

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

Interviewee: TUONG VY DANG

Interviewer: RUI ZHENG

Date/Time of Interview: April 5th, 2013

Transcribed by: RUI ZHENG

Edited by: Chris Johnson (8/18/16), Sara Davis (8/22/16)

Audio Track Time: 46:11

Background:

Vy Dang was born in Vietnam, in a family of two working parents and one sibling. She grew up and was educated in Vietnam before moving to the United States at eleven years of age with her family. At the time of this interview, she was an undergraduate student at Rice University, where her father is a professor. She plans on attending medical school following graduation.

Setting:

The interview focuses on experiences and identity formation that took place both in Vietnam and the United States for both Ms. Dang and her family. The interview was conducted in Wiess Residential College at Rice University and took approximately 46 minutes.

Interview Transcript:

Key:

VD	Tuong Vy Dang
RZ	Rui Zheng
-	Speech cuts off; abrupt stop
...	Speech trails off; pause
Italics	Emphasis
(?)	Preceding word may not be accurate
Brackets	Actions (laughs, sighs, etc.)

RZ: Today is April 5th, 2013. We're at Wiess residential college on 6340 Main Street on Rice University campus. I'm here with Vy Dang, whose actual name is...

VD: Tuong Vy Dang.

RZ: ...and she is the daughter of Professor Dang, who I have previously interviewed. So, when I interviewed your father, he mentioned that although he did not have much difficulty integrating into American society, he mentioned that it was probably harder on you and your brother because you came around middle school. Do you mind telling me, in your own words, how that was for you?

VD: I don't remember it being particularly hard for me because, since, my dad, as you know, is an English professor in Vietnam, he has taught me English since I was four years old, and I've been speaking in English with him since I was four years old, so there wasn't much of, you know, a language barrier that was going on. I guess the only thing that I really struggled with was the social aspect of it. I've always been sort of a shy person by nature, so it's not like, you know, because of the new environment. Although, like obviously, the new environment contributed to it, but that was why that I, sort of, didn't talk much to people when I first came over here...um to an extreme point, such as I wouldn't say anything at all, and nobody would...like almost nobody would ever have heard me say anything. So for the first two years, during 7th grade and 8th grade, I almost didn't talk to anybody, or almost didn't say anything, and I sort of...I was sort of, you know, in middle school or school in general in American culture, it is very encouraged for you to participate in the class discussion and just shout out things, or you know, raise your hands and things like that. And in Vietnam, it's more...it's more teacher focused. So you like listened to the teacher, and you only speak up when, you know, I guess you do have a question, you can raise your hands and stuff, but it's not like as encouraged as over here, and the only time you speak up is when the teacher talks to you.

So when I came over, I didn't really ever speak up in class, and I didn't really talk to many people. So actually, 8th grade, I actually opened up a little bit, and this guy in my class was so surprised that he heard me say something and he was just like, 'Whoa! You talk!' and that was really funny because, I mean, like I do have a close group of friends that I talk to, but other than that, I don't really talk to anybody else. But that's not because of a language barrier or anything like that...I pretty much understand everything after about half-a-year or a year since I came. But yeah, so there is nothing...there is no barriers—any barriers in the language front or, you know, educational front. I got on pretty well in classes and stuff like that 'cause...I mean, especially in math and things—science. In Vietnam, we're a little more...advanced...in middle school than like over here, so I got in pretty well and I was pretty okay with my teachers and things like that. I have less complaints about my teachers in middle school than my peers, so that part, I got on pretty well. I don't think that there is any particular, you know, troubles that I would see except for our economic problems...a little, but I mean, at that point I was still young and I didn't really need anything, almost, so it's not like it really bothered me, but um for a while, we...since we live in Houston, which is pretty hot most of the time, for a while, we couldn't turn on our AC much, so our house is really hot, and whenever my friends came over, it's like a toaster oven for them. So that was a thing um but yeah, other than, you know, some economic inconveniences, there really wasn't really anything that um I struggled with particularly.

RZ: Okay, I'm going to backtrack a little bit. You mentioned learning English starting at the age of four. Um so how did your dad start teaching you English at the age of four?

