Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #94 – Lama Kunga Thartse
June 26, 2006

TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number:	#94
2. Interviewee:	Lama Kunga Thartse
3. Age:	71
4. Date of Birth:	1937
5. Sex:	Male
6. Birthplace:	Lhasa
7. Province:	Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet:	1959
9. Date of Interview:	June 26, 2006
10. Place of Interview:	Ewam Choden Tibetan Buddhist Center, Kensington, California, United States
11. Length of Interview:	1 hr 51 min
12. Interviewer:	Marcella Adamski
13. Videographer:	Kerry Rose

Biographical Information:

At the age of 10, Lama Kunga Thartse was recognized as a reincarnation of a previous lama. He was taken to Thargye Dupdhe Monastery in Shang village to study and later moved to Ngor Monastery near Shigatse. He was born to an aristocratic family and his father, Mr. Shuguba, served the Tibetan government in various capacities, including the Minister of Finance. Lama Kunga Thartse nostalgically recalls his family estate where they used to grow barley, vegetables and flowers. The estate was later covered in concrete when the Chinese constructed a hydraulic energy station there. Ironically, his village had no electricity even after this transformation.

Lama Kunga Thartse's father was arrested in 1959 after the collapse of the central Tibetan government and he and his brother escaped to Nepal. When his father was released from prison in 1980, Lama Kunga Thartse visited Tibet and was reunited with his father after a period of 20 years. During his visit to Tibet, he was very touched by the difficult, poverty-stricken condition of the Tibetan people. Some pleaded with him, "Please do something. Help me."

Lama Kunga arrived in the USA in 1962 and lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. He established the Ewam Choden Tibetan Buddhist Center offering meditations and classes in Buddhism.

Topics Discussed:

Utsang, childhood memories, monastic life, imprisonment, forced labor, Chinese oppression, brutality/torture, escape experiences.

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Age: 71, Sex: Male
Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
Interview Date: June 26, 2006

Question: Thank you, first of all, Lama Kunga, for agreeing to be interviewed by us through the Tibet Oral History Project. I notice that we have some photographs here. Would you be willing to tell us a little bit about who is in these photographs?

Interviewee #94: [Holding up a black and white photograph] This person is my grandpa, my mother's father. His family was the minister of Temon. He was the Prime Minster of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. That is my mother's side of the family. [Pointing to different people] This gentleman is my grandpa's father, who later became a monk. At the back of this person is my grandpa's son and this lady was grandpa's wife. These two children were his [grandpa's] son's children. One of these children recently died at the age of 80, my first cousin.

Q: Where did he die?

#94: He died in Lhasa.

Q: This picture was taken in Lhasa?

#94: This was taken long time ago in Lhasa.

Q: Thank you. What about the next one?

#94: [Holding up another black and white photograph] This group of people in the picture [is] of the ministers or *Kashag*. The Dalai Lama's government, *Kashag*, it is called. Four ministers, four prime ministers and in the middle the gentleman is my grandpa. This picture was taken around 1912 or something like that.

Q: Was this photo found among the family treasures?

#94: [I] found it somewhere, I am not too sure. That was kind of a group of delegation, maybe in Simla. There was some meeting with the Chinese and British and Tibetans; kind of a border decision making at that time this was taken. [Pointing to next photograph] This picture has a few ladies here and the middle lady is my mother. She was maybe [in her] late 30s. This lady is my father's older sister and that is my uncle's wife. Mr. Shakapa, you may have heard of him; Mr. Shakapa's wife.

Q: That is the family name?

#94: The family name. [Holding up next photograph] This picture was taken in 1935 or maybe [sometime in the] '30s. I was born as a child of Mr. Shuguba, that's my father. That's me as a baby. That's one of my brothers at his small house in Lhasa.

Q: There are lots of flowers.

#94: He [father] loves plants and flowers. [Pointing to photograph] And also some peach trees inside of the part [?]. We used to go around a small yard. This is a bedroom here and it was very pleasant. He can make a beautiful house.

Q: I bet you enjoyed the fruit.

#94: The fruit, the peaches. When I was little and walking around, I used to pluck the peaches and eat—it was stealing actually.

Q: Lovely picture. Let's talk about this for a minute.

#94: [Showing a book titled *In the Presence of My Enemies*] This is my father in the 1950's.

Each year in Lhasa there is a festival. It is the Monlam Festival and two families taking turns to be head of the kind of military, Mongolia's tradition. It's called Yarsol. The Yarsol is a festival and at that time my father was doing Yarsol, the head of the Yarsol Festival. The reason the book is, my father was here [in the USA] and the Dalai Lama came in 1991 to San Francisco. The Dalai Lama asked me to bring my father to him, so I took him to San Francisco. [Pointing to the picture on the back cover of the book] This is it. The Dalai Lama told my father to write some memoirs, kind of a biography, something for the future Tibetans.

Q: What was your father's work in Tibet?

#94: Well, father's work was…various [kinds] of work since he became service for the government from the early ages all the way down to the end of the government in Tibet. The latest one was he became the Minister of Finance. In between, he became governor of certain districts and he was also an army general for a few years.

Q: Maybe I can back up a little bit and ask where were you born?

#94: I was born in our house in Lhasa.

Q: And what year was that?

#94: That was 1937.

Q: So that makes you now?

#94: I am 71.

Q: Your parents were from what area?

#94: My parents were actually born in Tsang province, which is far northwest, near Shigatse. The second largest town [in Tsang province] is called Shigatse. Our village is close to that and you probably know that the Brahmaputra River goes through that, so the way to go to the village you have to cross the Brahmaputra River with a yak skin boat. The name of the village is called Tanak, which means *ta* is horse and *nak* is black, a Black Horse Village. That village is very famous, not only our family, but ancient lamas, masters and teachers who also stayed and meditated in some places and several very important families, noble families such as Tanak Lungshar, a family which was very, very famous at the time of 13th Dalai Lama.

Q: When we were talking about your family, how many brothers and sisters you had in your family?

#94: Our family had six brothers and one daughter. We had quite a large [family]. My mother had six children, but there was one death. My sister died. Otherwise, I would have two sisters at that time.

Q: Where were you in the line up of six children?

#94: I am the youngest of the six sons.

Q: When you were growing up, I gathered your whole childhood was spent in Lhasa?

#94: Up until age 8, I spent with my parents and then my parents sent [me] back to Tsang province.

Q: Before we get to that age, can you tell me what your memories are before 8 years old? Can you remember any of the stories?

