

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

Interviewee: Lucita Villamiel

Interviewers: Emma Chibnall (Junior); Alisha Zou (Junior)

Date/ Time of Interview: March 13, 2014 at 12:30PM

Transcribed by: Emma Chibnall and Alisha Zou

Edited by: Chris Johnson, Sara Davis, and Patricia Wong (6/29/16)

Audio Track Time: 1:29:10

Background:

Lucita Villamiel was born in Janiuay, Iloilo, Philippines in 1941. She was one of seven children born to two teachers out in the poor countryside. After earning her nursing diploma in 1962, she moved to Nashville, TN in 1963 as part of the Exchange Visitor Program. When she arrived, she worked for three years as a nurse in a residency program at Vanderbilt University Hospital in Nashville. From there, she moved in 1966 to New York City, where she lived for 10 years at a Catholic hospital run by the Archdiocese of New York. During that time, she tested for and received her nursing license, and she was also granted permanent residency. She also earned her BA in Psychology from Manhattan Marymount College. After she had been in New York for 10 years, she decided to move to Houston since her sister lived there.

She arrived in Houston and applied to seven different hospitals in the Medical Center and was accepted at all seven. She went back to bedside nursing after having spent a lot of time in administrative duties. In the subsequent years, she got married, had a daughter, earned her bachelor's degree in nursing from Prairie View A&M, and earned her master's degree in nursing from Texas Woman's University. Towards the end of her career, she became involved with the Philippines Nurses Association of Metropolitan Houston, as well as the Filipino ministry at her church, St. Helen's Catholic Church. She continues to fundraise for these organizations, especially for Filipino specific issues. She lives in Pearland with her husband, where she stays active by working in her garden, playing Scrabble weekly with her friends, and babysitting her grandson.

Setting:

The interview took place in a private study room on the second floor of Rice University's Fondren Library. It lasted for an hour and a half. In that time, Ms. Villamiel shared several stories of her move to Houston, as well as what things were still like for her family living back in the Philippines. She also brought along a number of photographs and the awards that she had been given throughout the last several years of her community involvement.

Interviewers:

Emma Chibnall is a junior at Rice University studying sociology and urban and social change policy studies. She was born in St. Louis, Missouri, but primarily resides in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. She is highly interested in the mechanics of oral history collection and stories of migration.

Alisha Zou is also a junior at Rice University, and is majoring in Asian studies and policy

studies, as well as minoring in business. She was born in Morgantown, West Virginia, and grew up in Beijing, China and then later Boston, Massachusetts. She is of Chinese descent and is very interested in the exploration of the Asian American identity.

Interview Transcript:

Key:

LV	Lucita Villamiel
AZ	Alisha Zou
EC	Emma Chibnall
—	Speech cuts off; abrupt stop
...	Speech trails off; pause
<i>Italics</i>	Emphasis
(?)	Preceding word may not be accurate
[Brackets]	Actions [laughs, sighs, etc.]

AZ: This is Alisha Zou.

EC: And this is Emma Chibnall.

AZ: We're here today on March 13th, 2014 in Rice University's Fondren Library to interview Lucy Villamiel for the Houston Asian American Archive oral history interview project. So could you begin by telling us a bit about yourself?

LV: Okay. Um, so I am Lucy. Lu—my full name really is Lucita M. Villamiel, but I go by Lucy. That's pretty much what everybody knows me. Uh, Lucy Villamiel. I'm comfortable with that name. Anyway, so, how do you want to start?

AZ: Anywhere you want.

LV: Anything?

AZ: Yeah, Anything.

LV: Okay, I [laughing]—I was initially invited by Christie. Um, I don't even know how to pronounce her last name. Poisot? P-O-I-S-O-T. Anyway, she used—well I know her as a child. Uh, we used to be neighbors in Missouri City. And then she mentioned sometime about this, uh, Rice University doing some kind of oral interview of some Asian people, Asian, maybe immigrants, let us say. And, so, like I said earlier, I didn't really ... was—I was hesitant to, uh—to come, you know, to consent to this because I said, "Well, my life is not that really interesting." [laughter]

Anyway, but I'm—I'm a retired registered nurse. I came way back, way, way back, in 1963. It was in 1963, October of 1963, um, uh, under what we call Exchange Visitors Program. And, uh, that's how nurses and physicians, uh, came to America at that time, through this program. And—and, um, while we were applying for the program, we have a choice of where to go, which state, which hospital. Oh—oh, by the way, at—at that time, I was a graduate nurse. I

just finished school of nursing, diploma school of nursing, in '62, March of '62.

So I applied and I applied at Vanderbilt, uh, University Hospital, and that was in Nashville, Tennessee. So we came in October of, uh, '63. That was shortly before President Kennedy was assassinated. And I stayed there for a good three years. Actually, the contract initially was just two years, and—but I was extended among the others. There were 16 of us nurses, graduate nurses. We were not registered in America because we were not required at the time to be registered. But we were sort of a—a trainee internship or residency kind of program for nurses. That's how it was. And the program, the Exchange Visitor Program, supposed to be only two years, again, can be extended for third year. So, I stayed there, um, excellent place to train. Um, Vanderbilt University Hospital.

And, after three years, then the contract was over. We were to go home, uh, back to the Philippines, apply whatever we have learned there. But a friend invited me to visit New York City. So I went with her and while I was there, she was working at a small hospital, uh, run by the archdiocese of New York. It was Catholic hospital. And, um, she was working. She invited me. Said, "Well, you want to come and stay here and work?" I said, "Well I'm not registered. I'm finished with Exchange Visitors Program." But then she introduced me to the—to the director of nursing who was a nun. A nun that—that hospital was run by the nun.

And—and apparently, there were others like me who had finished the program, Exchange Visitors Program, that was—were interested in working. So I said, "Okay I will work. And then what about the visa, you know?" And, uh, the sisters were saying that we will apply for some kind of a special kind of visa for you all to stay. There were 26 of us total. I found out later. So, I worked there, and I worked there for a good 10 years, a good 10 years. And I grew up in—it was a training hospital also, by the way. You know, they have a residency program and—and fellowship program for physicians. So—but none for nurses.

But we were—because we were working, we have to be required to be licensed. So, we took, um, a state board kind of exam, uh, prepared by the state board of nurses, uh, in—licensing board of nurses for New York for foreign-trained graduates like ourselves. But, you know, you have to con—they considered the fact that we were already trained in Vanderbilt also. So they were willing to let us come and work.

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So you have to pass this exams and then we became registered nurses in—in New York. But that only specific for New York. You cannot work in any other state because it was designed only for New York for foreign-trained graduate. It was not really the regular state board exam that is being given by, uh, every different state for their own state to practice nursing in their state.

So, but at that time, during the 10 years, uh, period, I decided I want to go back to school 'cause I had a diploma in nursing. So I was fascinated with this program at another Catholic hos—uh—a—Catholic, uh, college. It's a branch from, um—I think they were in Tarrytown, New York at that time, the main campus. But it called Marymount Manhattan College. And—and um, I worked my degree in psychology [sic]. It—it took me three years part-time to finish that, so I got a degree in psychology.

And then, at that point, 10 years passed, I was working to support myself. Uh, I decided I want to leave New York. I want to try other state. But, I have only li—I'm only licensed in New York. So I have to take a state board exam. I took state board exam in New Jersey and—and

passed that, so I was licensed in New Jersey. But I didn't work in New Jersey. I decided to drive to Texas. And—and I said I'll try and see if I like Texas. If I don't like, I'll keep going, drive to California. At the time, [laughs] I applied be—uh, passed the state board of New Jersey, so I'm licensed in New Jersey. I can apply for reciprocity in any other state. So I applied for reciprocity to come to Texas. I got licensed in Texas. I also have a license in California because that was my plan.

