding of the relationship that developed between the two of them and of the events that culminated in disaster in 1965. What is very clear is that, by the end of 1964,

Gale was fully convinced that her destiny was to become Mrs. It Sareth. It is also clear that he was hesitant about marrying, that from the beginning he insisted that marriage could not take place before she became twenty-one years old, and that he finally said it could not happen at all. It is also clear that some form of physical intimacy must have taken place, although I remain convinced that it never resulted in intercourse.

However, the patriarch of the family Lee Black must have believed otherwise because he became the unrepentant architect of a chain of events that left people scarred forever. Our brother Sareth had fallen into the hands of people who were originally well-meaning but who, acting out of sanctimoniousness and hysteria, did irreparable harm.

Fear, abused authority, and dedication to a mean-spirited God ruined Sareth's reputation, deprived him of his educational support, and ultimately drove him from this country.

1965: A Year of Human Consequences

On July 17, 1964, I bought the red Renault which afforded me an unprecedented amount of autonomy. It was a great benefit in that it permitted Sareth and me to more easily and frequently visit friends and relatives and attend lectures and concerts. Before having a car of my own I had to leave campus according to my neighbor's work schedule, which meant I had no option but to be home by 6:00 pm each day. While having the car was a positive thing to me, it evidently was not to my parents because they lost an element of control over me that had never been questioned and had always been total. I do remember that as time progressed I looked for reasons not to return home before 11:00 or 11:30 pm, a practice that considerably irritated my mother. I could seldom leave home on weekends because attending classes and going to church were, in my parents' minds, the only acceptable reasons to be away. I observed my twentieth birthday in August 1964.

In June 1964, Sareth and I went to visit my mother's youngest sister Grace who lived near the seashore in south Florida. We spent a week boating, skiing, and sunning on the beaches.



Boating with Aunt Grace and Uncle Lloyd, near Palm Beach, Florida, June 1964

Despite the climate at home and the endless diet of religion, I was grateful I had a place to live, food to eat, and that my father was still paying the \$83 per term tuition and giving me \$20 for textbooks. He rarely gave me money beyond that, and in fact I did not need it. I had the job in the restaurant and had learned to operate projectors in a local cinema. Life was not bad.

The study of Spanish language and culture in high school was my first small window on a world outside my back yard and outside the church. My undergraduate major at UGA, French literature, provided an even wider view; but it was my friendship with Sareth, his fellow Cambodians, and other international students that made me realize I wanted to be in a wider world. I knew I would thrive in it. I knew too that in time I would leave my parents' home and make my own way in a very different and varied world unknown to them.

I had expected to live with my parents until completing my undergraduate degree at the University of Georgia. The next step in my plan was to earn a graduate degree in the United States and go to study in Europe. I expected to grow up and leave home the way most young people do, at a time and in a manner like any ordinary person would after graduating from college. It would be an uneventful passing with a mixture of sadness and happiness. It did not happen that way.

The fall quarter at the end of 1964 turned out to be one of our best. Sareth and I were

both working and taking classes. The automobile allowed us to do things that previously we had not been able to do. Correspondence continued between Sareth and Gale, and by that time it was almost exclusively hand-delivered by me. There were also telephone calls between them of which I was seldom aware.

All in all, there was a good end to a good year. My work at the Varsity Restaurant and the Georgia Theatre continued to provide enough money to meet expenses beyond the tuition and book costs my father gave me. Despite the number of hours I worked each week, my grades were acceptable. However, I had found spending time at home increasingly onerous and continued to look for reasons to leave early each morning and return as late as I could each evening. The weekends were more tolerable because Sareth was often there. As dreary and predictable as home life was, it was stable with one notable exception that became a defining moment in my life.

The house in which we lived in Madison County faced Georgia Highway 106 and was situated in the middle of a plot of approximately three acres behind a large field of about seven acres. The house could be seen from the highway across the field. Each year my father planted a garden in the big field, and we all worked in it including Sareth. Every spring and summer rows upon rows of beans, watermelons, corn, potatoes, okra, and squash could be seen by passersby, many of whom were family and friends who often stopped to chat when they saw us planting, tilling, or gathering. My father loved to share the vegetables with them and often was heard saying, "Come on up here and get yourself a couple dozen roasting ears (of corn) and a mess of beans!" This shout was followed by a directive to one of the children, "Go find a basket and pick them some." It was the neighborly thing to do and over time made him well liked. There always remained plenty to be frozen or canned by my mother for our own use.

The land on either side of the house remained forest. No attempt had been made to remove any of it. During the previous spring my father decided the forest should be cleared of underbrush and instructed me to do it. It was a daunting task for which I had little inclination and less time. Moreover, the only tools available to me were a saw, an ax, and a wheelbarrow. It was several acres of woods. I was in school and working at two jobs. For the first time in my life, at twenty years old, I made a decision not to do something I was told to do. However, I never told him that. No reasoning or contrary discussion was allowed. I simply never began the project. It was never mentioned unless by my father.

I had long ago learned how to get along in this environment by doing what I was told, keeping opinions to myself, and never contradicting anyone. I did not argue or assume opposing positions. There was no need for discussion; whatever he said had to be done. It was safer to reflect the opinions or at least seem to accept the ideas of adults, especially him. The one time I deviated from this approach solidly reinforced the wisdom in maintaining it.

In December 1964, he brought the clearing project up again one evening at supper, wanting to know why it had not been done and insisting I do it. Contrary to my usual affirmative response, I attempted to reason with my father, explaining that it was a big job, I was still working, and the underbrush would quickly grow back, adding that in my opinion

it was not a good use of time and that I would prefer not to do it. There was a moment of silence. Then came a crystal clear validation of the feeling of “otherness” that had haunted me as long as I could remember, a feeling engendered by a father distancing himself from his own child by quipping, “Why can’t you be one of us? Why can’t you just be one of us?”

His hands gripped the sides of the table as if to steady it. He looked up from his plate and said, “Let me tell you something. As long as you put your feet under MY table and as long as you eat MY food, you WILL do what I tell you to do!” I knew then that what I had felt and suspected was true. I did not belong in that family in the same sense that others “belong” in theirs. It was in no part MY table or MY food or for that matter MY bed or MY house. It was not my space, not my place. What was I doing there?

Discourse between my father and me had always been sparse, tense, and superficial, but this time it was different. A smile appeared on my face. It was not the usual smile that rarely represented true feeling. This time the smile was from my heart, as genuine as it could be, a reflection of calmness and peace. I was not afraid or angry. I gave a measured, quiet response.

“Yes, sir, I think I understand.”

And I did understand. In an instant I understood that as soon as I could arrange it I was going to leave HIS house, HIS table, HIS food and never return. The calm I felt came from unquestioned resolve.

Neither that conversation nor the woods project were mentioned again, but from that evening I began to think about what would be required to live completely independently and finish my studies. Five quarters remained until my anticipated graduation in June 1966. Work hours at the Varsity would have to be increased, and I would have to work all weekends and employee vacations at the theatre. I could do it. I would do it. I would do whatever was required.

The following week I told Sareth. He was surprised but did not attempt to get me to reconsider. The Christmas and New Year’s holidays passed without incident; he spent some but not all of the time with us. He visited Atlanta and Washington during that Christmas break as well. In January serious thought began about my moving out. The most problematic issue was housing. It took weeks to work through the options, but in February we arrived at what we thought would be a workable solution. Sareth had lived in Reed Hall since shortly after he arrived in Athens in 1962. His friends Jim and Christine Thornton had moved out of Reed Hall to a house in town, eliminating one of the good reasons he had to continue living there. He had two quarters remaining before graduating in June 1965.

We decided to buy a mobile home to be located on a lot near the campus in which we both would live until Sareth graduated in June. I would continue to occupy it and make the payments through my senior year and graduate school. It could then be sold and the money divided as we saw fit. The purchase had to be in his name because, at twenty years six months of age, I was still considered a minor under Georgia law, a deceptively small fact upon which much heartache later hinged. By cutting hair and working at the student union, Sareth had earned enough money for a large down payment. The total cost of the home

was \$4,011.85. He paid \$2,516.85 as down payment; I paid \$295. The resulting monthly payment of \$51.37 could easily be made by me after he left Athens. It was ideal.

Colonial Mobile Homes of Athens, Inc.

ATLANTA ROAD — ATHENS, GEORGIA

CUSTOMER'S PURCHASE AGREEMENT FOR MOBILEHOME, TRAVEL-TRAILER OR PICK-UP-COACH

SOLD TO <u>SARETH JT</u>		PHONE: _____		DATE <u>2/27/65</u>	
ADDRESS <u>Box 2345 University Station</u>		SALESMAN _____			
Subject to the terms and conditions stated on both sides of this agreement Seller agrees to sell and the Purchaser agrees to purchase the following described property:					
MAKE <u>STAR</u>	MODEL <u>1965</u>	B. ROOMS <u>2</u>	LENGTH <u>36</u>	WIDTH <u>10</u>	STOCK NUMBERS _____
SERIAL NUMBER <u>1991</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> NEW <input type="checkbox"/> USED	COLOR <u>Grey/white</u>	PROPOSED DELIVERY DATE _____		KEY NUMBERS _____
INSURANCE COVERAGE INCLUDES			PRICE OF UNIT \$ <u>3895.00</u>		
<input type="checkbox"/> FIRE AND THEFT — CAC			OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> FIRE AND THEFT — COMPREHENSIVE			COST OF SET-UP PARTS _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> COLLISION — Amt. Deductible \$ _____			SUB-TOTAL <u>3895.00</u>		
<input type="checkbox"/> LIFE, HEALTH, ACCIDENT			SALES TAX, IF ANY <u>116.00</u>		
<input type="checkbox"/> CREDIT LIFE Years _____			OFFICIAL FEES, LICENSE, TITLE, ETC. _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> PERSONAL EFFECTS			DELIVERED PRICE TOTAL \$ <u>4011.00</u>		
<input type="checkbox"/> VSI			COST OF INSURANCE \$ <u>100.00</u>		
OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT, LABOR AND ACCESSORIES			USED TRADE-IN ALLOWANCE \$ _____		
<u>Mobile Home as per the enclosed bill of sale and receipt with every thing same.</u>			LESS BAL DUE ON ABOVE \$ _____		
			NET ALLOWANCE _____		
			INITIAL DOWN PAYMENT _____		
			CASH AGREED BEFORE DELIVERY <u>2811.00</u>		
			LESS TOTAL CREDITS <u>3811.00</u>		
BALANCE CARRIED TO OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT \$ _____			UNPAID BALANCE <u>1200.00</u>		
REMARKS: <u>Purchase to furnish libary</u>			COST OF INSURANCE 30 MONTHS <u>140.00</u>		
<u>20 2x9x16</u>			" " " _____		
<u>12 4x8x16</u>			TO BE FINANCED \$ <u>1340.00</u>		
			TIME SALES DIFFERENTIAL <u>601.00</u>		
			TOTAL CONTRACT OR TIME BALANCE \$ <u>1541.00</u>		
			36 months @ \$ <u>51.27</u> beginning <u>5 MAR 1 1965</u>		
			and for each month thereafter.		
			IT IS MUTUALLY UNDERSTOOD THAT THIS AGREEMENT IS SUBJECT TO NECESSARY CORRECTIONS, AND ADJUSTMENTS, TO BE MADE AT THE TIME OF SETTLEMENT.		
DESCRIPTION OF TRADE-IN			YEAR		
MAKE _____			MODEL _____		
TITLE NO. _____			SERIAL NO. _____		
AMOUNT OWING TO WHOM _____			COLOR _____		
Purchaser(s) certify that: (a) I (We) have read the matter printed on the back hereof and agree to it as a part of this agreement, the same as if it were printed above my (our) signatures; (b) I (We) am (are) 21 years of age or older; (c) I (We) have voluntarily purchased the above described trailer, mobilehome or vehicle, the optional equipment and accessories thereon, the insurance as described and have agreed to all the terms of the financing arrangements; (That the property I (We) am (are) trading in is free from all encumbrances whatsoever, except as noted above.					
Colonial Mobile Homes of Athens, Inc. DEALER					
Not Valid Unless Signed and Accepted by an Officer of the Company					
By <u>[Signature]</u> APPROVED, SUBJECT TO ACCEPTANCE OF FINANCING BY BANK OR FINANCE COMPANY.					
I, OR WE, HEREBY ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF A COPY OF THIS ORDER.					
SIGNED X <u>[Signature]</u> PURCHASER					
SIGNED X _____ PURCHASER					

FORM 100 Jenkins Mobilehome Printers, Massachusetts, Ill.
Copyright 1963. Rev. April 1964

Printed in U.S.A.

FILE COPY

Bill of sale for mobile home purchased February 27, 1965 as residence for Sareth and Jim

Colonial Mobile Homes of Athens, Inc.
ATLANTA ROAD — ATHENS, GEORGIA

Customer's Order No. _____ Date 2/27 1965
 Name Sareth St
 Address Box 2345 Mumfords Station
 City Athens State Ga

SOLD BY	CASH	C. O. D.	CHARGE	ON ACCT.	MOSE. RETD.	PAID OUT	
QUAN.	DESCRIPTION					PRICE	AMOUNT
	Payment on mobile home serial 1491					2576.85	
						PLUS TAX	
						TOTAL	2576.85

Thank You

Please keep this copy for reference
 ALL claims and returned goods MUST be accompanied by this bill.

Rec'd By Bruce Smith

Colonial Mobile Homes of Athens, Inc.
ATLANTA ROAD — ATHENS, GEORGIA

Customer's Order No. _____ Date 2/27 1965
 Name Sareth St
 Address _____
 City Athens State Ga

SOLD BY	CASH	C. O. D.	CHARGE	ON ACCT.	MOSE. RETD.	PAID OUT	
QUAN.	DESCRIPTION					PRICE	AMOUNT
	partial down payment on 52/010 Star mobile home					295.00	
						PLUS TAX	
						TOTAL	295.00

Thank You

Please keep this copy for reference
 ALL claims and returned goods MUST be accompanied by this bill.

Rec'd By Bruce Smith

FORM 527
 Jubilee Stationery Firm
 Monmouth, Illinois

ORIGINAL

Printed in U.S.A.

Receipts for down payment for mobile home purchased as residence for Sareth and Jim

Professors in the College of Forestry at the University liked Sareth and were interested in seeing him continue his studies in the US. With the help of these professors, university administrators, and other influential people he knew in Georgia and the nation's capital, he was awarded a full scholarship to the American University in Washington, DC. Like everything Sareth did, this move was calculated. It was designed to change his study more toward his real areas of interest, political science and international affairs. The American University was one of the best schools in the nation for this. At first, admissions officials were hesitant to admit him because he had no undergraduate preparation in these areas. However, because of his good grades at UGA and recommendations from highly placed friends, he was admitted to begin in the fall of 1966. He was notified in early spring 1966 and from that time looked forward to a new stage in his academic life and to the prospect of being in Washington.

By March 1965 the mobile home had been purchased, a lot on which to put it rented, the home itself installed, and Sareth had moved from Reed Hall to the new residence. All that remained was my own move, which happened on a weekend that same month. It was a rare occasion. Our parents went to church on a Friday night leaving Tim, Gale, and



Sareth receiving award for academic excellence, UGA, 1964

me at home. I put my clothes and a few other belongings in the red Renault without making it obvious that anything was missing. Discovery and the resulting confrontation had to be avoided. The clock was set to alarm at 5:00 am; I planned to leave early Saturday morning.

While I was packing my car, my sister Gale inquired what I was doing. There was no way to avoid telling her the truth, that Sareth and I had purchased a mobile home and that I was moving there. "I want to see it," she said. Looking back, it appears to me that the response I gave her on that occasion might have provided kindling which smoldered and shortly became a conflagration. My thoughtless response was, "I will come get you sometime." It did not occur to me until years later that she might have heard in my statement something I never intended.

I did not sleep. How could I? 5:00 am came, the alarm sounded, and I got up. My mother heard me stirring and got out of bed herself. As I walked from my room through the den and kitchen I noticed the little, white accordion that had been purchased for \$20 at a pawn shop and with which Sareth and I so often made music. I had forgotten to put it in the car. I picked it up. By that time my mother had caught up to me.

“What are you doing?”

“I’m leaving.”

“When are you coming back?”

“I’m not.”

“Well, you’re not taking that!”

Without saying another word I put the accordion down, got into the red Renault, started the engine, backed out of the driveway, and for the last time watched the house disappear in the rear view mirror.

When I arrived at the new place, it did not take long to remove my belongings from the car and arrange them in the smaller bedroom which had been designated for me. There was not much time to think about or enjoy the new surroundings because both Sareth and I had to continue our work and class schedules. Sareth had two short telephone conversations with Gale the following week. He did not tell me what they talked about except to tell me that she asked to borrow a small tape recorder I had. This would have meant one of us would have had to return to the family home; neither of us was willing to do it. The following week in another conversation with Sareth she repeated her request. Arrangements were never made for her to use the tape recorder. It occurred to me thirty years later that had we honored her request our lives might have been different.

We had lived in the mobile home for less than two months when the first of a series of devastating events orchestrated by my father took place. It was Saturday, mid-morning when we heard the sounds of vehicles in the small front yard. Two Athens police cars slowed to a stop; my father’s car followed and stopped. The policemen exited their cars; one approached and knocked on the door.

“Mr. Black? Are you James Black?”

“Yes, sir.”

“I have a man with me who says he is your father. He wants to talk to you, but I must tell you that we do not have a search warrant or any authority to enter your house without your permission. You do not have to allow him into the house, and you do not have to talk with him if you do not want to do it.”

“I will speak with him. He may come in.”

Even after all that had happened, I was still so intimidated by him that I did not object. My father exited the car, came into the house and sat down. I was interested in what he had to say but knew it would make no difference in how I felt or the decision I had made. Sareth was at home, and although he remained in the back of the house at my insistence, he could still hear what was said. I looked at my father, waiting for him to begin to speak. When he did speak, there was no softness of voice or change from his traditional approach to

problems and people. He was definitive and directive, still the alpha personality determined to have his way. Even so, I was willing to hear him out and said nothing until he began to raise his voice. I responded with the same calm I felt the weekend of the underbrush conversation.

“We are not in your house now. We are in mine. You cannot talk to me that way.”

This time it was not just determined eyes and clinched table. He was furious.

“I will say anything to you I please, and you stop me if you can!” I had never seen him so angry, but I was not angry myself. For the first time in my life, at least at that moment, I had the advantage. I stood.

“This conversation is over.”

The officer who was listening just outside the door escorted him to the parked car and the procession left. Neither Sareth nor I understood how vindictive and dangerous this pious man, cloaked in self-righteousness, would become. My father then began striking out in every way he could and with each step gathering sympathy and making himself into a victim. His efforts over the next ten months ensured that the two of us would never be reconciled. The family was broken forever. It would be thirty-seven years before I would see him again.

Several months later that same police officer came into the restaurant. I waited on him. We recognized each other, and in the conversation that followed he told me my father had requested that the police accompany him to the mobile home, remove me from it by force, and take me back to the Black family home. They had refused.

My father’s next move was to contact university officials. Two weeks after the visit with the police escort a letter arrived from the University addressed to Sareth. The Office of International Students informed him that as a foreign student it was illegal for him to own property of any kind and that the mobile home we had just purchased would have to be sold. We began to feel afraid. He was a foreigner and uncertain what his rights actually were; I was trained to acquiesce to all authority without question. Neither of us was equipped to fight back. We had no defense mechanisms. All that was left to us seemed to be to wait in fear to see what the next blow would be. Nevertheless, we took the prudent step of trying to divest ourselves of the mobile home and find another place to live. Making matters more complex, it was the end of the quarter, Sareth’s final one, and both of us had to prepare for and take final examinations. We were both still working.

Despite all that had happened, the tension and uncertainty, there remained good things for which we were grateful and that served to keep us focused. Sareth was graduating in a matter of weeks, moving to Washington, reconnecting with old friends, and beginning a new graduate program studying subjects he really loved.

We finally did find a buyer for the mobile home. However, he was willing to pay only \$1,800 and assume the loan. Incidental expenses including set up and water connection had brought our total investment to more than \$3,000. The \$1,200 loss was particularly bad because it left Sareth little money for the move to Washington.

Finding a place to live became urgent. Above the restaurant where I worked was a

small hotel, the Colonial Hotel. The manager, Mr. Charles Kinney, often ate in the restaurant below. The hotel had some permanent residents, including Mr. and Mrs. Kinney, and when he learned of our situation, he immediately arranged rooms for us. We vacated the mobile home and moved to the hotel.

My father's hubris and anger knew no bounds. In the early days of June 1965, what little firm ground we stood on shifted. While continuing to contact university officials he made a masterful, devastating power play. He paid a visit to Dick Russell who lived in Winder, Georgia, about thirty miles from the Black family home.



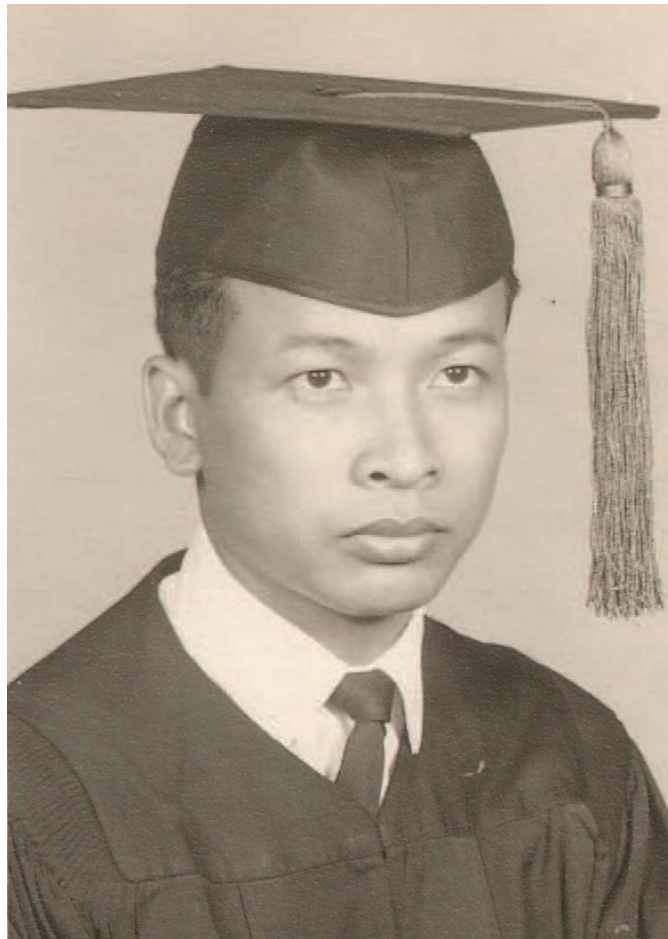
Richard B. Russell, Jr.

Richard B. Russell, Jr. served in the US senate from 1933 until his death in 1971. He was elected to the Georgia state senate in 1920 and became the governor of Georgia in 1931. For more than twenty years Senator Russell was arguably the most powerful man in Washington except for the president himself. He served on the Armed Services Committee and senate Appropriations Committee and heavily influenced agricultural and defense legislation. He had major influence on the federal budget. Senator Russell's work included significant legislation that brought about economic growth in the State of Georgia. He authored the bill providing for the National School Lunch Program in 1946 and was

instrumental in creating the internationally known Center for Disease Control in Atlanta. Among the foremost experts on military and defense policy, he was advisor to six presidents and a candidate for the presidency himself in 1952.

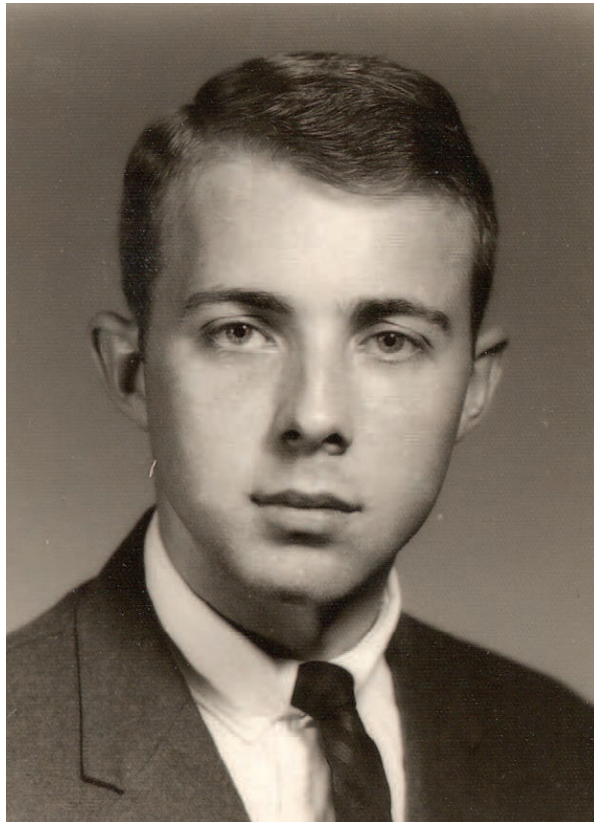
Yet, distinguished as his public service was, he had a very dark side. In 1935, Dick Russell opposed an anti-lynching bill in congress. From that time he worked to weaken and halt civil rights legislation. Russell believed in “white supremacy” and “separate but equal” societies. Given the fact that my father had begun referring to Sareth as that “black devil,” it is not a stretch of the imagination to suppose Senator Russell was entirely sympathetic when my father explained how the “black devil” was “destroying his family.” Russell began making telephone calls.

In a very short time, a letter arrived for Sareth from the American University with the terse message that the scholarship previously awarded to him had been withdrawn. No reason was given. That letter was followed in a week by notification from the United States Department of State that his visa was cancelled.



Sareth, graduation photograph, 1965

Sareth did graduate as scheduled in early June 1965, but we were in a vortex. He had spent four years cultivating friendships and earning respect on campus and in town. The friendships chilled, and the respect seemed to evaporate. The situation was mortifying to both of us, and the strain was beginning to show. We were numb. What had happened? Why had it happened? What was he to do? Where would he study? Would it even be possible to continue? Would he have to return to Cambodia? It was as embarrassing as it was puzzling. The one thing we knew was that he must leave the United States immediately. He began frantically attempting to contact friends in Washington to no avail. Next, he called, cabled, and wrote to people he knew in France. A decision was quickly made that he would use what remaining money he had, fly to Paris, and investigate future possibilities from there.



Jim Black, 1965

At the time and for a long time afterward, I felt as if all this hell had come about because of me. This was the lowest period of my life. We talked a lot, trying to figure out the pieces and the players and considering what the future might be. I was the only one with an income; I knew and he knew that I would send him as much money as I could wherever he was. There was no question of it. All this hell, all this pain had come about because of his acquaintance with me. I felt responsible.

A week after graduation Sareth packed his clothes, and we walked the three blocks from the hotel to the bus station. He was to take the bus to Atlanta, then fly to New York and on to Paris. Never before or since have I felt such sorrow. I watched the bus pull out of the station and cried all the way back to the hotel. It was Saturday morning. I did not come out of my room for two days. Sareth called from New York and sent a telegram when he arrived in Paris.

The summer began in earnest. I enrolled in one course, PSY-423, Abnormal Psychology. Daily work at the Varsity and weekend work at the theatre continued. In addition, Davison's, a local department store, hired me to work as a printer. Mr. Kinney offered me a job as Sunday clerk which paid no money but provided a room. It quickly became evident how fortunate these circumstances were. The room was "free." I was allowed to eat at the restaurant before beginning work each day and allowed to take food leftover at closing. I had few expenses other than tuition, books, gas, and the occasional piece of clothing. The combined income from the Varsity, the theatre, and the department store was enough to provide me with what I needed and also keep my commitment to help Sareth, but little more.

In the latter part of the summer, something happened that showed my father's true character. He continued communicating with university officials who continued responding to him. A note arrived from the Assistant Dean of Men Harry Cannon stating that he wanted to see me and that I was to make an appointment immediately. I did. He was an imposing man, bald headed and big. From behind his desk, he explained that my father had come to see him and was very concerned. He had asked Mr. Cannon to make certain I had insurance on the Renault. He did not object to my owning the car; he just wanted to be certain it was insured. He feared I might have an accident which would involve him in a lawsuit. I had not insured the car. The premium to insure the Renault was \$750 per year, a large sum I could not possibly afford. Mr. Cannon then told me that if I could not afford to insure the car, I would have to sell it. I did not know it then, but, as Assistant Dean of Men, he did not have the authority to force me to do that. He had bluffed. However, I was under 21, technically still a minor and subject to my father's wishes. At that time, my father owned three operating automobiles. He drove one hundred fifty miles a day to and from work and to my knowledge had no insurance on any of them. He had never seemed concerned about it. His action can only be seen as mean and hypocritical. He forced me to sell the car while seeming prudent, reasonable, and accommodating. I sold the Renault for \$100.

When Sareth first got to Paris he lived with a Mr. LeGrand, 81 Avenue LeDru-Rollin. In a letter of August 6, Sareth explained that, in order to study anywhere, he would have to have proof of financial support and therefore requested a letter from me. On August 20, 1965, I wrote to him formally promising to send \$120 (\$890 US 2013) per month.

Colonial Hotel
Athens, Georgia
August 20, 1965

Mr. It Sareth
Residing with Mr. LeGrand
81 Av. LeDru-Rollin
Paris 12^e France

Dear Mr. It:

In response to your letter of August 6, 1965 concerning financial support of your studies, I am pleased to inform you as follows:

1. You are assured that the sum of \$120.00 (one hundred twenty dollars) will be sent to you from me each month until the completion of your studies.
2. You are free to choose any institution or university.
3. You will please inform me of your academic progress.

Receive from me, Sir, warm wishes for your scholastic success.

Yours very truly,

James L. Black

Letter from Jim to Sareth pledging financial support, August 20, 1965

Adding a final sorrow to the others of 1965 was the death of Sareth's mother Koy Dim which he had feared for months. He was deeply troubled that he could not be in Cambodia to be with his family and help comfort her during her last days. He was able to return home for the funeral, however.



The funeral of Koy Dim, September 1, 1965. Sareth, Srás, Sandap, Siveth, and Simuoun

Sareth succeeded in gaining admission for the fall term to the Faculté des Sciences Agronomiques, a state school in Gembloux, Belgium. However, he would have to study water and forest management, not international relations, law, and economics as he had planned to do at the American University in Washington. After his first year of study in Gembloux, life became a little easier. He was awarded a scholarship for the academic year 1966-67 of 5,000 francs (\$738 US 2013) per month by the Belgian Government.

Faculté des Sciences agronomiques de l'Etat

GEMBLOUX (Belgique)

RECTORAT

Telephones : (081) 616.13
617.90
617.91

Monsieur IT Sareth

N° II-21.5/7714/LJ/MH.
(à rappeler dans la réponse)

Gembloux, le 27 décembre 1966.

Monsieur,

J'ai le plaisir de vous informer que la Caisse Générale d'Epargne et de Retraite a émis un avis favorable à la proposition que je lui avais transmise de vous accorder une bourse de 5.000 fr par mois, pour l'année académique 1966-1967. L'octroi de cette bourse est autorisé à la condition de faire parvenir, en fin d'année académique, un rapport sur votre travail de l'année.

Je vous saurais gré de vous mettre en contact avec M. Jaumin qui se chargera de liquider les mensualités.

Veuillez agréer, Monsieur, l'expression de mes sentiments distingués.

Le Recteur,



Prof. Dr. L. HENNAUX.

Letter informing Sareth of Belgian scholarship for 1966-1967



Faculté des Sciences Agronomiques, Gembloux, Belgium

After the Renault incident, things settled. Sareth was studying in Belgium. I was studying in Athens. We were both busy but communicated regularly during the following year.

I did manage to complete all requirements for the Bachelor of Arts Degree and graduated from the University of Georgia on June 4, 1966. I celebrated that occasion in two ways. I purchased, on credit at the jewelry store around the block, a small diamond ring that I had admired for months; and I visited Sareth in Europe. All year I had been working up to sixty hours per week and saving every penny possible.

The trip took me to Atlanta by bus, then by air from Atlanta to New York, New York to Reykjavik, Iceland, and then to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. Sareth met me in Luxembourg, and we traveled by train to Gembloux, Belgium.



Sareth & owners of the hotel where he lived, Belgium, 1966



Sareth at his desk, Gembloux, 1966.

The banner affixed to the right wall in the photograph above reads, “Mourir pour le pays est un si digne sort;” “Dying for one’s country is a very worthy end.” This maxim is a French translation of a line by the Roman poet Horace, “Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.”



Jim at Sareth's desk, Gembloux, 1966



Sareth cooking, Gembloux, 1966

Sareth and I traveled in Belgium and France ending in Paris where we visited the University of Paris, staying in the Pavillon du Cambodge at the Cité Universitaire. We both hoped we would one day study at the Sorbonne. From Paris we returned to Luxembourg for my flight home.

In Their Own Words: Gale Speaks

Because it had a profound effect on the course of events at the time, we now ask the question, “What exactly was the nature of the relationship between Gale and Sareth?” What can we know and how can we know it? If correspondence from him to her were available, or if he were here to speak for himself, or if she were here to speak for herself, our task would be better informed and possibly definitive. However, none of the above is the case. The only evidence available to us for the present purpose is the correspondence from her to him, from him to me, and my own recollections. I bear in mind that I am peering into the most intimate places in the hearts of two human beings whom I loved and who in the end must have loved each other.

Sareth knew that one day Gale’s letters would constitute evidence by which his intent and actions could be known. He also knew that if the letters were viewed in the context in which they were written, they would make his actions and that confusing, seemingly incomprehensible time better understood. He would neither want to see others hurt nor have his own reputation enhanced at their expense, but inevitably, the same context that clarifies Sareth’s actions sheds light on the actions of those others. While not justifying bad behavior, a careful reading and thoughtful interpretation of the correspondence makes it easier to understand why people acted as they did. Declarations, inference, and actions during these years at one time or another cast all the players in an unflattering light, including myself.

Given that the correspondence from Gale to Sareth is in retrospect so critical in creating the direction of and informing this story, I ask myself how it could have seemed unimportant to me at the time. I gave it very little thought. Although I was a courier for some of this written correspondence and as such must be considered an enabler, I never read any of it nor was any of it read to me. I was sometimes but most often not aware of the telephone calls to which they both refer. Surely I must have been aware that some relationship existed between them, but I do not remember ever witnessing activity between my sister and Sareth that remotely suggested amorous relations.

An examination of recurrent themes and related statements will be helpful in arriving at important conclusions and inferences. The correspondence from my sister Gale can only be viewed as “love letters.” While the writing is not salacious, it does consist of the normal vocabulary of love. It is possible to exercise discretion in quoting such language and still arrive at satisfactory conclusions. Ellipses indicate the omission of wording which either reflects that or which is simply not relevant.

Themes in the Letters from Gale to Sareth with Excerpts

Gale's Romantic Feelings

The second paragraph of her first letter describes the general tone of Sareth's relationship to the Black family.

Sareth, you'll never know what a joy it is to have you here. I may not show it as much as I should, but I sincerely appreciate all the information and advice you've given me. Oh, and thanks ever so much for the book rack you gave me. When I show it to the kids at school tomorrow I know they'll want one. I showed my math class how to square numbers the way you taught me Monday. (Letter 1, November 12, 1963)

However, also in the first letter there is wording which can be easily interpreted as evidence of nascent romantic attachment.

The only time I'm sad is when you go back to Reed Hall. I think of all the wonderful times we have had since I've known you, and then I think about a year or so in the future when you'll be at home and I'll probably never see you again, and then the tears flow. . . . (Letter 1, November 12, 1963)

This romantic attachment becomes explicit and unmistakable in subsequent letters.

I am about to tell my "Past, Present, and Future" feelings toward "Mr. It Sareth." My first inward impression of Mr. It was "Wow!" (I'm not joking, Sareth, I'm serious) those dark eyes, that beautiful hair, and that skin, something people work weeks on trying to acquire the color he was born with. Now, because of his good looks and the attention he gave me I immediately fell in love with him. (Letter 3, January 3, 1964)

God bless you, and, my little friend, I'm yours as long as you want me. (Letter 10, June 2, 1964)

I will love you always. (Letter 11A, June 22, 1964)

I've been kind of worried about the last 2 notes I wrote you. I mean, some girls like to dangle men, keep 'em on a string, and the men can't tell whether the girls love them or not 'cause they don't tell 'em if they do or don't. I want you to know that I do love you more than anything, so I told you what I was thinking. I just hope you didn't think it was too much. (Letter 12, June 30, 1964)

God loves you, and I love you. Together I think we can do a pretty good job of taking care of you wherever you are. (Letter 12, June 30, 1964)

You know something? You are almost as messy as James. The other day I looked in your drawer. Man, it was a mess. Naturally, I straightened it like a good future wife should. (Letter 15, July 17, 1964)

In the first dream we were washing dishes in Mableton. Mother had just gone out the door. . . . We embraced and kissed, but only for a moment because mother came back into the kitchen and said, "Was he trying to kiss you?" I gave her an emphatic, "NO!" After she had gone I said, "I was kissing him." (Letter 18, August 11, 1964)

Do you suppose you could manage a very longed-for, tender kiss, say about 30 minutes long? (Letter 21, October 12, 1964)

Your loving wife (Letter 30, December 11, 1964, signature)

I am very, very, very, very, very, very, very jealous of people who can be with you and not be watched. (Letter 34, January 8, 1965)

Parental Guidance

As time progressed my parents informed (me) that I was neglecting my duties as the daughter in the family which I know they'd do sooner or later because of my crush on Mr. It. . . . Because of our relationship with Mr. It my parents informed me I was to love and treat this young man as a brother. . . . I also plan to love him as much or more than I ever have. (Letter 3, January 3, 1964)

Mother declares in so many words, you're a 26 year old man, and I'm supposed to keep my distance, but parents or no parents, through school or not through school . . . they cannot tell me whom and how to love. (Letter 3, January 3, 1964)

Daddy says my education comes first. I wish I was through with my old education. Then according to my dear mother she wouldn't care if you gave me special attention. Frankly, I don't believe her. (Letter 3, January 3, 1964)

. . . the way mom and pop talk we won't be seeing much of each other. (Letter 16, July 29, 1964)

Sareth's Actions

Never, ever has a man or boy told me that he loved me, and I didn't know what to do or what to say, but I acted ridiculously about it I know, and I apologize for seeming as if I didn't believe you because I know you'd never say anything like that and not mean it. (Letter 4, February 17, 1964)

Sareth, thank you for everything you've given me, not altogether material things, but all the flattering and complimentary things you've said, the way you act when we're together. (Letter 4, February 17, 1964)

You remember that note you gave me Sunday night? . . . You were wrong again. You are not so different for me, not for "me." (Letter 4, 1964)

You will never know how you made me feel. Neither will you know how long I waited just for one little kiss of security. I got a little more security than I expected but I loved each and every enjoyable second. (Letter 11A, June 22, 1964)

Ever since the 22nd [June] when you kissed me, you know what I think about? I think about Sunday when you held my hand and told me we would mix our skin colors. I like to hear you say things like that. I think about you and me and our 3 kids since that's how many you said you wanted. I can't have any more without you, and, by the way, if you ever go anywhere and find me with three kids, they will be yours and mine. (Letter 12, June 30, 1964)

The more names you call me, I'll know I am just a few steps closer to becoming Madame It Sareth. (Letter 18, August 11, 1964. Sareth's nickname for Gale was "Cow.")

. . . whether or not I am a virgin depends entirely upon you. God has already forgiven me of that which I have already done wrong. (Letter 19, September 20, 1964)

I know my parents haven't treated you the way I wanted them to. And I know you were looked up to in your own country, and you will be when you return. "But please do NOT EVER AGAIN think of yourself as being immoral!! You are not, and I love you. (Letter 19, September 20, 1964)

. . . what do you mean when you said that you'd better know who you are? I know. You are the man I love very deeply and who will be the father of my children. (Letter 41, February 25, 1965)

As far as your being dumb and stupid, suppose you let me decide that. . . . (Letter 41, February 25, 1965)

Gale's Responses to Sareth's Correspondence

I received your last letter. . . I think you express yourself well enough to get the point across. Anyway, I was so happy about what you had said I cried myself to sleep. (Letter 3, January 3, 1964)

Your last letter, oh, Sareth, it was the most beautiful thing I've ever read. I'll cherish its words . . . as long as I live. (Letter 3, January 3, 1964)

Thank you for your little note last week. I enjoyed it very much because it lets me know you were thinking of me, and that makes me feel good. (Letter 10, June 2, 1964)

As for the card, Darling, you will never know how much I loved the card. It was so beautiful, and the words were, I mean, I have never seen a card that expressed one's love for another so vividly. (Letter 15, July 17, 1964)

I know, if you are anything like me, you get very impatient waiting for the next letter, especially when it takes me so long to write once after 4 letters from you. (Letter 19, September 20, 1964)

I know I said I would answer your letters one at a time, but right now I do not have the time to look for them. (Letter 20, October 8, 1964)

I have your letters, dear, but I am going to wait until I have much more time to write. (Letter 24, November 1, 1964)

There are many other things like that I should have written about but did not. So, if there is anything else you want to know ask me. I would go back and answer them but Bean told me to tear everything up tomorrow (answered or not). (Letter 34, January 8, 1965)

I can now tear up your 3 last notes. I have answered them. If James knew I still had them, he'd kill me. (Letter 37, January 27, 1965)

Marriage

. . . do you know what you did Monday morning? You made me the "HAPPIEST" girl in the world, also, dear, very impatient. Now, I don't know whether or not I can wait on those seven years. You know what would be wonderful, if it was possible? If you haven't thought of it, I have, and that is if I could only go back with you in '67. I suppose it's sort of silly but it was just an idea I had. (Letter 11B, June 23, 1964)

One day in my room James was lying on the bed reading, and I was typing. James asked me if anything had changed. After a while I told him that I could not marry you because I did not think you were in the pattern God had for me. James asked if the Lord told me that. I very promptly said that the Lord had told me nothing 'cause I didn't know when the Lord was trying to tell me something or when he wasn't. I thought James would be very angry, but he was not. Oh, how I wanted him to kick me and tell me what a fool I was being. (Letter 22, October 15, 1964)

I wanted God to give me an answer. Should I or should I not marry you. Also, during this time I was seeking for the Holy Ghost and talk about somebody being confused. Well, I decided that rather than live with a doubt all my life whether or not God was pleased with our marriage, I decided “no” I would not marry you. Now, please do not stop reading there. You don’t know, nobody knows, what I went through for about a week. I was worried about you. I was terribly confused about how to receive the Holy Ghost. I was either thinking about you or receiving the Holy Ghost. The night I decided I was determined I was going to write you and tell you about my decision, but I could not. (Letter 22, October 15, 1964)

Finally, I came to the conclusion I could and would not marry anyone but you. I love you much too much not to marry you. (Letter 22, October 15, 1964)

You said something about a “next time” and on the other side you asked “Are you sure you will be Mrs. It??” Well there will never be a next time. The only thing that will get me to change my mind is for God Himself to knock me down and tear me apart. (Letter 25, November 8, 1964)

Many, many months ago long before you made your indirect proposal (I say “indirect proposal” because you never asked me directly to marry you.) (Letter 25, November 8, 1964)

I thought I’d write. I also concluded I would send all your notes back, and if you want anything answered that I didn’t answer, you can ask me again when you ask those 1,000 questions. I surely do hope I have answers for all of them. (Letter 27, November 16, 1964)

Also, Dear, I am very glad you did not ask me directly to marry you. . . . (Letter 27, November 16, 1964)

Now, to get to your last note, I really would like to know what your thoughts on our marriage are, but if you want to wait, OK. (Letter 27, November 16, 1964)

About your questions, I think I threw away the wrong note because I don’t have the one with the questions on it. The most important question I remember of course and will answer. “Yes, Dear, I will marry you.” I think though that the date will have to be changed because of some things papa said, and I think myself 18 is a little young to be married. (Letter 32, January 1, 1965)

From what you said and the way you said it I guess you don’t like the idea of changing our wedding date. We don’t have to change it, but I was just thinking of what difference it would make (as far as my parents are concerned) if we waited until I was 20 or so. But if it were possible I would be willing, and I would like to very much get married now. . . . if you want, we can still get

married in '67. (Letter 34, January 8, 1965)

Here are a few things I do want though. 1. I want or would like to be married in the States, 2. We must eventually choose a minister to perform the ceremony but we can wait until the time comes for that, 3. Mama always said when I got married she wanted it to be at the house, but in this case she may change her mind, 4. Most important, I want to marry my dear, dear congressman before you return to Cambodia to run for office. (Letter 34, January 8, 1965)

I truly think it is the right thing for you to ask daddy for his permission, but you also said you were a Christian. Therefore, I don't think they will object as much. (Letter 37, January 27, 1965)

The first time I read, "I myself, would wisely retire from my field" I sort of laughed because I couldn't think of you doing anything like that. . . . I love you more than anything except God, so don't ever scare me like that again. (Letter 39, February 9, 1965)

The only thing that I know of that has rocks in its head is a crayfish, and I ain't marryin' a crayfish! (Letter 39, February 9, 1965)

Well, Dear, you have said that, "Our marriage will not be in the summer of 1967," and, "Daddy will not agree with it I am sure, so the marriage could not be possible." I'll say this: It is, the marriage, possible, and eventually will be. (Letter 41, February 26, 1965)

I have just as much liberty to love you as any other woman, if I may use that term, has to love the man of her choice. Someday, doll, we can do all the things we want to do without being watched. (Letter 41, February 26, 1965)

When I said that we are not married yet, I meant that we were not privileged to take part in the things a husband and wife can do, not that there was a possibility we would not be married. . . . your loving wife. (Letter 42, February 26, 1965)

Religion

Gale was influenced by the religious atmosphere in the family and refers to religious beliefs and God frequently. The first mention is in Letter 3 in which she simply says, "God bless you."

