

AN INTERVIEW WITH ERIC MENDOZA

An Oral History Conducted by Holly O'Donnell

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

Oral History Research Center at UNLV
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University of Nevada Las Vegas

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Oral History Project

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PREFACE

“I think any immigrant would not forget that day when they leave their country”

Following a path of chain migration that began with his sister and then his parents, Spring Valley Hospital medical records assistant Eric Mendoza left Manila, Philippines, for the U.S. at age 27 in 1996 with two of his eight siblings. After staying a month with family in Los Angeles, Eric joined another sister in Las Vegas. He also briefly lived in Columbus Valley, Ohio, for two years, utilizing his skills as a carpenter to fix another sister’s house, but eagerly returned to Nevada citing Ohio’s frigid weather.

The sixth child of nine explains his lengthy immigration and naturalization and Social Security process, complicated by a mismatch in names between his passport and his birth certificate. He describes his education, Philippine public transportation, road infrastructure, and government corruption as well as its colonial past. He talks about Filipino festivals, traditions, foods, and strong family ties and identity, language, adaptation, and assimilation. He explains his life in the U.S. and the lives of his siblings. Mendoza’s story is one that encompasses the life of an immigrant and the things it entails.

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in Las Vegas, Nevada
Conducted by Holly O'Donnell

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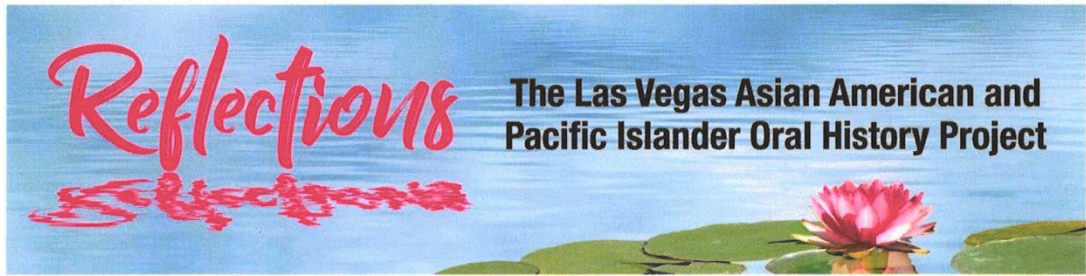
After moving to the U.S., Mendoza noticed countless differences between the U.S. and the Philippines, especially when it came to areas such as the government or transportation. He discusses his job, the brief schooling he did at CCSDN, and how he keeps in contact with the two sisters he still has in the Philippines. He also touches on topics such as the local Filipino community, festivals and traditions, and how he cooks Filipino foods. He stresses the Filipino culture as a family-oriented, and also mentions his likes and dislike regarding Las Vegas.....7-15

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What is your full name, and can you please spell it out?

My full name is Eric Mendoza, E-R-I-C; last name Mendoza, M-E-N-D-O-Z-A.

Where were you born?

I was born in Manila, Philippines.

And where was your family born?

Manila, Philippines.

When did you immigrate to the U.S.?

April 10th, 1996.

Oh, so you remember the exact day.

Yes, I cannot forget the day.

Who did you come with when you immigrated? Was it your family?

My family, yes, two brothers and one sister.

How old were you at this time?

I was twenty-seven at that time—twenty-six, actually. I turned twenty-seven that year, in July that year.

Why did you and your brother and sister immigrate here?

It started with my sister meeting my brother-in-law, who is half-Filipino and half-American. They got engaged when she turned eighteen, and then they moved out here. Then my sister decided to petition my mom and dad, and then after that, my mom and dad petitioned us to migrate here in the United States.

I see, her husband was a U.S. citizen.

Yes, he is a U.S. citizen doing his doctor's degree in the Philippines because his dad is Filipino and his mom is Lithuanian, so he's half-half. They met each other at a tennis court, and they started playing tennis, and they started dating. That's where it all began.

How cute. Where was this tennis court? Was it in Manila?

It was in one of the provinces in the Philippines. My dad used to work in a bank, and he always gets assigned to different provinces in the Philippines. When I was in third grade, we left Manila, which is the proper city in the Philippines, and then we stayed in one province for about two years and then moved to another province where my father was assigned, and that's called Cebu. I was in sixth grade there, going on sixth grade, and we stayed there for three years, and that's where we met Mark, which is my brother-in-law.

I see, they started this eventual chain migration. Did they move to Las Vegas immediately?

No. They moved to L.A., and he did his internship for his doctor's degree. They lived in an apartment. While they were doing that, my sister started the process to petition my parents. Then when my parents got the go signal to come here as an immigrant, then they're the ones who started the process to petition us kids to come here in the States. You can only petition one family member, and then when that family member becomes an immigrant, that family member can petition the rest of the family.

I see, which leads me to my next question, which is, when you first immigrated here, where did you live?

L.A., California.

For how long?

Actually, I stayed there for a month, only a month because...Another story to this is because my other sister left as well at the same time as my other sister. We're basically nine in the family.

Her husband is in the Air Force in the Philippines. When the bases were still there before the Philippines took independence, they took him out there. Anyway, she always lived here in Las Vegas, and she's a nurse. After a month in L.A., we came here in Vegas and lived with her, not this sister that I'm renting right now, but another sister who has been here for a while, too, almost the same time as my other sister.

You said there's nine of you, including your mom and dad?

Nine children.

How many live in the U.S., and how many still live in the Philippines?

In the U.S. is two brothers, two sisters, four. There's four of us here in the States. One in Canada. Oh, three sisters here, I'm sorry. Yes, three sisters and two brothers, so that's five. One in Canada and two in the Philippines.

Wow, great memory. Then I wanted to ask you how it felt when you first left the Philippines to come here, if you can recall how it felt.

To me, it was great because the Philippines is a third-world country at that time when I left. Well, it is still, and poverty. How do I say this? It's hard to live in the Philippines, and so a lot of people are trying to get to either Canada or the United States to get a better life. To me, when I first landed here in the airport, it was totally different, and I was very happy and glad that I'm here and excited, I guess, when I came here at that time.

When you lived in the Philippines, how long were you wanting to move to the U.S.? Was it for a long time?

Actually, to be honest with you, when my parents decided to petition us, I turned twenty-one at that time. When you turn twenty-one, according to immigration, you have to wait seven more years, but if you're below eighteen, you can come right away. The process is really fast. My

youngest brother was petitioned before he became eighteen, and so he was already going back and forth from here to the Philippines while he was working in Jack in the Box, and he has three jobs, and he was living with my other sister. That was my youngest brother. He got here before us.

At first, I was not excited because I had friends in high school and college that I didn't want to leave. I'm already used to the life there in Philippines. I don't know what kind of change that's going to happen to me in the States, but I heard a lot—we watched TV at that time—that it's great to live here. At that time, I think I was told that everybody can succeed here if you do well, unlike in the Philippines—at that time when I was twenty-six, twenty-five—the only job that you can actually go for in the Philippines is in banks, way back in the '80s.

