Interviewee: Ramon Burdeos  
Interviewers: Dae Shin Ju and Saima Toppa  
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Background:

Ramon Burdeos was born in Butuan, Philippines in January 30, 1936. He briefly studied engineering at Mapua Institute of Technology.

All his life, he was attracted to the glitz and glamor of 'Hollywood America' and thus finally decided to emigrate under a U.S. policy to recruit Filipino nationals into the U.S. Coast Guard on October 10, 1955. He arrived ‘undocumented’ but legally—being given no visa or official papers as proof of his legal entry. In the Coast Guard, Burdeos suffered from institutional discrimination: Filipinos were prohibited from advancing or acquiring special skills; they could only work in menial positions as cooks or stewards aboard ships and naval bases since the Filipinos were meant to replace the Blacks who had left the Coast Guard to protest similar institutional racism and discrimination.

In the U.S. Coast Guard, Burdeos worked as a steward for 10 years, stationed in multiple sites across the country. During the Vietnam War, he was stationed in the Pacific. After 10 years, he became a U.S. citizen virtually overnight under Section 329—a policy set by the U.S. government, declaring that all aliens serving in the armed forces during World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, or in any other period of military hostility are now entitled to be naturalized as U.S. citizens.

After his service, Burdeos graduated with a Bachelor of Sciences in Medical Administration at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston under the G.I. Bill. In 1989, he became employed at St. Mary’s Hospital in Galveston, Texas as a hospital manager. In 1994, Burdeos started a literary career publishing novels on the historical experiences of Filipino-Americans. One book, The Steward and the Captain’s Daughter, describes his real-life experiences caught in an interracial relationship with a Caucasian woman who was the daughter of the Captain he served. Fired and humiliated, Burdeos sought to capture the injustices he experienced as a ‘colored’ Filipino who could only work in menial positions in the Coast Guard due to his race.

Setting:

This interview was conducted in the Chao Center for Asian Studies Conference Room at Rice University. Mr. Burdeos was a spirited speaker, and spoke candidly regarding his experiences growing up Filipino, as a retired member U.S. Coast Guard, and
as a published author. He also gave valuable insight on discrimination stemming from inter racial relationships and the Filipino American community, under the view of someone who staunchly identifies first as American, and second as Filipino.
DJ: This is Dae Shin Ju.

ST: And this is Saima Toppa.

RB: Okay.

DJ: And we’re here today on June 29th, 2012 Chao Center of Asian Studies conference room to interview Mr… Ramon… Burdeos.

RB: Ah, yes. Ramon that’s my real name but they call me Ray—all these years.

DJ: OK. To interview Mr. Ray Burdeos.

RB: Exactly, aha. And that’s better, yeah. Because my son is Ramon so I don’t wanna make sure you’re not talking to my son.

DJ: Okay. Um, starting the interview, could you briefly tell us about your childhood? Growing up in the Philippines?

RB: Yeah-huh.

DJ: Could you tell us about it?

RB: Yeah, okay. [clears throat] I was born in my hometown Butuan that is in Mindanao, south of the Philippines, January 30, 1936. My dad at that time was a deputy governor and my mom was schoolteacher…smaller town in Mindanao. And I
went to school—went to Catholic school called Aureus High School—it’s uh run by the… by the Dutch people, missionaries, Dutch, in my hometown. I graduated in high school in 1952… and by the way I’m a Roman Catholic, not Muslim, not a Protestant—I’m Roman Catholic, 100 percent. And then graduated high school went to, um, Mapua Institute of Technology—that’s a college in engineering. Their curriculum is just like MIT. One of the best schools out there. I only lasted one year because I decided to join the U.S. Coast Guard in the Philippines. They were recruiting Filipinos in to the service.

DJ: So did you quit college?
RB: Yes, I went to service, correct. Aha.
DJ: So what were you studying?
RB: Engineering.
DJ: Engineering?
RB: Aha.
DJ: It, was it like a specific?
RB: No, it was in general engineering because first year. Nothing. All of it is general courses. Yes I was there during general courses and then when I tried to join the, the U.S. Coast Guard, it took me two years to get in because the list was too long. I have to wait for long but I quit school hoping that I would get in right away. So, when I joined, my idea of joining was Hollywood. You know, in those days I was young. You watch these Hollywood movies, you know. Beautiful houses and kids going to the park and got cars—all the goodies not found in Philippines. I mean a few we have. So, I was intrigued with that. I said, ‘Oh, let’s go to America.’ Another one was women—look as beautiful, you know. Marilyn Monroe—those days. Elizabeth Taylor—beautiful, you
know, Western women. For a young guy there was a feeling of, ‘Oh, I’m a Filipino, I cannot do that,’ you know. To me, it was, it was okay. That’s one of the things. You all see these beautiful women in Hollywood and even today all these American girls and all that. But I find out something later wasn’t all true, right. [laughs]

DJ: So was joining the Coast Guard really popular among young students?

RB: Oh yes, in the Philippines. See ya, America—the Philippines very Americanized. Everything shown in the Hollywood is in the Philippines. And the Filipinos have that tendency of copying, you know, American entertainment, singers, whatever you have, you know, they have, uh, jeans in America—Filipinos will be wearing jeans, too. So they all copy American way, you know. That’s what they do.

DJ: And did you learn, did you know how to speak English?

RB: Yes, uh, because, because our curriculum in the Philippines, from first grade after college, they always teach English language—always, yeah, oh, yeah. Yeah, we are more exposed to that, you know. Although, there’s a distinction though. Uh, where island you came from, you’re accents different—from different islands. You know, we speak in English but, I say, ‘Oh, wait a minute, what are you saying?’ You know, different accent. If you are from South or North, two different people. But they are talking in English.

DJ: So what other languages do you speak?

RB: I’m sorry?

DJ: What other languages?

(0:04:57.8)

RB: Oh my own hometown is called Butuan. That one distinctive language, small group
only. But really be unique because it’s not known to different towns. And we call it
Butuannon, that’s one. The second one is, uh, Ilongo. Ilongo is from the Visayas Island,
another island spoken by my mother, so I learned that through my mother cause my
mother from there. And then when I went to school I learned Tagalog—the national
language. I never knew much in before, but when I went to school, you have to learn
Tagalog. And I don’t like the Tagalog language. I want to go back to my own hometown
language, you know, and but you don’t have now choice, you have to pass that. But I
was passing—I was in the, in the borderline of C and D. [laughs]

ST: Can you spell the names of those languages?

RB: I’m sorry?

ST: Can you spell the names?

RB: My name?

ST: No, the names of the languages.

RB: Oh, the language, ok. Uh, the Ilongo is I-L-O-N-G-O. And the other one is
know, is Tagalog, okay.

ST: Thanks.

DJ: So when you joined the Coast Guard…

RB: Yes.

DJ: Did you plan on settling in America?

RB: Everything was, you know, I want to do this, I want to do that. So there was nothing
specific I wanted to do. But this what I discovered—I didn’t realize that when I joined the
Coast Guard we are really the people that replacing the blacks. What I mean by that is
the Navy and Coast Guard—there was this segregation, you know, segregated. All the blacks and other minorities—Chinese, Filipino, Korean or whatever could only work in the kitchen serving the officers. And the whites could do everything. So in 1947, President Truman was approached by the black people said, ‘Look, we’ll be fighting in the war Second World War. We’re dying for this country. And when we come back, we still have to work in the kitchen.’ Truman realized that, that it’s about time we allow this non-white to choose wherever they want to if they are qualified. So he signed a executive order saying, ‘Ok. As of now, the service is gonna be integrated. Now we’re—there’s no more restriction. You could do you want to as long as you pass it—qualifying test—you can make it.’ What happened was there were thousands of blacks, Asians working for the officers only, you know, that’s stewards or [indistinct] stewards—taking care of the officers, cooking for their meals, make up their beds, clean their rooms—that’s what they do, stewards. This people when they were given the opportunity and they get the intellect, they get people not dumb, they choose to go to the other side kind of work—where the whites work. What happened here now in this Steward Department, there’s shortage of stewards. And the ship’s gonna arrive the officers there’s nobody serving the meals. They don’t wanna cook themselves, you know. They have somebody serve them. So there was a shortage of that. So what they did, they went back to the Philippines, they said, ‘Well, we get all comfy, our colony, the only colony U.S. has. There’s lots of Filipinos that want to come, come to the United States.’ During that time when we were a colony, it was rather restrictive for Filipinos to go to America. You didn’t want, the whites didn’t want you to be in their neighborhood. You only want you to go to America to be and in the
labor force—work in the plantations, work in the agriculture all in California whiskers. That was what you was supposed to do. And their women were not allowed to come to America. There become, so when all the blacks, not all of them, when they were to move out to that, you went to Philippines. And the, and the Navy now said, ‘Okay. We’re now going to… recruit Filipino nationals. At that time we’re independent already. We get our independence in 1946 from U.S. Now of course we are now aliens no longer American nationals. Before, we were American nationals being a colony of U.S. But when we get our independence 1946, we are now foreigners, okay? So we can’t come since 1947, so the government said, ‘How can we resolve this?’ But I know what the story.

