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**From:** [William Ledbetter](mailto:William.Ledbetter)

**To:** [chanrithy@chanrithyhim.com](mailto:chanrithy@chanrithyhim.com)

**Sent:** Saturday, August 09, 2014 10:16 AM

**Subject:** My deepest thanks

Dear Ms. Him,

I am an American expatriate who for the last 11 years has been teaching in schools in Singapore. Two weeks ago, I traveled with my wife, daughter and in-laws to Siem Reap, visiting Cambodia for the first time.

Cambodia has been a place that has provoked a strong longing within me for many years, ever since I watched 'The Killing Fields' in college. Having read the memoirs of Dr Haing Ngor and of Dith Pran I felt a strong need to visit the country of your birth and pay my respects to the victims of the killing fields.

But my trip turned out to be so much more for me. It started very touristy; tuk-tuk rides to Angkor Wat and the other temples, evenings on pub street, and marketing with my mum-in-law. But quickly the trip turned into an experience of the people we were meeting: our tuk-tuk driver, who became a wonderful friend (my daughter taught him to play 'Uno'); Thary, the man with no legs who every evening set up a small boutique stand and sold hand-made bracelets of surpassing quality; the two young lads we saw sniffing glue from a bag, who we rounded up and fed a meal to (though the language of food was all we had in common); the cooking classes we took, eating our own Amok fish; the bike rides through the rice paddies during a monsoon down power, with our legs filthy from the mud and cow dung; and the opportunity I received to teach for a few days at a modest village school.

Underlying all these emotions, senses and experiences - and perhaps contextualizing them - was the chance purchase of your book in a street market in Siem Reap. A book so modestly told, so filled with heartache, that I was only able to read 16 or so pages at a time before I would stop to recompose myself.

During my last 2 days I developed diarrhea significant enough to have a doctor come and advise an IV. As I spent a sleepless night of incontinence in my clean bathroom, I read of your survival with amazement and true respect. Here I was, surrounded by the conveniences of hygiene, medicine and comfort, and I was barely (to my mind) surviving. Whilst you survived infinitely worse.

This note to you is not intended to be simply a praise of your courage, strength and spirit. But to extend my genuine GENUINE and SINCERE thanks that you both were willing to relive the horrors of the Khmer Rouge years and that you did so in such a simple, yet compelling manner. My heart broke over and over, your description of your parents, and your siblings were so evocative and so filled with love that my wife asked me several times if I was alright; I was weeping as I read.

Your book will be a treasured and honored friend in my library, and one that I have already encouraged my colleagues and friends to read.

True immortality is the memories of ourselves that we leave behind us after our passing. Thanks to your book, the memories - the immortality - of your dear family will endure.

Thank you again, for sharing such a painful experience with us. I hope you continue to find peace and strength in your life, even as you honour the memories.

Most sincerely,

William Ledbetter