

HIGHLIGHT: *Ambassador Sichan Siv*



One month before America's Bicentennial, Sichan Siv arrived in Wallingford, Connecticut with two dollars in his pocket. Before that, he had spent a few months in Thailand teaching English to fellow refugees in a camp, and learning Buddhist precepts as a monk in a nearby temple. The previous year, he survived two Khmer Rouge death sentences and their slave labor hell, working 18 hours a day with just one meal. He had missed the last U.S. evacuation helicopter by 30 minutes on April 12, 1975, when he chose to attend a meeting to arrange food and medical supplies for some 3,000 stranded refugee families in an isolated province. When he was a child his mother told him to "never give up hope, no matter what happens." Hope kept him alive and helped him move forward in these most difficult circumstances.

On June 4, 1976 Siv arrived in his Promised Land, completely exhausted but full of hope. He started his new life at the bottom of the ladder. He picked apples in Connecticut and drove a taxi in New York. He was eager to do everything that came his way, in order to "adapt and be adopted." In the meantime, he was awarded a scholarship to Columbia University's master of international affairs program.

Siv became interested in the U.S. political process while watching television coverage of the Democratic and Republican national conventions in the summer of 1976. In 1988, he volunteered for the Bush campaign to better understand presidential elections. The thought never crossed his mind that he would end up working for two Presidents of the United States. On February 13, 1989, exactly 13 years after he began his escape through the

jungles of northwest Cambodia, Siv became the first American of Asian ancestry to be appointed a Deputy Assistant to President of the United States, under George H.W. Bush.

In March 2001, President George W. Bush appointed Siv as a delegate to the 57th U.N. Commission on Human Rights. In October of the same year, the President nominated him, and he was unanimously confirmed by the Senate, as the 28th U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Until 2006, he concurrently represented the United States at the U.N. General Assembly and Security Council. His responsibilities ranged from cradle to coffin: children, health, HIV/AIDS, economic issues, food crises, humanitarian disasters, human rights, refugees, women, and aging. The United States is the largest donor to all these programs and Ambassador Siv's office at the U.S. Mission to the U.N. oversaw some 70% of the U.N. budget.

In June 2005, Ambassador Siv addressed the 60th anniversary of the U.N. in San Francisco, following a tradition set by Presidents Truman in 1945, Eisenhower in 1955, Johnson in 1965, Secretary of State Schultz in 1985, and President Clinton in 1995.

In addition to his three presidential appointments, Ambassador Siv has had a distinguished career in the private sector, encompassing refugee resettlement and educational exchanges, as well as financial management and investment banking. In his spare time, he travels around the United States and the world speaking about the American Dream, to motivate and inspire. While at the White House, Ambassador Siv was proudest when he said "On behalf of the President." At the United Nations, when he walked in, representatives from 190 countries looked at him and saw America. They wanted to hear what he had to say. When he uttered: "On behalf of the President, Government, and People of the United States," that was his proudest moment.

Ambassador Siv is the author of *Golden Bones* which will be published in the spring of 2008. It recounts his journey from humble beginnings in a sleepy village in Cambodia, to the White House, and the United Nations. It is about an extraordinary escape from hell in Cambodia, an American journey from apple orchards to the White House, a timeless and universal tale of love, dreams, hope, and freedom. It is the unique history of two lands: opposite sides of the earth; two cultures: ancient and modern; two nations: weak and strong; two societies: poor and rich. It is the true story of one mother's love and sacrifice, of her son's hope and struggle for survival, and of his life between these different worlds.

Ambassador Siv is married to the former Martha Pattillo of Pampa, Texas. They live in San Antonio, Texas.