



# Escape from Vietnam: A Journalist Rescues His Family, Survives Torture and Thai Pirates (Reader Shorts)

*Duong Phuc, Neal Matthews, Vu Thanh Thuy*

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Duong Phuc and his wife, Vu Thanh Thuy, joined the exodus of Vietnamese refugees in the late 1970s who abandoned a world and a way of life to embark on a journey into the unknown. First Phuc had to escape execution in a reeducation camp, a gripping story he relates in vivid detail. After two years on the lam, Phuc and Thuy finally escaped the country on a boat with their two daughters, a toddler and a newborn, in 1979. One-third of the estimated 100,000 “boat people” that year died of thirst, starvation, drowning, or at the hands of pirates. Phuc and Thuy were captured by pirates and marooned with dozens of desperate refugees on Ko Kra Island, the notorious pirate lair in the Gulf of Siam.

For three weeks the pirates raped, tortured, and killed many members of their party until the UN High Commissioner for Refugees was alerted to the location of the island, and rescued them.

Phuc and Thuy spent the next 10 months in a Thai refugee camp, seeking justice against the pirates. They finally reached freedom in late 1980 and began their life anew in the United States.

Today they are successful business owners in Houston, Texas, and they have never stopped trying to assist refugees and the dispossessed in Southeast Asia.

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