

Name of Interviewer: Linda Nguyen

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Language of Interview: English and Vietnamese

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Themes: Immigration; Vietnam War; Life in Vietnam and America

Name of Person Interviewed: Ngoc Xuan Nguyen

Contact Information of Person Interviewed:

Translators: Lisa, Katherine, and Randy Nguyen (siblings of interviewer)

Name	Transcript
00:01	
Linda	I'm Linda Nguyen, and I'm here to interview my dad. What is your name, Sir?
Ngoc	[in Vietnamese] Ngoc Xuan Nguyen.
Linda	What was it like where you grew up?
Katherine	[translating to Vietnamese]
Ngoc	[in Vietnamese] Dad grew up in a [in English] big town. [in Vietnamese] Dad went to school. During the day, Dad helped out my family. Dad cleaned up, did laundry, things of that sort. [interruption]
Linda	What was your life like as a child?
Ngoc	[in English] What mean?
Randy	[translating in Vietnamese]
Ngoc	[in Vietnamese] When Dad was little, dad went to school. Dad helped my family.
Linda	Did you play with your friends? Did you go to the movies?
Ngoc	[in Vietnamese] Every day Dad played with my friends.
Linda	What sports did you play?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] In the mornings, Dad went to school. In the afternoons, Dad played with my friends. Dad played sports like soccer or volleyball. On the weekends, Dad went to the movies. Dad saw movies that were for kids: cartoons. French and American movies.

Linda How much were the movies?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Dad didn't have to pay. The grown-ups paid. Dad don't remember. Maybe \$2 or \$3.

Linda Who took you to the movies?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] My brothers or my sisters took me.

Linda Were the movie theaters the same, like here in America? Did they have popcorn, drinks, or snacks?

Ngoc [in English] No, just the movie only. Because [in Vietnamese] they were too expensive. You couldn't pay for them. You could only see the movie. Definitely, they were the same like here in America.

Linda Was it close to your close? Did you have to walk or take the bus there?

Randy [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in English] We ride bicycles.

Linda A lot people rode bicycles in Vietnam?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] When Dad [in English] grew up, [in Vietnamese] there were only a [in English] few cars, few motorcycles, almost all bicycles. [in Vietnamese] At school, Dad locked my bicycle. At the movies, somebody looked after it for us. Like the movies here. Someone watches the bicycles.

Linda What occupations did you have in Vietnam?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] In Vietnam, Dad went to school. Dad only worked.

Linda Until after high school? Is that when you started working?

Ngoc No.

Linda Where did you work? In a factory?

Ngoc [in English] No, no, no. we didn't have jobs like in the US. Just go to school or do something with the farm. For the family only. [in

Vietnamese] It's not like here in the US where you work after you get off of school. They don't have jobs like that in Vietnam.

Linda Did you work after college?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] No. In Vietnam they didn't have jobs like that. Dad all ready told you. After a year of college, Dad had to join the navy.

Linda So you went straight to the navy after college?

Ngoc [in English] One year of college. Everybody had to join.

Linda How old were you when you were enlisted?

Ngoc [in English] 22.

Linda Were you scared?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in English] No, no.

Linda Did you want to join?

04:59

Ngoc [in English] Yes. Everybody had to join the navy, army, or air force.

Linda You fought for the South Vietnamese?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc Yes. [in Vietnamese] Dad was living in the South. Dad was [in English] born in the North, but Dad grew up in the South. [in Vietnamese] So Dad went to the South navy, not North, South.

Linda When the Americans came over to help the South Vietnamese, did you fight? What did you do in the navy? What was your position?

Ngoc [in English] US navy were friends. US navy were training South Vietnamese navy. [in Vietnamese] We were friends, allies.

Linda What was your position? The armies had ranks. They had sergeants, lieutenants.

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Dad was a [in English] petty officer.

Linda Did you train at the boot camps here in America or in Vietnam?

Ngoc Vietnam.

Linda Was it hard?

Ngoc [in English] Yeah.

Linda Where did you live when the war started? What city?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] When you ask that question, it's hard for Dad, because the war started since great grandfather, then with my brother and me. It started before Dad was born.

