

Interviewee: Gregorio Pendon

Interviewer: Katie Stacy

Interview Date: October 22, 2021

Transcribed by: Katie Stacy

Reviewed by: Jessica Gonzales, Samuel Lee

Track Time: 1:54:36

Background:

Gregorio (Greg) Pendon was born in 1941 in the town of Pototan, in the province Iloilo, Philippines. During his childhood, he lived with his parents, five siblings, and 4 cousins. He was also close with his grandmother, Gregoria, after whom he was named. He earned a bachelor's degree at Adamson University in Manila, Philippines, in the field of chemical engineering, came as a student to the United States to earn his PhD in Chemical Engineering at Texas A&M University. While attending Texas A&M, he met Luzviminda (Lucy) Naguit, and they married. The Pendons have 4 children: Regina, Joseph, Maria, and Greg. Greg Pendon and his wife Lucy currently reside in West Columbia, Texas, a small city located 55 miles southwest of Houston.

This interview covers Greg Pendon's childhood, immigration to the United States, education, career in chemical engineering (primarily at Dow Chemical Company), as well as his family.

Setting:

This interview was conducted remotely via Zoom. The interviewer was located in Austin, Texas, and the interviewee was located in Pearland, Texas. This interview was conducted as part of a class project for The University of Texas School of Information graduate students Katie Stacy and Jessica Gonzales. Greg and Lucy's daughter Gina (Regina Flynn) assisted with technology support by setting up the Zoom application and logging into the meeting, as well as by pairing Greg's hearing aids to the Bluetooth audio so that he could hear the questions.

Key:

GP: Gregorio Pendon

KS: Katie Stacy

—: speech cuts off; abrupt stop

...: speech trails off; pause

Italics: emphasis

(?): preceding word may not be accurate

[Brackets]: actions (laughs, sighs, etc.)

Interview transcript:

**KS:** Today is Friday, October 22 2021. My name is Katie Stacy. And I'm here with Greg Pendon. And this is a video call to interview him for the Houston Asian American Archive. Thank you for talking with me, Greg, I'm going to start out by asking when and where were you born?

**GP:** I was born in the Philippines, the town is Pototan. And in the province of Iloilo.

**KS:** How would you describe that area and the household where you grew up?

**GP:** The area is about 15 miles away from the coast. And it's really in the central part of the province. And it's a farming community with all the what we call the "barrios" around it so people are really farmers to begin with.

**KS:** And do you—

**GP:** And our household that I grew up with, I grew up with four brothers—three brothers and two sisters. But in the household, we also have- grew up with four cousins. The cousins, because their parents died during the World War in World War Two. So, my mother being the only sister of my aunt, took on the, informally adopted the four siblings, so we grew up together. And so I also grew up with my mother's mother. I've been- my mother, was named, that's how I was named after her. The name of my grandmother was Gregoria. So, I was named after her and I was the second child. I have an older sister. And then after that, I had a sister and then three brothers came along.

**KS:** Were you close growing up with your siblings?

**GP:** I'm sorry?

**KS:** Were you close with your siblings while growing up?

**GP:** Yes, we are. We were very close. I mean, well, normal sibling rivalry and things like this. But we got along very well. Everybody had a chore of the house, division of labor. Of course my mother ran a small grocery store and my father was basically postman for the town. But later on he was the—he became the Postmaster of the Postal Service.

**KS:** Can you speak more about your parent's occupations?

**GP:** Yes. My- like I said, we grew up in the, brought up in—my consciousness about growing up really started when I was I think I was three years old. And my father started as the delivery for telegram service. And then later on was- he became a postman. And also at the same time he learned how to do the telegraph operator, the Morse code, you know, in the old days. And then after the postman, the Postmaster retired. He was- he became the Postmaster. And like I said, my mother ran the small grocery store. And us kids would-would help in tending to the store when we're out of school.

**KS:** What were some of the values that your parents emphasized when you were growing up?

**GP:** The values that we had really is, it's about working hard. And church was really important to my parents. We would do, growing up, we would have to be, we have to be—you have to be home by six o'clock, because we had to do the Angelus and we have to do the prayers and the rosary every night. And it was happy, the environment, all my friends in the community. It was, like I said, it was fun growing up. We were poor but I didn't know.

**KS:** Do you have any fun memories that you like to think about from your time growing up back home?

**GP:** Yes, my fondest memory was, was getting up Sunday morning early and take—and my grandmother was the time was getting old and she needed help in getting to the church was only about three blocks away from the house. So she would wake me up and I'd take her to the, accompany her to church for the early five o'clock mass in church. And then my—later on, when I was in high school, my father decided to get a traveling rice mill

business. To build, he and an uncle built the motorized vehicle. That's where we put the rice mill. It's a small rice mill. And that's how I learned how to drive the vehicle. Twelve years old, I was able to drive the vehicle.

