

Vietnamese American Oral History Project, UC Irvine

Narrator: JOE DO

Interviewer: Paul Do

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PD: My name is Paul Do and I am doing this interview for the Vietnamese American Oral

History Project. Can you state your name for the camera?

JD: Do you want my Vietnamese name or my legal name?

PD: Whichever one you're more comfortable with.

JD: Well, my Vietnamese name is Dung Do.

PD: And, what is your legal name in the States?

JD: Joe Do.

PD: What is your date of birth and where were you born?

JD: I was born December 3rd, 1965 in Saigon, Vietnam.

PD: What were your parents' names and can you talk about them for a little bit?

JD: My father's name is Thang Do and my mother's name is Uyen Nguyen. Mom and Dad. Um, I mean, they're good parents. You know-

PD: Where did you grow up? Did you grow up in Saigon most of your life?

JD: Well, most of my childhood is in Saigon, up to the time I left the country.

PD: What was it like growing up in your hometown?

JD: It was fun, I guess. We had some good times and some bad times. For the most part, it was okay.

PD: Was there anything significant that stood out in your childhood that you remember now?

JD: Not really.

PD: How many siblings do you have?

JD: I have two brothers and three sisters. I have an older brother. I'm the second oldest and three sisters after me. And, the youngest brother. That makes six total.

PD: Can you describe your schooling in Vietnam growing up?

JD: I was lucky enough to go to school growing up in Vietnam. School was fun. I always liked school. Made tons of friends back then. The difference between schooling there and United States, was back then you can look at the uniforms of the students and know which school they went to. But, yeah, school was nice. That was a part I really liked.

PD: Well, I did not know that about the uniforms. Did you prefer that? Or did you prefer the way American schools are set up.

JD: It's kind of yes and no. It's kind of nice, with the uniform, you feel like you belong to a special group. A union. Just by looking at the uniform, people can understand where you belong to. I understand here, people can wear what they like and have more freedom. And, that's alright, too. I think I prefer the uniform better.

PD: What was your favorite subject in school?

JD: Biology actually. I was really good in it. I think I had a really good teacher who spent a lot of time on it. We had a special connection and we spent time after school.

PD: Did you hold any jobs in Saigon?

JD: I didn't have a "job" job. Beside school in Vietnam, it's kind of normal everyone helps out the family. My dad, at the time, was into selling used electronics like t.v.'s and refrigerators. We would search and buy old school, take it home, fix it, and sell it for a profit. If I have free time, other than school, I would help him with the business.

PD: I just want to go back to the family. With regards to your family name, is there anything particularly special about the Do name? I know Nguyen is a more common name. But is there anything particular about the Do name or is it simply a surname?

JD: Actually, the Do name in Vietnamese is not a common name. But, you know, in the family, especially all the kids, we all have the same middle name. It's Xuan. Doesn't matter female or male. Everyone had the middle name Xuan. It goes back two, three generations that I know of. It's kind of unique to know which branch of family you're coming from. If you have the middle name Xuan, then you know that family member is kind of close.

PD: Can you elaborate on that? How do I phrase this question? Did everyone in your immediate family have the name Xuan?

JD: The middle name, yes.

PD: What does Xuan mean? Where did it come from?

JD: I don't remember. My grandfather and my great-grandfather and all their grandkids, doesn't matter girl or boy, all had the middle name, Xuan. Xuan in Vietnamese means "Spring." So, I don't know how it got started. It was just the way it was back then.

PD: That's an interesting fact, I did not know that. So, is your middle name, Xuan?

JD: Yes. I think it stopped at my generation because we're in America now and all the kids have American names. I think this is where it stops, I guess.

PD: Just playing off the name theme. Did you have any nicknames growing up?

JD: Actually, I do. I have nickname, Thi. It means "little." Everyone in Vietnam called me that. Actually, only two of us in the family had nicknames. My sister was ____ and it also means "little." But, the other four did not have nicknames.

PD: With family traditions, like the nicknames. Was there anything else particularly unique during holidays or traditions throughout the years?