Linda Ok, so the conflicts started before you were born?

Ngoc [in English] Yeah, before Dad was born. When I grew up, Dad joined the navy.

Linda When the US came to help you guys, where were you? Were you in high school? Were you in college? How old were you when the US decided to come and help?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] During that time, Dad was in school. Dad hadn't joined the navy. [in English] Ok, ok. Dad joined the navy in 1965. American people came to our country before 1965, in 1945, 1955, 1945, 1955. US navy helped family move from North to South in 1955.

Linda So you moved from North to South when you were ten years old.

Ngoc [in English] 1955 on the US naval ship.

Linda Was your dad in the army too? Was your dad a part of anything, government?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Grandfather worked for customs.

Linda Customs?

Ngoc [in English] Yes. French customs. [in Vietnamese] Do you know what customs is?

Linda Oh, French customs.

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Are people that check at port.

Linda Border?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] No, not the border. Customs search people. People that smuggle drugs or things like that. That's called customs. Grandfather did that.

Linda What about your other siblings. What did they do during the war?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] My sister was going to school.

Linda You had two brothers and one sister. Is that correct?

Ngoc [in English] No. Two brothers and two sisters.

10:03

Linda Was your older brother a part of the war too?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Uncle Hai.

Linda Was he part of the navy, like you?

Ngoc Yeah, [in Vietnamese] but Uncle Hai didn't [in English] join the navy. [in Vietnamese] He was [in English] police officer.

Linda For the South Vietnamese.

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Yes, for the South Vietnamese. Uncle Hai was a [in English] police officer.

Linda Were you involved in the war? Did you come in contact with any American soldiers?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in English] American people were training the navy. [in Vietnamese] Dad was in that particular base.

Linda Did you have to fight with them?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] How can Dad fight with them. They were our friends.

Linda No, with them?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc. Yeah. [in Vietnamese] Dad fought. Definitely, Dad had to.

Linda Were you afraid?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in English] Fought with the North. [in Vietnamese] When you're fighting, you're not afraid anymore. Guns going off, you're not afraid. We were men, boys, we weren't afraid. Everyone had to go out there. Everyone had to shoot guns. Everyone had to steer the ship, fly the plane. Everyone had to do it. You can't be scared.

Linda When the North Vietnamese would attack, where were you? Would you be at the forts? Would you be at your bunks? Where would you be? I know that they attacked multiple times.

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Dad was on the ships, on the boats. [in English] Anytime. We fight anytime: daytime, nighttime. [in Vietnamese] Sometimes, Dad was on a ship, and sometimes on a boat, the small ones in the river. Dad fight in the river.

Linda So you fought on the river.

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Yes. Like Good Morning America, those movies that we watched.

Linda Is there something that you remember? A story? Like a particular day that they fought or a particular event, or something that really stayed in your mind after all of these years?

Katherine [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Too many days. The days all run by together. Of course. They were different. Some days we fought with them. Some days we saw them die. See the communists die. Also we took a lot of their guns, their weapons. Some days, we saw our friends get killed. Some days, Dad got injured. Dad had to go to the hospital.

Linda Were you ever captured by the North Vietnamese?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] No, Dad was never captured. My troops captured some of those people.

Linda Were you ever in a re-education camp? There were camps for refugees. There were camps for a number of people.

Randy and Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] You mean in America? No, they were never able to capture Dad.

15:00

Linda Oh, I'm sorry. I forgot that the re-education camps were in North Vietnam.

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] No, they never captured Dad.

Linda When they would attack, would it be with bombs, guns, what would it be with?

Ngoc [in English] Bombs, guns, like B-40, [in Vietnamese] grenades.

Linda A grenade.

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] They fought with anything.

Linda And they would attack you while you were on the boats?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Yes.

Linda So your boats would sink?

Katheringge [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Dad got injured. Some of my friends' boats sank. Mine didn't. Dad only got injured.

Linda So you fought on the ships. What about on land?

Ngoc [in English] The navy didn't fight on land.

Linda Did you ever have to help out the army? If they were short on men?

Ngoc No.

Linda Did you ever have to help out your fellow Vietnamese soldiers?

