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Tampa Food Families Oral History Project
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Interviewer: Andrew (Andy) Huse (AH)
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[Transcriber's Note: Interview begins mid-sentence]

Trang Viet: —born in 1946 in Nha Trang. Nha Trang is a coastal city in Central North Vietnam. And one of the time I fought a fisherman in there. So we love seafood a lot. And they're cheaper than meat. So the family eats a lot of seafood because we catch it, and we don't have to buy meat because it's more expensive.

Andrew Huse: Okay, so how big was your family?

TV: My mother gave birth fifteen times.

AH: Wow.

TV: And lots of my brothers and sisters died young because the medical tradition over there is not very good. We still have eight of us left in here. Yes, most of us in here by now—most in U.S.—the majority of us [are] in the Tampa Bay area here.

AH: Okay.

TV: So we get together from time to time. Yesterday is my mother's deceasing day. We all, family members, get together and some people cook some food and bring it home and put it out on (inaudible).

AH: It's your mother's day of what?

TV: Deceasing day.

AH: Oh, the day that she died?

TV: Yes.

AH: Okay.

TV: It's amazing that people over there, the Asian countries, they don't pay much attention to the birthday. But they pay more attention on the deceasing day.

AH: I see.

TV: And we worship them during the deceasing day. So we cook something for the (inaudible) and worship them. And that is a chance for the family—an opportunity for the family to get together, you know, to worship our ancestors.

AH: I see.

TV: We don't worship them on their birthday, but we worship on their deceasing day.

AH: I see.

TV: However, I don't know why, I leave house early so my sister at home, the elder sister, number seven, allowed the family cook vegetarian only. I don't know why. Sometime we cook non-vegetarian, but most of the time we cook vegetarian during the deceasing day.

AH: I see.

TV: So we just have it yesterday.

AH: Okay.

TV: Sunday, we get together. (laughs)

AH: So what did your parents do? Were they farmers or—?

TV: That's interesting. My parents were born in Central Vietnam in very remote villages. Which is my great-grandfather, my grandfather were working as a farmer, growing rice and things. But when my father growing up and at first part of his life he worked in the sugar cane plantation—

AH: Okay.

TV: —set up by French people because French colonized the country during a period of time.

AH: Yes.

TV: And then he went into Mơ Nông area which is a highland area.

AH: What area?

TV: Mơ Nông¹ area, the highland area of the country.

AH: Okay.

TV: A very focalized area, and he worked for a tea plantation.

AH: I see. How do you spell the highland area?

TV: Let's see, highland area, it can be B-a-o, B as (inaudible)

AH: A-o?

TV: Yes, B as (inaudible. B-a-o—

AH: B-a-o, okay.

TV: B-a-o L-o-c.²

AH: L-o-c?

TV: L-o-c, yes. It's a mountain area. It's a very cool climate. It's raining often and the water is volcanic years ago, so the red soil and it grows. The French people come in there, and it has a lot of tea plantations.

AH: I see.

TV: My father [was] working in that area. So I have a little bit of knowledge about tea processing. So I pick up pretty good cache of tea.

AH: So and where you were born, was that—?

TV: Nha Trang.

AH: What is it? How do you spell it?

TV: N-h-a T-r-a-n-g.

¹ Mơ Nông is an area in the Central Highlands region of Vietnam.

² Bảo Lộc is a town in Lâm Đồng Province in the Central Highlands region, famous for its tea.

AH: Okay. So that's where you get your name from.

TV: Right.

AH: I see.

TV: And that's a very beautiful coastal city. Long, long, long and beautiful.

AH: I see.

TV: And along the beach there are lots of trees along the beach and not so many private beaches like that.

AH: Yes.

TV: Now days, there are some, but not—the public can enjoy it.

AH: And that was in North Central, right?

TV: Just north of Saigon about Central, South Central.

AH: Okay, South Central.

TV: About two hundred miles north of Saigon. (speaks in Vietnamese to unidentified person)

AH: So you said you left your house at a young age.

TV: Yes. (speaks Vietnamese)

AH: If you ever need to get up, just let me know. I can pause it.

TV: Actually, I leave there about six or seven years old because my father working in tea plantation about when I was about six or seven years old. And in that remote area there's no school so they have to send me to put up in the house with the Catholic Sisters.

AH: Okay.

TV: So I grow up learning some [and] reading Catholic things. And then after a few years over there, I was sent back to the Central Vietnam where my family was born, to live with auntie and uncle. So I lived there for about two or three years. So I had to (inaudible) the countryside good. We grow things and we eat things right off the field. Some years we couldn't have good rice so we had the sticky rice. I use sticky rice just (inaudible) beautiful smell excellent, something like that. Just one minute.