Sunday night you were talking about talking to me about the Bible and religion and things like that, and I said I knew nothing. Well, of course, I know a little something with mama and daddy talking and preaching and things of that nature, but I would not want to talk to you, especially for fear I'd tell you something wrong. . . . (Letter 6, March 24, 1964)

You remember that Sunday when I called you from the Meeks? You said you thought daddy believed in God too much. NO! NO! NO! There is no such thing as far as I know, and I'm pretty sure I'm right. (Letter 8, April 17, 1964)

Not only do I pray for my parents, but whether you know it or not, Dear, I also pray for yours. (Letter 12, June 30, 1964)

I guess you know by now that I pray every night. . . . (Letter 12, June 30, 1964)

In fact before the Lord saved me, which has not been too long ago, my life with the boys has not been dull, very sinful, but not dull. That is something I have wanted to tell you about for many months, but when I tell you it will take a long time and much understanding from you. It might even change your whole feeling toward me. (Letter 16, July 29, 1964)

Except for knowing that I have done God's will, you are the thing I want most, you with your love and our children. (Letter 16, July 29, 1964)

. . . most of all I want us to be spiritually at one someday soon. I pray you will know my God as I know Him. He is a God of understanding and patience. He knows your future, and He knows mine. He knows when you will accept Him as your personal Savior; I do not. Therefore all I can do is hope and pray it will be soon. It might be hard because I know you have been taught to accept all religions, but this is not only a religion. It is a faith, the type of faith I want my children, our children, to be brought up in. (Letter 18 August 11, 1964)

I [was] even more joyful when you said you believed in God too. Somehow I always knew you did or eventually would. I wish I could tell mama and daddy, but I can't. (Letter 28, December 1, 1964)

I truly think it is the right thing for you to ask daddy for his permission, but you also said you were a Christian. Therefore, I don't think they will object as much. (Letter 37, January 27, 1965)

I am very glad, Darling, you believe the way you do spiritually. The more you learn and get to know more about the Lord, you'll find out just how wonderful He is. (Letter 41, February 25, 1965)

The Ith Family

Have you heard from your parents lately? I hope your mama is doing better health wise. (Letter 2, December 10, 1963)

I thank God every night for your parents, because they produced such a wonderful son. Someday, about seven years, I know I'll be able to meet your wonderful parents and thank them myself. (Letter 12, June 30, 1964)

When you hear from home, I hope your sister is feeling better because I pray for her as much as I pray for Papa. (Letter 12, June 30, 1964)

I know I am right that you love your mother more than you love me. You are supposed to, just like we're supposed to love Christ first because He first loved us. Your mother, I know, is a wonderful person, and she had to be a wonderful mother to bring up man such as you are with such high principles. Your mother, I also know, loves (you) much more than I. I will never know how she has adapted herself to not having her loving youngest with her. I know if I had a son like you I would never let him go away if I could help it. (Letter 19, September 20, 1964)

James (Bean)

We are having a C.A. [youth organization] meeting on Friday night. I asked James if you could go and if we could pick you up. He said "no" because you-know-who would find out and would not like it. (Letter 14, July 16, 1964)

Tuesday on the way home I explained everything to James, so if he gives you any more "dim views" I don't know what's wrong. (Letter 22, October 15, 1964)

When "Bean Head" says things like you wrote me about, please don't burn. Be glad and happy because he's the one with the surprise coming. (Letter 27, November 16, 1964)

The only comments I have for the first part of your next to the last letter are: I am very, very glad James thinks I am a "religious girl." I try to be for what is life with [out] faith in God? (Letter 28, December 2, 1964)

There are many other things like that I should have written about but did not. So, if there is anything else you want to know ask me. I would go back and answer them but Bean told me to tear everything up tomorrow (answered or not). (Letter 34, January 8, 1965)

Conclusions and Inferences Based upon Gale's Correspondence

There was frequent communication between Sareth and Gale after Fall 1963 in the form of letters, notes, and telephones calls. From the above excerpts we may conclude the following:

1. Sareth helped her with her studies and gave her small gifts.

Sareth, you'll never know what a joy it is to have you here. I may not show it as much as I should, but I sincerely appreciate all the information and advice

you've given me. Oh, and thanks ever so much for the book rack you gave me. When I show it to the kids at school tomorrow I know they'll want one. I showed my math class how to square numbers the way you taught me Monday. (Letter 1, November 12, 1963)

I'll cherish the bubble gum and pencils. The flip flops were a little small but I can wear them. (Letter 15, July 17, 1964)

2. Sareth paid attention to her which she understood to be of a romantic nature. Whether he intended it to be in the beginning is a matter of conjecture, but evidently it became so.

Sareth, thank you for everything you've given me, not altogether material things, but all the flattering and complimentary things you've said, the way you act when we're together. (Letter 4, February 17, 1964)

3. Gale told Sareth that she loved him.

Because of his good looks and the attention he gave me, I immediately fell in love with him. (Letter 3, January 3, 1964)

I want you to know that I do love you more than anything. . . . (Letter 12, June 30, 1964)

4. Sareth told Gale that he loved her.

Never, ever has a man or boy told me that he loved me, and I didn't know what to do or what to say, but I acted ridiculously about it I know, and I apologize for seeming as if I didn't believe you because I know you'd never say anything like that and not mean it. (Letter 4, February 17, 1964)

5. There was a physical aspect to the relationship which began with the kiss on June 22, 1964. However, based upon, “. . . we were not privileged to take part in the things a husband and wife can do. . .” we may conclude that this physical relationship did not include overt sexual activity and certainly not intercourse.

You will never know how you made me feel. Neither will you know how long I waited just for one little kiss of security. I got a little more security than I expected but I loved each and every enjoyable second. (Letter 11A, June 22, 1964)

When I said that we are not married yet, I meant that we were not privileged to take part in the things a husband and wife can do, not that there was a possibility we would not be married. . . . your loving wife. (Letter 42, February 26, 1965)

6. Gale's parents noticed her attraction to Sareth and counseled her to treat him as a brother, an idea which she rejected. (Letter 3, January 3, 1964)

As time progressed my parents informed (me) that I was neglecting my duties as the daughter in the family which I know they'd do sooner or later because of my crush on Mr. It. . . . Because of our relationship with Mr. It my parents informed me I was to love and treat this young man as a brother. . . . I also plan to love him as much or more than I ever have. (Letter 3, January 3, 1964)

7. When marriage was first mentioned by whomever, there was recognition that Gale was underage and that she would have to be twenty-one, seven years hence, before marriage could take place.

You made me the "HAPPIEST" girl in the world, also, dear, very impatient. Now, I don't know whether or not I can wait on those seven years. (Letter 11B, June 23, 1964)

Someday, about seven years, I know I'll be able to meet your wonderful parents. . . (Letter 12, June 30, 1964)

8. Gale states twice that Sareth did not ask her directly to marry him.

Many, many months ago long before you made your indirect proposal (I say "indirect proposal" because you never asked me directly to marry you.) (Letter 25, November 8, 1964)

Also, Dear, I am very glad you did not ask me directly to marry you. . . . (Letter 27, November 16, 1964)

9. Gale was determined to marry Sareth and referred multiple times to herself as his wife.

Naturally, I straightened it like a good future wife should. (Letter 15, July 17, 1964)

The only thing that will get me to change my mind is for God Himself to knock me down and tear me apart. (Letter 25, November 8, 1964)

I'll say this: It is, the marriage, possible, and eventually will be. (Letter 41, February 26, 1965)

Finally, I came to the conclusion I could and would not marry anyone but you. I love you much too much not to marry you. (Letter 22, October 15, 1964)

10. From the beginning, Sareth had misgivings about the marriage which he attempted to put off by stipulating that it could not happen until she became twenty-one, by introducing doubt, and by giving her opportunities and reasons to change her mind. He made those

misgivings clear, finally saying that they could not get married.

Now, I don't know whether or not I can wait on those seven years. (Letter 11B, June 23, 1964)

I thank God every night for your parents, because they produced such a wonderful son. Someday, about seven years, I know I'll be able to meet your wonderful parents and thank them myself. (Letter 12, June 30, 1964)

You remember that note you gave me Sunday night? . . . You were wrong again. You are not so different for me, not for "me." (Letter 4, 1964)

You said something about a "next time" and on the other side you asked "Are you sure you will be Mrs. It??" (Letter 25, November 8, 1964)

I thought I'd write I also concluded I would send all your notes back, and if you want anything answered that I didn't answer, you can ask me again when you ask those 1,000 questions. I surely do hope I have answers for all of them. (Letter 27, November 16, 1964)

Now, to get to your last note, I really would like to know what your thoughts on our marriage are, but if you want to wait, OK. (Letter 27, November 16, 1964)

. . . what do you mean when you said that you'd better know who you are? I know. You are the man I love very deeply and who will be the father of my children. (Letter 41, February 25, 1965)

As far as your being dumb and stupid, suppose you let me decide that (Letter 41, February 25, 1965)

The first time I read, "I myself, would wisely retire from my field" I sort of laughed because I couldn't think of you doing anything like that. . . . I love you more than anything except God, so don't ever scare me like that again. (Letter 39, February 9, 1965)

The only thing that I know of that has rocks in its head is a crayfish, and I ain't marryin' a crayfish! (Letter 39, February 9, 1965)

Well, Dear, you have said that, "Our marriage will not be in the summer of 1967," and, "Daddy will not agree with it I am sure, so the marriage could not be possible." (Letter 41, February 26, 1965)

11. Sareth, Gale believed, then relented and asked her to marry him.

About your questions, I think I threw away the wrong note because I don't have the one with the questions on it. The most important question I remember of course and will answer. "Yes, Dear, I will marry you." (Letter 32, January 1, 1965)

12. Gale began to have misgivings.

I think though that the date will have to be changed because of some things papa said, and I think myself 18 is a little young to be married. (Letter 32, January 1, 1965)

From what you said and the way you said it I guess you don't like the idea of changing our wedding date. We don't have to change it, but I was just thinking of what difference it would make (as far as my parents are concerned) if we waited until I was 20 or so. But if it were possible I would be willing, and I would like to very much get married now. . . . if you want, we can still get married in '67. (Letter 34, January 8, 1965)

Too, I would like to say something about the date. The only reason I said 18 was a little young was because daddy's always talking about when I get married, and he always leaves the impression that I should be about 25 (Can you imagine waiting that long?). (Letter 39, February 9, 1965)

13. Martha indicated her approval of marriage when Gale became eighteen. Gale then concluded that it would be acceptable for her to marry Sareth when she became eighteen in 1967.

But mama said, "Well, since I was 16 [when I got married], you should be at least 18. Mama usually has more pull so I am looking forward to the summer of '67." (Letter 39, February 9, 1965)

14. Gale first mentioned returning with him to Cambodia.

You know what would be wonderful, if it was possible? If you haven't thought of it, I have, and that is if I could only go back with you in '67. I suppose it's sort of silly but it was just an idea I had. (Letter 11B, June 23, 1964)

15. Gale frequently "witnessed" to him in an effort to persuade him to become a Christian and at one point understood that he had in fact done so.

I (was) even more joyful when you said you believed in God too. Somehow I always knew you did or eventually would. I wish I could tell mama and daddy, but I can't. (Letter 28, December 1, 1964)

I am very glad, Darling, you believe the way you do spiritually. The more you learn and get to know more about the Lord, you'll find out just how wonderful He is. (Letter 41, February 25, 1965)

I truly think it is the right thing for you to ask daddy for his permission, but you also said you were a Christian. Therefore, I don't think they will object as much. (Letter 37, January 27, 1965)

In Their Own Words: Sareth Speaks

Only twenty pieces of Sareth's correspondence are in my possession. There were more. It will be explained later how these were put into the hands of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. It is helpful to think of them as falling into three groups a) a letter to me from Paris in Fall 1966, b) thirteen letters to me and my wife relative to our marriage and his visit to the US all dated 1968, and c) six letters to me during the early to middle 1970's.

In 1965 Sareth and I were both vilified by friends, family, and church people who could do little damage beyond loose, uninformed talk and by university officials who could and did do serious damage. Multiple university officials called him to their offices repeatedly which he found extremely humiliating especially given the high regard in which they formerly held him. He was accused among many other things of 1. knowingly violating the conditions of his admittance to the US, 2. owning several automobiles, 3. setting out deliberately to initiate and maintain a romantic relationship with an underage female, and 4. purchasing a mobile home so that he could carry out his plan to marry an underage female, my sister Gale.

His most direct and comprehensive commentary about this entire situation is to be found in his letter to me from Belgium dated November 25, 1966.

Listen! The day which the authorities know that I have not had four cars, that I have not violated any regulation by buying the trailer (I did not know the rules because when I signed papers at the US embassy I did not understand a word – they also have not read for us!!), that I bought it not to marry any girl, will be my honor[s] day. I will drink two cans of beer with you – I mean it, although I never did. I will write to my father to get permission to drink. Keep this letter to show it to me in case I refuse to drink unless my father will say NO.

However I still hold the gravity of my mistake for having loved a girl under 18, although she pushed me to marry her, to say yes. One day I do not remember the exact date, she called me and talked not less than two hours over the phone about nothing but marrying her before my return to France. I replied no, she said yes; I said no she replied yes. . . Finally, I left my word unsaid and just listen [ed] to her proposals. I did not tell you because I did not and still do not want you to blame her – I knew you were going to say something caustic to her.

By the way, in one of her letters which the authorities should have read (remember I have mentioned a little about that while we went to Beachwood. You stared at me. She asked me to kiss her 30 minutes. Hm! I told her I might choke to death. . . . I am smiling now because of such a letter.

If Sareth violated the conditions of his admittance to the US, he did not know that he was doing so. He never owned an automobile in the United States. I do not believe now and never have that he set out to maintain a romantic relationship with my sister. However, it does appear that such a relationship did develop and that it was not entirely platonic. I categorically state that the mobile home was not bought with any thought of his marrying Gale or of her ever living there.

Numerous references to the events of 1965 appear in the 1968 letters. Despite his experiences with my family he never spoke negatively or spitefully about any of them. In Letter 6, June 13, 1968 from Paris he refers to my grandmothers.

I am glad that grandma was coming to see us in a good way. I still love them – Grandma Lerlean [Black] and [Grandma Mellie] Perry.

I myself on the other hand was embittered for many years and might not have acted with restraint except for Sareth's admonitions such as the one in Letter 8, June 15, 1968 regarding my sister's upcoming marriage.

I just received two letters dated May 16 and 25. I have to reply immediately that we must absolutely not Xerox any kind of her letters to send to her husband.

Do not forget that we consider (and always will) ourselves as not only educated but cultivated people; so, if we do that we will make ourselves low.

He responds to my suggestion that we show the letters to Lee in a letter dated June 20, 1968.

I am very glad to hear that you handled the business very nicely. However, I do not think that these people need to talk to me because we do not have any kind of relations since 1965, unless they wish to know something specific. In this case, we will have an alternative; we either keep quiet or blow up; that is, we'll tell what was going on. If we talk, that means we [will have to] say something bad from [about} the Cow. We still have part of responsibility because I had loved her.

Even as late as April 23, 1973 he asks to be remembered to my aunts, uncles, and cousins with whom he had spent much time in South Carolina.

Please say hello to the Woodruff [South Carolina] people and explain to them that my daily job is too intense to write them regularly.

Afterthoughts

Regardless of how the romance between Gale and Sareth began and whether or how it was resisted, there must have been talk of marriage. Sareth apparently in the beginning was less eager than Gale, resisted it to some degree, but gave way after a period of time if what she says in her letters is to be taken at face value. However, at some point both Sareth and Gale seemed to reconsider whatever commitment they had and began to put brakes on the process. Perhaps, despite the continued marriage talk in her correspondence, she began to want the marriage postponed. It is possible that they both wanted it to be at a stop. Her reason was perhaps because of the admonitions of her parents; his reason was likely the same as it had always been, her age. Then something unrelated happened that seemed to thrust the whole notion of marriage into high gear again. This time there was no governor at all and the result was a train wreck.

It appears from the distance of almost fifty years that, despite the physical proximity, my father, my mother, my sister Gale, my brother Tim, and I were living compartmentalized lives with very little meaningful communication. Each was busy dealing with the internal and external factors of the life he or she was living. There is no question of my separation; I was separate and different and always had been. The ever-present fear in the household was debilitating; fear of God, fear of sinners and heathens and, for the children, fear of a despotic patriarch who had to be obeyed. What bound the family together was, in my opinion now as it was then, genetics and religion, not any form of intimacy or the kind of love one would expect in a functional family.

When the situation at home became intolerable, I left. The move had absolutely nothing to do with Gale, but she must have believed it did. It is easy to understand how she would view the purchase of the mobile home as a sure sign that Sareth intended to marry her in the very near future. My unexpected move must have frightened her, adding to her confusion and leading her to think all three of us were going to live in the mobile home together. Any doubt she might have had about that was erased when she heard me say, "I will come get you," without clarifying my intention by adding, "for a visit." I do not view any subsequent action she took as mean spirited in any way or negatively directed at Sareth or me. What seems more likely is that she mistakenly understood that he did intend to marry her before he left the United States as she had so often said she wanted. The ambivalence she had felt for some time turned into doubt which became fear and ultimately panic. In any case, she evidently informed Martha who told Lee who began a program of hysterical acts so damaging, hurtful, and hateful that none of those involved has ever fully recovered from them.

Lee believed everything he did was appropriate because he answered only to God, and it was God who led him to act as he did. He was convinced that Sareth had encouraged me to leave home and that the mobile home was purchased so he could marry Gale. Sareth had not encouraged me to leave home and did not know I intended to do so until I informed him. Lee by his attitude and actions pushed me out the door himself. Had Sareth and I not made living arrangements together, I would have made them otherwise.

My father communicated his misfortune to everyone who would listen and over the years never stopped referring to Sareth as “that black devil.” I was painted as the ungrateful son who had been given every advantage. Sareth was condemned and driven from this country by adults who were acting worse than children and who should have known better. However, Lee and Martha in their minds and in the minds of the family and community were viewed as loving parents who had been wronged by a deceitful, devil possessed, black foreigner and an ungrateful, resentful son.

Lee never regretted his actions and years later said to my brother, “If I had to do it all again, I would do exactly what I did.” This is the mindset of an individual who cannot be wrong, of someone who is incapable of admitting a mistake, and who therefore has no need to consider any view or opinion beside his own. I have never regretted my decision to leave although the hurt and damage that followed remains a great sorrow to me. My father was a man consumed by self-righteousness, righteous indignation, and pride. The whole mess could have been clarified and a disaster avoided by a direct question to either Sareth or me.

My only regret about leaving was that I had to abandon my brother Tim whom I loved and who was only ten at the time. His story is an entirely different chapter in the life of this dysfunctional family. He paid a high price. I am sorry for the hurt he had to endure after I left. His life would have been different had I stayed.

There was one notable exception to the familial condemnation of me, one which was and remains a source of strength and which I never expected. In 1967 I paid a visit to my maternal grandparents. During that visit my grandfather Luke Perry asked me to go outside with him to the well to help draw a bucket of water. Two things about this request seemed strange to me at the time. The house had running water which made it unnecessary to draw water from the well, and he was very capable of drawing the water without assistance as he had done for more than sixty years. Nevertheless, I went. He dropped the bucket into the well, and I cranked it slowly up. Nothing was said until it reached the top. He paused, looked at me, and said, “I don’t know why you left. They never told me. . . . but it was the best thing you ever did.” I hugged him, and we left the bucket of water outside on the well shelf.

I do not know what involvement my mother Martha might have had in this sad affair. Martha is intelligent, capable of influencing and controlling indirectly, and as Gale stated, “had more pull.” She must have developed this indirect, manipulative skill over the years in response to my father’s authoritarian personality. I believe she allowed him to believe (if indeed he really did) or to pretend that he really was the boss. Lee’s intelligence was of a different kind. He was extremely skilled mechanically and could do many delicate, complicated things with his hands. However, he had little emotional intelligence and limited his intellectual curiosity to things mechanical or religious. It was confirmed later that Gale first told Martha that she and Sareth were going to get married (and perhaps that I had said I would come to get her). Martha then told Lee who went berserk. It is easier now to understand how they arrived at the assumptions they made; what remains incomprehensible to me is why their reactions were so mean and destructive.

Over the years the nagging question remains, “What might I or others have done to prevent these events or at least to have brought about a less brutal outcome?” Events quite likely would have unfolded differently if any of the following had happened:

I had waited until I was twenty-one to leave home,
I had found the courage to talk back to my parents years earlier, I
had been completely submissive,
Lee had been less authoritarian,
Lee’s God had been kinder and more inclusive,
Sareth had rebuffed Gale or vice versa,
I had refused to act as courier,
I had informed my parents when Gale told me about marriage plans,
I had not said, “I will come get you,”
We had made the tape recorder available to Gale to leave a warning, or
Lee had asked a direct question in a civil way.

None of the above occurred.

I do not blame Gale. She was a young person controlled to some extent by her hormones. She too must have felt some degree of repression, and perhaps she saw Sareth as a way out, although I must conclude that she really loved him. My abrupt departure was a tipping point. She became frightened when she began to actually believe that what she had wanted might really happen. The woman in her who had acted out of passion reverted to the child who acted out of fear. She must have felt trapped.

Neither do I blame Sareth. The attention he received from Gale must have been as hard to resist as the attention she thought he directed at her. He never told me he intended to marry Gale. However, Gale told me on October 13, 1964, according to her letter, that she was planning to marry Sareth. I never believed a marriage would take place and did not take it seriously. I believe Sareth handled the situation the only way he could. He knew she was too young and told her that, if they could get married, it could only be after she had reached the age of twenty-one, the age of majority. He had to have understood too that his marriage to a foreigner would have presented cultural and perhaps political difficulties at home. He did not want to offend either her or Lee or Martha. He felt caught. Was he to withdraw without explanation from a family that had been kind to him? Was he to withdraw by making up a lie about his reasons for doing so? Was he to tell Lee and Martha, “Your daughter is approaching me in ways that are difficult for me to manage?” There was no good answer, no good way out, and ultimately no way to win. The situation was made especially difficult for him because he did in fact love all of us. He loved me. He loved Tim. He loved Gale. He loved Martha. He loved Lee. How could a family that purported to love him and whom he loved turn on him in such a way? Sareth says in his letters that he made a mistake by loving Gale. He probably made a mistake by loving any of us. Had he not genuinely loved all of us including our extended family of relatives and church people, it would have been easier for him to simply walk away.

History, human frailty, racial prejudice, ignorance and misguided religion converged in 1965. Although everyone except my little brother Tim contributed in some way to this disaster, the proximate and major architect was my father. His intention relative to these specific events was the same as it was throughout his life. He sought to control everything and everybody, to have his way, and he did. He ruined a man's reputation, deprived him of his educational support, and ultimately drove him from this country. In so doing he mortally offended and alienated me. He always believed he was right in doing what he did. He looked back with satisfaction at his wisdom in responding to the guiding hand of God with no regret for his actions or their consequences. He remained, so far as I know, supremely self-confident and serene in his righteousness until his death.

Even so, the possibility must be allowed that Lee the perpetrator was also Lee the victim in a twisted, hidden way. Perhaps the biggest culprits were the god in his mind and religion as he knew it. He kept the Christian "god of love" hostage in heaven's basement, dark, narrow, and cold. He imposed his own limitations of education, reasoning ability, and background on his god and insisted that this god, with no view or appreciation of the world outside, act as puppet master of his family and all those he knew. The hostage god, with the limitations Lee imposed upon him, ruled the world. Lee was so intent upon listening for and carrying out what he thought were this god's commands that he could not hear him saying, "Wait, wait, you don't understand! If you let me out of here, I can serve you, you can serve me, and together we can serve others better."

It is impossible to know whether the relentless insistence upon everyone's worshipping the basement god came from Lee's genuine desire to usher them into heaven, his self-doubt, or something else unknown. It was likely a combination of those things. My brother Tim was diagnosed as an adult as having Attention Deficit Disorder. After years of research and thought Tim concluded that Lee himself had the disorder and clearly exhibited the symptoms. If Tim is correct, that too probably helped determine Lee's reaction to life.

I did not see or communicate with my father for thirty-seven years until a few weeks before his death. On that occasion I thanked him for three specific things he had taught me or made possible for me that had added significantly to the quality of my life. He made no response to my references to those things. He did however compliment me on the quality of my shoes, explain that the dogs were chasing the chickens, and change the subject to "that devil man." There was no conversation of the type one might expect after so long an absence, such a family tragedy, or impending death.

1967-1968: The Cuban Connection

Graduate study began for me at the University of Georgia in September 1966 on a very good note. A graduate assistantship in the university library helped me improve research skills and develop techniques for dealing with the general public. I was responsible for aiding scholars in their research and for the security of one floor of the library at night. However, in the fall of 1967, I was awarded a teaching assistantship; I had complete responsibility which meant that I taught, administered examinations, and assigned final grades. This little country boy was teaching at the University of Georgia! In my mind, it was a mile-high, neon marker on my road to somewhere. I enrolled in two courses and taught from one to three classes per quarter, depending upon enrollment. The hotel where I lived was directly across the street from the main entrance to the university, and the restaurant where I worked was on the ground floor. The building where I took classes and taught was three hundred feet from the hotel. What could be better! It was one of the happiest times of my life.

Early in the fall term my friend Dianne Clark, with whom I shared an office, asked me if I had met Cloris, one of the new graduate students, also a teaching assistant. Dianne liked her, thought that I would, and wanted us to meet. We did. This woman was strikingly beautiful with black hair, a fine figure, and an exceptional sense of fashion. She spoke English with some command but with a pronounced Spanish accent which I found charming. Her clothes were well made, stylish, tailored to her body, and occasionally accented by fine jewelry. This combination was rare, especially among graduate students, most of whom were struggling financially.

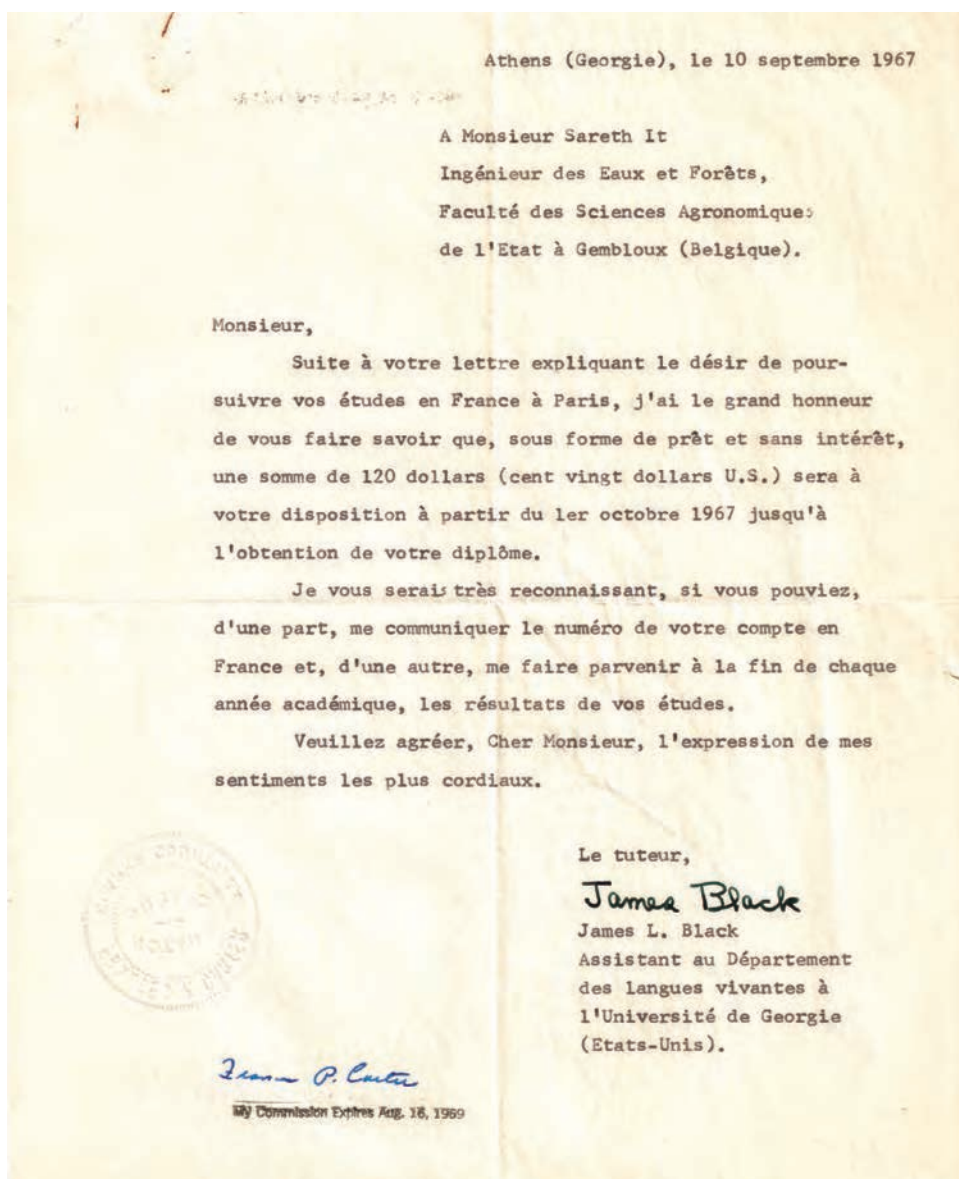


Cloris Ramos Cocina, 1967

Over a period of months, a friendship developed into a love affair. I was completely taken by this exotic woman. I adored her and loved her company. She was Cuban, and eventually I was introduced to a wide community of Cubans in Athens, Atlanta, and Miami, each of whom had fascinating stories to tell.

Cloris was in the process of a divorce from her first husband and had two young girls. She was renting a small house not far from campus. After we dated for several months, I moved from the Colonial Hotel to live with her and the children who were five and seven years old. Having two adults in the house made life easier for Cloris. I often took care of the children while she carried out chores, studied, or taught her own class. She and I lived together successfully and happily.

We began to talk about the possibility of marriage. Among the details shared about our lives were the stories about Sareth and the events of 1965, which were still troubling to me, and the vivid, terrifying memories of her family's escape from Cuba that lingered in her mind. Even though I loved this woman, I hesitated to marry. Neither of us had completed graduate study or had a permanent job, and I was still planning to study in Europe. In addition, I had a financial commitment to Sareth of uncertain duration that I was determined to honor that would be unrelated to our family. This commitment had just been reconfirmed on September 10, 1967 in a letter to him in Belgium.



Promissory letter supporting Sareth's study in Belgium

There were many discussions about this arrangement during which Cloris assured me she understood and accepted my financial commitment to Sareth and that she was completely comfortable knowing that I would continue to send a specified amount of money to him each month.

At first I was to follow my plan to study in Paris, but as it turned out Cloris also wanted to study there, and the expectation was that we would work to make it happen together. She, Sareth, and I discussed the plans to study in Europe in our correspondence.

Paris, le 11 mai 1968

Dear Bear and Cloris,

I have told you that I will go to ask at the Central office for your admission to the International campus. Well, I yesterday went there, because next week is the busy week, and the lady advise me to write you that you will have to submit your request to the Director of The U.S. foundation. Here is the complete address:

" M. Ronald G. Frazee
Directeur de la Fondation des Etats-Unis
15, Bd Jourdan, Paris 14
France "

If I were you I would tell him that I will get my master's in September and I would like to go to school in Paris (in literature) during the school year 1968 - 1969. I then ask him to reserve me a room at the foundation....

He will, I am sure, reply you in sending you forms to ~~put~~ fill out, and the process is very official.

I very sincerely would like for you to go to school and not to work because it won't cost us very much. Sooner or later, you both will work and we will have enough money to pay back, if we had to ~~the~~ borrow. Anyway the very first step for you is to be in Paris at the campus. We will see.

It is Saturday and I probably won't go out as usual to the library (close to Arc de Triomphe) because of the agitation almost everywhere.

Please give my love to the girls.

Samson

Samson

Letter from Sareth discussing European study, May 11, 1968

Cloris' divorce from her first husband became final on April 11, and despite my reservations we married the next day April 12, 1968. It was a small, civil ceremony attended by my friend Dianne Clark, my cousin Greg Perry, and Dr. David Waller, an economics professor at the university who also lived in the hotel. Cloris and I had known each other for seven months.

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
VITAL RECORDS SERVICE
APPLICATION FOR MARRIAGE LICENSE

STATE FILE NO. _____
COUNTY NO. _____

COUNTY OF Clarke

COUNTY ORIGINAL

PERSONAL PARTICULARS	CONTRACTING PARTIES		CODE
	GROOM	BRIDE (MAIDEN NAME)	
1. FULL NAME	<u>Mr James L. Black</u>	<u>Cloris L. Ramos</u>	A
2. RESIDENCE: STREET ADDRESS	<u>Colonial Hotel</u>	<u>Park View Apts</u>	B
CITY	<u>Atlanta Ga</u>	<u>Atlanta Ga</u>	C
COUNTY AND STATE			D
3. AGE LAST BIRTHDAY DATE OF BIRTH AND RACE	<u>23</u> <u>8-24-44</u> <u>W</u>	<u>30</u> <u>8-26-37</u> <u>W</u>	E
4. BIRTHPLACE	<u>Newport News Va</u>	<u>Santa Clara Cuba</u>	F
5. RELATIONSHIP	<u>none</u>	<u>none</u>	G
6. USUAL OCCUPATION	<u>Student</u>	<u>Student</u>	H
7. BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY			I
8. NUMBER OF PREVIOUS MARRIAGES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NONE <input type="checkbox"/> ONE <input type="checkbox"/> TWO <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	<input type="checkbox"/> NONE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ONE <input type="checkbox"/> TWO <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	J
9. IF PREVIOUSLY MARRIED HOW DISSOLVED		<u>Divorced</u>	K
10. UPON WHAT GROUNDS		<u>Legal Gds</u>	L
11. WHEN AND WHERE		<u>Clarke Co Ga 4/11/68</u>	M
12. OLD LEGAL MARRIAGE	<u>none</u>	<u>none</u>	N
13. FATHER'S NAME	<u>L.D. Black</u>	<u>A. Ramos</u>	O
14. FATHER'S BIRTHPLACE	<u>Madison Co Ga</u>	<u>Santa Clara Cuba</u>	P
15. MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME	<u>Martha Ida Perry</u>	<u>Cloris Garcia</u>	Q
16. MOTHER'S BIRTHPLACE	<u>Madison Co Ga</u>	<u>Santa Clara Cuba</u>	R
17. FATHER'S RESIDENCE	<u>Madison Co Ga</u>	<u>Miami, Florida</u>	S
18. DATE AND PLACE OF CONTINGENT MARRIAGE	<u>April 12, 1968</u>	<u>Atlanta, Ga</u>	T
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE FOREGOING ANSWERS WERE MADE UNDER OATH AND SUBSCRIBED BEFORE ME BY <u>ONE</u> OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES			
DATE: <u>12</u> DAY OF <u>April</u> 19 <u>68</u>	APPLICANT: <u>Cloris L. Ramos</u>		
SIGNATURE OF ORDINARY: <u>Ruby Harrison</u>	APPLICANT: <u>James L. Black</u>		

Application for Marriage License, James L. Black and Cloris L. Ramos, April 12, 1968

Georgia Department of Public Health
VITAL RECORDS SERVICE

Marriage License

STATE OF GEORGIA COUNTY OF Clarke

To any Judge, Justice of the Peace, Minister of the Gospel, or any other person authorized to solemnize: You are hereby authorized and permitted to join in the Holy State of Matrimony

Mr. James L. Black and Miss Cloris Ramos

according to The Constitution and Laws of this State, and for doing so this shall be your sufficient license.

Given Under My Hand and Seal, this 12 day of April 19 68

Ruby Hartman Ordinary

I Hereby Certify, That Mr. James L. Black and Miss Cloris L. Ramos were joined together in the Holy State of Matrimony on this 12th day of April 19 68 by me in the City of Adams County of Clarke, Georgia.

Recorded 4-12-68 Fee 5.79

Ruby Hartman Ordinary

JUDGE MAGISTRATE'S COURT OF CLARKE CO.,
Toll 0.00

Official Must Sign Both Copies. Return To Ordinary Immediately After Performing Ceremony.

COUNTY ORIGINAL

Marriage License, James L. Black and Cloris L. Ramos, April 12, 1968



Map of Cuba and South Florida, USA (mapsof.net)

Cuba was discovered by Christopher Columbus on his first voyage to the Americas in 1492. The small island became a major source of sugar, tobacco, and coffee, and remained in the control of Spain until December 1898 when the last Spanish troops left. It was taken over by the United States with assurances the occupation would be temporary and that elections would soon follow. In 1940, Fulgencio Batista was elected president, and Cuba became a base for organized crime. It became home to mobsters who made agreements with the country's top leaders. Economic crises and political corruption fostered rebellion, and on January 1, 1958, Batista abandoned the country to the control of rebel leader Fidel Castro. Although Castro might not have been a card-carrying communist in the beginning, he did have communist leanings, and is believed by some scholars to have been a Soviet agent. Cuba became a base for anti-American activities and strengthened its ties to Russia which at that time was the United States' chief adversary. This shift exacerbated Cold War tensions between the two powers. Russia began constructing missile bases in Cuba which led to an international stand-off. It ended by Russia standing down. The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 was the closest the world had ever come to nuclear war.

Castro purged opposition leaders, who were arrested and disappeared without a trace. He declared labor unions illegal and closed opposition newspapers. Teachers and professors were also purged, and a series of land reforms was begun. At that time 98% of the land was owned by less than 2% of the people. In 1959, Cuban citizens began leaving the island by the thousands, and the Cuban government confiscated everything they owned. Today there are approximately one million Cuban exiles in the United States.

My wife was Cloris Ramos, the daughter of Orfelio Ramos-Valdés (1903-1983), a Cuban multimillionaire, a "mogul" as his fellow countrymen called him. He was from the town of Santa Clara in central Cuba and was a person of accomplishment including the holding of at least one US patent. He and his wife Cloris Garcia de Ramos first visited the US in 1936 and periodically thereafter. He made frequent visits during the late 1950's.

1

2,766,346

TILT ACTUATED CIRCUIT BREAKER

Orfelio Ramos Valdes, Santa Clara, Cuba

Application April 1, 1955, Serial No. 498,611

3 Claims. (Cl. 200-61.52)

This invention relates to a tilt actuated circuit breaker and has for its primary object to discontinue the flow of electrical energy from a battery through the ignition system of a motor driven vehicle when the vehicle tilts beyond a predetermined angle to the horizontal.

Another object is to eliminate the danger of fire and to discontinue the operation of the engine of the vehicle either through the impact of the vehicle against another object or the tilting of the vehicle beyond a predetermined angle to the horizontal.

The above and other objects may be attained by employing this invention which embodies among its features a pair of contact arms mounted intermediate their ends to move in intersecting arcuate paths, a contact mounted adjacent one end of said pair of contact arms to advance in a rectilinear path which intersects the arcuate paths, spring means mounted adjacent said arms and engaging the contact for retracting it relative to said contact arms, a wedge mounted adjacent the contact arms for advance therebetween into wedging engagement therewith to cause said arms to move in their arcuate paths and frictionally engage the contact and hold it projected against the effort of the spring, yielding means mounted adjacent the arms and engaging the wedge for retracting it relative to the arms, and a tilt released latch mounted adjacent the wedge for engaging it and holding it advanced against the effort of the yielding means.

Other features include triggers mounted adjacent opposite ends of the wedge and operatively connected to the latch for releasing said latch when the angle of the circuit breaker attains a predetermined value, a ball guide mounted below the contact, a hump intermediate the ends of the ball guide, a ball within the ball guide for movement toward one end thereof and over the hump when the circuit breaker tilts beyond a predetermined angle, a trigger mounted adjacent the ball guide and intersecting the path of movement of the ball as it moves over the hump, and said trigger being operatively connected to the latch for releasing it upon engagement of the trigger by the ball.

In the drawings:

Figure 1 is a fragmentary perspective view of a frame of a vehicle, showing the battery mounted thereon and this improved tilt actuated circuit breaker mounted on the frame adjacent the battery;

Figure 2 is a schematic diagram showing the manner in which the circuit breaker is connected into the electrical circuit of a conventional motor vehicle;

Figure 3 is a view similar to Figure 2, showing the circuit breaker actuated upon the tilt of the vehicle;

Figure 4 is an enlarged horizontal sectional view taken substantially on the line 4-4 of Figure 1;

Figure 5 is a vertical sectional view taken substantially on the line 5-5 of Figure 4;

Figure 6 is a vertical sectional view taken substantially on the line 6-6 of Figure 5;

2

Figure 7 is an enlarged fragmentary sectional view taken substantially on the line 7-7 of Figure 5;

Figure 8 is a fragmentary enlarged sectional view taken substantially on the line 8-8 of Figure 5; and

Figure 9 is a fragmentary enlarged sectional view taken substantially on the line 9-9 of Figure 5.

Referring to the drawings in detail, this improved circuit breaker designated generally 10 comprises a supporting panel 12 which is adapted to be bolted or otherwise fixed to the frame F of the vehicle adjacent the battery B thereof. Carried by the supporting panel and extending perpendicularly outwardly therefrom is a main panel 14 carrying adjacent its upper edge a bracket designated generally 16 which comprises spaced parallel substantially horizontally extending ears 18 which are pierced with aligning openings 20 and 22 for the reception of pivot pins 24 and 26, respectively, the purpose of which will hereinafter appear. Carried by the bracket and projecting outwardly therefrom in spaced relation to the ears 18 are guides 28 having aligning openings 30 extending therethrough which lie on an axis which extends above and between the pivot pins 24 and 26. The guides 28 are constructed of nonconducting material.

Pivotal intermediate their ends for rocking movement on the pivot pins 24 and 26, respectively are contact arms 32 and 34, the upper ends 36 and 38, respectively, of which define contact terminals which are adapted to frictionally engage the contact to be more fully hereinafter described. The extensions 36 and 38, like the arms 32 and 34, move in intersecting arcuate paths about the pivots 24 and 26, respectively, and mounted for longitudinal sliding movement in the openings 30 of the guides 28 is a contact 40 carrying an axial extension 42 which, when the contact 40 is advanced, extends between the extensions 36 and 38 into frictional contact therewith, as will be more fully hereinafter described. Carried by the contact 40 and extending outwardly therefrom adjacent the end thereof remote from the extension 42 is a cross pin 44 against which a washer 46 bears, and encircling the contact 40 between the washer 46 and an adjacent supporting guide 28 is a compression coil spring 48 which, when the contact arms 32 and 34 hang free, retract the extension 42 from its position between the extensions 36 and 38 of the contact arms 32 and 34, respectively. A suitable terminal 50 is carried by the contact 40 and is connected through the medium of a conventional flexible cable 52 to one terminal of the battery B of the vehicle. It will be understood, of course, that the supporting guides 28 are constructed of a non-conducting material so that ground between the battery B and the frame F will be established only when the extension 42 projects between the extensions 36 and 38 of the contact arms 32 and 34. Carried by the contact arm 34 and extending laterally outwardly therefrom is a contact ear 54 which, as illustrated in the drawings, is connected through a conventional flexible cable 56 to ground G.

Secured to the main panel 14 in any suitable manner below the guides 28 is a frame 58 carrying vertically spaced outwardly extending supporting arms 60 on which is mounted remote from the panel 14 a guide block designated generally 62 which comprises a tubular body 64 which lies in spaced parallel relation to the longitudinal axis of the contact 40 and carries adjacent its end remote from the contact arms 32 and 34 an upwardly extending tubular guide 66, the lower end of which opens through and communicates with the interior of the guide 64. The guide 66 is provided intermediate its ends with an elongated longitudinal extending slot 68, the purpose of which will hereinafter appear.

A transversely extending partition wall 70 is carried by the tubular guide 64 to define a stop for a spring to

In 1954, Ramos-Valdés ordered the construction of the Santa Clara Hilton Hotel, which he owned and operated. Officially opening on April 22, 1956, it had eleven stories, one hundred forty rooms, several lounges, three restaurants, a radio station, and a large theatre. Ideally located facing the city park, the hotel was and still is the tallest building in the city. One of the lounges he named for his younger daughter Rojelia; the theatre he named for his wife and daughter Cloris. Teatro Cloris not only presented movies but occasionally concerts and stage productions. The Santa Clara Hilton became a major tourist attraction and during the revolution was used by the rebel forces because its roof top provided the best view of the surrounding area. Fidel Castro himself spent the night there in 1959. The hotel operates today as Hotel Santa Clara Libre.



Santa Clara Hilton Hotel built by Orfelio Ramos-Valdés

Ramos-Valdés also founded Omnibus Santa Clara, the bus transportation system in the city. Throughout the years this entrepreneur, even when rebel activity was at its highest and the politics of the country were at their most uncertain, unlike other Cubans, was allowed to leave Cuba freely to travel to and from the United States. He carried with him the money required to purchase buses and spare parts. He foresaw the outcome of the political unrest and each time he flew to the United States took more money than his mission required,

leaving the remainder in US banks. According to his daughter, in addition to the Santa Clara Hilton and Omnibus Santa Clara, Ramos-Valdés owned a farm in south Florida and mining interests in either Puerto Rico or the Dominican Republic.

In 1960, the United States placed an embargo on Cuba, preventing all exports to the country and ending Ramos-Valdés' reason for legitimate travel. Also in 1960, he decided to send his wife and two daughters to the US. He remained. When he himself attempted to leave at a later date, he was arrested by Cuban authorities who searched him at the airport and found a pen set that had been altered and contained diamonds. He was later released to flee Cuba, abandoning a large part of his fortune.

For most of 1968, in addition to being enrolled in graduate courses, I held three jobs. I was teaching, operating projectors at the Georgia Theatre, and serving as the "sandwich boy" at the famous Varsity restaurant in Athens. For a short time I held a fourth job at Miller's, a discount clothing store. Collectively Cloris and I had enough money for living expenses and a little to spare. From April through August that year the total family income was \$2,965. \$657 came from her teaching assistantship, \$492 from her father, and \$1,816 from me. The \$1,816 figure did not include \$400 of my income that had been sent to Sareth. Since Cloris arrived in Athens, her father had sent her \$700 (sometimes more) each month. After our relationship became serious, he limited his support to an occasional check for the grandchildren. Any indication I might have had of his resistance to and resentment of our marriage fell short of the reality. I did not know then how distressed he was that we married and what influence he retained as a Cuban exile.

Although separated by distance, relations between Sareth and Cloris were friendly and warm as attested by the two following letters.

Paris, le 12 mars 1968

Dear Cloris,

I am very sorry for not being able to answer you sooner. However, I hope that you understand quite well what I am doing in Paris. I have to read not less than 600 books and summarize them...

I was very glad to read your last letter. Of course, I would like to see you in Paris, but our financial problem is very great so that we have to wait. I also want to come to your wedding party....

Your Jim wrote me that he has visited Atlanta and met your family. I do not think that they will object to your marrying at all.

Go rent a box number 4077 which is I think straight above mine & when I was in Tucker Hall (formerly dorm F). I then moved to Reed Hall in a single room and finally rent a box number 2345!! The postmaster laughed and laughed because I begged him until I got it.

I would like to repeat that if ever I do not write you on time, please know that I always think of you all, ~~just~~.

Love,

Sareth

P.S. I enclose you two aerograms

Letter from Sareth to Cloris, March 12, 1968

Athens May 9, 1968

My dear friend:

We received the ^{last} letter and as usual were very glad, but this, in special, touched me very much, maybe because you mentioned the girls and of course they are a big part of me and I would like everybody else to feel the same about them, and when I say everybody else I refer to Jim and you, and specially you that hasn't know them yet. They are so cute, and right now ^{it} is another reason that make me feel very happy because Jim loves them and we have the same ideas about how to bring them up etc etc so that make us feel still closer.

