

CAMBODIAN WAR: 1970-1975



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A First and Last Reunion of a Unique Band of Brothers & Sisters

For those who covered the Cambodian War between 1970 and 1975, the memories have always been particularly painful. Forty years ago this month, they witnessed first-hand the overnight plunge of a peaceful Cambodia into the abyss as the country was dragged into the Vietnam War. Then over the next five years, the horrors multiplied as war engulfed the entire country. A total of 37 foreign and Cambodian journalists were killed or disappeared, more than in the war in neighboring Vietnam. When the war ended with the fall of Phnom Penh to the Khmer Rouge on April 17, 1975, Cambodia's nightmare continued—and many of those who covered the war could not bear to look back at the entire tragedy. At least 31 Cambodian journalists were executed after the Khmer Rouge take-over, including one country's few female reporters.

Now, for the first time since that horrible war, a handful of war correspondents are returning to Phnom Penh for a reunion from 20 to 23 April. The event is organized by Chhang Song, the last Information Minister in the Lon Nol government who now divides his time between Cambodia and the US and acts as a senior adviser to both the government and public-at-large. As a military spokesman at the beginning of the war, then-Captain Chhang Song worked closely with these foreign correspondents, listened to their complaints and treated them as members of his own family.

"The sudden presence of a large number of foreign journalists in Cambodia in the early 1970's was an important historical development in Cambodia's fight for survival," Chhang Song explains. "I knew them as friends. Many were killed or disappeared. For the past 40 years, I have never forgotten those days and have dreamed constantly of bringing them back. Now, it is finally happening."

Assisting Chhang Song in his quest is former Associated Press (AP) correspondent US-born Carl Robinson who covered the Cambodian War from neighboring Saigon, today's Ho Chi Minh City, and now lives in Brisbane, Australia. While several reunions have been held over the past 15 years in Saigon, this is the first one in Phnom Penh. And, considering their age, this reunion will most likely also be the last one.

"Covering the war was so painful that many, even now, are unable to look back on that period," explains Robinson, who has only re-visited Cambodia in the past couple years. "It's even harder to look at what happened afterwards. For their own peace of mind, this return is an important event in their lives. I'm sure there will be quite a few tears. But I'm sure joy too as they witness Cambodia's amazing resilience and recovery."

During the Cambodia War, Le Royal—then renamed Le Phnom by the republican regime—was the unofficial headquarters of the foreign press corps which numbered less than 50 at any one time. Many had offices in the hotel as well as accommodation. The pool-side restaurant was a favorite gathering place after another hard day covering the war, a danger-fraught exercise that saw many venturing down less-than-secure roads by vehicle. For the reunion, the now totally refurbished hotel is acting as the official host of the reunion with several functions planned.

Several activities are planned over the three-day reunion including a personally guided tour of Cambodia's National Museum and the Royal Palace, both closed during the war, plus informal gatherings and exhibitions in the downtown quarter. On one day, the former correspondents will re-enact a morning military briefing under a banyan tree not far from Le Royal where then-Captain Chhang Song had his office. Then, as during the war, they will head off on a "road run" out of the city to check out the situation first-hand. On this occasion, however, they'll travel down Route 3 to Wat Po where nine of their colleagues were ambushed and killed by the Khmer Rouge on 31 May 1970—the most in a single day—and hold a Remembrance and Lunch at the local Buddhist temple. In the evening, a memorial to their dead and missing colleagues will be unveiled at Le Royal. The commemorative reunion has the support of the Minister of Information Khieu Kanharith, the Club of Cambodian Journalists (CCJ), the Overseas Press Club of Cambodia and the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam).

During their reunion, the former correspondents will also visit the Killing Fields as they catch up first-hand with what happened after 1975 and then are brought up to today's more peaceful times. They are hoping to meet with local tourism and business people as well as local journalists. About a dozen of the 40 surviving correspondents from the Cambodia War are expected to attend the reunion, including two women correspondents, Sylvana Foa and Elizabeth Becker.



Photo of Elizabeth Becker in 1973, from her official press card for the Khmer Republic and her card from the Committee for the Safety of Foreign Correspondents in Cambodia, asking in five languages (Khmer, Vietnamese, English, French and Chinese) to be treated well as a professional journalist. Foreign journalists always carried both cards.



Elizabeth Becker of the Washington Post interviewing Prime Minister Long Borei of the Khmer Republic outside Phnom Penh in spring 1971. He refused to flee at war's end and was captured and beheaded by the Khmer Rouge.



