

AN INTERVIEW WITH MAILA AGANON

An Oral History Conducted by Kristel Peralta and Cecilia Winchell

Reflections: The Las Vegas Asian American and Pacific Islander
Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV
University Libraries
University of Nevada Las Vegas

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Claytee D. White
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PREFACE

“Here you can enjoy a little bit more because it’s much cheaper over here. Everything over here is cheaper, except Chinese food.”

Maila Aganon was born in the Philippines to a mother who worked long hours as a teacher and a father who worked in Saudi Arabia eleven months out of the year, returning for a month of vacation once a year. Aganon explains this was a common arrangement, and growing up she was on her own and responsible for getting herself to school. Aganon attended elementary school, an all-girls private Catholic high school, and one year at a Catholic university in the Philippines.

At 16, she emigrated to the United States with one brother and her parents under the sponsorship of an uncle; they settled in San Francisco. Self-motivated, Aganon continued her education at San Francisco State University full-time while also working full-time as an office manager at Allstate Insurance and as a bank teller with Bank of America. After receiving her undergraduate degree in accounting and an MBA in finance, she continued working for Allstate, rotating through as many positions as possible in order to learn all aspects of the insurance business. After leaving Allstate for a risk management position with AAA [American Automobile Association], she transitioned to remote work when she relocated to Las Vegas.

In the nineties, while visiting her parents who had recently relocated to Las Vegas, Aganon invested in a rental property. In 2003, tired of the high cost of living in the Bay area she too decided to move to Las Vegas and settled into her “investment” property. Here, she met and married her husband, started her family, and is part of the growth of the Asian community in Las Vegas. She has worked 30 years in insurance with a focus on risk management and is currently with Caesars Entertainment as Vice President of Treasury.

In the interview, Aganon touches upon differences in language, culture, food, and traditions. Malia loves ‘all’ food but admittedly leaves the cooking to her husband and her mother. When

her mother visits, she makes traditional Filipino dishes such as adobo with fried rice and lumpia, which are favorites with Aganon's children. Agnon compares different traditions and holidays, such as Christmas and debuts, to those in the U.S. While Christmas is prettier 'here' she misses the large family gatherings in the Philippines. When asked about debuts, a type of coming-out party, Maila explains that not being a 'girly girl' she did not have one. Aganon prefers simpler things, such as her marriage performed at a Las Vegas drive-through chapel. She reflects on the growth of the Las Vegas Asian community and the businesses to support them. Aganon feels at home in Las Vegas, never experiencing racial discrimination until COVID and the lockdown.

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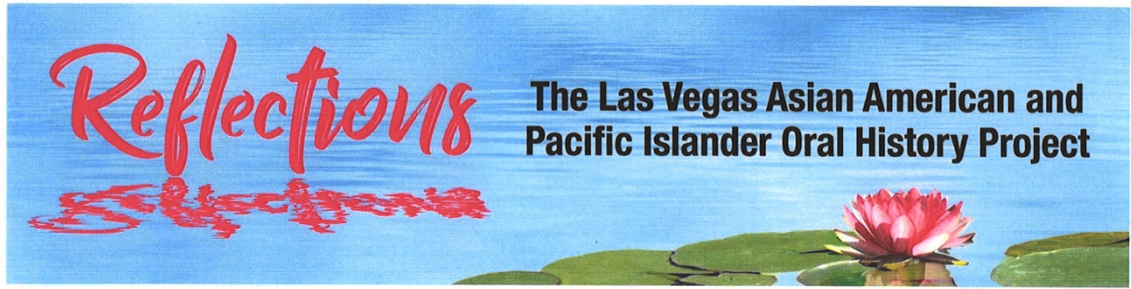
Aganon discusses her childhood in the Philippines, growing up mostly alone as her father worked overseas and her mother worked long hours; attending at an all-girls Catholic High School and one year of university. Aganon recounts the move to San Francisco; differences in environment and education, and attending San Francisco State University while working full-time at Allstate and Bank of America.....1-3

