

whenever I smelled Lysol, I wanted a delicious Coke.

Most of the time we were rain-soaked, cold, hungry and frightened. I think of the Bible verse Paul wrote, "To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless" (1 Corinthians 4:11).

The sound of people crying never ceased. Because of terrible safety conditions, I saw old people and children swept overboard.

Next Stop: U.S.A.

Eventually, we flew to Fort Chaffey, Ark., where we lived in barracks while my mother, who spoke some English, waited in line every day to complete paperwork and locate a sponsor.

One day a Vietnamese man who claimed to be a Roman Catholic priest quietly talked to some of us homesick kids. He told us that if we would meet him at the church on a certain day, he would put us on a ship to go back home to Vietnam. He cautioned us not to tell our parents. On the appointed day, I got up early before my family did, brought their breakfast, packed my clothes and went to the church.

I left behind a letter telling my parents, "I have to go back because I miss my home and friends so much. I love you."

At the church we children waited. Meanwhile, my distraught mother, who had found the letter, and an MP drove around calling on a megaphone for the missing children. When I heard my mother's voice, I knew something was wrong. Against the warnings of the priest, I screamed, shook loose from his restraining hand and ran out of the church. Of course, the real motive of the "priest" was to sell the children into prostitution in Asia. Once again God had spared me from a horrible fate. The next day our family was shipped out to Virginia.

Communitistic Threat

Later we moved to Houston, where we found out that the long arm of communism had not forgotten us. When

I was 15, I was kidnapped on my way home from school by a communist who had tracked down my parents. His plan was to use me to get to them. He took me to an empty apartment where he attempted to rape me, but, for some reason (divine protection, I believe), he didn't succeed. He would make me walk with him in downtown Houston while he made phone calls to my mother demanding certain things: \$3,000, two gold bands so that he could say I was his wife, and papers signing me over to him. My mother tried to comply, thinking she would save my life, but I overheard him tell his friend that he planned to take me to Hawaii and kill me. In desperation I waited for an opportunity to escape.

On the third day, when he finally left me by myself, I searched everywhere for something—I didn't know what. Finally, under the kitchen sink I found a treasure—a butter knife. With it I pried off the door hinge and squeezed through the opening to freedom. Again, God had not let evil overcome me.

Fear of Vietnamese communist revenge forced my parents to move their place of residence often throughout the years.

A Brighter Day

As a result of being kidnapped, I decided to go into police work and became a certified Crises Intervention counselor and later a reserve police officer.

When I married and had Britanni, we moved to Palestine, Texas, where my

husband's family lives. But the marriage, to my great sadness, did not last.

I didn't know how real God could be until the day my husband left me. My husband had even been the one to introduce me to the Bible and to Jesus. For six months I called out to God, crying myself to sleep every night. Finally, He encouraged me.

My daughter and I have continued to be close to my former in-laws who have been a steady source of Christian love and guidance. I'm active in church and currently work as an assistant court clerk at the local police station.

A particular source of joy for me is that every year I'm invited to speak to elementary school classes and tell my life story.

When I look back on my life, I realize that I was one of the luckiest Vietnamese citizens during the war. Not only did I escape just before the Communist door closed, but more importantly, I found a faith in God that is real. In fact, the same day that I became a citizen of the United States, I was baptized as a new Christian.

Some may say that I have taken the American God along with America, but I say that I have left behind the stone idols of Buddhism and come into a relationship with the living God. I want to learn more about His Son Jesus and live by His words. *

Escape From Vietnam

Editor's note:

Hey, girls! Isn't it exciting to know that we serve a God who can make beautiful things happen out of hardship, suffering and tragedy? I hope you won't simply read this story and flip on to the next page without really doing some soul-searching first.

Think about it: Are there any idols in *your* life that you need to leave behind? You probably don't have a stone idol of Buddha, but are you putting *anything* in your life ahead of Christ? If so, that thing or relationship is an idol. And you'll never become all God wants you to be as long as there's an idol standing between you and Him.

You may be thinking, *How do I know if there's an idol in my life?* Ask God. Say this prayer: "Jesus, is there anything or anyone in my life more important than You? If so, please bring it to my mind right now."

He is so faithful! If you ask with sincerity, He'll respond. And when He does, seek His forgiveness and commit that person or those things to Him.



It's so easy to take our freedom of faith for granted, isn't it? Next time you go to church, ask God to help you truly worship. Bask in the freedom you have to praise Him. Thank Him for the privilege of being called His child.