So, I drove to Cali—I have a degree in psychology. So I drove to Texas. And, at that time, I was only looking for—oh, by the way, when I was in New York I grew up in my profession. And, um, I became what they call a clinical coordinator, which is a little higher, advanced practice nursing kind of thing.

So when I came here, I wanted a master's degree, in nursing, but I cannot have a master's degree when my undergraduate was psychology. So I went back to school again, part-time, was—while I was working. And I applied. By that time, I wanted to go back to bedside nursing because I was away from bedside nursing. The past five years—the last five years of my stay in New York I was in some kind of—of administrative kind of role. I was missing the bedside.

So I came. I applied in seven places here, oh, seven hospitals around the area. And I got accepted at seven. So, but I was fascinated by the Life Flight. So, I came into—I said I want to work in critical care area, you know, there. I—I wanted to work in Life Flight, but I cannot. Well, it was just starting at the time and they were looking for experienced nurses to fly. I didn't have experience in bedside. In fact, five years I was away from bedside.

So I work in a critical care unit. They gambled on me. I said—I said, um, you know—I—I sold myself. I said I'm a fast learner, this kind of thing. So then I was very eager. I was so hungry for knowledge at that time, at the bedside. So, Life Flight was really very interesting. And then this—the ICU was very interesting, surgical ICU, trauma ICU. And that's where I stayed. Um, I worked there for a good four to five years. And it was so good, it felt so good.

But then in be—then, I went back to school to get my undergraduate in nursing. I got it from this Prairie View A&M. It was so easy to get into it. It was part-time again. It wasn't here yet at the time. Uh, they have a satellite campus somewhere on Kirby, here in Houston. So I got that, three years of that part-time.

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And then I got married and have a little girl. So, I sort of like, um, slowed down working, part-time actually, for about a year. And then when my daughter was three years old, I went back to school again, to get my master. I got it from TWU. It took me a good four years to finish that because during that time I got sick. I was—got diagnosed with cancer.

That was the lowest part of our life. Um, breast cancer. I was undergoing treatment. My husband, uh, got laid off. This was in the mid-80s. Um, I have a young daughter; my husband couldn't stand not working, so he left to go to Massachusetts. At that time, Houston was in recession. And, uh, Massachusetts they didn't have almost—almost no unemployment. So, he found work there in a week.

So anyway ... so after four years, um, after a year my husband came back, and, um, so I—at that time when he was gone, I was thinking, I mean, you know, if it's still worth it for me to continue my master. Maybe we could just follow him there. I could easily find a job as a nurse there. But I was thinking of my daughter. I have to get her out of school and—and, you know—and at that time my dad came to visit us. And so, I stayed. After a year, my husband came back. I

graduated.

And, uh, at that time there were so many community services that were trying to get me to get involved in. You know, Philippine Nurses Association had been really trying to get me to get involved with all their activities, educational, professional activities. My church, the same thing. And so, at the time I said to myself Well, um, I already finish school. My husband is back. You know, my daughter is a little older. She was eight years old at the time, and, I was—I got better from cancer. So, I was thinking, “Well, maybe I should, you know” Oh, I was thinking at that time, I said, “Had I died from the cancer, I mean—oh, my Maker will ask me—” I said, “What have you done? I mean you, you know, through your life?” And, um, all I did was pretty much myself, you know? I was trying to improve myself, you know, both my profession and educationally. So I said I need to start giving back, you know, to others.

So that’s when I—okay, I went. I joined the Philippines Nurses Association. I got very involved with there. I joined the, um, um, community service at my church. And then I started getting involved with American Heart Association. And, uh, there was a Filipino ministry council, uh, uh, with the Archdiocese, you know. I was born (?) for (?) the community. That’s how I came. Any more that you want me to add?

AZ: Yeah, um, we were really curious to know about your life back in the Philippines.

LV: Okay. When I was, well you—um, my original family, there were seven of us children. One was a stillborn—stillborn. So there were six of us live birth, um, three boys, three girls. My parents were both teachers. My parents were very much, oh, on education. Um, you know, we came from a very poor family. My father’s family’s very poor. My mother’s family was also very poor. And, uh, well, my mom’s family owned some lands, you know, ‘cause Philippines is an agricultural country, so all sorts of income people were agriculture. Rice fields, you know, corn fields, sugarcane, stuff like that. But they were all gone. They were all sold so we could all go to college, and—and we all did. Six of us.

Anyway, my mom, um, is chronic—was chronically sick. So, in and out of the hospital every now and then. And that’s how I became a nurse, pretty much, because I—I watched those nurses take care of my mom. And I was fascinated with the white uniforms, you know? [laughs] Stiff apron and cap and that kind of thing. So I said I wanted to be like one of them. And that’s how really I became a nurse.

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And, um, but I was the only one that had thought of coming to America because at that time that the Exchange Visitor Program was very popular back home among physicians and among nurses, nursing school, medical school. My brothers and sisters didn’t really want to come here until, uh, the economy became so bad during the time of our ex-president Marcos. I don’t know if you heard of him. He’s, um—he was a dictator. Became—our country became a dictatorship sometime in the ’80s, early ’80s. And, of course that ruined the economy. You—you know, foreign investors, Chinese, Indian, um, even US, uh, left the country. And the economy became so bad. So, and then that’s when my—my other younger brother and my other brothers and sisters wanted to come.

And I said, “Well, I could apply for sponsorship to let you come.” But it was very hard at the time because, for me—in fact when under Ex—Ex—Exchange Visitor program, I was in

New York, then, um ... You know, remember the sisters applied for us. And so we pursued that application, and I became permanent resident, uh, in '72. So that's almost nine years from when I first came as an exchange visitor. It was hard then to know this new immigration thing is coming off right now. So, but, my—I applied for my sister. And she was the only one who was interested, okay? Said—not so much for her, but for her children she said.

So 20 years passed. She was about to come, but that's when 9/11 came. And all her paperworks were lost. So, that was the end of it. So, then none of them were able to come. But my sister came to visit. And my dad came to visit too. My mom never did come. She doesn't want. You know, my mom is simple woman—was very simple, lived in a—a farm and, uh, is afraid to—uh, to ride in a plane. International flight is almost like, oh, 18 hours, 20 hours flight, you know? That's pretty much it.

And so, our life was so simple, very much like study, study, study. Um, 'cause my dad—my dad believed that, uh, if we have an education, nobody can steal that away from us. He said that you could—if you use it wisely, you'll do well in life, you know. Nobody—you will never lost it. It's with you. So that's how, how—how we as Filipinos impart our children too. So it's almost like all our children are expected to go to college. It's not that when they finish high school, that's it. That—that's the end of their formal education.

Um, in fact, my daughter—I have one daughter, and, uh, she's married to a nurse. Uh, she finished healthcare administration in Clearlake, U of H Clearlake. She stayed. She stayed, um, in Texas because when she was young we started an educational program for her. It's called Texas Tomorrow Fund. Texas Tomorrow Fund, you can only use it in Texas. You cannot use it anywhere. So she used that to go to college, and, um, finished a degree in healthcare administration. She works now at Baylor. Uh, she's one of the middle administrator there. Her official title is Administrative Coordinator. And, in May, in two months, she'll finish her MBA, from Texas Woman's University, my alma mater, you know.

So that's pretty much us. My husband—oh, my husband, um, uh, was an engineer in the Philippines. But, when he came—he came in the—in the '70s. Uh, the—at the time, the immigration requirement to come to America is different. They have to apply for permanent residency, and during the time engineers were allowed to come in—into America. And so, he came, was an engineer. But when he got here, he never bothered to get license, so that was the problem. There—so, he contented himself to be a technician. So he would work in different areas, um, different big companies as electronic technician. And that's what he retired from.

