KB: Hello my name is Kevin Bui and today is February 9th 2014. I’m going to interview Steven Bui and we’re at his home in Garden Grove, California. This interview is for the Vietnamese American History Project. Could you quickly state your date of birth?

SB: My name is Steven Bui; I was born in December 19th 1961 in Vietnam.

KB: Do you know exactly where in Vietnam?

SB: Phan Thiet Vietnam

KB: Um, what were are your parents’ name and could you describe them?

SB: My father name is Bu, But, B U T, and his first name Bui, B U I, and my mother name is Nguy, N G U Y, and her last name is Ho, H O.

KB: Um could you describe your parents more, like how were they like?

SB: How, how what?

KB: How were your parents like.

SB: How my parent like. I don’t how my parent like.

KB: Ok. Um, could you describe where you grew up?

SB: I was grew up in the house during the war, they call that the mountain. That the where I was… from the South.

KB: Ah, could you tell me some of your childhood memories

SB: You when, when I was young, I like nineteen sixty nine, I think 1969 yea that the mountain that the lot the war be because in the South, and every day we go to church. And the communist
they shooting and when they shooting a lot and we have to go into the church, to hid, because the people, think that if you go to the church the God will protect you. So that when I from the nineteen sixty, I think 1968 to 1970 that during that time you know my life is very very difficult, very crisis. Ah nothing, we don’t have, you know, place to go to plays only you know because the war coup, you know, couple months you will see, you know, the shooting and since we have to run, so that, 1972 I moved to, Binh Thuy, I come back to my parent because that time I live with, I live with my grand mom so in 1972 I, moved back to may parent’s house in Binh Thuy and ah that that where I grow up until I leave Vietnam.

KB: Um you said you spend time with grandma could you elaborate more?

SB: Um I, when my parent left Binh Thuy, ah, Phan Thiet go to Vietnam and he left me with, stay with my parent, um my grandparent because my grandparent he, she too olds and I’m the one who, can you know live with him, with live with her because my grandfather die long time ago, long long long time ago only my grandmom and my auntie. So when I live there I think, at that time I only… I believes 12 year olds or twelves, or twelve year old or ah thirteen year olds so I have to help her a lot the help her to get the water from the wells and you know, help my. After school I go to, after school I help my auntie run the business. So that the, that how it is.

KB: Um what business did your aunt run?

SB: Ah he, she, what she did is ,she got the business she bought the, the merchandise from Phan Thiet and she go to bring to the, the Saigon to sell over there, so every month she you know she go over there to sell the merchandise and ah, I helped her ever everyday um, afterschool I go and help her you know to make sure the merchandise is, everything in order before the shipping.

KB: What was school life in Vietnam like?
SB: The school in Vietnam is not like over here the school over there is, first we go from eight to twelve o’clock. From twelve, to two o’clock we go home to take ah lunch and a nap and from two we come back to school until four o’clock. And the school over is not, like over here. Another thing is very discipline. If…you don’t behave the teacher, you can get hit by the paddle and, school over there is,… one teacher. They have six subjects, not like over here we so one six teacher they have six subjects. So that, that the school over there is like.

KB: Um, what was the main industry in your hometown?

SB: Ah…farmer, that the main is farmer.

KB: Were your parents farmers?

SB: Yup my mother had a farm the big farms, and my daddy he run the, business. First he go to the military and then he discharge from military and he run the business

KB: Did you have any kind of local gatherings or events at your hometown?

SB: Yes, every summer, we have the, the fair. And the people, you know, gathering around, to celebrate yah the food, they, you know, they harvest, you know because every year they harvest the after they done the harvest they put the fruit ah we have the celebrate.

KB: How did you celebrate events like Tet or birthdays or funerals?

SB: Birthday we don’t, we don’t celebrate birthday over there, we only celebrate the Tet, the Tet is…Every year the New Year is the, the children must rest very nightly, and they go to mother, ah the pare, ah the grandmom first, to Chuc Tet, they call it Chuc Tet, and then go to, go to the parent and then after that go to uncle and…aunt, after that. So the Tet is over there is, we have January 1st to all the way January 10 to celebrate Tet. Not like over here, so every day we celebrate with the people stay home, no matter they don’t work at all, on Tet only ten day they don’t work. So only stay home and celebrate.
KB: Could you explain of Chuc Tet

SB: Ah what we Chuc Tet is, we wish the grand mar, parents is live longer, healthy, that and a lot of childrens, a lot and a lot the grandchildren gather with him every year because, in Vietnam the where we live, that in the war, so the grandparent you know, every year the town where I live every month we have the people die because of the war, so we wish, my grandparent no uncle die and no sick uncle aunt die during the war. So that, that we wishing luck for that

KB: You said you were a student who also helped out his aunt and grandma, did you have any other occupations other than that?

SB: Ah no, first yea we, I did, life at that time I read my, I help my aunt to make the, the brick, because they she make a lot of brick to sell for the people who build the house. And also ah, after the house, after that business is, slow and she try to buy the seafood and sell to the Saigon client

KB: Moving on what do you remember most your parents and grandparents when you were a child?