Ngoc [in English] The navy never had to fight on land. The navy fought on boats or ships.

Linda How long were you on the boats? A year? How long?

Ngoc Dad [in English] was on the boat about 7 ½ years.

Linda 7 ½ years. Is this just throughout Vietnam?

Ngoc [in English] 7 ½ years, because Dad transferred [in Vietnamese] from this unit to another unit.

Linda Was it mainly around Vietnam? Or would you go to Thailand, Malaysia or other countries?

Ngoc [in English] No, just ship only. [in Vietnamese] Dad did bring the ship over to Guam.

Linda Guam?

Ngoc [in English] Guam. Do you know Guam? 1967, 68.

Linda And what did you do in Guam?

Ngoc [in English] We bring ship to repair. 1967, 68.

Linda And the North Vietnamese weren't there?

Ngoc [in English] And we training there.

Linda The North Vietnamese never attacked Guam?

Ngoc [in English] No, Guam mean US. Do you know Guam?

Linda Oh, it's US territory. Where is it at, exactly?

Ngoc [in English] Guam look like Hawaii or something like that. Close to San Francisco. [in Vietnamese] You just say Guam Island and they'll know. United States.

Linda So while you were on the boats for 7 ½ years, is it before the Fall of Saigon in 1975? Or was it during the Fall? Did you have to stay after the Fall of Saigon?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] When Dad went, Dad was [in English] boat captain of the boat. [in Vietnamese] My troops and Dad went.

Linda When did you leave Vietnam? What year?

Ngoc [in English] 1975. We stayed on the boat. We drive the boat to the dock. Then we ride the ship to go to Philippines, 1975. And from Philippine camp, [in Vietnamese] Dad flew to Guam Island. Dad was there for one month, two or three months Dad can't remember. Then Dad went to Fort Chaffee , Arkansas. Did you write that?

20:46

Linda Was it just you and the troops that left? Were you able to take any family members?

Ngoc [in English] We went to the United States then Fort Chaffee, Arkansas.

Linda Was it just the soldiers on the boat and the airplane or did you have any Vietnamese refugees?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Yes, there were. There were civilians, police officers, navy, army, anyone that ran towards them came too.

Linda What about your brother? He was a police officer. Was he with you?

Ngoc [in English] No, only one. Only Dad. [in Vietnamese] When Dad was at Wake Island, Dad saw my sister, my nieces and nephews.

Linda So your sister was there waiting for you? In America?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Yes, Dad met her there.

Linda She came before you did? How did she come over? How did she make it?

Ngoc [in English] I don't know.

Linda How did you know where she was going to be? I'm sorry. You met her in Arkansas.

Ngoc [in English] No, no. Dad met her at Wake Island.

Linda Wake Island?

Ngoc [in English] (spelling it for me) W-A-K-E Island. Her and family at Wake Island.
Island. Yeah.

Linda How did you know where she was?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc No, no. [in Vietnamese] We met there. One day, when you're walking around the camp, you run into people.

Linda Oh, you didn't know she was there all ready when you happened to go there.

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] No one knew any one. You just meet and run into people. Dad ran into my nephew and he called, "Uncle Ngoc, Uncle Ngoc."

Linda And Wake Island is where again? I'm sorry.

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Wake Island, Dad does not know where it is, but Wake Island, people know. [in English] Former air force base of the United States.

Linda Why America? Did you choose to go to America or did they send you to America?

Ngoc Dad [in English] chose it.

Linda Did you register for a country? Because you had choices between France, Australia.

Ngoc [in English] No. Dad choose only the US.

Linda Why?

Ngoc [in English] I like it. Because I'm been here before so I knew.

Linda When were you here before?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Dad told you Dad was at Wake Island and Guam. Do you remember?

Linda Oh, you were training.

Ngoc [in English] Yeah.

Linda What did you bring with you when you came over?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Dad didn't bring anything. At that time, we were running. We couldn't bring anything.

Linda Where did you go when you first came to America? What places did you see?

Ngoc [in English] Fort Chaffee, Arkansas.

Linda And from there, where did you go?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Some people sponsored me out to Indiana. That part was called Indianapolis, of Indiana.

