

# The Final Day of My Husband's Life

## April-30-1975

*Pham Thi Kim Hoang (General Le van Hung's wife)*  
*translated by Tran Thi My Ngoc and Larry Engelmann*

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My husband was stationed in the Delta in Can Tho in the spring of 1975 where he was vice commander for Military Region IV (MR IV) under General Nguyen Khoa Nam.

In March, when the North Vietnamese Army attacked Ban Me Thuot, I was in Bien Hoa. My husband contacted me during the battle and he told me to move to MR IV. He said the Communists would march on to MR III, which include Saigon, from Ban Me Thuot and he did not think that MR III would be able to resist them. It was because of that reason I moved to MR IV to be with my husband. My husband knew all along that the American government would abandon us. He knew it. He had no faith in them. I had our two small children with me at Bien Hoa at that time. And my husband told me that I had to hurry and move to MR IV because the National Road 4 linking Saigon with the Delta would be cut soon, because Saigon and Bien Hoa would be lost to the communists for sure. So on the 2nd of April 1975, I left for Can Tho by car.

I stayed in a house near the corps commanders headquarters in MR IV. After the fall of Ban Me Thuot, General Pham Van Phu (Commander of MR II where Ban Me Thuot was located) was isolated and he could accomplish anything. And the same is true for General Ngo Quang Truong in MR I (the area including the northernmost provinces of South Vietnam and the cities of Da Nang and Hue). He could not do anything at all. As for General Nguyen Van Toan in MR III (the area around Saigon) and Cao Van Vien, the chairman of the Joint General Staff, my husband had no faith in them and he did not trust them. One need only look at Toan's character and his military life experience and one just can't have any faith in a man like that or have any hope in that person.

My husband knew that Saigon would fall because after the loss of the other two regions, MR I and MR II, because there was no able leadership left in the military. Seeing who was in charge in Saigon, he concluded that Saigon could not hold out. So, military and political survival meant retreating to the MR IV region and establishing an enclave there, but even that could not hold out for long all alone.

To tell you the truth and be fair, in 1975, the number of people in the South who were really honest and who were ready to fight against the North Vietnamese was negligible and very few of the country's leaders could be trusted. There were some members of the Hoa Hao, for example, who came to my husband and expressed their willingness to fight against the communists. They asked

my husband to provide them with arms and ammunition. My husband, however, was unsure of their reliability and he suspected there might be treachery by this group once he gave them supplies.

Then, on April 21, 1975, President Nguyen Van Thieu resigned and handed over the government to Mr. Tran Van Huong. I remember still the words of Mr. Thieu: "Losing a President Thieu, the military still has a three-star General Thieu. The people still have a soldier, Nguyen Van Thieu. I pledge to fight side by side with my brothers, the soldiers." Thieu's announcement moved me very much. But then his words became meaningless when the high-ranking commanders, who directly ran the working machinery of the government and the military, ran away to seek safety for themselves and their families and friends and at the same time abandoned their own countrymen just as we were being caught up the final bloody hurricane of the war.

News of the loss of MR I, II and III arrived in Can Tho. We learned that there were places where no fight took place, important places abandoned to the enemy. Yet there were also a few places where intense and determined fights were waged to the last man. But too often the losing troops ran for their lives like a colony of ducks being hunted. The army became confused and demoralized. President Thieu, Prime Minister Tran Thien Khiem, General Cao Van Vien, ran like scared rabbits and left the country to others. So, who was left to fight? The soldiers who remained watched their commanders flee. Who was left to lead them? The soldiers began to whisper among themselves, "For all these years we have been fighting for our country or have we been fighting for a horde of corrupt individuals?" Without the commanding generals, the troops were like a snake without a head, all broken up and in disarray. And there was this question: "If the soldiers have no commanders, then what will happen?" The soldiers started asking, "What do the generals know about fighting in battles? It is the soldiers who fight and the generals who reap the benefits." Those comments came from unhappy and dissatisfied elements and they were from the point of view of observers who were like frogs sitting in the bottom of a well -- they could see only a very small part of the developing situation.

When my husband heard that President Thieu had resigned and said he would stay in the country, he knew right away that Thieu would flee from the country, no matter what he said. And Thieu did. My husband also knew that the whole Thieu administration would flee from the country and they did. But my husband made the decision to remain in his country. And he did. How did my husband know these things? How could he predict? He could do so by looking at the past activities of these people and looking at their record. Everything was there -- the answers were all there already. They lacked character.

