Vietnamese American Oral History Project, UC Irvine

Narrator: DUC TRI PHAM
Interviewer: Michelle Le Pham
Date: February 25, 2012
Location: Stanton, CA
Sub-Collection: Vietnamese American Experience Winter 2012

FIELD NOTES

The interview was conducted at our home in the living room. Individuals present were the narrator, Duc Tri Pham, and the interviewer, Michelle Le Pham. We began by signing all the consent and release forms. The narrator seemed surprised as to how much paperwork was necessary for the project.

My father sat across the table from me dressed in a grey polo, sweatpants, and sandals. Beside him was a mug of beer in which he took occasional sips during the interview. I assume that because I’m his daughter, he was comfortable enough to present himself in such a manner.

During the first few minutes of the interview he seemed very tense. He began with his back pressed against the chair, fingers interlaced and ankles crossed. His gaze was directed towards his left as if looking into some window into the past. Most of his answers were very short without much elaboration. As the entire interview drew longer his posture slowly became hunched over with his forearms resting on his knees, it seemed like he was trying to engage me and the future listeners.

We had a total of six breaks, roughly every fifteen minutes at his request. By the third break, my father went into his room to change into a sweatshirt. As we continued the interview his answers became longer and more elaborated. I took it as a sign that he is becoming more comfortable.

I noticed that the way in which he approaches the questions gradually changed as the interview wore on. Before his answers were very one dimensional adhering strictly to what I asked without any extra input. Then his answers became more detailed, by the end he was interjecting his personal opinions along with the answers. When he began explaining his ephemera and old family photos he became really excited to the point in which I couldn’t keep up and had to slow him down.

What made me very pleased was after the sixth and final break he went outside into the patio to have a smoke and came back about five minutes later telling me that he wanted to make a final statement. When he was making his last statement, based on his body language and flow, I suspect that it was something he had been rehearsing a few weeks prior.