Vietnamese American Oral History Project, UC Irvine

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AVT: Hi. Today is Sunday February 19th, 2012. This is Allen Tran with the Vietnamese American Oral History Project and I am interviewing my father, Phat Van Tran. At the moment we’re at his business in San Diego, California. And I guess we’ll begin. Can you state your name and how to spell your name?


AVT: So where and when were you born?

PVT: Born Vietnam.

AVT: O dau (where) specifically?

PVT: Cai Be, My Tho, Vietnam.

AVT: Do you know the names of your parent?

PVT: Yeah.

AVT: Can you tell me the names?

PVT: Tran Quach Thi and Tran Dieu.
AVT: Can you describe to me where you grew up? Cai Be, can you describe your hometown.

PVT: Cai Be like a small town. It’s just small province.

AVT: Do you remember your neighbors?

PVT: Yeah, just go to school. Elementary there but after elementary I come to different to city for high school.

AVT: How about you house in Cai Be. Do you remember what it looked like? How big it was?

PVT: We had a three story house. We have two houses. We all do business, my mom, my dad would maintain business. Retail and reselling.

AVT: What did you sell specifically?

PVT: We sell office supplies, building supplies, plumbing and all kinds.

AVT: Do you remember any memories in your childhood that really is something really strong? Something you remember.


AVT: How old were you?

PVT: I was six or seven years old.

AVT: Do you know why? Biet tai sao khong (Do you know why)?
PVT: My dad was because during the war, the Viet Kong put the *chay* (bomb) on the street. And my dad have the sedan car and he have to go to the Saigon and buy stuff and I don’t know. Somehow, he trigger the whole car. He die with some of his friends too.

AVT: Do you remember where you were at the time?

PVT: I was away from Cai Be about two kilometer. I was in elementary school.

AVT: So when you got home --.

PVT: No they tell me not at home cause my dad die.

AVT: Do you remember how you felt?

PVT: That time I was young. I don’t know much. I know it was it something sad. Bad. It’s the kind of memory you never forget.

AVT: After that, how was life, with only one parent.

PVT: Harder. My mom worked so hard. She was young. She was about forty-something. She work so hard. She continue my father business. To carry on and raise five kids. And it was really tough for her. But she make it. She go through all kinds of suffering.

AVT: Did all of your siblings help you out? Did everyone get an education?

PVT: Yeah. She help us. Go through all of us education. Send us to good school.

AVT: What did you do for work when you got home? Did you do homework?

PVT: No but when I was in high school, I was away from home. When I come home, like once or twice a month, then every time I come home I help her.
AVT: Where did you go to school -- high school?

PVT: High school I went to Saigon. High School was catholic school. The school was very harsh. It the Chinese.

AVT: So were you raised Catholic beliefs and all that.

PVT: No no no. They don’t teach you catholic stuff. They just teach you English and Chinese. And Vietnamese.

AVT: How did you get in? Was there a test? You paid?

PVT: Yeah you have to take a test. You pass the test. You get good grade and you go in. Otherwise, you can’t. Tuition is very high too.

AVT: Ane, was she able to get everyone into high school?

PVT: Yeah. Different schools.

AVT: Do you remember your grandparents?


AVT: How did your family get to Vietnam? Was it just Ane?

PVT: I think dad come in first. Along with the family. With relatives. And then I think after he come here, he got married with her in China, then they go to Vietnam.

AVT: Do you know their histories? Like Ane’s? Ata’s?
PVT: Not much. I don’t know.

AVT: You never asked when you were younger?

PVT: I asked. Told me to forget to about that. We were so busy. I think she just so busy. Little time to try to talk.

AVT: Do you remember did anyone else in your family have different occupations? Giong (Like), your brother, or sisters.

PVT: My brother in the Army in Vietnamese Army. He work in the Vietnam supply house. He was a sergeant. And second brother, older one, he in the Air Force. So he in the helicopter. The older sister helping the family, helping Ane, my mom, to help the business. And the other brother, the younger one, which is older than me, that one had to go to Japan and study.

AVT: So he had exposure to Japan before.

PVT: Yeah before 1975. Actually in Taiwan first to study and after that 1975, in 1976 because we had no support, because the communist took over South Vietnam, we don’t have any system to send money out. So he had to go to Japan and study and work.