When President Tran Van Huong resigned and as General Duong Van Minh took control of the government, my husband knew that there would be no peace settlement and that there would not be any last-minute agreement between the North and the South. There were rumors of what General Minh might do to stop the advance of the North Vietnamese Army. There were rumors that he would arrest all of the generals in the army. But my husband was not afraid of General Minh or the rumors like this.

Despite the chaotic situation in Saigon and in the nearby regions, MR IV was relatively calm. And the reason for its calmness was because of the calmness generated by the leaders of the region--

leaders like General Nguyen Khoa Nam and my husband. As the leaders of the region, they decided not to flee, not to run away. And therefore, the personnel under their command did not want to flee either. There was, of course, a small number who did try to escape and ran away. This is always true.

You need to know also that as soon as the Central Highlands were lost to the communists, I myself made the decision that I would not leave the country. My husband never asked me to leave and never told me to leave. And I decided for myself even before then, that I would not leave because I knew that my husband would never leave the country. And I made up my mind to stay and die, if that should be our fate, together.

On the 29th of April, on the radio, Prime Minister Vu Van Mau and President Duong Van Minh broadcast on the Voice of Saigon ordering all Americans to leave Vietnam within 24 hours. It was at that time that the secret plan for military operations by Generals Nam and my husband were finalized.

In those last hours of the Saigon regime, General Nguyen Huu Hanh, the replacement for General Vinh Loc (Chairman of the Joint General Staff) during the last day, made countless phone calls to Can Tho. He tried to persuade my husband to cooperate with General Minh and to surrender. He stressed the concepts of military brotherhood and comradeship. But my husband suspected that he was merely examining the attitudes of the two commanders of MR IV. Many times during his telephone conversations with General Hanh, my husband was decisive and said that he would not cooperate with Minh and he would not surrender to the communists and he would fight to the death.

On April 30th, General Duong Van Minh surrendered the country to the Communists unconditionally. Remember that General Duong Van Minh twice destroyed (Minh headed the coup against President Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963 and ordered the murder of Diem and his brother) the country and had stained its history and lowered himself down to sign his name to a treacherous document that offered his country to the enemy. I heard Duong Van Minh's unconditional surrender speech to the North over the radio. When Duong Van Minh declared his surrender of South Vietnam to the Communists a number of soldiers just left the military and went home. But I remember now still, the large number of officers and soldiers who broke into tears when they heard the surrender announcement from General Minh. They embraced the flag and they kept their weapons and they cried.

Prior to the surrender, my husband and General Nam made contingency plans. They decided to stay in MR IV and fight. And even should Saigon fall, they and their troops would withdraw into the secret hidden areas in the jungles of the Delta region. The plan to withdraw into the jungle areas was made before General Minh surrendered. However, they were kept secret and only a very few people knew about it. My husband and General Nam still carried out their duties and continued to make plans for regular military exercises and operations. The plan to retreat into the hidden areas was made and ready to be executed at the proper moment. My husband and General Nam never thought they would receive any military aid from the US Government. And so in order to carry out their plans they never planned on it and they never even considered it.

General Nam and General Hung were three times offered a chance to evacuate by their American advisor. And they refused each of the three times. They decided not to abandon their men and their country but to stay and defend it to the death. Their American advisor continued to prod them, but finally he left in desperation and in sadness.

The plan for a secret operation in the Delta was now ready. Weapons, ammunition and food were prepared. All was readied for the troops to be directed and redeployed in new zones. The plan of moving the troops was code named Operation LINKING HANDS. Military Region IV had good strategic points and an army there could continue the fight alone for a long time. By the 29th of April, there was not a single stronghold in any remote part of that countryside or any town that had yet fallen into the hands of the NVA or the VC.

But in Can Tho, in the early morning of April 30, 1975, people were in a confused and frightened state. What led to the collapse of morale in Can Tho was that there was an infiltrator from the Communists in the radio station and instead of broadcasting the order of General Nam, that everybody was supposed to stay put and fight, they broadcast the message from General Minh telling everyone to surrender and to lay down their arms. So people became disoriented and didn't know what to do and many became pessimistic. Some of the military people deserted.

Right in the town the saddest scene of chaos took place. Some criminal elements seized the uncertain occasion to loot the properties of the American offices and buildings and disregarded the warnings shots of the police who tried to maintain order and safety. The civilians fled. Some people were paralyzed by fear and they sobbed and screamed and other people looted and destroyed like a bunch of madmen. There must have been a number fifth column people in the crowd who tried to create disorder and to terrorize the people and to destroy the morale of the soldiers.