SB: I remember it they first they working hard, hard working person my like my…like my grandfa… grandparent, my mother side. Every summer I go help my grand mom, I mean my grandfather, my mom my mother father, to help him, because he do the medicine, Chinese medicines, so I help him to, go to the jungle to collecting the, the root and the, tree. So because the, because…medici, meh, Chinese medicine, they use a lot of the, the root, the tree, the flower, and the bone so I, help, him during the summer. And my mo…, and who also I help my mother doing during the farms because we, my mom have to farm and every summer we, collecting the, we harvest the fruit, and a lot of food and we collect them and I’m the one who a guarding the people you know, a where to pick and a bring it to the towns for sale. So what I did is I only you
know like the guarding the people, you know, make sure nobody steal the, nobody steal the fruit and a, make sure they delivery on time, that how I help my mom to do all the farming

KB: How many siblings do you have?

SB: I have nine

KB: Ah do you want to give out their names or do you want to keep it private?

SB: I keep it private.

KB: Ok, who was the oldest of your other siblings?

SB: I’m the oldest one

KB: As the oldest child what responsibilities did you have that your siblings didn’t?

SB: You know, because my parent have a lot of the children so I’m the one who, who sometime I have to take care the my brother and sister, you know when she not there, so that how, that how I did when I was young.

KB: Like how, what did you do as for taking care of them?

SB: I take, take them to play, you know, to the neighborhood to play…and make sure you know, they not a go to a jump to the river, that how I take care. Other than that it, nothing.

KB: A what would you say about your relationship with your siblings are?

SB: Ah when we were young we, you know we were young we only playing and a climb the tree, go hunting…me my me and my brother go to hunting and a and at that, we don’t have toys like over here so every time we want to have the toy I have to, I have to make it. So I have to a, make the toy by, you know, a lot of thing a plastic or the wood to curve it to make the toy to play, not so that and I help them a lot to do the toy

KB: What toys do you make could you give an examp…
SB: I make the boat, I make the boat and I make the, the wheeling a wheeling a what they call that, wheeling cart...And also I make the pad the lamp, lamp pattern for the children, children new years

KB: What languages did you speak?

SB: Vietnamese

KB: Was that the only language at the time?

SB: Yeah

KB: What memorable stories have your family members told you in the past?

SB: What is the memory of the, what of the, story?

KB: Yeah like what stories have your family members told you in the past?

SB: Oh I don’t recall, I don’t recall.

KB: Could you explain more of what occupation each family member had in your family?

SB: My mother side is a 99% is the farmer, so what we, you know we have to farm we a the, every time, you know, if the harvest come we just, my mom ask my cousin to help her to you know, to pick the fruit when the fruit is it ripe so that how it is; but my father side is a only he only had my father only have one brother and one sister, one brother die during the war and only one sister and she single only at that time she only do the business. Other than that is nothing.

KB: How educated were your family?

SB: None at all. My, father when he, escape from the communist he go to the South, and that time, when go to the South he doesn’t have the, the family doesn’t have the money, so he have to join the army. That’s it and so do my mother side same thing, they run from, they escape from the communist to the South they move to the South, and nobody have money to go school they only join the army and that’s it.
KB: Just to clarify, you said both of them escape to the South, does that…

SB: uh huh

KB: mean they’re originally from North Vietnam?

SB: Yeah they originally from North Vietnam.

KB: Do you know where exactly?

SB: It in … north Hanoi and the, it, they a also, go, close to the Hue, Hue and the and they call the, it call the, Ha Tinh Nghe An, Nghe An Nghe An. They call the city they call Nghe An; that the where the Ho Chi Minh is ah come from.

KB: So how did your parents meet?

SB: Oh how my parent meet, they have the middle, but I don’t know I heard that somebody you know ah introduce her to him, so I don’t know because I wasn’t that at that time I wasn’t there. I’m not born yet so I don’t know.

KB: In Vietnam, does your family reunions or annually gatherings?

SB: Only the, only the Tet, Tet is the, Tet is the annually gathering, that only the time we, we see a lot of people.

KB: In America, did you meet, have more gatherings or less gatherings?

SB: In America we had more gathering.

KB: Like what activities did you?

SB: Where?

KB: During the reunions or gatherings

SB: Ah we just eat, cook, and eat that’s it that the culture; when we gathering we do nothing but eat, cook, eat that’s it.

KB Mr. Bui you have a spouse right?
SB: Yes

KB: How did you meet her?

SB: Oh I meet her at the work when I work at the Alcon. At that time I was the quality engineering and my wife is the, he is a technician and I met her over there.

KB: I’m sorry, this took place in America right?

SB: Yes

KB: Do you have any children and if you do how many?

SB: Two

KB: Oh, do you do talk to them about your history?

SB: Ah no

KB: Why not?