JD: Back home in Vietnam, we always had gatherings and reunions, especially during the Vietnamese New Year. It's like a tradition. We get together, eat, drink have fun, play games, um, yeah.

PD: What particular religions or religion did your family practice?

JD: For myself, I don't really have a religion. My family, on my side, everybody believes in the Buddha. We used to go to Temple, back then. For me, it was just for fun. I wouldn't say it was my religion.

PD: You said you went for fun. Was it more for social gatherings? Does it mean many kids went?

JD: Yeah. Especially during Vietnamese New Year, it was tradition to go to the temple to pray and bring something back like a flower or a branch with leaves or an orange. It was for luck. YYou bring something back from the temple and it brings luck into your home.

PD: For those watching the interview and are not familiar with Vietnamese traditions, can you elaborate on those beliefs on bringing those items back for luck. Was that different for every family or does everyone have generally the same beliefs.

JD: It is Vietnamese culture. It's not just my family. It's just something we grew up with and was told and taught by the elders. I don't know how it started, it was just something we all knew. When you go the temple, bring back something pretty and good, it means good luck.

PD: Before coming to America, did your family have any heirlooms that was passed down?

JD: Not that I can remember. Most of the people were poor. We have old pictures and stuff. Nothing valuable like gold or silver.

PD: Did your family live in Saigon your whole life? Did you guys move anywhere else?

JD: For me, yes, until I left. I was told my parents used to live in different parts of Vietnam before they had any kids. All of my life then was in Saigon.

PD: Where did your parents come from?

JD: My dad was born in North Vietnam in Hanoi. That's where his parents were born and raised. So many different generations from my dad's side. He was born in Hanoi when he was very young when that event happened in 1954 when that event happened with the country splitting into North and South. His family left the North because they did not want anything to do with the Communists. When the country was split in two, they moved South in 1954. I remember my dad said he was about 3 or 4. So, he probably doesn't remember much about the North. My mom's family had the same story. Her family left the North in 1954. But, she was born in the South.

PD: Did she return North?

JD: No. When her parents left the North, she wasn't born until they made their home in the South. When the country got divided, if you stay in the South, you stay in the South, you can't cross the border.

PD: Can you elaborate on that?

JD: Like I said, the country got divided. Either you choose to believe the Communists or believe in the Freedom Party. It's not just for us. It's for everybody. If you choose to live in the North, that's where you stay. That border did not come down until 1975 when the Communists took over. It's a border. There's soldiers, you cannot cross.

PD: So, growing up, did you feel like the war had a large of small effect on your childhood.

JD: I was young, I was probably 8 or 10 when the Communists took over Saigon. We heard about the war and people talk about it. But, since I lived in the city in Saigon far away from the

war, I heard stories, but nothing that really affected my life. We were small. We did not understand what was going on.

PD: Were you in Saigon when it fell?

JD: I was. My dad was working for the old government in the South. He was in the Air Force. He tried to get connections for the whole family, my mom and brothers and sisters to leave Saigon on that day. Unfortunately, we didn't make it. I remember that day when the tanks made it into the city on the streets. The family was staying at my uncle's house. We were waiting on my dad to see if we had the connection. I remember I was scared. There was a lot of gunshots and people yelling. It was chaos. I remember there was a smoke grenade. It was thrown in front of my uncle's house. I just happened to be by the door. The smoke got into my eyes, it was so bad. It was stinking and hurting my eyes. My uncle got me and held me down and told me to stay low. He dragged me away from the smoke. It was scary.

PD: Did your dad face any repercussions?

JD: I mean, he did, but he was low rank. He was sent to some camp to be reeducated about the Communist way, but he only stayed 3-6 months tops because his ranking was really low. He got to go home early.

PD: That's pretty amazing because I read some stories where some people were told it was ten days and stayed ten years.

JD: If you were higher ranking in the military, some people stayed there until the day they died. Some got to go home. But, that is true, some stay for 10, 15, 20 years. Some don't go home.

PD: Did your father talk about it?

