

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

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Interviewee: Rolando Panis

Interviewers: Anthony Rogers and Christopher Chan

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Transcribed by: Katarina Slobodova

Edited by: Priscilla Li (3/14/17)

Audio Track time: [01:51:51] part 1

- 46:41, part 2- 29:00, part 3- 36:20

### Summary:

Rolando Panis, originally from the Philippines, talks about his life before and after moving to the United States. While in the Philippines, he changed schools and jobs quite often as a young adult, with engineering as a reoccurring theme. He eventually decided to move to the United States with his girlfriend, a nurse. After marrying, he had kids who all grew up and attended college in Houston. Now he enjoys his retired life by traveling, visiting with family, and fishing. Other topics covered include: his childhood, attitudes toward other minorities, religion, as well as extensive discussion of other family members. Detailed short stories help expand on each topic.

Interview Transcript:

Key:

AR	Anthony Rogers
CC	Christopher Chan
RP	Rolando Panis
—	Speech cuts off; abrupt stop
...	Speech trails off; pause
Italics	Emphasis
(?)	Preceding word may not be accurate
Brackets	Actions (laughs, sighs, etc.)

**AR:** This is Anthony Rogers.

**CC:** And this is Chris Chan.

**AR:** And we're from Rice University with the Houston Asian American Archive Project, and we're here today with Mr. Ronaldo Panis.

**RP:** Rolando [corrected pronunciation]

**AR:** Would you like to start off with telling us about where you're from?

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**RP:** Ahhhh Philipines. Yeah I was born in the Philippines, uh in the province of La Union, in the town of Ago. And uh I went to school there, in Manila, from uh college. First I went to school in my hometown. Then after graduating the uh high school, I went to Manila to get my course. I started engineering, but it's too hard, you know? [laughs] Then my daddy, called me back to my hometown. Then uh I went to get the uh technology, uh practical electricity, and uh, industrial electricity, such as welding, electrician. Then I had my uh I had my own store, like electrical and cement, because my daddy is working in a cement factory. He supplied my cement with the factory price, and I'm selling. And uh since I'm selling, those electrical parts, I ask those people that need uh electricity in their house, that if uh they will buy the whole supply on me, I give them installation free. So I install houses for the electricity, you know. Then when I'm tired, doing that job, then I asked my dad 'can I go back to college?' Then uh I decided to get commerce. Commerce is look like business, you know? Then I took uh business school, from the National University in Manila.

**AR:** And how old were you?

**RP:** Hm?

**AR:** How old were you when you owned your own store?

**RP:** Uhh, I graduated high school at age of sixteen. Then I stayed there for, after graduation I went to Manila for one year, then went back to uh to my hometown. Then uh, maybe I was nineteen years old when I went back to college. Then I decided to get business. Then I finished my business. Then uh, I apply for job. Then I'm working for Makati, uhhh Makati Business District during the night, and I go to scho...uhh well um, still in the school during the day. Then later on, I work night shift after graduation, for the Pacific Data Corporation, doing some uh computer.

**CC:** What year was this?

**RP:** Oh I cannot remember the year. [laugh] Maybe...

**CC:** After college?

**RP:** Yeah. Then later on I taught also some computer courses, while I'm uh working. I taught uh Assembly, Fortran, Cobol, and uh...Then later on I decided to take the board exam for accounting. While we're uh reviewing for the board exam, well, some of my friend, just keep ask, 'hey, let's go to the embassy', 'Well why?' 'We can get application, go to America.' I said 'okay.' Then uh we decided to go there, but the problem is you got to leave early, around three o'clock in the morning, because they only accommodate sixty people. Then after sixty people, everybody will go home again for the next day, you know? So we went there very early in the morning, three o'clock, fall in line, then they count. And one of the uh, before sixty people, get application, then fill up, send it here in California. I decided to go California. Then uh, takes me three years, before I receive a response, but before that my daddy is uh discouraging me, 'eh, there's nothing, see?' You been sending your application for three years and you haven't received anything, and after that I was surprised. [laughs] I just saved the response from uh U.S. embassy in California, then they need my physical exam, and interview, and I pass. Then I came to America.

**CC:** What made you decide to apply to come to America?

**RP:** Just people that uh, they just make uh, you know, those people that with me...

**CC:** Your friends...

**RP:** ...when we're reviewing the board exam. I took the board exam, but I failed, you know, failed two

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subjects. Then I decided not to continue, you know. I got my uh, my reference, well uh I worked also from Bacnotan Cement, while my daddy's there, because we're free, as much as your daddy is working there, you know. We work, then we study during the night, for the industrial electricity. Then I went to California. But, before that, I got the girlfriend in my neighborhood, which also a relative of mine, third cousin.

**CC:** Was she from your hometown?

**RP:** Yeah, the same. It's my, my relative, you know? When I was courting her, still in school, taking nursing, you know. Then graduated nursing, she came to America, an exchange visitors here in Houston. She came ahead of me, 1971, but it's just exchange visitors. While me, when I come here United States, I am immigrant. I stay in California. Then call me during the night, you know, talking together. Then later on, she came and visit, visit me in California. But she got an uncle living in uh Oakland, which is uh, Navy, you know? That uh, when she was there, arriving, I was working in California, on uh hospital, like uh, they call it Hahnemann Hospital, as in housekeeping. Then I just started that week, when she came. I asked my boss, 'can I go and pick up my girlfriend in the airport?' Then she asked me, 'what do you want? You can select, your job or her.' [laughs] Yeah, then uh, because, if I go with her, then maybe they gonna fire me, you know. Then I decided to stay in my job. [laughs] I call my uncle to pick up my girlfriend there. Then uh she went to her uncle in Oakland. After my work, then I went to visit her. Then after a week she came back here in Houston, because she is nurse. She work with Methodist Hospital. Then uh after six months working in uh California, and uh San Francisco, I decided to quit my job and move here in Houston, because my wife is...I mean my girlfriend is encouraging me. 'Hey, come to Houston, they got lots of jobs here.' Then, I came here. Then uh, she provided me apartment. Then uh, I stay in the apartment. Then later on we decided to get married, you know. Then, we got kids. [laughs] From uh [laughs]—first we got my daughter. First my daughter. Then every two years, we got kids. And for five years, you know. I mean five kids in all. They got two years interval.

[10:08]

**CC:** What year were you married?

**RP:** 1972. Uhh, June. Then uhh... I mean, I came here in Houston. Then after three months, I land a job. I was a payroll clerk, in one of the uh paper company. But I'm just a reliever, because somebody get pregnant, and uh get the baby, that's why I got to do her job. Then after that, I was laid off, and find another job.

**AR:** Was it difficult to try and find a job during the seventies?

**RP:** Uhh, it's easier, rather than now. Now is too hard. My kids take maybe a year before they can find a job. But my, my first daughter, Christy, is the job that look for her, not her look for the job. Before graduation, for her. They went to her school. They ask her 'hey, you wanna work with us?', 'eh, okay'. [laughs] So I take care of my kids, while my wife is working during the night. Uh she has the night shift, three to eleven, while I work six o'clock to four o'clock. But my, my wife, before, she go to work, she leave my kids to other people, either other people who also is nurse. She ask them 'hey, are you off today? Can I bring my kids for you?' 'Okay. okay, by that.' Then keep on going, I pick up, after, after my work, I got to pick them up. Then later on my first daughter is three years old. She went to a preschool. Then uh, after preschool is only uh five and a half years old. Then uh class is opening for the uh first semester of elementary. She took some for grade one and she passed. Without going to uh kindergarten. She is only five and a half years old when she start. So uh when she is in school, then I, uh, she stay, uh. I got to pick her up before six o'clock, because once uh, you will not pick up your daughter, kids, before six o'clock they gonna make you pay. I think \$5. Money, you know. Extra money. So I got to leave early to my, from my work.