And, myself I retired from Memorial Hermann. Um, because I had a master's, so I became an advanced practice nurse in medical surgical nursing. And, I uh—and my specialty, actually, was in pain management. And, then I retired from there. I'm still involved with community services. A lot of—of what I have, you know, about myself were written by people, uh, about me, you know. I think I submitted a couple of sheets. Uh, you read that. So, community service is very important to me. I still am very involved with our church. Um, I'm not involved with American Heart anymore. They wrote, uh—they wrote a volunteer spotlight in one of their publications about me and another nurse.

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And, uh—and also we have a little publication in our church. And this other guy [laughs] wrote—wrote something about me too. So, and then we have the—I'm Catholic, and we have this Filipino ministry council that's involved with the Archdiocese of New York. So a priest

there got me involved with that, um, Filipino ministry council. I served there for four year. And, again, they recognized me also with some kind of a plaque, and ... you know. And, they—they do that.

And—and then—and then the, uh, uh—and then we—we have this small group of, uh, like about 60 families, in, um—in our church. Uh, that—the one time a Filipino priest had said, all Filipino parishioners should come, uh, for some kind of a meeting to meet with him. So we came. I was one of those, there were 8 of us to start with. And then we said, “Well it’s, what can you do for the church? You know, I know you say hi, hello to everybody when you see each other, but as a group what can you do?” And said, you know, “I want you to form a group.” So we did, and, um, it grew and grew and grew. There are now almost close to 100 families. And that’s how we started. And he gave us a name. In four years that he was there, he was running—you know, running us, our involvement with the church.

But then, he was leaving, he was going to be assigned another church. So he told us we need to have some kind of a—some kind of leadership group that will keep, eh, the association running. So, they choose me as their [loud thump] first president and up to now, it’s still going on. It’s now 22 years. We’re still very involved with the church. Um, individually we’re involved with different ministry, but as a group, then, we made ourselves known, uh, in the archdiocese. Now, they gave me again another plaque, about [laughter]—again another tiny little plastic thing. [laughter] It’s still going on.

So, Catholic Daughter is really a biggie. It’s the, um—the biggest, uh, organization of Catholic women, um, in America. That’s why it’s called Catholic Daughters of America. It’s pretty much a—how you say?—community service also. “Unity and ...” “Unity and charity” is their motto. You know. We get involved. We fundraise. We get involved with church activities, of course.

We fundraise and whatever money we make from fundraising we give out to, like, there is what they call the San Jose Clinic. That’s a—a—how you say? Catholic-run clinic, uh, that’s for non-paying people. It’s like Ben Taub, kind of thing. Or San Tin, San Quentin Mease kind of clinic, uh, or Covenant House for, uh, pregnant teenagers, you know. There’s a lot, they call it St. Vincent de Paul Society, which is you give out to poor people that will come to church, apply for food, for money for gas, for whatever, rent actually if they’re being evicted. Just countless and countless of—of, uh, charity, um, organization that—that the money that we raise as Catholic Daughters go to.

And we help out too. We even built homes, you know, the Habitat. Uh, so they’re all, um—and I’m still there. I sang in the choir for 10 years. I don’t really know how to sing. [laughter] I don’t. I could barely read notes, but I quit because I couldn’t carry notes anymore. I became sort of like, uh, um, asthmatic kind of, medical problems. And I cannot carry long note. I have to steal a breath and—and it doesn’t sound good. But no director can pick it out. [laughs] I’m stealing a breath.

[0:25:06]

Anyway, that’s my life. Now, uh, that I’m retired, see we—we—we built a retirement home in the country, in Pearland. So, of course, we neglected that during the time that we were working. So that’s where my husband and I are. You know, that’s our exercise. We go to YMCA, by the way, to stay healthy. We do exercise at least a couple times a week, like the Monday and Friday. That’s why I said I can come on—on Tuesday and Thurs—to Thursday.

And—and I chose the time 10 to—to 3 o'clock because I don't want to drive here during 8 o'clock. 'Cause I know how that is in 288 because I drove that for a good 20 years, 25 years since we move to Pearland. Anyway, so our exercise is we—we—we have—we have vegetable garden. We have flower gardens. We have trees. We have lot of fruits. We have a lot of fruits, from banana to lemon to—to oranges, to peaches, to a lot, a lot of trees in the two and half acre property.

And, uh—and our daughter had gotten married. Um, she married a nurse from VA, and, um, they bought a house in Sugarland. They have one son, who every now and then we get to babysit, you know. And—and, uh—and again, you know, we instill in her to educate herself, you know? Same as her, she married a Filipino guy too, which is, uh, I—I'm very pleased. And, also the same faith with us. She's very involved with the church too, herself. Actually she's the one who encouraged me to come. That's pretty much my story. So ...

AZ: Could you tell us about the transition to Texas because New York and Texas—

LV: [overlapping] Okay.

AZ: [overlapping] —just completely different, and, like, what you like about living in Houston, what you dislike living about?

LV: [overlapping] Okay, okay, see New York City—you know, New York City are for the young. That's how I felt. It's for the young. It's not a place to raise a family. I'm glad I got married in Texas. I met my husband here in Texas. Actually, when I was in New York for—during that 10 years' time, he was in New Jersey. And, um, he had never been married himself. And, uh, I got married very late. I just couldn't get myself to marry those other guys. [laughter] I shouldn't say that.

Okay. It's—it's, you know—it's—New York is New York. It's a great place to be. And if you are ... a great place to visit. Great—it has its own rules. I mean, you know, it's um, you will never run out of things to do and things to see in New York. And it's not the same. Even museums, they're evolving, you know? More, much more than Houston. Uh, but it's not a place for a family because of limited park (?). Um, I would be afraid to raise a child there. And, um, transportation, you never need a car, I never owned a car until, uh, you know. Actually, I bought a car in New York and drove it down here.

Um, I learned to drive there and I didn't know how to drive yet at that time. I was thinking I'm going to put my car on Amtrak train [laughter] and—and drive it to Dallas because that was the route at the time. And then drive from Dallas to here. But, I decided to drive anyway. So, in fact, I was even willing to drive to California. Anyway, so, um, but then, when we came to Texas, to Houston—oh you know how I came to Houston? Actually, in fact my sister came. In the '70s her husband was also an engineer. He's dead now. Uh, he came and—and worked for the city of Houston. My sister, uh, is an accountant. She's retired from Chase bank. And, uh, so, she came. Her husband came first, sort of like, you know, found a job, um, got an apartment, and there she came with their two year old son.

[0:29:38]

So I came to visit them. And—and—and then, of course, Texas Medical Center, I never

knew about it until I came to visit them here in Houston. And I drove around and—and I like, uh, what—I like, uh, what I saw. And I have this brochure about Texas Medical Center I started to read. And at that time I was thinking I'd like to go back to school, you know, for my nursing degree. I just finished, uh, my psychology degree there.

And, uh, so I came. And then—and that's when I started to look. Uh, I said I'm gonna apply, and I applied all those places and I got accepted. Oh it was so easy! It was so easy! [laughing] But then, again, of course I was fascinated with Life Flight, and it was so easy. And, so, that's how I came.

Now, Houston, when we first came, I have a—a nurse who was under my supervision, who came to Houston too about the same time that I came here to visit my sister. And she had requested for a vacation, so she came and stayed in [inaudible word] somewhere in Braeswood at the time. And I was—I was staying at my sister's apartment somewhere, um, in that area, too Stella Link. And—and then when, uh—she liked to come too. And—and—and she was browsing around too for a place to move.