Aganon talks about her parents' move to Las Vegas in 2003 and how she spontaneously bought a house in Las Vegas as an investment during a visit. Aganon reflected on a 30-year career in insurance and risk management at Allstate, AAA [American Automobile Association], and Caesars; and the decision to move to Las Vegas due to the better cost of living and proximity to her parents. Aganon describes life, food, entertainment, getting married and starting a family in Las Vegas, and rising to the position of Vice President of Treasury at Caesars4-6

Aganon speaks about her Filipino heritage, family, culture, and food, including the country's many languages; fluency in three dialects of Tagalog; and her family's favorite dishes, some cooked by her Chinese husband. Aganon talks about the growth of the Asian community, and what she misses about San Francisco; Aganon compares cultural traditions in the Philippines and the United States, such as Christmas and Debuts7-10

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Aganon returns to the topic of food, language, and her mother's traditional dishes such as adobo with fried rice, lumpia, and sinigang; and the availability of Filipino, Korean, and Asian ingredients available locally at stores like Seafood City. Aganon talks about her mother who visited during COVID and could not return to the Philippines, Aganon shares why the family speaks English at home and those that she learned in the Philippines.....17-19



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[Interview June 10, 2021] Good afternoon. This is Kristel Peralta, and I'm here with Cecilia Winchell, Stefani Evans, and Maila Aganon.

Can I ask you to spell your first and last name for the record?

Sure. It's Maila, M-A-I-L-A; Aganon, A-G-A-N-O-N.

Thank you. To start, please tell us about your family and your childhood; how you grew up; any parents, siblings and, schooling you can remember.

Sure. I was born in the Philippines, so I grew up primarily in the Philippines. We moved here to the U.S. when I was sixteen. Our first stop was San Francisco, so I spent ten years over there, roughly, before coming here to Las Vegas. I have a couple of older brothers. One of them was able to come to the U.S. with us. He lives here in Las Vegas as well. Then the other brother lives in Canada.

Could you tell me more about what it was like growing up in the Philippines until you moved?

Growing up in the Philippines is very different from here. It's from the time when there wasn't really any internet or any modern stuff. Growing up in the Philippines, my mom was a teacher, so she was always working, and then my dad, he works in another country. We would typically only see him maybe a month out of a year when he takes his vacation, but for the most part, he's away, and that's not uncommon. In the Philippines, a lot of the parents sometimes would go abroad to earn a living.

Where did he work?

I don't remember the companies, but he went to Saudi Arabia. I was very little.

What was the school like growing up in the Philippines? What kind of friends did you have?

For elementary school, the school was right across the street from my home, so that was pretty easy. Over there, you really don't need adult supervision because basically, practically, you grow up in a village and everybody knows you. I was basically on my own because my mom would have to go somewhere else in a different village to teach and my dad is nowhere around. You just basically live on your own. Obviously, they come home late at night. It's very different when you think about how here in the U.S. I would never let my kid walk to school by himself or something like that. It's very different. That's grade school.

Then high school, I went to an all-girls Catholic school, so I would have to take the bus to go there. It's a very different scene because it's a private school, and so it's just different. It's all girls.

What kinds of things did you and your siblings do in the Philippines when you were growing up?

My brothers are a lot older than me, five or seven years older. I'm not necessarily in their age group, so I didn't really do a lot of playtime with them. By the time I grew up, they were basically away for school in a different city. I just remember having two big brothers, which is so good because I got to learn a lot of the boys' stuff. I got to learn how to ride the bike really early on. A lot of my toys were boy toys because I get the hand-me-downs and it's two boys. I was working with firetrucks rather than dolls. That's what I remember.

When you moved here to the United States, you mentioned that it was first to San Francisco. Why that location first?

