

# **AN INTERVIEW WITH JULIAN EUSEBIO**

An Oral History Conducted by Cecilia Winchell and Jerwin Tiu

---

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

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

University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2020

Produced by: The Oral History Research Center at UNLV – University Libraries  
Director: Claytee D. White  
Project Manager: Stefani Evans  
Transcriber: Kristin Hicks  
Editors and Project Assistants: Vanessa Concepcion, Kristel Peralta, Jerwin Tiu, Cecilia  
Winchell, Ayrton Yamaguchi

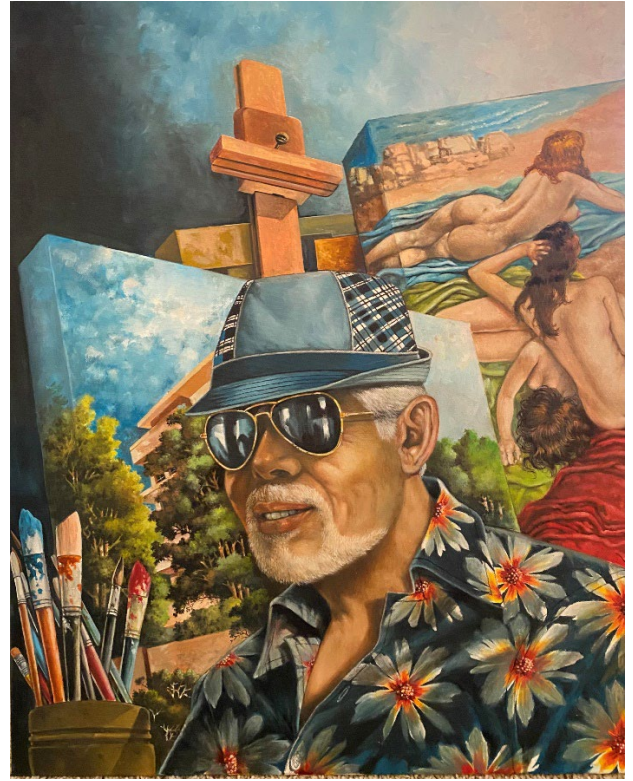
The recorded interview and transcript have been made possible through the generosity of a grant from the City of Las Vegas Commission for the Las Vegas Centennial and funding from private individuals and foundations. The Oral History Research Center enables students and staff to work together with community 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  
Director, Oral History Research Center  
University Libraries  
University of Nevada Las Vegas

## PREFACE



“I enjoy [drawing] a lot because I can show what I can do. If I finish something and it turns out really nice, I’m very, very happy.”

Born in the central Bulacan region of the Philippines, Julian Eusebio had a simple childhood in the countryside helping his parents farm and harvest rice. Moving to Manila for college, Eusebio studied architecture while also illustrating for comics and magazines. Throughout his time in the Philippines, Eusebio recalls doing everything from illustration to being an art director at an advertising agency until he received an offer to move to the United States and work there.

First landing in Los Angeles, California his nephew told him about the cold weather in New York, leading him to stay in Los Angeles and continue his art director career there. After a

while, Eusebio started a construction business, landscaping and constructing swimming pools for everyone including celebrities such as Michael Jackson's brother. He expanded his construction business to Las Vegas, Nevada, where he opened up another branch in 1992 because of how he saw the city booming. After retiring in 2010, Eusebio took up painting more seriously again, using primarily oils, as well as drawing in other mediums such as charcoal. His work has been exhibited throughout the Clark County libraries and he continues to be inspired by numerous different styles. Throughout his time in Las Vegas, Eusebio has enjoyed everything from the wide range of restaurants to the gambling. Nowadays, his paintings revolve around landscapes, people, and seascapes. He cites his favorite artists as Norman Rockwell and Rembrandt, and throughout the rest of the interview he talks about everything else from his drawing process to how he got involved with showing his artwork throughout the Las Vegas Clark County Library District.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