#94: My father told me—I don't remember too well—but at the age of four, I was saying that I was born in a different lama's reincarnation, some sort of remembering *kyewa,* which is birth, to recollect something and I was telling my parents to show places. Later my father told me that I asked father to come with me and to show the place where I belonged. [We] took a few days of trip, but we didn't recognize somehow until later at the age of 8. Then I went to the Tsang province.

Q: With your family?

#94: My parents went to…my father, mother and other brothers were stationed down in eastern Tibet, Kham because of the government. [My father was the] governor, so he had

to go to eastern Tibet, so they split. My uncle, the father's younger brother told me, "Where would you go, [with] father to the east or go to the north? If you go to the north with me, you will have a lot of *chang* 'home-brewed beer' to drink, meat to eat." He was kind of alluring me. I said, "That sounds good, I will join you," so I went to Tsang and the other brothers went to the east.

Q: You were about 8?

#94: Around 8. At the age of 8, I went to Tsang to the Tanak village.

Q: Can you tell us about your life in that village?

#94: We were kind of estate landlord and then big buildings and inside there were servants working. Outside there will be maybe 15 or 20 villagers around, like serfs or subjects. They provided work for the house. It was kind of like that.

Q: Was it a farming community?

#94: Yes, it was a farming community, absolutely.

Q: And you lived with your uncle?

#94: With my uncle, who was kind of in charge of the estate. He was taking care of the farm and whatever the needs were, producing food and everything.

Q: What was some of your fondest memories of those years?

#94: I enjoyed myself. I loved my uncle who was like my father. Father used to grow a lot of vegetables outside besides the barley and other grains. He also produced carrots, radish and potatoes. We used to go in summertime, we tried to grow and he showed discovering of the vegetables and flowers. He loved growing flowers and trees. We had the village and next to it was the river. It was a year round river; the water was available there in the village for irrigating the fields. The water was available.

Q: What was the name of the river?

#94: It is called the Tanak Tsangpo. Now needless to say, when the Chinese moved in, the Tanak Tsangpo was turned into a hydraulic energy. They stopped the Tsangpo five miles back inside the village and then dug a route in the mountainside. Right there on our estate home they bring the ugly water hydraulic power.

Q: Right in the family estate they put the hydraulic power?

#94: Right in the family estate. The fields where we used to grow beautiful barley is completely concrete. They made it into concrete.

Q: Did you see it recently?

#94: Yes, I went in 1999 and I took my niece also to Tibet and I showed her Tanak village.

Q: What was like that for you to see?

#94: It was kind of sad. It was completely ruined, actually. There was no electricity available for the villagers yet. The power goes to Shigatse instead of the village. The village has no light.

Q: Are there many villagers left?

#94: Few villagers are still there—here and there—but they don't have light.

Q: When you saw what the Chinese had done to your family estate, what kind of feelings did that make you have towards the Chinese?

#94: It is a very sad situation because psychologically and mentally, everybody was kind of oppressed. We used to have poor villagers; there was a lot of poverty, but the mental state was clear and happy. There was a system in Tibet [where] the poor are given food by the people who have. Those who have it give to the poor people and the beggars are allowed to beg. People who have the money or *tsampa* 'flour made from roasted barley' or whatever they can give. It was kind of like that.

Q: Is that kind of happening now or when you were a child?

#94: When we were children it was like that. When I was a child, the beggars were happy inside. All they needed was *tsampa* to eat, to maintain and there was no pressure, no mental pressure. Now there is a lot of pressure that arises, jobs and education, so-called education that the villagers I visited in Tanak have no good school.

There was some kind of a symbolic school, very, very bad. The children have no equipment or paper or pencils or things like that. I visited the inside of the so-called school. I visited that. There are no proper chairs and all the black boards were written on in Chinese, not in Tibetan. But the school [is held] maybe once or twice, a meeting, that's all and the rest of the time the children are just left without a school. Maybe some of the children have received a little education, but they are sent to the larger town.

Q: How did the people handle this oppression in terms of their Buddhist beliefs? Were they angry with the Chinese? Did they hate the Chinese?

#94: The basic human beings as we go down to the … not all Tibetans are perfect Buddhist practitioners. We are all human beings and we try to follow the Buddhist teachings, but we still have the mind of a human being. So obviously we get angry, oppressed and depressed.

In 1980 I went back to Tibet to meet my father who was released from the prison. That was the first time the Tibetans were reunited. Chinese opened the door to the west and Tibetans and Asian people were beginning to reunite from the gap of the 20 years, when the families split. The first time I was able to go in 1980 to meet my dad who was alive and released from the prison.

Q: How long had he been in prison?

#94: For almost 19 years, from 1959 to 1979 and Dad didn't do any, or cause any danger to the Chinese.

Q: Why was he arrested?

#94: Because he was a minister and a part of the Dalai Lama's government, part of the government thing. After all, being head of anything; that is, head of the family is no good, head of the monks/monasteries is no good and all were persecuted.

Q: How long did you stay there? What happened after 8?

#94: I stayed until at the age of 10 and then I was chosen as the *tulku* 'reincarnate lama' of a monastery. Then I became a lama and went to the monastery.

Q: Can you tell us what it means to be chosen as a *tulku*?

#94: To be chosen as a reincarnate feels a little shy, a little afraid, nervous and at the same time confused. Then there was a lot of feeling of something, that I must do something because the surrounding people who were choosing me were respecting [me] in an unusual way. In the village where I lived there was not that much respect; friends were very kind to the children in the usual normal way, but now I am sitting on the throne and wearing a monk's robe. They cherished and honored me. I felt each time when they did, "I am getting something that I am supposed to act differently." I am building up inside of my mind, actually [they were] making me into that, molding me into that situation.

Q: To be a *tulku*, does that mean you were considered to be a reincarnation?

#94: Yes, I would be the reincarnation of the *tulku*. Yes, recognized [as such].

Q: Who was the person you were supposed to be a reincarnation of?

#94: I am the reincarnation of the lama who died before me. [I was] his reincarnation, but he was also the reincarnation [of the] previous lamas and all the way it goes back to the [time]. I was born as the disciple of Milarepa, who was a great yogi in Tibet around the 10th or 11th century. The lineage goes from that down up to my predecessors. Then I was chosen as that predecessor's reincarnate lama.

Q: And that happened when you were 10 years old?

#94: Yes, when I was 10. I was chosen at that time.

Q: What happened to you? Did you live in monasteries from then?

