

Name of Interviewer: Catherine Glauser
Method of Recording Interview: Digital recording
Language of Interview: English
Location of the Interview: 10526 Cook Road Houston, Texas 77099
Date: September 28, 2008
Themes: Immigration; Food, Culture. Family Values
Name of Person Interviewed: Adrienne “Amy” Phan

Name	Transcript
00:01	
Cat	Tell me your name.
Amy	Amy Phan
Cat	Today’s date?
Amy	Sept 28 2008
Cat	Thank you very much Miss Phan. Ok and tell us a little bit about your family. Where are you from?
Amy	I was originally born in Houston, Texas but my I originate from Southern Vietnam both my parents grew up in Saigon and came over during the war and I was born here in Houston in 1983.
Cat	Oh, ok. When did your parents exactly come over?
Amy	They came over at the fall of Saigon on April 30, or they left on April 30 th 1975, they headed straight over to the states. My Mom ended up docking off in DC and I’m not sure where my Dad ended up- he was a stowaway on one of the refugee boats but my mom came over here through the US Embassy.
Cat	Oh wow! Have they told you any stories about how hard it was to come over here or who they came over here with?
Amy	My Mom came with her entire family minus her older sister because her older sister, her husband, and children imprisoned for being a part of the anti-communist rally so they actually stayed in Vietnam and that was really hard for her family because they all had to leave one of their own behind but my mom told me stories about her voyage over here on the embassy boats to come over and a lot of times it was hard because they were so over packed stowaways and a lot of times all they had to eat were sugar and water because they had run out of their food supply. I don’t really know all that much that happened with my Dad because I think it was very difficult for him, because he was a stowaway so essentially his entire family he had to leave behind in Vietnam. So, I don’t know a lot

about his history in coming over because he doesn't talk about it because it's probably hard, a hard memory for him to relive. But I have heard a little bit about my Mother's experiences, that was pretty much it and it was rough coming over here because you essentially come and even though you are granted way by the US Embassy. I remember her telling me horror stories of difficult it was to find a job and when they did it felt like pretty much being like slaves and stuff and she had come from the wealthy family of a general so it was a really really big transition for her and the rest of her family, but that's pretty much the jest of their journey over to the states.

3:00

Cat Goodness! Have they ever met up with those members of their families that they left behind? Whatever came about with your Aunt?

Amy My Aunt, eventually I think about 5-6 years later she finally made her way over after they were released from the communist prison So my aunt is living here now in Louisiana and My father's family is mostly still over there. A couple of them have eventually made their way over to Houston and they have made their lives here, but they came over much much later than my dad did. So my parents are really the original ones that came over from the war but the rest of the family is still in limbo. Much of my father's family is still in Vietnam, still living under communist rule.

Cat [Background noise] Tell me about the occupations they held and some of the things they did when they came over to the US- I know you mentioned your mom felt like she was working like a slave doing slave labor even though she came over with the Embassy. So tell me a little about that- What occupations did she hold and what did she do to make ends meet?

Amy Well, I remember one of the first job experiences she had it wasn't just her, it was her and my entire family including my former four star general grandfather which they all went out every day to the strawberry fields to pick strawberries and it was hard grueling work it was like slave work- you were only getting paid five cents per basket of strawberries you'd submit and working out there in the fields I remember she said the strawberry plants were bristly and they would come home and their hands would be very raw with and splinters and it was a very blistering experience and she said a lot of times they would be huddled at home at night crying about the situation they were being put under. Then I remember my Grandmother had accepted a position as a cook at some NY restaurant, but it wasn't anything fancy it was just a hotel or something, but she was the second hand cook when in Vietnam she was the chef and that was difficult and my Mother would go into the kitchen and always help my grandmother out because so much was expected even though they were being paid so little. They were still appreciative of it because literally when they moved here they had nothing with them I mean you weren't

allowed to bring anything with you and so they had to start from scratch. So literally any penny they made they held on to very tightly so even though they were terrible slave-like condition jobs, they took anything they could.