SB: Because I don’t think they interesting on that one and also it the… the, the past is not many people, you know they… the kid like the past because no, a lot of the war and nothing and, so I don’t I don’t know, I don’t think they like it so

KB: Earlier you mention that you went to hid in the churches, does that you’re cath, practicing Christian?

SB: The prac…, the what you mean by that?

KB: Do you practice Christianity, like as in Methodism, Catholicism

SB: No because my parent is the, Catholic, and that why I was baptize and, become the Catholic

KB: Do remember when or where you were baptized?

SB: I was baptize in Phan Thiet Vietnam

KB: Does your family keep an altar for their ancestors?

SB: Author?
KB: Altar

SB: Ah, what you mean by that?

KB: Like, like pictures and the incest

SB: Yeah that the we still have it at the at the home at my parent house

KB: What tradition do you still do for your ancestors?

SB: We, the tradition is we only go, uh once a years we go to church and prayer

KB: Have that change since coming to America?

SB: Ah no

KB: So what activities did you do at, in regards to your religion in Vietnam

SB: What activities, nothing at all the, ah when in Vietnams the, for the, you’re talking about the reason right? The church or what?

KB: Like did you Church on Sundays, did you go Parish Festivals?

SB: In Vietnam I am the altar boy. I join the boy scouts. And my brother also the altar boy. So every day we go to church not, not every week but every day. Every morning from five, from five o’clock to the, from five thirty to, to six thirty we go to church and after that we go home and eat and go school. Every day Monday to Friday like that. Or Saturday Sunday we, you know we go to the, the church for helping you know like the, make sure everything is ready for Sunday church. So that, that is when I was young, that how I

KB: Ok, What special food tradition did your family have? Like a recipe or anything.

SB: We don’t have the, special because the food over there are that time it, very rare not, not very much so we don’t have any, recipe for the food we only eat the regular food not nothing is very fancy.

KB: Ok, do you have any family heirlooms or mementos, do you
SB: What do mean?

KB: Like pictures, figurines, jewelry

SB: No I don’t

KB: Ok next we’re going to talk about the wartime experience do you have

SB: Ok

KB: So how did the war in Vietnam affect your family and community?

SB: Oh it affect a lot, because every week…you know community where I live every weeks, more people die, because of the war this is 1972 we call that “Mua He Do Lua.” And every…house has the people who serve for the war. Every week, every week we heard the fath…, the priest announcing mister this mister that die so, so and it affect us a lot because we’re very worry, will my uncle will die or, you know and when the communist go to take over so that affect us a lot for the war. And you know, sometime we go to the church and we left at night about six o’clock and we heard the, the, gun shooting on the air and we have to dig to the ground, I remember at that time my house, my parent’s house they have the basement outside so every time they the they shoot to the to the community and then I have to go, me and my mom go to the basement and sometime the, in the rain season, the basement is full of the water and you know we have to soak in the water so that that the very hard time at that time from I think at that 1972 or 70

KB: Ok, again could you state where you lived during the war?

SB: I live in the war is nineteen, in Phan Thiet in Phan Thiet Vietnam from when I was born to 1972 I left the Phan Thiet I go to Binh Thuy it call Hanh Than and both they have war also, no matter you know, in in in in Phan Thiet at that time they have the Mau, “Mau Tet Mau Than;” in
Binh Thuy, in that time we have the war for the “Mua He Do Lua” that from the the Hue. That two war is happen at that time

KB: You said your uncle and your father were involved in the war correct?

SB: Yep

KB: But anybody else in your family involved?

SB: At that time everybody is, my si my fa my fath my mo father side and my mother side every uncle is…eighteen year or more must join the army no matter what

KB: But how were your family members involved in the war as well? Not as soldiers

SB: I don’t know, I don’t know how at that time I really don’t know, I only see my uncle is the soldier and yea my both uncle is soldier

KB: What do you remember most about this time period?

SB: At that the most rem, the most…I remember is like I say before every week, I heard the people die I heard the people die. And every time the people die they go to the funeral and the funeral they go to my, in front of my house my, I mean my mother house, so that what I remember every week, every week I have, we have heard oh somebody die, so that all I remember

KB: Do you know why the funerals were usually in front of your house, your mother’s house?

