

AN INTERVIEW WITH LINH FEE

An Oral History Conducted by 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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Oral History Project

University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2020

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The recorded interview and transcript have been made possible through the generosity of a grant from the City of Las Vegas Commission for the Las Vegas Centennial and funding from private individuals and foundations. The Oral History Research Center enables students and staff to work together with community members to generate this selection of first-person narratives. The participants in this project thank University of Nevada Las Vegas for the support given that allowed an idea the opportunity to flourish.

The transcript received minimal editing that includes the elimination of fragments, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. In several cases photographic sources accompany the individual interviews with permission of the narrator.

The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of Reflections: The Las Vegas Asian American and Pacific Islanders Oral History Project.

Claytee D. White
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PREFACE



“I hope to learn from what I did in my life and give little pearls of wisdom to my kids. Now, whether they’ll listen to me or not, that’s another thing. I said, ‘I’ve done this before. Trust me.’ But, of course, they don’t. And they have to make mistakes on their own just like I did. I did make mistakes. I had to learn where you should work or what types of people you should surround yourself with. I wouldn’t change it.”

From reminiscing about her early days on the shores of Oahu, Hawai’i to her lively household in Las Vegas, Nevada, Linh Fee, the fifth daughter of seven children, details her life, along with some of the valuable things she has learned throughout her journey. Linh was born on June 10, 1974, and raised in Oahu, Hawai’i. Her father, Michael Joseph Fee, had met her mother, Thuy Nguyen, when he had been stationed in Vietnam for the military. Shortly after, the two married and have been with each other since. After the marriage, Linh’s father was stationed in several locations, one of the last posts being in Hawai’i, where Linh spent the entirety of her childhood.

A fond pastime for Linh and her siblings was spending most of her childhood at the beach as an inexpensive way to keep a bountiful family entertained. Linh also explains that her home, though small, was filled with fond memories of spending lots of time with her siblings that her parents

still live in today. Additionally, Linh highlights her mother's upholstery business located in her home while her father continued to work for the military.

Thereafter, Linh went on to involve herself heavily in sports, eventually obtaining a scholarship for Soccer at the University of Hawai'i. Following her graduation with a degree in graphic design, Linh noted that she had a difficult time finding work pertaining to her degree after graduating. After freelancing for a bit, Linh decided to take a chance and move to Las Vegas in 2002 after reconnecting with her now husband Howard Chan, a longtime friend of hers. Linh served cocktails while her husband worked the front desk at hotels, Linh's younger sister joined her a year later.

Linh eventually became bored with her waitress jobs and decided to pursue a different career route, one focused on medicine. Eventually, she opted for a career in dental hygiene where she has found to love the place where she currently works at. Linh went on to have three children and bought a home with her husband and younger sister. In the future, Linh hopes to pursue more of her hobbies and is currently attempting to tackle the obstacles that her children face in regard to their cultural identity.

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February 4, 2022

in Las Vegas, Nevada

Conducted by Cecilia Winchell

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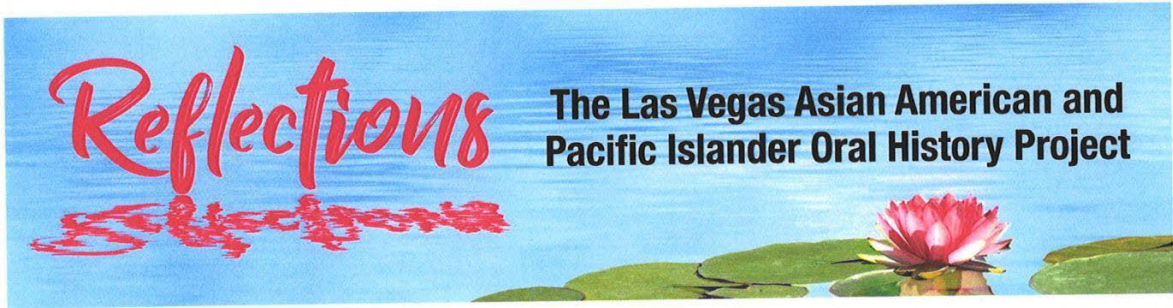
Honing in, Fee goes on to describe her college experience, how she ended up in Las Vegas, freelancing in graphic design, cocktail waitressing, rerouting her career to dental hygiene, attending the College of Southern Nevada, her work as a dental hygienist, how she navigated through her career and finding the place she works at currently, and her experience as a Temping Hygienist. 13-17

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Good morning. Today's date is February fourth, 2022. My name is Cecilia. I am joined here by Stefani Evans and Jerwin Tiu as well as Linh Fee.

Linh, will you please spell your name for the record?

My full birth name is My Linh Fee; it's M-Y L-I-N-H, last name is Fee, F, as in Frank, E as in Edward, E as in Edward. I go by Linh, which is phonetically spelled L-I-N-G, and there's a story already about that. My mom and dad had a deal where if they had girls, my mom, who is of Vietnamese descent, would name the girls, and my dad, who is American, would name the boys. We'll get into that later. But there are six girls and one boy, so that's why we all have Vietnamese first names. We have Catholic middle names. Mine is Catherine with a C. We always went by the second part of our names. My Linh, I went by Linh. My other sister is Que-Tam, and she went by Tam. We never went by the full name. Why? I don't know. One day I asked my mom when we were looking at a map of Vietnam, and there are a lot of places that end in I N H, which is how you spell my name, but she pronounced it with a "vin" or "min" with no G, I asked her, "Why does my name sound like L-I-N-G?" Then she said, "You can change your name if you want." I never really got an answer from it, but my parents have called me Ling ever since I can remember, so that's how I grew up with the name Ling. We all have nicknames, and my dad even nicknamed me Ning, N-I-N-G, when I was a kid. I grew up with the name Ling. That's how I asked you, how do you want me to write my name? It's just I go by Linh now (pronounced Ling) even though the correct pronunciation is Mylinh. So, long story for that, but that's why I have the unusual name. People think I'm Chinese because it's Linh, but I'm not.

Thank you for that. To start off, I would like to ask more about your childhood, your parents, grandparents, anything you know about your family growing up.

I've been calling my parents because I was telling you I don't know a lot of information. My dad grew up in New Castle, Pennsylvania. He was just telling me that his father worked in the same facility for forty or fifty years as a steel mill, I guess, engineer at the time. They would make the machines that would make the steel. He worked in the same place for forty or fifty years, and it was a sad story because he said he had no retirement after all that time. I guess the company was bought and sold a few times, and when they did that – just like here in Las Vegas – they make the employees start all over. It was a sad story. I'm not sure exactly where they were from, but I have some paperwork here that I was telling you before that they did some ancestry things, so you can actually find out where they came from, and you guys can make copies of it. Some stuff you can't really read, but you can maybe find out...I don't remember them too much, my grandparents. My grandmother died when I was young. My grandfather, I think he died ten years after that, in '89, so I wasn't very old.