Cat Obviously this affected your Mom; in what ways do you think it affected your Mother being raised in conditions like this?

Amy I think it taught her to be humble, I mean because growing up as the daughter of the general she was very pampered all day- she didn't have much responsibility so coming to the states and having to undergo being treated like that, being treated like a poor refugee it really really humbled her and taught her the significance of having to fend for yourself and you can't take things for granted. I really think it benefitted her life I believe that without the experience and the hardships she had to go through she wouldn't be the person she is today.

Cat Right. So, what occupation did your Mom hold? I know she was pretty young when she came over. How old exactly was she?

Amy I think she was 18, yeah she was 18 when she came here so her primary objectives were 1, to help the family make money so they could eat and 2, at the same time because she did grow up in a good well educated family all the children were expected to still finish school and go to college and all that so, not only was she working in the strawberry fields and helping her Mother in the kitchens but then at night when she'd come home she would have to study for her classes and I heard from my uncle that they would literally maybe would sleep two hours a day for the first couple of years it was really difficult because all they could do is work work and more work then go to school and stuff and then wake up and do the whole thing over again.

Cat Did your Mom eventually complete her degree or complete er education so where she felt it was satisfactory for the family?

Amy Yes, she finished her degree up and got her accounting degree and that's when she moved to Houston to pursue that goal. But all the children in the family finished college and a couple now are very successful they all learned a really good humbling lesson. They made sure to stick to the family first and then education and they did complete that.

Cat Did they work in the strawberry fields the whole entire time they were in the college setting or the educational setting or did they work other jobs?

Amy No, that was only for the first couple years and then I think they had a godmother that took them under her wing the first couple of years they were in the states and they just started helping her doing house duties like housekeeping. She would put them to work in other people's homes- cleaning, cleaning toilets, scrubbing floors, dusting windows that kind of

stuff. So they did do a couple of things but it was always work and school work and school it never deviated much from that, at least until they finished school.

Cat Who was this Godmother? I know a lot of cultures they don't have that.

Amy I'm using Godmother as a poor translation into the English language, but she was more or less a friend of the family and they had known her for a really long time and eventually her son married one of my Mom's sisters. But she was a friend of the family's that had been living in the states before the war so she was already adapt to the culture here and she acted like a liaison between my Mother's family trying to understand the English culture and language from their hard core traditional roots in Vietnam.

[10:08]

Cat How hard was it for your family to learn the language and to integrate and to basically assimilate into the culture in the United States?

Amy Well because they saw it as- they were thankful they were brought here after the fall of Saigon because they knew that after communist rule took over it would never be the same so they would rather be here than not [background noise] and so they took it as we have been invited here by the U.S. Embassy and we are going to do everything we can to assimilate ourselves so they actually tried very hard to learn the language very hard to learn the differences in the culture so I don't remember ever hearing stories of how difficult it was because they were so thankful that they wanted to know, wanted to know everything. So I don't really believe that it was so hard and now all of them speak perfect English minus the accent but they are all pretty much Americanized now too they do still hold traditional values, but as far as assimilating they are 100% American.

Cat What traditional values do they hold tight to?

Amy Probably family values, marital values...

Cat Explain a little more: what do you mean by family values. What do they hold tight to exactly as far as traditional wise, traditional Vietnamese culture?

Amy Well, traditionally within a family they put a lot of respects and emphasis on the elderly so that always first and foremost comes first like in traditional Vietnamese culture, even back in the country now- No matter... here, like, you don't put your parents or grandparents in foster homes or nursing homes they stay with you, they are very well respected. It doesn't matter if they are senile or have Alzheimer's or whatever, whatever ailments they are doing through they are still respected in the family and are treated just as such. Like so, we don't ever put people in

hospices and you don't send them off to a nursing home because they just can't take care of themselves anymore- its you do whatever you can to make sure that your mother or father are well taken care of- even if you were the granddaughter you would do the same thing. The elderly are always respected in that sense and the children have to be brought up being taught that education is the number one thing that will get you through and its not just about hard work, its about being able to support that hard work with a good educational background and intelligence.