SB: Because that street, before they go to the cemetery, they have to pass to the that street because the not over here, the people when they carry the casket from the church go to the cemetery they don’t have the car, they walk they carry on the shoulder all the way through, through the street of where I live so that why I heard every, every week the people carry the casket through in front the street where I lived. It’s not like America you know when you live in
the, the big street and small street, but where I live is the big street and where the car coming 
back and forth and also the, the funeral you know go to the cemetry they go to that road.
KB: Were your family members every captured by enemy forces during the war?
SB: Yes
KB: How did you feel about that?
SB: Oh feel very bad, very sad, very sad
KB: Were you or anyone you knew ever in a reeducation camp?
SB: Yes, my uncle, all my uncle is, was in, education camp. I have one uncle, my mom brother, 
I think he the fifth one. During the war and the communist catch him, they took him to the north, 
and when he left, when he left the house he me he when he left the house it, he got only 20, 20 
dong, the that currency Ameri…, Vietnamese currency 20 dong and he tie his, 20 dong under the 
belly and when the communist, during the war he got catch, he got, he got, he caught and he 
become the prisoner. And when, when the Vietnam, Saigon fall, I think that it Saigon fall and 
they release him so I think that about twenty year later and he come back home…everybody 
thought he died and all everybody thought he died already, so the in the family already have you 
know, he picture on the wall already, but when the Saigon fall and then he come back home and 
he come back home and everybody surprise that he think that he the ghost and he come back 
home and he still have that money that he, he got before, so at that time I remember that it the 
big surprise for everybody in the family
KB: Did any other family members return from education camp, that were caught?
SB: My uncle he the he also the when the communist come over he also the prisoner camp, I 
have two uncle one is die during the during in the in the, the education camp he die in there and 
another one is still, still alive today.
KB: So the recap, was there two or three uncle there in re reeducation camp

SB: Totally I have the three totally I have three, but one die and two still alive

KB: Could you say which side of the family they were on?

SB: At that in my mother side

KB: All three of them?

SB: Yeah all three of them, and

KB: uh…

SB: also the my cousin, my cousin is the is the in the prisoner camp too. I have two cousins he older than me about he, I think at that time he about twelve year older than me so he was in the prisoner camp and he is the he one is the captain and other one is he’s the…I think the more like the higher than captain I don’t I don’t know they call that but he was in the prisoner camp that time also.

KB: Did they make it out?

SB: Yeah, all of them make it out but one, the all the cousin make it out, and now they live in England, now they live in England.

KB: [moved microphone] Sorry about that, describe any injuries or dis, disabilities you or your family member members suffered as a result of the war

SB: None

KB: So they all came out fine?

SB: Yea all came out fine

KB: Ok what did you remember during the last days of the war?

SB: I remember it’s at that times, when I at homes and my father he left home, he go to Vung Tau to, he tried to rescue my mother, my grandmother who is his mother and I at I at that time at
home and in front of my house I see the soldier run cross my house with the injury and they cry a lot because they try to go to the go to find some place to, to stay and I see a lot of people you know, injury and people you know with the really really bad and at that time I go to at that time a lot of people, left Vietnam but they don’t know where to go they just go into the boat. And they, they left they and that mornings I go I and that morning is very quiet and very quiet because we see a lot of the communist come over all the town already so and no more, no more Vietnamese soldiers only communist and very quiet and I’m that time I am very very alone and then I go to the, ocean shore I walked along the ocean shore, I think at time I only four, ah, fourteen year olds and I walk along the shore and I see a lot of die on the along the shore and I see you know they the people you know he the body is swallow up and I go and keep counting, counting and I see some people is they take advantage. You know they turn the dead people up to see any jewelry and they pick the jewelry they pick the diamond or the neck chain and I see how rude the people you know did like that and me and I walk along with my dog, I have that time I have I have the dog and I see I see and I go to tell the priest I go to say, tell the priest that, “hey um, father I see a lot of people die on the along the shore do you want to call anybody to help?” And the father say don’t do anything because you know if I do anything the communist think that I am the you know the member of that people so I that time I didn’t do anything I just, I just go home and really really you know I got really really mad and two day, two I think a week later my father home and my father tell my mom that hey we better prepare to escape this country because he said that a lot of people you know, they took, they shoot a lot of people and they capture a lot of the people from the South so, that one that I remember that really bad thing I remember

KB: Ok going back to how you said your father was a soldier, how’s that experience like?
SB: I don’t know it because when he was a soldier and he discharge because he only had one mother and they policy is you know, if you have mother nobody take care and then you, they authorize him discharge and stay, to stay home and take care the parent so at I only remember that at that time

KB: But you said he had a brother correct?

SB: Heh?

KB: You said he had a brother correct?

SB: A butter?

KB: Brother

SB: A brother

KB: Yeah

SB: He had the brother but he brother die, die in die at the war because I heard that one time one I at the school and my aunt aunty call me say hey uncle is die so I left the school and go to see him that’s it that all I that only I remember I am very close to him he the one I’m the very closest, closest in in the family

KB: Could you describe what was happening around April 30th 1975?

SB: So that the April 1930…that the one I just tell you that the

KB: Oh yeah

SB: That the

KB: That’s the Fall of Saigon

SB: Yeah, that the Fall of Saigon that the

KB: Ok, what was life like after the war?
SB: Life after the war, oh life after war is everybody live in in, everybody live in the nervous. Because they don’t want, they don’t know what is tomorrow; and also my cousins, after the war the…the communist government call him and tell him ok you have go to, to a…I think that that they use another word, they go to the meeting, and everybody go to the meeting is never return, only, that that that’s so everybody nervous after the war. At why they escape.

KB: Ok, what did your family do between the time after the war and before your escape?