Which is where your father worked.

Yes, but now it's different. But at the time, before, it was totally different. Everybody goes to work after they graduate in college and works in a bank. That's it, yes.

Was that your plan?

I was working in a bank, yes. I was a credit investigator at the time.

Then I wasn't really looking forward to it, but when my papers came in to do my medical exam, my parents said, "You're going to be leaving in three months." That was 1996 at that time. Then the shock came in, and I was like...[gasps]. I became excited, like, "I'm going. I'm leaving." It was a great feeling at that time.

What was the hardest thing to leave behind? I know you were excited, but what was the hardest thing?

My friends. I think to me it was my friends because I had a lot of close friends back home in high school and college when I was there.

Coming here, were there any types of laws or restrictions or any other type of legislation that you or any of your family members met that made it hard to immigrate to the U.S.?

None of my siblings had a hard time. I had a hard time because...My story started when I was issued a passport. My birth certificate says "John Eric." My real name is John Eric. The Philippine Embassy messed up with my passport and only put "Eric." When I landed here, at that time in April 10th, I was pulled over to the side by an immigration officer, and he was checking my papers and said, "There's two different people here. Your passport says 'Eric,' and your birth certificate says, 'John Eric.' You either lose one...because they're considered two people." I thought I was going to get deported because of that. I tried to explain to the officer that they messed up my passport, and I know it doesn't match my birth certificate and all my documents. My college diploma and everything like that said "John." But then, "There's no problem. You're staying here. We just had to eliminate the 'John.'"

I agreed to it. At that time, I was at the airport in a security room or something like that, and I was so scared. The immigration officer said, "We're going to have to get rid of the 'John,' so right now, you're going to be known as Eric Mendoza only." I agreed to it, and then that was it. We just went to my sister's house and exploring the United States of America.

Your full name on your birth certificate was John Eric Mendoza?

Yes.

Now you're just Eric.

Just Eric, and then there's a story of that. When I took my oath-taking—after ten years with having the residency card, you have to take your oath-taking before ten years to apply for a citizenship. Then I applied for it. Immigrants take a test about the history of America. They give you documents on what possible questions would be asked on your interview as a naturalized

American citizen, which I answered all ten of them correctly. The only thing I remember is, what was the first boat that landed in the United States? On the *Mayflower*. Is that correct?

Yes.

That's the only question I remember, but I answered everything correctly.

Anyway, I took my oath-taking at the federal building downtown, and there's a lot of immigrants there. You do your oath-taking. After that, you get scheduled to be interviewed by another immigration officer. When I did that, the immigration officer asked me, "Do you want your 'John' back?" I was surprised because that was 1996 when I first landed at the airport, and ten years later, they still know that they took out my first name. I was like, "Oh my gosh, you guys still remember?" "Yes, we have it in your file. Everything's here. Do you want it back?" I said, "Yes, please put it back." On my certificate, it says, "John Eric Mendoza." I'm so happy.

Yay. Are you still going by just Eric Mendoza right now?

Right now, well, I got used to it, so...I got used to Eric Mendoza, so I don't put my "John" in there, but my legal name now is John Eric Mendoza. Yes, but I still just give out my second name, Eric, because all three of us brothers have this first name John; John Emmanuel, John Emiel, and John Eric. Our dad just named us all John.

I see, which leads me to something I never asked, which is, how do you fall in the line of your nine siblings? Where are you?

The sixth. Five girls, me, a girl and a boy and a boy.

Oh my goodness, a lot of older sisters.

Yes. I am the firstborn boy, and then another girl, and then two more boys after that.

Something to explore now is, what was your experience learning English, and did you know it before moving to the U.S.?

Yes, I do. We do have to take in high school six English classes and twelve to thirteen English classes in college. It is the second language in the Philippines, English is. When I came here—I guess it happens to all immigrants—we all know straight English. We don't know the slangs. I can only say for myself because when I got here, I didn't know any slangs. It's just straight English.

My first job was at Wendy's, here at Charleston and Rainbow, I believe. People are talking to me, and they were saying, "What's up? I'll do a rain check," or anything that we would not know at that time. In response, when somebody says, "I'll see you later," I would say, "What time?" Then they're like, "Well, see you later." "I know, but what time?"

This one guy noticed this, but he's a teenager, and I was twenty-seven at that time. He's like, "Where are you from?" I said, "Philippines." "Do you know slang?" I said, "No, I do not know slang." He was nice enough to teach me all these slangs while I was working there. I only worked there for two months. He basically taught me how to respond to slangs because I only knew straight English, like, "What's up?" or "Catch you later," something like that. "I'll do a rain check." I'm still learning, actually. I don't know all the slangs.

When you first came to either L.A. or Las Vegas, what were the biggest differences you noticed?

The roads are wider. The air is cleaner. People are more, I should say, outspoken. In the Philippines, when you walk in the city, nobody really tells you, "Hi, how are you doing? Good morning." You don't say *hi* to random strangers in the Philippines. But here, it was culture shock for me because we were walking in the mall, and people were greeting us, and I'm not greeting back because I'm like, well, I don't know you; why should I? That's one thing I noticed.

Another thing, there is not a lot of traffic compared to the Philippines. Plus, the government is actually one thing that I noticed, too, is different than where I was born.

Why was the government different?

The government in the Philippines, there is no chance of improving because it's a lot of corruption to be honest with you. A lot of Filipinos deny that, but they deny it because they don't want to talk about it. I don't know if you've heard of Ferdinand Marcos, who became the president way back in the '80s. He is a dictator, and he ruled for twenty years, corrupted all the money and stuff like that. Then the people revolted against him, and he was taken by the U.S. and was...How do you say this? It starts with the letter E.

Exiled?

Exiled, yes. He was exiled, and then he passed away, I think, in Hawaii. The government of the Philippines is really corrupt up to now, to be honest with you. That's one thing I've noticed that a lot of people want to leave the Philippines because of that, too.

I did ask about the transportation and traffic. I was going to ask you, and you already...

Transportation there is kind of different from here. Here you need to have a car, or the busses are nice. Over there, they call it a jeepney, which is a jeep that's open, nothing. You're crammed into one car to travel to one place to another. There's taxicabs there, too. There's tricycles, I believe, a motorcycle and a cab attached to it, and it just brings you wherever you want to go. It's really different. It's congested, and the roads are not organized, and it's really small and narrow.

Was that your main mode of transportation, the jeepney?

Yes, when I went to work. I sometimes took the bus, but the bus is packed with people. Pollution is a number-one problem in the Philippines because they don't regulate the pollution over there or how your vehicle should be tested every year because they don't have the registration. They

don't have the same...I shouldn't say rules. I can't think of the word, how they maintain the vehicles to be tested every year so that we don't pollute the air. We don't have that there.

How long were you living here before you got your car?