JD: He did not. I guess it wasn't pleasant. I guess he didn't want us to know the truth.

PD: How old were you when the Communists took over?

JD: I was about 10.

PD: Did you notice a different from that point on.

JD: Big difference. You can see it in the community. Everything was strictly by the law. You were not allowed to talk about the old government. You couldn't play music before 1975. Food was hard to come by. A lot of families were hungry. Families would hide gold or silver to try and live better. I would say the majority, at least 80%, the people in my neighborhood did not have enough to eat everyday. You were afraid to say anything. They can twist anything around .You can go to jail for saying one thing. Everyone was scared all the time, hungry all the time.

PD: What happened that made food so hard to come by?

JD: I guess the war happened. A lot of crops got destroyed. By switching the government, it used to be two governments, now it was just the Communists. I don't know the percentage of people who fled Vietnam in 1975. Back then, I was young. I don't know why it happened. Food came very hard. Jobs were lost. People used to work for the Americans and old government and now they don't get paid. There was not food to sell. Even if you had money, it doesn't mean there will be food.

PD: You said a lot of jobs were lost. Was there a job switch in your family?

JD: Yeah, in Vietnam, the traditional way, most of the women stay home and don't really go to work. My mom was a housewife. My dad, like I said before, he used to be in the Air Force. That's how we got by. After the Communists took over, he didn't have a job no more. It took him awhile to figure out, you know, what can he do to make a living for all of us. When he get into, the resale of electronics, we did okay for a while.

PD: Did you have any Communists in the family?

JD: Actually, yes. My mom's older brother, I don't it's by choice, but the story I was told. When the whole family tried to leave the North to go to the South in 1954, for some reason, the oldest uncle on my mom's side got left behind. They lost connection and they thought he was dead. Not until the fall of Saigon in 1975-probably like a year later, my uncle found where the rest of his family lived. And, he came. That's how we found out our mother had an older brother from the North. Since he stayed in the North, he was part of the Communists.

PD: Did you meet him?

JD: Yeah, I did. He was a very nice guy. I liked him. He was married, he got two kids, two cousins, that were born and raised in the North. One boy, one girl. We didn't get to know them until after the Fall of Saigon. I liked them. Very nice people.

PD: I'm just going to do an audio check really fast. Was your Uncle able to do anything to help the family since he was on the Communist side?

JD: I don't think so. I was just happy to meet him. If he did, I was too young to know. They probably wouldn't tell me anyways. I don't know.

PD: After the Communists took over, did you notice any of your friends stop coming around or know anyone who escaped the country before you did?

JD: Yeah. Some of my friends, I didn't see anymore. I don't know if they died or escaped.

PD: Can you give an example?

JD: There was one kid who I used to play with. He lived seven houses down in the same neighborhood. The whole family, even after everything settled down, the house was empty. I don't know if they left the country or went somewhere. It was just weird.

PD: Was there a pivotal moment or was it a build-up for your family to leave Vietnam? Or what was your story?

JD: We knew there was no future. Being my father was being part of the old government meaning that none of the kids in the family would be able to go to college. If anyone was involved in the old government, you would not be able to go to college. The most you can do is high school and that's it. For the boys, after high school, we would be forced to join the communist military, whether we like it or not. My father did not like that. He worked hard and-at the time, we got left behind. We experienced how life with the Communists-a lot of people tried to figure out ways to escape the country. One of the ways that a lot of people do is escape with the fishing boat. Fishermen have boats and permission to go out. That's the only way that-so what they do, those fishermen have a boat. You have to pay them with gold. They decide how much gold per head, per person, if you want to leave. My older brother left the country probably four or five years before I did, by himself. We did not have enough money to pay for more than one person at a time. He left four years before I did.

PD: What year did he leave?

JD: I would say 1979 or '78, around that time.

PD: Why did the fishermen want gold? Did they just want gold?

JD: Yes. The reason for that, the Vietnamese currency was worthless outside the country. They can't take that money to escape money. The only thing that would be of worth would be gold.

