

Houston Asian American Archive
Chao Center for Asian Studies, Rice University

Interviewee: Antonia Ingversen
Interviewers: Xingyi Li, Sophie Lafferty
Date/ Time of Interview: October 20th, 2018
Transcribed by: Xingyi Li, Sophie Lafferty
Edited by: Zoe Clark (3/25/2019)
Audio Track Time: 1:40:23

Background: Judge Antonia Ingversen was born on May 4th, 1946 in Manila Philippine. Her family immigrated to Missouri, United State when she was eight years old. She graduated from the University of Missouri in 1968 with a B.A. degree in Political Science and moved to Houston. She later obtained her J.D. degree from University of Houston in 1973. She was admitted to practice in Texas in 1973. She was elected as the Associate Justice for the 14th Court of Appeal in Texas in 1980s. She served as the president and the director of Asian American Bar Association from 1984 to 1998. She established a non-profit organization called Asian American Bar Foundation, Inc. She was also involved in other organizations including APAHA and Organization of Chinese Americans.

Setting: The interview focused on Toni Ingversen's childhood, immigration, education and work experience. It was conducted in person at the second floor of Fondren Library, Rice University on October 20th by Xingyi Li and Sophie Lafferty.

Key:

TI: Antonia Ingversen
XL: Xingyi Li
SL: Sophie Lafferty
—: speech cuts off; abrupt stop
...: speech trails off; pause
Italics: emphasis
(?): preceding word may not be accurate
[Brackets]: actions [laughs, sighs, etc.]

Interview Transcript:

XL: Today is October 20th. It's 9:30am right now. We are at Fondren Library interviewing Judge Ingversen for Houston Asian American Archive. I am Xingyi Li.

SL: I am Sophie Lafferty.

XL: To start with, uh could you tell me your name for the record?

TI: Yes. My full name is Antonia, my nickname is Toni. Uh... My mother's maiden name is Martinez Ilagan, I-L-A-G-A-N, and Ingversen, I -N-G-V-E-R-S-E-N.

XL: Okay, so when and where were you born?

TI: Where I was born?

XL: Yeah.

TI: I was born in Manila, Philippine.

XL: And when were you born?

TI: May 4th, 1946.

XL: Okay, so now we will ask you questions about your early childhood and immigration. Do you have any memory of Philippine before you migrated to the US?

TI: Yes.

XL: Could you describe it for me?

TI: Well I remember that uh...we live in the um what they called AGRD. [**XL:** Mhmm] My father fought for the American in World War II in Philippine. He was a Sergeant and we lived on the base of the family housing. And so, I remember that quite a bit. I remember riding my bicycle pass the house, you know, slamming into a telephone pole. I remember going to the officer's club area and watching movies there. I remember chasing dragonflies. I remember going to uh live in my grandfather's house. It was a big two-story house right beside Santo Tomas. I think it was like the [inaudible]. We lived there before we came uh uh before we left the Philippine to come to America. My grandfather was a circuit judge in the Philippines. He would go over around to the provinces and hold court. And I remember the great big house and the big sala, this is like the big living room. I remember we used to polish the floors I guess along with the maids with half coconuts. That's how. And then we put our foot on it and we polish the floor that way. And I remember there being a dance instructor that would come to the house and he would teach all the ladies how to dance. I remember going at the second floor, the balcony, and looking out, I forgot the name of that, it was a great big boulevard and watching the cars get stuck in the flood.

XL: Wow. So...did your family live together like you with your grandparents?

TI: Only at the very end. We lived in our own house. I remembered the first one. I was told that it was a bungalow on stilts because the Philippines floods a lot and it has woven bamboo- woven thatched walls and they had to hold on the roof whenever it would be really windy they would hold out their hand on the window and hold the roof down. I was told that one day I fell through the wall because it was only woven and I fell down, I don't know how many feet it was, into a ditch. So we lived by ourselves and then when we live in the military residents, we lived, myself, my mother, father and my sister Olivia, she's- I am the oldest of the five children and she was the second oldest. We had a couple of maids take care of us.

XL: Just to clarify, is your family house in Manila or...?

TI: Wait, let's see. Something about Diliman but I'm not sure, I don't recall exactly where it was but it's in the military compound.

XL: Ah okay, and then you said at the very end, you moved in with your grandparents.

TI: Yes. Because we were going to leave six months after my father departed for America.

XL: How old were you?

TI: Well, I was seven years old.

XL: Was it a very big family?

TI: Well let's see. My grandmother, I was told, eighteen birth and thirteen survived. I also remember going to school there, San Marcelino Academy and we wore uniforms. And then after that Santa Theresa, it was also an academy. And we wore blue pleated skirt in a white blouse with a bowtie and a [inaudible].

XL: Okay that's really interesting. Could you tell me more about your education in Philippine like what classes...

TI: Well, I mean I was just, it must have been from maybe pre-school or something? Or kindergarten, I am not sure, and we were taught by the Belgian nuns. I remember one of them was Mother Redemptive and so these are all Catholic schools. And then I remembered Santo Theresa Academy and going there before we left. I don't quite remember that clearly but my aunt, Tita we called her. She also graduated from there because I remember seeing pictures of her wearing the school uniform.

XL: So could you describe the neighborhood that you grew up in Philippine, both the family house and grandparents?

TI: Well, I think probably where the first one that I recall maybe it was in Batangas. But I couldn't, you know, I don't remember it too much from there and then I remember the army base where we lived. That was um... that was- the house was pretty comfortable and was well furnished. I remembered my father had a car. He had I think an Oldsmobile. And my grandfather's house. His name is Judge Sigrid Martinez. My grandmother, these are on my mother's side, my grandmother's name is Guadelupe Valdosa Martinez. They had- It was a great big house and two-story and they had a big masonry wall that was maybe at least 8-foot high and it had broken glass and maybe barb wire along it. But- And there would be the front entrance and there would be the [inaudible] chairs and the big covered area there and then you entered the house. And there was the very very large hall that's called the Sala, and then to the left was a big dining room and then the kitchen. There are two kitchens, an interior kitchen and a dirty kitchen. And then one big bedroom for my grandparents. The bathrooms were really really large, I mean you can roller-skate there in 'em. And upstairs, I think, they had so many children, they had dormitory like room is upstairs, with a big room with a bunch of beds in it. And I remember it was on the corner and right across the street was Santo Tomas...And one time I had to get my my something done to my teeth, and I did not want to go there and then my mother said, "You know up there" she would point up to the upper levels of the school maybe second, "they have that fetuses in preservative" and that really really scared me but I don't remember too much about the neighborhood. We just kind of stayed mostly within the house and I remember they're saying that across the big big boulevard across from our house was Dr. Carmencita Lopez and apparently, she was a friend of the family.

XL: So how many siblings do you have?

TI: I have two brothers and two sisters.

XL: Are you the oldest?

TI: I am the oldest of the five.

XL: So did you help your family to take care of your siblings?