The plans for Operation LINKING HANDSs were kept secret and only a few close staff members of my husband and General Nam were aware of them. The other people under their command were not told of the plan because there existed at that time an atmosphere of mistrust among the officers and others in the military. The withdrawal was planned to begin at noon on April 30th, 1975. The troops would be withdrawn into the secret hidden areas of the jungle at that time. However, before that time, my husband gave the orders to begin the troop redeployment to the colonel who was chief of the security office. The colonel was supposed to relay the orders to the troops, but this colonel delegated this direct responsibility to his captain and then took off with his family and fled the country. And so what happened to that captain? Nobody knows! He just disappeared too. He left. His commander fled in the 1st the place, so naturally he did too. But we did not know that yet.

The order to begin Operation LINKING HANDS was issued. But then when contacting the commanders of the units in the area, we found out that they did not know anything about the plan. They had not readied their troops as they should have done in the morning. when we tried to locate the colonel who was in charge of distributing maps and orders for the secret redeployment of the troops, we realized that this officer had taken his family and ran away after passing the duty to his captain and the captain had disappeared right on the heels of his commander. And all of the maps and the orders for the Operation LINKING HANDS had disappeared with them.

Generals Nam and Hung were filled with anger, frustration and disappointment. Their feelings cannot be described adequately with my words. As for myself, I cannot help but cry today when I remember the torn expression and the pain and the disappointment that showed on my husband's face at the moment when he realized that the plan to fight was hopeless. The lines of veins appeared in his forehead and his teeth were clenched. He expressed his deepest and utmost inner pain upon hearing the news of the treachery. He pounded on his desk. The careful and well-arranged plan was now suddenly foiled because of an act of betrayal and cowardice.

My husband lifted his eyes to look at me and he said, "Victory is what we have always aimed for. But what if we fail? Then what do you want to do?" I responded, "Then we will all die. Our children do not want us to be in the hands of the communists either. I will stay with you. I will not abandon you in this moment of disappointment." And to deflect the possibility of being captured and falling into the hands of the enemy, I methodically and calmly planned for the death of my children--the final rescue of all of us.

A small number of pessimistic people who only thought of themselves, and who did not want to fight, were there. But the others, who were close to my husband and to General Nam, those who were trustworthy, stuck close by and said they would follow the Generals' orders. Let me tell you about this thing first. My husband and General Nam planned all their military operations from their headquarters building. My husband divided this place into two sections. One was where General Nam planned the military events. And the other section my husband designated as the secondary headquarters. It was to this place that my husband called me to tell me of the betrayal by his colonel. And as soon as he heard of the betrayal he developed new plans and discussed them with General Nam.

At 4:45 PM that day my husband left his office at the Corps headquarters to return to the headquarters office where we lived temporarily. The reason he returned home on that day was because there was a rumor that the representatives of the communists would come in and sit down with General Nam to demand his surrender and to ask him to sign over the troops and the region. My husband did not agree to this. And he did not want to witness this event and so he returned home. He did not wish to witness the shameful transfer between 2 star General Nam and the Major Hoang Van Thach of the Viet Cong.

At 5:30 PM my husband radioed to General Mach Van Truong to order him to deploy two units of tanks to protect the Command Office of the 21st Division. After that he contacted other troops that were still fighting in various other nearby areas. At that time, alongside national road number 4 from Cai Lay and My Tho to Long An, there was heavy fighting going on. Along this route, fighting continued until May 2nd, 1975. Very heavy fighting.

My husband called a meeting of his officers for 6:30 that evening. But at 6:30 when all these officers had arrived at the gate there were also ten townspeople already standing there waiting. They asked to meet with General Hung in the name of representatives of the people of Can Tho. They then made their request. "We know that General Hung will never agree to surrender. But we beg of you not to counterattack. With only your order of counterattacking, the Viet Cong will shell the town. Can Tho then will be destroyed completely, just like the ruins of An Loc [which General Hung had successfully defended in 1972]. Please, for whatever the fate of our country is as such,

please General, for the sake of the people and their lives, please put away your daring and proud spirit." They said that it would be better to accept shame and to bear shame than to go on fighting, killing and dying.