(0:09:58.8)

 Somehow they started recruiting 1952 bringing in these Filipinos. But no question was asked. All you wanna know is, ‘Are you born Filipino national?’ I mean, are you a Filipino? You are not Chinese or Japanese or Korean? If you are, you could join the Navy or Coast Guard. Now, you know that when you come to the U.S. the first thing the immigration asks you your passport, right? Where’s your visa, right? We don’t have that. Because the Consulate in the United States in the Philippines, the embassy, cannot come up with the number of visa immigrant to bring these Filipinos to America, because they only allow 25 Filipino nationals to immigrate to America. So in our words 25, just will all fail. But how we can bring 100 of Filipinos into the Navy every month? That’s how I come in. I joined with 100 people brought to United States and there was no visa available. So there was an arrangement between the government and the Philippines and U.S. says, uh, forget about, you know, let’s just close our eyes—I’m, I’m just saying
that you know I know the whole story behind it but what I’m saying is I came to this country (pause) undocumented just like all these Mexicans crossing the border. I have no—the record that I have was, they issue me ID card saying that you’re now—this is your ID card as a military man but whether you are an American citizen or not, is not listed in there. So I was about to come in along with about 100 of us in that ship joining the Coast Guard and Navy. But the condition there that after—there was a contract—four years or six years. After the contract if I decide to get out from the Navy or Coast Guard, they must discharge me back to the Philippines. They cannot let you go here in U.S. because you are not a citizen. So they get transport you back to the Philippines to go home. That was the condition there. So anybody who will decide not to continue their service, they go back to Philippines. That was our condition in that. But what happened in 1952 when it was a Korean War, big grand war and the, uh, U.S. involved in there, they come out with a policy by the government, by the U.S. government, all aliens serving the armed forces (?) during Korean War, are now entitled to become U.S. citizen overnight. All aliens, right? See, but they didn’t distinguish whether it was illegal aliens or the legal aliens. To come to country, you have to come in as a legal agent, uh, an immigrant with a number, right? But we were not legally admitted. Moreover, our record says, uh, that this man is not legally admitted for permanent residence because we have no papers, nothing. No, immigration admit us at the port when I arrived in San Francisco because I have nothing to show. Now of course we come in here because just because arrangement between government in Philippines and U.S. So Korean War broke, all veterans to that—all aliens now become citizens. Now, I was—my buddy I met him in three months, my buddy was in Korean War; so he applied. All the immigrants ask, ‘you
are an alien?’ ‘Yes.’ So, uh, the immigration assumed that because he is an alien he’s got legal papers coming into the country. So overnight become American citizen. In my case, I missed it by three months; I came in after the Vietnam War. I became a veteran of the war. Same thing happened. All aliens you know now [indistinct]. That’s how we are we become we’re about 45,000 of us Filipinos become U.S. citizen by virtue of that as a veteran alien. But then again I mentioned you it wasn’t specified that we were legal or illegal because actually in order to join service you have to be legal. But we were not. That’s how I became a citizen. And I say to Uncle Sam, ‘Thank you.’

**DJ**: Um, could you describe your recruitment process?

**RB**: Good. [clears throat] At the beginning of the recruitment, it was announced in the papers. When the Filipinos hear about that, ‘Boy, I’m a student, college students. Even doctors who want to join—they so want to go to Hollywood, they want to go to U.S., you know? At that time, everybody wanted to join big naval base Sangley Point in Cavite, outside of Manila and they want to join.

(0:15:19.4)

I even I cannot believe the number of people that wants to get in. We cannot accommodate thousands people who want to join. They said, ‘Wait a minute, stop.’ They say, ‘If you are interested to join, write us a letter saying what your qualifications are, why you want to join U.S. Coast Guard and then we’ll call you if you can, you’re what we’re looking for.’ That’s what happened to me. To everybody. So now everybody write the letter and say, ‘Oh I, I, I, I am a good student. I went through this college’ and then they call you if you are lucky. Once they call you, they only allow about maybe a
hundred a day to take exam. So they were able to accommodate, you know. And, and in a easier way getting people in. That’s how the recruitment done. But out of that 100, you only probably pick about eleven—average eleven. All been turned down. They pick the cream of the crop of that group. I’m not trying to brag because I’m in, you know. But that’s what happened. If you’re not smart enough, if you’re not healthy enough, good-bye. That’s why that…

**DJ:** So what kind of exam was it?

**RB:** Oh, my, uh, you know, aptitude test, you know. Little bit smart, you know how to write add two and two equals four, you know, that kind of thing, you know—aptitude test. That they have intelligence to do work whatever, or you know, you are qualified to. Yes, intelligence so that’s an aptitude test. Then, after that, you go for the physical exam. Once you pass physical, the last one is the personal interview. And it is something unbelievable too. You sit down and a recruiter will talk to you. And some of the Americans get different accent too, you know. If you’re from Brooklyn, from Boston, they got different accent—if you’re from Alabama, you know. Some of the people America [indistinct] are confused. What is he asking me? You know. All that. So you go to interview and that guy who decided to interview could say, ‘Yes, we’ll take you in’ or ‘No, you’re going home.’ It’s not easy; hard for us to get in. That’s how hard. They take the cream of the crop with the guys, you know.

**DJ:** Do you remember what kind of questions he asked?

**RB:** Boy this is about [laughs] fifty-seven years ago. Fifty-six years ago. Well, yes, you know, who’s the president of United States or something, yeah, like you’re going to immigration, you know. That kind of thing, the personal, you know. And what you think
about the government, you know? They want to know what you’re leaning into, you know? Whether you are for or against American. They’re looking for that. So a minor mistake can tank it, you know. They should eliminate you. It’s hard.

**ST:** When did you join the U.S. Coast Guard?

**RB:** Uh, okay. October 10, 1955.

**DJ:** Do you remember the contract?

**RB:** Oh yes. The contract it allows you to choose either four years or six years on the contract. Uh, the contract, uh, that it’s mandatory you could only stay as a steward, you know, nothing else. Now it’s your job its only steward. To make sure you understand that so when you come to U.S. yes, oh wait a minute I want to be a medical man or, you know, an accountant. No, no, no you work for the officers, yes. Very specific.

**DJ:** And do you remember your wage?

**ST:** Your wage, your salary.

**RB:** I’m sorry?

**ST:** Your salary? How much you made as a U.S. Coast, Coast Guard member?

**RB:** My?

**ST:** Your salary.

**RB:** Oh, salary. Again, it’s not your fault, ok? It’s my hearing. Yeah, uh, we started, uh, the beginning was about $40, I think?

**DJ:** A month?

**RB:** A month. Uh-huh. Forty, but it was plenty for us, for young guys, yeah, about 40. Anyway, 40 or 50, yeah, yeah, at that time. And then you get promoted every six month or a year and they give you another ten probably or twenty dollars more. But I
started about 40—between 40 and 50, you know.

ST: When you were growing up in the Philippines, what was like economic conditions of the Philippines?

RB: Philippines was the second, uh, economy in whole Asia. The Philippines was. Uh, the money at that time was $1 to 2 Pesos—strong, Philippines. In my idea, I join and uh I, I mean, you know, like Japan was doing okay but not as good as Philippines. The reason behind because it was more Americanized and all that, yeah and the Filipinos at that time were hard-working, too, because they went to America learn many things good ethics you know and all that. It was great, you know, for a while—for a while.