And so, um—so when we came back and I said, “How was your vacation?” She said, “I went to Houston.” I said, “Oh you went to Houston? I was there too!” And she said, “I'd like to move back. And—you know, I'd like to move back. I like to go to Houston. I want to stay in Houston. I'm gonna resign, you know.” And I was thinking the same thing. So, and then I said to myself, “Oh, I have a sister here and I have this girl that I wasn't too friendly with her at the time.” I'm—I was, I have so many nurses under me that were Filipinos, but I have to distance myself, you know because I was in the, uh—in the supervi—supervisory kind of level, so I have—I don't want to mix, you know. So anyway, and so I said, “Okay so let's go. You know, the two of us, let's go together.”

But then she move ahead of me. She moves to—ending up working in Methodist. She was fascinated with the cardiovascular program at that time in Methodist. And I was fascinated with the—the, you know—the Life Flight and the critical care. So—so at least I had a friend. I had a sister. And—and so I didn't feel so—so by myself.

As when the same of when I go back to Tennessee, I didn't know anyone. I was by myself. But then I traveled with about five other ladies, five other nurses. We all came from different nursing school. We don't know each other, but at least they were Filipinos. And they were—and we were through the same agency that processed our papers to come as an exchange program. So at least we know each other. And, um ... and the—but when I came, I said I have my sister here, and I have this—you know, this friend of mine, who became a very good friend of mine later. She is retired now too.

Um, so that's how I came to Houston. But then when we first came, um, the apartment was right there somewhere by Brompton, close to—in that—what is this? Holcombe, Holcombe. And that [indistinguishable several words]. Uh, that's where [indistinguishable words] is now. And my first impression—oh gosh, I said “Amy, if we forget to buy something, if we get—forget to buy milk, we still have to drive to go to grocery store!” I mean, you know, right in Manhattan, you go down. You just walk right down in your apartment, or—or maybe even just a block, there's a grocery store to buy things. And that's what we found. And she said, “Well, we came to a boondock.” Kind of, uh—kind of like country. I mean, that's how we—that's how we felt at the time.

But this was in the 60—uh, uh, when? '76. So Houston wasn't as—as crowded, you know, at the time as—well, coming from Manhattan, it was a big difference. But then, as we stay, then Houston g—became what it is now. And then fact, in 7—in '86 when we decided we

want to build this house—retirement house in Pearland, Pearland was nothing. It was a country. Nothing, nothing, there was nothing there, one grocery store, one—one, uh, Kroger in there. There was even no movie house. There was one Walgreen. And I have to pass our house to go to grocery store. I used to go grocery store by [inaudible words] before I hit the freeway, to go home to Pearland ‘cause there was nothing in Pearland. But now Pearland is a very fast growing place.

There were only 13,000 people when we moved there. And now, I was looking at the sign actually today. I look at the sign the freeway. It was 91,000, but our mayor was saying that we are already over 100,000 people in Pearland. And—and in fact, the—the country house that we built is—is not country anymore because we’re surrounded by subdivisions now. There are million dollar homes there around us. Our house was only—when we built it—was only 96,000. But then—the even—the co—the city bought, uh, an acre from us to expand road. They’re gonna make a four—four lane—five lane with the island in the middle. So, uh, I said, the country followed us. [laughs]

[0:35:29]

But it’s okay. It’s alright. We’re getting used to the gradual progress in Pearland. That’s what we are now. So my life is so simple, you know, very simple. I’m a member of a Scrabble group. We have, eh—we—I have seven friends and we play Scrabble here in Houston every week. You know, most often it’s on the weekend, Sunday or—afternoon. We—and, uh, I k now, somebody wrote about the mahjong there. Now are you familiar with mahjong? You’re Chinese? Were you born here? You—you’re born—oh, you’re born from here. Where is your family from originally? From here? Your, uh—

EC: [overlapping] My family’s from here.

LV: [overlapping]—but your root—you’re from?

EC: Um, in, in Germany and Ireland.

LV: [overlapping] Oh German? I see. Oh yes, Germantown. Um, I have a lot of friends from Czechoslovakia. Yeah, I only been to Germany, Frankfurt airport, only airport once. Yeah.

But anyway, so my life now is very simple, you know. Um, most of our—in—either in the house or—or in our yard, yard work. We enjoy yard work, you know. You know? And—and we have But socially, we are still very involved socially because we’re very involved with the—um—is it—you know, mostly church work.

Now there’s this, uh—there was this latest calamity, um, back in our country, you know, about this big, uh, hurricane. They call it typhoon there. And so, um, when that happened, within that week, we had, uh, fundraising. I was in that. I was very involved. We—we had fundraising. A—a dinner dance kind of thing. And, to raise money very fast so that we could, you know, send it back home. And we didn’t channel it through any charity organization. Uh, we—what we did at that time was we collected 48,000 and we—we sent a physician, a doctor whom we know, uh, go back, uh, flew that money to the Philippine to buy medicine. Medicine because we were hearing that people were injured. They were treated, you know, emergency treatment, but no—nothing, no medication for pain, no antibiotics. So, you know, the whatever emergency treatment

amount to nothing because they got infected and they die or they even totally, um, became chronically sick or something like that. So we sent this doctor, went home with that 48,000 dollars. Um, in fact, he said he bought some tarp because people's home were all blown away so maybe just tarp to temporarily And then there's another big one that is coming up, another dinner dance that is being Um, we are going, but I'm not involved with that one, uh, this coming May. Again, big fundraising for that.

And, of course, you know, there are churches. There—the Archdioceses of New York had pleaded to people, parishioners to please have a—some kind of a special collection to—from the parishes to put in money. Our church, um, collected 35,000. Um, and we—we channeled it through, um, the Catholic Relief Fund, which is an international organization of Catholics, uh, churches and, uh—and whatever. Because some of the money they said go to administrative kind of function, and it didn't really get to the people—you now, help the people. So that was the initial reaction we had when we got that 48,000 that we really need to send someone there, you know, who will really oversee. And—and he was a—a doctor, really from that place that was really badly hit. So—so things like that, we still get ourselves involved.

[0:40:04]

And—and my husband too. My husband play bowling, you know. Like I play Scrabble, he plays bowling. He bowls two or three times a week. That—Friday is his bowling day, uh, with our YMCA. And most often Sun—weekend, Saturday, Sunday for me, or even Monday because you are all retired, and, uh, play Scrabble. [laughs] That's—it varies. That's just how we And then of course, every now and then my daughter, since she's in school she has been asking us to help babysit. And, um—and the other grandparents are doing the same thing to help her out. So she's gonna finish this May. So, you know, I don't know what her plans are. But she's really ambitious. She wants to, um—she wants to improve herself too. Her husband is in school too, to get his master's. But he works in VA. A nurse. I said, “You—you should really switch role. He should be the administrator and you should be the nurse.” But anyway. So that's—that's my life.

AZ: Could you tell us about, um, how you raised your daughter? Is she, like, very, um, proud to be a Filipino?

LV: How I raise her?

AZ: Yeah.

LV: Okay, yes. Um, when she was young—see, we were involved with this Filipino group that—that I was the president. Um, so they have young children too, about the same age as my daughter. And somewhere in Houston, the—the same thing is going on among the Filipino community. So, we want to teach our children about our same Filipino cultures. So, they have—there was once, um, a couple of years that this Filipino group in—in Houston, actually in Notre Dame Church particularly, and another church, I forgot the name of the church. Anyway, so, oh, they—they were putting up some kind of a show, um, children's show. They were teaching our children our native dances. And, um, so if, um—then they put up that show. So I been driving, uh, uh, some other, uh—other moms, we were—we drove to Houston to get our kids get involved with this show. And that's how they got to know how to dance our native dances.

