Transcription

[00:00:00]

NC: Today is February 17th, 2019. This is Nicole Chang with the Vietnamese American Oral History Project, and I am interviewing Mr. Anh Nguyen. We are at his home in Fullerton, California.

AQN: Hello.

NC: Hi. Please introduce your name.

AQN: My name is Nguyen Quoc Anh.

[00:00:26]

NC: And what is your birthday?


[00:00:33]

NC: What city were you born in?

AQN: I’m not exactly sure. I think it was either Rạch Giá, at the southern-most cities in mainland Vietnam or ___, a nearby city.

[00:00:57]

NC: What do you remember about the city?

AQN: The city that I was born in?
AQN: I think around the time I was between five and ten, probably six or seven, I went back to visit the home I was born in. There was a river in the back, and there was a bookstore. We used to live with my grandfather. I was born in my grandfather’s home and he ran a bookstore. And in the back, there was a step going into the river so people could bathe and wash clothes and do other things with the river. And sometimes we would see battleships going across the river - U.S. battleships - and it was a little dirty. I was told that after I was born, there was a big flood, and water would go into the house and there would be up to people’s knees, and people would have to sit in hammocks all day long to avoid the water. But when I went back there about this past year, I could no longer recognize the house. So I don’t think - so I don’t remember much about it, we couldn’t find the house last time we visited.

NC: What were your parents like?

AQN: So my father is Nguyen Van Lau. And my mother’s maiden name was Tran Thi Ngoc.

NC: Okay. What about your grandparents?

AQN: On my father’s side, my grandfather was Nguyen Van Rat. And then my grandmother was Nguyen Thi Hat. Then on my mother’s side, my grandfather was Tran Van Trung, and my grandmother was… oh my gosh, I can’t believe I forgot my maternal grandmother’s name. I’m closest to her, but I don’t know why I can’t remember her name.

NC: Maybe it will come back to you.

NC: What do you remember most about your grandparents/parents from when you were a child?
AQN: So I guess my maternal- I’m closest to my maternal grandmother out of all the grandparents. My maternal grandfather was very stern. And then my paternal grandfather was- I guess he had a lot of children and grandchildren, he also spent some time with me because I was the oldest boy- the oldest son of the oldest son. I didn’t spend a lot of time with my paternal grandmother.

[00:06:12 ]

NC: What do you remember most about your parents?

AQN: My parents- I think they were too busy with seven kids. So- they didn't have the time to spend with each of the kids. So there was a lot of expectation because I was the oldest son- so they expected a lot from me. So I had to do a lot of the work, a lot of the manual labor to maintain and upkeep the house.

[00:07:36]

NC: Do you know what your parents/ grandparents did for a living?

AQN: Yeah. So in Vietnam, the women usually don’t work outside of the house. So my paternal grandfather was a bookseller, he had a shop, he ran a shop selling books. And then on my mom’s side, my grandfather was, I think he was like a civil servant, probably a tax- something equivalent to an IRS worker. And my father was a captain in the army- I think he was a technical person, so he helped build the telecommunication system- the military communication system.

[00:08:50]

NC: What can you tell me about their educational backgrounds?

AQN: So my father was academically very strong. I think he scored very high on the- before he joined the army, he was a principal of a high school. And then they- because of the war, he was drafted into the army. So after he joined, I guess they tested people to send them to America for
studying, and so he scored pretty high so he was sent to America to get his B.S. [Bachelor of Science] from Arizona State in electrical engineering. So he came back to Vietnam to put his education into practice, so he- I think he was one of the leaders in developing the communication system for the military. And afterwards, when we immigrated to America, he went back to school to get his masters in electrical engineering. And my mom- I think was a high school grad.

[00:10:43]

NC: You mentioned you had six other siblings. Can you tell me what their names are?