Actually, my dad bought a car, and he let me borrow his car when I would go to work at Wendy's in 1996. Then eventually, when I saved up a little bit of money, I bought my own car, which is a Mustang, a red Mustang. It's easy to buy a car here based on your credit rather than buying a car in the Philippines. It's really hard in the Philippines; cars there are very expensive if you live in the Philippines.

Your first job was Wendy's. I wanted to ask you what jobs you've had here.

Wendy's. I was a debt collector for loans. I worked in a company called Sallie Mae. I worked at Citibank down in Sahara in The Lakes. I worked at the Dollar Rent A Car at the airport, and this one that I have right now.

What is your current job, right now?

I am a medical records assistant at Spring Valley Hospital.

It sounds like since living in Vegas, you've been mostly in the Summerlin area. Did you live anywhere else?

No, just in Summerlin.

About your education, you said you went to college in the Philippines, so that was where you got your higher education?

Yes.

What university did you go to?

Philippine School of Business Administration. The level of education at that time in the '80s is different from the level of education here. It's still different up to now. A four-year degree there

is an associate degree here, in the '80s. I think now the Philippines is trying to level up their education and trying to match the education level of the United States and other countries, as of today. But at that time in the '80s, when I was in college, it was totally different. My diploma from the Philippines is only considered an associate degree here, when I got here.

Did you have to go back to school when you got here?

No, I didn't. I did go to school, but in a different course. I was trying to study for criminology, and I studied in Apple Valley in Victor Valley Community College and then here at CCSN, when it was still called CCSN, but my grant ran out because I filed for my citizenship. If you're an immigrant, you get a full pardon, and you don't have to pay it back for student loans. But when you file for American citizenship, it goes away at that time, but now they changed it. If you're an immigrant and you're still an immigrant, even though you applied for American citizenship and you already got naturalized, you will still have the grant because of other presidents passing the bill. I think it was Clinton who passed that bill, I believe, if I'm correct, either Clinton or George Bush.

The year that you were going to CCSN, what year was that?

That was 2003 or '04, I believe.

I see. It's because your grant got taken away.

Yes. Well, no. My grant was ceased because I filed for American citizenship, because at that time, when you become an American citizen, they cut off your benefits, but now they don't. It was passed on a bill that even though you become a naturalized citizen of the United States, they still grant you that; it's called a Pell Grant. At that time, 2003, who was the president at that time? Was it Bush? I can't remember. But it was one of the rules and regulations that if you become a naturalized citizen and you're no longer an immigrant, they take your Pell Grant away

from you, and they don't really take it away from you, but they just say, "You're an American citizen now. There's certain rules and regulations that we have to cut you off from your free loans on your Pell Grant," basically.

Was there anything else they cut you off from?

No, just the Pell Grant. I used to take four thousand dollars a month that the government issues for me for my school, to buy books and tuition and everything.

Yes, I am familiar with the Pell Grant. I know it is still today. You didn't finish that degree?

No, I couldn't finish it because I ran out of funds. I don't have the funds anymore. I don't have the money to pay my tuition. I only did two years of that school.

Did you know that the funds would be ceased?

Yes, I did, but I couldn't extend my residency as an immigrant because my family wants me to—well, they didn't really force me, but they said, "You need to file for your citizenship." You can extend it, but when you extend it, the government only gives you, I think, another two years, and so I would have to wait for that two years. If it runs out, it's still going to be the same thing.

They knew what immigrants were doing before, at that time. What they would do is they would just extend their residency another ten years and not file for their American citizenship because the government doesn't really force you, but recommends that you file within ten years for naturalization.

Okay, I see. Speaking more on Las Vegas, are there any differences in specifically Las Vegas that you noticed between Manila and here, or was it still the same?

What do you mean? Sorry.

That was a bad question on my part.

Compare a city from the Philippines versus here?

Yes.

There is no comparison, actually. It's better here. If you're talking about a city in the Philippines where I grew up, Manila, versus Las Vegas, Manila is really a big city. It is the main city of the Philippines, and the rest are just provinces, basically. When you go to Manila, everything's there, but it's just congested. Compared to a state here, there is nothing compared to what you can achieve here in the United States, living in any state for that matter, versus living in the Philippines at that time, in my opinion. Now the Philippines is getting better, but it still needs improvement, basically.

Do you stay in contact with the family you have in the Philippines?

Yes. I still have two sisters back home.

Do you have a grandma and grandpa still?

All my grandpas and grandmas have passed away.

How do you keep in touch with them?

Through Facebook, social media, basically. We just say *hi* to each other at least once a week, see what's going on, and we see each other's posts in Facebook and stuff like that.

Have they ever visited here at all?

Yes. My oldest sister has a tourist visa, so she comes here once a year and stays here for three months and then goes back and then comes back every year. My other sister does that, too. But this year they couldn't come to visit us because things are very tight right now with COVID and everything.

More on Las Vegas. You've lived here for...twenty...?

Nineteen ninety-six would be twenty-two. I think more, twenty-five.

So, you've seen it change completely.

Yes, yes.

In the neighborhoods that you've lived in, which is mostly western Las Vegas, were there other people of your ethnic background here?

When I got here?

When you got here and, also, now.

I don't know anybody, actually, when I got here, any Filipinos that I know of. I worked with some, but it was just a work-related relationship, nothing like hanging out and having a good time with other Filipinos. I think I answered that correctly.

Perfect. Are there any festivals or traditions from the Philippines that you would like to reinstitute into Las Vegas, or are those kinds of things just privately celebrated with you and your family here?

You are correct. I think the culture is just celebrated privately. There is a Filipino community in Las Vegas that gathers. I cannot remember the name of it. They gather in parks and get some kind of permission to have a festival or something like that, but I don't know if that's still going on. I haven't heard anything. But when I first got here, I actually got the chance to show up at one. It's basically a Filipino community where food is being cooked in a park, celebrating whatever national holiday that we do in the Philippines that we celebrate here, basically.

Was this a specific national holiday, or is it any national holiday?

It was a specific holiday for the Philippines, like our independence from the Spaniards, from Mexico and stuff like that. Different kinds of holidays that they celebrate there.

I wanted to ask about food. Do you cook traditional Filipino food, or do you often eat it?

I often cook and eat it, at least twice a week, sometimes three times. I do cook a little bit of Filipino food, but not a lot because it's really hard to cook Filipino food. But the basics, the easy ones, yes, I do. I do cook them.

Is it hard because you can't find the ingredients, or is it just...?

It's just hard to; it's tedious, basically. You have to have the right flavor, and if you mess it up, you mess it up, and that's it.

What are the names of the dishes you cook?

I do cook adobo, which is pork based. A pork belly, basically, and it's seasoned with vinegar and soy sauce and garlic.

What's your favorite?

That's my favorite.

What should people who have never traveled outside of Las Vegas know about your country's culture and history, and vice versa?

Can you repeat that, please?

Yes. What should people who have never traveled outside of Las Vegas know about Filipino culture and history? That's kind of a hard question.