25:00

Linda Where did you stay there? Did you live in an apartment with other Vietnamese?

Ngoc [in English] No. I stayed with the sponsor family. [in Vietnamese] He was a minister.

Linda Was it you and your sister or just you?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] No, just Dad. Where my sister went, Dad didn't know.

Linda Were you worried about your family back home?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] At that time, we couldn't worry. There was nothing we could do. When Dad came down to Texas to work, Dad was able to contact my brother. Mom and Dad sent money back to for my brother.

Linda What transportation did you use? In Indiana, Arkansas, how old were you?

Katherine [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc No, no. [in Vietnamese] In Indiana, Dad didn't have a car. When Dad went to Oklahoma, then Dad had a car. Dad worked in Oklahoma.

Linda How did you come from Indiana down to Oklahoma?

Ngoc [in English] By bus.

Linda Why did you choose to go to Oklahoma?

Ngoc [in English] Friend, family, and Dad found a job there.

Linda What job was it?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] It was like assembly work. Dad and my friend worked as mechanics, fixing machines.

Linda Was your sponsor an American family, Vietnamese family?

Ngoc [in English] Vietnamese family. [in Vietnamese] Oh, the people that sponsored me? American. He is a minister. Dad forgot his name. It has been a long time, Dad forgot his name.

Linda When you came to America, did you all ready know some English?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Dad knew English back when Dad was in high school.

Linda It wasn't too hard for you.

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] In Vietnam, Dad [in English] learned some English and some French. [in Vietnamese] When Dad came over here, Dad spoke a lot of English more than French. Dad didn't use French much and forgot some of it.

Linda Did you look for your own job or did someone help you?

Randy [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] No. Dad applied for a job and they gave me the job. Nobody helped Dad. They asked Dad if Dad spoke English. Dad talked to them in English, and they were ok. They accept, and Dad got the job. They asked me where Dad was from, what Dad did, Dad's age. They told me to [in English] fill out the application, and I filled out about 90%-95%, and they were ok. [in Vietnamese] Then they saw that Dad could work, so they gave Dad the job.

Linda And your wife, where did you meet her?

Ngoc [in English] Dad meet mom in Wisconsin. [in Vietnamese] Dad was up there for school. During that time, Dad remember, was the sixth month, [in English] June 1977. Dad went to Wisconsin. Dad attend MATC. M mean Milwaukee, C mean Community College, something like that, MATC. Dad married mom in Wisconsin. Dad went to school there.

Linda Did you finish college?

Ngoc [in English] Yeah finish MATC, [in Vietnamese] then Dad went to Texas, and Dad got a job here.

Linda In Wisconsin, who did you live with?

Ngoc Milwaukee, Wisconsin. [in Vietnamese] Dad lived with my cousin, my sister-in-law, and her husband.

Linda How long did you stay with your sponsor family?

Ngoc [in English] Not long. For only a couple of weeks, and then Dad moved to Oklahoma.

30:00

Linda When you were on your way over to America, did you all ready have a sponsor family? Or when you came to America, did you stay somewhere? How did it work?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] When we came to America, we stayed at the refugee camp. Then someone sponsored us. He sponsored Dad.

Linda You were at the refugee camp for how long?

Ngoc [in English] Not long, about two, three months. Dad left the refugee camp September 1975. Then [in Vietnamese] Dad went to Indianapolis.

Linda How were the camps?

Ngoc Fort Chaffee.

Linda What did you do there?

Ngoc [in English] Day time, we go to English class and played around with friends and eating and nighttime, we go see movies, enjoy. We go around.

Linda Were they nice?

Ngoc [in English] Yes.

Linda Did you see anyone that you knew there? I know that you ran into family members, but what about friends from back home?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in English] A lot of people. Just friends. [in Vietnamese] Dad met a friend, Uncle Tien.

Linda You made friends?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Uncle Tien was my friend from Vietnam, and a lot of people. Too many people.

Linda What questions were you asked when you applied to immigrate?

[pause]

When you were on the ship to come over here, they knew that you were a South Vietnamese soldier. Is that how you were able to come to America?

