Vietnamese American Oral History Project, UC Irvine

Narrator: LY BANH
Interviewer: Viola Van
Date: August 28, 2012
Location: Garden Grove, California
Sub-Collection: The Grove Senior Apartments
Length of Interview: 01:16:05

FIELD NOTES

The interview was conducted in the community room at The Grove Senior Apartments in Garden Grove, California. The language used throughout the entire interview was Cantonese. Present during the interview were the Narrator, Ly Banh, and the interviewer Viola Van. We began by following assignment protocol and signed all appropriate consent and release forms. We began the process of the interview with a few laughs and the occasional interruptions of other residents passing by.

Ly Banh was wearing a floral blouse with black slacks, a beautiful jade bracelet, and neatly coiffed hair. She was anxious to see me and actually realize that the interview will be taking place. Throughout the entire interview, every type of emotion that could come to mind did arise. We had several interruptions in our recording as she excitedly told her passerby friends that she was conducting an interview with me when they asked what the set up was for. Her interview contained several occasions of laughter and many pauses to recollect her memories of her journey out of Vietnam. There were many dates and names that were forgotten, but she was tried to her best ability to remember exactly how each situation had come about.

Ms. Banh had a very spirited memory of her childhood in Vietnam and of her country. Her family was of Teochew background so she remembers having difficulties understanding Vietnamese as a child in grade school. She remembers living in the city with her family and going to many different schools as a child. She recounts all four times of her struggles of trying to leave Vietnam. Perhaps her biggest sacrifice throughout her whole journey to try and leave Vietnam was sending her infant child to a hired liaison to safely have him leave the country before she even left herself, in order to secure a better future for him. She explains that her journey was much more different from all of her friends because she had to be separated from her husband and child while they had already left, but she tried four times to leave and the first couple tries failed.

She had some photos from her past; however, most of them were with her daughter in England. Ms. Banh shared that after all these years; she is still
friends with one of her classmates from grade school who left for United States earlier than her. It took a couple years for her friend to locate her, but the two of them still communicate and her friend still visits her to this day.