Then I work with Stewart & Stevenson. It's a ...what you call that...manufacturing for uh turbine generators. Worked there for twenty-five years. Then later on our supplier, which General Electric, bought the company. Then uh take over, take over the uh company, including the employees. So I worked there for thirty-seven years. I mean uh twelve years for GE, and twenty-five years, but it was carried over, your seniority, they bought

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your seniority, and I got thirty-seven years, you know.

**AR:** Did you keep the same job once GE took over, or did you get a new position?

**RP:** Yeah. Yeah.

**AR:** Oh okay.

**RP:** So that's the way my life is here on the United States. [laughs]

**CC:** Can you tell me some more about your family back in the Philippines?

**RP:** Well, my daddy, uh when uh he's in college, he is a member of the ROTC. Then when the war broke down, they got him and enlisted him as a third lieutenant on the military. So he become a soldier, you know. Then uh during the war he fought with the Japanese. He is with the uh 4.2 mortar batteries. But uh after several years, you know, well uh Philippines, most of the soldiers were captured, and uh my dad is one of them. And uh they put him in prison, in Tarlac. They call it Tarlac. Capas, Tarlac. Then, after that he joined the death march, with around uh maybe two-hundred miles to walk from Capas, Tarlac to Bataan. And he was in prison in uh Bataan, in concentration camp by the Japanese. Since uh he was a uh officer, he got a little more supply than those regular soldier-soldiers, you know. Because some of his friend with, they're uh—what do you call that, just a regular soldier, not officer, they even eat the sole of their shoes to survive, you know. So since my dad is an officer, somebody uh is sneaking, like a nurse, sneaking to give him foods. But uh they found out, and I think they killed the nurse by the Japanese. Then when my dad get out from the uh— when the war is over and they were released from the prison, he stayed in Manila, and uh he stayed with a friend there until he recovered, you know, because he is also very uh—what do you call that—skinny. Then uh after several years, he continue his uh school. He went to National University to get his engineering course, civil engineer. Since he is in the military, he got the uh...what you call that uh...what do you call that—the military, that the military will be the one to...uh give you tuition, what do you call that?

**AR:** Oh, okay.

**RP:** So he finished engineering. I was already born when he is in school. I stayed with him in Manila. Um uh, I think, uh, from four years old to six years old. That's 1950...1948 to 1951. He graduated engineering in 1951. In 1950, then he passed the board in 1951. Then he worked with Bacnotan Cement Industry for thirty-five years. Then uh when I was here in the United States, since I got lots of kids, you know. First I petition my mother to come and help, you know. Babysit. Then he come and babysit. Then later on, my mother petition my dad. Then he came here. Apply for uh veterans and he got a pension. Then after that, she started staying here in the United States, because she cannot just get out without me, because uh they are not driving, you know. Then every Saturday, or when I was off, that's the time that I can drive them around. Then he's not happy for that. She want—he want a life that he can go around. That's why he went back to the Philippines, because in the Philippines all he gonna do is uh, get a, like a tricycle. You know tricycle rides?

**AR:** Uh huh.

**RP:** Yeah. Ride. 'Can you bring me there? Can you bring me there?' Then they can bring him anywhere, you know. While here, you got to know how to drive before you can [laughs] go around. [laughs]

**AR:** When, when did your parents come to the United States?

**RP:** Well, my mother came here 19 uh...when my little girl is uh...I think uh, 1980...I cannot remember what

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date, because my mother stay here for twenty-five years.

**AR:** Mmm, and your father came before that?

**RP:** No. My father came after.

**AR:** Oh, okay.

[20:30]

**RP:** Then uh... Well, my uh father went back to the Philippines. My mom stay here. She go there once in a while to visit my dad, you know. Then she got sick. She got the lupus.

**CC:** Uh.

**RP:** Then uh she died on here, United States, while my dad died in the Philippines in 2004, and my mother died 2007. Then we bring her body back to the Philippines, instead of burying here United States, you know, because that's what they want so.

**CC:** How often do you go back to the Philippines?

**RP:** Well uh, I went—we went there with my family...1986. Like every uh four years. Something like that. Then my dad, when my dad pass away, before he pass away, they call me, that is emergency. Then I went. Then after a year, uh, after maybe six, uh three months I went back again because he died. Then after a year, I went back again. After we bury him, then uh we got those uh... what you call those...prayers for nine days. Then after that I came here United States. Then after a year to celebrate his anniversary, I went back to Philippines to celebrate his first year anniversary. Same as my mom. When my mom died, then we bring him, bring her to the Philippines. Then uh burying there, then prayer. I stayed there for three, four weeks, you know. Then after a year, I went back there again for celebration of her anniversary. That's the tradition that we got to have a big prayer and a party to celebrate the anniversary. Then uh after two years I went back again. Then my brother is encouraging me to, well uh since my mother is already here, he petitioned also my brothers. That's why all my brothers came here United States.

**CC:** Mmm.

**RP:** But my other brother, he got a girlfriend in New Year's Eve. That's why it's the girlfriend and they get married, that, uh, bring him to New Year's Eve. And now he moved to Houston, and now we are three in here in Houston. And one, the youngest one, he cannot, uh, he cannot stay here. He don't like to stay here for long. That's why he went back to uh Philippines and now he's got his family there.

**CC:** How many brothers do you have in total?

**RP:** Oh we got four, in all. I'm the first one.

**CC:** Oh you're the first one?

**RP:** Yeah, and uh, so my, my brothers are not far from my house, then I go visit them once in a while. Uh go fishing with them, you know, because that's my hobby, go fishing. And then...

**CC:** Where do you fish?

**RP:** Galveston, Freeport. And uh, right now my brothers got farm. Then they supply me eggs. [laughs] Every week, lots of eggs, because uh they got a farm, big farm. Seventy-nine acres. [inaudible] They give me a chicken to butcher, but my kids don't like it. [laughs] Once they see that I'm butchering, 'Eh, you got to be uh, you got to love those chickens. [laughs] Don't butcher them!' It's like 'okay.' [laughs] Then if I butcher them, they don't like to eat once it come out. It come from the eh... they're not, not in store, they don't like to eat. [laughs] Then uh my hobby is uh go fishing, and I have my garden in my backyard, vegetable garden. That's why most of the time, I'm not buying any, any, anything from the stores, you know. Only, some uh dry goods. I got my eggplant, bitter melon, beans. I got all in my backyard. And now since I'm retired, I stay home. [laughs] After retirement, I went, me and my wife went to Europe to visit, because we haven't gone there for long time. We haven't seen Europe while my daughter go there every three months, because she work with Shell. And Shell, Shell uh, Dutch is in Netherland, [inaudible]. Every three months she is there. So we went to uh Portugal. We went to Spain. Uh we went to France. Paris, yeah, there. So maybe next two years again, maybe might go to Holy Land, or somewhere. [laughs]

[26:24]

**AR:** Oh so, how did your um, can you explain how your wife, your wife's program to go from the Philippines to Methodist Hospital?

