

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Patrick Lam

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Veterans Remember Oral History project

Interview # VRV-V-L-2015-005

Patrick Lam, who fled Vietnam as a 'boat person' in 1979 at the age of nine, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Veterans Remember-Vietnam* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Feb 20, 2015 Location: IL Information Service studio, Springfield, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital video, HD – wide screen

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Technical Support: Mark Suszko, Greg Lipe and Tony Bateman, IIS videographers

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 0.47/0.78hrs.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on May 6, 2015.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

**Transcript
being processed**

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Abstract

Patrick Lam, *Veterans Remember*, VRV-V-L-2015-005

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Phat Tan Bui, who is now known as Patrick Lam, was born on January 20, 1972 in Saigon, Vietnam (formerly South Vietnam), and grew up in Lai Thieu, South Vietnam, a more rural community north of Saigon. His father served as an interpreter for the United States Army until his death in 1974. After that, the family was very poor and struggled to survive, especially after the Communists came to power in May, 1975. In 1979, Patrick's grandmother decided that the family should take a risk and try to smuggle some family members out of the country in the hope that they would make it to a friendly country (hopefully the United States), and then send for the rest of the family to join them.

Young Patrick said goodbye to his mother and siblings, and joined two aunts and uncles and their children, twelve family members in all, who bribed their way onto a fishing vessel in My Tho, crammed with 200 boat people. As part of the escape plan, he was adopted by his uncle, Tan Nhut Lam. They were at sea for a week, evaded Malaysian pirates and had run out of food and water when they found a lone oil rig. Patrick's family jumped into the water so they would be rescued by the oilmen. They then were transferred to a friendly naval vessel (Indonesian or Malaysian), which took them to tiny, deserted Kuku Island. They were left there to fend for themselves for several months. The family was then taken to Galang Island, Indonesia in for a short stay, then to Singapore before finally flying to San Francisco, California in 1980. They soon joined family members in Port Arthur, Texas, eager to start a new life in the United States. See also Mr. Lam's interview in the *Immigrant Stories* project for a more thorough discussion of his life as an immigrant in the U.S.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Vietnamese boat people; life under Communist rule in Vietnam in the late 1970s; Kuku Island, Indonesia; Galang, Indonesia; life on the deserted island of Kuku; My Tho, Vietnam; first impressions of the United States

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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