AQN: So my oldest sister is Binh- Gina. Or Binh Nguyen. And then I’m the second. And then- I have a younger sister- who is- Anh- Nguyen Thi Nguyet Anh. So the first one is Nguyen Thi Nguyet Binh. Second one is Nguyen Thi Nguyet Anh. And then after Nguyen Thi Nguyet Anh is Nguyen Thi My Linh, is the third one. So that’s the fourth kid but- so let me just go by order. After Nguyen Thi My Linh is Nguyen Thi My Hong- that’s the fifth kid. Next one is Nguyen Xuan Hoa- is a boy. That’s the sixth kid. And the last one is Nguyen Mong Lan- that’s another boy.

[00:12:01]

NC: What do you know about the origin or history of your family name?

AQN: I heard that one time- the tradition was that you would honor the king by taking the king’s last name- so therefore, we probably had a king with- or an emperor with the Nguyen last name, and so a lot of people maybe liked him or chose to take his name for other reasons. So therefore a lot of people in Vietnam have the same last name- either Nguyen, or Tran, or Le. I think that that’s the reason why we have only a few names but they are very common.

[00:13:13]

NC: Do you have children?
AQN: Yes.
NC: How many?
AQN: 3.
NC: And what do they do?
AQN: So Eileen- the oldest one, Eileen is a girl. Twenty six now. She’s in medical school in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. And then the second one is Nick. He’s twenty two, and he’s a computer science student at Cal Poly Pomona. And then there’s Neal, who is twenty, and he is an electrical engineering student at UCSD.
[00:14:08]
NC: Do you talk to them about your history?
AQN: Not really, they don’t-I don’t think they’re that interested. They haven’t asked me about it, I mean sometimes I’ll say something about it but I don’t think that they are curious about it.
NC: Are you still in contact with family in Vietnam?
AQN: No, we only have distant family. And we don’t really have any contact.
NC: So are most of your family in the United States?
AQN: Yes.
[00:14:56]
NC: What kind of schools did you attend?
AQN: High school or post high school?
NC: Any sort of education.
AQN: So I went to high school here in Fullerton, just a middle class high school. So afterwards I went to UCLA and so- that’s the extent of my schooling experience.
[00:15:49]
NC: Did you go to school back in Vietnam?
AQN: Yes. Back then I was also in a very middle class, typical, primary and secondary school.
So I went all the way to sixth grade before emigrating. So when I came to America, I started seventh grade. Also, I think my first school in America was in the City of Orange. And we didn’t move to Fullerton until ninth grade- or maybe tenth grade. So very typical middle class schooling from beginning to end, nothing remarkable.
NC: Do you have any special memories of your primary or secondary school?
AQN: Yeah. I remember that it was very demanding. And if we didn’t meet expectations, we would be hit until- we would be hit. So there was some physical pain involved if we didn’t meet expectations. And there was a lot of competition to do well in school, to avoid the military. So people were pretty intense about getting good grades so that they could get into the schools that will reduce the likelihood of being drafted into the military. I think that back then if you got into college then you don’t have to- then you don’t have to enter the military after high school. And that was a big deal- I’m not sure about this- I’m not a hundred percent sure about the rules of how you could avoid getting drafted into the military, but I think there was a lot of pressure to do well in school.
[00:19:32]
NC: So after you came to the United States, you went to UCLA for college. What was your major and why did you choose it?
AQN: So I started out studying Physics. Probably because I think the main reason was because I thought it was a hard field- and I thought that I wanted to do something hard. And you know, so- I wanted to do something in the physical sciences, and I felt that physics was the hardest so I wanted to see how far I could go.
NC: What kind of career did you want to have when you were a child?
AQN: I think I wanted to go into something science oriented, maybe a scientist or an astronaut.
NC: Has it worked out that way?
AQN: No, it hasn’t. It’s very competitive so- and I think I didn’t have the guidance or the necessary investment to get into these exotic science career. I think in order to get into- so if you want to be a physicist, that’s a lot of investment and risk that I think a newcomer to America can’t afford. So therefore I had to change my major to electrical engineering which is I think a little bit easier and has more demand, so- it’s not bad, I’m an engineer- it wasn’t the original field but it’s pretty good so far.
NC: Did you work while you went to school?
AQN: Yeah, so I worked while in school- I started working when I was fourteen, I tried to get summer jobs every summer. And even while I was in school I would do odd jobs. So school took a long time for me, but even during school and in between school I would work whenever I can.
NC: Can you describe some of the jobs?
AQN: Some of the jobs?
NC: Yes.
AQN: So when I was younger I started out as a painter in the summer. One summer I was a custodian at an elementary student. One summer I was an assembler for a company in Irvine making scales for the postal service- or for the people to weigh their packages before applying stamps to them. And I was also a programmer at an investment firm to help them optimize their trading to minimize the effect that they have on the market when they execute their trade. Let’s see what else- it’s been so long. I also worked in the cafeteria when I was living in the dorm- I
also worked at Disneyland as a traffic- I don’t remember the title- traffic management or something, to direct people, clean up at the park and maybe direct traffic. So- I think that’s it.