**RP:** Well uh, she is a nurse in the Philippines. She applied with the— what do you call that— exchange visitors, like agency. Then uh they recruit her. They got twenty-one of them when uh they came here United States. Then uh, it was, petitioned by... what do you call that... Methodist Hospital. So they are all together twenty-one there. Then after a year, but they are only uh, not uh... not the uh... what you call that— not a nurse on here, but like a helper until you pass your board exam on here. Then after passing the board exam, then they give you big money, you know, because you are already on here the United States. Then she's still there. For forty... thirty-nine years. No, seventy-one, that's uh forty years already in Methodist. Some of his, uh her co-nurses that came here at the same time, left the uh hospital and uh go all over. Like uh they go New York, Washington, California. They go everywhere, you know. I think they got only three of them left at Methodist from those twenty-one people.

**CC:** Whoa.

**RP:** Yeah. [laughs] Because uh in the Philippines once you are a nurse, most of the nurses don't stay in the Philippines because they don't pay much.

**CC and AR:** Mmm.

**RP:** That's why people some uh—something past two-thousand, all of them will get out. Maybe uh I know somebody, just go back maybe two of them went back and stay there in the Philippines.

**AR:** Do they usually come to the United States or they go to other countries as well?

**RP:** They go anywhere. Canada, England, Australia, Middle East. Yeah. As long as they can earn more money, because our money is not too big, you know. Right now is around forty-five per dollar. Forty-five pesos. So they make more money.

[29:09]

**CC:** Do you have a religion?

**RP:** Yeah, Catholic.

**CC:** Catholic?

**RP:** Mm-hm.

**CC:** Has that been...has that played...?

**RP:** Since I was a kid, I was a Catholic. When I married my wife, she is in another religion.

**AR:** What was she?

**RP:** Uhh, Church of Christ. But the priest that married us don't like to marry us unless she will convert, convert to Catholic. But actually she was born Catholic. Her dad is the one exploring all the religions. Transferring from one religion to other religion. So since we get married, and she is a Catholic, and now she is a diehard Catholic. Go to church every day. Once uh she finished her work in the afternoon, around five o'clock, left the house, go to church. She is a member of four, I think four, Catholic organization. Like uhh...what you call that uh...I forgot the name uh...Precious Blood, uh Holy Rosary Crusade uh, the...Our Lady of Lourdes, and uh, there is another one. I forgot the name. It's [laughs] in my mouth, but I cannot recollect what's it now. So she, every, like, every week, like Saturday, she go to meeting from one place to another, different church. Like our house is surrounded by churches. We got three churches there, but we go to a different church that is farther from our house. Not the one that you can walk. [laughs]

**AR:** Where is that?

**RP:** I don't know why [laughs].

**CC:** Which church do you go to?

**RP:** We go to Notre Dame.

**CC:** Oh, Notre Dame.

**RP:** On uh Boone Road. Because the pastor there is a Filipino.

**CC:** Right, right.

**RP:** Oh you know that?

**CC:** I know. I've been to Notre Dame.

**RP:** Oh yeah? [laughs] And our house is beside uh St. Theresa, at the back and uh and the front is uh the one in uh, [inaudible]—there's another church there, that's why it's not far from our house, that's why. But I don't know why my wife go farther.

**CC:** So did your wife convert when you got married?

**RP:** Yeah. And now she is a diehard Catholic now. Even her dad. Before he was Church of Christ. After

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[inaudible] something like that, you know. Then, you go back to Catholic. Her dad uh her family is in Canada. We go there and visit every, every year.

**AR:** Where do they live in Canada?

**RP:** Saskatchewan, Regina. We are scheduled to go back there, what uh, July 30. For visit. We go there every time, and her dad already pass away there. And he, she got her sister, two, three sisters, and uh two brothers there. So they got the reunion every time. One is in Winnipeg, and uh every time we go there, it's a coincidence that it's her birthday, because August 4, you know. That's why we celebrate her birthday every time on there. [laughs] Then my kids are telling us 'eh, you haven't celebrate your birthday here. You always celebrate in Canada.' [laughs] Because that's the—what you call that—when we go there, that's the vacation, you know. So it's a coincidence that we go there during vacation. We stay there sometimes couple of weeks, but it's time. Just only one week, because the hospital do not approve the other week. Because they say first come first serve, and even a year ago, you, like now, her vacation next year, for 2012 she already told her boss that 'I will be vacation on this day.' [laughs] Once you are late, then you cannot do anything, you know. That's why.

**AR:** Could you talk about the different languages you spoke when you were in the Philippines?

**RP:** Uh, the what?

**AR:** Different languages. Is it, you know, you mentioned you had—you spoke a dialect with your family.

**RP:** Oh yeah! In my hometown we speak Ilocano, because we are from Ilocos. Then uh when you go to Manila, you got to learn how to speak Tagalog, because that's the national language of the Philippines. So that's: uh Ilocano...I understand some other languages like Pangasinan, because uh my hometown is in between uh Ilocos and Pangasinan. That's why some of the people that live in my hometown speak uh Pangasinan. I know a little bit, but not much.

**CC:** What about in school? Did everyone speak English or did...

**RP:** Yeah, in our school? Yeah. Because uh since I was grade one, they teach us English. But uh right now, they do uh like uh, they emphasize for the uh student to get a Tagalog courses. So they got to learn. Because some of those, farther South, like uh...[inaudible], if they went to Manila—they go to Manila, sometime they cannot speak Tagalog, because most of the time their dialect, they're like Visaya or Ilongo, whatever, you know. That's why. That's why some of those uh, my coworkers, Filipino, they cannot speak uh fluent Tagalog. So, that's why uh some of those people on here, like those Mexicans, 'how do you learn, how do you learn how to speak English?' Well, we learn when we're kids, you know. [laughs] Then they asking me 'you Filipinos, you came here United States just to teach us how to work?' Yeah, because you don't know how to work. [laughs] Yeah, those Mexicans. They do not know how to speak English well because they came here illegally, you know? They cross the border. They don't even know how to talk, you know. They just, because they didn't go to school. Filipinos are ninety percent go to school.

**CC:** Did you go to a Catholic school?

**RP:** No, uh no just a regular public school.

**AR:** Did you teach your kids, um Tagalog or...?

**RP:** Oh uh, we're teaching them, but they don't like to learn. [**All:** laughs] But my other son, you speak in Filipino and he will answer you in uh English. He can understand it, but he cannot talk. Well, all these other



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ones, the first thing that they want to learn are those bad words. [laughs]

**CC:** How many children do you have?

**RP:** Five. I got uh two boys and three girls.

**AR:** And where do they all, where do they all live now?

**RP:** My daughter Christy live here in downtown. They got a house there. And uh my other daughter got a house in uh in uh Grand Parkway. My other daughter is in New York. My other son, my youngest son is uh, he live in apartment. My oldest son is still in my house. [laughs] Is still, it's only now that he decided to go back to school. While the rest is already, graduate, graduate. Now he's taking nursing.