So, that's why they asked for gold.

PD: So, 4 to 5 years later. Did you escape in '82, '83?

JD: Yeah, around 1982, I think. I remember that day, that was the last day of my school year, I came home from school. I can tell my parents acting strange. My mom looked at me and started crying. She told me to eat my food and then come talk. I ate my food. My parents sat me down. I was probably 16. They said they had enough gold and the connection to escape Vietnam. But,

your choice. If you stay, you probably have a year left in school and then you'll have to join the military. If you want to leave like your brother, we can help. But, it will be tonight. You will be leaving the family tonight. I said yes.

PD: How difficult was that decision?

JD: I knew it would be difficult to leave my family and everything I knew. But, I knew I had no future, I wouldn't survive in Vietnam. I heard stories of others who made it America, Canada, or somewhere in Europe, they can go to college. They have a chance at freedom. They can do what they want. There's no limit, no worry. That's what I want. It was hard. I wouldn't see my family for a long, long time. I knew that I needed to go.

PD: Can you walk me through the whole process.

JD: After we talked, about two hours later, a couple came to the house. They talked to my parents. My parents told me they would take me to a town near the ocean so I would quick access to the boat. We said our goodbyes. I left the family with that couple. They took me on this bus to this town on the ocean. It was like a fishing village. They told me to stay in their house or people in the neighborhood would see strangers. Don't go outside. They were scared. Night falls, it was around midnight. Somebody else came to the house. The couple told me to go with that person. She was about my age. She came with two more people that also going to escape the country. We all get into this little canoe, small boat. The girl my age was trying to get the canoe out into open water. I remember there was a full moon. It was beautiful. The whole surface of the water was lit up. I was wearing this bright orange shirt. The girl told me to take off the shirt because of the moonlight being bright. So, I did. We get out into the water and she steered the boat into this little, weird area. This dune sand. She told us to get out. I jumped out and the sand went up to my knees and I feel the water underneath. She said to dig myself a hole so no one

would see until the big boat comes. There was multiple canoes. Same thing. I saw people jump out and dig themselves a whole. We didn't say anything but we knew we were all there for the same thing. The big boat came around 2 or 3 am. We were told to get on the big boat and I did not know exactly how many people were on the boat at the time. It was nighttime. They put everybody down at the bottom of the boat. That's where there was a tank to hold fish. We went out. We were inside this little box. It was dark and smelled really bad. I got seasick. I remember throwing up, passing out, waking up, throwing up, passing out. By the time, I was kind of waking up and feeling okay, I was told we passed the international water. The boat ran out of oil so the engine wasn't working. We were just floating out there. There was probably 100 people with me. Men, women, kids, babies. We were floating on that boat for five days, five nights. Everyday, the owner of that boat and his family stayed on the top of the deck. They got to eat, cook food. None of us at the bottom was given food. They gave everybody a cap on a bottle and everyone gets to caps of water per day. And, that's all they gave the people at the bottom of the boat. On the sixth day, I was scared, hungry, starving, I mean-pretty much everyone at the bottom of the boat was in the same situation. But, on the sixth day, in the morning, I was looking out, and far out in the horizon-I heard people talking, way out there, I saw this little floating thing. Something solid, couldn't figure out what. But, since we didn't have an engine, we kept drifting. The weird thing was, no matter where we drift, it seems like the thing out there kept getting bigger. It took us about two days until we can see it, it was an American ship. We found out they knew about us three days ahead, but since we were close to the Vietnamese, they did not want to get too close in. The Vietnamese soldiers might think they'd want to invade. They want to help to us but not get too close in. But, with their radio technology, they knew where we were heading. Later, I found out the captain of that boat, after he returns, he would retire. I guess he

wanted to do some good before he left the navy. Actually, we were the second boat to be rescued by that captain. They took us to this refugee camp in Singapore. That's where I stayed for six months. They tried to figure out if I have any family in a different country, which I do. My older brother, who left before me, who lives in America. They contacted him. He sponsored me to come to America. After all the paperwork, they transferred me to Singapore to a different camp in Indonesia where I stayed for a year until I came to America.