#94: I was taken to the monastery by my uncle and his associates on the back of a horse. Then I stayed in the monastery and my uncle and the associates stayed with me for two weeks. [It was] a comfortable place and then after that my uncle had to leave. He left me behind and I had to stay in the monastery. That day was really painful. I remember clearly that all day I was crying at the back of my uncle. Finally uncle left and uncle's friends were giving me *khata* 'ceremonial scarves,' [saying] goodbye and hugging me. I then cried so much. [For a] few days I was very miserable at that time.

Q: You wanted to go home?

#94: I wanted to [be] back with the family. But after a few days, I found a lot of other children around my age; there were maybe six or seven of them. Together we played and so it got more fun and afterwards [I] was okay.

Q: It sounds like you made an adjustment. I wanted to go back and ask who were the people who identified you as a *tulku*?

#94: Those were the older friends or [who were] associated with the monastery of the previous lama and some of the lama's attendants. They [were the] people who came to receive me. There was a tradition and some kind of a test, to choose certain items, which belonged to the previous lama. They were items like bells, *dorje* 'thunderbolt-shaped ritual objects' and some other items. I had to choose the right ones. I did choose the right ones, which belonged to the previous lama.

Q: Was that hard to do?

#94: It wasn't too hard, maybe accidentally.

Q: Did you feel that you knew which the right one was?

#94: I may have something, something, but not too clearly. It was accidental or something that I chose or maybe karma to connect with that, so that's kind of connected with this monastery.

Q: Now you are 10 years old in the monastery. Can you give us a summary of what happens to you over the next few years?

#94: For the next three years I was staying at the monastery.

Q: The name of the monastery?

#94: My monastery is Thargye Dupdhe and a village called Shang Village. It was a Gelukpa School, the yellow hat sect school as the Westerners call it. I was there chosen as a Gelukpa Lama. I used to wear a yellow hat. The Dalai Lama wears a yellow hat. So I stayed there three years, studying a little bit. I had a tutor. Then finally, my case is slightly different from the other lamas. Then my uncle came on a visit. He came to visit from time to time. My uncle felt that I was not really [being] educated too well in this monastery. He thought he could take [me] to a larger monastery where I would receive a better education. So he took me to another monastery.

Q: What was the name of that monastery?

#94: That was called Ngor Monastery near Shigatse, not far from Shigatse. Shigatse is the second largest town and that monastery was a big monastery, much bigger than the previous one.

Q: About how many monks lived in that monastery?

#94: Maybe 300, 400 or 500 monks lived there.

Q: How did you feel about going to this other monastery?

#94: That was a nice thing. I enjoyed it because two of our brothers were there in that monastery.

Q: Of your own brothers?

#94: My own brothers were there. Then I was okay to join my brothers, so I stayed there in the monastery.

Q: From what years did you stay there?

#94: I was there from the age of 11. I think at age 11, I went to the Ngor Monastery.

Q: So at the age of 11 you went to the Ngor Monastery. How long did you stay?

#94: I stayed there until 1959.

Q: How old were you in 1959?

#94: In 1959 I was 21, I think.

Q: So about 10 years in the Ngor Monastery?

#94: Yes, 10 years in the Ngor Monastery.

Q: Can you tell us about your daily life in the Ngor Monastery?

#94: Because I had to study harder, [I was] provided a tutor. I had to study, memorizing a lot of Buddhist texts, so much memorizing texts and root texts and rituals. The Ngor Monastery has a lot of rituals to do; all of those I had to learn during these ten years. Then I was chosen as the lama of the Ngor Monastery. In Ngor Monastery there are four *labrang*, which are kind of four colleges. Then main congregation, then there is a fraternity; there are 500 monks there. The four *labrang* were kind of supporting the main organization. Our Labrang is called the Thartse *Labrang*. There were the Thartse, Khangsar, Phende and Lubdhing *Labrang*, four colleges or four departments. I was picked up to the Thartse Department, where one of my brothers lives.

Q: What made that different from the other ones? What did you study in that one?

#94: The system of school is, in Tibet there are four main Buddhist schools Sakya, Nyingma, Kagyu and Gelukpa. I am now in a Sakyapa school. The Sakya lineage was started around the 11th century. I was in the Sakya Monastery with the masters of Sakya.

Later on around the 14th century, the Ngor Monastery was established by a lama called Ngorchen Kunga Sangpo. Ngorchen Kunga Sangpo started in the 1400's at Ngor Monastery and that was my monastery. My latest monastery was an education [in] Sakya tradition. Basically, all Buddhist studies [are] similar. The sutras and tantras, all these studies are the same thing. They emphasize on slightly different—in our monastery [it was] more like tantric *vajrayana* practices, emphasizing on that.

Q: How did you like monastery life?

#94: Afterwards, I enjoyed a lot but there is a lot of pressure [because] of the studies. [It] was really strong pressure, "You are a tulku, and you are a lama." They will expect you to be better than the average ones, so you have to study hard and sometimes we get [into] trouble with the teacher. I still have nightmares of forgetting the sutras and studies. Still I have this fear, a kind of an anxiety. I could even today, these days in memory. That was the part that was not so good.

Q: Because you had exams?

#94: Exams and I have to do better than anybody else. That was hard.

Q: You still have nightmares of those days?

#94: Nightmares I do have.

Q: We are talking about your living there during the 1950's. You are in this monastery with all these monks. Do you have any awareness of what is happening inside of Tibet regarding the Chinese invasion?

#94: Not much. Our monastery was far away and secluded from the center of Tibet. We didn't know too much about what was going on. Even we didn't know what was going on in central Tibet, Lhasa. We didn't care about so much. We are just involved in our studies. Until 19…I didn't know the Chinese came to Tibet. We began [to] know something, that the Chinese were coming.

Q: When did it begin to change for you? When did you life change in the monastery?

#94: It wasn't changed. Nothing changed until 1959. In 1959, the Central Tibetan government collapsed and then everything was certainly changed. Nothing was changed gradually. There was no gradual changing.

Q: How did you hear about the central government collapsing?

#94: Central government was collapsed…I used to have a radio, a Phillips radio. I used to hear something from India, news that said, "Today the Chinese have an upright [uprising?] problems," and few days later, "Now under control." Something like that. No other details. A few days later, "The Dalai Lama was injured," or something like that. A few days later, "The Dalai Lama escaped from Tibet to India." Then we were scared [that] something must be going on, so we just kind of [saw] change and certainly at that time. And then people heard that Lhasa was collapsed and that the Dalai Lama had left. Then that people had started to be taken to the prisons. My father was taken to prison. All associates of the government, hundreds of people were put together in a prison.

Q: Was this 1959?

#94: Right, 1959.