AH: Sure. So you spent some time then in a Catholic mission?

TV: Yeah.

AH: That's where you were educated at first?

TV: Yes. It was an elementary school.

AH: Did you learn French or English there as well?

TV: At that time I was too young to learn anything.

AH: Okay.

TV: But I learned French when I was young and after that.

AH: Okay. What kind of attitudes did you have towards the French then? I mean—

TV: In fact, I don't feel comfortable with the French people very much. Look at after the World War II. The English people tried to return the land to their country like India, Thailand, whoever the war—in the Middle East, okay. On the other hand, the French people tried to come back after Second World War and they tried to retake the country. For example, the Vietnam, Cambodia, Algeria, therefore those countries have a very long war after the Second World War. If you look at history—

AH: Yes.

TV: That's the way it is.

AH: Yes.

TV: That I feel bad. If the French would not come back that way, maybe we don't have that what we call the Vietnam area later on. (laughs)

AH: Yes. Before then it was called Indochina. And when the Japanese left, the war wasn't over for you.

TV: Yes. Yes, it wasn't over.

AH: No, it just—a new war had begun against colonialism.

TV: Right. So that is something different between the colonies under the French and colonies under the British people, quite different. If you look at those areas under British and those areas under the French, you see how long the war lasted.

AH: Yes.

TV: Algeria's was too.

AH: Yes, really bad.

TV: You studied history, so you know about this. (laughs)

AH: Yes. So, did your parents sympathize one way or the other, for or against the French?

TV: My father worked with the French people most of the time. He doesn't have anything against the French. But of course a lot of people were against the French people.

AH: Yes.

TV: Particularly for propaganda, the Communists were against the French a lot. For that main reason they fight against the French. But my father doesn't like Communists at all so—

AH: Yes.

TV: He escaped from where his original, where he was born, into Nha Trang area.

AH: Okay.

TV: Just like go into the ocean, get a boat and get in and after that he worked for the tea plantation. But after he worked for the tea plantation, he quit his job in 1957 or something. And he became a fisherman in Nha Trang city.

AH: Okay.

TV: So for that I know a little bit about fish and seafood—eats a lot of that too.

AH: I see. So after spending some time in a mission then what did you do after that?

TV: I was sent back to my cousin and auntie in the countryside.

AH: Oh, yes.

TV: So over there and I was back in the city for high school, also in the Central Vietnam north of Nha Trang in Central Vietnam. So I live most of the time, most of the time I live in rural area more than city area. And when I was in college I live in the bigger city after that.

AH: So what was your education like and what did you concentrate on?

TV: Yes, I finished four years at the Vietnamese National Military Academy in Vietnam, so similarly to West Point here.

AH: I see.

TV: It's totally under U.S. instruction. I mean they say, "Okay, follow this program, follow this book," and so and so. We follow exactly like that.

AH: So at that point were they teaching in English, or was it Vietnamese?

TV: Vietnamese.

AH: Okay.

TV: I studied English mostly in that four year academy in Da Lat.

AH: I see.

TV: That academy in Da Lat is in a high mountain area. It grows a lot of vegetable belong to western country. That mean the area is cold enough so they can grow cabbage, lots of watercress, lots of cauliflower, some things that you can grow in Western Europe which is not suitable for the other areas in Nha Trang.

AH: I see, in the tropical areas.

TV: Right.

AH: So were you expected to be a soldier after you graduated?

TV: Yes, I expected to be a professional soldier after that.

AH: Okay.

TV: However, I was choosing to be sent here to continue education for, you know, post graduate school.

AH: Oh, they were going to send you to America.

TV: Yes, they sent me in 1973. The academy sent me.

AH: Okay. So you finished at the academy in what the late 1950s right?

TV: No, late 19—

AH: Oh, no, I guess it would have been—

TV: No, that was 1971, seventy-one [1971].

AH: Oh, you finished in seventy-one [1971].

TV: (sounds of agreement)

AH: So when did you start at the military academy? When did you finish high school?

TV: Sixty-eight [1968] or sixty-seven [1967], or sixty-six [1966] or sixty-seven [1967]. Sixty-seven [1967] to seventy-three [1973], so four years at college.

AH: So, explain then your experience of the time of transition between the French and then the American intervention in Vietnam.

TV: Okay.

AH: Where were you and how were you spending your time?

TV: Terrible thing about this is this—I would like people to read a book about my father's life. Okay, this is in Nha Trang and this is not the Nha Trang where my father was born. When the Communists—when after the World War the Communists take over this area, this is a French area. So my father goes down to the ocean and escaped into the French area. Okay. And when he escaped and the French people were thinking he's a Communist and he was put in jail.