**KS:** What were the decisions that led you to move to the US?

**GP:** I'm sorry?

**KS:** What were the decisions that led you to move to the United States?

**GP:** When I came to the United States. I came to the United States in 1964. After, when I went to college in Adamson University, I finished my chemical engineering, Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering at Adamson University. I actually started at the University of San Agustin in Iloilo. But after the third, my junior year, my parents decided that I will go to Manila to pursue my—to finish my—pursue my degree in Chemical Engineering at Adamson University. And so when I finished it, when I finished I thought I would—I can get the-the job that was for my degree Chemical Engineering. There were no chemical plants, no, no industry except for the Shell refinery in the Philippines.

So, first I applied to—I went to—I actually went to Tokyo on a Rotary Scholarship to pursue a degree at Tokyo Institute of Technology. But before I could do that, when I went to Tokyo, I had to go to the language training course because all the classes were conducted in Japanese, and the textbooks were written in [Japanese]. After three months of going to the Japanese—the Japanese language, I know I can't handle it. So I went back to the Philippines and then I started going to—going to—I don't know if you're familiar with the United States Information Service, USIS Library in Manila. So I frequented and I went to the library almost every day looking for schools that I could apply to, and actually applied to [Cal Tech], Georgia Tech, in Georgia, Texas A&M. And then I applied to—actually I applied to Rice also. But only Cal Tech and Georgia Tech, and Texas A&M replied to my application. And along with the application for admission was also my need for financial assistance.. So it's either graduate assistant or teaching assistant. And at that time, my sister was in Houston, as a nurse in Houston. And she told me that "I can help you, I really could help you if you go to school in Texas," so I went to Texas A&M. And the initial assistantship was in the form of the \$200 a month assistantship, teaching assistant or a graduate assistant, and so I went to Texas A&M, and I would spend my weekend in Houston. On weekdays I would be in College Station pursuing my Master's degree in chemical engineering.

And after I had my Master's degree, before that I got married to Lucy, my wife, and so we both moved. So I'm over at College Station and then at the same time, the department offered me a National Science Foundation Fellowship to pursue my PhD in Chemical Engineering. It took me six years to finish my PhD, but at the same time, I was raising—my wife and I were raising three children in College Station

**KS:** What, um, I want to just take us a minute to ask you what is it about chemical engineering that made you choose that field of study?

**GP:** I think my hearing aid is, uh, say that again?

**KS:** Why did you choose to study chemical engineering?

**GP:** Oh did I choose—that was, it was in when they started school chemical engineering and the University San Agustin, what I call the, my ninong or my godfather, my god-baptis my baptism, he was a graduate of University of San Agustin, and he was the one who encouraged me. I didn't really know when I went to register for a

(chemical engineering) for at University of San Agustin I didn't know whether I would, I didn't really know what's what [audio garbled] and or so, he encouraged me to take chemical engineering and I owe it to him, and throughout the years when I was at San Agustin he was encouraging me. And the highlight of my stay in college is that when I went to in my second year in university, San Agustin I obtained a full scholarship because of my grades in my degree, and then when I moved to Manila to Adamson University, I was also given a scholarship because of my grades.

**KS:** Were there any, were there any major differences, uh, that you noticed, going to school in Manila versus College Station?

**GP:** Oh, that really—it's the big, big, big, big difference. In, well, number one, the quality of instruction. You know, in the Philippines, most of my, all of my instructors were degreed but they had their degrees in chemical engineering. But it's all academic they didn't have they didn't really have a background, technical background on experience in chemical engineering, how to design chemical plants, how to design a process. But in College Station, Texas A&M, all my professors were all uh PhDs and, and PhDs and they have the technical background for what they're teaching in, at the college. So that's the major, was the biggest—it was an eye opener, because they can relate to you. They can relate to you what you're struggling with, what—give the guidance, and why-what you should be working on. And that's I think, where I developed my initiative to do things that I needed to do and it was—it gave me the foundation for what I did in my career at Dow Chemical.

**KS:** What kind of defining moments did you have in grad school? Like what kinds of moments of initiative did you—did you have?

**GP:** It may be that I would say it's probably when the head of the department who was my graduate advisor came to me one day and said, "Greg, I really—we need—I need your help." He was writing a series of technical textbooks, in his area of expertise which is distillation and separations. And so, he asked me, if I would do the—said you would do the—I would do the simulation. That was the time when computer simulation was [beginning], I would do the simulation. I would do the—he would write the theory and I would write the computer programs to do what he wanted me to do for his textbook. And so I was then being able to then write it in technical journals and then make that presentation to present that technical journals to the American American Institute of Chemical Engineers and to see my name on the publications such as the "Chemical Engineering Progress". It's what I call, it may not be—for my technical paper to be accepted by publications in chemical engineering was a defining moment for me. We know that you're an expert in that area.

**KS:** You mentioned that one of these moments was when you needed to write computer code- had you ever done that before? Or was that something that you needed to learn for this project?

**GP:** I-I-I, that was the first time I did the writing the computer codes. Fortran- Fortran programming was a- key punching and then writing, yeah you know, the, [audio cuts out].

**KS:** Uh, what, what was it like to attend school during this time period in American history in the 60s and the early 70s? Did you face any challenges that you'd like to talk about? Um, things like that?