(0:20:35.8)

So, uh, yes, Philippines really was one of the best at that time in whole Asia. Yeah.

ST: And specifically, for you and your family, did you have a comfortable lifestyle? Did they make enough for you to live upon comfortably?

RB: My, my own family, not, okay. Well, you wanna know my how I feel about? What is this now?

ST: Just your perception.

RB: Okay. Well, first, at that time I was here, there were no Filipino women allowed to come to this country. So I am a man, we looking for a woman, so we forced to go with Americans or South Americans, Mexicans and some whites. Oh, probably black, too. Mulattos, all that stuff, because there were no Filipino at that time and in my case, I was lucky. Little bit fine. You know, uh, I remember when I went to Philly, uh; we go out in our liberty time meaning liberty time is getting out from the work and service. We go to Philadelphia and we go dancing in YMCA and YWCA, the Christian association. And
that’s where we met women—nice women, you know, not, not, hanging in bars, you know, in that places. And these women, they were nice. Some were still thinking that they are superior, you, but rest of them were doing fine. But along the way sometimes you get in trouble because some policemen in town still don’t believe in integration. You know, like one time, I had a girl—a white girl. I get picked up because I was visiting her in her apartment. The deputy at the station, they wanted to know what I’m doing in the white neighborhood, you know. I say, ‘Oh, I saw a girlfriend.’ ‘Girlfriend?’ ‘Oh, yeah.’ There’s so many young girls at that time going from upstate Pennsylvania. Small town in the farm. Once they graduate high school, they go to big town and one of these big employers at that time in the fifties was telephone operators—easy job for women. Those who don’t want to go to college yet, want to experience big town, they work in this telephone company. I remember in those days when you call they, they plug it and directly to people you’re calling to, so there’s a set of telephones in the rooms, hundreds of the girls work in that. That woman, you know, they’re good. So they were in big town and here we were sailors looking for good time. So that was good for us. We had a good time. But there was some bad ones that just like I said some white folks did not like that—you get in trouble.

**DJ:** Could you describe, uh, your first arrival to the United States?

**RB:** Say that again?

**DJ:** Could you describe your arrival to the United States?

**RB:** Ok, yeah. Well, when I arrived, they, uh, I was, you know, on the ship on this big uh navy ship, you know from, from Manila to, to Kwajalein and then Kwajalein to San Francisco. And it was a rough ride because I never been on the ship before. And this
is Pacific Ocean—it is rough, you know. And then you work, you’re seasick, I mean
sometimes I mean, ‘God, what am I getting into?’ I wanna, you know, should have stayed
home. I, all of us young guys, still looking forward to going to Hollywood or something
or going out with blonde girl or brunette or whatever. So I put up with that. but that was
hard. When we get to California, we’re about—I didn’t knew yet our category as, as a
military man. When I get to California, we’re about 100 in my group. 70 were going to
Navy school, and 30 into Coast Guard, boot camp. We were going to the boot camp just
like everybody else go to the boot camp and for training.

(0:25:03.8)
So when I get to, uh, San Francisco, we get off, and on that ship, it was a big ship, many
military men from overseas American returning home and their dependent, too,
stationed. Korean, many Korean, Japan and the Philippines going back home, you know,
after the tour, they bring back home. So we’re hundreds—that was a big ocean liner.
Yeah. More or the less, the group that were disembarked there, and I didn’t, I realize
now that the reason behind it after the immigration left because all people in there
whether you’re in service or not, immigration officers are always gonna be in there,
looking for your passport. Because you come into port, not coming from a foreign
country. Everybody be checked. So when all of those checking by the immigration done,
for we were the last group, they were disembarked. And then we just get out gangplank
get into pass, the

Navy went to San Diego Train Center, I went to Alameda as a Coast Guard. That’s how
I arrived in U.S. But looking at this Golden Gate Bridge, boy, that was fantastic, I say.
You see this in movies, you know—Golden Gate Bridge and you were underneath that in
my ship you know going to Alameda. I say, ‘Boy this is fantastic. This is beautiful. This is America.’ Yes, excited. Very excited.

DJ: So how long did it take from Manila to...

RB: Oh, almost one month. Long travel, yeah. Cause they stop at some island and load, load some of the Americans that come back, you know, and this is the what is called M.S.D.S. ship, you know, by, run by the Navy bring back all that troops back home, yes. So, when I went to the soil of the U.S. I didn’t kiss the soil you know. But I said, ‘Wow, I’m in. I’m here.’ Yes, excited.

DJ: And then you went to boot camp.

RB: Boot camp, yeah. In, in Alameda. It’s a small island called it government island—Alameda. Are you familiar with that? The small island—it’s all about the train for Coast Guard people, you know. And Coast Guard is one of the branches of the United States Armed Forces, one of them. But the smallest one. But smallest, it get two functions: there, one is military people and second as the enforcement, law enforcement for the sea. In other words if there was some problem with the sea, where U.S. owns that, Coast Guard handle that. The Navy cannot do that, the Army cannot do that. The Coast Guard could do that. They are the law enforcement people.

DJ: So what did you do at the boot camp?

RB: Okay. Just like anybody else you see in the movies. They give you a hard time. They kick you and, you know. Call you all kinds of names. I mean they make you suffer. But it was good for us. Young guys say, ‘What, what about this.’ We did great. And we find out that almost 100 percent, almost these people of Filipinos sent passed because they have that energy, they have that good—I want to take, I don’t wanna go
back to the
Philippines, you know. I’m here now. Work hard. That’s what happened.

DJ: So how long was the boot camp?

RB: Uh, about four months. Oh, yeah, yeah, every morning, drill, oh.

ST: What was the racial makeup of, of, uh, the boot camp?

RB: Racial makeup? That’s a good question.

ST: Yeah.

RB: Uh, in a boot camp, what happened because it was a big group of Filipinos, they have a one company. I mean they put some Americans there in one company, but in my company, uh, we’re about thirty, and five white boys, and one black and all Filipinos because we come in groups. But they come in two, three, they mix in all the white, so there was no problem on boot camp, you know. They put you to work together.

DJ: So was there any, um, segregation at the boot camp?

RB: Uh, discrimination you said? Oh, yes, you still have that. Yeah, but it’s very subtle. It’s not openly say, ‘Hey you…’ Oh, they call us names just like they call blacks names too, you know. Or Koreans you know they got names. But the white people, they’ve got pretty good job using names, calling names to these minority people, oh yeah.

ST: What sorts of racial stereotypes did people have of you as a Filipino?

RB: Oh yes. That’s, that’s the stereotype was is, uh, the thing that we’re only good you know for the menial work—yeah, the stereotype, you know. You cannot be, uh, a command—commander in the ship or anything like that because you know intelligence is not there. Oh yes, they have that.

(0:30:09.1)
The white folks only, okay. Not all of them, but majority was like, ‘You’re not qualified to this kind of thing.’

**ST:** And what about the black members of the U.S. Coast Guard? How did they perceive the Filipinos?

**RB:** Overall? The whole time I was in service? Well at the beginning it was like just like there was discrimination. What happened though, like my case, after ten years I became U.S. citizen. So now I’m just like all black goes to become an officer. I am a U.S. citizen, you know? Three months into integration now, I said, ‘You should give me a chance to get another job.’ That’s right, you cannot refuse me. So they said, ‘Ok, if you pass test the job you’re looking for we’ll send you to school.’ So I took the test I was a medical corpsman. Medical corpsman is you know medics like but it’s beyond the medics. They train you like they even call you doc. They train you on fast track on diagnosis, treatment, all that kind. Or emergency procedure, somebody get hurt, you could do suture, do that, whatever thing, you know. Or minor problem you get, uh, cough (?) all that stuff upper respiratory or lower you know. So they train you that’s a medical corpsman. You do like that but only allowed to be done to an active duty personnel. So I was a corpsman, yeah. So when that happened, uh, the American changed their action, not all of them, to this Filipinos, you know. Cause majority Asian was Filipinos were in Coast Guard and Navy. Cause they were not allowing the Koreans and Japanese. Only the Americans, the Koreans that were in California and Hawaii and, you know, yeah so they were allowed to do that. And after that it change. Now whenever I was a corpsman I was a department head so people listen to me whether they like or not, how I look like because I’m the chief now. So it changes gradually. And then just before I retired, our children started going to military academy—West Point, and, uh, Naval Academy, Coast Guard Academy and the guy, uh, go in the top of the class.
So they become officers. When I left, I saw Asians already taking commands of the ship.