AH: This was in the fifties or in the forties?

TV: Nineteen fifty-four.

AH: Okay.

TV: Fifty-three [1953] or fifty-four [1954].

AH: That was right after the disaster at Dien Bien Phu right?

TV: Yes. Fifty-three [1953], fifty-four [1954], fifty-two [1952], in that area.

AH: Okay.

TV: And he was put in jail because the French thinking he was a Communist.

AH: I see.

TV: He was hung like that (demonstrates wrists behind head) up on the roof, up on the ceiling and beat him bad. He cannot move his head. Even though my father disliked Communists and tried to escape from them.

AH: Yes.

TV: And he was put in jail for two years. Only me and my mom were outside at that time.

AH: I see.

TV: It was hard to survive with a mother and a son. And my mother bear another child by my father.

AH: I see.

TV: So, that is—I know about French—I was in the compound area when they moved us from the remote area into the central area not near Nha Trang. I was in that area. I see the French people at five, six years old. They separated me from my parents and they claimed that I'm orphanage.

AH: So they did this because they thought your parents were Communists and they wanted to separate you from that influence?

TV: Mm-hm. So my father is still in jail and my mother still in jail for the first few months until they discovered my mother pregnant. So they just put my father—my mother out and left my father in there.

AH: I see.

TV: Me, I was sent to the Catholic orphanage and ready to go to French. (laughs) That's terrible, right?

AH: Oh, yes.

TV: So a five or six year old boy, you know. So my mother had to go and ask the father, the Catholic father, you know, to intercept before they sent me out.

AH: I see.

TV: So finally she got me back. So I would stay. Otherwise, I don't know where I am now. (laughs)

AH: Yes.

TV: So about the French, it's hard to say. They do terrible, I mean action for the prisoner which is bad, it's bad.

AH: Yes.

TV: But that's all I know about the French. But I don't grow up in the big city. I don't have money to attend the French school when I was young. But in Vietnam, if you have money to attend the French school, you have privilege, because it's easy for you to get into some good school because you know French fluently. I studied French in a regular program which is three to four hours a week. It's not a one hundred percent French program—you speak French and writing in French and doing in French. So it's a disadvantage for me at that time. So, that's the way I am, but what can we do about it? (laughs)

AH: So the school—when you attended high school, was it a public school?

TV: A public school.

AH: Okay.

TV: Half of the period of high school—junior high I stayed in a private school. Senior high I attended a public school. It's a regular program, not (inaudible) but regular. Which is—I choose the French as my major language, second language was English at that time. So, when I was graduated from high school, I was not really good in French, but still no use after many years, so I am not good in any French right now at all.

AH: So by the time you got out of high school, the American intervention in Vietnam was heating up.

TV: Oh, heating up, yes.

AH: This was what, around sixty-four [1964], sixty-five [1965]?

TV: The Americans come here—well, one thing about this. When I was back in—remember after I finished primary—really in the primary school in Da Lat in the—Bao Loc, Da Lat area, I was sent to my uncle and auntie and I live there. In that period of time fifty-seven [1957], fifty-eight [1958], fifty-nine [1959], the Communists were all beginning activity.

AH: I see.

TV: They come from the jungle every night, they gather the people and tried to—

AH: So this is the Vietcong³ then.

TV: Yes, the Vietcong. My uncle was captured by them. My uncle, only one uncle. And they bring him to the jungle and the next day they returned with the body. Okay.

³ Vietcong was a Communist-led army and guerrilla force in South Vietnam that fought its government and was supported by North Vietnam.

AH: They executed him.

TV: Yes. Something like that.

AH: Why? Because he didn't cooperate?

TV: No, he did not. He's very strong anti-Communist. And one of my—the uncle married to my auntie, he's not really an uncle—the one married to my aunt.

AH: Yes.

TV: They come in and search her house and the Communist, the guy who come and captured him, mistake his servant so released him. (laughs)

AH: Oh, they thought he was a servant.

TV: Right. Okay. So he never stayed in the countryside anymore. He went back to Nha Trang with my family.

AH: I see.

TV: I was there.

AH: So it's safer in the urban areas then.

TV: Yes. So I see the activity. But when I was joining the military in 1967, yes—and then after that in sixty-eight [1968] the Tet Offensive [January 31, 1968], the very strong Tet Offensive by Communists. It's very heated up, you know.

AH: Yes, let me ask you then how coming out of high school, what did you expect to do? I mean, did you know you were going to go to the Vietnamese Military Academy? Or did you plan on it? Or did you have other plans?

