Vietnamese American Oral History Project, UC Irvine

Narrator: NGUYEN, CAO HIEP

Interviewer: Shaun Gutierrez

Date: March 7, 2012

Location: Santa Ana, California

Sub-collection: Vietnamese American Experience Winter 2012

Length of Interview: 01:16:14

00:00:22 Introduction, name age, and birthplace

00:00:46 Childhood experiences, memories, siblings

00:01:33 living arrangements, family compound

00:01:54 recalls music, and arts in the family and its centrality

00:02:46 Explains his birth order

00:03:38 talks about his relationship with his twin brother

00:04:03 revisits importance of art in the family

00:04:36 talked about parents fostering his musical abilities

00:05:00 anecdote about his father and his bike rides

00:05:58 Cultural traditions songs, art

00:07:30 revels in Anti-war songs, and Trinh Kong Son

00:08:35 talks about the family café while working there

00:09:01 school, and education

00:09:31 talked about his denial from the University due to political background of his father

00:10:28 decided to travel around the country to develop his art
00:11:57 reconciliation of his period out of school
00:12:27 explain his feelings about his teachers
00:13:06 memories about growing in his family, primarily discussed his mother
00:13:40 Mahjong, and family gatherings
00:14:20 talked about anecdotes about his father’s jeep
00:15:04 expressed slight displeasure at going to church
00:15:22 talked about his father’s popularity
00:16:12 Expressed his usage of Vietnamese and the appropriate times to use it
00:17:00 recounts the story of how his parents met.
00:18:18 remembers the story about how he and his wife met
00:19:06 talked about his familial values, and traditions
00:20:36 discussed the importance of respect for those who passed
00:21:44 talked about religion in the family and the dynamics in past and in the present
00:23:19 war time experiences, how it affect his community
00:23:50 father was in a concentration camp
00:25:50 discussed his dad is presence in his life
00:27:22 how he maintained his relationship with his father
00:27:55 expressed his displeasure and disillusionment with ever seeing his father again
00:28:43 discussed where he lived during the war
00:30:15 recounts family’s class and differences between pre and post war town
00:32:02 talk about artillery shells falling from the sky
00:33:40 Changing of livelihood, travelling to visit his father in the prison
00:35:35: discussed his inability to go to school
00:36:10 reasons for coming the United States, and method of transport
00:39:05 Discuss the food that he ate at the camp
00:40:39 family sponsorship by his father
00:41:04 First impressions of the United States
00:42:34 discussed his many, many relocations
00:42:53 talked about how he learned English by watching movies
00:44:30 talked about how work caused isolation
00:45:11 talked about how language was a big battle
00:46:01 recounted his detachment with people due to inability for communication
00:47:09 talked about completing his higher education
00:47:52 Explained indirect racism, and how it affected it him
00:49:45 identifies himself as an Vietnamese Americans
00:50:20 talked about a sweat lodge (anecdote)
00:51:32 process of naturalization, citizenship test, and his participation in voting
00:52:42 maintaining his family and artist friends back in Vietnam
00:53:16 recounting going back home to Vietnam, and how he felt out of place.
00:55:26 explains that going for something bigger and better allowed him to feel better
00:56:25 talked about effort of cultural preservation
00:57:41 He expressed his sentiments for little Saigon and ideas of art promotion
00:58:15 Discussed a plan to create an exchange of art between Vietnamese Americans and Vietnamese
00:59:18 recounts his decision to come back to doing art, doing exhibitions, VAALA
01:00:19 talked how there is a home outside Vietnam in the United States.
01:02:04 explains that art help him bridge the gap for his communications skills, and enabled him to survive

01:03:54 Discussed the circle painting project, and his inspirations its beginnings

01:06:36 in-depth explanation of circle painting, discussed breathing exercises and etc.

01:07:57 he believes that everything is interconnected

01:08:34 He talked about the scope of circle painting

01:10:21 He talked about his goals for this project, and his desire for it’s expansion