**GP:** The... No, I didn't really see a lot of challenges. You know that challenges come and go and the biggest challenge was, to me, was just the time that it would take to get the program written correctly, or even punching the— doing the keypunch cards. The biggest challenge for us is I guess where we have three children, and my wife was working. And so we had to divide our time. We had three young children so I would go to school in the

morning, and then at two o'clock I would come home and relieve my wife and my wife would go to uh, go to work. And I would take care of the children until she comes back again, at night at 11 o'clock. And so I would take care of the children, provide for all their needs, feed them, [give them their] baths and put them to bed. And so when she comes home at 11, with the things that I haven't finished during the day I would go back to the college and then finish the work that I haven't done or I haven't finished during the day. I would come home maybe at two o'clock in the morning, two o'clock in the morning and then repeat the same thing the next day so... it's a good thing that we lived just off campus and it's only a short walk from the office.

**KS:** I want, uh I want to sort of switch tracks a little bit and talk about your immigration journey and journey to citizenship. You've been open about the period of time being very long and frustrating. How did you feel about having to live with uncertainty year after year as things you know moved on?

**GP:** I think I didn't really worry about being—to live with it the stress of being deported was a long journey but, but I was, I was not so—I didn't get depressed on whether we should be deported or things like that because when I went to work, because throughout that journey, I had my company Dow Chemical had promised me that whatever happens we'll—we will help you. And so at that time, I had some other options if things didn't go well. But as you know government changes, uh every year the change makers and laws and there's so I might—I didn't—I don't really worry about whether it would be I will be deported or it was—it was difficult, it was trying, it was very trying times but we felt like we have the help of a lot of people to overcome th-our problem. And it came, and in due time it came. The only problem I had with it is biggest challenge because of my job. I could not because I didn't have the visa to stay, I didn't have the opportunity to help service the plants for Dow Chemical in other areas of the world. I could not I could not go to Germany or I could not go to Spain or I could not go to the Netherlands because I didn't have, uh, I didn't have the visa, if I left the US I could not come back. So I had to wait until 1988 to make my trip to the other parts of Dow Chemicals complexes.

**KS:** Can you, uh, can you speak more about the different types of support and help that you received during this time? You've spoken a little bit about Dow Chemical. Were there any friends and family who also helped you with your in your journey to citizenship?

**GP:** Oh, you mean about my immigration status or?

**KS:** Yes, I'm hoping you could speak more about the different types of support that you received during the immigration process.

**GP:** Uh, yes. First, like I said Dow Chemical and then the community, the lawyers we have met in our area in Lake Jackson or West Columbia. They even wrote letters to the congressman, as you know, Ron Paul was from Lake Jackson. And so he at that time, it was, he was running for his—he is the congressman. And he helped us write the letters. And Mr. Davis, also a lawyer in Lake Jackson, helped us write those lawyers to Senator Bentsen And they got him to help us with the—with our case. And, and, the person the Pribbles— that also helped us, I don't know if Lucy had told you about her, our foster—what we call our foster parents here in Houston. They also helped us in a way that they would—their acquaintances and friends would, they even accompanied us to the courthouse for the hearings. And this particular person, this other person helped us with his whole corporation. And he was a hiring director for the company and they came up with us and helped us [with his] advice and wrote letters. But it really was—really changes what really came about us was the changes in immigration laws. And then we went through the whole process but all along the way, these people really helped us. Dow Chemical, first of all, and then the lawyers from Lake Jackson and Senat-uh, Congressman Ron Paul.

**KS:** Uh, could you tell me more about your foster family? You mentioned them briefly and I'm just wondering if you can elaborate more on them. I'm sorry? Yeah. Sorry. Could you tell us more about your foster family?

**GP:** Oh yes, the foster family, uh, I don't know if Lucy had told you that she met the Pribbles, Nell Pribble. She met Nell when she came to the US in 1964. There was a big group of the international meeting in Houston<sup>1</sup>, and all these ladies would meet these nurses and—and introduce them to Houston and then take them out to see Houston. But for some reason, Nell Pribble and Lucy clicked and they got together. They just fell in love or—and Nell Pribble when she came in August. And on December, she invited Lucy to go with her to visit their daughter in northern Dallas. And she spent Christmas there. And after that Christmas, every time I would visit Lucy, Nell Pribble would always be there and we'd go out.

And then then over the years we just we just did treat each other like yeah, we're family. See the husband, we called him Gramps, but Rufus was his real name. He was the one who introduced me to football. They had national football because they had—they had the tickets to the Rice game. He was a graduate of SMU Southern Methodist University. So the Southwest Conference was still there and he would get tickets to those games and he would buy the tickets for us and take us to the games at Rice stadium and then the, and then, and then, the oh what is this the—Astrodome and even in Dallas, at Texas A&M, and then Dallas he will take us to those games. And so when the kids came along, they just decided that they want to be our kids' grandparents. So, every birth, when our kids were born they would always come during the first visit or to the hospital for Lucy. And when our kids were growing up, on Grandparents Day, they would always want to know when the Grandparents Day at school is and they would come. And they're gone now but they were—every Christmas we'd spend Christmas with them and, and with them and with their grandchildren so we're really extend—what will be called the extended family and second family and they're our American family so... they're always proud to tell their friends that there is our, this is our second—our other family. When Gramps passed away, in the memorial we were all, we were all treated just like their children because they were—the memorial they were they left behind. We were part of the family that will be remembering them and mourning Gramps's loss and then when- when Nell passed away many years ago also, Lucy was in charge of the, in charge of the services for Nell. We're, we really like—we thought were our family here in Houston and it really helped our acclimatization or this country. We were really blessed that we had... we met them. I don't know if we were just luck but...