And, then—and again, church. So, our church in Pearland. And at home, um, well my husband and I speak our language at home, but we—we—our daughter never learned to speak our—our language. And that really seems to be a problem for us Filipinos because we get assimilated so much, you know, with the American culture ‘cause we speak English. By the way, our incr—our medium of instruction back home, uh, is English, back in the Philippines. So, when you go to—if you had been to school in the Philippines, you learn English from kindergarten up. And later they had changed that. They had changed that—that our children, um, later, meaning in—I think in the ’70s—that our children should learn our native language vocabulary or dialect so to say in whatever island the kids are, and should learn that for the first couple of years, up to grade two, kindergarten to one and two. And then from there to English. But during my time, you know, once you start kindergarten, English. Because books are in English. Teachers are—are talking to you in English. So everything in English.

So, it’s—it was good in a way. So when—so when we migrated to America ... so our chil—when—we speak to our children in English. So they never learn. They never learned our—our language. Not—not like the Vietnamese. The Vietnamese, or even the Spanish, when they’re at home I think they speak Spanish, so the—the kids grow up to become bilingual, which is great. And Chinese, the same thing, I think. And Vietnamese, same thing. It’s only Filipinos. Very rarely, um, that we—that like my daughter, can understand, um, Filipino language, but barely. Cannot really communicate. Can understand, but cannot speak well. She can understand better than she can speak.

[0:45:00]

And—and when we were ... during my—my parents’ time, our grandparents speak Spanish, you know, I guess because we were under Spanish regime for so many hundred years! And then the American came. We were only—oh, only like 50-something years, but the—we adopted the American way of, um, edu—education, and also form of government too.

So anyways, so that’s how we introduce our children to Filipino—and then at home, we cook Filipino food, so they learn to eat Filipino food. And among themselves, Filipinos, they—they get involved for (?) Filipino activities. So that’s how—in fact, that’s how my daughter and her husband met, from a Filipino youth group. You know, they—they have—there’s a lot of youth activities among the Filipinos too. Even now!

There—there—you know, in school, mostly in church, they—they have what—what they call a Bayou Awakening. Bayou Awakening is the church-sponsored program for uh, teenagers from 18 to 26, college-age student. And they get to go retreat. Retreat—they—I’m not sure if you’re familiar with retreat. Retreat is some kind of get together and it’s a faith-based kind of, uh, oh, get together. And—and that’s how they get to know each other. And that’s how they get to know other Filipinos too. Even, in fact when this thing happened back—this typhoon? There’s a lot of Filipino youth group that had, um, a sponsored concert among—among the youth also, raise fund to—to add to, uh, the—this, um, fundraising.

So it’s—it’s perpetrated, you know, that way. And—and—and again, myself, I would—I’m so glad that my daughter got married to a Filipino too. ‘Cause, that—you—but there’s a lot of, oh—of our kids’ friends, uh, that have smorgasbord [laughing] family. ‘Cause like—like Christy’s, she married this French guy, and their younger sister married a black guy, and then younger brother is marrying this coming—actually, this coming weekend! And we’re going—to Vietnamese girl. And then—and, um—so—and—and so, we intermarry. They intermarry. I only

have one daughter, so got married to Filipino. So it is good. In fact, I knew the parents because the parents were very involved with the community services in Houston, um, long before I knew my current son-in-law now. You know. Because the parents and I were so related and I never met the kids until, uh, they started dating my daughter.

So then, that's—and that's how—and we want to keep it that way. That they—they mingle among themselves, uh, eventually it will be lost. But the—but at least, you know—in fact, there's this story. This one family, um, he used to—the—the—the patriarch should they say, the grandfather, um, is a doctor, got married to an American girl. So they have six children. All the six children got married to—not one of them got married to Filipino. All got married different races. And, so the grandchildren ... [very quietly] The grandchildren was—[louder, laughing] he was the only Filipino in the group! [laughs] When I saw the pictures, he was the only brown one there! [laughs] It was so interesting!

But that's because—then—so the Filipino thing was lost. Gone. And, uh, but some of us would like to at least keep that. So, oh, or at least, if not Filipino, Asian. Like this—this, um, younger brother of Christy. He's marrying this Vietnamese, so they (?) sort of become—become Vietnamese, um, Asian group too. Uh, though of course, sister Christy got married to this Anglo guy and the other one, um, a black guy. So when they get together, it's very diverse. It's really cute. Really cute! [laughs] Really! You know, there's a chink guy. There's a black girl, and there's this white, very blonde girl! [laughs] You know? Interesting. And I will not see that in my family—and with maybe our grandson. With somebody different. But it's fine. Fine. That's—that's how it is and it's ... that's not colorful. [laughs]

[0:50:02]

That's—that's my simple life in America. But what—I'm so glad I came. I often wonder what would my life have been had I stayed, especially now 'cause the economy is so bad. And I said we probably—well, we probably survive 'cause I probably would have married another professional, who is—who has a job, you know, working. Um, my—my sisters and family did very well, but ... You know how it is, you know, um, the Hispanics specially, um, it's true with us too, Filipinos because we have a lot of Hispanic, um, you know, practices too because of our having been under Spain for so long. Um, you know like, we—we send money home. We will, you know, up to now, I been here like 50-something years, I haven't stopped sending money. I helped—I helped two ne—uh, two nephews and two nieces, uh, go to college.

And, um, uh, we have one adopted daughter. One adopted um, oh, my parents adopted a—a—a baby, uh, who took our place when we're all away from home. We were all gone. And, I guess because of my influence, having been a nurse, she became a nurse. Uh, she's now married with two children of her own and back home. And, uh, is now a—some kind of clinical instructor in one nursing school there.

And then one nephew, whom I helped also, started nursing. He and his sister became nurses, both. And he's now here in New Jersey, himself. And—and—and the—the sister went to London, um, became a nurse too. She's now working in London. A lot of us Filipinos, I guess because of our economy, have to find employment outside of the country. So, another—another, uh, niece—oh no another nephew is in Oman. This is an Arab country. He's working there as a nurse. And my brother, he's now deceased, but, uh, he—he was a maritime graduate—maritime graduate marine, a merchant marine, and met his wife in Libya, of all places. Uh, his wife was a, um, retired now too, um, uh, medical—uh, technologist, and um, they have two children whom I

helped go to college. And their son is now in Oman. And—and the—the daughter back home, married.

So I mean, I helped them, um, um, with some, you know, like what I do is that every year, I send them a post-dated check that they could cash. And I have to earn those checks, of course, month. So I don't send big chunk of money, but I—I—like, it's almost like a—a saving for me. Instead of putting it in a savings account, um, you know, it goes to—goes to the check that—that I have post-dated to give to them.

Though, even after now, I'm doing that to my—for my—my—what you call this? It's grandniece and grandnephew. They were—my grand—my niece, um, is having hard time, you know? She went to college but couldn't find a very gainful, um—not really gainfully employed. Uh, she and her husband, so they have three children and they had asked if I could help in some way. So, there's another one that I Oh I really had said I don't want to do anymore through the grandchildren, you know? I [indistinguishable]—I help their—my nephews and nieces, but—I can't—I—I can't—I cannot not help.

I have—I have [indistinguishable]. We stayed for, you know—we educated our daughter. She's—my daughter is okay. She's self-sufficient with her husband. Ah, but I know my—this niece, um, is not—is having a hard time. So I told her, I said, "Okay, I'll help until, uh, you're—at least, your oldest son finished college." And that's what we do, by the way. Uh, it's a family—almost family tradition back home. When one child, oldest one, or—or even whoever, when one child finish college and is gainfully employed, help the other siblings to—to go to college. Education is very important to us. It's—it's—it's, um—it's already a understood thing that when you finish high school, you go to college. You know. You cannot opt not to.

