

YMCA 175

Oral Histories and Stories

Story teller Jim Thompson

Subject Personal Reflection

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Refugee Work Post WW2 Transcription

Jim Thompson: She will come in every morning and open the curtains in to all the cutters walk through the house to check that everything's all right. When, I come back my fridge is full.

Jim Thompson: On the other side is a young lady who's about Baha'i. Bow the Baha'i faith. She's equally wonderful. She drives me down to Edinburgh airport. But, anyway, I'm digressing.

Interviewer: Great so I'll start recording and then it's okay if we stop. We don't have to it can be informal because

Jim Thompson: It's just head and shoulders or all round?

Interviewer: No, it's all round.

Jim Thompson: So, I better draw my feet in.

Interviewer: And that's okay. We're I think we're working on with need to know. No, that's fine. We're good. Okay, you can move. Okay, so. Yeah, so if we can maybe go back to the refugee work in Europe after the war, then that'd be great.

Jim Thompson: When do you want to start? Now?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, whenever you ready?

Jim Thompson: Well, when the war finished in 1945. The YMCA went to work immediately. And I can still remember the names of the people three most involved his Tracy Strong and Hugo Cedergren. They left England the day after the end of the war. How they got into France I don't know, but they did. And they moved around among the displaced people that they came across and staff that literally started doing YMCA work in displaced people's camps. And in these displaced people's camps, they came across YMCA staff, people who have been staff themselves. And they themselves started a little YMCAs. So that as the months wore on after the end of the war, there were little YMCAs springing up all over the place.

Dr. Alice Arnold left Geneva the day after the war ended and went to Trieste and started work among displaced people in Trieste. And within a few months, the reports will show that she was looking after something like 10,000 people.

At this time, a man came out of a concentration camp called Joe Bednarek. He had been General Secretary of the Krakow YMCA, and he met the YMCA Tea Car and he asked what he can do to help. And they said, *Go back where you came from*. And the extraordinary thing is that Joe turned round went back to the concentration camp where he'd been, and he began to work with the people who had been left behind. The British Army by then reached the concentration camp and no doubt that they were of enormous assistance.

Joe simply became, as the months and the years went on, a legend in the YMCA. And eventually he became the leading light of YMCA work in Europe, which at one time, in the immediate war, years following the war, there was something like 2000 YMCA secretaries involved full time in refugee work, in Germany, in France, in the United Kingdom, in Spain. The German YMCA, began an operation called homes for all. And

these were to house many, many refugees who did not, or displaced persons who did not want to go home. There were others who would have liked to have gone home but for one reason or another couldn't. There were soldiers and airmen who did not want to go home because their homes were now under Soviet occupancy. This grew and grew and grew until the International Committee of the YMCA realized that the refugee element of their work was now greater than anything else. And so, about 1954, it was decided that the specialist committee needed to be formed, and the obvious person to be the engine in this whole thing was Joe.

So, Joe came from Europe and was the first secretary of the World Alliance Refugee Committee. In 1965, I know that's a good few years on, but in 1965 I had gone to Africa as national Secretary of the Kenya YMCA. It was to be a short-term assignment. And in 1967, I had a message from Geneva, that a very important meeting had taken place between the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, British Christian Aid, and Joe Bednarek. They would like to know what the YMCA could do in the famine stricken, war stricken, areas of Africa. They needed to know whether the YMCA would be acceptable to governments? Whether we could work in cooperation with regional directors of UNHCR? Whether national General Secretaries and committees of YMCA would be willing to accept this new responsibility?

And so, I was asked then if I would travel all over Africa and do a report on this. Why pick a European to do an African report? And the reason was quite simple. It was far easier for a European to move from country to country in Africa than it was for someone, say with a Kenyan passport, to go to Nigeria. It was as simple as that.

So the report was done on the Watutsi war, the influx of Southern Sudanese into Uganda, the Angolans who had moved up into Zaire. Again, with Watutsi's who was in Tanzania, the South Africans who were in Kenya. And most importantly, looking back on it, the hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians who were victims of one of the most terrible famines that Africa's ever had.

At that time, Haile Selassie said there can be no famine in the land of Judah. That led ultimately to the fall of the Ethiopian government. To the death of Haile Selassie himself who I understand was literally starved to death, and to the death by execution of a man called who was the president of the world YMCA movement. , was blamed for the famine, although he wasn't in any way responsible, and he was executed.