Listening to them, I felt both pain and discomfort. I was not surprised at their request because just one week earlier, the Viet Cong had shelled heavily in the area of Can Doi, creating a great loss of life and property. The people of Can Tho were still horrified that the same thing would happen to them. My husband was expressionless as he listened to their request. It took a long time and he forced a smile and replied, "Please be at ease. I will try my very best to minimize the loss and damage for our people."

When this group left, my husband turned to me and said, "Do you remember the story of Mr. Phan Thanh Gian? When three eastern provinces were lost, he had to bend himself to let go of three more western provinces to the French because of his care for the people. He could not bring himself to make the people suffer and he could not let himself lose his proud spirit or his hands in surrender, for this act would bring shame to his country and his soldiers. He, then went on a fast and took poison to end his life. I would rather die than to have my hands tied and watch the invasion of the Vietcong." Because the people came forward to make that request and said they were the representatives of the local population of Can Tho, my husband could not refuse them. They made the request on behalf of the people themselves and not on behalf of the communists. They made the request as the people, so my husband did not want to hurt them and so he decided to honor their request.

At 6:45 PM General Nam called my husband to check the situation in various places. My husband told Nam of what the representatives of the people of Can Tho had requested. Hung also let Nam know that the newest secret order would be given to a trusted person to be distributed. General Nam said to Hung that he had recorded a message to the people of Can Tho and the message would be broadcast by the radio channel in Can Tho. One more time there was a failure. The channel of Can Tho was taken over one hour before by the infiltrators. The director was threatened into broadcasting the message to the people of the Vietcong Major Hoang Van Thach instead of General Nam's message. They broadcast Thach's message first and ten minutes later they broadcast Nam's. But it was too late. It was impossible to regain the trust of the civilians and the soldiers then. More men deserted.

My husband had one major worry. He worried about the safety of me and of our children. And he asked me what I wanted to do about all this. Deep in my heart, I had made the decision that if my husband and his troops were to withdraw into the secret hidden places in the jungle, then my children and I would not go with him. I had made a decision also I would kill myself and my children so that my husband would not carry this burden, this worry, that would divide his attention away from fighting. The reason I wanted to do that was because I knew that during the time the troops were moving to the jungles, no doubt, fighting with the communist forces would take place, therefore as soon as the troops were to be deployed to the places that were set up and began the march and the withdrawal, then at that time I would take my life and my children's lives, and this way my husband would not be distracted from his responsibility and his duty to defend the country. I did not want us to be an added burden on him.

I am a Catholic. And I know that Catholicism forbids taking one's life, but you must know, that there are exceptions to the rule. For example, to kill oneself for one's country, and for one's military forces, that is acceptable. I did not change my mind. I did not change the decision of killing myself and my children, but what happened was at that time, when the plans for the withdrawal into the jungle collapsed, my husband thought of killing himself. I wanted to die with him. The children and I wanted to die together with him. At the beginning I did not tell him of my plan of killing myself and the children, but at that time, when the plans for withdrawal collapsed and my husband talked of killing himself, we discussed a plan of dying together as a family. But my husband disagreed with my decision. He did not want me to do that. To tell the truth, in the beginning, my husband agreed with my plan that the whole family would die together. I would inject the children with sleep medication and then I would inject myself with the same medication, and my husband would then shoot himself. But when the time came, my husband changed his mind and he did not want me to die nor the children. But he wanted to go ahead with his own plan to die.

At 7:00 PM my husband called me up to his office. We were alone. He recounted for me all the failures since the afternoon and up to that minute. Then, looking at me with his fiery eyes he told me slowly and gravely that he was going to kill himself. And he said, "You have to live to raise our children." I panicked, "Oh, my husband! Why did you change your mind?" He said, "Our children are innocent. I could never bring myself to kill them." "But we could not let them live with the communists. I will do it for you. All I need to do is to give them a very strong dose of sleeping drugs. Wait for me. We will all die at the same moment," I begged him. "Impossible! Parents cannot kill their children. I beg you, Hoang, please try to bear this shame. Try to live and replace me to raise our children into good people. Try hard to live, even if you have to bow and to bear a heavy burden of shame." "If this is for the children, for your love of the children, then why can't we leave for a foreign country like the others?" I asked him. He narrowed his eyes and with a severe look at me said, "You are my wife. How could you utter those words?" Knowing that I was clumsy with my words and had said the wrong things that disturbed him, I hastily expressed my excuses. "Please forgive me, my husband. It's only because I love you so much that I said these words."

