



## **Hamill confronts Khmer Rouge commander August 18, 2009**

New Zealand transatlantic rower Rob Hammill has confronted the man who ordered the torture and execution of his brother 31 years ago.

The former New Zealand world champion rower delivered an emotional testimony in a Cambodian court to the former Khmer Rouge commander on trial for crimes against humanity.

An emotional Hamill testified in Phnom Penh about the "incredible" impact the horrific death of his brother Kerry, 27, had on his family - a "massive and unquantifiable impact".

Almost 31 years to the day after Kerry's boat strayed into Cambodian waters, Rob Hamill had the chance to confront the man who signed his brother's death sentence.

Hamill said he had waited a long time to confront his brother's killer and to tell the story about the impact on his parents and siblings.

Hamill's mother is now dead and his father is in a nursing home.

The New Zealander's wife, Rachel, and their two-year-old son were in the packed public gallery as Rob Hamill spoke for a full hour.

"At times I've imagined you shackled starved, whipped, and clubbed viciously," Hamill told the trial.

He says his parents were hugely affected by their son's appalling death.

"It changed them. They were never the same after it all happened," Hamill told the court. "They were terribly affected, as any parents would have been."

Hamill, 14 at the time of his brother's death, added: "The death of their first-born was the worst possible news for our family. He had not just been killed, he had been tortured."

### **A family's worst nightmare**

Kerry's letters about his adventures kept his family in awe of his travels, but in 1978 the letters stopped.

Kerry was captured by the Khmer Rouge when the yacht on which he and friends were sailing strayed into Cambodian waters.

Crewman Stuart Glass, a Canadian, was shot while Kerry and Briton John Dewhirst were interrogated and tortured for two months before being killed in Phnom Penh's notorious Tuol Sleng Prison run by Duch.

It took 16 long months for his family to discover he had been captured, tortured, forced to say he was a CIA agent and executed.

In court Rob Hamill told the prison boss he stole two brothers from him, one in prison and one back home as Rob's other brother killed himself when the grief became too much.

"Today in this courtroom I am giving you all that crushing weight of all that emotion, the anger, the grief and the sorrow," he told the court.

### **Duch impassive**

Kaing Guek Eav, or Duch as he is known, the man responsible for Kerry Hamill's death, was in court and listened impassively to Hamill's testimony as it was translated.

Comrade Duch is the first of five senior Khmer Rouge members to be tried by an unassisted tribunal.

Duch, 66, has pleaded guilty to murder but the five judges - New Zealander Dame Silvia Cartwright, a French national and three Cambodians - will decide Duch's innocence or guilt after hearing all the evidence. Dame Silvia was in court to hear Hamill who was accepted as a civil party.

Duch has pleaded the same defence as some of the Nazis at the Nuremberg trials after World War II, maintaining he was simply carrying out orders and would have been shot had he not done so.

The Khmer Rouge was one of the world's most brutal regimes.

The radical communist policies resulted in the deaths of up to two million people from starvation, overwork and torture.

Hamill says there is no provision for execution but he hopes that Duch will be given a life sentence, "a real life sentence so he would spend the rest of his days in a cell.

"I'd be happy with that."