TV: Actually, I attend the university for a year, but I don't feel comfortable with the program.

AH: I see.

TV: And anyhow—

AH: Why didn't you feel comfortable?

TV: Because they—the scientific program is not very good, the instructors not very good.

AH: I see.

TV: The book was shorter. And I'm very poor to afford to be in the big city and study only.

AH: I see.

TV: My family cannot afford that, most of that reason.

AH: Yes.

TV: So then, if I'm not success in every test of the year I would be dropped into the army anyhow because that's very—the highlight of the war at that time.

AH: Yes.

TV: So I say, okay if I'm looking for a dictation [education] either I had to show up at the military academy for a four year college and it's free.

AH: Yes.

TV: So I'd rather do that instead of just go straight to war immediately.

AH: Okay. I see.

TV: So I preferred my education, to get an education through the program.

AH: I see, so at that point I mean there was a lot of uncertainty about what the future would bring.

TV: Yes.

AH: How, did the prospects look? I mean, you were becoming a part of the military of the South. And obviously the North was very strong sending more people south to infiltrate. So basically, did you think there was a chance?

TV: I don't think any chance—I don't think, Okay, I get an education first.

AH: Yes.

TV: And whatever happened at a fight, if I fight I fight like every people in the country, that's all.

AH: I see. And you graduated then in 1972.

TV: Seventy-one [1971].

AH: Seventy-one [1971].

TV: Yes, at the end of seventy-one [1971]. And I was in Vietnam in seventy-two [1972], and in seventy-three [1973], I came here at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania.

AH: So, did you actually then serve in combat capacity?

TV: No.

AH: No. So what did you do for that year in between?

TV: They sent me to the artillery school.

AH: Okay.

TV: Then they sent me to study English in Saigon for—to prepare to come here.

AH: I see.

TV: They intend to train me as the instructor for the Vietnamese National Academy later on.

AH: Okay.

TV: So that whole program is—just five of us were allowed to pick up to send here.

AH: Just five?

TV: Out of a few hundred people.

AH: I see.

TV: And the rest of them just in the battlefield all the time. Half of us die—same classmates—die in 1972 or seventy-three [1973].

AH: Wow.

TV: Yes, I was there right until the end of seventy-one [1971], about the end of seventy-three [1973] half of us died.

AH: Wow. So, how do you account for that? Why were you sent away? Was it because your test scores were higher or?

TV: Somehow, I don't know. (laughs) Probably test scores were quite high.

AH: Yes.

TV: I graduated pretty high in school.

AH: So, what were they sending you to America then to be educated in?

TV: They—because we were short in engineering field.

AH: I see.

TV: They would like to send to another country to teach in this school.

AH: Oh, so they wanted you to become an instructor?

TV: Later on.

AH: Well, your test scores must have been very good then. (both laughs) So you literally dodged a bullet then—

TV: That's right.

AH: —by being sent to America, because at that time the war was going very badly.

TV: I know, badly. Lots of my colleagues died immediately.

AH: Yes.

TV: You know, you have four years in the school, you get out in the battlefield with the platoon leader right? About eleven men or twelve men surrounded you right?

AH: Yes.

TV: (inaudible)

AH: Yes, yes. Obviously not very safe if most of your colleagues died—

TV: Right.

AH: —in the first year or two.

TV: Particularly in 1972 it was very— (makes sound of disapproval)

AH: So how was your family coping with the situation then?

TV: My family, my—

AH: Your father was still a fisherman?

TV: Yes, my father, a fisherman during the time I was in the military academy. Sometimes off, sometimes on the—financially he's off and on because it depends on the season of what he can catch and what he cannot catch.

AH: Yes.

TV: And they still lived in Nha Trang. Therefore even my family was based in Nha Trang, but I never stayed in Nha Trang that long. Every year I had one or two weeks from school to home, that's all. I see my family about two or three weeks a year, that's all I see them.

AH: So while they're staying in Nha Trang then, did they see any kind of combat in that area or—?

TV: No.

AH: Not until the Tet Offensive?

TV: Yes, because the country goes like that (demonstrates) and the city is right near the ocean.

AH: Yes.

TV: And the activity goes up this way (demonstrates), not—

AH: In the interior, yes.

TV: The interior yes, not down near the ocean.

AH: So was there action there during the Tet Offensive?

TV: They [were] actually there during the Tet Offensive, but nothing as close to the city. Because the city is here (demonstrates). They were the last one to (laughs) so they can see them.

AH: So the combat never got near the—

TV: No, no.

AH: So then you come to America.

TV: Yes.

AH: By then you know English?

