Vietnamese American Oral History Project, UC Irvine

Narrator: ALEX THAI NGUYEN
Interviewer: SAMANTHA ERICA TAKAHASHI
Date: February 10, 2013
Location: Westminster, California
Sub-collection: Linda Vo Class Oral Histories, 2013
Length of Interview: 01:19:24

Time Log

00:00:22 Alex Thai Nguyen states and spells his name.
00:00:33 States when and where he was born.
00:00:48 States and spells his parents' names.
00:01:30 Speaks about his father in minimal detail (occupation in Vietnam)
00:02:44 Talks about his mother (life in America and occupation in Vietnam)
00:03:45 Discusses the location and characteristics of his home town, Bien Hoa.
00:05:29 Talks about making his own tailless kites during his childhood and how he eventually persevered and created a tailless kite that successfully flew
00:09:12 Discusses a memory in which he witnessed a fight between two women who sold chickens in the marketplace
00:11:04 Speaks about his siblings and life living with his 7 siblings and his mom
00:11:53 Talks about how his family moved from Bien Hoa to Saigon and on the last day of the Fall of Saigon, his brother and himself went inside of a military station and got kicked out, and while climbing and jumping the gate, he recalls the physical pain he endured
00:12:15 Describes the dynamics between his older brothers and himself (during his childhood)
00:15:23 Talks about what he remembered the most about the time period of the Vietnam War, including the instance in which his family and himself had to shelter themselves in a bunker in their home (during a Communist bombing) and the bunker was filled with rain water
00:18:17 Discusses how the Vietnam War divided his family, separating his family (in America) and the rest of the family (in Vietnam)

00:19:39 Speaks about how not having his father in Vietnam affected his family

00:20:23 Discusses about how not having his father in Vietnam, specifically, affected him and eventually led to him quitting school at 8th grade

00:21:55 Talks about how his father sponsored the family to migrate to America and how his father sent remittances to his family in Vietnam

00:23:21 Discusses the journey from Vietnam to Thailand to Hong Kong and finally to the United States

00:24:25 Speaks about his father's passing that had occurred during his family's journey from Vietnam to America

00:25:17 Talks about his father's passing affected himself and the rest of his family

00:27:13 Describes what life might have been like for him if he hadn't come to America

00:28:15 Discusses his initial thoughts about America and feelings of culture shock after coming to America

00:29:58 Talks about his high school education in the United States

00:30:21 Speaks about his community college experience and how his love for music started to blossom

00:30:55 Talks about how he quit community college and worked numerous jobs in order to support himself

00:31:32 Discusses how he went back to community college

00:33:21 Discusses receiving his bachelor's degree in Cognitive Science at UC Berkeley
00:34:36 Talks about how he realized that he wanted to pursue a career that would allow him to work with children and led to him contemplating becoming a pediatrician, but he ultimately received that medicine was not for him

00:36:34 Speaks about how he started teaching piano to his niece and further discusses how he switched the method he used to teach piano

00:38:44 Discusses the reasons as to why he is a business-owner, not an employee of a company

00:39:31 Talks about the beginnings of his entrepreneurship during his childhood buying firecrackers wholesale and reselling the firecrackers to kids in his hometown

00:40:41 Speaks about how he has not been back to Vietnam and that all of his family and relatives are currently living in America

00:41:27 Discusses what he sees in the future for his piano school

00:42:57 Talks about racial discrimination that he has experienced in America

00:44:20 Speaks about his love for Vietnamese food and how he frequents Little Saigon for Vietnamese food

00:45:10 Talks about how his mother never taught him how to cook Vietnamese food

00:46:05 Talks about the song "Hay be tho oi" and how that song reminds him of the Vietnamese War

00:47:22 Hums and sings "Hay be tho oi"

00:48:33 Speaks about how his family celebrates Tet in Vietnam

00:49:19 Discusses the traditions and customs associated with Tet

00:51:14 Talks about his love for firecrackers and lighting firecrackers in celebration of Tet

00:51:38 Speaks about how his family celebrates Tet in America
00:52:27 Talks about how his pregnant mother visited a fortune teller told her that the baby in her womb would become a famous person one day
00:53:36 Talks about how his family first settled in Westminster after migrating from Vietnam and their various living situations in America
00:54:40 Discusses how his current home came into his possession
00:55:36 Speaks about how thought that Berkeley was the most interesting place that he has lived
00:56:05 Talks about his dorming experience at UC Berkeley, including the memory of when a college student mistook Alex for a parent
00:59:26 Describes the process in which he learned English (started to learn English in Vietnam) and his experiences of learning English in high school
01:01:35 Discusses when he uses Vietnamese and English and the deterioration of his Vietnamese due to lack of usage
01:03:06 Talks about he wishes to preserve filial piety and respect for elders in America
01:03:57 Discusses the differences between Vietnam and America
01:06:06 Talks about how he wishes to visit Vietnam, but has no desire to live in Vietnam
01:06:38 Speaks about how he cherishes the memories of his childhood and how living in Vietnam enabled his creativity to blossom
01:08:03 Discusses his fondest memory of his father: riding home with his father on his Honda motorcycle
01:09:04 Talks about his father's occupation as a Director of Rehab Center, in detail and how he went to work with his father one time
01:10:39 Discusses how his father was similar both at work and at home
01:10:52 Speaks about how coming to America changed his father

01:12:21 Continues to talk about how American changed all of his family

01:13:36 Talks about the importance of religion in his life and why his religious views have changed throughout his life

01:15:14 Discusses about how coming to America has made him introverted and a self-introspective person

01:18:03 Speaks about what might have happened if he had stayed in Vietnam

01:19:24 Interview ends