SB: At that times, my parent buy the boat. And he, everyday I try to go help my mother the farms; and…one or two time a weeks he ask me the go to the fishing bego he want to train me not to become the seasicks when escape the, the Vietnam because he already, he already plan going to escape the Vietnam, so he want to train me, you know, if I go to the sea every, everyday and then I don’t the seasicks. So that’s why, you know, that during, during the, after the, the fall, so we don’t go to school at all. Because at, at that time, all the teacher go to the camp, the education camp and all the teacher all the, principal go only the, my school is become the education camp, so that we don’t have school to go, we just stay home and help the parent that’s it.

KB: Did your father take your other sibling fishing to teach them how to not get seasick?

SB: Huh?

KB: So, so when your father took you to go fishing

SB: Ah huh

KB: Did he take any other siblings?

SB: Yea, me and my brother. Me and my brother and my sister, they cannot go because everytime we go, we go to the we go the over the sea. They come and inspect every person in the in the boat make sure no woman. If they see the woman that mean you escape, so that yea
my, my sister and my young brother, my younger brother and my mom not, not there that time only me and my brother, the second one

KB: What was it like leaving your home country and how did you feel about it?

SB: Oh very sad because, before I leave the country, I farewell with my friend. That very very interesting, I told him that, “hey, tonight I’m leaving so if you want to follow me, just go and otherwise, you know, I don’t know I come back or I die,” that what I tell my, my friend. So that very hard

KB: Have you seen your friend, that friend after?

SB: Yea we united in America, be, he, some live in Texas, some is come to New Orleans, he and he die in New Orleans, but some in live in Texas.

KB: What do you think of the United States policy during and after the war?

SB: The policy what you mean by the policy

KB: How the US was involved in the war

SB: The US

KB: Yea

SB: Oh, I don’t, I don’t like the politics and I don’t believe in politic. So

KB: How did you feel when the US soldiers came to Vietnam?

SB: How do I, I, because where I lived in Vietnam, the city I live there is no American soldier, but Australia soldier, they live over there. So Australia, all soldier is very nice. But the soldier in the Phan Thiet where I live, where I live before its American soldier, but, I like it because…the over there they have the camp for the, the base, American base in Phan Thiet and every weekend I go over there to play with the, monkey because the American they, they raise
monkey, you know, in the, the base and I, come over there to play with the monkey and also, you know, to play with, the, the playground they have for their kid. That I will remember

KB: Ok, next I’m gonna talk about the immigration to American

SB: Uh-huh

KB: Why did you come to the United States?

SB: Why, because, that time my uncle he live over here first, and then when we escape from Vietnam we go to Thailand, and my uncle he sponsor us to over here in the, in the in the America.

KB: How did you leave?

SB: By boat.

KB: Um

SB: From boat to the Thailand and from Thailand they go to airplane over here. And the, at that time they have the USCC, United States Catholic Charity, they one who respond all the money, all the airplane ticket for us to come over here

KB: What possessions did you bring with you and why?

SB: What what?

KB: When you escape did you bring any possessions?

SB: No

KB: So you brought nothing with you to the boat

SB: Nope, nothing we, nothing at all

KB: Could you tell me more about your journey through the, to the boat to Thailand?

SB: Ok when we escape, left first, me and my brother go to the boat first. My sister, and my brother, young brother, at that time he, he very young and my mom then have to put him to, to
take, let him take the, sleep pills, sleeping pill so he can sleep he no cry during the escape. And he put in the basket and he carry, he carry and he go to the small boat. And small boat because the, at that time the, in the where I live they have the people who live on the river. And who, some people how sleep on the river, they live on the boat. And most of people they live in the land. So my mother he had friend live in the boat, the river boat, and that what he carry my, she my carry my sister, my young sister and my brother, to that small boat and, I and my next brother, my father on the big boat, so we waiting for them to come, and then we pick them up then we run. After we run about a five minute, the communist they saw them and they shoot, they shoot us, they shoot and luckily my boat is very fast. In run and, and when my daddy he plan to go to escape he already plan everything. He had the, he bought the gun, and he bought the grenade, so, when we escape Vietnam, we see the communist, chasing us, and, the big boat he, they had the big boat, they had the navy they chasing us, and when they chasing us and, my daddy he throw the grenade to the ship and, and they see that we the gun and that why, they turn around they go home, back and then we keep going, but during we going we have to, pirate. But luckily, they only steal the money, nobody had been, beat or rape at that time, so it take us seven day on the sea to go to the Thailand.

KB: Were you in any refugee camp in Thailand?

SB: Yea we have the refugee camp in there, we have, we live there for seven months. Seven month over there

KB: Could you describe more about your time at the refugee camp?

SB: Over there is nothing, we just everyday is, you know live in the small tent look, ah, when we go in, to the Thailand, the government, the Thai government tell us to break down the boat, because they don’t want us to go out again. So when we break down the boat, the boat is sink,
and we go on the land, we live in the, the United Nation Camp, they have the camp for us, so we live in small camp. I think about 10 feet, by 8 feet by 10 feet, that small camp for family of, at that time we had six people. That’s it that and then that we stay there for until we leave America

KB: Did you interact we the people in the camp?