When we immigrated over here, we were sponsored by my uncle, brother of my dad, and they live in San Francisco. We went to go live with them first.

How long did you stay in San Francisco?

At least ten years.

What was the culture shock that you experienced moving from the Philippines to San Francisco?

This is a good story. I remember we got here in February, so it was winter in San Francisco and it was dreary gray skies. My uncle picked us up from the airport. I did not even want to go to their house. My first thing is, “Can we please drive to the Golden Gate Bridge?” We did. That was our first stop from the airport, the Golden Gate Bridge. But it was such a big disappointment because it was orange. You know what I’m saying? It wasn’t nighttime when everything is lit up, and I’m going, “It’s orange.” My first thing is the Golden Gate Bridge is orange.

Then as the months go by, the next big culture shock is—remember this is the time of *90210* in the Philippines, and all I see are blond and beach people in the United States. Then going to San Francisco, predominantly Asians, and I’m going, “Wow, where are the blonds?” It’s all dark-haired folks like me. That was a culture shock. I was expecting this beach-like moment, the grand San Francisco Bridge, and it wasn’t quite like that.

How is going to school in comparison to the Philippines, in the United States?

Going to school, it’s different. For me, it’s basically college that I can kind of prepare myself for. When I left the Philippines, I did a semester of university over there. I did not have to work. I basically had to go to a dorm and all I had to do was just study. In the U.S., because we just got here, it’s a different experience for me. I had to work. While going to school full-time, I’m also working full-time. I think that’s a big difference because had I not been working full time, I’m sure I would have been able to experience all the other stuff that you’re supposed to experience in college, like partying. I never did that over here.

Was that drive to go to college and to continue your schooling something that stemmed from your parents, or was it just a personal decision?

No, it's a personal decision. My parents always said that they never had to worry about me doing my homework; I'm always doing that. I never called in sick. I've always gone to school. I think it's a personal drive.

Now let's get into how you moved to Las Vegas. What is the story of you choosing this state, and why are you here now?

This is in 2003. My parents moved here first. I think they moved here in the late '90s. We used to be in San Francisco, and, as you guys all know, San Francisco, even then, is a very expensive city. My parents came here for a small Las Vegas vacation and they never went back to San Francisco. They just decided they were basically going to move to Las Vegas. We had relatives over here, so there is always somebody who can help out in the beginning, and then you go on your own. They were here first.

For me, I did a lot of back and forth. Maybe twice a year I would come and visit them, so that's how I got familiarized with San Francisco. I got a really good job in San Francisco. This is post-college. I started earning a pretty good amount of money compared to where I came from before. I decided it was probably a good time to invest in Las Vegas, in 2003. I came here for the wedding of my cousin, and then I came back home to San Francisco with a house. It wasn't planned. We were waiting for a wedding, and there were so many developments in 2003, and housing was very "hot" here, where you would have to line up or it's a lottery system. Things worked out for me. I went to a place, and I guess the house opened up, and I fell in love with the house. Without any plans, I put down an interest payment or something like that to hold the

house. I bought a home without really thinking that I'm going to move over here, so then I went back home to San Francisco because I was just going to rent [the house] out.

Throughout that period when they were building the house, I lived in San Francisco in a converted garage, kind of like an in-law, and you pay a lot for the rent, and it's the same amount that I would be paying for the mortgage. The house that I bought here, I would consider it a mansion because it's a new house. During that six-month period, I just decided I'm going to move to Vegas because I've got a brand-new house waiting for me, so I did.

When you initially moved here, besides the housing, how appealing it was, what other things drove you to stay here and move here?

My parents, they are also getting old. I figured eventually I need to move close by, so I came. The other part, too, is it's a lot easier here than in San Francisco because in San Francisco you would have to spend a huge amount of your pay on housing where here you can enjoy a little bit more because it's much cheaper over here. Everything over here is cheaper, except Chinese food, is what I've learned. It seems like it's cheaper, Chinese food, in San Francisco than over here, but everything else is cheaper here.