PD: Can you describe what life was like in both camps? And, what years?

JD: It was the summer of 1982 that I left Vietnam. Got to Singapore in 1982. Singapore was a very nice camp. They give you food, they give you shelter, clothing-life was okay. I mean, I missed my family, it was tough. I was just sixteen, never left my family for more than 2 days. Now, I'm on my own, don't know the future, Don't know anybody. I knew the people on my boat. But, they were still strangers to me. The first two months were really tough. I was homesick. It took me-about two months to finally get into my head, you're alone and to deal with it. Adjust to life and make it work. But, anyway, compare the two camps, Singapore was way better. We had electricity and running water. We had everything. We could stay inside the house to sleep. But, when we got to Indonesia, which is like a deserted island, there's not set-up camp. They had no basic necessities. It was tough. You kind of build your own shelter from what you find in the jungle.

PD: Why were you transferred?

JD: The reason for that, I was told, the camp that they had in Singapore is temporary. It's not that big. They only hold people in the process. Do people have others to sponsor them and whatnot. After the paperwork is processed, they can't keep you there any longer. The process takes a long time. It took more than a year for everything to get processed. So they got to keep you

somewhere, start learning English-until it's time for you to go. The camp they had in Indonesia-I was told there was two. Galang 1 and Galang 2. I heard Galang 1 was way better. Galang 2 was very new, nothing was built. Pretty much, we did what we could. Tried to survive until it was our turn to go to America.

PD: Do you have any stories from Galang 2 that stood out to you?

JD: There's a lot of things that happened in Galang 2. I remember-I got transferred there, don't know anybody, somehow, there's myself and three other guys my age. DON't have no family, we kind of got together to support each other. We became very close, almost like family. When you're out there alone, don't have nobody and you find somebody who cares, it means a lot. So, we tried to have each other's back and build the shelter as best we could. Everyday, you want drinking water, you have to walk like 2-3 miles from the beach, through the jungle, to this stream. It was very dangerous to get to the stream because it was in the middle of the jungle. There were stories told of people being attacked by wild animals. We always went in groups so we could have help and defend ourselves. I remember this-one time, four of us went to get drinking water. We got there okay. On the way back, two people will carry this bucket with this long stick on their shoulders. One guy will walk in front and one in back. That day, we were walking back and we heard noises in the grass. All of a sudden, this boar comes out and looks at us. We threw down the bucket of water and got together as a group. It looked at us really angry. It started to make a move towards us. One of my friends threw the stick at the boar and it missed him by a foot. When it came towards us, two of the people with me jumped apart. It happened so fast. All I remember, I put my stick up, held it real tight, and tried to stick it in as hard as I can. It happened so fast. I remember my stick pierced into the boar form the ear down and through the body and out the other side. My friend said hold onto the stick and they all jumped and held it

down until it wasn't moving anymore. It happened really fast. I was scared, when it was all over with, when we got back to camp, everyone said "Oh, you're the hero, you killed the boar." But actually, I was just defending myself. I don't know, I was scared. But, I did it. But, anyway, that's one thing- I will never forget that thing.

PD: So, when you first came to America, where did you first live?

JD: Westminster, California.

PD: When was that?

JD: I came to America in 1984. Lived with my brother and my uncle's family in this two bedroom apartment. We lived there for two years.

PD: What jobs did you have?

JD: I worked at the Costa Mesa swap meet on the weekends setting up tents. I worked a second job at the drug store. Did that job for awhile. I got a job in manufacturing for Zydex making hard disks and memory disks for computers for a few years. After that, I worked for Toshiba for a few years. That's where I met my wife.

PD: What were your impressions of the United States before you came?

JD: Back home, America was like Heaven. You hear stories. You're never hungry, there's always food. There's freedom, you can do what you what. It was a big culture shock. I didn't know the language. Everything was different. It took me a long time to get adjusted to the culture here.

PD: What was the most shocking about moving to America? Was it learning a new language? Was it the food? The buildings?

