

It was a big risk to travel to the camps while the country was in the middle of war. However, they made it to the camps and eventually were able to reunite with their family in America in 1980. Despite the tragedies and loss Sean Touch experienced, this day brought her a familiar joy seeing her children happy and safe.

However, she knew she could not be truly happy until her whole family was reunited. She still had her sons, Bunsu and Masy and their families still trapped in Cambodia. Therefore, she tried very hard to learn English so she could pass her citizenship test in hopes of being able to sponsor her remaining children to America. In July of 1987, she succeeded in this effort. She was able to reunite with her remaining children.

Sean Touch was in good health, living in the comfort and care of her children in Minnesota until the age of 90. Her physical health struggled from 90 years old onward. However, her mind was sharp until this very last year.



The flag of the Kingdom of Cambodia.



Sean Touch died on April 25th, 2022. She was 95 years old. After a visitation on April 29, 2022 at the Ballard-Sunder Funeral Home in Shakopee, Sean Touch was buried at Lakewood Cemetery in Minneapolis.

Sean was loved and missed by her children, Sokha (Sivhong) Seng, Bunsu (Porthy Seng) Seng, Masy (Porchou) Seng, Masiek Seng, Botuma Seng; 11 grandchildren; 9 great-grandchildren, and other loving relatives, and friends. She was preceded in death by her husband, Seng Mengly, and their son, Buntha Seng.



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## SHAKOPEE HERITAGE SOCIETY



# Sean Touch

1927-2022



Sean Touch was born in the province of Kampong Thom, Cambodia. She was born around the 4th month of the Lunar calendar in 1927 to Sean Sun and Ji Sun. Sean was adopted and cared for by her aunt after losing her mother at the age of one month.

Sean Touch was one of the few girls of her generation who learned how to read. She was 8 years old.

When she was 17 years old, she married Seng Mengly. The two newlyweds started their lives together as banana farmers in កំពង់ចាម, or Kampong Cham.

Kampong Cham means *Port of the Chams* in Khmer. *Kampong* means port or harbor. *Cham* refers to the ethnic Cham people living in the province. The word *Kampong* in Cham is shared in other Austronesian language, the Malaysian and Indonesian, both mean *village*. A symbol the province is known for is two snakes wrapped around each other, which located at the capital city bridge, Kampong Cham. Kampong Cham is primarily lowlands. The main river is the Mekong River which forms the eastern border of the province.



The Cambodian genocide was the systematic persecution and killing of Cambodians by the Khmer Rouge under the leadership of Communist Party of Kampuchea general secretary Pol Pot, who radically pushed Cambodia towards an entirely self-sufficient agrarian socialist society. It resulted in the deaths of 1.5 to 2 million people from 1975 to 1979, nearly a quarter of Cambodia's 1975 population, according to [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cambodian\\_genocide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cambodian_genocide).



Despite working tirelessly, they barely made ends meet. So, she and her husband decided to move to Phnom Penh in 1958 in hopes of creating a better life for themselves and their young children. In Phnom Penh, she and her husband sold water for a living, according to Ballard-Sunder Funeral & Cremation in Shakopee.

Sean Touch and her husband were extremely hard workers. Their love for their children gave them strength to work tirelessly. Through the hard times, they had each other. And in each other, they found strength and joy. Sadly, this happiness did not last. Sean Touch's husband, Seng Mengly, passed away in 1970 at the age of 57.

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Things continued to get worse as the Khmer Rouge took over in 1975 after winning the Cambodian Civil War. They pushed people out of the city to empty fields. These fields later on became known as the *Killing Fields*.

Cambodia where collectively more than one million people were killed and buried by the Khmer Rouge regime (the Communist Party of Kampuchea) during its rule of the country from 1975 to 1979, immediately after the end of the Cambodian Civil War. The mass killings are widely regarded as part of a broad state-sponsored genocide. At least 1,386,734 people were victims of execution.

During this time, she got separated from her family. Her oldest son, Buntha was taken by the Khmer Rouge, her second oldest son, Sokha, joined the Cambodian Navy with the help of his brother-in-law, Seng Kim Noun.

Being separated from her four oldest sons, she was made to walk by foot for 15 days straight from Phnom Penh to Romlong while caring for her two youngest children, twelve year old Maseak and six year old Toma.

Eventually, she did meet up with her second eldest son, Sokha, who left the navy in disguise to find her. She also learned that Sokha's wife and son made it to America with his brothers-in-law. They decided to journey to the Thai refugee camp in hopes of reuniting with them in America.