Where did you go to school in San Francisco?

I went to San Francisco State. I did my accounting degree and I also did an MBA in finance over there, although I did go to UNLV for one semester—my last semester of my MBA is at UNLV—so I took a couple of business seminar classes in UNLV—so I'm an alumni, I guess.

That's great. Now I'd like to get onto your career and how these degrees led way to your current occupation now. Could you tell me a little bit more about that?

You guys have got to stop me if I'm just going too much. My career right now is in insurance. I started in insurance in 1993, I think, so it's been almost thirty years. I started in an insurance

agency. I used to work for an agent and basically, I'm the office manager and I'm licensed, so I do a lot of selling of the insurance as well. This was when I was really young, I want to say maybe eighteen, nineteen. I got the license to sell insurance at that time. It was with Allstate Insurance. What I've done...I really wanted to learn all the facets of the insurance company, so I rotated within Allstate. I did a lot of the different departments of insurance. I stayed with them for about five, or six years. Throughout my undergrad degree, I was working with them full-time. Then on the weekend, I worked as a teller for Bank of America. I worked with Bank of America for five years, so this was throughout my undergrad degree. I also moved cities. I went to Sacramento for a little bit as well, but predominantly it's always in San Francisco.

Basically, my current role is in what we call risk management. Are you guys familiar with risk management?

Please tell us.

Think about commercial businesses, like the big businesses. They all need insurance, worker's comp insurance, insurance for the casinos; that kind of stuff. There are insurance brokers that work with them, and so that's currently my role. I'm an account executive for an insurance brokerage. My clients are mostly the casinos. That's currently my role.

After my stint at Allstate, that's when I moved into the risk management role with AAA [American Automobile Association] in San Francisco. At that time it was for a risk manager role. For large companies, there is a position called risk manager, and basically what that is, is that person that manages all their insurance needs, all their risk management needs. For example, the likes of MGM or Caesars [Entertainment], they do have a risk manager. What they do is they plan for the purchases of worker's compensation insurance, property insurance, and things like that, so your benefits as an example. That was my first role, as a risk manager for AAA. I stayed

there for...I can't remember anymore how many years, but I think it's also around five years because I seem to move every five to six years. I just kind of graduated from AAA. I was with AAA, actually, when I moved to Las Vegas. AAA is based in San Francisco. When I moved to Las Vegas, AAA actually allowed me to do remote work, so that was my first remote work experience a long time ago, in early 2000. Then I moved here.

When I moved here, I got married here. I had kids, and then I decided that I shouldn't be traveling as much because I used to travel between San Francisco and Las Vegas a lot. With a young family, traveling is not really that good, so that's when I switched companies. I went to Caesars because Caesars is based in Las Vegas. I worked as a risk manager for Caesars, and I stayed with Caesars for nine years, eight or nine years. I started as a manager and worked my way up to become a vice president of treasury and risk before I left them.

Awesome. I'm going to backtrack to how you grew up if that's okay.

Sure, yes.

What kind of language did you speak at home? Was it mostly Tagalog or was it a mix?

Now?

Now and then even when you were growing up.

When I was growing up, it was obviously Tagalog. But when I got married, it's English because my husband is Chinese, so he doesn't understand any of the language. Primarily here at home, we speak English, so the kids speak English. I speak Tagalog with my mom, but it's difficult to explain. There are three dialects that I speak in the Philippines. I speak a different dialect depending if I'm talking to my mom or my dad because they have different dialects. It's completely different.

Where are they from?

My mom is from the Philippines; it's called Pampanga, which has a different dialect. My dad is from Tarlac, so he also speaks a different dialect. Then I went to a school that speaks Tagalog. That's why I have to learn all three when I was young.

Oh wow. That's amazing.

SE: *Is that very common?*

Yes. Yes, it's common if you don't live in Manila. If you live in Manila, you'll only speak Tagalog.