[4:52]

VD: It was part of one of his—he thought of it as an experiment—an experimental way of teaching it. So when I was four, um he came home one day and he told—or he didn't tell me—he didn't speak any Vietnamese when he came home. And he told my mom—he was talking to my mom in English, which I didn't understand then, but he—basically she told me that he has had an accident, and he could no longer speak Vietnamese, so from then on, he just started speaking English to me exclusively. And my dad is a very dedicated person when it comes to things like that, so he would make it a point to never say anything in Vietnamese in front of me even to his friends. So I mean I heard later on that he told me that it would cause some inconveniences sometimes when they had gatherings and I was there and he couldn't speak to them in Vietnamese or anything like that...but I mean he-he didn't really care about that 'cause he is really focused on what he wants to do. And so, yeah, he started talking to me um in English and he'd take me around in Saigon, which was where we lived in the South, and he would just point to things and, you know, tell me the name of it in English and he gradually—I just started talking to him in English, I guess. I was a young age so I could pick it up really, you know, quickly. It was really strange to see—I just speak English exclusively to him so it was really, I guess, in Vietnam to see me just talking to my dad in English and we're not foreigners, or anything like that. But as I grew older, I think during, I'm going to say like 5th grade or something like that, I don't remember for sure, I had an Australian tutor who was a student of my mom, 'cause she teaches foreigners Vietnamese, so she has a lot of connections in that part. So he would come, I think twice a week or something like that, to teach—or to just to converse to me, 'cause my dad is really big about just trying to, you know, get the spoken English out first before he even touched the reading or the writing, so I didn't really learn the reading or the writing, so I didn't really learn reading or writing until—um actually I didn't even learn writing in Vietnam, I just, you know, spoke and he started, you know, giving me English books and things like that when I was around 5th grade, 4th grade. It was pretty, you know, late compared to when he started speaking to me in English, and he said it wasn't as—in his view, it wasn't as significant, um you know—it wasn't significant to teach writing or reading at a super early age when you're trying to learn foreign language. And, yeah, that was, I guess, that was about it and 'cause my parents have a lot of dealing with Americans and, you know, English-speaking peoples, I used to go on trips with them and that would help me with my English. And I think for a while, I had an Australian accent or Australian-British mix, but that's gone now, so. But yeah...

RZ: Did your brother also get raised the same way?

VD: No. My brother and I am six years apart. So um by that time, we were almost going over 'cause I came over here when I was 11, so that was probably around when I was 10 years old that he was born so he didn't have as much time to be in that kind of environment or to do—I

mean like, after, 'cause later on, when I was in 4th or 5th grade, probably, my dad has a class that he teaches at home for kids who would come and learn English and stuff, and my brother would, sort of, be a part of that class and join in and things like that. So he did get some of it, but it wasn't as—the way that I, you know, received that instruction, so...

RZ: I see. Your dad actually mentioned that he would request you speak Vietnamese at home. So it must have been quite a different process than when you were back in Vietnam and you would only speak to him in English. What did you think of that?

[09:36]

VD: At first I resisted it because I've been speaking in English for him—to him—for so long, you know. All of a sudden, when we came over to America, he just suddenly said that he really wanted me to speak in Vietnamese, which is really strange because I wasn't used to it, but I understand like that he is afraid that I'd forget it...and, you know, a second language is always a good thing especially if it's my native language. So um I just thought it was really ironic, 'cause, I mean, I thought for the longest time that he really didn't know how to speak Vietnamese. So, I found that when I was—like, I had my suspicions, but I really confirmed it when I was around, probably, late 8 or 9 years old. And, you know, it was just really ironic that when we came over here, he would insist I talk to him in English when he lied to me almost my whole life. So I would talk English to him, you know? So, it's like...it's really weird. But I still think—I mean I try to speak in Vietnamese to him now, but I'm just more comfortable with speaking English sometimes. Sometimes when I speak Vietnamese, I can't think of a certain word and so I just substitute it with English, which is probably the reason why he wants me to speak English so I wouldn't do that, but I mean, overall I think I can still communicate pretty well so...My brother um actually has, I guess, a harder time expressing what he—like expressing himself in Vietnamese. He can understand Vietnamese but he can't really express himself very well, he can't really read or write that much. Although he is probably better than most Vietnamese Americans who are born here. But yeah...