I know, it is. What should they know? Filipinos are family-oriented people. We take care of each other, basically. We have a lot of respect for older people, basically. You call it senior citizens here in the States. There, when you see a senior citizen, you either open the door, grab a chair, and help them in a way they would feel comfortable in a public place. Maybe I didn't answer that correctly. I don't know the term, but it's a lot of respect for older people, basically.

What do you think people who have never left the Philippines should know about the U.S.? If there's anything.

I think I would tell the Filipinos that have not experienced being here in the United States that you can make it on your own here in the United States if you have the will to get a job. It's easy to get a car. There are more job opportunities, not just working in a bank. I think that's it.

The last Las Vegas oriented question is, what do you like most about living in Las Vegas?

Can I say what I don't like about it?

Yes, absolutely.

The heat, summer. I do not like the summer. It's dry heat, but in the Philippines, it's humid. As soon as you step out of the shower, you're sweating already.

Las Vegas is nice because I can navigate myself in a grid pattern system because you don't need to get lost. In California, it's so easy to get lost. You don't know where north, south, east and west is. Here, it's a grid system. You know if you're facing north, you're going to go north. If you're facing west, you're going to go west. It's south going to the airport. To me, it's easy. I think it's one of the easiest states to drive around and navigate, I believe.

Just to clarify, you only lived in California for two months and then you moved to Las Vegas?

Yes.

Switching gears here, do you identify yourself as Asian American, and how do you identify ethnically?

I am Asian American, naturalized, though. On your second question, what was it again? I'm sorry.

How do you identify ethnically?

Filipino.

Do you feel connected to your Filipino heritage?

Yes, I am, yes.

Do you feel connected to your Filipino culture?

Yes.

How much does being Filipino affect your identity?

It doesn't to me. Say the question again.

How much does being Filipino affect your identity after living here for over twenty years?

To me, it hasn't because I still have my accent. You can tell I have a Filipino accent. I wasn't born and raised here. I don't think it has affected me even though I'm living here for twenty years. It did kind of change me a little bit with the western culture, accepting western culture because I live here and I have to. But in regards to my identity as a Filipino, I don't think it has affected me even though I've lived here for a long time, for twenty years.

It hasn't affected your identity as an Asian American, or...?

Yes, if I answered it correctly.

Definitely. I just needed clarification.

It hasn't affected me being an Asian American. For that question, do you mean that it affected me that I have to change my identity as an American or as an Asian American? That I accept to be an American-American or Asian American versus being an immigrant or being western?

Being an Asian American.

Then, yes, it has not affected me. I'm still an Asian American.

Absolutely. But when you think of yourself, do you think—Let me think now...

How I understand the question is if living here for twenty years has affected my identity as not being a Filipino or just accepting myself as an American?

Both.

To me, it has not affected me to change my culture or to identify myself as an American. I still consider myself as Asian American because I'm an immigrant.

Thank you for clarifying that for me.

Did I answer that correctly?

Yes. Going off that question, was it difficult for you to assimilate into American culture, or were you seeking to assimilate into American culture, or did it just happen without you knowing?

I just adapted when I came here. I wasn't really seeking to learn the American culture because I don't want to overwhelm myself because I still have my Filipino culture, which I brought here, which is totally different because everything's different when you are an immigrant, especially when you come of age, when you're of legal age, it's totally different. Especially when I grew up, way back in the '80s, things were different at that time.

One thing I've noticed here is that when I came here, the norm of dating is different from the Philippines. The norm of having friends is different. The culture is different, and so I had to adapt to it because I was already an adult when I came here. It's not like I came here when I was a teenager and had just accepted the culture as a teenager living in America.

Is that what your brother got the chance to do, your youngest brother?

Yes, yes. He's more Americanized than everybody in the family, but my youngest brother is still attached with his Filipino culture. He became more Americanized than the rest of us because we all came at an older age.

Did you feel pressure to assimilate into American culture?

No, not really. It was just hard, to be honest with you. To me, it was hard. I can speak to my other siblings as well. It was hard for them, too. Having the accent is really hard when we first

got here because I really had a thick accent, still have, and I think that was one of the pressures, was trying to lose the accent. Talking to people is one of the pressures, too, because we don't know how to communicate being here for two months, three months, four months, or six months. It's hard for us to, I should say, relate to. We think the language, but we can't speak it in English, something like that. It's hard for us to translate it because we're thinking still in Filipino, in our language, thinking and translating it into English. Converting into English is really, to us, pressure that was really, really hard for us because we can't. Sometimes we can't convert it, and we're having a hard time trying to explain what we're trying to explain, basically.

Do you still feel that pressure?

Yes, sometimes, but now I've got used to it. But before two years, when we first got here, three years, I was still having a hard time.

Do you remember having any breakthroughs in this struggle of like, it only took a certain amount of years, and then suddenly it was easy, or is it?

Yes, you're correct. Suddenly, it was easy after twenty years. I take that back. Fifteen years. The rest is really, really hard for me. I think my younger brother didn't have a hard time, but for me, it was really hard, and my other brother, too, that was the second to youngest. Yes, it's just hard. We accepted the American culture or the western culture, but it's hard for us to express ourselves because we're trying to convert everything that we think into English, and we only knew straight English in school. When you come here, the slangs are in there of how people explain.

I'm going to give you an example. This happened to me. Really, it is a true story. When you go to a restaurant in the Philippines, you just order what's on the menu. When you order bread, they just give you bread. When you order meat, they just give you meat. They don't ask you if you like it medium rare, well done or medium well; they don't do that. It's just meat well

done. When you order bread here, they ask you if you want toast, sourdough. In the Philippines when you order toast, they just give you toast. They don't ask you what type. Those are the things that I had a hard time. An example, going into restaurants when you order eggs, they just give you sunny side up in the Philippines, but here, they ask you, "Would you like it sunny side, scrambled?"

We went to this restaurant. I can't remember the name. They're closed now. It's on Charleston in Summerlin. Anyway, they have huge, big onions. I can't remember the restaurant, my first restaurant that I came with my sister. The waitress was trying to get everybody's orders, and then came to me, and I couldn't. The waitress was asking me a lot of questions about getting the food. I just want food. Stop asking me questions. Then I would look at my sister and say, "What should I say?" She said, "Do you want toast, white bread, wheat?"

She would just repeat it.

She would just tell me, "Just order white." Then, "How would you like your eggs?" I would ask her, and she would just say, "Just say scrambled." That was the worst experience that I had because I don't know how to answer. It was an experience to me because now I know.

How long did you struggle with that kind of interaction?

Fifteen years. A long time.

Did you ever experience any kind of prejudice or discrimination in the U.S.?