Cat Good. Tell me about day to day operations in your family- such as does your Mom still cook traditionally, traditional foods? Does she use traditional use traditional methods to prepare food or, I don't know, how does that work?

Amy The funny thing about that is a lot of times my brother and I will beg her not to because she cooks so much of it that we are like No we are tired of Vietnamese food. But when she does prepare it, she does prepare it in the traditional flavoring but the method has changed- she has become much more modern and westernized, I mean they don't use pressure cookers in Vietnam but however when she prepares some traditional Vietnamese meals here, they will taste the same, maybe better because she's a chef, but she uses a different method and more efficient ways, obviously because we have the technology here and that's a big way to show that you can keep your traditions- you just have to be smart about it. Work smarter not harder.

Cat So, your Mom's occupation now is a chef?

Amy No, she was a chef for a little bit but now she just works for Continental and she loves doing that because of the airfare she gets everywhere. She did have an opportunity to go deeper into the accounting field, but she realizes she has too many passions and the job she has with Continental allows her the flexibility to follow all of the dreams she's wanted which is, to have her own business and to be able to be there all the time for her son. And that's another thing, about being a traditional parent. She doesn't believe its right to work 8-5 come home to your children, cook them dinner and make them go to bed. She wants to be able to be in our lives all the time and that's why she's taken it upon herself to work part-time these days because children are still important and she does want to put emphasis on raising us properly.

[15:27]

Cat Ok, and your Dad? What does your Dad do?

Amy My dad owns his own AC/Heating Company and he is pretty much at work all the time because he owns and operates his own business. I mean he is just constantly on call. And he allows my mother to take care of

raising us because he knows he can't be there physically, so at least he is there monetarily.

Cat Ok, is that traditional of a Vietnamese household? That the father work and the mother stay home with the children?

Amy Yes it is. Although it is not so much that the mother stays home all the time, it's more of a part time working mom. You have to do what is called for to be able to survive; she has to have the monetary gains to be able to raise us the way she would like us to be which, you know, educated and classy people.

Cat Growing up in America, what have your parents told you besides family history, how do they remember Vietnam?

Amy My mom always used to tell me, especially when we went back to Vietnam "Wow, it's so different now," and say how the country was so beautiful and wide open. It's much different than it is today, today when people think of Vietnam; they think, you know, cluttered streets, and all the houses right next to each other. That is how it is, but that's not how it was back then. Back then, it was much more carefree, much more open, you know, you had a lot more open fields and nature peaking out around you, but now it's just a little different. But, she used to say back home it just very peaceful and beautiful and it's just not like it is today.

[17:27]

Cat Have you gone back to visit what were your experiences?

Amy I went back several years ago to visit and I wished I had seen the Vietnam that my mother knew, but I know it can't happen. At the same time, when you get away from the city and go to the countryside it is as beautiful as she's always talked about. Unfortunately there are so few places that are like that anymore now most of the terrain is covered by poor little cities and it's hard to see the beauty, but because that's where I originate from, it did humble me and it did bring me a sense of [sigh] it did make me realize where I came from and make me realize that I wasn't rooted as an All American girl- I knew I came from something more.

Cat Wonderful. Did you go back to visit relatives?

Amy Yeah, like I said my Dad still has a lot of his family back there and we went to go visit his sisters and brothers now all their children- and I'd never met these people before in my life, but when you meet them you know they are family and it was as if there was no disconnection and there was nothing weird about it because you have this family bond. That's another thing about strong family traditions is everyone knows each other and you are never a stranger.

Cat Was it difficult for you being a Vietnamese American and being born here going back and relating to the traditional Vietnamese family how was it different and how did it effect you?

