

Vietnamese American Oral History Project, UC Irvine

Narrator: JOE DO

Interviewer: Paul Do

Date: May 9, 2015

Location: Fountain Valley, California

Sub-collection: Vietnamese American Experience Course, Spring 2015

Length of Interview: 01:30:09

Time Log

- 00:00:55 Joe Do talks about his parents and how his childhood was like growing up in Saigon.
- 00:02:10 He talks about his siblings. Joe goes into detail about how kids wore uniforms going to school in Vietnam.
- 00:05:35 Joe talks about how his father would find and repair old electronics for a living.
- 00:06:20 The family middle name, Xuan, is discussed as being passed down through multiple generations. It stopped after the family made their way to America.
- 00:10:03 He talks about family traditions during the holidays.
- 00:14:45 He talks about the origins and roots of his father and mother.
- 00:18:30 The war did not have much effect on his childhood as the war seemed like it was far away from Saigon.
- 00:19:32 His father tried to get a connection for his family to escape the day that Saigon fell.
- 00:20:29 He hid at his Uncle's house when the Communists took over Saigon. A smoke grenade went off outside of the house.
- 00:22:44 His father made it back from re-education camp after a few months. He talks about how others were not so lucky.

- 00:25:18 The people in his neighborhood did not have enough to eat after the takeover. People were scared of the new government.
- 00:27:22 Many jobs were lost. His family had to find new ways to survive.
- 00:28:33 Joe talks about his family members who were Communist.
- 00:31:30 One of his neighbors' houses was empty even after everything settled down.
- 00:32:57 His family did not agree with the Communist way.
- 00:33:15 Being part of the old government meant high school was the highest education level you could receive.
- 00:35:32 His older brother left the country before he did.
- 00:36:13 The fishermen only wants gold as payment.
- 00:37:44 His parents collected enough for Joe to escape Vietnam at a young age.
- 00:39:50 The plan was set. A couple would take Joe to another village near the ocean for the escape.
- 00:41:39 Midnight came and he left to move towards the ocean to escape.
- 00:44:05 The big boat comes for the people escaping the country.
- 00:46:06 The people were floating on the boat for five days and five nights.
- 00:48:25 The refugees were rescued by an American boat after about a week floating on the ocean.
- 00:50:08 Joe was taken to a refugee camp in Singapore for 6 months.
- 00:51:02 He was transferred to another refugee camp, Galang 2, in Indonesia. He stayed there for about a year before coming to America.
- 00:53:03 Joe discusses how he dealt with the drastic changes that occurred so fast in his life.

- 00:53:50 The camp in Indonesia was in way poorer conditions than the refugee camp in Singapore.
- 00:56:30 To get basic necessities for survival in Galang 2 required dealing with a level of danger.
- 00:57:05 Joe forms a group with others in the camp around his age. The other boys also escaped with no family.
- 00:58:28 To get drinking water, one must get to the middle of the jungle where there is the possibility of animal attacks.
- 00:59:32 Joe talks about how the group got attacked by a wild boar while in the jungle. They ended up killing the animal in self defense.
- 01:01:55 He first lived in Westminster, California upon coming to America in 1984. It was with his brother and Uncle's family.
- 01:02:35 His first job in America was setting up tents for people working at the Costa Mesa swap meet.
- 01:03:52 Joe talks about the impressions he had of the United States before coming to America and how those impressions compared to reality of how things were.
- 01:05:25 He starts working for Toshiba where his work ethic is recognized. He rises through the ranks.
- 01:07:05 Joe meets his wife and fall in love. They get married in 1993.
- 01:08:30 He experiences racism in the States for the first time and discusses his thoughts on racism in general.
- 01:11:40 His two youngest sisters had escaped Vietnam and he provided for them.

- 01:12:10 The family moved to Seattle, Washington to seek a job. His wife did not enjoy Seattle.
- 01:13:30 Joe moves to Texas for better job opportunities. He went back to school for a real estate license.
- 01:15:10 Once more, he went back to school to receive a medical coding license. He was a medical coder for a few years.
- 01:17:02 The family moved back to Southern California to pursue a different career.
- 01:17:20 Joe talks about his sons being born.
- 01:18:02 Most of his family has moved to America.
- 01:19:50 He ponders on how Vietnamese culture will be experienced the newer generation of Vietnamese Americans.
- 01:22:00 Joe is appreciative of the Vietnamese communities that have been built throughout parts of America.
- 01:22:57 He talks about how he values family over everything. He hopes that future generations will keep family in high regard.
- 01:23:30 Joe wishes that the Vietnamese language stays alive.
- 01:24:04 He wants to bring his sons to Vietnam with him one day to show them his roots.
- 01:24:35 Joe went back to visit his family in Vietnam in 1992.
- 01:25:50 He has started raising birds as a way to pass the time and keep stress down.
- 01:27:15 Joe talks about how proud he is of his family and being able to marry his wife.
- 01:28:30 He is happy with his life. Joe wants to continue to travel in the future. Peru is at the top of the list.
- 01:30:08 Joe is thanked for participating in the interview.