Vietnamese American Oral History Project, UC Irvine

Narrator: CHRISTOPHER PHAN
Interviewer: Andrew Lu
Date: May 14, 2012
Location: Garden Grove, California
Sub-collection: Linda Vo Class Oral Histories, 2012
Length of Interview: 01:15:36

Time Log

00:00:11  Christopher Phan introduces himself, his birthdate, and his place of birth.
00:00:27  He introduces his parents, discussing their names and their ten year separation.
00:01:05  Phan talks about his mother and how she raised him alone until ten years after when he was reunited with his father.
00:02:31  He describes his hometown, his house, the pond, and living conditions.
00:05:24  He had childhood memories of collecting crickets, being mischievous, and pranks.
00:08:40  Phan describes his first experience in the United States.
00:09:45  His family celebrated Tet, Buddha’s birthday, and adopted many American traditions as well.
00:10:40  Phan really misses the Durian Fruit.
00:12:09  He misses the simplicity of life and discusses how electricity has shaped his life.
00:13:40  Helps mother along with Grandmother raising peppers, feeding the rabbit and the chickens.
Farming is the industry of Vinh Long.

Wonderful neighbors would cook him hu tieu, a noodle soup with pig tails.

Fishing with neighbors and family in the pond was fun. These fish were raised to be consumed.

Phan begins working at fourteen as a library page until his current job running for Garden Grove City council.

Phan’s inspiration for City Council has begun at an early age. He describes military service as putting your life on the line.

Begins speaking about how he and his family was effected by the war and how he felt at the time.

He has always lives on the bare minimum. Like a Spartan so to say. Living this way has helped shape his life.

Punishment was quite painful, he would have to kneel on a jackfruit, deal with spankings.

His experiences leaving for the United States and the challenges he faced.

Phan’s thoughts on United States policy. The United States should have continued fighting.

He feels bless his father had been picked up by an American ship, giving him the opportunity to stay in the United States.
He didn’t have a choice about leaving Vietnam, but it was through his father and mother’s desire to reunite that they left. He also speaks about the consequences of if he were to stay.

He discusses his father’s occupations and how his father escaped.

He tells of his sponsorship trip over to the Americans via flight.

Not being the same color, and the lack of language created a stereotype in which Phan was picked on as a child.

Racism isn’t as apparent as your grow older. Phan began fighting racism with intellect.

Phan talks about his education in Indiana, his law degree, his experience in the Navy and on active duty.

Phan declares himself as Vietnamese American and discusses the intricacies of what a Vietnamese American really is.

After returning to Vietnam, he discovers corruption and a larger disparity between the rich and the poor in Vietnam.

He discusses the cleanliness, the cultural differences between the Americas and Vietnam.

Little Saigon is Phan’s backyard. He discusses growing up with Little Saigon so close.

Phan’s involvement in the Vietnamese community stems as far as from the Vietnamese American Armed Forces Association to offering a wide variety of services to indigent refugees.
The importance of maintaining language and tradition and discipline and passing it along to the next generation is very important to Phan.

The connection between Phan and religion and his parents and religion

Phan discusses his current relationship between his parents and the generational disconnect between them.

Phan is quite popular, he has two phones at almost all times.

Phan discusses his busy schedule.

Phan has always been involved with the Vietnamese community.

Phan’s views on race.

His mother and father were both educated. Phan discusses his mother’s and father’s job history.

If Chris Phan does not win the election, what are his second plans?

Phan’s concluding words.