Q: How did you first hear about your father being taken?

#94: What happened was, I was staying at the monastery. My brother, my mother and a couple of servants, they came out of Tibet [probably means Lhasa] and they came to the village. They met me at the village in the monastery and they told us, "Now we are all finished. Your father is in prison and all the relatives are taken to the prison." So they were kind of doomed.

Q: Did your mother give you the details of what happened?

#94: Yes, my mother gave me details. He [Father] was put in a prison. For the first few months they could take some food, socks and changes of clothing. For a few months they [the family] were taking [things for father in prison]. Then later they [the Chinese] stopped even taking of clothing. Socks were returned back to the home. Socks were also cut by the chains and the bloody socks came back and all the miserable things.

She [Mother] saw that sort of thing. She was very upset, of course. Then we got together finally, my brother and my mother got together. Meanwhile, our uncle who was staying at

the village was also taken to the Shigatse prison, with a group of people. Then we went together to the village, Tanak Village. One room was left, all the rest were closed and locked. They left some provisions for us and we ate that. We stayed in that one room.

Q: Your original village? Your original home?

#94: Yeah, original village, original home. My mother, my sister-in-law—my uncle was not there—a couple of children were there, my brother was there.

Q: Your father and mother were living in Lhasa when your father was arrested?

#94: That's right. My father and mother were living in Lhasa. One of my brothers who lives in Switzerland now, he was also in Lhasa.

Q: What was your father doing when he was arrested?

#94: My father had to go to Norbulingka because of the very intense situation [that] occurred following that month, and they had big meetings. They were negotiating with the Chinese military. You have heard that the Chinese invited the Dalai Lama to the concert and things like that, and the Tibetan, the Lhasa people learned that this was a trick—that they [the Chinese] were going to kidnap the Dalai Lama. My father and all the other associates of the government got together to negotiate with the Chinese military. They happened to be in Norbulingka, and at that time, they gunned down [meaning that the Chinese fired]. After the Dalai Lama left, a few days later on March 10, they shoot the big guns at the Norbulingka and they killed many people. [People] scattered everywhere and the remaining people were put together in the prison.

Q: And the prison where your father was taken was to Shigatse or Lhasa?

#94: Lhasa. The first three years in a military prison. Meanwhile, they were building a new prison and then he was taken to Drapchi military prison for three years. Meanwhile, they were building a bigger one, Sangyip, it is called, near Sera Monastery, inside of the mountain, a huge prison camp.

Q: The name again please?

#94: It is called Sangyip, Sangyip prison camp. It is huge, hundreds and hundreds, thousands of people can be put in prison. They took him finally to that place. It was kind of a life prison. There were a lot of people his age, lots of people were there, lots of important people were there, lots of villagers from far eastern Tibet, a lot of heads of villages of west, north and south. Many important village heads were there put together.

Q: Did you ever see your father again?

#94: [I had] never seen [him] after he was arrested for 20 years, until I came here and in 1980 I learned that father was released from the prison. It was in the newspapers in New

York or some place. The newspaper had this list of 34 important people who were released. Then the Tibetan office in New York called me and said, "There is a name which looks like your father's. Can you identify it?" I took the list of the names of important people and Mr. Shuguba was released. I was shocked! Mr. Shuguba, I thought he passed away 11 or 10 years ago.

Q: Because you hadn't heard anything?

#94: Nothing. No news.

Q: So what did you do?

#94: I immediately applied for a visa and it might take a year. But meanwhile, luckily, one gentleman from National Geographic, a photographer, came to see me here and he said he's going to go to Lhasa. I said, "If you are going to Lhasa, there is supposedly my father is still alive. Can you find out? If you find out, could you contact with my father and if possible take a picture?" He said he would do that. He went to China and talked to the Chinese. First the Chinese said, "We don't have that person and we didn't locate such a person." Then he insisted and went to Tibet, and then finally he located my dad.

Q: Where? Where did he find him?

#94: The day he was released from the prison, he walked through the town and he had no idea where to go because he was completely cut off. He was walking around in the street. Meanwhile, luckily, his one sister was alive, his sister and the sister's son—I'll show you later in the picture. There was one picture of him taken during the prison and the picture was kept in the sister's house. The small child was walking around and he recognized the grandpa. The child immediately went quickly to Father's sister's place. "Grandpa is walking around!" Then everybody rushed [outside] and it took some time to locate Grandpa. Grandpa was walking with his—he had picked up pieces of cloth and sewed them up and made a kind of a mattress. That was the only possession he had from the prison. He wrapped that and was carrying it and just walking around.

Then there my dad was, so finally they got together, my father and my aunt, my aunt's son and several of our relatives were gathered together. Finally, the Chinese showed the photographer. The photographer had demanded, "I must see Mr. Shuguba because I have a friend who lives in the United States." Then finally they said, the local leaders said, "Hurry up. There are people from the United States who are looking for Mr. Shuguba. So make that sure." They immediately prepared. They told our family to wear their best robes, put the candies on the table and fill the tea cups with tea." They set it up for the photograph. The photographer came and they took a picture. It is a beautiful picture. I can show it to you.

Q: Of your father?

#94: Of my father and family. Then I went in 1980 to Tibet by way of Nepal. I took a bus to Lhasa and that was my first visit and it was very miserable. From the border all the way down to Lhasa took four nights. Each night I slept in a kind of motel, funky motel. There 30 to 40 people, young 20 year olds, young people came and asking [telling?] me miseries, their miseries. They had to work so hard in the wounded [?] time, in digging out in the very cold rivers to clear out the rivers and fields. In the middle of winter they have to stay in the ice water. They were saying, "Please do something. Help me." I was all the four nights like that. I was so tired myself, I was exhausted.

I did prepare and brought a tape recorder. So I said, "I can't hear too much because I am too tired. Anything that you need to tell, tell it in this tape." So they were talking in the tapes. They were miserable; Shigatse, Gyangtse and all the way it was misery in 1980. 1980 was how I saw how the Chinese treated people so badly overall, everything from the village to the town to the city. Everyone is dusty, miserable. Relatives were…they said that they have a hat, they have a black hat which is "not allowed to talk to me." They said, "Don't talk to me. Don't come to me."

Q: Because?

#94: Because if you talk to me, then they are questioned by the local police, "What are you talking?"

Q: Because you had a black hat?

#94: Black hat. Black, which is a black mark. You are a criminal.

Q: Did you present yourself as a Rinpoche when you were traveling through Tibet?

#94: No, no.

Q: You look like a regular man?

#94: Like a regular man.

Q: So how would they know?