Amazing, you know? But in my days, we had to work in the kitchen. So there’s a big change because of education. And because of the quality and because of the Democrats, not Republicans. I’m getting politics now, you know. Republicans say, ‘No, no immigration. We don’t want this’ You know, but what amazes me, I’m talking about politics, many Filipinos are Republican. I call them stupid. Flatly. How in the heck you can be a Republican when you are a minority? I cannot absorb that. I cannot believe that. I’ve been in so many arguments now with Filipinos. These people that came here as professionals, you know, they came her doctors, nurses, engineers, and immediately they become Republicans. I say, ‘wow.’ But I told them, ‘You know what? If not for the Democrats, you people, just like me before, cannot get in this country. It was the Democratic Congressman, senator from Cali, from New York that changed the law. The law before was in 1920 immigration law that if you are a minority from Pacific, in Asia they only limit it to 25 or 50 per year. But then in 1965 that was changed by the Democrats, and Republican fight to kill the bill, that it’s going to be based strictly on professional what this country needs.’ And you know how bright Japanese and Koreans are, you know. They are top in the, you know, get in there, pass it. And the Indians, the Indians are mathematicians, you know? They are bright in numbers. Look at now in this country—So many Indians, so many Chinese, Koreans because what they got in their brain, you know. (0:35:02.0)

And here, and this most of the people are Republicans. And I told them, ‘You know, you aren’t grateful to the Democratic Party.’ Even now, when Obama trying to give this young
kids age 12 you know, you know, to avoid deportation allow him to continue and the 
Republicans screaming, saying ‘You cannot, you cannot do that…[indistinct]’ And Obama is 
trying to help these, you know, Koreans, just minorities. But still a lot of my people, 

ST: That’s okay.

RB: But that’s true. I’ll tell you what, this is happening. If you look at the pictures of the 
Democrat, it’s integrated: Indian, Filipino, Chinese, Korean. You go to Republicans— 
whites and maybe Asians, some Asian, and very rare blacks. [indistinct]. Okay, I’m sorry. Go ahead now.

DJ: Okay. So, you were stationed in many different cities, right? So you were stationed…

RB: Uh-huh

DJ: At many different cities?

RB: Oh, ho, yes.

DJ: So, what was—where was your first station?

RB: Ok, my first station was in—after the boot camp, they sent me to Philadelphia in 
Pennsylvania. Actually, it was not Philadelphia—it was called Gloucester City. It’s just 
across the bridge of, you know, Delaware River, other side. But I lived in Philly, and just 
go to work in New Jersey. So, I, I say Philadelphia, plus it's a big town. That was a 
beautiful city, you know. Uh history and all that stuff. And that’s where I started living 
like, you know, trying to integrate to the American way to living, yeah. That’s what. But 
at that time, very few Asians are too. It was difficult for us to go out and make
some women at least you go for American girls, you know. I was able to do that because
in Philly in that time in fifties, the small Chinatown, close to downtown, only four
buildings—four restaurants owned by Chinese. And one barbershop owned by a Filipino,
you know. That was Asians before. And you hardly see any Pakistani or Indian at that
time, rarely. The Indians are only when they were scholars, you know—scientists that
were sent to this country, you know, to pursue whatever, yeah. But rare, but, mostly
Chinese, Filipino, Korean—very few Korean, matter of fact. But there were some
Koreans, yeah. Matter of fact, the uh, the champion in the 1950s Sammy Lee is a Korean,
world champion in diving—number one in the world. That’s Korean. Lee, last name L-E-
E, I think, yeah.

DJ: So were you a steward?

RB: Ah?

DJ: Were you a steward?

RB: Was I…

ST: A steward?

DJ: Steward? Like, your position?

RB: I was a steward, yeah. Yeah, yes, steward, you said?

DJ: Steward. Steward?

RB: Steward? You mean the job?

DJ: Mm-hm.

RB: Yeah, I worked in the kitchen, yeah. Yeah, for many years—for ten years—I was
working in the kitchen, you know, or working in the officers’ quarters. They have
quarters in the base—I clean their room, clean their commode, well that, because they
were not hiring civilians. You’re in the military. Somebody could do in the military. Oh yes. In the ships, you know, we do that kind of work. But you know there’s an advantage in one too. Because to work with the officers, other people has less power with the officers. See we work for these, I forgot, I work for the captain and I can do what I want to because the captain says. ‘Okay, just take a couple days and come back’ you know. Other guy cannot do that. So, there were some advantages to it, you know. Not all bad. When you go in the foreign country, and you ask the captain, ‘Captain I want couple days off.’ He says ‘Oh okay, go ahead, take off.’ And somebody you know, it’s easy because you work for the big people—the officers. There were some advantages. Nothing all bad. So, it, it was there you know [indistinct] like, okay.

(0:40:04.2)

DJ: And how did you get promoted?

RB: Okay, good question. So, [clears throat] I has been steward for about ten years. When I become citizen and I said, ‘Look, I don’t want to be no more work in the kitchen. And my, my CO said, ‘Ok. Take the exam and if you have the, the score to qualify, we’ll send you to school.’ Yes. They send me to a Navy school because mostly Coast Guards go to a Navy school because they have bigger offer to all kind of stuff. And they sent me in Great Lakes and, uh, as a medical corpsman. Mainly, they call them ‘Doc,’ but they are not doctors. They just train you to know to identify, if there’s problem you could be there to stop the hemorrhage, to stop whatever, or treat you something like that. I was trained in Great Lakes in 1968. Then after that you go promotion. By promotion, many you have to take the exams, service-wide, you compete with other people—you compete with a lot of people. So
I was promoted when I was a steward by the way, I was only up to, uh, A4. You know the rates are by numbers. A1, A2, up to A9. That’s your status and I was A4 for 10 years. A4, that’s the only, uh, third class steward they call it. And then but at that time, 10 years the other people not steward they were already making chiefs—making A8s and A9s already, because their work are wide open. But the stewards, too limited. You have no opening. They tend to put you down because they don’t need all the people to work—not chiefs or leaders, you know. But when I was a corpsman, we did five years and become the chief. I was promoted—they kept passing me. I become leader in the group, I become a department head, you know, so my responsibility went up—the whole life changes, you know. Oh yeah, now I was the guy with the big stick. That’s what it is. That’s how military runs.

DJ: You said you became an American citizen after you um…

RB: Joined the, uh, become the veteran of the Vietnam War.

DJ: So were you in Vietnam?

RB: No, I was not under fire, no. But I was in the Pacific, but not under fire, no. But the law said if you were in the service during that period of the time, because even if you are in U.S., you are still supporting the war because you’re still, you know, handling cases through the war. But I was not in front of, you know, under the gun [indistinct]. Yeah, but I was in Pacific making patrols, yeah. Yeah, so, when you become citizen, the whole, everything changes—life changes, you know. Changes for the better.

ST: When you came to the U.S., was it important to you to maintain ties to the Philippines?

RB: Okay?
ST: When you came to the U.S., was it important to you to maintain ties to the Philippines?

RB: Oh yes.

ST: Did you speak to your family frequently?

RB: I think, we Asian, still family, you know we, we, we feel that our family is a number one. No matter where you go, you still wanna see her. That’s American—that’s Asian, you know. Oh, yes, I love to go home to see my sister and relatives, yes. We like that. I still have close affinity with the Philippines, you know. But I’m now, cause I said, I’m American. I want people to understand that. I don’t want to be told by a white boy, ‘Hey, go back where you came from.’ And it happened to me one time. A white man said, ‘Hey, you don’t belong here. You go back where you came from.’ So, wait a minute now. I said, ‘Did you serve Uncle Sam?’ he cannot give me the answer. ‘I did.’ Yeah.

ST: What year was that incident?

RB: Uh?

ST: Was it recent?

RB: Huh?

ST: That, that incident.

RB: That what now?

ST: That incident of discrimination?

RB: Oh yeah, it happened here in Texas.

ST: Recently?

DJ: When did that happen?

RB: No, not recently. When…when I was in active duty. That was in 1967.
ST: Wow.