Yes. Yes, we always do. Immigrants always experience any sort of discrimination, but it doesn't really affect me. I was called a *chink* one time, *FOB* one time, which means fresh off the boat, basically, a lot of times, especially when I was working at the airport at Dollar Rent A Car. I had an experience where they said, "Can I get a White person instead of you?" I said, "Okay, I'm going to be right back and ask my manager if I can get a White American for you." That was one

of them. Another one was a guy wrecked a car, and he didn't get insurance from the company, and his insurance won't pay for it. He got mad because I was trying to explain to him what the situation is and everything. He called me a *FOB*. But you don't go to their level and lose your temper. You just have to let it go, basically.

Do your siblings feel that same way about discrimination and prejudice?

I guess so, yes. They've experienced their own racial discrimination, and I have my own, but we never really talk about it. It's just nothing. That's not important for us. When we celebrate or when we gather, it's nothing that we talk about over dinner or anything like that because it's negativity.

That sounds like the worst job ever.

[Laughing]

Have you ever entered a situation considering or being cautious of your ethnicity?

Say that again.

Have you ever entered a situation, and in the back of your head, you're thinking about your ethnicity?

In a situation like what?

Like walking into a restaurant or walking into—

A mall.

Yes.

And then I'm thinking that I should be...? That I should be an American, or I should act like an Asian?

That you're thinking you're afraid that you might have to face prejudice or discrimination.

Yes, we always have that in the back of our heads when we go into places. I think all immigrants experience that. To me, I don't want to think that way because it just gives you a negative attitude that you're going to be miserable when you think that. I have a Chinese coworker, and he does that all the time when he walks into restaurants and walks into stores because of COVID. I think having that in the back of your head is an anvil (sic) that brings you down. To me, as Filipinos, we have our own stereotypes, but it doesn't really bother me. I don't want to think that way. It's just going to ruin your day if you're thinking about it when you walk into a store, like they're all staring at me because maybe I'm Filipino and whatnot. Thinking that way, to me, it's not the right way to have a mindset, basically.

Has that fear ever stopped you from entering a place or doing something?

No, not really, that hasn't stopped me. To me, if you think that way all the time, I think you're going to be more paranoid and not be social with other people, basically.

I am wondering in what setting do you feel the most and least accepted.

The least accepted culturally?

Culturally and ethnically.

When you say "setting," like...?

Like a situation if you're in a room somewhere and you're feeling like, oh, I feel like I don't belong, or I feel like these people don't want me here.

I've never had that situation before. I got invited to a party once, and everybody was White, or everybody was American, and I'm the only Asian, which doesn't feel right. It really didn't bother me because I got invited. My friend was American. At first, when I walked into the house, it was like, oh, everybody is American, White. I'm trying to look for an immigrant, which is a different race or a different culture, and I didn't see one. That was a little split-second culture

shock, but it just dies down because it was fine. I've never had an experience like walking into a restaurant or being rejected in a place. That's never happened to me.

Where do you feel the most accepted?

I guess everywhere here. Statistically, if you go to a Filipino restaurant, then yes, you see a lot of Filipinos. You see a lot of foreigners, too, Black people, White people eating in a Filipino restaurant. It's a little bit comforting. To me, I feel comfortable everywhere I go. I don't feel not accepted when I go somewhere else.

Here's a question that's kind of unrelated. Are there any pressures from your family to pass down Filipino traditions, heritage, culture?

No, no pressure, for sure. My dad never pressured us. I think it's built into a Filipino. If you're just talking about Filipinos, it's built in, and only if you're born and raised in the Philippines. It's built in that the culture is there. You love the culture, and whatever culture you learn in the Philippines towards other people is already there. I am talking about people who are born and raised in the Philippines. I'm just talking about Filipinos, not Filipinos that are born and raised in the United States, basically. To me, the culture has degraded. It's not a bad thing because you were born in the United States. Basically, as a kid being born in the United States, you totally accept the culture right away because you were born here. But I'm talking about people who are born and raised in the Philippines. Parents never really pressure you to—I guess some Filipino parents do that—have kids and their kids are born in the United States. I can say that some of them do pressure them to either learn their language and pressure them to pass on their culture. I guess that's it. Learn the culture, learn the language, learn the history of the Philippines versus somebody who was born and raised and it's already built in there. I don't think there's pressure

from any parent that has kids born and raised in the Philippines and then migrated to another country.

Do you feel that way with Sean at all? Because you said Sean was born here.

Yes, Sean was born and raised here, yes. Do I feel...?

You were saying that Filipino people born in the United States might feel pressure from their parents to learn the language.

Yes, but my sister never pressured them. But they don't know how to speak it.

Oh, Sean doesn't know how to speak Tagalog?

No. I think he understands a little bit. All my sister's kids don't know how to speak Tagalog, and my sister never pressured them to learn the Filipino culture, but she tells them the culture. She tells them the history of the Philippines, but never pressured them that you need to learn this.

"You need to learn that; you need to learn this; you need to be like that." No, nothing like that.

Okay, I see. Here's a little fact. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are the fastest-growing population group in Southern Nevada.

Oh, really?

Does that mean anything to you?

No. I didn't even know that.

Does it make you feel upset? Does it make you feel glad? Are you indifferent?

No, not really. No, I don't have any feeling.

I guess I just told you that, and so you probably haven't had time to process.

Right. Well, if it is, then it is. I don't feel that, oh yes, we're multiplying here in Southern

Nevada. But I don't feel any prejudice where, *oh, it's great, a lot of Filipinos, yea, or no*

Filipinos, no. I really don't feel that way. If it is the fastest, that means that people are coming to

Vegas. I think it's this is the state that people love, and a lot of people come here because they love the state, basically. I think it has to do with the state.

How come?

Because Las Vegas is a tourist spot, twenty-four hours. You can go to a restaurant literally less than two miles away rather than living in Ohio, which I lived in Columbus for two years, worked in downtown Columbus. I worked at a hotel there, Hyatt Hotel. You have to go downtown; you have to go out of the suburbs to go to work in Ohio, and they close at nine o'clock. I guess Filipinos like the twenty-four-hour nightlife where it's more accessible, restaurants everywhere, and there's gas stations on every corner unlike Ohio. I'm just speaking of Ohio, but I'm sure there's other states.

I don't mean to interrupt, but I am also from Ohio.

Oh, really?

Yes.

I did not know that.

Yes. I know what you mean when you say you have to drive a really long time to get Starbucks, fast food, anything.

Yes, and they close at nine o'clock. In Ohio, Columbus for that matter, you go to one place to go to work; everybody goes downtown to work. I used to live in Grove City in Ohio. My sister lives there in Ohio. She's now in Toledo, I believe. I lived there for two years. My sister had problems with the house and everything like that. I know a little bit of carpentry from growing up back home, and so I did it for free and lived there. I was thinking, oh, let me stay here and check out Columbus, Ohio.

I think it's about the city. When a lot of immigrants are populating a state, that means the state is good; they like the state, which I can only imagine Las Vegas...because of the accessibility, basically.

I want to ask more about Ohio. Did you live anywhere else in American since the past twenty-one years?

