Interviewee: Vu Thanh Thuy
Interviewers: Priscilla Li, Steven Loyd
Date/ Time of Interview: July 2, 2018
Transcribed by: Coleman Lambo
Audio track time: 1:21:11
Cleaned by: Priscilla Li (7/14/18); Steven Loyd (8/8/18)

Background:
Mrs. Thuy is a very accomplished journalist who served as a war correspondent during the Vietnam War and was awarded with a Silver Star for Valor by the Army of the Republic of Vietnam in 1970 and later received the Best War Report Prize by the Vietnam Press Corps in 1972. After the fall of Saigon, Mrs. Thuy was thrown into the Vietnamese boat people crisis and was eventually rescued and immigrated to the United States. This experience would serve as the basis for her entrance into writing as she later captured this crisis in her memoir which was released in May 2016. She is currently one of the operators and spokespersons for Radio Saigon Houston, a radio station that broadcasts informative talk shows and discussions oriented towards the Vietnamese American community and Vietnamese listeners who are transitioning into American society and culture. Additionally, Mrs. Thuy is highly involved in local social and professional organizations and is a mother of five children.

Setting
The conversation with Mrs. Thuy was primarily centered on the publication of her memoir, her experience as a Vietnamese woman in American culture, and balancing her obligations to her family, duty to society, and professional goals. This interview was conducted at the Radio Saigon Houston station located in the Houston Chinatown area on July 2nd 2018.

Key:
TV: Vu Thanh Thuy
PL: Priscilla Li
SL: Steven Loyd
—: speech cuts off; abrupt stop
...: speech trails off; pause
Italics: emphasis
(?): preceding word may not be accurate or transcribed [Brackets]: actions [laughs, sighs, etc.]

Interview Transcript:

PL: Today is July 2nd, 2018. We’re here at Radio Saigon Houston, um, and, uh, for the— we're interviewing Vu Thanh Thuy for the Houston Asian-American Archive. Um, and this is more of a follow-up interview. Uh, so my name is Priscilla Li.

SL: My name is Steven Loyd.

PL: Okay. Um, and we’ll start asking you, uh, since like twen—2011. Um, and since the interview done by the Vietnamese-American Heritage Foundation, um, what activities have you been heavily involved in?

TV: Um, oh it’s tough to say. [PL laughs] There’s a lot of activities. You’re talking about social activities, professionals?

PL: Uh, social and professional activities.
TV: Okay, um, I think we still running the radio.

PL: Mhmm.

TV: And all the publications, uh, related to the radio station like the yellow page and the directory and the uh, television [PL: Mhmm.] uh, studio. Um, and what else? Um…it’s about it. You know, oh and two years ago we published our memoir [PL: Mhmm.] on, um, on the Vietnam war. The, uh, the communist regime. [PL: Mhmm.] Uh, especially communist prisons in Vietnam and the, uh, boat escape [PL: Mhmm.] by refugees. [PL: Okay.] And it was um, [places book on table] this is the second edition. The first edition came out in May two-thousand…uh, what was it, sixteen. And then the second edition started in September ’16. And now we are in the third edition, uh, along with the, uh, English copy of the book. [PL: Mhmm.] Hopefully we’ll be on Amazon in the next, uh, few months.

PL: Okay. Um, and what was the process of writing the book?

TV: I beg your pardon?

PL: What was the process of writing the book like—um…

TV: Oh it took, it took me and my husband, uh…thirty-seven years to finish it. We started writing it as soon as we, um, left Vietnam. Left Vietnam, and held on a deserted island by the pirates. Uh, as soon as we were rescued by the United Nations and I started writing down everything. And then throughout the years, uh, we uh, keep writing and, you know, before our memory faded with time. And [clears throat] in 1988 there was, um, a few in—inquire on, um, getting my book by some, uh, publishers starting off a literary agency in New York. And then there’s a literary lawyer, Robert Burnett (?) in Washington D.C. wanted to buy the book. But um, at that time we were raising five young children and working full time. And uh, uh, being involved in a lot of other activities, so we couldn’t agree to the timeline [PL: Mhmm.] of the publisher. So we decided to do it on our own pace. And that’s why it didn’t finish until two years ago. When I took almost like a two years semi-kind of um, absence from the, from work [PL: Mhmm.] to have it, uh, finished.

PL: Um, and what is like the differences between the three editions? Is it just…?

TV: Uh, uh, every edition, uh uh, every new edition has more things.

PL: Okay.

TV: Because after the readers, um, read the book, they, a lot of them have their own documents that we didn’t have. They have our pictures. Remember we escaped by boat, we couldn’t bring anything with us. So, we didn’t have, uh, a lot to, um, a lot of proof, a lot of pictures, and documents. [PL: Mmm.] But after the readers read it, they send articles we wrote, uh, before, before 1975 [PL: Mhm.] to us about the Vietnam War. And we were able to reprint it in the second and now the third editions.

PL: Mhmm.

TV: Um, because [clears throat] when you’re talking about things that happened thirty, forty, fifty years ago [PL: Mmm.] you have to be very precise. And since we didn’t have, uh, much document to prove it. And then um, we could only rely on our memoir to some…to our, on our memory to some extent. Especially when it comes to little details. That’s why we couldn’t go into details about that. So thanks to
all the documents sent by my readers, I was able to, you know, add a lot of, of, of details into the new edition.

PL: Uh, so did you have to go back to interview, uh, people in your life to add to the edition?

TV: Uh no, actually, uh, during our book signings in the U.S. and Canada, I met, uh, a lot of old friends, old colleague in the press in Vietnam. And then uh, I met with, um, my uh, uh camp…um, not camp, uh, how the—cellmate at the prison, Communist prison. And I met with the refugees whom we rescued on our rescue mission. So um, those meeting was very heartwarming and, and um, they assure me about um, the accuracy of our memoir. And then um, hmm…and it, it made my work much more meaningful when it, um, the story, only this is our story, but it’s a typical story of uh, millions of Vietnamese, uh, from South Vietnam.

PL: Okay. So it’s your first time seeing them since, like, you had first met them.

TV: Oh it was very, very uh moving.

PL: Yeah.

TV: Yeah, there was, uh, especially there, like, there was a cellmate in the prison camp, just stood right up in the crowd and tell us that uh, “I was there,” you know that she…that that—she was there, when it happened, and she read my book and it brought all the memories back to her. And then um, the people we rescued, uh, the people I rescued were mostly settled in France because I was on a French ship. [PL: Mmm.] Rescue mission, uh, ship. So they were resettled in France. But they were visiting families in places that we had book signings so they came. [PL: Mhm.] And um…so that’s very, very, very special. That’s something you cannot, um, I never expected that I could, you know, get that so soon so fast [PL: Mhm.] right after the book was um, published.