About what you said of my "dearest in-law family" and I think you are completely right but at the same time we didn't wanted her calling us back constantly so we let her say everything she wanted, I am sure she must think I am completely dumb, because the only thing I said was "ejin, ejin" and she told me she wanted to meet us and I didn't even say "I do too" so she will be sure there is

Letter from Cloris to Sareth, page 1, May 9, 1968

intentions on my side ^{not} of doing it. About what you said of when I stay alone here, I am scared already of that, because I know they are going to try to get close to me as soon as they find out he is gone, and I don't want that trouble at all. I agree with you, I think we must ignore them completely, not even to remember deep in our minds that they exist. The same happens with the father of the girls, he hasn't seen them in a year now, though he has money to go to Spain and New York etc, but I am afraid that now that he knows I am married and when he find out that Jim is gone he would do something like to try to take the girls away. That really ~~scare~~ scares me.

We took some pictures of the girls, as soon as we have the copies we will send you yours.

We are both with a virus on the throat that is killing us. I am almost through with it but Jim is now in the worse part.

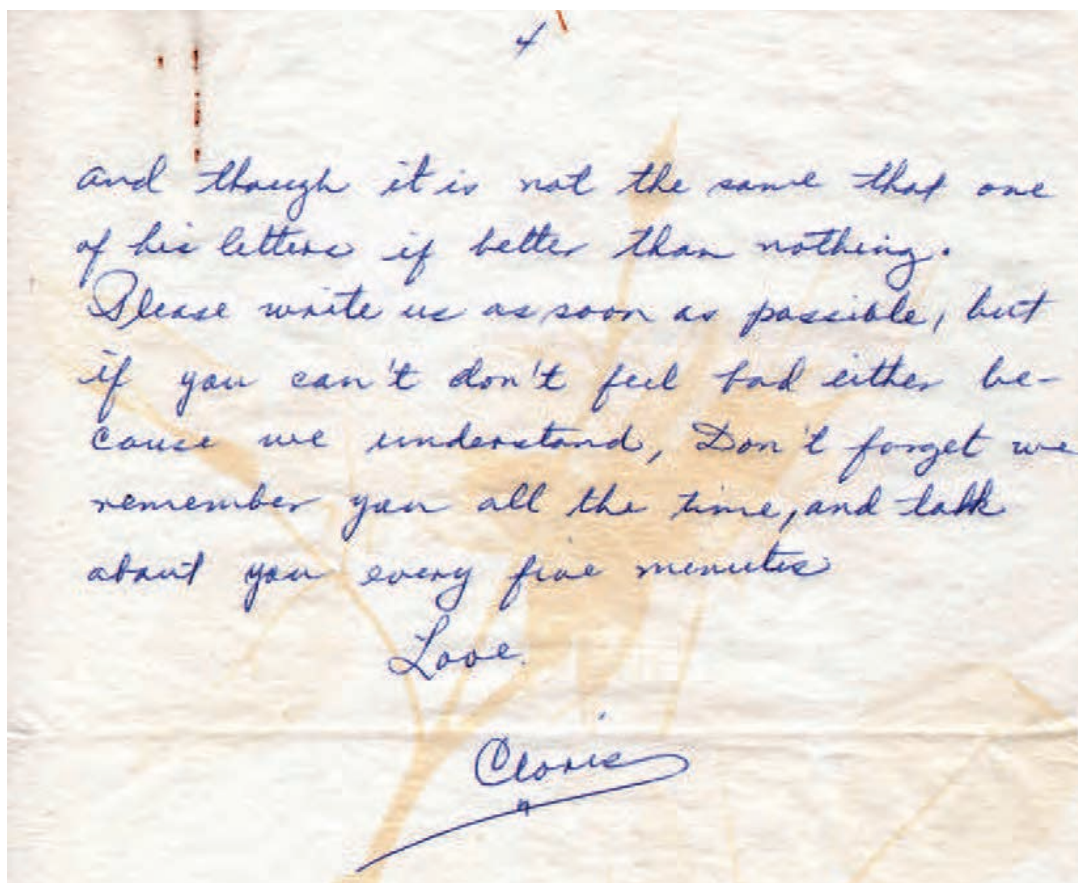
He feels very bad at you, because he can't write you as frequent as before, but I think you understand, and I tell him so. He is teaching, took a part-time job at Miller's that pays \$1.60 an hour and he works 4 hours a day, he says is a really soft job and then every spare minute he has he starts working with his thesis.

You said that didn't know if we received your money, I thought ~~you~~ ^{mention it} did in my last letter anyway, I am sorry if I didn't and thank you very much, it was a great help.

I have been sewing lately very much, I guess you know already that that is my hobby and today is my older's nephew's birthday, he wanted a bath robe and I am doing 3 one for each brother.

Well that is about everything for today. At least if Jim can't write you very very soon you will know of him through me

Letter from Cloris to Sareth, page 3, May 9, 1968



Letter from Cloris to Sareth, page 4, May 9, 1968

Transcription of letter from Cloris to Sareth, May 9, 1968

Athens, May 9, 1968

My Dear Friend:

We received the last letter and as usual were very glad, but this, in special, touched me very much maybe because you mentioned the girls and of course they are a big part of me and I would like everybody else to feel the same about them, and when I say everybody else I refer to Jim and you, and specially you that don't know them yet. They are so cute, and right now it is another reason that makes me feel very happy because Jim loves them and we have the same ideas about how to bring them up etc., etc. so that makes us feel still closer.

About what you said of my "dearest in-law family" and I think you are completely right but at the same time we didn't wanted her calling us back constantly so we let her say everything she wanted. I am sure she must think I am completely dumb, because the only thing I said was "ejem, ejem" and she told me she wanted to meet us and I didn't even say "I do too" so she will be sure there is intentions on my side of not doing it. About what you said of when I stay alone here, I am scared already of that because I know they are going to try to get close to me as soon as they find out he [Jim] is gone and I don't want that trouble at all. I agree with you, I think we must ignore

them completely not even to remember even in our minds that they exist. The same happens with the father of the girls. He hasn't seen them in a year now, though he has money to go to Spain and New York etc., but I am afraid that now that he knows I am married and when he finds out that Jim is gone [to study in Europe] he would do something like try to take the girls away. That really scares me.

We took some pictures of the girls, as soon as we have the copies we will send you yours.

We are both with a virus on the throat that is killing us. I am almost through with it but Jim is now in the worst part. He feels very bad at you because he can't write you as frequent as before, but I think you understand, and I tell him so. He is teaching, took a part-time job at Miller's that pays \$1.60 an hour and he works 4 hours a day. He says [it] is a really soft job and then every spare minute he has he starts working with his thesis.

You said that [you] didn't know if we received your money. I thought I mentioned it in my last letter anyway I am sorry if I didn't and thank you very much. It was a great help.

I have been sewing lately very much. I guess you know already that that is my hobby and today is my older nephew's birthday. He wanted a bath robe and I am doing one for each brother.

Well that is about everything for today. At least if Jim can't write you very very soon you will know of him through me and though it is not the same that one of his letters if better than nothing.

Please write us as soon as possible, but if you can't don't feel bad either because we understand. Don't forget we remember you all the time, and talk about you every five minutes.

Love,
Cloris

On July 15, 1968, I signed the lease on a basement apartment at 200½ East Rutherford Street in Athens which was badly in need of paint. We worked every spare minute repainting. We were looking forward to inviting friends to our new place and especially to having Sareth who had already been invited in a June telephone conversation. I wanted him to have several weeks to get to know my family. I hoped that the two people I loved most in the world would come to know and love each other as I loved them. We all were excited about his coming.

Sareth, however, had reservations, fearing another round of confrontations with University of Georgia officials. He asked me to notify them and request a letter stating that they had no objection to his visit. University administrators at that time had neither authority over nor interest in him because he was not a student. Trouble indeed arose but it was from the most unexpected of sources.

Sareth flew from Paris, arriving Monday, July 22nd. In addition to the two bedrooms occupied by the family in the main part of the apartment there was a large room at the back in which some items were stored but which nonetheless served very well as a guest room. That was to be Sareth's. The improbable and unforeseen events that occurred during the following weeks and months are hard for me to believe even today.

From the time he arrived, Cloris' behavior changed. Her typical Latin temperament became exaggerated to a degree I had never seen. She could be sweet and even tempered one moment and the next agitated about things that seemed very minor to me. The first angry outburst came when I loaned Sareth a pair of shower shoes. I was unprepared to cope with sustained disagreement. I did not know that a difference of opinion or an argument could or should lead, if not to compromise and reconciliation, at least to some acceptable terms. I had

never heard my parents exchange one cross word, not one. I was not accustomed to fighting, had no skill at it, and did not like to do it. I grew up believing that having an argument with someone was the worst thing that could happen, and I actively avoided conflict. Cloris and I could get into an impassioned argument at the grocery store about an article of food. Such an angry dispute kept me upset for days, but it had no similar effect on her. As soon as we turned the corner and reached mid-point of the next aisle she would look back at me and say, "Jim, what is wrong with you?" It seemed that we were arguing and fighting about the slightest of things, and regardless of the progress of the discussions, any peace was short-lived.

The warmth of the previous correspondence and telephone conversations turned to ice and hardened steel. My wife became hostile to me and acted in Sareth's presence as if he were not there, arguing with me about him as if he could not hear her. Despite the fact that she was an excellent cook, no meal was ever talked about, planned, or prepared. Each day was more charged with animosity than the last. Sareth began to find reasons to be absent, to be out of our presence. No one could blame him. She ordered me several times during the next week to tell him to take his belongings and leave. I refused. He was there at our invitation, hers and mine, and he had no place to go. Furthermore, we had planned a party on August 9 to introduce him to our small circle of friends, a group that included more of hers than mine.

There seemed to be nothing during those days that did not call forth argument; but there was one recurrent, particularly explosive issue: money. She forgot that she had previously completely understood (so she said) my commitment to send Sareth money and began accusing me of depriving her little girls of clothes and other necessities. She brazenly and erroneously asserted that I was sending him money she had earned. In fact, I was contributing more to the family than anyone. The father of the girls contributed nothing to their upkeep. This was a reflection of his anger at Cloris for having left him. Moreover, from time to time Sareth actually sent money to us. Cloris thanked him for doing so in her letter of May 9, 1968.

A related, compounding issue involved a ring that Sareth was wearing when he arrived.

"Look at what he is wearing," she said.

"What?"

"The ring!" The hounds of hell began running through the halls at 200½ East Rutherford Street.

"I finally understand," she screamed. "He has made a fool of you! How could you be so stupid? How could you be SO STUPID? He is taking money from you and living the good life in Paris. You are sending him money that belongs to my little girls!" I repeatedly attempted to explain that he did not buy the ring and how it was purchased; but she, like my father, was not interested in truth.

The ring Sareth was wearing was the one I had purchased on credit on May 16, 1966, to celebrate my graduation from the University of Georgia. The last payment was made on February 28, 1967. I bought and paid for the ring before Cloris and I met.

STATEMENT
IN ACCOUNT WITH

BUSH JEWELERS

165 E. CLAYTON STREET
ESTABLISHED 1914 PHONE 546-0427

ATHENS, GA. August 14, 19 66

M. James Black
Colonial Hotel
Athens, Ga.

	Paymt.	Bal.
5-16-66 \$195.00		
Tax 5.85		
5-16-66	\$25.85	175.00
6-24-66	10.00	165.00
7-1-66	10.00	155.00
8-30-66	10.00	145.00
9-23-66	10.00	135.00
10-24-66	10.00	125.00
11-30-66	10.00	115.00
12-30-66	10.00	105.00
1-3-67	10.00	95.00
2-20-67	10.00	85.00
2-28-67	85.00	0.00

Payments were \$10.00 a month.
In payment for a man's, yellow gold, diamond ring.

Bush Jewelers
ap Bush

Payment record, man's ring

Sareth noticed the ring immediately upon my arrival in Luxembourg in 1966. It was obvious how much he liked it. I gave it to him without hesitation. I remember the day we took it to the jeweler to have it sized to fit his finger. It was a simple gift from one friend to another and carried no other significance.

The arguments between Cloris and me progressed from the merciful simplicity of shower shoes to find a permanent resting place in her devastating deconstruction of my mental underpinnings. She had remembered every little secret, human doubt, humiliation, or unworthy act I had ever shared with her. One by one they reappeared as scalpels in the hands of a master surgeon to flay my already fragile psychological skin. There were no limits.

Still, attempts were made to save the marriage, but no explanation, clarification, apologies, or compromises helped, and every day I heard, "Jim, you are so sick! You need help!" Finally, I agreed to seek the help she so often said I needed on the condition that she would participate as well. I made an appointment with a very capable psychologist, Dr. John Roitch. We had only two consultations with him together; thereafter she refused to

go. However, on Thursday, August 1, she checked herself into the university infirmary for five days. It was classic Cloris theatre with a bigger role and larger audience. I continued counseling with Dr. Roitch for one year.

Cloris believed she and her children were being abused, wanted everyone to know it, and spread that news all over the city of Athens. Strangers on the street stopped to reprimand me for my behavior. Everything was out of control. It was like a bad movie in which all the characters are villains. All three of us were cats on our own hot, tin roof. How could things be worse?

At 8:15pm on August 8, Cloris pulled a knife out of a kitchen drawer, said that she was going to kill Sareth then herself, and told him to leave. He did. I was in disbelief, hurt beyond words, and in no mood for small talk or fraternizing. However, we had scheduled our party for the next evening. Wanting to avoid the embarrassment of having to explain a cancellation, we abandoned sound reasoning and did what no two people who were thinking clearly would have done. We decided to proceed with it.

Nothing could have been as embarrassing as the result of that decision. It was during this party on Friday, August 9, attended as it happened exclusively by Cubans, that Cloris feigned a suicide attempt. The party was in full swing. I found myself alternating between serving drinks and sandwiches in the living room and slipping back to the bedroom to calm her and make telephone calls seeking help. She was in bed with an empty bottle of sleeping pills by her side. It was obvious what had happened, and it was frightening.

The obvious did not prove to be the case. It was a hysterical ruse, high theatre with the perfect audience. She was clutching the pills in her fist and had taken none. Activities during the remainder of this evening degrade everyone concerned. People were distinguished by the depths to which they sank. In the end, I demanded that the guests leave, and the argument that followed between Cloris and me resulted in my being bloody in a hospital emergency room. It was a singularly regrettable affair. Things were never the same afterward. I rented a room in a house near the campus and never spent another night on Rutherford Street. Her frequent admonition to me, “Ying, jew are so seek! Jew need helb!” (“Jim, you are so sick! You need help.”) rang in my head.

When Sareth was gathering his belongings preparing to leave the apartment, he was unable to find several boxes of documents and materials. When I asked Cloris about this she said she knew he was a communist and that everything with his name on it, evidently including some of my letters, had been given to agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. When questioned, the local FBI officials responded exactly as I expected: they knew nothing. Both Sareth and I had been placed on the radar of the FBI by Cloris with the full support and encouragement of the Cuban refugees at UGA, all of whom in their own minds were still fleeing communism.

The political situation and my own actions made it easy for the Cubans at the University of Georgia to see what they were already predisposed to see. It was easy for them to conclude that Sareth and I were communists. For the record, neither Sareth nor I were ever communists or even entertained the idea of becoming such.

I was deeply disturbed by what we were doing militarily in Southeast Asia and had consciously sought to avoid serving in the military. I believed the US presence there to be illegitimate and more harmful than helpful. The largest student protest organization in the United States was Students for a Democratic Society which had a chapter at the university. The SDS had been associated with violence and was infiltrated and monitored by the US government. I went to one of their meetings. For the numerous, suspicious, recovering Cubans who were in my wife's circle of friends, that was enough to label me a communist too.

It is unlikely that there was one Cuban exile who had not heard of Orfelio Ramos-Valdés. It is likely that most of the Cuban exiles at the University of Georgia had met and knew him personally. These Cubans were professionals, teachers, businessmen, and lawyers who had sacrificed everything they owned for the freedom to leave Cuba. Many were working toward degrees that would qualify them to teach Spanish. The Cuban community at the university was close, and it was common for me to return home from work to find several of them visiting my wife. The two I recall having been there most often were a man named Fernandez-Rubio and another named Monteagudo. What I did not know was how much they were influencing Cloris. What she did not know was that they had been relaying detailed information about her life and activities in Athens to her father since she arrived. This prompted him to reproach her in scathing terms in a letter postmarked January 13, 1968.



Envelope containing letter from Orfelio Ramos to Cloris, January 13, 1968

QUE YA ES HOY
LA VIDA
POR SI

Letter from Orfelio Ramos to Cloris, page 1, January 13, 1968

BK-13

Letter from Orfelio Ramos to Cloris, page 2, January 13, 1968

READ THIS CAREFULLY – FOR YOURSELF AND FOR YOUR DAUGHTERS
AND THE OTHERS, NOT FOR ME BECAUSE I AM FINISHED WITH THE MATTER.

C.

A few lines to clarify some things for you: I'm not putting your name in case this is gets lost; therefore, tear this up as soon as you read it since I know that when I tell you something, you don't accept it, and if it isn't a letter with a check in it, you tear it up without reading it anyway and with no remorse. But I beg you to read this one, not for me because I have just returned from the place [Athens] where I was planning to spend the holidays with my grandchildren, but which I left to avoid seeing you so shamelessly running about in the streets. I decided to return [to Miami] and not have to see your face again or take a call from you. And because I know that even if I arrive at the year 69, I will not survive it because of my suffering in the face of such shamelessness and nerve on your part. I have lived a life among so many people and known some of the best people and some of the worst, but I have never known anyone to act like you. I know about all of your running around since the night you went out alone and stayed at the Holiday Inn, your running off every weekend including even trips to Jacksonville and Cordele, which are 350 miles from there and every week until your last party – the day that I left you went to Atlanta. I never thought that I would ever have to see one of my daughters in such a situation – forcing us to leave a house that I alone was paying for, in order for you to do completely as you please, to do what you were doing when I surprised you. You had the nerve to threaten us with the police – for all this I BEG YOU TO STOP ALL OF YOUR RUNNING AROUND and that you call O [Oscar] at Flora's house. He has more right on his side than you at this moment because if they prove the licentious life which you lead, the judge will give your daughters to him. And that would be very easy to prove with a little money. Call him collect Sunday or Monday after 9:00 P.M. I will advise him that he should expect your call. What you are doing to him is criminal, to all the family, to him and your daughters, who, if they stay with you and you don't stop as I have said, they will be the ones who pay this debt which you have to everyone, all the interest and everything. I am sure that with the example that you are setting for them, it will be as I predict. I want you to know that if you don't call O [Oscar] as I demand, when I return presently to collect your mother, I will bring him so that he sees them and can be with them. I know that you will say that you are free and of a legal age, but that can only be said when one can stand on her own feet, and if you think otherwise, you can consider that your father dead. Another thing, you are still married and even if you weren't, there is the matter of your giving them the example of your going out with a different man every week. All of this they will carry within themselves for the rest of their lives. You can do what you want, but I am not responsible for what may happen if I see you again in those conditions. I believe that although your reputation has been ruined, you can still correct it. And if you have to return to this house, you can come and we will not kick you out. If you are going to change and return to decent living, let me know -- and do it—and you can count on me. On the other hand, you know that I will be dead to you and that even after my death you will not be able to benefit from anything I own because I am inclined to write a new will for your mother and for me in which I will leave you only \$5.00, which is what I am obliged to do. You decide.

Transcription, letter from Orfelio Ramos-Valdés to his daughter Cloris, January 13, 1968

He considered what he had to say so sensitive that he typed it, addressed her as “C,” and did not sign it. It began, “I am not putting your name in case this gets lost. Tear this up as soon as you read it.” He knew her activities on a daily basis and that she was going to parties in different cities every weekend. He said, “Exijo que des un alto a todas tus correrías.” “I demand that you put a stop to all your running around.” He continued, “I never thought I would see one of my daughters in this situation. During the course of my life I have known some of the best people and some of the worst, but I have never known anyone to act like you.” Her father was most concerned about his grandchildren witnessing their mother’s “dissolute” life, and particularly furious because she had threatened to call the police because her parents had arrived to visit her without invitation. Furthermore, he warned her that it would take very little for a judge to order that her children be given to their father. This long note was followed on January 20 by a signed letter in which he implores her again to correct her life and return to her husband Oscar. To my knowledge she never called Oscar. The two of us continued to live together and eventually married. In late January, Cloris handed both these letters to me with the instruction to get them out of the house.

After hearing, either from her (or more likely from the other Cubans), about the events of August 9, Orfelio Ramos-Valdés flew to Athens and drove Cloris back to Miami. She filed for divorce on September 6. From Miami she called University officials, my parents, and others we knew to complain about how she had been treated. On December 16, I went to Rutherford Street to remove my remaining belongings.

A more experienced person than I would have better understood the trauma my wife, her family, and the other expatriates had undergone and the permanent scars left on these privileged people. They had given up everything they owned in Cuba and life as they knew it. Was it any wonder they were suspicious and distrustful? Their recent history disposed them to see communists everywhere, and they had decided without knowing him that Sareth was a communist as, most likely, was I.

To Cloris, I was a husband who cared about someone else more than I cared about her, refused to renounce a commitment to someone whom she hated, and added insult to injury by forcing her into that person’s company. Moreover, I had allowed myself to be duped by a communist into supporting his studies abroad and thereby taking away support she believed I, rather than their own father, owed to her little girls. To the Cuban community, I was a communist who attended meetings of subversives, supported other communists, and harbored one in my home, exposing Cloris and her children to him which they all seemed to take as a personal insult.

In the opinion of Orfelio Ramos-Valdés, his daughter deserved better. She had married, against his will, a man far below her station in life, a man who had nothing and little promise of having anything. It was true there was no prospect a union with me would ever provide her with the lifestyle to which she was accustomed. In Cuba the family had always had servants. She once told me that before they came to the United States her mother had never fried an egg. Cloris was herself a good cook and a gifted seamstress, but

those were skills she learned out of desire rather than necessity. One of her parents' wedding gifts to her and her first husband was their honeymoon: six months in Spain.

The tension between Cloris and her father at that point might have been heightened by the fact that, in his mind, she had married for the second time beneath her economic and social station in life. Her first husband and father of her children, Oscar, was a Cuban exile who made his living in Miami as a carpet layer. When I met Cloris, he had not contributed to the support of his children since their separation, leaving that to her, her parents, and to a lesser extent later on to me.



Bridal Photo, Cloris Ramos, Havana, Cuba; Cloris and Oscar on Honeymoon in Spain

For the second time, Sareth's association with my family and me had forced him into an excruciatingly untenable position. He feared there might be lingering questions in the minds of university officials about the 1965 fiasco and was reticent to make the trip back to Athens in the first place. He did so only at our insistence. His fears sprang to life when Cloris called those same officials from Miami. Even my parents were alerted that "the black devil" was back. I found myself far beyond my capacity to deal with hysterical talk and action. I was not having any more of it. Repairing the marriage was out of the question. No

matter how much I might have loved her, I knew that what I had seen and heard came from deep wounds. I also knew those wounds might never be healed and that they were more fundamental than any stemming from our marriage. The “for better or worse” phrase from our marriage vows lost its meaning. The hurt cancelled the beauty and the charm.

In the end, the only thing that might have prolonged our marriage was the only thing I could not do: repudiate and abandon Sareth. I had no intention of doing so. I had given my word, and without the financial support from me he would have been destitute in Paris, unable to continue his studies or get home to Cambodia. This situation would never have existed had it not been for my father’s deliberate actions with their intended consequences and my own with their unintended consequences. I felt responsible. I could not let him down.

The few Cambodian students remaining at the university lived together in a rented house and allowed Sareth to stay with them until his scheduled return to Paris. I saw him once or twice before he left, but the meetings were strained. Finding a suitable subject of conversation was difficult. We both were still stunned. He did not understand how I could have made such a misjudgment in choosing a wife, how she could have treated him as she did after all the pleasant letters and telephone calls, and how it was that I did not exercise better control of the situation. Neither did I.

Although the petition for divorce was filed in September, the actual adjudication dragged into the following year. The lapse in time turned out to work in my favor. Cloris was a popular woman who had, prior to our marriage, become accustomed to evenings out and parties on the weekends. This subsided when we married but resumed when we separated. Orfelio Ramos-Valdés viewed such conduct as unbecoming, especially for a married mother with two young children.

In retrospect, the January 13th and the January 20th communications from her father should have made more of an impression on me than they did. I might have chosen not to contemplate the implications because, by the standards of the day, I was a part of her “dissolute” life. We were living together unmarried, she was still married, and the children were living with us.

What is certain is that she saw no need to view the constraints of our marriage contract, however tentative, with any prudence at all and proceeded while we were still legally married to enjoy the social opportunities afforded by a university community. It should not have been a surprise; ten months earlier I had been one of those social opportunities while she was still married to Oscar. History had repeated. Our final court date was April 10, 1969. All parties appeared at the appointed time. While we were standing directly in front of the two huge doors leading into the courtroom, my attorney produced and showed to hers a series of photographs sufficiently explicit to suggest that her father had good reason to be worried about her lifestyle and which clearly demonstrated her disregard for the marriage contract. Then she, her attorney, and my attorney entered the courtroom. I was never called to enter and remained outside the courtroom throughout the entire proceeding. One of two things happened. Either the judge denied outright her petition for temporary child

support and permanent alimony or, what is more likely, the plaintiff understood the untidy implications of the photographs and withdrew her request. The divorce was granted, and I was required to pay her attorney's fee in the amount of \$266. The Cuban exiles no doubt thought of themselves as having saved Cloris and her family from another communist threat.

It was over. Not long after that I saw her sister Rojelia in Atlanta. The meeting was pleasant; we were happy to see each other. Before parting company she said, "Jim, I understand what you went through. Remember, you were married to Cloris only one year but she has been my sister all my life." I was not to speak to Cloris again until 2010, forty years later.

1969-1975: The Years Between

The US began precision bombing in Cambodia in 1965, and in March 1969 that effort was escalated to "carpet" bombing. The decade ended as inauspiciously as it had begun with one exception: I got a job. Sareth's friend Jim Thornton had taken a position the year before as head of the Department of Modern Foreign Languages at a small college in South Georgia. Before leaving Athens he said to me, "Jim, when you finish your degree, call me. I will have a job for you." Frankly, as honest as I knew him to be, after thanking him for the offer, I did him the disservice of dismissing his comment as stemming from a desire to be nice. I never thought of it again. However, in late August 1969, Jim and I met on the street in downtown Athens. After exchanging pleasantries, he said, "Well, are you ready to go to work?" Although I had completed my coursework for the master's degree, I had not completed the required thesis. Surprisingly, he told me to come to Valdosta anyway. I completed the Master of Arts Degree during my first year at Valdosta State.

In October 1969, moratoriums were held across the United States against the Vietnam War. White House advisors were against extending the war into Cambodia, but Kissinger and Nixon were for it. Three members of the White House staff resigned in protest. Students all over the US began protesting our intrusion into Cambodia. Governors in 16 states called out the National Guard. Then Nixon himself ignited a firestorm by calling the protestors "bums." It was the largest war protest in US history.

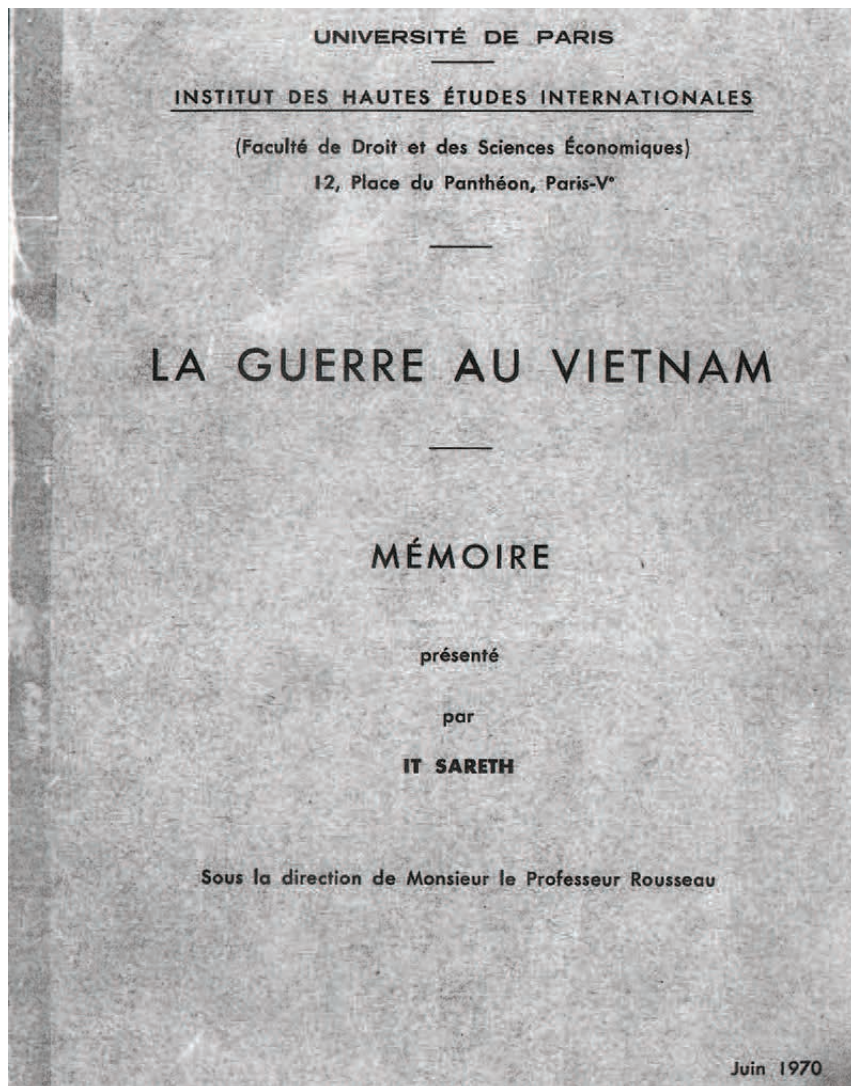
Students at Valdosta State College shared the concerns of students all over the country and held their own moratorium. Here a student and I are in discussion at that moratorium demonstration on October 15, 1969 urging the US to cease activities in Vietnam.



Valdosta State College student and Jim at war protest, October 15, 1969

Sareth and I continued to communicate through 1970 and 1971. Upon completing the degree in Water and Forest Management at Gembloux, Belgium, he enrolled at the University of Paris in the Institut des Hautes Etudes International with the goal of earning a doctorate in Law and Economics. However, the route to that goal and whether or not it was ever achieved, at least for this writing, is speculative.

Sareth's studies, before arriving at the University of Paris, had been unrelated to Law and Economics. Based upon the information available to me from the University of Paris, I conclude that he was required to earn a Bachelor's degree in Law and Economics before being allowed to officially enroll in a doctoral program. Students in French universities usually prepare a paper, called a "mémoire," as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the bachelor's degree. The cover page of Sareth's "Mémoire" appears below.



Title Page, “La Guerre au Vietnam,” by Ith Sareth

Sareth makes the following references to his studies in his letters.

I have to read not less than 600 books and summarize them. . . (Paris, March 12, 1968)

I think meantime, when I am there [USA], I [will] still continue my research at the library because, as you know, the theme of my thesis is quite heavy. (Paris, June 13, 1968)

I must study a lot because I would like to get another diploma in “International Law” besides my Ph.D. (Paris, June 13, 1968)

Next year I hope to be on scholarship. The Prince, Head of the Pavilion, told me that he helps me in the business. Tomorrow I will go to see the Cambodian ambassador in Paris to ask him about my request sent by the Prince through him. (Paris, July 1, 1968)

If my scholarship wouldn't be granted, I would accelerate my work to finish in June or July 1969, and I would ask you to send me only \$60 per month. (Paris, July 1, 1968)

So, do not wait for me if that letter [requested from Mr. Cannon] arrives too late because, first of all, the special flight has a specific date, and either in September or October, I will have oral exams. (Paris, July 3, 1968)

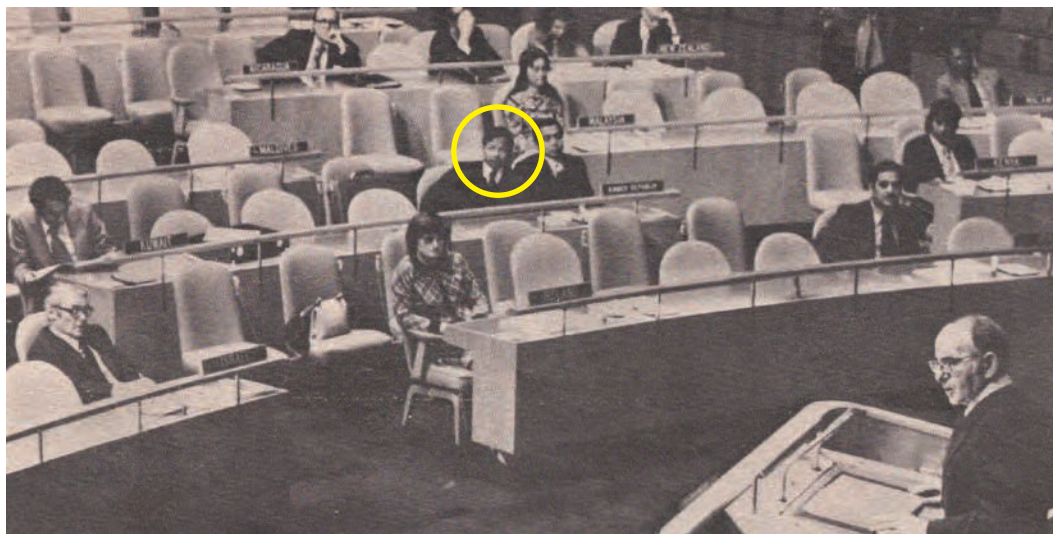
Sareth did tell me, in relation to his study and the research paper he was writing (which he called a "thesis"), that he and his major professor were having a serious disagreement either about his approach to the research or about some of his conclusions. I did not hear how or if this disagreement was ever resolved, although such differences usually are. If the undergraduate, bachelor's degree were awarded in June, 1970 and if, subsequently, the required doctoral level classes had to be taken and a dissertation written, it is difficult to conclude that Sareth could possibly have earned the doctorate before his return to Cambodia in 1970. Sareth's supervisor from 1973 until the fall of Phnom Penh, Mr. Chhang Song, Minister of Information, stated in an interview in Long Beach, California on May 20, 2013 he is certain that Sareth did not have a doctorate.

It appears, based upon a letter to me dated April 23, 1973, that, when he first returned to Cambodia, he managed a publication called *The Phnom Penh Times*. He says he moved to the Ministry of Information in 1972 and was appointed Director of the Agence Khmère de Presse. The AKP was a governmental agency producing a daily publication in French which collaborated with international news organizations such as UPI, AP, and Reuters. Sareth also states in the letter that he lectured in the afternoons at the Faculty of Law. Additional important information in this letter is that in the summer of 1972 the Cambodian Government sent him to South America with stops in Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, and Panama.

In a letter dated March 15, 1974, he writes that he arrived on March 5 in London on an official visit press visit. While there he visited Bath, Bristol, and Cardiff. Another letter arrived dated March 20 saying that he was back in London, that it was his last week there, and that he would return home soon. A Cambodian student we had known at the University of Georgia Tan Mien was also in London at the time.

In early fall 1974, Sareth notified me he would be attending the twenty-ninth session of the United Nations in New York. I was scheduled coincidentally to attend a meeting of the South Atlantic Modern Language Association in Washington beginning Wednesday, October 20. The meeting ended early Friday November 1, and I immediately took the train to New York. Sareth had found a hotel for me near his where he had a small suite.

We spent many hours together that weekend enjoying the sights of the city, eating in exotic restaurants, and visiting with members of the delegation which included Prime Minister Long Boret, Foreign Minister Keuky Lim, five ambassadors, and Heng Vong Bun Chhat, Dean of the Phnom Penh University Faculty of Law, twenty-five delegates in all.



Sareth and fellow Delegate, 29th Session, United Nations, December 16, 1974, Newsweek Magazine

Sareth was the bursar for the delegation and in charge of disbursing the funds allocated for members' expenses during the session. Some of the members of the delegation whom he did not name were encouraging him to return to Cambodia early. "Why?" I asked. "Because I will have to leave the money with them to be spent as they please and not necessarily the way it is intended to be spent. I can't go home early because this money was entrusted to me for very specific purposes. It is my responsibility," he explained.

The most sobering moment of the visit transpired Sunday morning. We were in the living room of his suite. He had brought me some small item which he needed to retrieve from his suitcase. We went to the bedroom; he pulled a suitcase from under the bed and opened it. In order to get to the object he wanted he had to remove several things. The first thing that caught my attention was a wig. Then there was another. At first I did not say anything. Then emerged a dress, a dress! . . . then another. There were other odd articles as well, things which he would never have reason to own.

"Sareth! What is this?" It was far too serious a moment to even think of making a joke.

He sat on the bed and began to explain. He said, “I am afraid. Things are happening in Cambodia which make me afraid. If things really go wrong, I must be prepared to escape.” He had purchased items of clothing, wigs, dresses, workman’s attire, and other things in New York to be used as disguises in the event he needed to flee the country. He continued to explain that he had secured a small airplane, hidden it on the outskirts of Phnom Penh and was paying a pilot to remain near the plane twenty-four hours per day. The explanation ended with, “If I have thirty minutes warning, I can get to the airplane and make it to Thailand.”

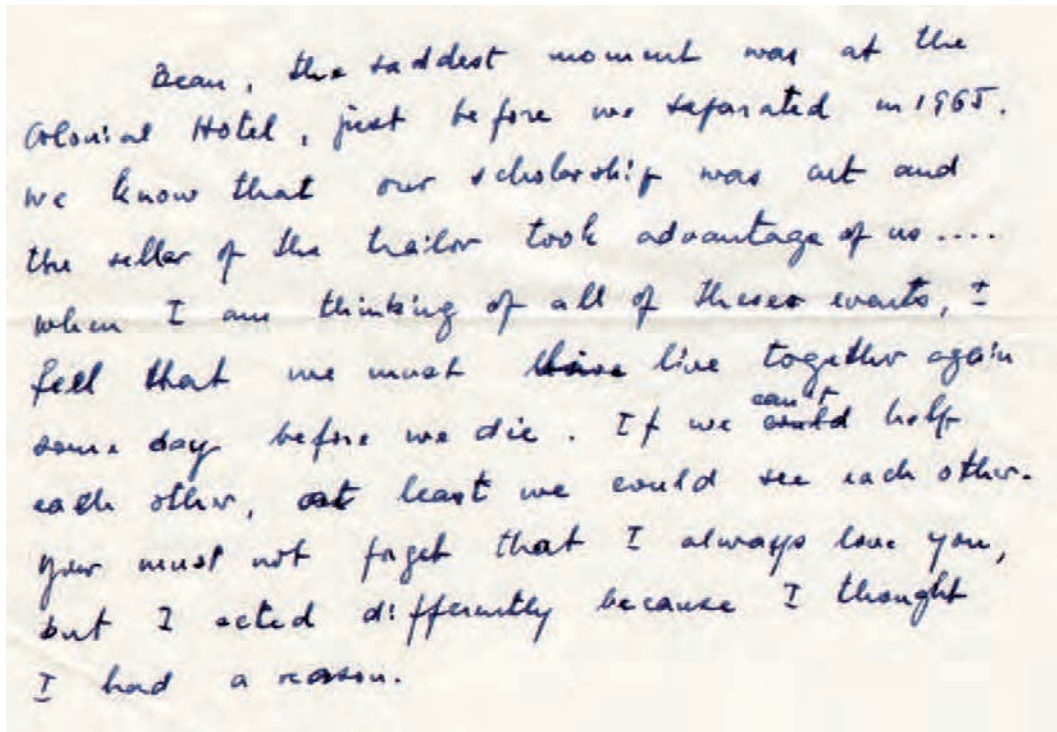
The room fell silent. I realize now that I should have pressed him with questions to understand more precisely what he meant and the gravity of the situation in Cambodia. I naively and thoughtlessly did not. I have blamed myself over the years for not insisting that he come home with me to Georgia where we could have found a teaching job for him and where in safety he might have been able to be of some assistance to his family and his government. Given his loyalties to family and country and given what I have recently learned about him from my time with his family, I now know he would have refused even if I had asked.

I collected the gifts he had brought for me, the item he took from the bottom of his suitcase and a large ceremonial mask of Hanuman. We said goodbye, and he walked with me down stairs to call a taxi. I was never to see him again.



Mask of Hanuman given to Jim in New York, October, 1974

On his way home to Cambodia at the end of the twenty-ninth session of the United Nations Sareth wrote to me from Taiwan. His final reference to the seminal, pivotal, wrenching year of 1965 and his most touching sentiments about the friendship we shared came from Taipei on December 22, 1974.



Bean, the saddest moment was at the Colonial Hotel, just before we separated in 1965. We know that our scholarship was cut and the seller of the trailer took advantage of us.... When I am thinking of all of these events, I feel that we must have live together again some day before we die. If we ^{can't} help each other, at least we could see each other. You must not forget that I always love you, but I acted differently because I thought I had a reason.

Bean, the saddest moment was at the Colonial Hotel, just before we separated in 1965. We know that our scholarship was cut, and the seller [buyer] of the trailer took advantage of us. . . When I am thinking of all of these events, I feel that we must live together again before we die. If we can't help each other, at least we could see each other. You must not forget that I always love[d] you, but I acted differently because I thought I had a reason.

The next and last letter I received from Sareth dated January 30, 1975 appears below. He requested the loan of \$1,000 (\$4,424 US 2013). I was jolted, not because of the request or the amount, but because I knew what this request meant. He was in trouble, serious trouble. My wife Sally and I were together when the letter was opened. Although she knew my friend Dianne Clark and my first wife Cloris, she had never met Sareth. However, she did know of our history together, including the events surrounding my family and those surrounding my marriage to Cloris. After a moment or two, Sally looked at me and said, "You have to do this, don't you?" To which I replied, "Yes." Her understanding, loving response was a gift I will always cherish.

REPUBLIQUE KHMERE

MINISTERE
DE
L'INFORMATION
DIRECTION DE L'AGENCE
KHMERE DE PRESSE

Le Directeur

Phnom Penh, January 30, 1975

Beauy Beau,

I wrote you a couple weeks ago -
that I already received your book and
pictures. Jenny had forwarded the parcel
to me.

For the moment I really need
something that you might help me.
Could you send me 1,000 dollars as
a loan at the end of February? I'll
pay you back whenever I have the opportunity.

In case of positive answer, you can send
the traveler's check to Miss Jenny at the
Khmer Mission (845 Third Avenue, 20th floor)
and tell her to forward by diplomatic
bag to Phnom Penh.

My regards to Sara,

Affection,

I. Sareth

Letter from Sareth requesting loan of \$1,000, January 30, 1975

Letter 20

REPUBLIQUE KHMER E

MINISTERE
DE
L'INFORMATION

DIRECTION DE L'AGENCE
KHMER DE PRESSE

Le Directeur

Phnom Penh, January 30, 1975

Beany Bean,

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My regards to Sara [Sally],

Affection,

It Sareth

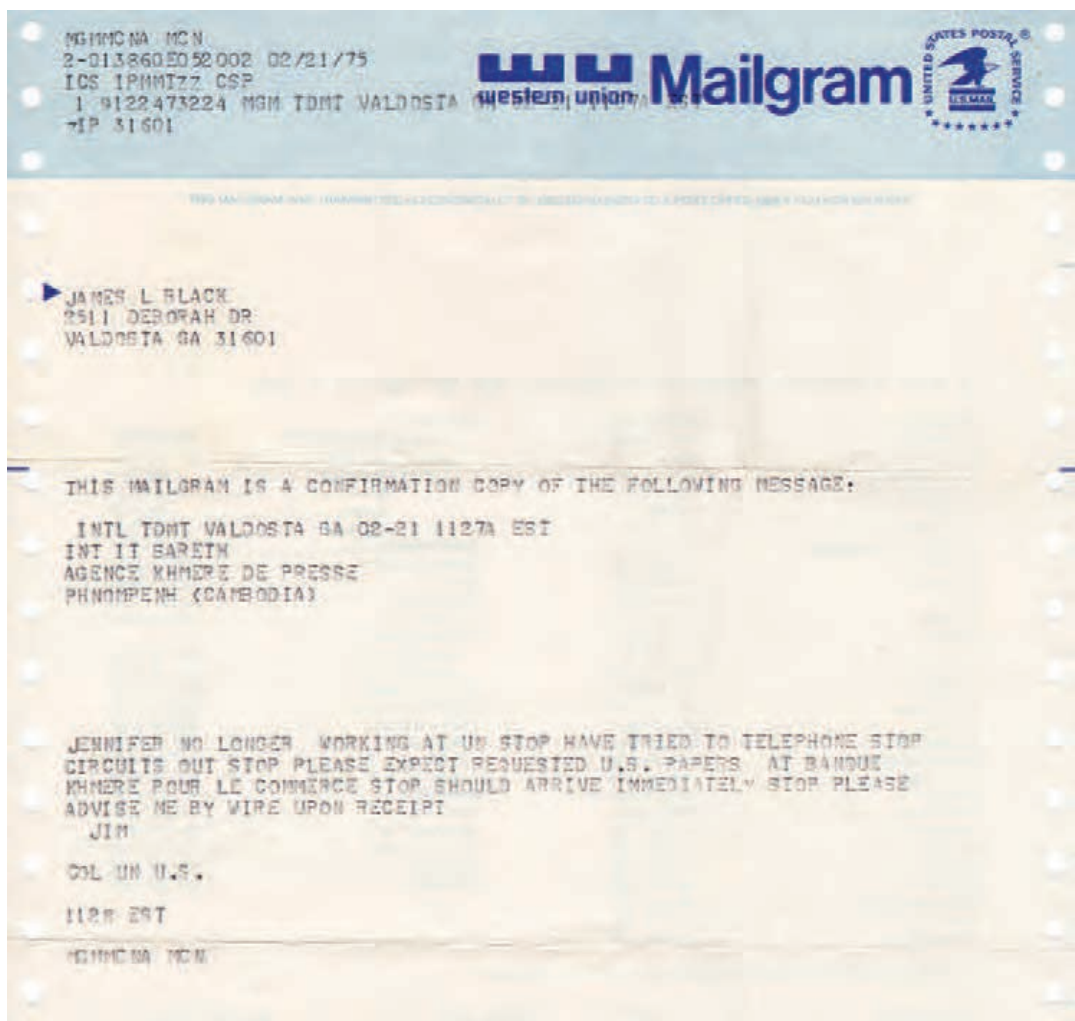
Transcription of January 30, 1975 letter from Sareth to Jim

Although Sareth had written this letter in Phnom Penh on January 30th, he sent it in a diplomatic pouch to New York to be mailed. The envelope in which it arrived is postmarked New York, February 11, 1975, with “Khmer Mission, 845 3rd Ave, NYC 10022” written on the back. Within several days it arrived in Valdosta, and I immediately went to my bank to make arrangements. He had specifically instructed me to send the money as Travelers Cheques to his friend Jenny who worked in the Mission Office at the UN and request that she send it to Cambodia in a diplomatic pouch. His reasons for wanting to do this privately were obvious. Unfortunately, when I attempted to contact Jenny, I was informed that she no longer worked at the Mission Office. I was reluctant to send the money via bank channels out of fear of exposing him. However, I knew that he would never have asked for the money if he did not need it desperately. I had no option but to send it the only way I could.