As a result of that report, I was asked to go back to Africa again as the first World Alliance African Refugees Secretary. The first job was to do something about 120,000 Southern Sudanese who had crossed the border into northern Uganda. They were divided up into roughly 10,000 lots, and the government of Uganda gave 15 refugee settlements and into each of these settlements we put 10,000 people. We recruited agricultural advisors. Each settlement had an agricultural advisor, and they very quickly became far more than simply agricultural people. They became social workers and carers. They were involved in every aspect of life in the refugee camps.

And so that went on until, after something like 18 months, everyone in that camp, these settlements, were self-sufficient. And then again, the government moved in and began to levy income tax, which wasn't a bad thing. It showed that people, people's consideration of refugees as being utterly helpless, was quite wrong. Given half a chance they can be self-sufficient.

The same could not be true of the Watutsi who were in Burundi. We had 40,000 divided into four settlements there and our job was sanitation, nutrition and baby care. One of the most inspirational young men I've ever known was David Moore, a Canadian, who undertook to lead this work. I could only visit him once every two months. David

had to build his own house and he was loved by the people he worked with. An illustration of this is that in Geneva and I tried to arrange things so that David would be home in Montreal for Christmas with his family one year. He refused to go. And later I was to find out that this was because he had given his word to a duty woman who was expecting her first child and she'd been told it was a breech birth. And David had said he would be there to drive her to a Mission Hospital when the baby arrived. And he did. His affection for his people, and the affection that they had for him, I saw one day when a pygmy man, not a Watutsi but a pygmy man stopped him at a river crossing and thanked him for what he had done to help his grandson in some way or another. And when we returned that night, the pygmy man was waiting there with two little clay pots. One he gave to David, and one he gave to me. And as I'm talking to you now, that's up on top of that. That clay pit on top of that cabinet is the same clay pot that the pygmy gave to David and to me all these years ago.

They were Tutsi, who had a chequered history in that after a few years, many of the children that we looked after in these refugee camps grew to manhood and they were returned to their homeland and, and that led to the second Watutsi war. The Watutsi were a minority tribe, again established themselves as the leading force in Rwandese government. Peace has come to Rwanda now and I see that Rwanda is now advertising itself as a holiday and that is quite, quite wonderful.

The Angolans who were in Zaire, and we had a primary school and also some social work in Zaire with the Angolans in West Africa. They've now gone home. They've gone back to Rwanda, and it was a very happy occasion a number of years ago, to see the Angolan YMCA received into the fellowship of the World YMCA movement at the World Council meeting. And to meet again, the General Secretary of the newly formed Angolan YMCA, who was the headmaster of the refugee school in Zaire, Sebastio Mantequilla. Second inspiring character with his people, with his pupils, with his parents, walked from Zaire, walked back to Rwanda, and with memories of what the YMCA had done to be of some assistance to him from the Angolan YMCA.

At that point, I have been traveling for the best part of four years by dodgy aircraft and on different roads, traveling perhaps three weeks of every month, and after nearly four years of that I needed a break. And so, I came to London, and for four years enjoyed life in Europe before returning to Geneva on the first of January 1974 as the World Alliance's Refugee and Rehabilitation Secretary. And that was on a Monday and on the Thursday, I think it was, I set off on what was to be the first of very, very many journeys over the next nearly eight years, which encompassed every continent. And in particular, the Middle East, the ongoing tragedy, the work in Gaza, the work in Lebanon, Jordan, and the West Bank, the whole business of the Vietnam War and new work springing up in Latin America. And so, it went on for seven years until there was a personal tragedy in our family life. And again, it was time for me to come home. I need to draw a breath.

Female Interviewer: Oh very good. Excellent

Male Interviewer: I didn't have to say that it was quite a bit more in the pictures. I picked up on the pictures as we've gone along with some of these as well, but maybe some of the Vietnamese stuff that's got the good sort of stories around. Yeah. Yeah. Next.

Jim Thompson: Yeah. I'm thinking on my bottom at this point.

Male: Oh, that's very good. I know. It's very good.

Female: Like, yes, because

Male: I wouldn't be able to do that so eloquently without having to hesitate. Oh, so I did have one hesitation.

Jim Thompson: You can edit that or Not.

