Vietnamese American Oral History Project, UC Irvine

Narrator: Tra Van Mai
Interviewer: Tuan Mai
Date: February 20, 2012
Location: Anaheim, California
Sub-Collection: Vietnamese American Experience Winter 2012

Time Log

00:00:30   Tra Van Mai introduces himself, his parents, and his upbringing
00:05:02   He speaks of the local culture and traditions in his hometown
00:06:30   He describes the lack of communication he had with his parents and the lack of knowledge of the history of our surname
00:08:52   He briefly describes the complex stories of how he met my mother
00:10:20   He tells of his experience in the navy during the Vietnam War, especially during 1975
00:16:10   He and other military officials are blindfolded and taken into the jungle by the Viet Cong for reeducation
00:18:00   He describes life surviving in the jungle for over 4 years
00:26:30   He returns home to live as a rice farmer and provides reasons for his escape by boat
00:32:45   The engine on his boat died and the people on his boat was saved by an oil tanker that sent them to a camp in Malaysia
00:34:50   Transition to the Philippines after 5-6 months in Malaysia
00:37:04   Life in Orange County, California
00:41:35   Explains his relative ease of adjusting to life after just arriving to America as well as differences between life here compared to back in Vietnam
00:43:30   Tells of his communication and relationship with his family back home
00:47:50  Story of his hesitation to return home to Communist Vietnam to visit his dying mother
00:49:45  He describes the beginnings and importance of Little Saigon and his participation in the Hi-Tek Protest
00:54:20  He talks about the group meetings he has with his navy friends in Orange County
00:56:21  He voices his wishes for the 2nd generation and future generations of Vietnamese Americans to keep in touch with their roots and especially in the language
00:59:00  He retells the story of his escape by boat in more detail in addition to his view on faith and religion
01:07:20  Speaks of his ease of transition into American society further
01:09:01  Tells of his education in the English language and how it allowed him to adapt well through the process of his transition
01:11:40  Talks of his security position and other leadership positions during his stay in Pulau Bidong refugee camp
01:16:15  Reminisces of memories he and his childhood friends share about the beaches in Vietnam
01:19:00  Authorizes the donation of some of the papers he brought over with him from Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, etc
1:20:03  Concludes with additional advice and opinions for future generations