Ngoc [in English] No, they didn't ask any questions, because they know.

Linda Were you in your uniform? Is that how they knew?

Ngoc [in English] Yes.

Linda Did you have any identification on you? To prove that you were...

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Of course. They needed proof. That's why they didn't ask any questions. Any one that was there, they accepted. It's not like now, where they interview. Back then, they accepted everyone. They let us all go.

Linda What was the hardest thing about leaving Vietnam?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] There was nothing hard about Vietnam.

Linda Starting over in America, was it hard?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] No, it wasn't hard. It was easy for Dad.

Linda Why was it easy for you?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Because when Dad came over here to the refugee camp, the people trained Dad. They let me learn English. We came out here and people helped us find jobs. And when we spoke English, it was easy for us. [in English] Everything fine. Good time. [in Vietnamese] Nothing was hard. Dad was very happy. Dad enjoyed it there. When we left, no one knew; they just ran. We ran away towards the ships, then we went to Guam, the Philippines.

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Linda Your family, parents were still in Vietnam.

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Dad didn't have my parents then. Dad only had my brothers and sister. No one knew any one. No one gave us a hard time. When we came over here, no one gave us a hard time. It was very easy for anyone coming over.

35:05

Linda From Wisconsin, you moved down to Texas?

Ngoc [in English] Yeah, from Wisconsin, we go to Texas.

Linda Why Texas?

Ngoc [in English] We find a job here. After college, MATC, we find a job. I find a good job here. A good start. Then Dad go back to Wisconsin and married mom. Dad went back within a week. [in Vietnamese] I worked in Texas from October 18, 1977.

Linda Did you come to Texas from Wisconsin alone?

Ngoc [in English] Yeah. Dad drive.

Linda Where did you live?

Ngoc [in English] With family friend here, Uncle Tien. Then Dad married and move out [yawn]. [in Vietnamese] Then Dad had you children.

Linda What occupations did you have in the United States?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] A lot of jobs. There was a factory Dad don't remember which one. Dad does remember Dad was an assembler there. Then Dad worked at Kellwood something. Then Dad went to school. After that, Dad worked in a [in English] machine shop in Texas. Dad was laid off, [in Vietnamese] then Dad worked in air conditioning until the day Dad retired. [in English] That's all.

Linda So far, in Texas, you were only in contact with your sister?

Ngoc [in English] What mean?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Linda Your sister was here in the United States. Did you know where your two brothers were?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] No, Dad didn't. They were still in Vietnam. Dad was able to contact my sister, because she found Dad through Red Cross. Red Cross found Dad. She asked Red Cross to help her find Dad.

Linda Did you have to send money back to Vietnam, to send them over here?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] No, Dad didn't send money. Dad only sent things.

Linda What did you send?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Dad sent clothes, medicine, and various things.

Linda So you didn't send money?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] No.

Linda Are you a citizen right now.

Ngoc [in English] Yes, Dad is a US citizen. 1985, Dad and mom were citizens.

Linda And do you think of yourself as an American?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in English] Yes. Dad enjoy it here. Dad is happy here.

Linda What do you think of US policies during the war? Do you think they did the right thing?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in English] Yeah, yeah.

Linda What about after the war? Because you were a veteran, was it hard for you? Did you have memories of the war?

Ngoc No. [in Vietnamese] Dad doesn't have any. Dad doesn't think about the war anymore. Dad doesn't think about those things. Dad only thinks about my job and my family. Dad doesn't worry about that.

Linda What about after the war, when did you hear the news that the war was over?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] During that time, Dad was on the ship. Dad escaped from Vietnam. They said it was [in English] over [in Vietnamese] when Dad was on the ship going to the Philippines.

Linda How did you feel when you heard it was over?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] When Dad heard the news, Dad was very sad. [pause] But Dad couldn't do anything.

40:05

Linda You were sad, because the North had won?

[pause]

Now, is Vietnam still a communist country?

Ngoc [in English] Yeah.

Linda And have you been back since?

Ngoc [In English] No, no, no.

Linda Would you like to go back?

Ngoc [in English] No, no, no.