#94: There were people coming. At that time they opened the…before me there were quite a few Tibetans going in and out.

Q: What kind of things did you see that were shocking to you?

#94: The misery, dusty, poor. Everyone is completely depressed all the way to the town of Lhasa, Shigatse and the villages, particularly the village people. They had a tremendous misery. I made tapes to bring to India to give to the Dalai Lama.

Q: Why did you want to do that?

#94: I wanted to report. They asked me to report to the Dalai Lama. That was their wish. At least they can get a message to the Dalai Lama.

Q: How did the Tibetans' Buddhist teaching help people under these circumstances? How do they understand their suffering?

#94: Not all of the Tibetans were educated in that way. For example, I can tell you my dad's situation.

[Tape change is announced.]

[A family picture taken by the National Geographic photographer as described by the interviewee earlier as that of his father with the family in Lhasa after he was released from prison is shown.]

Q: We left off with your telling us about your father and how the family tried to see him but couldn't see him and after a short time, they had to stop bringing him food. Is that correct?

#94: That's right. While my father was in prison, the first three months, they [family members] were able to bring some food and tea; a thermos of tea and they could go through with the prison keepers. Later on they [the Chinese] stopped that even and [there was] no contact. They were sending some change of clothes and she [mother] said that the socks were also in half. The bloody socks indicate that he was chained, his feet were chained up and so because of that he had a very bad treatment there during the prison [term].

Q: And then you told us about the wonderful story of how he was let out of the prison, was walking along the streets and was recognized, actually by this little child who recognized the photograph. You told us that story and then, so now could you tell us…the family goes out to the streets and they find him and then what happened?

#94: [Pointing to the picture of the family] As you can see in this picture, my aunt is here, this gentleman is my aunt's son and one of these children was walking round in the street and he used to see some pictures of my dad and he recognized dad's face. The child saw that he was walking around and the child went back to his home and [said], "Grandpa is coming. [He is] walking around," so they, he and the others [pointing to them in the picture], rushed to look around in the streets.

Q: You said your aunt, is that your father's sister?

#94: One of the sisters. Father had four sisters. Three had died during [his time] in the prison. This one had a lot of suffering, but this was the end of the 11 years of hard work and things like that. She finished forgiving everything. She was also released a couple of years [back]. [Pointing to another gentleman in picture] He was also in prison for many

years and 11 years [of] hard work. Finally, this was the end of the era of their prison [days].

Q: That's your father in the middle with the hat.

#94: [Pointing to the picture] This is my father and these are my nieces and nephews.

Q: And how did this beautiful picture get taken?

#94: This was the National Geographic man—he is Fred-something.

Q: I can see it. [Reading from the picture] Fred Ward, Lhasa, August 1979.

#94: That's right. Fred Ward came here. A friend of mine who is a professor from Berkeley brought him here and said, "Fred Ward is going to go to Tibet." So I said, "That is very nice. If you [are] going to Tibet, [please] locate my father." So he did. He insisted to the Chinese and then finally he came to this local area and found him. Before he found him, the Chinese and the local people came and set up this group of people.

Q: Chinese permitted these people to come together and they made them dress up?

#94: They said, "You have to wear clean [clothes], clean yourselves up and it has to be a decent picture, a decent appearance."

Q: And why did they want it to look that way?

#94: They [were], maybe, saying that nothing significant [was] suffered [by] these people.

Q: And yet you are saying that your aunt was in prison, your father was in prison, another man was in prison. Three of these people spent at least 10 years or longer.

#94: Actually it was 10 years [in] prison and 10 years outside of prison for hard labor.

Q: What happens next to you? You said you were going to go to Tibet? Now you are under way to Tibet.

[Videographer]: Can we finish some of the things with the photograph because you said some things in the photo were staged. Can you speak specifically about those things in the picture that were set up for the sake of propaganda?

#94: Well, this picture…they didn't have nice clothes to wear normally. This is like a ceremonial dress up. [Pointing to the picture] Candies are put there. They brought candies and they set up the teacups. Normally, they don't have any butter tea whatsoever in that time. They have butter tea [pointing to the picture] here and like some sort of a normal life-style…showing it. In reality they didn't have at that time.

[Videographer]: Anything in this photograph that's not completely true?

#94: True in the sense, these people are alive. That's the truth, but the way they look, smiling and everything, was not really true. They had to do that. If you don't do that they could have trouble.

[Videographer]: What about the photograph of the man on the wall?

#94: I think this is the chairman after Mao died. There was some Chinese gentleman who was chairman. I think he didn't stay too long [in office], but whoever was the important Chinese chairman, you have to put [his picture] in each family house. We used to have the Dalai Lama's picture, but they [were] not allowed to do that.

Q: What would happen if they had the Dalai Lama's picture?

#94: That would be trouble. If they had it, that would be real trouble. Earlier there was not too much trouble with seeing the Dalai Lama's pictures. Now it would be really bad.

Q: Lama Kunga, I would like to ask after you had that long journey from India to Lhasa to see your father, what happened when you got there?

#94: The first time I went to Tibet, as I said each time I took a bus from Nepal. A bus, a public transportation and they set it up. Before me, there were Tibetans going in and out. I took a bus with a group of Tibetans and each time I stayed the night, there were lots of people coming and asking for help and telling their miseries. So many things happened and then I came down to Lhasa. I saw the family was sitting in this room [pointing to the picture] here, and I met all of these people.

Q: Was your father there?

#94: My father was there. I handed him a *khata*. We were all…almost hard to recognize each other. My father was there, aunt was there, all the cousins were there, my first cousin was there and then plus the whole town people started to come in. They were so happy about meeting [seeing] us together that they were crying; even the street people were crying, meeting [seeing] us together.

Q: This reunion was so wonderful.

#94: The reunion was so wonderful. When I was coming from the village in Nepal down into Tibet, villagers were so eager to see the Tibetans who were coming from outside and they took out a piece of hair from me and a piece of cloth; a piece of hair from the clothes. They took it out and they smell it; that much kind of eagerness to see. The village, the people who had never had contact and they were strangers. They were not our relatives or anyone. They were the common people who really…as cold and the first thing that you see are like a warm person they are seeing. They were just grabbing me. Not only me, but the people who were coming from India had the same situation all the way.

Q: When the people were asking you to listen to their miseries or their stories, what did they want you to do?

#94: They asked to, mainly, they all said to tell the Dalai Lama. That's the one thing.

Q: And tell him what?

#94: Tell him that we are being treated by the Chinese so badly, and that there was misery. That's to [be] conveyed. That's the message that needs to be delivered to Dalai Lama.