Amy That was an experience because I am very Americanized, I am Westernized. It was kind of funny because they see people from America as being more wealthy and more well off so they kind of look up to you in a way even though I'm obviously much younger than my aunts and uncles and it was funny because it was just a good learning experience. I would ask them what have you been doing over the years, day to day, what do you do for fun, and stuff like that and they would ask me the same thing they always want to know "oh, Amy you are only this old, what kind of job do you hold, how much money do you make, what kind of car do you drive?" It was very different- the luxuries they have compared to the luxuries we have. It wasn't strange, it was just that we wanted to know what each other were up to and so it was not that there was an audit ear or anything out of place- it was just learning and that's all it was.

Cat Describe in your opinion come of the differences that maybe we view as luxuries that they did not have or some of the differences you encountered specifically.

Amy Well, the major thing was that I notices that my father's family that was left behind there's two aunts and three uncles and they all have kids and the grandmother was still there and they lived in the same building I mean they all shared their lives together constant and every day. You don't have it like an American family where your brother has his own house with his own wife and their own kids and your sister is off in another state and she's got her own thing with her own company. It's not like that- everyone lives off each other and feeds off each other and they make their lives more rich by spending time with each other because they don't have luxuries like cable television or being able to go out to the movie theatre all the time or going out to amusement parks they don't have that- so their entertainment is each other. I think that was a huge difference between the luxuries between what we have and what they have- who really has the luxuries here, you know?

Cat Right. Basically it's who views the luxury and in which manner, right?

Amy Exactly.

Cat Going back to your family, how traditional has your family stayed through all this time? I know at the beginning they tried to assimilate very quickly and assimilate into American culture very rapidly- how traditional have they stayed and in what ways?

Amy I think the hugest thing my brother and I have noticed is the whole you will not date anyone until after college well, of course that is not how it

goes here in the states They try to hang onto it, but with me being the older daughter and I'm already now into my mid-twenties they've kind of gotten over that even though they are trying to uphold that with my brother but it's just not going to work because we just didn't grow up with that mentality that you don't date until after you turn 22.

22:54

Cat Right. I understand that you are in a relationship right now, could you explain some of the differences or any of the obstacles your parents have had to overcome being that he is not traditionally Vietnamese?

Amy I wouldn't so much call them obstacles, but it is interesting every time we all get together and have dinner because my parents love telling him this and that about Vietnam and it's not an obstacle, it's more their chance to be able to educate another person about our culture and where we come from and I think it's interesting and I get to hear a lot of stories because of that because they didn't really tell me a lot of these stories when I was a child and now they are relaying it to my boyfriend and it's like "Oh Mom, you never told me that, hmm" [laughter].

Cat I see. I know some families keep alters for their ancestors, does your family keep alters for your ancestors?

Amy Yes. I don't know what you mean about ancestors, but my Grandfather who passed away in 91- there is always an alter for him and we always keep candles around and plate of fruit and stuff and his picture up and statues, little religious statues and stuff. Yes, we have alters. I do notice there is a difference between American families and our families when it comes to that because I don't see alters when I go to a regular American family's house, you know.

Cat What significance does this have to your family? How often do they visit the alter and how significant is the alter in the household?

Amy It's not so much very significant until there are big family celebrations like whenever we throw something as simple as Labor day when traditional American family might get together and have bbq and throw the pigskin around [laughing] but we get together and the first thing anyone does before a bite of food goes in anyone's mouth is we get in line to pray to the alter, not so much the alter but the person we are remembering so all the big family gatherings that happens and that's when the alter is being praised, I guess.

Cat Do you pray individually or do you pray as a family- how does that work?

Amy We actually pray individually. I believe it's the same in all the rest of the Asian cultures is that we don't actually sit at the table and bow our heads one person speaks the prayer and we all say amen. We don't do that we

each go up to the alter ourselves and we say our own silent personal prayers and we bow our heads and we you know make our own personal prayers that's just how it is in the household before you eat you must do your own individual prayer.

26:00

Cat After everyone prays to, in this case you're Grandfather, who eats first in the household?