Linda Are you involved in politics now?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] No, Dad not involved in politics, or anything of that nature. Now, Dad just enjoys with my family. [in English] Every day, Dad watches the news.

Linda Is there anything that reminds you of Vietnam? Is there a song? Is there something that just brings you back? I know that war is traumatizing. Is there something that still...? Your troops and you?

Randy [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] A lot of things.

Linda Like what? Anything in particular or one song?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] A lot of songs, a lot of pictures, news that makes Dad remember Vietnam.

Linda Does your family have an altar for your ancestors?

Randy [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] At our house, we do. Our house has to have one.

Linda Are there certain kinds of celebrations or traditions that you do for your ancestors?

Ngoc [in English] What mean?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Yes. Mom and Dad brought the traditions here, celebrated them the way we used to Vietnam, just like in Vietnam. We have Tet, anniversaries of deceased ancestors, and others, like in Vietnam.

Linda You took a lot of Vietnamese culture with you...

Ngoc [interruption] Yes.

Linda And you still have them today?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Yes, and we taught you children the way it was like in Vietnam. We raised you similar to how it was in Vietnam.

Linda Did you change to be like an American?

No reply

What American culture did you find easiest to adapt to? Hard to adapt to?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] No, nothing was hard for Dad. Everything was the same for Dad, because Dad all ready knew some of the culture. There are some aspects of their culture that is similar to ours. Dad only had to learn how to drive a car.

Linda How was that? Was that hard?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Yes, hard for Dad, but Dad only practiced for two to three weeks, then Dad received my driver license. But the American people helped a lot. You children are very lucky to be born and raised here in this country. [in English] Very lucky [in Vietnamese] for you children. To be born in a country like Vietnam now, in the Viet Cong, communist, is hard. Here, you children can go to school of your choice, find a job, you live happily here. You're very lucky. Mom and Dad are also very lucky to live here.

Linda Was it hard for you to fit into life in America?

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] No, Dad lived a rather easy life here.

Linda In your opinion, what will become of Vietnamese culture in the US?

Lisa [translating in Vietnamese]

45:11

Ngoc [in English] Yeah. [in Vietnamese] There will still be Vietnamese culture, but at times, it will be similar to American culture. From generation to the next generation, it is like the [in English] Chinese people, Koreans, or even [in Vietnamese] people in the Netherlands are the same.

Linda Would you say that you are more American or Vietnamese?

Randy [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] That is hard to say. Dad can't say that. But living here, Dad realizes that life is [in English] better [in Vietnamese] here in America than life was in Vietnam. Dad is very happy. Now, Dad is retired, and the government treats me well. Dad has insurance here, money from my retirement, and social security. Dad has so many things here. People [in English] protect Dad very good.

Linda Is it important to have your culture, to keep it, and pass it on to your kids?

Ngoc [in English] Yeah. [in Vietnamese] Of course it is. Dad took the culture, brought it back here, and taught them to you. You were [in English] born and [in Vietnamese] raised here, but you still remember the culture back

home, because that is important to people here. We taught you well so that you can be good people here in America. Your life will be better. The life of Vietnamese people, here, are becoming better and better. You guys see that Vietnamese people do good things, a lot of different things: work well in school, find a good job, marry an American person, or anyone. That is a good life.

- Linda Are you still in contact with anyone from the navy?
- Ngoc [in English] Yeah. [in Vietnamese] Sometimes Dad has meetings with them. Dad meets up with my friends.
- Linda And they're all doing well?
- Ngoc [in English] Yeah. [in Vietnamese] Some of them are still alive, and some of them are deceased. Dad still meets up with them.
- Linda Are there any stories you want to share, any memories you still have, anything else you want to share?
- Ngoc [in Vietnamese] No, there are a lot. Dad doesn't have any right now.
- Linda Are you still in contact with your sponsors?
- Ngoc [in Vietnamese] No. Dad doesn't know where Dad put the address. Dad will have to find it.
- Linda If you could change anything, would you?
- Ngoc [in English] No. What mean change?
- Randy [translating in Vietnamese]
- Linda Maybe the country that you chose to go to or being involved in the War?
- Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Dad wouldn't change anything.
- Linda How do you feel about the communists now.
- Ngoc [in English] Bad. Communists always bad.
- Linda How are your views different than theirs?
- Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Dad is not in Vietnam, so Dad doesn't know. Right now, Vietnam is [in English] poor, very poor, education [in Vietnamese] is not good.
- Linda What did the communists want? What were they after?
- Randy [translating in Vietnamese]
- Katherine [translating in Vietnamese]