NC: What is your current job title and for what company?
AQN: So I’m a system engineer for Panasonic Avionics.

NC: What made you choose this career?
AQN: It’s close to home and it’s something I think I can add value to. And I like the people that I work with, and it provides some- it’s pretty stable, and also it could be interesting as well.

NC: Can you describe your typical workday?
AQN: So typical workday I would spend maybe one or two hours in a meeting. So basically I will take requirements or ideas about what the market wants, and then- so I’m responsible for- I help to develop satellite communications systems for commercial aircraft. So my job is to learn about what customers (airlines) currently want or may want and then decide what features to add to our system, because the system can be- the system can be adapted by software to do things that it doesn’t currently do- so my job is to learn what the customers want, and then decide what feature mix- to push for future products- to include in our future products.

NC: Do you have any special family traditions, customs, or foods?
AQN: I don’t think we have any tradition in particular. But usually I think the only thing I can think of that makes us different from other Vietnamese family is that we take turn hosting parties so you know for example, I would be responsible for Thanksgiving, and my sister would host maybe New Year and Fourth of July, and another sister would host the Christmas party. But beyond that, we’re pretty typical Vietnamese.
NC: Are there any songs, images, or artifacts that remind you of Vietnam?

AQN: Yeah, a lot. Yeah, there are many. There isn’t one song or image, but yeah. So whenever I hear Vietnamese music- I guess. Yeah many things remind me of Vietnam.

NC: What family heirlooms do you possess?

AQN: I think the closest thing we have to that is our sofa in our living room. The one that has the wooden frame, that has the green cushions, that’s the closest thing we have to an heirloom. It’s pretty- it’s nothing special. My parents bought it at Montgomery Ward, which was like a Sears from a long time ago- they are out of business. When they didn’t have room for it, they wanted to get rid of it, I volunteered to take it and sanded it down and put a new clear coat on it and when out and bought new cushions for it. So I think that’s the closest thing I think- to an heirloom. But it’s nothing to look at.

NC: Do you have any photo albums?

AQN: Yeah, do you want to see it now- or later?

NC: Yeah- we’ll look at it later actually.

AQN: Okay.

NC: Who made them?

AQN: My wife.

NC: Could you describe their contents?

AQN: So the album that we have has probably three or four photos of me and my side of the family from Vietnam, and then the other ninety-five percent are of my wife and her family from
Vietnam. So it shows people fifty years ago—mostly black and white. Very traditional Vietnamese photographs.

[00:32:14]

NC: Actually, I think it would be nice if-

AQN: You want to see it?

NC: Yeah.

AQN: Okay.

AQN: That's not in Vietnam. So this is when I graduated from UCLA- Ph.D. You want to see photos from Vietnam, right?

NC: Yeah.

AQN: So- let's see. I think this is one of the few photos that we have from Vietnam. This is my, that's my mom. So this is when my father was getting his B.S. at Arizona so we were in Vietnam by ourselves. We only had three kids back then. So that's my mom and- so the rest are my wife's family, most of these pictures are hers. That's her parents. Mostly hers- is that relevant? Do you want to see her pictures? I think if you flip to the end, there might be another one of me.