PL: So um...

TV: And they're all waiting for then English version. [PL: Yeah.] They said that the family would buy one book for the family. But if it’s English version they will buy a single c—they will buy single c—they will buy copies for each of their children [PL: Mhm.] and their, um, family members.

PL: Um ‘cause there’s a trend of, uh, Vietnamese-Americans learning like, like just knowing English um so that’s why they’re…

TV: Um yes, the younger generations, [PL: Mhm.] including my children, they speak, uh, English. Uh, they speak Vietnamese well. But uh, and they can read at some extent but they cannot read, you know, [PL: Mhm.] not Vietnamese literature, [PL: Yeah.] you know, yes, it would be hard for them to understand. Are you Vietnamese?

PL: No, I’m Chinese.

TV: Oh, you’re Chinese.

PL: Yeah. Uh so, did you translate the book or did you have someone translate?

TV: Actually the book was first written in English.
PL: Okay.

TV: And then I translate it in Vietnamese.

PL: Mm-hmm.

TV: But, while translating we added a lot of things in there, a lot more things in there. And so that’s why when we um revised the English version, we decided to retranslate everything from the Vietnamese book to the English.

PL: Okay.

TV: And so it’s uh, it’s uh, it’s a little um...uh, different from the way people do books. Usually, people will write in Vietnamese. But uh we first wrote, uh, wrote it in English.

PL: Okay.

TV: And then uh, because um because we add a lot of things and there’s so much work to be done with the book. So, I got some uh translation help from a friend of mine, American writer who speak and write Vietnamese very well. So he helped complete the translation.

PL: Um, what do you hope that people will take away from the book?

TV: I think they would understand about what Vietnam really was and is. Um, especially about the Vietnam War in light of the, uh, Vietnam War movie by Ken Burns that just came out. Uh, we were hoping that, uh, there will be uh...uh, there, that—the later Vietnam War movie films would be more, uh, accurate, more truthful. But I guess that um, as Americans you can only get that much of the truth. You cannot get the whole truth because it's hard to, unless we are daughters and sons of Vietnam, that we know exactly what was happening in our country. Uh so beside uh, uh...uh, propaganda documents by the communist regime in Vietnam, uh, the um, American could only—filmmakers could only interview people, uh, you know—in the short interview there was no way you could tell by the whole war. [PL: Mhm.] One third of our book was about the Vietnam War because both my husband and I were war correspondents during the time from 1969 up to until 1975. [PL: Mhm.] So we got the firsthand um knowledge and understanding of the war from our side, at least from our side. So I hope it will contribute to the American, um, not only the younger Vietnamese generations but the American readers about what the war was really like. I don’t believe that there was any book written by Vietnamese journalists. There was a book about—on Vietnam War written by the Vietnamese generals and Vietnamese government. So when it comes, when it came from governments, either from the North or from the South, uh, uh...I, I don’t think it can be as um, accurate and as um, impartial as—and neutral as from journalists. We were journalists so the truth was our—our goal, and our um, and our only goal to tell the truth. [PL: Mhm.] So we have no um, we have no um, need of, uh, propaganda. And I hope uh, the non-speaking Vietnamese readers can um, can get, can get the truth through our book about the Vietnam War.

PL: So how would you—so you described your perspective as very neutral?

TV: Yes, I described everything that was happening during the years that we cover the war and then um...uh, from our side and from the American side as well, and about our understanding what’s happening in Vietnam at the time.

PL: Um, so how was it like working with your husband, um, on the book and also at the radio station?
TV: It took us thirty-seven years that’s why [TV and PL laugh] I think if it was just one of us um was writing it would be much faster. It may take a couple of years. But because of—there are two different perspectives, and my husband and I used to be colleague, compe—competitive, you know, colleague. So, it was very hard, you know, and to publish, uh, to work together on one book, uh, because there is a lot of conflict, a lot of disagreement, uh, so uh, we went back and forth sometimes every step I move forward, and uh, you know, my husband set it back two steps. So it took a long, long time. Even the voice on the book, uh, how do you write it together on one book on a personal, you know, account. So it took us many years before, and thanks to the radio station when we decided to, uh…read some excerpt of it on the radio, [PL: Mhm.] we could use different voice. My husband used his voice, and I used mine. And through that experience, it was very well received by our listeners and then that’s why we use that approach on—in the book.

PL: Okay.

TV: You know, so, different voices. I would say whatever I, I, I want and he, he did the same thing. There are two voices in the book.

PL: M-hmm. Um, in a 1989 article in The Chicago Tribune you said one of the hardest challenges you faced is balancing family and professional life. Um, is that still true today?

TV: What thing?

PL: Um, balancing family [TV: Yes.] and professional life. Is that still a challenge?

TV: Uh, it’s much easier now that our children are all grown up.

PL: M-hmm.

TV: But during that time I was always torn between being a mother, being a wife, and being a, uh, community activist, and being a professional woman as well. Especially coming from a culture, as I was, it was that um, the woman, the children were the women’s job, and the house, all the house work was supposed to be woman’s. [PL: Mhm.] Uh, so…it wasn’t easy to, uh, succeed, uh, our side of family. So I, I got very used to the struggle of, of trying to, um, go, to go away from the, the norm of the society. But um, being torn as a mother is different, it’s very hard. I um…uh, because uh, all mothers wanted to be the best for their children, and the best Asian mother was very different from what I wanted to be. Uh, and so that’s why I, I have to learn almost, you know, learning every day how to, how to um, overcome the obstacle that I got. [PL: Mhm.] It was a very lonely road—path, you know, to be um, uh, to have a career and to be a community activist and also, uh, raising five children. Um…uh, five teenager at one point, uh there were three teenagers in the house at the same time, so it wasn’t easy. But uh fortunately, they are now all grown up and then, uh, and so it really is my guilt—a lot of my mother’s guilt, uh, a lot. Especially now with the seven grandchildren that I have, I was able to, uh, make up for everything that I missed with my children. Now I, I can do with the grandkids.

PL: Mhm. So how would you describe how you raised your daughters? Um, in, in the 2011 interview, um, you talked about how your father was very instrumental in teaching you how to believe and to not live for yourself but to live to make an impact.

TV: Yes.
PL: So what kind of things did you—what kind of principles did you raise to your daughters?

TV: Uh, the same thing.

PL: The same thing?