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] They say they have a lot of reasons, but they are not the right reasons. That is why we don't really know. We don't know their reasons. They tell lies. They're liars. They say that they're helping us. They say they [in English] fight the American people [in Vietnamese] to help the people in the North, but now they invite the American people to come in, in order to help them. At first, they said that Americans were bad people, but now they invite them to come. They beg for them to come into Vietnam to help the Vietnamese people. They say one thing but do another.

Excerpts

Subject: Life in Vietnam

Name	Transcript
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1:00

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] Dad grew up in a [in English] big town. [in Vietnamese] Dad went to school. During the day, Dad helped out my family. Dad cleaned up, did laundry, things of that sort. [in Vietnamese] In the mornings, Dad went to school. In the afternoons, Dad played with my friends. Dad played sports like soccer or volleyball. On the weekends, Dad went to the movies. Dad saw movies that were for kids: cartoons. French and American movies. [in Vietnamese] When Dad [in English] grew up, [in Vietnamese] there were only a [in English] few cars, few motorcycles, almost all bicycles. [in Vietnamese] At school, Dad locked my bicycle. At the movies, somebody looked after it for us. Like the movies here. Someone watches the bicycles. [in English] No, no, no. we didn't have jobs like in the US. Just go to school or do something with the farm. For the family only. [in Vietnamese] It's not like here in the US where you work after you get off of school. They don't have jobs like that in Vietnam.

Subject: War experience

Name	Transcript
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08:35

Ngoc [in Vietnamese] During that time, Dad was in school. Dad hadn't joined the navy. [in English] Ok, ok. Dad joined the navy in 1965. [in English] American people were training the navy. [in Vietnamese] Dad was in that particular base. Dad fought. Definitely, Dad had to. [in English] Fought with the North. [in Vietnamese] When you're fighting, you're not afraid anymore. Guns going off, you're not afraid. We were men, boys, we weren't afraid. Everyone had to go out there. Everyone had to shoot guns. Everyone had to steer the ship, fly the plane. Everyone had to do it.

You can't be scared. [in Vietnamese] Dad was on the ships, on the boats. [in English] Anytime. We fight anytime: daytime, nighttime. [in Vietnamese] Sometimes, Dad was on a ship, and sometimes on a boat, the small ones in the river. Dad fight in the river. [in Vietnamese] Too many days. The days all run by together. Of course. They were different. Some days we fought with them. Some days we saw them die. See the communists die. Also we took a lot of their guns, their weapons. Some days, we saw our friends get killed. Some days, Dad got injured. Dad had to go to the hospital. [in English] Bombs, guns, like B-40, [in Vietnamese] grenades. [in Vietnamese] They fought with anything. Dad [in English] was on the boat about 7 ½ years.

Subject: Journey to America

Name	Transcript
20:35	
Ngoc	[in English] 1975. We stayed on the boat. We drive the boat to the dock. Then we ride the ship to go to Philippines, 1975. And from Philippine camp, [in Vietnamese] Dad flew to Guam Island. Dad was there for one month, two or three months Dad can't remember. Then Dad went to Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. There were civilians, police officers, navy, army, anyone that ran towards them came too. When Dad was at Wake Island, Dad saw my sister, my nieces and nephews. One day, when you're walking around the camp, you run into people. No one knew any one. You just meet and run into people. Dad ran into my nephew and he called, "Uncle Ngoc, Uncle Ngoc." Dad choose only the US. Dad didn't bring anything. At that time, we were running. We couldn't bring anything. Some people sponsored me out to Indiana. That part was called Indianapolis, of Indiana. [in English] Not long, about two, three months. Dad left the refugee camp September 1975. Then [in Vietnamese] Dad went to Indianapolis. [in English] Day time, we go to English class and played around with friends and eating and nighttime, we go see movies, enjoy. We go around.