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[00:34:26]

AQN: Oh, I think there's another one I want to show you.

[00:35:32]

AQN: So this is- no that's when I was in college here in America. That's me and my sister- my older sister. I think this is high school- when I graduated from high- maybe not- this is when I graduated from UCLA with my Bachelors.

NC: Thank you.
AQN: You're welcome.

[00:35:59]

NC: How are manners different in Vietnam than in America?

AQN: I think- maybe- America is more polite. Vietnamese are more- I think that Vietnamese are more goal oriented in terms of how they act towards other people. If there's something to be gained by being polite then they are extra polite, otherwise they're less. I think Vietnamese are more calculating because of their harsh living conditions.

NC: Do you have any hobbies?

AQN: Yeah, I do. So I- I like to learn about how people think. I'm interested in human behavior. History, I like history. I like to read about old battles and about society evolve when there's a disturbance. I'm also a tech guy so I like to tinker with gadgets. In my spare time I like to explore, I like to go and experience nature, look at the stars and do stargazing and ride around without the top on. Yeah- I like to work on cars. I do most of my cars' repair. And I'm pretty interested in politics, but I haven't done anything with it so- that's something I kind of regret. Maybe I should get involved more instead of having- learning a lot but not doing anything much. Maybe I'm off topic.

[00:40:03]

NC: Do you vote in the U.S. elections?

AQN: Mhmm, all the time, every time.

NC: Why?

AQN: Because I think that it's a privilege and a responsibility to vote. Because not voting is a waste.

NC: Do you feel strongly or have an opinion about the political parties?
AQN: I do. I guess you want to hear about the opinion- or that's enough.

NC: Yeah.

AQN: I think that there's a strong element of- I think that the Republican party has a lot of people who are xenophobic. And as somebody who is not- who isn't a native American, it's- I find that to be unacceptable. So regardless of all the things that I might agree with the Republican party, that's the one thing that I find- that I cannot accept. We're talking about existential issues, everything else is secondary I think. So that pretty much boils down to why I feel- that's the main reason why I'm a Democrat, because I don't feel that many Republicans want people like us here.

[00:43:33]

NC: What do you think of the number of Vietnamese Americans who are in office or hold an elected position?

AQN: So I think at the local level- I think it seems reasonable, the numbers don't seem to be unexpected. But I think as you go higher up to the state and national level, I think we don't have sufficient representation.

NC: How do you think they make a difference in helping the community?

AQN: How do I think?

NC: Yes.

AQN: So yeah- I guess the- since they depend on Vietnamese votes to get to the offices that they're in, I think that they're responsive to the needs of the community. Although- that answer was- I guess I don't understand the question. I don't understand when you ask how do I think they serve the community. Could you repeat that again? Maybe I'll understand it better the second time.

NC: The question is how do you think they make a difference in helping the community?
AQN: I guess at the local level all they can do is decide how to zone a certain piece of land or maybe perhaps they'll fight for- maybe they'll advocate financial support to Vietnamese who are still in Vietnam. Or when there's a natural disaster- or perhaps advocate to support freedom of expression in Vietnam, so that's something I think they could do, and they may be doing it.

[00:46:41]

NC: Do you have memories of and/or experience of the war?

AQN: I guess the closest thing that we came to experience the war was where I lived, we would hear loud explosions at night a lot- probably every night. The fighting was close enough that we could hear booming sounds at night, and we would see a lot of soldiers in our daily lives too. And also we have people in our family who are part of the military but I haven't actually seen hand to hand combat.

[00:47:46]

NC: How old were you?

AQN: We left when I was ten.

NC: What do you remember most about that time period?

AQN: So the time period- while we were living there?

NC: Yes.

AQN: I think I wasn't old enough to be worried, but I think I did sense- looking back I think I did experience stress. I guess I can observe stress from people around me- from my parents and neighbors. But I didn't- I guess I wasn't fearful.

