Vietnamese American Oral History Project, UC Irvine

Narrator: NGUYEN KIEU LY
Interviewer: Alex Nguyen
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Location: Irvine, California
Length of Interview: 01:26.03
Transcriber: Alex Nguyen

Narrator Life Map

1970  Born in Saigon on March 13th
      – Born as the second son out of 4 children
      – Took drawing classes as a child
      – Father was a tailor
      – Parents were ethnic Chinese
      – Father was from Canton region of China
      – Lived with nuclear family along with his uncle, aunt, cousins, and a grandparent

1978  Fled Vietnam on a boat with his family
      – Stayed on the boat for about 3 days and then landed in Malaysia
      – Lived in refugee camp for 1 year

1978  Moves to the U.S. and settles in the San Gabriel Valley with family
      – Sponsored by an uncle and a church group to come to America
      – Lived in Alhambra initially with the uncle who sponsored his family
      – Then moved to San Gabriel in the 4th grade
      – Parents stitched clothing for money and eventually bought a jewelry store

1991  Begins undergrad at Cal Poly Pomona
      – Gains interest in art and drawing again

1992  Becomes a U.S. citizen
      – Changes name to Charles
      – Eventually changes it back to Nguyen

1995  Graduates from Cal Poly Pomona and goes to Rome
      – Stays in Rome for 2 months
      – Paints a fresco with a group of 20-40 artists
      – During this time parents buy a restaurant
      – Works at the family restaurant

1998  Begins graduate school at Cal State Fullerton
      – Earns degree in printmaking
      – Works at library and continues to do artwork and printmaking
2011  Joins group: Los De Abajo
   – Collaborates with group at Self Help Graphics over time and eventually joins the group.