But out in the provinces and islands...

Yes, it's common because the Philippines supposedly had over two thousand dialects, and we have seven thousand something islands, so that's why there are so many dialects. But the ones that I speak are the three most common ones.

What kind of food did you eat at home growing up, and what kind of foods did you carry on from that and you're still making them?

I don't cook, so I eat anything that people serve me. I would say that growing up, Filipino food. Now it's Filipino food because my mom is staying with me. She got stuck with me during COVID, so she's not able to go back to the Philippines. We're eating a lot of Filipino food because she's cooking. If my mom's not here, it would be Chinese or American because my husband is the one cooking.

When you moved from San Francisco, what were some of the hardest things that you had to leave behind to come here?

The weather. In San Francisco there are a lot of surrounding cities to go to so you don't have to plan your weekend. If you want to go to Half Moon Bay, you'll be there in forty-five minutes, or to Napa, or wherever. In Las Vegas, we're so far away from any other city that to go anywhere

you have to plan a weekend basically if you go to San Diego or L.A. or Salt Lake; that's it. That's the hard part because in San Francisco there are so many places to go, and there's water, the ocean. Here we've got Lake Mead, but the water is slowly disappearing. But I like it over here because it's twenty-four hours. There is always a restaurant to go to even if it's one o'clock in the morning.

You mentioned that you've been here since almost the early '90s, or is it 2003?

[Since] 2003 here, 1992 in San Francisco.

Okay. Considering how much time you've spent here, what are some of the things you've noticed about the city changing, and how do you feel about the city's change?

Las Vegas, oh my god, it has changed so much. I think we're getting more diversified. When I first came here, I didn't feel like there were so many Asians then yet, and now I think that's slowly growing particularly, probably, in the Southwest area. I know that just because all my favorite Filipino stores are there—like Jollibee is there, Seafood City is there, and I can name a few more. That's why I keep thinking that at least on the Asian population, I think it's growing over here, and I think a lot of it is influenced by California. There are a lot of Asians in California, and it's very expensive, and we're the closest state.

Now I'd like to touch on traditions that you may have celebrated. What kinds of traditions did you have growing up, and what kind of traditions do you carry on now?

Ooh, that's tough because I don't do any. It's very different. Growing up in the Philippines, we're predominantly Christian, and the Christmas holiday is very, very big. It starts in September for us and then the last sixteen or twelve days of December it's even magnified, and you could go to mass until Christmas. Unfortunately in the U.S., it's not something that I was able to carry on. I guess I'm going to answer it with what I am sad about as far as what traditions

stopped that I wish I could have continued. It's never too late, Maila. The whole Christmas thing, it feels like Christmas in the Philippines is incomparable to Christmas over here. I think part of the reason is that it's all about family and relatives, and I have a lot of them in the Philippines. Here, there are not really that many of us. Even if we celebrate Christmas, it's such a small gathering that it doesn't feel the same. I got more Christmas lights here and prettier Christmas tree, but it's just not the same. Does that make sense?

Yes. Did you ever have a debut or anything, or attended one?

No, I never got that. Are you familiar with a debut?

SE: *Tell us about that.*

Basically in the Philippines for girls, when you turn eighteen—is it eighteen or sixteen?

KP: *I think it's eighteen.*

Eighteen. I can't remember. When you turn eighteen it's a big deal, and so it's a party where you're supposed to be introduced to the eligible bachelors or the community or something like that. It's a big party where you dance. It's almost like a wedding without a groom if that makes sense. There is a debut party. There is that big gathering and it's done in a reception hall.

Everybody looks forward to it because you get dressed in ball gowns and things like that. I never did that because I came here.

SE: *Were you planning on doing it?*

I think my parents would have done it, but it wasn't like I was sorry that I never did it. I never even thought about it until now that you asked me. I wasn't a girly girl. I did not even get married in a church. I got married in a wedding chapel here, a drive-through, so it's not a big deal for me.