AVT: But Mom. How did you two meet and marry?

PVT: I knew her brother. Her younger brother was my friend, we go to the same school.

AVT: Which one? Cau (Uncle) …

PVT: Tuong. We knew each other. I come over to his house. And we would an (eat), ruou (drink alcohol), we talk. And since then, I met her then. We talk and after that I marry her.
AVT: Wasn’t it arranged though?

PVT: Not really arranged. I picked it. My choice. She doesn’t know. Then her father is know my mom, in the same province. So they know each other well so they trust the family. So they just tell mom to. Cause I asked for it. And Ane, mom, come down. Then I ask permission to marry her. Since we marry in 1976, December I believe. And we get marry.

AVT: So with children, Kim?

PVT: Kim was born in 1978. In May. Right after two and a half year, we had Kim. And after a few months, I think about three months, in august, we had to get away. We leave the country, Vietnam. We come by the boat together. Because that time it was so much going on and communist just try to steal everything from our family. They try to take everything inventory we had. But at the same time we owed them a lot of things. The communist were doing so much bad thing. We have no choice. Seem like we have nowhere to go. Seem like we got to leave the country to get the better life. To get the freedom.

AVT: Was it scary? Because during that time. Do you remember after April 1975?

PVT: Fighting. Big fight. People just everywhere. I don’t remember much but I see a lot of fighting. A lot of bombing. A lot of shooting. It’s just the way war is.

AVT: Was your hometown?

PVT: No I was in Saigon.

AVT: Was it dangerous to go outside.
PVT: Yeah. It seemed like a few days before that, everybody just completely run everywhere. So just, it sucked. The whole thing.

AVT: How come you didn’t escape then.

PVT: We don’t know where to go yet. So we just stayed where we at. Then I go home, to my hometown.

AVT: Do you remember -- oh if you need to take care of that go take care of that.

PVT: Let’s finish this.

AVT: During this time during 1978, do you remember – who was first to go to America.

PVT: Who? Older brother. Thanh. He in the Air Force. So at that time he would run away. Because they had a lot of access to leave. They had helicopter. They may flew to. And Enterprise, the Navy, big ship. He left the country so he go to Camp Pendleton and that time we were lost communication between the family and Thanh. So 1976, I think, 1977, he send, we receive one of his letter. That he was in safe place, America, and everything be okay. We though he die during the war doing that thing. April 30, 1975, because we lost communicate with him for a long time. After we receive that letter, my mom was very happy. She understand he was in a safe place.

AVT: So after that, how did you end up. What was the system and everything. How did you get to America.

PVT: First we had to escape Vietnam. Become the boat people. At that time we prepare a lot of thing because Kim on three months old. We didn’t have much money at that time, we just leave and get together with people by boat. We just leave and at that time, big storm coming in. And our boat was so small. Like seventeen meter. And then we just go.
And luckily we get to Malaysia. During that time, before we get to Malaysia, our boat actually sank.

AVT: Because of what?

PVT: Because of the rocks at the shore. We so happy to see the shore after 7 days at the ocean.

AVT: Oh. So the boat sunk at Malaysia. Not Vietnam.

PVT: No Malaysia. I think we hit rock or something. We get about hundred meter from the shore. Big waves. And then the boat was sunk. People panic. Jump down. And that time we have like around 100 people or so. Can we stop to take care of business?

<Interruption>

PVT: Yeah and then. We was our boat was sink. A lot of people panic. And Kim was three months old. She was the youngest on the boat. Some two to three year old kids died. I think total about ten to twelve people. I can’t recall.

AVT: Who did you go with again in the boat.

PVT: Just me, and mom, and Kim. That’s it.

AVT: On the way, how long did it take to get to Malaysia?

PVT: I think it was around 1 week.

AVT: How many people died?
PVT: I told you, during the time, people were panicking and the boat was sunk. People were just jumping, don’t care anymore.

AVT: So no one died of sickness?

PVT: No, just drowning. Underneath the boat, no one help. Later, Red Cross people come and help. Give us food and clothing because we had nothing. Bare hands.

AVT: As you were there, how was the life style?

