

Kicked out by Communists, I swam the Mekong River back to Vientiane, Laos

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Photo July 1973 - location unknown

The time had come: my plane landed in Vientiane, the capital and largest city in Laos. I felt nervous about going through customs, but the man just jeered at me and asked me a few questions, and I was in.

For the next two weeks I tried to familiarize myself with the country. I often strolled to the banks of the Mekong River to watch the sun go down, and for some reason I pondered my ability to swim across it. This idea came to fruition about two weeks later. I had left by boat and gone across the river to Thailand to visit a friend, and upon my return to the border the Pathet Lao informed me I was no longer welcome in Laos. They took my passport and gave me the day to gather my belongings and depart.

I became angry and decided a swim was in order, so late that afternoon I collected my passport from customs and took the boat back to Thailand, as if I were obeying their orders. Then I waited until dark and off for my swim I went, arriving on the other side without incident and popping into the church center like a drowned rat. As I swam the narrow part of the river and looked up at the stars, I felt good and thought what an exciting life the Unification Church has given me.

I stayed about 10 days in Laos and then had to go back to Bangkok on business. I took advantage of the mass exodus that was then taking place and easily crossed the immigration checkpoint out of Laos. I drove to Bangkok, took care of my affairs, bought a pair of flippers and headed back once again to make the river crossing. I thought it would be easy. When I got to the river, however, I saw that the water had risen, because June is the rainy season in Laos. (From May to September monsoons from the southwest bring an average of 10 inches of rain per month to the area, causing a rapid rise in the river and widespread flooding.) I waited in the bushes for four hours, debating, but a villager saw me as I was peeping over the bank, so I piled into the river at once.

The current was stronger this time and I was quickly swept downstream, passing within 25 feet of two fishermen. Needless to say, I was quiet, and after I went by them I swam out towards the other side. I swam hard for 40 minutes before I reached the other bank and was once again back in Laos, without going through a lot of red tape. This time I stayed for two months. Then, after a harrowing flight across the river in the early morning and a night spent in a Thai jail, I proceeded on to Bangkok.

I know that by myself I would never dream of doing such stunts, so this is testimony to what God's power can do. If we can only become instruments for God, there is no way anything can stop us from regaining the world for our Heavenly Father.