GENERAL 225 10-69		DEBIT MEMORANDUM	
TODAY: 2/21/75		WE HAVE CHARGED YOUR	
ACCOUNT COVERING:		AMOUNT	
Purchase of Foreign draft payable to It Sareth		1,020.00	
CHECKING ACCOUNT NUMBER	103-25-546		
MAIL TO	James L. Black 2511 Deborah Dr. Valdosta, Ga. 31601		THE CITIZENS & SOUTHERN NATIONAL BANK VALDOSTA, GA.
			DEPT.
			BY CDeming

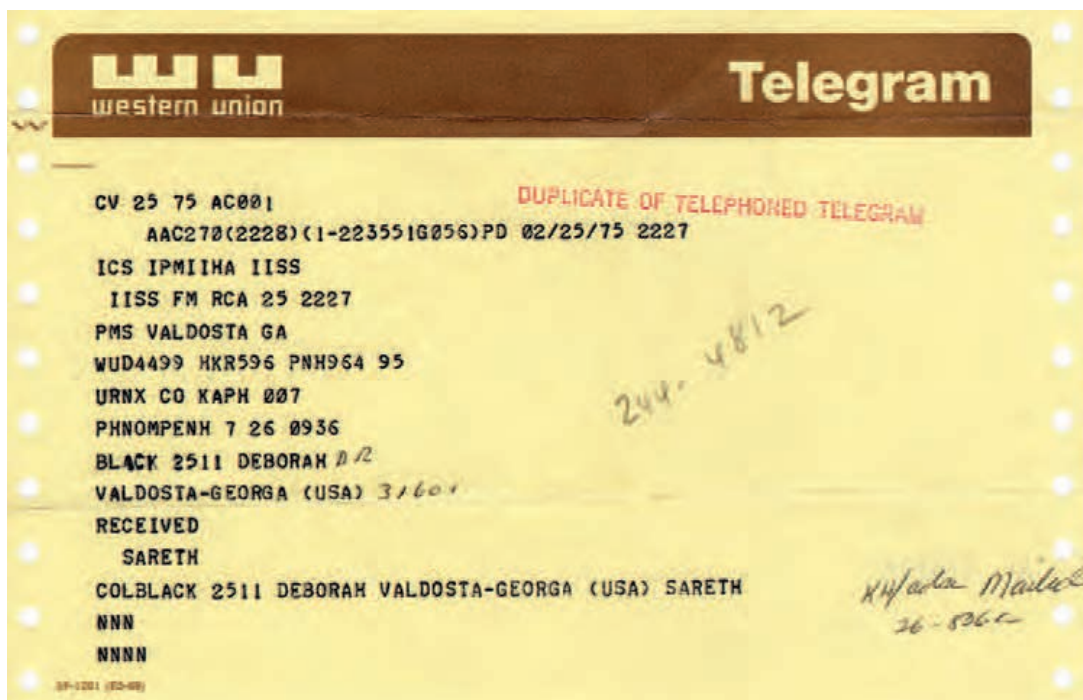
Debit Memorandum showing purchase of foreign draft to be sent to Sareth, February 21, 1975

There were numerous attempts to notify him of this change by telephone. The circuits to Phnom Penh were out; no telephone traffic was going through. I finally sent him a Mailgram.



Mailgram to Sareth notifying him to expect funds to arrive at Banque Khmer de Commerce.

On February 25, 1975 I received the last communication from my friend and brother Sareth. “Received” was his last word to me.



Last communication from Sareth to Jim, February 25, 1975

At the end of April, 1975 the news coming from Cambodia made it clear why Sareth was fearful and why he thought he needed to make provisions to escape. Although I hoped to hear from him after that, I knew in my heart that I would not. I never did. When I learned that so many teachers, government workers, and other educated people were being purged, I became convinced that he had perished after the fall of Phnom Penh along with thousands of others. Slowly I learned that those thousands had become hundreds of thousands and then almost two million. I gave up hope of ever seeing or hearing from him again and ultimately of ever really knowing what had happened to him. I heard the clanking of the pots in Sorrow's kitchen.

My Brother Sandap, I hope this letter has helped provide a more complete and better understanding of your brother's life during the years he was away, of his relationship to my family, of how that family loved him, of the part that family and I played in harming him, and of the lasting devotion which he and I had to each other. You have firsthand knowledge of how hard Sareth worked in his youth, how dedicated he was to his family, and how driven he was to succeed. Now you know more about what he had to overcome to complete his education, return to his family, and begin his life of service to the country he loved.

Thank you again for your graciousness to me in 2011 and 2012, for receiving me as a member of your family. Being able to embrace Sister Siveth and you has brought healing to me. I celebrate the lives of Sareth, Srâs, and Sister Simuoun and honor with gratitude

and respect Koy Dim and Ith An. I thank you and the extended Ith family every day with joy for this reunion and for accepting me. As you have said, Sareth, after all these years, has led me to you.

I feel an unbreakable and timeless bond to you, to your family, and to the people of Cambodia who, I believe, will again stand on the peaky mountains wrapped in rainbows.

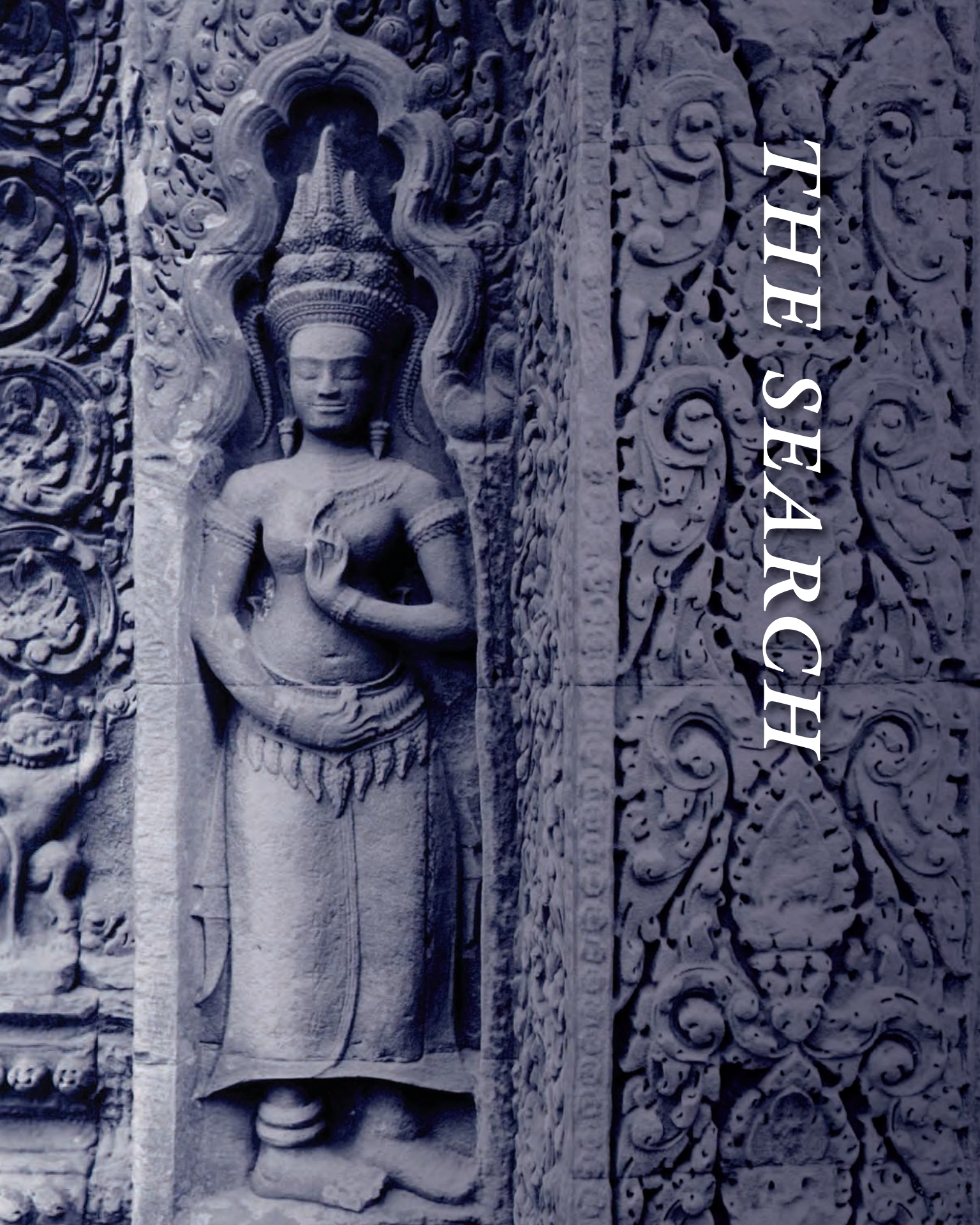
My best wishes go to you and your family for peace, good health, and happiness.

Until we meet again,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jim Black". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ici se termine l'histoire du Petit Cadet au monde.

THE SEARCH



The Search

The sparse and depressing news coming out of Cambodia after 1975 forced the conclusion that what happened to hundreds of thousands of others had also happened to Sareth. Over the years the disturbing notion which eventually found a permanent place in my head was that my own actions might have harmed him. . . again. His request of January 30, 1975 that I send \$1,000 alarmed me, especially after what he told me the previous December in New York. He was very specific about how the money should be sent: in Travelers Cheques by diplomatic pouch from New York. I was to call his friend Jennifer, alert her to expect a letter to him, and ask her to put it in the next pouch to Phnom Penh. When I called, I was told that Jennifer no longer worked at the mission. I was either too afraid or not savvy enough to put the request forward anyway. Instead, I sent the money through banking channels. Sareth's receiving something from the US in a diplomatic pouch would have been inconspicuous; retrieving the funds from a bank would not. Moreover, the Travelers Cheques would have been safe and easy to negotiate into other currencies should he have found himself in Thailand as he said he might. I was left in fear that my failure to send the money exactly as he had instructed at best had drawn unwanted attention to him and at worst led to his death.

Contact with the Cambodians Sareth and I had known at the University of Georgia was lost, and I became busy enjoying my marriage and career at Valdosta State College which became Valdosta State University in 1993. My wife Sally, a home economist specializing in family development, worked for the University of Georgia Cooperative Extensive Service. We had a comfortable life, enjoyed our community of friends, and were made even happier by the birth of our son Michael in 1979. Slowly the hope of ever seeing Sareth faded, but he was never absent from memory. His gifts and personal belongings were always within view at home and in my office. Hanuman was a faithful reminder at work.



Hanuman in Jim's office, Valdosta State College, 1977



Hanuman in Jim's office, Valdosta State College, 1983

Other treasured objects, gifts from Sareth or associated with him, were concrete reminders that kept the memories of our time together vivid. The most personal mementoes were the amulet with scrolls of prayers that his mother Koy Dim gave him in 1962 and the little basket that his youngest sister Siveth made for him, but there were other things as well.

For example, he enjoyed playing Scrabble because it tested his English and allowed him to learn new words. The same Scrabble set we used during the 1960's with his handwriting on the score cards was on the bookshelf downstairs.



Miniture mask, gift from Sareth to Jim



Ox cart model, gift from Sareth to Jim

An unexpected surge of hope arose in 1989 from an unlikely source. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, one of the most respected publications in higher education in the United States, carried an article on page A21 of its September 6 edition titled “From Labor Camp to White House – Former Prisoner of Khmer Rouge Now Provides Higher Education’s Link to President.” The article was about Mr. Sichan Siv.

FROM LABOR CAMP TO WHITE HOUSE

Former Prisoner of Khmer Rouge Now Provides Higher Education’s Link to President

By THOMAS J. DeLOUGHRY

WASHINGTON

Fourteen years ago, Sichan Siv was imprisoned in a Cambodian labor camp.

Today he has direct access to the President of the United States. And among the subjects the 41-year-old Mr. Siv discusses with George Bush is education.

As one of two Deputy Assistants to the President for public liaison, Mr. Siv is the President’s primary connection to higher-education associations and other special-interest groups.

He is also responsible for arranging White House ceremonies related to a variety of topics ranging from the announcement of the President’s education proposals to a celebration for 5,000 Little Leaguers marking the 50th anniversary of the baseball organization.

Seated on a sofa in his office in the Old Executive Office Building next door to the White House, Mr. Siv discusses his history and new job in a matter-of-fact style. Indeed, he has become a minor celebrity, featured in the *Washington Post*, *People* magazine, and a host of other publications around the world.

He also was honored recently at the National Press Club by CARE, the refugee-relief organization for which he worked in Cambodia.

Mr. Siv, who received degrees from the University of Phnom

Continued on Following Page



Sichan Siv: “I was teaching until 1974, when I saw so much death and destruction I wanted to do something to help.”

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Part 1, Article about Sichan Siv, Chronicle of Higher Education, September 6, 1989

Former Prisoner of Khmer Rouge Is Education's Link to President

Continued from Preceding Page
Penh in teaching, law, and liberal arts in the early 1970's, was teaching English and Cambodian in a Phnom Penh high school when he became active in the effort to aid refugees fleeing the war-torn countryside.

"I was teaching until 1974, when I saw so much death and destruction I wanted to do something to help. I learned through friends that CARE had an opening for someone who could speak English," he says.

He was responsible for providing refugees arriving from the countryside with the necessities to begin their lives in the city.

His commitment to those duties almost cost him his life: His work caused him to miss the last helicopter evacuating Americans and other relief workers from Phnom Penh as the Khmer Rouge approached the city.

Mr. Siv recalls the date, like all other dates from his past, without any trouble. It was April 12, 1975, he says, and he missed the helicopter by 30 minutes. Five days later the Khmer Rouge arrived.

Captured at the Border

Mr. Siv, his mother, brother, and three sisters were all sent to a labor camp. He, however, escaped and bicycled more than 200 miles toward Thailand only to be captured 15 miles from the border and sent to another camp.

Later he would learn that his mother, brother, sister, and a dozen more distant relatives had been killed in the camp. His two sisters who survived also now live in the United States.

In January 1976—his ninth month of forced labor—Mr. Siv volunteered to be a crane operator because he knew the work would take him near the border with Thailand and improve his chances of

escaping. A month later, he made a run for it.

"It was Friday the 13th of February, 1976, and I was alone in the back of the timber truck when I realized it was now or never," he says.

A three-day run through the jungle ended with his arrest in Thailand for illegal entry. Japanese friends bailed him out and had him placed in a refugee camp until CARE officials arranged for his immigration to the United States.

Arriving in June 1976, Mr. Siv worked as an apple picker and as a

**"Any time the
education community
has anything, just call
and set up an
appointment and
we'll meet."**

short-order cook at a Friendly's Ice Cream Parlor in Connecticut.

After stints as a cab driver and bank teller in New York City, he received a full graduate scholarship to Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. He earned a master's degree in international affairs in 1981 and went on to work at the United Nations for Cambodia's non-communist delegation.

A Volunteer for Bush

In 1987, Mr. Siv was hired by the Institute of International Education in New York to manage its Asian and Pacific programs.

They included one that brought Taiwanese engineers to American universities to study for advanced degrees. Other programs brought Indonesian agronomists and officials from the Sri Lankan ministry

Part 2, Article about Sichan Siv, Chronicle of Higher Education, September 6, 1989

I wrote to Mr. Sichan Siv on April 27, 1990.

Valdosta State College

Valdosta, Georgia 31698

April 27, 1990

Mr. Sichan Siv
Deputy Assistant to the President
for Public Liason
The White House
Room 128
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Siv,

The article entitled "Former Prisoner of Khmer Rouge Now Provides Higher Education's Link to President" which appeared in the September 6, 1989 issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education was arresting to me. First, you have over-come such obstacles in your native country to provide such service here. I admire and am grateful for what you have done.

Secondly, as I read the details of your life I became confident that you must have known personally a friend of mine from whom I have not heard since 1975. I am attaching some documentation, some of which is personal, so that you may more readily place him. I would consider it the utmost favor if you would tell me what you know about him and about what I now believe must have been his last days before falling victim to Pol Pot.

This man It Sareth became not only a close friend of mine but of my entire family during the years of 1963-65 when he and several other cambodians were studying at the University of Georgia. He became, simply put, a member of my family, taking vacations and spending breaks from school and weekends with us. He left the University to study at the Sorbonne, but we remained close friends.

In Fall of 1974 he wrote me that he was going to New York as a part of the Cambodian delegation to the United Nations. I went to New York to visit with him. As you will well recall those were terrible times. He had shared over the years certain information with me; his brother was at that time Chief of the Cambodian Secret Service. Sareth was frightened about the situation in Cambodia and for his life. He bought all manner of disguises in New York, telling me that he was hoping that, should worst come to worst, he could escape undetected to a small air plane which he had secured and get to Thailand or Vietnam. We had a somewhat anxious visit. Since 1975 I have blamed myself for not somehow forcing or inducing him

A Unit of the University System of Georgia
and an Equal Opportunity Employer

Letter to Sichan Siv, April 27, 1990, page 1

to remain in the United States and to return either then or later to Georgia where he would have had support from my family.

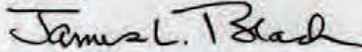
In January, 1975 he wrote asking for \$1,000. I sent it immediately and received a cable with the single-word response "Received". I have heard nothing since and have concluded that he is dead. He gave me clear instruction to send the money to the office of the Cambodian Delegation at the United Nations where he had a personal friend Jennifer who would see to it that it would be forwarded to him in a diplomatic pouch. Now, when I found that she had left employment I sent the money through regular banking channels. Frankly, Mr. Siv, I have blamed myself at least in part all these years for his death. The situation was so sensitive in Cambodia that the knowledge that he might have had external resources, particularly resources here, could have been sufficient to draw unwanted attention to him. I heard that citizens were shot simply because they wore glasses evidencing that they probably could read and therefore be dangerous to the Pol Pot regime.

Other Cambodian nationals who were at the University of Georgia at the same time were Uk Tinal, Sin Meng Srun, Om Sorry and Minh Thien Voan. I would like any information about them as well, but none concern me so much as It Sareth.

I look forward to hearing from you and will be grateful for anything you can tell me.

Very best wishes for your continued success.

Sincerely,



James L. Black
Director of Auxiliary Services and
Assistant Professor of
Modern Foreign Languages

JLB/lb

Enclosures

Letter to Sichan Siv, April 27, 1990, page 2

On June 5, Mr. Sichan Siv responded.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 5, 1990

Dear Mr. Black:

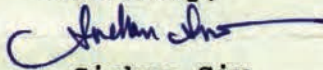
Thank you very much for your letter of April 27, 1990 regarding It Sareth.

I did know of It Sareth in Cambodia. In fact, prior to 1975, he was teaching at law school where I was a student.

As far as I can recall, he was in Cambodia at the end of the war. It is my belief that if he did not get out of Cambodia by then, there remains little hope. As for Sin Meng Srun, he is currently living in California. His address is: 2710 Terrace Avenue, Arcata, CA 95521. He may be able to tell you more about your other friends.

I'm sorry to pass along such disheartening information.

Sincerely,



Sichan Siv
Deputy Assistant to the President
for Public Liaison

Mr. James L. Black
Director of Auxiliary Services and
Assistant Professor of Modern Foreign
Languages
Valdosta State College
Valdosta, GA 31698

A telephone conversation with Dr. Sin Meng Srun, a professor at Humboldt State University in California, lent strength to what I had feared all along, that Sareth had been killed during the first hours or days after the fall of Phnom Penh. Government officials were Pol Pot's first targets. Sareth was a professor of law and Director of the Cambodian

Press Agency. He was part of the Lon Nol government. What other conclusion could there be except Sareth had perished? If he had escaped Cambodia, I would have been among the first to know. Dr. Sin and I completed our conversation by talking about our careers and families, adding our best wishes, and saying goodbye. All hope of seeing Sareth again vanished permanently.

Even so, my curiosity about his fate remained alive. Encouraging improvements in communication and the availability of information began to occur in the early 1990's, and by 1996 access to the World Wide Web had become common place, if not in private homes, in many businesses and most universities. In March 1996, two PhD students at Stanford University began working on a project called the "Stanford Digital Library Project." It changed the landscape of information gathering forever and eventually became the powerful search engine "Google." Although the ability to retrieve information was improved, the amount of information on the web was still extremely limited. Gradually, custodians of records across the world began converting materials to digital formats that could be retrieved electronically.

When I found a spare minute at my desk I would type "It Sareth" into the computer and push the Enter button. There was never a reference. Eventually, I purchased a personal computer and searched more frequently and thoroughly, but no matter how often I searched or how many variations in wording I used, there was no response, not one. It was as if this man had existed only in my world.

My long-time friend Joe Newton and I had talked about visiting Asia for years. We both wanted to see the beautiful countrysides, meet the people, and experience the culture. Joe, a philosopher at heart, was interested in Buddhist teachings and the history of the region. He looked forward to the photographic opportunities offered by the hundreds of ancient sites, especially Angkor Wat. I was interested in those things too but the heart of my interest rested in my own history with Sareth and Cambodia and the abiding angst and guilt I felt about "the American war."

In 2010 we decided to go. Through Overseas Adventure Travel, Inc., a company based in Cambridge, Massachusetts we selected a guided tour with a small group of twelve people. The group was scheduled to visit Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia in December 2011.



Itinerary of Southeast Asia trip planned by Joe and Jim for December 2011

Although I accepted the fact that Sareth himself was dead, I could not travel to Cambodia without trying to find his family. If his relatives had survived the war and the Pol Pot regime, surely they could be located. I needed to see their faces, to hear them speak. Maybe they knew details about his death and would share them with me. I wanted his family to know that Sareth never forgot them and that people in the United States loved him, especially the Black family. Also, I felt a compulsion to acknowledge that the love came with a price of pain and heartache. It was not that I believed I could make up for any of it, but it was important to me for them to know I was sorry for it and that their brother Sareth bore it all with unworldly grace.

Every week I sat at my computer searching, hoping to find some bit of information about Sareth, typing . . . “It Sareth”. . . Enter. . . . “Sareth It”. . . Enter. No result. Still nothing. At the same time other leads were explored. In January 2011, my friend Dianne Clark invited me to Jacksonville, Florida where she was visiting her mother. A visit to the Clarks was always spent in laughter, making music, reliving old times, and basking in the warmth of genuine friendship. On the way to lunch that day, her mother Dot said, “Jim, oh, Jim, there is something you must see.” She began to give directions without revealing the destination. We eventually turned a corner to find something transported from another world. I could not believe my eyes. It was a gleaming, newly completed Cambodian Buddhist Temple, Wat Khmer Savy Rattanaram. It was a beautiful. We stopped. I met the abbot and several monks and explained the quest I was just beginning, the search to find a family that, considering history, might no longer exist. Although they assured me they wanted to help, communication barriers and the lingering suspicion of temple officials that I might have political intentions prevented progress.



Wat Klmer Savy Rattanaram, Jacksonville, Florida, USA

The unstructured hours afforded by my retirement from Valdosta State University brought my thoughts back again and again to the obligation I felt to Sareth's family. At home each morning as I descended the stairs to make coffee, I saw Hanuman guarding the amulet and the little basket. I often thought and sometimes even said aloud, "Good morning, Hanuman!" One day he responded. In my mind I heard: "Return these. Take them back."

I stopped halfway down the stairs and thought, "What if I WERE to take them back? What if the most precious, personal mementoes I have were to travel 10,000 miles home again? The amulet and the basket would rest with Sareth's family in Cambodia where they really belonged." That gesture would explain what I could not put into words. I determined to do it, to take them home.

I intensified my search efforts, preparing a set of photographs and records I thought would explain what I was trying to do and why. Over the next few months I mailed a cover letter with a packet of documents to anyone who might be able to help. One of these individuals was His Excellency Mr. Hem Heng, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, the Cambodian ambassador to the United States. As a courtesy I called the embassy to alert him before sending the materials. The call was answered personally by Mr. Peang Gafour who listened to my entire story, occasionally asking a question or making a comment. Several days later he responded by email.

From: PEANG GAFOUR [mailto:pgafour@hotmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, April 21, 2011 11:48 AM
To: j.l.black@mchsi.com
Subject: RE: Arrival of Packet of Information regarding It Sareth

Dear Jim,

H.E Hem Heng and I received your package yesterday 04/22/11. We would like to thank you for the complete set of information you have sent to us about Mr. Ith Sareth.

Walking through the packages we see that Mr. Ith Sareth used to work for the Ministry of Information of the Khmer Republic. Thus, H.E Chhang Song a former minister of information of H.E. Lon Boret's Government under the Khmer Republic era might be a resourceful person who could give some useful information to you to locate the whereabouts of Mr. Ith Sareth.

H.E. Chhang Song currently resides in Long Beach California. His telephone number is 562-607-3870. You might like to give him a call and hear what he says.

If we know anything about Mr. Ith Sareth we will certainly keep you informed.

Sincerely

Peang

It appears that there were two Sareths working for the Ministry of Information at that time. One is your friend Mr. Ith Sareth and the other one is Mr. Thong Sareth a graduate student from Europe, Belgium or France, not clear.

The third reading of this email produced a startling revelation. All my internet searches had been doomed to failure because I had misspelled Sareth's name! Mr. Gafour had spelled it correctly: "ITH." The memory of Sareth's explaining why he had dropped the "h" came back to me. Peang Gafour had given me the key! He had reminded me of a long-forgotten, critical detail.

I couldn't leave the computer. In the fifteen years since the inception of the web there had never been so much as a hint of reference to "It Sareth." The words "Ith Sareth" appeared in the Google search bar as fast as I could type them. There it was: the first web reference to "Ith Sareth."

Crossing Three Wildernesses: A Memoir - Page 179 - Google Books Result
books.google.com/books?isbn=1566891671

U. Sam Oeur, Ken McCullough - 2005 – History

“General Sak Sutsakhan, Ith Sareth, and other dignitaries from our delegation came, and I wound up in one of the observer seats. Kurt Waldheim was serving as ...”

The joy of that discovery is indescribable. Another quick web search found the vita and address of Mr. Ken McCullough, an administrator at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, writing teacher, and poet laureate of Winona, Minnesota.




Left: Ken McCullough, Right: U Sam Oeur

He and Mr. U Sam Oeur had written “Crossing Three Wildernesses: A Memoir” telling the story of how U Sam Oeur survived the Khmer Rouge regime and ultimately escaped. Ken McCullough was warm and encouraging. He told me about his friend Sam Oeur and suggested I call him. Sam knew Sareth. Both were members of the 1974 delegation to the 29th Session of the United Nations. Sam, Ken and I spoke many times during the next several weeks. I am indebted to both these men because they began to think creatively with me about the search. They shared their experiences and referred me to people they knew, sometimes contacting them on my behalf.

Sam wrote to his friend, Jim Mizerski, who was at that time in Cambodia. In July 2011, Jim found two references. One reference was in the databases of the Cambodian Genocide Project, Yale University, and the Documentation Center of Cambodia, Record Y00323. It refers to a man with the family name “Ith” although no given name was recorded. This “Ith” was employed by Democratic Kampuchea from 1975-1979 and lived in the old Commerce school, west of the Ministry of Information. I discounted the record. I could not imagine that Sareth would be associated in any way with the Khmer Rouge, and there was no given name.

មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា

Biographic Database Khmer | English

Record No:	Y00323
Name:	Ith (PPP, p. 277)
Sources of Information:	PPP, pp. 277-278
DK Employment 75-79	In the Ministry of Information in Phnom Penh, 1975???? ;notes: appointed by the City Committee Ministry, assistant to Chiev in charge of directing a group of former technicians from before the revolution (PPP, p. 277)
Chain of Command (Superiors)	Chiev (PPP, p. 277)
DK Activities pre-79	resided in the old Commerce school, west of the Ministry of Information (PPP, p. 277) removed from the Ministry of Information office when all responsibility for radio assignments and former technicians was shifted to Hu Nim's K-33 group (PPP, p. 278).
Affiliations:	Chiev (PPP, p. 277).
 Scanned original doc.	
Copyright:	The data above and organizational structure of the database are copyrighted property of the CGP. The aesthetic presentation and category names are property of DC-Cam.

Record Y00323, Cambodian Genocide Project, Yale University and the Documentation Center of Cambodia

The second reference was an article titled “Chhim Sochit: A Student from Canada.” It was in the April 2002 issue of “Searching for the Truth.” Chhim Sochit was arrested and sent to Toul Sleng prison on October 10, 1976, interrogated, and killed on January 28, 1977. He confesses that he was hired by the CIA “to instigate students to rise up against the royalist regime and to support the Lon Nol regime.” Ith Sareth was among those he named as being a part of this activity, alleging that he belonged to an eight-member group. Saray Bunky was also alleged to be a CIA agent.

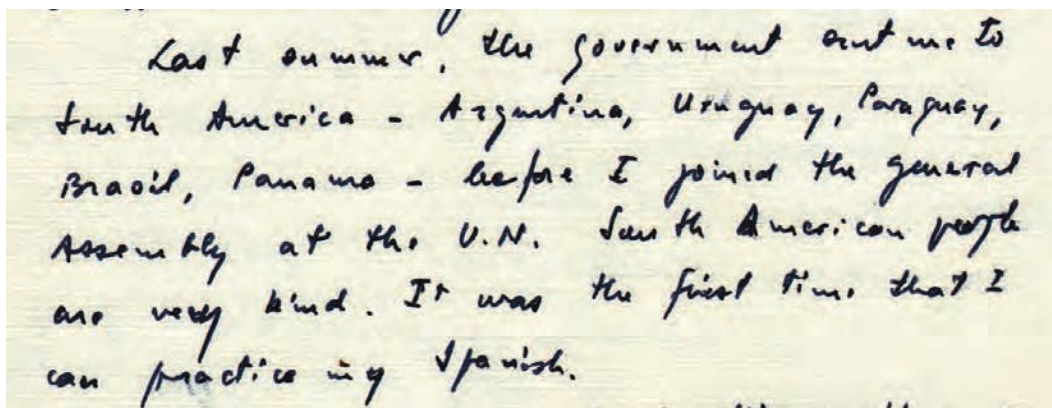
In August 1972, Saray Bunky sent him a message saying that the Khmer

Rouge abroad were resolutely waging a political war against the Republic and were supported and recognized by many countries. Moreover, they continued waging a political war in the international arena. In order to curb the spread of the Khmer Rouge on the international stage, Saray Bunky sent Chhim Sochit, Ith Sareth (Ministry of Information), and Lev Suth Sophoantha (Electricity of

Cambodia) to join a delegation to Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Brazil. This was called a goodwill delegation. The delegation visited the four countries to ask them for [political] support. After being informed about the political situation in Cambodia, governmental representatives from each country pledged support for the republic against the communist group. Page 4

In August 1976 Chhim Sochit went to Cambodia under Chuon Viseth's orders. Chuon Viseth told him to recruit evacuated people and let them know about plans that would be implemented in Cambodia. First plan: when he arrives in Cambodia, he must make contact with an eight-member group, Saray Bunky, a major in the Ministry of Defense; Bun Yeoun, a second lieutenant in the Ministry of Defense; Sin Rong, a salesman; Lev Suthsophoantha, an official of Electricity of Cambodia; Ith Sareth from the Ministry of Information; Nong Phaly and Nhem Daovreoung from a private school called Dara Rasmey high school; and Hor An to prepare for the next meeting. Second plan: after contact is made, Saray Bunky will be selected as the group leader. He will assign the eight members of the group to recruit evacuated people. The third plan: he must meet and seek support from twelve people in the revolutionary army. Saray is assigned to contact Sarin Chhak, Huot Sambath, and Chao Seng (an official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Ith Sareth is to contact Phok Chhay, Chao Teary and Uch Ven. Lev Suthsophoan's duty is to make contact with Dy Phon, Ruos Cheatho, and Phlaok Saphan. Chhim Sochit is to contact Men Niktho, Nuth Bunsong and Deng Kaory to seek support and to persuade them to be secret informers from the Khmer Rouge. Page 6

It is estimated that only 20% of the information in confessions forced at S-21 is accurate. However, the statement that Ith Sareth was sent by the government to visit Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Brazil is true. Sareth mentioned this to me in a note dated April 23, 1973.



Last summer, the government sent me to South America - Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, Panama - before I joined the general Assembly at the U.N. South American people are very kind. It was the first time that I can practice my Spanish.

Excerpt, note from Sareth to Jim, April 23, 1973

Given that this part of Chhim Sochit's confession is factual, we might assume that some of the other information is as well. If that is the case, Sareth was working officially and unofficially for his government and against the Khmer Rouge.

The excitement mounted. I dialed the number Peang Gafour had given me for Minister Chhang Song. He answered in a low, slow voice.

"Yes, Mr. Black, the Embassy told me to expect your call."

There followed more information about Sareth than I had been able to find in thirty-eight years. He continued.

"I knew him well. Sareth was my friend too. He worked for me from 1972 until the end. He was a leftist intellectual and utterly incorruptible."

That was the Sareth I knew.

During the thirty-minute conversation Minister Chhang Song answered question after question and invited me to call him again. He too referred me to Mr. Youk Chhang, Director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia.

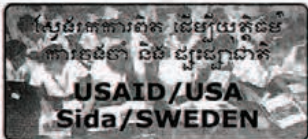
The Documentation Center of Cambodia

The search for Sareth's family gained momentum in July 2011. Mr. Youk Chhang responded immediately, allowing me to send the packet of information to him via United Parcel Service. Upon receipt he requested that his associate Mr. Socheat Nhean consider what might be done to help. Socheat then took a series of steps that I was convinced would bear fruit.

On October 23, he placed an advertisement in a newspaper.

និយាយពីការរស់នៅក្នុងសម័យខ្មែរក្រហមគឺនិយាយពីការផ្សះផ្សាអប់រំកូនចៅឱ្យអត់គុណអច្បាសស្រីយ

• ក្រសួងអប់រំ យុវជន និងកីឡា និងមជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា



សម្ភាញ់ខ្ញុំនៅទីណា?

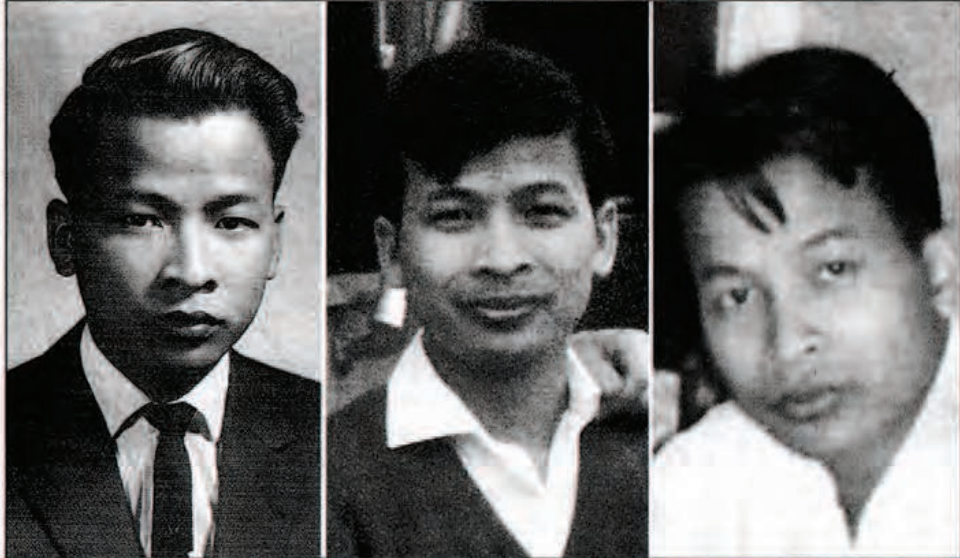
ក្នុងពេល: អ៊ុត សារ៉េត គឺជាមិត្តជិតស្និទ្ធរបស់ខ្ញុំម្នាក់ ។ សារ៉េត បានចាកចេញពីប្រទេសកម្ពុជា ដើម្បីមកបន្តការសិក្សានៅសាកលវិទ្យាល័យចរចាសហរដ្ឋអាមេរិក ក្នុងអំឡុងទសវត្សរ៍ ៦០ ។ ក្រោយពីបញ្ចប់ការសិក្សា សារ៉េតបានត្រឡប់មកប្រទេសកម្ពុជាវិញ ហើយក្រោយមកពីឆ្នាំ១៩៧២ដល់១៩៧៥ សារ៉េត បានកាន់មុខតំណែងជាប្រធានទីភ្នាក់ងារសារព័ត៌មានខ្មែរ (Agence Khmer de Presse) និងជាសាស្ត្រាចារ្យច្បាប់នៅទីក្រុងភ្នំពេញ ។

រាប់អានគ្នាហួត ទោះបីជាគាត់ត្រឡប់មកប្រទេសកម្ពុជាវិញក៏ដោយ ។ នៅថ្ងៃទី២៣ខែមេសាឆ្នាំ១៩៧៣ សារ៉េត បានសរសេរលិខិតតូចមួយផ្ញើមកខ្ញុំ ដោយប្រាប់ថា គាត់ធ្វើការនៅក្រសួងព័ត៌មាននៅប្រទេសកម្ពុជា ។ គាត់មានខ្សែចង្កេះមួយដែលម្តាយរបស់គាត់ឱ្យគាត់ពាក់ ហើយគាត់បានពាក់ខ្សែចង្កេះនោះមកកាន់សហរដ្ឋអាមេរិកនៅឆ្នាំ១៩៦២ ។ ក្រោយមក សារ៉េត បានប្រគល់ខ្សែចង្កេះនោះមកខ្ញុំ ។ បងប្អូនស្រីរបស់គាត់បានធ្វើស្មុគមួយ ហើយគាត់បានយកស្មុគនោះ ដើម្បីទុកស្រាមជើងរបស់គាត់ ។

នៅក្នុងឆ្នាំ១៩៧៥ ពេលដែល

គាត់មកប្រជុំនៅការិយាល័យអង្គការសហប្រជាជាតិក្នុងប្រវត្តិវិញ សារ៉េតបានឱ្យខ្ញុំ ក្របហានមានមួយមកខ្ញុំ ។ ក្រៅពីខ្ញុំកន្លះ សារ៉េត បានផ្ញើវត្ថុអនុស្សាវរីយ៍មកខ្ញុំជាច្រើន ហើយសព្វថ្ងៃនេះខ្ញុំនៅតែរក្សាទុករបស់ទាំងនេះបានល្អដដែល ។ សព្វថ្ងៃវត្ថុអនុស្សាវរីយ៍ដែល សារ៉េត ឱ្យមកខ្ញុំធ្វើឱ្យខ្ញុំនឹកឃើញគាត់មិនអាចបំភ្លេចបានទេ ។ ចាប់តាំងពីខ្មែរក្រហមចូលកាន់កាប់ប្រទេសកម្ពុជាមក សារ៉េត បានបាត់ខ្លួនរហូត និងមិនដឹងជារស់នៅទីណា ឬស្លាប់នៅទីណាឡើយ ។ ខ្ញុំនៅតែមិនដឹងថា ជោគវាសនារបស់មិត្តខ្ញុំម្នាក់នេះទៅជាយ៉ាងណានោះទេ ។

10/23/11 ដេមស៍ ហ្វេក



Notice of the search placed in Khmer newspaper, October 10, 2011

There was no response. He placed another notice in the Third Quarter, 2011 English edition of *Searching for the Truth*.



Notice, Third Quarter 2011 Edition, Searching for the Truth

I was impatient for someone who knew or was related to Sareth to see one of these notices and contact the Documentation Center. We waited. No response. I began to reconsider the facts. Sareth came from an educated family. His father was a school administrator. His brother Srâs had also visited the United States and held high rank in the National Police. Sareth himself had earned what anyone would consider a world-class education and was a part of the Lon Nol government.

Adding a sharper edge to the probability of his death was the fact that one Cambodian expatriate told me he heard that Sareth had been asked to write a new democratic constitution for the Lon Nol government. I remembered the words of the Khmer Rouge song *Long Live April 17*. "From every direction Phnom Penh chiefs were shot; they were gangsters selling out our country. Lon Nol supporters fled the country, and we advanced to totally smash the imperial puppets, both the regime and the individuals in order to bring them to a permanent end." How many members of this cultured, educated family could have survived such vicious, bestial brutality?

In October 2011, an email arrived from Socheat with an attachment. He had placed Sareth's photograph on the cover of Issue 142 of *Searching for the Truth*. In addition there was a full page notice inside. No words could express my surprise and gratitude to Socheat Nhean, the staff of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, and Director Youk Chhang

for this generosity. It was a beautiful, arresting sight. Surely it would bring result; surely someone would recognize that visage and remember.



Cover, Issue 142, Searching for the Truth, October 2011

November passed. December arrived. There was no response. I accepted the disheartening conclusion that all hope was lost. I would never again see Sareth; I would never meet his family. This circle would forever be broken.

Final plans were made for the Southeast Asia trip, and friends suggested that I view it as any other. Mr. Banheang Hav who lives near Washington, D.C. said, “I could not find my own family when I returned to Cambodia. There was nothing left except my father’s grave. I don’t want you to be disappointed. Go and enjoy your trip. Cambodia is a beautiful place.” I took that advice to heart. The amulet and basket would be left behind out of fear they might be damaged or lost, and, after all, there was no reason to take them.

On December 10, Joe and I departed Valdosta for Bangkok. The trip proved to be better than we imagined. After three days in Thailand including a tour of Bangkok, a visit to the Royal Palace, a cruise on a long-tailed boat, and a trip to Ayutthaya, we flew to Luang Prabang, Laos on December 14.



Points visited by Joe and Jim, December 2011

Two days later we began a long bus ride over mountains visiting Khumu and Hmong tribes on the way to Vientiane. It was becoming easier to put the disappointment of not being able to find Sareth's family out of my mind. We stopped at Vang Vieng to stay overnight at the beautiful Thavonsouk Resort. The fatigue of the long ride was mitigated by the charm of the owner of the resort. This friendly Laotian welcomed the group, sat at the end of our long table, reached for his guitar, and sang Elvis Presley's most popular recordings in perfect English. The beauty of the facility itself, the landscape, the convivial group, the food, and the music made this evening memorable, but it was just before becoming unforgettable.



Serenade by owner, Thavonsouk Resort, Vang Vieng, Laos, December 16, 2011

The resort owner was crooning the last stanza of “I Can’t Help Falling in Love with You” when I felt the vibration of my iPhone. I was not expecting a call or communication from anyone and ignored the alert until the song ended. I took the telephone from its case, opened the mail, and was transfixed. The mail was from Socheat. His generosity in placing Sareth’s photograph on the cover of *Searching for the Truth* had paid off. Someone had recognized the photograph and called the Documentation Center.

From: Socheat Nhean [mailto:truthsocheat@dccam.org]
Sent: Friday, December 16, 2011 5:08 AM
To: YOUK CHHANG
Cc: James L. Black
Subject: Re: Ith Sareth

Dear Jim,

Ith Sareth's brother found Ith Sareth in the magazine, and he called me today. He is living in Phnom Penh and has a sister living in Pursat which is about 200 miles away. I will take you to meet with him when you are here.

See you next week.

Best,
Socheat

----- Original Message -----

From: YOUK CHHANG
To: Socheat Nhean
Cc: James L. Black
Sent: Friday, December 16, 2011 11:53 AM
Subject: Re: Ith Sareth

Tell James.

From: Socheat Nhean
Sent: Friday, December 16, 2011 11:51 AM
To: Youk CHHANG
Subject: Ith Sareth

Dear Director Chhang:

A woman read *Searching for the Truth* and said that Ith Sareth was her uncle. She also said that two of Ith Sareth's siblings are still alive—one living in Phnom Penh and another one living in Pursat. They are in their late 80's. I will meet with them soon.

Best regards,
Socheat

Email from Socheat Nhean informing Jim that Sareth's family had been located

It was difficult to disguise my happiness. I quickly showed the mail to Joe, the day's activities ended, and we retired for the evening. I remained awake for hours contemplating the next several days but fell into a deep sleep before the alarm sounded at 6:00 am. Morning email contained another communication from Socheat in which he asked if I would do an interview for the records of the Documentation Center. Of course I agreed. The group departed Vang Vieng, completed the tour of Laos, and arrived in Saigon. In the meantime Socheat contacted Sareth's brother Sandap who agreed to meet on Friday afternoon, December 23. I enjoyed the days in Vietnam but all the while wished they would pass quickly so we could be on our way to Cambodia.

Socheat was busy making arrangements for our meeting with Sandap. He asked his friend Ms. Kallyann Kang, a correspondent with Cambodian Television Network, to join us. Kally decided to prepare a report of the meeting to be broadcast on CTN.

Entrance into Cambodia from Chau Doc, Vietnam was spectacular. We traveled by speedboat up the Mekong River passing villages, towns, pagodas, and shores lined with palm trees, finally arriving at the border where we disembarked to clear customs and immigration.