[0:55:18]

Uh, like, for my parents, you know, as far as, uh, any kind of skill for my mom, we have to learn how to sew. All of us. Boys and girls. We—we all know how to sew. And for my dad, we all know how to type. So, we have to—at least keyboarding is, uh ... it's easy, you know. And—but—oh, I don't really—I never did really use that. But my sister, uh, the one that—who—who is here, is an accountant. So, so she helped—it helped her [indistinguishable] to know how to type. And even now, I could still do stenography. I could do a little of stenography, simple ones, you know? And once you learn it, you never—like a bicycle, once you learn it, you never forget it. [laughs]

I—I love to read. Oh, that's another thing. That's my other hobby. I love to read. I read a lot. And I—I seldom watch TV, which is bad, in a way, you know, why? Because sometimes I cannot keep to current events, you know? Oh, what's going on? My husband is very political-minded. He watch CNN. He watch Fox News. He watch O'Reilly. He watch Glenn Beck. He watch all this, you know—this people talk about politics. I don't. I don't like—then—but of course, he's also sports-minded. [beeping in background] He watch sport a lot. I get involved with sport, but sometimes what I do, I watch—I'll look and see what's the score and then I go on doing whatever I do and then I peek (?) again.

I—and you do—I love basketball because I understand basketball. I don't understand football, but I—but I knew what's going on too. I knew about what's going on. I knew Wenzel very well. [laughs] You know Wenzel, right? [laughs] I knew—I know what's going on with that kid. Anyway. See, but—but I don't like to sit down and watch. I don't like to do that. Every time—if I do watch, um, I—I occupy myself with something. Either when, um, I have to i—

when we—I iron or I press our clothes. Or—or we have—we have a lot of white, uh, bedspread, you know, a lot of tier (?), you know, with all these quilt, a lot of times. I do that. I watch or—or—or I cook, and I watch.

But all the times when I have to sit down and watch, I—I—I don't like to do that! I don't like to do—but I read newspaper. We have daily newspaper. Um, my husband read it from page to page, almost. [laughs] Uh, when—and I read magazine. I like, uh—I read simple, simple, just entertainment, for entertainment, simple books. Where I don't have to think to—when I read it. You know. I like, like Grisham. I like—you know Grisham? Oh I cannot wait sometimes until her—his next book comes out! [laughs] It's—'cause it's so simple reading! It is very easy to read. But I don't like Ludlum. Ludlum, you know Ludlum? Have you heard of Ludlum? Or—or Clancy? Oh gosh! You have to—you have to really understand. Sometimes he has too many characters. I have to go back. I said, "Who's this guy again?" I have to go back and the first few pages to figure out who that character.

Anyway. I—I just simple, simple reading. I read magazine. I read—I read *People* if I happen to be in doctor's office, you know. And sometimes I watch TV before I go to sleep. I watch the simple thing. I like "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" because it's—it's very educational. For me, it's very educational. Even the simple thing like "Family Feud," you know. Have you heard "Family Feud"? [laughs] That's very educational for me too! [laughs] Oh it's a crazy program! [laughs harder] That kind of simple things. I don't wanna think hard anymore. You know?

So, easy life. Well, we have travel. We have traveled. We have done our traveling. We have gone to Europe. We have gone to Portugal, to Spain. Uh, France, we've been to France. We've been to Italy. We've been to Rome. Um, we have gone to almost all the cruises that come—start from Galveston, you know? We been to Cancun, you know, the Cayman Islands, you know the, uh, what—one more ... Jamaica, the, uh—and, uh, what's the other one? Um, what's—what's this other one? That, um, you know, this—all this Mayan ruins, you know, uh, you go, you—I don't want to go anymore. There's so many things going on now with all these cruises. No, no. I don't want anymore.

[1:00:20]

And, uh—but, we also have some health problems. So, I had, myself—I have gone through a lot of, um, uh, near death related kind of incident. I—you know, aside from cancer, breast cancer. I had, um, pulmonary embolus one time. You know what pulmonary embolus is? What it is is a—it's like a—like a heart attack. If you have a clot—if you have a clot in your, uh—in your—or bleeding—in your heart, you—you have a heart attack. If you have a clot—clot or—or bleeding in your brain, you get a stroke. They call it stroke. If you have something like that in your lung, you—you call it pulmonary embolus. Embolus is a clot. It's a blockage, and it can be very fatal. I had that one time, so I was on a—a blood thinning, uh, kind of medicine for a year, you know. Coumadin, they call it Coumadin. You know you have to be—they watch closely your—how your blood clot. And so, that's what happened again.

And—and I—I became shaky one time. Um, I came patient myself in the care, in surgical ICU at Hermann when, um—when I—I bled through a, um, what you call these? Through a, um, ulcer. I had an ulcer. I had a duodenal ulcer. It's an intestinal ulcer. Because I was in that, um—in that blood thinning medication.

And, um—and I fell, uh, one time at work. So, uh, wouldn't it be one year, it—it ruined

my, my left knee. And I have now a bionic knee. I have a knee—a knee replacement done. [laughs] And that kind of thing. And, uh, my husband is asthmatic. He's diabetic also.

But we—we—we watch what we eat. I, myself, is overweight, 20 pounds overweight. But I am! You know, I'm 140 pounds and I should only be 120! [laughs] But we stay—we stay active. And we stay—uh, you know, YMCA. My routine at YMCA is I have 30 minutes at least twice a week. Uh, 30 minutes, uh, bicycle, 30 minutes treadmill, and I lift weight. I have 12 weights—12 weight exercises. It exercises all your muscle. You know, from bicep, tricep, to—all your trunks, all these muscles in the back, and muscle, you know, those abductor—abductors, the thigh and legs, everything.

And they—when you go there initially, they will let you go through this, uh, exercise, you know, tell you what your goals are, and, you know, why you want to join the YMCA. And we—our goal is just so we stay, um, strong, uh, flexible, not so much to build muscle, you know, but to show—could be flexible, and a little stronger, and, uh, you know, be active. Our heart and lungs functioning well. That's it.

My husband is 78. See I'm 72. So 6 years older than me, but still do bowling in a league! That's a League 2! It's not just regular bowling. It is senior league. And—and he—he practices brain by reading. So my—and Scrabble. Have you ever played Scrabble? It's a beautiful game! And there is the—a—now a new game. They call it Scrumble? Is that in the Internet? That you can play. You could—you could like—almost—almost select the [indistinguishable 1 word] kind of thing.

I'm not an Internet person. I—I'm not good in Internet. I'm not really very good. I always call my daughter. She says, "Mom, I already showed you." [laughs] I said, "Show me again!" [laughs] Keep on asking her. Well, you all are writing (?) those [gestures at laptops and smartphones], and I'm not. All I have is just simple Internet to communicate with people. I'm not even Facebook. Ooh! I don't want—I don't like Facebook! Almost everybody, Facebook and Instagram or whatever or Twitter or whatever! No.

[1:05:06]

You know, I guess maybe because we are old. We're older. That's why. And a lot of my friends are the same. They're saying the same thing. You know, we're not for this new stuff. I just have a cellphone I could barely manage. [laughs] I've been—I've been talking! I talk a lot! What more do you—you want? What more question more?

AZ: No, it's great! Um.

LV: Whatever.

AZ: No, you're doing so well. Um, could you tell us about how you met your husband?

LV: Oh yeah! That's interesting! [laughs]

AZ: [overlapping] I mean, just give us the whole story! Yeah.

LV: [laughs] That's interesting! Okay, anyway ... we got married late. Um, I was 37 when I got married. 37, that's very late. My daughter got married at 28, which is—I'm glad. My husband

was—how old was he? 42, I think. [mumbling] Yeah, he was 42 going 43 when we got married. He never been married. I've never been married. Um, we—he was in New Jersey. I was in New York, before we moved to Houston. I came two years ahead of him—two years. I came '76; he came '78.