SB: Huh?

KB: Did you interact with other people in the camp?

SB: Yea, when I go over there, is my…I think we are number 70, people, 70 people at that time. And when I leave the camp, that area, that is about four, five thousand people live there

KB: I forgot to ask, when did you leave Vietnam

SB: I leave in July, ah no not July, I think that some time is in, I don’t remember what month but I think nineteen six, nineteen seventeen six. 1979 we leave Vietnam, but I don’t remember what month

KB: You said that your uncle sponsor you to come to Unite States correct?

SB: Uh huh

KB: How did you feel about that?

SB: Oh very nice, when we come over here it everything, everything is very nice, we like it

KB: You also said the UCC sponsored the plane ticket correct?

SB:Yep

KB: Could you tell me more about that organization?

SB: That org, organization for Catholic, United States Catholic Charity, that organization is, you know, they pay you the ticket to come to the, the America, but, when you have money, you pay them back, if you don’t have money and then they, they, they just, you know, waiver. So and then when you come, when they come to, to the United State, they come to help you with the
food, with the housing, with the work. So that, that charity one of the best charity I see them but, it very good

KB: What were your first impressions and early experiences in the United States?

SB: Oh cold, because I was live in Vietnam, and what they call that the weather is tropical, but when I come to the United States, the first impression is cold, very very cold.

KB: Where did you first move to when you were in the United…

SB: Ah

KB: When you went to United States

SB: I was first is the New Orleans

KB: How long did you spend in New Orleans

SB: I live New Orleans from 70’s, 1977 and I left New Orleans 1983

KB: So, so why did you move to so, Southern California?

SB: Because at that time, after I finish from my I, after high school I got my the electric engineering and when I have the electric engineering my, my teacher, he told me that, “this is a not a good place for you to stay, I think you better go to California, California is the best, electronic company over there and a lot of successful electric company over there.” And one days I tell my mom, I pack up and I move over here, I drove over here; at that time I have, I bought a car, I only, I bought. I remember I got the LTD Ford, the car, and with my, I think I have about two hundred dollar in my pocket, and I move to California

KB: Did anyone else come with you?

SB: No, no nobody else come with me; me and my friend, and I, when I come over here, my friend introduce me to, a, his friend so when, so when I come first, I come to Orange County and Orange County is, I don’t have anybody over here so I move to San Jose, I live San Jose about
couple week and I come back to Orange County and at that time I go to, looking a jobs I fill, I fill in an application, and the next, next day they call me to work, and from that time I, I work from that time and then I stay here forever

KB: What did your family did after, how did they make a living after coming to United States

SB: My, my father he work at the supermarket, the warehouse, and at that time we, he, he still need the government assistant, but he work a day, he work at the day jobs at the supermarket; I believe, I remember at that time he only make two dollar seventy-five cent per hour. So that why, he work and then until when I move to California and ask him, “hey come, move over here,” so everybody move over here.

KB: What did your mother do in New Orleans?

SB: Huh?

KB: What did your mother do in New Orleans?

SB: He do nothing he only stay home and take care my sister and, my brother

KB: What did you do in New Orleans?

SB: I am schoo, uh, student. I student and the part time I work at restaurant, I work the Chinese restaurant, French restaurant for the weekend.

KB: So…what financial support did you receive other than UCC

SB: My parent only have from the, welfare, I think from that time

KB: So, it’s just welfare and UCC

SB: Yea, the UC, USCC only couple months, for they only looking, help us for my family to looking for the house, and the clothes that it; and after that the government take care

KB: Ok, how did you feel about your decision to the come to United States?
SB: Oh very the good decision it right decision to come to United State, it that I think that the United States is the best, country in the world to live

KB: Ok what were your chall…., some challenges you experience when you first moved to United States?

SB: Challenging?

KB: Challenges, yes

SB: The challenging is English.

KB: How long did it take you to learn English?

SB: Oh it take me, about two years, two year to learn it. Because I remember that time when I come United States no English and every time I catch the bus, I always go wrong direction, so it remember that

KB: Did anyone help you learn English?

SB: Ah no, I go to school, I go to school and learn English at school

KB: How did your father and yourself found jobs?

SB: UC, USCC refer

KB: Ok…what were some similarities and difference you had between New Orleans and the Vietnam

SB: Oh we, the, the similar or what?

KB: Similar and differences

SB: A lot of the difference is but nothing is similar, similar is nothing but a lot different, the food, the weather, the socialize, everything, so different

KB: What about from, New Orleans to Orange County
SB: Oh New Orleans is, Orange County is, because New Orleans is, Orange County is more, more jobs and the weather is right; in New Orleans it hurricane, and humid, hot, so I think the Orange County California is better

KB: Did you experience any racism in your neighborhood or work place?

SB: Ah what?

KB: Racism

SB: Oh yes, everywhere, still now

KB: Could you elaborate more on that?

