Vietnamese American Oral History Project, UC Irvine

Narrator: AMY HUYEN LE

Interviewer: Vee Kim Banh

Date: February 26, 2012; March 15, 2012; March 18, 2012

Location: Irvine, California

Sub-Collection: Vietnamese American Experience Winter 2012

FIELD NOTES

This interview was conducted in a hotel room of a friend Miss Amy Huyen Le was visiting. We began the interview by signing all the required documents and consent forms that allowed Amy Huyen Le’s story to be publicized.

Amy Huyen Le had been through a long week of internships and bartending, thus the interview was set in a casual setting during the late evening at 11:00pm. She was wearing loose black sweat pants, a long gray shirt, and a large purple scarf. She wore black, thick-rimmed glasses with her blonde-brownish hair down.

Amy seemed quite tired from a stressful weekend, yet she still managed to visit her friend for a night to catch up since moving back to Southern California. Before beginning the interview, Amy offered me an ice cream sandwich and I conversed with her a little bit more on what type of questions I would be asking. Amy was very responsive and seemed excited to begin sharing her experiences.

I noticed that Amy was a bit more fidgety when she mentioned any recollections of her mother. From my perspective, it seemed that Amy’s mother was someone she respected and feared. She respected her mother for raising her the best way she could, but feared the growing dependence her mother tried to instill in her. Amy had grown used to being independent and was not accustomed to a prominent leader in her life.

Throughout the interview, Amy got up several times to refill her water glass. She frequently complained of having a nasally voice, which is somewhat noticeable when listening to the audio file again. She had had a deviated septum correction procedure before, but her asthma was still present and affected her pitch by lowering it.

At the end of the interview, Amy was growing quite weary due to the late hour. We ended the interview around 1:00am and Amy informed me she would have to be up by 6:00am to beat the traffic back to LA for one of her internships. As I was leaving, Amy began preparing to take a shower.
Unfortunately, the interview did not save properly and the audio file was unable to be recovered. On a more positive note, the narrator was able to participate in the interview again except her busy and conflicting schedule only allowed her to redo the interview via Skype.

On March 15, 2012, Amy informed me that she was available to interview. Since her schedule was drastically different each day and her availability coincided with my classes, I was unable to meet her in LA to conduct the interview.

This interview focused mainly on her family’s history. She was not close enough with her family to understand their struggle in immigrating to America, but she definitely considered family the number one priority in her life.

The second interview actually seemed more productive than the first interview. I felt as though Amy had more time to prepare her responses so the content was richer and she was able to recall more stories about her past.

Moreover, Amy seemed less tense when talking about her mother. She was more comfortable in her own environment and I think that interviewing via webcam eased her nerves. She felt less rushed since she was not getting up early in the morning, thus she took more time to formulate her responses and to expand on certain topics, such as her aunts and uncles’ traditional dishes.

On March 18, 2012, Amy and I conversed once more over Skype. She was wearing light purple shades of eyeshadow and a bit of eyeliner. Her skills from her previous job as a make-up artist and manager at Chanel were evident.

During this interview, Amy mentioned multiple stories of racist incidents. When she talks about the incidents now, it seems as though she does not particularly care for the situation as much as she tried to place emphasis on it. I get the feeling that her independence has made her feel indifferent to situations like that and that is probably her response to most uncomfortable situations.

In addition, Amy was able to ask her relatives for stories about their past in regards to immigrating to America. Her family stories reflected the struggles her grandparents and parents had during the Vietnam War, while her own personal stories reflected the struggles of growing up in a single-mother household.