**AR:** Where did your children study?

**RP:** Eh?

**AR:** Where did your children study?

**RP:** Who?

**AR:** Your kids?

[38:23]

**RP:** Well, my daughter Christy went to school here in downtown uh, University of Houston. He was the most, well, smarter. Because uh he was there, then uh she became the editor-in-chief of the newspaper in University of Houston. That's when they found that, after, before, before six months graduation, well uh, Shell company went there to recruit her. And uh, she met her husband, one of the writer and the editor of the newspaper. So then later on they get married. They got two kids. Her husband is a finish uh, like a writer, then now he's taking law. But my daughter is doing...that, paying the school, you know. [laughs] Because uh she make more money than her, than him. My uh other daughter, most of my kids are uh they take computer. My first daughter is information systems then she got her master's degree. Uh I don't know. While taking a Master's degree, she apply for the Texas Hall of Fame. They give him, they give her a scholarship. Then uh, whatever the Hall of, Hall of Fame don't pay, then the Shell company pays. All the Master's, you know, all the expenses. They are encouraging her to take her Ph.D. but I don't know when. When uh she took her master's degree, she applied here in uh Rice University, but the problem of Rice before is uh you got to give up your work to be uh full in your, but right now they change their curriculum, you know. You can work while you study, you know. But before no. While you take your master's, you got to take 100%. That's why she didn't come here, but she passed the board, uh she passed the exam on here for master entrance exam. Then she went to University of St. Thomas. That's where she graduated. My other daughter also went to school there in University of Houston. Two of them, the one in New York also went to the University of Houston Downtown. While my youngest, also in computer technology, went to uh...what you call that uh...central campus in University of Houston. Yeah, they are all in University of Houston. Right now my uh oldest son is in uh Houston Community College, taking summer class for what, nursing. So they—everybody went to school. Yeah.

**CC:** What about um when you went to school in the Philippines? What was your biggest memory?

**RP:** Memory what?

**CC:** Memory of, of school in the Philippines.

**RP:** Like uh...well I, I went maybe four, five different schools on there. Because first I went to college. Then later on, hard for me. [laughs] I drop, I mean I didn't pass some other subject, my dad get mad. Well it's not easy, you know. Because uh you are the first born, and once you leave the house, because in the Philippines you go to Manila, that's around uh five hours. You stay there until you finish your first semester, or if there is a holiday, maybe three, four days, then I go home. Then since I'm uh first in the family, my concentration is not on school. [laughs] That's why I flunked some subjects. Then later on I get the uh—I went to other school, which I took my practical electricity. Then when I worked in Bacnotan Cement, they give us a, they hired somebody to teach us industrial electricity. Then I went back to Manila to get my course in business. Then after that, then I worked, then I go to other school again to get computer. That's why maybe five, six different schools that I went. Yeah.

**CC:** Did um did your family have um a lot of pressure to go to school or...?

**RP:** Well, they encourage you, you know. Because uh if you, they didn't encourage you to go to school, then you will be, I mean you cannot lead what kind of life you want, you know. Like uh in here United States, most of the people here, after graduation of high school, they work. After working, they don't like to go to school anymore, right? That's why they pressured you in the Philippines, that's why ninety percent of Filipinos go to school. Even you are very poor, they gonna borrow money. Like my cousin. His uh his dad is a farmer, and uh, he went to medical school, then uh my dad uh give—help my cousin go to school. Buy books, you know. Then since my cousin cannot afford to buy books then he went to the library and study before he go to class. Then he finished, because uh medicine there is ten years, not like on here. Maybe, I don't know how many years in here. Engineering there is five years. Once it's a Bachelor's degree, it's a Bachelor's. So he finished his medical school, then came here United States. And now he is successful uh doctor. He's a plastic surgeon. That's why even you cannot afford, even you don't have money, you got to make way, so you can uh, you can let your kids go to school. That's what they are doing there in the Philippines. Not like here in United States. Once you cannot afford, that's all. You go and find a job then you can go to school is what they tell you, right? They let you go find a job first before you go to school here.

**CC and AR:** Mm-hm.

**CC:** So what was your um, your biggest memory of when you came to the U.S.? What kind of impacts did you have?

**RP:** Well, it's a big impact for me, because once you come here in United States, it look like a glory to you, because you earn American dollar while compare to Filipino pesos. It is easier to find a job here, than the Philippines. In the Philippines you need to know some politician before you can find a job. Here, you have got to use your head, your skills, not bribing somebody....

[46:41]

**CC:** Okay, so um were there any surprises when you came to the U.S.? Was anything not what you expected?

**RP:** Yeah. Because uh in the Philippines you cannot afford to buy a car. In here you have an official price and you can buy whatever one you can afford. You can drive here. You can do like, uh, those rich people there in the Philippines, you can do now here, because people here are all the same you know. You get money, you can buy anything you want.

**CC:** So did you, did you buy a car when you first got here?

**RP:** Oh, well, I got the second-hand car, then I drove, I drove all over the United States already. I drove to California, to LA, San Francisco...I went to uh Florida, I went to uh Louisiana, many times, because uh one time my brother get there and I go visit him maybe once a month. I drove to New York, to Long Island. I drove to Canada, where my wife's uh family, maybe three times already, from here. You drive, what you call that—35 go to Dallas, then Dallas, it becomes 36, I guess, go all the way to North Dakota. And from North Dakota, you cross the border, go to uh Saskatchewan, because the first state in Canada that you can hit after you cross the border from North Dakota is Saskatchewan. If you go right you go to Winnipeg. The first time we went to Winnipeg, then go around. Then from Winnipeg to Saskatchewan is about eight hours. [laughs] I drove two or three days every time! Like, California is the longest I got—three days, three nights, with my kids.

**CC:** Is it easy to cross the border into Canada?

**RP:** Well, there are some people that they restrict you know. Because uh when we cross the border, we got all the papers. Then uh, the one in front of us, they are couple of, I don't know, they're young. They let them uh bring out everything in their car! [laughs]. But ours is just show the, show our paper, and we are citizens of the United States. Because I applied my citizenship after five years that I came here. Then uh, after applying, that's the time I invitation my wife, because my wife is an exchange student and we get married. Then uh I petition her, because I am an immigrant when I came here. I am a third reference. So, she become a citizen in 1979; I become citizen in 19-...I came here in 1972, I become citizen in 19- uh [CC: 77.] -75, -76. Then I petition my wife. Become citizen too.

**CC:** Is it easy for Filipinos to become U.S. citizens?

**RP:** Well, there are some uh—because uh you got to post—pass the examination too. Well uh, before it's easier...

**CC:** Easier.

**RP:** Yeah, when uh during the '70s. Easier. It's a—once you are resident of five years, you can apply for citizenship. But now, maybe a little harder now. [laughs] Well there are some Filipinos who illegally came, maybe they cross the border from Mexico, they go that way. I don't know some uh, like uh, like uh, Mexicans, you find them, and they will get their uh driver's license sometimes. But that's because when they are kids they cross the border, stay here, go to school. They didn't care about they're illegally, and later on if they get the driver's license, they got to look for the papers you know. So that's my uh car. In the Philippines you cannot afford to buy a car, only the rich man. So here, once you get money, I bought my car for 500 dollars. [laughs] I got that Impala.

**AR:** So what um what struggles or difficulties did you or your families face when you came to the United States?

**RP:** Uh...when uh my family is growing, because once they go to school, especially in college, they go all together, you know. Because they're, they're uh interval is only two years. Like if you got three uh three kids in college, then uh if you're making not enough money, then you cannot afford. That's why they got to apply for—what do you call that—the educational benefits. Like uh they apply for seventy (?). Well uh, right now, they finished school...that's the only hardship I got.

**AR:** So how did um—are you involved in the Filipino community in Houston?

**RP:** I am a member before, but I'm not a member anymore.

**AR:** Oh, okay. Did you have any friends from back home—besides your family—that moved to the States?

**RP:** Well uh, some of them, but uh they go to different States you know. Because once you got different relatives you go where your relative is. Like, I got the relative in California, that's why I went. Some, like, but

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my other relative who issued me is in Chicago, but I never go to Chicago. [laughs] From California, then I came here in Houston. I stayed down here because my wife's already here, and we got the family. But before, when they were kids, we used to travel, you know, but when you get old, it's hard to travel, because I am the only one driving before. Well, my wife could drive, but she sleeps. We go in rest area, and she says, 'I'm tired, I'm tired.' What? You sleep the whole day and now you're tired?' [laughs]

**CC:** When you first went to California, where did you stay?

**RP:** From where? In California? My auntie.

**CC:** Oh, you stayed with your Aunt.

**RP:** I got an auntie there in Sherman (?), in young green circle (?). She's a relative of my dad. So I stayed there at their house. Later on I found a job. Then, when I got the job, I rented the uh—what you call that—you got the two story house and we rented below. Then uh I got another guy there, another room. He worked with the hotel, he's a chef, a cook. Then every, every afternoon he brings me foods from the uh hotel—bring those big steak, don't worry about that! Buying me foods, you wait for me to come home, and I give you steak, or anything you bring out. Because he is a chef, you know. And I stayed at their house.

