

Ladies and Gentlemen:

First of all, I would like to extend to you my very best greetings and thank you for giving me this precious opportunity to express my gratitude toward the USA, Iowa and all of you.

I am grateful to the USA where such human love and kindness is shown. I am grateful to the State of Iowa where I am welcome with open arms and with such tenderness.

I am grateful to Governor Ray, Mr. Ken Quinn, Ms. Colleen Shearer, Mr. Marvin Weidner and the IRSC and Mr. and Mrs. Joe Miklus (my sponsors) for giving me this chance to be resettled in Iowa.

I am grateful to the state of Iowa where I have renewed hope.

I fled from my native land ten thousand miles away - weary and heartbroken.

Physically, I am better off, but I still have my family back in Viet Nam, so my emotional life is very hard for me. There is an emotional pain of loss. I lost my home, which means the familiarity of daily life, I lost my occupation which means the confidence that I am of some use in the world, I lost my language which means the naturalness of reactions, the simplicity of gestures, and the unaffected expression of feelings. I left my relatives and my best friends have been killed and that means the rupture of my private life.

But I think that there is no human being who does not know the special pain of losing something or someone. Some endure this pain better than others and their resiliency returns quickly. Others never quite recover from the loss and the emptiness that goes along with it. For me, many feelings are evoked by the loss of these things. I feel sad, relieved, bitter, thankful and guilty. The feelings I am left with are so complex that often I begin to forget the loss and work instead to sort out the feelings.

I always know something else is present - another sentiment, another action, a part of me that has been twisted by loss and now forms that special pain. I feel, that something in me has been taken away by my emotions.

So you begin to understand why a sadness colors the outlook of many refugees even as they speak enthusiastically of their hopes and dreams in their new adopted country.

I am here without hope of returning to my homeland, but I am here in Iowa and find here a place to grow. I will now consider the USA as my second fatherland because I have been reborn right here and I pledge myself to do my utmost for the good of the USA, Iowa and their people and to share my knowledge and skills with the community.

I will start my life over here with my very best efforts. I know that I will have to face many difficulties and new challenges but I do believe that with your support and God's help that I can overcome any obstacles.

When the Viet Nam<sup>war</sup> ended in April, 1975, the first excesses of the communists were excused as an understandable outburst of anger and rage. They set up many re-education centers, which were barbarous concentration camps. They abused the ordinary people - stripping them of all they possessed, condemning the professional class, abolishing the markets and carrying out everything with high-handed policy. The people were not allowed to say anything in their defense but had to obey and work long and hard with very little to eat. All freedom was taken away and my people had to ask permission to do the smallest things even something as small as buying a pen.

The communists are very clever, they first made it their goal to sever everyone from members of his own family and neighborhood. Everyone had to work long and hard and if an assignment was not finished in the day, the people had to work at night. They divided by ten houses in a zone and were repressed by a policeman. They used the children as spies in the family, so they could check every activity. Everyone in the family suspected each other and they dared not to do anything and of course they had to keep quiet because each one in the family belonged to an organization.

I bring you evidence that the communists have been brutal in their treatment of my people. Things in Viet Nam have never been as bad as they are now. Current repression is far worse than it was. There is nothing to eat--- everything is very expensive--with two Dongs (VN money) worth just under one dollar.

- a bar of soap	500
- a tube of toothpaste	800
- a pair of trousers	2000
- one yard of cloth	1000
- one kilo of rice	100
- one kilo of meat	500
- one tin of condensed milk	1000
- one ounce of Gold	22,0000

The average monthly salary of a worker or an employee is 60-700 while 100 Dongs is considered very, very good.

That is roughly the amount of a lunch for two people in one of the city's state restaurants, while the bill in a private restaurant is 30-40 per cent more.

Six years after the fall of Saigon, and reunification of the country the city still remains its own self.

Finally the pent-up frustrations and desperation of the enslaved people became evident when the Vietnamese people took the boats or walked through Kampuchea. They braved every kind of danger possible - from storms to pirates, from Vietnamese Communist police... to Polpot soldiers. They risked not only



their lives but those of their beloved. Whole families gave everything they owned to pay the price of taking a desperate chance to obtain freedom.

Everyone has a right to enjoy the freedom that God has given them. No one now can pretend that the communists wherever they are and whatever their pretenses, are not completely and essentially opposed to freedom and to God. Unless we support those suffering in the captive nations, we may someday share their fate.

I should say that we are obliged to assist by our prayers and support all those who are true captives behind the iron curtain and any country controlled by communistic means.

I was imprisoned in the communist jail for four years and six months. When I was in jail, I tried to kill myself twice but I was saved. In my attempt to escape, I was arrested three times by the communist soldiers and again I was saved. When I was in Khao I Dang refugee camp, I had no hope to come to the USA because I had no relatives there. I had to be in refugee camps in Thailand from March 25, 1980 until December 30, 1980. I lived in a situation that was desperate with little food, clothing and much illness and suffering of every kind. I lived in perpetual anxiety about my beloved family back in Vietnam under the yoke of the communists. So many times my mind was filled with anxiety and I worried myself sick about what might happen next. Everything haunted me day and night and I thought about the uncertainty of the future. During that desperate time I learned that Iowa had a very good refugee program so I wrote a letter to Governor Ray to ask for help. I received a letter from Ken Quinn writing in the Governor's behalf. Shortly afterward I received sponsorship from Joe and Judy Miklus. This renewed my hope and faith.

I am here and as I think over the past, I realize that it is God alone who has helped me to survive through so much and I believe he has done so because He wants me to share my life and experiences with others. I believe He wants me to be the voice of my people who still remain in Viet Nam so that maybe in some way I can help others to obtain their freedom.

I have received many miracles from God and my life belongs to Him who has sustained me.

Thanks be to God that I have endured. May my endurance continue until I am able to accomplish everything I risked my life for.

Once again, I thank you for your assistance and I pledge to do everything I can to help others.

In order to end, I would like to share a poem written by an anonymous writer.

God is in every tomorrow  
therefore, I live for today.  
Certain of finding at sunrise  
guidance and strength for the day.  
Power for each moment of weakness  
hope for each moment of pain.  
Comfort for every sorrow  
Sunshine and joy after rain.

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God is in every tomorrow,  
planning for you and for me.  
Even in the dark will I follow  
trust where my eyes cannot see.  
Stilled by His promise of blessing,  
soothed by the touch of His hand,  
confident in His protection,  
knowing my life's path is planned.

God is in every tomorrow  
life with its changes may come.  
He is behind and before me  
while in the distance shines Home.  
Home where no thoughts of tomorrow  
ever can shadow my brow.  
Home in the presence of Jesus  
through all eternity now.

Thank you for your attention. May the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and  
the Love of God be with you all.

NGUYEN KHAC TAM