Narrator: Tam Van Mong
Interviewer: Jennifer Mong
Date: April 26, 2015
Location: Garden Grove, CA
Sub - Collection: Vietnamese American Experience Course, Spring 2015
Length of Interview: 01:22:14

Time Log

00:00:13 He introduces himself and gives background information
00:00:45 He discusses the origin of the last name “Mong”
00:00:56 He describes his hometown, Ha Tien
00:01:22 He shares his childhood memories in Ha Tien
00:02:11 He shares how his family celebrated Tet
00:03:31 He talks about his family’s rice noodle restaurant and helping his family as a child
00:04:00 He shares how his parents encouraged him to escape Vietnam in 1978
00:05:31 He discusses how the Vietnam War affected his community such as rockets going off
00:07:08 He talks about how little the Vietnam War affected his family
00:09:25 He remembers where he was, what he was doing, and what happened on April 30, 1975
00:12:34 He talks about his parents’ silence during the war
00:13:49 He remembers how his mother stood up for him at school after being wrongly accused by the school principal
00:17:08 He discusses how his parents pushed him to leave Vietnam and the process
00:18:30 He shares how it felt to live his family
00:19:07 He shares how he felt when he left by boat and his family members’ failure to successfully escape by boat
00:20:15 He talks about leaving by boat with few possessions
00:21:52 He retells what happens to family members that did not succeed in escaping by boat
00:23:40 He explains the different times the Thai pirates’ attacked his boat (4-5 times)
00:26:37 He recounts his life in the Leam Sing Thailand Refugee Camp and about brotherhood
00:38:29 He remembers about his first arrival in the United States in 1980
00:41:37 He talks about collecting the Welfare Assistance Program for a few months and his funds for the first few months in the United States
00:42:31 He remembers his routine of going to adult school and going to work
00:42:58 He talks about his decision to choose work over school because he lived alone without family
00:43:11 He talks about working in an assembly line in Kennedy Company in Monrovia
00:43:52 He talks about a distant relative that picked him up at LAX
00:44:40 He shares his first experiences and impressions in the United States
00:45:56 He recalls the challenges he confronted in the United States and how getting his certificate from machine shop school changed his life
00:46:50 He looks back at his decision to leave and reflects on his life in the United States
00:49:00 He reflects on how he communicates with his family members in Vietnam throughout the years
00:50:01 He mentions the songs that reminds him of Vietnam
00:51:02 He discusses his first visit back to Vietnam after fourteen years
00:51:46 He talks about trying to sponsor other family members over to the United States but not succeeding
00:54:14 He talks about what has changed in Vietnam
00:55:24 He shares how he does not trust the communist government

00:57:37 He speaks more about the experiences in the Leam Sing Thailand Refugee Camp

01:02:37 He recounts his experience with Thai Pirates in more details

01:06:33 He reflects on the different lessons he learned based on his overall experiences

01:07:36 He talks about the emotional stress he had when he first lived in California

01:09:46 He mentions about how he kept in contact with his friends from the camp for a few years before they lost contact with one another

01:11:28 He remembers seeing American Soldiers at his hometown

01:12:49 He states how he thinks the refugee camp is closed

01:13:17 He talks about the process and waiting for their flight

01:13:43 He retells the story of an ex-communist police officer showing up at the Thai Camp

01:16:53 He talks about how he and his friends would protect the women in the camp from male visitors

01:19:04 He talks about how the father of the church gave money to the refugees without relatives in the United States

1:21:22 He emphasizes hard work in order to succeed in the United States