TV: Without um, without life example, life—how do you say it? Actual example, [PL: Yeah.] when—as children they didn’t understand at the time, they were very upset that um, that um, I took time away from the family to do things but now as they are older they, they understood it and they were very, uh, I think a lot of them were following my path right now. [laughs] I have uh, a daughter, the f—the fourth one is um, she was a, a Peace Corps returnee. She served two years in Morocco. Um, uh, trying to um, open up a women’s center for, for the Muslim women in Morocco. And uh, and now she’s a clinical social worker, working with uh, child protective services. So I think all of that path, the path they, they, they took was that um, going the way most Vietnamese um, children were told by their parents to do, to become doctors, lawyers, eng—engineers. Uh, but uh my children took different paths, different, you know. And I think uh, um…now, now they could claim that, you know, they follow our path. But when they were kids, they were very much against it. Just like I was kind of against it when my father told me that I should serve the—that I shouldn’t be just a mere hanger like a cloth hanger, a rice bag, that's a proverb in Vietnamese saying—only care about your own, you know, interests. Then at the time I said “why should I have to do that?” and then he told me that it’s better to be a strong member, uh—it’s better to be an ordinary member of a strong community than being the leader of a weak one.

PL: Um, so did you instill…did you uh allow your daughters to participate in any like Vietnamese traditions like Têt…

TV: Oh yeah. Not only allowing, I encouraged them. [PL: You encouraged them?] [all laugh] I suggested. Um, they didn’t follow first. You know, they were very much Americanized. Mm, they um…but then as they grow, grew older, then they start, you know, trying to understand more. And that’s why they encourage us that we have to publish the book. Because when they went—when they went to college, they realized that the book they wrote [sic] on the Vietnam War and on the Vietnamese were very different from what we told them at home. Um, here and there, at bedtime story, I um…when they were young I would read them fairy tales. But when they were older, I was telling them about my childhood, uh, you know, like “when I was your age” kind of thing. And it was very different from what they learned from the book. And they told us that um, it was so different. And, and they got into a lot of trouble with their professors in college because they debate against them. They said, “No that’s not the way my parents said this and that.” But there was no proof for them to prove, uh, their point. You know, it’s only, you know...hearing from the parents. It didn’t count in school. [PL: Mhm.] So they told us that we, we have a duty, that we owe it to their generation to write about it. [PL: Mhm.] And my oldest daughter helped us writing the book by um…if it—if you left it to me I don’t know when we can finish it. Because we always working full-time, always, um, participate, involved in outside activities full-time, um, and so there was really no time, not much time to do it. But we, we did write a lot here and there. But the time to combine them together and, and put everything together, uh, it was my daughter who did it. [PL: Mhm.] And then while putting it together, she saw a lot of missing parts, so she came to us with a tape recorder and asked us questions and then we would be telling her and she would transcribe it. [PL: Mhm.] And so, and so we finally have the book done. Uh, her um, help took…almost 15 years, you know, you know, to complete.

PL: Mhm. Does she remember a lot of it? Of like..
TV: Oh yes, she was um, four when we left Vietnam. And then she um, witnessed almost everything as we did. Um, and she did remember a little bit, and, and so...what—talking to us and helping us working on the book, she realized that, you know, she got a, a more truthful pictures of—from her memory. Because as a child sometime, you understand things and you look at it differently.

PL: Mhm. So when you were telling them, like, your childhood and what you—that you had gone through, did you try to shield them from anything? Or did you tell them the truth?

TV: Um, not when they are older. When they were young, yes. We only um, um, there was one thing that I talked a lot about, um, being a foreigner in the U.S. We are so grate—grateful that we are, um, that we are...that we could rebuild our life, a new life here. So I don’t want to, uh, my children to have any hatred, any anger, um, uh, even when it comes to uh, discrimination sometime um, experience, um, in the U.S. I try to shield them from that because I want them to live freely, 100% freely. Because there are g—throughout our ordeal, I realized that there are always good people around. You know, and um, and...although the bad people seem to do more, talk more, speak up louder, but the good people are more, um, patient, and are more consistent. So, uh, there’s always good people for them to count on. And that’s what I want to show them. Even now, I would shield my grandchildren from that. If one of them came home and said that, “oh there’s someone who told me this and that” like a Ching-chang or how come your eyes are not...uh then I would tell them that you know, tell them that that’s your specialty, you know. That’s something that no one can take away from you. Um, yeah, I want them to be as Americanized as much as possible, uh, but only on the good things, and then they should keep all the good things from their own heritage. [PL: Mhm.] Because that’s something—I learned that in my experience working at The San Diego Union-Tribune, I worked there for thirteen years. And I realized that um...my specialty is something that no one could compete with me, with my Vietnamese heritage. And so that’s why, um, I’ve seen a lot of Vietnamese-American journalists fail, uh...from competing with their American, um, colleague. Because of course we don’t look American, you know, when we go out we have a disadvantage. Sometime um, our uh, object (?) didn’t trust us as they uh, trust uh, and, you know, an American journalist. Um, and so it’s very wrong when, when you try to compete, uh, from your, on your weakness. And then I realized my strength was my heritage. Uh, all American, um, colleagues at the paper, when they write something about Vietnamese they have to come to me, and ask for my background information and ask for my opinion. So that’s made me...that’s made me an expert. So why should you give up your expertise for something, you know? Of course you should try your best to be the best um, um, in, in, in this country. But um, you always need to hold on to your, you know, to your heritage.

PL: Yeah. Do you have any distrust, um, amongst the Vietnamese-American community? Like, any divisions in the community here in Houston?

TV: Yes, um, not the distrust. I think we were able to succeed, uh, 20 years, uh, working, um, in the ethnic media is very different. When you work in the mainstream, you don’t have much, uh, trouble dealing with the community. Although I did, because um, uh...and that’s why I couldn’t cover my own community. It’s very hard. Uh, f you say something bad, even it's truthful, the community would look at you as a, you know, as a, a traitor, they would say that “you stab us on the back.” And so it’s, it’s very, very hard to cover your own community. But being in ethnic media, I don’t have to deal with that dilemma. And uh, but, I have a different dilemma. It's, um...look at, present it. So I try to present both points of view. Like when we see something from the news that not good for the Vietnamese then I have to, you know, have both sides speaking. Uh, and let them speak for themselves. The nice thing about um, about doing radio versus doing a journal, doing newspaper, is that you can get their voice on the air and they speak for themselves. Uh, in um, newspaper, when you write about it you quote them, but they could retract it. They could say, “oh I didn’t say so.” Or the community could ask, you know, could question your accuracy. But, in radio, when someone’s voice, you know, it's right there, and so that, that’s why
both of us my husband and I always um, uh, were able to succeed after 20 years. Uh, sometime, we talk among ourselves—it’s harder to be a journalist here than back in Vietnam because we have to um, please both worlds. You know. We have to um—and then, uh, being professional at the same time as being sensitive to both cultures.