**AR:** So how has uh—whenever you go back to the Philippines, how has it changed since when you were little?

**RP:** It changed, like the uh weather, sometimes. Because sometimes it's too hot there when you go around, you know, and uh sometimes when you go there, you find your friend if they are still there, then, 'Hey, come to the house and drink!' 'Okay.' Go buy foods there, because sometimes the people over there cannot afford to buy the expensive foods. And we drink. We go around. Just uh—sometimes I hire the tricycle. Don't go any, anywhere; I'll pay you the whole day. He stay there beside you, drink with you... Let's go there! Then, drive again. [laughs]

**AR:** How has Houston changed since when you first came here in the 70s?

**RP:** Well uh, I'm still new here. Then uh, I don't know what I'm doing. Then when I learn how to go fishing, then I go fishing every weekend, you know. There, the only thing we go fishing there is uh—what you call that—the freshwater. While here, you go to Galveston, and even my kids—I go fishing with my kids. Since they were small, I teach them how to fish. Then, all of them knows how to fish, you know, but nobody gets my part as a fishermen, because they are all lazy you know. 'Its too hot!' they say. Okay, it's too hot. 'I go somewhere with my friend.' Okay, you go. Then I go by myself. Go fishing.

**CC:** Have you gone fishing in the Philippines?

**RP:** I went but uh I tried to bring some fishing rope there, then I went to the seashore, I go fish, I caught small one like that. [Gestures a tiny fish and laughs] And here I got big one! I even caught a tuna...hundred pounds. [CC: So do you know what [inaudible]?] I ride on the boat...three days, two-hundred miles away. I caught those yellow fin tuna, black tuna, grouper...cause it's three days, you know.

**CC:** Do you miss the Philippines?

**RP:** Well, once in a while, since my friends, some of them have already passed away. And the only thing there now is my brother. I got another friend there, he don't like to go to the United States. Well uh, those other people there, I don't know, because when I lived there, I lived in the Philippines, they haven't born! Then when I go back there three or four years and they already got the kids. Then another four years, then they are grown up, you know! [laughs] Then who is this? Who's that? He comes to you because everybody knows you came from the United States. Everybody come to your house! Ask, 'Hey my gift, my gift, my gift!' [laughs] That's the tradition there. Then uh they ask you, 'Hey you buy foods for us?' 'Okay. Go find uh, go find the goat to butcher, or dog,' because there in the Philippines you can eat dog. [laughs] 'Yeah, go and find dog, butcher it,

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eat together you know.' Look like uh almost every day they got the party in your house. They come and have drink you know. Every day, even until twelve, one o'clock, they are still there in your house, drinking. Some other people cannot, cannot go home anymore because they were drunk. They sleep in your house. Then the next day, again. Like that again, like that, every day...until you left the Philippines. Then they go back to their old things, you know. And when they know you are coming again, they come to your house! Once you are not there, they are not there! [laughs]

**CC:** Do you like Houston as a city?

**RP:** Well, if you think of the hot weather. **[All:** [laughs]] Well uh, before I preferred to stay in California, because the weather is good. But uh since my wife encouraged me to come here, I can adapt myself even if it's too hot. Anyways, you can stay inside; you got air conditioner there.

**AR:** Have you ever felt like discriminated against, because you were Filipino living in Houston?

**RP:** Oh, some other...Yeah, sometimes in your job. Sometime, they give you hard work, while the other they give the easy work, you know. But I didn't complain. Because if you complain, sometimes you cannot stay long in your work. So some other—some of my companions there, they laid off. While I didn't complain, that's why I stayed long. Many times they laid off some other people in my work.

**AR:** What about like neighbors or anything?

**RP:** Well, there are some neighbors, don't even talk to you. Like in the neighborhood, they only uh call me when my dog mess up the fence. **[All:** [laughs]] Because uh like uh they got two Filipinos, they are neighbors, live uh not far from my house. I know that. The dog of the other one, went to the other house and pooped there, you know. The guy of the house, get the poo and bring back to the other place where the dog is. And he get mad, you know! He fight each other, you know! Because uh, that's what uh—I got the neighbor there, he always talk to me regarding that, but they don't talk to me, regularly. Only one neighbor on my right side, he talk to me every time he see me outside. 'Hey, how you doing?' Some other people there across my house, they just look at me. They don't say any word. But sometimes I try to figure out...because one time my car was parked there in the street, just straight from their house. And later on my car was messed up. Maybe they back up the car and hit my car, you know. But I didn't ask them, because it's during the night. I didn't call police. I just showed them the expenses—I paid \$800. I didn't say a word. They're not talking to me. Only one uh neighbor talked to me every time. Now that old man that always called me, already passed away. But the guy that lived there, his son, he don't talk to me, but he knows all my kids. He knows all their names. My kids are wondering how, how that neighbor knows all our names? I don't know. [laughs] I don't know, you ask him! I don't like to talk to him. Because maybe that guy, he never works. He stays at home. Maybe he was on drugs before, that's why. His dad is a veteran, one of the brothers drives a fancy cars, you know? BMW every time we go there; BMW, Mercedes...now he's just driving by himself, but he got three cars there. Um.

**AR:** So were your kids— do they have more American friends or do they have Filipino friends too?

**RP:** Oh, there's a mix. There are some—because sometimes they came to my house. There are American, there are Indian, uh...different, uh Vietnamese—my, my youngest son has got the girlfriend of Vietnamese. My other daughter married a Black. My first daughter married to a French. So we're all together when they came to my house. Every weekend my daughter came, they are all uh coming to my house. We got a reunion every weekend, you know, bring their kids, play with my grandkids, yeah. Especially my, my oldest daughter, the youngest son they got...they are crazy. Every time he comes to my house, he breaks something. That's why every time he walks we got to follow him! Or else...one time uh I saw him medicine. Then later on, it's already half [inaudible], it's liquid, he open it and drink I guess. We called the, uh, we called the uh, what do you call that, poison department, something like that.

**AR:** How many grandkids do you have?

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**RP:** I got four. My oldest is sixteen years old. She's a lady now...oh, seventeen already. Yeah, she, she will graduate this coming year in high school.

**AR:** Did your kids um really—you know, you showed how important education was to your children, are they doing that to their kids too?

**RP:** Yeah, they're encouraging them to go to school. Anyways, that's the oldest, but the rest is still uh preschool. Because my, my second daughter was—she got pregnant when she was fifteen years old. That's why she got, she got uh sixteen-year-old kids now. But uh I don't know what happened to the daddy. Just give up. My daughter get married to other guy. Got uh one boy and three girls. Only two daughters got the kids. The one that making good money is the one that got kids. [laughs]

**AR:** So you said you used to be part of the Filipino Association...?

**RP:** Yeah, the uh Ilocano Association of Houston. During the early days that I'm here, I know everybody in uh—most of the Filipinos in Houston, I know them. When some other people migrated from some other state because some uh Muslim people in our area came from Chicago, because it's too cold there. That's why they move here in Houston.