RB: I was in active duty during the Korean— during the Vietnam War. Oh yeah. Oh yeah. It happened. He said go back to where you came from cause I look different you know. Oh yeah. But I don't take that anymore. I don't take that anymore. You still once in a while find people think that way. That you don't deserve to be here. But it’s changing—it’s changing now. It’s changing, yeah.

(0:45:00.0)

DJ: Could you tell us about your...um...other stations?

RB: Yeah, I was from Philly I was transferred to, uh, New York City, you know, and in the ‘60s, and I stayed working for the, for the Commander and I got in trouble working with the Captain. The Captain has a good-looking daughter. And I was young. And she was young. And she was showing, that, you know, she likes me. And it’s New York City. You know how New York City is. It’s just, you get lost in there, you know? (laughs) Yes, I was only there for about five months, and this woman kept looking at me, talking to me. And I didn’t have any permanent city girl at that time. And this is a good-looking woman. A really, beautiful woman. A brunette, that I was dreaming about a long time ago in the Philippines. It’s in the book. You can see it in the book. (laughs) You know go see and read it in the book. So, we met in the subway and sat in the Staten Island…

ST: Staten Island Ferry?

RB: And she came to me and talked to me. I was scared because her dad is my boss. I worked for her dad. I got scared. But I said, ‘Man, I’m not gonna let go of this thing.’

Fortunately, yeah, I asked her out for a cup of coffee out in downtown. And it started.
We started going. Finally, after we’ve been going for a while, probably a couple of months, and her dad found out. Her father found out about it and I was called in the office by the commanding officer. And you know if you’re a commanding officer, you are the king. You do...you know...I walked in and he slammed the table and told me exactly what he thinks about it. And he said, ‘Tomorrow you’re gone.’ He called Washington and he said, ‘I want this guy out.’ I was lucky that I had a contract for four years. Otherwise, he could’ve...if I was due to get out, he could have said, ‘Not recommended for re-enlistment.’ That means they give me one-way ticket to go back to Philippines. But no, I have three more years to go in my contract. So, they cannot... you know, deny I have that. So, the best thing they did was they transferred me here in Louisiana, in New Orleans. And at that time, the Filipinos were being hanged in the Louisiana. It was very strict about discrimination. So, they sent me there and that’s how it is. But when I was there, they transferred me in Texas, and then I worked for a Captain. His wife was a Puerto Rican. So, in other words, not too far from Filipino. Spanish heritage, you know. And the Captain likes me. And time for me to re-enlist, he approve it, not knowing that the old Captain had wanted me to go. That’s why I was able to stay. And then by the time after the contract, I become U.S. citizen because I was a veteran, so, nobody could touch me anymore. Indeed I am Americano. (laughs) Yeah, very. You should read my book, you know. I think you will say, ‘Boy, this guy is really something...’ (laughs) I wrote three books already. I’m working on the fifth one right now. But the one I give him, it’s just about my life and the Filipinos that came here as stewards like me, and after given the opportunity, did well. One made for Commander, the other one, you know, good jobs, you know, after that. After they were given the
opportunity, you know, to move along. Move along, you know.

ST: When did you start writing your books?


ST: What...what...how did you start this path...this career?

RB: That’s a good question. Okay, after what happened with this Captain, and I was serving for Texas, and I decided I wanted to go to school, you know, so I studied, uh, here in Alvin. Used to be small college. They called it Alvin Junior College. I started studying, you know, there, while on my off days, I’m working, I studied two courses. I, I said, ‘Well, you know, I got plenty of time now I’m going to school. I want to do something.’ So I write a book. What am I gonna write? Yeah, I’m talking about my experiences. With a girl. So the title of the book is, The Steward (that’s me) and the Captain’s Daughter.’ (laughs) I told everything in there. And one of the officers that was dating with that girl wrote me, he said, ‘Now I know why you...why you did all that stuff.’ It’s amazing...and, you know, it’s uh...so it’s in the Internet. Or Amazon. Or Barnes & Noble. You find my book in there. Again, there are some typos. The prin—the publishers sometimes, oh you know, can’t publish it that well (?). You know, my books the publishers have typos. But uh, good reviews, all that. And I enjoy doing it. I’m not making best-seller yet, you know. But the book is good because it’s about interracial relationships. You know, white here and brown. She’s American, I’m Filipino citizen, you know. Um, her dad is the Commanding Officer and I was the steward working for the dad. So, the ingredients for a good story is right in there. So, it was easy for me to write. And I can remember it because I went through hard times...you know, when I was working with the Captain. And I was changed from one unit to the other, because what I
DJ: So when did you move to Texas?

RB: Huh?

DJ: When did you move to Texas?

RB: OK, so, after all this thing, about two months in New Orleans I was transferred in Texas. I stayed there for about eight years, and then I become citizen. That’s where they sent me to school. To Navy School. OK, from there, I was transferred to, uh, from school I was transferred to Connecticut, there. Then, to work at a Coast Guard Academy, uh, infirmary, because I was corpsman already, I was working there. And I stayed for about two years in, uh, New London. Then I got transferred to Hawaii. (Indistinct) I was the only medical man on that. And our job was patrolling the Pacific, working the Asian navigation, and supplying Coast Guard, you know, unit. And after Hawaii, I was transferred to, uh, California, riding a small plane in California, in San Diego. While I was there, I get a call from my old boss, in Coast Guard Academy, he said, ‘We’re opening our own Medical Corpsman school for the Coast Guard. Instead of sending guys to the Navy, we’ll provide our own school.’ He said, ‘You want to teach?’ I said, ‘Teach? Me? A Filipino teaching a white guy?’ (laughs) I said, ‘You gotta be kidding.’ You know. He said, ‘Come on, I want you to teach.’ So, I was picked up as one of the instructors to open the school. So that’s how I was in San Diego for three years teaching Medical Corpsmen, in one of the wings of the Coast Guard Academy out there. I worked there, and I liked my job. After that, I was—my last duty was in Ketchikan, Alaska, running a small clinic again. Uh, you know, uh, stayed there about three years, and I decided it was time to leave the Coast Guard. I had 23 years, support for my retirement. When I retired, I worked for a while... I wanted to
be managers so I opened... a... fish-and-chips restaurant. You know, fish-and-chips, that’s an English? You hear about tha—oh yeah, you’re Pakistani, okay. And I worked for about a year and a half, and then I got robbed. Two o’clock in the afternoon. It was rainy day. Two black guys come in looking for the manager. I was behind and my… my cashier came in and said, ‘Somebody lookin’ for you.’ When I walk in there, these two black guys open up their jacket, they have several shotguns underneath. I’m picking my nails. They say ‘Take your cash register, bring out all the money.’ I was robbed.

DJ: Where was this restaurant?

RB: Fish-and-chips. It’s a seafood restaurant. In Galveston. In Galveston. And, that, I was robbed. And after that, I said, ‘No, this is not for me.’ So, I decided to close down and return it to the bank, decided to go back to school. So, I went to the University of Texas in Galveston, and since I was a corpsman, medical, I wanted to see if they would take me in as medical student. I tried that, but they said, ‘No, you have to have at least so many hours for the… you know... in college.’ All I have is one year from Alvin College. They said, ‘Why don’t you instead go into medical administration?’ You know, because they don’t require much in there. And I say ‘Medical administration, yeah I could run clinics after that.’ So, since I have the G.I Bill., the government will pay everything. I said, ‘Why not? I don’t have a job anymore, I’ll go to school.’ I went to school and graduated in Medical Administration. But they called it Bachelor of Sciences in Health Care Sciences, major in Medical Administration at UTMB in Galveston. After that, I was hired as a manager of a clinic, uh, that owned by the U.S. Armed Forces, but contracted with Saint Mary’s. So, I worked for a while, after that I retired, I quit.

DJ: So, why did you decide to retire from the Coast Guard?
RB: Why? Uh, one reason was my children wanted to stay in one place now. We been
moving a lot, you know. So, we say, ‘OK, I’ll retire.’ And, since my two boys were born
here in Galveston, they want to come back here. One, my daughter is born in
Connecticut. So, we went to Galveston and I retired here in Galveston. That’s one reason
I, you know, I retired. Because the family wants to stay in…one place.

DJ: How did you prepare for the retirement?