RZ: Okay, you mentioned some social troubles when you were—after you first came, mostly in the classroom. Did you encounter any stereotypes during the period where you were really shy?

VD: Uh, no, I don't—I wouldn't say that I did. I mean I didn't notice anything because—I mean...I guess because, also, we live in Houston which is like pretty multicultural, so there isn't as much stereotype, but I did notice that when I was staying in California, 'cause I stayed there for several months...I guess that the people...I just felt like that the people were generally less friendly. It wasn't necessarily like a race thing, you know? It was just less friendly and I just came over here and everyone here is pretty much more friendly, so that's my impression of it. I don't think it had anything to do with race or ethnicity or anything like that.

RZ: Okay. When you also first came here, I—you mentioned knowing the language but um did you have an experience of culture shock just by some person's behavior or anything like that? That was just something completely unexpected?

VD: Nothing is standing out right now. It's...I just...the only thing is that I just—I came here and I didn't know like a lot of the slang and the pop culture and just things that you generally know if you're, you know, if you have lived here for generations, and the tradition, I guess. And I wasn't super into sports and football, and baseball, and all that stuff. We're more into soccer and things like that. I mean I wasn't—I generally am not into sports that much. Anyway, but yeah, other than that, I don't think that there was any real culture shock. For the longest time, I had this idea about dating. That once you started dating, it's like a track to marriage, so it's—I guess—so that's different than, you know, what you think of dating here. It's just like sort of casual thing, there is no commitment necessarily until after a certain point. But that was what I held onto, you know, the old—the way of thinking in Vietnam sometimes, so yeah. The first guy who said that, you know, 'You love me.' I burst out laughing. I thought it was like so hilarious. We were just in high school and it's not something you would say, so I didn't want to go out with him because he was a white guy and my parents had said that it was kind of, you know, I get married to a white person, then it'll be hard for him to be integrated into our family and that's why I sort of didn't want to, you know, start dating him or, you know, advance our relationship in any way, which is kind of silly now that I think of it. But that was exactly what I told him. So that was kind of silly, but um good times.

RZ: I see. Your dad actually mentioned that before you came to the U.S., you had a lot of friends in a close peer group, and you would basically go out almost every day if not every week. And um that changed after you came here because of...economic constraints? Your harder time being social in school? So does that—looking back on that—did you think it affected you any or did you miss Vietnam because of it?

[15:31]

VD: I mean I don't remember going out excessively in Vietnam or anything like that. My parents- my parents didn't like me ever to go, sort of, on sleepovers or anything like that. I don't know...I can't remember if the concept of sleeping over was with me when I was in Vietnam, you know? But they're not the kind of person to- to encourage that, and I guess- I guess that's true because in Vietnam, every—it's a way smaller area. So I could just walk places, you know? I could, you know, bike somewhere to see my friend and that was pretty um, pretty easy. But over here, you need a car to drive somewhere or drive to the movies, things like that. But, I mean, I don't—I wasn't particularly bothered by it, I guess. It's more to say...

RZ: I see. Was there anything other than the whole not talking to your classmates that made you aware that they might see you differently?

VD: It didn't make me aware [laughs]. Like I said, I had a group of friends that, you know, I would talk to and it's not like I felt lonely or anything like that. I didn't feel alone. I had people that I would talk to and, you know. I had a—I found a neighbor who is also Vietnamese and that, you know, I started talking to her pretty early on and we would... We had a tradition of always when we would go home on the bus, we'd stop by this other friend's house nearby. We'd just hang around there and, you know, just watch TV or something silly. But yeah, it wasn't—I wasn't very conscious that it sets me apart or anything.

RZ: Um. Now that you've been in America or the other half of your life, do you still identify as Vietnamese and do you think your kids and then their kids and eventually their kids would still see themselves as Vietnamese?