SB: Yeah because, when I live in New Orleans I remember when we go to school, they always, the people, the black people they look at as, look like we are from the another moon, another planet because at that time no, Asian people over there only, you know, we are, I think we are the first to live there so they look us look like you know we are the, the alien. And call…everywhere you know, we go is they just look at us so. And when we ask somethings it they don’t give right, right aways.

KB: Did that change over the years?

SB: Oh yes it change a lot, it change a lot. Recently it change a lot because, due to, I don’t know because a lot of people right now so that why they, they change a lot

KB: What was your neighborhood like in New Orleans?

SB: Oh, the neighborhood like, oh I was live in the community, where all the Vietnamese and the Black community together. And, it, it very very very, strange; at that time you know, you heard they fighting every day, because two culture not diff, it not the same so they, they miscommunication and get fight and later on, later on, they keep you know, get along together very well.
KB: So did you have any friends outside of Vietnamese people during that time?

SB: Oh yea. I, at that time, when I work at the… I work I know the guy, you know, he, he the owner of the industrial, his father owner and his younger than two year old, and when he ask me work for him, I think at that time, I work like the, driving the folk lift. So, I and him get very well because he invite to go to hunting with him, we go hunt and we go a lot of the, the fishing and from that I, know more American friends of black and white, so I get along very well at that time

KB: Could you tell us more about your life in New Orleans?

SB: Live in New Orleans is, after school, you know, we have to go to, afterschool we either go to play basketballs, football, or weekend we go to fishing, hunting, that that’s it; everyday, you know, but only the summer, but when the winter come, it very cold and when the, fall time it very rainy, the hurricane come, the wind stay home so only, only the time we spend it summer.

KB: Did you still go to in New Orleans?

SB: Oh yeah, we go to church New Orleans, we have the, the Vietnamese they create their own church, they have the trailer, they, they bought the trailer and they make the, the church out of the trailer at that time. Because, because of that time there is no church in that community, so they bought the trailer, they bring the trailer over and they make the church

KB: Do you know if that church is, has grown since then?

SB: Oh yeah, that church is very, right now is, that area is very grow right now because they, Vietnamese they have their own church, they have, they bought the land, they built their own church. And the big church very big church.

KB: Explain school life in New Orleans
SB: School life is, I think it very easy because… the education in New Orleans is not very hard in California. I don’t know why, because it, maybe that because it the urban city, so that why the kid is very easy and also the teacher very easy, that what I think, that the urban city. Nobody care, so that why you know, they let it loose.

KB: When you first school in the United States, what grade level did you start at?

SB: I start at nine grade

KB: How were your siblings experience in New Orleans as well?

SB: A what?

KB: Your siblings experience

SB: Oh my, brother is the he, my brother and sister when I think he go the elementary school, at that time its elementary school is, he go from eight o’clock… noon o’clock to twelve they have lunch at school and after school they, and after lunch they go back to school again until three o’clock, so they don’t have problem; but my, I, I go school from seven o’clock until two o’clock.

No, no lunch, so every day I have to, catch the bus go to school and my brother and also you know, they catch the bus go to school, soon.

KB: Did you go to college in New Orleans?

SB: Yes, I go the what, what they call that college, Delgado, Delgado College in school

KB: Ok ex, explain the experience from living, moving to New Orleans to Orange County

SB: Oh very tough, because the New, because in the New Orleans I live with my, under my parent with my mother, father but in New, California I live by myself, I share the room with somebody else. So, I have to do everything, work go, go work, go eat, go school every day and laundry, I I do everything by myself, nobody help so it very tough time, but it teach me a lot because I, can survive you know, I can survive by myself, because everydays, after school,
because nobody cooked for me I cannot cook, because I share the room with the somebody, so what I did is every day is either McDonald hamburger every day. Like that, until my parent come over and then I stay with them.

KB: When did you move New Orleans to, Orange County?

SB: I, I left New Orleans from 1983

KB: Ok, when did your parents and other family members leave?

SB: I think they left, they come here 87, 1987

KB: Did all your family members move to Orange County

SB: Yes

KB: How’s school California?

SB: How’s school over here is very very, very good because they have a lot of problem for the you know, they have like, a lot of problem for the Asia so it very very, very good and the at that time when, when I, when I move to California in 1983, that time the California school is number, top ten in in United States because they have a lot of money, they have a lot of money, that why the, the school is top ten, but right now, the California school is, compare to before, now nowadays California is about, about two hundred something [laugh]

KB: What did you do after you got an education?

SB: What education you talking about?

KB: In California

SB: Oh I’m working from that time I work. When I work, I work and then I take my B.S. degrees, after I done that B.S. degree I still work, work until you know I do, I work at same employee.

KB: Ok what do you do now?
SB: I am the investor. Builder and investor

KB: What was the change from electrical engineering to investing?

SB: Ok, I like it because the…for electrics engineering I work for someone else; and when I change to investor, I do for myself, so that I like more better than the work for somebody else

KB: Ok, ok what do, what do you except, I’m sorry, how, how was your reaction to the racial diversity in America? Compare New Orleans and Orange County

SB: What you mean by compare what?