Amy Whoever's ready.

Cat Really? [laughing] There's no specific person as far as your Mom or your Father or..?

Amy I'm not sure if it's traditional or not, but we always try to push my Grandmother to eat first because like I said we do hold a high respect for the elderly but I don't know if that's a traditional thing or that maybe she's just its kind of a women and elderly first I think that might be the same for American families.

Cat Ok. How does your family celebrate certain Holidays? Do you celebrate say, Christmas for example? How do they celebrate Christmas?

Amy We celebrate Christmas traditionally the exact same way but again instead of everyone sitting down at a table and everyone praying together we do the individual prayer but yeah- we celebrate the same way maybe not so much getting together around the piano and singing Christmas songs together [laughing] but we do open presents and the ham dinner and all that, its kind of the same because they did try to assimilate and we do try to fit in the culture but sometimes we get crazy and we do fondue instead of ham dinner so.. [Laughing] so, maybe that's how we differ.

Cat Ok are there any certain traditions, besides praying to the family alter or praying to your grandfather, are there any other traditions for holidays you guys do?

Amy I [pause] not that I can recall, I really believe that all we stick to is praying to the alter.

Cat Ok. What does your Mom fix on a usual basis for special occasions? Do you celebrate Tet, for example? What does she fix for very special occasions?

28:00

Amy Unfortunately, I don't know what it's called in English or do I know what it's called in Vietnamese, but I just usually tell my Mom "hey that stuff wrapped in the banana leaves, what is it?" [Laughing] and she will feed it to me, but yes, during tet she does fix the tradition thing wrapped in

banana leaves and desserts and stuff like moon.. Moon cake I think is a traditional dessert, she does make all that stuff but again unfortunately I do not know what it's actually called [laughing].

Cat Oh, ok. Where does she get all the ingredients for that? Does she make it all by hand or does she buy it?

Amy Well she makes everything from scratch, but she buys all the ingredients she uses to make it from scratch pretty much always comes from Asian supermarkets like Hong Kong Markey or Viet Hoa or something

Cat Is it hard for her to find the special herbs and spices that she likes to use?

Amy No, because being a Capitalist market here in American they are really good about being open to ethnic supermarkets and understanding that we need those people like my mother needs a supermarket that carries the special ingredients in order to make the ethnic dishes, so it's not hard at all you can walk in to any Asian supermarket and find the same thing.

Cat Well, good. How are you going to carry on the traditions of your family?

Amy Being that I was raised in America from birth, to be honest I don't believe I will. I don't think it's been quite instilled into me to carry on the traditions it's never been a very big goal of my family to tell me hey these are our cultural traditions and we would like it if you carry this into your life once you grow up and start having a family- they never emphasize that to me, so I never put that much value on it- I do it with them, but I do believe that's as far as its going to go.

30:08

Cat Do you think maybe a little but of the culture is lost or do you think its evolving into something different?

Amy To be completely honest, I will say it has been kind of lost, but at the same time it's evolving. But I think we are all evolving, and I don't think it's just Vietnamese or Asians in general I think every culture I in America is evolving into something new so it would be unfair to say that my culture is being lost, but we all evolving as an entire society in America.

Cat Ok, I thank you so much for your time Amy I really appreciate it and I think this was a wonderful episode and experience for me and just thank you very much.

Amy Thank you, I enjoyed it too.

Recording 2: Beginning at 10:55

10:55

Cat So your Dad was a stowaway and your Mom came over with her Dad's family because her dad was a general, how did your parents end up meeting, how did that work and what did the family think about that?

Amy My parents met at SUNY, obviously in New York, and they met through college and eventually they just like regular Americans happened to like each other and decided to go out for pop and a movie [laughing]. So that's how that worked. I don't think my Mom's parents had that big of an issue with it because, like I said, they were trying to assimilate they were trying to do things the American way- so it's not like they were ever trying to push my Mom to marry someone of some other family, but also at the same time because they did move they didn't know anybody anyway to start introducing so it was kind of like "well, we are in America- we might as well do what they do"

[11:54]

Cat How long had they been here before they got married?