PVT: Then they move us to the refugee camp at Pulau Bidong in Malaysia. I was surprised. We had nothing there. We don’t have any supply from united international commission. Because at the time, we away. We at the island. So very difficult. And during that time, we had no medication. A lot of kid die because we don’t have medication. Die from the water we drink. Cause the water everybody try to get it from digging well. The water so difficult to take. To drink. So people, kid, don’t have much food, then they die. I think die diarrhea mostly.

AVT: Did you get sick?

PVT: I was but maybe I am lucky.

AVT: Did you make any friends at the time? Ban.

PVT: I think that time, we had friends. Just you know, we had to survive to.

AVT: Were they safe or did you know anyone who died, anyone you were close to?

PVT: just people, neighbors you see. Every day you see people day. Especially young kids.
AVT: How did you survive. You just try to live every day?

PVT: And a few month later, they had supply coming in, but still not enough, for us to eat. So we have to. They have small fishing boat from Malaysian people. They coming, they sell coca cola. They sell rice. And you know. With higher price.

AVT: Where did you get the money?

PVT: At that time, I had very little gold. Like one \textit{chi} (gold). Two \textit{chi} (gold). Cost that time, if I exchange with Malaysian money, it was sixty Malaysian money -- dollars. I start from that.

AVT: How long did you survive off that?

PVT: I had to swim through the ocean and buy stuff from the boat. A lot of black market. Because we had no supply. So people want to buy food to whatever.

AVT: How long were you there for?

PVT: Eight months to ten months.

AVT: Eight months you survived off of --.

PVT: That and you know, international united, what you call it. UN?

AVT: So there was no work to do? You just try to survive? No jobs.

PVT: No Jobs. Every day, people coming in. People escape from Vietnam, They put everyone in the camp. And that camp grew like crazy. Every day four -- five – six hundred people. The camp look, now you know. It just packed. Four kilometers. By the
time I leave. I left that camp, fifty thousand people refugee. Can you imagine? Four kilometers? It’s packed! So it was really difficult time we live.

AVT: Was there a lot of crime, rape, fighting?

PVT: No. Fighting maybe. That’s normal.

AVT: But it was pretty safe.

PVT: Not safe, but it was safe. Because we all refugee, we try to help each other if we could.

AVT: Do you remember what the Orderly Departure program was?

PVT: That the program, ODP. They send letter to second brother Thanh because he escape Vietnam in 1975, live in United States San Diego. And then he try to sponsorship for me. He just want to do it.

AVT: Were you among the first of your families to go, because Thanh. Were you the second one to go to America.

PVT: I’m the second one. Thanh, my second brother, I told you he escape 1975. Then he stay camp Pendleton. Then a month or so. Then stay San Diego and start work here. In 1978, he sponsor me, going to the United States.

AVT: After the eight months, did you go on another boat over?

PVT: No we flew. We fly with the American airline.

AVT: Was it really easy after that? Just fly over, documents and --.
PVT: Yeah fly over. Do some documents. Apply for this and that. Then take some English classes. After a few months, I start working. During that time I go to school. I have the certificate for welding. Like the welder. Because that time, I just want to coming in and restart the family, go to work and make the money. Excuse me I busy.

<Interruption>

PVT: Arrived 1978. Then we stay in San Diego. Go to school got certificate as welder. Go to electronic stuff school. Then ten months or so, I start working. I start working different field because I needed job. Few months later mom started working too. Mom got certificate in electronics.

AVT: Where do you get these certificates?

PVT: We go to the community college.

AVT: Was it expensive?

PVT: Free.

AVT: How long did it take to get the degree?

PVT: No it just a certificate to get you going. To get the job.

AVT: So ask them, “Hey I want this certificate.”

PVT: No you have to go to school for it. I think its twelve months program.

AVT: Do you work during that time?
PVT: No that time I don’t work. I don’t have car. I go by bus. Then you have to get the job to buy car for three hundred bucks. Borrow from friends. Fifty dollars here and there. And then you start working. And you save every bit from then.

AVT: In regards to right when you got here in America, did you have contact with Thanh?

PVT: Yeah. We lived together.

AVT: Did he pick you up when you arrived?

PVT: No. USCC. I was in Los Angeles and they cannot contact him. He was somewhere else busy working. Because he moved it was a problem. So then finally, I have his name and then one of the gentlemen be nice, let us stay his house. He look at phonebook and find him and call him. And then get a hold of him.

AVT: Were you a bit nervous when you arrived?