Have you attended any here?

I did one time. I had a friend, a Filipina friend who still carried on the tradition. It was at Sam's Town Casino, so she did a debut and it was nice.

Are they better in the Philippines, or is it okay here?

I think for those people that actually do it over here, they try to carry over how it is in the Philippines, so it's comparable.

That's good. Now I'd like to touch on some of the more recent events that have been happening in our society, such as Asian hate crimes and COVID-19. I'd like to ask you if you have ever experienced any racial discrimination here.

I did.

Please tell us.

This is post-COVID, and it's in this neighborhood. I walk every morning, early in the morning before the sun even comes out. Actually, it happened a couple of times. The first time I was walking at five a.m. on Alta [Drive], and when I walk, I try to walk on the asphalt because it's better for my feet, and it's five a.m. Nobody is there, there are no bikes, and I stay on the cycling lane because there's no cyclist. Just out of the blue, there was this car that basically tried to run me over, yes, yes. I actually called the cops on that one. I knew that they meant it on purpose because they veered towards the cycling lane and I had to basically jump to the sidewalk because over here there is a big divide, a walking trail. The guy opened—and I know he's a guy because he yelled—he opened the side window and just basically yelled at me to go back to my home country. He said, "Go back to your home country."

SE: *Did you get his license number?*

No. It was one of those where you're like, what just happened? By that time he's already two blocks down.

I'm so sorry. That's terrible.

Yes, yes. The other one—and I don't know if the other one is a racist attack. At least that one, that person said, "Go back to your home country." The other one is also still here, and this is probably about a month later. I think that one was April, so that was April right after everyone was saying 'Kung flu' and all that stuff. This one is in June because I remember it was already hot. I was walking around eleven o'clock in the morning, so daylight. I was just walking. I was not doing anything. A guy just flipped me while driving. It just floored me. I'm like, why? And they're not Asians. I'm going, okay, whatever, you just move on.

How did you feel when those terminologies were passed around, like 'Kung flu' or the 'China virus,' how did that make you feel?

I just feel like they're stupid and I try not to think about it because what am I going to be able to do? I can't do anything. It's their way of thinking and I don't know them. If I know them I will definitely say something.

Did you ever experience bad discrimination in schools or the workplace when you were here, or just recently with COVID?

No, not recently, no.

Before we close I'd like to open it up to Cecilia and Stefani if they have any follow-up questions.

CW: I want to go back a bit. I was wondering if you had any memories of your grandparents.

Yes, on my mother's side because paternal side, I did not see them; they were already dead at that point. On my mom's side, my grandfather actually served with Americans during World War II. He had good stories for me when I was young. He actually participated in the Death

March of World War II. There was a march from one place to another, and they called it the Death March.

SE: *The Bataan Death March?*

Yes, yes. He was part of that. He has a lot of stories about the war, stories about...he also worked at the Clark Air Base, an American airbase in the Philippines, so he had also stories about how life was working at the airbase. That's what I remember about my grandfather.

Then, my grandmother, she is basically just a housewife, so doesn't have any work. But what I remember about her is her [ancestors]. The Philippines was colonized by the Spanish, and so when she tells me stories about her grandparents, they were Spaniards. I know at least that I have some little Spanish blood in me.

CW: *Actually, do you remember any of your grandfather's stories that you can tell us?*

Nothing specific. What I remember from his stories is he mentions a lot of names that I don't recognize, a lot of the generals during that time. He would say, "Oh, General This was here, and I served doing this," but I don't remember a lot. There were a lot of that stories. It's all about war stories.

SE: *And he was really proud of that service?*

Oh yes, yes.