JD: Pretty much everything. Everything was so different and new and strange to me.

PD: Going back to working with Toshiba where you met your wife? Can you talk about your work with them and how your relationship with your wife formed?

JD: I got my big break at Toshiba. The people recognized my work ethic and my ability. I was sent to Japan for three months to study a new copy machine model to sell in America that was designed in Japan. They needed to send someone to bring the knowledge from there to Irvine to start production so we can sell.

PD: Around what year were you working for Toshiba?

JD: Oh gosh, I think that was back in 1990.

PD: So, how did working for Toshiba help you form your relationship with your wife?

JD: I was a team leader. My wife was hired to work on the production line. Things happen. We dated. We fell in love and here we are 22 years later.

PD: When did you marry your wife?

JD: We got married in 1993, May 15th.

PD: Was she a refugee as well?

JD: she was. She escaped with her family. I don't exactly know when. Her story was a little better than mine because she went with her family and her family owned the fishing boat.

PD: Did you face any racism when you came to America?

JD: Unfortunately, yes. The first time I faced that treatment was when I worked at the swap meet. The owner of the tent sold fur coats. I remembered that she was eating this hamburger at lunch time. Usually I bring a little something for me to eat at lunch. She took a couple bites of her burger and she didn't want it anymore. She called me and said if I wanted it, here's my lunch. I didn't know how to react. She was my boss. Her friend looked at her weird and said you already took a bite. She said I was just an Asian guy and I'd eat it. That was kind of hurtful.

PD: How did you deal with racism coming here?

JD: There's racism everywhere. It happened to the Black, Hispanic, and Asian community. There's good and bad in everyone. I don't hold it against the Americans. It's just the way the world works. You can't help it. There's going to be good and bad people in every community.

PD: DID you continue working with Toshiba?

JD: I worked with Toshiba for 5 years until they closed the plant. They moved back to Japan. They asked if I wanted to come with them. At the time, I wasn't an American citizen so the whole process would have been a long process with a lot of paperwork. At the time, my two youngest sisters escaped Vietnam and were living with me. I was their guardian. I was providing for them. I turned them down.

PD: So what was the next step?

JD: It was hard to find a job in California at the time. I heard there were better jobs in Seattle. I was married to my wife for over a year. I got a job up there and stayed for two years. My wife did not like Seattle. It rained all the time and was depressing. After two years, we moved to Texas. The cost of living was low and there's more jobs out there. I had family out there. I thought it would be a good place to start a family. I got a job in Texas for year and realized I needed to make better money. Real estate was doing well at the time. I went back to school to get my real estate license. I did that for four years until the whole economy collapsed.

PD: What year did you get into real estate?

JD: We moved to Texas in 1995. Got into real estate around 1997. Got out of it in about 2002, around that time.

PD: What was your next move after real estate?

JD: After real estate, you know, I was given an opportunity when I was collecting unemployment to advance myself in a different career. I went back to school for medical coding. After I got my license, I worked for Southwest Surgical Associations. I was in charge of all the medical coding so we could bill out insurance to collect money. I did that for 7 or 8 years.

PD: What made you want to come back to Southern California?

JD: My youngest sister was involved in medical research for all the-you know they do research on new medicine before they get out on the market. She said it was a good field to get in to and advised me to get into the business. I entered some courses, so I could get a certificate to enter the field as a study coordinator. My sister offered to have me work with her in medical research. So, we decided to move the whole family back in 2011 and stayed here ever since.

PD: How many children do you have?

JD: I have two sons. My oldest son is twenty years old and born in 1994 in Seattle, Washington. My second son was born in Houston, Texas in 1999.

PD: How many relatives from Vietnam live in the States with you?

JD: Now, all of my family live in the States. Some in California and some in Texas. Yeah, we're all here now.

PD: Are there any family traditions that you brought with you?

JD: I think since I left so young and had to adapt-I mean, there's not really any traditions. I just do what works.

PD: When you think of yourself in American society, how do you see yourself fitting in that picture? American? Vietnamese? Vietnamese American?