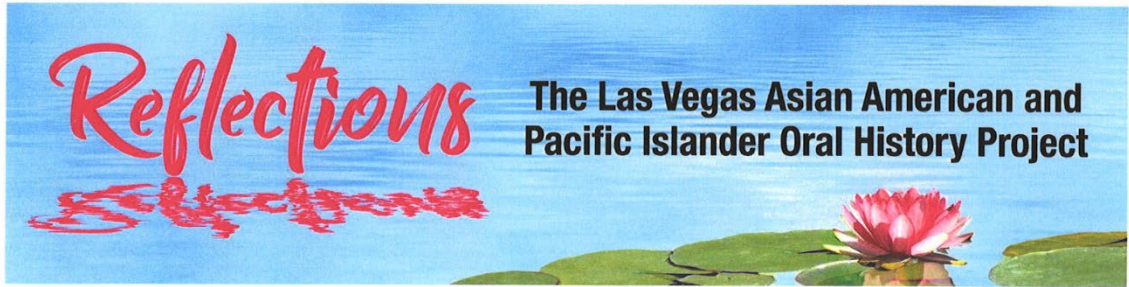
Interview with Julian Eusebio

June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022

in Las Vegas, Nevada

Conducted by Cecilia Winchell and Jerwin Tiu

Preface.....	iv
Julian Eusebio begins with recalling his early life growing up in the countryside and details about his family. After moving to Manila to pursue illustration work and receive a degree in architecture, Eusebio did work both as a comics illustrator as well as an art director. In 1972, he would go on to leave the Philippines in pursuit of better opportunities in the US and eventually landed in Las Vegas, Nevada, two decades later because of a booming market. After retiring in 2010, he has continued to be an avid painter and talks about his art and his interest in art.....	1–6
Eusebio discusses his favorite art pieces that he has created and what mediums he prefers to paint with. He also details some various other topics including Filipino traditions, what he enjoys about living in Las Vegas, and what kinds of restaurants he frequents. He then returns to the topic of his business in Los Angeles, California, and how his architectural background helped him, how his favorite artists have inspired him.....	6–13
With a collection of koi pieces, Eusebio goes into detail about the inspiration behind them and why he enjoys them so much. He discusses more information related to his construction business and their expansion to Las Vegas, and how he got involved with exhibiting at the Las Vegas Clark County Libraries. He mentions some information about his family composition and how he has seen the city grow in his time here. Finally, Eusebio discusses what kind of people he built pools for and what it was like having his son take over his business.....	13–20
Appendix – Selected Works.....	20–23



Use Agreement

Name of Narrator: JULIAN P. ELISEBIO

Name of Interviewer: Cecilia Winchell, Jerwin Tiu

We, the above named, give to the Oral History Research Center of UNLV, the recorded interview(s) initiated on \_\_\_\_\_ as an unrestricted gift, to be used for such scholarly and educational purposes as shall be determined, and transfer to the University of Nevada Las Vegas, legal title and all literary property rights including copyright. This gift does not preclude the right of the interviewer, as a representative of UNLV, to use the recordings and related materials for scholarly pursuits. There will be no compensation for any interviews.

I understand that my interview will be made available to researchers and may be quoted from, published, distributed, placed on the Internet or broadcast in any medium that the Oral History Research Center and UNLV Libraries deem appropriate including future forms of electronic and digital media.

[Signature] JUNE 1, 2022  
Signature of Narrator Date

[Signature] 6/1/2022  
Signature of Interviewer Date  
[Signature] 6/1/2022

**Good morning. Today's date is June first, 2022. My name is Cecilia Winchell. I'm here with Jerwin Tiu and Stefani Evans, as well as Julian Eusebio.**

**Julian, may you please spell your name for the record?**

My name is Julian, J-U-L-I-A-N. My middle name is Perona, P-E-R-O-N-A. My last name is Eusebio, E-U-S-E-B-I-O.

**Thank you. To start off, could you just tell us about your childhood, where you were born, your parents, your grandparents.**

I was born in San Pedro Hagunoy, Bulacan. The center part of the Philippines, and I grew up in the same place. I did my elementary and high school. After I finish, I go to Manila to continue with schooling. I work in textile company as supervisor of design and engraving.

**Do you remember anything about your grandparents?**

Not too much, my grandmother die before I was born. My grandfather, every time I visit him, he teach me to do local toys.

My childhood is very, very simple. I grew up in the countryside. We just play all the time in the field, helping our parents on faming.

**What were your parents from?**

My father is from Paombong, Bulacan and my mother is from Hagunoy, Bulacan.

It's like a rice field. Because in our place, it's mostly farmers. It isn't really a farm with a lot of chickens or pigs and stuff like that. This part is taking care of the field to plant rice and harvest it.

**Do you have any siblings?**

Yes, I have two sisters. We are three. Me and my siblings are a total of three. My mother passed away in 1946 after the war, and my father died maybe around 52 years ago.