Q: And what about your father? Did you have a chance to talk to him alone at all?

#94: Yes, I did talk to him and I spent four months in Tibet. During those four months in Tibet, I had to change [plans] for bringing father. My plan was to bring father through Nepal. The immigration documents went to the Beijing United States Embassy. They told said, "You have to go to China and from China you have to exit." I refused saying, "I don't want to go to China." I needed all the documents sent back to the Nepal Embassy. That took us a long time. I actually had to go back to Nepal to make that sure.

Q: To get documents to get your father to leave the country, and you wanted the documents sent to Nepal?

#94: My father should leave from Nepal to contact with the United States Embassy in Nepal.

Q: Why did you want that?

#94: Because that's my route. I thought to go to China would be difficult that time. I have never been to China.

Q: Is it politically difficult?

#94: Politically and routes wise. I have never been to China at that time, so it is easiest from Nepal. We finally managed to do that.

Q: During that time were you able to talk to your father about his experience in prison?

#94: Yes, I asked many times. He never talked about what happened during the 20 years of prison. Nothing much and he said later [that] 10 years later then he was…his job was to go out in the daytime and in the spring and summertime to take care of the apple trees. Then sometimes to clean the roads, prison camp streets, that was his job. In the early years during the day, he was a young man in his 50s, a very strong man, so he had to carry a lot of lumber from one place to another.

Q: Was he tortured?

#94: He was not really tortured too much, but in the beginning there was the interrogation. That was for three years, the interrogation. People came in the middle of the night. Different groups of people like police asking memories of what you have done, what year where were you and blah, blah, blah. Then another [group of] people came and [asked] different questions and that lasted three years.

Q: Did he refuse to answer questions or were they very easy questions to answer?

#94: Whatever questions they asked he told everything of exactly what happened.

Q: He told them.

#94: He told them whatever the things that [happened]. He didn't resist anything, just told them. The important people were not corporally punished except situations like interrogation where there were 200, 300, 600 people in front of them. There was some public disgrace. Some Chinese guy started to hit and then somebody stopped [him].

Q: What was your father's attitude towards the Chinese after he got out of prison?

#94: He didn't have too much aggression of anything. He was, kind of, almost kind of [like] nothing happened to him. Something he never talked about [that] the Chinese are bad. He never said [they are] bad.

Q: What do you make of that?

#94: That's why we have come to the question that you were asking "What do you make of Tibetans feel they are Buddhists and yet they don't get angry?" So I said not all Tibetans really understand Buddhism, but I can tell the situation of my father who had some experience with Buddhist practice, Buddhist philosophical studies and basically impermanence—that impermanence and the history of the impermanence of the world that he learned. He knows the World War II and even maybe World War I. He knows that and not only Tibet and China and the rest of the world happen all the time. He applies the dharma, the emptiness, the impermanence and the understanding of that. He applies that and he meditated during the prison [term].

Q: He did meditate?

#94: He did meditate quietly. That's why a lot of people survived. One of my uncles was a terribly religious person who has suffered a lot and then died in the prison.

Q: How many of your uncles died in prison?

#94: At least I know that one has died, and two of them [came] out of Tibet. Actually, two uncles died. One real uncle, my mother's brother is called uncle and then there was my father's younger brother who went to prison right away from the village. He was never

seen again. He died in a real bad prison camp, far away in a weird place where they sent 800 people together. They had no food and they shoveled and if they saw any insects, they had to eat them.

They say some prisoners were so hungry that they saw the rats in the field, and they ate them alive. They said, the cousin in the picture told me, that a group of people were so hungry and that the prison keepers had to feed the prisoners, but they did not have any cattle to eat because they ate them already and the one left was a dog, a big dog. The prison keeper said, "today we have one feast, a dog feast," and they cooked and they grabbed. One of these persons ate too much and that night he died. He had too much. Some said they'd rather die than eat dog meat. Lots of people ate dog meat; they were so hungry, they ate too much and they died.

Q: When you stayed in Lhasa to try to get his papers, did you ever take him back to his home village?

#94: [I was] not able to do that. You couldn't do that at that time. In the 1980s still people were really uptight. The police and everybody [were] watching from behind all the time.

Q: When you got permission, where did you take your father?

#94: Then finally the Chinese agreed. I promised the Chinese police that I would bring him back. Then they set up a jeep for me and my father and also my cousin [pointing to picture] [who] came with [us] to the border of Nepal. It was funny that the Chinese driver said that, "You are lucky." He was a Chinese, but he was not really happy being in Tibet.

Q: What happened when you got to the border?

#94: At the border we say goodbye and then on the Nepali side, we took a bus. We went back to Kathmandu. There was my other brother who lives in Germany waiting to receive us. We rejoined there. He [father] had to stay there to recuperate for one month.

Q: Was he very weak?

#94: Not too bad. He was very strong.

Q: After 19 years in prison?

#94: He did say that he got somehow healthier and healthier. One was simple food and a lot of exercise. Before he was staying as a minister, there were not too much movement and maybe a lot of oily food and things like that, so [he was] not so healthy.

Q: He was healthier in prison?

#94: He was healthy in prison. He did say that he was put in a prison basement with legs shackled and hands [tied] [gestures tying of hands]. It pains terribly, miserable pain. There

were eight of them. They screamed and screamed, "Please kill us now," because they couldn't bear this. They screamed all night. [For] three nights they screamed. Then, finally, on the third night somebody came and released this one [the tying of hands in the front] and put it [tied the hands at the] back. It was such that, when he moves slightly, it gets tighter, so it was almost bloody. He said in mind somehow he felt some kind of a heavy load was left there in the prison. He [felt] some sort of release [from] something at the same time while in his misery. Some kind of responsibility; the Tibetan responsibility was so heavy because the Dalai Lama went to India and then what to do? [He] didn't know what to do. Then he [felt] completely released.

Q: He was powerless to do anything.

#94: So it was almost like a new freedom—a very interesting mindset.

[Speaker off camera]: I really agree with the meditation that he's been doing. I think that helps a lot because I've heard a lot of high lamas secretly receiving initiations in the prison and meditating and that helped a lot. A lot of them survived.

#94: Yeah, meditating that really helps. Understanding of the impermanence, that helps. A lot of people fight, resist and what they get, is shot.

Q: They fight what's happening?

#94: They fight and they refuse to tell you and all they get is the worst.

Q: This is a profound concept, but could you just say some words about the meaning of impermanence?

