

Phu (00:01): Hello

Vang: Hi

Phu: My name is Phu Truong. I would like to interview you and hear your war stories. Can you first please tell me what your name is and a little bit about yourself.

Vang: My name is Vang Tran. I was born in 1944 in Thai Binh, Ha Noi. In 1954, my family migrated to the South due to war break out. I was eleven years old at the time.

Phu: How was your childhood like? What were some of the things that you've learned through your parents teaching?

Vang: I complete elementary school in Ha Noi, and I continue school when I got into Saigon. My dad was in the army and my mom stay home to take care of the kids. Both were very busy however, they nevertheless forget to teach us good manners, humble, do good deeds and be respectful to others.

Phu: How was life in Vietnam? What was your occupation or what was there to do during that period of time?

Vang: In time of war, majority joins the army if they finish school or would not continue school. Like many, after 1964, I joined the army. I was in Su Doan 5 of the Republican of Vietnam. After 1975, I was captured by the Communist and was force into what they called "reeducation camp" which in reality is prison, where most live under horrible conditions with no food, water, or proper shelter. I got release in 1981. Between 1981 to 1992, there weren't decent jobs available for people like me. The Communist was very bias to those who served in the army; therefore, we have to find small business to do in order to survive.

Phu: Were you involved in any cultural organizations in the past?

Vang: When I was young I was involve in the Youth organization at my local Catholic church.

Phu: Did you practice any traditional arts or sports?

Vang: Yes, I was into soccer when I was young. We were in soccer teams at school.

Phu: During the war break out where did you live?

Vang: 1954-1975 I live in Saigon.

Phu: Did you move to any other places?

Vang: No, we stayed in Saigon.

Phu (0:10:45): When you were in the military what was your position.

Vang: I was lieutenant.

Phu: Who else in your family was in the military?

Vang: My dad, my younger brother, and also my father in law all were serving in the military.

Phu: Did you see any American soldiers during your time serving for your country? How was your reaction toward them and how was the communication like?

Vang: I saw a few; it was an honor to fight the war with them. Even though there were a language barrier, we somehow find ourselves communicating fine maybe it's because we have the same view of fighting against the Communist and fight for freedom.

Phu (00:14:10): Did the war affect your family?

Vang: The war not only affects my family but to all the families in Vietnam. Everyone was influence to protect our freedom against the Communist. We all feel the threat. The kids weren't able to go to school and families were obligated to move because there was war going in their villages.

Phu: How about yourself? Do you have nightmare still about the war or anything that still remind you of the war time?

Vang: Yes, sometime a sudden loud noise would remind me of the bombs exploded. At night I would get nightmare.

Phu: Did the Communist capture you during wartime?

Vang: No, only after The Fall of Saigon I was captured and was sent to what they called a "reeducation camp".

Phu: Do you know anyone else that was captured?

Vang: Yes, those who have ranking or just whoever they can captured in general.

Phu (00:20:00): So this reeducation camp, what is it like? Did they teach you anything?

Vang: It was horrible. The term was misused. It was a prison where many died due to hunger and thirst.

Phu: Were you injured during the war?

Vang: My left foot was injured.

Phu: Anyone in your family that was injured?

Vang: No. Just me.

Phu: How about during the reeducation camp?

Vang: My father in law was really weak and sick due to the camp. The Communist released him like a few weeks before knowing that he was about to die.

Phu (00:25:00): What made you decide you want to go to United State?

Vang: It was a dream for all after the war because US is where we can have freedom like we used to before the Communist takeover.

Phu: So who stayed and who went to US in your family?

Vang: My wife and I and our kids were the only that could go to US through HO program. My younger brother and his family weren't able to go. Same goes to my wife's family.

Phu: What did you bring with you to US that to you was important?

Vang: I brought what is needed and just a few things that was important to me in term of personal values. One was a painting of Jesus symbolize love and belief, a picture of me in my military uniform, and a small plant to remind me of my culture and my heritage.

Phu: Do you still have those things?

Vang: Yes, I still have them at home.

Phu: How was the trip to US?

Vang: We went on the airplane through HO program. It was a long flight from Vietnam to Hong Kong, then Hong Kong to California, and then California to Houston.

Phu (00:30:00): So why choose US? Don't you have relatives in Australia?

Vang: Oh, those are my brothers in law. They left Vietnam before The Fall of Saigon by boat. As for me and my family we were under HO program.

Phu: What were the programs like? Did you go through an interview session and were there any inspection?

Vang: Yes, of course. We have to go through an interview and also health check ups.

Phu: What were you feeling at the time you about to migrate to US?

Vang: We were really excited. It was like a dream come true. We look forward to a better life, more opportunities, and what we value most freedom.

Phu (00:34:50): How was life in US when you first arrived? What were the obstacles you have to face?

Vang: It was hard due to the language barrier, the different weather and climates, and also transportation. In general, everything is new to us and we just have to adapt to the new environment.

Phu: Did you get any help from anyone when you come over?

Vang: YMCA sponsored us and I had a relative that help us with housing for a month. But after that a friend refers us and we move out to an apartment called Blue Bell. The owner was very nice, they give us a big discount. First three months were free and the first year was only \$100-200 per month. We also had the government help through Welfare program. We met a few friends and they refer me to apply for jobs.

Phu (00:40:25): Did you have any other jobs during your time here in the US?

Vang: No. I stick with one company called "Lone Star Screw" for more than 13 yrs.

Phu: What are the things or traditions that you aren't use to here in US?

Vang: Well one is holidays such as Halloween are very unusual when I first arrived. We don't celebrate Halloween and it was very scary to see what people dress up as too.

Phu: How about the story of eating dog?

Vang: Oh, that is normal in Vietnam but not here in the US. I've learned that Dog is man best friend here. We can't do that here or else we would be in jail due to animal cruelty.

Phu (00:46:00): Are you a citizen? And why you think it is important to get your citizenship?

Vang: It is very important. When you are a citizen you can vote, you have a voice to make a difference.

Phu: Would you call yourself an American?

Vang: Yes, I am Vietnamese American.

Phu (00:54:00): Any changes since you leave Vietnam?

Vang: Yes, some of the homes are now rebuilt. Roads are rebuilt as well. However, there are many place that got worse.

Phu: What cultural or traditions you still keep?

Vang: We still celebrate the Vietnamese holidays. At my house we have an alter where we have God and our ancestors.

Phu: What are your emotions during these holidays/cultural events?

Vang: Whenever I attend holiday/cultural events and people are *singing the Vietnam's Republican anthem*...I get very emotional.

Phu (1:00:00): What are your hopes for these events?

Vang: I believe that these events are set up to remind us of our culture and traditions. With these events the second generation will benefit from it and will learn from their elders. We need to keep our roots and need to learn our language and our culture.

Phu (1:05:15): Do you have anything that you regret in your life?

Vang: I think one thing I regret is that we can't save our country. Our history shows that many heroes die to protect our land and people and it is sad that the Communist is now taking over Vietnam. The dream of Freedom cannot be achieved and our people are suffering. I hope changes in the future, and hope the younger generation will continue to fight for Vietnam's destiny.