Tuyet, Lan, and Linh along with their grandparents, undated

But my dad grew up in Pennsylvania, and he's glad he doesn't live there anymore, he didn't care for the cold. They are now living in Hawai'i. My mom is from Vietnam. They met...I've got dates for you guys, which I learned a lot. I knew stuff, but I didn't know dates and all that kind of thing. My dad was in the Army, and he doesn't talk a lot about it, as a lot of them do not because of the posttraumatic experience from that, and so we as kids never asked because that's just what was normal. You just didn't ask. But my dad was born in '39, and my mom was born in '49, so they're ten years apart. She was from a little town near Hanoi, North Vietnam, called...I'm not going to try to pronounce it, H-A, second word is D-O-N-G. I think they met when she was seventeen-ish.

My dad met my mom in '67. It's funny because he says that he can't remember anything, but he remembers quite a bit. He said it was June of '67. He remembers when he was deployed and all that kind of stuff, too. He said in March of '67, he asked to reenlist, and he did this more than once. He reenlisted for six months and then another three months after that. In '68, they got married, and that's when they left Vietnam. In '71, they ended up in Okinawa. My dad said in Phoenix, he was discharged, and his first deployment was to Hawai'i. He told me that he said, "When do I pack my bags and leave?" Because great, right? Twenty-two years there, and he retired after thirty years. He said he got eight years of credit for serving, which was great, putting towards his retirement. In 1995, he retired from a federal job, and then he had to go back to work because in Hawai'i that's what you do. If you don't pay off your house, the cost of living is so high. He went back just for a couple of years, he said, and when he blinked his eyes, it was about seven years. He decided to stay and make the ten-year mark to get another retirement with the state. He's funny because he said he retired twice, once in '95 and once in 2008, and he said that's the last time he's retiring, and he's not worked since.



Linh's mother and father, 1983

My mom, I don't know a whole lot about because she met my dad when she was seventeen. She also retired in 2014. She has basically been with him since he was a teenager, since they met.

Let me back up. My dad has thirteen siblings. I do know that. I don't remember the boys and girls; that kind of thing. They were Catholic, so that explains lots of siblings. My mom is the oldest of four, a brother and two sisters, and I think she still has two sisters living in Vietnam. What I remember...my dad always tells a story where she would squirrel away money when they were together. He told her one day, "You can save money." She would save the money and send it back to her family. How she was brought up, which was very hard, sometimes she gets into it where—she was the oldest, and so even though she was a girl, she was supposed to provide for the family. At a very young age, she would babysit, or she would do these crazy things to help take care of the siblings, babysitting, that kind of stuff, like I said. She said she would have to take food from the baby so she could eat some because they didn't have anything.

I remember as a kid, she would pack up—I don't know if you remember this. They would sell chicken in Tyson chicken boxes. They [student assistants] don't know what I'm talking about. It was a huge block of chicken. It would take all day to defrost it, but it was cheap, and that's how you made dinner. My mom would save the Tyson chicken box and pack it with medicine, boxes of Tylenol and whatever they couldn't get, and she'd wrap it up and send it as care packages every now and then to her family. It was sad because when I got older, she would talk about when she would send money, she found out later that whoever got the money first would take it all. Basically, they were stealing from their brothers and sisters because it was so hard then.

She went back a few times. We never went with her. I was honestly too scared to go, and I was young at the time when she went back. She would have to oversee, like if she made repairs to her mom's house or something like that. Because when she would send money, it would never get to the place where she would want it to go. It was cute, though, because the story she would say was when she went there, she was the auntie of the village, and all the kids would flock around her because now she's rich even though she's not. But compared to them, she was rich. She would say she would buy a bucket of clams and feed a lot of people because a little bit of money went a long way over there. She hasn't been back for a long time because it was too hard, just the tension and the fighting which is sad. But what is she supposed to do? When she did go back a few times, she probably spent three weeks or a month there, which is nice. I wanted to eventually go back with her because that would be a great experience, but who knows? She's not entertaining that idea anymore just because of the situation of the family.

SE: Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Hawai'i. I'm going to go down the list of my siblings. There are seven of us in my family. Like I said, there are six girls and one boy. Because my dad was in the Army, everybody was born all over the place. My older sister, her name is Thuy Mai. She goes by Mai. She was born in '68 in Vietnam. My brother, his name is Terry. He was the lucky one because, like I said, my dad got to name the boys. It's Terrance, and he got Terry, so he had an easy childhood, I'd have to say that with his name. He was born in 1969. We're all very, very close in age. My mom was pregnant for many years, and I feel her pain. My other sister, her name was Tuyet, and it's funny because my dad talks about it. It's spelled T-U-Y-E-T. But the way they say it – and he didn't know that's the way it would come across in American language – as “because she's a twit and she's idiot” and that kind of a thing. In high school, she actually gave herself a nickname because it was hard. First of all, you're growing up with an Asian name that no one can pronounce, which is very hard. On a side note, even when I would do interviews, they would see my name on paper, and I'm like, “I hope they aren't prejudice.” Interview me and give me a chance because when you see my name on paper, they don't know what to think of me, and that can go for any ethnicity. My next sister, her name is Que-Tam. She was born in '71. Sorry, Tuyet was born in '70. Que-Tam, '71. Then there's me, I was born in '74. Then my younger sister is Tu-Lan, '76, and Mai-ly, '77. Mai was born in Vietnam, Terry in Texas, Tuyet in North Carolina, Tam in Okinawa, myself and the two younger ones were all born in Hawai'i, and for some reason we're called The Three Babies. Even though I'm forty-seven years old, they still sometimes refer to us as The Three Babies. I think because their biggest gap was between myself and my older sister, which is about three years, but everybody else is basically only a year apart in age, so maybe that's why The Three Babies thing came.



Linh, her mother, and her six siblings, undated



"The Three Babies" - (L to R) Linh, Lan, and Mai, undated

Three of us stayed in Hawai'i, and so you can see where my dad ended up in all his places of being stationed. He said once he was actually stationed in Hawai'i, he was never going to leave, which it is a great place to grow up. It's funny because I think everybody grew up like that because that's what you know. It was neat growing up in Hawai'i. Every weekend we'd go

to the beach because how do you...entertain or engage, but seven kids on the cheap? You go to the beach. It was free. We'd pack a lunch. We'd barbeque. Pitch a tent for the day sometimes. My dad would grill, and we'd play in the water until we were blue, and then come home. What I remember, I think we lived in an area, but I only know it from a picture, but most of our years were in Kaneohe on the island of Oahu, Hawai'i, and they're still there today, my parents.



Beach trip with Linh, her father, and her siblings, 1977

CW: What did your mom do in Hawai'i?

My mom just cared for us for the main part because, like I said, there were a truckload of us. When I was probably...I don't remember the year. I should have asked her. When we were older, maybe intermediate school or so, she worked at an upholstery shop. She was an apprentice at an upholstery shop. We were old enough to get dropped off at school or go to school on our own, so she had a little more time. Eventually, she bought the upholstery shop. She renamed it

and relocated it to our house, and they built a small room, an extension. We used to have a patio and a little yard, so they just built a room for her. She renamed it Seven Stars Upholstery for the seven kids. She did couches or chairs like this or car seats, headliners in cars, basically anything that needed to be re-fabricated. It was pretty amazing what she could do. On the weekends, we would help her pull staples. It was hard to make five dollars pulling staples off a couch, let me tell you, but it was money, so we did it. She had that for a while. Eventually, she stopped doing that, and she got a job working at...I think it was Pearl Harbor. She was doing the same thing in the submarines, reupholstering things, and she did that until she retired. Now they're just hanging out in Hawai'i.