PL: So American culture and Vietnamese… [TV: And—and Vietnamese culture.] Okay.

TV: I, uh, have a talk show, a weekly talk show on love and family that we talk a lot about the different cultures, about the conflict of being in a new country. Uh, about the differences in being American and being Vietnamese. Uh, especially now with a lot of comers, um, newcomers from Vietnam. Uh, they even asked us to, uh, talk about, um, the manners, the different manners from Vietnam and the U.S. Uh, for example, in Vietnam, as well as as in, uh, with Chinese, we would um—we use the chopstick and then we will dip our chopstick into the, you know, communal bowl and, uh, plate. But in the U.S. you cannot do so. So there’s little things like that, but—very enlightening to people and, and really help them to adjust, you know, much quick—more quickly than um, than uh, the first generation come over to the U.S.

PL: Um, so do you—so you like radio a lot more than the newspaper?

TV: Yes, and faster too.

PL: It's faster.

TV: Yeah. You just uh, get up there and then you just talk. Um, why um, in writing especially someone like uh, me I am a little, I have a little problem with being perfectionist. So when I wrote something I was never, uh, satisfied with it. I kept rewriting and rewriting. And so it took much longer time than speaking on the air.

PL: So what difficulties have you encountered with the radio? Um, yeah.

TV: Hmm. Uh…being between, uh, going in between the lines, between the conflict, uh, of the um...you know, there’s a—there’s the U.S., there’s Vietnam, there’s also within Vietnam there’s the old comers and the newcomers. There’s a lot of conflict. There’s the uh, uh, pro-Communists and the anti-Communists. And uh, there’s all of that, there’s a very fine line, going, surviving to them. And that’s the hardest. That’s the hardest part about, uh, surviving. Our English book title, English-version title is Surviving, you know. We always tried to survive in the Vietnam War. We tried to survive. Now, even in the U.S. we try to survive. Uh, succeeding between the conflict.

PL: Mhm. So like living between two sides?

TV: Yeah, between two sides. Always.

PL: Always?

TV: Yes, always. Same thing at home with the kids. The, my children will be, uh, would be asking me, um...like, uh...for example: how can I um, uh... you know, they would ask uh, who, uh...what we would we prefer they marry to? I have five girls. So they ask, uh, what kind of husband, what ethnic group that I like them to marry to. And of course we told we like them to marry to the Vietnamese. And they said “so you are discriminating against the non-Vietnamese.” I said no I’m not. But, that’s our preference. And then I have to explain, you know. But, in a way not to make them feel that we discriminate against anyone. We don’t. We cannot. We’ve been discriminated against a lot in—throughout our lives. We don’t
want them to be discriminating against anyone. But I was telling them about the similarities in the culture, in the religion, in the language, in the understanding, in the acceptance of society, acceptance of, uh, both families, you know, because in our culture I don’t know—uh, when we marry, we marry the whole extended family. Uh, the whole race, we don’t just marry one person. Uh, individuum—individualism is very different, uh, in Vietnam. There was no such, you know, it’s more community, it’s more family. And so I tried to um, to explain, uh, all of that. And again, that’s…that means that, you know, drawing a fine line between conflicts.

PL: Hm-hmm. Um, so do you feel like people have to choose a side? Or...

TV: Yes, there are choices to make [PL: Mhm.] every day, all the time, on everything. And but, I believe there’s a price to pay for any choice you make. [PL: Mhm.] And if you um, if you research, if you find out what price it is, and you accept it then you, you will have a peace of, uh, you will be at peace in any choice you make. [PL: Mhm.] No matter how hard it is.

PL: Um, so when you came to the states you had—your parents were already here.

TV: Yes.

PL: Um, and so you had—would you say that your family was your main support group in the beginning?

TV: Oh yes, from the beginning. We couldn’t have survived without them. [PL: Hm.] Uh, living, uh, in Vietnam, living underground for two years. Uh, paying for the boat’s escape twenty times. [PL: Hm.] It’s a lot and a lot and a lot of money. I didn’t realize at the time, we were, you know, running for our lives, so we just need whatever we need—we needed. But when we came here, I found out that my parents had to work two jobs, you know, day and nights, they support me. Uh, and my whole family had to, um, sacrifice a lot. Um, and uh, even before then, when I was growing up they were always my, my, my…mentors, my um, teachers, uh and so um, family was everything to me.

PL: M-hmm.

TV: So I try to do the same with my children, um…um, although, our life was a little different from my family’s. Um, because um…I think as a jour—uh, because both my husband and I wanted almost everything. We wanted to be parents, we wanted to be uh successful professionals, we wanted to, uh, pay back our debt, uh, of our survi—survival. Because uh, throughout the ordeal there was twice I made a vow because at that time, um, things were, it was so dark. It was so terrible that I wish for that, uh that life. Than keep living, it was too hard to live. It took a lot more courage to live than to die. Uh, um, and so, and so I made a vow that if I survived that my life wouldn't be of my own. And that’s why when we came to the U.S. we started paying that debt and that’s why we have to sacrifice our kids to some, you know, in some way. Before I leave the home for the meeting, for example, for a community meeting, I have—always have to weight, (?) you know. Um, my children are well fed, are well, you know, at home and somebody babysit them before I could, you know, go to the meeting. Uh, you know, I weight that all the time if a child was sick. Then I have to weight whether I—sometimes I have to, uh, leave a sick child at home with a babysitter because I was supposed to speak to a thousand people at the fundraising. It’s all set, I cannot, so I have to weight—you know, all the time, every single day, everything I do, I, I got so used to being weighting even up to now, I don’t need to. I can relax a little bit, but I still weight. It becomes so, a nature of my personality. To be weighting. Whatever I say, whatever I do does it affect anyone? Does it hurt anyone? Does it, uh, is it good for anyone? You know, that kind of, of mentality you have to, um, to do all the time. But um, it was hard at the beginning. It make me into a tough person at the beginning. But now I, I, I think it was an advantage of mine. I think that that was so…uh, that gave me
such peace in everything that I do, no matter what, uh, consequences, because I need to weight before I, I think um…uh, I, I was aware and I um…I guess, and I um…I make my own decision. I think it was tough for my father at the beginning. Like on my marriage—marriage, he would um, he uh, said something and I said that, uh, you know, um…I knew it then. And I—and he said “oh if you knew it then you can decide, you can do whatever you want. But then you have to know that there’s a price. Knowing there’s a price.” I said, "yes.” And that, um, conversation followed me my whole life. So, when you make your own decisions you would have the strength and the power and the will to, you know, to, to, to overcome any uh any consequences.