**KS:** You've talked a little bit about your wife Lucy, would you mind telling me how you two met?

**GP:** Oh, yeah. Oh, yes. Yeah. Well, like I said, my sister was living in Houston working as a nurse in Houston at the time when I was at A&M. So every weekend, I would thumb a ride to, you know, in the old days you thumb a ride. I didn't have a car then but I would thumb a ride from College Station to Houston. You see all these students lining up Highway Six—on Highway Six thumbing a ride to wherever Dallas or Austin or San Antonio or Houston. And I would—I managed to thumb a ride. I would get a ride to Houston and that particular day was my birthday. That weekend was my birthday. So I thumbed a ride into Houston.

When I got my sister's apartment there was a big note on the door that says " I'm at work and I won't be in until 11 o'clock. But I have a friend in Park Towers which sits across the other side of the medical center." It said you can walk there and this is the apartment number you knock on my friend's door and she'll take care of you until I get home at 11 o'clock. So I did, so when I walked over to that apartment, Park Towers apartment, and I knocked on the door. And then so this young lady said "Yes?" I said- I asked her I said "Is Mags there?" the name of my sister's friend. She also went to work, she said, and I'm the only one here in the apartment so would you—can you

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<sup>1</sup> meeting of members of the Rice Institute of International Education in Houston

come in? So I sat and we sat there talking and well, it was lucky for me that Lucy was not at work at that time. So that's the first time we met.

And, after that, I think it was Thanksgiving and friends of ours in College Station, a Filipino couple was giving the party for all the—there were about 20 and—not that many—10 Filipinos in Texas A&M College Station. Most of them were Rockefeller Scholars from the Rice Institute in Los Baños in the Philippines. And so to throw a party for us and he—she also invited the nurses from Houston and along with this group of nurses, about six of them, Lucy was part of it. And so from there we developed a relationship and then in 1965 we dated and then when I was doing—at that time I was doing my research for my master's degree, and at that time you have to write your own. Get the—find a typist, do the typing, and then so on weekends when I'd go to Houston, Lucy would offer to type my thesis. And, and so yes the relationship just developed. And finally in 1966 I proposed to her, and so got married in Houston, the old Houston cathedral in Houston.<sup>2</sup>

**KS:** Thank you for sharing that. Um, I really enjoyed hearing it. I'm wondering if you can talk more about what it was like to be going to school and raising a family at the same time. That sounds very difficult to me.

**GP:** Yeah. Yeah, it was. It was hard- I can tell you it was hard but we had fun... (audio cuts out) would take the kids camping, visiting Lucy's foster parents' weekends. And then the hardest thing was making ends meet, you know. I was making \$200 a month on an assistantship and Lucy was making \$300 a month at the hospital, and rent and everything else. But we had fun with—on weekend, Friday night was you know, we have the old—the university has—in summertime, we had the Grove where we would see movies in the campus. And otherwise, there's also the drive in theater—drive in movies. And it's only \$1 per car load. So we'd count our pennies, all together we have \$1. You'll be able to take the kids and then that was also the first time we've had pizza. Yeah. Pizza and then... maybe... Tex-Mex food was when I learned how to like Tex-Mex and pizza.

**KS:** What what types of Tex Mex do you like the most?

**GP:** Oh, I like the taco, the barbecue... barbecue taco, yeah, beef taco. I really enjoy that. Yeah.

**KS:** Do you remember any of the movies that you went to see at the drive in?

**GP:** Oh... yeah. Some were old movies like the Cary Grant "North by Northwest." And "The Alamo." They were hit movies. Yes. And Jerry Lewis movies, I really—I was fond of Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis comedy books. I don't think I had missed a Jerry Lewis movie when I was growing up. I follow, I really enjoy this—this just kind of funny movie.

**KS:** Thank you. I asked that because I noticed the Bushel and a Peck sign, and I think that's from the Guys and Dolls musical. And so, I had wondered if you guys enjoy musicals.

**GP:** Oh...

**KS:** Okay, I'd like to start—uh, switch gears again and start talking about your work history. And the first thing I'd like to ask is, did you enjoy your teaching assistant job when you were a grad student? Or was it you know, kind of drudgery?

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<sup>2</sup> Houston Co-Cathedral



**GP:** Which one is it? Teaching?

**KS:** Yes, the teaching assistant job at Texas A&M, did you enjoy that?

**GP:** Oh yes, tremendously, I really liked the dynamics that I had with the students. And I remember, there was only one woman, one girl in that whole class of seniors. I would—I teach the Unit Operations Lab. So, there was only one girl in that class. And I really enjoyed the teaching, and the kids looking up to me, you know, and say what—what should—what, what should I do now, Greg? And I—What should I do, what. (audio garbled) doing the right thing, you know, I would—they would write their experiment and with the result and all of this and their observation I will be correcting. And yeah they are very smart kids and it—it definitely makes you feel good when you know that these kids are so smart. But they'll ask your opinion, right—we're doing the right thing you know, and, and that was, to me that the other benefit that I got from teaching in that class is, right when I went to work for Dow, when I went to work for Dow—most of, a lot of those students—my students were working for Dow Chemical.