No. That, I forgot to answer the first time when you asked me. I totally forgot about that. Ohio, L.A., and here. That's it. I totally forgot about that.

Ohio was two years?

Yes, just two years.

What made you leave?

Ohio? Because of the weather, shoveling snow; I didn't like that. Plus, I didn't have a car when I went there. I took the bus, basically. Sometimes my brother-in-law would drive me there and pick me up. One of the things was when the house was done with the project and everything, I decided, ugh, this is not working for me, and so I'm going back to Vegas.

I don't blame you. You went from one extreme of the cold to the extreme heat.

Yes, I know. I was so excited because, ah, no more heat, but when I got there, like, no. My sister was so mad because one night it was so cold that I had turned up the heat to, I think, ninety, for me to just get warm. The bill was...She was like, "What? What did you do?" I had never worn a trench coat, and I wore one going to work. Standing in the bus stop wearing three scarves, three layers underneath and a beanie and a trench coat. That was downtown. Yes, I had to come back.

Two years is actually a long time. Props.

I shoveled snow every day, every weekend.

What did you build on your sister's house?

Not really built. It was broken, the patio, the boardwalk. We just had to repair it. I cannot build, but I can repair, like kitchen cabinets that need to be repaired and decking, some flooring.

Who taught you that?

Just back home because back home we do our own stuff involving our own. When I was growing up, my dad just did his own. He never hired anybody to fix the house. He just did it himself, and he taught us how to do it. Basically, it's just experience when we were growing up.

Do all of your brothers—sorry to interrupt. Go ahead.

It's just how my dad passed his learning on when he was growing up—I think he was really young in World War II—to us when we were growing up in high school, how to do stuff at home. How to repair this, how to repair that. In the Philippines, when you call somebody over there, like a plumber or a carpenter or whatnot, it's really expensive. When he was growing up, his dad passed on his knowledge of how to do stuff, and then my dad passed his knowledge on to us of how to do stuff. That's just how it went when we were growing up. And then carpentry is one—not the most job—I guess I can say it is the most common job, is carpentry. You can be a carpenter just by somebody teaching you, unlike here, you have to go to school and stuff like that. In the Philippines, it's all about training, how you teach people and stuff like that, and then you just become a carpenter because you just keep on doing it and doing it and doing it. That's how people learn there. Their education is not really as good as here.

Do you feel like your youngest brother didn't learn carpentry?

No, he didn't. He was taught, but he never had any interest in it because he was already seventeen, eighteen when he got here, and so culture-wise, he was more exposed to the western culture.

Did your sisters ever learn carpentry?

No.

Do any of your brothers have kids?

My youngest one does. He's got twins, girls, my favorite. The second youngest is married, but he doesn't have kids, and he's the only sibling that doesn't have kids. Everybody has kids except me. I'm sorry, that's me. Sorry. I don't have kids. Me and him don't have kids, but everybody else does.

I see. I was going to ask if maybe the brothers who learned carpentry, your older brother—

No, I'm the oldest brother.

I was going to ask if they would pass on their knowledge of carpentry to their children.

Living here, if I had a kid, I don't—I'll try. But knowing my other brother, I don't think he will because we're living in a different time. How should I say this? I guess I can say you're living in a different era than we lived before in the '80s. It's totally different. I don't think he would probably teach him to do carpentry because he can just go to school for it.

Do you ever have to do your own carpentry on this house? Do you ever do plumbing?

I do my own stuff, yes, in the house. I fix what I can.

Oh, I forgot to tell you that I used to work at Home Depot at one point, and I used to have a sideline doing floors, installing—not carpet; I can't do that—wooden floors, like laminate. It's a really hard job. But here, you can't really do—carpentry in the Philippines is different than carpentry here. There, we used wood all the time to build a house. Most houses there are built of wood, part wood and part cement. No drywall, just straight-out cement, no insulation. It's just cement, a roof, and wood. That's it. It's really not comfortable to live in.

Was that your childhood home?

My childhood home was the ultimate. We had a house, part wood as well. When there is a storm, the roof would just peel off from the house because of the winds. We used...It's not how houses are built here in the United States...It's sheets.

Aluminum or metal?

Metal sheets, yes. That's what our house was built on, metal sheets, wood, cement. It's a tropical country, so there's a lot of storms all the time during the rainy season, and those things are not really secure a hundred percent. If there's a big, huge storm and winds, it'll just come off, and we'll just replace it. My dad would buy sheets, and he would tell us to go to the roof and help, and we'd just hammer them down.

I did not know that.

My era was really, really different, I should say, versus living now.

But repairing your house kind of set you up with those foundational...

Yes, that you know how to do this and do that and whatnot. I guess it's more of how my dad transferred that knowledge to us that you should know how to do this and whatnot so that when you grow up, you know how to do it, basically.

I think I missed this. I'm sure I already asked you. Where are your parents living now, your mom and dad?

My parents are both passed away.

Did they live here before they passed?

Yes, they did. My dad passed away in 2014, and my mom passed away this year, February.

When you first moved to the U.S., did you have an idea of what your life would look like where you are now twenty years later?

No, I would never imagine that I would be living comfortably. If I didn't leave the Philippines, I would probably still be working in a bank or not living as comfortable as I should say that I am now.

You had no idea of what your life in America would look like, but you know if it was—

Well, I knew that it was going to be better. I didn't know how much better it was going to be, but I knew it was going to be better for all of us siblings that left the Philippines or migrated, actually. I'm not saying left, but...the only thing I don't like about the Philippines and the reason why people are leaving there is because the government, basically. That's a hundred percent sure that any Filipino would say that part of it is the government because it's corrupt.

You were most relieved to get away from that?

Yes. That and get a better life, basically, because I think all immigrants coming from a third-world country want a better life. The reason why they want to come to the United States or any other country, Canada or whatnot, is just to get a better life.

If you have extended family who still lives in the Philippines, do you ever encourage them to move here?

Yes. Actually, they are in the process of petition. My sister, actually, who comes here every year, is in the process of doing that, and I think she will be coming here probably next year because her papers are already in place, and all she needs is a medical. She's going to be living here in my sister's house. She is the sister before me, so she's older than me, obviously. She's going to be migrating here soon, next year. I'm not sure what month or whatnot, but I do know last time I spoke with her that her papers are already in, and they're interviewing the month that they applied for the migration, which is actually in June of 2021. All she needs is her medical examination. After that, they'll let her know that you're ready to migrate to the United States.

She has children?

Yes, she does have children.

Are her children going to follow her?

Her children are over twenty-one. When she gets here, she has to file for another petition to petition them and her husband because that's how it goes. You have to do it one at a time. You can't petition two people at the same time. You can only petition one person or a family member, like a husband and wife or one brother or one sister, because the government only allows you to sponsor one person. But if it's a husband, like your mom and dad, yes, you can, but you can only sponsor one sibling at a time. You can't sponsor two.

Once she gets here, she will petition her husband.