[**Ed. Note:** Linh Fee adds the following four paragraphs regarding her mother:

After reading the transcript, I realized that there were little details about my mom. I called her and we went over a few things. She didn't work while we were young. She did decide to go back to school in the 80's and received her Associates of Arts in Liberal Arts. Throughout her years of education, she enjoyed many different topics. She took classes like oceanography, microbiology, piano, herbology, fitness, algebra, and entomology. She loved to learn.

In 1983 she received a four-year scholarship. She studied home economics and secondary education. She did not finish, quitting one semester short. She said the kids were too much to deal with and very unkind. In 1984 she worked for the upholstery shop for only three months, then she bought it and named it Seven Starts upholstery after her seven kids.

She still continued her education and received another Associates of Arts degree in Fashion. In 1997, she closed her upholstery shop due to slow business and difficulty working out of our home. She didn't have the advertising benefit of a shop front. She worked for Pearl Harbor and took OSHA classes but didn't finish her degree. In 2014 she retired.

I do remember my mom always sewing clothes for us. She took sewing classes when we were young. My mom is 4'10" and could never find clothes to fit her. She was very resourceful and that was great, especially with 7 kids!]



Linh's mother at age 17/18, 1968

What was schooling like in Hawai'i?

Schooling for me was great. I started off at the elementary school right up the street. We walked. It's different here because, depending on the weather, I can't have my kids walk in a hundred and twenty degrees. We walked all year round, and it was great. Everything is so much closer distance than here. A block here is not a walking block as in other areas.

But in Hawai'i, a lot of people of Caucasian descent say that they got bullied a lot if you weren't Hawaiian, if you were fair-skinned, and I'm sure that's true, but I didn't personally experience any of that even though you know I wasn't Hawaiian. People knew I was mixed, but they didn't know what. My dad looks like a big freckle. He's White. He's Irish. He has red hair. And there is my mom who is Vietnamese, so dark hair, dark eyes. But my dad, very fair. He never said anything about those experiences either because he was there for quite a while. People

say that we didn't really get bullied because we don't sound like we're from the mainland. It's funny because people from Hawai'i, if I say two words, they can say, "You're from Hawai'i." I'm like, oh my gosh, what did I say? There's a certain, they say, accent. I say bad English. I'm not sure which one it is. There is a slang or an intonation on how you speak. Obviously, I don't know I'm doing it, but they can tell you're from Hawai'i. I can pick up people as well that are from Hawai'i or have been there for a long period of time.

But I never experienced the bullying, so it was great. I went to public school. High school, same thing. Most of them were around where we lived. We played sports. I played high school soccer for a long time. I got a scholarship to University of Hawai'i, and it was the first year that they had a women's soccer team. It was actually a club team, and we had a great time. It was fun. We got to come to the mainland to play games. It was brutal because you're on a seven to ten-day road trip, and you played six or seven games because that's where all the teams were was in the mainland. The next year we went Division I, which is great, and then we got creamed. But it was still fun. To get a scholarship and that kind of thing, it was good. It kept us out of trouble because you had to get good grades, and you're practicing and going to school the whole time.

Because it's such a big family, I'm curious about the family dynamic and what that's like.

For me, because I was in the lower half of the seven kids, I had it easy. I had it great, probably because my older brothers and sisters paved the way, so to speak. My brother left the house first. My mom...I don't know if she's going to read this...had a little temper on her, so they didn't get along. He was the only son. He actually joined the Army when he was eighteen. When they were seniors, he and his girlfriend got pregnant, so he left, and that didn't sit well with my mom. But it's funny because as we grew up, we all did the same chores. We had a chore chart, and it was

perfect. There were seven days of the week, and so we rotated. This week you did these chores, and this week you did this, and so we all helped. It's not like we didn't.

My older sister, because my mom was pregnant with her before my dad, she is African American and Vietnamese. She looks different. She was our older sister. I felt that she just felt different from us, and I didn't know why until I was much older. Being all raised the same—and I tell her this. We are not very close, but we spoke a little while ago, and I said, “I didn't know you weren't my full sister until I was ten years old, even though you look different and everything,” because my mom and dad treated everybody the same. But obviously, she had a different upbringing than I did. But we're all very close.

It was great. You always had somebody to play with because somebody was always there, and you had somebody to fight with. It was nice having such a big family. I can't imagine being an only child. When I had my kids, after I had my first, I said, “He has to have a brother or sister. There is no way you can't...” I feel sad for only children because they are missing out of the friendship that you have as siblings. It was good. Birthday parties were great.

It was a little tight in the house because there were so many of us, and it wasn't a very big house. One bedroom, there were two bunk beds, so there were four of us in that room, and it was so close that when we played games, you'd jump from one bunk bed to the other; that's how close it was. The next room had another bunk bed, so there were two of us in there. My poor brother slept in the extra room. He had a bed, but it was an open room. Then my parents' room. There was one and a half baths, so there was one shower, a stand-up shower. I remember as a little kid my mom would feed us through the shower, and my dad would be in there, “Next. Next.” We were all close in age, and we didn't know any different, and it worked. It was tight

and it was fine because that's what we knew. It's the same house today that they're living in, yes, same house.



Linh's childhood home, Kaneohe, HI, undated

Then you went to the University of Hawai'i. What did you study there?

I was going to go into teaching, and then I found out how much they got paid, and so then I changed. I actually didn't know what I wanted to do, but I liked art, and so I ended up majoring in graphic design over there. I finished with that, and then after I graduated, I couldn't get a job. I freelanced for a little bit. The amount of money, if you know anything about that, is you put in fifty hours to a design, and then you sell it for X amount of dollars, and you work for minimum wage doing that. That was hard. I worked in retail. Probably my first jobs were retail, so I stuck with that through school.

I ended up moving to Las Vegas to take a chance. I figured everything would be the same in Hawai'i if it didn't work out. My family is still there; that kind of a thing. I moved up to Las Vegas in 2000, and I tried to get a graphic design job. They probably were at eleven dollars, twelve dollars back in 2000. I said, "You're out of your mind," which was sad because you go to college and get your degree, and then you could have done this without a degree.

I decided to waitress, and I made more money slinging drinks than I did with a college degree. But I know Las Vegas is a very—I told my husband because he works in tips; he's a bellman—it's a very make-believe town. You can't go to another town and be a bartender and make the money you can in Las Vegas. That's just the way it is. I cocktailled and I got bored, just eight hours of walking around seeing people gamble. I'm not knocking it because I still have friends who do it and make a killing. We saved our money, and we bought a house, so it was great.