PVT: Of course because everything new to us. It seemed like everything change three hundred sixty degrees. You don’t know what to do. Especially you’re young. We used to live in Vietnam and knew what we were doing and how to get the culture and understand everything. Now we are in different country and different culture. You have to learn. Like beginning, like newborn baby. Have to learn everything.

AVT: When you arrived did you face racism right away?

PVT: Racism? No. I don’t think so. Say to people, we say “Hi” back to them. A lot of culture we did not understand. So we get used to it.

AVT: Were you live with a lot of Vietnamese or a lot of everybody?
PVT: No I live in east San Diego where the poor people stay. I the poorer one, I didn’t have money at that time.

AVT: From then, essentially, where did you work?

PVT: I start the first job at IMED, do the infusion pump for hospital. Then I just start working and since because I have background with the education back home and a lot of English, I do have easy interview. So they pick me. I start assemble. I believe three dollar or two, I don’t remember, three fifty, three twenty five an hour.

AVT: Did you do a lot for leisure? For fun? What did you do between the time you --.

PVT: At that time. My vision and focus was how to survive. Any entertainment, any life, enjoy life -- I don’t have that privilege. Because I just focus on making money. How to survive the family. How to save some money to start and raise the right family. Since this was a new world for me.

AVT: How did your jobs change over time?

PVT: During that time, I still want to be go back to school and get some degree to continue my education because I believe you get better education, you get better job, you get better pay. That’s the only way you survive.

AVT: Was that how it was in Vietnam, the more education, the better job?

PVT: I think so too. Everywhere in the most important, everyone can get job because they want to see the background. They cannot just say, “Hey, my experience.” Experience is one thing. Education is different thing. I believe that during that time, mom and me, we work together same company, but different departments. And by the time we go home, I go to City College to continue my education. And during, I think about three years or so, then I got the Associate Degree to get me promoted to the technician. Better
technician, better pay. Then I wasn’t surprised because I knew exactly what we had to do, what we wanted to, our vision. We wanted to get good family, to raise a good family, to get a better house, and better living. Which is American people always wanted.

AVT: How did you all work when you had two kids?

PVT: By that time, Dat was one. My mom, your grandma, taking care of us.

AVT: How did everyone come over? One by one or?

PVT: No. The first time. No. The first one go to United States, I repeated that, Thanh, my second older brother because he in the Air Force. He been in there 1975. The second one was me. Your mom and Kim, your sister, in 1978. Then I think 1979, early March, I believe February, my mom, my oldest brother, my sister, and nephew, Nhu and Yen. Not nephew. Yes nephew, Chay. And Niece. They coming over. Then we live together.

AVT: Was it your side that came first, then mom’s side?

PVT: Yeah my side first.

AVT: After mom side, she bring everyone.

PVT: Yeah, after mom live five – six year, she apply for US natural citizenship. She pass the test and she get the citizenship. And then she got the citizenship when she apply for the information. Family. Her side. It’s still ODP I believe.

AVT: Before then, did you not feel like a citizen? Like when did you start feeling like a US citizen? Or even now, do you still not feel like a US citizen?

PVT: I feel if I come to this country, I am a member, am a part of the American society. I am American. It still doesn’t matter how long it take. Because you don’t want to live in
Vietnam and you want to be freedom. And United States is the country is freedom in the world. You all can have that fancy one in this world. You work hard, you get better education, you smart, you get better life, better job in this country. Doesn’t matter what you do. If you are the guy in the street, if you have that vision, if you have that gut, and you do it right way, you will make it in this country. Don’t be lazy. That’s the bad part of a lot people. Some people don’t have thinking. I feel bad for them. What can I do?

AVT: So from then, how did you open the business now?

PVT: I work about twenty years, mom work twenty, save up, and only buy a little. And since 1987, after her, my mom side of the family got my grace to United States and then they start working too. They working the somewhere beauty supply up in LA. They work a few years later, I believe four or five years. The owner help them, say “Oh you open business too. I help you.” Then he help, Uncle Thanh, and then after Thanh, say, “Hey.” That time mom stay home. Only me working. Cause raise you also. So Cau Thanh say, “You live at home, why don’t you do a little business? Start a beauty supply. Supply a name for you. Drive around. Or whatever.” We just start from then. He just bring a lot of stuff in. Maybe three -- four thousand. In 1992, we just do it from then. We just start doing it. And then do about since 1996. Seem like we do alright, not okay, but during that time I still working back and forth. And we just start a business, and it got better. After business better, I quit the job.