**What kind of foods did you eat growing up?**

We ate rice. Mainly that's what we eat there in the province: rice, fish, chicken. Whatever my mom cooked and lot of vegetables.

**What did you do after moving to Manila?**

Helping my uncle selling vinegar and part time working with my friend for comics illustration.

When I moved to Manila, I started doing comic illustrations. I do a lot of series in comics and magazines. [Pointing] That's the one that I used to go on to college to take architecture.

**How did you get into illustrating and drawing?**

Even when I started school in elementary, my teacher found out that I was very good in drawing that way. She always asked me to go to the blackboard to help her to draw. Then growing up, when I'm getting bored, I mostly like drawing and sketching, things like that. After high school, I decided to go to Manila to pursue work on my drawing.

**What did you enjoy about drawing?**

I think that's my life. I enjoy it a lot because I can show what I can do. If I finish something and it turns out really nice, I'm very, very happy.

**You were in Manila illustrating comics and magazines for a while. What did you do after that?**

I worked in a drug company as an art director.

**Were you in the Manila all the way until you left the Philippines?**

Yes. I left the Philippines in 1972 to come over to United States. Actually, I'm working with American company in the Philippines as an art director, and then when my company's art director in New York retired, they asked me if I can go to the States. I agree with them. Well, first I don't agree, because I have a very good job in the Philippines, and even my boss is telling

me that [I] don't need to go there. But I think that maybe for a change, maybe I can experience, also to be here in the States, and that's why I come over here. I think I am very lucky, because when I come here, I stop over in Los Angeles. My nephew told me to stay in Los Angeles because New York is very cold, and I don't like cold places. I decided to look for a job, and one Sunday [I see] an ad in the newspaper that they are looking for artists and an art director. I go there and apply, and when they see my portfolio, the boss right away asked me if I can work right away. I worked there at the advertising agency as an art director at Treasure Chest Advertising. That's my art experience.

What's the time that the computer come out? My business as an illustrator was going down because mostly they use computer. Then I decided to do something because I can feel that my art business is going to go down. I go to this board of contractors in Los Angeles and apply for examination in landscaping, and then I got the result in 1975 and started working in landscaping. Then, after one year, I add swimming pool, to build swimming pool, and in 1992 I move here in Vegas.

**Did you continue your construction business in Vegas?**

Yes, '92 up until 2010.

**Why did you decide to move to Las Vegas?**

Because I noticed that the progress of Las Vegas. I'm thinking that may be a chance to get more customers in the kind of business I have. Actually, I consider myself very lucky, because when I moved here, I got a lot of customers that want me to do their job. In 2010, I decided to retire, and that's the time that I go back to my painting.

**I wanted to go back a bit to when you left the Philippines. Was there anything that was hard to leave behind when you left? What were the hardest things to leave behind when**

**you left the Philippines? Was there anything that you were really sad about leaving behind?**

Oh, yes. Because of my work, I have a lot of comic series, and also I was an art director of publishing at the same time I was working full-time at American company as an art director, also; but I had no, really, idea to come here. Only my wife wanted to come over here. I told her, “What do you need? We have a very good life here in the Philippines.” One of the things that I’m not really too much interested to come out here, because my boss is American, and he told me, “Why are you going there? I’m American, and I don’t really want to go back because over there, you wash your own plate, and you cook your own food. Here, what are you looking for? You have a maid, everything.” But after that, I’m not sorry that I come out here, because it gave me a lot of experience—excitement and experience. As a foreigner or Asian, it’s a little bit hard also to find a job. But because of my experience, I think I’m very lucky. That’s one of the reasons, when I applied for a job, they hired me right away when they saw my portfolio.

**How did you meet your wife?**

I met my wife when I was in college. I was taking architecture, and she was taking pharmacy. I loved to go around with my friend to a lot of dormitories, and then I meet my wife there.

**Could you tell us about some of the comic book series you worked on?**

In the Philippines, there are a lot of comic magazines including Viwayawas Publications and Bucaklak Publications. Sometimes, when a writer likes your work, then they ask if you want to work with him. That’s why I have a couple of series that I’m doing there. I’m very, very busy, because they always have a deadline. I’m a newlywed at that time, and that’s why I try my best to work harder; because, when you’re starting a family, you need some money.

**Do you remember what the stories were about?**

It's like love stories. A lot of writers create stories of Vove & Vocal stories, like that. Mostly it's a light book for Filipino people, mostly the topic of their stories.