**PL:** M-hmm. Um, so how did you—how do you feel about the current anti-refugee, anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States today?

**TV:** Oh that, that, that is very sad. Um, the children and um, my husband and I, we talk about that almost every day. Um, because if, uh, that kind of thing was happening thirty years ago we wouldn’t be here. We wouldn’t be settled in the U.S. and nobody would be helping us, nobody would be rescuing us and we had no chance. So, um, and uh, a couple of years ago when the um, uh, Syria, uh, refugees came and then they were pushed back to sea and a lot of them drowned. That was the biggest motivation that, uh, that um, made me uh, took two years of semi-absence from work to finish our book. Because our book is, is a whole—everything here, if you read the book and you realize that our surviving, um, was worth, you know, your help, then I hope it will remind all the Americans about, you know, their own immigration to, to this country. Uh, because um, that’s why we, we all made this country you know the greatest. And now if we go back to our, uh, the um—the sentence on the liberty of, of, of, you know, on the Statue of Liberty always came to me whenever I felt tired or, uh, discouraged. And so I think that that, if we still have that Statue out there, you should, uh, walk and talk. You know, we cannot turn back the refugees, we cannot turn our back on them.

**PL:** Hm-hmm. Um…so, because like, um, as a refugee yourself, what would you consider your home?

**TV:** My home?

**PL:** M-hmm.

**TV:** My home is where my family is. [TV and PL laugh] Wherever they are, then that’s my home.

**PL:** Yeah. Um, so have you, had you, uh, visited Vietnam before?

**TV:** Uh yes, I took my, uh, three younger children, uh, to Vietnam on a, on a mission ship—on a, on a mission trip, uh, building school in the rural area. Because at that time they were, um, they start growing up and they start having questions about, about Vietnam. And um, it’s very hard, uh, for them to, uh, I want them to have their own experience. So I took them on a, um, mission trip, um, and we went to the rural area. We build um, um well, built a drinking water wells.

**PL:** M-hmm.

**TV:** For the villagers and build school for the children. And the children ask uh, “why do we have to do this? This is supposed to be the government job. Why do people have to buy their drinking water?” Because those peop—those um, peasant villagers have to buy water to drink every day. Because um, the river water was so contaminated that it couldn’t be, uh, that wasn’t drinkable. And so we said that, ask the gov—ask the government, you know. I let them—I didn’t answer for them. I asked them, I told them to research for themselves, and uh…and try to understand. And they said “why do we have to build school?”
And then they met with kids, um, six-year-old, um, first grader have to walk two miles to school on the—not on the road but on the um, like uh, between rice fields, road—to school, because there was no school close to them. And then uh, so they, they say that, uh, “so there was no education for the children?” I said, “no there's no such free education like the U.S.” Uh so, from that trip they understand what’s happening in the country. They understood why we had to leave, and they appreciate the U.S. a lot more. Before that they took everything for granted. But when they came back there and they saw the kids, they saw the, we visited an orphanage and saw so many children having no parents. And then, and having no foster parents, uh, like in the U.S. Then they start—I think it, they really grew to love and appreciate the U.S. a lot more. And at the same time they understood what communism was about. Before, they only uh, um...read about it, um, on, on textbook, and textbook was mostly anti-South Vietnamese. Was mostly pro-communist. They would come home and tell me that “But the Vietnamese was—were heroes, were heroic by fighting against the American,” you know, “for independence.” And I told them “but American weren’t there.” They were there to help us, you know, they didn’t colonize us like the French or the Chinese. It's very different. Uh, so uh, and then um, and through that Vietnam—Vietnam trip, they, they, they, understood a lot more. A lot more than anything that they could teach anywhere. So I think, uh, um, yes, uh, we—I came back, my husband came back with um, for um, to cover the um, uh, uh, President Bush, uh, you know, um, conference in Vietnam in 2006. And um, uh, um, we wanted to, to follow Obama last year, two years ago, to Vietnam but um, you know, but our visa wasn’t accepted. Wasn't granted by the uh Vietnam, Vietnam government.

PL: Oh. [long pause] Um, oh, so how do you think journalism has changed over time for you?

TV: Oh, journalism was my uh, my lifeline. It’s in my blood. Mm, I remember when I was growing up my father asked what I wanted to be. And when I grow up, I said that I want to travel so I would, so I researched all the profession that could help me to travel. First would be being flight attendant. Um, and then, uh, being a diplomat. And being a journalist. And so, and at that time the easiest way was to be a flight attendant. All you need to be is uh, knowing—know the language. And I was in French school at the time, so I spoke French, uh, fluently. But my husba—my father asked me, “But you know flight attendant is also like a waitress. Do you want to be a waitress the rest of your life?” And I said that, “but I could travel places.” He said, “But still you are a being a waitress.” I, it, I—the, my, my tone, my tone of voice seems to be—no, he didn’t mean to look down on, on the job, but he said it’s not fulfilling enough for me. Uh, uh, so, and so I said, “Then I’ll be a diplomat.” And he said, uh, “You like politics? You have to deal with a lot of politics,” you know. And “It will be out of your hands, because you are a diplomat you have to follow whatever you are told to do. I don’t think that you, you, you, can have that, uh, you are not that type to do that.” And so I said, “Okay, then I will be a journalist.” And my father said that “You will be poor. No journalist will be rich.” [all laugh] Um, “but you will get the chance to learn, along with traveling.” And I said, “that’s what I wanted.” I wanted to learn and keep learning. And uh, journalist, uh, journalism helped me to learn throughout my life. Um, and made me who I am.

But one thing about journalism that I didn’t discover before, and when I share it a lot of my colleagues told me that they didn’t know about that. Uh, journalism helped me to survive, uh, through my ordeal. Because um, being a journalist, you learn how to distance yourself from the situation. From the subject, from whatever happened from your environment. And so, throughout my darkest, uh, times, I was able to step back and, and look at it as a journalist instead of being as a victim, an object of the situation. I would pretend, I would say, I would, eh, "why am I running for my life away from the pirates on Koh Kra island,” for example. I was telling myself that I am just be—"I am just a journalist disguised,” you know, “being in disguise as a boat person.” You know, so, “and I am going to go back and write about this.” And so I start, my mind start recording what happening instead of recording what fear and, you know, despair—despair. I was able to distance myself. I didn’t realize that about that—the profession until, you know, until then. And now I use that, uh, instance in a lot of other ways, you know, whenever I have to
deal with anything. For example, dealing with my uh, um, children for example. Mothers and daughters always have some kind of conflict [phone rings] at some point, uh, at some time. So, I always again I would retreat into my journalistic, uh, you know, mood and uh, being able more—to be more, more objective.

