Background:

Maria Verma Tadeo was born in 1948 on the Visayan Island of the Philippines. She has two siblings and attended Catholic school growing up. She attended St. Paul College of Nursing and worked briefly in the Philippines before immigrating to Houston. She married her husband shortly after moving to the States and has raised two daughters. She returned to the Philippines briefly to complete her graduate studies, but has otherwise lived in Houston ever since. Verma occasionally refers to a woman named Christy Poisot, who is another interviewee of the Houston Asian American Archive and the daughter of a Filipina immigrant nurse.

Setting:

The interview focuses on the career path of an immigrant nurse from the Philippines, also discussing difficulties in pursuing education between countries.

The interview was conducted in a study room at Fondren Library on the campus of Rice University and required about 1.5 hours. Ms. Tadeo was wearing multiple rings, which can be heard occasionally hitting or rubbing on the hard surface of the table.

Interviewers:

Tara Patel is a rising fifth year at Rice University and has lived in Houston most of her life. She is one of the HAAA summer interns and is majoring in history and economics.

Dillon is a rising sophomore at Rice University. He was born in Houston and lived there until moving to Shanghai at age 5, where he completed the rest of his education at Shanghai American School. His parents were first generation immigrants to the United States and residents of Houston, which is what sparked his interest in the Houston American Asian Archive.
DC: [recording begins mid-word]—ginning.

TP: This is Tara Patel.

DC: And I’m Dillon Chai.

VT: Mm. Hi.

TP: And we are here in the Fondren Library at Rice University interviewing Ms. Verma Tadeo for the Chao Center of Asian Studies, the Houston Asian American Archive. Could you first just start out about—telling us about your childhood?

VT: Um, my childhood is not really that encouraging, but it was a challenge. And, you know, I am the first daughter among the three. We’re about almost seven years apart. [laughs] And so we don’t have that close relationship. And when I was studying, I was in the dormitories. So I don’t see my—my brother, you know, which is—you know, once only a week—only be sometimes, once a month. So, uh, m—they—my parents geared (?) for us is our education, so that’s very important. They work hard for me to be educated. [laughs] I guess, you know, to work hard to send me to school. And, even to send to school, to send me in the dormitory, where I could reflect and get my, you know—my studies, under the supervision of the nun. Ah, so, I was a good girl [laughs] then. And, same thing is in high school and in college. In college it was a real courage for me because I was at the university. Then I took my internship the second year. And I was in College of Nursing for—for five years. And that was also all girls. All girls school. The boys are new to me [laughing] you know when we go out, you—ooh, you know? But, it’s just everyday is a challenge, you know?

And then I graduated 1969, uh, college, and, uh, I, you know—I, uh—lo and behold I was not the smartest person, you know, the smartest. And, you know, uh, our attorney, uh—one of our professor said that if one of you, among our class, one of you will—you’ll get the top 10 or whatever—get, you know—uh, you will be—you’ll be rewarded. And I didn’t believe then, until then when it was released. And, then our school was top six. So, I didn’t know all about that. All I know is I want to pass. And, lo and behold, it was me. So, I never expect—all I want is to pass, and to get out from the struggle, you know? And then, that’s it.

But that didn’t give me a big head, you know. It gave me more to challenge, more endurance to where I’m getting at. And then, after that, I took my graduate studies. And, of
course, I’m not used to going to work and going to school. You know? So, I work and I go to school. That was the hardest stop (?) in my career. Because I used to go to school—go to school alone, and here I had to work and go to school. Anyway, it took me about, um, five years.

And then I graduated. And when I graduated, I came here and finished my graduate studies. And, my acceptance—lo and behold, you know, I was working. And this is the hospital of the Philippines that was modern and technology-wise, you know—the new one that was built under the regime of President Marcos. You heard about President Marcos by history. You will research that. But anyway, President Marcos, uh, built this—had this, uh, hospital built. This is a modern technology hospital so far in the Philippines. And I worked there after I took my exam. We have—you know, everybody that works there have to take exam. And then that year, the wife of the president come and visit, you know, by helicopter, on that hospital. And—and I said, “Oh, that’s the wife of the president!” I never knew. And then—I never met her except in the escalator. And then—when is it—oh, it was—every day was a challenge, you know, for me. Because he was—he’s—she was doing a lot for the people, you know, a lot for the people for, uh, how to modernize, you know, the, uh, medical system in the Philippines.

[0:05:49]

And I was accepted at Methodist Hospital. My acceptance at Methodist Hospital …. Mind you, there was no—there was only typewriter before. And I don’t know much about typing, so I wrote it in my own handwriting. And, lo and behold maybe a month later or so, I have—I have six hospitals, you know, all over. I have San Francisco, and, uh, I had Dallas. I had, you know, Lansing, Michigan. I had New York and Brissing (?) all of that. But on—uh, all of them answered, but this was the first one. And it was—at that time—the culture at that time was the, uh, fastest communication was social telegram. You remember that? The social telegram. There was no telephone. There was—[deep breath] So, I said “Oh my God! I had a social telegram from Methodist and acceptance.” You know? Telegram before is the immediate communication. I said, “Wow! You know that is, hmm.” I only wrote there in my—in my handwriting.

And the thing that I did in handwriting is my mom was an English teacher. And, uh, she always believed that I had to correct myself. I had to do this. And I don’t like my mom because she have everything I …. You have to make statements. She corrects it. But anyway, uh, she—I wrote it in handwriting, they accepted me by social telegram. And it said, by—you know, by next week. We are waiting for you by next week. And Christy’s mother—you know, the lady that was with me—uh, she was in that group. But they have their acceptance a long time. Mine was just sudden, you know? And I said, “You know, you have to leave with this—with this group.” But theirs is through agency. Me is through [laughs]—through direct, you know, acceptance. And I said, “Oh God.” You know, so I have only one week to prepare to come over here. And my great grandfather, you know, uh, helped me out monetary-wise, you know, to—to, uh, pay for my plane ticket.