So, it was like a transition, and they made it easier for me, because they will be assigned at the areas of—you know Dow Chemical is a big complex here in Freeport. 85 different units of chemical processing and I was in process engineering. I was in process engineering. So, a role at processing engineering is to help the plants, especially in troubleshooting what the problem is, and so these graduates are working for Dow. It was easy for me because they just call me and said, "Greg we got a real problem (audio is garbled). I know you can help us." So it made my transition to Dow Chemical easier because of the relationship that I had developed when I was teaching, and we had a very good relationship when I was teaching, so...

**KS:** Can you talk more about your transition into Dow Chemical and the types of work that you did throughout your career?

**GP:** Okay, you know when I went to work for Dow, it was more of a yeah. And maybe it was an accident or it... But I had my, when I graduated from my PhD degree... all the jobs have dried up, I could not find a job, I could not find a job. The only job that was offered to me at that time was a teaching job in Nova Scotia, in Canada. And so, I did that. So, So, but anyway, I had my degree in, I had my—I graduated in December and so from December on, Dow Chemical and Texas A&M, my boss, the head of the department, said "I'll keep you here as the research assistant." And you would do, I would do the all the legwork for investigating the models that he proposed in his textbook and write his text. So, I did

In April of that year, in 1973. My head of the department said "Dow, I had a call from Dow, and we need help in writing simulation programs for the process—for the hydrocarbon process. Simulations in order to simulate the steady state of the hydrocarbon processing. They said well, they said that, that's the work that you're doing here anyway, so he said, "I want to send you there and you would still be paid from, uh, with us, but you will be making a little bit more, like \$600 a month" said. "And so, you would go to A&M but it would be just for the summer." He said from April until August. So I said yes. So at that time Lucy and the kids were in Houston. So, I said okay, I will be there. So, I went to Dow and then they hired me just as a contractor, I was a contractor for Dow but my paycheck came from Texas A&M. So, I worked until August. By the time by when—the end of—by mid-July I committed to this job in Nova Scotia to be assistant professor in Nova Scotia. But my boss came down to my office and he said "Greg, why don't, why don't you stay here with us? And now work at Dow Chemical". I said "I can't do that, the school catalog has been printed in Nova Scotia and my name appears as an instructor for a couple of courses in at the Nova Scotia Technical Institute". I said that "I'm not sure I can do that. But I said I'll get—I'll talk to my wife and see what she thinks". So, I did. So, I went to talk to Lucy and Lucy said, "Okay, you



go ahead and go to Nova Scotia. Me and my kids will stay here." I said, "I don't really—I don't think I could stand the cold up there in the north." So she said— said "Okay we can live here and get a good job and maybe we can come back in a few years" I said. So I went back to my boss, I said "Okay", he gave me the paper.

So, I started as a process engineer. And Dow then gave me big projects, apparently they liked one of my projects, so promotions came and by 1980, seven years after my career they promoted me the—what do they call it—senior process associate or the point where I am responsible for this technology at the plants that I am helping troubleshoot those needing help, and after that I did the—I was assigned as the process engineer for the expansion of the plants, like the plants in Tarragona or plants in Stade, Germany and also in The Netherlands. So, I'd be doing the process engineering for the project. Then transition like I said was really easy because I had to learn a new type of process control and all of that to design equipment that gets all my work (audio garbled). Texas A&M was just writing codes for- writing codes for the simulation program. And I probably developed through self-study and dealing with [HTRI and HTFS] and all the other resources that were available to me I developed the specialty in heat transfer. So, in 1990, a few years later I became the heat transfer expert not only for Freeport but also for what they call the Global Process Engineering for Dow Chemical. And that means it's all over Dow facilities in parts of the world. And that was fun, because you get the—met with all process engineers from other countries in Dow Chemical and I really enjoyed it. Going to Tarragona and Holland was one of the best things that I experienced (?).

**KS:** In recent years, there's been an ongoing conversation about discrimination, especially in the workforce. You were just talking about how you became the heat transfer expert. And I was just wondering, did you ever perceive that you were being treated differently than your co-workers? For example, with promotions or getting projects, um, anything like that?

**GP:** I'm not sure. Say that again?

**KS:** Sure. Sorry. Did- did you ever feel like you were being discriminated against in the workplace, in terms of getting promotions or projects?

