

July 3, 1973
~~June~~

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Before the fall of Saigon, ~~he~~^I wanted to flee with family, US air force Col. said he could fly family out, but not me. Against orders.

April 30- Communists arrived in Saigon in Chinese tanks. Loudspeakers on jeeps said keep calm, no panic. Nothing happened for two weeks except parade for Hanoi notables. Only one official newspaper. Said all military and civil servants of senior rank must register. Three days for registration. Separate place for each category. I went to Marie Curie school. No fear of registration. This happened between May ~~5x~~ 15-20. We were given passes allowing circulation inside Saigon. Special pass from police needed for movement outside town.

June 1. Newspaper said all registrants must present themselves for re-education, didnot say where. Must have food and clothing, incl. poncho and moustiquaire, for 1 month, NCOs for one week. June 15 - Generals had to go the Cholon campus of Saigon Univ., I reported to Don Bosco technical school in Go Vap. There we were organized in groups of 30 men (3 TOs) 2000 Lieut.Cols showed up. Relaxed atmosphere. Food brought in from Chinese restaurant as ordered by officials. NVA cadre. At midnight, loaded on Molotova trucks, 30 to a truck. Left at 2 am in long convoy. Arrived 5 am at Long Khanh, former ARVN base about 100 km from Saigon. Barracks contained 30, 60, or 90 men depending on size of barrack. At first nothing to do, only pick up wood for cooking. Fed twice 12 noon and 6 pm. For the first 3 months we had enough food because we were drawing down ARVN stocks at the base.

September - commencement of political courses. 10 lessons. First lesson was American Imperialism, ans1 French and Japanese. Class from 8-12, 500 students in class. 2-5, discussion in barracks with can be watching and taking part. Automatic repetition. No debate. Lesson 2 - VN govt Lesson 3 VN army Lesson 4 Socialism Lesson 5 Meaning of labor. Lesson 6

Final victory of Communism. Course lasted one month Monday thru Sat., Sunday off. No hard labor. NVA cadre. After 3 months, food ration smaller One letter to family per week. Must write it. Since my own family already escaped, I wrote to cousins etc.

The purpose of the first six months was to categorize people.

December 20, 1975 - Transferred at night in trucks to Suoi Mau camp, Bien Hoa. Barracks of corrugated tin roofing material. This camp formerly held VC/NVA prisoners being exchanged per Paris agreements. This was a big camp with 5 subcamps, surrounded by three wire fences.

Escapes # 2 Arvn majors worked in carpentry shop. During noon break, can be inattentive, escaped under fence. One caught in wire, shot. Other escaped, caught that night trying to hitchhike to Saigon. Trial witnessed by 2 observers from each barrack. Prisoner was charged with escaping to make contact with outside & "imperialists". Said he was innocent, only trying to rejoin family. Shot right away, only one week before transfer of most prisoners to north. Of the 2000 Lt. Cols, only 50 permitted to stay in South, teachers, doctors, engineers, technicians. I was one. After 2-3 weeks I was sent to another camp.

June 76 - Bu Gia Map Camp, Phuoc Long, former communist camp. Arrived at dawn in heart of jungle. No houses. (In second camp at Bien Hoa I had 2 visits from in laws of 30 minutes each. Received food and money hidden in cigarette package) New camp, hard labor. Medical problems here - malaria, dysentery, beri beri. Malaria because this had been communist zone, no malaria eradication. At Bien Hoa, 3 people died of sickness. At Phuoc Long 7 died. We had to clear 100 acres with coupecoupes, burn area and then plant rice. One big machete for two people. Quota 10 trees per person per day, used for stringing wire. 4 people carried one tree back to camp. Hours 5am reveille. Rice soup for breakfast. Work started at 6:30. 12-1, lunch break of rice & maniou, sometimes corn. Work again

One hour walk to and from worksite. Evening discussion sessions on production, China VN relations etc. Sunday - "individual assignments" Build house for can be etc. Punishment for not meeting norms - family visit cancelled "Harder you work, sooner you go home etc."

Stayed there June 76-Feb 78.

Escapes * % Lt Cols Special Forces and Paras headed for Cambodian border (10-15 kilometers), never heard of again. No beatings at camp, but put in Conex in sun. Treatment depended on camp chief. There were 500 people in Phuoc Long camp, other similar camps around. Camp for prostitutes nearby. Strategy to make prisoners condemn themselves, then trap them.

Released Feb 78 before Tet. "Moving in day good, at night bad."

Given 10 dong for transport, took bus Feb 14 to Saigon. Our house on Hai Ba Trung St. confiscated, afraid to go there. Supposed to report to police once per week. Applied for job with Ministry of Health, put on waiting list, but escaped before job came. Stayed with my cousin and her husband in Phu Nhuan, near Tan Son Nhut. At time when Hanoi was letting Chinese go, we bought false Chinese ID and residence papers and registered with Chinese group authorized to leave. Cost 10 taels of gold. Left in chartered bus for Rach Gia. They told people there were being sent to new economic zones. At 4 pm left in two small fishing boats for Malaysia. 3 days and 3 nights arrived in Malaysia. Stayed six months at Pulau Bidong Camp. Left March 79 because wife already permanent resident here.

Situation. People hate communists, say so openly. Young men drafted for Cambodia, try to escape to join resistance. Communists now corrupt. People in north now hating communists too. If communist corrupt, no escapes possible.