And then, when I came here, I said, “Oh my gosh!” I told my mother, I said, “You know this is an open world for me.” And I said, “Mom.” I said, “I know …” When we work at the hospital, the—we have three—three months orientation, and that was who, you know, enticed me to come here because I was reading more about, you know, open-heart surgery. And I w—I heard about Debakey. You heard about him? Ah, okay, you can research about him. [TP laughs] He’s the open—first one that open-heart surgery, the Debakey and Cooley, is said. The Debakey
was at Methodist. And, he—he’s—he’s dead now. I think he died. I think maybe about—maybe five—five years ago, or seven years ago. Um, with Methodist. And at Methodist there were not only me, a Filipino, but there were other Filipinos that had been here before, so they have assisted us, you know. They kinda, you know—it’s a culture-wise, you know, assisted, uh, help us around—and, then, um—until we got our footage [footing] here. [laughs]

[0:09:57]

And the challenge in Methodist was enormous for me. It opened a wide array of, you know, uh, challenge in—in medicine. Uh, I, you know, listed myself at Texas Woman’s University to because my—I promised Methodist that I will continue my undergrad—undergraduate studies. And they said they—they can help me out on that. But, working and then at that time was new to me, you know. It was taking all my time. So, 19, uh, 85, I—I went home and finished it. So, and then finished it myself and took—and, you know took care of it because my husband said, you know, “Once you get wet. You get wet.” You—you know, you have to continue it.

Anyway, I was here 1971. ‘72, my husband, mmm so-called boyfriend, you know, at that time, came over. And he was a CPA. We’re just friends, boyfriends or girlfriends or whatever you called it—that right now. But anyway, then we got married. And he took his, uh, board exam here. But, when he applied to the board of accountancy, you know, uh, they give her—they give him a license without taking the board exam because of his grades and the—whatever—the—the correspondence from the Philippines, from the university. So, well, he was kind of smart, you know?

And then, but, I lost my husband last year. And I missed him. He was a CPA both in the Philippines and here. Uh, the—the gradings, you know, that has been on his, uh, papers was four-point-one, you know, or—but yours here is inverted. Four-point-one, but inverted. So he—when he took his MBA at University of Houston, and they said, “Oh we cannot accept you because of your grades.” And I said, “Why?” You know, I—I told, you know—we went there, and, you know, the—he cannot get, uh, graduate studies with, you know, master—uh, MBA. And said, “Why?” And we wrote again, and we came, and we said, you know, “We would like to see that meeting department.” And, you know—and they had evaluated the—the, you know, his transcript of record. And it—communicated with the Philippines, I think. And then, it was reversed. Ours is reversed than yours over here.

So, it is at the time a culture to change, you know? But right now in the Philippines they had changed that. The re—the recent education, right now, they had changed that. Uh, actually, the education in the Philippines was … kinda … different from here, in America. Not all 100%, but they—they—different from here where—you know, where they can be admitted to here, too. So I think they have to learn that. They learn from that point.

And, um, my challenge here, when I was in Methodist, I start from the beginning. [covering face] Oh my God, you know. I—I never been, you know—I—oh I don’t want to be …. At first I was just—the first three months we had here, I struggled. I don’t know. We are … like nurse’s aide. We, uh, took temperature, blood pressure, clean the patient. You walk the patient. And I said, “Oh my God, mommy this is what I—” you know I told my mother. “This is what I’ve seen.” And what I—you need to do, you know. This is not a challenge for me. And they said …. So I just prayed and they said—my mom said, “You cannot reach the other side of the river without, you know, canoeing yourself, you know. There are some treacherous point in time
before you get to the other side. So, do your own.” Meaning, you know, it’s a cross, you know, a heavy cross for you to carry, and so carry it, you know? Jesus carried it, and you carried it too. So, I didn’t—I kept that in mind. And, um, the tool that I will never forget is the, um, proverbs that I’ve learned. If there’s a will, there’s a way. So, I—I always stand up for that.

[0:15:38]

And so, when I was at Methodist, I came as a nurse’s aid, even though I was a—of course we are just graduate nurses because we have to take the board exam. Until I took my board exam, uh, we upscalated (?) your—ourselves. You know, from nurse’s aid, then I was now a reg—regular R.N. After the regular R.N., I was a charge nurse. I escalated myself quickly. And, you know, I was a charge nurse, then a head nurse, then, you know. So I see myself progressing. And, here Methodist have given me wide array of expertise. Whatever, what I want, you know, I can challenge it. So it was a challenge for me.

I am so proud that I—you know, I went into cardiac research. I went into open-heart surgery. I went into neuro research, and, uh—and then I went into just regular, you know, uh, head nurse. And then … after that … I was so grateful with working with doctors with Baylor College of Medicine because Methodist, you know, was, uh, oh, oh, working with Baylor at that time. I think I now—the new thing now is they are separated, huh. Well, anyway, that was—they had a clue (?).

So, uh, I was … it was a challenge you know. [laughs] I really—I’m gratified thinking over it—over it right now, I’m gratified. I’m satisfied. I’m so confident that I am grateful that the Methodist have given me all those chances. This country … yes. I was so grateful that have given me the opportunities. So, [scraping sounds] my challenge in this country, I want to give back where I can, what I can give back. It’s sharing, and it’s communicating. It’s rewarding, gratifying, and it is also, you know—with what education has given to you, you can not only make a difference to yourself, but to the rest of the people. Like you now, interviewing me, your purpose is—I know what it is, you know. Your purpose is to be a fruitful person in the future.

TP: Yes.

VT: To be—to challenge what future gives you and to make a difference to the people.

TP: That’s correct.

VT: [overlapping] In front of you and beside you. [making hand motions] On your side, on this side. So, really, you know, uh, uh, to me it is rewarding.

TP: Okay.

VT: And I can say myself that I—I can—I put up myself into this situation that has given me an opportunity to grow and make a difference. If I have not had surgery, I still have to make difference. Even though I am recovering now. I have been recovering, you know, for three years. I want to make a difference. So coming here [to the interview] this is partially a little tidbit of making a difference. Isn’t it?
VT: And to me. And, uh, I want more, you know, to come back home, where—I went home last year, um, last weekend of May. And they retrieve me to come back, you know, when my husband died, you know. I was, you know, not expecting that. The last week of December. So I have to come back. But there I bought a land where I have—make a—a, you know—uh, like a little hospital, you know, for the aging. And, eh, so that’s making, you know, difference to my brothers and sisters, you know, to the elderly, who are poor, who cannot take care of themselves, who are destitute, you know, that are n—no resources. So, I am paying that land right now until I finish. And—and—and I hope—that is my wish. But my—I have started already. And I want to do that. You know, whatever God gave me, I will offer it to them. And, uh, um, I want to—that one way is making [jingling sounds] a difference to them. That one way is giving back to them what they had given me to grow up, you know.

I still can remember, you know, when I went to school before, the culture or tradition at that time was we don’t have—for example—we don’t have, uh, what do call this? We didn’t have, um … what to call this? Um, uh, when you put your food and wrap it in foil. We don’t have the foil. We only have banana leaves. And we—that banana leaves we cut it up, and you know did this. And then we throw the—the leaves, you know, on—on the fire and it will be, you know, eh, not an—just—just like the green turns to yellow-green, and that’s enough for you to put (?) your food in. That’s our foil before. See where I came from?