Sylvana Foa, UPI bureau chief in Phnom Penh, on a boat on the Mekong.



Kate Webb, the UPI bureau chief.

PHOTOS ABOVE: TOP LEFT: Al Rockoff and Françoise Demulder, who passed away only last year. Photo: Elizabeth Becker. Photo by Catherine LeRoy. TOP RIGHT: Viet Cong rocket attack on Tik Lsak area of Phnom Penh, 1972.

AGENDA



20 to 23 April 2010

DAY 1, TUESDAY 20/4:

Arrival of participants in Phnom Penh and check into Le Royal Hotel.

17:00: Welcome drinks and then informal dinner in city restaurant.

DAY 2, WEDNESDAY 21/4:

09:00: Guided tour of Cambodia's National Museum by ex-Reuters Correspondent and now Archeologist at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies Peter Sharrock and his local counterparts. Hosted Lunch. Afternoon visit to Royal Palace including performance by Royal Ballet.

18:00: Welcome Reception and Dinner at Le Royal.

DAY 3, THURSDAY 22/4:

08:30: Morning "military briefing" under the tree outside Colonel Am Rong's old office followed by a "road run" down Route 3 to Wat Po where nine of our colleagues were ambushed and killed by Khmer Rouge on 31 May 1970. Service of Remembrance & Lunch at a local Buddhist temple.

16:00: Return to Phnom Penh for unveiling ceremony of a Memorial to Fallen Journalists of the Cambodian War 1970-75.

19:00: Evening dinner hosted by Cambodian Journalists Association.

DAY 4, FRIDAY 23/4:

09:00: Briefing on events after 1975 followed by visit to the Killing Fields.

12:30: Luncheon hosted by local business association, including tourism association, focusing on Cambodia today.



TOP LEFT: Kampong Trabek, Prey Veng province.
TOP RIGHT: Viet Cong rocket attack over Tii Laak area, Phnom Penh 1972.

BOTTOM LEFT: Reporters, Phnom Penh, 1972.
BOTTOM RIGHT: Col. Am Rong, Kung Thay Ly, Sylvania Foa, Col. Azada from the Philippine Embassy. In the back left is David Maimani from the Israeli Embassy and at right in the back is AFP's Laurent Chevalier.

ATTENDEES



List of Attendees for Phnom Penh Reunion

CHHANG SONG: Co-organizer of the reunion. At the start of Cambodia War in 1970, Chhang was a captain in the army working with spokesman Colonel Am Rong and a daily briefer to foreign media. In 1974, he was named Minister of Information in the Khmer Republic government that fell in April 1975. Today he lives in Long Beach, CA. Well-known to all old hacks who covered the war. (US)

CARL ROBINSON: Co-organizer of the reunion. He worked with the Associated Press in Saigon as a photographer and between 1968 and 1975 as a full-time correspondent. He frequently covered the war in Cambodia on extended assignments. US-born, moved to Australia after the war. (US/AUS)

JIM & MILLY PRINGLE: Reuters correspondent, later Newsweek and The Times (London). Covered Vietnam and Cambodia during the war and afterwards to present time. Presently residing in Phnom Penh. (UK)

PETER SHARROCK: Ex-Reuters correspondent and now an Archaeologist at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies and an expert on Khmer antiquities. (UK)

T. JEFF WILLIAMS: Ex-AP and later CBS. Slipped into Cambodia three days before the March 18, 1970 coup posing as professor because American journalists were then banned. Covered the first six months of the conflict during which time 25 foreign journalists were murdered. Hired by CBS News in Cambodia following the death of correspondent George Syvertsen. This is his first return. (US)

KURT VOLKERT: Ex-CBS News. Arrived in Phnom Penh mid-May 1970 with CBS crew from Tokyo. Did not accompany Syvertsen and other crew members that fateful day 31 May 1970. Helped recover the bodies of CBS crew and was instrumental in mapping where executed NBC and CBS crew members were buried. Returned in 1992 to help a US military team recover their remains. (US)

ELIZABETH BECKER: Covered the Cambodian war for the Washington Post, Newsweek and NBC. She is the author of *When the War was Over*, a history of modern Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge, which has been translated into Khmer (by Youk Chhang) and French and won the Robert F. Kennedy book award. Her new book *Bophana*, a story of love in the time of the Khmer Rouge, will be released in Cambodia in Khmer, French and English at the time of the reunion. Recently retired from the New York Times, she visits Cambodia regularly. Her stories from the war can be found on www.elizabethbecker.com. (US)