Male: Oh, yeah.

Jim Thompson: Well, we can talk about Vietnam because that deserves a chapter, itself. Can I just maybe...

Female: Just say this is a great photo is where we talked about the agricultural advisors that they got the

Jim Thompson: These are the guys who I recruited in Entebbe. We've been through a training course. That was the first 10. We had 15 altogether. One of them was killed. One of these was killed in a road accident.

There is one very good picture there. And I took it and I'm shocked at how bad it is. But we didn't have fancy cameras. It's a group of men going out to cut down. Yeah, walking forward. The interesting thing is, these had never been more than 10 miles out of their villages. What happened was the largely Muslim army from the north. At this time, they were exploiting oil in the south. And that was found to be true. So, they thought they better make a move. And what was the point of letting all these savage all this lovely oil? So, the army, the Sudanese army, which was largely Muslim, completely Muslim, moved into the south, burn their houses, stole the cattle, rape the women. Drove them out. And 120,000 across the border in Uganda. And I was on the Uganda border. What the hell do you do with 100,000 people? And that was the first big operation. Everything else fell into place after that.

The famine in Ethiopia deserves a chapter by itself because of one incident which led to another at a place called Kampulcha. We, the YMCA, the Ethiopian YMCA, funded by the World Alliance, was caring for 50,000 famine victims. In this, and I was working up within Kampulcha, doing some stuff with Ethiopian YMCA, I needed information for funding and all the rest of it. But in the centre of this enormous, almost like a sheep pen, there was a wooden hut. And I asked what was in the hut and they said that there were about 30 children in the hut suffering from measles. The quandary was do you the bring these children out into the community already malnourished or do you leave them to die?

And in company with the YMCA people we went to the YMCA Dessi, which is near a big town. And there's always stupid human in a situation like that. We couldn't find the key to the cashbox, and we had to break open the cash box. And we took the money and we went to the market, at Dessi and we bought every blanket we could. And we went back, and with the agreement of the people, we took these children, I wrapped them in blankets, and laid them on a flatbed truck we drove to the district Governor's house.

And we got there. It was well after dark, it would have been early hours of the morning, and woke the governor up, the district governor up, and we said, *what are we going to do? These are your children.* And he was a man of immense compassion. He said, *There are some corrugated iron sheds at a place called Bati. Take them there and say, I sent you and the village will welcome you.*

At dawn the people came and shared what little food they had. They helped us to settle the children down in the sheds as best as we could. And then the next few days, I had to leave but then the next few days they got beds and bedding and people came and helped and so on And out of that grew the Bati Refugee Children's Home. So, and in that that report which I make to witness in Buenos Aires, there is a photograph of a boy before and after. And I think that's well worth looking at. And the other one there as well to the back, and I think it says I was a stranger and you took me in. Here the back page, I think somewhere. (Yeah). And these are two girls from the Bati Children's home a year later. That is the same boy. Where was I before I rambled on?

Female: Well, we were going to Vietnam.

Jim Thompson: Let's do Vietnam. The work in Vietnam began because a group of students from Saigon University went to a refugee camp in Vung Tau and what they saw simply astonished them. The dead were only partially buried. Floods had uncovered some of the dead because they'd only to be buried in less than a foot of soil, and there was no medical facilities. People had, were pouring in and drifting out. There was never a constant population and it was just a scene of desolation. And what they had intended as a weekend stopover to do what little good they could, ended up by them staying for - I don't know - two weeks, three weeks, and working. There are doctors among this and dentists and working away.

And they went back to Saigon, back to the YMCA again, and they said *well you know, we can't leave a situation like that.* So they got on to the World Alliance of YMCA, they cabled them and said *something's got to happen here* and the World Alliance needs to find money and they said *okay, you go and do something about it and we'll put the money up.*

So, they managed to recruit people, and their situation simply became too big for the Saigon YMCA to handle it. And so, this was one of the occasions when the World Alliance had to take over the intimate management of the process. So, a man called Yukio Miyazaki, a Japanese was sent, an American was sent to train staff, and then began to open up from a big farm here, a primary school here. Social Work here family union, digging sanitation pits. You know, sanitation pits hadn't been dumped, dug in some of these camps. And they recruited about, ultimately, about 50 staff. Yukio, after about four years, went back to Japan, and was replaced by a man called Masaichi Yamashita.