AVT: In your early years, when immigrating here, did you miss Vietnam at all or not really?

PVT: Yeah I miss I Vietnam. I was born there, a lot of friends, I have some relative. Most of them here but I still feel like Vietnam. Cause you leave the country, and you grow up there, and you see a lot of memory there. But, I still not really think -- I miss it. Maybe at first. But now I get used to it. I was come back few times, that’s all I do.

AVT: When you came, was it hard to adjust? Did you miss the food, culture, everything?
PVT: It really tough cause you miss a lot of thing. You have to adopt a new culture. Adopt a lot of thing. Which is people, because you know, people don’t like a lot of change in their life. But sometimes you have to take that. Doesn’t matter how it take, but you have to. That’s life. Anyone can adopt it.

AVT: You know Little Saigon?

PVT: In Santa Ana.

AVT: Do you want to visit it? Do you even visit it?

PVT: Yeah I visit it. They have a lot of food. I think it good for community, Vietnamese community because it kind of culture too. Maintain the culture. I believe maybe my first generation as immigrants and your generation maybe completely wipe out. A lot of Vietnamese American don’t speak Vietnamese anymore. I think that’s a bad thing too cause each culture have a good thing of them. Vietnam different culture. And see different culture. And make the United States better country.

AVT: Did you feel it’s important to be American right away?

PVT: No I can’t. I have to live here and do my best. I don’t understand most culture. I told you, I just adapt little by little. Until you know, you get used to it.

AVT: You watch Paris by Night right? A lot?

PVT: Whatever. Whenever I have the chance.

AVT: Do you feel like it’s a strong representation of Vietnamese culture?
PVT: I think so. It’s good to make young kid, second generation Vietnamese understand the culture, and the music, and I think it part of Vietnamese social life. I think it will be helpful to second generation.

AVT: Did you ever notice the change? How before it was like it became American? How it became a mix of Vietnamese and American together? And now it’s trying to go back to our roots and preserving Vietnamese culture.

PVT: I don’t think I see that. Because you still in United States. Doesn’t matter what you learn American culture at school. You have to learn. You see people. Different culture. Different everywhere. You still have to. I don’t think go back to the root of Vietnamese. I don think that happen. I just think that it harder to remember. I think it the culture let the second generation Vietnamese see what is you first generation. Now this day they have video, CD, DVD, everything, music, internet. So I think it’s very helpful for the second generation so they know exactly what the first generation coming here, what form, what the purpose here, why they came out of Vietnam, because of communist and all that stuff. So I think they can appreciate what the first generations have done to the second generation. If I don’t do success or do better my life now, I don’t think my kid be better life. That’s my feeling. That’s why I work seven days a week. Doesn’t matter, at night, if I have chance to make money, I do it. In the right way. So my kids should go to better school, better education. And make their life easy when they you know go to the real world. To see the world.

AVT: Is there any family back in Vietnam at all? Anyone left?

PVT: No.

AVT: Do you have anything? Do you remember if you were given anything? You know heirlooms? Did your parent ever give you things? Important items that have a lot of memory.
PVT: I lost everything. I don’t know. Nothing. Because we have a watch. My mom give it to me. But, when I in the refugee camp. I have to sell it. I have nothing to eat. What can you do? I know memory, nothing can buy but. When you have no food you cant survive. You have to sell it. Sell it. Then go buy food.

AVT: What other sacrifice did you have to make in order to survive? To immigrate over.

PVT: Now I understand what is real worth now. Seems when I was a student in Vietnam, I don’t know much. Because I don’t make any many. I don’t know what real worth is all about. But when you go to refugee camp, you live by myself, I have no support. We have to work. To make our family survive. It very tough. And I have no experience for that. That’s why I have to do anything I can. So I understand, very important, if you cannot make it, making money to raise your family, you can’t survive in this world.

AVT: Do you remember any songs, images or anything of Vietnam? is there something you associate with Vietnam? Something that triggers memories for you.

PVT: No. I just remember. My father died and buried there. Visit when I have chance. To go back to Vietnam.