DON KIRK: First visited Cambodia in 1966, later covered the 1970 Sihanouk overthrow and US invasion. While working for Washington Star in April 1970, he and Canadian Broadcasting Commission's Bill Cunningham were almost captured by Khmer Rouge near Kirivong south of Phnom Penh but managed to talk their way out. In 1971, published *Wider War: The Struggle for Cambodia, Thailand and Laos*. Wrote for New York Times Magazine and then the Chicago Tribune, where he revealed Khmer Rouge atrocities in 1974 in articles republished in *Tell It to the Dead: Memories of a War (1975 & 1996)*. First returned to Cambodia in 1985 for USA Today and last in 2002 for the International Herald Tribune. (US)

AL ROCKOFF: A freelance photographer who covered the war in Cambodia for AP and other agencies. Present at the fall of Phnom Penh in April 1975 and at the French Embassy. Returns regularly to Cambodia for several months a year. (US)

DAN SOUTHERLAND: UPI and later Christian Science Monitor's correspondent who regularly covered the Cambodian War, including the 1970 US Invasion, from his base in Saigon. He was one of the last correspondents to see Sean Flynn (son of actor Errol Flynn) and Dana Stone before their disappearance east of Chipou in April 1970. Worked regularly with the legendary Dith Pran before he was hired full-time by the New York Times Sydney Schanberg. Covered Fall of Saigon in 1975. Now works for RFA. (www.rfa.org for recently-produced Mekong Diaries.) (US)

SYLVANA FOA: Covered Cambodian War for Newsweek and United Press International (UPI) from its early days in 1970. A determined journalist, she earned the enmity of American Embassy and expulsion from Cambodia in 1973 after exposing US violations of Congressional restrictions on the war. Joined UPI in Hong Kong and interviewed Prince Norodom Sihanouk in Beijing in October 1973, was one of the first American reporters allowed into China during the Cultural Revolution. She was first woman to serve as foreign editor of a major international news organization (UPI), the first woman news director of an American television network (Univision) and the first woman to serve as Spokesman for the Secretary General of the United Nations. Twice nominated for Pulitzer Prize, she now teaches journalism at New York University extension in Tel Aviv, Israel. (US)

JACQUES & LESLIE LESLIE: LA Times correspondent from January 1972 to July 1973 when he was expelled by the Saigon government. First American to visit "liberation area" after the 1973 cease-fire. Covered Cambodia war until December 1973 and returned in February 1975 until a couple days before Khmer Rouge occupied Phnom Penh in April. Also covered the collapse of the coalition government in Vientiane and the takeover by the Pathet Lao. Author of a book about Vietnam and Cambodia called *The Mark: A War Correspondent's Memoir of Vietnam and Cambodia*, published by Four Walls Eight Windows in 1995. (US)

MIKE MORROW: Ex-Dispatch News Service correspondent who broke the My Lai Massacre story in 1969. Captured and held by VC/NVA for one month in Cambodia in 1970. Now lives in Beijing. First time

back since war. (US)

TERRY & SUSAN WOLKERSTORFER: Ex-AP correspondent who covered invasion of Cambodia in 1970 while based in Saigon. (US)

GLENN MCDONALD: Ex-ABC radio correspondent who covered the Cambodia War off and on between 1970 and 1975. (US)

STEVE NORTHUP: Ex-UPI and Time photographer who covered the war. (US)

MARTIN STUART FOX: Ex-UPI correspondent who covered Laos and then Vietnam but never Cambodia. (Traveling with wife Elizabeth.) (AUS)

TIM PAGE: Ex-Time-Life photographer. Badly wounded in '69 and evacuated to US. Never covered the Cambodian War but was there with the UN in 1989. Devoted years to finding out what happened to his good friends Sean Flynn and Dana Stone and produced one documentary is now working on a second. Hopefully he will be shooting during the Reunion. Traveling with Australian documentary maker Marianne Harris. (UK)

PERRY DEANE YOUNG: Ex-UPI reporter who wrote the book *Two of the Missing* about Sean Flynn and Dana Stone, which has recently been re-printed with revised material. Left Vietnam in 1968 and this is his first time back. Never worked in Cambodia but this is a mission to pay homage to his lost friends. (US)