But I got bored, and so I decided to go back to school. Then I went to hygiene school, which was great. I thought I was in my midlife crisis, but apparently it was my quarter-life crisis, so I'm headed for my midlife soon. I decided to see what my credits in Hawai'i would transfer over to Vegas because I didn't want to retake any classes as much as I could, and I wanted to still work with my hands, and I thought, what can I do that I won't fall into the same problems? I thought the medical field is a guaranteed thing wherever you decide to live or move. I thought, what can I handle? My girlfriend is a nurse, and I talked to her, and I said, "I cannot do that. The life and death, I would carry it with me too much." It was either doing sonograms or hygiene. I thought, sono techs, you've got to work in a hospital twenty-four-seven, no days off. Hygiene, four days a week, three days off. I can handle that. I went to the hygiene side.

I got my degree at CCSN at the time, and now it's CSN, on Charleston. A lot of my science credits transferred over, my math, that kind of a thing. I still had to take some courses, which, as you guys probably know, are sequential, so it took me a long time. You have to pass this class in order to even register for this class. It took me about a year and a half to get those in order. Then you took some tests to get in. I think it was thirty students that they accepted, and I was one of them, which I was very happy. They put you on a point system. I got zero points for experience. I was never in the dental field. I was just taking a shot and hoping that I would mesh with it. But I still got in with all my other points. That program was two years, and I graduated that one in 2007.

I remember we were very tight on finances because it was an intense program. A lot of people can't work while they're going to school. I remember my husband telling me—I think I got my diploma on Thursday, the ceremony, and he goes, "You need to get a job." I said, "Can I get my diploma first, please?" I get it because...At that time, the economy was great. I got a job on Monday. It was a week, and it was good.

What does being a dental hygienist involve?

You have to have a strong stomach, first of all, because there are many different definitions of hygiene. It's funny because in school they teach you one thing, and then when you get to the real world, it's something that they can't teach you. I think that's in any profession. I think you have to be a really good people person because in the dental field the anxiety level is probably number one for people. To go to their dentist just for cleanings or work, like cavity filling or something like that, you have to have compassion and understand people. You have to be good technically. It's a very small space that you're working in, and you have a lot of different types of people. Some people can fall asleep. Some people are rigid the whole time. But I think if you find a good

doctor, which I love him—I wish I would have found him much earlier in my career. I’ve been with him for about three and a half years. But if you find a good doctor, he runs the ship, and everything else flows after that. With good people you work with, you attract good patients. I think it’s the full package, if that makes any sense.



Linh and family at Linh's work, 2017

You've been a dental hygienist since 2007?

Yes.

How is your experience in the job, and how do you feel about it?

I like the way I went about it. Of course, like I said, if I found Dr. Ruggeroli early on, I would be happy, too, but I wouldn't have appreciated him because I wouldn't have known what was out there. The way I started was, like I said, I got a job, and I took the first job that they offered me because I needed to pay my bills. It was good. It wasn't bad or anything. You just learn certain doctors want things a certain way as far as their personalities, the equipment that they have, the

standard that they do. I've worked for doctors who have great chairside manner, and some who are not. Some that say things that shouldn't be said to patients, and it doesn't flow with me. You need to...I don't want to say baby patients, but there are certain things. You can say things with the same intentions but say it two different ways. That's what I tell my kids. It's the tone you use. It's the words you use. Some have it and some don't. You don't want to work for those that don't because that's a reflection of you as well. Some people have very old equipment, and they offer you a job, and I say, "No thank you," because you're going to work that much harder if you're not with technology. I'm not saying you have to have the top of it, but you don't want to be in the Stone Age either.

I worked for a little bit, and he wasn't paying my taxes properly. He was putting me like I was an independent contractor. My tax guy was like, "You need to get another job. You're paying too much to work there." It was fine. I didn't put a lot of time in with him.

I said, "This is a great opportunity that I'm going to do what they call a temping hygienist." There are agencies that you can sign up for that people are affiliated with, say somebody is on maternity, they'll say, "I'm going to be out for these months." Or somebody who calls in sick who is affiliated. This temp agency would say, "I've got a job for you tomorrow. It's at this place. This is what they'll pay you. This is the schedule. They'll give you an hour per patient." Or they're what's called accelerated hygiene. I dabbled to find out a lot, and it wasn't for me, but I'm glad I did it. I have a girlfriend who loves to temp because there is not a lot of responsibility because you're just for the day versus you seeing somebody for five years; you're responsible for that patient, if that makes any sense. She is in and out. I don't like it because I don't know where anything is. First of all, you've got to find the place. Then you show up twenty minutes before, and you don't know where your instruments are, what kind of computer

system they're using. Can you imagine opening a computer and going, "How do I log in? How do I find my X rays? How do I find my charting?" Every office is different, so it was a lot of anxiety. But it was neat to see what was out there without committing too much, so it was a great thing for me to do to see what I wanted and what I didn't want.

Eventually, you move on, but it's hard because when you work for somebody, you don't know who they're really like for two to three months, and this is any job, I'm sure. Everybody shines on the interview, and so I put my best self forward, and so do they. Some doctors want you to do a lot. I don't want to say it's busywork, but when you get down to it, it's different from what you're doing textbook and then what the reality of the job is. They fill out a lot of forms and do all this kind of stuff. I'm like, "I need to clean my patient. I need to educate my patient. We need to do this, this and this." Then other places came in, and things that weren't to me...but everybody has different priority lists, and they did a lot of extra things where you could possibly add to their building because it is a business. Some doctors run their offices more for the businesses versus taking care of the patient, but I think you need a balance, and I found that right now. I had to go through all of that in order to find my home, where I am right now, and I'm fortunate because a lot of people don't, and a lot of people go to work and hate, but they have to pay their bills.

You've obviously been in Las Vegas for quite a while. How have you seen it change and grow in your time here?

I have, but I'm a homebody, too, so it's not like I...you can definitely see the Strip change. Growing up in Hawai'i, the Strip is like Waikiki; you only go there when people come to visit, and it's the same thing here for us where we only go to the Strip when people come to visit. Just the amount of roads, the traffic. I remember we moved out to the southwest, and the 215 was not

built yet. We would go up and down access roads. We were like, “Oh my god, you live so far.” Now it’s even further past me. At the time, you could see five cars on the freeway, both sides, that’s it. No one was out there. Now if I leave five minutes late, I am adding fifteen minutes on my drive home. Yes, the people are crazy.

I remember when I moved in 2000, I was sticker shocked coming from Hawai’i. I wanted to fill up gas all the time because it was a dollar and something cents, and Hawai’i was three something. You didn’t think anything of it because you had a car and you had to fill it up, just like here. Food, even now it’s still so much cheaper. When my sister comes to visit, down the cereal aisle, she is throwing boxes of cereal in there. I said, “What are you doing with all that cereal?” She’s like, “It’s only two dollars a box. In Hawai’i, it’s six dollars a box.” Her kids don’t eat cereal. I said, “That’s actually probably a good thing. It’s just sugar.” But it was a treat for them. Even when I go back home now, you go and get your staples, milk, oatmeal, fruit, whatever when you first come in, and you walk out with two bags, and you’ve spent sixty dollars. My dad laughs at me and goes, “You’re not in Kansas anymore,” because I forget how expensive it is. In Hawai’i, everything is shipped in, and they have to pass it onto the consumers. Here, we ran to a grocery store earlier, and I spent twenty dollars on fruits and vegetables, and so it’s so much more affordable. Sometimes we take a picture of our receipt and send it to my sister, and she gets mad. Of course, I don’t live in Hawai’i, but my cost of living is pennies compared to what something like would be. But even that, I can see from when we just moved in in 2000 until 2022 that’s different from then. Look at our gas now. Quite a difference in, well, it’s twenty-two years when you say it out loud. It doesn’t feel like it.