NC: When did you leave Vietnam?

AQN: 1975.

NC: Did you want to leave?
AQN: I don't remember having an opinion. I guess if I could imagine myself back then I'd probably say no- I would lean towards not leaving if I had the choice. But I don't remember how I felt back then because I had a very close friend, so I guess- if somebody asked me I'd probably lean towards not leaving.

NC: Did people around you know that you were leaving?

AQN: No, we left suddenly. We were given one hour to get ready and leave, before that I had no idea that we would leave. We had an hour to pack our stuff and get ready and then somebody would come and pick us up- and that's what happened.

[00:50:37]

NC: Who planned the journey?

AQN: So I heard that- because my father was in the army and he worked very closely with the American military. And when he was at Arizona State- he was roommates with an American student who had a father who was very high up in the military- I heard that his roommate liked my father so he asked his father to arrange to bring us here, so I think it might have been through the intelligence service. So maybe his father, I'm speculating now, I think his father who was was like a colonel or soldier in the military maybe asked an American lady to help arrange for our trip to save the Vietnamese military people who have been working closely with the Americans because they think that these people would be vulnerable to be punished after the fall of Vietnam, so- did that make sense? So somebody from the U.S. government arranged to pick us up and bring us here.

NC: Did you leave anything behind that you wish you would have taken with you?

AQN: No, we didn't have anything- I mean we had our house, we left that behind. But I didn't have anything valuable.
NC: Can you describe the methods and conditions of the journey?

AQN: Yeah, it was pretty interesting. So we were whisked away from our home to the international airport. Tan Son Nhat airport- and so we were brought- the lady who came and picked us up, picked up another Vietnamese family. And both families were brought to the airport and we were sequestered there. We could no longer leave the airport if we wanted to leave the country. So at that time, because the Viet Cong were closing in, they were surrounding the capital of South Vietnam. So the military- the South Vietnamese military didn't want military people to leave, they wanted them to stay and fight, and so we had to- when we got to the airport, the lady had to use her influence to get us through the checkpoint- to get us in- because we weren't supposed- my father wasn't supposed to leave since he was part of the South Vietnamese military. So we waited there until they found a cargo plane, a C130, which is to transport cargo. So when the time came, they drove a bunch of people like my family to the plane and we sat in the middle of the aircraft where they would hold cargo before, and so I'd be sitting on the suitcase. And because the Viet Congs were so close, the aircraft had to take off- so before the aircraft could start to taxi, the South Vietnamese soldiers would want to board the plane to check IDs to prevent other soldiers from leaving, but the American soldiers would prevent the Vietnamese soldiers from boarding, and I saw that they were actually kicking the Vietnamese soldiers out of the plane, physically with their leg- because the cargo plane had a door in the back and the Vietnamese soldiers would want to get on the plane from the back, so they were actually fighting to prevent them from getting on. So afterwards, the plane had to take off pretty steeply vertical because there were North Vietnamese soldiers very close to the airport and as the plane was taking off, doors on both sides were open and there were soldiers with machine guns
pointing down and getting ready to shoot back if they started firing at us, so that was pretty memorable. So anyways, we flew to the Philippines on the 29th, so that night the country fell. So when we were in the Philippines, we heard that the country had fallen. So we spent one night in the Philippines and then we went to Guam for two weeks I think- and then we went to Camp Pendleton after that for a month or something like that, so we didn't come out until maybe June or July, so it took about two months to come out of Camp Pendleton.

[00:58:17]

NC: Can you describe your experiences at Camp Pendleton?
AQN: Yeah it was pretty nice. We lived in a- we shared a big tent with a bunch of other families. Everyone had a cot, it was thick- tent was made out of thick fabric, it was super cold at night. Some lucky refugees got to live in the tin dome housing, but the rest had tents. I thought the food was pretty good- we had hot dogs and hamburgers all the time, only thing was it was really cold. Yeah, it was pretty fun, we had a lot of people around. There was nothing to do- everyone was waiting for somebody to sponsor us so we could come out- we could leave the camp.