KB: The racial diversity

SB: Racial?

KB: Diversity like between Orange County

SB: Um-huh

KB: and New Orleans

SB: No because New Orleans is the, one of the poorest state in America. And, California the richest one so it very very different

KB: In terms of racial groups

SB: Racial?

KB: Racial groups

SB: I think that, over here it, more…more socialize, more friendly than over there.

KB: Do you have any funny or memorable experiences or culture shock

SB: Ah no

KB: Ok, are you a citizen today?

SB: Huh, yes

KB: Do you vote in US elections? Why or why not
SB: Yeah I vote election.

KB: Why

SB: Because, I pick the people who know how to do the jobs, that why I pay, I vote. And also the, every time they have the new rule, and then I, like, and then if I like it I vote if I don’t, I against it

KB: Do you volunteer or donate to any political parties?

SB: No I don’t

KB: How do you get your news and information?

SB: In, online internet

KB: Is it in English or Vietnamese?

SB: English

KB: Why do choose English than Vietnamese?

SB: Because it faster, English is faster, the Vietnamese you have to wait until couple weeks

KB: I meant in terms of language, sorry

SB: Yea it still language, the Vietnamese they take long time to, for the news than the American

KB: You still have family in Vietnam, is that correct?

SB: No, only my cousins, my uncle, but not, not brother and sister

KB: Do you keep touch with them?

SB: No I don’t

KB: Have you gone back to Vietnam?

SB: Yes

KB: When?

SB: 1997
KB: What was the experience like?

SB: Both I, I don’t like it. First of all because the that code…the whole is country is corrupt by the communist. Everywhere you go is money money money, even you go after you come out from the, you go to the airport to check out, you have to give them the money otherwise they held you for couple hours. So, ever, at that time when I go, when I leave the, when I come back to USA and I think, no when I go to vacation over there, I remember I took the camera, and when I left they want me to, reveal video tape for them before I leave, so I really don’t like it

KB: What did you do in Vietnam?

SB: I’m a student at that

KB: No, sorry I meant what, on the vacation

SB: Oh I just go to see the, the sightseeing and visit the, my, grandmom, not grandmom, I go to visit my uncle my aunt that it

KB: Are there any song or images that remind of Vietnam?

SB: The song, another song remind me of Vietnam.

KB: Could you give an example?

SB: Like all the Tet song. And, because the Vietnam all the Vietnam song is very sad song it not like American, it not happy song it all the sad; so I try not to remember it because every song is the really sad, I don’t know why the, because maybe, the people live at the war when they write the song, they alway think about the sad.

KB: Sorry give me a second. Ok, what traditions or customs do you have, do make an effort to preserve?

SB: What the what?
KB: Sorry let me repeat that. What tradition do you still preserve?

SB: Tradition I still preserve today?

KB: Yeah

SB: I don’t think…let me see, tradition; only Tet, Tet tradition that it

KB: In your opinion, what will become of Vietnamese culture in America?

SB: What become or what

KB: What will become of Vietnamese culture in America?

SB: What will become come I… I’m not sure what you mean

KB: How will it change like Vietnamese Culture?

SB: How it change the commun…

KB: In the United States

SB: Because I, when I in Vietnam I’m very young, so I don’t know much about the, I don’t remember about the culture, but when I live in the, United States, at that time I teenage, so I adapt right away so, I I don’t the much about the changing

KB: How has the Vietnamese, community changed over the years?

SB: Oh they grow a lot, they change a lot. Because nowadays more young people, and they have more open mind so they change a lot.

KB: What you think the difference is between the first generation and second generation of Vietnamese?

SB: The first generation and the second generation, I think the second generation is they, they stronger because they speak English better, they fight for themselves. The old generation is they don’t, you know, because the language so that why they not fight for themself, so I think the new generation is they fight for themself a lot
KB: Are you involve with Vietnamese community?

SB: No I don’t

KB: Why not?

SB: Why not, because what it is I don’t have time to read for the you know the community, I don’t, absolutely don’t have time

KB: Ok, what do you do for entertainment?

SB: Oh I Watching TV that’s it.

KB: Any hobbies?

SB: Huh

KB: Do you have any hobbies?

SB: Hobby, no no no no hobby for over here

KB: What are the most important things that future generation of Vietnamese Americans should remember about their heritage?

SB: I don’t know

KB: Ok are there any memories or stories you would like to share?

SB: A what?

KB: Are there any other stories you would like to share?

SB: Stories like to share

KB: Yes

SB: Let me see…the story I like to share I, the only story I share is you know, if you live in America, you must working hard, if you want to become success, you must working hard and you must be your know create, you don’t follow people you know, step, if you follow the people
step, you will lose, so you have to, you have to create your own, your own thing to go, your own, inventor, so that I want to share

KB: Ok thank you allowing me to interview you

SB: All right, thank you