I had been going in and out of Vietnam, because of the World Alliance's connection. Principally because this was something that was needed, and would need into the future, vast amounts of money. So I better find out exactly what was happening, not only from the written word, but by seeing for myself because I was going to have to

communicate this to funders. And so I was going in and out of Vietnam about once every three months or something like that.

When it was clear that Saigon was going to fall and the Vietnam war would be over, the realization was brought home to us that there was a grave danger of Vietnamese staff being sent to the education camps. And this was a concern that was occupying the minds of all of the agencies that had staff in Vietnam. The answer, which some of them did was to withdraw. And then the last days of Vietnam, something like 56 agencies who had been working in Vietnam, came down to something like seven. The rest have withdrawn all the staff and had gone to Australia, Indonesia; however, our staff refused to go. Masaichi Yamashita gave them the opportunity of leaving and they said no they would continue to work on.

I arrived in Saigon from Geneva on the 24th of April 1975. And the staff had just come back into Saigon the day where they've been working on the beaches, doing family reunion, digging the sanitation pits again, playing on the beach with the children. Taking food out to the long boats, which were too big to come into the beaches. There are famous pictures of forming a bridge so that people could come off the beach, off the ships onto the beaches. Until enemy, not enemy activity, but military activity, got too close and they had to evacuate the staff back to Saigon.

I arrived, as I said, the day afterwards. And we, for the next few days until the death dates, we were in a state of flux. We were simply doing what we could. We were running food out to people who had been left without food for days. And on the morning of the 29th, Yukio Miyazaki, and I were told that a group of 300 Vietnamese had failed to be evacuated from the roof of the American Embassy and they had made their way to the United Nations compound, and which was the wrong thing to do. Because the United Nations, at that time, was still regarded very much as the enemy by the North Vietnamese forces.

So, any compound that flew the United Nations flag was a target for artillery. And Yukio and I got there with a load of rice and powdered milk, and clearly it wasn't enough to feed the three hundred people there. So, Yukio left with the Land Rover and I stayed behind. And as Yukio was passing through a market next to the compound, we came under very heavy shell rocket fire. And the compound wasn't hit. And Yukio got out of the market without any damage. Went back, filled up the land over and came back again by which time the shelling had finished. We distributed the food and then we had to come out through that marketplace again, and there were many bodies. Many people have been killed in combat with the last day of the Vietnam War. They were covering bodies with corrugated iron sheets which have been blown off the roof of the stalls. These were mainly women who had been working in the marketplace.

At about 11:15 rockets went up from the south signifying their acceptance of surrender and it was answered from the north by two or three rockets from one side; two from the other. And the Vietnam War was over.

Immediately after these rockets went up, and nobody I understand is going to accept this as fact. But an airplane shot across the sky of Saigon. And I don't know why I did this, but there's an almighty explosion and I lifted my camera. And there's a great cloud of dust and smoke. But a quarter of a mile, where a tank battle had been taking place, and that is the last bomb to have been dropped in the Vietnam War. And I think it's among these papers there.

About an hour and a half later the South Vietnamese Army began to fall, the name of the street, and they walked past, throwing their weapons away, taking off their

uniforms, their boots and walking in their underwear. A defeated army. Hundreds, maybe thousands, walked past us like that that day. They were followed, about half an hour later, by North Vietnamese infantry with a traditional pith helmet and the bag of rice and with the plastic bag around their necks. They were followed by jeeps, by tanks. And by this time we had gone down to the edge of the pavement. And you remember things that have no real consequence in the fall of Saigon but stick with you. A tank commander coming past and stopping the tanks and dismounting and saying to *Masaichi Yamashita*. How could he reach the town center square? And Massa telling him down second on the right and the man climbed back up and the tank's roaring engine. Massa did this and the man climbed down again, and Massa said *you can't go down that street because it's a one way street*. And I thought this guy's driven his tank 1000 miles and somebody is telling him he can't go down a one way street.