#94: Yeah, the meaning of impermanence is really a profound teaching because everything is matter and components; the body is the matter and the component of the body together. As long as there is component, there is also decay. Nothing is permanent in any situation, in heaven or earth.

Q: And why is that liberating?

#94: If you really understand that, then you don't need to fight too much.

Q: To fight what?

#94: To fight, to resist and to hold on to it. You cannot hold on to this.

Q: Because you realize in its ultimate nature, it is impermanent. There is nothing to hold on to it.

#94: Nothing to hold on to. The wisdom of that is to release, relax; to give you some relaxation at the time of death. Usually the time of death is a crucial moment—a time to hold on to our self, our physical body or even mental attitude also tries to hold on to it, but

can't do it—that's [how] nature is made. So relax and to understand nature of the decay or the impermanent nature—comes and goes.

Q: That teaching gave great comfort?

#94: Not really comfort, but it is relaxing, for relaxation.

Q: What about the teachings of compassion towards all beings? How does that teaching affect you when you see what the Chinese did to your father? How do you feel about that?

#94: If you really and truly understand the Buddhist essence of dharma, if you understand the emptiness or the impermanence, then you become like the mother of children. The children are fighting for no reason, for the sand castle and you smile. You smile and you give some guidelines. You understand what they are fighting for—for you it is laughter, for them it is misery. You give some love, you try to understand that whole *samsara* 'suffering associated with the cycle of birth and death,' the world. The world is like a child. The child will try to create something and during the creation, you fight for it. You try to make money and the highest, the biggest money and to do that we just fight. We sweat and sacrifice our energy, and maybe somebody may get there at the top, and by that time you are finished, nature gives up.

Q: Do you think the average Tibetan has some understanding of impermanence and compassion?

#94: As I said not all of the people, may not have it, but lots of people do and obtained teachings given by lamas. All the lamas are responsible to teach the basic principles of Buddhist concepts of the relating to the world and nirvana. Lots of people know, lots of people would know the basic things. What you saw in Ladakh, people who are smiling. What they are smiling is not childish, but they are smiling in one glimpse of laughter of life.

Q: You said that when your father went back, when he finally left India, did he go to see the Dalai Lama?

#94: He came straight from Nepal to here [USA] and then he stayed here [a] few years. The Dalai Lama came here in 1991, I think. The Dalai Lama asked where my father was. He liked to see him, father [for the] first time.

Q: What was like that for your father?

#94: That was very nice. I took him to the hotel where he [His Holiness the Dalai Lama] was staying in San Francisco. They hugged each other and they sat silent [for a] little bit. They spent, maybe 20 minutes together, holding hands together. He [the Dalai Lama] said let's take a picture for your book. He [father] was trying to do the prostrations. The Dalai Lama laughed, "Stop that prostrations. Not anymore. You don't have to do that."

Q: Why do you think the Chinese invaded Tibet?

#94: I think basically the Chinese like to extend territory. The Chinese fear foreign countries like India, and Tibet is easy to invade. Tibetans did not prepare anything. We were secluded inside [our country]. We were satisfied [that] our old culture was working well until 1959. Monks were meditating in the monasteries and farmers are working and nomads are raising yaks and government's job is mainly to take care of the monasteries and all kinds of things, which are unusual in the outside world systems. We were almost like a group of deer [that] lives in the forest and outside there are lions and wolves ready to … so that's [how] it happened.

Q: The lions pounced.

#94: Yes, the lions pounced.

Q: What do you think should have been done to help the Tibetan people?

#94: The western [people] should pay attention to the Tibetan cause, human rights and speak about it openly to tell the Chinese, not necessarily the government, but, "We like to raise people like you in humanity, to have peace and human rights."

Q: What advice or message would you like to give the next generation of Tibetans living in Tibet or living in exile?

#94: I think that they should continue their culture [which is] based on Buddhism and the essence of dharma. Tibet is actually a Buddhist country and Buddhism brings the texture of life, importantly compassion and wisdom. These things Buddha gave to Tibet, and without that Tibet is the same thing as [being] no good. To continue to being Buddhists, to keep the compassion, to generate compassion in their minds and to, of course, at the same time to learn things, mistakes that our ancestors and parents' [made] in order to take care of [our] country. [They] should have dreams and hopes to continue and to develop that.

Q: What do you feel has been lost forever?

#94: I don't feel anything [has been] completely forever lost. Wherever there are Tibetans, I think it is still not lost. It is scattered a little bit, scattered and misplaced.

Q: What do you want the people around the world to know about Tibet and to do about Tibet?

#94: The people of the world are the same as the people of Tibet. They like to live [in] peace, like to share [with] each other; the people of the world should also learn that. The world should help the Tibetans and all the other forgotten human beings. There are lots of countries, not only Tibet, but there are lots of forgotten people. [The world] should pay attention and help each other because after all, we have only one planet earth here. We live here and this is our house, [so] live together prosperously and happily.

Q: What would you do if it were possible to return to Tibet?

#94: If I [were able to] go to Tibet, I would be happy to go to Tibet and maybe I will die in Tibet. That's my birthplace and if you can die there, that's fine. [I'll be] happy.

[Question to people off camera: Is there anything else that you would like to ask, either of you?]

[Question from videographer] I want to revisit the idea of dharma and impermanence and compassion, in the moment maybe when you are fearful or angry or you are seeing some injustice. How in the moment, not generally, but do you feel, how soon like you or someone else in Tibet deal with these feelings in relation to the Buddhist teachings?

#94: I think it depends on individual people who have [been] exposed to more dharma. [They] would have it easier to overcome the fears or anger or things like that. It depends on how familiar [you are] with the dharma. You get angry. I would say that, if I get angry, I do get angry sometimes, but then after that you just feel to calm down, to try to connect with the understanding of impermanence, dharma and compassion, try to connect [with] that so that helps you to cool down. That's how you do.

Q: Lama Kunga, is there anything that we didn't ask or something that you think should be mentioned before we conclude our interview—anything that you would like to add?

#94: Just being here and my job is to do the center here, the Ewam Choden Tibetan Buddhist Center, which I established 30 years ago. I also spoke to the Dalai Lama and he said that was a very good, excellent idea. I have a center here and we like to welcome anyone who is interested. We offer mediations every Sunday and classes. [We have] visiting lamas come here. His Holiness the Dalai Lama came here too, and Gyalwa Karmapa and Dujom Rinpoche, all the head lamas have come here in the early '80s and '70s. We had a good opportunity to introduce many students here. My hope is to continue for the people who are interested and participate. Please do welcome.