DC: Sorry to—sorry to interrupt, but uh, our device is like really sensitive, so like, uh, you’re—you’ve been saying some really important stuff, but I’m worried that like —

VT: [overlapping] Okay.

DC: —the sound of your ring, like, on the table might like block it out in the transcript, and we wouldn’t want to lose any of what you’ve been saying.

VT: Okay.

DC: So like, it—it’d be great if you could, uh, be a little more careful with the ring sound. Thank you.

VT: Mm. Okay.

DC: Yeah, continue.

VT: So, uh—so what, uh—want me to start? [laughs; DC laughs]
TP: Well you have an incredible life story, we’d really like to go back and ask for more details about your childhood. Could you describe your neighborhood that you lived in, in the Philippines?

VT: Here? In the Philippines?

TP: No, in—when you were younger.

VT: Oh.

TP: Your childhood.

VT: My neighborhood was … not rich.

TP: Not rich?

VT: There would be poor people, you know. But, the neighborhood I came from, you know, were the—they, you know—they struggled to … and when I went home, you know, I didn’t see them. So they … wherever they are …. But I saw some of my classmates and they have—they have, uh, good lifestyles now, you know, because of their children. And, you know, my—uh, my classmates are, uh, struggling to—you know, to get educated. So the—the main purpose are—at that time, our tradition was to get educated. And when you get educated, you have, you know—you’ll have something to challenge, and you’ll have—they said—my grandmother said, “You have a pocket in your money. Oh! Money in your pocket.” [laughs] So, if you don’t have education, you know, it’s—you cannot, you know, find means of living. That’s what they say.

TP: Now, the phrase “not rich” might have very different meanings in America and the Philippines. What kind of struggles did the people face in your community?

[0:24:43]

VT: Mm. Sometimes, uh, you know, like them—the people that around us—they don’t have land, or they—because we do farming, and if you have farmlands, you know, you can—you have at least to sustain yourself, you know, and leading yourself. But they had to work for those who have lands. And when they work for those who have lands, you know, they are remunerated, not salaried, remuneration, you know, given you know what enough you have done, what, you know, you can be given, what your work had provided. So, they work for the people who are middle class and upper class.

TP: Were your parents farmers as well?

VT: Pardon?

TP: Were your parents farmers as well?
VT: My parents, you know … luckily, my grandparents have lands, you know. So, we survived from that. And my parents work. My father is an engineer, uh, at that time. And my mother is an English teacher. And historian. [laughs]

DC: So you said that you—uh, on your consent form you speak a number of different languages. Uh, when—what language did you speak at home and when did you learn the—your other languages?

VT: Okay. We have our native language, you know, our native language. Philippines is divided into like three different situation. These three sections speaks different languages. And mine and—lo and behold, there are too many languages, and I cannot control that. But, in my area, it's Visayan language, which is the common language, you know, among us people. And English, you know, is when we go to school. We don’t learn English until grade three. [laughs] But right now, they have—I cannot believe it. They have kinder; they’re speaking English. So, as I told you, it’s tapered down here. And, I mean it’s a challenge for us to cross by, you know. And, uh, at the time, we don’t, you know, I was—I learned English, you know, gradually from my mother, my parents, and in school, you know, when I was in grade three. And our English language is mostly in college. High school and college. High school if you are in the nuns’, you know girls—school for girls, you know, you speak English. And if they catch you, they are—you are penalized, you know, speaking in your own dialect. Because they want to improve—you to improve, you know, your English communication. So, in college, too, it’s English language, too.

TP: So when did you learn Tagalog and Spanish?

VT: Uh, oh, back in the Philippines. Our area, since the—the Visayan Islands mostly speaks Spanish.

TP: [very quietly] Okay.

VT: Uh, because in—during the World War II, uh, Spain discovered Philippines. Is—was King Philip’s. And, you know, the tradition of the Spanish people had been brought to the Philippines. So, mostly at my age and below, you know, they can speak Spanish. My mom, you know, speaks Spanish frequent—I mean fluently. [pause] But it’s—now that, you know, I’m—I’m not, you know I’m not really geared to because they took it off, you know, and—the Spanish, they took it off from school. Spanish is our, uh, also accredited units that you have to pass. So bringing—bringing—bringing it up to school is a better communication, better, you know, uh, language, uh, understanding. And, uh, a bet—a better, uh what you call? Uh, um, a better way of communicating and understanding. And in—the Spanish here is quite different than our Spanish. Because the Spanish is mostly Mexican. Isn’t it? And the Spanish over—that we learn is mostly from Spain.

[0:30:21]

TP: Now you said Philippines is divided into three different regions.

VT: Yeah.
TP: What was the name of your region?

VT: The Visayan Island, which is where—where I came from.

TP: Okay.

VT: The Mindanao Island. And the Luzon Island, where Christy came from.

TP: And what was the name of your town?

VT: Dingle. It’s, uh, Dingle—it’s also spelled in English.

TP: Okay.

VT: D-I-N-G-L-E.

TP: Okay. [pause] Can you describe what your school was like growing up?

VT: When I was growing up?

TP: Yeah.

VT: My school is very strict. It’s run under—by nuns. And … it’s just li—you remember, you know, your military here? It’s similar to that, you know. You have to walk, like, you know—but they want you to walk. [laughs] You have to smile when they want you to smile, you know. You have to—you know always to say “excuse me,” “pardon me,” or something like that. You always have—it’s mostly, uh—you know, I can tell now it’s a respectable attitude, you know, where you—but I learned through that. I learned to, you know … very well, I learned a lot of, you know, being so cordial, [laughs] and so, uh, respectable. And … not, uh—what do you call—meek and humble, you know. You don’t have to be open, proud yourself, pride yourself, you know [indistinguishable]. You know, at that time, on my culture—at that time my tradition is, you know, the more quiet you are, the more reserved you are. That’s what they want you to be. If you’re quiet, you’re reserved. Meaning you speak up only when you know; when you are, you know, talked to; when you are, uh—what do you call—you have that talent. So, they said—and my—one of the nun tells me, you know, “Oh she’s quiet, but she is—she has the guts,” you know. You would say here “guts,” but we don’t say that where—that word. We never heard that word in our country in—at that time. But, it’s mostly understanding. You have the talent. You have the knowledge, and you have the expertise.

TP: And you attended Catholic school all through high school?

VT: Right.

TP: Okay.
VT: All through the years of education.

TP: Where did you attend college?

VT: What?

TP: Where did you attend college?

VT: Oh. [pause] St. Paul College of Nursing.