SIMON DRING AND FIONA MCPHERSON: Ex-London Daily Telegraph correspondent covering Cambodia. (UK)

DIRCK HALSTEAD: Ex-UPI and then Time Magazine correspondent. (US)

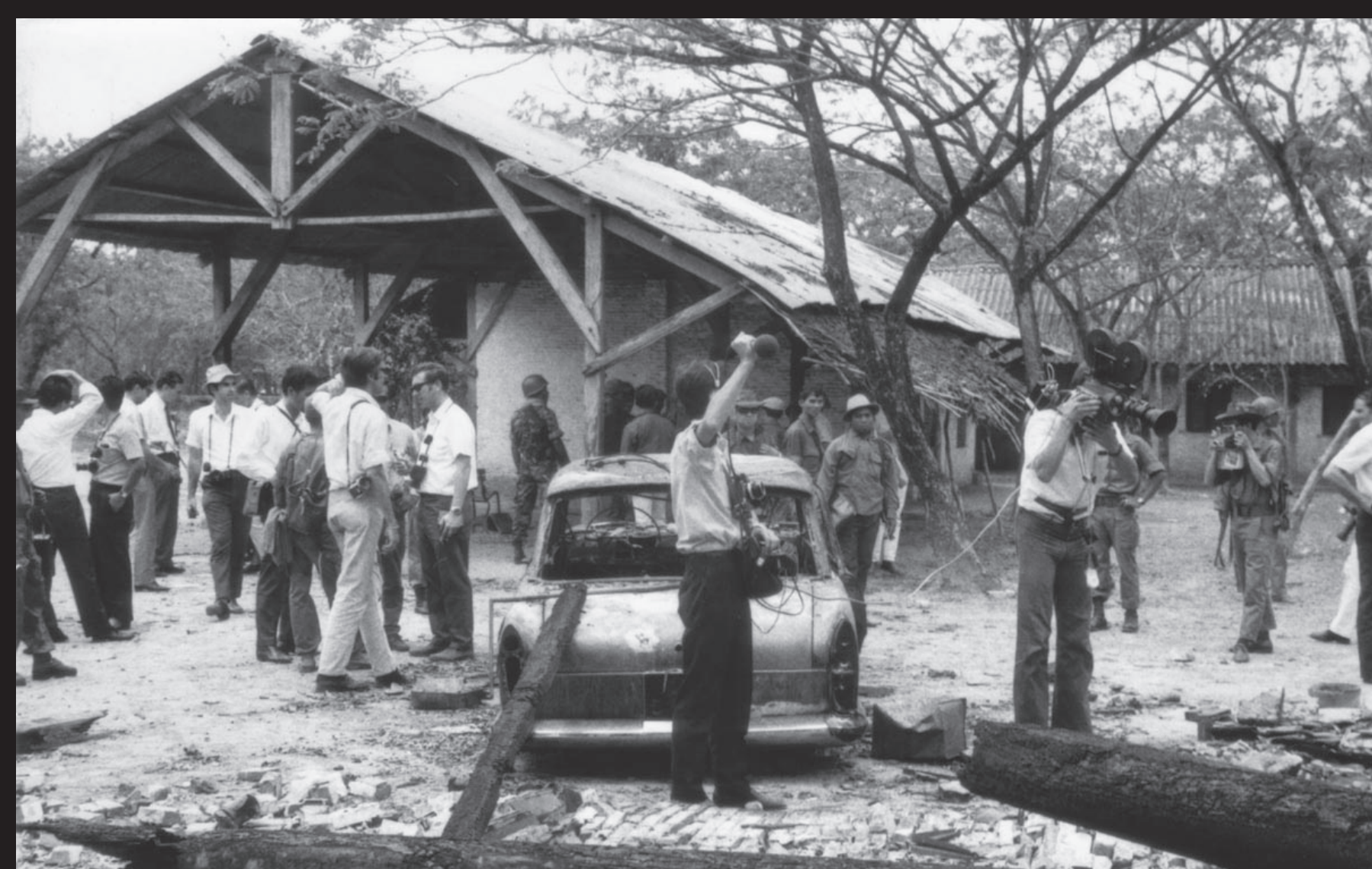
DAVID TERRY: Freelance photographer who covered Vietnam and Cambodia Wars. (US)

TOM CHEATHAM: Correspondent with UPI who covered Vietnam in mid to late 1960's. (US)