**AR:** It's too hot here.

**RP:** Yeah it's too hot here, but even when you're hot, it's cold—when it's cold you cannot get out. Especially in Chicago, it's the Windy City. It's uh summer here, you can say summer or hot weather until December. There is uh, like uh, only three months summer, that's all. You cannot enjoy it. Even my, uh my brother, who live in New Jersey; his kids stay at home most of the time, then when they came here and visit, they told their dad and mom, 'We got to move down here, it's better here!' They have been in New Jersey for what, five, seven years. They try to compare what's uh cheap over there; they say in New Jersey you don't pay tax. That's why most of the people in New York, they go to New Jersey and shop there, because it's cheaper.

**AR:** Were you worried uh when you first had kids about raising them in the States as opposed to the Philippines?

**RP:** No, I don't, I don't think it over until they got already grown up! [laughs] Because every time you got the kids, what happened? I say, I think it's an accident. [laughs] I don't know what happened. That's why they're wondering why we raise five kids but most Filipinos got only two kids. Two kids is hard for them. Well we have five, you know? 'Then how do you manage?' Well, as long as uh you got somebody to help you, like uh like my wife, when she's working, she ask those other Filipino nurses, 'Are you okay, I'm gonna bring my kid to you.' 'Yeah, okay.' That's what happens.

**CC:** What's something that you learned through your experience that you pass to your kids?

**RP:** Well I try to pass to them my experience, like uh I go fishing... Before they used to come with me, then, when they grown up, they don't like anymore. They say it's too hot! [laughs] That's the only thing I pass on them. Encourage them to, like my son, oldest son: I encourage him to go to school. Every time I ask, 'Hey, go to school, go to school!' Because uh if you get a degree, that's all, that's for your life, I said. So uh since I'm already here for uh thirty-nine years, I already accustomed with around here.

**AR:** So have you always lived in Sugar Land?

**RP:** Yeah, first I lived in uh Hiram Clarke. I bought—because my, my friend got the house there. Then their neighbor sold the house there, I guess the veterans. Then, he told me to assume the payment. Then uh, I paid uh \$200, four bedrooms. Then after two years, he move out. Then, I sold also my house and get another house.

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Then I stayed Missouri City. Then later on, somebody encouraged me to, 'Hey, it's better to get houses there, it's beautiful.' Because one of my friend become a uh real estate salesman. He was the one who tell me about those houses there in Sugar Land. Then there are, everything is near there, you got shops like at First Colony, you got malls there. Okay, I move to Sugar Land then, and since then I never move anymore! [laughs] I've been there, what, twenty-four years, in my house.

**AR:** How's Sugar Land changed, since when you moved there twenty-four years ago?

**RP:** Well, before, like my neighbors, since uh my subdivision is under construction before, we are the very few people, maybe three, four peoples still there. I mean uh, before, now, everybody moved on there, very different people, sometimes they are good, sometimes they are bad, you know. But uh in my uh subdivision, even if you leave your garage open, nobody, nobody will come and break in. But I got a neighbor on the other side that uh, he's mowing the lawn, then later on he's thirsty, he leaves the lawn mower outside, he went to drink, then when he comes back, the lawnmower's gone. Somebody come and pick it up, you know, those. There are some people there that go around during like uh night; they go around and look for something to steal... or day. You look around, then, nobody there, and you leave something outside, then they will come and pick it up. When I was in Missouri, one uh one afternoon, like Saturday, I clean my car—I got the red Monte Carlo. Then the next morning is Sunday, we go to church. We were already dressed up, then when we get out, then my car's gone. Somebody stole it.

**CC:** In, in Missouri City?

**RP:** Yeah. So, we leave that area. I get out from that subdivision, and just move here in Sugar Land. Uh I got, I got some friends there, because we are neighbors, we got around seven Filipinos all together in one block you know. And some of my friends uh bought property in Pearland, and they move there, and two, still got two more left there, but I never go back there to see. They're telling me, 'Hey you got your grapefruit bigger than your house already.' Okay. [laughs]

**AR:** So when did you retire?

**RP:** Last January. January 31. I decided because I am 66 already. I asked myself. Since uh you are 66, you have full Social Security. Pension already. And, time for me to retire.

[01:15:35]

**AR:** So what plans do you have now since you're retired? Besides going fishing?

**RP:** Uh, maybe traveling? [laughs] Going traveling. We had already went, one month after retirement. We went to uh Europe. Then uh this uh—July 30, we're going to Canada. Next year, maybe March, I'm planning with my brother to go back to the Philippines, because I haven't been back there for, what, three years? Since m...two thousand eight, nine, ten, eleven—yeah, three years. Then maybe another year, then uh we go to [inaudible] with my wife... my daughter's trying to tell me to go to Europe again. 'We will pay,' they said. Okay, you pay. [laughs] Well uh, that's the best when you are retired. You get to make yourself active you go around. They're trying to tell me to go exercise. I don't have much exercise. [laughs]

**AR:** So uh you said job—are jobs really still difficult to get in the Philippines, even now?

**RP:** Oh yes, it's more worse now, than uh before. Even just to be, what you call that, like cleaning the streets, cannot even find a job. That's why my brother, what he's doing, he buy and sell rice; once he got some rice harvested, he buy it, dry it, then sell it. Before it's easy: like me uh, I got my store before, got lots of people come to me. Like uh my cement...if they deliver two-hundred bucks, couple of days is good. Then uh, I was by myself before, then I got to carry, go bring it to like uh anything much, I got to bring it back to the car or to the tricycle, because most the uh transportation there are tricycles, can get it five bucks, you know. Since uh I sell

cheaper than the number, that's why they come to me most of the time. Now, it's a little harder for people now because most people wake up very late. I tried also to sell some stock in the market when I was young. Sell, uh, I don't know, you know about...vegetables...or um [du-roq], I don't know, you know that kind of food, [du-roq], it's kind of black like this, when it's ripe it's black, but uh when it's green, it becomes black.

Only everyday when I was very young, go to the market. I got lots of things. Did bad when I was a kid. One time my uh grandmother told us with a relative to go and get some, what do you call those, some kind of grass that uh give it to the pig. What we did, we get some uh, you know the rice paddies, it's dry, we put first on the socks, then get the vegetables from the apple bed, then an old woman found it and get mad! Ah, what happened to you, but they had already paid us some money! [laughs] I got lots of things that happened, and I did when I was a kid... One time me and my friend, again, went to a field. We saw a uh frog on the—they got the uh, what do you call that, a balloon—it's a little dip where they get water to water the uh tobacco. We saw there (?). First we threw a small uh, what do you call that, uh hard uh, look like dirt, but it's hard, you know...

**AR:** A rock?

**RP:** Rock. It's not actually a rock...it's a bit of uh, you know when the ground is dry, you can uh, get it? Like this?