Amy I believe they were only here for about five years in the states because they got married in 1980, three years before I was born so and I believe they were dating for about a year before they got married.

Cat Tell me a little about the wedding ceremony.

Amy It was done in a Catholic church, of course, but it was very traditional and it looked like a regular American wedding. It didn't look like anything out of the ordinary except that once you come out at the church and go to the quote and quote reception hall which was actually just my grandparents home at the time, they changed into the traditional Vietnamese clothing which is like the long dress and the hat fixture and that is actually done at many traditional Vietnamese weddings, even today. And once again you eat the celebratory foods like the roasted pig and bitter melon soup and moon cake and all that- very traditional things but as far as the ceremony goes, it was exactly like a regular modern American wedding.

Cat So she wore the white frilly dress and your dad wore a tux and..

Amy Yeah, my Mom actually made her own wedding dress and I believe she still has it, but of course I can't fit into it [Laughing].

Cat So I understand that your Mom worked as a cook, in accounting, everywhere else, tell me how did she come upon these different special talents? Did she just work and find out ways on how to do that or how did she find out about those special traits?

Amy

My Moms always been the kind that was restless when it came to occupations and stuff like that so she finished college and got a job in accounting because of her degree, then she realized it bored her, then she went back to community college to learn fashion design, then opened up her own store for that, then got bored, then opened her own restaurant, after a while got bored of doing that, then hair and nail salon thing and owned that for a while, she doesn't settle well because she gets bored. I guess that's another pert she sees as being an American she has so much freedom to be able to go to school and learn those kind of trades and be able to open your own business with free enterprise and if she lived in Vietnam now, that would never happen, ever she wouldn't have the freedom to do that at all, nor the money. And here she is really thankful for being in the states that she can carry out her dreams of being a business owner even though she can't pick a business to own but at least she has that choice and she knows that and I believe that being here in this country has allowed her a great deal of freedom.

[15:15]

Cat

What does your Father think about your Mom being such empowered independent female?

Amy

He likes to brag about her a lot, [laughing] but of course who wouldn't because she is so determined and on the go and coming p with new ideas and it is nice to have someone like that in the family because I know that in Vietnam you don't really have the freedom to do that much and I know a lot of my Fathers family. I mean they have many dreams, but they don't have the means to go out and do it so really it looks like they are lazy people, but it's not that they are lazy it's that they don't have the means to go out and grab it so that's an unfortunate thing. My father really likes that my mom is like that and he always supports all her business dealing and of course they always go in and he helps her out with the books and the operations and stuff like that.

Cat

That's fantastic. Have your parents sponsored any of your other family that wanted to come over the U.S.?

Amy

Yeah, actually in fact my dad sponsored both of his brothers that lives here now; one lives in Oklahoma and one lives in Pearland but he sponsored both of them although one was sponsored in the mid- 80's when I was still a child and one was recently sponsored in the early 2000's and then I think that he had to sponsor his mother to come over here and she ended up sponsoring another one of his brothers. So, a lot of them have gotten the chance to come over here and his cousins too- we are pretty close with a couple of his cousins and I know they had to get sponsors to come over, but I don't know who sponsored them. It's like my Dad was the big U.S. ticket for all of them.

17:08

Cat That's good that they have that opportunity, Amy, thank you so much. Are there any other memories you would like to share with me?

[End Transcription]

Excerpts

Voyage to U.S.:

[0:38] They came over at the fall of Saigon on April 30, or they left on April 30th 1975, they headed straight over to the states. My Mom ended up docking off in DC and I'm not sure where my Dad ended up- but he was a stowaway actually on one of the refugee boats but my mom came over here through the US Embassy.