KEN WAGNER: Ex-UPI correspondent. (US)

MATT FRANJOLA: Ex-AP correspondent in Phnom Penh in last stages of the war who later covered the fall of Saigon. (US)

GEORGE HAMILTON: Actor friend of Sean Flynn who is attending to pay homage to his memory. (US)



TOP LEFT: Refugees.
TOP RIGHT: Press Conference with Lon Nol's spokesman Am Rong whose name was pronounced 'Am Wrong' by Western reporters at the time, 1970. His assistant Chhang Song, standing to the right with a logo on his left sleeve, was later appointed Minister of Information of the Khmer Republic. Source: Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives/The Lon Nol Dossier.

BOTTOM TOP: Chhang Song (looking on), 1972.

MEDIA CASUALTIES OF THE CAMBODIAN WAR: 1970 -1975

Compiled by the Richard Pyle of The Associated Press (AP) and last updated on 19/3/10. Further refined by Carl Robinson.

A total of 37 international and Cambodian journalists, photographers & cameramen were killed or missing-in-action (MIA) in Cambodia between April 1970 and April 1975.

The largest number were from Japan (10), France (8) and USA (7 each). Cambodia lost five (5) during the war. Other nationalities are Switzerland (2), West Germany (1), Austria (1), Netherlands (1), India (1), Laos (1) and Australia (1).

1970

Gilles Caron France Gamma phtg MIA Rte 1 Chipou CA Apr 4
 Claude Arpin France FL/Newsweek phtg Cap VC Rte 1 Chipou CA Apr 5
 Guy Hannotaux Switz L'Express Cap VC Rte 1 Chipou CA Apr 5
 Akira Kusaka Japan Fuji TV MIA Rte 1 Chipou CA Apr 6
 Yujiro Takagi Japan Fuji TV MIA Rte 1 Chipou CA Apr 6
 Sean Flynn USA FL/Time MIA Rte 1 Chipou CA Apr 6**
 Dana Stone USA FL/CBS MIA Rte 1 Chipou CA Apr 6**
 Dieter Bellendorf WGermany phtg NBC Cap KR Svay Rieng CA Apr 8
 Georg Gensluckner Austria FL Cap KR Svay Rieng CA Apr 8
 Willy Mettler Switz FL MIA Kampot CA Apr 16
 Takeshi Yanagisawa Japan Nihon Denpa corr MIA Kampot CA May 10
 Teruo Nakajima Japan Omori Inst MIA unk loc CA May 29
 Tomoharu Iishi Japan CBS cam KR/VC ambush Wat Po Rte 3 CA May 31

Kojiro Sakai Japan CBS sound KR/VC ambush Wat Po Rte 3 CA May 31
 Ramnik Lekhi India CBS cam KR/VC ambush Wat Po Rte 3 CA May 31
 Gerald Miller USA CBS prod KR/VC ambush Wat Po Rte 3 CA May 31
 George Syvertsen USA CBS corr KR/VC ambush Wat Po Rte 3 CA May 31
 Yeng Samleng Cambodia CBS driver KR/VC ambush Wat Po Rte 3 CA May 31***
 Welles Hangen USA NBC corr VC ambush Wat Po Rte 3 CA May 31
 Roger Colne France NBC cam VC ambush Wat Po Rte 3 CA May 31
 Yoshihiko Waku Japan NBC sound VC ambush Wat Po Rte 3 CA May 31
 Raymond Meyer France ORTF MIA Siem Reap CA Jul 7
 Rene Puisseuseau France ORTF MIA Siem Reap CA Jul 7
 J. Frank Frosch USA UPI corr Murdered Rte 2 Takeo CA Oct 28
 Kyoichi Sawada Japan UPI phtg Murdered Rte 2 Takeo CA Oct 28
 Johannes Duynisveld Neth FL ARVN ambush Parrots Beak CA Dec 26+

1971

Francis Bailly France FL Murdered Rte 4 CA Feb 19

1972

Alan Hiron Australia FL Cap KR Neak Luong CA Apr 25
 Terry L Reynolds USA FL/UPI Cap KR Neak Luong CA Apr 25
 Chim Sarath Cambodia FL Cap KR Neak Luong CA Apr 25

1973

Has Prak Cambodia MIA Has Santeheap CA date unk
 Taizo Ichinose Japan FL MIA Angkor CA Nov 23

