Narrator: Đỗ Châu Huyền
Interviewer: Trâm Lê
Date: January 5, 2015
Location: Baldwin Park, California
Sub-collection: Trâm Lê Oral Histories
Length of interview: 02:10:46
Transcriber: Thuy Mai

Time Log

00:01:21 Mrs. Đỗ talked about her father and his positions in the government of the Republic of Vietnam as well as his involvement in the arts and performance.

00:04:58 She mentioned about her peaceful childhood and how she lost her mom during Currency Conversion Day.

00:09:38 She talked about her dad and all the men in the family were in re-education camps.

00:11:09 She talked about her higher education career in Vietnam at the University of Saigon, majoring in Language and Literature. Then she further talked about her teaching career as an English teacher in Vietnam and teaching experience as part of VAA (Vietnamese American Association).

00:15:17 She talked about her 7 siblings and their occupations.

00:19:49 Mrs. Đỗ recalled her last days in Vietnam as an English teacher at VAA and how she battled between staying in Vietnam because of her pride or evacuating to America.

00:26:33 She avoided talking about her experience of being discriminated and began talking about her sister’s experience discrimination because she was the daughter of a minister.

00:31:37 She talked about tragedies that she knew from students that she taught English to when they tried to escape Vietnam. She also talked about Vietnamese girls trying to marry foreigners so they can leave the country.

00:35:47 She talked about coming to America in 1992 with her family. She emphasized on the importance of education to her and how she made sure to send all of her kids to college to continue their education and how they all became successful afterwards.

00:41:00 Mrs. Đỗ talked about her struggles to continue her teaching career in America. She then became a high school substitute teacher at Alhambra School District.
She talked about taking classes to become an elementary school teacher at the Charter School of Education.

She recalled changing her mind and wanting to be a preschool teacher after substituting in a preschool at Alhambra Children Center. So she started another program at East LA College to get her preschool teaching credential.

She became the side director at a childcare and human services agency called OPTIONS.

Mrs. Đỗ compared teaching in Vietnam to teaching in America and how she grew to really love teaching little kids. She also sang two Vietnamese nursery songs that she translated into English for her students.

She talked about feeding birds at a park and one day was captured in a photo which later was published on the Pasadena Newspaper when she was 52.

She talked about some of the activities she was involved in such as; president of an alumni association, participation in a poetry contest, and books she wrote by herself and with her husband.

She reminisced about her love story, how she met her husband.

She talks about destiny and gave examples in her life where she did not expect certain things to happen, such as buying her house.

Mrs. Đỗ talked about valuing effort over talent. She also spoke of the sacrifices she had to make so her children can finish their college education.

She explained her reasons for staying in LA County instead of settling in Orange County. Then she went on to talk about how she felt about her son, Trí, running for mayor of Westminster.

She talked about her marriage with her husband and the time he spent in prison in Vietnam. She also mentioned how her children were forced to take Russian as a foreign language in school in Vietnam.

She talked about her experience when she went back to Vietnam in 2008 and how different it was from what she remembered.

Mrs. Đỗ discussed about the current Vietnamese government. That they let the rich become richer, and the poor become poorer. She also talked about her dream of building a preschool for the little kids in Vietnam.
She shared her thoughts about the younger generation of Vietnamese American in the U.S. and how they fail to understand the older generation’s struggles, sufferings and thinking.

She talked about her life as a substitute teacher and the struggles she had. She then went on to talk about her teaching methods and experiences.

Mrs. Đỗ concluded her thoughts with a message to younger generations.