A call to alert checkpoint officials of arrival, Cambodian border, December 22, 2011



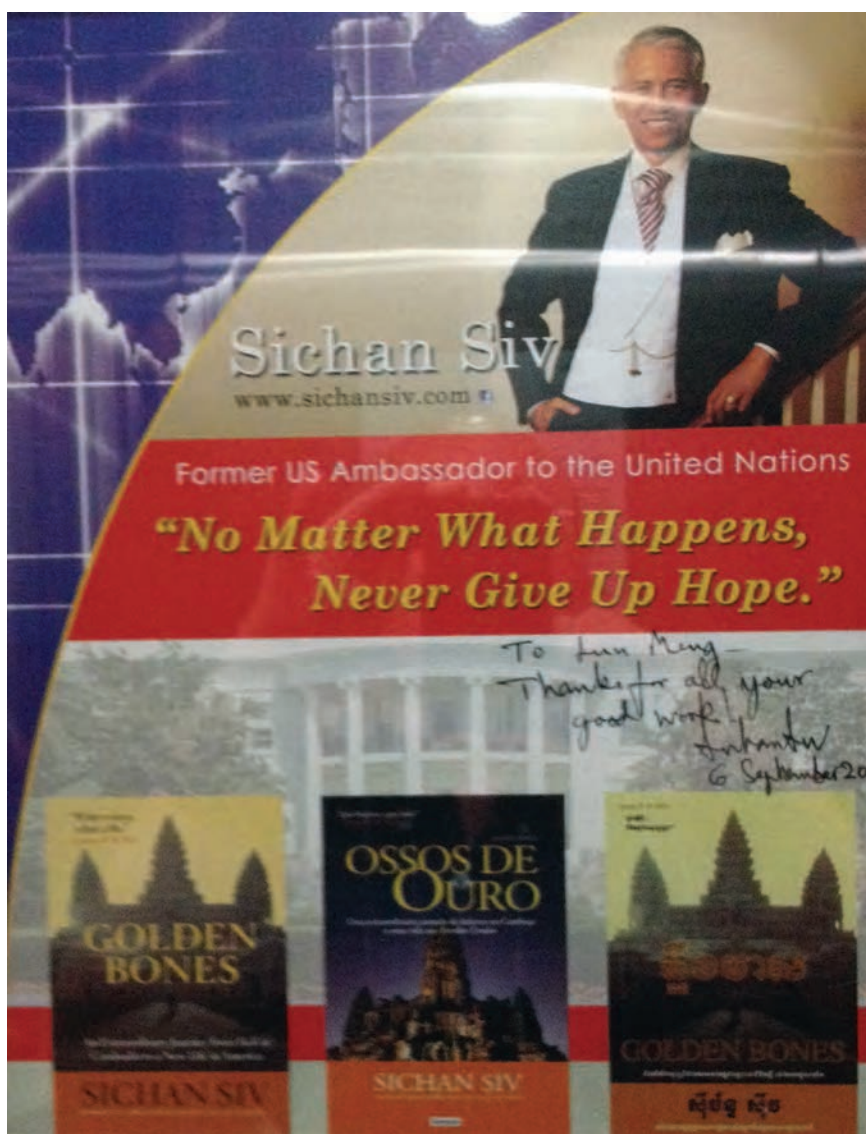
Cambodian border checkpoint police station, December 22, 2011



Disembarking at checkpoint, Cambodian border, December 22, 2011

After officially being admitted to Cambodia, we again boarded the speedboat to continue up river. It had been a day out of the best travelogue with a story-book ending. We cruised up the Mekong River, docked, and stepped off a motor launch directly onto the streets of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. No fictional account in my mind of an arrival could have compared to the reality of this one. A bus drove us straight to the Almond Hotel for dinner and a night's rest. Joe and I got into the elevator with our luggage, pressed the button, the door closed, and we began to rise. It was obvious both of us were tired. For the first time that day my mind was not occupied by racing thoughts. We stared straight ahead.

When the elevator stopped and the doors opened, I reached to my right to grip the baggage handle. As my eye swept upward I noticed a poster on the elevator wall. There he was, Mr. Sichan Siv. I felt as if he were speaking directly to me: "No Matter what happens, never give up hope." This was another in a series of validating events related to my search for Sareth's family, events and coincidences reassuring me that I was in the process of something meant to be by some force outside myself.



H. E. Sichan Siv poster in elevator, Almond Hotel, December 22, 2011

At 7:30 am the following day, Joe and I were invited to participate in an event central to the mission of the Documentation Center of Cambodia. It was the unveiling of a monument at a local high school designed to serve as a permanent reminder to students about the past suffering of their countrymen, the necessity to understand their history, and the path to forgiveness and reconciliation. Guests from the Ministry of Education and from the Center spoke to the students assembled under a large tent. Students then asked questions about the Khmer Rouge period and were given materials to take home.



Jim, Socheat observe as Deputy Director Vanthan speaks to students, December 2011



High School students at genocide monument unveiling, December 2011



Monument before unveiling, December 2011



Monument reminder about tolerance, forgiveness, and reconciliation, December 2011



Officials from high school, Ministry of Education, and Documentation Center (including Jim in red tie and cap) distributing educational materials, December 2011

From the high school event, the Documentation Center team and I returned to the Center offices where we met Kallyann Kang and her television crew for an extended interview. It was humbling to me that Center officials and Ms. Kang were interested. The essence of the story was not about me nor was it about my family. It was about the mettle of one of their own, Ith Sareth, about what he had to go through in the United States, and about his courage and determination to overcome the adversities, complete his education

and return to serve his native land and countrymen. The tragedy in this story is that his decency, courage, and determination collided with lingering intolerance and unrepentant ruthlessness that allowed for no reconciliation. The morning passed with questions, answers, musings, and the hum and click of cameras. I told as much of Sareth's story as time allowed and I could remember.



Documentation Center interview, cameraman, Jim, Kally, December 23, 2011

After lunch at the Center, we boarded the vans to travel to No. 36, Street 352 off Monivong Blvd, the home of Sareth's brother Sandap. I felt as if my heart were in my throat. The presence of my friend Joe was comforting; I was happy he was there to share that special moment with me. Joe was busy doing his own photography. Surprisingly, Sandap lives only a few blocks from the Documentation Center.



Meeting Sareth's brother Sandap, Jim, Sandap, Kally, Socheat, December 23, 2011

We spent an hour and a half getting acquainted and sharing stories, both of us in amazement that this meeting could happen.



Getting acquainted, Sandap, Jim, Socheat, Kally, cameraman, December 23, 2011

Sandap's wife Cheang Sithan and daughter Ith Bophaphalkern were also at home that day.



Sandap's wife Cheang Sithan and daughter Bopha, December 23, 2011

The conversation moved forward occasionally in French between Sandap and me but more often in Khmer among the family with either Socheat or Kally translating into English for me.

Sandap told me about his own life, about his family, and about his sister Siveth who lived 200 miles away in Pursat, adding that her health was fragile and she might not live long. I regretted not being able to meet Siveth. Sandap began to relate the details of Sareth's last days:

- a. Sareth had been living in Phnom Penh with Siveth and her three children,
- b. Sareth took them out of the city after the fall of Phnom Penh,
- c. He (Sandap) followed them later but when he caught up to the group, Sareth had left them to return to Phnom Penh, and
- d. They shot him.

The situation at that moment did not permit additional inquiry or clarification, and I felt satisfied that what I had believed all along had been confirmed. Sareth died almost immediately after April 17, the fall of Phnom Penh.

At last I felt re-connected to Sareth and was in a way transformed by it. It is inexplicable. I left a copy of the packet of information, and we said farewell.

The tour group went over land to Siem Reap, and Joe and I realized our dream of visiting the ancient sites of the area. On December 25, 2011, Christmas day, Joe took a tuk-tuk from the hotel to spend the entire morning taking photographs at Angkor Wat. Also on Christmas day an email arrived from Sandap's son-in-law, Bopha's husband, Mâm Sâm, a man who proved to be as helpful and generous as he is warm and affable. His thoughtful kindness set a permanent tone for my relationship to the entire family. Since then communication between the Ith family and me has been constant.

From: Mam Sam [mailto:msbg777@yahoo.com]
Sent: Sunday, December 25, 2011 10:32 AM
To: j.l.black@mchsi.com
Subject: Merry Christmas

Dear Uncle James,

My name is Mam Sam. I am a nephew-in-law of uncle Ith Sareth, your close friend about whom you want to find out. I am sorry that I could not meet you when you came here for an interview with my family members.

You should have been given more information, but my father-in-law felt nervous to tell you at that time. So please do not hesitate to contact us again if we could do more about it.

May God bless you and all your family members with continued good health, success and happiness forever

Keep in touch later,

Mam Sam

Sent from my iPad

Email from General Mâm Sâm, Sandap's son-in-law, December 25, 2011

The 26th and 27th were spent visiting Banteay Srei, Angkor Tom, Ta Prohm, and other wonders. We flew on December 28 to Bangkok and the following day embarked for the US. On the long flight home I kept telling myself, "You have to go back. You have to go back." Finally, before arriving in Valdosta I said to Joe, "I am going back as soon as I can."

The thought gained momentum. When I called Dianne Clark to tell her about having found Sareth's family and the short time we had together, her response was, "Jim, you have to go back soon. You will never forgive yourself if you don't." From that moment I began to make plans. Emails were exchanged with the Ith family exploring the possibility. Michael and Joe began helping me put everything together. The Ith family was as happy as I was about my returning. It was settled. I would go back in February, 2012. This time the amulet and little basket would be carefully packed in my carry-on luggage.

On January 12, an email arrived from Leaksoursdey Ky with an attachment, an interesting and informative letter from her mother Ith Khunnary. Khunnary works at the Australian Embassy; it was she who initially discovered the story about her uncle in Issue 128 of *Searching for the Truth*.

On February 2, I flew from Valdosta to Atlanta to Seoul and on to Phnom Penh. I was living a dream. The twenty-three hour flight passed reading about Cambodia, thinking of questions to which I needed answers, and looking forward to meeting other members of Sareth's family, especially his sister Siveth.

Dear Mr. James L. Black,

First of all, I would like to present myself. My name IT Khunnary, currently I am 54 years old. I am Mr. IT Sareth's niece.

I would like to say "thank you so much" for publishing my uncle's truth in the book and sharing them in my country. It is great to hear that you would like to know who have found the book and helps to Mr. Sareth's relative. On December 16, 2011, during I was collecting old books and documents at my work place to throw away, I felt like I found something important then I picked it up. It was "Ka Pit = The Truth" Suddenly I saw my uncle's name in the book, after I got that it was my uncle's picture on the cover. I was really surprised about it, after I read the article inside I felt like I wanted to cry. There were a hundred books that I were preparing and nearly throw away, why I could see this book. Was that what my uncle bring to me?

It reminds me the last few sentences that my uncle talked to us before he was disappeared, I still remember it. He said "My dear brothers, sisters, my nieces and nephews, please went back to our home town" Then he continued that "I would go back to Phnom Penh and asked my friends who studied with me. Their name "Ho Nim" and "Ho Yon" - Why did they ask people to go out of city? Because here didn't have any school for study, and didn't use any currency" Then he said "If I died, leaved me alone because I didn't have wife or children" It was so sad, he has studied for 12 years out the country and because he loved the country so much, he came back and was killed.

Finally I wish you all the best of luck and wishes.

Best regards,
IT Khunnary

Letter from Ith Khunnary to Jim, January 12, 2012

The Korean Air flight arrived in the Phnom Penh International Airport at 10:20 pm on Friday, February 3. Several hundred passengers got off the airplane, merging squarely with what appeared to be an equal number waiting to board. I stood at the back of the crowd pondering what to do next. From the opposite side of the huge room I could make out a finely dressed, beautiful woman standing next to a very official looking man. She was in stark contrast to the tired, disheveled passengers who appeared numbed by those same long flight hours I found surprisingly easy. She waved her hand in the air as high as she could get it. It was Bopha. At once we began moving toward each other. It was as if Moses were parting the waters of the Red Sea. Passengers retreated to the right and left to allow us through. After hurried introductions, the airport official said, "Come with me, please." He looked at my passport, someone retrieved my baggage, and we moved directly to the exit doors. Just outside stood Bopha's son Thearith and his fiancé Suon Bopha Watey whom I later learned to call "Little Bopha" to differentiate her from Ith Bophaphalkern, "Big Bopha." I felt the way I did so many years ago at the University of Georgia: I felt as if I "belonged," as if a part of me were really home. In fact, I was embarking on a journey of acceptance, warmth, and love I could not have imagined.

Although they invited me to stay at their home, I declined because of the length of my visit. Instead, they drove me to the Almond Hotel where Joe and I stayed last December. The amiable hotel staff remembered me by the black, leather Greek fisherman's cap I always wore. I spent Saturday morning recovering from my flight and getting settled at the Almond, but at 2:00 pm the Mâm Sâm family picked me up to go to their home for the afternoon and evening. It was a time of general acquaintance. Sandap retrieved some of the few remaining photographs of his family which Thearith scanned for me. They drove me back to the Almond around 8:00 pm and told me to be ready to leave the hotel at 7:30 am the next morning for a trip to Pursat to meet sister Siveth.



Map of Cambodia

At 7:30 am the next morning Big Bopha, Khunnary, Little Bopha, and Thearith appeared at the Almond, and we were away. The late model Toyota SUV, with occasional exception, moved smoothly for 200 miles over Highway 1 to Pursat. The trip was pleasant

with one refreshment stop and presented an opportunity to see parts of Cambodia I would never have seen otherwise. After traveling several minutes into the city of Pursat, we abruptly turned right, slowly moving down a dirt street with traditional Cambodian homes elevated above the ground on huge posts. Then we turned through iron gates into a compound to find a modern concrete house with pretty tiles. It was the only house on the street different from the others; it was Siveth's home. There was a group of children playing in the yard, construction of another house in progress, and various large blocks of partially carved stone to be seen. There she was, seated on a bench on her front porch from which she never moved. Her face was sweet but somber.

Introductions were made while Big Bopha and Khunnary prepared the lunch they had brought. It was served around 12:30 pm, and after the remains were put away, we all sat on the porch together. What I wanted so badly had really happened: I could look into her face, hear her speak, and ask her questions. I was still in disbelief.



Ith Siveth's home in Pursat, February 2012



Ith Siveth and Jim at her home in Pursat, February 2012



Jim, Yen Pennary (Ith Siveth's daughter), son-in-law, and children, Pursat, February 2012



Ith Siveth, Jim, Little Bopha, Yan, Yen Pennary (Ith Siveth's daughter), Pursat February 2012



Ith Siveth, "Little Bopha," Jim, and "Big Bopha," Pursat, February 2012

Little Bopha, now a university student, had spent four years in California and spoke perfect English with only the slightest accent. It was like music to me at that moment, music made by an angel who understood the importance of this meeting. She remained at my side translating the conversation between Siveth and me with reassuring ease.

Siveth's calm, peaceful demeanor hid the pain of her past. It was explained during the trip to Pursat that she had lost her brother Srâs and her two sons during the Pol Pot regime. In addition, her father Ith An had starved to death. She and her family had lived in Pursat since 1975 when they were forcibly moved there from their native province Svay Rieng.

She looked at me for a few seconds, then said, "He told me about you."

"About me?"

"Yes, Sareth told me about you and your family."

"What did he say?"

"He said there was a family in the United States that loved him and helped him, and that you were his friend. He also said you bought a house together."

"Did he tell you about my sister?"

"Yes, he said there was a girl. He said he could not marry her because she was too young."

"And did he tell you anything about my parents?"

"No."

At that, Little Bopha leaned to whisper into my ear, "You see, Jim, he did not tell her any of the bad things."

I was touched that Sareth had told Siveth. It was amazing that she remembered it all with such clarity especially after so long a time and the intervening events.

"He told me about you too," I replied. Sareth loved everyone in his family, but he felt especially close to this younger sister Siveth. "I have something for you." I reached into my bag, retrieved the little basket, and removed its wrapping. She recognized it immediately.

"I made that," she said.

"I know."

"He told me you liked it and when he gave it to you, you asked, 'Was this made in a factory?' Those were my exact words to him in 1962. I was stunned. She continued, "When he was here in 1965 I began making a bigger one for you, one with nine points. I wanted him to take it to you but he had to leave before it was finished."

Siveth recounted verbatim several other things which I had told Sareth fifty years ago. It hardly seemed possible, but it was true. It was more than I could take. I was overcome by emotion and began to sob uncontrollably. Family members standing nearby quickly moved to touch me. I could feel the warmth of their hands and the sympathy in their hearts. I had never been in such a state. They were successful in quieting me, and we fell back into serious conversation about Sareth and his life. At last some details were coming

to light, things I only could have learned from her. Siveth spent the afternoon, willingly and unselfishly reliving those painful times. Here are the surprising things I learned that day.

1. From 1972 until 1975 Sareth lived with her and her children in an apartment building in downtown Phnom Penh. Sandap pointed the building out to me later.

2. In 1975 an official from the US embassy arrived at their apartment to notify Sareth that he should immediately board a helicopter, waiting at a location very close to their apartment, to leave Phnom Penh. Siveth remembered being present when someone came to notify him. She also remembered actually seeing the helicopter. This notification had to have occurred on April 12 when US Ambassador John Gunther Dean carried out Operation Eagle Pull which evacuated people from Phnom Penh.

I watched the Embassy personnel driving themselves to do all they could to help those who had thrown in their fate with us. Many had worked all night long drafting the letters which were delivered in the early hours of April 12, offering to take them to safety. (excerpted from Dean's autobiography, *Danger Zones*)

Helicopters were brought from Thailand and from aircraft carriers off the Cambodian coast. They landed in a soccer field near the US embassy, took on passengers, and flew them first to the aircraft carriers, then to Thailand. According to Dean, whose papers are housed at the Jimmy Carter Library in Atlanta, Georgia, he intended to take "everybody who wanted to go." It stands to reason that Sareth would have been given opportunity to evacuate.

Obviously, all official and non-official Americans were eligible for evacuation. In reply to a query about which Cambodians should we take out, Washington suggested Cambodians in the government, Cambodian military closely linked to the U.S., and all well-educated Cambodians who Washington felt (and rightly so) were a target for the Khmer Rouge once they came to power. Our mission took exception to that cable, pointing out that anybody who had been working for Americans, Cambodian or third-country national, whether he or she was illiterate or a Ph.D, was in danger. Our team agreed that we would take everybody who wanted to go, whose life could be endangered. We took gardeners, houseboys, Koreans working for our mission, Cambodian generals or ministers, or educated Cambodians. (excerpted from Dean's autobiography, *Danger Zones*)

In addition, we had set up a procedure whereby key Cambodian leaders were told to send an assistant or secretary to the U.S. embassy at 6:00 a.m. every day to find out the situation and decisions taken by us regarding taking people to safety. That system worked rather well when, on this fateful day of April 12, 1975, we had decided to leave Phnom Penh by helicopter. These aides and secretaries all came on the morning of April 12. One of them

was the aide to Sirik Matak. We had prepared during the night a message stating that we were evacuating, and urging the recipient of the note to come along. (excerpted from Dean's autobiography, *Danger Zones*)

Other members of the embassy went to other Cambodian ministers in these fateful hours of April 12 to try to convince them to come along with us to safety. (excerpted from Dean's autobiography, *Danger Zones*)

Sirik Matak in a famous, heart-wrenching letter to Dean declined the offer. Based upon Siveth's statement and considering the information in Dean's autobiography, Sareth was among those notified.

3. Sareth declined the offer to evacuate. He explained why. The reasons he gave to Siveth that day were

- a. he had studied hard for his country,
- b. it would be unfair for him to leave when millions of his countrymen had to remain behind, and
- c. he wanted to try to help his country.

4. Sareth accompanied Siveth and her children on foot to a pagoda outside Phnom Penh. He then returned to the city. This evacuation occurred most likely on or immediately after April 17. Sandap's daughter Khunnary remembered what Sareth said to the group before leaving them to return to Phnom Penh.

It reminds me the last few sentences that my uncle talked to us before he was disappeared, I still remember it. He said, "My dear brothers, sisters, my nieces, and nephews, please went back to our home town." Then he continued that "I would go back to Phnom Penh and asked my friends who studied with me. Their name 'Ho Nim' [Hu Nim] and 'Ho Yon' [Hou Yuon] why did they ask people to go out of city? Because here didn't have any school for study, and didn't use any currency." Then he said, "If I died leaved me alone because I didn't have wife or children." It was so sad. . . (Ith Khunnary in a letter to Jim Black, January, 2012)

5. After going back to Phnom Penh, Sareth returned to the pagoda with supplies. He said that he was working for the Khmer Rouge. According to Siveth, he worked for them until the invasion by the Vietnamese in 1979. He also told her that they had given him a house although she never knew its location. Sareth immediately returned to Phnom Penh.

The news that Sareth had not died in 1975 was suprising and intriguing. Here-to-fore there was not one indication he had lived beyond the fall of Phnom Penh and every indication that he had not. This highly placed, educated man working for the Lon Nol

government had managed to avoid being executed during those weeks after April 17, 1975 when thousands of others had perished. How was that possible? I could hardly wait to question Sandap about what I had learned from Siveth, but that opportunity would not present itself for several days.

We returned to Phnom Penh in the late afternoon. The excitement of that day was stoked over the next three weeks by a series of events, each of which revealed additional information, adding pieces to the puzzle of what really happened to Ith Sareth. The voyage of discovery had begun in earnest.

The staff of the Documentation Center of Cambodia invited me to accompany them to attend the day's proceedings at the Extraordinary Chambers of the Courts of Cambodia. Between 1975 and 1979 an estimated 1.7 million Cambodian citizens lost their lives as a result of actions taken by the leadership of Democratic Kampuchea. On trial for crimes committed under their leadership are Nuon Chea, Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary, and Ieng Thirith. On Monday, February 6, 2012, the only witness questioned was Mr. Youk Chhang, Executive Director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia.

The Scandinavian defense lawyer questioned Mr. Chhang in flawless English throughout the morning and afternoon sessions. Much of the evidence against the defendants consists of records from the archives of the Documentation Center of Cambodia. The lawyer's focus that day was upon discrediting that evidence by making Mr. Chhang admit that the Center had at some point lost custody of records, rendering them unreliable. Mr. Chhang, in equally flawless English, was masterful in his responses which were fluid, forthcoming, and informative but never allowed the inference of loss of custody. The attorney responded, "Director Chhang, please allow me to re-phrase the question." He did so repeatedly during the day; Mr. Chhang responded obligingly each time in exactly the same manner as he had before but in different words. His testimony was a highly diplomatic work of art. Youk Chhang was named by *Time Magazine* as one of the 100 Most Influential People in the World in 2007.



Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia in session, 2012

General Mâm Sâm arranged for a boat and captain to be at our disposal on Tuesday, February 7, a national holiday. Big Bopha, Little Bopha, Thearith, and Srey Pich put together all the makings for a fine picnic. They picked me up at the Almond Hotel, and we cruised along the Mekong River eating, drinking wine, and celebrating.



Waiting to shove off to celebrate the national holiday aboard ship, February 7, 2011

Our good time turned into a real adventure when the boat's steering mechanism failed, and we began drifting down the river out of control. The captain called for another boat which caught up to us, and we changed vessels.



Sandap, Jim, Sithan, and Soc, Mekong River cruise, February 7, 2011

It turned out to be one of our most enjoyable days, a happy time. The business of the day mercifully kept me from thinking about Sareth.



Jim and General Mâm Sâm in Valdosta State University cap and shirt

Saturday, February 11, brought a visit to the Royal Palace and National Museum.



The Ith family and Jim at the Royal Palace, February 11, 2012

On Sunday, February 12, we visited General Mâm Sâm's home village, meeting his sister and her family, paying a visit to the family stupa and burial site, a beautiful tribute to his family erected by Mâm Sâm himself.



Sâm at his sister's home, February 12, 2012



Mâm family burial site



Sâm at pagoda where he spent many childhood hours



Supper on the canal, Jim, Sâm, Big Bopha, and Srey Pich, February 12, 2012

On February 15, the thirteenth day of my visit to Cambodia, Sandap, Cheang Sithan, “Big Bopha,” and her daughter Srey Pich drove me to Svay Rieng. On the way, Sandap told me about the history of their family and their struggle to survive after the fall of Phnom Penh. The gravity of what happened to them became clearer, and dozens of events and details swirling about in my mind gelled into their proper places, revealing their significance.

In the mid 1940’s, the Ith family lived in Ohum Chheute’al village, Svay Rieng Province near the school where Ith An worked as an administrator.



School in Svay Rieng attended by Sandap, Srás, and Sareth and where Ith An worked



Sandap and Jim at Ith An's school, Svay Rieng

Across from the school, down a short, shaded road, we found where the family home once stood.



Road across from school, heading toward Ith family home, Svay Rieng

The house itself had been destroyed by Pol Pot's soldiers, and the present owner of the land was building a new house exactly where it once stood.

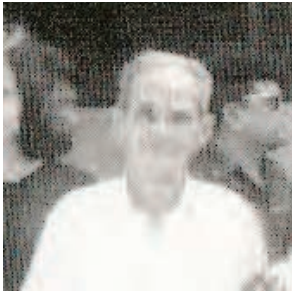


Sandap where Siveth, Simuoun, Srás, Sareth and he grew up, Svay Rieng

A short distance from the school we found the gravesite of Ith An and Koy Dim which Sandap had to rebuild after it was desecrated by a Khmer Rouge tank.



Sandap and Srey Pich approaching gravesite of Ith An and Koy Dim, Svay Rieng



Ith An



Koy Dim and Ith Simuoun



Ith Srás



Sandap and Jim at grave of Ith An and Koy Dim, Svay Rieng

The familiar landscapes and buildings enlivened painful memories which Sandap and his family and millions of others, for the sake of their peace of mind, had frozen in time and chosen not to revisit; but, as we moved from place to place, Sandap spoke of events as if they had happened only yesterday. This family's misfortune and the precariousness of their lives under Democratic Kampuchea became real to me.

The forces of Pol Pot overran Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975. They immediately began forcing people to leave their houses and belongings and stream into the countryside, telling them they could return in three days. Ith Sareth, his sister Siveth, and her three children left Phnom Penh, walking south along National Highway 1 toward Svay Rieng. They headed for a pagoda, their first stop on that long journey, carrying nothing but the clothes they wore and a little food. Sandap and members of his family planned to leave later following the same route.

Evacuating with Sareth and Siveth was the Eng family, two parents and eight children including three girls, Eng Seiha, Eng Peheany, and Eng Menea. Thousands of

people were leaving at the same time. Progress was slow and movement crushing causing the Ith and Eng families to become separated. Sareth had particular attachment to the Eng family: he was in love with Eng Menea. She was nineteen. The distressing separation caused him to constantly move back and forth between the two families, compounding the demands of the trip. Whatever reassurance and assistance they might have hoped for from the monks was not to be. They had been forcibly removed by the Khmer Rouge. Moreover, hundreds of other evacuees were scattered throughout the grounds. Still, it was the safest place to rest, and the two families were grateful for it.



Entrance to pagoda where the Ith family stayed on the way to Svay Rieng



Courtyard of pagoda where Ith family stayed on way to Svay Rieng

When the families were settled, Sareth did something nobody expected. He told them that he was not going to continue the journey with them to Svay Rieng. Instead, he intended to return to Phnom Penh to find two men he knew, school mates, Hou Yuon and Hu Nim to ask them why they were making people leave Phnom Penh. He left his family and friends with the heartfelt but heart-wrenching message, "If I die, leave me alone because I do not have a wife or children." They were surprised when he returned to the pagoda two weeks later with food and other supplies. Before leaving again, he told them that the Khmer Rouge were allowing him to work for them and they had given him a place to live.

Sandap and his family left Phnom Penh shortly after the first group; but by that time the evacuation was in full force, and the streets were jammed. Killing and mayhem were everywhere. Bodies were on all sides. The family could hardly move. They made it down Monivong Street, crossing the Bassac River over the Monivong bridge. When they arrived at the pagoda, Sareth had already returned to the city. While they were there, Khmer Rouge soldiers arrived to ask if anyone would like to return to Phnom Penh to work. Sandap, skeptical of the offer, did not indicate interest. His intuition saved his life; those who raised their hands were removed from the pagoda and shot.

When an abandoned house was spotted in the small town of Preah Eng, the group stopped again. They hoped to avoid completing the trip to Svay Rieng, remembering Pol Pot's promise that everyone could return to Phnom Penh within several days of the evacuation. The Iths stayed at Preah Eng for one month before concluding the promise was an empty one and resuming their journey to Svay Rieng.

Despite the advantage of the familiarity of their home territory and their caution, the Ith family was eventually rounded up by Khmer Rouge soldiers. Sandap was placed in a prison camp; out of approximately 1,400 inmates, no more than two dozen survived. One of those was Sandap. Before April 17, he had worked for the city of Phnom Penh and developed skills which the Khmer Rouge needed. He was removed from the prison and allowed to work. His wife Cheang Sithan and their children including "Big Bopha," only twelve at the time, were forced to work in the rice fields. Bopha's future husband Sâm, also twelve, worked in the fields as well. Siveth and her three children were forced to move to Pursat.

On December 25, 1978, 150,000 Vietnamese troops invaded Democratic Kampuchea, and people were told that they could go home. Sandap went to Phnom Penh to find work; his wife and children followed shortly after. Siveth, having lost both her sons, decided to remain in Pursat with her daughter.

Sareth, however, was confronted with what was without doubt the second most critical decision of his life, a decision which would lead either to freedom and relief from the danger and uncertainty he faced every day or to utter disaster. He decided to leave Cambodia. Negotiating and ultimately cooperating with the Khmer Rouge to survive was one thing. They were at least Cambodians and his countrymen. However, accomplishing that with the Vietnamese to whom he had always felt antipathy was entirely different. The southern province of Svay Rieng borders Vietnam. There were constant irritations and

flashes of conflict along this border. Sareth had mentioned these difficulties to me over the years. This antipathy was shared by sister Siveth who related specific incidents from her childhood in my conversation with her in February 2012.

Sareth had remained in Cambodia to aid and protect his family and do what he could to help his country, but contact with members of his family was lost soon after April 1975, removing one of his reasons for staying. The arrival of the Vietnamese removed the other reason. There was still hope of helping Cambodia if he were working with his own countrymen, but he had no hope of doing so under the Vietnamese. His survival until 1979 had hinged, in addition to his own savvy, upon his knowing Hou Yuon and Hu Nim, but he had no similar connections to the Vietnamese, no relationships upon which to build.

Hou Yuon and Hu Nim were extremely important people. They were in the mixture of leftist intellectuals who were prominent in Democratic Kampuchea. Both were educated in France and had been influential in Cambodian politics from the early 1960's. Both served in the government of Sihanouk and were veterans of the communist movement in Cambodia. Hou Yuon held a doctorate from the University of Paris, and it was his ideas upon which the economic policies of Democratic Kampuchea were based. Hu Nim was appointed as Democratic Kampuchea's Minister of Information.

Sareth, Hou Yuon, and Hu Nim had significant things in common. They went to school together, were educated in France, and were considered leftist intellectuals. However bonding those commonalities might have been, there were important differences. Sareth had not only been educated in France but in the United States and Belgium as well as, was not a communist, and evidently had worked clandestinely against the Khmer Rouge and with anti-royalist forces in support of the US backed Lon Nol government.

One can infer from what he said to his family when he left them at the pagoda that he had not maintained close contact with either Hou Yuon or Hu Nim in the recent past. Otherwise, why would he have needed to return to Phnom Penh to ask them why they were forcing people out of the city and why they were no longer using currency? If Sareth had associated with these men recently, he most likely would have known the answers to those questions.

Other factors support the theory that Hu Nim, Hou Yuon, and Sareth had not been in recent contact. Sareth was outside Cambodia studying in the US, Belgium, and France from 1962 until 1970. These two men were in Cambodia during that time. Both Hou Yuon and Hu Nim were elected to the assembly in Cambodia in 1962 and from that time participated in one way or another in government. Sareth's inquiry about reasons for the evacuation might have struck an especially sympathetic cord in Hou Yuon who by accounts was himself against it. Sareth's decade long absence from his family, as painful as it was, might have been one of the circumstances helping ensure his survival. His being out of the country for more than a decade had kept him off the radar of others who later became highly placed Khmer Rouge leaders, thus affording him an additional degree of protection.

Despite the lengthy separation, Sareth evidently rekindled the friendship with Hu Nim and Hou Yuon, emphasized their commonalities, and convinced significantly

influential people that he could be of use to them. As Director of the Cambodian Press Agency in the Ministry of Information of the Lon Nol government, Sareth monitored and controlled information entering Cambodia via the world wide press organizations. Even more important, he controlled the “official” information which went to these agencies for worldwide distribution. It stands to reason that the Khmer Rouge leadership, especially Hu Nim, would value someone who understood and could manipulate such an information gateway. In any case, Sareth’s long acquaintance with Hou Yuon and Hu Nim, fluency in several languages, degrees from three countries, recent experience outside Cambodia, working knowledge of the international press, and his own diplomacy, were enough to prevent his being immediately arrested and executed after April 17, 1975 for his participation in the Lon Nol government and any other of his activities, real or imagined.

In the end, despite their contributions to the communist party and Democratic Kampuchea, the Khmer Rouge turned on Hou Yuon and Hu Nim. Hu Nim was arrested, tortured, and killed at S-21 on July 6, 1977. Hou Yuon disappeared sometime after 1975; thoughts differ about exactly how this happened. By that time Sareth had established himself sufficiently to endure the remaining years of Democratic Kampuchea.

The arrival of the Vietnamese made the risk too great for Sareth to remain in Cambodia. He began making plans to escape to Thailand with the idea in mind of making his way to the United States. He left Phnom Penh walking west along National Highway 3 toward Thailand, moving whenever possible through the cover of forest to avoid detection. Although the Vietnamese army liberated Phnom Penh, many areas surrounding the city remained occupied by the Khmer Rouge. Sareth was forced to travel through these unliberated zones where there was intense fighting between Vietnamese and Khmer Rouge soldiers. Making the situation even more dangerous was the fact that the Khmer Rouge in their paranoia had begun to strike out against their own just as they had done in the cases of Hou Yuon and Hu Nim. They killed anyone suspected of being disloyal.

In January 1979, Saosath, a former teacher and family friend from Svay Rieng, was himself leaving Phnom Penh traveling west along Highway 3. The heavy fighting between the Khmer Rouge and Vietnamese had left hundreds of bodies along the road. Approximately fifteen miles outside Phnom Penh, Saosath recognized a familiar face among the corpses. It was Sareth. His identification was still in his coat pocket.



Road sign across road from where Sareth's body was found, National Highway 3

Saosath returned to inform Sandap who immediately sent a man to recover Sareth's body and bring it back to Phnom Penh, but it was too late. Local villagers had buried him along with many others in a mass grave. His death could possibly have been caused by crossfire, but Sandap believes it is more likely that he was killed by Khmer Rouge who knew him and concluded that he was fleeing Cambodia, abandoning Angkor and the Khmer Rouge cause.

Nobody in the hard-working, productive Ith family was spared sadness and suffering during the rule of Angkar. In addition to the forced evacuations and loss of all personal property, some members paid the ultimate price. Father Ith An, the teacher and school official, starved to death. Brother Srâs, a promising division chief in the Cambodian National Police, was killed in 1975. Sister Siveth lost two of her three children, two sons. Ith Khunnary and her husband were separated; he was forced to marry someone else.



Sareth's probable final resting place, field behind sign, National Highway 3

There was mostly silence as we drove back from Svay Rieng to Phnom Penh. The trip had been a somber, sad experience, but at last, after forty years, I was able to piece together what I had known and what I had been told that day into a tragic narrative about the final years of Sareth's life. It was the story of a noble, courageous man who worked hard for his family and his country and who ultimately joined the nearly two million others whose lives were sacrificed during the scourge that was Democratic Kampuchea.

The story reduces itself to the following:

Everything was not "fine in Cambodia" as Sareth had written in his note to me on May 10, 1973. There was a civil war in progress. By the time I saw him in New York in October 1974, the situation had deteriorated so much that he had good reason for the fear he expressed to me that Sunday morning. Purchasing disguises and holding an airplane and pilot just outside of town meant he was terrified. Even though his initial thoughts were of escape, his love for his family and his country won out over any desire to protect himself. When Ambassador John Gunther Dean offered him, among many others, the opportunity to leave on April 12 in Operation Eagle Pull, Sareth, his very good friend Long Boret, most of the Lon Nol cabinet, and Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak, a member of the royal family and a principal player in the Lon Nol government, chose to remain.

Long Boret who became Prime Minister in 1973 was at one time Minister of Information, and it was he who originally hired Sareth as Director of the Cambodian Press Agency. Only weeks before the fall of Phnom Penh, the Prime Minister had been in Thailand negotiating with the Khmer Rouge in an effort to stop the war. Long Boret was generally regarded as a hard-working, honest man, a fitting friend for the "utterly incorruptible" Sareth.



Prime Minister Long Boret

Sirik Matak and Long Boret, among thousands of others, were executed by the Khmer Rouge in the unprecedented carnage that began on April 17, 1975. However, Sareth miraculously survived the executions after the fall of Phnom Penh and lived until 1979. Whatever connection or agreement he made with Hou Yuon and Hu Nim was strong and effective. Initially they must have protected him, found him a place to live, and assigned him work in the Ministry of Information. Even the highly dangerous implication by Chhim Sochit in his confession at Toul Sleng prison did not bring about Sareth's arrest. According to Chhim Sochit, Sareth was a part of an eight member resistance group working against the Khmer Rouge with an alleged CIA agent Saray Bunky. Any such implication usually resulted in arrest and imprisonment if not immediate execution. Loss of contact with his family, invasion by the Vietnamese, and the knowledge that he could no longer serve Cambodia left Sareth no option but to escape.

The escape attempt failed, and in January 1979, fifteen miles outside Phnom Penh on Highway 3, Ith Sareth, who had survived until then against all odds, lost the fight and joined the 1.7 million of his family, friends, and countrymen sacrificed during, or in the aftermath of, Democratic Kampuchea, disappearing into history. He was forty-one.

Celebrations and Goodbyes

On Friday, February 17, I attended Little Bopha's sister's wedding and reception, splendid affairs and, to me, highly symbolic ones. There were hundreds of people at the wedding ceremony itself but many more hundreds at the reception that evening. No doubt every family represented at these events had been affected by the Pol Pot regime in ways similar to the Ith family. Yet, the joy and happiness was unmistakable and far removed from the sorrows of those years. These hundreds of people together, enjoying the moment, wishing the bride and groom happiness and success, were recognizing and honoring the value and promise of these two human beings. To me, the young people represented the future of Cambodia; the older people represented history and reconciliation. I was honored to be there.



The wedding ceremony of Suon Socheata and Oung Ty Sana, February 17, 2012



Big Bopha, Sâm, Jim, Little Bopha, and Thearith at wedding, February 17, 2012

I wanted to do something special to express my appreciation to the Ith family for their hospitality, the gift of their time, their willingness to share information, and the warmth of their love. On Sunday, February 19, everyone was invited to dinner at one of my favorite Phnom Penh restaurants, Romdeng. Socheat Nhean, to whom I owe much, joined us.



Farewell Dinner for Ith family, Romdeng Restaurant, February 19, 2012

It was here that I officially returned one of those precious mementos from Sareth which had been in my possession for fifty years. I presented the amulet which Sareth's mother Koy Dim had given him to wear to the United States in 1962. With the help of Chean Sithan, I placed it around Sandap's neck. This gesture meant a lot to me and a lot to him. The amulet was home.



Returning the amulet, Romdeng Restaurant, February 19, 2012

At 11:00 am on Tuesday, February 21, I said goodbye to Mr. Youk Chhang and Documentation Center staff.



Jim and Youk Chhang, Executive Director, Documentation Center of Cambodia

My last days in Phnom Penh were punctuated by two more of those remarkable, affirming events, things I could never have imagined and certainly never expected, things that reminded me that I was about something that was destined. At 6:30 pm, February 21, Thearith picked me up at the Almond, and we drove to his house where everyone I had met in the Ith family was waiting to share our last evening together. After dinner, we relived the good times of the past weeks, expressed our hopes of seeing each other again, and conveyed our best wishes. They had brought parting gifts, not only for me, but for my son Michael and his wife Krystle as well. After I had received everyone else's gift, Khunnary reached behind her to bring up a long object in a green cloth bag. She handed it to me. It was a two-stringed Chinese fiddle, an erhu, like the one Sareth played all those years ago. It was a thoughtful, special gift which carried deep meaning.

"You remembered we made music together," I said, stumbling for words.

"And he taught me a song that we played all the time."

Nobody present could play the instrument. That was not a disappointment because I did not want to let go of it anyway.

Still holding the fiddle and still searching for words, I continued, "Well, let me see if I can sing the melody of the song Sareth taught me." It was the only thing I could think to do, and I was sure it would not matter whether or not I got it right because it would likely be as obscure to them as it was to me.

I looked down at the coffee table to steady my concentration and began slowly, “Da, da, da, daaaa. Da, da, da, da, da, da, da, daaaa. Da, da, da, da, da, da, da, daaaa. Da, da, da, da, da, da, da, daaaa. Da, da, da, da, da, da, da, daaaa.”

I could barely hold the melody together and continued to focus downward. On the last “Da, da, da, da, da, da, da, daaaa” I slowly lifted my gaze and realized that everyone in the room was singing that song. They all knew it! The hair stood up on my arms. It was the single most bonding moment of the trip. I will never forget it. It was electric.

Khunnary, a singer who had performed the song many times, wrote the lyrics for me from memory. It is titled “Love Star” and was written by Prince Norodom Sihanouk.



Jim at home in the music room with Gen. Mâm Sâm, the fiddle, and the flag of Cambodia

On February 22, my flight home was scheduled to depart at 11:40 pm, leaving me one more day in Cambodia. I packed my things early in the morning and called my favorite tuk-tuk driver, Mr. Ban, who drove me about the city for a final tour and dropped me at Romdeng for lunch with Jim Mirzerski. Jim autographed ten copies of the Romdeng Restaurant

cookbook “From Spiders to Water Lilies” which contains his beautiful photographic work. They were the perfect souvenirs for friends back home.



Jim Mizerski autographing “From Spiders to Water Lilies” at Romdeng

During my stay in Cambodia, one of the things I enjoyed doing was touring the markets which I did often. I especially enjoyed the jewelry shops and seldom passed one without going in to browse. I visited dozens of shops hoping to find a piece suitable for my son Michael. Although the precious stones were spectacular, the gold plentiful, and the designs exotic and alluring, I never found anything I thought suitable for him. I wanted to tour the market again and asked Mr. Ban to drop me there after lunch. Our custom was for him to leave me at my location, take other fares, and expect me to call him to pick me up. We agreed to meet at 4:00 pm at one of the market’s corners. I had several hours on my own and enjoyed them visiting every stall in the market and all the surrounding jewelry stores. As 4:00 pm neared, I began to make my way along the sidewalk to the agreed upon corner to wait for Mr. Ban.

As I stood, my eyes followed the lines of the buildings as far as I could see. I wanted to remember the images of the people moving about, the shopkeepers standing in front of their shops, and the vehicles scurrying in the streets. Opposite me on the other side from the market was a series of shops selling items related to home maintenance, an appliance store, a plumbing business, understandably less pristine and orderly than most of the other shops. I tried to keep out of the way of people passing and leaned against a pole.

I looked at the row of shops again and noticed between two of them a small jewelry store that I had not seen before and that itself looked dark and a little messy like the neighboring shops. My eyes moved to another part of the scene.

On a few, rare occasions in my life I have heard a distinct voice within me, a voice telling me something or instructing me to do something. Each of these occasions became pivotal in my life. That day I was tired and sad about having to leave Cambodia and the people I had come to love. I was thinking about nothing in particular, just standing there waiting for Mr. Ban. I heard it again.

“Go over there.”

“Where?”

“Over there. The jewelry store.”

“But it’s a tiny, little store. What am I going to find there that I have not already seen?”

“Go over there.”

The traffic was heavy, people were everywhere, and it was already after 4:00 pm. I pushed my way out into the traffic, expecting the vehicles to move around me. I was always amazed when that happened, but it did. I got to the other side to find that I was right. The shops were cluttered and off putting, but I went straight into the little jewelry shop. The attendant was not in sight. I felt rushed and quickly moved around the displays in the cramped showroom and was almost out of the shop.

“Go back.”

When I moved back to the previous show case, I saw something unlike anything I had seen in all the gold stores, jewelry stores, and silver shops I had visited during my time in Cambodia, something unlike any of the stylish pieces of beautiful, expensive jewelry, something totally different. I knew it instantly. I had seen it before. It was the ring, THE ring! Exactly like the one I had given Sareth in 1966. I froze. I could feel Sareth behind me, looking over my shoulder. He seemed to be laughing as if he had just played the best trick imaginable on me. It was his way of letting me know that the circle had closed. The attendant arrived; I bought the ring and made my way back to the opposite corner where faithful Mr. Ban was waiting.



The ring on Michael's hand, a perfect fit

At 9:00 pm, the entire family met at the airport to see me off. The adventure of a lifetime and a quest of thirty-seven years came to an end.

My Cambodian Family



Jim with the Ith Sandap family: Ith Khunnary, Cheang Sithan, Ith Sandap, Soc, Jim, General Mâm Sâm, Ith Bophaphalkern, Ith Sereyvuth



Sothearith Keo (Thearith), Ith Bophaphalkern (Big Bopha), Srey Pich, Gen. Mâm Sâm



Sothearith Keo (Thearith) and Bopha Wathey Suon (Little Bopha)

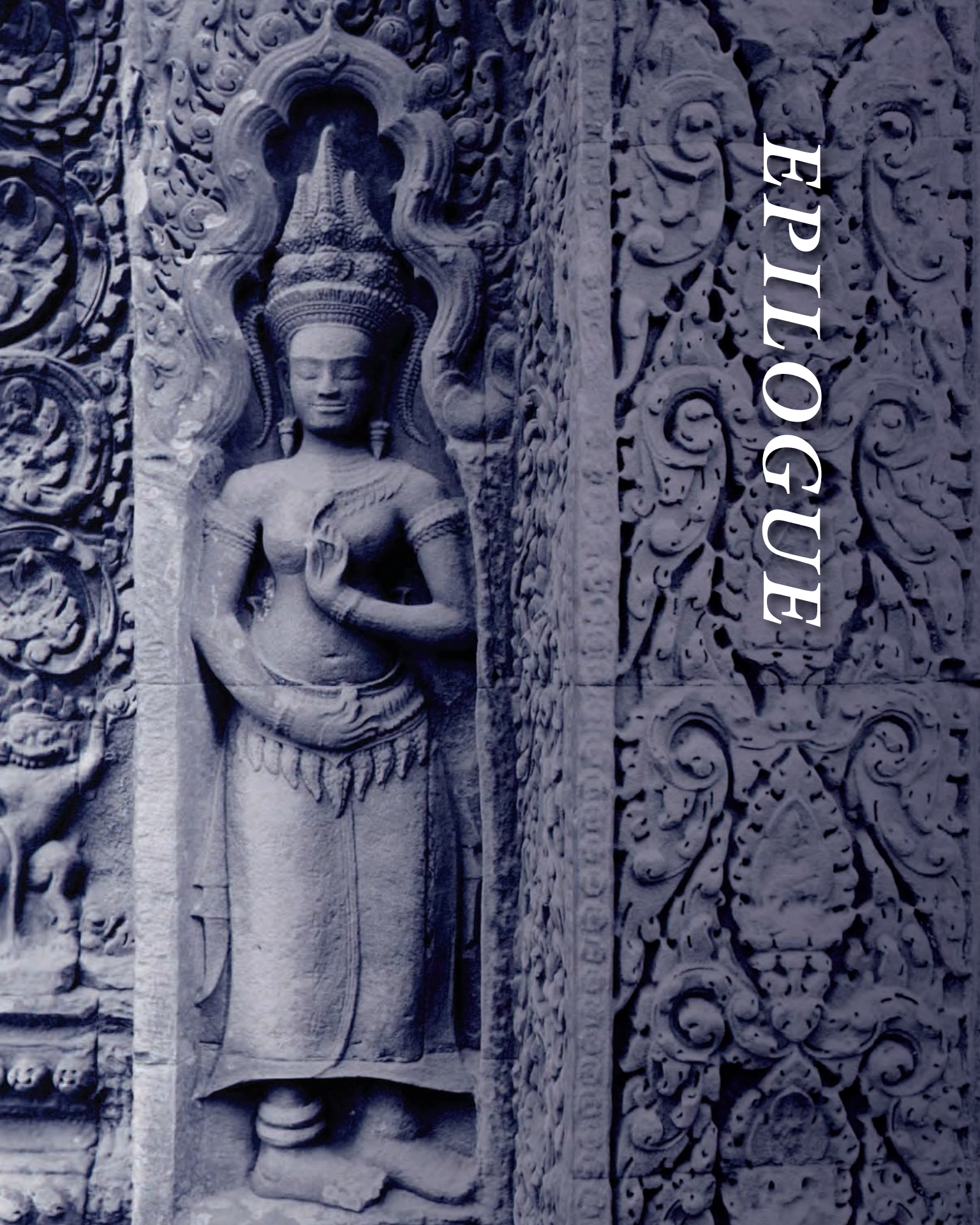


Ky Socheata, Ith Khunnary (with Srey Sour), Jim, and Ky Leak Soursdey



Ith Siveth and her daughter Yep Pennary

ПРОЛОГ



Epilogue

A Letter to Sareth

1709A Gornito Road, #257
Valdosta, Georgia, USA
September 1, 2013

Dear Sareth,

You will be pleased to know that Hanuman has kept me company every day since you gave him to me in 1974. For nearly forty years, this great hero has had a place of honor in my office or in my home and served to remind me of you, our friendship, and Cambodia. You have never been nor will you ever be forgotten.