Subject: Life in America

Name	Transcript
27:05	
Ngoc	Dad applied for a job and they gave me the job. Nobody helped Dad. They asked Dad if Dad spoke English. Dad talked to them in English, and they were ok. They accept, and Dad got the job. They asked me where Dad was from, what Dad did, Dad's age. They told me to [in English] fill out the application, and I filled out about 90%-95%, and they were ok. [in Vietnamese] Then they saw that Dad could work, so they gave Dad the

job. Dad meet mom in Wisconsin. [in Vietnamese] Dad was up there for school. During that time, Dad remember, was the sixth month, [in English] June 1977. Dad went to Wisconsin. Dad attend MATC. M mean Milwaukee, C mean Community College, something like that, MATC. Dad married mom in Wisconsin. Dad went to school there. Yeah finish MATC, [in Vietnamese] then Dad went to Texas, and Dad got a job here. Because when Dad came over here to the refugee camp, the people trained Dad. They let me learn English. We came out here and people helped us find jobs. And when we spoke English, it was easy for us. [in English] Everything fine. Good time. [in Vietnamese] Nothing was hard. Dad was very happy. Dad enjoyed it there. When we left, no one knew; they just ran. We ran away towards the ships, then we went to Guam, the Philippines. Mom and Dad are also very lucky to live here. Dad realizes that life is [in English] better [in Vietnamese] here in America than life was in Vietnam. Dad is very happy. Now, Dad is retired, and the government treats me well. Dad has insurance here, money from my retirement, and social security. Dad has so many things here. People [in English] protect Dad very good.

Subject: Vietnamese Culture

Name	Transcript
41:52	
Ngoc	<p>[Does your family have an altar for your ancestors?] [in Vietnamese] At our house, we do. Our house has to have one. Mom and Dad brought the traditions here, celebrated them the way we used to Vietnam, just like in Vietnam. We have Tet, anniversaries of deceased ancestors, and others, like in Vietnam. [And you still have them today?] [in Vietnamese] Yes, and we taught you children the way it was like in Vietnam. We raised you similar to how it was in Vietnam. [in English] Yeah. [in Vietnamese] Of course it is. Dad took the culture, brought it back here, and taught them to you. You were [in English] born and [in Vietnamese] raised here, but you still remember the culture back home, because that is important to people here. We taught you well so that you can be good people here in America. Your life will be better. The life of Vietnamese people, here, are becoming better and better. You guys see that Vietnamese people do good things, a lot of different things: work well in school, find a good job, marry an American person, or anyone. That is a good life.</p>

Summary

Ngoc Nguyen

[I] joined the [South Vietnamese] Navy in 1965. [I] was a petty officer. American people were training the navy. [I] was in that particular base. [I] fought. Definitely, [I] had to. [We] fought with the North. When you're fighting, you're not afraid anymore. Guns going off, you're not

afraid. We were men, boys, we weren't afraid. Everyone had to go out there. Everyone had to shoot guns. Everyone had to steer the ship, fly the plane. Everyone had to do it. You can't be scared. [I] was on the ships, on the boats. We fight anytime: daytime, nighttime. Sometimes, [I] was on a ship, and sometimes on a boat, the small ones in the river. [I] fight in the river. [We fought] too many days. The days all run by together. Of course, [everyday was] different. Some days we fought with [the communists]. Some days we saw them die. See the communists die. Also we took a lot of their guns, their weapons. Some days, we saw our friends get killed. Some days, [I] got injured. [I] had to go to the hospital. They fought with anything: bombs, guns, like B-40, grenades. [I] was on the boat about 7 ½ years.

This oral history project is a great reward to my family and me. I was given the opportunity to interview my dad, who is a veteran of the Vietnam War. From the interview, I learned so much about my dad. He has always told me bits and pieces of his life in Vietnam, the Vietnam War, and his life in America. Now, in this interview, all of the pieces come together to form his life. I chose to write the excerpt through my translation of Vietnamese and through my dad's own English, because as he is proud of my Vietnamese, I am proud of his English.

Linda Nguyen (daughter)