Q: You had to leave Tibet as it got dangerous. We didn't get a little bit of the story. Can you just say how you got out of Tibet in the end?

#94: Finally, we were really tense. We really didn't know what to do it, but my brother had decided to leave the country. He had seen all the terrible things, killing people and so on and so forth. He did tell me that he was going to go whether I'm going to stay or not. Then I said, "I'd also like to be with you and to go, but we must think about our mother, sister and sister-in-law." So we spoke to them and my mother said, "Please do not go for a while because your dad has recently, three months ago, gone in to prison." At least she hopes that maybe six months later he will be released. How could we go while he is in prison? We can't do that. I can't do that. You never do that. She's against our idea of going out.

Then me and my brother have no way to stay because each day is getting worse, tighter and tighter. So then finally, we decided to say that for the time being, my brother and I will go, but maybe not going outside of the border. We may go to the monastery. We will stay there and we will make contact with each other. So we left our mother, sister-in-law and sister—

our sister was doing some retreat and we couldn't help. We would have brought our sister too. My brother and I left. We had two other people. One we hired, an older guy who knows how to go across the mountains. We hired him and we were four people and four horses. We took a journey towards India through the mountains. [In] the daytime we hid and at nighttime we walked. We had a lot of trouble with lack of sleep and the altitude. At some points we were hallucinating and all the boulders and rocks are turning into dead bodies. Things like that, [we were] hallucinating.

Q: How many days?

#94: It was 15 days. [We] slowly walked through.

Q: What month of the year?

#94: [We were] lucky. It was like June, end of June. So not too much snow on the Himalayas.

Q: When you said things were getting tighter, the Communists were coming down hard on the monasteries? What was happening?

#94: [The Communists were] coming down, and the central [Tibetan] government had collapsed. All have collapsed throughout the locals, in Shigatse and in the towns. Like say Oakland [city in California, USA] has a local district, they [the Chinese] send [troops] here and already they have seized the people. They seized and they [the people] are not allowed to go out; to go to Oakland or to go to Richmond [city in California, USA], it was not allowed. Then slowly, [the Chinese] kind of sifted out and people [the Chinese] will come and say, "Who is this? What is his position? What is his job?" Mostly heads of the family, a man was…you can't see in the families 20-year-old men, not too many. All were women and children.

Q: Because they took all the men to the prison?

#94: They took all the men to the prison.

Q: Were they after you because you were, at that point, a recognized teacher or anything? Were you picked on for any reason?

#94: They would pick us. They could pick us very easily because we were kind of noble, we were lamas, and we were children of ministers. They could easily find us, so we left.

Q: How did your mother feel when she heard you'd left?

#94: She was very sad. I heard later the information after I returned in 1970. My father didn't see her because she died in the village, the Black Horse village. They didn't meet for 20 years. Mother didn't see father for 20 years. There was a public interrogation in the local [area]. There were 12 people from different counties. The heads of the counties were

interrogated. The day that my mum was supposed to be interrogated with the 12 people, mother died in her sleep in the prison cell.

Q: Your mother was in prison?

#94: Oh, yeah, she was. My mother went to prison. They put her in a cell.

Q: Was she in prison for long?

#94: It wasn't too long. She was hiding in the retreat place. Then the local people said, "Bring her down to town for the next day's interrogation."

Q: And she died that night?

#94: The local people brought her and put her in the cell. Some of her friends, the village friends said, "Lady, tomorrow is your time to go for the interrogation. You do some prayers." That night she died.

Q: She died that night?

#94: She died like that. [Makes gestures of sleeping].

Q: Peacefully.

#94: Peacefully.

Q: How beautiful!

#94: Yeah.

Q: Do you think she chose to die?

#94: She chose to die. Then the next day the 12 people, including our sister-in-law [underwent] three days of interrogation and beatings. Some of them were badly beaten and my sister-in-law went to prison for 11 years; 11 years of forced labor.

Q: Just to wrap up then, you come to India after the horrific journey and then you stay in India for a while?

#94: I stayed for a while in India in various places. We become refugees in India again, but then we were psychologically free. We were just free and the Tibetan government-in-exile had not established in Dharamsala. The Indian government had to put [the exile government] somewhere. They [the Indian government] were having trouble with the exile government. There were a lot of consultations. The exile government had a lot of responsibilities, taking care of the hundreds and thousands of refugees; where to put [the refugees], where to go?

It had a lot of difficulties and then they said that people, who are able to take care of themselves, please do. So we took care of ourselves. We did have some relatives in Sikkim. We were okay then. Then we stayed in Sikkim for a while. We, all three brothers, got together in Sikkim and then we came to Darjeeling. We stayed most of the time in Darjeeling. His Holiness Sakya Trizin and his family were in Darjeeling. We were relatives and so we visit there too.

In 1962 I came to the United States in New Jersey. They chose four lamas. From New Jersey the Mongolian Karmic Tibetan Buddhist background—Mongolians from Russian invasion, same thing as Tibet, like the Russians stayed in Mongolia. There came a whole bunch of Mongolians to this country and different countries as refugees. They were Tibetan Buddhists. They set up some organization.

One of the Mongolian priests, Geshe Wangyal was his name—when the Dalai Lama was exiled in Dharamsala, he visited back to Dharamsala. He knew the Dalai Lama earlier in Tibet. He is Mongolian, but he is a Tibetan Buddhist scholar. He asked His Holiness, "What can I do? [Can I] do something for you?" And the Dalai Lama said, "We have lots of other things. We have young lamas who are here and they need help. You can help whatever is needed for the scholar students, scholar exchanges." So he went back to New Jersey and organized with his friends and then they sponsored four Tibetan lamas. One, I was chosen luckily [along with] three others to go to New Jersey. That's how we came in 1962.

Q: What city in New Jersey?

#94: It was Howard. It's a very small town Howell, New Jersey. It's between Freehold and Lakewood, New Jersey.

Q: So you went from New Jersey and then you came to…

#94: [For] five years in New Jersey, we studied English language. After we learned language a little bit, we split differently. Some lamas went to Wisconsin and I went to San Francisco, California [for] integral [?] study. They asked me to come there and teach, and so I taught there three years and then I liked the Bay Area and I stayed here. This house was available for rent and so I rented it. The first two years I paid the rent and finally the lady who owns the house says she wants to sell it. Then a group of us put together and we bought this house in 1973, and it has become a temple. The Dalai Lama came here; all the lamas came here.

Q: It's very beautiful. You do very good work.

#94: Thank you so much.

Q: Thank you very much for this beautiful interview.

END OF INTERVIEW