VD: I think it'll always be part of us—of me...that, you know, I think of Vietnamese—it's sort of like a- a dual citizenship thing, but...it—I mean, it's changed a lot. Because when I first came over here, I remember that I miss Vietnam a lot so I'd always think about how much I would like to go back, and you know, the things I'd do. There is a lot of memories back then, or like places I would like to visit, but it stopped gradually over the years. Sometimes I still think back and—to Vietnam—but it's only because my grandmother is over there and she's a really big part of my childhood and you know she's getting really old now and I'm just like, I have this fear that she'd just like pass away and I won't be able to go see her, you know? So it's—so basically, Vietnam now is just like that to me and I would never—I can't think of going back and living there anymore. Since the last time I came back there, it's- it's a totally different place now, and just—it was really complicated when I came back there. And like some things are not what I remember it to be, but as, you know, as an identity, I still think of myself as Vietnamese and I still, you know, feel strongly about certain issues concerning Vietnam now and sort of like in the Vietnam War. My dad is still—like the Vietnam War is a big thing to his generation and the generation right before him so it's still relevant to me, but I mean, I'm-I'm not super bitter or like taking sides or anything like that. Um, but yeah, I do think of myself as an American now, but there still is strong part of me that is Vietnamese. It's not completely sort of American, and my dad thinks that I will never be American. So that's his point of view and I don't know. I sometimes think that he is wrong, but I can see his point of—where he's coming from.

[20:24]

RZ: So that makes me curious. Like, do you think it's a difference between what he thinks American means and what you think American means? Like what is American in your words?

VD: Hmm I guess, yeah, you're right. I guess there is a difference between what he thinks is American and what I think...I think what he thinks is American is more like skin color and race, things like that, and I sort of would like to embrace the idea of America as a melting pot and people come here, you know, contribute to it and it's—I feel like it's more like a personal identification—what you want to identify yourself with and not necessarily defined by anything,

you know, clear and definite. So um that's why to a certain extent, I-I do think that I'm American because I've lived here for so long and I identify this as my home and all my friends are here. And so most of the memories that I can remember [laughs] occur here, like my childhood memories fade after a while. So yeah, so that's what I use to identify myself as, but I don't think he sees it that way. I guess also because he has lived in Vietnam more and, you know, he feels more connected to it, so he would remember what it was like, so I guess in a way he would identify himself as Vietnamese, so still his choice.

RZ: I see. Um you mentioned earlier that the Vietnamese War—the conflicts and other things associated with it—didn't impact you as much as it does for your dad or your mom? Can you elaborate on what you mean—a particular instance where it made you aware that it means something more to him?

VD: Oh, actually, it doesn't mean as much to them either. They are just more interested in it. He's just, I mean—if we go on a road trip for someplace. He would, you know, really want to go places with like, Vietnam War memorials or like things like that. He would take movies about the Vietnam War and watch them and...but it's not a super, you know, he's not- he's not super impacted by it—emotionally or anything tied to the war. It's more of the older generation...more like my grandfather and yeah...my grandfather's generation. My grandfather's pretty impacted by the war. He was—he, I think, fought in the war and um he went to, after it ended, he went to the re-educational camps that the communists had. So he is really against the current government in Vietnam and it's a- it's a really touchy issue with the Vietnamese community over here because—I mean, they- they sort of—I think, I don't know if it's just because like I grew up in, you know, the present day Vietnam or I suppose the way it was taken over by Communists and the Communist government and things like that—but um I didn't—I don't feel that the—I mean like I know there is corruption in the government and stuff like that, but I don't feel, when I live there, that um I was struggling the way they describe it here to their kids right now, so it's sort of—I feel like sometimes, they're almost like brainwashing the children over here to...I know like, you know, I'm not downplaying the hardships they went through, but my parents also went through you know those kinds of hardships then too, and I just feel like it's—it's kind of hard for a lot of the older generation to move on from the war even though they are living here now, and they probably like have a good life and...but yeah, it's just—it's a very touchy issue in the Vietnamese community right now, and it sort of fragments our community a bit because there is, like differing opinions and the younger people sort of don't see why the older generation are so stuck on this, but at the same time like, they are, sort of, brainwashed by it, almost. But yeah...

