

MORNING STORIES TRANSCRIPT

Dancing With History: Lowell, Massachusetts teenager Vyrik Eng discovers ways of dealing with his father's absence, his mother's pain and the family's Cambodian past. Also, a conversation with Clark Boyd of *The World's technology podcast*. 9/23/2005

Tony Kahn:

Hi everybody. This is Tony Kahn, the producer and director of *Morning Stories* from WGBH in Boston, and today's story is the story of an emigrant family who came to America from Cambodia, a country so decimated by a recent civil war, that there probably wasn't a single citizen who wasn't directly involved in the genocide of one third of the population, either as a killer or as the relative of a victim. This is a story told not by [classical Asican music begins and continues into the story] a parent who fled but by her son, a young man named Vyrik Eng – a story about his life in the Cambodian community of Lowell, Massachusetts, and about all the painful memories that his mother didn't manage to leave behind. We call this story, *Dancing With History*.

Vyrik Eng:

My mom, she have like flashbacks about the past, due to the Khmer Rouge. Yeah, sometimes she have nightmares like, in the middle of the night she just wake up, start crying, and like, calling my grandfather's name, asks for help, like, look for help and stuff. And not just when she's drinking, but when she's sober too. Sometimes just wake up the middle of the night and listen to her she start crying. It make me think like, "Why can't she go to sleep?"

1993, when my dad was separated with my mom, and it was hard for my mom to raise eight children by herself. Like when she look at us, it remind her of my dad, and what my dad did to her. So then they -- she took it out on us, so me and my older sisters try to keep her away from my little brother and sister so she don't hurt 'em, so my role, I try just hold my mom back and my sisters just take my little brother and sister to a room so that she don't come and hit us.

Before, when I was younger, my brother was in a gang, was a member of gang, and I kind of followed his footstep that time. Keep me busy, like after school and stuff, just hanging around my older brother.

[Music fades away, and different, more lively music (percussion dance music?) starts]

[Inaudible] went to the Butler School, and my sister joined the troupe before me; then she asked me to join with her, to go to the studio in – downtown. Then I said, "Sure, I just try one day," but when I got to the studio, I kind of liked what they did there. They taught us how to, to do different dances, what the dances mean, and a little bit of history about dances.

It's part of me; it's part of my routine throughout the day. I stayed off the street, and it like, led me toward a different direction other than gang.

[Lively music fades away and slower music starts again]

I didn't really know about, like, the Cambodian past. It helps me talk to my family better. I just think of my mom, how she doing while I'm at school and she's at home.

Last year I started to think more like, about her health and stuff. I look for people for help, and she take depression pills. They keep her from – not waking up in, in the middle of the night and stuff. And now she's in a group that helps her talk about raising us in Americanized way, like, tell her about what our future will be. I think that group really help right now, and it helped change my mom a lot.

One of my goals, since I was small – me going to college and get all my degrees, get a lot of money, and try to help out later, after. So I, I can't do anything right now; I know I will find a way to help out.

It's hard.

Tony Kahn

That was today's Morning Story from Vyrik Eng – *Dancing With History*. Gary Mott, Vyrik is somebody that you actually ran across.

Gary Mott

Yeah, several years ago I was doing a story for public radio on the Angkor Troupe, and it was really pulling the kids off the streets, and Vyrik was a member, a terrific dancer, and he's now a sophomore at Salem State University here in Massachusetts.

Tony Kahn

How's his mom doing?

Gary Mott

Don't really know. I tried to get in touch him in the last couple days, and would like to report back in a future podcast.

Tony Kahn

It's great to hear a story like this, where you realize that, that culture's never something you leave completely behind, and it's something that you can renew in America. America is a place where you get a chance to refresh your own sense of where you come from.

Gary Mott

Vyrik's story is very similar, you were mentioning the other day, to the story about Anthony Williams –

Tony Kahn

That's true!

Gary Mott

Our podcast –

Tony Kahn

That's true.

Gary Mott

Not a Mean Bone in His Soul

Tony Kahn

It began with a gang and –

Gary Mott

Yeah...

Tony Kahn

– and found through dance, a way of being able to get in touch with himself and connect with other people.

Gary Mott

Yeah.

Tony Kahn

You know, I think in an upcoming *Morning Story*, we might want to take a look a little bit about how different cultures deal with, with stress and with depression. A nice piece of good news about the rest of the world is, is that we're hearing from it in our, our emails to *Morning Stories*.

Gary Mott

A guy named Sam writes from England: "Just started to get into your podcasts and listen to them on the London Underground en route to work." The Tube.

Tony Kahn

... The Tube, and the whatever, the Can [chuckles] in New York City. There's a fellow who listens to us on the "A" train in Manhattan on the way to work in the morning. We also have a, we have an email here from somebody in Sydney, Australia. He says, "Hi Tony and crew."

Gary Mott

Hey... [chuckles]

Tony Kahn

[Chuckles] Hey, Mr. Crew! "I'm a new listener. Thanks to your podcasts, I can listen to *Morning Stories* as I ride my bike to work through Sydney city every morning."

Gary Mott

Also we heard from Philippe in Sverige.