**AR:** Oh, yes, I know what you mean.

**RP:** Threw it. From small like this, threw it. Then later on, getting bigger and bigger, that well is already full! Then we left. Then somebody saw us then they get mad and told my dad. And his dad, and get mad with me. Then the next morning, me and my friend went there to dig back, and remove everything. Because it's deep like this. You have to remove everything that you threw it in there. One time again, they got another friend. It's uh almost dark and we saw a papaya tree. It got the ripe fruits there. 'We gonna get that! We gonna climb that!' Then later on, when it get dark, I was the one who climb it. Then I get the papaya, you know, we are stealing it! Then I told my friend, 'Catch it!' Then I throw it, then when I throw, I saw the one catching is the owner! **[All: [laughs]]** The owner is the one catching it, okay! [laughs]

**CC:** What happened—what did the owner do?

**RP:** She just laughing... but she told my dad. And my dad uh get the, what do you call that... In the Philippines it's normal for the father to whip you with the uh belt or stick. Ah, he whipped me with the belt! [laughs]. 'You're lazy!' In here, my, like in the Philippines, in my backyard I plant some vegetables you know. Then I try to teach my kids to eat the Filipino vegetables...They don't like it! You know those bitter melons—I don't know if you know bitter melon...You know it? Oh, you got in China, right?

**CC:** Yeah.

**RP:** They don't like. They say its bitter! **[All: [laughs]]** And the uh—you know the gourd? They don't like it either. One time when they are kids, I told them to eat. I told my son: 'Eat that, eat that'. Later on I stand up, went to the kitchen. Then uh after, after that then I go back, I saw his plate its already empty! But they're not talking, nodding their head like that. 'okay good you already ate!' Then, 'Yes, dad!' Then a couple of days [later] my mother is cleaning the floor of the rug, you know. Then, 'How come this rug is a little uh...' [laughs] Put some food—my son put it there, and covered it! [laughs] He's crazy, I told him! He told me to, 'You were forcing me to eat, and I cannot eat that!' 'Okay.'

**CC:** So what foods do they like to eat?

**RP:** They like American foods...

**AR:** Do they like balut?

**RP:** Well uh, my son trying to eat... but they don't like. Yeah, I even bring to my work...you know, those



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Americans. 'Tastes good! For you!' 'Yuck!' [laughs] You eat balut, right?

**AR:** It's like boiled duck eggs... [CC: I've never eaten it.]

**RP:** That is a good one, yeah? Make you strong! (00:09:47 + 00:28:59) [All: [laughs]]

**AR:** So, what other, what other ways, did you try to—besides food, did you want to give your kids Filipino culture?

**RP:** I try and encourage them, like uh—besides what I'm telling them to do, like uh, but uh some of my kids have played tennis, with their friends, but I didn't teach them how to do it. Because, their friend is the one who invited them to go play. My other daughter is uh, remember, I think she's teaching uh, she's one of the—what do you call that, instructors in fitness. You go exercise; they teach you how to do the right thing at 24 Hour Fitness.

**AR:** Are—do your kids still—do they still—are they also diehard Catholics? Like your wife? Like your wife is?

**RP:** Yeah uh all my kids are Catholic, but uh only uh, only two or three, first, only two is going to Church, you know. Then, later, when my daughter, first daughter got her daughter go...

**CCE** ...then uh get the first Communion, then got to go, got to go to Church with her, you know. But her husband is not fully Catholic.

**CC:** Were you Catholic, baptized by birth?

**RP:** Yeah.

**CC:** So your parents are Catholic also?

**RP:** Yes, Catholic. You know most of people here in the United States are not much Catholics. They're Baptists, or Protestant, or something like that.

**AR:** Were most people in your hometown Catholic also?

**RP:** Oh yea, Philippines? Ninety percent! But uh, I don't know, they got some kind of religion that—Born Again, they call it 'born again'—it's a new kind of religion, that when you die, you will not bring your [body], like uh you will not bring you to Church—just go straight to the cemetery. They bring you to Church before going to the cemetery right? But those uh born again, [don't] do that. Once you die, you can come from house, or you can, because most of the people in the Philippines, when you die, your wake is in your house, not uh not in a funeral home. Once you get out from your house, then you go straight to the cemetery. In Catholic, you bring your first to the Church, then uh to the cemetery, something like that. My daughter in New York, when she cannot find a job, she went to Church, then later on she found a job, and now she goes to Church every time now. [laughs] But uh they're planning to come back, I mean, go to Austin, it's uh their—like the new year of the rent of your one bedroom is, look like, you pay one house over the year is one thousand, thousand-two, per month, you know. Too expensive. That's why, and uh during winter it's too cold there. While on here, until December, it's still hot.

**AR:** What are some other benefits you see living in Houston, instead of living in other cities besides the weather?

**RP:** Uh... well, uh during early days it's easier to find a job here, because most of those oil companies is here. Where I was in California, it's hard to find a job over there. But when I left California, that's the time that they start the uh Silicon Valley. Uh, if I was there, maybe I didn't move there during that time. 1970s they didn't have the Silicon Valley yet. The only eh, the only uh, what do you call that, computer company is the IBM in

San Jose. Of course, I went also in San Jose. I got also a relative there. I stayed there for a while...one month. I think all over California I got relatives. I got relatives in L.A., Sacramento, San Francisco—I got lots of relatives there. That's why what I was doing before is since uh, every weekend they got those parties, like Mahjong, they play Mahjong. And once uh in your house, play Mahjong, you got to cook foods for the players...then they cook food, and I go eat, you know.

**CC:** At your house?

**RP:** No, in those uh, like uh...Not at my house, only other people in California. I never, I never, what do you call that, I never learned how to played Mahjong. Even in the Philippines before, in our house, they play Mahjong. My uh my brothers learned, but I never learned. What I did is just cook eggs, then whoever wins, then sell the eggs. [laughs] But uh I never learned how to play. My brothers know. So that's...Right now, the life of a retiree is uh...just wake up. [laughs] Well uh I still wake up early, because I bring my wife to work. She don't like to drive, because once you drive and you park, like at the medical center, you, you wake up early so you can park near the hospital, but if not, then you got to go all the way to, to what do you call that, where ever that is, it's too far. So I bring my wife to work every morning, since uh the same time I used to wake up since my work started at six, and ended at 2:30. My wife gets out at 2:30, then I just uh drop by, drop in the morning and pick-up in the afternoon, and go home. And since she's still working, I got to wake up at the same time. Until she will retire. [laughs] I don't know, maybe next year. She's still 64 or 65, this year. I mean 64. Next year she will be 65. She, she want to retire too.

**AR:** Do you want her to retire now?

**RP:** No, my wife.

**AR:** Do you want her to retire now?

**RP:** Well, I'm telling her. Uh if you want to retire, every time wake up in the morning, oh look like I'm lazy to go back to work. In the evening, she want to sleep early. Since I have no work, I can stay up until midnight you know watching TV! She tells me, go to [my room] and watch TV there, because I have TV in my room. Well, she said next year maybe. I want to enjoy my retirement early, so I don't like to retire when you get, you get sick...or some people die before they can retire, and then you cannot enjoy it no more.

**CC:** So do you like retirement?

**RP:** Oh yeah, its better. [laughs] You don't worry about uh doing things already, you know. But it's uh it's okay because you do not see your coworkers, you don't have lunch with them. (00:20:12 + 00:28:59)

**CC:** Do you plan on going back to the Philippines any time soon?

**RP:** By March next year. Yeah, last week we were preparing early March. Because that's the anniversary of my mom.

**CC:** Which, which anniversary do you mean?

**RP:** Death anniversary. I go back there and visit; maybe every uh every two years I go back and visit. Because uh my kids want to go there, but they want to go that, what do you call that, Boracay, I don't know if you have heard of that, Boracay...it's a beach that everybody go there, like Americans go there too. They like to go there.

**CC:** Do your kids like to go back to the Philippines often?

**RP:** No. They never go. They were—when they were kids, there was a time they go to the Philippines, but no, not now. Nobody came to the Philippines.

**AR:** It's just you and your wife that go back?

**RP:** Well, uh, only last uh last two years that my wife came with me. She never go to the Philippines for a while, twenty-four years.