His voice was so calm and so serious. "Listen to me. People can run away but I will never run away. There are thousands of soldiers under my command and we have lived and died together. How can I at this minute abandon them and seek life for myself? And I will not surrender. At this moment, it is too late to withdraw into the secret places because we do not have the supply of weapons, ammunition and food, therefore, we will not be able to withstand the enemy for long. It is too late. The Vietcong are coming. Don't let me lose my determination. Continuing to fight now will only bring trouble and loss not only to our family but to soldiers and civilians also. But I don't want to see the sight of any communists."

I shakily asked, "But what about me? What should I do?" Holding tightly to my hands he said, "Our marriage has been full of love and respect and that makes us understand each other. Please try to tolerate this, even though you will have to bear many shameful and disheartening things. Go in disguise, change yourself so you can stay alive. I trust you. For myself, for our children, for the love of the country, you must bear it. Listen to me. I beg you. I beg you!" I could say nothing before his gaze and his bittersweet words. "Yes, my husband, I will listen to you," I promised him. But he was afraid that I would change my mind, so he continued to press on, "Promise me! Promise

me that you'll do it!" "I will, I promise. I promise to you, my love. But please let me have two conditions. If the communists make me live away from the children and if they rape me. Then do I have the right to take my own life?" My husband thought for a moment and then nodded his head in agreement. He stood and embraced me and wept. Finally he said, "Hurry up and ask your mother and children to come in to see me."

When my mother and the children came into his office, he said goodbye to them and kissed the children. He explained to my mother why he had to die and why I had to live. Then obeying his command, I invited all of the officers and soldiers who were still present for their meeting to go into his office. Everyone lined up and waited for the new orders. The atmosphere was so solemn and yet so moving. This was the moment of saying farewell between the living and the dying of people who had fought closely together for so many years. My husband said that there were no new orders to go to the hidden places to fight back. The fighting was finished for now. He said, instead, "I do not abandon all of you to take my wife and children to run away overseas. As you all know, the operation failed midway, and I did not counterattack because of the people. Now I cannot bear the shame of surrender. You all have cooperated with me and when you did something wrong I scolded you. But when I scolded you, it is not because I hated you. I scolded you because I wanted us to come and to help one another. Even though our country is being sold out, being offered to the communists today, you are not to be blamed. It is those who directly held the fate of the country in their hands who are to bear the blame. Please forgive me my mistakes if I have made any. I accept death. A commander who cannot protect his country, his position, then should die at his position for his country. He cannot abandon the people and the country and seek safety for himself. When I die, go back to your families, your wives and your children. And remember clearly this, my final warning: you must not let the communists put you in a concentration camp under some deceptive pretense. Goodbye, my brothers."

General Hung saluted and shook hands with his men one by one. When he came near Major Phuong and Captain Nghia, he said, "Please help my wife and children. Goodbye." Everyone stood still. Nobody was able to say a word. My mother rushed over to him and asked to die with him. My husband comforted her and asked her to look after her grandchildren. He then ordered everyone to leave. No one wanted to move. He had to push them out one by one. I then pleaded with him, "My love, please let me stay to witness your death." But he refused. Captain Nghia ran away. My husband returned to his office and locked the door. I heard a loud shot from the other side of the door. A terribly loud shot. It startled me.

It was 8:45 PM, April 30, 1975. It was the final day of Vietnam. The final day of my husband's life. Someone said, "General Le Van Hung was dead!" I thought, "Oh, my husband, you are no more!" When I entered the room my husband lay across the bed. His arms were open wide and he was still trembling hard, his whole body shook in waves and convulsions. His eyes were wide open and filled with anger. His mouth was open and his lips were moving. I threw myself at him and embraced him. I knelt beside the bed and put my ear to his mouth while asking, "My love, my love. Do you have anything else to say to me." But he could no longer answer me. I held him in my arms and he died there.

General Nam was unaware of my husband's suicide. When I tried to call him on the radio I could not get hold of him because the frequencies were jammed by the communists who were



broadcasting. I don't know exactly where General Nam was at that time. I just did not know. But I tried to call him on the radio and I tried to locate a frequency where I could connect with him.

He was probably a mile or so away from where I was at that time. And my husband did not tell me or did not leave a message for me to contact General Nam and to tell him of his death. But I just wanted to tell General Nam, I just wanted him to know. My husband did not talk to General Nam about killing himself because at that time, on the 30th, during the day, there were some contacts between them but later in the day they lost contact with each other and he couldn't communicate with General Nam. And besides, my husband did not commit suicide until the communists invaded the town of Can Tho.