**When you arrived in the United States, did you experience any culture shock?**

The first time I come out here, especially when I was hired as an art director, when you are new in this country, especially Asian, the accent is hard to understand. A lot of my artists are okay, but only one that is always questioning me and asking me, "Can you please repeat it?" When I have a meeting, they always want me to repeat what I'm telling, because he told me, "I cannot understand." One time we have a meeting, and this guy is questioning me. "Why don't you say it really loud so that I can understand?"

Then my boss called me up. He told me, "Do you have a problem with your artists?"

"I don't know. Maybe because of my accent he cannot understand."

"Well, what are you going to do?" That's what my boss told me. I'm just trying to work with him. Then my boss told me, "It's up to you. If my artists cannot understand you, I'm going to tell him to look for another job."

What happened with that, when we have a meeting again, he's questioning me again. I remember that my boss told me about that. The name is Rick. "Rick, do you really not understand me?"

"No."

Then I told him, "Maybe you better look for another job." Suddenly, they understand me. But it's very, very good experience, actually, for me.

**You retired in 2010?**

Yes, I'm retired and I'm just doing painting.

**You've been painting ever since you retired?**

Yes, since 2010.

**In that time, what got you back into painting?**

I think that's my life. Even when I'm working on my construction company, I have a lot of appreciation on my presentation, because my presentation—especially on swimming pool—I can draw mostly like actual pictures of swimming pool, and I do a lot of landscaping around it.

That's why my customers like my presentation all the time. I love my business because, also, I can use my art.

**I'd like to ask a bit more about your art. What are your favorite things to paint?**

My favorite, I love to draw people and then landscaping and seascape. I try all the time to do something, to put a little bit—because my art is mostly conservative, very tight in style. If I have time, I try to loosen it, to find something in a new style.

**What's your creative process like? How do you decide what to paint?**

See, what happened to me is mostly a lot of time the topic. I love to go to the library, and I found out every time that I go to the library, I find something that really amazes me on the art of some artist, and then I'm trying to do something that I can be closer to them.

**Who are some of your favorite artists?**

My favorite artist is Rockwell, Norman Rockwell, and Rembrandt. That's why I have a collection, a couple of collections, of Rockwell and Rembrandt.

**What are some of the favorite pieces that you have painted yourself?**

It's not here. I paint one they called Winnowing. In the Philippines during the harvest time, women are screening rice. When the winds blow, they are holding... I don't know what to say for all that, but they are screening. That's my favorite. Also, one of my favorite things is

charcoal. As you can see, I have a lot of pieces. In charcoal, you can do a style and use it in color.



Art Shell Competition, 1956, Title: Winnowing—Watercolor  
“Me and my father when I received the first place award in art competition”

See the Saint Teresa over there? I did all the wrinkles and everything. But in color, it's very hard to do that. Then also this painting, you can see all the rain. In color, it's very hard to do something like that, but in charcoal

**What medium do you use when you paint or draw?**

Before, I used watercolors, because when I was in high school, that's my favorite medium, watercolor. But when I come out here to the States, I switched to oil and—I can't remember

what's the other one. Mostly oil what I'm doing now. I do very, very little watercolor. I like to it's easy.



do it in oil, because you can touch it up. In watercolor, just one stroke; that's it. You cannot repeat. When you do it, that's the color. But in oil, if you make a mistake, you can cover it, easy.

**Do you still celebrate any Filipino traditions or celebrations?**

Yes, here in the States, but in the Philippines, there are a lot of Filipino traditions that you can go or you can see. Here, it's not too many. Mostly what I see only here in the United States is when ten or twelve Filipinos get together and enjoy independence. That's the only one. But in the

Philippines, it's too many. There are a lot of festivals. During May, in the Philippines, they call it Fiesta. You can see a lot of that tradition. Here, it's not too many. The only Filipino traditions here are birthdays or a wedding anniversary.

**Are you religious?**

A little. My wife is very religious. She prays the whole night. My wife is not here now, so you cannot meet her. She is a very religious lady.

**What do you enjoy about living in Las Vegas?**

I enjoy it here because before, I gamble, and that's why I enjoy it. When I am working on my business, I gambled all the time, but now when I'm retired, I stopped. It's nice also here because there are a lot of shows that you can see. It's good here. I think I like it here more than Los Angeles. In Los Angeles, there's not too many things that you can see. Also, the area that I am living in LA, at nine o'clock it's all closed. Here, you can go out anytime to eat. I like it here.