[25:11]

RZ: You mentioned your dad likes to watch the movies and visit memorial areas. Is it more for personal education or does he feel like he needs to understand it more. What do you think is his motivation? Like does he force you to go with him whenever he goes to visit those areas or watch those movies?

VD: No, he doesn't force me to go with him. He just encourages it and whenever he, you know, has a video about the Vietnam War or something like that, he just like asks me if I want to see it. He doesn't force me into anything if I don't show interest in it, but um I think- I think he partly does that because of educational purposes, I guess, 'cause he wants, I guess he wants to see the different perspectives that are given on, you know, about the war and, I guess, compare it with his own perspective even though—I mean, according to him, he wasn't, you know, as much there for the war 'cause he was still young so he didn't understand as much about the war um and about the struggles and things like that as they—he- his—the older generation. So I guess it's sort of like a curiosity and sort of like, you know, a learning experience almost, but it's not detached. I think he just has an attraction to it because it is some part—a big part of, you know, our history and it still impacts the people that are living here, so he just feels sort of a connection to it, sort of like if we want to like learn more about our culture. It's just a natural instinct, I feel like, so it's not like a detached educational viewpoint or anything. So...

RZ: Does he look at video—not videos—movies that are both presented by Vietnamese producers and American producers, and go to memorials in Vietnam and Thailand and Malaysia, wherever the refugees were, or was it just whatever he could find in the U.S.?

VD: It's- it's pretty much whatever he could find in the U.S. I mean, he hasn't had a chance to go to many other countries besides the U.S. and Vietnam, but I'm sure if he did, he would seek it out and look it, but there isn't as many movies made on the Vietnam War by um Vietnam or by the Vietnamese people, and I think, you know, the movies that are made by the Vietnamese people here are usually like not... not as focused...it's sort of like made as a propaganda tool rather than like, um an educational kind of thing. I'm sure they mean it to be educational, but their biases get in there and I'm sometimes feel it's sort of more propaganda than anything.

RZ: Do you feel the same way about the American films?

VD: About the American films?

RZ: Mmhmm.

VD: Sometimes-sometimes I feel they, I guess, don't see the Vietnamese perspective as much in, you know, they—there was—they focus a lot on, uh, sort of, the trauma that U.S. soldiers experience, you know, when they are over there and when, you know, they are back in um America after the war. And their reception—and the reception that was awaiting them when they came back wasn't as glorious as they thought um. It was when they first started—and joined—the war, but...I guess, yeah, I just-I don't... [laughs]

RZ: No, it's okay to be confused. A lot of people are about this. I just wanted your opinion on this. I'm going to switch topics a bit. And um your dad mentioned owning a spiritual altar instead of actually belonging, in a sense, to a religion. Do you help with the upkeep? Do you plan on having your own? Like what do you think of that practice?

[29:45]

VD: I haven't thought of that. It's an ancestral altar and we have my grandmother's picture and my grandfather's picture there. And my mom usually does the upkeep of that. She would, you know, present them or like put like fruits and incense on the altar and change it regularly. I don't usually—I'm not usually that involved in it. I'm only involved in it when she tells me to do something or like change the fruits or offering or um, you know, light incense on special occasions like New Years or something or death anniversary of my grandmother. We um would light incense and, you know, pray to her. But it's not a large—I would say it's not—No, that's not correct. It's not that it's not a large part of who—no, it's a large part of who we are but it doesn't like invade much into our daily lives. So it doesn't impact my daily life that much. And I'm not sure yet um whether or not I'm going to have an altar because there are different, you know, ways. You can't just get an altar if you want to. There are like traditions of who should set up the altar and who's like responsible for having a death anniversary celebrations and things like that, and so I'm not sure how that would go um for in the future...but I think, yeah, I'll probably keep it if, you know, I have to. Or not that I have to, but I would probably like keep that tradition.