At about 1:00 AM the phone rang again. This time it was General Nam. "Hello, sister Hung?" he said. I cried when I heard his voice, "General Nam!" Nam's voice was filled with sorrow. "I heard the news of what happened," he said. "I share with you the sorrow. My condolences, sister Hung." I continued to sob. I asked General Nam what he planned to do. I heard him sigh on the telephone. And then he said to me words that I will never forget until the day I die. "The fate of this war is so miserable. Sister Hung, your husband and I planned everything so well, even to the last minute details, and in the last moment we were betrayed. That's it, sister Hung." Then his voice came back to his former calmness and strength. "Try to be brave, sister Hung. You have to live because of your kids. If there is anything urgent or dangerous then call me."

"Thank you, General, " I said. After my talk with General Nam, I stepped out onto the balcony and looked to the courtyard below. The officers and soldiers were all gone. the gate was open. The wind moved the doors making a noise that was sad and tragic. I just stood there and cried for a long time.

The next morning at 7:00 AM I had just finished my prayer for my husband's soul when I heard a sob behind me. Turning around, I saw Lt. Col. Tung, the chief of staff of the military hospital in Can Tho. He had come to visit my husband one last time. He told me that he had to return to the hospital right away because General Nam had just committed suicide. His body was still in the hospital. General Nam ended his life by shooting himself in the temple at 6:00 AM, May 1st, 1975. After our phone conversation, I had a premonition that it would happen, that he would kill himself. However, when Tung gave the news, I was still shocked. I knelt down facing the military hospital where he lay and I prayed for his soul.

The people of Can Tho knew me and would have pointed me out to the communists so I had to leave Can Tho on May 2nd for Saigon in order to protect myself and my children. I stayed at one major's home, he knew my husband, but I stayed there for only one night and then I had to go find another place to live, because nobody was willing to house me because they were afraid, and I also was afraid for them if they housed me and something happened.

During the next years in Saigon I had to change my residence countless times, I had to change my residence up to the time I left the country, which was in September of 1981. Why were few people willing to help me even though my husband was a hero? You have to live in a communist society to know. How could they help me? After all, if they helped me they would be dead. They would be blacklisted by the government, they would be punished. Therefore I had to be on the move all

the time. The children stayed with me most of the time, but whenever the search by the communists got too close, I would give them to my mother to care for and until things calmed down and then they would live with me again. I got little help also because not many people in Saigon knew that I was the wife of General Hung. I hid that fact from everyone. During the period of 1975 to 1981 I had no idea of committing suicide, but if I was captured by the communists, then I would have to die, I was willing to die in a brave manner and not be tortured nor would I lose face nor could I hurt my husband's honor.

During that time period who could be happy? I could not be happy. Who could ever be happy living under Communist rule? In the aftermath of the war, in the first few years, my hopes were still high and I was hoping that there would be a coming back, a return, because there was news and rumors of the resistance forces fighting, and I never thought of leaving the country. I was still thinking and hoping that the communist would be booted out of the South. However, as time went on and I recognized that I knew that the situation was not as rosy and advantageous to us, to the South Vietnamese people, I decided that the only way to be able to do something for the country was to leave the country and then go overseas and maybe from the overseas base I would be able to affect the situation. There was no way I could become an activist in Vietnam because they were always following me, like a shadow. They followed me that close. They followed me day and night.

When my husband was alive he never told me to leave the country nor did he have the idea of leaving the country. But at night, in my dreams, when my husband came back and he told me the communists were near and that I should flee again and so he saved my life so many times. I left Vietnam finally by boat. I was in a refugee camp with my children for 11 months in the Philippines. Then I came to the United States. Besides freedom, I wanted to make a life for my children, to raise them and to continue to follow the path of my husband. I tried to do as I promised my husband before he died. I dream about Vietnam all of the time. For sure. It is my mind and it is always with me. Yes, I do. I always dream about being back in Vietnam and being chased and being hunted down by the communists. And my children can still remember their father.

General Le Van Hung and General Nguyen Khoa Nam are dead. But their spirits, their heroic spirits, will not die. I will always remember and honor them.

*Pham Thi Kim Hoang*  
*translated by Tran Thi My Ngoc and Larry Engelmann*

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