Later that afternoon in the broadcast all foreigners would go to their homes and stay there. And we did. Next morning when we woke up there were North Vietnamese soldiers at our front door. How they knew where all the foreigners lived, I don't know, but they knew where we lived. But they didn't know what to do. Massa knew a little Vietnamese. Hugo Miyazaki had joined us from Japan by this time. And we talked to them, or they talked to them, and decided that this lecture on staying at home wasn't going to be followed up. So, we had sense not to get out a car, but we got bicycles out and we rode to the Ministry of Social Service. And walking in the carpark was Dr. Anh the previous minister, and he was waiting for the new boys to arrive and smoking furiously. And the new boys did arrive, in a kind of jeep thing. Two senior officers arrived, a more junior officer and the driver. Dr Anh escorted them up to a now deserted building. And half, we decided just to hang around with nothing else to do.

Half an hour later, Dr. Anh came down and said *They want to see you, like talk to you*. So, we went up and there were two officers, senior officers, sitting behind the desk. The other man who seemed to be a junior officer taking notes, and Dr Anh and we explained the work of the YMCA, what we've been doing. They were interested. One explained that he was a medical doctor; that he had studied at the Sorbonne in Paris. That he spoke French. And he did. And that each served as an army officer, not an infantry officer, for nearly 30 years, reaching the rank of whatever, generals, something or other. And they said, *Go and continue your work until we tell you to stop*. So, we did. We rode our bicycles back, and we assembled the staff and we said, *let's go to work again*. And we did for about three weeks. And then we were told to stop; that the authorities now had their own services in place. They had arrived with a template, which they just placed on the city. And in three weeks time they had all the social services growing that they needed and we had received from them an assurance that our staff, it was not necessary for our staff to be re-educated in terms of this book,. And so Yamashita Miyazaki and I were now self-surplus to requirements. The staff were disbanded. We divvied out all the money that we had left, among the staff as a sort of farewell bonus, and they just melted away.

Only one member of the Vietnamese Saigon YMCA came to any harm. A Captain and who had been a member of the Saigon Committee, and not the World Alliance group, at the Saigon Committee and an intelligence officer in the South Vietnamese Army, arrived at our house, about a week after the city fell. He had with him a lady Vietnamese officer who had a badly gashed foot. We cleaned and bandage the foot and invited them to stay on with us. And they wouldn't do that. They went out the way they'd come in, through a bathroom window, and said that they were going to try to reach the Cambodian border, the Kampuchea border as it was. But they didn't get to the border and Captain Anh on was shot while trying to escape. He was the only fatality as far as I know, among our people.

After five weeks of being held, not against our will, I got a message out through Peter Gill, a reporter with the Daily Telegraph, who had, he got a message out saying, and then the message was hidden. *Jim Thomson alive and well in Saigon. Advise Grampian Television.* And this message, went to Grampian Television. And my daughter Rosemary, was then working in the programme department of Grampian television, and they said, Thomson. Thomson, you know. So, she was able to phone her mom in Geneva and say that I was alive and well.

And shortly after that, Miyazaki Yamashita and I were invited to appear at the Tan Son Nhat airport for deportation and we were went through the process and relieved of all foreign exchange. And when we got when Yamashita when Massa, Miyazaki and I got to the, the top steps Yamashita had disappeared. And when we looked down about he was on the other side of the perimeter wire, waving goodbye. And he stopped in Saigon and did good work for the next eight months. But working pretty much alone, because he didn't reengage the staff. He just moved around doing good work, until eventually he had to get out. And at Estes Park, about six years ago, I had the pleasure of meeting the General Secretary of the Vietnam YMCA, and saying to him *How are things in Vietnam these days?* He said *we are doing very well. Always having a regard to government interest.*

Female: That was good that bit. You added onto your email about the airports that was good.

Jim Thompson: About Masa.

Female: Yeah, yeah. There's something about house arrest. I just want to try to find the sheet that you gave me. But did you have it in the car? But it doesn't matter, I've got this here anyway. So, we've done the war.

Jim Thompson: Do you mean that...

Female: Yeah, did I just leave it there?

Jim Thompson: I knew this would happen.

Female: It must be here somewhere. Because I said don't you want to look on the way in the car? Anyway, what's it now? Really good. Okay.

Jim Thompson: In Hong Kong I met a young lady, British lady, whose name was Dorcas Pratt. Now if my name was Pratt I wouldn't call her Dorcas. It's just, I would have called her that somebody like Rosalind Pratt.

Female: I've just read about her. In one of those books. That name. Is it on here?

Jim Thompson: Dorcas Pratt?

Female: Yeah.

Jim Thompson: But I haven't spoken about her.