TI: Well. Yes, I helped take care of 'em. I took care of mostly the younger ones in my...At first you know, it was me and my sister Olivia and then my brother Marcelo was born just before we left for America. And then when we came when we settled in St. Louis County after that my sister Maria and baby brother Roberto were born.

XL: So you said, you mentioned that your father is in the military. So what were your mother's occupation during that time?

TI: I think she had her degree in accounting and business.

XL: Okay. Did she work when you were in Philippine?

TI: I'm not sure about that. But I know she worked when we came, you know, when we came to the US.

XL: So are you parents religious?

TI: Oh My mother's very very religious. They have they have certain things that they will- Of course, she-she goes to mass because she went to mass every Sunday and we have she would had prepared Altar and then in the evening time she would light the candle and pray. And then she would go to sometime during the week it would be Perpetual heart novenas, I remember, and she would try to get us all involved and then they made sure that we went to Catholic schools, grade schools, high schools if possible.

XL: Was that both in Philippine and in the US

TI: Well yes.

XL: So why did your family move to the US?

TI: Well, my father fought for the US Army in the Philippine during World War II and after that was Sergeant. After that he worked for the US Army Records Center in the Philippines, I guess in Manila and then around 1953, they moved the record center to Overland, Missouri, and he was sent- he was transferred over there and the family followed six months later.

XL: Have you ever imagined migrating to the US before?

TI: No, not before we left.

XL: So did your extended family also moved to the US with you?

TI: No, we were the only one who came to America at that time.

XL: What was your childhood dream. Did you ever imagine being a Judge when you were a kid already?

TI: No, not really. I just know that my grandfather was a judge so that was something familiar to me, you know, somebody in a position of authority. But back then when you were like six or seven you don't really have any kind of anticipation for your future or your career. But I remember in the Philippines when we moved to St. Louis. I often wondered Will I travel where will I go? Where will I go? This was before you know the family dispersed to different parts of the world

XL: So you said your family dispersed to the all over the world? Do you mean your extended family or like your siblings and you?

TI: Well, eventually in 1968 I came here to Houston. Olivia, my sister stayed in St. Louis. Smd then the rest of the family, they went back to the Philippines and my ma and pa took the three of the youngest kids and they went back to settle in a farm, that's where my father was going to retire. But they weren't there too too long and then they came back and settled in California.

XL: What was the transition like when you first moved to the US? Do you remember?

TI: Well I remember that my father, well when we came we were in a Propeller plane and it was very very noisy. There was myself and my sister Olivia and the youngest was Marcelo. He was a baby, and he had to hold type. I remember we were going to bring pop some kind of fruits and they look like grapes only they have tough skin. We got a great big bunch and when we came to Hawaii, I think we were told that we couldn't bring those fruits in so we ate a lot of it. It made us sick, but when we arrived in Los Angeles, I remember my father greeted us there and I remember staying at The Roosevelt Hotel and seeing television for the first time and it was like the Wrangler's Club and Heavy Duty and that was like amazing for me. And then I remember pop took us to Woolworth's and we thought that was a big experience. [**XL:** So-] And then we took the train from California and I remember mountains so we must have passed Colorado and then to St. Louis. And then we stayed- the first day we didn't have a house yet. But we stayed in Creve Coeur, Missouri and we stayed in the home of old Mrs. Daikeler and I think she owned the home, but she lived in the basement next to this great big furnace blower and we lived upstairs and it was very very cold. We had not experienced that much cold in the Philippines. I remember we wore snow pants, a big heavy coat, hat, gloves. I mean the whole nine yards and... so there was a television there and my father loved the fights so we watched Friday Night Fights and wrestling at the Chase. And then when I went to school, I think it was just a one room school house and there was this young boy who was older than me of course, I think his name was Michael Shaughnessy, and he helped me and I think I was told I skipped a grade maybe first or the second grade. So after that, my father was having a house built for us and in Florissant, Missouri, it was the North St. Louis County and so we moved there and that's where I grew up until we just before 1968.

XL: So, how long did you stay in that house that you described?

TI: Well let's see, I went to grade school Our Lady of Fatima and I think from 6 through 8 I went to North American Martyrs, it was a Catholic school and then one year at em..I think St. Thomas High School, these are all of course in Missouri. And after that, we can't afford Catholic school, private school anymore. And so I went to public high school and senior high school. and so we stayed in the house throughout that time and then I went for a year at Washington University at a scholarship there and then I went to University of Missouri St. Louis where I graduated in '68. And so a year before graduation, I moved to my professor's house and I was a live-in babysitter. And so it was in on Waterman Boulevard in St. Louis, and then after I graduated I think for the summer for a short period I lived with my sister in an apartment.

XL: So did you did any of your family members speak English by the time that you migrate to the US?

TI: Well, we all did.

XL: Okay. When did you start to learn English?

TI: They thought it was schools, but Tagalog was my primary language. That was what we spoke in the house and I can still you know, when I hear it, I understand it. I remember when during Holy Week at they would have the reading of The Passion of Christ that they called de Pasión and I remember hearing it there. And I recall I don't know how but I had gotten hold of something like that and I was reading it in the Tagalog and if I would speak it, I would understand it. But just looking at it, you know straight I would not be able to, you know, recognize it but it was the audible sound, that's what I understood.

XL: So did your parents try to maintain Filipino traditions or culture while you are here?

TI: When we came to America and lived in Creve Coeur and St. Louis, there weren't any, hardly any Filipinos or Asians that I was aware of and I think we were the only Asians in Florissant that I knew of. Certainly wasn't any at school. But they did, my mother would cook all of Filipino food and my father, and my father, I don't know how he got hold of these things, but he had a green thumb and he can make things grow. He had quite a garden and he had the bittermelons and the opals, which is very very long squash and a bunch of things that he would grow in the garden and...and so and they they spoke Tagalog at home.

XL: So you just you mentioned your first job was babysitting and cherry picking when you were 15 years old.

TI: Picking strawberries.

XL: Oh, it's picking strawberries. Okay, so can you describe that for me? Do you work for your family or like other families?

TI: No, I think I was probably maybe 7th or 8th grade or something like this. I just remember one summer pop, you know, said "We're going to go to this farm," and he...he had a couple of people who rode with him. I mean they had they had carpooling back then. And then these ladies... he would pick up the ladies and you know code of work and after working and then he would come home. And so this is something where I don't know where he found it, but in the morning, he would drive you to the farm and that was near I think near Melany Road near Fluorescence and it was a strawberry farm. And then you've got paid I think 25 or 50 cents a pick which is about this by this and this deep, fifty cents and they wanted to make sure you know yet to make it a certain way, so that, you know, you had the most attractive biggest strawberries in the very top, and so but it was kind of back breaking job but because I would be there he dropped me off in the morning and then you pick me up after he dropped off his rides in the evening, I didn't last very long, but I remembered it was very hard work because you would be bent over all the time and it was just like up and open. And after a while, I said, "Pop, this hurts a whole lot" and he said "No you have to keep doing it until the pain goes away." I remember about that time I was also in the girls' softball team. I played shortstop. So I just remember those two things together, but I was also babysitting the neighborhood. And that wasn't too bad. I remember particularly one Christmas, I was babysitting there for this family had the most enormous tree. It took up the entire picture frame window, which was probably about six foot wide at least. I mean when you're small everything looks big.

