Vietnamese American Oral History Project, UC Irvine

Narrator: HUY BUI
Interviewer: Khang Nguyen
Date: November 13, 2012
Location: Midway City, California
Sub-collection: Vietnamese American Experience Course, Fall 2012
Length of Interview: 01:10:25

Time Log

0:00:25  Huy Bui discusses his demographic background i.e. where he was born, which city he resided in.

0:01:00  Huy Bui describes his hometown of Saigon and how the lifestyle was in the city.

0:02:32  Talks about his family’s social standing in Saigon.

0:02:43  Huy Bui talks about his early childhood. He talks about his youth and the times he was a troublemaker and a “jerk.” He talks about his schooling and what he loved to do on his spare time while in Vietnam.

0:03:35  The beautiful scenery he has missed of Vietnam. He reminisces about the days when he traveled the countryside to see the scenery.

0:03:49  Explains that the city had only manufacturing companies and no factories within the city.

0:04:17  Talks about his home in Saigon was close to other homes and that there were a lot of neighbors to communicate with.

00:04:27  Explains why living next to a cemetery is fun.

00:05:03  Explains what happened during Tet and how he celebrated it in Vietnam with his family. Explains the traditions that he and his family held during this festive time.

00:06:30  Talks about Tet being fun, only up to 1975.
00:06:42 Talks about his schooling days in Vietnam. Explains the mischievous things that he did at school and to his classmates.

00:09:53 Talks about his parents and their occupations. Talks about how they raised him and his siblings.

00:10:20 He models after how his parents raised him to raise his own children.

00:10:27 Talks about his family history. How his parents got together and their background before marriage.

00:11:35 Talks about his older step-brothers who came from the North and were split during the Vietnam War. His father left for South Vietnam and was wanted for betraying the North.

00:12:02 Talks about his travels to North Vietnam during his time in Vietnam. Talks about his travel to North Vietnam was due to being a troubling child and his parents sent him to his uncle for discipline.

00:13:01 Talks about his experiences on the train for the first time and what he saw in North Vietnam; with the culture and environment being very poor.

00:14:45 Explains his family who were in the army and were split in both the communist and South Vietnamese army.

00:15:21 Talks about his parent’s education level and why it was a social norm for women to stop attending school early.

00:16:14 Explains why his father married again in South Vietnam to his mother, even though he had another wife in the North.

00:16:31 Talks about his own family, his wife and how they came to meet each other. Glimpses over the fond memories with her over the years.
00:17:09  Talks about his children and what they do.

00:17:37  Explains to he tells his children that they are lucky to be in America. Talks about children in Vietnam not having a future and over here they have that chance.

00:18:05  Explains that his family has a motto that they all live by.

00:19:56  Talks about the family traditions that he and his family partake in.

00:20:20  Talks about how he and his family help out the Tet festival and how they try to immerse the youth in the Vietnamese tradition they are trying to keep alive.

00:21:04  Talks about another tradition with him and his family from Bui where they meet up in the United States to reunite with the family.

00:21:56  Explains that he has an alter for his ancestors and that they don’t worship the dead, they give them thanks for all they have done for them.

00:23:08  He talks about his religion and how he views his religion with his family.

00:24:50  He talks about traditions that he has within his family.

00:24:59  Talks about having photo possessions, home movies and collecting Vietnamese money.

00:25:54  Explains how the Vietnam War affected his family.

00:27:08  Explains that the only warfare that he heard or seen was during the Tet Offensive, which occurred in his city.

00:27:53  Talks about the memories of seeing and hearing that his relatives get killed and injured from the war. He sees that people in his neighborhood that get killed and hurt also.

00:28:50  Talks about his uncle that was captured and put in reeducation camps and the effects of being in such an environment effected his life during that period.

00:30:51  Talks about the days of the war ending and how it affected his family and his life.
00:31:14  Talks about when he came to the United States. Talks in disgust about living with the communist for three years. Talks about how life was like during the communist regime.

00:33:37  Talks about his family living in fear under the communist regime. Explains lives cannot be rebuilt after the war, but must be lived on.

00:34:45  Talks about his experience of leaving his homeland. Explains how and why he left for Vietnam, alone on a boat.

00:35:44  Explains that U.S. intervention was good and key to helping South Vietnamese get out of communist rule when Vietnam fell to communist. Explains why Vietnam fell and why Vietnam couldn’t support itself to fight the communist themselves.

00:37:40  Explains how he and his aunt, uncle and cousin snuck out of Vietnam and how they find out how to successfully.

00:38:33  Talks about his experience on the boat and how it felt to be on a small boat with so many people.

00:39:37  Talks about how lucky their boat was and had no one die on the boat trip to Malaysia, where he stayed for 5 months before getting sponsored by his grandparents to come to the United States.

00:40:46  Talks about life in Malaysia with his relatives that came with him.

00:42:06  Talks about his first impressions of the United States upon coming over via sponsorship. Talks about the vast differences of being in Vietnam and then coming to a highly technological society of the United States.

00:42:32  Explains his life in Illinois and going to high school there. Explains why it took him five years to graduate high school.
Talks about his life after high school and his life when joining the marine corp.

Explains how he got to California and how much he loved it here.

Talks about why he decided to join the military.

Explains why he and his grandparents did not get any welfare money from immigrating over from Vietnam due to the immediate request for getting a job by the government. Explains how proud his family is of that.

Explains the many challenges that he faced when he first came to America, most importantly learning the English language. Talks about how helpful his peers in school were in helping him transition to life in America. Explains that the area that he lived in were mostly immigrants so racism was not common between him and the Germans.

Talks about where he lived during his arrival to the United States.

Talks about how long he was with the military and explains his life in the military.

Talks about life after the military and going back to school and obtaining a job that he has to this day.

Explains his job that he has and how much he loves it.

Explains the differences between the communities in Vietnam and the United States.

Talks about his only encounter with racism in the United States.

Identifies himself as a proud Vietnamese American.

Looks on learning English as “talking in a silent language.”

Talks about becoming a U.S. citizen after being in the military and voting every year.

His family is all in Vietnam due to his sponsorship of his family.

Explains why he cannot go back to Vietnam yet due to his anti-communist label that the government knows him by.
00:54:48 Explains why he hates communist so much and why he wants change and support the fellow activists that are in Vietnam.

00:55:53 Explains what an activist does and how they express their discontent to the communist government.

00:57:00 Talks about songs and images that makes him remember Vietnam.

00:57:48 Talks about the lasting image of Vietnam being his mother’s eyes when she let him escape from Vietnam.

00:58:19 Talks about the Vietnamese traditions and customs that he tries to preserve in his family.

00:58:41 Talks about new Americanized traditions that he has taken in as family traditions.

00:59:02 Explains the changes in tradition that his family has while in the United States.

00:59:43 Talks about the Vietnamese culture in American and how strong it has become.

01:00:38 Talks about wanting the youth to preserve tradition. Explains that he tried to teach his children Vietnamese but they respond in English although they know how to speak it.

01:01:00 Explains the changes in the Vietnamese community due to more youth participating in the anti communist movement.

01:01:54 Talks about other groups that he is involved with outside of the activist party.

01:02:31 Talks about how Little Saigon has changed and his opinions of it. Also explains how much Little Saigon reminds him of Vietnam.

01:03:15 Speaks out to the youth to know why and how they got to the United States and try to help the youth in Vietnam who have no future. Wishes the youth to help the Vietnamese government change the way they govern Vietnam.

01:05:03 Explains the ways his family are all activists.
01:05:30 Shares some memories that he would like the audience to hear.

01:10:26 End of interview.