What were your first impressions when you moved here?

Scared. I was very scared. I think I was twenty-five. It took me a couple of weeks to drive on the roads because I was scared. Coming from Hawai'i, it's an island. The freeway, the max speed is nothing compared to here, not that anybody listens to it. But it's slow driving. People are very kind in Hawai'i. They'll stop. They'll wave you in. They'll say *thank you*. Here, people will speed up and cut you off, and you'll meet them at the stoplight. It's very defensive driving here. It seriously took me a couple of weeks. I remember the apartment that we stayed in was very close to the grocery store, but the way I was located, there were three lanes of traffic going this way, and I had to go that way. Obviously, I still remember this because I was so scared to cross three lanes to get into the other three lanes just to go around the block to go grocery shopping. That was very different from island living, very slow paced, that kind of a thing, to being afraid for your life. Fender benders back home were actually fender benders. Here, you would have a car flipped upside down. It was just very different, so it was scary for me.

It was a big city, but it was also fun, too, because it was the first time I really moved out on my own. Like I said, it was different. We bought things from Ikea. We drove to California for the day. I was a kid. We had saimin for dinner at night because we had no money. When I did waitress—it's funny; my husband teased me about this—I would make fifty bucks, and it was a lot of money for me, fifty dollars in cash. I'd go and buy shrimp, and we'd make a shrimp dinner or something. It's just funny. We had no bills, no responsibilities, so it was fun. We could drive to California for the day and drive back or do something like that. In the beginning it was scary, but afterwards it was fun.

Obviously, you've been here for a while. What are some of the things that you've come to enjoy about living here?

With this whole pandemic thing, we've done things differently with our family. We're road tripping more. Just to have that flexibility of where we're located, I can go anywhere. I don't have to jump on a plane in Hawai'i. In Hawai'i, you've got to think, how much is the plane fare going to cost? That's step one. Here, we pack up, and we're exploring the country now. We've done a lot of national parks. I don't know if you guys read in the news. Everyone is onto this because now they're so overwhelmed that they're charging where you can't just roll up and go to Yosemite or whatever. You have to have a date for it because people aren't flying as much anymore.



Family Roadtrip, Route 66, December 2021
(L to R) Deegan, Logan, Harlow

But there is a lot of other stuff you can do. I finally went to Zion, which is only three hours away from us, and it took me twenty years to get there. This is ridiculous. We used to do Disneyland because I have kids. I said, “We’re going to pause on Disneyland. I don’t need to be with a million people and pay my whole year’s savings for one vacation.” When we road trip, it’s cheap. We pack a lunch, and we spend the whole day. I was nervous about the kids. Will they like it? And they love it. Kick a rock, run in some dirt, and we’re in a different state. I’m glad that we’re trying to explore new places.

Of course, cost of living compared to where I’m from, great. Jobs are usually—I haven’t looked for a while—are usually more plentiful here and comparable. In Hawai’i, you would think that you would get paid double because the cost of living is double, but it’s not that way. It’s not comparable, so you’re still struggling. A lot of my family live with in-laws, whereas me, I’m not living with mom anymore. That’s a deal breaker. But they have to live with an in-law in order to pay for the food and the gas and the mortgage, that kind of thing, where we’re lucky. Where we live would be a mansion compared to Hawai’i, so that’s my go-to all the time from where I came from. But, yes, there’s a lot of perks except for education; for my kids, that’s a tough one.

I’d like to switch the focus a little bit and talk about cultural traditions. What kind of foods do you cook at home?

We cook a lot of American. We do cook some Vietnamese. My husband is full Chinese, so he has a few dishes. I live with my younger sister, the one right below me. When we first bought our house out here, we lost it in that 2007-2008 when the market flipped, and she lived with us. We’ve always been living with each other mainly the whole time. She is single and doesn’t have kids. When I first moved up, it’s funny because she was supposed to be here first. She was

supposed to go to UNLV as a transfer or exchange student for a year. Long story short, that didn't pan out, and I was going to move with her the next year. My husband ended up moving, and I said, "Okay, I'm coming without her." We were here for a year, and then she actually came a year after. We all have been living together for the most part. We short sold our house during that dip, and she qualified—she's probably the only one on Earth who could qualify at that time because everybody was sunk in the real estate at that time. It's funny because the two houses that we short sold and the house that we live in now are within walking distance of each other. It was a big house, but it was for a great price, and so I said, "We're moving in with you." I've got me and my kids and my husband, and we all still live in that house today.

My sister is the chef, which I'm blessed because I work and have kids, and so it's really nice to have somebody to help you out than come home and have to eat leftovers or go through a drive-through. She cooks a lot, and I cook a little bit. We do eat a lot of American, a lot of Vietnamese food. My mom has a lot of recipes that we try to do. We go out to eat. Same thing, we eat a lot of Asian cuisines. That's mainly our love: Chinese, sushi, and Hawaiian cuisine. But we still make pastas and Italian food. My kids love spaghetti. Yes, there's a lot, too. That's the other thing in Vegas: You have a lot of places to eat in different ranges that you can find anything you like whether it's takeout or fancy, which is amazing for Vegas.

What about cultural celebrations?

Not too much of that. I guess we're more Americanized that way. We know it's Chinese New Year, but we didn't do anything major for that. We do like popping fireworks; that's for sure. That's a big Hawai'i thing, too. My kids get excited about that. We do it Fourth of July and New Year's, which is funny because when we came up here, New Year's, they don't allow you to pop fireworks, but in Hawai'i it's a huge, huge thing. It's so big. Now they've outlawed aerals. It

would be where you're driving on the freeway, and you cannot see the freeway sign because there is so much smoke in the air from people lighting and stuff. But, yes, we do like fireworks. But tradition, probably American, like the Christmases and the Easters and all that kind of stuff. We always decorate the house for something. The kids look forward to that, too. Something small goes a long way.



Linh's children during the holidays, November 2020

Along those lines, how do you see your AAPI identity?

It's hard to say. When I tell the kids, "We're going to go home for vacation," they say, "Mom, Hawai'i isn't home. Las Vegas is home." And I'm like, "No." But they were born here, so I see what they're saying. I guess just probably the way I was raised, too, I guess I would identify more with being Asian even though I'm fifty-fifty. I'm half-Irish, a little German, my dad says, and I'm half-Vietnamese. I don't know. You just pull more towards those kinds of things and the cultures. I don't know if it's more, like I said, the Hawai'i experience, which it's Hawaiian, but

because there is so much Asian influence when I was born and raised there. That's more of what we have, I guess you could say. A lot of people say, "Are you Hawaiian?" I say, "No, I'm not." I am from Hawai'i, but I am not Hawaiian." But I do have the Hawaiian Asian culture; that's how we grew up.