AVT: Do you have any favorite songs that remind you of Vietnam at all? Do you have anything that makes you feel nostalgic?

PVT: Not really. I think its because I was so busy when I come here. Work work wrok. No time to think about that. Sometime we sing some song I like. There’s my song too. There’s no particular song I like best, the most. I don’t have time and all that.

AVT: Do you remember when you did your band?

PVT: I don’t do band. It just fun take all stress from your body.
AVT: What year did you start it?

PVT: Just a few friends. I think 1992? 1990, 1987? Maybe 1989. That just a few year, then I stop. We only play during weekend. For only Saturday for wedding, parties, and like that.

AVT: Did you have music background from Vietnam? Did you study music in Vietnam?

PVT: I study some music in Vietnam?

AVT: What did you play?

PVT: I play drum, guitar, keyboard.

AVT: Did you own it or study it?

PVT: I study.

AVT: But you didn’t have it.

PVT: I have some guitar from home.

AVT: Would you say your family was well off?

PVT: Yeah well off.

AVT: Would you say your life style in Vietnam was really privileged? Did you feel like it helped a lot to survive the refugee process? Or not really and you just had to figure out everything on your own.
PVT: Like I told you, when I in Vietnam, I had nothing to worry about financially. Because the family help me. When I go to the refugee camp, I had to figure out day by day, to be survive. When you think about surviving or the word “surviving.” Doesn’t matter, whatever job you got to do, you do it, in the right way. So you just work. Whatever you can do it. Whatever you have to do. That’s it. So live day by day.

AVT: In regards to our generation, Kim, Dat, con -- how come, compared to me, how come I wasn’t made Vietnamese?

PVT: Because when you start a business, you have more busy. We didn’t have time to teach you all that. Come home first in the morning, eight o’ clock leaving, at home, open the business. Then eight at night go home, have dinner, then no time to teach you all that. Sometime we feel very bad. It’s like I told you. We need to raise the family better. We work harder. Sometimes we miss that. Sometimes it our fault. You don’t know. We just thinking one way. The vision we see, “making money, making money.” Sometimes we think not worth it. Now you learn Vietnamese so not much change. If you really want to learn something you can. But if you don’t want to learn it, nothing you can learn about.

AVT: Do you feel where you are right now, how you came out, how you survived and everything?


AVT: Would you say your quite proud? Would you say you are successful?

PVT: I can’t say I’m really successful. But I think I make it through this world. I feel like I achieve that thing I want to. Family and now you are the last child I send to the college and I proud of that. But I think I achieve what is my thinking, my vision. My life okay. Just okay.

AVT: Do you have any more memories, from 1980 to now?
PVT: Yeah I do. I thinking back when I finish through the United States. Everything new to you. Everything is tougher than you. But I think I better than before. I feel better, I feel good for myself. Because I make it this world. But I am very sacrifice what I have now. Just enough to raise the kid, go to college, get the good degree. Like Kim, got master. Dat, second child, get master degree. You should done better too. That’s all my hope in my life, in my life, which is, I want you guys to get the best education that you can. Otherwise, money is not worth anything.

AVT: After you lived in east San Diego, you had to move to Mira Mesa, do you remember the process? Buying the house and knowing where to go and all that.

PVT: I looking for better place for children go to better school. I am not saying east San Diego is bad, it just, when they have level of living, I think it can be better, different school better too, to help their kid who complete school. And I think that very important. If you just stay in the place where education is not that well, your kid will not learn anything. And when they go to college, they can't get job with other people. SO that’s why we moved from east San Diego, I save the money, and at that time it was easy. You just have five percent down or ten percent down, whatever. I buy with older brother. We share with oldest brother, Thanh. Hanh Tran. Ba cua Nhu. And Yen. And then

AVT: Is it this the one at Aderman? Or the one next to Aderman?

PVT: That’s after. Then we stay together. Then few year, we save a little bit up, and then I buy house. I stay at the old house.

AVT: By then you were in America for how long?

PVT: Ten years or so.

AVT: So you saved enough for a house by then. Was it exciting?
PVT: Yes. That’s a big time. I can’t afford to buy myself so I have to share with my brother. I think any investment in real estate, it’s the best.

AVT: Did you understand that at that time?