Her kids first.

Her kids first?

Yes. My parents actually petitioned her. Here's a story. She gave up her American citizenship because her husband didn't want to leave at that time. Then when she gave up her citizenship, she has to apply for a new one. Now that they have decided, okay, let's go, I'm ready to retire in the United States, you have to reapply for that even though you already got approved the first time, but you gave it up. She was already petitioned by my parents, so nobody has to sponsor her. That's how it goes. It's already outstanding out there that my mom and dad already petitioned her. All she has to do is reapply for it.

My other sister that's in the Philippines has to be sponsored by my sister. She sponsored her, petitioned her to come here.

For the sponsorship, how long do you need to be sponsored before you—

There is no time. But as long as the sponsor has a job, has income, and can provide comfortable living with the immigrant, then they should be fine. I don't think Immigration asks for any proof that you can provide as long as you have a job and stuff like that.

Once she gets here, how long do you think it would be before her children can come?

Probably ten years, fifteen years at the most because the petition—or less than that, probably. I don't know. I really can't tell from parent to—because I waited seven years. When I got approved, I had to wait seven years. When I became twenty-one, I had to wait seven years to come here. But they already petitioned me before I became twenty-one, so I guess it was three more years, so ten years because I was petitioned before twenty-one. When I turned twenty-one, I wasn't able to leave because I already turned twenty-one, so that prolonged it. If I was petitioned before I turned twenty-one, it would only be three years.

But because it was after twenty-one, it was seven.

Yes, they added seven more years. I waited seven more years before they could accommodate an over-twenty-one immigrant.

Is it different based on the relationship that you have, or is it just the age?

Just age. It has nothing to do with relationship. Anybody can. If you were in the Philippines and you're Filipino, I can petition you to come here.

Even though we're not related at all?

Yes. I can declare you as either a family member, a fiancée or anything like that, even though we're not related. A lot of immigrants do that because it's a loophole. Even though they're not related, they try to file it as they're related. All you have to say in the papers is that you're related even though you're not, but you can sponsor them.

Would you ever sponsor anybody?

I guess I can if I had the chance. I think so, yes.

Your older sister sponsored you originally?

No, my parents did. My sister who married Mark petitioned my parents. She is the only sibling that petitioned my parents. Then my parents petitioned the rest of us.

Oh, they've petitioned all six.

All eight. Except for my sister that I'm renting right now in this house because she married an American citizen, so that's automatic. Mark was an American citizen doing his doctorship in the Philippines. They met, they got married, and they moved here. That was the beginning of us coming here in the States. If my sister did not meet him, we would still be in the Philippines. My sister became an American citizen because Mark is already an American citizen. He was just living in the Philippines. Mark and my sister petitioned my parents, and then my parents petitioned us, the rest of the family. There were eight of us, not nine because the ninth is already an American citizen because she married Mark.

That's right. And this is her house.

Yes, that's right.

How long has she owned it?

Since 2008, I believe, but I never lived there. I only moved down here in 2017, June or July, I believe, because other people lived there. Her son lived there for a while. He used to work at the Trump Towers, and then he left. My sister got the house, and it was vacant, and my other brother lived there. His name is John. I don't know if you've seen him, but you've always lived here all your life, right? And his wife lived there. They got a house, and they moved out. Then her son finished school and lived here and got a job at the Trump hotel. He lived here for a year and a

half or something like that, and then he left because he got married and wanted to go back to Irvine and do another study or school, and so that was vacant.

I was basically living in an apartment. She would always ask me to visit the house and take out the weeds because she got a letter from the HOA. I would come here. She gives me the key. Then I just go through the place and stuff like that. One day, my apartment raised their rent on me, and I couldn't afford it anymore. I asked her, "Can you be my landlord, and I can be your tenant?" She approved. That was the date I moved in, June or July of 2017 or 2018. I can't remember. Then I met Craig, and then I met the other neighbor over there.

Do you plan on moving?

Eventually, yes, I will move because they're going to retire here. Mark is going to be retiring probably in five, six years, or seven years at the most. They're probably going to retire here in Vegas versus in Apple Valley because his practice is in Apple Valley. He has a clinic there. When that happens, or even before that happens, I have to go get my own place again. Probably this time, I'll at least buy a condo and not rent because my sister is always telling us, "Don't rent." If you're going to rent, rent with your families. But I think buying a house or getting a condo is one of my bucket list, in the future. I really want to get a house.

Do you think it's going to be on this side of town still?

Yes, Summerlin, it's going to be here. There's nowhere else I want to get a house because I like this place, Summerlin. The west side is safer.

Do you feel the same way about immigrating to the U.S. as you did when you first came here? You described it as exciting. You were excited for the opportunities. Do you still feel that way?

Yes. I think any immigrant would not forget that day when they leave their country because of something; in my case, because nothing is really going to happen to me in the Philippines, basically. Plus, the government, the corruption, the poverty and everything like that, I think any immigrant will not forget that even though they've stayed here for a long time.

But the excitement, yes, I do remember the excitement and the change, and the culture changed as well, how to adapt in a different country because you were born and raised in a different country and you're an adult and you're coming to another country is quite shocking—not shocking, but it's a big change, versus coming here as a kid. A lot of Filipinos, when they get approved, they're eleven, twelve years old, and by the time they get here, it only takes them two years, three years to get used to it. Their brains are sponges. They accept the culture right away.

Has your perspective on the U.S. changed at all since the time you've been here?

How I see the United States when I was living in the Philippines?

Yes, versus now after living here.

No, not really. My expectation living in the United States when I was back home is still the same expectation that I see now. It hasn't really changed except for Biden. I'm just kidding. I didn't mean to say that.

Whatever you want.

I guess now I'm tuned into how the government is different from where you migrated from, basically.

I was going to ask if you're glad that your family took you to the U.S.

Yes, I am glad. Yes, very, very glad, yes.

A question I just remembered that I wanted to ask you, but it's kind of off topic. How has the model minority stereotype of Asian Americans affected you, if it has at all?

Model minority? I'm not sure I know what that means.

The model minority stereotype is attached to Asian Americans because they were...

Is it a bad stereotype amongst Asian Americans or...?

It's a damaging stereotype because model minority meaning they were the "good" immigrant because they assimilated hard.

I think I know what you're saying. That immigrants, Asian Americans, are more successful than most other people. Is that what you're saying? Is that how I interpret it?

Not only that, but also that White people expect Asian Americans to be the good immigrants, so they're not like other people of color. They're different than Black people or Latinos because they're more assimilated into American culture because they "behave." Have you ever heard of that kind of stereotype before?

Not really, just the movie "Crazy Rich Asians." That's how I learned about it. According to the movie, and I researched it, it is...not a little bit true, but it is happening that Asian Americans are more successful than White people, I believe, I would say that. I don't want to be offensive.

It's just statistics.

