Vietnamese American Oral History Project, UC Irvine

Narrator: ROBERT THIEU VU
Interviewer: Han Vu
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Length of Interview: 1:25:52

Narrator Life Map

1951  Born in South Vietnam on December 25.
1975  Due to the Fall of Saigon, Mr. Vu began working eight to ten hours a day in order to help provide for his family.
1981  Mr. Vu attempted to flee Vietnam by boat for the first time.
   • Mr. Vu got caught, arrested and was thrown into a re-education camp.
1983  Mr. Vu was released from the camp and successfully escaped alongside his brother.
   • After about six days on the boat, they spot a ship belonging to the United Kingdom who generously provided them with some food and water and directed them on how to get to Malaysia.
Mr. Vu stayed at a refugee camp called Pulau Bidong for about a year.
   • Mr. Vu began learning English and volunteering as one of the leaders who gathered food from the high commissioners to divide amongst the groups.
1984  Mr. Vu was accepted by the American delegation to leave to America.
   • Mr. Vu was transferred to another camp in Malaysia called Sungei Bishi where he stayed for about three months.
   • Mr. Vu received a job as a translator for one of the English doctors who volunteered in the baby clinic.
   Mr. Vu transferred to Morong Bataan in the Philippines for about six months.
   • Mr. Vu became a translator for English class.
   • Mr. Vu became the vice president for the Young Youth of Vietnamese Catholics.
   • Mr. Vu became the advisor at the post office in the zone he lived in,
with each zone ranging from 2,000-3,000 people.

1985 Mr. Vu left for America and lived with his sister and cousins in Anaheim, California.

  • Mr. Vu went to school to become a machinist, but after an incident with his mechanic, he decided to go to college to become a mechanic.

1989 Mr. Vu got married and moved to Lawton, Oklahoma to open a restaurant.

1992 Mr. Vu moved back to California as he was unable to find anyone to babysit his daughter.

  • Mr. Vu received a job at an auto shop and became the service manager.

1994 Mr. Vu became a self-employed business owner when he opened his own auto repair shop in Fullerton, California that is still up and running today.