Linh and five of her siblings, July 2021, (L to R) Terry, Lan, Tam, Linh, and Mai-ly

Yes, that makes sense. How has that influenced the way you raise your children?

I guess I raise them how I was raised. Like you said, probably the food we eat a lot. My two kids, my eleven- and my eight-year-old, they know how to use chopsticks already, which not a lot of people do. My six-year-old is trying. For birthdays, you get to pick out where you want to eat, and she picks dim sum; that's the treat, so that's what she goes to. They still like other things, too. They look very Asian. They have dark hair and dark features; that kind of stuff because they

only have a little bit of Caucasian in them. They've already experienced, sad to say, bullying in intermediate school. My son comes home and says, "Mom, why do they call me yellow?" I have to try to explain to him where that comes from. I said, "That's not a nice term to use, but that's how people categorize different ethnicities. You're Asian, so they think we look yellow, I guess." Some people ask them, "Do you speak English?" She's like, "Yeah." But you get this



thing that I'm going back to about my name on paper. You wouldn't think that I have any Caucasian. I don't know. I think I just try to raise them with good manners and good behavior and just hopefully how other people...I don't know if it's so much of being Asian or not, but just to "treat others as you want to be treated" kind of thing.

Linh's children, August 31, 2015

Kind of in line with that, have you ever experienced discrimination, and how has that affected your life?

Like I said, I personally haven't or can't remember it. Funny story. On the way here, my sister dropped me off. I don't know what we were talking about because we spoke to my dad last night, and I got some things from him. I said, "I'm going in tomorrow. I need some more dates." I don't know what we were talking about, but my dad has a large family, and most are on the mainland. I couldn't tell you who they are. We were very separate being in Hawai'i. Very few

people came to visit us. Just one aunt, in particular, would come every year, so I know her better. But everyone else was very separate from us. That's just how it was. We had...I think she must have been a cousin or something, and I don't recall this until she brought it up on the way home. They were in town, and they said, "Do you want to meet for lunch?" This is a long, long time ago. We met them. She said, "You don't remember this story?" I said, "I don't." Basically, when we were talking about this, I know a lot more about my dad because he has a bigger family and this and that. She said, "Oh, you mean you're going to talk about dad bringing mom back from the war to his racist family." I said, "What?" I said, "I don't remember any of these things." And she goes, "Well, there weren't a lot of stories." But my dad, being a soldier, went to Vietnam, and he brings back a Vietnamese wife. They are a White family, and I guess she wasn't treated very kindly. Like I said, they didn't speak a lot about it. She tried to assimilate and make the turkey for Thanksgiving, tried to make American food and that kind of stuff, and she tried to learn the language. Then she said, "What about the time we met the cousins for lunch?" She said basically during the lunch that they were beating around the bush asking me why I married a Chinese man. I don't remember this, like I told you. She goes, "Yes, that's basically they were asking questions. Out of everybody in the world, why did you end up marrying...?" You think I would remember somebody being insulting like that. It was funny because my husband was also born and raised in Hawai'i. His parents were first generation, came to Hawai'i, so he spoke English since he could learn it, but he was also the translator for his parents, and he had one younger brother as well, five years younger. Even though he was Chinese, he was a local boy just like I was a local girl. Like I said, being in Hawai'i, there were a lot of Asian people in Hawai'i.

Personally, any attacks on me, I don't recall that as far as how I looked or anything, but I have heard of other stories of people having a really difficult time growing up and not being Hawaiian in Hawai'i and looking fair-skinned.

How did you meet your husband?

We worked in the same shoe shop. I worked in a shoe shop, and I transferred to another one when I was going to University of Hawai'i, closer to that so I could go to school and go to work afterwards, and he worked in the same shoe shop. It was funny because we were great friends, and we were friends for a very long time. I was probably eighteen or nineteen-ish. We were friends for a long, long time. It's funny because he stayed in the shoe business in the higher-end shoes. He actually met my sister, my older sister, because she was in the high-end shoes. We went our separate ways. It's funny because all of us look the same, and by this, I mean I was in an elevator in Waikiki—I worked in Waikiki for a while—with somebody, and he looked at me and goes, “Are you Terry Fee's sister?” And I said, “Yes.” To pick somebody out...I didn't think we look that alike, but apparently we do. My husband was working with my sister, and he saw the name, too, and he's like, “Are you Linh's sister?” And she's like, “Yes.” He met my sister before I could even introduce them. Yes, we worked at the same shoe shop, and then we reconnected years after that when I was working in Waikiki. He was working in the same shopping complex, and he walked by my shop, and then he came in. I'm like, “Oh my gosh, oh my gosh.” We reconnected later on. But, yes, small world.

I'm going to turn it over to Stefani or Jerwin now.

SE: Were you married when you came to Las Vegas?

No.

Why did you choose Las Vegas? I can see you wanting to go to the mainland, perhaps, but why Las Vegas in particular?

Like I said, my younger sister was supposed to be an exchange student to Las Vegas. She was going to do one year here at UNLV, and so when she decided that, I said, "I'll go with you. I've got nothing really going on. Let me try something new." Her plan fell through, and she ended up not going. She ended up going to Portland instead. That was her exchange.

At that time, my husband—this is when I ran into him, and this is before she had backed out. He goes, "Guess what, I'm going to Las Vegas." I said, "So am I. Lan and I are going to go." That's how we reconnected, and we actually started dating before I moved up here. As time went by, then she fell out, and he was going to go. I said, "Do you want to be roommates?" He had some other friends that he had set that up, and so he moved up and stayed here a year, and then I said, "I'm going to stay back and try to save some money," which was a bad move because I saved a thousand dollars in the year that I stayed in Hawai'i. I said, "I should have just moved with you. This is crazy."

I moved, which was also the scary part. I had a thousand dollars to my name. I shipped my truck. I had a little pickup truck, and I shipped it to Long Beach. He met me in Long Beach. We drove here. The rest is history.

Where exactly were you living when you came? Where was the first place you lived?

Casey Drive. I think that was on the east side around here, in an apartment. I don't know exactly what area that would be considered. Not Henderson.

Cross streets, maybe?

I could get them to you. He would know that. I don't know.

Was that because it was close to work?

He had friends that already had a place, and so he was going to rent a room with them. I think they were in a different apartment because when I ended up coming up, they moved to this place, which is actually not too far from here, I think. We needed roommates. You couldn't afford a place on your own even back then, and then I just jumped in.

But, no, I didn't have a job or anything. When I got here, even though I had my degree, the goal was to start waitressing to make some money. I was still young enough to do that. I think my first job was at Bally's. I worked at the pool at Bally's serving food and drinks.