**GP:** I believe—to be truthfully honest I never feel—I never felt that any kind of discrimination. The only time I was—some people think was discriminatory was before my last big promotion, my supervisor came to me, the boss up. Said, "Greg, I think you need to go to the accent- accent improvement course," and it was, uh, he said "the department will pay for you to go to this service in the medical center. And it might take you some time for you to—they will do it because you have to drive to Houston from here and the class is at five o'clock in the evening." I said "Sure anything", you know, to me, it just—I am—I have—I know, I still have my accent so. So, it wasn't—t was that some people will be its demeaning, why would you do that to get promoted? The—go to the accent... It comes with the job, I have to deal with other people, I have to talk to different nationalities, and I have to—every day I have to work when people come to my office to consult, consult or need help and I needed to be able to communicate to them. It was, to me it was a benefit that I did it. But that was the only time that I would say that to some people it might be discriminatory.

But and the only—another thing that people might think discriminatory, when I was—my initial—my first year at Dow, after a few, a couple of months I think—you know the in the office, beginners are scattered in the first floor. But the main office, only engineering offices, is up on the second floor. So that's where we would pick up our mail, internal mails and all of that collect and get our mail. And one day I went up to the office to pick up my mail. And the Secretary, what we call this secretary of the boss called me over and said, "Hey, come over. Could you get me my coffee?" So, I said, "Sure Millie, no problem." So, the coffee room is where the mail also so I said "no

problem." So, I would keep on the—get the coffee. And that went on for about a week. Finally, the following week I went up there and she said, "Greg, I really have to apologize." I said, "Why, Millie?" Said, "Yeah, because I thought you were just a messenger from the mailroom" because my office was the mailroom and she thought I was just up there to collect my mail so I said—So is it—Somebody—my boss told me that said, "That's Dr. Pendon that you just told to get your coffee." So, it was a big laugh and we enjoyed that and Millie could not stop talking about it every time her friends in the community, in the office to always relate every time we'd be in the same gathering, same parties, you know. "Let me tell you about what Greg and I, yeah. How Greg and I met."

So, it was... they might think it's discriminatory, but I observed many discrimination from other people but to me personally, I don't think I've ever experienced any kind of discrimination. I was promoted because I did my work, I developed my expertise. That's—I know how to develop my expertise, so that's why I hate to call it I survived, but how I—And my office said "open door" and engineers who come. You know, in Dow Chemical when I went to work in 1973, the environment was really different from the environment that we had when I was working during the later part of my career. Yes, there were no women engineers. There were women there that started working and you can ask older people for support, and it was—the older engineers view young engineers as competitors for the job. So, it took—it was not a good situation. But for me, I was lucky because people I had dealt with at Dow, some of them were my former students. And we had that relationship. That, and so, they were just—they came to ask for my advice. So they would listen, and these people, are senior engineers, or superintendents in the plants. When I retired, they all came over. And I think to some extent I changed the culture in our department because most of the new hires that I was involved in the hiring process of several department in the later part of my career. So, every year we plan to hire five engineers, and most of those engineers that I had a hand in hiring were women, young women engineers, and minorities: Vietnamese, South Americans, and I even hired one Filipino engineer from California. She didn't stay but six months, I think she wanted to go back to California, but she didn't stay. But by the time I left Dow Chemical about a third of processing engineers were women, and a good number of minorities and ethnicity.

**KS:** It's so nice to hear that you were able to change the hiring practices so much during your time there. Did you did you act as a mentor to any of the of the engineers that you hired?

**GP:** Oh yes, I did. I did I—not only did I mentor people that I hired, also engineers, young engineers, especially like the Chinese and Vietnamese engineers for the research organization. They would ask me, they would ask me to mentor them. And there was one, when I retired, one of these people that I hired actually wrote a very nice letter about how I would be good, not just a mentor, but I would be in the University setting in the school, academic, I would be advisor, I would be an excellent advisor because I would work for the mentorship stuff, yes, telling them what to do, but getting them to see how they can succeed in their profession.

**KS:** And what advice would you give younger generations of Asian Americans and specifically Filipino immigrants, if they were interested in a career in chemical engineering?

**GP:** First of all, I would—one thing I would tell them is keep your heritage, be what you are, try to be comfortable with your heritage with your skin, you're a Filipino or minority. But say to work hard, take the initiative. And they will- your bosses will notice, will see how the quality of your work is. You're doing what you think is best. And keep learning. Keep learning on what we just said or let's say I'm working in a startup business, what I'm doing. So, keep learning as you go because what you learn in school or what you've learned throughout your life is just the foundation, as you go through your career at work, you find opportunities to improve.

**KS:** Thank you so much. I have a couple of additional questions. I'd like to move into talking about your, your family and how you've interacted with your surrounding community. And after that, that will pretty much wrap us up. But first thing I wanted to ask was how did you, uh, how did you choose to teach your children about Filipino culture or language and what kinds of Filipino experiences, you know, was important for you to make sure that they had?

**GP:** Well, my children, they were—at home I raised them in—Lucy and I ran as a Filipino household. I mean yeah, everybody shares responsibility for getting the house in order, getting the food and all that. And the children have chores. So, in fact, we had—our house's two floors, so that the children's bedrooms were upstairs and we had a bell in the kitchen. Wake up in the morning and Lucy and I would prepare the breakfast and as soon as the breakfast was ready one of us would ring the bell. It's a bell and one of them usually wants to sleep more and so they don't listen to the bell. We either yelled, and said, "Mikey, come down! Tina, come down! Breakfast ready!" We have to leave the house to make it to Freeport at 7:30 because luckily for us, Lucy and I, we had the same schedule because she works during the day so we would carpool—drive one car unless something is really need to and the kids would—After breakfast, we wouldn't leave the house until the kids are out of the house and walking to the bus stop for the bus.