[1:15] My Mom came with her entire family minus her older sister because her older sister, her husband, and children imprisoned for being a part of the anti-communist rally so they actually stayed in Vietnam and that was really hard for her family because they all had to leave one of their own behind but my mom told me stories about her voyage over here on the embassy boats to come over and a lot of times it was hard because they were so over packed stowaways and a lot of times all they had to eat were sugar and water because they had run out of their food supply. I don't really know all that much that happened with my Dad because I think it was very difficult for him, because he was a stowaway so essentially his entire family he had to leave behind in Vietnam. So, I don't know a lot about his history in coming over because he doesn't talk about it because it's probably hard, a hard memory for him to relive. But I have heard a little bit about my Mother's experiences, that was pretty much it and it was rough coming over here because you essentially come and even though you are granted way by the US Embassy. I remember her telling me horror stories of difficult it was to find a job and when they did it felt like pretty much being like slaves and stuff and she had come from the wealthy family of a general so it was a really really big transition for her and the rest of her family, but that's pretty much the jest of their journey over to the states.

[3:07] My Aunt, eventually I think about 5-6 years later she finally made her way over after they were released from the communist prison. A couple of them have made their way over to Houston and they have made their lives here, but they came over much much later than my dad did. So my parents are the original ones that came over from the war but the rest of the family is still in limbo.

Jobs/Success in the U.S.:

[4:15] I remember one of the first job experiences she had it wasn't just her, it was her and my entire family including my former four star general grandfather which they all went out every day to the strawberry fields to pick strawberries and it was hard grueling work it was like slave work- you were only getting paid five cents per basket of strawberries you'd submit and working out there in the fields I remember she said the strawberry plants were bristly and they would come home and their hands would be very raw with and splinters and it was a very blistering experience and she said a lot of times they would be huddled at home at night crying about the situation they were being put under. Then I remember my Grandmother had accepted a position

as a cook at some NY restaurant, but it wasn't anything fancy it was just a hotel or something, but she was the second hand cook when in Vietnam she was the chef and that was difficult and my Mother would go into the kitchen and always help my grandmother out because so much was expected even though they were being paid so little. They were still appreciative of it because literally when they moved here they had nothing with them I mean you weren't allowed to bring anything with you and so they had to start from scratch. So literally any penny they made they held on to very tightly so even though they were terrible slave-like condition jobs, they took anything they could.

[6:15] I think it taught her to be humble, I mean because growing up as the daughter of the general she was very pampered all day- she didn't have much responsibility so coming to the states and having to undergo being treated like that, being treated like a poor refugee it really really humbled her and taught her the significance of having to fend for yourself and you can't take things for granted. I really think it benefitted her life I believe that without the experience and the hardships she had to go through she wouldn't be the person she is today.

[8:46] No, that was only for the first couple years and then I think they had a godmother that took them under her wing the first couple of years they were in the states and they just started helping her doing house duties like housekeeping. She would put them to work in other people's homes- cleaning, cleaning toilets, scrubbing floors, dusting windows that kind of stuff. So they did do a couple of things but it was always work and school work and school it never deviated much from that, at least until they finished school.

My Moms always been the kind that was restless when it came to occupations and stuff like that so she finished college and got a job in accounting because of her degree, then she realized it bored her, then she went back to community college to learn fashion design, then opened up her own store for that, then got bored, then opened her own restaurant, after a while got bored of doing that, then hair and nail salon thing and owned that for a while, she doesn't settle well because she gets bored

Education:

[7:05] I think she was 18, yeah she was 18 when she came here so her primary objectives were 1, to help the family make money so they could eat and 2, at the same time because she did grow up in a good well educated family all the children were expected to still finish school and go to college and all that so, not only was she working in the strawberry fields and helping her Mother in the kitchens but then at night when she'd come home she would have to study for her classes and I heard from my uncle that they would literally maybe would sleep two hours a day for the first couple of years it was really difficult b/c all they could do is work work and more work then go to school and stuff and then wake up and do the whole thing over again.

[8:06] Yes, she finished her degree up and got her accounting degree and that's when she moved to Houston to pursue that goal. But all the children in the family finished college and a couple now are very successful they all learned a really good humbling lesson. They made sure to stick to the family first and then education and they did complete that.