TP: In the Philippines?

VT: In the Philippines.
TP: Was that in your region of—the Visayan Island?

VT: No, in Manila.

TP: [very quietly] Okay. [normal volume] Why did you choose to pursue nursing in particular?

VT: To pursue…?

TP: Why did you choose to go into nursing?

VT: Oh! Good question. Our public health nurse, when I go home, I always see her with a medicine bag, you know, walking, you know, along the plaza. And I said—you know, we don’t have means of transportation at that time. If you have means of transportation, you are extremely rich! So, she crosses from the plaza and, you know, I could see from our, you know, top (?) window, from our house. I said, you know, “Oh gosh, you know. She’s in uniform.” She is—her uniform—she’s an ar—she looks like an army nurse because it’s all starched, you know. Oh, I said, “So … clean and nice and very good and …..” And so, it mentored me. Not until I came back from here. I went back 1980 … ‘83, and was able to tell her that, you know—that it was through her that I had—it had mentored me silently in my mind that I want to be a nurse. And, too, at that time to be a nurse is also a—uh, helping other people. Being a nurse at the time on—on my—you know, at my time is serving more to the people and not more about money. So, you know, what—how much I earned at that time? 78 pesos. 78 pesos are probably only two dollars in here. [laughs]

[0:35:44]

TP: That was 78 pesos a month?

VT: Mm-hmm, right. But I can smile now. I can, you know—I was able to be, uh, part of the community. It’s about sharing. It’s about, you know, a good Samaritan. It’s about, you know, like your parents are sick, you know, “I’ll take care of it. Don’t worry. I’ll take care of her.” You know, it’s about that tradition, that culture. So, it’s more of giving rather than receiving.
DC: So you worked in the Philippines after you went to college?

VT: Yeah, I work—I work only one year.

DC: Okay.

VT: But, you know, you know, as I told you, I was getting—I was doing my undergraduate studies. You know it was kinda hard. Then, after that one year, I moved down here. It was, uh—it was quick.

TP: So you spent five years in nursing school in the Philippines?

VT: Mm-hmm.

TP: And then you worked one year, and then you came to the U.S.?

VT: I come here in, uh—what do you call this? ‘71?

TP: ‘71, okay. And you graduated from nursing school in …?

VT: Hmm. In ’69.

TP: Okay.

VT: I took my gr—graduate studies, you know. So I, you know, I had not finished it when I left. But when I came—uh, went back, I finished it.

TP: Okay.

VT: And they gave me a chance, you know, to finish it. I was given, you know, uh, a temporary, you know, time, you know to finish it, as long as I finished it and at that—this—this time, now you are given only about five years. So, over here, when I work at Methodist—at after I left Methodist, we moved down to, uh—what you call this? To Spring? It was hard for me to—to, you know—to travel to here because at that time there’s one way going down and one way going up. So, there was no freeways at that time. So it was hard. It takes about sometimes two hours to get here from our place. I—I did that for almost a year. And then, the next year, I said, “No this is not for me.” I had to find another job, you know, close to the area. And the way—at that time it just so happened there are m—m—you know, hospitals, you know, growing up in that area. However, I didn’t went back to the hospital. I went as a director of nurses in the healthcare. For the—you know, it’s a long-term care now. You call it long-term care, the aging. So, I been a director of nurses for at least five years. [overlapping] Differ—

TP: And that was in the Spring area?

VT: Uh, here in Houston.
TP: Okay.

VT: In different places. And I was glad. Because, through that, it had opened a lot of possibilities for me. That’s what after—after I finished my graduate studies. Opened a lot of possibilities for me that I know how to lead. I know how to organize. I know how to, you know, administer, and to be more cost effective, and to be efficient and effective at the same time.

TP: Why did you choose to immigrate to the United States?

VT: [inhales] 1) to learn more technology in medicine, or in nursing, and to—and improve myself, you know, according to the needs of the technology. Oh, you know, by educating, by learning, by participating, by sharing, communicating, and confidently doing, you know, what, you know, needs to be done like open-heart surgery, you know. I can attend an open-heart surgery. But, not now because now is quite different that where I was before. So, yearly—yearly or how often it is, it changes through the years. Isn’t it? Yeah. So you grow up with the change.

And, it brought me—I was able to help my—my, um—my brother’s children. I sent them to school, I was able to help them, you know, to finish—finish their career. Not 100%, hmm, 80%, 75%, you know, 78%. But they were able to finish because at that time, you know, they need help. They—they have—school is very expensive. And you have to let them, hmm—grow them. And I had help at least 12 people, so that’s encouraging, isn’t it? So it’s giving back. I don’t ask for what is—you know, for me. No, I just want to help. So, that’s—for me, it’s more of gratification. It’s more of rewarding and whether they remember it or not, it’s okay.

TP: So you’re saying that by coming to the U.S., you were able to make enough money to provide your nieces and nephews opportunities?

VT: [overlapping] Yes, I—mm-hmm, and to improve themselves, you know. I was able to—uh, what you call this? More of helping them out from here to there. But from here I was able to participate and be a partner in any, you know, occasion that I can be—you know, make a difference. Not monetary because, you know, the same amount of money. And—but—with you know, my expertise, meaning, you know, what I’ve learned being a nurse.

TP: When you came to the U.S., did you plan to stay here for the rest of your life?

VT: Hmm, that’s a good question. Um, for the rest of my life …. They said there’s no place like home. … But what God gave me, I will accept it, here or there. And if, you know, my—my mission or my—my projects, you know, will materialize, you know, I may probably go over there, and, you know, come back here, learn more or whatever, you know. Opportunities will be given to me. And I will bring them to improve themselves. So it’s about the technology, improvement of yourself, sharing, and, you know, uh, making a difference. [sound of doors closing]

TP: So, when you continued your schooling, you said you went back to the Philippines?
VT: Yeah, I went back to the Philippines to finish my graduate studies.

TP: Why did you go back to the Philippines to finish schooling rather than completing it here?

VT: Because here I have to work and I have to go to school at the same time! And ‘cause, you know, I’m not used to that. I tried it, you know—I tried it for—oh God, you know, I’d been enrolled at Texas Woman’s, you know, but, I think I stayed only for about two months or three months in. I—I cannot, you know. I said, “I need to give up this.” But I’m used to because that’s where I got, I think, you know, the culture I’m used to, study, study, study, and that’s it. And then finish it, and there you go. And explode, [laughs] you know, when you’re done. So that’s it. So at least they gave me an option, you know, to finish it when I went back.

DC: So the hospital held your position open while you completed your education in the Philippines?

