

Report on Progress of HOF Documentary Sheila Petzold February 12, 2021

Most of the fall was spent screening, transcribing, and culling a large list of interviewees to be included in the documentary down to a manageable number. All the interviews chosen had to be transferred from the original raw material (not the trimmed versions on the website) into screeners by our editor, Norm Sawchyn, with readable timecode imbedded on the screen so clips of these interviews could be chosen for a script.

With help from the interview teams and Management team, a total of 16 interviews have been chosen. (See document.) As a result of our last meeting, Mai Chi Nguen, who is female and speaks French, was added to the list. There are 8 refugees and 8 Canadians. The refugees themselves, however, are the main storytellers and appear throughout.

All of these interviews had to be properly transcribed, word for word, with original time code references to enable choice of clips for editing. Malcom Hamilton screened and provided transcribed clip choices for three refugee interviewees. I completed the rest. It was important for me to get very familiar with each of these interviewees, what they had to say in order to get a sense of how and what to write.

I translated one French interview for subtitling in English. One Vietnamese and one Khmer interview which had been translated for the web version, had to be re-done for the raw edit versions with help from Mondy and Uyen, and Richard who provided the time-code placements for the new subtitling. This was a laborious task! And we will have to ask Richard and Uyen to assist again before the edit is finalized to ensure Norm and I have cut on the right words!

Norm has now assembled the chosen interview clips (almost three hours of material) into their assigned chapters and sent me screeners and notes on them all. These are now being further edited down and form 5 blocks of the story:

1.	Intro and Historical context Fall of Saigon and Phnom Penh Life Before Decision to Leave
2.	Escape Pirates Rescue

3.	Life in Refugee Camps Canadian Response – Government and Sponsorships Canadian Interviews in the Camps
4.	Arrival in Canada Adjusting to Life in Canada Reflections
5.	Where are they now? Credits

I have finished writing the Block One first draft script for editing which provides a narrative line. Norm has started to put it together. However, he does not have all the required visuals he needs as we are still waiting for some screeners from the CBC. Stills also need to be chosen to illustrate references such as the Killing Fields. We also are waiting for some personal photos of our interviewees to be re-scanned at higher resolutions so they can be used in editing.

VISUALS:

Our visual researcher Kathie McKenna has been hired and has found some great footage for us.

We have two screeners from the CBC are crucial for writing and editing the next two blocks of the story. Kathie has sent in a request for a second batch of CBC screeners, primarily news reports of the era, and we are waiting for those. We will also require other more metaphorical stock footage with hopefully lower licence fees.

Licence Fees.

These are proving to be much more costly than the original budget of 5 years ago. Prices have gone up considerably. Also, my original estimates did not expect the need for as much moving imagery which is more expensive. It is also difficult to estimate cost because we do not know yet what royalty fee the CBC will let us secure. We have some negotiating to do.

Stills Images.

I must also return to the still photo visuals collections that Mondy has assembled and go through to make choices for the edit. Many of these required re-labelling with key information, such as sourcing, location, picture size and quality (some are not high enough resolution). This is so Norm and I can easily choose and insert with ID reference onto our edit timeline.

I have also found, borrowed, and scanned headlines and pictures from the Project 4000 collection which will help tell that story. They had 11 UNHCR pix which I also scanned, and which are free with proper credit.

Conclusion:

There still is a lot of work left to do – we are really just starting to edit! But I feel we have completed the most difficult part. Writing the next blocks will be somewhat easier and visuals needs more easily identified. I hope to have the next two blocks written in the next two weeks.

And a very rough first cut with many visual holes by the end of March. Fingers crossed.

Sheila Petzold