Vietnamese American Oral History Project, UC Irvine

Narrator: TY THAI
Interviewer: Cindy Thai
Date: February 16, 2013
Location: Rosemead, California
Sub-Collection: Asian American Studies 100W, Winter 2013
Length of Interview: 00:56:25

FIELD NOTES

The interview was conducted in Rosemead, California. Present during the interview were Narrator, Ty Thai and interviewer Cindy Thai. We followed protocol and signed all consent and release forms prior to beginning. I took photos of Mr. Thai and he was very cooperative throughout the entire interview process.

Mr. Thai and I discussed the interview questions prior to beginning so that he would have an idea of what information and stories he might want to share. He also asked me for clarification on some of the questions because he did not understand its wording. After situating ourselves in the dining room, I set up the audio equipment and proceeded with the interview.

During the interview, Mr. Thai would often times provide rapid responses without having to pause and think about his answers. At times he would struggle to formulate his responses because he would try to think of the proper English word to express his thoughts or the grammatically correct way to state his answer. I found that a few of my questions, especially my follow up questions generated long, detailed stories from him. Sometimes when I asked him a question he would not answer it directly and instead talk about something else.

When asked to recall his favorite childhood memories and first encounters with American culture, Mr. Thai would smile and chuckle while reminiscing about these happier times in his life. When asked to discuss more difficult topics such as his life during and after the Vietnam War, and his experiences in a Malaysian refugee camp, Mr. Thai adopted a more serious demeanor. His facial expressions conveyed how he felt at the present moment during the interview as well as how he might have felt during the time of these actual events in the past.

I could tell from Mr. Thai’s detailed and elaborate responses that he was very proud of his hometown, family, and upbringing in Vietnam, his Chinese culture, and all that he has achieved in the past 30 years of living in the United States. I think he enjoyed discussing his personal experiences because it gave him an opportunity to retrospectively reflect on his life. After concluding the interview, I thanked Mr. Thai for sharing his life story with me and for allowing me to preserve it for future generations.