Lim Saron Cambodia MIA Nokor Thom CA date unk

1974

Koki Ishiyama Japan Kyodo/FL Cap KR Oct 73/rptd died CA Jan 20
 Marc Filloux France AFP/Laos murdered by KR CA Apr 15 (aprx)**
 Manivanh Laos AFP FL/interpreter murdered by KR CA Apr 15 (aprx)**
 Lim Savath Cambodia FL/AP KIA Kampong Chhnang CA Oct 1 (aprx)

1975

Ly Eng Domneung Peel Prik (Morning News) killed by KR Phnom Penh CA***



The man with the cigarette is Barney Seibert of UPI. The man standing on the far left is Heng Hok. Back row, second from left is Path Sun; back row, third from left is Im Yam; back row, far right is Chey Sarun; front row, far right is Sing Siphly; front row, second from right is Veng Eng. The others are all photographers or freelancers who worked with the press. Their names are unknown.

AFTER 17 APRIL 1975 – THE TIME OF THE PRISON WITHOUT WALLS CAMBODIANS KIA/MIA AFTER THE FALL OF PHNOM PENH#

Accurate accounting of Cambodian nationals KIA/MIA after 1975 is problematical due to scant information and the unknown fate of many of the victims. The list below is not definitive and more information is needed on the circumstances of death. Most of these Cambodians had worked on the front lines of the fighting as freelancers for the international press—and were targeted by the Khmer Rouge for this work—while also working for their local papers. As they vanished after the Khmer Rouge takeover when hostilities ended in April 1975, they are treated here as a separate category.

Chhor Vuthi AP
 Hong Ho UPI
 Sun Heang freelance/AP
 Tea Kim Heang (Moonface) freelance/AP photographer
 Mean Leang AP/freelance
 Put Sophan CBS
 Sou Vichit Gamma photographer
 Sok Ngoun Reuters
 Ith Chhun freelance
 Chea Ho UPI
 Lanh Daunh Rar AP

Lek
 Leng
 Lyng Nhan AP
 Ty Many
 Heng Hok UPI
 Vantha AP
 Ung Kim Seng aka Cheav *
 Saing Hel editor Areyathor newspaper *
 Yun Huor Nihon Dempa News *
 Keo Yun freelance TV cameraman *

Soeung Phoeuk Thor editor of Maet-to-Phum,
 or Newspaper Editor *
 Ou Nget photographer with Minister of Information *
 Hak Kheng freelance cameraman *
 Buoy Sreng editor of Sangkruos newspaper *
 Suon Chheng Horn *
 Chey Chum *
 I Ith *
 Men Manil *
 Ly Khuon *

* Arrested, held, tortured and executed at Tuol Sleng between 1976 and 1978.

*** Yeng Samleng, a CBS driver, is only non-news person on list.

** Flynn and Stone are believed to have been executed by KR captors (per Tim Page).
 + Duynisveld, traveling w/ VC unit, was seeking Stone and Flynn.

** Filloux and Manivanh, his female interpreter, left Vientiane and crossed into northern Cambodia hoping to meet and interview Khmer Rouge officials. They were never seen again; available evidence indicates they were captured and executed. Bodies were not recovered. Jean-Jacques Cazaux, AFP chef in Laos at the time, said Filloux was a locally hired staffer on pending reassignment to AFP Paris. Manivanh, a freelance interpreter, is the only Laotian on the list.

*** As the Khmer Rouge entered Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975, Ly Eng hid in the Monorum Hotel for two or three weeks. Then he descended from his hiding place, found his old red convertible sports car and dashed away down Monivong Boulevard toward the bridge, breaking a few Khmer Rouge blockades. He reached the bridge when a group of Khmer Rouge guards prayed him with bullets and he plunged into the river in his car.

Compiled by Youk Chhang and Elizabeth Becker

FURTHER REFERENCES:

Requiem: by the Photographers Who Died in Vietnam and Indochina, edited by Horst Faas and Tim Page (Random House, New York 1997); A Cambodian Odyssey and the Deaths of 25 Journalists, by Kurt Volkert and T. Jeff Williams (iUniverse.com, Lincoln, NE 20010); Lost Over Laos, A Story of Tragedy, Mystery and Friendship, by Richard Pyle and Horst Faas (Da Capo Press, Cambridge, MA 2003); Two of the Missing, by Perry Deane Young (Press 53, PO Box 30314, Winston-Salem, NC, 1975 and 2009.)

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