Vietnamese American Oral History Project, UC Irvine

Narrator: PHAT VAN TRAN
Interviewer: Allen Vinh Tran
Date: February 19, 2012.
Location: San Diego, CA
Sub-Collection: Vietnamese American Experience Winter 2012
Length of Interview: 00:85:20

Field Notes

The interview was conducted in the comfort of Phat Tran’s business, Phat’s Beauty Supply, located in San Diego, California. We sat in the back of the store, surrounded by towering boxes of supplies for local nail salons. My father laid down on two adjacent black leather chairs as I sat next to him on a box of nail files. Throughout the whole interview, it is apparent in his impatience to just go through the interview; however, he was thorough enough to provide answers that contain depth.

Phat Tran wore his every day work clothes. Typically wearing some shirt, cotton jacket, slacks, and sandals, today’s combination was a green shirt with knitted texture, a blue cotton jacket, khaki slacks, and brown worn out sandals. His eyes were red from lack of sleep therefore he rested on the makeshift mattress as we performed the interview.

Initially, it was a bit awkward. Short fragments of answers were returned as I said rehearsed questions that didn’t trigger anything exciting. However, as we slowly delved through his memory, my father began to ease up, and told stories with the fluidity he has when he speaks jovially with his friends.

The interview has a lot of broken English, however, this is the language I grew up with, thus I was able to understand the entire interview, minus a few words that he made up. The interview also had various interruptions, since we were at his business, whenever he was to be called upon, he had to answer to it right away. Phat Tran did not want to conduct the interview anywhere else since that day he just got an invitation to hang out with his buddies. Since he was so adamant at conducting at the store, we did so.

The evolution of the interview is fascinating as I never expected him to be so clever to weave motivational words to remind me of my goals and the likes. Though throughout my childhood he never really pushed me, he is trying to make that up now, while he has the chance. It is apparent in his idea that education is everything, and his preaching was extremely appropriate for me as a college student.
As the interview concluded, my father bounced from the chair and happily walked away while leaving some departing words.