Female: I've seen it.

Jim Thompson: No, you haven't.

Female: But it's weird because my mom, my mom changed her name by deed poll to Pratt. And that's another story. So, I recognize the name. Anyway.

Jim Thompson: What is just coming into my head so...

Female: I know. How can that be?

Jim Thompson: I haven't written Dorcas Pratt in years

Female: That is weird. It's not in one of those books?

Male: No. That's Buenos Aires

Jim Thompson: She's certainly not in there.

Female: Well

Jim Thompson: I only met her for ten minutes

Female: Weird. Anyway, if I think of it like, that is different. I've definitely seen that today. But it might not be in that same person. Crap. Second part of the I've seen today somewhere. I'm going mad. So yeah, I'm still recovering most of that in here.

And so, I think it's more sort of general. You've said about people who have inspired you within the YMCA. You mentioned a couple of people. Or any other characters you can think of specific.

Jim Thompson: Well I've spoken about Joe, if you found heard enough about him

Female: David Moore

Jim Thompson: David came through London when I was in London. When he was finished in Burundi, he and his sister. Sister went out to be with him in his last few weeks, and he came to London and Miriam was in hospital in London having such and I had gone to see her. And there was a closely guarded secret that David was coming to see me at the offices in London that day. And I wasn't there, but this. He came up to London, and he had two pieces, two items with him. And I know where this is ... because I moved it out for my granddaughter the other day.

Female: Oh

Jim Thompson: It's a walking stick. Now what's odd about the walking stick?

Female: So, it's a bit tall.

Jim Thompson: It's a bit tall. What's next? Because the Watutsi are over six feet tall. David and I were made chiefs of the Watusi tribe, so we'll have a little respect down here. That's what it is. A Watutsi duty staff of office from knocking malcontents.

Watutsi is as big tribe. Hutu are small and Hutus are four fifths of the population and the Watutsi 1/5. And the Belgian cotton colonizers, colonists, decided that if they were going

to pacify the country, they ought to get the big fellas on their side. And they could pump the little fellas talk to us. So, when independence came, they would do the Watutsi and became the governing body. And the Hutus said, *We don't like this*. So they killed a quarter of a million Watusis.

Female Yes, sir. Okay, so your earlier stuff as well, like going to the army, the Indian Army.

Jim Thompson: Yes.

Female: And we're still using interest.

Jim Thompson: Which is of no interest to the YMCA.

Female: No, but I just thought that was interesting as, well, because when you're speaking...

Jim Thompson: Well, it did give me a feeling. Yes, it did it for being a bloke.

Female: Yeah, yeah.

Jim Thompson: Those four years in India. Female 44:24 uh huh

Jim Thompson: You mean didn't know I speak Indian, did you?

Female: I got the YMCA bit

Jim Thompson: Well done you. Only person, not for publication, but the only person I ever had an active dislike to, the only Indian, was a YMCA Secretary.

Female: Really?

Jim Thompson: Because armies move. And, ready to move and the YMCA Secretary comes along and says, *I would like to have any Christians on board if they would come and we will have a small prayer meeting*. I haven't got any Christians. I've got 120 batters that all Muslims. *May I come and see?* No, you may not!

He wanted examine the tuts. They would have killed him.

Female: Oh dear. I suppose as well any young people who stand out you still grow as leaders during your time. Well, it was in Thailand as well wasn't there.

Jim Thompson: Oh, Joe. Yeah. You better get the camera going again. Was small and rotund and was an inspirational character in every sense of the world, word. I first met Joe at a little dinner that was being given. And he was so shy and retiring, that you would have taken him for a junior clerk somewhere. And it was only after the dinner that I discovered that, in fact, he was the national General Secretary of Thailand. He was that kind of man.

And we talked about what would happen in Thailand, which was encompassed if you like with Cambodia, with Laos, with Vietnam, all boarding it and, up in the top Burma with refugees and displaced people, threatening to pull him from the Burma. So, what

would happen if there was a sudden influx of refugees into Thailand? Would the YMCA be interested? And Joe wasn't sure what they can do even if they were interested. But we all know about the saga of the boat people and the boat people began to leave Vietnam long before the end of the war. And then a place down on the south coast of Thailand, southeast coast of Thailand. And there may have been about 10,000 there, and this man, who wasn't quite sure what the YMCA could do, was there. And he didn't know what he was going to do when he got down to. But he wasn't very long in discovering what needed to be done and what the YMCA could do to help, and he had a team working, the volunteers first of all, and then professionals. And it grew and grew and grew.