**AR:** Oh wow.

**RP:** Because uh most of her uh family, they live in Canada. That's why they go to Canada every, every year to visit. And they got the reunion you know, every time. Her mom, brothers, sisters, they all live there now. Nobody. She's going to visit her Auntie there in the Philippines. She got her Auntie, the sister of her mom. And some cousin you know. But most of the time she go to Canada.

**AR:** So how did you find your jobs, when you first came to Houston? How did you...?

**RP:** Well, my friend is an accountant. She works with a company, then—when he found out that somebody's leaving to have a baby, she asks me if I can work there. Of course she knows that I know how to work with bureau, and I worked. Just as labor you know. But I quit that job—I mean, since that lady came back to work, then I get out from that and find another job from an agency here in Houston, but it's a nightshift—twelve hours, you work during—what do you call that, 6 o'clock in the afternoon to 6 o'clock in the morning, and I got some kids. And I asked them to transfer me to during the day, and they didn't like it. And I quit, again. Then uh, I went to those Filipinos playing basketball, talk to them, 'Oh they got a vacancy at my work, you come to apply!' That's the Stewart Stevenson, and I was uh, I got the job. Then uh, that's the start at Stewart Stevenson. Then since Stewart Stevenson was bought by General Electric, then they are making those uh big—lots of overtimes. But when you get old, you don't like to work overtime anymore. When I was uh young and strong then, I worked twelve hours a day. Sometimes Sunday too—seven days a week. But now, you are lazy! [laughs] That's long hours, twelve hours a day. You know, you make good money, but uh during income taxes possibly the money you make, knocks off some you know. Over time, you got lots of overtimes. I even got one sixty hours overtime for two weeks. So I, I make more money on overtime than regular pay you know. Yeah, you cannot work sixty hours overtime, just only overtime. That's why sixty hours overtime plus your forty hours, that's a hundred hours in all, for two weeks. Because that company I worked has lots of overtime. I think I managed when I was young, but when I get old, then I already sixties, I said I don't work overtime anymore. I got friends that tell me, like this, like that. No, it's okay.

**CC:** How did you like uh your company, working with GE, or before?

**RP:** Well, uh, since they got all the benefits, good benefits, like in GE, if you worked ten hours a day, and you have a vacation, they don't pay you eight hours, they pay you nine and a half—nine-point-six, extra, they got an extra one-point-six, and some other benefit. The only thing they remove is the profit-sharing. GE is too tight. They don't like to spend money. They don't even give you bonus or whatever, you know. They cut everything! Even those gifts during December...they give you like uh gift certificates, for December, like thirty or anything...they cut it off. But when I was with Stewart Stevenson, everything there...they got uh profit-sharing. They got uh, like, if you finish the job early, the company will give you bonus. And every time we ship out a unit, we got a party. In GE, nope. That's why they got a big company. They don't like to spend money. They don't even, like before in Stewart Stevenson, if they hire you after uh three months, they give you raise already, right. In GE you got to stay there for one year. If there's no vacancy, they lead you out, then you got to reapply for another three months, after three months. That's why they are doing there; they don't hire someone from outside, straight from outside, they hire from agency. Sometimes is good—it depends, the management. Sometimes they change, sometimes they change the manager, sometimes they change the President...

**AR:** So do you have anything else you'd like to include that we haven't asked you about?

**RP:** Oh like, what, what particular?

**AR:** Umm, I don't know, any stories or anything like that you haven't told?

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**RP:** Well, yeah, I already told you a while ago, about my stories! [laughs] When I was young, I was a crazy man, a crazy boy. That's why I always get spanked by my dad, because in the Philippines, once they will not spank you, you will not reform, you know.

**CC:** Have you had to spank your own children?

**RP:** Oh uh, before when they were kids, but uh, sometimes in here, like have you seen that woman on TV? That black woman, who spanked her kids? Then later on the kids reported to the teacher and the uh uh the services took her kids out from her you know.

**AR:** Wow, I was, I was spanked. [**All:** [laughs]]

**RP:** I don't know how you...did you—are you born on here, or you born in uh, you born in China?

**CC:** No, I was born in the West.

**RP:** Oh, you born on here? Because uh it's different to raise children in uh your own country than when you are in the United States, you know.

**AR:** What are some differences that you saw? (00:29:57 + 00:28:59)

**RP:** Yeah, they like encourage you... like here in the United States, once you graduated high school, once you learn how to go work, you work uh, and forget how to go back to school, you know. But in the Philippines, once you graduate high school, they encourage you to go college. Even if they cannot afford, we borrow money for you to make you go have an education. So they like to do that, that's why most Filipinos, maybe ninety percent go to school, have degree, you know. Once they got the degree, once their pay is not enough, you know, they get out, they apply for overseas work—anywhere, as long as you get out from the Philippines.

**AR:** Do all of them go back?

**RP:** Oh, very, very few people go back there! Once you are in another country, and uh you adapt yourself there, then I don't know, once you got your family, you don't go back anymore. Some of those people, they stay low. Some of my friends, I have not seen them, they are all, all over the United States, I guess. Maybe they got around now, five, six already passed away. Some of my classmates. And uh once you are in the Philippines, once you don't know somebody in the politics, you cannot find a job. You got to know somebody. That's why they call it: it's not what uh, it's not what you are, but whom you know, then you can find a job. Even you don't know the job, as long as somebody recommends you, you get it and can make money.

**AR:** Did you—do the Filipinos in Houston have any interactions with the other Asian American communities in Houston?

**RP:** Well uh, it depends, if uh you...some other people does, especially you're active on—in organizations. But some others [inaudible]... like my brother who works with Continental, then he got a ranch, he works half day on his ranch and half day at Continental, and he works five days, but most of the time he is there in his ranch, feeding his chickens and uh cows, and pony, and whatever. Because once you are not there on your ranch, uh there are some like the coyotes kill your chicken, the uh snake eat the eggs. They got some snakes there too; yeah a big snake on my brother's ranch.

**CC:** Is his ranch in Houston?

**RP:** Yeah, here on 288. They got seventy-nine acres there beside the bayou, because once you are beside the bayou there are lots of snakes.

**CC:** There are coyotes there?

**RP:** Coyote, yeah, they got coyote. Sometimes they got uh thirty chickens die, because the coyote eat it. The coyotes, raccoons...Raccoons, they only eat the guts. Coyotes they got uh only the feathers left—they eat everything! And the owl, you know the owl... they eat the uh chicks, but they go during the night, not the day. Day you cannot see them.

**CC:** Did your family, any of them own farms or ranches in the Philippines?

**RP:** No, they don't own anything. Only two got the houses: my first one got house here in [unintelligible] Downtown, the one who worked with Shell, and the other one who got the house in Grand Parkway, Westpark... all the way; the other one live in an apartment, and the other boy stay with my house. Well uh since I got the big house, sometimes only two of use with my wife looks like...it's not good, right. A big house and only two? Sometimes yeah but, sometimes my wife go to church, I am by myself there. I look around...hear something, there got the commotion or whatever! [laughs]

**AR:** Well, I think we've reached a pretty good stopping place.

**CC:** Yeah, we've covered a lot.

**AR:** Unless you have anything else you would like to say? [**RP:** Okay.]

**RP:** Well thank you...

**CC:** Thank you, Mr. Panis.

**RP:** ...for this, uh, thing. This is the first time I was interviewed for uh this kind of uh you know...this was my first experience.

**AR:** Well, I hope it was a good one.

**CC:** Yeah, thank you very much. (00:36:20 + 00:28:59)