[**XL:** So] And I remember in the neighborhood my mother was the, I call it the village piano teacher and she would teach the kids in the neighborhood. And she would teach all of us wherever we live, we always had a piano. So I mean that was always a tradition so when I came here, I always had a piano, now I have two. I

XL: So what do you mean by piano?

TI: Piano, the music instrument.

XL: Oh! Sorry yeah piano. [laugh] So did you...did you earn that money to support your family or just for your pocket money?

TI: Oh, I think it was just pocket money because my father had a job he worked for the government.

XL: Did your mother also work?

TI: Well, she raised the family for the most part until we got to, you know, maybe high school, maybe everybody passed through high school and then she started working. Well, and then the family also my father upon his retirement. He opened up a dry-cleaning shirt laundry and a laundromat. So Mom and Pop work that and then I would also work there. I did the shirt press which was three machines that after the shirts are laundered and starch then you went ahead and put those machines in a press and then there were either folded or hung up. And then I also did the steam press for the dry cleaning the most etcetera. So I got very fast on those.

XL: So now we are moving on to your education career experience. So could you describe your Elementary and Middle School experience, especially specifically how you adjusted to life in the US?

TI: Well the very first school did I just remembered I forget the name of the school, but it was in Creve Coeur Missouri. And like I said, it was like a one-room schoolhouse and I don't remember a whole lot of that and then when we moved to the house I went to school maybe is third to...third to fifth grade. It was Our Lady of Fatima. It was a Catholic school and I remember a lot during that time. I remember the names of a lot of the kids and it was also on Annex, which was I guess the overflow schoolhouse little bit apart from the big main school, and I enjoyed that very much, and then after that a new school and a new Parish opened up, North American Martyrs, and that was closer to my house. And so I would walk over there. That was, I think, sixth through eighth grade. These are all, let's see, In North American Martyrs I was taught by nuns I remember Sister Margaret Mary... I believe Sister Rita and after that that I went to St. Thomas Aquinas for high school for one year and that was also taught by nuns and priests and I remember, I remember one of the nuns I think Sister Scholastica and I remember Father Schaefer, but during the time that I was there they had after school...it wasn't tutoring but it was for being a students who were college bound and I remember it was called heart-brace vocabulary workshop and a lot of other things that made you...I mean we became professional test-takers. I mean they taught us to a point that we just go in to the SAT, ACT, you know, all those things, we were not afraid. They taught us the techniques, you know, you don't stay on anything too long, and then move on, and come back. The whole thing was covered and we did very very well on those things.

And also in Senior High school, I remember um... I think was I in the band? I play the piano in the band during that period. And I also played piano for some kind of a diocese band or orchestra, and I never felt all that comfortable by myself playing the piano because I only play for my own appreciation and then, you know staying on rhythm which is very challenging for me, but I persevered, you know, apparently they kept me on for a while and the band, you know, it was not a marching band, of course, [inaudible] piano but it was very good is Mr. Joe Bosey and in he have a quartet Ragtime Band. He played on one of the boats on the Mississippi. So that was pretty enjoyable, and I remember I performed somewhere in the background of a musical. I always loved musicals and...so I think I was in the chorus of some of those. Oh, and I remember in the great when we were very very young. We were part of the student record chant choir and we performed it was I think it was on television. So I love singing.

XL: So it seems like you moved a lot throughout your primary and secondary school. Like how was...did you experience any trouble like trying to fit into the new school culture.

TI: No. Except when I went from Catholic School to public school. I just thought the world was made of two...I thought it was just all Catholics, and so, you know, it's like so that was the only thing but you know beyond that initial questioning. It was not a problem because we were all...I don't know, I was always driven by education. I just enjoyed it a lot and I enjoyed the teaching part of it. I really enjoyed my teachers and in public school, they taught us Latin and I was very very interested in. It was like 3 years of Latin and I remember there was a group there, the Latin club in I remember some of them were in the speed lugging they were cave, you know, they pay their scores and then they said jokingly and they wrote

on the side of the cave Aeneas loves Dido was just very in joke. It was part of the, you know part of the Virgil's Aeneid which we read in Latin.

XL: So you mentioned you were in your involved in band and in Musical and maybe in the Latin club like were you also involved in other like activities when you were in high school?

TI: Well, I think I was in the baseball-girls softball team and I was shortstop and I don't know that I was in the Latin club, but I knew some of the kids that were in the Latin club. But I remember I was in some reading club in the summer and then we would read classic books and I remember in Catholic High School and we were introduced to different kinds of literature through the Ages and that's where I found out that a lot of books weren't on the index the Catholic index, which is these are books forbidden to be read by Catholics because they did different things like they mocked the clergy or the church...or Martin Luther's ninety-five theses against the church and I made sure I read those things because, you know, it was like, why are they banning these things? I have to read them to find out why as I'm just, you know been eternally curious.

XL: What was your favorite extracurricular activity when you were in high school?

TI: In high school? I'm not sure... I did like- we studied a lot so there was not a whole lot of time but I do remember the musicals. I always wanted to play Kim from Bye-bye Birdie. Of course, that it would to is a very blond very beautiful girl.

XL: Did you eventually pay that role? Did you eventually play that role?

TI: No. I was just I think part of a chores or whatever role I was involved with.

XL: So could you tell me the demographic breakdown for middle school and your high school. So were there any Asian population?

TI: None. It was white people, all white people. No Hispanics, I mean we were not were not exposed to you know, what demographics were, but that's all I can remember. I know they had their last names were French, Italian, and German, Shrumberger, Shaughnessy Devereaux. I mean St. Louis, Son Louis, these are all French things. It was [inaudible French word], you know, these were all very very French things. It was a very French city.

XL: Okay, so how did you do feel like being an Asian the only Asian in your schools?

TI: Well, I always considered myself American. So I didn't have any problem with that. Nobody discriminate against me. I mean, we were all smart and strong so I know I didn't know any better.

XL: Did you feel any difference?

TI: Well, I do know that I tried to make my nose smaller. I would practice in front of mirror and then I would practice. I guess I must have had a slight accent then but my mother had continued to have a very strong accent. And I remember talking into the mirror until I could hear no more accent.

XL: So when did you decide that you want to study law?