**PL:** So do you see the, um, weaknesses of journalism in portraying information to people?

**TV:** Uh, yes. Um, there’s a lot of um…the way I, I see journalism is very much different from today’s journalism. Especially, uh, media, you know, uh the, the mainstream media and the social media. Mainstream media is more for ratings. Um, the nice thing about the ethnic media is that uh, we have no ratings. When our advertiser asks us for rating I said that “no, Arbitron doesn’t cover ethnic media. Nielsen doesn't cover ethnic media.” So we are free, we don’t have to, um, to satisfy, um, uh, the rating. Uh, we don’t have to satisfy our viewers or our listeners for the ratings. Um, and so we, we can be a lot more objective. And I, um…and I like, uh, um, media the old way. I remember um, uh, you know studying my media, looking at um, um, studying my career, look—watching, uh, World War II movies. At that time, there was only radio. And radio was so close with the lifeline of the people. People, eh, and then, radio was able to, um—media did a lot more than um—had more compassion. Although, you..prof—uh, I mean, you report the truth. But at the same time, you, you could choose to report the good truth and the bad truth. There’s a good truth of, uh, soldiers helping one another. A good truth, a good, uh, good truth of um, and you know, people helping others to survive. And yeah, the bad truth of people, you know, killing, pointing the guns, and killing other people. There’s a lot of different truth in, in journalism. There’s not only one.

So, uh, if you uh, uh, you can, you know, if you um…and then through my experience, being a Vietnamese reporter versus my American war-correspondence colleague, they reported the Vietnam War so badly, so negatively. All the bad pictures, all the bad images, and bad stories. While there are a lot of good stories out there they didn't look for. I guess because it was not as, um, as, as um as sensational, as attractive as bad things. For example, media now, sometimes they uh, yes, a shooting of uh, of a, like, a school massacre for example, school shooting. Uh, of course you have to, to…report, you know, all, all thing—everything that’s happening there. But you can also, if you say all the bad things, um, then you should look for good things to balance it out because there’s always different, you know, different things in life. Um, uh, doing media in both ways, especially more leaning towards the good side lifts people’s spirit up. Lifts, uh, people’s hopes up. Otherwise, uh, nobody want to, whenever they return turn on the new it's all the bad things, you know, all you see are, are the bad things. Then people don’t trust the media anymore because they don’t get much from it. They only get, uh, discouraged, discouragement, and that’s bad. Um, same thing with social media. Social media was a great, great, greatest tool in um, for every individual can be a reporter can be a news agency of his, of, of him or herself. But if you use social media to do bad things then it’s—then um, then the consequences will be, you know, many, many-fold, uh, worse. And so um…in our, on our airwave we keep telling people that we always leaning to the positive side of the news.

**PL:** M-hmm.

**TV:** We will, uh, present only news to you, but we will cover the, the good side. There’s always a good side if you look—if you keep looking, you will find a lot of good things around you.

**PL:** M-hmm.
TV: And we should live that way, that’s the way our grandparents and our parents lived, you know, to
make our life, uh, the way it is now. We shouldn’t, uh, rob that from our children’s generation. I don’t
want my kids to grow up and, and all they saw was all the terrible things happening around us.

PL: Um, so, through your radio station you post, um, talk shows about, um, various aspects of how to
assimilate into society. But then you also have discussions on news reporting?

TV: Yes.

PL: Is that right?

TV: Yes. Yes, we do. We have um, our, our radio is mostly news and talk show.

PL: M-hmm.

TV: If you have, uh, any questions about anything, there will be a talk show answering that. Uh, we have
people um that’s why we have like, almost like, a hundred, uh, contributing hosts. Uh, being a newcomer,
you want to—let’s say, where to go, what to do, uh, how to buy the first house, how to get your kids in
school, in college, uh, how to, uh, get insurance, you want to understand about anything, there’s,
there’s some show that you can call in and ask questions and we have the expert telling them what to do.
Uh, years ago, we used to have the, the mayor of Houston going on our airwave once a month to take
phone calls and answer questions. We have the police chief. We still have the police, um, uh, show, uh, to
answer questions. We have the judge, the court and you, and so all the questions, um—uh—and it’s all
call-ins talk shows. So you can ask about anything. People like, uh, um, last week on my love and family
show, I was talking about Will Nguyen, who, who is being imprisoned by the Vietnam government
because he went, he was on Viet—he was in Vietnam on vacation but he um, he, uh, participate in a
protest, you know, against, um, against uh, uh, leasing, uh, Viet—Viet—Vietnam land to, uh, foreigners
for ninety-nine years. Ninety-nine years means almost, you know, losing, giving up the land, uh, to
foreign countries. So he was um, being an, an Vietnamese-American, uh, he grew up here, he was born
here so he thought that he would, you know, protest. And it was a peaceful protest. But then he was uh,
caught and arrested by the uh, by the Vietnamese government. And I talk on the air about that and a lot of
people call in and, and, and, and share and some people cry, some people look at him as heroes and some
others, uh, were saying, uh, he was too naïve to do that in Vietnam because Vietnam, uh, is not, uh, the
U.S. Uh, and um, being a foreigner is hard. It will be tough. They will, uh, they will consider you as a
terrorist, you know, when a foreigner participate in, um, like a, a protest against the government it’s not
like uh—they, it would be labeled terrorist. So it’s—and all of that, it was so new to us. So along with our
community, we are learning everyday and we’re growing everyday, uh, about new things and, and trying
to understand and trying to overcome new things that, that, that, that happen. So it’s a never-ending kind
of, um, with story and relationship. A never-learning—uh, never-ending learning. And that’s what um,
make us um, I think it’s—that’s what make us um, knowledgeable and rich to me. To me, to me I don’t
know, um...and especially on social issues are something that I believe that, uh, we are—we owe to our
society to care about social issues and do something about it. Do whatever we can and each and every one
of our capability to contribute because we, we all, that’s a debt we have to repay.

PL: M-hmm. Steven, did you have any questions?