**What kinds of food do you eat here when you go out to eat?**

I love steak. When I go with my friend, we go all the time to Chinese food. Philippines is like you are in China; there is a lot of Chinese food. We miss that food, also, because we grow up on Chinese food.

**Do you know any other painters in Las Vegas?**

Gig de Pio. He exhibits in UNLV. There are too many artists here. There are a lot of Filipino artists here, but they don't really expose themselves. I don't know why. But I know that there are a lot of artists here.

**I'll pass it on to Jerwin and Stefani now.**

**JT: What are your favorite Filipino dishes?**

Adobo, dinuguan, paksiw. You know paksiw, huh? It's a lot of sour.



**JT: Yes. I forgot my question. I'll pass it on to Stefani.**

**SE: You mentioned that you studied architecture in Manila. Did you graduate with a degree in Architecture?**

Yes.

**When you went to the contractors' board in Los Angeles, did you try to become licensed as an architect as well?**

No, no. Here in the States, even though you graduated in the Philippines, you cannot be a diploma holder here in America because you've got to go more years in college. Like me, even though I graduated in Architecture, I am not really a graduate in architecture when I am here.

**But that knowledge helped you in your business?**

Yes. In the Philippines, when you go Fine Arts, a lot of parents don't like it. My dad, when I told him I was going to go to Manila to pursue my studies to take Fine Arts, my father said, "What are you thinking? When you go Fine Arts, you will be hungry. You cannot get money for Fine Arts. Do something else. Find something else." That's why I decided to go Architecture. But architecture is a big help for me, especially looking at art in perspective. You have a knowledge and mostly you are doing right. Actually, I did not use my architecture for my living.

**You said your two favorite artists were Rockwell and Rembrandt. Why those two? Their styles are so different.**

Yes. When I was starting my art on painting, I loved to paint really like very tight things, all the details and more details. It's not loose. If you can see my painting, it's like...

**Very representational.**

That's why I love those two artists. The one that I like for Rembrandt is his light and shadows, and Rockwell is the detail of a human figure.



**When you think of Rockwell, what piece of his do you like the best?**

Actually, I think I like everything. You can see I have three Rockwells there. I love his style because it's very easy to understand.

**Very clean.**

Yes, clean. You can see the draperies, it's very simple, but it's very easy to understand.

**Almost like a photograph.**

Yes, yes. But Rockwell is mostly a photographic—I mean, a Rembrandt.

**When I look at your portrait sketches, they are very detailed.**

Oh yes. When I do charcoal, I am getting excited because I can detail everything. See that lady, all the wrinkles and everything.



**And the hairs.**

Yes. I love to see the actual detail of the piece, the expression. That's what I'm talking about.

But in color, it's very hard to do it. But in charcoal, it's easy.

**Tell us about the koi that you paint.**

I only started the koi maybe a year ago. When I go back to the Philippines, my Chinese friend brought me to what looked like a field of koi, and I saw a lot of good koi, and I thought maybe I would try to paint some of this. That's why I took a lot of pictures. When I came back here, I started doing it.



**When did you start doing this, about what year?**

Kois, maybe two years ago, only two years ago. No, maybe less than two years ago. I love koi because of the color. They are a very vibrant color.



**When you came to Las Vegas, you came here because of the cost of living and the building boom. Was there anyone here that you knew when you first came?**

No, that's it.

**You just came here cold?**

Yes, I come here because I know they are starting the progress of Vegas and because my business is construction. That's the reason that I decided to come out here, to be a part of the progress of Las Vegas.

**Who are some of the people that you met when you first came that were helpful to you?**

Here? Nobody. I told you that I love to go to Vegas when I was in Los Angeles. I was almost here every weekend. I think the first time I come over here it's 1975. That one is not even starting the progress of Las Vegas. But around 1980, there are starting of a lot of changes, buildings. I figure, maybe it's time to put something in Vegas, even a branch of my business. That's why, in 1985, I took the exam here in Las Vegas for pool construction, and I passed it, and I started my business in '92. In '94, I decided to move here and leave Los Angeles as a branch of my office, and Vegas became the main office.

**When did you close the L.A. branch of your office?**

I closed it in 1992 and retired in 2010.