PVT: I understand. I kind of have that feeling too because population. Make more houses, doesn’t matter what people live. Then they grow up, then they older. They have to get married, and rent a place, get the place. Doesn’t matter where in the world they still need a home.

AVT: Do you remember any important people in the process? Really important people that without them, you wouldn’t have gotten here to where you are right now. Without them you wouldn’t know how to do something, certain job, or item.

PVT: I think it important to organize USCC. I think the Catholic, helping the refugee, the UN, United States, and United International -- something I forgot. Helping us during that time. Gave us come over here. The government of the United States helping me. Because during that time we have no money. Have to get Medicare, have to get welfare, start somewhere. And then we just start. Those are the memories. That’s why now I pay tax to help other people. I think it’s a fair game. I think it’s good to help society get better. Instead of nobody helping other people to bring other people up. And if they can do better in their life, I think that’s more fair like that. And I appreciate they culture, helping me doing. I have difficult time in United States and now I getting better. I think it should be appreciate that so much. Deeply from my heart, I always think American people are the best in the world.

AVT: Did you have a hard time communicating? Translators?

PVT: A little bit difficult. I have a lot of accent. Because when you learn it in Vietnam school, different here. Because the way we talk different. We can change that. It not big
deal because English is English. If you really wanna learn, if you wanna get better, you learn to get better. I believe everything you can do, especially learning, is not that hard. It’s just up to your heart. Do you really want to? Or care about it?


PVT: It’s mixed. If I think and talk to myself. If my friend talk to me, if American talk to me, I think English.

AVT: Do you vote in US election?

PVT: That I didn’t do. I think it’s just no excuse. I should vote.

AVT: Do you vote now?

PVT: I should. This year, I don’t know. Sometime if I vote wrong. My vote is just important to the other people. But if I voting wrong, because I don’t understand much politician, and I hate politics. So I don’t want to get involved.

AVT: Raising children, in America. Would you say you raised them as Americans or Vietnamese?

PVT: I raise them, mom raise you guys as the Vietnamese culture. Because any culture have the good thing and bad thing. Doesn’t matter how you seen it. But first because you are Vietnamese, you are suppose to learn the culture Vietnamese first. Anything else right? If in this country, we don’t raise you the way it is, then maybe something change. Get closer with the family, which is we do. Make you work harder. Which is for me an example. And you see how hard I work so I try show you that. I work hard because I want you to get better life. And that’s the Vietnamese culture out. They care their children and anything else. Because I am making money for children. If I don’t work hard, my children don’t get better life. I have to thinking work hard every day. That’s
why we send you to good school, to get better life. So you don’t have to be suffering like me and mom. In the way we come here with bare hand. We work so hard. Anything you can do to get better. So tough. Not that easy like you think. So I want you to learn all that culture. And tell you how hard it is to working. So you go see better life for yourself. And you experience for yourself.

AVT: Did you find any difficulties in the difference in culture between Kim and Dat and how you wanted to raise them? Like their ideals as American born Vietnamese and your ideals as immigrated Vietnamese?

PVT: I see them now, when they grow up. They adopt two thing. Vietnamese culture some, but mostly American culture. They still adopt Vietnamese culture, that’s good. At least they can speak Vietnamese and also I feel it’s good. They can speak both languages.

AVT: Do you ever want to go back to Vietnam?

PVT: To live?

AVT: Both. Visit and live.

PVT: If I have time. But I don’t know about. The thing about Vietnamese government, they still don’t have human rights. So any of the Vietnamese people. So I think I feel sad for the people of Vietnam and the communist government that doesn’t know how to help them.

AVT: Whenever you wanna visit -- do you really want to?

PVT: If I have to, I go. But I don’t have time.

AVT: Do you feel Little Saigon --?
PVT: Little Saigon like here. If I time I go.

AVT: Does it remind you of home?

PVT: Not really. Just feel like, everything is there. Easy to access. The thing is good thing for Vietnamese.

AVT: Do you have anything else you want to share?

PVT: No. I think. Doesn’t matter what world. You work hard. Get to do the best. For yourself. Get better education. You will survive. IF you do bad thing, it going to be difficult for you to live also. So I don’t know. DO your best. Don’t be lazy. That’s it. Lazy get you going nowhere. Think you get worse. And your life, it doesn’t go nowhere. Low self-esteem too. Okay. That’s be all.

AVT: Thank you.