RB: That’s a good question. Uh… I wasn’t worried because my wife is a nurse and she
always can get a job anywhere. I married a Filipino girl, by the way. There was a
Filipino girl, because when I left New York, the Whites said, ‘Hey, don’t marry White
girls…not good for you.’ So that time was good—and at that period, there were so
many Filipino nurses coming to this country by the hundreds.

ST: What time period was this?

RB: Huh?

ST: What period was this?

RB: 1960s. So many nurses, from India, from the Philippines. Exchange student nurses.
They’re coming here. So, I met this woman in New York. I marry her. A Filipino. So
now I don’t have to worry about someone telling me, ‘Hey, don’t go out with a white
boy… white girl.’ You know. That’s what it is. Preparing for my retirement, I said, well,
I got good retirement from the Coast Guard, after twenty years. I still have, you know, the
G.I. Bill, which I can use to go to college. So, I was safe and my wife will always get job
as a nurse, and she loves to be a nurse. So, what I’m certain of is that we can stay in one
place now, and enjoy it. Yes, so my boys went to school, uh, get a degree, and my
youngest daughter said, ‘Dad, I don’t want to go to a four-year school. I just want a one-

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year program.’ Here in States, you can’t force them to do what they don’t want to. You
know, very independent mind. Not like if your mom is a Vietnamese who says, ‘Oh,
you’re going to be a doctor.’ You’re going to be a doctor. They work hard for you, but
you’re going to be a doctor. That’s how it is happening to Vietnamese here in this
country. From the hardship they have in Vietnam when they came down here, their
children are geared to go to college. You gotta be an engineer, a doctor, or a scientist. So,
when you open up the papers, here comes the Vietnamese the top of his class. (laughs)
You really notice that? They got this funny name but that’s how it is, the family. But
mine, since I’m too Americanized, I say, ‘Ahh yeah, if you want to be a doctor, that’s
OK. It’s fine.’

**DJ**: Do you still feel connected to the U.S. Coast Guard?

**RB**: I’m sorry?

**DJ**: Do you still feel connected?

**RB**: Oh yes, yes. Oh yes. Yeah, I’m still connected to the U.S. Coast Guard. Evidence.
Here is my first dog tag… Look at that.

**DJ**: How old is this? This is when you…

**RB**: I first joined.

**DJ**: Wow.

**ST**: Wow.

**RB**: So I carry my old ID. That’s my name. See! And besides I carry… my… uh… ID
card. Big. You know, I’m retired. And see, I had a disability when I was in service. And then I got my actual card when I was in active duty.

ST: Wow.

RB: And this my uniform when I was in active duty.

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DJ: Did you receive any recognitions for your service?

RB: Oh yeah, I did. I got this...I think I mentioned—I got this achievement medal for, you know, Outstanding Work. Yes, I have that medal. I think I mentioned it, yeah. At Chilton Middle. A written book.

DJ: So, have you always wanted to be a writer?

RB: No. (laughs) Good question again! (Indistinct) I said, well, I want to do something. I remember how it happened with the girl in New York so I wrote that book, *Steward and the Captain’s Daughter*. At the beginning, it took me a year to finish that, because I’m not a writer. I mean, I never think about being a writer. Yeah, I said, why do that (?)? So, I worked...self-studied...read books how to write. All that, you know? It was a tough time. Then, I tried that. Turned out okay. My first book I got a pretty good review. I said, ‘Man, I might be a writer, you know.’ So, I said well, I did one, why can’t I do another one. I started doing that. Another, second one, worst part about my life, (indistinct) you know. All the experiences I have. Then I did a third one too, okay. The fourth one, the one I didn’t copy to this, okay. Now I’m writing my fifth book, so do you call me a writer? I don’t know. What do you call me? But my son said, ‘Dad, you are an author now, you know? Not only one book, you got five books you’re working on!’ So did I want to be a writer? No, I didn’t plan to be a writer.

DJ: Can you describe your writing process?
RB: Yeah

DJ: How do you...how do you like, write your book?

RB: How? Well, start off with imagination to write a book, you know. And you have to
prepare for the one. This book I am writing now is about the war. The Second World

War. In my hometown. And I wanted to show what exactly happened there. But you have
to talk to people. Old folks like me, you know? Older than me. I had to talk to them. But I
read, had to read. Good thing there is Google in the Internet, you know. So many things
you can find there. There are so many, uh, historical facts that are been... you know... you
can access it through the Internet. So, I read up all those things and get an idea of what is
happening. So, what I read there and what I talk to people put it together. But my idea of
writing a book is like a novel. To tell a story. In other words, when I write from 1941 to
1945, it’s always connected to an index page. Not like...some would write a book. It’s
like a history book that teaches people in college or high school. I don’t. Mine is...I’m a
storyteller. What happened from the beginning, you know. I’m using simple words. You
never have to look for the dictionary to know what this guy is talking about. What is this
word he is talking about? I don’t use those words. I dumb them. There’s a word that,
probably fits I’m describing, I go to dictionary and see the easy way use that word. So, when
you read my book, you’re like, ‘Okay, next, next...’ Because it’s easy. But some of the
writers, (indistinct) you’re using, oh, this… flabbergasted… this big word. You know where I
learned that from? There’s a guy by the name of Edward Newman. Oh he’s, uh, CBS
anchorman. Hear about that guy? He says, you know, ‘When you talk to people...[pauses]
talk to people so they can understand.’ You know, you never know what education the guy
has. When you write a book, same thing. When you want to communicate, it’s because you want to communicate. Not to confuse the guy or start worrying, ‘Oh hey, give me the dictionary. I’m not understand what he’s talking about.’ That’s how I got into books. The easiest way I could write it, simplest way I could do that, that’s what I did. So, when you meet the guy compared the guy who wrote the book already, two different worlds. He got so many words, unbelievable. You know that’s good if for teaching the history about the world, yeah. But mine is storytelling. Like, ahh, this woman got raped by you know, this man. What happened here, what was the conversation, what was said, or, you know, that kind of thing. Simple. So, now I enjoy doing it now... because when your readers say, ‘You know, I liked that book.’ I really—I walk away... happy. One of my... one of my reviewers in Galveston newspaper, he said, ‘You know, in this book...’ I walk away happy, I walk away smiling. That’s like...that’s how writing is. Simple.

DJ: So, how did you get it published?

RB: Oh, that’s a good point too! Because if you’re not known, no one want to take a chance on you. You have to spend money. There are so many companies now. You pay... first you have to get your book liked. They have to like your book to take it in, you know. But they don’t want to spend money... to print that. You have to spend money to print that. And then they give you a deal—a realty—a certain percentage. You’d be getting less than other big writers, you know. But that’s good. Mine is just to publish the book. So, if they like the book, it’s not too controversial. And they say ‘Okay we’ll print the book. It’ll cost you about one thousand dollars, you know, for one hundred, okay?’ Or ‘If you need people to critique your book, we have services on that, we charge you...
five hundred.’ Or, you know, all the things, we get this publishing company. It’s a big one. Biggest in the country. AuthorHouse. You know, have you heard about AuthorHouse? Yes, that’s what you do. (Indistinct) So you have to invest on that one to get it published. But they don’t just pick anybody to publish. They still have to say, ‘Well, this work...working with this guy.’ But it’s your money, it’s not their money. And they go along with that. That’s how you publish. Before, it’s hard to get a publisher to publish because you have to be sure that you’re definitely writing a book or, uh, this woman or John Edward’s girlfriend and all that (indistinct) in your book. (laughs) You probably read the book, huh? Yeah, oh yeah, this is your thing. Because you know, it’s a scandal. Oh yeah, people read scandal! They love the scandal.

(1:08:31)

DJ: Is there a specific reason why you wanted to publish your book?

RB: A special reason why I used this company?

DJ: No. Like why do you—why do you want to publish a book?

RB: I wanted to make known what I think happened… just a little more to my group of people, Filipino, yeah (?)

DJ: So, what’s—do you have like a target reader?

ST: A target audience?

RB: Yes, uh, Filipinos. But it turned out to be—that be wrong. The other... the Whites, they like to read that. Yeah. Because ‘Oh boy, what’s this brown guy going out with this white girl?’ They’re curious. But my title was politically correct. But then the Filipinos are not that...they like to read White people’s stories and all. These Filipinos are... that’s true, it’s true. I mean, some do write them. I mean some do buy my book, oh yeah. But...
the ones I’m getting my, uh, my, uh, reviews are mostly from Whites. It’s amazing but that’s what it is, yeah.