You must be anxious to hear about the people we knew, Christine and Jim Thornton, Martha and Lee Black, Tim, Gale, and Cloris, but first let me say a few things about the two of us. It has been a long time since we have had the opportunity to discuss the events of 1965-1968, and we have never had the occasion to talk about those times with the advantage of decades of life experience. As I believe to be the case with you, there have been very few periods during my life when I did not give thought to what happened to us. I now share with you my conclusions and the latest news of the players in our life drama. I hope this will answer questions you still have and satisfy curiosity about what has happened to them.

The burning question in our minds over the years has been, “How could something which began so beautifully and positively have become so difficult, painful, ugly, and destructive?” Fifty years of hindsight have made it possible to reduce the complexities of our lives during those times to four basic ideas. Two are personal to us. The other two have to do with social and political issues of the time that were out of our control. In the simplest terms, these ideas are as follow:

1. Martha and Lee Black saw a plot where there was none;
2. Cloris, the Cuban community in Athens, and her father in Miami saw the two of us as communists;
3. We in some cases unwittingly gave people cause to believe what they did; and
4. Neither of us took measures to influence the course of resulting events; we did not defend or protect ourselves as we might have done.

Our youth, inexperience, and optimism allowed others who were badly informed, suspicious, and more powerful to sabotage the course of our lives. We might have been able to influence and direct events if we had been proactive in informed ways.

What I clearly understand now is that you and Gale genuinely loved each other. I also know that you were aware that her age was a factor to be considered. The fact that you were hesitant about marriage is supported by her comments in letters to you, by her references to things you said at the time, by your letter to me of November 25, 1966, and finally by your

sister Siveth. When I visited her in February 2012 in Pursat, Cambodia, she said that you told her about Gale when you went to your mother's funeral in 1965. According to Siveth, you said that although you loved Gale, you could not marry her because she was too young.

With that said, we move to other news.

Jim and Christine Thornton You will remember that Jim and Christine moved to Valdosta, Georgia in 1967. He became the head of the Department of Modern Foreign Languages at Valdosta State College. He kept his promise and hired me as an instructor in 1969. We continued to be good friends and colleagues, enjoying frequent meals together just as the four of us had done so many times in Athens. He retired in 1977, and the two of them moved to a retirement community in St. Petersburg, Florida. My son Michael and I visited them several times. Here we are together in 1991.



*Michael Black, Jim Thornton, Jim Black, Christine Thornton,
St. Petersburg, FL, 1991*

Their only son Joe moved to St. Petersburg to be near them, owns a business there, and is doing well. Christine passed away in August 2002. When I understood that she was gravely ill, I attempted to visit her; she refused to allow it. Instead, she wrote a letter in which she said, "I want you to remember me the way I was, not the way I am." Jim passed away in February 2008. Had it not been for your introducing me to these wonderful people, I would never have had the good fortune to have a thirty-six year career at Valdosta State University. In addition, without that introduction it is unlikely that Michael would have established a career in higher education.

The South Carolina Cousins Aunt Thalia Black passed away in July 2010, but Uncle Tommy, now ninety-five, lives with Elaine and is looked after by all four of the girls,

Audrey, Elaine, Sarah Ann, and Gladys. They all have children and grandchildren. Although Uncle Tommy's body is feeble, his mind is sharp. Your name is often mentioned when we are together.



Audrey, Gladys, Jim, Elaine, and Sarah Ann, Woodruff, South Carolina, 2010



Michael, Jim, and Uncle Tommy, Woodruff, South Carolina, March 2011

Lee and Martha Black Lee and Martha continued to live in the same house you knew and remained active in church work. He died in March 2004. We did not communicate or see each other for thirty-seven years. However, I did visit him on February 2, 2004, four weeks before he died. I am sorry to have to tell you that he never changed his mind about anything he did, and as far as I know never so much as questioned any of the erroneous facts he believed. Martha still lives there; at eighty-nine she enjoys good health and sound mind. They are pictured here in their back yard.



Martha and Lee Black, May 2003

Tim Black Now fifty-eight, Tim earned a degree in theatre and another in communication arts at West Georgia College in Carrollton, Georgia. He began his adult life as an actor, worked for the Columbia Record Company, then began a career in radio during which he used his resonant voice to make commercials. I wish you could have heard his work. He married while at West Georgia but is now divorced.

Tim has two daughters Rachel and Maggie. Rachel and her husband live in Washington, DC. He works at the US patent office, and she is a senior policy analyst at the New America Foundation. You can find her at this site: <http://newamerica.net/user/323>. They have one child Luke. Maggie is in the US Navy and stationed in Hawaii. She has two children, William and Caleb. The cute little boy you loved and with whom you so often played is a grandfather.

Tim divides his time between his home in Carrollton and the Black family home in Hull where he helps his mother when she needs it. Although I never speak with Martha or Gale, Tim and I talk and write to each other frequently. He still struggles to deal with the scars left behind by the years of religion. Understanding the revulsion he feels gives the comic, menacing evangelistic pose he strikes at Lee's funeral far more meaning than it would ordinarily have. Tim has a good sense of humor as you can tell, loves books, writing, and reading. You would still love him and he you.



Tim Black at his father Lee's funeral, March 2004

Gale Black Gale married on July 14, 1968 at age eighteen. She and her husband, a physician and a Pentecostal preacher, have three children Anthony, Joy, and Marcus. All of them live in South Carolina except Marcus who lives in California. Gale seems to be as religious at sixty-three as she was at fifteen. You would still find the qualities which you

loved about her when she was younger. She is as pretty a woman as she was a girl. Freely admitting that I know very little about her life, from what I do know, I believe she has enjoyed a fulfilling life and is dedicated to her family. In a letter to me in 2003, she said, “Your life is certainly complete without any of us, and fulfillment did not cease without you to share in ours.”

I saw Gale at Rachel’s wedding in 2004 and again at Michael’s in 2010. We had no communication from the last time you and I spoke to her in 1965 until she wrote to me several times in the early 1980’s; I asked her to stop. However, she wrote again twenty years later in 2003. You had always been blamed for convincing me to leave home. In a four-page, detailed response to that 2003 letter, I made it unmistakably clear that you had not done that. On October 13, 2003, I wrote to her:

Just for the record, Gale, my leaving was neither about you nor Sareth. It

was about and because of Lee. It was about the way he had always treated me and to some extent the way he treated you and Tim and Martha. It is difficult for me to understand how Martha has put up with him all these years. Again, just for the record, no one influenced me to leave except Lee. It was a decision which I made after years of living in a climate of fear, fear of displeasing him, fear of being shamed by him, fear of somehow never quite measuring up. It was a decision which I alone made after years of living under a pattern of treatment uncharacteristic of respectful, loving relationships, treatment which was harmful to me then as it was I believe to you and to Tim, treatment which to some extent I have to deal with today as I believe do you and Tim.

Gale’s response and our last written communication on November 11, 2003 included the following:

I think I understand why you had to make such a sudden and complete break. You moved on to try to heal and to make your own set of rules to live by, apart from parents, which is a normal thing to do. I did it. Please believe me when I say, I’m not trying in any way to trivialize what you were going through. But the complete break put into play another set of emotions and actions from the folks. I got married. Poor Tim was stuck. I was so into my own new thing, I didn’t know he was in trouble. I so regret not being there for him. Anyway the complete and total severing of all relationship, without explanation, left Mom and Dad in the precipice of the abyss of supposition, speculation and heart break. Mother filled the abyss with tears and Dad tried to stop the flow, which played out in things like the mobile home episode. You decisively made your own closure. They will never have closure because you’re still their son. They loved you and lost you, but they don’t know why.

She could have finally and definitively answered that question for them had she chosen either to show them my letter of October 13 or relay its contents.



The Black Grandchildren: standing-Gale's children Anthony, Joy, and Marcus; seated - Tim's children Maggie and Rachel & Jim's son Michael, 1999

Michael Black My son Michael and his wife Krystle live in Valdosta not far from me. We see each other often. Michael works as an administrator at Valdosta State, holds a doctoral degree, and has just finished writing his fourth book. You can get to know him better by visiting his personal website:

www.valdosta.edu/~mmblack/

and his Valdosta State website:

www.valdosta.edu/about/news/releases/2012/09/michaelblack-092712.php.

Krystle is a banker, recently completed a master's degree, and works for a large financial concern. They have no children. Michael's mother Sally and I divorced in 1986. She remarried and lives near Atlanta; we remain friends. I wish you had met her and that you could know Michael.



Krystle and Michael Black, 2010

Sareth, over the years correct information did reach Lee and Martha. When Michael was about eighteen he expressed interest in knowing his grandparents and began to establish a relationship. During a visit in 2000, while Lee, Martha, and Michael were together, your name was mentioned. During the discussion, Lee gave Michael the impression that he did not know what had happened to you. Michael responded in the following way:

“Really? You don’t? Well, let me tell you. Your actions in petitioning Senator Richard Russell were directly responsible for Sareth’s having lost a scholarship to American University in Washington, for his having his visa revoked, and for his being forced out of the country.”

Michael knew the details of your being in the US, your relationship to the family, and what happened in the 1960’s. He had presented scholarly treatises about you, your history in the US, and the Pol Pot regime both as an undergraduate at Valdosta State University and as a graduate student at Florida State University. Lee claimed ignorance of the result of his actions and the hell he created.

You knew the letters eventually would tell your story. They did. In October 1999, Tim visited me in Valdosta. For the first time, I showed him Gale’s letters; he asked for copies of certain ones which I gave him. In January 2001, the following letter arrived:

Burton T. Black
460 Hays Mill Rd.
Apt. CC-21
Carrollton, Ga. 30117
Home Phone 770-832-0554

January 08, 2001

James:

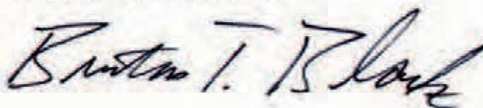
Thank you for the card that I received today. I know that you do not do this on a regular basis, but you need to make yourself your favorite drink and sit down.

This past weekend the opportunity presented itself to tell my father about the letters. I seized the chance like a big green fly hovering over a pile of cow doo-doo. Mother and Maggie had gone to bed. Rachel was not there. It was about 10:00. For the first time in months or even two years perhaps he mentioned the name of Serete. I know the spelling is incorrect. He started out talking about approaching Sen. Dick Russell. I knew what was coming. It was the "he did not want to hurt the boy" story. It was after he used the phrase, "...tear apart my family..." that this was the time. What follows is not the correct sequence. He interjected comments periodically but most of them were not very important. Mostly I told him the same things that I said to you when we were reading the letters in Oct. of 1999. The first thing that I told him was that you had convinced me of nothing. I told him that everything that I was going to tell him I had concluded for myself after reading her letters.

"I know something that you don't know." I asked him if it Gale approached him after you left. It was mother. Gale had gone to her first knowing that mother would go to him. "You acted on the information that you were told. If you had known the truth, instead of doing the things that you did, you would have thrown a cold bucket of water on her and spanked her spirit-filled butt." "A few years ago James told me about the letters that Gale had written to Serete. I told him that I wanted to read them. In Oct. of 1999 I read every word on every page. In those letters she through herself at him. She was horny for him. She was fifteen years old, her imagination and her hormones were going ninety miles an hour. In the last two letters she stated specifically that he never asked her to marry him. It was then that I realized that every derogatory, degrading word that you ever said about him was for nothing. She knew that anything she told you and mother you would believe and you did. We spent hours and hours listening to you degrade him and she said nothing. Then she married and moved away and I was left to listen to it. All she had to do was tell the truth." He asked me about the copies. I told him that I had selected the letters that I wanted copies of. I told him that I four sets of copies in my apartment.

Well, you get the idea. Frankly I was rather proud of myself. He knew I was serious and that I had given a lot of thought to what I said. He tried to tell me not to tell mother about the letters. I told him that I had told her about them many months ago. She had not mentioned them to him. Twice he tried to get me not to ever mention these letters to Gale. Twice I told him that if Gale ever gives me the opportunity that he had that I would confront her with them.

And they all said, "Amen".



Letter from Tim saying he had shown the letters to Lee, January 8, 2001

In 2006, while on business in Athens I stopped to talk to Martha. We sat in the back yard on a sunny, balmy day. I told her the exact moment that I decided to leave in 1965 and why. Finally, Lee himself had the opportunity to ask me any question when I saw him before this death. Because he chose not to do so, considering his condition, I did not bring the subject up myself. As I looked at him for the last time I remembered what he often said to Tim: “I did the right thing. If I had it to do again, I would do exactly what I did.”

Cloris Ramos In early Fall 2010, I found the name “Cloris Ramos” on the caller-identification on my telephone. There was no message. It was surprising because I had neither heard from nor spoken to her since the day of our divorce in 1969. I spent two weeks speculating about why she would call me. The only reason I could imagine was that some tragedy had befallen her children or grandchildren and she wanted me to know. Her children, when I knew them, were young and adorable; I loved both and would have been saddened to hear any such news. After thinking about it for another two weeks, I returned the call on the possibility that something had happened to the children. When she answered I was as distant as the miles between us.

“Why did you call?” I asked.

“Oh, I was just looking for a friend,” she replied. I knew she was expecting to reach me. I had heard that phrase from her forty years earlier. It was her attempt to make a friendly opening by suggesting that she had made a mistake in dialing. She had made no mistake. She did ask me about two people we had known in Athens, Louis and Mina. She wanted to know if I knew how she could get in touch with them. Louis was from Augusta, Georgia; his wife Mina was Mexican. The four of us had been friends at the University of Georgia. As a matter of fact, Louis had helped me paint the apartment on Rutherford Street before Cloris and I moved into it. I remember clearly that, while we were painting, he told me I had made a foolish mistake in marrying Cloris. As it turned out, the children and grandchildren were fine.

Cloris now lives in a small town near Los Angeles, California. The name of that town, “Santa Clarita,” is eerily like that of her hometown “Santa Clara” in Cuba. Her daughter Elizabeth lives in Texas; the other daughter Cloritina lives in California. They both have children. She did complain that Oscar had managed to support his children by a new wife but never fulfilled his responsibility to hers. In addition, she said that she had not spoken to her sister Rojelia in over sixteen years.

I knew the direction that communication with her could take, the direction she wanted it to take, and was not disposed to let it go there. However, I did have an address and photograph of Louis and Mina which I sent via email. Shortly thereafter a card arrived with a picture of Cloris, her daughter, and granddaughter.



Seated-Cloris Ramos; standing-Carolina (granddaughter) & Cloritina, 2010

Perhaps, over time she has come to show people her agreeable, charming side more often. An article from The Mighty Oak, a publication of the senior center near her home, would seem to illustrate that. This appears on page eight of the April 2008 issue.

Our Neighbors

Among those who exited Castro's Cuba in 1960, having lost everything to flee the Communists with her prudent parents forced to scramble for a new life in the United States, is our neighbor **Cloris Ramos**. Our Global Affairs Class had the opportunity to hear firsthand the experience of the struggle to survive the hostilities and abrupt withdrawal at this unique period in history. She shared the problems, events, and learned insights of having lived through a life-shattering event. Although difficult and complicated as it was, we find a lovely rejuvenated lady and friend with a bright spirit and enthusiastic persona and easy ways. Cloris manages to share her gifts and time with friendly abandonment that brings sunshine wherever she goes.



Cloris as a 22-year-old Cuban refugee.

Article from "The Mighty Oak" about Cloris Ramos, April 2008

Despite the salubrious tone of this article, I suggest that the friendly abandonment prevails until something fails to go her way and that behind the sunshine there is the hysteria of hurricane winds and the threat of suffocating high water. All of us who survive trauma retain its footprint on our psyches. I would like to believe that she has become a happier, less troubled person, but I fear those same demons that showed themselves in Athens still menace her and that her father's predictions about the influence of her lifestyle on her children came true.

She continued to call from time to time during the next year. I watched the caller-identification and never intentionally took any of those calls. The ones I did take were by mistake and associated with remarkable coincidences. Sally, her husband, Michael, and his wife Krystle were visiting one weekend in 2011. Sally, who had known Cloris in Athens and about her 2010 call to me after forty years, said, "By the way, has Cloris called recently?" Not five minutes later my mobile telephone rang. It was a number I did not recognize; I answered. "Ying, I hab son new nombers to gib jew ing case jew need deem." (Jim, I have some new numbers to give you in case you need them.) I recorded the numbers so I could recognize any future incoming call from her, not because I expected to need them or ever intended to use them.

The next and last time I talked with her was in February 2012. The timing of the call was unnerving. I had spent several life-changing weeks in Cambodia where I met your

sister Siveth, your brother Sandap, and their families. The activities of those weeks and the realization that my visit was over made the long trip home seem more exhausting. On Wednesday, February 22, the commuter jet from Atlanta landed around 4:00 pm at the Valdosta Airport. It taxied from the runway and was slowly reaching the terminal. Passengers began to stand to remove their carry-on luggage from the overhead compartments. So did I. The aisle was crowded. As my arms extended up to the compartment to retrieve my luggage the telephone rang. I was expecting my friend Joe to meet me and thought the call might be from him. I forced my arm down between fellow passengers, removed the telephone from its case and, while still trying to handle the descending luggage, put it to my ear.

“Ying?”

“Yes.”

“What ever happened to that communist?”

“What communist?”

“You know. The one in Athens.”

“If you are referring to Sareth, you are wrong. He was never a communist. You always believed he was, but he was not.” The coincidence of a call from her at the exact moment I was arriving from Cambodia and her first question being about you was unbelievable. Why her? Why then? Why a question about you?

She continued, “It was so terrible what happened.” By this time a dozen questions of my own ran through my head. Was it possible that she knew something about the recent history of Cambodia? Was it possible through some miracle she had rethought her actions in Athens and realized you were caught up in things only marginally related to you? Had she had a change of heart?

“Yes, it was terrible,” I replied. “The people of Cambodia have suffered immeasurably; his family suffered because of the wars. Sareth lost a brother and other members of his family and many friends. It was terrible.”

“Oh, I don’t care about him!” she snapped. “I was talking about us. I don’t like to talk about those times but my *therapist* is making me.”

I ended the call and have not heard from her since.

This letter must have been as difficult for you to read as it was for me to write. My hope for both of us is that the pain of reliving these times will be outweighed by our successes, the knowledge that steps have been taken to bring the true story to light, and the fact that your bittersweet journey is now better understood by the family that loved you so much. When Sister Siveth, Brother Sandap and I talked about you, I could see that love in their eyes. Your nieces and nephews spoke to me of you with affection and admiration. They still love the Little Cadet.

Sareth, you rose above every disappointment and defeat to complete degrees in three foreign countries. You were determined to master the subjects that you believed would be of greatest benefit to Cambodia; you became the teacher and the statesman you always wanted to be. You did it, and you did it with honesty, grace, and dignity. Brother Sandap said the family was proud of you when you went the United States to study in 1962. Now

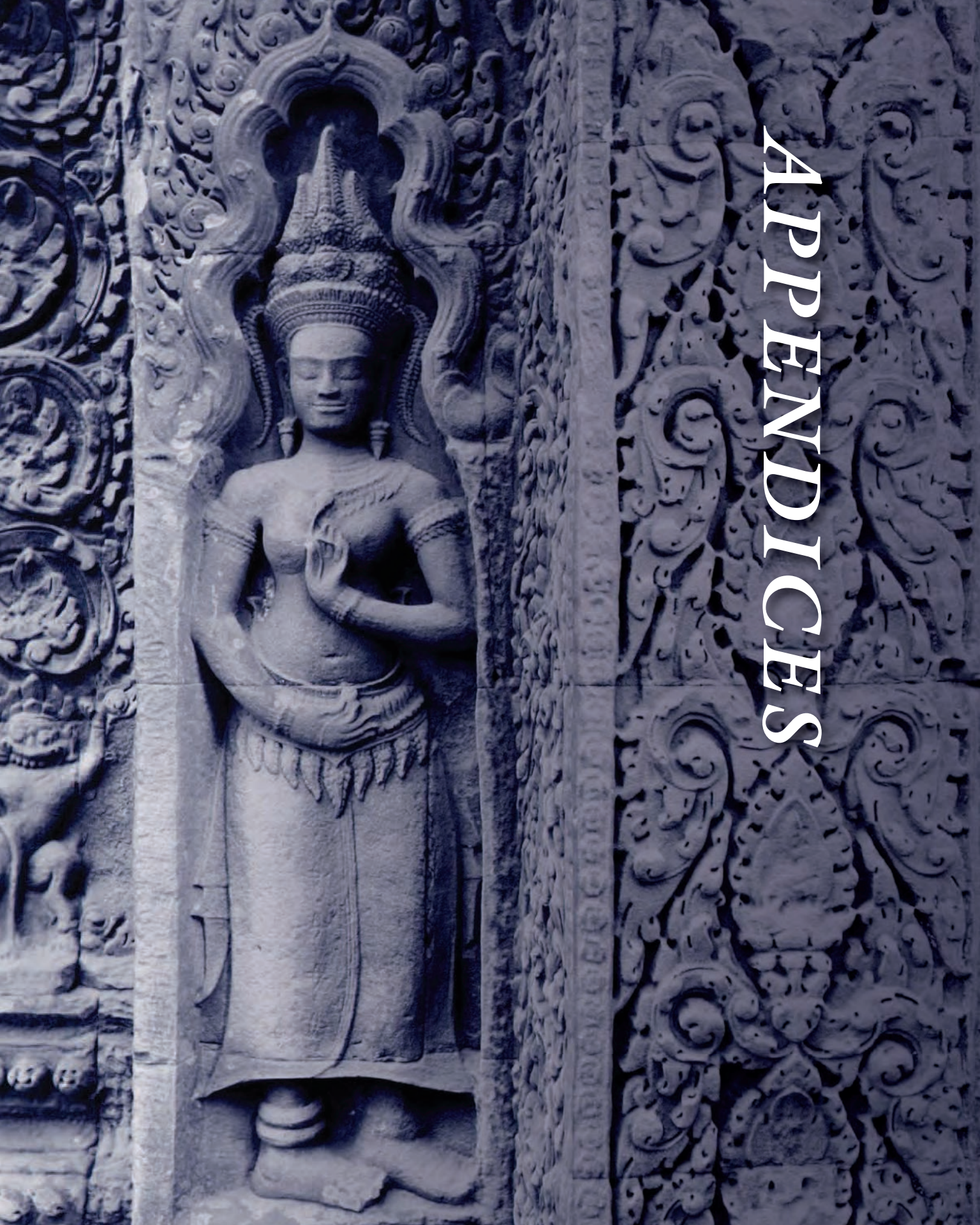
they have even more reason to be proud --- they know what you had to overcome to make it all happen.

Let us never again allow those events of our past to concern us. We have done all we can and now must look forward to living in the land of “what-is” and “what-will-be” instead of “what-was” and “what-might-have-been.”

With endless affection,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bean". The script is cursive and fluid, with the 'B' being particularly large and stylized.

APPENDICES



Letter to Sandap

Appendices

1. Letters from Sareth to Jim Black (November 25, 1966 – January 30, 1975)
2. Letter from Cloris to Sareth (May 9, 1968)
3. Letters from Orfelio Ramos-Valdés to Cloris (January 13 and 20, 1968)
4. Letters from Tim Black
5. Classified US State Department Cable assessing 1974 UN Delegation, September 10, 1974; Currently Unclassified
6. Jim's Letters of Inquiry about Sareth
7. Letter, Transcription, and Translation of Song "Love Star" from Ith Khunnary, Letter from Jim to Khunnary, February 1, 2011
8. Biographical Record Y00323 about "Ith" from Database of Cambodian Genocide Project at Yale University and the Documentation Center of Cambodia
9. Chhim Sochit: A Student from Canada, Searching for the Truth, Issue 28, 4-6
10. Advertisements placed by Mr. Socheat Nhean and the Documentation Center of Cambodia
11. Letter of Appreciation to the Documentation Center of Cambodia

Appendix 1

Letters from Sareth to Jim Black (November 25, 1966 – January 30, 1975)

Letter 1: Transcription

Faculté de l'Etat
Gembloux, Belgium
November 25, 1966 (11 pm)

Beany Bean,

This morning I received two letters written on Monday and Tuesday. I am glad you received everything especially the books. As for the stamp, you can very easily cut the bottom part with a razor blade to rearrange the zip code and U S A. You then just glue it back.

I, too, feel very sorry to hear that [you] missed the Thanksgiving supper at Mrs. Tate. What a sweet lady! I remember this word “sweet” because once while I was freshman and I did not even know its exact meaning, Mrs. Stoehr told me that Mrs. Tate is a very sweet person. Likewise I knew Mr. Danner “Newsman” but I did not know that he is an important officer. Well I only hope that she will invite you again.

Listen! The day which the authorities know that I have not had four cars, that I have not violated any regulation by buying the trailer (I did not know the rules because when I signed papers at the US embassy I did not understand a word – they also have not read for us!!), that I bought it not to marry any girl, will be my honor[s] day. I will drink two cans of beer with you – I mean it, although I never did. I will write to my father to get permission to drink. Keep this letter to show it to me in case I refuse to drink unless my father will say NO.

However I still hold the gravity of my mistake for having loved a girl under 18, although she pushed me to marry her, to say yes. One day I do not remember the exact date, she called me and talked not less than two hours over the phone about nothing but marrying her before my return to France. I replied no, she said yes; I said no she replied yes. . . . Finally, I left my word unsaid and just listen [ed] to her proposals. I did not tell you because I did not and still do not want you to blame her – I knew you were going to say something caustic to her.

By the way, in one of her letters which the authorities should have read (remember I have mentioned a little about that while we went to Beachwood. You stared at me. She asked me to kiss her 30 minutes. Hm! I told her I might choke to death. . . . I am smiling now because of such a letter.

Yes, I have noticed that you changed the hand writing. I sincerely like both ways. Mine is OK if I write slowly but I have that bad habit, it is very hard to correct. The fat brother has a beautiful hand writing either Cambodian or French. I have not received a word from him this year.

Well it is a little cold in my room. I should not dare to stay in that temperature, really, but I am not “frileux.” The whole hotel is cold because “les patrons” cut the heat from 10 P.M. until 5 A.M. Do not blame the Colonial Hotel then. Those people speak the same language. I will send this tomorrow, Saturday 26.

Your Samson

PS. Your name is Bean and Pochet. Mine is Samson only.

Letter 1: Page 1

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Schaaloux, Belgium
November 25, 1966 (11pm)

Beany Beany,

This morning I received two letters written on Monday and Tuesday. I am glad you received everything especially the books. As for the stamp, you can very easily cut the bottom part with a razor blade to rearrange the zip code and U S A. You then just glue it back!

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Letter 1: Page 2

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Your Thomson

P.S. your name is Ben and Pochet
mine is Thomson only

Letter 1 : Envelope (front)



Letter 1 : Envelope (back)



Letter 2 : Transcription

Paris, March 12, 1968

Dear Cloris,

I am very sorry for not being able to answer you sooner. However, I hope that you understand quite well what I am doing in Paris. I have to read not less than 600 books and summarize them. . .

I was very glad to read your last letter. Of course, I would like to see you in Paris, but our financial problem is very great so that we have to wait. I also want to come to your wedding party. . . .

Your Jim wrote me that he has visited Atlanta and met your family. I do not think that they will object to your marrying at all.

You rent a box number 4077 which is I think straight above mine when I was in Tucker Hall (formerly dorm F). I then moved to Reed Hall in a single room and finally rent[ed] a box number 2345!! The postmaster laughed and laughed because I begged him until I got it.

I would like to repeat that if ever I do not write you on time, please know that I always think of you all.

Love,

Sareth

P.S. I enclose you two aerograms

Letter 2 : Single Page

Paris, le 12 mars 1968

Dear Lonis,

I am very sorry for not being able to answer you sooner. However, I hope that you understand quite well what I am doing in Paris. I have to read not less than 600 books and summarize them...

I was very glad to read your last letter. Of course, I would like to see you in Paris, but our financial problem is very great so that we have to wait. I also want to come to your wedding party...

Your Jim wrote me that he has visited Atlanta and met your family. I do not think that they will object to your marrying at all.

You rent a box number 4077 which is I think straight above mine 2 when I was in Tucker Hall (formerly dorm F). I then moved to Reed Hall in a single room and finally rent a box number 2345!! The postmaster laughed and laughed because I begged him until I got it.

I would like to repeat that if ever I do not write you on time, please know that I always think of you all, ~~just~~ ~~time~~.

Love,

Luella

P.S. I enclose you two aerograms

Letter 2 : Envelope (front)



Letter 3 : Transcription

Paris, May 7, 1968

Dear Cloris and Bean,

I am again in a library of the campus. Today there will be again some manifestation at the Sorbonne and I did not go to school since this morning. You've probably seen on the T.V.

This week I've not felt (mentally) too well because I have received news from Cambodia. My sister's families are sick and they always ask, "When will I be back?"

Next week I will go to central office telling about your case that is you will come to Paris to study in the campus. Maybe they will ask me to tell you to write to get the forms or they will give directly to me.

Cloris and Bean, be happy together and we will see each other later. All of this is due to financial problem. The cheque letter arrived yesterday morning.

Samson

Letter 3 : Single Page

Paris le 7 mai 1968

Dear Cléo and Béa,

I am again in a library of the campus. Today there will be again some manifestation at Sorbonne and I did not go to school since this morning. You probably have seen on the T.V.

This week I've not felt (mentally) too well because I have received news from Cambodia. My sisters' families are not sick and they always ask "when will I be back?"

Next week I will go to central office telling about your case that is you will come to Paris to stay in the campus. Maybe they will ask me to tell you to write to get the forms or they will give directly to me.

Cléo and Béa be happy together and we will see each other later. All of this is due to financial problem. The last cheque letter arrived yesterday morning.

Laurie

Letter 4 : Transcription

Paris, May 11, 1968

Dear Bean and Cloris,

I have told you that I will go to ask at the Central office for your admission to the International campus. Well, I yesterday went there, because next week is the busy week, and the lady advise[d] me to write you that you will have to submit your request to the Director of the U.S. foundation. Here is the complete address:

“M. Ronald G. Frazee
Directeur de la Fondation des Etats-Unis
15, Bd Jourdan, Paris 14, France”

If I were you I would tell him that I will get my master's (in literature) in September and I would like to go to school in Paris (in literature) during the school year 1968-69. I [would] then ask him to reserve me a room at the foundation. . .

He will, I am sure, reply [to] you in sending you forms to fill out, and the process is very official.

I very sincerely would like for you to go to school and not to work because it won't cost us very much. Sooner or later, you both will work and we will have enough money to pay back, if we had to borrow. Anyway the very first step [is] for you to be in Paris at the campus. We will see.

It is Saturday and I probably won't go out as usual to the library (close to the Arc de Triomphe) because of the agitation almost everywhere.

Please give my love to the girls.

Samson

Letter 4 : Single Page

Paris, le 11 mai 1968

Dear Bear and Cloris,

I have told you that I will go to ask at the Central office for your admission to the International campus. Well, I yesterday went there, because next week is the busy week, and the lady advise me to write you that you will have to submit your request to the Director of The U.S. foundation. Here is the complete address:

" M. Ronald G. Frazee
Directeur de la Fondation des Etats-Unis
15, Bd Jourdan, Paris 14
France "

If I were you I would tell him that I will get my master's in September and I would like to go to school in Paris (in literature) during the school year 1968 - 1969. I then ask him to reserve me a room at the foundation....

He will, I am sure, reply you in sending you forms to ~~fill~~ fill out, and the process is very official.

I very sincerely would like for you to go to school and not to work because it won't cost us very much. Sooner or later, you both will work and we will have enough money to pay back, if we had to ~~the~~ borrow. Anyway the very first step for you is to be in Paris at the campus. We will see.

It is Saturday and I probably won't go out as usual to the library (close to Arc de Triomphe) because of the agitation almost everywhere.

Please give my love to the girls.

Samson

Samson

Letter 5 : Transcription

Paris, June 7, 1968

Cloris and Bean,

I notice that I haven't written you for two weeks or so. The absent [absence] of news is due to the bad situation in Paris. However, you probably knew by means of T.V. or radio or newspaper.

Yesterday, I went to school to see what's going on. Well, it was a mess. During three weeks there was no subway, neither bus! I must be in the campus to study.

I hope you already received my letter concerning your admission to the international campus in Paris. The school is not yet opened because the students refuse to take exams. In general, 75% of failure is the rule! In the lower classes; that is those in freshman and sophomore.

. . . .

I always think of you and always love you.

Your Samson,

Samson

Letter 5 : Single Page

Paris le 7 juin 1968


Chere Claire et Beau,

I notice that I haven't written you for two weeks or so. This absence of news is due to the bad situation in Paris. However you probably knew by means of T.V. or radio or newspaper.

Yesterday, I went to school to see what's going on. Well, it was a mess. During three weeks there was no subway, neither bus! I must be in the campus to study.

I hope you already received my letter concerning your admission to the international campus in Paris. The school is not yet opened to be postponed because the students refused to take exams. In general, 75% of failure is the rule! in the lower classes; that is those in freshmen and sophomore -----

I always think of you and always love you

your father,


Letter 6 : Transcription

Paris, June 13, 1968

Cloris and Bean,

I this morning wrote you hurriedly after the phone call. At 11:30 one letter arrived. It was dated June 10.

I read it over and over and I almost could not believe my eyes. I am glad that grandma was coming to see us in a good way. I still love them – Grandma Lerlean [Black} and [Grandma Mellie] Perry. If they hate me, [it is] because the frogs have twisted things.

Frankly, I would like to know exactly what she said after having read some letters. What do you mean by “she was shocked and scandalized?” Be careful with the letters. I mean I am afraid they are destroyed.

This morning I was sorry that I have not thoroughly understood you (Cloris). I wish I would speak with the girls too, anyway, I will see them soon.

Bean, please go to see Mr. Cannon as soon as you can because I will leave with the special plane at the end of this month.

I love you Cloris and Bean,

Sareth

Letter 6 : Single Page

Paris, le 13. juin 1968

Cloris and Beau,

I this morning wrote you hurriedly after the phone call. At 11:30 I one letter arrived. It was dated June 10.

I read it over and over and I almost could not believe my eyes. I am glad that Grandma was coming to see us in a good way. I still love them - Grandma Lillian and Perry. If they hate me, because the frogs have twisted things.

Frankly, I would like to know exactly what she said after having read some letters. What do you mean by "she was shocked and scandalized"? Be careful with the letters I mean I am afraid they are destroyed.

This morning I was sorry that I have not thoroughly understood you (Cloris). I wish I could speak with the girls too, anyway. I will see them soon.

Beau, please go to see Mr. Cannon as soon as you can because I will leave with the special plane at the end of this month.

I love you Cloris and Beau,

Love Th

Letter 6 : Envelope (front)



Letter 7 : Transcription

Paris, June 13, 1968

Cloris and Bean,

I am writing this just after having talked over the phone. It is now 9 A.M. It was 7:25 while we were on the line.

To be a little brief, I assure you that I will go to see you this summer. However, I would like for you to see M. Cannon and tell him what we have in our mind. Finally you should ask him a small letter. . . “To whom it may concern. . . “ so that my visa would be easy to get in Paris.

I think meantime, when I am there I still continue my research at the library because, as you know, the theme of my thesis is quite heavy.

I hope that M. Cannon help us: he is our savior, biblically speaking.

Cloris and Bean, I have to go right now wither to the library or to school, that depends really on the situation. Whatever the case, I must study a lot because I would like to get another diploma in “International Law” besides my Ph.D.

Sareth

Paris, le 13 juin 1968

Cloris and Bear,

I am writing this just after having talked over the phone. It is now 9 A.M. It was 7:25 while we were on the line.

To be a little brief, I assure you that I will go to see you this summer. However, I would like for you to see M. Cannon and tell him what we have in our mind. Finally you should ask him a small letter ... "To whom it may concern..." so that my visa would be easy to get in Paris.

I think meantime, when I am there I still continue my research at the library because, as you know ~~my~~ the theme of my thesis is quite heavy.

I hope that M. Cannon help us: ~~because~~ he is our saviour, biblically speaking.

Cloris and Bear, I have to go right
now ~~to~~ either to the library or to school,
that depends really on the situation. What-
ever the case, I must study a lot because
I would like to get another diploma in
"International law" besides my Ph.D. ~~in~~

LareTh

Letter 7 : Envelope (front)



Letter 8 : Transcription

Paris, June 15, [1968]

Bean,

I just received two letters dated May 16 and 25. I have to reply immediately that we must absolutely not Xerox any kind of her letters to send to her [Gale's] husband.

Do not forget that we consider (and always will) ourselves as not only educated but cultivated people; so, if we do that we will make ourselves low. It means also that I tell you to Xerox. . .

The victory, that is the justice, can be pronounced either by Dean Tate or by Mr. Cannon, or by both. Consequently, some explicit letters could be showed to the competent authorities, not to convince them, but to tell them the fact.

If necessary, you can very well, while you talk with Mr. and Mr. L. D. Black, show these letters to them provided they would not grab the papers.

When we build a big house, we will invite her husband and her to see us and we will be nice to our guests. By the way, I already received yesterday the registered letter.

Samson

Paris, June 15

Bean,

I just received two letters dated respectively May 16 and 25. I have to reply immediately that we must absolutely not xerox any kind of her letters to send to her husband.

Do not forget that we consider (and always will) ourselves as not only educated but cultivated people; so, if we do that, we will make ourselves low. It means also that I tell you to xerox....

The victory, that is the justice, can be pronounced

only either by Dean Tate or by Mr Cannon, or by both.

Consequently, ~~to~~ some explicit letters could be showed to the competent authorities, not to convince them, but to tell them the fact.

If necessary, you can very well, while you talk with Mr and Mrs. L.D. Black, show those letters to them provided they ~~do~~ would not grab the papers.

When we built a big house, we will invite her husband and her to see us and we will be nice to our guests.

(By the way I already received yesterday the registered letter)
Lauson.

Letter 9 : Transcription

Paris, June 20, 1968

Cloris and Bean,

In Paris all kind of mail is now very regular. Yesterday one nice letter came with all sorts of drawing and sweet words from our Lizi. Does Grandma love the girls? Today a long letter reached me with two darling pictures.

I read them over and over and every one of you were staying before me but I could not touch. When I get Mr. Cannon's letter, I will go to the U.S. Embassy to ask the authorities about the papers to get a visa.

I am very glad to hear that you handled the business very nicely. However, I do not think that these people need to talk to me because we do not have any kind of relations since 1965, unless they wish to know something specific. In this case, we will have an alternative; we either keep quiet or blow up; that is, we'll tell what was going on. If we talk, that means we say something bad from the Cow. We still have part of responsibility because I had loved her.

Hope to let you know soon about my trip to the States.

Always,

Samson

Letter 9 : Single Page

Paris, le 20 juin 1968

Cloris and Bean,

In Paris all kind of mail is now very regular. yesterday one nice letter ^{came} with all sorts of drawing and sweet words from our Lizi. Does Grandma love the girls? Today a long letter reached me with two darling pictures.

I read them over and over and everyone of you were staying before me but I could not touch. When I get Mr Cannon's letter I will go to the U.S. Embassy to ask the authorities about the ^{required} papers to get a visa.

I am very glad to hear that you handled the business very nicely. However I do not think that those ~~people~~ need to talk to me because we do not have any kind of relations between since 1965, unless they wish to know something specific. In this case, we will have ^{an} alternative - we either keep quiet or blow up; that is we'll tell ~~the~~ what was going on. If ~~g~~ we talk, that means we say something bad from the Gov. We still have part of responsibility because I had loved her

Hope to let you know soon about my trip to the States.

Always Cannon.

Letter 10 : Transcription

Paris, June 24, 1968

Cloris and Bean,

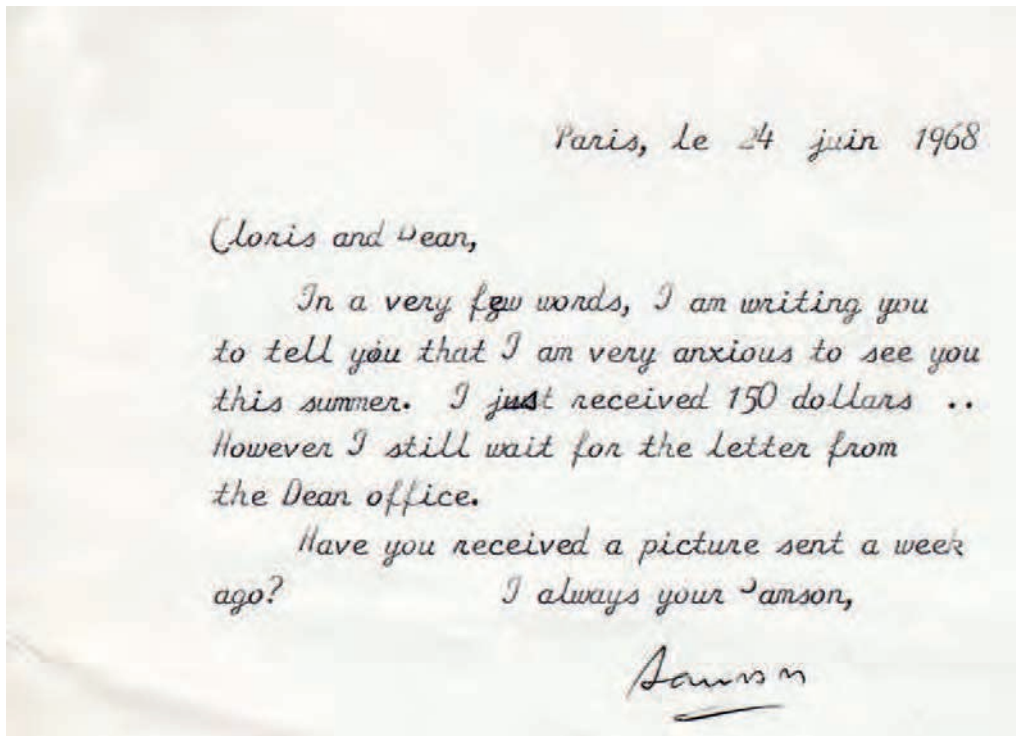
In a very few words, I am writing you to tell you that I am very anxious to see you this summer. I just received 150 dollars. . However, I still wait for the letter from the Dean's office.

Have you received a picture sent a week ago?

I [am} always your Samson,

Samson

Letter 10 : Single Page



Letter 11 : Transcription

Paris, July 1, 1968

Cloris and Bean,

Until now, I haven't received a single thing for the trip to the States. I hesitate between going and working here in Paris. Normally, I must start my work today; however, I would better wait a little more to see what happened.

Last week, there was no letter at all from you, and I became restless. If you have difficulties to get me a letter, do not worry, I won't go because I prefer my trip to be at least semi-official. In that case, I will stay in Paris to continue the research.

Next year, I hope I will be on scholarship. The Prince, Head of the Pavilion, told me that he helps me in the business. Tomorrow, I will go to see the Cambodian ambassador in Paris to ask him about my request sent by the Prince through him.

If my scholarship wouldn't be granted, I would accelerate my work to finish in June or July 1969, and I would ask you to send me only 60 dollars a month.

It is very hot in Paris during the last three days. I as you know, support very badly the hot weather. I have nothing on my body now.

Please give my love to the girls.

I am always your

Samson

Letter 11 : Single Page

RECEIVED BY THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE OF PARIS

-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-

Pavillon du Cambodge

8d Jourdan, Paris XIV

-00000-

Paris, le 1er juillet 1968

Glenn and Bear,

Until now, I haven't received a single thing for the trip to the States. I hesitate between going and working here, in Paris. Normally, I must start my work today, however, I would better wait a little more to see what happened.

Last week, there was no letter at all from you and I became restless. If you have difficulties to get me a letter, do not worry, I won't go because I prefer my trip to be at least semi official. In that case, I will stay in Paris to continue the research.

Next year, I hope I will be on scholarship. The Prince, Head of the Pavilion, told me that he helps me in the business. Tomorrow, I will go to see the Cambodian ambassador in Paris to ask him about my request sent by the Prince through him.

If my scholarship wouldn't be granted, I ^{would} accelerate my work to finish in June or July 1969 and I would ask you to send me only 60 dollars a month.

It is very hot in Paris during the last three days. I, as you know, support very badly the hot weather. I have nothing on my body now.

Please give my love to the girls.

I am always your

Samson

Letter 12 : Transcription

CITE INTERNATIONALE DE L'UNIVERSITY DE PARIS

Pavillon du Cambodge
Bd Jourdan, Paris XIV
Paris, July 3rd, 1968

Cloris and Bean,

I must alarm you right away after received few minutes ago, your last letter concerning Mr. Cannon's letter. I have not received anything of that nature from the dean's office. I am convinced that his secretary sent that letter by boat. If so, I should wait until September to get it.

As I told you in my letter dated July 1st, that I won't go to the States if nothing is clear for me. I do not want myself to have any trouble again. So, do not wait for me if that letter arrives too late because first of all, the special flight has a specific date, and either in September or October, I will have oral exams.

Tell the girls that I was very pleased to hear from them and I keep their letters.

Yesterday I went to the Cambodian ambassador in Paris. He said he will send the request to Cambodia favorably.

I am always your

Samson

Letter 12 : Single Page

CITE INTERNATIONALE DE L'UNIVERSITE DE PARIS

-1-1-1 1-1-1-1-1-1-1-1-

Pavillon du Cambodge

Bd Jourdan, Paris XIV

-ooOoo-

Paris July 3rd, 1968

Gloris and Bean,

I must alarm you right away after having received few minutes ago, your last letter concerning Mr. Cannon's letter. I have not received anything of that nature from the dean's office. I am convinced that his secretary sent that letter by boat. If so, I should wait until September to get it.

