

Synopsis: **"Mother Told Me to Follow the Sun"**

Before he was ten years old, Laotian-born Boun Sandraow had witnessed unspeakable violence, the death of loved ones and the choice between imminent, daily terror or self-exile.

In 1981, accompanied by two childhood friends, Boun heeded his mother's words - "Follow the Setting Sun" - and embarked on an improbable jungle flight towards the Mekong River. During the first phase of the children's deadly journey, they survived on wild fruit and at times their own urine for nourishment. Their only other sustenance was the thoughts of their ancestor's spirits.

The next several years included forced induction into the Thai rebel army, where he witnessed - and reluctantly participated in - behavior that was shocking to a degree unimaginable to contemporary Americans.

By 1986, exhausted and traumatized by such an unnatural existence, Boun defected and sought asylum from sympathetic Thai officials. For the next three and a half years, Boun traded one kind of deprivation for another. His life in a refugee camp was characterized by loneliness and verbal abuse.

In 1989, life took a positive turn, though, as he was sent to America under a special United Nations program. Boun eventually found himself in Boston, Massachusetts. He was an illiterate, psychologically burdened man-child with little chance of survival in an urban educational mecca.

His subsequent and personal success is even more impressive in light of his burning determination to tell his story, a tale which will disconcert many but which should inspire all.