Just close to the city, I guess. He was already working doing front desk because he also got his degree in TIM, travel industry management. His goal was to come to Las Vegas to be a manager. There's tons of hotels and opportunities. In his time here, he's worked front desk, he's worked concierge for a while, he did valet for a little bit. He was not a very good valet driver, and so he stopped that. And bellman. But all these things have to do with travel industry management. He thought one day he's going to become...so he could get experience and all that. But there is no money in management, and so he is still doing bellman. He makes more money being a bellman. Like I said, this is a make-believe town. You can make a killing just working in the service industry, and he has a degree. But at the end of the day, you've got to pay the bills. He likes it so far. I tell him, "When you're ready, you can go into management." Working eight hours and going home and not having to work twelve hours, and being on call seven days a week, there is a perk to that.

What was his first job here?

I think he was front desk... Bally's. It was a big hotel. It was on the Strip. He was there for a while. Maybe it was Paris because I think he transferred from being front desk to the concierge. He was concierge for many, many years, which was really fun because he got to try different

things out. I dealt in tips, and so I had the cash, and he had the in. We'd go to new restaurants for free, and we would just tip them. It was really great for us to get to know the city and do things that we would have never done because of his position in the concierge.

What was one of the coolest things you got to do?

Well, not me, but he got to race a car out at the speedway. It was only an invite for one, so I'm like, "I guess you can go." Yes, he got to do that. How cool would that be to drive a car at a hundred, whatever miles? It was mostly eating and shows. We got to see a lot of shows.

Normally, I wouldn't see any show because they're so expensive for the regular Joe Shmoe. That's a treat. But we got to see almost every show for free, so it was neat. Yes, that's what I remember for him to be able to do.

How do your kids identify if they're from Las Vegas, their mom is from Hawai'i, their dad is from Hawai'i, their mom is part Vietnamese, their dad is Chinese ethnicity? How do they...?

I'm not sure. It's probably like me when I grew up, thinking that everyone grew up in Hawai'i, everyone got to go to the beach every weekend, and it wasn't a big deal. They probably think the same thing. Like I said, they're probably experiencing the change now a little bit more because they're getting older, and kids are mean. In elementary school, everyone is the same. You could be a boy and talk to a girl and not go, "Ooh, you like her." Now he's in a higher grade, and he doesn't talk to girls anymore. I tell him this, "You can be friends with girls. It's okay." "Well, mom, I don't know. The girls talk to the girls, and the boys talk to the boys." As they're getting older, they're being treated differently by their gender, by their looks. I think we're just stepping into that right now whereas before when they were younger, they were all the same. Everybody was a friend whereas now he hangs to himself more.

He is Asian, so he is not tall. This is the biggest thing that we're dealing with because kids make fun of him. I'm not tall and my husband is not tall. We hope he'll be taller than us, but the odds aren't looking good. He is very smart, which I'm grateful for because him not liking school would be a bigger deal than not being tall. But because Asian people are not very tall, girls are different. Girls in any ethnicity can be whatever height; it doesn't matter, but for guys it's different. He went to go try out for the basketball team. He just got a phone because he's in the sixth grade and he was catching the bus. I gave him my old phone for emergencies. He texted me the same day. "I don't want to play basketball. Everybody is so tall."



Family trip to Oahu, Hawai'i, 2021

He is already feeling pressure from that. People tease him. I don't know if that's a direct link to him being Asian because he looks a hundred percent Asian because he only has a quarter

of Caucasian in him, so he pulls Asian. But with Asian, he's not very tall, and girls even call him Shorty. It's tough for him right now, and so I'm trying to help him in those ways. Then he came home with that comment that somebody called him yellow, and I have to explain to him that kind of a background. But as far as being Asian, like I said, we probably eat more ethnic foods, I guess you could say, versus just having the regular Americanized hamburger, that kind of culture. We like food.

It's hard because this is what I know so I can't really compare it to how somebody else would raise their kids and how they're acting. Does that make sense?

Yes. Is your neighborhood very diverse?

I find that all neighborhoods in Las Vegas—and that's a different thing, too, that you were asking. I feel that Vegas is very transient. We know our one neighbor, but they're older, so there's not a lot of commonality in that. In other areas or neighborhoods that we've lived in, you hardly ever see your neighbors, and that's what I miss about growing up in Hawai'i where you knew everybody on the street because they were there for thirty years, and we grew up with their kids. It's very different in that aspect. People are much to themselves. They do have some friends that are around the block that go to their same school, and they're Filipino Asian. But why they're friends, I don't think that has anything to do with it to be honest with you. He has other friends of other ethnicities, my older. He gets out a lot more than my younger ones. Everyone is very too themselves, unfortunately or fortunately. I don't know how you want to look at it.

JT: Throughout your life it seems that you've—not taken risks, but chances on certain things, like moving out here to Vegas, rerouting in your career. I just wanted to know if there is something you know now that you wished you knew before?

Oh, a lot. Well, you can say that for anybody. I wouldn't have wasted all that time; I would have went right into hygiene when I was twenty-one. When we went to hygiene, I had a good friend that was twenty-one. She was just starting, and I was so envious of that. I said, "Girl, you're going to have a career at twenty-one. You're going to make great money at twenty-one. You're going to have your head on your shoulder. I had just a thousand dollars to my name." Of course, there would be so much things where I would have skipped out on all that kind of stuff. But I had a lot of fun stuff, too, that I wouldn't take back because I had that period of "trying to find myself" kind of a thing. Before kids, it was great. I don't want to scare you. We snowboarded. We were like, "Hey, you want to go here for three days?" Okay. Now it's like, "I can't go to the Golden Knights game because I don't have a babysitter." It's very different, but I like that I had that time to dabble and do different jobs.

I was just telling my dad last night, because he told me the story last night about my grandpa, and it's funny that I didn't know what my grandpa did until last night, I said, "Dad, I never thought to ask you what grandpa did." What I remember of him, he was eighty years old, and as a kid you don't think, what did you do your whole life? That's when he told me that he worked in the same place for forty or fifty years, and he built machines. I'm like, "Oh my gosh."

If I didn't have that time before we actually had kids, because I had kids much later in life—I had my first kid at thirty-five, which they'll tell you you're very old to have a kid at thirty-five—that whole time before was great. Meaning there were no—this is coming out wrong—there was no...baggage is a heavy word, too. But there were no responsibilities—thank you—no responsibilities that I had so we could pick up and leave, and I had no bills. I was very good. I had no debt. I had no savings, either, but I had no debt. I knew that growing up, and our parents didn't really teach us that.

We were talking about this, too, that I'm going to teach my kids that. Things that I've learned in my life I'm trying to teach my kids, and so I'm trying to teach them about money now even though they're little.



Family picture, 2021, (L to R rear) Howie and Linh (L to R middle) Logan, Harlow, Deegan (L to R front) Lan

I said, “You make money, allowance.” They read books, and I pay them to read books, and they like to read books, and so they get a double-double. You can earn a buck or two. I say, “You save half. Put it in your bank or your wallet, and we’re going to spend the other half.” You’ve got to learn to enjoy what you work for, but that was not taught to me. I don’t know where it came from.

My little sister told me, and I don’t remember. I don’t know why, but there’s got to be a reason why I don’t remember stuff. But she said that she remembers that I took her to the bank to start her a checking account. I don’t remember, but that’s probably something that I would do. I remember when I got my checking account, I loved spending, and I loved to write the check at

the end of the month to make it back to zero. I don't know if it was grown-up stuff to do, but I remember.