VT: Oh. I was a director of nurses in the long-term at the time, and they gave me, you know, that amount of months, you know, to—oh, uh, what do you call—to leave.

DC: Mm-hmm.

VT: And then, I come back, and then be—director of nurses, and come back—go back again to finish it. So, that’s what I told you, the opportunities, you know. If you challenge it, if you are a good person, a good employee, or a good, you know, uh—let me see—a provider of your expertise, I think, you know, they can reward you at the same time. And I never expect that, but it did happen.

TP: So how long did it take you to get your graduate degree?

VT: It take me 18 months.

TP: Going back a little bit, what was your first impression of the United States when you first got here?

VT: A land of opportunities. … So the opportunity is open, wide array, but you have to challenge it. And you have to endure, you know, what comes with it. [laughs] But you have that challenge, that endurance, equals success.

TP: So what were some of the cultural differences that you saw that really struck you?

VT: Oh! [laughs] Let me give you a little …. When—the first few years here—the first year, I was here …. So, you know, when you are an employee at a hospital, you go to cafeteria, isn't it? And I said, "Oh my God, they're eating grass in here." I—so I wrote my mother, “Mom I need to go home because, you know, people here are eating grass.” [TP and DC laugh] It's about salad. [laughs] You know, you got all the spinach and celery (?), it looked like grass to me, you know? I said “Oh my God, they're eating....” And then when we come back I told my supervisor, said,
"Mrs. Woods … " So what did you eat, you know?" Because she likes me very much, and I said, "Oh, I ate, you know, this and that." Fried chicken because I—I [TP laughs] read in the—on the board fried chicken, and I only—I don't eat beef. And the only thing they had is fried chicken. "Oh, I'll get fried chicken." Lo and behold fried chicken is not fried chicken. [laughs] It was beef. So I'm allergic [TP laughs] to beef.

**TP:** Oh.

**VT:** And I had severe stomachache. And I start throwing up [indistinguishable] …. That was later on, when I was at—back to the—to work. But that was—that was some, you know, uh, history for me. It was—it’s something that I can laugh behind and think about it. And the salad that, you know, all green. You know, it’s not lunch. You know, all green and you have to eat it raw. I said—I thought it was grass to me. [laughs] So that's it. But, of course I like it now. [laughs] It was good. It is good.

So, it's about learning culture isn't it? And adjusting yourself to that. The culture—if you go to the Philippines, you will learn our culture more. If you come here, you will learn culture more gradually, and, you know …. So it's about, history is learning culture, sharing, and communicating, you know, the right way. Oh, what it is. Like, I told you that foil is, you know—we have banana leaves before instead of foil. So now—they have foil now in Philippines, you know? I don't know when it started, but it was a culture that you had to compare, you know. It's challenging.

[0:49:59]

**TP:** When did you nationalize to the U.S.? Have you gotten your citizenship?

**VT:** Yeah.

**TP:** When did you—

**VT:** 1988.

**TP:** 1988.

[pause]

**VT:** Oh, I didn't know that, that I have to get nationality. And I said, “Oh, I don't want to be nationalized. I want to be Filipino forever.” [VT and TP laugh] And that—and my husband said, "No, you have—we have to go for citizenship. You have to go for citizenship." Because I was first, he said, “You have to go for citizenship.” “Oh, what do they do in citizenship?" And he said, "You have to learn." And we have to go to the immigration, you know, to get some quizzes, exam or something like that. It's learning. Who was the first president? [laughs] What was the—what the flag stands for? You know, all of those. What is the, uh—the—the fence, you know, over here? What—for border (?). Also, it's learning. And it was—it was gratifying because I learned [TP coughs]—I learned to learn who was the first president who was until the 35th president, until the 38th, 45th president. So and it, uh—I know that. It's—it’s a learning process.
DC: Do you identify more as a Filipino or as an American at this point?

VT: Both. [laughs]

DC: That’s good.

[pause]

TP: Do you like Houston?

VT: Hmm?

TP: Do you like Houston?

VT: Yes. Yeah.

TP: How have you seen Houston change since you've been here?

VT: Sure, sure. Uh, in front of my eyes, you know. This, Rice University hadn't grown up. Of course, this is my first time I came here, but I can see you from the hospital [laughs]. You know, I can see this place from the hospital. And, when I'm working I'm like, “Oh my God, you know that's the elite hosp—you know, school that they have here in the …” I heard about, you know, Rice in [indistinguishable several words]. I'm a—a wide reader, so I read about Rice University. I said, “Oh, you go only there if you're smart. You go only there, you know.” So [TP laughs]—so all this, I learn. Oh, I can see from Methodist Hospital, Baylor College of Medicine, all the rest, you know. So it has given me and, uh … that Houston had grown at least 95%. [TP sniffs, coughs] I give that five percent because I want to grow more. [laughs]

TP: What different neighborhoods in Houston have you lived in?

VT: [DC clears throat] Here in the Braeswood area. When I was working with, uh, Methodist—oh first ever I was work with this was I was living in the dormitory here. And [TP coughs] then Spring area, and Woodlands area. Now Pearland. My sis—so … I can tell you more about that, but that’s all. I don't go from places to places, you know? The only—limit—limited, you know, I—I went to Las Vegas. I don't want to come back there [all laugh] because, you know, I'm not used to playing games, you know, or something. Uh, I just want to go there because I was my old school reunion. And I went to New Jersey. So let me tell you, I think probably I went to only 10 places. San Francisco, California, uh, New Jersey, New York, where else, Dallas. [laughs] That's all I've been. That much. … So I can tell you that Houston has grown a lot.

TP: How have the different areas in Houston that you've lived in, how have they been different from each other?

VT: Yes. Uh, living in Spring area is quite different than Houston area. [papers rustling] Uh … then also living in— in Woodlands, in …. They—they have that … I ca—I don't want to say this
because I know this is … This is, "oh they live in Spring area they are this. Oh they live in this, this." No, I want all be the same. So I treat everybody the same.

[0:55:18]

DC: Are you involved in any communities around the Houston area? Such as religious communities or, uh, Filipino communities?

VT: [overlapping] Oh. Not the Filipino community—

DC: Mm-hmm.

VT: —only religious communities.

TP: Catholic communities?

VT: Mm-hmm. Catholic communities.

TP: What kind of things do you do with other Catholics?