But we happened to have a mutual friend. Uh, that mutual friend, uh, was a boyfriend of this girl that also move here—who happened to be my nurse—one of my nurses before. And, so, this friend, uh, her boyfriend also ... was an engineer. So was my husband. So the—my husband and this boyfriend know each other from New Jersey. So when I moved here, his friend move here about the same time as, uh—as I and the other—and my gir—my girlfriend move here, '76. But he had been in touch with some friends through New Jersey. So my husband, one time they were talking and my husband said, uh, “I want to leave my job here. I wanna come to Houston.” And so he said, “Okay! Come!”

And so, my husband came and they—they were together. They were roommates for a while. And my girlfriend and I, so we ended up going out, dating together, foursome as a group, you know. My—this friend and my girlfriend, my husband and I. But then, in the end, you know—in the end, um, the two of them didn't—uh, didn't get married. Us—my husband and I got married. And, um—but—and she married somebody else and—and he married, uh, another—a—a doctor.

Anyway, so, because we were older So the—we met through this mutual friend and his—and my girlfriend. And, uh, we were older and we met in October? We got engaged in January, after—after three months, very, very short. We got married in June. So we—we knew each other, talked all over like eight months! Only eight months. But we were very close during those time. We were both new in Houston, and, um—and so, every weekend almost, we'd see each other. You know, we'd go to church together. He's Catholic too. So we go to church together. We go out and—and meet new friends together, and—and he was ready to get married too! And I was ready too!

So [laughs]—so—although, he wants to go back home and get married there. But—but then we decided that, um—he came from different island. I came from different island. So I said, “If we get married in my island, not all your family can go to my island, and if we wed in your island, the same thing!” So—so that was—actually, in fact, that was me who decided, I said, “You know, let's just get married here!” So, we have a very simple wedding. We got married, you know, St. Vincent de Paul, right here? And it was a simple wedding. What we did was we put our money together and—uh, the money I had from New York, his money from New Jersey— put our money together and we put that as a down payment for a new house in Missouri City. So we bought a house in Missouri City. And—and that's where we lived for a good eight years. That's where my daughter, you know, was born. Here, in Memorial Hermann.

[1:10:11]

But it was—it wasn't really a, um—I guess maybe because we were—again as I said, we were older. You know, 'cause what—I think when you're older, you know, you—you know, we decided, well, what's the wait? I mean, you know? But he wants to have a family and I do want to have family too. Uh, uh, I got pregnant easily, very easily. But then I lost it three and a half months later. I had a miscarriage. And our doctor was telling us—I said—you know, wait a couple. I wanted so much to have a child at that time 'cause I was 37 years old, I was. And I said, “I—I, you know—I want to have a healthy child.” And so ... so he said okay. When I lost the

baby, uh, he said, “Well, you know, wait for couple more months.” And I said—I mean, you know, there—uh, physiologically to another new lining of the uterus, stuff like that. And—and then—then try again! And we did! I had no trouble getting pregnant. It’s just keeping the baby!

I almost lost this baby, too, was born 4 pounds. Um, my daughter. Um, but then, you know, uh, I was working in—in—in trauma ICU. And so, when I got pregnant and, um—and I—I wasn’t quite sure. I’d been exposed to all these x-rays because, you know, in trauma ICU, um, at the time, it wasn’t individual room. It was just a drape. Drape. Uh, and it was a huge—like huge room with all this trauma going on, and, uh, you know, if—with Life Flight, you don’t know what kind of patient are just gonna come in! Uh, and sometime most of them are dirty cases, you know, gun shot wound, motor vehicle accident, uh, you know, construction fall. And they—so, you—you are around dirty cases. And, um—and then x-rays. Everybody are being x-rayed ‘cause these are all really life and death kind of situ—you know, uh, patient. They’re not, uh, these clean surgical cases.

So I was so afraid at the time ‘cause I thought I may have been exposed to x-rays myself. I didn’t know that I was pregnant, you know. And—but then when—when we—I—I had, uh, what they call this chromosomal tests that have—that has to be done. I went ahead and, uh—and had that done, and then I found I had a healthy baby. In fact, at that time, that was also, um—I was in a dilemma too because—so I said, “What will I do if I happen to be that because of my age, I will have a—a Down Syndrome baby” because that’s the—the most common thing that happens when you’re older because of some chromosomal dis—um, you know.

Anyway, so I had a healthy baby. But I said, “Okay, if—if I have—I happen to have—be pregnant with a Down Syndrome,” I said, “Well at least I’ll—I’m prepared. [deep breath] Because we don’t—you know, our faith, we don’t believe in—in abortion. And, um, even for Filipinos, we don’t also do—uh, believe in divorce. There’s no divorce, no—no Philippines. And it’s hard, people separate, but they don’t divorce, and the same thing with the Catholic Church, even up to now. Uh, well I think divorce is allowed now in the church—in our church now. But, I think there’s some process that’s—it’s a kind of annulment, which is, uh, a very, very difficult process.

Anyway, so—so we had—we had a baby, and the baby was born 4—4 pounds, stayed in neo-natal ICU for a while. And I took her home, um, several weeks later. Grew up to be very healthy child, very healthy. So and that’s how’s she’s—now she’s 33 years old now, and, um, very healthy, and hopefully then their son will be healthy too. So that—oh our—our courtship was very simple.

Because I thought—I think maybe because of our age. And—and that’s how we met, through—through friends. And through, um—but it’s sad that my girlfriend and her boyfriend didn’t—didn’t work out, you know. But, uh, it was a mutual agreement, you know. They—they decided that they’re not for each other. They are so strong. When both strong like, they fight a lot. And I said—ah—I said, “You—you—” I mean it’s good that they didn’t make it, you know? That—it’s simple, yeah. You have anymore question?

[1:15:07]

EC: Um, have you ever been able to bring your daughter back to the Philippines? To visit?

LV: Yes, yes, yes. Yes. When, um—when she was eight years old. Oh, and this is—this is sad in a way, and I regretted it so much. I regretted it so much because, uh, I remember the first time I

went home was nine years after I came because of the visa. And—and then, when I moved to Houston, I was in school. Then I got married and had a baby, one year, one right after another. So, the next time I went home, uh—I went home in '72, and the next time I went home was like 17 years later. My daughter was eight years old, uh, in '89, so that would be '72 to '89. That's 17, correct? And I didn't see But—but in '80—in '80, my dad came. So, my brothers and sisters and we just telephone conversation.

But in '89, my—my mom, who had been chronically sick, had, uh, gotten sick. So I told my husband, we have to go home. So I went home. I was new at my job at that time, but I made an arrangement. In '89, I just finished my master, and I started a new job. Uh, so—but then we went home and my mom got to meet my husband and got to meet my daughter. She was eight years old. But they been in touch on the phone.

And then, after that I went home again 10 years later, uh, in '99. By that time, my parents died in '90—'92 or '99. I went home just by myself at each of their death. Oh my dad having been here, he had been coming in, in and out—been coming visit, um, come back and visit, so it's just him. They had allowed him, but by that time my brothers and sisters, you cannot easily come as tourists because at the time—I think it's just like now, I guess. Uh, the immigration was strict because some of the tourists at the time, uh, let the visa expire and stay. They became illegal. Illegal.

And—and, so when you're younger, during that time in the '80s and early '90s, it's extremely hard to get visa. My dad has no trouble 'cause he was an older guy. He could come in and go home [indistinguishable several words]. He had been coming back and forth. My dad did as I s—uh, my mom as I said, you know, um, didn't want to fly. So—so then 10 years later in '90—in somewhere in '92, '93—'92 my mom died first, and then a year later, my dad died. And I—I've been home. I went home for funeral each time.