CW: *Religion and Catholicism are very important to Filipino culture. How has that figured into your own life, and how much has it influenced you?*

When I was growing up in the Philippines, I was what I would call a practicing Catholic, meaning I did all the stuff, like going to church, going to Bible school, and a Catholic university and high school, so that was all done. In the U.S., the belief did not change, but the participation

of going to church is what changed a lot. But it didn't really change my way of thinking, so I still believe in everything that Catholics believe in, and I try to instill the same for my kids.

CW: *What were the most important values that you wanted to pass on to your kids?*

The most important values, one is to be fearless. What I mean by that is that you'll go and experience a lot of things if you're not fearful, because you'll try everything. I always tell my kids, "Don't let anybody say no to you. Figure out a way. As long as it's not immoral, it's not illegal, it's not unethical, you can do it. Right? That is what I'm trying to instill, is don't be fearful of anything, and just go and try it.

The other part is to be kind to others. If you're kind to others, others will be kind to you. If you're honest and you're not lying, you're not trying to figure out what you told them before, so just being truthful.

SE: *I'd like to talk about COVID and the way it affected how you do your work.*

Before COVID I traveled a lot. We have an office here in Vegas, but I don't really see that office much because I travel so much. I remember distinctly the day when everything shut down because I just came back from Reno, actually. They basically said everything is shutting down. Right before the city shut down, I was able to get all of the important items in the office; that means I took all my twelve pairs of shoes that are there and brought them all home, not realizing that I would never see that office for a very, very long time. I was traveling. During the month of February, I was only home for three days. I was traveling a lot. When COVID halted it [travel], it was a big shock because, one, I don't go to the office, I'm at home, and [two], I'm not traveling anymore. Setting up the mini office wasn't so bad because I was already traveling and I'm very used to just working off my laptop anywhere I am, so that's not an issue.

I think for me the different part is not going out anymore, not traveling. Everybody now is working from home. Nobody is traveling. Everybody is sending you emails at different times. People don't seem to know the boundary of not working versus working. I'm guilty of that because now you don't have to commute, so what's the first thing that you do as soon as you get up? Unfortunately, turn on your computer and look at your email while you're going about getting ready, doing your coffee, so you're already looking at your email probably much earlier than your typical eight a.m. Then it's the same thing at night. You think you're off by five o'clock, but you're not really because you're going to pass by that laptop again at seven and you're going to look again. *Oh, I'm going to try to send out one more email.* Then you go back and you're thinking everybody is doing the same thing. You're getting irritated that people are sending you emails at seven p.m. or eight p.m., but you're doing the same thing. What I'm finding is that post-COVID, there are so many more emails because everybody is stuck at home. If I was traveling there is a span of time on the plane that I can't send an email, as an example. That has disappeared and everybody is just constantly working.

SE: *Have you gone back to your office?*

No. As a company, we're not back there yet. We're slowly doing our office opening. I think ours is starting probably in August, but it's not a requirement that you go back. At least through the year-end, they're telling us that everybody can still work virtually, and they're only opening ten percent, so it's a slow process. Even traveling is a slow process for us. We're not completely traveling yet. We can travel, but it requires a lot of authorization whereas before you don't need an authorization to travel. Because of COVID, it has to be essential travel. I'm happy that I've already done it.

SE: *With working at home and having a family at home, how do you keep that separate?*

In the beginning, it was very hard because of the distance learning. I have a ten- and a thirteen-year-old. The thirteen-year-old is self-sufficient. It was the best thing for him to stay home. The ten-year-old is very different. I actually took a couple of weeks' vacation to start distance learning. I want to learn what she's going to do because nobody trained us to do distance learning, and those two weeks saw a lot of crying between the two of us. We were crying and there is this guilt about [it]. *Should I call the teacher again? How many calls is this teacher getting because we don't get it?* It was very hard. You feel bad for them because she only had one hour of learning and she has to do everything on her own after one hour. How do you expect her to do it? And I'm working.