TI: Well, as I went to school at University of Missouri, St. Louis, I was a political science major and I'm not sure how I decided that but I was in there and I enjoyed it a lot and I lived in the home of a professor. I was live-in babysitter. I lived up in the attic and he was also a writer he wrote several books on

Utopianism, Albert Camus. It was Professor Ivan Sargeant and his wife and so I took care of her baby son Evan and it was...it was very very inspiring reading about the French idealist and the different utopian writings and...living in that house they had they had meetings of different kinds in the house. I do remember one time. They had SDS meeting. I think it was the Student for Democratic Society, at the house, and it was the discussion of ideas and to me this was quite inspiring and so I wanted to continue that and one of my professors at the University of Missouri was from Houston, Verner Greenvale and so I had one of my classes with him. And he recommended, he said, "You know, if you want to, I can write a recommendation for you to get a teaching scholarship at the University of Houston." I said "okay", you know I was to me I'll try anything, but we had some really really inspiring professors back then. And one of them was Dr. Engel Beltre and he wrote the first book about the common market and now he is chair of some kind of renowned, part of the economics department, I think in NYU. And so I still... and then Dr. Sargent, he goes around the world. I think he's currently in New Zealand and writing and I mean I still keep in touch with these professors.

So when I came over here, I was in the political science department and after a while, I was teaching fellow where you would help the professor of teaching these huge classes and there were several of us. But after a while it started out not want to become a political science professor. And so I went across campus and signed up the law school and apparently once you're in a graduate...I mean once you are a graduate student, you know going from one college to another. It is not hard. So I took the LSAT. Okay, that's fine. They admitted me and I think once you're in they have invested interest in keeping you and making sure you know, you keep up with everything. I worked my way through law school until the very last year. When I first came here, I had summer jobs, I worked as typing [inaudible] in Houston Lighting and Power. And from the lunch room on the fifth floor, we can see the Shell Building being born and rising and that was on Walker Street. And after that I worked for an associate in neuro -surgery as a medical secretary and we learn a whole lots of neural [inaudible]. I continued to work there and put myself through the night school at the law school. My future husband and I were staying together. And then he said that "you're just going to finish this completely, and I will take care of everything and you go to full-time day school." And I got my law degree in 1973.

XL: Okay. Um...so why did you decide to study Political Science when you were a undergrad?

TI: Oh it was just very interesting to me, and I like the literature. I thought that would, you know, I would not be suited for the sciences and the math. Social sciences would be more amenable to me.

XL: Could you describe your education for the record because it seems that you were in University of Washington for a year?

TI: Yeah. I was in University of Washington for a year. I took, you know, the calculus, and then the German. I forgot all of the other classes but it was a full schedule. It was uh.. I didn't do very well in Washington University so I lost my scholarship. So I went to the University of Missouri and after the first semester, I got...I forgot what they named it, but I got scholarships there too. My parents were very poor, so I knew that if I was to put myself through college, I had to get scholarship, so I was working really hard on those things. So I had full scholarship after I entered the University of Missouri till the very end.

XL: What about U of H?

TI: That was a teaching fellowship.

XL: But the law school...

TI: The Law School? I just worked my way. I didn't try to get scholarship there. I just it wasn't that expensive. So I did.

XL: So had any of your siblings go to college as well?

TI: Oh, yes. They all did yeah, my sister Olivia, she is the Performing pianist and she is like fantastic and she gives concert and she stayed in Missouri in St. Louis area and she married at that time. He was in Divinity School and so he is he's a minister but he's also in....um...he works for a company. But she was

an artist, and also a pianist. She stayed at [inaudible] college that where she got her performing piano. I also took some piano lessons too but not very well. And then I think my brother Mauri and my sister Maria, they did not go to college but they also did okay. My sister Maria is like works as a contract...she work for...on her own, contracting for companies, also working directly as a recruiter. And my baby brother Roberto...uh... I think, uh, I think UCLA. And then, uh, he's also, he's... uh, let's see, he works for companies, too.

XL: Okay. Um, so you mentioned before that your parents moved back to Philippine with your younger siblings, in 1960s? Um...

TI: Yeah, 1968, about. [**XL:** Okay.] That was the, that was the year that everybody split.

XL: Okay, were you in college by that time?

TI: Oh, I had—I had graduated [**XL:** Okay.] college, and, so, uh, as a part time job, well, uh, at that time, uh, I worked as a social worker, case worker, too, for St. Louis County Welfare Office, [**XL:** Mhm.] and then uh, after—when it was time to go to school in, in Houston, and I said, uh—then I went, uh, and I drove myself to Houston. I was very lonely here at first.

XL: Okay. And, so, was your sister Olivia also in Houston?

TI: No, she stayed in St. Louis, [**XL:** Okay.] to go to, uh, Fontbonne College [**XL:** Mhm.], and pursue her musical career.

XL: Okay. Um, so, why did you choose to stay in Houston, like settle down in Houston, after you graduated law school?

TI: Oh, well, let's see, after law school, well, I—I had, uh, met my first husband, Gert Ingverson, he's from Denmark, [clears throat] and then, we started life here.

XL: Okay, um... yeah. Uh, so you—your parents, uh, afterwards, your parents moved back to California, uh...

TI: [**XL:** What time was that?] Yes, uh, I think there was probably earthquake and floods wiped out the farm. They had a piggery, uh, where they had big pigs. I mean I—I remember one of the pictures of pop with one of the pigs, and he's uh, like, maybe 5'4", and the pig was—had his uh, paws on his shoulders, very big pig.

XL: [laughs] Okay.

TI: And then, so, and then they settled in, uh—well first they were in Culverity, I believe [**XL:** Mhm.], and then after that they moved to Irvine.

XL: Okay. Um, so were your parents retired by that time?

TI: Oh yes. That's, that's why uh—my father retired and, uh, opened the laundromat, and then after that, uh, when they went to the Philippines in '68, you know, they closed down—they sold the laundromat, and uh, moved to the Philippines.

XL: Okay. Um... so could you describe your career path for me?

TI: Well, uh, after I got my law degree, um... I drove to Austin to get sworn in, I think, so uh, I knew uh, I drove to Austin. So, uh, when I came back, uh... uh, let's see, I uh... I think uh, I hung up my shingle. Uh, I started a, uh—well, I applied to a very very uh... I—I applied to a lot of places, uh... uh, governmental things, and um... and then I think I worked for uh—I'm not sure if this was before or after I went to private practice, or maybe at the same time, because sometimes you can affiliate with other people—uh, uh, for a little while, I worked with Maxwell, Hopkins and Price, and then, uh, I know I uh, opened up my law office [**XL:** Mhm.], and uh, it was on Leeland, um... right next to the Houston house, and um, I met some nice people over there, and uh, I—I, you know, I continue to keep in touch with them. They're my friends. And uh, also, uh, one of the people in that, uh, suite of offices, uh, George, uh, Lewis, and uh, so, I—I, uh let's see... we were not associated or anything, but we would office together. And uh, I guess he must have known that I was like—I'm a good negotiator, because he would send me uh, "Toni, go find us a—an office." [**XL:** [laughs]] Like, "Okay...?" [laughs] And then, you know, we'd locate an office and move over there, and uh, after Leeland we moved to uh, I think 2419 Fannin, and uh, we stayed there for a while, and—and when the lease was up, you know, of course they always raise the rents, and then we moved—I found offices on Kirby. Uh, 3701 Kirby. And uh, I think we were on the top floor. And uh, after that, uh, let's see, I got to... meet with, uh, Victor Blaine, uh, he's like a, uh, famous, uh, criminal defense attorney, and so uh... I met with him, and I think we found offices uh, on Main Street for a while.