As I told you in my letter dated July 1st, that I won't go to the States if nothing is clear for me. I do not want myself to have any trouble again. So, do not wait for me if that letter arrives too late because first of all, the special flight has a specific date, and either in September or October, I will have oral exams.

Tell the girls that I was very pleased to hear from them and I keep their letters.

Yesterday I went to see the Cambodian ambassador in Paris. He said he will send the request to Cambodia favorably.

I am always your

Lamien

Letter 13 : Transcription

Paris, July 9, 1968

Cloris and Bean,

I meant to write to you yesterday but I thought I would better wait until today to tell you about the ticket.

This morning the round trip ticket was bought and I paid all in once. The date of departure is July 22. I will tell you again the exact time of my arrival in Atlanta. That round trip ticket is only to and from New York. So, please send me another 100 dollars immediately to buy a round trip New York-Atlanta. If you do not have money, you can send me 30 dollars and I will take a bus or a train.

The reason which I wait for the letter is that to avoid all games such as when I very first left for the States. The American officials made me signed all kind of papers that I did not understand a single thing. . . Now the letter from the academic building is not for the visa, truthfully speaking, but to know exactly where do I stand in general. I already got the visa which took me a little more than half an hour. Yet, the letter in question is still absent.

I planned to fly on July 1st, I missed it, they July 11, I did again. . . Now the reservation is on July 22 provided the letter arrived on time.

Well, I should stop now so that the letter will be picked up in an hour.

Much love from

Samson

Letter 13 : Single Page

Paris, le 9 juillet 1968

Cloris and Bear,

I meant to write you yesterday but I thought I would better wait until today to tell you about the ticket.

This morning the round trip ticket was bought and I paid all in once. The date of departure is July 22. I will tell you again the exact time of my arrival in Atlanta. That round trip ticket is only to and from New York. So, please send me another 100 dollars immediately to buy a round trip New York-Atlanta. If you do not have money you can send me 30 dollars and I will take a bus or a train.

The reason which I wait for the letter is that to avoid all games such as when I very first left for the States. The American officials made me signed all kind of papers that I did not understand a single thing... Now the letter from the academic building is not for the visa, truthfully speaking, but to know exactly where do I stand in general. I already got the visa which took me a little more than half an hour. Yet, the letter in question is still absent.

I planned to fly on July 1st, I missed it, then July 11, I did again... Now the reservation is on July 22 provided the letter arrived on time.

Well, I should stop now so that the letter will be picked up in an hour.

Much love from

Lamson

Letter 14 : Transcription

Paris, July 13, 1968

Cloris and Bean,

It is not my last letter this one because I will send you another before my departure to let you know exactly the itinerary.

I just received Cloris' letter dated June 27. It has been, I guess, delayed somewhere. I also make lots of plans in my mind and I am very thrilled each time I supposed that I am with you all. We have a car, we can go anywhere we wish to, but we must drive very slowly to avoid all kinds of accidents.

Another thing that you fail to tell me is the address of our new apartment. Give me the name of the street and the apartment number. I already have the phone number which is the following: 404-549-4738. Is that correct? Is it far from school, our new house?

Concerning my job in the States, you could ask the appropriate service to let me work between 6 and 8 hours per day. I can very well work either in any library or even somewhere else. I mean it.

Until now I have not received any letter from academic building, even the special delivery mail. Anyway in a very few words I wish to tell you that over here I am very well considered by Cambodian and French authorities. Accordingly, I do not want to put myself in any low talk in any kind of business. . . etc. . . etc. . . To tell you the truth, if you have not insisted, I won't go, not because I do not have enough money, but for my own prestige vis-a-vis of "American authorities." I still feel hurt when I think about how they treated me compared to what Belgian and French people did with me since 1965.

I am writing this a day after the phone call at 2 p.m.

Your Samson,

Samson

Letter 14 : Single Page

Paris, le 13 juillet 1968

Gloris and Bean,

It is not my last letter this one because I will send you another before my departure to let you know exactly the itinerary.

I just received Gloris' letter dated June 27. It has been, I guess, delayed somewhere. I also make lots of plans in my mind and I am very thrilled each time I supposed that I am with you all. We have a car, we can go anywhere we wish to, but we must drive very slowly to avoid all kinds of accidents.

Another thing that you fail to tell me is the address of our new apartment. Give me the name of the street and the apartment number. I already have the phone number which is the following: 404 - 549.4738. Is that correct? Is ^{it} that far from school, our new house?

Concerning my job in the States, you could ask the appropriate service to let me work between 6 and 8 hours per day. I can very well work either in any library or even somewhere else. I mean it.

Until now I have not received any letter from academic building, even the special delivery mail. Anyway, in a very few words I wish to tell you that overhere I am very well considered by Cambodian and French authorities. Accordingly, I do not want to put myself in any low talk in any kind of business... etc... etc... To tell you the truth, if you have not insisted, I won't go, not because I do not have enough money, but ^{for} my own prestige vis-à-vis of "American authorities". I still feel hurt when I think about how they treated me compared to what Belgian and French people did with me since 1965.

I am writing this a day after the phone call at 2 p.m.

Your Samson,

Samson

Letter 15 : Transcription

April 23, 1973

It Sareth
Faculté de Droit – Faculty of Law
PHNOM PENH

Dear Bean,

It is true that I'm at the Ministry of Information, but I'm no more [the] manager of Phnom Penh Times. I was appointed since 1972 Director of AKP (Agence Khmère de Presse) which is a governmental press organization. The daily publication is in French. International news in collaboration with AFP (Agence France Presse); UPI AP; Rueters, etc. . . .

In the afternoon I lecture international law at the faculty of law of Phnom Penh. I do like teaching.

Last summer, the government sent me to South America – Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, Panama – before I joined the General Assembly at the U.N. South American people are very kind. It was the first time that I can practice my Spanish.

Please say hello to the Woodruff people and explain to them that my daily job is too intense to write them regularly.

Love,

It Sareth

April 23, 1973

St Sareth
Faculté de Droit - Faculty of Law
PHNOM PENH
*

Dear Beau,

It is true that I'm at the ministry of information, but I'm no more manager of Phnom Penh Times. I was appointed since 1972 Director of AKA (Agence Khmerie de Presse) which is a governmental press organism. The daily publication is in French. To international news we collaborate with AFP (Agence France Presse); UPI; AP; Reuters etc...

In the afternoon I lecture international law at the faculty of law of Phnom Penh. I do like teaching.

Last summer, the government sent me to South America - Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, Panama - before I joined the general Assembly at the U.N. South American people are very kind. It was the first time that I can practice my Spanish.

Please say hello to the Woodcuff people and explain to them that my daily job is too intense to write them regularly. Love IT Santh

Letter 15 : Envelope (front)



Letter 16 : Transcription

It Sareth
Faculté de Droit – Faculty of Law
PHNOM PENH

Dear Bean,

I hope you have received my letter, haven't you?
Everything is fine in Cambodia. School is
still running in Phnom Penh. We won't have summer
holidays. . . .

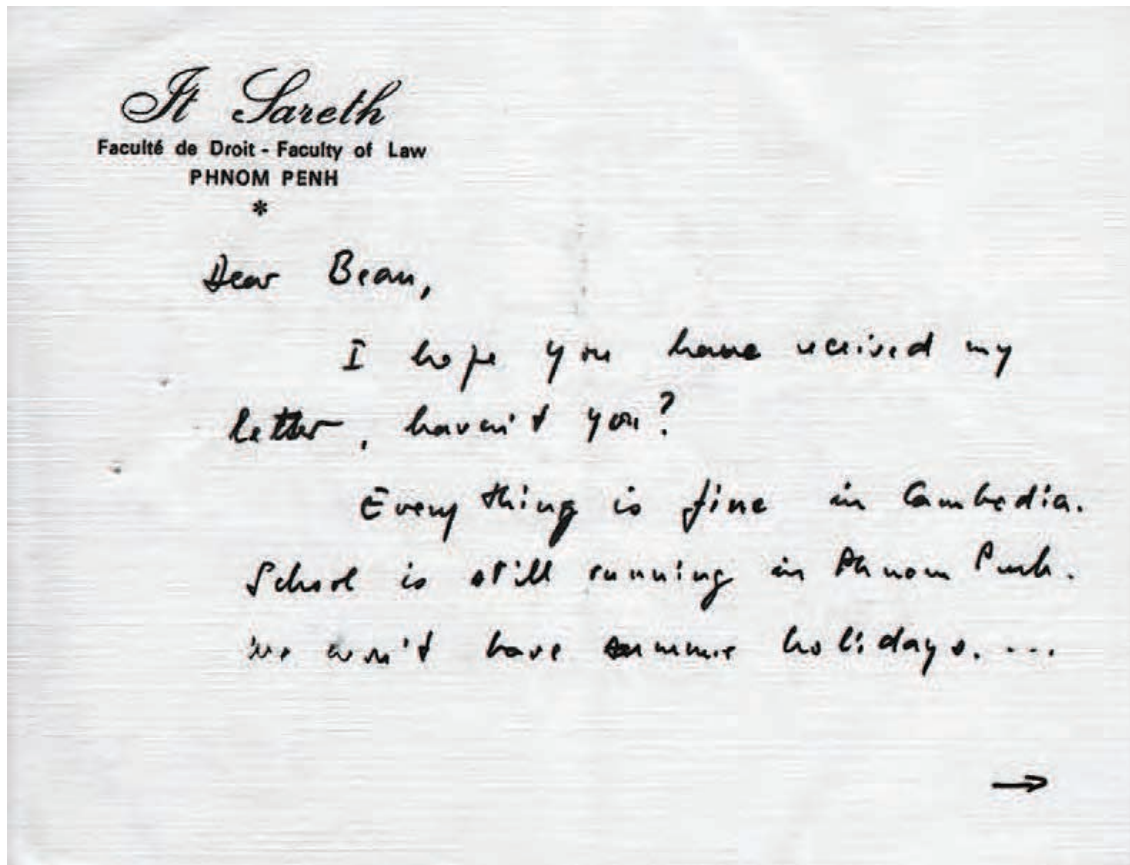
Please buy me a British history book written
by G. M. Trevelyan. (Title: A Shortened History of
England): a Pelican Book.

I really need it. Later you can buy me a dictionary
of Political Science. I lost mine.

I constantly think of you.

It Sareth

May 10, '73



Please buy me a British history
book "written by G. M. Trevelyan.
(Title: A Shortened History of England):
a Pelican book.

I really need it. Later you can
buy me a dictionary of Political Science.
I lost mine.

I constantly think of you

I T Farrell
May 10, '73

Letter 16 : Envelope (front)



Letter 17 : Transcription

For James

It Sareth
Faculté de Droit – Faculty of Law
PHNOM PENH

Dear Bean,

I'm on an official visit organized by the British Govt. concerning press. It is very interesting.

I arrived March 5 to London and come down to Bath, Bristol and Cardiff from 12 to 16. I'll be back to London tomorrow.

How are you, Bean?

In Cambodia I'm too busy at the present time. I'm editing a daily bulletin called AKP bulletin (Agence Khmère de Presse) in French in the morning and lecturing law in the afternoon to make money.

Write soon.

It Sareth

March 15, 1974

FOR JAMES

St Lareth
Faculté de Droit - Faculty of Law
PHNOM PENH
*

Dear Bean,

I'm on an official visit organized by the British Govt. concerning press. It is very interesting.

I arrived March 5 to London and came down to Bath, Bristol and Cardiff from 12 to 16. I'll be back to London tomorrow.

How are you, Bean?

In Cambodia, I'm too busy at the present time. I'm editing a daily bulletin called AKP bulletin (Agence Kemeral de Presse) in French in the morning and lecturing but ~~at~~ in the afternoon to make money.

With love.

St Lareth
March 15, 1974

Letter 18 : Transcription

REPUBLIQUE KHMERE For James

MINISTERE
DE
L'INFORMATION

DIRECTION DE L'AGENCE
KHMER DE PRESSE

Le Directeur

Dear Bean,

I'm back to London now, after having visited the western part of the U.K. This week is my last one in England, and today an official lunch has been organized by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office at the Dorchester Hotel. Tomorrow, I'll go [to] the Univ. of London to see one of my professors when I was in Paris. He lectured 2h/week at the Faculty of Law. Friday on the eve of my return to P. Penh, the Khmer Embassy, to "answer" to the Foreign Office, will offer a buffet dinner; I think spare rib with rice!!

Our friend Tan Mien is in London. Remember? While writing this, the TV is announcing about the shot in front of Buckingham Palace and the Queen will come back soon from Indonesia.

It Sareth

March 20, 1974

For James

REPUBLIQUE KHMERE

MINISTERE
DE
L'INFORMATION

DIRECTION DE L'AGENCE
KHMERE DE PRESSE

Le Directeur

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come back soon from Indonesia.

17. Farrell

March 20, 1974

Letter 19 : Transcription
Hotel Times

Taipei, Sunday, Dec 22, [1974] at 3 a.m.

Beany Bean,

I am thinking of you all along especially when I am leaving one place to another. When we were together you were always beside me to help me, sometimes I forgot the travelers' cheque book etc. . . Bean, the saddest moment was at the Colonial Hotel, just before we separated in 1965. We know that our scholarship was cut, and the seller of the trailer took advantage of us . . . When I am thinking of all of these events, I feel that we must live together again someday before we die. If we can't help each other, at least we could see each other. You must not forget that I always love you, but I acted differently because I thought I had a reason.

I hope by the way you have received my air letter written on my way to Tokyo.

Here is another thing that I mean to tell you and no one else would believe it because of the peculiarity of the facts.

While leaving N.Y. a man was sitting beside me. Before he took his seat, he nodded and said hello. I politely replied [to] him and no conversation was followed. As the plane was late from Fairbanks, I asked the stewardess what would be going on if I messed my connecting flight from Tokyo to Taipei. Her answer was vague and evasive. That man started to look at me (I presumed that he thought that I was a Japanese, but while hearing the accent, he took me differently.) and asked me where I'm from. . . question what I was doing in N.Y. I told him that the Cambodian government paid me just for the 29th session of the U.N. He smiled and gave me his personal card. Wow! He is president of an electronics company in Japan, U.S.A. and Korea. I asked him if his company makes any four way channel stereo (quadraphonic)? Of course, he replied. It would be rather expensive, I added, wouldn't it? He then explained that the price ranges from more than 200 to thousands [of] dollars, all depends on the power etc. . . I presume (again) that my question and my word were a little naïve to push the Japanese to offer me one stereo which costs more than 600 dollars. He asked my house address and promised me to send me one set and I will pay him only about 200 whenever go to New York again.

Bean, I do not know if the story is true. We have to wait and see. Maybe he will send me a 200 dollar stereo! But he looked very serious. He has his Ph.D. from Harvard in Political Science. His name is Kenzo Iwai.

My best regards to Sara [Sally] and I wish you a merry X-mas and a happy New Year.

It Sareth

P.S. Even I still feel uneasy when I am thinking about our staying in the Colonial Hotel. I assure you that I do not nourish any ill feeling toward your parents. IT



達時大飯店
HOTEL TIMES

15 LANE 26 SEC. 2
CHUNG SHAN N. RD.
TAIPEI TAIWAN R. O. C.
TEL. 515711-4
CABLE ADDRESS: "HOTELTIMES"

台北市中山北路2段26巷15號
電話：五一五七一—
電報掛號：HOTELTIMES

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that the Cambodian Government paid me just
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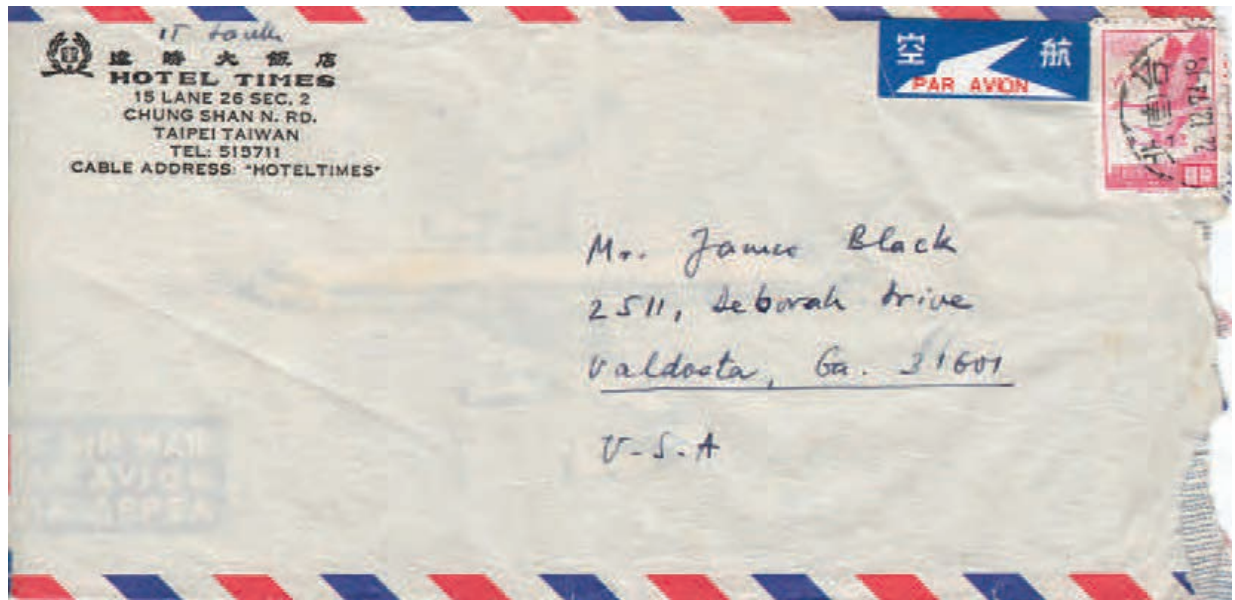
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By best regards to Sarah and I wish you a merry Xmas and a happy New Year.

IT Farrell

P.S.: Even I still feel uneasy while thinking about our staying in Colonial Hotel, I assure you that I do not worry about my ill-felting toward your parents.

Letter 19 : Envelope (front)



Letter 20 : Transcription

REPUBLIQUE KHMERE

MINISTERE
DE
L'INFORMATION

DIRECTION DE L'AGENCE
KHMER DE PRESSE

Le Directeur

Phnom Penh, January 30, 1975

Beany Bean,

I wrote you a couple weeks ago that I already received your book and pictures. Jenny had forwarded the parcel to me.

For the moment I really need something that you might help me. Could you send me 1,000 dollars as a loan at the end of February? I'll pay you back whenever I have the opportunity. In case of positive answer, you can send the traveler's check to Miss Jenny at the Khmer Mission (845 Third Avenue, 20th floor) and tell her to forward by diplomatic bag to Phnom Penh.

My regards to Sara [Sally],

Affection,

It Sareth

Letter 20 : Single Page

REPUBLIQUE KHMERE

MINISTERE
DE
L'INFORMATION
DIRECTION DE L'AGENCE
KHMER DE PRESSE

Le Directeur

Phnom Penh, January 20, 1975

Beauy Beau,

I wrote you a couple weeks ago -
that I already received your book and
pictures. Junny had forwarded the parcel
to me.

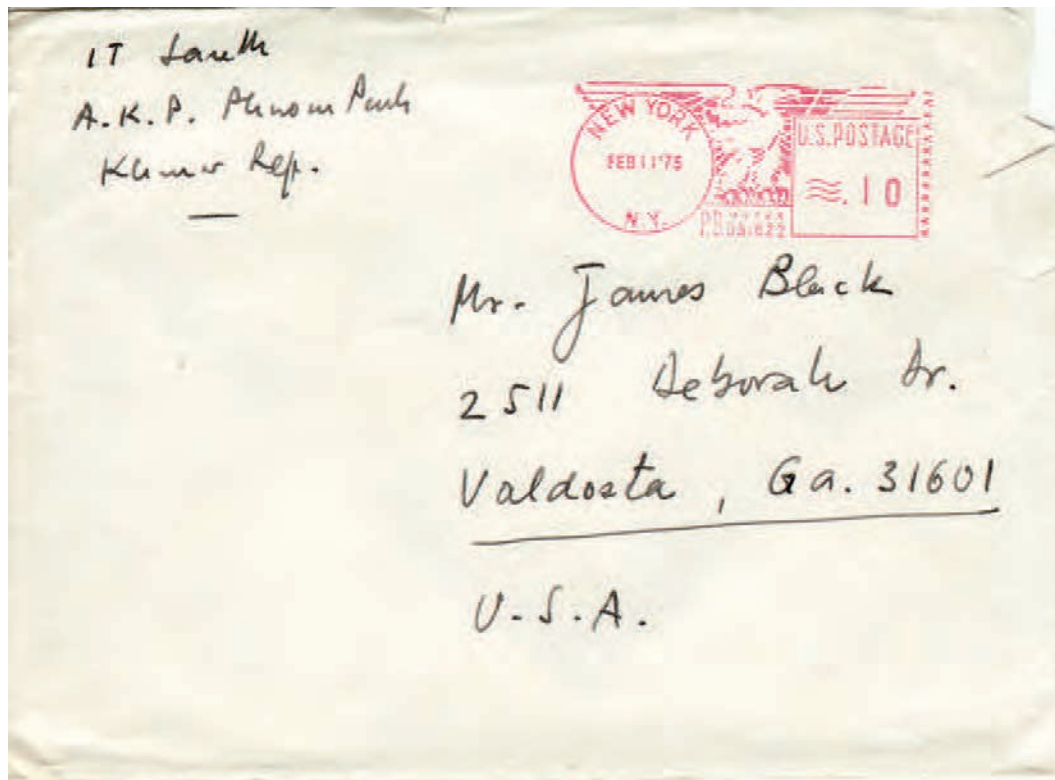
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In case of positive answer, you can send
the transfer check to Miss Junny at the
Khmer Mission (845 Third Avenue, 20th floor)
and tell her to forward by diplomatic
bag to Phnom Penh.

My regards to Sara,

Affection,

IT Sanella

Letter 20 : Envelope (front)



Appendix 2
Letter from Cloris to Sareth (May 9, 1968)

Letter from Cloris to Sareth : Transcription

Athens, May 9, 1968

My Dear Friend,

We received the last letter and as usual were very glad, but this, in especial, touched me very much, maybe because you mentioned the girls and of course they are a big part of me and I would like everybody else to feel the same about them, and when I say everybody else I refer to Jim and you, and specially you that don't know them yet. They are so cute and right now it is another reason that make me feel very happy because Jim loves them and we have the same ideas about how to bring them up etc. etc. So that make us feel still closer.

About what you said of my "dearest in-law family" I think you are completely right but at the same time we didn't wanted her calling us back constantly so we let her say everything she wanted, I am sure she must think I am completely dumb, because the only thing I said was "ejem, ejem" and she told me she wanted to meet us and I didn't even say "I do too" so she will be sure there is intentions on my side of not doing it. About what you said of when I stay alone here, I am scared already of that, because I know they are going to try to get close to me as soon as they find out he is gone, and I don't want that trouble at all. I agree with you, I think we must ignore them completely, not even to remember deep in our minds that they exist. The same happens with the father of the girls, he hasn't seen them in a year now, though he has money to go to Spain and New York etc, but I am afraid that now that he knows I am married and when he find out that Jim is gone he would do something like to try to take the girls away. That really scares me.

We took some pictures of the girls, as soon as we have the copies we will send you yours.

We are both with a virus on the throat that is killing us. I am almost through with it but Jim is now in the worse part. He feels very bad at you, because he can't write you as frequent as before, but I think you understand, and I tell him so. He is teaching, took a part-time job at Miller's that pays \$1.60 an hour and he works 4 hours a day, he says is a really soft job and then every spare minute he has he starts working with his thesis.

You said that didn't know if we received your money. I thought I did mention it in my last letter anyway, I am sorry if I didn't and thank you very much, it was a great help.

I have been sewing lately very much, I guess you know already that that is my hobby and today is my older nephew's birthday, he wanted a bath robe and I am doing one for each brother.

Well that is about everything for today at least if Jim can't write you very very soon you will know of him through me and though it is not the same that one of his letters if better than nothing.

Please write us as soon as possible, but if you can't don't feel bad either because we understand. Don't forget we remember you all the time, and talk about you every five minutes.

Love,

Cloris

Athens May 9, 1968

My dear friend:

We received the ^{last} letter and as usual were very glad, but this, in special, touched me very much, maybe because you mentioned the girls and of course they are a big part of me and I would like everybody else to feel the same about them, and when I say everybody else I refer to Jim and you, and specially you that hasn't know them yet. They are so cute, and right now ^{it} is another reason that make me feel very happy because Jim loves them and we have the same ideas about how to bring them up etc etc so that make us feel still closer.

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-2-

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Cloris

Appendix 3

Letters from Orfelio Ramos-Valdés to Cloris (January 13 and 20, 1968)

Letter from Orfelio Ramos-Valdés to Cloris: Translation, postmarked Miami, January 13, 1968

Read this carefully – for yourself and for your daughters and the others, not for me because I am finished with the matter.

C.

A few lines to clarify some things for you: I'm not putting your name in case this is gets lost; therefore, tear this up as soon as you read it since I know that when I tell you something, you don't accept it, and if it isn't a letter with a check in it, you tear it up without reading it anyway and with no remorse. But I beg you to read this one, not for me because I have just returned from the place where I was planning to spend the holidays with my grandchildren, but which I left to avoid seeing you so shamelessly running about in the streets. I decided to return [to Miami] and not have to see your face again or take a call from you. And because I know that even if I arrive at the year 69, I will not survive it because of my suffering in the face of such shamelessness and nerve on your part. I have lived a life among so many people and know some of the best people and some of the worst, but I have seen nothing compared to your actions. I know about all of your running around since the night you went out alone and stayed at the Holiday Inn, your running off every weekend including even trips to Jacksonville and Cordele, which are 350 miles from there and every week until your last party – the day that I left you went to Atlanta. I never thought that I would ever have to see one of my daughters in such a situation – forcing us to leave a house that I alone was paying for, in order for you to do completely as you please, to do what you were doing when I surprised you. You had the nerve to threaten us with the police – for all this I BEG YOU TO STOP ALL OF YOUR RUNNING AROUND and that you call O(Oscar) at Flora's house. He has more right on his side than you at this moment because if they prove the licentious life which you lead, the judge will give your daughters to him. And that would be very easy to prove with a little money. Call him collect Sunday or Monday after 9:00 P.M. I will advise him that he should expect your call. What you are doing to him is criminal, to all the family, to him and your daughters, who, if they stay with you and you don't stop as I have said, they will be the ones who pay this debt which you have to everyone, all the interest and everything. I am sure that with the example that you are setting for them, it will be as I predict. I want you to know that if you don't call O[Oscar] as I demand, when I return presently to collect your mother, I will bring him so that he sees them and can be with them. I know that you will say that you are free and of a legal age, but that can only be said when one can stand on her own feet, and if you think otherwise, you can consider that your father dead. Another thing, you are still married and even if you weren't, there is the matter of your giving them the example of your going out with a different man every week. All of this they will carry within themselves for the rest of their lives. You can do what you want, but I am not responsible for what may happen if I see you again in those conditions. I believe that although your reputation has been ruined, you can still correct it. And if you have to return to this house, you can come and we will not kick you out. If you are going to change and return to decent living, let me know -- and do it—and you can count on me. On the other hand, you know that I will be dead to you and that even after my death you will not be able to benefit from anything I own because I am inclined to write a new will for your mother and for me in which I will leave you only \$5.00, which is what I am obliged to do. You decide.

**Letter from Orfelio Ramos-Valdés to Cloris: Transcription, postmarked Miami,
January 13, 1968**

ESTA LEELA DETENIDAMENTE POR TI Y POR TUS HIJAS Y LOS DEMAS, NO
POR NOM POR MI QUE YA ESTOY LIQUIDADO

C.

Unas linias para aclararte varias cosas. No le pongo tu nombre por se esta se pierde, por lo que rómpela tan pronto l leas, ya se que cuando se te dice algo, no lo aceptas, y si no es una carta con un Chek y sin amonestarte la ropes sin leerla, pero esta si te ruego la leas, no por mi ya que yo regrese enseguida de ses donde pensaba estar hasta pasado reyes con mis nietos, pero para no verte con tanta descaró tirada por la calle del medio, decidi regresar y no volverte a ver la cara ni tomar una llamada tuya, y como ye se que si llo lleo al ano 69 de el no paso comprendoque mis sufrimientos ante tanta desparpajo y descar tuyo que estas naciendo cosas que yo que he vivido una vida entre tanta gente y conosco desde las mejores personas hasta las de mas malos sentimientos, no vi nada comparado con lo tuyo, tengo conocimiento de todas tus correrías desde la noche que fuiste sola a ese a ver lo de tu ingrese que te quedastes en el Holiday, tus viajes a correrla todos los fines de semana inclusive hasta Jacsonville y cordele que están hasta 350 millas d esa y todas las semanas hasta tu ultima fiesta el día que Sali que fuiste a Atlanta, no piense nunca que tendría que ver una de mis hijas en esa situación, al extremo de botarnos de una casa que yo pagabe solo para quedarte con el camino libre para hacer lo que estabas haciendo cuando te solprende inclusive tubistes el valor de amenazarnos con la policía, por todo esto te EXIJO QUE DES UN ALTO A TODAS TU CORRERIS y llames a O. a casa de Flora pñara que el que tiene hasta mas derecho que to en este momento puesto que si te comprueban la vida desordenada que tu llevas, el Juez se las entregue a el , y eso es muy fácil de demostrar con dinero en mano, llámalo colet el Domingo o el lunes después de las 9 P.M. que yo le avisare para que espere la llamada, lo que tu estas haciendo con el es criminal, con toda tu familia, con el y tus hijas que siguen contigo y no das un alto como te digo, ellas serán las que te cobraran estra deuda que tienes con todos con sus intereses y todo, estoy seguro de que con el egemple que les estas dando será como te pronostico quiero que sepas

ESTA LEELA DETENIDAMENTE POR TI Y POR TUS HIJAS Y LOS DEMAS, NO POR
C. NOM POR MI QUE YA ESTOY ⁴¹⁸⁶²⁵⁰⁰

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[illegible]

Letter 1 from Orfelio Ramos-Valdés to Cloris: Envelope (front)



Letter from Orfelio Ramos-Valdés to Cloris: Translation, Postmarked Miami, January 20, 1968

Dear Cloris,

I received your letter in which you tell me that you would never have thought that I would believe such things about you, to which I will respond that never in my life would I be capable of inventing anything against anyone, and much less against one of my children. But you can be sure that if I were not certain of all that I say to you, [all of] which I have spent many days in investigating and collecting information, and aside from everything that I have had to hear and see about you, that I believe that it is more than sufficient to be sure that what I tell you is the truth and that I say it for your good, for ours, and for your daughters, who are the ones who tomorrow will carry [on their shoulders] all these things, and [then] when you are suffering what we suffer now, [that] is when you will be convinced that I am right. You believe that it is all right that your daughters see a different man in their house every week, something which I have said to you more than once. And you do not care that we are enduring all of the criticism about you, without being able to defend you, since everyone sees your licentiousness behavior as we see it.

You also mention the house that I am buying for Rogelina: I am buying it so that she does not have to leave [her home] and live wherever she may find herself, and so that my grandchildren will not have to leave their school [which they now attend]. As soon as they leave Atlanta, I will [immediately] sell the house in the same way as I will sell the one I bought for you, and which I now have, besides that, awaiting you. And my money [is] invested without my earning anything because now they will raise my taxes, since this one where I live I will place in my name in order to take advantage of the exemption that pays more than \$500 per year. In all of these things the ones who are sacrificing themselves are we who economize to save money for others, we [who] do not even have good mattresses or a bedroom suite nor a record player nor many other things that we would like to have. For, before long I will die, and you will no longer have all this, and afterwards you and the grandchildren, as I tell you, will live shamed by your conduct and to hear and see such things. Therefore, I tell you that I demand that you stop and think about your daughters and about us—that you try to stop—and even with all of Oscar’s faults that you try to reconcile with him and that you try to come here, where we are, to live for your daughters and to care so that we do not have to live as we are living today. If you are capable of doing this, I will help you to the extent that my abilities allow me, and if you refuse, I don’t know what my reaction will be if you continue on the path you have chosen. It all rests on you, and then you will go to church to pray in order to repair the great damage which you are doing to us. You say that you know I hate you because of what I paid for you when you went to the hospital. This is just something that you say just to have something to say since you know that I would never hate you. But, yes, it upsets me that because of your running around, I have to spend money that we need so much, even though the money is not what it is all about. In this life I have always tried to have enough to leave to all of you since I was the one who least benefited from it. But none of this interests anyone else, and if this situation exists, it is only you who have created it, and [because] you believe that no one knows anything about your life and that everything you do is good. For all this, if you are inclined to straighten yourself out, as I have said to you so many times, for yourself and for “yours” [those who care about you] and for your daughters, you can count on me. If you choose to do otherwise do not write or call me.

Your father loves you.

OR

Querida Cloris:

Recibí tu carta en la
 que me dices q. muchas buenas
 cosas q. yo creyer tantas cosas
 de ti. La lo q. te dice q. jamás
 en la vida soy capaz de
 inventar nada. Consta radió
 y mucho menor de una de
 mis hijas, pero puedo estar
 seguro de q. si no fueran
 todo lo q. te dije por lo
 cual he pasado muchos
 días investigando y tomando
 datos y aparte lo q.
 he tenido q. oír y ver de
 ti q. creo es muy q. bastante
 para estar seguro de q. lo q.
 te digo es como te lo digo
 y q. te lo digo por tu
 bien por nosotros y por
 tus hijitas q. son las
 q. más me preocupan.

sobre ellas todas estas cosas
 y cuando tu estes supien-
 iendo lo q. hoy supimos nos-
 tros, es cuando te conven-
 cias de mi razón, tu crees
 incorrecto q. tu hijo este
 viendo un hombre distinto
 todos las semanas en su
 casa, cosa este q. te he di-
 cho mas de una vez, y no
 respetar ni aun q. proso-
 tos estamos soportando
 todas las críticas a ti. y
 sin poder defenderte
 puesto q. todo el mundo
 te ve como te venos noso-
 tros tu libertinaje, tan-
 bien me habla de la cosa
 de Rogelia q. estoy compran-
 do lo q. sera para q. ella
 me tenga q. salir a meter-
 se floride en cupute
 y q. mis nietos, tengan
 q. dejar el Colegio

②
 q. hoy tienen, Casa q. una
 vez q. ellos salgan de
 Atlanta enseguida la ven-
 dere, Como tan pronto han-
 da las pesas vendere la
 q. compie para ti y q. aho-
 ra la tengo encierra aten-
 diendote y costando llo-
 va y mi dinero nielido
 sin q. me gane nada
 porque ahora inclusive
 me subiran el TAXI ya
 q. esta q. viro la pondre
 a mi nombre para co-
 germe a la Evencion en
 Jeta q. paga mas de
 \$500.00 al qto, en todas
 estas cosas los sacrifici-
 os son los nosotros q. por
 economizar para los de mas
 ni tenemos buenos colcho-
 nes y fues de cuando, ni
 toca decir ni muchos
 cosas mas q. no gustaria

Tener q. dentro de poco me
 muera y ya no la tendré
 y solo por tener para vds.
 y los niños, y solo para
 después como te digo vivir
 a brechonado con tu con-
 ducta y en y ver tanta
 cosa, por eso te digo q.
 te digo q. de un alto
 y pienses en tus hijos
 y en nosotros, q. tales
 de terminar y hasta con-
 los los defectos de O. q. tales
 de reconciliarte con el y
 tratar de venir a esta
 donde estamos nosotros y
 vivir para tus hijos y darte
 a respetar para q. note-
 ngamos q. vivir en la
 honra q. hoy vivimos, si
 es capaz de hacerle de
 ayudar con lo q. quis
 fueras me permitir y
 si no quieres hacer

(3)

lo q. suceda q. yo no se
 cual sea mi reaccion
 de seguir te por el ex-
 traneo q. as tomaste, la
 era sobre ti y luego te vas
 a rezar a la iglesia pa-
 ra reparar este daño tan
 grande q. nos estas ha-
 ciendo. me dices q. sa-
 bes lo q. te odio por lo
 q. te pague cuando fuiste
 al Hospital frase q. dices
 por decir algo ya q. sabes
 nunca te odie pero si me
 molesta q. por tus corre-
 rias tenga que gastar
 su dinero q. taita palpa
 nos hace, aunque el
 dinero no lo es todo en
 la vida siempre trate de
 tener bastante para

dejárselo a Vdr. ya q. pien-
 so q. menos lo diré.
 Tal vez era yo pero nada de
 esto le interesa a los demás
 y si esta situación existe
 solo tu las as creado
 y creas q. nadie se da cuenta
 de tu vida y q. todo lo
 q. haces está bien, por
 todo esto si estás dispuesto
 a Rectificar como tantas
 veces te digo por ti por los
 tuyos y tus hijas podras
 copular con uno de lo
 contrario haces muy bien
 con tu decir q. no me
 escribiras ni me llama-
 ras.

Te quiero tu paglia
 Ora

Letter 2 from Orfelio Ramos-Valdés to Cloris: Envelope (front)



Appendix 4
Letters from Tim Black

Rte. 1, Hull Ia. Dec. 10, 1963

DEC 12 1963

11 A.M.

Dear Sarah,
I am fine, how are you?
I thank you for the getwell
card.

When you come back we
will make our on tv show,
and I ^{will} dance on it.

I would like to go on
that little trip we went
on.

I have to go now.

Love
Eve

Burton T. Black
460 Hays Mill Rd.
Apt. CC-21
Carrollton, Ga. 30117
Home Phone 770-832-0554

January 08, 2001

James:

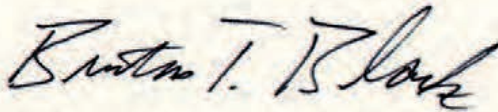
Thank you for the card that I received today. I know that you do not do this on a regular basis, but you need to make yourself your favorite drink and sit down.

This past weekend the opportunity presented itself to tell my father about the letters. I seized the chance like a big green fly hovering over a pile of cow doo-doo. Mother and Maggie had gone to bed. Rachel was not there. It was about 10:00. For the first time in months or even two years perhaps he mentioned the name of Serete. I know the spelling is incorrect. He started out talking about approaching Sen. Dick Russell. I knew what was coming. It was the "he did not want to hurt the boy" story. It was after he used the phrase, "...tear apart my family..." that this was the time. What follows is not the correct sequence. He interjected comments periodically but most of them were not very important. Mostly I told him the same things that I said to you when we were reading the letters in Oct. of 1999. The first thing that I told him was that you had convinced me of nothing. I told him that everything that I was going to tell him I had concluded for myself after reading her letters.

"I know something that you don't know." I asked him if it Gale approached him after you left. It was mother. Gale had gone to her first knowing that mother would go to him. "You acted on the information that you were told. If you had known the truth, instead of doing the things that you did, you would have thrown a cold bucket of water on her and spanked her spirit-filled butt." "A few years ago James told me about the letters that Gale had written to Serete. I told him that I wanted to read them. In Oct. of 1999 I read every word on every page. In those letters she through herself at him. She was horny for him. She was fifteen years old, her imagination and her hormones were going ninety miles an hour. In the last two letters she stated specifically that he never asked her to marry him. It was then that I realized that every derogatory, degrading word that you ever said about him was for nothing. She knew that anything she told you and mother you would believe and you did. We spent hours and hours listening to you degrade him and she said nothing. Then she married and moved away and I was left to listen to it. All she had to do was tell the truth." He asked me about the copies. I told him that I had selected the letters that I wanted copies of. I told him that I four sets of copies in my apartment.

Well, you get the idea. Frankly I was rather proud of myself. He knew I was serious and that I had given a lot of thought to what I said. He tried to tell me not to tell mother about the letters. I told him that I had told her about them many months ago. She had not mentioned them to him. Twice he tried to get me not to ever mention these letters to Gale. Twice I told him that if Gale ever gives me the opportunity that he had that I would confront her with them.

And they all said, "Amen".



Burton T. Black

*460 Hays Mill Rd.
Apt. CC-21
Carrollton, Georgia 30117
770-832-0554*

January 20, 2012

To the family of Ith Sareth:

When I was about seven years old my brother was attending the University of Georgia. One day he brought home a different person. I wanted to make this new person feel welcome. There was a table in the room with a bowl of candy on it. I took a piece of candy in my hand and took it to this man. My brother told me that it was impolite to give him the candy from my hand. So, I put the candy back in the bowl. I picked up the bowl with both hands, took it over to this new person, knelt down on one knee, bowed my head, and offered the entire bowl to this stranger. In my young mind that was as polite as I knew to get. My brother and the new person laughed. The new person was Ith Sareth.

For the next few years he was my friend. He gave me gifts. I enjoyed being around him. He treated me as an individual and not as a child. I am now fifty-six years old. There has not been a day of my life that he has not crossed my mind in a positive way.

It is unfortunate that I cannot offer him a piece of candy today. I shall remember him always.

With kind regards,


Burton Tim Black

Appendix 5

Classified US State Department Cable assessing 1974 UN Delegation
September 10, 1974, Currently Unclassified



Canonical ID: 1974PHNOM12101_b
Subject: COMPOSITION OF GKR UNITED NATIONS DELEGATION
From: Cambodia Phnom Penh
To: Department of State, United Nations (New York)
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Previous Handling Restrictions: -- N/A or Blank --
Archive Status: Electronic Telegrams
Type: TE
Locator: TEXT ON MICROFILM, TEXT ONLINE
Reference(s): n/a
Executive Order (E.O.): GS
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO
Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005
Enclosure: -- N/A or Blank --
Concepts: INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, MEETING DELEGATIONS
TAGS: Cambodia [CB]
Long Boret [LONG BORET]
Political Affairs--Foreign Policy and Relations [PFOR]
United Nations [UN]
Office: -- N/A or Blank --
Document Character Count: 4944
Date: 1974 September 10, 03:45 (Tuesday)

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15
ACTION IO-14

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ISO-00 CPR-02 VO-03 SCA-01 SS-20 NSC-07

CTAE-00 INR-11 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SY-04 FBIE-00 USSS-00

PRS-01 DRC-01 /077 W
----- 084292

R 100245Z SEP 74
FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7647
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 12101

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, UN, CB
SUBJECT: COMPOSITION OF GKR UNITED NATIONS DELEGATION

1. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS INFORMED US OF THE COMPOSITION OF
THE GKR DELEGATION TO THE 29TH UNGA SESSION. THE MEMBERS (ALL
FLUENT IN FRENCH) ARE:

A. PRIME MINISTER LONG BORET-- HEAD OF DELEGATION. THE HARD-



WORKING, COMPETENT PRIME MINISTER WAS ALSO HEAD OF LAST YEAR'S DELEGATION IN HIS THEN CAPACITY OF FOREIGN MINISTER. WE UNDERSTAND HE IS TO ADDRESS THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 9 AND WILL BE IN NEW YORK FOR ONLY PART OF THE SESSION. GOOD ENGLISH.

B. FOREIGN MINISTER KELKY LIM-- DEPUTY HEAD OF DELEGATION. KELKY LIM IS NOT A STRONG PERSONALITY AND HAS NOT BEEN A PARTICULARLY GOOD FOREIGN MINISTER. HOWEVER, HE CAN BE EFFECTIVE WITH OTHER DELEGATIONS. HAS EXCELLENT FLUENCY IN ENGLISH. U.S. EDUCATED.

C. GKR PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS CHHUT CHHOEUR--MEMBER. U.S. EDUCATED.

D. GKR AMBASSADOR TO KOREA POC THIEUN--MEMBER. WAS ALSO A MEMBER OF LAST YEAR'S GKR DELEGATION TO 28TH CONFIDENTIAL

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LINGA SESSION.

E. AMBASSADOR TO COLOMBIA THOUTCH VUTTHI--MEMBER. VUTTHI WAS FORMERLY ACCREDITED TO SEVERAL LATIN AMERICAN STATES AND WILL PRESUMABLY BE RESPONSIBLE FOR LOBBYING WITH THEM DURING THE SESSION.

F. AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON UM SIM--MEMBER. UM SIM, LIKE CHHUT CHHOEUR, IS ENERGETIC, HARD-WORKING AND FLUENT IN ENGLISH. U.S. EDUCATED.

G. AMBASSADOR TO LONDON DOUC RASY--MEMBER. ALSO MEMBER OF LAST YEAR'S DELEGATION. FORMERLY DEAN OF PHNOM PENH UNIVERSITY FACULTY OF LAW, HAS HAD EXTENSIVE GOVERNMENTAL, DIPLOMATIC AND JOURNALISTIC EXPERIENCE. WAS EXPELLED FROM OPPOSITION DEMOCRATIC PARTY WHEN HE DID NOT CLEAR LONDON AMBASSADORIAL APPOINTMENT WITH PARTY.

H. AMBASSADOR TO URUGUAY ONG KHUY TRENG--MEMBER. LIKE THOUTCH VUTTHI, IS ACCREDITED TO SEVERAL LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES AND WILL PROBABLY SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS AREA WITH VUTTHI.

I. SENATOR HEM CHIAM REUN--MEMBER.

J. DEPUTY LU LAY SRENG--MEMBER. SPEAKS GOOD ENGLISH (WAS EDUCATED IN U.S.) BUT DOES NOT SEEM IMPRESSIVE IN OTHER RESPECTS.

K. DEPUTY OU SAM CEUR--MEMBER. REPORTEDLY SPEAKS ENGLISH.



L. LT. GEN. SAK SUTSAKHAN--MEMBER. SAK SUTSAKHAN HAS BEEN EFFECTIVE IN DOING ADVANCE WORK FOR LONG BORET'S FOREIGN TRAVELS AND IS PRESENTLY TRAVELLING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER. HE IS DESCRIBED AS A "DIPLOMATIC COUNSELLOR" TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. SPEAKS SOME ENGLISH.

M. FOREIGN MINISTRY DIRECTOR OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS
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NOU HACH--MEMBER.

N. PRESIDENTIAL ASSISTANT TRINH HOANH--MEMBER.

TRINH HOANH IS EFFECTIVE AND ENERGETIC BUT HAS AN UNPREPOSSESSING APPEARANCE AND A REPUTATION FOR CORRUPTION. HE WAS A MEMBER OF LAST YEAR'S DELEGATION AND WAS MINISTER OF INFORMATION IN LONG BORET'S FIRST GOVERNMENT. SPEAKS SOME ENGLISH.

O. PRESIDENTIAL ASSISTANT KOCH SAN--MEMBER. ALSO A MEMBER OF LAST YEAR'S DELEGATION. A FORMER UNINSPIRING MINISTER OF COMMERCE, HE IS EDITOR OF ANEWLY-OPENED WEEKLY NEWSPAPER, THE "KHMER REPUBLICAN" WHICH FEATURES LONG BORET AS POLITICAL ADVISOR.