JD: Up to this point in time, if people ask me, I would say I'm Vietnamese. I don't really think much about the title. It's just how it is.

PD: What do you think is the major difference between your generation and the next generation of Vietnamese American being born?

JD: I think the next generation being born here in America isn't going to have the opportunity to experience what really Asian culture is supposed to be like. I don't blame them. They were born in America. It's a totally different culture and society. We're here now. This is where our home is. Our life is here now. I mean, you know, we got to go with the flow.

PD: When you say that, what part of Asian culture do you think they're missing out on?

JD: Down the line, I'm scared of them not being able to speak Vietnamese anymore. It's kind of tough to be Vietnamese and not being able to speak Vietnamese. But, I understand. Kids are born here and only speak English. As for experience- When I was young, there was a lot of events back home. It's hard to explain it, you have to be there to experience it to really know the culture. It's not going to happen here.

PD: In your opinion, what will become of Vietnamese culture in America. I know there's a Little Saigon in Houston and in California.

JD: It's good we have some kind of community to that we can relate to. It sure help that we have all that Vietnamese food and things we enjoy and are easy to get to. I appreciate that. It's like having a little piece of home here.

PD: So, what do you think is the most important thing for Vietnamese Americans to learn or remember about their traditions or heritage?

JD: Bottom line, doesn't matter who you are. We are all human beings. My value is family comes first. I wish that the next generation will hold that important in their life. Hope that they can keep up with the Vietnamese language. If nothing left, that is something that will tie them to their roots, I guess. I don't know. In the future, if I get the chance, I would love to take my two

sons back to Vietnam. So, they can get an idea where I come from, where their roots are. Being a short time there, I'm sure they won't learn all of the Vietnamese culture, but at least they will have an idea.

PD: Did you go back to Vietnam after you escaped.

JD: I did. I came back in, I believe, in 1992. At the time, my mom and dad and one brother and one sister still lived in Vietnam. The communists were more open minded with their politics. They allowed family members that lived out of the country to come back and visit. I visited for a month. That was back in 1992, I believe.

PD: Now, that you adjusted to daily life in the States after being here so long, can you talk about your daily hobbies or what you like to do for entertainment?

JD: Besides work, I like to go to the movies and spend time with the kids, just fun things. Lately, I got some birds to raise and breed. Kind of helps me with stress. I always liked animals. I enjoy it.

PD: Raising the birds, is that a hobby or a side business?

JD: It's just a hobby. I don't know. I don't even know if I can sell the young birds. I fall in love with them and can't sell them. It's kind of hard to let them go. I don't know. It's always just going to be a hobby.

PD: Just to help wrap up the interview, can you talk about the things you're most proud of? Like anytime in your life, from growing up in Vietnam to transitioning here to having living the last two decades in the States? You can take your time.

JD: I would say, you know, if anything, I'm proud of and feel blessed that I got a chance to get to know my wife. To get a chance to be together and share things and do things for the past 22 years. I feel very lucky that I get to marry such a wonderful woman. Have two beautiful kids,

which I love dearly. I'm so proud of them. So far, they are doing really good, whatever they decide to do, they focus on it and do the best they can. What I'm trying to say, is I'm content with my life. I'm happy with what I have now. I'm hoping things stay this good for a long time. Life is good.

PD: Do you see any future traveling for you?

JD: I love traveling. I got to go to a lot of different places. That's something I really enjoy. To go to different places and learn about different people, how they live, their cultures. I really enjoy that. If I get a chance, I would love to go to Peru. To see, what is it called again? Machu Picchu. I'm into that kind of historical stuff. I love the old stuff. Things that last thousands of years. To touch it and be on the ground of something that lasts thousands of years. If I can do that, that would be great.

PD: So, something tells me that you have much more culture shock ahead of you.

JD: And, that's alright. I've been through enough, I will survive.

PD: Well, thank you for your time and thank you for participating in this interview.

JD: Alright, you're welcome.

--End of Transcript--