XL: Um, could you tell me the time when you started your own, uh, law firm?

TI: I think 1973.

XL: 1973. Okay. So can you describe that experience more?

TI: Well, of course you, uh... you don't have any clients. [**XL:** laughs] And, so uh, what I did was go down to the courthouse, and seek uh, court-appointed cases. And these would be, uh, uh, cases were you represent indigent defendants, and uh, it would be uh, misdemeanor cases and felony cases, and then you would work those cases, to trials, to appeals if need be, and then you got paid by the county, according to, you know, how many hours you work. So I did that for a long time. And then I started developing some private clients, too: divorces, adoptions, corporations, and um, later on, uh, I developed uh, immigration cases and bankruptcy cases. And uh, and then uh, in 1995 I believe uh—well, in the early 90s I became very active in the Asian community. I—I was not aware of it. [**XL:** [laughs]] And um, uh... I think I had met Gordon Quan, um... I think he was an ad litem in one of my adoption cases. And I think he invited me to Asian American Coalition, I believe. Uh, they were having a meeting, and it was uh, near my house, and um, and that's where I started to get involved. And they said, "Why don't you join?" And I said "Well, okay." You know I, uh, [laughs] So, uh, I became, uh, quite active in the Asian community, uh, uh... I was uh—became president of Asian Pacific American Heritage Association, president of Asian American Democrats of Texas, and the Asian American Bar Association, and, you know, when they asked me to be a member of that, I said, "Well, do we really need one?" [laughs] So, uh, um, I had

never... been, uh, a member of, you know, any of those things before. And uh, so, uh, because uh, I was active in those things, and I—I was also an officer in a lot of other organizations, too. Um, I think it's on my resume there some place. Uh, Filipino organizations, other, uh, organizations. And uh... and I guess I must have caught the eye of Gordon Quan and Martha Wong. And uh, they s—they—they took me aside uh, at one point we were in... I think in a residence, uh, Dee's residence, somewhere near Rice. And, uh, they took me aside to one of the rooms, they said, "Tony, we'd like to make you a judge." And, of course, you know, I'm from Missouri, you gotta show me. [XL: [laughs]] So I said, "Oh, that's wonderful, thank you!" But—and, and: "I have to go now!" [laughs] I, you know, I—you, you don't... you know, that—that's pretty fantastic, but, you know, you don't accept that right away.

And so, uh, later on, I got a call, uh, from Alice Lee, Martha's, uh, administrative assistant, she said, uh—and I was uh... I'm not sure if I was president of the Asian American, uh, Bar Association, but I know I was writing a newsletter for them. And, uh, in the newsletter we always tell them about job tips. And so, uh, Alice said, "Toni, uh, we'd like to, uh, recommend you for, uh, parking hearing officer." This is kind of like a judge job, uh, where you hear, uh, uh, people who have gotten parking tickets. I mean these are different things, I mean there are a lot of different, uh... it—it's complex, you know, not just, you, uh, pay a fine. But um... and so, but it was not a judge job. So I told her, "What—I'd—I'd be happy to put it in the newsletter." "Toni, we're putting your name in this afternoon." And I said, "Oh, okay, sure, wonderful." [laughs] And apparently, I did not know it at that time, but there it's a backdoor job to getting a judgeship—and, uh... and, uh, the judge, uh, appointments are made by the mayor, uh, but it—it comes in the rotation of which of the council members, which is—is it their turn to nominate [XL: Oh, okay], okay, because it comes, you know, you have to go by vacancy, and what—which council member is avail—uh, you know, is it their turn to make the nomination.

And then, when you're already in the system, like a parking hearing officer, you've already been voted. I mean, they do the FBI checks, they do the urine checks for, uh, drugs, [XL: [laughs]] they do—really. And so, once you've already been—uh, you've already checked out for those things, once there is a vacancy, and then, uh, you are available, uh, then you may be nominated, uh, for recommendation. But, uh, there are other people also in the line, and uh, so uh, when it was time for Martha to make the nomination, uh, I think they—they made some nominations, but then, uh, I was told uh, "But don't tell anybody, because we still have to make sure these other people, who are already other Asians, who have been considered ahead of me, they have to say no first." And then after, you know, all of those people have said no—and then for various reasons, because uh, judicial positions don't pay a whole lot. You make a whole lot more money in private, and, in law firms, uh, for other companies. And so, uh, when all those people ahead of me decided they didn't want it, and then I—I was told that I would be getting the, you know, the—the nominations. And then, uh of course then you get a call to appear before City Council on such and such day.

XL: Okay. Um, so what makes you want to become a judge?

TI: Oh, well, um... I'm basically a person, you know, who has a lot of compassion for people. For some reason I've never been excited about making a ton of money. And, I—I like to... be helpful to the public. And, for some reason, I am a public servant. So, uh, you know, this felt good. And, I enjoyed doing it, and uh—so, uh, I had, previous to that, I had run for political office in 19-84, for the Associate Justice for the 14th Court of Appeals. At that time I had been, uh, I had been a lawyer for at least ten years, and I had done a lot of appellant work, and I enjoyed the work, and uh, and I thought I was qualified to do that. So uh, you know, that started my thinking about, you know, wanting to become a judge.

XL: Okay. So, in the resume you also wrote that you worked for the US Court of Appeals, is that when, like...

TI: Well, no, [**XL:** Like, is that... describe...] I had—when—let me see that.

XL: Oh, like, this is just a brief information that I, like, like—oh, it's just like a summary of your resume, at the end.

TI: Hmm... Oh. When I say, "Legal Background: US Court of Appeals," I admitted to the Supreme Court of Texas. It means I can be a lawyer in Texas [**XL:** Yeah.], practicing. "A US District Court for the 7th district" means I have cases before them.

XL: Oh okay.