RZ: Okay, you mentioned specific things that specific people do in its upkeep or its inheritance. Can you give me some details about that?

VD: I'm not sure, but I think basically, just like sort of, the eldest son or like the eldest children are responsible for that, um but...yeah, I think that is what one of those—and right now, even—'cause like my grandmother whose picture is on the altar right now and, um is on my mother's side and she is not—she is not the first born. So, the tradition has been carried on, you know, from, like over here to America, but it has been pretty diluted, so it's- it's not like strictly followed anymore. And because, also, we live so far from our relatives that um it's permissible for us to have an altar, but I don't think technically it's the right way of doing it, but yeah...

RZ: Do you—or any members of your families—sit in front of it and converse with your ancestors, because I've heard that this is what the Japanese culture does and I wasn't sure how your interaction—your daily interaction—with the altar is, if there is a daily interaction.

VD: Like I said, it doesn't really impact our daily lives that much. Um we do occasionally do that but not extensively at all, like I said, like during special occasions or things like that, we'd burn incense and would sort of, you know, pray and have a small message to my—y'know, to our dead ancestors. And when we go back to California, which is where my grandmother was buried, we'd like go visit her gravesite and do the same thing, but it's- it's not a daily ritual or anything like that.

RZ: Okay, I'm gonna transition once more. Your dad mentioned that he first pursued engineering due to his father pressuring him into doing it. Eventually he managed to go into

English instead. Um did he play a similar role in your decisions of pursuing your major and your future occupation, or what made you decide to go into your major and occupation?

[34:12]

VD: Right now, I am applying to medical school and—I think he did sort of impact that but, I mean, not in a forceful way. He just—he encourages that just like any, probably any, Asian parent over here. But he is a pretty open-minded man, I think, I would like to believe so. I don't—he has never pressured me into a specific career path or anything like that. I mean, pretty much, you know, wants me just to be happy, that is what he said, in whatever I chose to do. But, I mean of—obviously, there is certain career paths that he would like to discourage me from, such as like English, and that is what I used to tease him all the time. 'What if I drop this and just go to English?' He is just like, 'No, don't do that.' It's—even though he is an English teacher, but—he just—it's just silly, he thinks, because I'm Vietnamese and he is like, 'Who would like to learn English from you in America? What is that?' So—I mean, I-I see his point in a way. So, I mean, it's not, you know, I don't really want to go to English so it's not like a point of dispute amongst us, but yeah...

RZ: Aside from the oddity of you teaching English to future Americans, do you think there is another reason behind why he discourages you from pursuing his major in college?

VD: No, I don't think—I think that is the only reason. And I—he says that—to a certain extent, he says that like I can't ever be as good in English, basically, as like someone who was raised here or someone who was, you know...I guess it comes back to like the race thing, like someone who is white or like someone who has been here for several generations, you know. He just says that there are certain, you know, very—I don't know like how to say—but like, basically he just means that—I don't—he doesn't think that, you know, I can be as good of an English professor or teacher or whatever as someone who has lived here their whole life or who has had their ancestors in America for a long time, so, but I mean, it wasn't a serious discussion at all, so it's not like- it's not like I really wanted to be or anything like that. I just thought it was ironic.

RZ: Yeah, are there any other stories that your dad or things about your dad that you would like to share? Things that stand out? He-he was pretty upbeat about his entire life and life - this choice of coming to America are just pretty big move.

VD: It was pretty big and...I think he told me that he and my mom were, you know, resisting—no not resisting, hesitant to come to America for a long time because my grandfather, who is already over here I think for almost fifteen years or something like that—he had wanted us to come over here much earlier but um they, you know, remained in Vietnam partly because they—they had their roots there and they have things going on for them there, and partly because they sort of want me to sort of experience Vietnam first before, you know, I came over here um. But, yeah, it's...

RZ: Any part of the move particularly frustrating or hard on your family?