So, we have the household but we tried the—that it's the Tagalog, because I'm from Iloilo so we speak Ilonggo and Lucy is from Bataan and she speaks the Tagalog language, so the language at the house when Lucy and I would speak to each other in Tagalog. But because we—although we tried to teach them other languages, we were the only Filipino in the community and the school district. So, the only thing they get is when they go to school is look at each other and say this is so they—they really had to—they had a hard time being bilingual, so to the point that they actually just had to drop learning how to speak Tagalog. We would—on weekends, would get together with the other Filipino families and the Mexican community in Lake Jackson, for special occasions would get together with them, but that was the only—Then we'd go up to Houston to visit Lucy's brother but that was their only way of getting back with other Filipinos. But in school, they really didn't have, so the only way you can raise, English to your kids.

**KS:** How did you feel when your children decided to stop learning Tagalog? Was it upsetting?

**GP:** No, it's really not a big problem with, I guess. Sometimes, most of the time I find myself too even speaking to Lucy in Tagalog because it's just easier to communicate—in English. And, and the community—our community too is—we're really making a living where (audio garbled) the Americans and I'm proud that we're living in community, we live in West Columbia, everybody who—and when I met people and asked me, "Where are you from?" I always tell them, "I know". When they're asking when they say, "Where are you from?", I know they want to know if I'm—what part of the world I'm coming from, but I said I tell them, "West Columbia, Texas." But I said, "But if you want to know where I am from originally, I'm from the Philippines." And when I go to Mexico, when I go to Europe people ask me, but people initially do say I'm—to speak to me in Japanese. But I—when Lucy's with me, I tell them, "Wrong country." I mean, some other parts of the world when they see Lucy, Lucy's Chinese eyed you know I said so, so everybody thinks, most people think that she's Chinese. But I said, "No no no no—I am a Filipino." Even when I go to the Philippines, people still think I'm Japanese. Yeah.

**KS:** You talked a little bit earlier about going to football games. What kinds of other American experiences did you have as a family?

**GP:** Oh, we enjoyed [youth] soccer, it was also when our two boys were playing soccer, I was a coach and also, I was the president of the Brazosport Soccer League in our area. And the girls Gina and Tina, they played soccer

also, and we enjoyed going to the games. And what we really enjoyed most was the [school] band. They were both in and all of them were in band so, and in fact Joe was the drum major for the school for a couple of years and so we'd take them San Antonio, take them to Dallas for band. And also in church we were, Lucy and I were, five years that the—many years that the kids were high school age for the Catholic CYO—were in charge of the CYO for our church.

**KS:** What kinds of values or life skills were important for you to teach your children? Values, life skills? Can you hear me?

**GP:** Say that again?

**KS:** Sorry, what kinds of life skills and values was it important for you to make sure you passed on to your children?

**GP:** First thing our expectations for children was that we—the life skills has to be—take—show our example, follow our example. This is who we are, this is how we grew up with, and this is what we're trying to impart to you. What you see with us here is how we were brought up. So, our expectation is that you will follow our lead, follow example that number one, God is important to us. That's number one priority. Prayers is who we are. And treat people like you want to be treated. And our grandkids, when the grandkids were little, we had—Lucy every summer she had what we called Lola Summers, Lola's School and that's how they will learn. Our biggest is BIB, behavior influence behavior. That's—for the children and the grandchildren that's what we teach. Your behavior influenced behavior, behavior to other people. If it's anything that's worth do—it's doing—worth doing, do it with all your effort and with all your capabilities. So that's perhaps—our legacy is that that's all we can impart to them. We came here to this world with nothing and really the only thing we have is us, is our heritage. It's what our parents taught us and that's quite important to them.

**KS:** Um, you mentioned earlier, and I just wanted to clarify, you said that your grandkids would go to Lola School during the during the summer with your wife. Can you talk more about what happened there?

**GP:** Well yeah, I remember the picture now but she would have the one on this table or we'd have both seats on the side and Lucy would give them what the—lesson for the day, whether it's behavior, or singing, or drawing, or sketching, and all of that. But mostly it's about the relationship with our grandkids, (garbled audio) Lucy, I don't know if you know, if Lucy told you, (garbled audio) so she started<sup>3</sup> in- the in Lake Jackson. They have this for kindergarten children. They have the training for—safe training for the children during the summer time<sup>4</sup>. And Lucy was in charge of that, so part of that is also part of the Lola School.

**KS:** Thank you for sharing that. That was really nice to hear. I'd like to talk now about your—you've mentioned that God is very important to you. I was wondering if you could tell me about any religious services that you attend, um, and where you attend?

**GP:** Say that again?

**KS:** Sorry, can you hear me now?

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<sup>3</sup> She co-founded SafetyTown.

<sup>4</sup> Safety awareness and training program.