NC: Who greeted you when you first arrived?
AQN: I don't remember anybody greeting us. I think we just landed in Guam, stayed there for a week or two and then continued through Camp Pendleton- I don't think anybody greeted us- yeah I don't remember what happened when we landed.

NC: Did you already know English?
AQN: No, we didn't know any English. I think I did know something like “My name is something”.

NC: How did you and your family learn English and adjust to the new culture?
AQN: So- I started learning English- I didn't learn English, I just started school- seventh grade, I didn't even stay back one class. So we came over the summer, so the next year I went to the next grade level. But I think I took some classes that might be considered to be ESL (English Second Language) at some community college or something. And then also - when we started school-

NC: What changes in lifestyle did you make once you were in the U.S.?

AQN: I guess we didn't have as many friends- in Vietnam, most middle class people have a helper, a lady who comes and does a bunch of manual labor like wash the clothes- because we don't have washing machines- get the coal started, cook the rice. So when we got to America we didn't have that anymore definitely. In Vietnam, I would have friends- we would hang out all the time- they would come and clap really loudly in front of my house and I would run out. That doesn't happen here. In Vietnam I could ride my bike pretty far away and hang out all day long with cousins and friends- so we don't do that here. And also in Vietnam, there was also a lot of cheap street food- we don't have that here.

School- I used to walk to school in Vietnam. But here we had to take the bus- even riding our bike was too far to ride. So a lot of little things- maybe family too, there's less interaction with family in America.

[01:04:10]

NC: What were some of the challenges you experienced starting a new life?

AQN: Challenges- language barrier, that's a big challenge. Also a difference in everything. Kids are so much- they look different, they act different. So we lost pretty much everything- when we came here- so we were pretty poor in the beginning, so that saps a lot of your confidence. So it's very hard to adapt to a new country without the financial security- it's pretty scary that you didn't
have the financial power to back you up if something goes wrong- so it was pretty nerve-racking I think.

NC: What were some of the hopes you had for yourself and/or your family?

AQN: I didn't have big hopes when we first came here. I guess it was just to have security- just to do okay and have financial and physical security. I wasn't- I didn't expect or want a lot more than what we had in Vietnam. It wasn't- I guess I wasn't that ambitious.

Yeah- pretty modest hopes.

NC: Have you ever encountered racism in your neighborhood, in school, or in your workplace?

AQN: Direct and open racism at those three places, no. But I guess when I travel- I have observed racist behaviors from other people toward us. One time I think we hiked out of Zion National Park and we were all dirty and tired from two days of hiking I think sixteen miles or something- we got out of the bus and I heard one guy who was sitting on the bus- so you have to take the bus from where the hike ends to the parking lot. So I heard the one guy say something like "Even here we couldn't get away from them" or something- so the three places that you mentioned, people tried to conceal racism. But when you leave those three environments, I think you see more.

NC: And how do you feel about that?

AQN: I think- I guess it's to be expected. I know that everyone is a racist to some degree- so it's to be expected, but, I think it's something that everyone should be aware that it is wrong and that people should resist whenever they can.

[01:10:22]

NC: Did you expect America to be so racially diverse? How do you think the different groups get along?
AQN: How do I think the difference could get along?

NC: The different groups get along.

AQN: So I think- I guess when I was in- before I came here I didn't think it'd be so diverse. And I think when we arrived- I think it was about as diverse as I expected. So it wasn't diverse in the beginning. But over time I think California has become more diverse, although the rest of America is not even close to be like California in diversity. So I think the groups get along when there is plenty of resource to go around and people are content and people have access to all the resources that they want. But when you- when resources become less plentiful, then there's friction. So I think that in the past, America had a lot of- it was a land of plenty, so having a diverse country helped America because you have all the best people come in and build America quickly. But when you start to have- when resources become tighter, then perhaps the groups start to- there might be some animosity between the groups because the goal now is not to grow quickly but to defend their group to survive. So I think Americans' attitude towards diversity has changed over the last forty years.