VT: Oh, uh … we do a rosary group—you know, those that are in groups, you know, do the holy rosary groups that, you know, uh—it's mostly a religious groups in—you know, that will do every first Fridays of the month you have—we stay in the chapel for 24 hours. You know, so it's like penance, you know, like, you know, uh … It's mostly—I can see that, you know, it has deepened my, you know, religious, uh, affinity, my Catholicism. It had deepened my, uh, uh—my faith. And it has also, [TP sniffs; coughs] you know, the … my, oh, uh, [TP breathing deeply] understanding other people that’s around me. [scraping sound] And, mind you, you know, our present priest right now is Vietnamese. So I can say that, “Look, you know, no one is—is, uh—everybody is accepted by God, you know. But no one is left behind, you know. Anyone that can struggle can be up there.” But that's me. You know, that's my—my—oh, judgment. So everybody can be a president if they want to. [laughs] You can be a by—a president if you want to, yeah.

TP: I'll keep that in mind. [DC laughs]

VT: I will. [TP laughs]

TP: Can you tell us about how you met your husband?

VT: I met my husband when I was in the Philippines. I working in the hospital. I met him [indistinguishable] when he was visiting a friend that was hospitalized. And their own, uh—it was a quick acquaintances. And then I—I knew him three months before I left Philippines. And he went to the ends of the Earth to come over here so [laughs] I think that was true love.

TP: Aww.
VT: [laughing] What do you think?

TP: That's very sweet. [pause] Do you have any children?

VT: Two.

TP: Two?

VT: Mm-hmm.

TP: Boys or girls?

VT: All girls.

TP: Okay.

VT: And they are grown up now.

TP: How old?

VT: Older than you. [laughs]

TP: [laughing] Okay.

VT: They have children, two and two, all girls, too. [laughs]

TP: When you were raising your daughters, was your Filipino culture important in the way you were raising them?

VT: It was hard because you know you want them to raise, you know, partially with your culture and their environment has—is so different, you know? Trying to, un—you know, to—re—you, know—untouch—you’re (?) by (?) yourself. You know, like, you want them to be congregated (?) like this, but they’re—you know, once they are outside, you know, there's a different situation. So—until they were going to—to study. And when they were in high school, one—I—the incident that never dissatisfied me is one of them in the school bus, you know, told them, you know not to get up to—to—not to get up because they are not American. And it hurts me. And they said, you know, “You're an [indistinguishable]. You have to have a passport.” And the kids doesn't know what is passport. And, you know, I … I—I cannot believe that had happened, but it had happened. The word prejudice to me has never had a lingo. We never knew. My mom was a teacher, English teacher, but she never tells me, she never—I never—even in the dictionary, I never come across the word prejudice. It's only here that I learned by history, by television that the word prejudice has a meaning.

[1:00:45]

TP: Do you think you personally experienced any of that prejudice or discrimination?
VT: I did, through that—my children, and also at work. Now you ask it, at work, but, I challenge it.

TP: Can you elaborate? What happened at work when you were discriminated against?

VT: Okay. I was … [laughs] so, yearly you have evaluations, isn't it? So I was evaluated, and then I was evaluated. You know, A is for excellent. You know, uh, there are good, better, best, excellent, you know? [banging sounds] So (?) they (?) say (?) …. And I said, “Why I don't get this? [TP coughs] Why I don't get this excellent?” You know, I question my—you know, I— "No, I'm not getting that.” That was not only the first time I was evaluated. When I was evaluated the first few years—years, I was—it was okay. But when I was able to know, you know, the process of evaluation by reading their policy and procedure. I come across their policy and procedure, I said, “What?” And that entice me to open up more. And then I just kind of, you know, scanning, scanning, you know, when you're not busy, scanning.

And then one day, I was evaluated, and when I was evaluated, I only good—I only get good. Good—excellent—what is that—what is before excellent. I think better, or [TP coughs] better—better—good, better, or something like that. Anyway, so I said, “Why I didn't get …? What was …?" I was okay with the rest, with the way—I—I let it go. But this … [indistinguishable] My uniform I—I only good—get good, good, good. I said, “I come to work clean. I come to work pressed,” you know? Back home, you always—with the nuns, you always have to have an ironed uniform. I—my uniform is ironed. I iron my uniform. And my shoes is clean and white and or something. So why don't I get that E? I said, “Look.” I said, “So-and-so's uniform is it white? You know, this and that. I didn't see their evaluation, but, you know. [indistinguishable several words.” And then I challenged the rest. And they said, "Oh you have a good evaluation and you get, you know, this and, uh, you get—you get a raise." I said, "My raise was enough to buy potato chips and coke." [TP laughs] You know what I mean? 35 cents. I will never forget that.

And I said, “Well.” I said, “No, I wouldn’t—and you know …. No, this is not me.” I told—I told my husband, I said, “Oh, you know, honey I had—I was evaluated." And he said, “Oh, so how was it?” I said, “You know it's good.” And I said, “I have 35 cents." "What!? You know, 35 cents?" Because, he's—he’s also a—one of the—you know, he come up himself, you know, as a CEO or something, [indistinguishable several words] physical, uh—what you call this? Uh, whatever [indistinguishable several words]. It’s managerial (?) physical. Anyway, then he said, “What? 35 cents?” You know? “That's not even buy you a potato chips." You know, and this and that. I said, "Oh I know. That's what I said to ‘em myself."

[1:04:44]

And he said—so next time I said, "I'm not going to sign this." Oh! The supervisor retaliated with me. Why don't I sign it because it's a good evaluation. I said, "No, I'm not satisfied. [scraping sounds] I'm not satisfied.” And he said, "So?" The director of nurses on that department—see I'm the head nurse and the supervisor and the director of nurses, so I have to—two more people, you know? And he said, “So I'll give this to Miss Bajerky (?).” I said, “Okay.” Miss Bajerky was—I will never forget she was so nice with me. She is so nice with me, and she
knows me. And the other person, so she was on vacation. It was Mrs … whatever, I forgot now. Mrs.—I think Mrs. White or something.

Anyway, and she told the—she told the supervisor not to—for me to not to come to work. But I was already at work. And she said, "Oh miss, uh, you know, you have to go home," I said "Why?" And said "You know, you are not on the schedule." "Why I'm not on the schedule?"

They said, “You know, so-and-so Miss, uh, the director, you know, told me [scraping sound] that.” “No,” I said. I brought it instead of going back. I—I was in research at that time. I said, “I'm going back to the main, uh, building.” I told them—you know, so, “I'm going to the main buil—” I mean I was at the annex, you know, for … I went—I went to the main building on—on their—on the Methodist bus.

And instead (?), you know, I—I went to see Mr. Cunningham. Mr. Cunningham was the one who accepted me directly from the Philippines to here. And Mr. Cunningham told me—and he said, "Miss—Miss Tadeo, you know, uh, I have to see all your records, you know." I said, "Okay." I didn't know that, you know, the whole—my records would be, you know, opened. So, "And I will give you an answer the next day. 10:30 in the morning."