**GP:** Huh?

**KS:** Can you hear me?

**GP:** (garbled audio)

**KS:** Can you hear me now?

**GP:** Yeah, you're fading out.

**KS:** Oh, okay. Can you, can you hear me? I'm asking if you could talk to me a little bit about your church and the religious services that you attend.

**GP:** Well, you faded out again. Sorry.

**KS:** Okay, how about now?

**GP:** Okay, better.

**KS:** Okay. I was wondering if you- if you attend any religious services that you would like to talk about, you have mentioned how important God is to you. And I was also wondering if you could talk about why you choose to worship with any particular congregation or community?

**GP:** We're primarily—I was born Catholic and Lucy is too, and—Lucy is too. So, it was—it's a continuation of our upbringing in the Catholic faith, there was no question that we would be- would pursue being Catholics here in the US. In fact, I thought was, for the first few years in College Station we'd go look, go to the—it's the Catholic Church, but we'd look for- for Catholic church that would more reflect our, the way we were big Catholics in the Philippines. And then, after we moved here, in West Columbia, and we had—we were involved in building a new church, new Catholic Church in West Columbia. So that's, that became (audio garbled) became our focus for our church. And so, the kids, yes, followed us through and—and—and our pastor was really very, very good about getting the—me involved in, getting involved in the—in the church. So, and that's mainly the main reason why we chose to remain Catholic.

**KS:** What kinds of church events do you go to? Is there any? Do you have any, like fun memories of doing service work for church that you'd like to share?

**GP:** Yeah. Church service. Church services, like the Catholic Youth Organization, for example, would—well, so we were in charge of a Catholic organization with would be what we call the teachers also for this church, school or religious education, what we call our religious education. And, you know, we as Catholics, we have a special affection for the type of thing (?) like Lent, for example. And celebration, the Christmas celebration and all of that.

**KS:** I also—I see on your , the forms that you submitted, you're also a member of the Filipino Association Houston. Can you tell me a little bit about the work that that group does?

**GP:** You know, when we first lived in Houston, in the early 70s, we were—here were about maybe 200, 300 Filipinos in Houston. So, we organized, and I think we were the—one of the first Filipinos in Houston. So, we

organized this Filipino Association of Metropolitan Houston. But it really was just a means of getting together with all Filipinos on special occasions, centered on weekends, and doing things together on weekends and special operations. Like on the Philippine Independence Day, we'd organize, and all of this. But it's more of like I said fraternal organization and has nothing to do with politics. But since I left Houston and moved to West Columbia, I'm not really sure how [or] what the group in Houston is doing now. And for us, there are ways of giving back to the community like our Rotary Clubs and Rotary Club membership to Rotary Club, and other occasions where we get together with non-Filipino friends. You know, we've lived in Colombia Lakes since 1976. And that's the only home that we know right now. So, although all the kids are scattered around Texas and Colorado, I have one daughter in Colorado and then son in Austin. And Joe, the oldest boy is in San Antonio, so...

**KS:** Have you noticed any interesting differences in the experiences growing up between your children and your grandchildren?

**GP:** Yeah, it's, you know, one of our oldest grand-grandchild—we have eight grandchildren, two boys and six girls. And the oldest is a boy and I think he's 28-27 years old and he's—he played, he actually played football for Westlake in Austin, when they lived in Austin. But then he's in West Virginia. I mean not in West Virginia but in Norfolk, Virginia, he's the—in the Navy and [was] training to be SEAL, a Navy SEAL. The search and rescue team<sup>5</sup> for the Navy. And the girls, we have an engineer, Fiona is a civil engineer she went to RPI, and Maya is in Colorado and she has graduated, graduated last year from Regis University as a nurse, and like Gina said, Anya is there in Austin and Reggie there—Lia is in Chicago, going to the DePaul University for—wants to be a lawyer. And our youngest boy right now, his son is 17 years old and he is a [junior] in high school this year.

**KS:** Thank you so much. I would like to wrap up with just one final question. Um, what are your hopes for Asian American and Filipino American communities in the United States? What kind of hopes and dreams do you have for them? What are you hoping they will achieve?

**GP:** Filipino Americans, you know, our culture in the Philippines just—I grew up that children have to be seen and not heard. That's a common phrase in the Philippines. And my hope that the future generations of Filipinos will be more vocal, visible and take on their role as an active participant of the community—building. Give an active role whatever you're doing, whatever they do. I know most of Filipinos don't want to call attention to themselves, but that's the only way to me, that's the only way you can do. Instead of just, you know, it's part of our culture just keep on working and working and (garbled audio) but you have to make visible, make a stand for something. If you really believe in something like, sex trafficking for example, or people trafficking, yeah. Have to get involved, get involved with things that they [are passionate with] and what the work you do for you and for the community and for Filipinos. Getting their problems. Speak up, I'm saying.

**KS:** Thank you so much. I am going to wrap up here unless you have anything else that you would like for us to include in this, you know, please, please jump in and let me know but otherwise, I will go ahead and stop the recording.

[Interview concludes.]

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<sup>5</sup> Aviation Search & Rescue Swimmer