**Oh, you kept that open the whole time?**

Oh yes, yes. The only thing, I closed Las Vegas because my wife kept telling me, "You're too old." That's why I decided to close. But I really don't like to stop working. Then my wife told me, "Why don't you just stop and go back to your painting?" That's why I decided to go back.

**You mentioned your artist friend, Gig de Pio. How did you meet him?**

The first time the library asked me to exhibit there, we met at the library. Gig came out there and introduced himself to me, that he is also a Filipino, and he is an artist.

**When did you have your first exhibit with the Library District?**

I cannot remember anymore. Maybe I exhibit in the library around four years ago. I exhibit in Enterprise and Las Vegas and Windmill and then [Clark] County, but I exhibit twice here in the Sahara Library. Now I exhibit in the West Library, East Library, and becoming after that is the Summerlin, and I don't know the next. The manager of library art asked me if they can tour my paintings to all the libraries.

**How did you start exhibiting at the libraries?**

I love to go to exhibits. When some of the Asian groups exhibit in West Sahara, I asked one of the artists how they exhibit there in the library. He told me just to show some of your work there, and that's what I do. When they see my work, they ask me to exhibit.

**That was Darren Johnson?**

No, before Darren Johnson, Denise Alvarado. Darren Johnson is after. I forgot the name of the lady. Before it's a girl, the one who managed there. After a year, I think she retired, and then Darren took over.

**JT: I wanted to know if you had any other family here? What does your family look like in Las Vegas?**

No, I have no other family here. I am the only one here in the States. My wife, all of her family is already here. I have two sisters, and I keep asking them if they want to come over here, and they don't like to come out. They are very happy there. Now my youngest sister passed away, and I have only one there now. I am the oldest, and the second to me is the one that is still living there.

**SE: Your wife's family is here?**

All of her family is already here.

**Did they come here after you came here, or were they already here?**

I think they come over after we came here. One of her cousins is ahead of us, not him but his niece.

**When you first came to Las Vegas, where did you live?**

I lived in an apartment because we were just starting. We lived in an apartment on Sahara very close to Grand Canyon.

**You were always in the southwest part of town?**

Yes.

**How have you seen this city change in the time that you've been here? You've been here a long time. How have you seen Las Vegas change?**

Oh, there's a lot of change. That's one of the reasons that I come over here because when I saw it, I got interested to move or to put a branch in Las Vegas, because of the many constructions and buildings and things like that. I figured that when people move here, they're looking for landscaping or a swimming pool.

**Have you seen it grow in terms of restaurants or shopping?**

To tell you the truth, I think they grow everything. It's all together, restaurants, shopping areas, even hotels. They are massive. They put a lot of hotels here, casinos. When we come over here, the only hotels that were here were like Dunes, Flamingo, Sam's [Town], and then Circus Circus and then Sahara, and then everything is starting to put in, like Excalibur, MGM. Caesars is already here when I come over. But a lot of hotels, mostly when we come over here, they are starting to build a lot.



**When you look back on the construction projects that you've done here, what's your favorite that you've done?**

Oh, I build really good. They turn out really nice. A lot of people that I build through here, they always thank me that I did a really good job. Actually, the first time that I started the business here, my son keeps telling me that maybe we will go back to Los Angeles. I told him, "Why?" Because when we move here, the swimming pool is only eight thousand ninety-nine. My office in Los Angeles, my lowest pool there is twenty-five thousand. One of the best things in Los Angeles, I was involved with musical personalities and movie personalities. I built a lot of pools for Michael Jackson, the brother, and then I build also the comedian Black guy, Tyler R. Prior. I did a lot of actors and actresses there. My business there in Los Angeles is really very, very good. That's why my son was telling me, "Maybe we cannot survive here." Because it's only eight thousand something, the price of the pool here before; but now they go up. My son continues the business, and my son is telling me that the lowest pool, very, very simple, is around fifty to sixty thousand. That is a lot—too high, getting really high. My son now has a very, very good business here.

**He took over the business when you retired?**

Yes. Before he is working with me, and I have a lot of problems because he is getting a lot of mistakes, and I'm doing the correction and everything. But now he's very good. He was involved on the area that mostly are a lot of million-dollar homes, and he is just in Summerlin. I think the lowest house there is five million. That's his area. He is doing a lot of pools over there.

**Is there anything that we didn't ask you that you wanted to talk about?**

No, everything is all right.

**Thank you so much.**

**[End of recorded interview]**

**APPENDIX**  
**SELECTED WORKS**