I didn't have a lot of debt, and so that's why I really like how things played out. Of course, I would have liked to find my profession a lot sooner because I could have saved up for my future a lot earlier than I did. I hope to learn from what I did in my life and give little pearls of wisdom to my kids. Now, whether they'll listen to me or not that's another thing. I said, "I've done this before. Trust me." But, of course, they don't. And they have to make mistakes on their own just like I did. I did make mistakes. I had to learn where you should work or what types of people you should surround yourself with. I wouldn't change it. Maybe to travel more because it's so much harder, minus what's going on in the world, it's harder to travel once you get older and you have more responsibilities. When you're younger and you don't have those responsibilities, you're much freer. I wish I would have explored a little more. You work your whole life, so that will be that.

Thank you so much.

You're welcome.

SE: I wanted to ask, too, about art. Is that still a part of your life?

I like art, but I have zero time, which is sad. Last year was supposed to be the first year that all my kids went to school, but then with the pandemic they were all at home. This year is supposed to be the first year that I was like, "I'm going to have so much time to myself because I'm going to drop them off in the school." Then I realized they're not in school for eight hours. They're only in school for six hours. I'm like, "Okay, I'll still have a lot of time, so I'm going to start reading more, and I'm going to start doing more things." I'm still busy, but I'm doing more fun stuff. I get to go to the store, and we go to Hobby Lobby a lot. That's an arts thing that we like

without kids. Again, with kids I have to go to the bathroom three times, and then we have to stop in the toy aisle, so it's very different. I don't do it as much. My sister is starting a resin company, and so I would eventually love to go into business with her and do that. That's art. She's been doing it for a few months now, and I haven't done anything. It's hard because life happens, and you're still busy. I can make time for sure, but other things always seem to...She's funny because she tells me that one thing leads to another for me. If I'm going to do laundry, I'm going to walk through my kitchen to do it, but I'll see crumbs, and so I'll sweep the floor. Then the counters are dirty, and I'm like, "Oh my gosh, the dishes need to be put away." I do this because it needs to be done.



Howie (husband) and Logan (son) following a Bob Ross tutorial, 2022

But my husband has started painting. He works five days. I work two days. He works five days, and I work his two days off so that we never have to have a babysitter, which, like I said, it took us many, many years to get that way. He's worked overnights or two jobs, or we traded the kids in the garage because I worked a half-day and he's working the swing shift, that kind of thing. It took us a long time to get this way, so it's perfect. But on his days off, he started to paint, which is pretty cool because he's pretty good at it. I get jealous. How can he make time on two days, but on my five days off, I'm a mom. I have two jobs: I'm a mom, but I don't get paid for that, and then I go to work my other two days, and I get paid for that in currency. As a parent you understand what that means, but I am envious of him that he makes the time to break out his paint. He loves Bob Ross, and he does Bob Ross paintings. I can see how it's giving him something and balancing.

That is my next step is to find myself a hobby. Whether it be in the arts or not, I don't know. Just something, to have something. I do miss it. Ever since I was little, I have loved art. That's when I went to school, "I still want to do art, but what can you get paid for in the arts?" That's what led me to graphic design. At least that's marketable. I can't make ceramics. It's like sports; you have to be the top one percent snowboarder or skateboarder or whatever to make a living off of it versus a love for it. My oldest likes to do music. I say, "That is great, but you need to get a real job, and then you do music on the side." That's just how the world works. You have to be a top percent to make a living at it. But, yes, you surely can do it for fun and extra. Yes, I would love to get back into it. That's what I told her, "One of these days, I'm going to start helping you." That's where that's going.

CW: Is there anything else that we didn't ask you about that you would like to talk about?

I didn't think I could talk this long. I didn't think I was very interesting. I don't know. Not anything real. I hope everything gets back to normal for my kids' sake and what they'll remember and what they'll experience. I actually do like living in Las Vegas because there are so many different types of people here, and it doesn't really matter...I've never feared for them looking Asian or that kind of a thing. I think Las Vegas is a really good place for that. Maybe that's why I don't think of anything real different. But, yes, it would be great to travel more and to learn different things, but we'll see.

[End of recorded interview]

[Stefani Evans called Linh Fee later in the day, February 4, 2022, to ask the following questions.]

SE: One final question, Linh. May I ask you how your work has been affected by COVID?

When COVID it was very abrupt, probably just like everybody else. I think we went home that week not knowing what was going to happen, and then we were told to not open up the office the following week. We were all calling each other. No one knew what was happening. It was a very alarming state because we assumed that we were part of the medical field since we are dental, which oral health is the pathway to the body. But I think it was so new that they didn't know what was going on. After the fact, it came out that dental should not have been shut down. But again, it was so new, and the world was in a panic, so we were shut down for six weeks, which felt like a lifetime. I mean, I had not one spare mask at home, which you think I would because, like I said, I'm in the medical field. I ended up sewing masks out of some material that I had, probably just like everybody else, panicking. But as abruptly as we were shut down, I think they told the office on a Wednesday that you can open up on Monday. We all went back to the office

and tried to scramble and call patients because we had no one on the schedule. We worked a day or half a day, I can't remember what it was, just to call people who were comfortable enough to come back, and we opened up on Monday and have been running strong ever since. There are some people that are still afraid, but there are more that are not, so more people feel comfortable coming back. But our office, we run it like we did before. I always tell people that I'm nervous for offices who haven't been running properly, hygienic, wiping things down, using the right things. I think we incorporated a few of the things, like a high-speed suction and maybe face shields now and that kind of a thing. But, yes, we are very busy, very busy, which we're fortunate because we heard some offices actually shut down because the business wasn't there. But we're still getting people back on track, and unfortunately people have been...they're overdue, not just because of the whole shutdown. But, yes, we're all glad to be back at work and going full steam, so to speak.



Patient perspective of COVID-19 protocol at Linh's work, May 13, 2021

Thank you. Have some of your patients just not come back because of COVID, you think?

I'm sure there are people who haven't come back. I don't really deal with keeping track. That would probably be more of the front desk area who have a list. After a while, we call people and say, "You're overdue," and, yes, they say, "Oh, we don't feel comfortable coming in." So, sure, there are people who haven't been back in yet, or, like I said, people, on the three-month, they got passed by when we got shut down. Since we're so busy, it's sometimes difficult to get them into the schedule. But, yes, it pushed everybody back. Doctor actually did come in for emergencies, which was great, but it was on an emergency basis only. It was kind of funny because my husband actually did a prep for two crowns on his front teeth, and then the shutdown happened, so he's like, "Nooo." Normally, you're only in those a couple of weeks, and he ended up being in it for, I think, eight weeks. He's like, "I just want to eat normal." Because you baby your teeth with temporaries; that kind of a thing. But I said, "I can't bring you in. You're not an emergency technically." Poor thing, he had to wait. They checked up on you and they wanted to make sure it was a real emergency state for you to come in with the doctor aand maybe one assistant.

Thank you so much for this.

[End of recorded interview]