Tony Kahn

Where is Sverige?

Gary Mott

[Chuckles]... Sweden. Philippe says that, um, "Your podcasted stories, as it were, break down self-made barriers within my own consciousness."

Tony Kahn

Ah yes.

Gary Mott

Thank you so much.

Tony Kahn

Yeah. Philippe, your nation knows a lot about the inner life.

Gary Mott

My great-grandmother was from Sweden, so I have a special connection.

Tony Kahn

So you're an immigrant!

Gary Mott

Aren't we all immigrants? We heard from Fiona in Vegas: "Tony and Gary, you have added a new dimension to my life and inspired me to create a *Morning Stories* of my own. I live in Vegas, and work as an appraiser. For the past three years I have been collecting stories in writing from my travels around the valley visiting people's homes. Life is much more interesting here than the mainstream media would lead one to believe. I have now started to record some stories, and plan to podcast them, thanks to your inspiring lead."

Tony Kahn

Ah, well...

Gary Mott

Fiona, thanks!

Tony Kahn

Thank you, Fiona. We got a wonderful letter from, from a guy who was led by one of our stories back into a part of his own past. Let, let me read a bit of that to you. He says, "My name is Peter, and I'm writing to you in a very American Starbucks set in a very British city, Leicester. I checked out *Morning Stories* and I could never have known the number of smiles and memories it would provoke." What is his memory? Well, he happened to know one of the subjects of our *Morning Stories*.

Gary Mott

No way!

Tony Kahn

He says, "I was blown away the other week by the most incredible of coincidences as I listened to my downloaded *Morning Story*. The name Chris Cotton hit me like the lightning bolt from the past that it was." (Well, Chris was one of our storytellers on a recent Morning Story about all of the different father figures that he grew up with.) The email continues, "I worked with Chris at Camp High Rock during what I think was probably a formative part of his personal journey. It was so good to hear him again, and hear the sense he's made of his life. The two or three degrees of separation I've felt with *Morning Stories* were suddenly blasted away to one. What a special moment. Thanks for making it happen." Well, Pete – we did let Chris know and I hope by now the two of you have gotten back in touch with each other and have made this increasingly small world even a little bit smaller and warmer.

Clark Boyd, came by, in fact, the other day with a very interesting story to tell about just that. He's our neighbor in podcasting – does the technology podcast for *The World*. Here's what he had to say.

Clark Boyd

I got this email last week from Ben Howell, who lives in Adelaide, Australia, and he's a windsurfer, but he also does tech work, and he happened to be out on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

Tony Kahn

Ah yes, the Cocos (Keeling) Islands... [chuckles]

Clark Boyd

You know them well...

Tony Kahn

...Which are exactly where again, Clark?

Clark Boyd

They are out... They are literally out in the middle of nowhere in the Indian Ocean, and they are one of the most far-flung territories of Australia, apparently. So, Ben Howell was out there on this island, and he's talking with some of the tech savvy people there on the island, and they're lamenting the fact that they don't get enough news – even, I think they even have a problem getting shortwave out there.

Tony Kahn

Wow.

Clark Boyd

So, Ben says – apparently, they said, “Well, you know, come over, we'll have a few beers, we'll chat about this, what can we do?” So he gets this sort of tech savvy people on the island together, and they drink a couple beers and he says, “Well have you guys ever thought about, you know, downloading podcasts and listening to them?”

Tony Kahn

[Affecting an Australian accent] Podcasts?

Clark Boyd

Podcasts? What are podcasts? So, he shows 'em what podcasts are, and over the course of an evening they learn how to download them, and the next morning Ben Howell is the biggest celebrity in all of Cocos (Keeling) Islands, because he showed them how to get this wealth of information and entertainment. So now all a sudden, these folks at the Cocos (Keeling) Islands are downloading...

Tony Kahn

Right...

Clark Boyd

...My podcast and other podcasts, and as far as I can tell, they're then taking those podcasts and putting them out on the regular private FM or AM or whatever, radio station on the island, so it's actually a podcast that's being broadcast!

Tony Kahn

From broadcast to podcast to podcast to broadcast, literally around the world.

Clark Boyd

Yeah. And we can all do that.

Tony Kahn

I always enjoy talking to Clark and other podcasters, and we'll be hearing from many more of them as the weeks go by here on *Morning Stories*. And the weeks will continue

to go by on *Morning Stories* partly because of the help that we get every week from Ipswitch, a leader in file transfer software. So, guys, thank you. Ipswitch – you can check out their website at <ipswitch.com>, I-P-S-W-I-T-C-H.

Gary Mott

And our website is out there as well, <wgbh.org/morningstories>, and if you haven't, please send us an email, at <morningstories@wgbh.org>.

Tony Kahn

Please do, and remember, there's absolutely no cost for paper with email, and there's no cost in hearing us next week, so we'll back then. See ya.

[End of recording]

Transcribed by: Rebekah Sprecher

Notes from transcriber:

I did look up the spelling of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, and if you want to see a map of them, look here:

[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/islands_oceans_poles/cocos\(keeling\)_76.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/islands_oceans_poles/cocos(keeling)_76.jpg)