And then in '99, um, we went home again. I brought my daughter again. She was already 18. So she was So she went home the first time she was eight and then 18. They were the only two times that she had been home. So my family got—got to know her, uh, just by pictures, phone. Now, through Facebook [laughs] and for me, they—my nephews and nieces knew me from pictures. I brought some pictures, by the way. I brought some pictures with me. And my picture when I was young ... a young, uh, girl. I have pictures. Pictures of them.

Uh, so that's how—just how my daughter got home. But she's very close to them. She's very close especially to the family of my—of my husband be—uh, nephews and nieces because of her age. They were the same age group. Not so much of my family because my family were older than her and, uh—well ye, uh, a lot older than her. So that's pretty much all how she came. But she's very close to both our families. My—my—my family's side and her family's side—and my husband's family side.

AZ: [to EC] Do you have any more questions?

[1:20:08]

LV: Anything? I'll you—I'll show you some of my pictures, whatever, memor—memorabilia that I brought. [laughs]

AZ: [overlapping] Just to, um—just to wrap things up, um, this is our favorite last question, but what is your proudest accomplishment in your entire life?

LV: Um, uh, the one that I'm proud of? You mean, my proudest accomplishment?

AZ: Mm-hmm.

LV: I think, in rearing my daughter the way she is now. [pauses, taking a moment to collect herself] Oh, that makes me cry. [laughs] I think that's the—my—my biggest pride. [pauses] That, uh But you know, I'm—because I'm—I'm proud of the way our parents reared us. Oh, we were so poor. I remember. Excuse me. [wipes eyes] I remember some of ... the hardship that we had to go through because there were six of us. Six of us going to school, going to college, but I know I remember the struggle of my parents on (?) educating us.

And I didn't have that much hard time, really, uh, educating my—my daughter. Because I have good paying job. In fact, um, this is what I've been telling. See, you know when—when we were in nursing school, you know, the nursing was not so much, uh, of a job, but like a—it was more of like a vocation for us. You know, they give—sort of like ingrained to us by the sisters that you are becoming a nurse so—so you could help people. You can help sick people. You can take care of kids. Uh, you can, you know, you know—you're like help humanity, so to say, that cliché. And so, uh—but now, like days, like you go to nursing school because you'll never be without a job. They're all in this country. There will always be job for nurses. There's always be shortage of nurses. When I came, there is still shortage of nurses now. So, but then our training were different. I mean, you know. The—the way we're trained in—with that kind of vocation, kind of thinking.

So anyway So I—I really am very proud of how I raised my daughter, that, uh, the way she is now. I wish you could meet her because she's really a very kind person, but strong. A leader too. Also a leader, both, uh, outside—uh, mean both, uh, in her job and in—in her—in her faith at church. She—she's very active. She and her husband the same thing, you know? They have this, uh, what? Oh, you know, when they were in college, U of H, she has some of her uh—her—what you call this? Required (?) courses (?) kind of thing. The first two years, you know, just basic, um, courses. You know, psychology, English, and stuff like that, uh, from U of H. So they got involved in the what we call a—a Filipino Students Association of uh, uh, of—student association in U of H. And—and then before she moved to Clearlake to get her—the health care administration Her husband is the same thing, is also a school leader.

And—and then, they got involved in—in the church because of—of his parents. And I guess maybe 'cause my daughter, because of us right here in St. Helen. So, like now she's very active in the church, you know? She's, um—she teaches what we call CCE. CCE is a Catholic, uh, Continuing Education, uh, for kids, you know, from—she teaches, uh, 9th grade. So first year high school. And, um—and but she also is a lector. You know, uh, you do reading church services, and she—she does all they call Eucharistic (?) Minister educate. Are you—you're not it—are you Catholic?

AZ: [shakes head]

EC: [nods] Mmmm.

LV: Oh, that's why. She's Eucharistic (?) Minister. So, uh, in St.—in, um—in, uh, Notre Dame. So—so with that, even with her kid, with her college, uh, uh, or, you know, when she's in school and, uh, she still get time to involve with, uh, teaching CCE, the Eucharistic (?) Minister, be a—

and, uh, you know, um, uh, a lector. And um—her husband is an acolyte. You know what acolyte is? What they do? You know, when they—they—this is like in—not—not in—in addition to being an altar server, there are acolyte means they—they—they—they purify the vessels, you know, after its being used for communion. Then, the—the acolyte, uh, or if not the priest, or the deacon, the acolyte has to do that, not ordinary people. So they—so they have to go through special kind of training, special kind of installation for that kind of thing.

[1:25:13]

So, that, shows too I think—I think I reared her well. And she also value education, very much. That's why she went back to school to get her MBA. Um, she's hoping to—to go higher in her—in her level now, with, uh She's—she's some kind of administrator, department of geriatric and department of, uh, medicine at Baylor, and she handles the—the fellows and attending physician, doctors, and residents at Quentin Mease. You know, the Quentin Mease is a clinic that is like Ben Taub. It's right here. I didn't even know that this existed until, uh, she found—um, she was assigned there. Um, it's, uh—it's for—it's a public—it's a public clinic. All non-paying, uh, non-resource, um, patients in there. There's an—a—a—paying—no paying, um, no patients in there. They're all free, you know?

So, and now she's writing (?) her son the same way. Uh, she—they're thinking of—now her—her son goes to babysitters for now, but they're thinking of enrolling her to—in a Catholic church—uh, to pre-K, uh—what they call early childhood program at the, um—at St. Theresa in Sugarland. Becau—they—they actually re—belong to St. Lawrence Church in Sugarland, but uh, she—they still go to Notre Dame because that's where, uh, the husband grew up. At the—at that time, they lived in Stafford, but now they had—the parents now live in—in Greatwood. It's even, Greatwood. It's another big subdivision *past* Sugarland. In fact, it's almost close to Richmond.

You know, so—so and I think she—she will continue that with her son and ah, future children. So I think I—I—I sort of like, uh—I pride myself in the way I reared her. She's very altruistic too. She went to—went to Bayou Awakening. She was one of the key leaders there too. Have you ever attended it? You have not. You Catholic too? You? Okay. You know, their—Bayou Awakening is very good. It's very good for college-age student. If you—what—what church do you go?

EC: I go here on campus.

LV: Where?

EC: It's the chapel on campus.

LV: Oh, okay good. Okay yes. Yes, that Um, what it call—what is call? Is there a name to that? What's, uh—what's the name to chapel? Is there a name in the chapel?

EC: It's just the Rice Catholic Students—

LV: Oh I see. So that's not it. The reason—this what they call—they have a name to one chapel, I can't remember what it is. What—a—a—a university come with chapel. I think it's U of H, uh,

chapel, maybe that is I've been trying to remember the name, but I couldn't remember the name. Anyway, yes, so those are her involvement. She's close—she's very close to the Lord. And, uh—and I hope that she perpetuate that to her children and her grandchildren too. And I hope she helps—she helps too. I think she will because she's helping right now. And, in a small way, but—sh—she—but she has to finish school first. Her husband, I don't know what his plans are, but he has some plans for himself, for VA also, yeah. Uh, other nurse. So ... that's about it. So, don't you think I should be proud of my daughter? I'll show you! You want to see? Some of the memorabilia!

AZ: [laughs][overlapping] Alright, I'll just wrap up the interview! But thank you so much!

LV: [overlapping] Okay. Sure. Sure.

AZ: Thank you so much—

EC: Thank you so much.

AZ: —for having us. Thank you so much for coming. Yeah.

LV: [overlapping] Yes, yes! Thank you so much too. I mean I—I talk too much.

AZ: No, no it was perfect.

[1:29:10]

End interview