Yes. I should rephrase that. Most immigrants are more successful than Americans. I can't say Asians. I've seen doctors, and they are Indians, like in India. A lot of doctors are Indian. Doctors here in Las Vegas, a lot of them are Indians, which are successful. To me, it's just basically you can...The question is how I relate to that or...?

How has it affected you, if it has at all?

Well, I'm not rich. That affects me. No, I'm just kidding. It hasn't affected me. That's the statistic, how it goes. It only shows immigrants are more, I guess, hardworking, you could say,

than most people. Yes, but that doesn't affect me at all. It has affected me in a good way to think that immigrants are more hardworking.

Did the fact that the Philippines was a U.S. colony affect your...

Well, it was almost to be a colony, but it didn't happen because after the revolution with Ferdinand Marcos, one president decided that we need to have our independence. We used to have American bases there. It's called Subic Bay and Clark Air Base. American servicemen were stationed in the Philippines only because of the Cold War at that time with Reagan and the Russians. The Philippines is a strategic place to, quote-unquote, launch a nuclear missile. That's why the bases were there, at the same time protecting the country as well because who doesn't want to be protected by the United States? The Clark Air Base and Subic Airfield has been there for a long, long time, during Reagan and the Cold War with the Russians. Then after the revolution, one of our presidents, which has been in war for twenty years, got overturned. One president decided that the Philippines should have our own independence, cut our ties from the United States. But we're still in debt. The country is still in debt from the United States, anyway. That's when the bases left and having the Philippines as a colony did not happen, same thing as would have happened in Hawaii, basically, because Hawaii is a colony. If that would have happened, then it would have been a totally different story. It would have been a great thing that it would possibly happen to the Philippines. But the thing is that they don't want to be governed by the United States because they still want to do their own corruption. They don't want to be under the rule of the United States, under the federal government, because if you're a colony, you have to follow the law of what country assimilated you to be as a colony. It's like saying, "I don't want to be ruled by you because you're going to audit me, and I can't do my corruption, so

stay away from us. Let's do our own corruption," and stuff like that. That's more political, basically. That's the reason why it never came to be a colony.

Do your siblings also share that same opinion?

Oh yes. I think every Filipino does that was in my generation, which is the Z generation, I believe, yes, that one of the reasons why it never became a colony is because of that.

I never did ask you when you were born.

Nineteen sixty-eight.

My last question is, do you plan on staying in the U.S. until...?

Until I die?

Yes.

Yes. I don't think I'm going to go anywhere, yes. There's nowhere for me to go at my age. I'm settled here in Las Vegas.

Is there anything you think that would make you go back to the Philippines at all?

Probably a vacation, and that's it, just go to the beach. That's about it. We do have nice beaches.

Have you been back at all?

That's the thing, I haven't.

For twenty years?

Yes, I haven't. I just never took care of my passport. Up to now, I still don't have a passport. All my siblings have passports, which I am actually taking care of right now. Applying for the real I.D. is a pain in the butt because when I had an appointment with the DMV, when I showed my naturalization papers, it has my first name on it, John, and my Social Security only has "Eric," so I got declined. They said I have to fix it in Social Security, add my name, which I was supposed

to do when I got my oath-taking. I'm sure the officer said, "You need to go to Social Security, update your name to put your 'John' back." That's what I'm trying to do right now.

I never went back there because I never had a reason. Number one, it's expensive to go back; the flight alone is thirteen, fourteen hundred dollars just to go back. On top of that, you still have to bring extra money to use on your vacation. The thing with Filipinos is that when you go home, the Filipino tradition is you have to bring a lot of gifts. It's to... See, I'm doing it again, I'm translating Filipino language into English, and I can't say it because I'm having a hard time translating it. It's like a homecoming, basically. You bring a lot of gifts to all your friends because you came from the United States or America, or you came from Canada, or you came from a different country. What they perceive is that you're very, very successful, which is not really that true. You might be. But that is the perception of Filipinos who have not left the Philippines; that if you come back home from the United States or Canada or whatnot, you're very successful, and you have a lot of money, and stuff like that. That's how they expect you. That's why when you come home, you have this homecoming that you have to bring all these gifts. It's really expensive to go back to your own country because you have a lot of friends.

Not just family, friends, too?

Yes. You have to give them a gift or something, a token of something that, hey, I know you; you're my friend. I know how to say it. If there is any Filipino listening to this, it's called *pasalubong*. That's the language. It's how you give thanks that you're coming home and seeing them. You give them gifts, basically, something like that.

I see. I'm trying to think of a good closing question.

Any question will do.

Do you plan on moving out of the Southern Nevada Valley at all?

No, no. I'm staying here in Las Vegas, yes, only because, like I said, I'm traveling in a grid system. I don't want to travel. Traveling in California is really hard. I got lost one time. I was trying to get to Temecula, California from Apple Valley; I ended up in Chino, Chino City in California. That was really...I think we only had Nokia phones at that time. The iPhone was not even invented at that time.

How I got to Temecula is I went to Jack in the Box in Chino. When I got to Chino, I was like, where am I? You're in Chino, California. I was like, how do I get to Temecula? My brother-in-law just gave me directions, but I got lost. Anyway, he gave me specific directions and a map. I believe she gave me a map, yes, somebody working in Jack in the Box. I got to Temecula. Then when I got there, I had to meet somebody. Honestly, I was picking up a firearm for my brother-in-law. I finally got there, and he just gave me directions how to get back to Apple Valley.

I really don't like leaving Las Vegas because, to me, like I said before, the accessibility of the state or Las Vegas, to me, is very comfortable. I feel comfortable living here in Las Vegas. I don't want to go back to Ohio, either, with the snow. I don't think I can see myself living in another state than here in Las Vegas.

Speaking of your brother calling, I'm wondering if you and your siblings speak to each other in English or Tagalog?

Tagalog, yes. But we do speak "Taglish," which is what we call it. It's called Tagalog and English. But when we are out having dinner in restaurants, we do speak English. We hardly speak Tagalog in public—we do in public, let's say, in the parking lot, yes, we do. But if it's a crowded area, we try to limit ourselves to speaking English instead of speaking the language. But on phones or at home, we do speak Tagalog, yes. I don't think I've ever spoken with my brothers in English. I think short, short ones, like, "Can you hand me that sugar?" For us to say that it's

awkward; it's like, "Really, you're speaking English with me?" It's just awkward. But if there's other people, then obviously we have to speak English, like other visitors. Gatherings with other invited people, yes, we speak in English. But if it's just us, to us it feels awkward to speak in English with each other. We just laugh, like, "Why are you speaking English?" It's not awkward, but awkward funny. We just laugh at ourselves, like, "Okay, we're speaking English, woopy doo." Yes, we speak our own language, Tagalog, basically.

Does your sister speak Tagalog to Sean at all?

No. They speak English. Sean does not understand it. He knows Korean, but he doesn't know how to speak Tagalog. He learned Korean very quickly, in less than a year.

With that, I think we're finished.

[End of recorded interview]