ST: How much did it cost for you to invest in your first book?

RB: How much did it cost me? Oh, it cost me about a thousand five hundred. But they gave me books, you know. I buy the books after that. And then, they charged me less,

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because, you know, being author. And I could sell that book to make money too, on my own.

ST: Mhmm. How much...

RB: But the idea now though is getting your book out there. Now the Amazon pick it up. You see my book all the time on Amazon now. Barnes and Noble pick it up, you know. And other… I never realized company... I see my book even in Chinese. You know, being sold by Chinese company, or in Germany. I said, ‘What is this?’ But what is happening...these people out there are reading this story somewhere, they’ll make that accommodated to you. So, your book is available out there now. Now, on top of that now, I just found my books are an e-book too. You know what an e-book is? An electronic book. In other words, instead of buying a hard copy, you just go over to the beach a book and I say, ‘OK, how much you charge?’ They charge $10.55 for my Steward’s and Captain’s Daughter.’ But if you buy in book, it costs you about $19.50, okay. So we see the title is good, oh, okay (?). So that’s how we do it now. It’s an e-book. But the problem is they’re also choosy what they put in there because they want to make money. They all want to make money. That’s what they do. If I buy it, they want to make money. That’s how it is.
ST: How much do you make from your books now?

RB: Huh?

ST: Approximately how much do you make from your books?

RB: How much—what?

ST: Do you make?

RB: Oh! I’m just breaking even.

ST: Uh huh.

RB: I’m just breaking even. But I’m not worried about that. Because one of these days, someone might pick it up and say, ‘Boy, I’d like to make this into a movie.’

(laughs)

RB: No, this is true because of the story. Here is a brown boy taking out this white girl. You know, that kind of thing. Yeah, some day somebody decided, okay, that’s where I’ll make my money. Because I get the...you know I own that book. It’s not owned by the publisher, I own that book. You know, so it’s still out there. At least my children have something to look for, you know, for later on. They say, ‘Dad wrote a book. Now they want to make a movie.’ I was approached too, really, but it didn’t come out right. Oh yeah, the minute just put it out there in the public. Right? Just put it out. Don’t worry about making money, you know? But I’m breaking even now. Oh, yes, what I spent. Now, on top of that, I enjoy life writing. Just like my son did...said, ‘Dad, you are a writer right now, you know?’ (laughs) I said, ‘I just started writing. I never went to a creative writing class. Never been there.’ But I’m a writer, on my own. I learned it through my own experience. So, anybody can write. It’s just that they have to have good imagination.
too, you know. Really, your mind gotta be working.

**ST:** Have you considered selling your books...

**RB:** Huh?

**ST:** In the Philippines?

**RB:** No, it’s never been sold in the Philippines. Only in U.S. I know somebody in Germany bought it, uh, in England bought it, but not in the Philippines.

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**ST:** I think...It might be popular in the Philippines. (laughs)

**RB:** No. You know why? It needs marketing, and they don’t market over there. And my publisher didn’t have that. Yeah. (pauses) But I’m getting the readers from the Philippines too, you know? I mean, yeah, like all the Filipinos here, they hear about, oh boy, that story. That’s the only time they, you know. But having market in Philippines, nah. There’s a danger there because if you sold it to Philippines, there’s scam artists out there. You know, they copy it and they pirate them, and they sell big portion and they’re making money. Philippines is known for that. Taiwan is known for that, making pirate books. They could copy exactly what it’s looked like. These Asians are smart, you know that? Oh yeah.

**ST:** Um, can you describe what community organizations you’re involved with?

**RB:** Uh, my organization here? Well, the only one I have here is... the... well, this is unbelievable. They have a... my hometown actually has an association here, from my hometown. Here in Houston. They call it Agusan—which is my province—Association of Texas. All the people from the old country. We have a President, I was the Vice-President. The President quit because he could not get organized to get his members to get a meeting. For a meeting, there would only be like four, five people showed up. Well,
there’s about thirty here in this town. So, we couldn’t get enough people so they quit. So, now I was the Vice President, so they say ‘You’re the president now’, so I’m the president. Very inactive. I’m just there when there’s something probably going on, they call everybody and say we’re having meeting and that’s it. But the other one…I’m very active in the Free Masonry. Mason. I’m a Mason. I’ve been a Mason since 1976 when I was in Active Duty. I stayed active. I’m always connected to the Free Masons.

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It’s a good organization. And if you know Mason, uh, all the Shriners hospitals are Masons, you know. All the—and those hospitals are free. There’s no business office in that hospital. All free because of the Masons. To become Shriner, you have to be Mason first. Yeah, that’s what they are, big part about it. So, I belong to that and my Association of Butuan—uh, Agusan Association of Texas.

ST: How do you spell that?
RB: I’m sorry?
ST: That...that province?
ST: When you were working in hospital—or clinic—administration...
RB: I’m sorry?
ST: When you were working in health care administration...
RB: Oh yeah, I was manager of—after I got my degree from UTMB, I was hired by St. Mary’s Hospital managing this—they have a contract with the U.S. government. Since there’s a military facility here so they have to have that to take care of the retired people, and they’re dependent, so they hire me to run the clinic. I was the manager there for a while and providing all the U.S. armed forces beneficiaries for the
healthcare, yeah.

ST: How much did you make as uh...

RB: Oh, the only payment at that time... about two thousand... one hundred a month.

Small.

ST: What year was that? What year—time period was that?

RB: Yeah, yeah, that was good pay. It was my salary.

ST: But what time period though?

RB: I’m sorry.

ST: What time?

RB: Oh! What time? 1989? Yeah, I only stayed there for a year and decided to quit.

ST: Do you, uh, still visit the Philippines often?

RB: Every year. Now that I’m retired, oh yes, every year I go home. Sometimes twice.

Oh yes...but it’s harder to go back...

DJ: Do you go back with your family? Do you go with your family?

RB: Sometimes there’s one that my family goes. There’s that time I go alone because my wife doesn’t want to go to Mindanao. So, when you talk about Mindanao, it’s a Muslim country. That’s what they think about, and they’re scared. So, Mindanao, a part of that, are Muslims. Mohammedans. You know, they’re from, uh, mostly from Indonesia and they go, you know, to the Philippines. And there are Muslims in there. But they’re not Filipinos, you know. And they still got problems. They’re still fighting against the government. But I don’t, because I was born and raised there. But my wife is from the North. She, ‘Oh no, I don’t want to go there.’ So, when we go home, I go South, she goes North. Yeah, that’s right. But I enjoy going back to Philippines. It’s the people I, you know, grew up with when I was young kid. And my hometown is mostly Catholics but 90% Roman Catholics. There were some Muslims, sure. Merchants. Protestant, yeah, protestant... Koreans, you got some Koreans.
DJ: Do you have any relatives in the States?

RB: Did I bring—no, no, no. Just me. Just me and my wife and my children.

ST: Filipinos, um, are known popularly to remit a lot of money to the Philippines. To send money back. Have you...

RB: Yeah, yeah, right now I’m supporting my sister because she’s retired and helping with her living expenses. Yeah, supporting her. My sister. I send her money every month. Health care… That’s the bad part about the Philippines. The health care, I mean, you know, it is not provided by the government. It is very, very limited, you know. So yeah, I send money to my sister every month. A lot. To help her.

ST: How much do you send her?

RB: Oh, about, uh, $350. But if you multiply that to forty-two it’s good money.

DJ: Going back to your time during the Coast Guard, did you ever face any mental or physical difficulties?

RB: Physical difficulties?

DJ: Yeah, physical or mental difficulties. Like hard times? Did you have any hard times?

RB: No... the problem I had there was getting seasick when you’re on patrol. Yeah, see what happened here, the Coast Guard often times, they’ll be going out trying to save ships, you know, hit by hurricanes. That’s the time we go out. I’ve had a rough time living out there. Oh yes, you get sick. You sleep you tie yourself up in the bunk because you fall. That’s the one—that’s what I really didn’t care for. Being seasick when it gets hurricanes. And Coast Guard, the Navy will be hiding and we’ll be out there in the water looking for this shipwreck or, you know, need some help. You gotta be out there. That’s
a Coast Guard duty.