TI: And then, um, US Court of Appeals, there were some cases before them, too... uh, uh... I think it might have been Bureau of Immigration Appeals, uh... It's probably more specific in there. But, um, that's when I did appellant work. I did it for myself, uh, I also did appeals for other people. For other, uh, lawyers. And um, and, you know, it—it's not that I sought them out. I think they just, uh, I think one of them was um, uh, an attorney by the name of Joe Rojo, and um, and he worked, uh, with uh, oh... oh... a—another attorney who had a lot of criminal defense work. And for some reason, apparently he did not—he had a lot of cases on appeal [**XL:** Mhm.], and he didn't work them. And so, he was starting to get in trouble. And so, Joe said to Mr. H, Mr. Herrera, "Toni does appeals." And so, he said, "Why don't you ask her to help you with these?" So he—I went to his office, and he gave me a bunch of cases to do the appellant work. [**XL:** Mhm.] And so, you know I did that for him. And those were all, uh, all manners of different cases. And, uh, usually they were the hard cases, you know, robberies and stuff like that. And um, and I—I, you know, I had, uh, experience with my own appeals. Because when you, you know, you get a court-appointed case, and it's a very very, uh, you know, it's a serious case, and these are felonies. And, uh, you don't get a dismissal on those things, hardly. And so, uh, after you have the jury trial, when, you know, you—you need to appeal if they want to appeal it. So I had a—a lot of appellant work to do [**XL:** Okay]. And I remember one of the—the people I officed with, Victor Blaine, he had, uh, immigration cases for which, uh, somehow or another bonds were posted and the people did not show up. So you had to appeal the forfeiture of those bonds before the Bureau of Immigration Appeals, I think that's what it was. And I had a bunch of those, too.

Uh, and then, uh, I did cases for other people, too, for Mr. Lewis, and he would say, uh, "Tony, we got this case"—uh, he did not like going to court for some reason. And, uh, he said a long time ago in one of—he was—he was mistaken for a defendant, and he said, "Well I don't like to go there." [laughs] So he—he would send me off, to uh, uh, "Tony, there's this cases in Fort Bend County, and it's a—" It wasn't an appeal but it was a trial. Uh, and it was a probate case, and, uh, it was one of the big banks where there were trustees, uh, I think for, uh, for one of, uh, his clients, and um, they were opposing and the client died and then she changed her will to make it go to this other person, and the bank had opposed it, and so we tried it and we won, so, uh, he was quite happy, and—and sometimes—not the eve of, but, like, very very soon, you know, like just before something is gonna go to—to court: "Tony, would you mind standing in?" Like— [laughs] "But, but Mr. Lewis..." [laughs] But I would go ahead and do it, too. You know, you learn to stand on your feet, uh, and, you know, since I—I was in front of judges, and going to jury trials, my exposure to, uh, you know, different, uh, levels of confrontation or advocacy, um, they were just, uh—uh, after a while you got used to it, you were not afraid. You—it was just a matter of, you know, did we prepare enough, did we get enough witnesses, etc.

XL: Okay. So, what was the most meaningful ca—career experience that you've ever had?

TI: Hmm. Well, I—I think a lot of them were meaningful in different ways. Uh, but adoption cases are very happy, and um... Uh, let's see... corporations are very happy. Uh, there are other things, too, you

know, representing people in felonies, and all those things. Um, they, uh—I mean, you get the satisfaction of having done the best job you possibly could. And uh, I know when I’m uh, appointed to represent somebody, we go all the way, if they want to. I mean, jury trials, uh, try to get, uh, witnesses, uh, try to get—I—I did a lot of competency hearings, too, people who were not competent to stand trial. So you had to, you know, get um—you had to, uh, get authorization, uh, for money to pay a psychologist or psychiatrists to interview these people, and, uh, and immigration cases are also, uh, very happy cases, although that’s—that’s uphill, and it’s a lot of hard work, and, uh, immigration office back then, uh, when you were doing a—a lot of these, um, uh, uh cases and... you had to stand outside, sometimes in the rain in long lines, and sometimes it would be very cold. So, uh, this uh—But, you know, the outcomes of a lot of the immigration cases are very happy.

XL: Um, so, could you tell us about your involvement in the Asian American Bar Association?

TI: Uh, well, let’s see. I think I was one of the, uh, first members, and uh, later on I became president. And I remember, uh, I did the newsletter for a long time, and um... I remember that they wanted to, uh, do fundraising for scholarships, so I incorporated the—the Asian American Bar Foundation, and uh, you know, of course I hand it to the organization, uh, after I’m through with that, but sometimes, you know, once you’re a corporation you have to maintain it, and, uh, you have to do filings, uh, I’m not sure if that continued, uh, but I know there is a Bar Foundation now, [**XL:** Mhm.] so they might have continued. And um, I—I remember, uh, when I was president, uh, we did, uh, monthly meetings. And then, that was always my, uh, happy job to go find restaurants, and that would, you know, do—uh, have a—a meeting, uh, venue available for us at a price that we could afford, and, and then lining up a speaker, and uh, and making sure that that is—has been, uh, granted continued legal education status. So there was a lot of, uh, that stuff, you know, you just don’t say, “This is happening on Thursday, come!” Uh, you know, you have to do a whole lot of preparatory work, and then, uh, you have to call up the members! And so uh, uh, I remember my, uh, little girl Alecia was helping me, uh, uh during part of this time, and I would have her call the members to remind them to come to the meetings. And she said, “Mom, these names are really hard to pronounce!” [**XL:** [laughs]] But uh, yeah, uh... that was, uh... yeah, that was very very, uh, satisfying working, um, with the Asian Bar.

XL: Mhm. Okay. So, what—what did Asian American Bar Association do? Um...

TI: What?

XL: So what did Asian American Bar Association do?

TI: Oh. Well, um... uh, it was, uh, something, uh, it was an organization to help, uh, the members of, uh, you know, uh... Asian American attorneys, uh [**XL:** Mhm.]... uh, at—at first I questioned: “What—what are y’all gonna do?” And, uh, and they said, “Well Tony, a lot of times, you know, people have a—a hard time, you know, uh, or they—or maybe, uh, you know, you feel like you’re alone out there, and uh, you need to have some kind of a camaraderie, some kind of a socialization, uh, for other people going through the same experiences, too. And it’s good to have that and have support that way. Also, uh, since these are—uh, we’re putting up, uh, or—or having—uh, continued legal education. Uh, you have to maintain 15 hours of continued legalization each year to, uh, continue to be a member of the state Bar, to be able to practice law. So this was a way where, uh we would be able to, uh provide that—um and the, uh, the education was free, but, you know, you just paid for the dinner. And um, also, you know, uh, in the newsletters, we would provide, uh, different, uh, uh, resources, uh, when we heard—when we would hear of, uh, different jobs that are available, positions available, uh we would post it on there, too. So, uh, in a way it was something that, you know, we all—we uh, we felt it was, uh, something that would benefit the members in—in their profession.

XL: Okay. Um, so, what was it like to be a minority female judge in Houston?

TI: Oh, I never thought of it that way. [**XL:** Mhm.] Uh, uh, well with the city of Houston, uh, when I first got, uh, uh, the information, or, when I was advised that they wanted to consider me for that, uh... I mean I never thought of being a—a minority. See I—for some reason I don't really think of myself as a minority [**XL:** Mhm.], 'cause I'm a very strong woman [laughs], and we can do anything. [laughs] But, uh, you know, when, uh, I was told about the position, I—and I, uh... I was told that they wanted to keep that court, Court 9 at night, an Asian court. Because the judge who was there before me was Judge Ang, a Chinese judge. And so, that's uh, that's the only, uh... uh, that's the only way that I thought that they were—you know, that I was a minority being a judge. Because there were other judges there, Hispanic judges, etc. [**XL:** Mhm.] Mhm. And there were African American judges there, so, it was uh—The city of Houston is, uh, they have a ton of women judges. [**XL:** Mhm.] I mean, it's very—it's a very democratic, uh, array of judges.