Our company is very flexible because they understand that there is a lot of that going on. I just think about those people that have kindergarteners. At least mine is ten years old. I feel worse for those people that have much younger kids. Throughout the year it got better, but I was so happy when they went back to school because it's very challenging because the kids are kids. Even if you tell them, "I'm working," they still pop up on your Webex meeting video, and then they start waving. But everybody is so cool about it. If I'm having a meeting with somebody and their kids pop up, I don't mind being interrupted, actually. I start talking to the kids. I think in that respect, even if we have that kind of interruption, I've never seen anybody rude enough to say, "Hey, don't let that happen again." No, they weren't like that, even clients. Everybody seems to be understanding of all this technological stuff that's going on and all the noises that are happening in the background, so I think that was good in that respect.

SE: *I'd like to go back to...they asked about food. Can you tell us about the Filipino dishes that your mother makes?*

Sure.

SE: *What's your favorite?*

All of the above. She makes adobo. I'm sure you guys have already had it. Adobo is made of soy sauce and vinegar. The palate of Filipinos tends more towards the salty than the sweet side.

Adobo is on the salty side, so she makes a lot of that. She also makes *sinigang*, which is a soup-based food, more on the sour side. She just tries to make different items. It's more for my kids rather than for me. Grandmother doesn't cook for the daughter anymore. She's cooking for my son, really. It's amazing.

SE: *What's their favorite?*

Kyle's favorite is adobo and fried rice.

SE: *And your daughter?*

Haylie's favorite is *lumpia*. *Lumpia* is an eggroll, so that's her favorite.

SE: *And what kind of filling does she like?*

Anything without shrimp because we're all allergic to shrimp.

SE: *Where do you get the ingredients to make these dishes?*

Seafood City, which is a Filipino grocery store, I think they have three stores now in Las Vegas. We go there a lot. We go every couple of weeks. We pick up all our Asian items over there. There are also a couple of Asian-like stores in Spring Mountain that we go to. I don't know if you guys know 168. Also, Greenland for Korean food because we like to dabble in Korean as well, so they have a lot of kimchi and all that. We go to those stores or Costco. The problem with Costco is every Costco trip is three hundred dollars, at least.

SE: *When you arrived in 2003, where did you go for your food or ingredients?*

In 2003, I don't believe they had any Asian stores yet in 2003.

SE: *There was Chinatown.*

Yes, Chinatown, you're right. We would go to SF Market in Chinatown. I think SF Market and Ranch 99 were there then, but they didn't have any Filipino grocery yet at that time. It's mostly just Asian, so that's where we went in 2003. In 2003, it was just me and my boyfriend, now husband, so we really did not need much.

SE: *You said your parents were here in the '90s, but then you mentioned that your mom was here because of COVID.*

Yes, she retired. When they retired they went back home to the Philippines.

SE: *When did they go back to the Philippines?*

2010-ish, I think, 2010, around that time. They are now in the Philippines, so that's where they predominantly live, but they come here a couple of months out of the year during the holidays to see family and see the grandkids, and then they would just go back home. My mom came here for Thanksgiving 2019 and hasn't gone back home because it's so hard to get tickets. We tried two times and two times we had to cancel the trip because of all the quarantine requirements.

SE: *Are your kids learning Tagalog?*

No. I wish that we did that. I think what's hard is because my husband speaks a different language and I speak a different language. I would have preferred that they learned Cantonese. But then if they learn Cantonese, I cannot speak Cantonese. If they learn Tagalog, he can't speak Tagalog. We never attempted it. I figure when they grow older they can figure out what kind of language they want to learn.

SE: *Even with your mother, they speak English?*

Yes. My mom speaks English as well.

Finally, why is it valuable for the university to collect interviews such as yours?

Well, I think it preserves the culture and history, so it's something that you can look back to in ten years, fifteen years from now and see, okay, what was the thinking and thoughts of people then versus now? It's really to preserve historical facts, I would imagine.

That's all we have. Thank you very much.

[End of recorded interview]