Vietnamese American Oral History Project, UC Irvine

Narrator: LIEN NGUYEN

Interviewer: Michelle Le Pham

Date: November 26, 2012

Location: Garden Grove, CA

Sub-Collection: The Grove Senior Apartments

Length: 00:56:11

FIELD NOTES

The interview was conducted at the narrator, Lien Nguyen’s senior apartment home. Present during the interview were myself, the narrator, and her close friend and neighbor, Thu Huyen. The process began with a reiteration of the importance and purpose of VAOHP while Lien was filling out the release forms. When we began there were some technical difficulties. The recorder would unintentionally stop and then we would have to redo a number of parts. Fortunately, she was very patient and was slightly amused at my panic fumbling.

Lien was my first female narrator. I was a little apprehensive because I always had this stereotype that women made bad narrators because Vietnamese women were less willing to share than men. I also thought that women were overly sensitive and because of my poor Vietnamese skills, offend my narrator. Lien had a very mild temperament, soft-spoken, and had a bubbly attitude.

When I first saw her at the mixer I noticed she walked with the aid of a walker and without it would limp. I had no intention of ever asking her what happened for fear of offending her, but halfway through the interview she decided to address her leg. Her willingness to be so open made me feel welcomed into her home. Off the record I told Lien how fascinating her life, but with a wave of her hand she would say that she was nothing out of the ordinary, if not boring.

Unlike my other narrators, she came to the United States in the early 2000s. For the first time I had a modern perspective of how life evolved under the Communist regime. I was also pleased to learn how Lien received help acclimating to the American life style via St. Anselm. Coincidentally, my principle investigator for VAOHP is also the chair of this organization.

Before I left and called it day, Lien insisted that I stay awhile longer to eat. During this time she rushed into her room to find the perfect pictures to accompany her oral history. Her friend Thu Huyen expressed interest her scheduled interview the following day. She inadvertently started to tell me her story. Seeing Thu so excited about her interview made me feel like my endeavors are worthwhile.