SL: Um, you talked earlier about how American understanding of the Vietnam War was not always
accurate, so what sorts of things do you think are typically misrepresented in American depictions of the
war?
VL: Uh, they only did, um, misrepresented the whole, um, idealism of the South Vietnam. Of the South-Vietnamese soldiers. The heroism of South-Vietnamese soldiers. Uh, everything that you see in the Vietnam War, on American publication, was very negative on South Vietnam. They called us puppet government. Yes, some leaders may be puppet leaders, but there are true leaders there, there are true heroes there. Um, uh, the, the proof of it is that when Viet—when Saigon fell, when Vietnam fell, many of them commit suicide instead of falling into the hands of the enemies, you know, I don’t think a puppet, uh, leaders would, would do that. They would not do that. [SL: Mhm.] Of course, um, committing suicide is not, is not something Americans are familiar with and understand very well. But uh, for um, you to sacrifice your life for goals, I think that means something. And um… and I think because American media only follow American soldiers, I didn’t see many of them so not—very few, uh, follow, uh, Vietnamese, um, soldiers. So all they saw was that, um, uh, I am very grateful to the American soldiers but at the same time I felt for them. I, I, I, I felt much pity for them. Uh, they were youngsters, they didn’t know anything about Vietnam, about the culture, about the language, about the people, uh, about the enemies, who look exactly the same as their allies, and they were thrown there. They weren’t uh, educ—educated enough, uh, about, uh, the country, about the war, and they were thrown there. And, and, and forced to fight, forced to kill, coming from a country a peaceful country like the U— the U.S. is very, very hard to understand Vietnam. And so, that’s why the American, um, uh—but mainly, mainly American soldiers fought so hard and were very heroic. But uh, you know, the other half, you know, could be scared, could be uh, could be uh, overreacted and cause, uh, troubles. And the American media, um, you know, focused on those, uh, nega—you know negative—negativities, and that’s not fair, that’s not fair at all to the American soldiers and to, to the Vietnamese.

The same thing with the people. Um, uh, since we look so much alike, the South and the North Vietnamese; we’re all Vietnamese, we look alike. And so they, and, and, and so, uh, the American, um, media, since they didn’t understand about the Vietnam history, um, they, uh, kind of, uh, glorified the North Vietnamese as, uh, real patriots while the Vietnamese as puppet people. You know, people can be puppet, uh, and the patriotic really didn’t understand about communism. The very communism that, um, our, uh, that, that five U.S. presidents tried to, to, to, to fight against, to stop the, uh, influence of, uh, journalism [sic] all over the world. And so they didn’t understand about that. And then, uh, because journ—uh, communism is all propaganda. Even, um, Gorbachev, uh, was the president of the, of the Russian, of Russia, he said that at twenty years old if you don’t—if you are not a communist you are, um, uh, you are a coward. At forty, if you still, if you are still a communist, you are stupid. You know, because you have to—because it’s all propaganda, it’s all talking about—look at, there’s, there’s only four country left that stay communist. But um, in the ‘60s and ‘70s, American media fell in love with communism, with, with, socialism. Socialism is wonderful, it’s very different. Communism used the social, disg—uh, disguise to, to, to, to attract people. Uh, sh—socialist country like Norway, like Canada are all wonderful countries. But uh, communist countries are not. They just use the socialism as, as an excuse. And that’s why they base on that and they, they glorify the North, uh, Vietnamese. Uh, and they, they insulted the South Vietnamese.

Uh, although I am a journalist and I don’t take sides, during the war, but I am a South Vietnamese—I know exactly what is happening in my country. So um, so that, that was not fair. As a citizen, I think that was so unfair. And, and I uh, I had written a lot about that. I spoke last year, I, I, two years ago I spoke at the UC Berkeley on um, a symposium about the Vietnam War about that. I said that it’s about time, at least, American journalists have to be, have to look back into history. Uh, there’s a lot new um, uh, there’s a lot of, uh, confidential document had been, how do you say—had been, the archive had been opened up, [PL: Mhm.] you know, for public viewers. They should go back, and you have to admit, you have to fix it, you have to admit if you are wrong. If you were wrong then you have to s—to, to be uh, you have to have the uh, honest. You have to be honest and do something about it. [pause] Talking about Vietnam War, then I, I got my blood up because that was that was, that was so unfair. Being Vietnamese journalist
I was caught between the two, uh, between the um, the two si—the two sides of the story. I was caught between, uh, my people and I was caught between my, my people and my own—I have to answer to my American colleague. I have to debate with my American colleague all the time. Why we should be looking at the same thing, we are all journalist, we are professional journalists there's only one way to go—do—to go about that. But then, I have to defend, we have to defend ourselves all the times. And it’s not, it’s not nice to put us on defensive mode all the times.

PL: [to SL] Do you have any questions?

SL: I do not.

PL: Okay. Um, I wanted to ask, uh, you made a lot of achievements at a young age, um, as a journalist, bringing awareness to the Vietnamese boat people crisis, um, so today what would you consider your most, uh, proud accomplishments?*

TV: I guess being a journalist. [laughs] You know, every other part of my life was just um, just um, just um...history. Uh, it's history that took us along. But being, uh, a journalist, we try to stay attached to history. That's why I had to go through all of that, those ordeals. All those ordeals became my achievement. Uh, we were survivors. We were just um, uh...[TV’s husband walks by out of frame, she laughs] my husband, and our president. Um, and, and so, uh, I think my biggest achievement is being, is being able to survive. Um, and thanks to journalism that I, that I learn how to do that. Uh, and I hope that um...if I, I hope that...people can learn from my experience. If I could survive, anybody could. Because I was a very shy Vietnamese woman, [laughs] um...but I was able to, uh, endure and overcome, uh, to get this achievement—anybody else could. There was no excuse. When my children said “I can’t” I told them that there were two things I never want to hear from them: “I don’t know” and “I can’t.” If you don’t know then you, you know, search to know—find out. If you can’t, then you have to, you know, try to make it possible. Nothing is impossible. When there is a will, there is a way. That’s my motto since very young, you know, my father always said that—he used to quote Napoleon's quote: “there’s no ‘impossible’ word in my dictionary.” And that’s what he, and in French there is a term that says vouloir c'est pouvoir, means there’s a will there’s a way.