**DJ**: Do you ever get used to it?

**RB**: Sorry?

**DJ**: Do you ever get used to it?

**RB**: What? No?

**DJ**: Used to it? Used to the sea...?

**ST**: Sea. Were you used to the seasickness?

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**RB**: Oh yeah, I vomit and everything. Yes, really sick. I mean, like, sick like a dog.

(laughs) Sick, yes. Everybody gets sick. When it gets rough, when the ships going like this way, your brain, your... your ear, you know that liquid that control your thing, your ba—you’re sick (?)..

**DJ**: On the other hand, what was, like, your most—your happiest moment serving as a—serving as a Coast Guard?

**RB**: (Indistinct) Going to different ports and you know, you meet so new people. So, yeah. When you go there, do that, visit the different towns, it was a good part of it.

Overall, I had a fantastic time in the Coast Guard. And because of the Coast Guard, I’m living okay. Otherwise, if we were in the Philippines, I’d be one of the crooks out there, trying to rob the government. Most politicians in the Philippines are crooks. It’s changing now because they had the Chief Justices thrown out... for corruption. So, it’s changing now. We in Asia, our governments really unstable. Different crooks, you know, trying to get in. But now it’s changing. You know, like the Philippines, now this President, and he’s overthrowing the corruption. And he had this Chief Justice kicked out... for corruption.
That’s a good example. That’s one branch of the government, you know? Chief Justices, Supreme Court, take out. So, it’s good, and we’re learning now to do right. Japan got problems. China got problems. Korea got problems too, you know. But overall, it’s doing better now than before. They’re doing better now than before. Even Pakistan is doing better. That woman president before was really great, you know.

ST: Benazir Bhutto.

RB: Yeah, but then, obviously, she got take out.

ST: She got assassinated.

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RB: Assassinated, yeah. But... it’s changing to the better now. I think. You know, than before. Yeah.

DJ: Do you have any more questions?

ST: Uh, I gue—I guess, uh, how do you identify yourself now? Do you identify yourself ever as a...

RB: By first marriage?

ST: No, no...Do you identify yourself as a Asian American? Or Asian? Filipino?

Or Filipino American? American?

RB: Okay, first of all, I want to make sure where I, um, you know, where I should be belong to, because I chose to first American. I don’t want to be hyphenated. American. I told my children, I said ‘It’s okay if someone calls you a Filipino-American. That’s fine. But first, you are American. Because you might be President of the United States. I don’t want to hear, ‘There’s a Filipino-American President now.’ No such thing as a Filipino-American. There’s an American there. Okay, that’s what I push on my children. So, I’m first Filipino—I
mean, American. Second, I’m very, very proud to be Filipino, an ethnic Filipino. I am very proud. I love being Filipino. Not White, not Black, or anything else. Filipino. Happy to be an American. That’s what I believe. Yeah. You should believe we’re all Americans.

ST: Do you identify with other Asian Americans?

RB: I don’t want to be called Asian American. I’m Filipino American. Now, there’s different definitions. Now, your group...your group...your group...we’re different. I’m... I’m Filipino American, not Asian American.

ST: Now, how does—how do your children identify? Do they also call themselves American?

RB: Yeah, yes American. That’s what we are. I made an impression on them, and they believe we are Americans. But, they are proud to be of Filipino blood. Yes, Filipino blood, they love that. But, they are Americans, yes.

ST: Any more questions?

DJ: Yes, um, as a Filipino American, what kind of interactions do you have with other ethnic minorities, such as Latinos and Blacks?

RB: Say it again.

DJ: As a Filipino, do you have any, um, interaction with other ethnic minorities? Do you? Interactions with other ethnic groups?

RB: Oh, no, I don’t.

ST: How do you relate to like, uh, Latinos?

RB: Oh, other minorities. Oh, I’m closer more to the Asian minorities than the White
Europeans. Oh yes, I’m more Asian. I think we can understand be—much better than the European group. We know where we came from. Yes, um, I’m in that group, yeah.

**ST:** How do you relate Latinos and Hispanics or Blacks?

**RB:** Okay, it’s okay. For the, uh, for the Latinos, I could probably because, as a Filipino, we are partly Spanish. My dad, matter of fact, is fifty percent Spanish. You know, so I can relate with that. But in generality, as different section of the world... not—I’m not in South America, I’m more in Asia. If there’s gonna be the South Americans, the Asians, the Europeans, the Slavics—you know, one of those things—I’m an Asia. Yes.

**ST:** I guess I just have a question about, uh, how long you have been living in the
RB: Ah, when I retired in the Coast Guard, 1979.

ST: OK.

RB: I lived in, in the island, you know. But I worked in Houston. I used to work for a real-estate company for five years. Here in, uh, Westheimer. In commercial real estate I did sale stuff that way at that time. Yeah, so, I’m very familiar with Houston. I call this Houston-Galveston area. Really. Because what is in Houston includes Galveston, you know, yeah.

ST: What attracted you to Houston and Galveston?

RB: What attraction?

ST: Why did you decide to settle here?

RB: Well, being Filipino, close to the beach. Close to the water. Because, you know, being close to the beach, going fishing, that’s Filipino. So many islands in the Philippines, there’s a thousand of them! So, I have to love an island. So, I found an island in Galveston. You know, that’s my island. Yeah, because of the island. You know, you can go out there, the sunrise you go to the beach. Yeah, that’s what it is.

ST: Is there a significant Filipino community in Galveston?

RB: Huh?

ST: Is there a significant Filipino community?

RB: Yeah, very small community, yeah. Mostly nurses working at UTMB. Many nurses. This is where I settled down. Where I pick up my wife in the morning from the hospital, okay, from night shift. I’ve been doing it for twenty years, you know. I get a bit tired. You look at the people coming out of the buildings. Mostly nurses. More nurses... there are more
Indians and Filipinos than Americans… nurses. More Indians and Filipinos coming out that door. Amazing. You do see White, maybe one or two. (laughs) But Asians and, uh, there are Koreans now too. But because of the Koreans came later on here and mostly Koreans go for either doctors—not nurses—doctors and engineers. Those Koreans are... So they are in different group...section in the country. But for Chinese—for Filipino and Indians, they dominate the nurses and doctors. Doctors and nurses is two groups and coming out of that building of that UTMB, I say, ‘Oh, what happened to the White folks? Where are they?’ (laughs) You hardly find them. And the Blacks. So many Blacks now, too. So, it’s changed the whole ethnic group of doctors, you know, at UTMB. I thought you were American. (laughs) So you don’t want to go home, huh?

DJ: Well, it depends.

RB: Well, if you meet someone here, probably say ‘No, I love it here so probably gonna stick around.’ Watch out, watch out. You’re probably, ‘Oh, I like this. Oh, it’s okay. Yeah!’ But there’s so many—yeah there are Koreans here. Yeah, many Koreans here. Doctors and fisherman. True.

ST: OK, well thank you for your time.

RB: Thank you. I appreciate it, for the invitation, and nice talking to you ladies.

(1:31:17)

[Recorder turns off. Interview ends]
Do you think you have received fair amount of recognition for your service?

Retirement
  - How did your life change after retirement?
  - Do you still feel connected to the U.S. Coast Guard?
  - Were you prepared for a change after retirement? What kind of plans did you make?
  - Did you get help from others making those plans?

Migration Process
  - Could you describe your naturalization process?
  - When did you move to America?
  - Which city did you first move to?
  - With whom did you move to America?
  - Why did you decide to settle in the States?
  - Tried assimilation or wanted to maintain ties to the Philippines
  - What other cities have you lived in?
  - Why did you decide to settle in Galveston, TX?

Did you have any other job besides working for the Coast Guard?

When did you start writing books?

- What was your motivation?

- Have you always wanted to be a writer?
  - Any writing in earlier times?

- Could you describe your writing process?
  - Data collection
  - Time spent
  - Subject of the material (four books)

- Publishing
  - Contacting the publisher
  - Copies sold
  - How popular are the books?
  - Type of readers

Culture
  - How important is it for you to continue maintaining Filipino culture?

- Is racial diversity important for you?
As a Filipino, what kind of interactions do you have with other ethnic minorities such as Latinos, blacks, etc?