XL: Okay. Um, so have you ever experienced any type of discrimination? Um...

TI: I—I never felt that really. [**XL:** Mhm.] Uh, now, uh, I know somebody... I had been asked to, uh, to be a witness for somebody who was uh saying—that she was—she was an attorney, and I forget what a, you know, organization it was, that she, uh, thought she was being discriminated by... but, uh, in looking back, you know, I—I told you that when I was looking for a job as an attorney in—after law school, and uh, uh, I got turned down by a whole lot of, uh, places. And uh—But I never thought it was because of, uh, discrimination. Uh, I—it might have been, but I never thought of it that way.

XL: Okay. Um, so how have you seen the changes in like, Asian Americans who are seen—who are—who are in, like, law practices in Houston. Is it growing?

TI: Oh, of course! Uh, at first there were just a handful, uh, and a lot of them were in immigration. You know, the Gordon Quan's, the Harry Gee's, uh, Frank Halim's, um... uh, Ted Wu's, Tim Seo's, uh... but, uh, I guess that—that I would consider that the old guard, the Hannah Chow's. Um, but, now there are like scaths and scaths of Asian attorneys—Asian American attorneys. And, they are at big law firms, I mean, they're—they're at corporate council, I mean they are everywhere. I don't think—I don't think there's, you know... I mean the growth spurt has been tremendous.

XL: Okay. Um, so can you tell me about the nonprofit organization involvement that you have? So you wrote in your, uh, consent form that you were involved in Asian Pacific American Heritage Association, and, uh, OCA Organization of Chinese American Advisory Committee. Um, can you...?

TI: Oh, APAHA? Um, I—I became president, back then, uh it was called Asian American Association.

[**XL:** Okay.] They didn't have the Pacific in that name. But the—the very first, uh, co-chairs were Martha Wong and Kim Szeto, second one was Gordon Quan, and I was the third. And um, so uh... I became involved with them and I did, you know, uh, I think I attended their functions and stuff, uh, but then, uh, before I became president, uh, one of the members, Judy Li, who works with—who worked with Gordon Quan, uh, she was in charge of, uh, the uh, I think the film festival here at Rice. And she was apparently going to, uh, you know, set it up, and provide the refreshments, etc. and then all the notices. And she called me and said that she had to go out of town, and would I mind doing it. And, uh, I said I would go ahead and do it. You know, I—I get into these things, uh, uh, I guess naively, and when I said I would do it I didn't realize how difficult it would be, because you have to come up with donations from everywhere, so you have to solicit—because there was, no—no funds.

So I started to contact all sorts of different people, for food donations, for alcohol donations, um, and um, uh, different things. Uh, I think I—I got hold of Antone’s and, uh, not Budweiser, but we got alcohol from somebody. And uh, I had met um, one of the gentlemen who, uh—He was a lawyer, and then he worked for the—and then he—one of his clients was a uh... they made egg rolls in Pasadena. And apparently as a fee he got part of the company. So I called him up and said would he mind donating, you know, two cases of egg rolls. And so, I mean, and then from—Uh, there was another gentleman I met, and he was a Raja Suites—he was Pakistani, he used to work for NASA, he was a scientist, and then he owned this k—this uh store—food store—on Hillcroft. And Hillcroft is a big Indian, Pakistani, uh, district there. And so he donated a whole bunch of stuff. And it was like scaths and scaths and scaths[?] of food. A—and then, uh, we made sure that, uh, I had, uh, people who would pick up the food, and then I had this, uh, acknowledgement. And then the 501(c)(3) [unintelligible] things. And then they would deliver, uh, uh, the receipt to them and that information, and we told them that they would be, you know, listed, as um—listed as, uh, people who had donated, and, uh, it would uh reach, you know, X amount of people. Uh, this was part of the—the sell. And so they would do that, too. And then, of course I couldn’t fry up two cases of egg rolls myself, so I think I got hold on Shiva restaurant, which is in the village, not too far from Rice, and uh they had agreed to fry up the egg rolls. I mean, we had all—and then I had I think some kind of alcohol that needed to be chilled, and I had, uh, contacted a convenience store where they would allow us to chill all this stuff in the refrigerator cooler. And uh, it was uh... A—and then we’d also, uh, did the advertising—I forget how we did the advertising. Uh, we didn’t all have all that email stuff back then. But we did all that, and um, it was very very successful. People were, like, stunned that we had such an array of stuff for the reception. And uh, so they thought, “Oh, she would make a good president!” And so I thought, “Oh no, is this a good idea?” “Oh yes, Toni.” “Is it going to be work?” “Oh, no.” [XL: [laughs]] Never believe that part. Never. Nearly went bankrupt. So uh, that’s how I became the president back then.

XL: [laughs] Wow.

TI: Uh, let’s see—OCA—uh, they just call it OCA now, not Organization of Chinese Americans. [XL: Oh, okay.] But back then that’s what it was. And so I was invited to a meeting, and uh—let’s see, uh, during that time, they said, “Tony, would you like to be a member of the board?” Or something. And I said, “Well, okay...” And uh, so, you know, I started attending the meetings and, and ever since then, uh, I have always been listed—I attend and support all of their functions. And uh, they have a whole bunch of them, and they’re always very very beneficial to the community. And uh, so uh, even to uh—like last month, I think they had something, and uh, I’m still listed as—uh, on the advisory board.

XL: Okay. Um, so what do you like to do in your free time?

TI: Well, uh, after I retired, um... uh, I had found out, uh, shortly after I retired, uh... Well, uh, when you’re, uh, a judge, you have to do continued legal education for judges. And so the city of Houston pays for that. All of your travel, uh all of the courses. And uh, after I retired and I was no longer an active judge, I had to do continued education to be a bonafide Bar member. And, um... so uh, I sta—uh, I signed up—I had to sign up for some, you know, um, plain vanilla lawyer courses. And so uh, I called up the Bar and asked them to help me. And I told them what my situation was. And then they said if you’re a retired judge, you can attend all of these things for free. Now normally, uh, let’s say two, three day seminars are, like, between 5 to 700 dollars. And so if I could attend them for free, that’s wonderful. And they feed you, and I only attend the those things that are in Houston that I enjoy, and things that I have not been exposed to very much, like oil and gas, intellectual property, international law. And so I signed up for those things. I—I enjoy them immensely. I also read a lot. I’m on the second book of the uh, uh, “Crazy Rich Asians.” [laughs] And I love to cook, and I have to get back into the piano, uh, because I love to do that. But, I haven’t because my hands hurt and I can’t see the notes. [laughs] But, uh, you know, those are some of the things I do.

XL: Okay. Um, so, how many kids do you have?

TI: I have two. Uh, Alecia, uh, my daughter, and Hans, my son.