P. GENERAL LES KOSEM--MEMBER. LES KOSEM IS A CHAM AND IS PRESENTLY HEADING ONE OF THE KHMER ISLAM DELEGATIONS TRAVELLING IN THE MIDDLE EAST. PRINCIPAL ROLE ACCORDINGLY WILL PROBABLY BE IN CONTACTING ARAB DELEGATIONS.

Q. COUNSELLOR OF EMBASSY IN PARIS FROM TEP SAVAN--MEMBER.

R. DEAN OF PHNOM PENH UNIVERSITY FACULTY OF LAW HENG VONG BOUNCHAT--MEMBER. PARTICIPATED IN LAST YEAR'S UNGA SESSION AND IN LOS CONFERENCE AT CARACAS.

S. MINISTER-COUNSELLOR OF BERN EMBASSY OR KOSSALAK--MEMBER.

T. MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY HONG HOELUNG DOELUNG--MEMBER. WAS MOST RECENTLY CHARGE D'AFFAIRES IN PARIS.

U. FOREIGN MINISTRY DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR CONFERENCES SON SONE--MEMBER.

V. PHNOM PENH UNIVERSITY FACULTY OF LAW PROFESSOR ITH SARETH--MEMBER. ITH SARETH IS ALSO THE EDITOR OF THE DAILY GOVERNMENT INFORMATION JOURNAL AGENCY



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KHMER DE PRESSE. HE IS FLUENT IN ENGLISH, HARD-WORK-
ING, AND SHOULD BE A VALUABLE MEMBER OF THE DELEGATION.
U.S. EDUCATED. PROBABLY MOST USEFUL DELEGATE ON PRESS
QUESTIONS.

W. CONSELLOR TO THE GKR UNITED NATIONS MISSION HAV
BAN HEANG--MEMBER.

X. FUNCTIONARY AT THE GKR WASHINGTON EMBASSY GAFFAR
PEANG MET--MEMBER.

Y. PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS--
SAM SIDAROUN--SECRETARY.

2. COMMENT: THIS IS A LARGE DELEGATION FOR A SMALL
COUNTRY, BUT IT IS OBVIOUSLY TAILORED TO MAKE MAJOR
EFFORT AMONG OTHER DELEGATIONS ON KHMER REPRESENTATION
QUESTION.
KEELEY

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Appendix 6
Jim's Letters of Inquiry about Sareth

Valdosta State College

Valdosta, Georgia 31698

April 27, 1990

Mr. Sichan Siv
Deputy Assistant to the President
for Public Liason
The White House
Room 128
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Siv,

The article entitled "Former Prisoner of Khmer Rouge Now Provides Higher Education's Link to President" which appeared in the September 6, 1989 Issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education was arresting to me. First, you have over-come such obstacles in your native country to provide such service here. I admire and am grateful for what you have done.

Secondly, as I read the details of your life I became confident that you must have known personally a friend of mine from whom I have not heard since 1975. I am attaching some documentation, some of which is personal, so that you may more readily place him. I would consider it the utmost favor if you would tell me what you know about him and about what I now believe must have been his last days before falling victim to Pol Pot.

This man It Sareth became not only a close friend of mine but of my entire family during the years of 1963-65 when he and several other cambodians were studying at the University of Georgia. He became, simply put, a member of my family, taking vacations and spending breaks from school and weekends with us. He left the University to study at the Sorbonne, but we remained close friends.

In Fall of 1974 he wrote me that he was going to New York as a part of the Cambodian delegation to the United Nations. I went to New York to visit with him. As you will well recall those were terrible times. He had shared over the years certain information with me; his brother was at that time Chief of the Cambodian Secret Service. Sareth was frightened about the situation in Cambodia and for his life. He bought all manner of disguises in New York, telling me that he was hoping that, should worst come to worst, he could escape undetected to a small air plane which he had secured and get to Thailand or Vietnam. We had a somewhat anxious visit. Since 1975 I have blamed myself for not somehow forcing or inducing him

A Unit of the University System of Georgia
and an Equal Opportunity Employer

to remain in the United States and to return either then or later to Georgia where he would have had support from my family.

In January, 1975 he wrote asking for \$1,000. I sent it immediately and received a cable with the single-word response "Received". I have heard nothing since and have concluded that he is dead. He gave me clear instruction to send the money to the office of the Cambodian Delegation at the United Nations where he had a personal friend Jennifer who would see to it that it would be forwarded to him in a diplomatic pouch. Now, when I found that she had left employment I sent the money through regular banking channels. Frankly, Mr. Siv, I have blamed myself at least in part all these years for his death. The situation was so sensitive in Cambodia that the knowledge that he might have had external resources, particularly resources here, could have been sufficient to draw unwanted attention to him. I heard that citizens were shot simply because they wore glasses evidencing that they probably could read and therefore be dangerous to the Pol Pot regime.

Other Cambodian nationals who were at the University of Georgia at the same time were Uk Tinal, Sin Meng Srun, Om Sorry and Minh Thien Voan. I would like any information about them as well, but none concern me so much as It Sareth.

I look forward to hearing from you and will be grateful for anything you can tell me.

Very best wishes for your continued success.

Sincerely,



James L. Black
Director of Auxiliary Services and
Assistant Professor of
Modern Foreign Languages

JLB/lb

Enclosures

James L. Black

1709A Gornito Road, # 257, Valdosta, Georgia, 31601
Telephone: Home 912-247-5430, Mobile: 229-630-3672
E-mail: j.l.black@mchsi.com

February 1, 2011

Venerable Abbot
Wat Khmer Savy Rattanaram
4540 Clinton Avenue
Jacksonville, Florida 32207
United States of America

Esteemed Venerable Abbot,

I am deeply grateful that you would meet with me today to examine my documentation and consider helping me locate the family of my friend Mr. It Sareth in Cambodia.

The attached documentation will serve 1. to establish a friendly connection between Mr. It Sareth and my family, 2. to show that this relationship was on-going from 1963 until 1975, and 3. to give you an idea about his whereabouts and activities, at least those which are known to me.

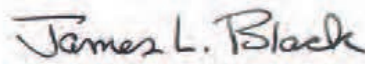
During the years 1963, 1964, and 1965 Mr. It Sareth became a member of my family spending weekends, vacations, and school breaks with us at our house. From time to time my family entertained all thirty Cambodians who were studying at the University of Georgia at that time. Indications are that Mr. It perished during the war. My sole wish in requesting your help in locating his family is to let them know that while he was away studying he remembered and honored them, that he represented them and his country admirably, and that his loss is deeply felt even today by those who loved and cared for him in the United States.

I know Mr. It Sareth to have been an honorable person who worked very hard and successfully at his studies; who conducted himself with dignity; who represented his country and his culture (of which he was very proud) well and always favorably; who was extremely well liked by officials at the University of Georgia where we studied; and who was esteemed by local officials and citizens alike.

I will be in Cambodia December 24, 25, 26, and 27, 2011. I may be reached in the United States at the address, telephone numbers, and e-mail address above. In Cambodia I may be reached via mobile telephone.

Any guidance and aid you might give me in locating members of his family who remain will be greatly appreciated. I am most grateful for having met you and your staff at Wat Khmer Savy Rattanaram and thank you for receiving me so graciously. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,


James L. Black

James L. Black

1709A Gornito Road, # 257, Valdosta, Georgia, 31601
Telephone: Home 912-247-5430, Mobile: 229-630-3672
E-mail: j.l.black@mchsi.com

April 7, 2011

His Excellency Mr. Hem Heng
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Royal Embassy of Cambodia
4530 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20011

Dear Ambassador Hem,

I write to respectfully request your help in locating any remaining family of my friend Mr. It Sareth who studied at the University of Georgia in the United States from 1962 through 1965. My assumption is that he perished during the evacuation in 1975. However, he had two brothers and two sisters, at least some of whom (or whose children) may yet survive and remain in Cambodia. One of his brothers worked in law enforcement and the other was a building contractor. I have no knowledge about the status of his sisters. I believe, although I am not certain, that the family lived in Phnom Penh. My sole wish in locating his family is that I may personally let them know that while he was here he remembered and honored them, that he represented them and his country admirably, and that his loss is deeply felt even today by those who loved and cared for him in the United States.

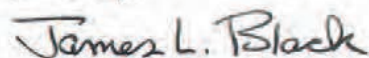
During the years 1963, 1964, and 1965 while he was studying at the University of Georgia he became a member of my family, spending weekends, vacations, and school breaks with us at our home. From time to time we entertained all thirty Cambodians who were studying at the University then. I know Mr. It Sareth to have been an honorable person who worked hard and successfully at his studies; who conducted himself with dignity; who represented his country and his culture (of which he was very proud) well and always favorably; who was extremely well liked by officials at the University of Georgia; and who was esteemed by local officials and citizens alike. My family and I were so positively impressed by this man and by the promise of his future that we provided private financial support to aid him in continuing his studies in Belgium and then at the Sorbonne in Paris.

The attached documentation will serve 1. to demonstrate a friendly connection between Mr. It Sareth and my family, 2. to show that this relationship was on-going from 1963 until 1975, 3. to give you an idea about his whereabouts and activities as known to me, and 4. to provide photographs of his family.

I will be in Cambodia December 24, 25, 26, and 27, 2011. I may be reached in the United States at the address, telephone numbers, and e-mail address above. In Cambodia I may be reached via mobile telephone. My hope is that before this trip I may find and communicate with members of his family who remain and of course arrange to meet them in December.

Any guidance and aid you might give me in locating members of his family will be greatly appreciated. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James L. Black". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

James L. Black

James L. Black

1709A Gornito Road, # 257, Valdosta, Georgia, 31601
Telephone: Home 912-247-5430, Mobile: 229-630-3672
E-mail: j.l.black@mchsi.com

April 26, 2011

His Excellency Mr. Chhang Song
3850 East Esther Street
Long Beach, California 90804

Dear Minister Chhang,

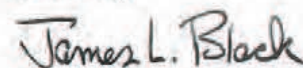
Thank you sincerely for having taken the time to speak with me about my friend Ith Sareth and the possibility that we might locate remaining members of his family so that I may meet some of them when I visit Cambodia in December. This notebook is exactly what I sent to Ambassador Hem Heng including my letter to him which will explain my intentions in more detail. I was very happy to hear that you considered Ith Sareth to have been your friend as well. His absence and the probability of his death has left a sorrow in the hearts of an entire family which loved and cared about him when he was here in the United States and to this day holds him in that same esteem.

You will find this information in hard copy, on a CD, and on a thumb drive. The format is primarily PDF. #2 on the media has a single PDF file which carries some information which does not appear on the hard copy form and might help you to review the information more quickly and easily. You will also find single copies of each of the documents and photographs so that you may choose those for any uses you might determine.

Thank you again for your time and your help. I look forward to your reply and hope that we can remain in touch. I hope that one day I may thank you in person.

May your health improve and your recovery be complete. I am mindful of the many things you have done including writing books, creating and leading organizations, and providing leadership to bring about healing, growth, and sustained peace in Cambodia. You have my admiration and gratitude.

Sincerely,



James L. Black

James L. Black

1709A Gornito Road, # 257, Valdosta, Georgia, 31601
Telephone: Home 912-247-5430, Mobile: 229-630-3672
E-mail: j.l.black@mchsi.com

April 26, 2011

Mr. Youk Chhang, Director
Documentation Center of Cambodia
P.O. Box 1110
66 Sihanouk Blvd
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

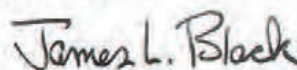
Dear Youk,

Thank you again for having been so responsive to my inquiry. In this notebook you will find thirty-seven photographs and documents relating to Ith Sareth and his relationship to my family. Copies of this information are provided on two compact disks and one thumb drive for ease of access. The annotated pdf file contains some information not in the notebook, specifically transcriptions of the notes and letters. I might suggest that you review this copy if you have time. Also included are notes of thanks to your deputy Mr. Kok-Thay Eng and Ms. Elizabeth Becker. If you would be so kind as to pass them on to them, I would appreciate it.

I should give you a brief history of my attempts to locate Sareth and his family after 1975. In April of 1990 I wrote to Mr. Sichan Siv who gave me the address of Dr. Sin Ming Srun whom I had known at the University of Georgia. We spoke several times by telephone. Most recently I have visited and written to the Abbot at Wat Khmer Savy Rattanaram, Jacksonville, Florida. They received me kindly there and wanted to help but had no resources to do so. I then on April 7 wrote to His Excellency Mr. Hem Heng, Cambodian Ambassador to the United States. Ambassador Hem and his deputy Mr. Peang Gafour referred me to Minister Chhang Song who, I believe, sincerely would like to help but his recovery must be his paramount concern, and I would not want to expect otherwise. Most recently I have spoken with Mr. Ken McCullough who teaches in Minnesota and with Mr. U Sam Oeur, now living in Texas. Mr. U told me that he thought Sareth's family was from Prey Veng Province; and fortunately Mr. McCullough referred me to you. You probably have read their book Crossing Three Wildernesses. Sareth is mentioned in this work.

I am very open to any suggestion and advice and am honored to have met you this way. If you are in Cambodia in December and can see me I will do my best to thank you personally. I hope to hear from you, Deputy Kok-Thay, or Ms. Becker. I am deeply grateful.

Sincerely,



James L. Black

Appendix 7

Letter, Transcription, and Translation of Song “Love Star” from Ith Khunnary
Letter from Jim to Khunnary, February 1, 2011

Letter from Ith Khunnary to Jim, January 12, 2012

Dear Mr. James L. Black,

First of all, I would like to present myself. My name IT Khunnary, currently I am 54 years old. I am Mr. IT Sareth's niece.

I would like to say "thank you so much" for publishing my uncle's truth in the book and sharing them in my country. It is great to hear that you would like to know who have found the book and helps to Mr. Sareth's relative. On December 16, 2011, during I was collecting old books and documents at my work place to throw away, I felt like I found something important then I picked it up. It was "Ka Pit = The Truth" Suddenly I saw my uncle's name in the book, after I got that it was my uncle's picture on the cover. I was really surprised about it, after I read the article inside I felt like I wanted to cry. There were a hundred books that I were preparing and nearly throw away, why I could see this book. Was that what my uncle bring to me?

It reminds me the last few sentences that my uncle talked to us before he was disappeared, I still remember it. He said "My dear brothers, sisters, my nieces and nephews, please went back to our home town" Then he continued that "I would go back to Phnom Penh and asked my friends who studied with me. Their name "Ho Nim" and "Ho Yon" - Why did they ask people to go out of city? Because here didn't have any school for study, and didn't use any currency" Then he said "If I died, leaved me alone because I didn't have wife or children" It was so sad, he has studied for 12 years out the country and because he loved the country so much, he came back and was killed.

Finally I wish you all the best of luck and wishes.

Best regards,
IT Khunnary

James L. Black

1709A Gornito Road, # 257, Valdosta, Georgia, 31601
Home: 912-247-5430, Mobile: 229-630-3672

February 1, 2011

Dear Niece Khunnary,

As I make my last preparations to leave tomorrow for Cambodia again I think of you and of what you did to make this possible. Thank you for your wonderful letter which was forwarded to me by your daughter Ms. Leak Soursdey.

I do believe that Sareth was speaking to you that day when you decided instead of throwing all the books away to put them down and examine one. You examined the exact one which spoke of him and of my search for his family, actually my search for you. I believe that his spirit speaks to us because he lives within our hearts and is in a sense with us each day of our lives.

Thank you for remembering Sareth's last words to you. I look forward to hearing more of your memories of him. I also want to you know about your life and that of your children as well. I hope you will not mind sharing your memories and your family with me while I am in Cambodia again. I leave at 5:45am tomorrow and will arrive at 10:45pm on Friday, February 3. Nephew Sam and Niece Bopha have kindly agreed to meet me at the airport and drive me to the Almond Hotel where I will stay.

My heart is full of joy knowing that I will see you and meet all of your family. Thank you for receiving me so warmly into your hearts and into your homes.

In anticipation of a wonderful time with all of you,

James L. Black

“Love Star” by Prince Norodom Sihanouk

Love Star (Pkay Sneiha)
 បទចម្រៀន ផាយស្នេហា

I ឱ ផាយស្នេហា ផាយស្នេហា គួរឲ្យស្នេហា
 or Pkay Leur Mek Pkay Avey Chamlek Kuor Ory Sneiha
 ផាយស្នេហា ផាយស្នេហា គួរឲ្យស្នេហា
 Pkay Nis Chea Pkay Robos Neak Na Kuor Ory Sneiha

I: meaning

Look at that glorious star.
 It's so lovely. Whose star is this?
 I love it so much at night time.

ក្នុងស្ថានភាព ៗៗ
 Knong Peil Reatrey (three times)

II ឱ ផាយស្នេហា ស្នេហា ស្នេហា ស្នេហា
 or Pkay Leur Steah Leuk Dai Sampeah Som Kon Kramom
 ម៉ែឲ្យស្នេហា ឲ្យស្នេហា ស្នេហា
 Mer Ory Neang Toch Chang Ban Neang Thom Som Kon Kramom

II: Meaning

Look at the stars in the house.
 I request for one of these
 stars - girls. The mother
 offers the younger girl
 while I prefer the bigger one.
 I want to dance with her.

យកមកស្នេហា ៗៗ
 Yok Mok Ream Leng (three times)

Khunmang

“Love Star” by Prince Norodom Sihanouk

P'kay Sne Ha

I. Oh! P'kay Leu Mek	P'kay Avey Cham Lek	Kour Oy Sne Ha
P'kay nih Chea P'kay	Robos Neak Na	Kour Oy Sne Ha
Knong Pheal Rea Trey.		

II. Oh! P'kay Leu P'theah	Leuk Day Som Peah	Som Kon Kra Mom
Mer Oy	Neang Toach	Chang Ban Neang Thom
Som Kon Kra Mom	York Mork Rom Leng.	

Love Star

I. Oh! Star in the sky	a strange star	(and) lovely one
Whose star	is this?	a lovely one
at night.		

II. Oh! Star in the house	join and raise hands to pray	(and) seek (approval) for (unmarried) daughter.
Mother permits	younger daughter	but (star) wants elder daughter
to invite her (daughter)	to dance.	

Appendix 8
Biographical Record Y00323 about “Ith”
From Database of Cambodian Genocide Project, Yale University and
the Documentation Center of Cambodia

មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា

Biographic Database

[Khmer](#) | [English](#)

Record No: Y00323
Name: Ith (PPP, p. 277)
Sources of Information: PPP, pp. 277-278

DK Employment 75-79 In the Ministry of Information in Phnom Penh, 1975???? ;notes: appointed by the City Committee Ministry, assistant to Chiev in charge of directing a group of former technicians from before the revolution (PPP, p. 277)

Chain of Command (Superiors) Chiev (PPP, p. 277)

DK Activities pre-79 resided in the old Commerce school, west of the Ministry of Information (PPP, p. 277)
removed from the Ministry of Information office when all responsibility for radio assignments and former technicians was shifted to Hu Nim's K-33 group (PPP, p. 278).

Affiliations: Chiev (PPP, p. 277).



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Appendix 9

“Chhim Sochit: A Student from Canada,” *Searching for the Truth*, Issue 28, p 4-6
Excerpts from the Chhim Sochit Confession

Chhim Sochit: A Student from Canada

Sophal Ly

Chhim Sochit was a Khmer intellectual who was born into a poor farmer family in the province of Battambang, but pursued his studies abroad. He moved to Canada as a refugee just before the Khmer Republic collapsed. When he came back to his country, he was arrested and sent to S-21 (Tuol Sleng prison) on October 10, 1976. His interrogator in Tuol Sleng was Brak Bo. Chhim was killed by Angkar on January 28, 1977.

Brief Biography

Sochit, 32 years old (1977), was born in Svay Pao commune Sangke district, Battambang province. His father's name is Chhim Chea. His mother's name was Samrith Huon (dead). His stepmother is Aop San, a farmer in Battambang province.

Chhim Sochit has four siblings:

1. Chhim Somitr, a (male) high school student in Battambang
2. Chhim Sometra, a (female) high school student in Battambang
3. Chhim Somno, a (male) primary school student
4. Chhim Somny, a (female) primary school student.

In 1967 Chhim Sochit graduated from the Faculty of Business in Phnom Penh. In November 1967 he received a scholarship to study in Belgium, but he returned home when he contracted an illness that forced him to abandon his studies there.

In January 1969 he began work at Electricity of Cambodia in Phnom Penh, becoming its chief accountant in September of that year.

Political Life

A. In Cambodia

In December 1969 Chhim Sochit was introduced by his friend, Bun Yeun, to Saray Bunky (an agent), a major in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Facing the financial hardship of his family who lived in the countryside, he decided, in February 1970, to become a member of a CIA group led by Peter

Thomson and Andre Motte (a French CIA agent), through Saray Bunky. He earned US\$180 per month as an agent whose job was to instigate students to rise up against the royalist regime, led by prince Sihanouk, and to support the Lon Nol regime.

Chhim Sochit contacted Koy Pech, a law student, and asked him to help create a movement against the royalist regime. Then he contacted some other students—Pen Kien, San That, Yim Kechse, and Kem Sontro—to ask them to enlarge the movement.

In October 1970, Saray Bunky sent Chhim Sochit to contact more students to propagandize that prince Sihanouk went to the People's Republic of China in order to ask Viet Cong armed forces to help him return to power and that the prince used his reputation to conceal this from the international community. In the same month he met the students who he had contacted and strongly believed that prince Sihanouk was a traitor. Chhim Sochit kept in touch with the five students more closely in order to persuade them to help spread his plan.

In January 1971 Chhim Sochit contacted three other students: Blong Lysueng from the Faculty of Medicine, Kim Srieng from the Faculty of Pedagogy, and Chhim Nath. Chhim Sochit tried to convince them to believe that the revolutionary army was under the control of Vietcong [and] Vietminh, and that Yuon communists were using Vietminh to attack and capture Cambodia as its satellite.

April 1971 was the time when the Khmer New Year would be celebrated. Chhim Sochit went to visit his relatives in Battambang province where he was born. On the way to Battambang he talked with a teacher named Kong Reth about the war in Cambodia, saying that high-ranking cadres of the revolutionary army were Vietcong and Vietminh, and really not the Cambodian revolutionary army. The teacher agreed with Sochit's opinion because he hated the Khmer Rouge. The Khmer

Rouge forced people in his village to give the army food and money, and forced them to flee into the jungle to join them. Discovering that Kong Reth was unhappy with the Khmer Rouge, Sochit enticed him to help encourage people to rise up against the Khmer Rouge.

In September 1971, Chhim Sochit resigned from his position in Electricity of Cambodia and applied for a new job at the National Credit Bank. There, he was in charge of export and import paperwork. One month later he asked Koe Mongkry, the dean of the Faculty of Business, to accept him to teach accounting to students in the Faculty. During his classes he took time to tell students about the Khmer Rouge to fill them with hatred and a desire for revenge against Khmer revolutionaries.

In November 1971, the political situation in Cambodia changed. Founders of the Khmer Republic broke up and their political standing became weak. Students who had supported the Khmer Republic took a quiet position in order to observe the events.

In March 1972 Chhim Sochit met with Koy Pech, Yim Kech Se, and Blong Lysuong to learn about the position of students at the faculties. The three told him that most of the students did not like Khmer Rouge soldiers and they still supported the Republic, but were unhappy with the republican leaders who did not practice the principles of a republic. After learning that the republic was still supported by most of the students, Sochit continued to contact other two students to stir up anger among them in order to spread this sentiment to other students.

In August 1972, Saray Bunky sent him a message saying that the Khmer Rouge abroad were resolutely waging a political war against the Republic and were supported and recognized by many countries. Moreover, they continued waging a political war in the international arena. In order to curb the spread of the Khmer Rouge on the international stage, Saray Bunky sent Chhim Sochit, Ith Sareth (Ministry of Information), and Lev Suth Sophoantha (Electricity of Cambodia) to join a delegation to Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Brazil. This was called a goodwill delegation. The delegation visited the four countries to ask them for [political] support. After being informed about the political situation

in Cambodia, governmental representatives from each country pledged support for the republic against the communist group.

On October 17, 1972 Chhim Sochit went to South Korea to study international business after being selected by the Ministry of Education. Chhim Sochit came to a party with his fellow participants. After being asked by his colleagues about the continuing war in Cambodia he told them, "The Khmer Rouge revolutionaries said they fight against imperialism. In reality, we don't see imperialists in Cambodia. The war [in Cambodia] is like the war waged by North Korea..." Most of his fellow friends gave their support to the Khmer Republic because South Korean people also experienced suffering when North Korea had waged a war against them between 1950 and 1953.

In March 1975 Chhim Sochit had to come back to his country, but unfortunately, the Pochen Tong Airport was under shelling attack. Phnom Penh was surrounded by revolutionary soldiers. When he could not return to Cambodia, he applied for refugee status to live in Canada.

B. In Canada

In Canada he became an accounting secretary at a women's fashion shop. In December 1975 he met Choun Viseth, the group leader in Canada (his CIA adviser in America was William Schneider). Through his contacts with Choun Viseth, Chhim Sochit volunteered to join the Khmer Free Movement in order to liberate Cambodia. He continued to work with Chum Ty (a military reporter) and Kuy Rong (In Choun Viseth's group and a propagandist responsible for recruiting Khmer people in Canada).

Chhim Sochit made several contacts with many Khmer refugees abroad to incite anger among them and persuade them to join the Khmer Free Movement to fight against the Cambodian Revolution, raising family separation to justify their cause: Khmer revolutionaries captured Phnom Penh and evacuated people from the city to rural areas to live miserably in hunger and without shelter during the hot season, causing deaths and suffering. Cambodian people were treated like animals and were killed by Angkar—whenever they wished—without trials. Angkar's principles held that

feeding old people was a waste of food because they could not work any more and deserved death. The people who were evacuated were fed only to help Angkar do agriculture. When Angkar was dissatisfied with or suspected someone, they dug up the past, saying that the accused was against Angkar or was a secret agent of imperialists. After that, the accused were brought to higher Angkar and were never seen again.

Ironically, thousands tons of rice that the people produced were exported to China or Laos, while leaving the Cambodian people hungry. Thus, Cambodians could not decide their own destiny, as Angkar promised. Rather, their lives were in Angkar's hands. Chhim Sochit used these negative aspects to entice Eab Bunlong to join the Free Khmer Movement.

In May-June Chhim Sochit attended two meetings at Chuon Viseth's invitation. The meetings were held to inform participants about a plan to liberate Cambodia through political means, which had already been worked out.

In August 1976 Chhim Sochit went to Cambodia under Chuon Viseth's orders. Chuon Viseth told him to recruit evacuated people and let them know about plans that would be implemented in Cambodia. First plan: when he arrives in Cambodia, he must make contact with an eight-member group—Saray Bunky, a major in the Ministry of Defense; Bun Yeoun, a second lieutenant in the Ministry of Defense; Sin Rong, a salesman; Lev Suthsophoantha, an official of Electricity of Cambodia; Ith Sareth from the Ministry of Information; Nong Phaly and Nhem Daovreoung from a private school called Dara Rasmey high school; and Hor An—to prepare for the next meeting. Second plan: after contact is made, Saray Bunky will be selected as the group leader. He will assign the eight members of the group to recruit evacuated people. The third plan: he must meet and seek support from twelve people in the revolutionary army. Saray is assigned to contact Sarin Chhak, Huot Sambath, and Chao Seng (an official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Ith Sareth is to contact Phok Chhay, Chao Teary and Uch Ven. Lev Suthsophoan's duty is to make contact with Dy Phon, Ruos Cheatho, and Phlaok Saphan. Chhim Sochit is to contact Men Niktho, Nuth Bunsong and Deng Kaory to seek support and to persuade them

to be secret informers from the Khmer Rouge.

On August 20, 1976, Chhim Sochit arrived in Cambodia. He was then sent to K-15 Unit (in the Cambodian-Russian school of Technology).

Between the time of his arrival and his arrest, Chhim Sochit did not carry out any plan made by Chuon Viseth because he was not free to move about, as he had expected he would be. In his confession, Sochit wrote that he was very shocked by what was going on and saw the real goal of the revolutionary Angkar.

On September 1, 1976 Chhim Sochit was brought to Boeung TroBek camp. On September 23, Chhim Sochit was sent to another unit, called Talei camp. Chhim Sochit lived there until he was smashed by Angkar.

Sophal Ly is a staff-writer for Searching for the Truth.

Brak Youtry (aka Brak Bo): Chhim Sochit's Interrogator

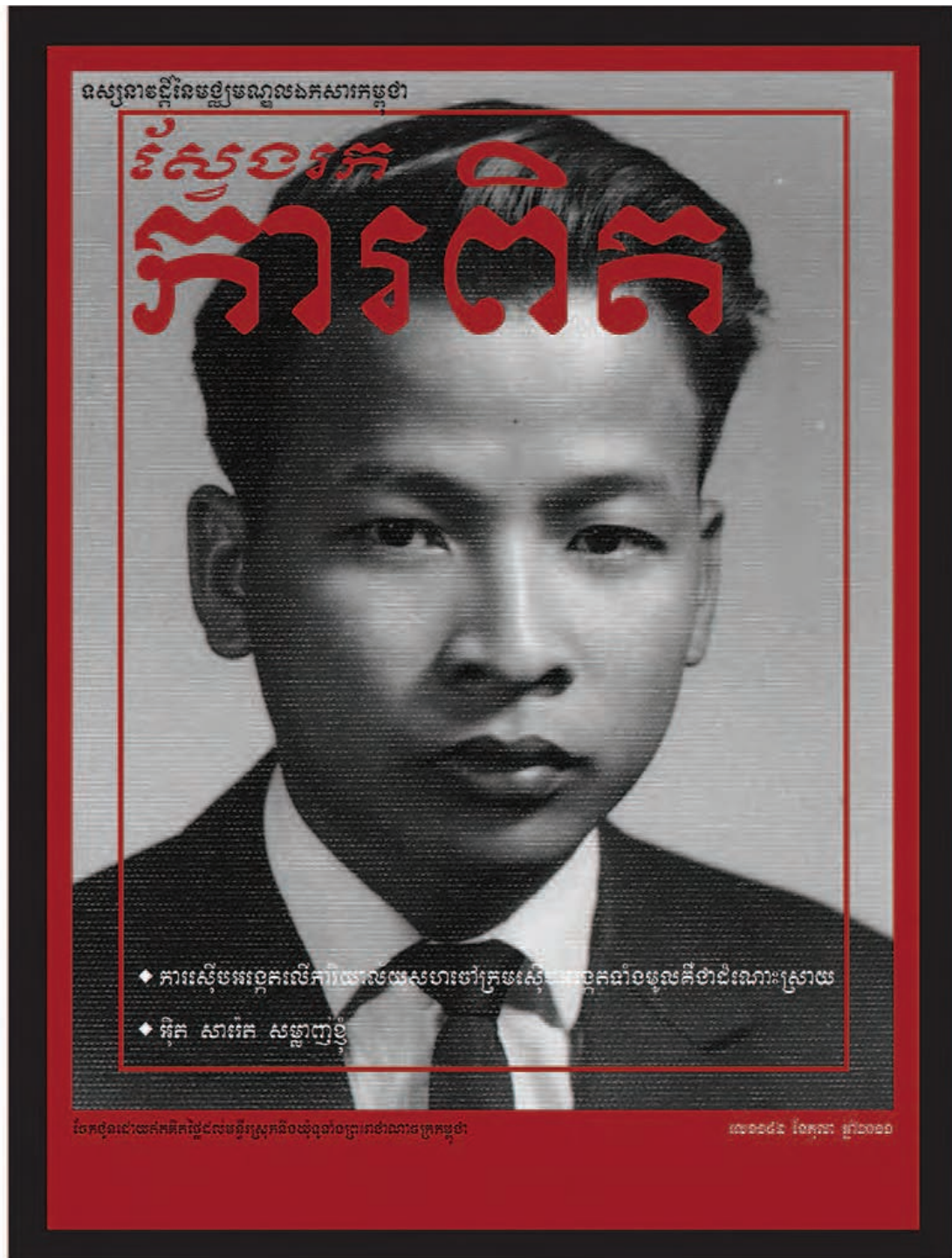
Twenty-three years old in 1976, Brak Youtry was also called Brak Bo and Comrade Bo. He was born in Prek Ta Duong village, Prek Thmey commune, District 18, Region 25. His father was Brak Om, a 55-year old Khmer. His mother was Chea Kuy, a 48-year Khmer farmer.

Brak Bo left school when he was in grade 9. He joined the revolution in early January 1973 through Ngorn Sry, chief of a fish sauce factory. Ngorn Sry helped Brak Bo get a job in the trade department of Region 25, where he worked for one year under the leadership of Hong, the president of business 21 in Region 25. Next, Angkar assigned him to cut trees and produce rice in the farming department of S-21 under Ta Sim, the chief of the farming department. He stayed in this position for six months.

On April 17, 1975 Brak Bo was sent to Unit 265, Platoon 22, headed by a man named Rath. After nine months, he was sent to study at a military technical school of Division 703, run by Tuy and Peng. He finished his studies after 5 months and 16 days, and was then appointed to be a messenger at S-21 (Tuol Sleng prison) under a platoon officer named Bou. After nearly a year, Brak

Appendix 10

Notices of the Search for Ith Sareth and His Family:
Advertisements placed by Mr. Socheat Nhean
and the Documentation Center of Cambodia



លេខ១៤២ ខែតុលា ឆ្នាំ២០១១

វិស័យអភិវឌ្ឍន៍-ជំពូកស្រាវជ្រាវអភិវឌ្ឍន៍

អ៊ិត សារ៉េត សម្លាញ់ខ្ញុំ

ខ្ញុំបានឈ្មោះ ជេមស៍ ប្លែក (James Black) សព្វថ្ងៃរស់នៅរដ្ឋចរចៀ សហរដ្ឋអាមេរិក ។ ខ្ញុំបានសូមប្រកាសស្នូលមិត្តភាពស្និទ្ធស្នាលឈ្មោះ អ៊ិត សារ៉េត ដែលបានមកសិក្សានៅសាកលវិទ្យាល័យចរចៀ សហរដ្ឋអាមេរិកកាលពីឆ្នាំ១៩៦២ ឬស្រាប់ញាតិរបស់ សារ៉េត ដែលអាចរស់រានជីវិតពីជំនាន់ខ្មែរក្រហម ។ ក្រោយពីបញ្ចប់ការសិក្សា សារ៉េត បានវិលត្រឡប់ទៅប្រទេសកម្ពុជាវិញ ហើយក្រោយមកពីឆ្នាំ១៩៧២ ដល់១៩៧៩ សារ៉េត បានកាន់មុខតំណែងជាប្រធានទីភ្នាក់ងារសារព័ត៌មានខ្មែរ (Agence Khmer de Presse) និងជាសាស្ត្រាចារ្យច្បាប់នៅទីក្រុងភ្នំពេញ ។ នៅថ្ងៃទី២៣ ខែមេសា ឆ្នាំ១៩៧៩ សារ៉េត បានសរសេរលិខិតតូចមួយធ្វើមកខ្ញុំ ដោយប្រាប់ថា គាត់ធ្វើការនៅក្រសួងព័ត៌មាន ហើយលែងធ្វើជាចាត់ប្រតិបត្តិការសារព័ត៌មានភ្នំពេញថែមសំឡេងហើយ ។ គាត់មានខ្សែចន្លោះមួយដែលមួយរបស់គាត់ត្រូវបានកាត់ ហើយគាត់បានពាក់ខ្សែចន្លោះនោះមកកាន់សហរដ្ឋអាមេរិកនៅឆ្នាំ១៩៦២ ។ បងប្អូនស្រីរបស់គាត់បានធ្វើស្មុគមួយ ហើយគាត់បានយកស្មុគនោះដើម្បីទុកស្រាមដើមរបស់គាត់ ។ នៅក្នុងឆ្នាំ១៩៧៩ ពេលដែល សារ៉េត មកប្រជុំនៅការិយាល័យអង្គការសហប្រជាជាតិក្នុងប្រព័ន្ធវិទ្យុវ៉ែត គាត់បានត្រឡប់មកមានមួយមកខ្ញុំ ។ ក្រៅពីទុកនេះ សារ៉េត បានធ្វើវត្ថុអនុស្សាវរីយ៍មកខ្ញុំជាច្រើន ហើយសព្វថ្ងៃនេះខ្ញុំនៅតែរក្សាទុករបស់ទាំងនេះបានល្អដដែល ។ ប៉ុន្តែចាប់តាំងពីខ្មែរក្រហមចូលកាន់កាប់ប្រទេសកម្ពុជាមក សារ៉េត បានបាត់ខ្លួនរហូត និងមិនដឹងជារសនៅទីណា ឬស្លាប់នៅទីណាឡើយ ។ ប្រសិនបើមានស្តាយ ឬដឹងព័ត៌មានអំពី អ៊ិត សារ៉េត សូមទាក់ទងមកប្រជុំផ្ទាល់តាមរយៈសារអេឡិចត្រូនិច jblackjim@gmail.com ឬទាក់ទងមកមជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជាតាមរយៈទូរស័ព្ទលេខ ០១៦ ៨៨៦ ៦៩២ ឬ ០២៣២១១៨៨៩ ។

សូមអរគុណ!



រូបថតផ្ទះ ឯកសារដែល សារ៉េត ប្រគល់ជូន ជេមស៍ ប្លែក

LOOKING FOR A LOST BEST FRIEND

My name is James L. Black. I am looking for my Cambodian best friend, Ith Sareth, who disappeared as the Khmer Rouge took power in Cambodia in April 1975. Sareth came to study at the University of Georgia in early 1960s. After his graduation, later he was appointed director of the *Agence Khmer de Presse* between 1972 and 1975 and he was also a professor of law. I am also looking to make contacts with his brothers, sisters, relatives or any person who knew him in Cambodia or abroad. Please feel free to contact me at jblackjim@gmail.com, or by phone: +1 229-630-3672 or postal service at 1709A Gornto Road, #257, Valdosta, Georgia 30601, USA, or contact the Documentation Center of Cambodia at 016 876 692 or 023 211 875.



Ith Sareth in 1963



Ith Sareth in 1963



Ith Sareth at University of Georgia, 1964

DOCUMENTATION CENTER OF CAMBODIA (DC-CAM) ♦ 14

និយាយពីការរស់នៅក្នុងសម័យខ្មែរក្រហមគឺនិយាយពីការផ្សះផ្សាអប់រំកូននៅឱ្យអត់ឱនអត្បាសស្រីយ
• ក្រសួងអប់រំ យុវជន និងកីឡា និងមជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា



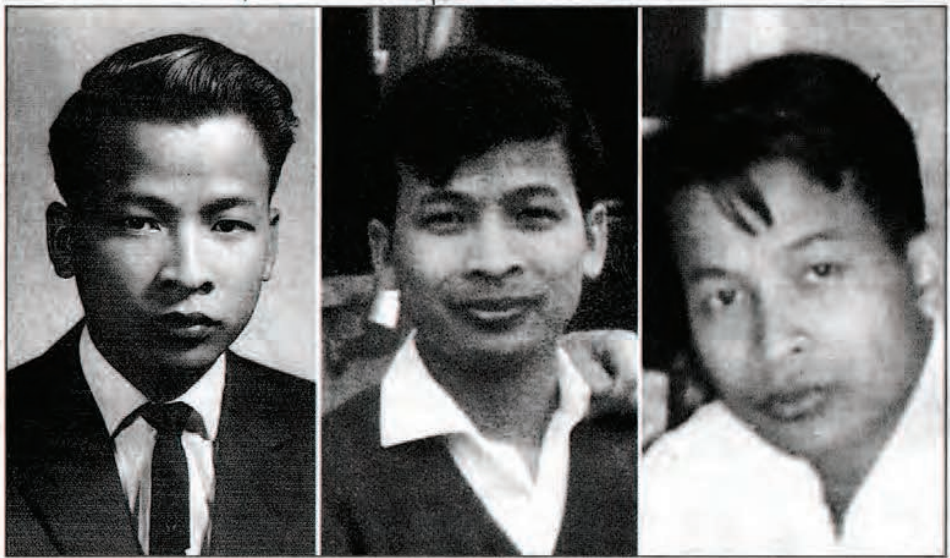
សម្ភាព្យ័ក្ខនៅទីណា?

ភ្នំពេញ៖ អ៊ិត សារ៉េត គឺជាមិត្តជិតស្និទ្ធរបស់ខ្ញុំម្នាក់ ។ សារ៉េត បានចាកចេញពីប្រទេសកម្ពុជា ដើម្បីមកបន្តការសិក្សានៅសាកលវិទ្យាល័យចរចាសហរដ្ឋអាមេរិក ក្នុងអំឡុងទសវត្សរ៍ ៦០ ។ ក្រោយពីបញ្ចប់ការសិក្សា សារ៉េត បានត្រឡប់មកប្រទេសកម្ពុជាវិញ ហើយក្រោយមកពីឆ្នាំ ១៩៧២ ដល់ ១៩៧៥ សារ៉េត បានកាន់មុខតំណែងជាប្រធានទីភ្នាក់ងារសារព័ត៌មានខ្មែរ (Agence Khmer de Presse) និងជាសាស្ត្រាចារ្យច្បាប់នៅទីក្រុងភ្នំពេញ ។

រាប់អានគ្នាខ្លាំង ទោះបីជាគាត់ត្រឡប់មកប្រទេសកម្ពុជាវិញក៏ដោយ ។ នៅថ្ងៃទី២៣ ខែមេសាឆ្នាំ១៩៧៣ សារ៉េត បានសរសេរលិខិតតូចមួយដើម្បីមកខ្ញុំ ដោយប្រាប់ថា គាត់ធ្វើការនៅក្រសួងព័ត៌មាននៅប្រទេសកម្ពុជា ។ គាត់មានខ្សែចង្កេះមួយដែលម្តាយរបស់គាត់ឱ្យគាត់ពាក់ ហើយគាត់បានពាក់ខ្សែចង្កេះនោះមកកាន់សហរដ្ឋអាមេរិកនៅឆ្នាំ១៩៦២ ។ ក្រោយមក សារ៉េត បានប្រគល់ខ្សែចង្កេះនោះមកខ្ញុំ ។ បងប្អូនស្រីរបស់គាត់បានធ្វើស្មុគមួយ ហើយគាត់បានយកស្មុគនោះ ដើម្បីទុកស្រោមជើងរបស់គាត់ ។

គាត់មកប្រជុំនៅការិយាល័យអង្គការសហប្រជាជាតិក្នុងបុរីញូយ៉ក សារ៉េត បានឱ្យខ្ញុំ កូនបហុនមកមួយមកខ្ញុំ ។ ក្រៅពីខ្ញុំកន្លះ សារ៉េត បានផ្ញើវត្ថុអនុស្សាវរីយ៍មកខ្ញុំជាច្រើន ហើយសព្វថ្ងៃនេះខ្ញុំនៅតែរក្សាទុករបស់ទាំងនេះបានល្អដដែល ។ សព្វថ្ងៃវត្ថុអនុស្សាវរីយ៍ដែល សារ៉េត ឱ្យមកខ្ញុំធ្វើឱ្យខ្ញុំនឹកឃើញគាត់មិនអាចបំភ្លេចបានទេ ។ ចាប់តាំងពីខ្ញុំរក្សាមកចូលកាន់ការប្រទេសកម្ពុជាមក សារ៉េត បានបាត់ខ្លួនរហូត និងមិនដឹងជាន់នៅទីណា ឬស្លាប់នៅទីណាឡើយ ។ ខ្ញុំនៅតែមិនដឹងថា ជោគវាសនារបស់មិត្តខ្ញុំម្នាក់នេះទៅជាយ៉ាងណានោះទេ ។

10/23/11 ជេមស៍ ហ្សក



Appendix 11
Letter of Appreciation to the Documentation Center of Cambodia

James L. Black

PMB 257, 1709A Gornito Road, Valdosta, Georgia, 31601-3580
Telephones: home 229-247-5430; cellular 229-630-3672
E-mail: jblack@valdosta.edu

December 28, 2012

Mr. Youk Chhang, Director
Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam)
66 Sihanouk Blvd
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Dear Director Chhang,

As 2013 approaches I think of those who have most influenced my life in 2012. You, Mr. Socheat Nhean, and your staff members are at that top of that list. I shall always be grateful for your kindness to me, for the time and effort given to my cause, for precious space in "Searching for Truth," and for all efforts associated with my having found the Ith family in December, 2011. I am profoundly influenced and changed by that encounter and by my subsequent visit in 2012. We remain in contact to this day, and I believe always will.

Through the Documentation Center of Cambodia my life has been changed in several specific ways. First, a tear in my heart has been healed. Because of the abrupt and brutal way my friend Sareth was forced by my family to leave the United States in 1965 there was, over and above the sadness of losing his company, a lingering sorrow in my heart. Meeting his brother Ith Sandap and his sister Ith Siveth and being able to look into their faces, explain what happened, and receive such understanding and warmth in return was one of the most healing moments of my life.

Second, the time I spent in Cambodia with you, Mr. Socheat Nhean, the Ith family, and the Cambodian people has redirected my inner self to a more positive and peaceful place. Since the 1960's I have carried guilt about the involvement of the US in Southeast Asia and the effects of the "American War" on the Cambodian people and the Cambodian landscape. The only image I carried of Cambodia was one of devastation and human injury; it was fixed in my mind. You and your staff at the Documentation Center of Cambodia, specifically Mr. Socheat Nhean, have afforded me the opportunity to understand how far Cambodia has come since that time. I now see a country stepping forward economically, socially, and educationally. Everywhere I went I found acceptance and kindness. I saw industrious citizens working to make their lives and the lives of others better. Although the past cannot be changed, you showed me that we can change our point of view and understanding of it. In so doing, we in a sense free ourselves to take the lessons from it and apply those lessons bought at very high price to ensure a better future.

Third, I have been reunited with "my family." I find it difficult to express the effect of having been received and accepted in such a gracious way by the extended family of my friend Sareth. I recognized them, and they recognized me in the most fundamental of ways. I felt as if we had always known each other. As I was preparing to leave Cambodia brother Sandap said to me, "Our brother Sareth was taken from us during the war; now he has sent us you."

It is obvious to me that this healing and reconciliation is not unique to me. It is being duplicated throughout your country and in other parts of the world by the continuing efforts of the Documentation Center of Cambodia. Please express my gratitude to everyone at the Center. Please tell them that their dedication and good work is making the world a better place in ways that they cannot always know. Please assure them that their influence extends beyond national boundaries and into the hearts and minds of people all over the world,

Sincerely,



James L. Black
Valdosta, Georgia USA



Ith Sareth, Tim Black, Gale Black, Martha Black, Michael Black, Jim Black

Do not forget that we
consider (and always will)
ourselves as not only educated
but cultivated people.

I T Sareth

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