So 10:30, I was cleaning the floor, I was on my knees, you know, cleaning the floor, washing the floor. And he said—then the telephone rung. I forgot all about it. And he said—Mr. Cunningham said, "Oh, Mrs. Rodney (?)", uh, Miss—Miss Tadeo, I'll give you … I—I—I got all your records. And your records, all the five director of—of nurses want you back to their department." Because I was in research. And he said, you know, this and that. So what, uh … so I was … oh—you know, I—I said, "What—what for?" And he said, "Ms. Rosa wants you back. [indistinguishable word] they want you back [indistinguishable] this and this and that." I said, "So, what happened to my evaluation?" And he said, "Report tomorrow, and you'll get 387. 387 dollars raise," Ooh! I said I didn’t know. So I'm not an accountant you know. [VT and TP laugh]

I told my husband when he got home, and he said "Ooh! That's good." He said, “I'm glad.” You know, my husband was not glad about the money, but glad that I can stand up for myself. So that's a challenge for me. From there on, I got my got my footings. You know? I can be who I want to be and who you want me to be if you give me a chance, you know? That— that—that's it. So, there on, I got—I got that—so … ooh … [scraping sounds] it really improved me, you know? I—that kept me challenging, you know, to where I can, so I—I challenged myself to climb up the stairway.

TP: So, back to your kids, have you taught them your native language Visayan or Tagalong?

VT: No. [laughs] Now they ask me, "Mommy, I wish you had taught us, you know, to do this and do that." You know, because they see people, you know, they want to communicate. You know, they cannot communicate, but you just say "hi" and this and that. But they feel better, you know, if they can communicate in our language. But I told them. I said, “You know, when I was teaching you before, you know, you take—you—she tried to, you know, on the table—she tried to hit her sister on the foot, you know. Said, "Look, look." “Oh,” They said, you know—they said, "Mommy is saying about bucket." Bakit means "why," but they said, "bucket of water." [laughs] So they making fun about it. But right now, they want to, you know—they want to—they—I think they have learned that. So they—they can—they can communicate better. They can, you know, make friends better, with—especially, you know, in our area or in our group. And they can, you know, express themselves better. But … their English. They—they cannot understand Tagalog or Spanish.
TP: So, you would say that your daughters have very much embraced their Filipina identity. Would you say that?

VT: Raised Filipino?

TP: Have they embraced their Filipina identity?

VT: What I can say, right? So-so. [All laugh] Oh, they will say you know—"Oh, you know, are you Filipino?" "Oh, yes." You know, they will answer that, “yes,” you know. But, to me they are more of Americanized.

TP: Did you ever take them to the Philippines?

VT: Yes, once.

TP: Once.

VT: They were small. And they want to go back. You know, what it is. And, they want to know more. I think more of, you know, our culture, but to me it's kinda late. [laughs]

TP: How often do you visit the Philippines?

VT: Well, since I came here, since 1971, and it is what year now. And I've been home to the Philippines maybe six times. It's quite expensive to come home, but …

TP: You have two siblings, is that correct?

VT: Mm-hmm.

TP: And they're both still in the Philippines?

VT: My—

TP: [overlapping] Are your siblings, um—did they ever come to the U.S.?

VT: No.

TP: Okay.

VT: Uh, no—my—my sister is, uh, a nurse, too. My brother is an engineer. But life is choose. You have to make a choice isn't it? And your choices must be clear and meaningful. So they choose to be there I guess.
TP: Uh, before the interview you were telling us about how you have two names, would you like to go over that again?

VT: Yes. The priest, one baptized you. That's the culture before, okay, not … culture. One baptized you if you didn't have a name. Uh, two names—it should be a blessed virgin if you are a girl. And a boy it should be, you know, Christ name, somewhere like that or one of the saint's name. However, to me, my parents are very close. They were religious people. And that's only that because the person want to baptize me. No, it's already in born to them, that, you know, that's it. So, my name is Maria, like the Blessed Mother, Maria, but I'm not the blessed mother. [all laugh] I'm sinful. And you know, since my mom and my dad, you know, shared that name, you know. So it's called Ver, Virginia from my mother, Virginia, Ver. And Mateo, for Verma. So back home, when the nuns we are in school, the nuns will call you Maria Verma. They never call you by one name. Maria Verma. Again, those are the cultures at that time when I was growing up. [scraping sounds] Now they can call you, address you when you are in college, address you with your last name. Miss Araño, Miss Tadeo, Miss, you know, Miss Panis or something like that.

TP: What—which of those names is on your birth certificate?

VT: Both.

TP: Both?

VT: Mm-hmm.

TP: Okay.

VT: Maria Verma. And my passport too, the same, Maria Verma.

TP: Okay.

VT: At first when you're learning to write, you know, you don't want to carry that because it's a struggle to write two names, you know? But I guess I was taught, you know, by my mother, you know. Oh, they—you can do that too by shortcut. Maria, instead of María, M-A-period. You can do that too. That's understood by your teachers, and your …

(1:15:16)

DC: Um, what names did you give your children?

VT: Uh, the first one is with—within my husband and mine. Rovi Lynn. So, Rovi is …. My name—my husband's name is Rodolpho, and my name is Verma. So Rovi, R-O-V-I. Then the name—the next name is L-Y-N-N. So my other daughter is Michelle Renee. So she has two names, too. They are not religious. [laughs] That name will not [indistinguishable word], they were given one two names because we have to have two names. And they are [laughs] [indistinguishable several words]. They are not that [indistinguishable several words].
DC: [to TP] Do you have any more questions?

TP: I don’t know. I don't think so, if we want to like round it out?

DC: Okay, so I guess we can just … well, uh, before that, do you have anything to add that you haven't shared?

VT: To question you?

DC: No. [VT laughs] Just like to share—share with the Houston Asian American Archive.

VT: With you?

DC: Yeah.

VT: Again, I am thankful, grateful, fully confident of the opportunities that's given me here. To express myself in my profession and to make difference with people and be learned how to make a difference in the future. And that it's all about educating. Educating means you are going to challenge what's in front of you, what's given to you, and what—how would you be in the future. Uh, and also how would you share that in the future. Remember educating is not only that you should know, but what should people learn from you. So, it is a—a conviction that who I have done this …. Lo and behold, at Methodist, I shared myself. Maybe I'm not the perfect person. I'm not bad. I am satisfied that I was been there, you know, been educated there, learning the technology, learning the im—uh, the changes in medicine and in nursing and the learning of the culture around it.