XL: Okay. How old—how old are they?

TI: Um, let's see... Alecia's 40—uh, let's see... she's 43 and my son is 41.

XL: Okay. So, um, are they in Houston?

TI: Yes, uh-huh.

XL: Okay. Um... so what were your biggest challenges and rewards in raising kids—raising your children?

TI: Um, well, let's see. This was before they wrote books on how to be a career woman and also raise a family. So we just had to learn how to do them, uh, trial and error. And so, you know, uh... I, uh... I stayed at home, uh, for quite a few months after the birth of each child, and a—um, as soon as the—since I was in private law practice, I could pretty much, you know, set my own hours, uh but, when uh—when they started going to school, uh, I started to, you know, uh... uh, spend more hours at work. But I remember one time, uh, when my son was in grade school, he was saying, uh, you know the other kids' uh parents or moms would come to some events at school, and then I think he defended me by saying, well, “Mom has to work a lot. That's why she would come here, you know, if she could.” And that just broke my heart. But uh, you know, you have to do that and... and then uh, they—I put them, uh, into a pre-school, uh... there was a—uh, a daycare near the house, and uh, after work I'd pick them up from there. But it was very nice, they had good teachers there, and then they had a swimming pool, too. So, um... yeah. I—I tried to be available for them as much as possible.

XL: Okay. Um, so, what were the rewards in raising children?

TI: Were the...?

XL: Uh, what were the rewards?

TI: Oh, well, every moment is a reward. I've always felt that, uh, you know you don't own your children. You're just, uh, you're there to, uh, to guide them and—and to show them by example, not necessarily dictate to them, you know, “You must do this, you must do that,” uh, you know, some very basic things: uh, compassion, honesty, uh, uh, courtesy... And, I—I think they, you know, they've done that quite well, and uh, a—and I think they're uh—they've grown up to be good, responsible adults.

XL: Do you think, um, your professional career has ever been, like, obstructed by your identity as a mother? Um...

TI: I don't think so.

XL: Mhm. Okay. So and, did you try to maintain Filipino culture with your children?

TI: Well, uh... Sometimes, uh, uh... I—I remember growing up, uh, we—I would refer to certain things and what I recall were Tagalog words, and, uh, just because, you know, they would come up, I did not,

you know, purposefully say, you know, “I’m going to use this Tagalog word here.” But um... And then also, uh, their father’s from Denmark, so, you know, there’s a lot of Danish being, uh, spoken at home, too. But um, yes I—I would, uh, cook Filipino stuff and uh, sometimes uh, I would, uh, use certain words like lampara, ventana... and I now know they’re Spanish. But back then that’s what they used in the Philippines. And uh, and so, my little girl would say, “You know, uh, I was over here with my girlfri—” You know, her little cl—uh, you know, girls who, uh, she played with, and uh, “I called this this word, and they said, ‘That’s not English, what is that?’” And so, that’s like... [laughs] And so, uh, I think in—in a certain way, uh, that’s—that’s what they learned.

XL: Okay. Um, so this—Uh, do your kids, uh, speak the language? Speak...

TI: No.

XL: Okay. Um... Have you ever experienced any conflicts between, uh, Filipino and American culture with your—your kids?

TI: Uh, they have not told me, because they always—they were born here, and, uh, it’s not that they assimilated anything, I mean they just grew up with it. Uh, you know, just the—the current culture.

XL: Okay. Um, so when was the last time you visited Philippine?

TI: Um, let’s see. I went—uh, uh... they call it a return to the homeland. And they call it balikbayan. It is very prominent in advertising. Uh, “Would you like to do some balikbayan boxes?” Or, “This is a balikbayan trip. And this is low cost.” Uh, so um, my two sisters and I, uh, I think it was in the beginning, uh, right around 2000, uh, we went back to the Philippines and, uh, my—uh, Olivia, my second sister, uh, was coming from New York, and Maria, my baby sister, was coming from California, so we all, uh, said we’re all going to meet at the Shangri-La in Manila on this date. And so, uh, we did, and but we went, uh, from Manila to Boracay, uh to Bangkok, and then from Bangkok, uh, uh, they basically went home, and then I went on to Chiang Mai, uh Bali, Hong Kong, and then back, uh, to the US.

XL: Okay. So do you visit Philippine very often?

TI: No.

XL: Okay. Do you, [**TI:** No.] um—Did you go back to Philippine, like, from time to time when you were k—children? [**TI:** No.] To visit your families?

TI: No. [**XL:** Okay.] Our family was just here, and this was our immediate family.

XL: Okay. Alright. [to **SL**] Do you have any question to ask, Sophie?

SL: Um, yeah. Could you tell us a little bit more about the non-profit organization that you established? The uh... let’s see...

TI: Asian American Bar Foundation?

XL: Yeah.

SL: Asian American Bar Foundation, Inc., yes.

TI: Well, I just, uh, I created the corporation, and I filed it, and uh, uh, I forget uh—I think what we—there—there are some, uh... some taxing things that had to be done to maintain it, but after—after my year was up, you know, I just gave it to the organization and they, you know, continued to do whatever it was that they had to do with it from then on.

XL: Okay. Um...

SL: Do you have any affiliations with Rice University?

TI: Not really, uh, my son is um—uh, he's—he made a donation here, so he always is mentioned as a donor, so.

SL: Okay, that's—

TI: Oh, I—I go to some of their concerts.

SL: Oh okay.

XL: That's interesting, yeah. Um, so when—when did you retire?

TI: Uh, 2015.

XL: 2015? Okay. Uh... So what was your plan, um, after you retire? Like... do you plan to travel around, or like...?

TI: Well, I still, uh, uh—shortly after I retired, I had a bunch of health problems and surgeries [**XL:** Yeah.], and uh, so that took care of things for a while. I still have to have a surgery on my left knee for knee replacement—this has already been done, and it's—it's very—doing very well. Uh, so, I've always wanted to travel. Um, I think Machu Picchu, that sorta thing. I would like to see the Aurora Borealis somewhere. [**XL:** Okay. Alright.] But uh, you know, uh, with my first husband, uh, we did a lot of traveling to Europe, we went to Denmark, and we would go see the country there. And with one of my friends I went to Italy, and, uh, traveled around there, a lot of Italy. And, uh, I've been on cruises by myself, and uh, I've been to Mexico some. Um, so, but I—I still enjoy traveling, but I don't know if my mobility will permit it.

XL: [to **SL**] Do you have any more questions?

SL: No, [**XL:** Okay.] that's it.

XL: Um, do you have anything to add, uh, that we didn't mention before that you want to talk about?

TI: Well, um... I can't think of anything. [**XL:** Okay.] But, uh, yeah, I've enjoyed it. [**XL:** Thank you.] I hope, uh, I provided you some, you know, salient information.

SL: Yeah, definitely.

XL: Yeah, definitely. Yeah. Thank you! So, that's the end of our interview.

[end of audio]

[01:40:23]