Family Values:

[10:17] Well because they saw it as- they were thankful they were brought here after the fall of Saigon because they knew that after communist rule took over it would never be the same so they would rather be here than not [background noise] and so they took it as we have been invited here by the U.S. Embassy and we are going to do everything we can to assimilate ourselves so they actually tried very hard to learn the language very hard to learn the differences in the culture so I don't remember ever hearing stories of how difficult it was because they were so thankful that they wanted to know, wanted to know everything. So I don't really believe that it was so hard and now all of them speak perfect English minus the accent but they are all pretty much Americanized now too they do still hold traditional values, but as far as assimilating they are 100% American.

[11:46] Well, traditionally within a family they put a lot of respects and emphasis on the elderly so that always first and foremost comes first like in traditional Vietnamese culture, even back in the country now- No matter... here, like, you don't put your parents or grandparents in foster homes or nursing homes they stay with you, they are very well respected. It doesn't matter if they are senile or have Alzheimer's or whatever, whatever ailments they are doing through they are still respected in the family and are treated just as such. Like so, we don't ever put people in hospices and you don't send them off to a nursing home because they just can't take care of themselves anymore- its you do whatever you can to make sure that your mother or father are well taken care of- even if you were the granddaughter you would do the same thing. The elderly are always respected in that sense and the children have to be brought up being taught that education is the number one thing that will get you through and its not just about hard work, it's about being able to support that hard work with a good educational background and intelligence.

Recording 2 [12:19] It was done in a Catholic church, of course, but it was very traditional and it looked like a regular American wedding. It didn't look like anything out of the ordinary except that once you come out at the church and go to the quote and quote reception hall which was actually just my grandparents home at the time, they changed into the traditional Vietnamese clothing which is like the long dress and the hat fixture and that is actually done at many traditional Vietnamese weddings, even today. And once again you eat the celebratory foods like the roasted pig and bitter melon soup and moon cake and all that- very traditional things but as far as the ceremony goes, it was exactly like a regular modern American wedding.

Food:

[13:30] The funny thing about that is a lot of times my brother and I will beg her not to because she cooks so much of it that we are like "No we are tired of Vietnamese food." But when she does prepare it, she does prepare it in the traditional flavoring but the method has changed- she has become much more modern and westernized, I mean they don't use pressure cookers in Vietnam but however when she prepares some traditional Vietnamese meals here, they will taste the same, maybe better because she's a chef, but she uses a different method and more efficient ways, obviously because we have the technology here and that's a big way to show that you can keep your traditions- you just have to be smart about it.

Summary

Amy Phan: "Well, I remember one of the first job experiences she had it wasn't just her, it was her and my entire family including my former four star general grandfather which they all went out every day to

the strawberry fields to pick strawberries and it was hard grueling work it was like slave work- you were only getting paid five cents per basket of strawberries you'd submit and working out there in the fields I remember she said the strawberry plants were bristly and they would come home and their hands would be very raw with and splinters and it was a very blistering experience and she said a lot of times they would be huddled at home at night crying about the situation they were being put under.

They were still appreciative because when they moved here they had nothing with them, so they had to start from scratch. So any penny they made they held on to very tightly so even though they worked terrible slave-like condition jobs, they took anything they could.

Being treated like a poor refugee really humbled her and taught her the significance of having not taking things for granted. I believe that without the experience and the hardships she had to go through she wouldn't be the person she is today."

Method and Summary:

I chose not to edit the above interview. The interviewee expressed herself wonderfully and her genuine sincerity did shine though, I felt that certain words would still be emphasizing the points without losing any of the value or depth contained within the interview, but I did not want to lose any of the value or strength of her own words. She gave me such an in-depth look at her family, that I had an extremely tough time choosing only one small excerpt that would do the interview justice. Thank you to the Phan family for letting me into their lives and for telling their story.