[01:13:24]

NC: Do you have a funny or memorable experience of culture shock?

AQN: Let's see- when I first came here, it was rare to find people with black hair. So people would want to come and feel my hair. And I remember one time- I was in maybe seventh grade, and I already ate my lunch. I didn't know how to say I ate, so I kept saying I don't want to eat. And the school principal was walking around and he saw that I didn't have food and he was concerned, so he kept insisting to take me to the cafeteria to get me free lunch- but I didn't want to go because I already ate my sandwich- and I could not express that I already ate, so that was pretty embarrassing. And I think when I came, I was pretty shy, and then once the other kids
found out I was shy, they would pretend to chase me around to try to kiss me so I would run away. It was an innocent time.

[01:15:27]

NC: Do you travel to Vietnam?

AQN: Yes.

NC: What was the purpose, and for how long?

AQN: Just sightseeing. We were there last year for about a week. And twelve years before that, we were there for two weeks. Mostly sightseeing, just to see the scenery and also- see what's happening with the country's development and maybe see the people- see how they live. We would eat the food too.

NC: What do you think of the changes over the years?

AQN: So I think that they are developing slowly- but they are developing, and I think last time I was there, I saw a lot of hope in people and I think that they have the potential to progress quickly, only thing is that they need to deal with the trash situation- but I think it could be an opportunity, not only a burden.

NC: Would you want to move back to Vietnam and live there for the rest of your life?

AQN: No, mostly because I would be far from my immediate family and- I think that's the one dominant reason. If I didn't have family here- I could see myself living there.

[01:18:17]

NC: What changes have you seen in the Vietnamese population in America?

AQN: I think that- I have to say that I'm not a hundred percent sure because I don't interact with Vietnamese outside of my family. But I think that people have shifted away from professional
academic careers to more business oriented careers. There's less of an emphasis on science and
art- more emphasis on the capitalistic pursuits.

NC: What do you think are the differences between the first generation, the 1.5 generation, and
the second/ third generation?

AQN: So 1.5 means people who moved here as a kid?

NC: Yes.

AQN: So I think the first generation is more- I think they become more liberal. The first
generation might be more focused on anti-communist. 1.5 might be- a different emphasis- the 1.5
generation might be more interested in economic security, and the second generation might be
interested in the pursuit of happiness, taking more risks, leaving the fear of communism behind
them. If I had more time maybe I'd have a better answer.

NC: What difficulties do these different generations face in communicating or getting along?

AQN: Definitely. The first generation tends to speak Vietnamese a lot and very little English.
And then progressively- maybe the second generation now start- is now the opposite. So I think
they can never- there's a lack of true communication between the various generations as you- as
the difference increases. So nowadays, you may find some second generation who speak
Vietnamese fluently but that's rare and typically those people do so for some because they want
to be different- they do it to be cool, to be different- but typically people have moved on- there
isn't a strong push to preserve the language.

[01:23:30]

NC: What are the most important things that future generations of Vietnamese Americans should
remember about their heritage or history?
AQN: They should remember that without a country, you may not have the protection that you need in a harsh, competitive world. I don't think that answers your question- can you say that question again?

NC: Yeah. What are the most important things that future generations of Vietnamese Americans should remember about their heritage or history?

AQN: Oh, okay. I think- I have a theory that the reason why Vietnam has seen a lot of turmoil in the past, is because it is sitting on a very piece of highly desirable land. The reason why it is so desirable is because it has a very long coastline that separates Asia from America and Europe. So because it's so valuable, I think a lot of people want it. And so in order to get it, they would cause fighting among the people so that they could get a piece of it. So I think the lesson that people should learn is that they should be careful, that what they believe in, what they want- they're not being manipulated by others who may have an agenda, which is not consistent with their agenda.

That's all.

NC: Okay. That is the end of our interview.

AQN: Okay.

NC: Thank you.

AQN: You're welcome.