And then at the end of the Vietnam War, you had coincidentally the change of power in Laos went a political party called the Patet Laos took control of the entire country. And those Laotians who had been working with the Americans became marked people. And it was either get out of the country or die. So, thousands of them – we, I know of at least 10,000 because they swam the Mekong River or crossed in narrow boards, came to a place. And there were 10,000. And Joe was there with his team by now. Trained in how to care. We had two clinics, and a primary school we started. These things which are hanging down the side, these are belts which are stitched by the young Laotian women. And when they reach the age of 15 they wear these belts as an inducement to young gentlemen to show how clever they are. And this is this is I'm on the market guys, you know? I've got hopes you see.

And we built a hospital which, by now the World Alliance had taken over the project then. Not the daily project, but we've taken over the securing of funds. So, we funded the building of a hospital with doctors and nurses and all sorts. And it was there that my son, our son, went to work as an engineer because we were totally dependent upon mobile generators. We moved from there. A lot of these people move from there as new people came in, the older ones moved out. And went to a preparing camp for consular officials to go through the camp and select the young, and the fit, and the young families for moving to Europe moving to the United States. The old and infirmed, they were left behind, so that we had more and more people who are left behind. Just when we thought things were settling down, there was a massive excavation of people from Cambodia. Certainly not less than 80,000, who came to a place in Thailand. And Joe was there. Naturally. He was responsible for the coordinating committee for all of this work going on. He was sort of chairman and secretary and everything else of what was going on. And the YMCA was responsible for bringing food from Bangkok by trucks up the Sakeo. And for the distribution of food within the camp, it's a cable. And I have somewhere a report from the United Nations saying, *Whatever happens, whatever happens, the Bangkok YMCA must continue that work of food supply to Sakeo because there is nobody else ready to take it on.*

One of the terrible things that happened is that we became aware of tourist buses coming up from Bangkok to Sakayo,, so that tourists could appear through the wire at the refugees, and that that had to be nipped in the bud very quickly. But you talk about the inhumanity of man to man, and m that was a case in point. Things settled down. And Joe went back to the Bangkok YMCA and to agricultural schemes here. And then, in his 50s, he died. Had a heart attack and died. And is buried about 50 feet from our son. So that when we go, we always put a flower on Joe's gravestone.

The interesting thing was that Joe, the terrible thing was that Joe used to confide in me that his elderly parents lived and he lived and worked in Bangkok, and it's about six hours train journey away. And he used to worry about what was going to happen to

his parents. If he died first. They both died on the same day as Joe. They died the next day Joe died. And the following morning is, I forget which went first. One went at dawn and the other died at lunchtime. And you can tell but it's in Thai squiggles, but you can tell the dates are the same.

Female: Jolly good. Yes, I suppose really, it's just about any general impact that you think the YMCA has had on you. It's more the other way around, actually in your case, right?

Jim Thompson: Yeah, yes. That's a surprisingly easy answer. Because if you look up what I've said over the years and you say you've got. Oh, it will end with Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy's poem. I make it a point of always ending with that boy. And I'm not gonna delete the whole point is, *there may be rest for thee my God but not for me. For we must fight. It is not right that we should cease and less than peace, a peace our souls has never won does thou has made us. So does that must surely know the sources of strength we came to seek to find to save the wandering and the last. Being by the show, The Tempest tossed and said hungry bodies don't a feast.* And as long as I have got that prodding me in the backside I'm still young enough to do something about it.

Female: Yes. Yeah, and I saw that the Ros who does some of our stories for us when she's looking at different things had must have matched some of that some of the war stuff. I know that she's been she's kind of looked through the book and things as well. So Gosh. Thanks very much so far.

All of that.

Jim Thompson: What do you mean so far?

Female: Yeah, well, you only 96.

Jim Thompson: Cup of coffee?

Female: Yes. Let's do it.

Jim Thompson: Already?

Female: Well, I do need to get sorry LifeWay didn't do that before. Why are we you just say that if we can use the photos or history for berming or anything that you said I have to get it all signed off now. Just

Jim Thompson: Put him back in the cage. Thank you.