So, it's—it's a, uh—a wide array of challenge and endurance. When you endure, you have the courage to move on, the courage to, you know, uh, express yourself and be a part of a community and a—be a part of where you start before and you grow up now. Remember when you—uh, when you were a child? It was not like this. When you were a child, you ask your mother. It was quite different now. So you are growing up with the technology. The modern world, where, you know, the past is still important. And history is so important because you can challenge yourself to make better. Oh! That's why there is museum, isn't it? You study the artifacts of, you know, all those times. And—and why we have to study? Because we have to move on. We have to improvise ourself. This is how it was the beginning and how it is now. So it's … you grow with the change. You grow with the technology.

[1:20:22]

There was no [points to phone] this before. There was none of this before [points to other phone]. There was none of this before either [points to glasses]. Your eyeglass, there was none before. And you had to see, you know? But, you are thankful for the modern technology. You're thankful what it is for, and, you know, you're thankful for what is you. So, your professors are your mentors and they are going to drive you where [scraping sound] you can be freely educated and, you know, improvise yourself—improve yourself. And [scraping sound], to them, it's just a challenge. To them, it's gratifying. When you're gone, they said, "Oh, I had Dillon before. Now I—I saw Dillon on the TV! I saw Dillon on the newspaper! I saw Dillon on the Fortune 500!"
See? “Oh, that Chinese man, I know him! [DC laughs] He was just smiling and grinning, but he's now the CEO of the company." So how would you—that's improvement, isn't it?

So life is changing. Life, you go with a change, but you will never forget where you came from. That's—that's why history is important. Where I came from, there was no foil. Now [TP laughs] there is foil. Where I came from, I never knew that I will be here in this country. But they have given me an opportunity. And when I got that opportunity, I challenge. I endure. And you have the courage. You have the benefit. So, you can walk along Rice University and five years from now and see, "Woo! That's my school, and here I am now, so, CEO of this company."

See? And "Oh, I invented that. You know, I invented that." And (?) then (?) … so it would be—what is it? Gratification. Who died? The inventor of the iPhone? He died, isn't it? What is his wife doing right now? I'll tell you. She's making difference in a poor country.

TP: [quietly] Okay.

VT: So she is sharing that, the [indistinguishable several words]. I read it in the magazine. Oh, I think—or it was that magazine, that, you know, she is sharing it to Africa or something like that. So, that's nice. And, of course, she had—her husband shared up here. The iPhone, you carry iPhone?

DC: Mm-hmm.

VT: So she shared—shared that, and then she shared it to other people. So that's good. How is it in the future? Dillon will say—five years from now—oh, Dillon is—is on her airplane, went to Africa, make a difference. Got the African people educated, got the African people, you know, got out of poverty. So, Africa is not only poverty. There are rich people in there, too. Don't you know that? Oh, I guess you know, that there is a farmland, you know, rich in diamond that only one time—when it—it started—they started I think maybe—maybe less than 10 years. A man was going to his farm. And, you know—and he said the—the bright (?) sun (?), it was sparkling. And he just found that, you know. Why is it sparkling? And he kept [indistinguishable several words] Everyday that he went, it was sparkling. And he gotted (?) all that—and that's where the diamonds started. Not all the diamonds, but, you know, that they are rich now in diamond.

[1:25:11]

And, of course, meaning that—that—it was just a stone, so you have to polish it, you know, to make it better. So that's what—now who owns it? It was the—the government. That the government took it away from the people. So that's where the rich and the poor. The poor becomes poor; the rich become richer. And I don't like that. I want to share. So, it's about sharing. And committing yourself.

I got another. You know, it's about, six words you need to remember. There's “seek something good and embrace it.” So, there's a will, there's a way. Look for something good, or seek something good, and embrace it. So just—you gotta embrace it. You have to make a difference, he (?) said (?). So that's—that's a challenge. And that was, uh—that—I read that in the Fortune 500. [laughs]

TP: Oh, okay.
VT: And then … and that's good that—you know, that CEO, he was from Harvard. And, uh … there's a will, there's a way. Anything that, you know—seek something good and embrace it. And what else? There's another one. Uh, I can’t remember. But that—there's a will, there's a way. That's always come into my mind. Others can make it. Why can't I? See? So, if you make it, why can't I, Dillon? Hmm?

TJ: Okay.

VT: See?

DC: Alright.

VT: That's—that’s about it. It's getting educated. Oh, smart is about being SMART. Do you know what is SMART? SMART is, um … uh, what do you call this? Uh … I—is making you a … is equivalent to quality assurance, quality improvement, quality assurance. Uh, uh, oh just—it is "measurable." It is "right time." Uh, it is "action right time." S—I forgot—I forgot the S. But, you know …

DC: Specific!

VT: Specific!

DC: Yeah, SMART goals.

VT: Perfect, thank you! [TP laughs] You’re smart, Dillon. Specific, measurable, action, right, time. Equivalent to quality assurance, efficiency, and effectivity.

TP: Mm-hmm.

VT: See? You can never be in any problem, that's where—again, when I was in my nursing, I had to be SMART. You know [indistinguishable several words] god. The Texas Department of Health surveyed me at this big conference room. God, you know! I'm a foreigner. I'm being surveyed. The—the facility is being surveyed. And, here it comes, you know. They—they tell me what—uh, you know, I can see about, you know, everybody—they say everybody—all the administrator people. And they said, you know, "Miss Tadeo, you have done a lot in this facility. We come to this facility almost yearly, and you have done a lot of improvement." I said, "Oh, that's good."

And, uh … so the conference suggest, you know, “All—are all you seated? You know, isn't it?” I stood up because that's how I was—my culture, you know, back home. You know, if—even in school, you stood up if you are the speaker or you speak for—for yourself. I stood up and said, "The next time you’ll come. I'll be SMARTer. I’ll be SMART." They said … they—they look at me and say, "What is she saying? You know, this little people—person, you know.” This, uh—what do you call this—"this foreigner person." I said, "I'll be SMART. I'll be Specific. And, you know, I’ll be—I'll have more action right time." Ooh! [banging] They said, "That's good." So, the Texas Department of Health at that time, I have learned from them, too,
you know. They have given me the opportunities, you know, to express myself. They have given me opportunities, you know, where I, you know, make improvement. And, you know, they have given me that acknowledgment that they had seen improvement, you know, in what I have done and I have to give them more improvement when they come back. So, if I move from one facility to another facility, they know me where I am. But I guess, you know, they are not there anymore.

DC: All right.

VT: So, they are older than me. There are new people now.

TP: Okay. Well, thank you very much for coming out here today. We really appreciate it.

VT: [overlapping] Thank you two for the time you have given me.

[1:31:13]
End interview