VD: Not particularly. We moved to California in the first—when we first came over because most of my relatives live there. But as you know, like California, the expense of living is really, really high, so my dad—he went on his own while we stayed over there and I finished my 6th um, my 6th grade. He came over here and he explored around and he finally settled at Houston, which is pretty affordable place to live and he could um— he bought our house almost—he paid off our house like instantly almost instantly. That was one of the reasons why he came to Houston because he didn't want us to just live in our relative's house or like get a mobile home or something like that, even though our relatives over there, at first, really discouraged his move over here. They wanted us to stay over there. They offered, you know like, they offered my mom jobs that—in their offices and companies and things like that.

I've an uncle who is a dentist and my mom could have gone to work for him as a dental assistant. Um, but, it's just—they—I guess, I think they are very proud people and um being professors in Vietnam, it is a really esteemed position—so when they came over here, they didn't want to just settle for any job to earn a living. My dad wanted to go back to school and get a Master's degree or like even further. They didn't have a chance to do that in Vietnam, but he wanted to continue his education and somewhat return to the job—or the career that he had in Vietnam. So he didn't want to stay in California. I guess that he is a very determined person. Whenever he wants to do something, he will find a way to make it happen, so-so everybody kept telling us—like all my relatives kept saying that it was like impossible for him to come over here and work and study at the same time but he, you know, really wanted to do that. So that is why he moved over here, he could buy our house um over here, and he felt it was better for us to sort of have a little distance from our relatives, 'cause every, I think, most of our relatives, which is a lot—ten families or something like that—were living in a pretty like close area in San Jose, California so he thought it was better for me and my brother, and—it's better for him. Even my mom, you know, sometimes family support is good but they could influence your decisions on things and if he—we—had stayed over there, he would probably have not gone back to school and gotten a Master's degree and, you know, gone back to teaching the way he could do over here. So that is something I have like always admired in him that he could do things that he set his mind to and plans to. And...but yeah, he is pretty- been pretty successful at that, so...

[42:01]

RZ: So did they not try for professorship again in—when they came to California? Did they try to pursue their older jobs as professors after they immigrated?

VD: Oh, I mean we didn't stay in California that long. We stayed only for about 7 months or so. But yeah, I think that he wouldn't have stayed over there anywhere because he really wanted to get our own house and not have to, you know, crowd and live in another person's family—person's family and inconvenience them in any way. So um, I don't think—I don't know if he

would have pursued it if we stayed in California but I—he didn't want to stay there in the first place, so there is really no question of whether um we were going to start our lives again over there, because I don't think he saw a future for us over there if he could settle us down.

RZ: What about your mom?

VD: My mom sort of wanted to stay up there 'cause it's-it's mostly her family over there. His family is mostly in Vietnam. So I guess she did want to stay over there, but I guess she just trusted my dad and, you know, I-I really think that it was a good start for us to come over here and start, you know, with a house and with like everything we had instead of just getting some random job. And we came over with like an aunt's family and she stayed in California and, I mean, they are doing pretty well now, but for a time, they were living in some of my other relative's house and then they got a mobile home to stay in a while. And I guess it's just not what my dad envisioned himself to be so that's what his decision was to just come over here.

RZ: Did your mom try to apply for any further education or teaching job after you came to Houston?

VD: She went to school...she went back to school. She was—I don't remember what she was applying for but...um I think she was studying to be a respiratory technician but um...and she was doing pretty good with that, you know, with her studies and everything, but when she went to actually practice it in a hospital setting, she just found that it wasn't for her—she's a very—she has a very mild temperament, and she just- she just didn't like that kind of environment. And her English is not as good as my dad's because she was teaching Vietnamese and she wasn't teaching English, and so like that, I think, was the biggest hindrance to her continued education and also because of her, you know, her role in the house. She had to take care of us so she didn't have as much time. So when she was at school, she would like constantly be doing housework and after that just transitioning immediately to studying. And I guess that was a little too stressful for her so um, so yeah, she dropped out of that program and um now she is teaching kids after school. So it's kind of—it's, I mean, it's not the same thing, but it's a good balance for her now and she is, I think, made peace at that.

RZ: Thank you so much for your time. I really enjoyed this interview.

VD: No problem. Thank you.

RZ: Bye.

[46:11]
[The recorder is turned off; the interview ends]