PL: M-hmm. Um, so since being—

TV: And then I, I had, I had gone through so many impossible situations in my life and I realized that when you are facing dead end, then you look at the impossible and try to make it possible. And I realized that, you know, mystery happens. There’s a lot of...mysterious things happen within yourself, within your mind, within your will, and to the people around you, when you uh, when you uh, decided to not give up. Uh, my next book after the memoir will be, uh, a book that had been, um, asked for by a publisher. The first pub—pub—publisher of, uh, Chicken Soup for the Soul. [PL: M-hm.] He was the very first publisher, he listened to, uh, my, one of my, uh, speaking engagement in New York and he invited to me to lunch and he said that, “Why don’t you write me five books on the irony of life.” And I said, why do you—irony, inspirational book, and I asked him why. He said that, "in listening to your talk, I realized that there could be five books on irony of life." Uh when uh, because I was talking about—then he told me what he wanted to be done. But I told him that it has to wait until I finish my memoir.

One is about, um, you know, when I was, uh, a woman in Vietnam and being a war correspondent and then um, that’s such, that’s very ironic for a woman like myself to be. And then when I was a boat person, and when I was came back to rescue, I was a refugee. How can I dream of going back on a rescue ship to rescue refugees? Uh, thirty-six, uh, international ship passed us by. Nobody even stopped to help us, much less rescuing us. How could I dream of being a rescuer? But I was telling everybody I met,
wherever I went, wherever I talked to, I told them that, you know, I dream of someday being a, a rescuer. And then very soon, six da—six years after I came to the U.S., I came back on a rescue ship. You know, if you keep telling people about your dreams, good dreams, not for yourself but for other people, then somebody will help you to realize it. And that’s what happened to me. And it’s happened to me in all the very ironic situation of life. For example, I was a mother of five. I wasa, I am a Catholic. I am a mother of five, I am a Catholic. I am, uh, you know...anti-abortion. I am not, you know, fanatically anti-abortion. But in my religion I just—but I was pick, uh, I was, uh, chose, chosen by the, um National Organization for Women to be their twenty-first-century woman. To give me the Twenty-First-Century woman award. So when they picked me, I told them that, “Are you sure? I think you picked the wrong person.” This is who I am, and I was telling them, and then all the feminists there—Gloria Steinem was there, uh, Dr. Ruth Westheimer was there, all the, you know, uh Faye Wattleton who was the um, president of Planned Parenthood was there. And I was telling them about my abortion stance, about picking the wrong person. And they all, after my, uh, my talk, they all said they picked the right person. So that’s ir-, ir- isn’t that irony? And that’s, that’s what the, um...that’s what I will write next after, after this.

PL: Um, so yeah those are your goals for the future?

TV: Hm-hmm.

PL: Is to do that? Okay. Um, so what are your hopes for the Vietnamese-American community? Um...

TV: I hope the Vietnamese-American community have the...best of, um, chances of all, of all people, all our people, to be here. So we should appreciate it. We shouldn’t take it for granted. We should learn everything we could learn and, uh, but at the same time you should maintain your heritage. Uh, delete what is not so good about, uh, the Vietnamese culture but keep—hold on to the good, the good ones. And I hope the Vietnamese Americans, um, I believe we are the most privileged, uh, group, race. Because we have been through war almost all our life. Uh, one-thousand years under the Chinese, one-hundred years under the French, and then uh, after that then the war until the end of, of South Vietnam. Um, we’ve been through so much to something out of it. Make something out of all the misery that we had to go through and make it worthwhile for the next generations. I believe each one of us, we were born into this world, we owe our lives to it. And everything we got, the more we got, the more we have to pay back. And it’s better to pay it forward than having to pay it back. Paying it forward, you can have more, um, you know, having to pay it, uh, badly, uh, so uh, I told the children to pay it forwar. If you learn how to pay it forward now, when you're faced with things that I have, I had to face, who knows in the future what this kind of, of—when we came to this country, we thought that our children will have, you know, the greatest of peace and the greatest of life here. Now I’m not so sure anymore. You know, with everything’s happening around us, I don’t know what the future brings. Uh, so, It’s very scary, so I told the children that they should pay forward as soon, as long as they still can. Uh, because there may not be chance to do that in the future.

PL: M-hmm. Did you have any last questions Steven?

SL: Not off hand.

PL: Okay. Would—do you have anything else you would like to add?

TV: Hm, hm, no. I just think that we just need to...pay back, no matter what situation we are. Um, I been thinking a lot about uh, the, the, the famous suicidals that we um, just saw on the news. Anthony Bourdain, I was a fan of Anthony Bourdain. And Kate Spade for example. And um, it really brought back a lot of memories of all my desperate moments in life that I wanted to, to, to, do the same. And then I
realized that um, uh, it’s such a waste of, of, of life, a waste of talents, a way of—waste of personality. And I think that we all have to bear that responsibility as, uh, as the community. As friends. We all should bear when some—uh, I was able to survive because I got a lot of help through my des—desperate time. Sometime the help doesn’t have to be there, the help of— the idea of, of being loved and being waited by my parents kept me alive. Um, the love I had for my baby and my husband kept me alive, you know, all of those things that could be, um, as a member in the society we could…give that, we could offer that to people so they don’t be that so desperate. I really cried when I heard Anthony Bourdain killed himself because it’s such—I was a fan of Robin Williams. I know that that’s mental health, but, but those could be helped too, if the people around—if we care more about the people around us. And um, one thing, although I appreciate the social media and new technology, but one time, one thing I miss so much about the old time when there was no phone, when there was no, you know, technology, was that like at the airport you always talking to the people next to you. Now, everybody was like that. [motions using phone] My husband and I, whenever we went to, you know, we did the same thing. And I look around and I took it back and I told him that we shouldn’t do that, you know, we should do something about this. So I stopped doing that in my own family when the grandchildren come in to stay the week with us, I confiscated all of their phones. I say you can have it one hour a day at the end of the day, you know, and then uh, the same thing, I think we should, we should do something to, to balance our life between media and social media. Between our family and our society. And I think that the balance you ask, the questions you ask earlier, it’s still, it’s still my goal now, trying to balance everything. At the same time you have to balance, uh, physical life and spiritual life as well. [PL: Mhm.] Physical act—uh, physical activities and spiritual activities. Material things versus, you know, uh, spiritual things. It has to be balanced out. It keep you balance.

PL: Hm-hmm. Okay, well that’s all we have today. Uh, thank you so much for your time.

TV: Thank you. Thank you for giving me the chance to share my passion.

[interview ends]

*Vu would like to add that one of her accomplishments in life is going back to Koh Kra in 2017 to establish a cemetery on the island. Koh Kra is the island where pirates kept her, her family, and other Vietnamese boat refugees captive. The cemetery has 60 tombstones and is visited monthly by a Thai Buddhist monk who will pray for the deceased and maintain the cemetery.