TV: Yes, a little bit.

AH: A little bit?

TV: A little bit, yes.

AH: Okay, so you were obviously learning a lot on your feet when you came.

TV: Yes, I had one year to prepare, to study English in Saigon before they sent me here.

AH: Okay.

TV: So I was still for a year in (inaudible) and the Communists take over the country and in 1975.

AH: So you finished your studies right about then?

TV: No, I went—not quite. Then I moved out to Catholic University in Washington D.C. before I finished up.

AH: Okay, so you transferred there and finished your schooling there?

TV: Yes.

AH: Why? Because the war was over?

TV: Yes, over. (laughs) And no military!

AH: You were no longer being sponsored by the Vietnamese military.

TV: Right. Right.

AH: Because they didn't exist.

TV: Right.

AH: So then, your family obviously you must have been very nervous for their well-being when it falls. Tell me about how that happened. I mean, they were in the city when the Communists took it over?

TV: Okay, now, let's talk about this country over here (refers to a map) because during the 1975 when the Communists go to the South, the Vietnamese force was going backward, backward, back and all the forces, this is the de-military zone here.

AH: Yes.

TV: All the force fallen back and some of them, in fact they are using the ocean route about here, about here and about here. Now, when the (inaudible) boat was coming down here because my family lived near the ocean here so they see boat there, thousands of thousands of people died because first thing when the ship moved here.

AH: Thousands of people died why?

TV: Because of first aid, no food, no water.

AH: Oh, I see.

TV: So lots of people died. And therefore my father very scared even though all of the family know that I was in U.S., but some of the ships leaving here for the, you know, the seventh fleet out here. But my mother—my father already died—my mother did not allow any children to go get into the ship and go to the ocean.

AH: When did your father die and how?

TV: Seventy-three [1973], just after I leave the country about three months. So I leave in August, my father died about November. He was just sick and died.

AH: Yes. Do you think his time in the French prison had anything to do with his death?

TV: Lots, yes. He was not doing well at all.

AH: Yes. And it's hard work being a fisherman.

TV: Yeah.

AH: So your mother wouldn't let any of the children get—take the boat?

TV: The ship, yes.

AH: Why not?

TV: To become a boat people. Because the loss of boat getting here from Hue, lots of people die on the boat.

AH: So she thought that—

TV: Too dangerous.

AH: Yes. Okay.

TV: So that's why nobody get into the boat and go to the U.S. in 1975.

AH: Yes.

TV: Until 1988. I petitioned to the U.S. government in 1984.

AH: So your mother and your sisters were stuck in Vietnam?

TV: Yes, in Vietnam.

AH: For all that time.

TV: Yes, all that time. In 1984, I petitioned—my mother already died—so I petitioned on my family, my brothers and sisters to U.S. In 1988—they get here in 1988.

AH: Did your mother die of natural causes?

TV: Natural causes.

AH: So how was your family treated once the Communists moved in? I mean obviously they knew that you weren't loyal to Communism.

TV: Right. They know that I was here. They know that the government sent me here.

AH: And that you were a part of the military.

TV: Yeah, and they go to my house and ask my mother, "Where is he right now?"

AH: Ask your mother what?

TV: About me.

AH: Okay.

TV: So my mother say, "No, I don't know where he is. He didn't write me anymore."
(laughs)

AH: Was that true? Did you write—you hadn't written her?

TV: No. They know where I am. (laughs)

AH: Yes. And it probably would have been dangerous to write the—

TV: Yes, right.

AH: —if they saw that they got a letter from you.

TV: Right, right.

AH: Okay. So you're keeping quiet and not writing your mother, but they know—

TV: Right.

AH: —that you're working on their behalf to try to get them to come to the U.S. right? So this—

TV: They know I am here safe, but they don't want people to know that I'm here and they're still in touch and so on.

AH: So were they discriminated against because of you?

TV: Yes, because I was in Southern Vietnamese military first of all. Secondly, I was educated in U.S. and maybe I was C.I.A. [Central Intelligence Agency] or something like that.

AH: Yes.

TV: Whatever they think, who knows in their minds.

AH: So what—how did they treat your parents—I mean your mother and your family differently?

TV: Because the majority of the children were very young at that time.

AH: Yes.

TV: All those older next to me, they died when they were young.

AH: Yes.

TV: So they were very young and they were not in the military at all years ago.

AH: Yes.

TV: So they could do nothing.

AH: So, how many siblings did you have that were still alive then at that time?

TV: Eight.

AH: Eight. And did all of them survive?

TV: Yes.

AH: They did. Okay.

TV: They were very young, very young.

AH: Yes, I see. So these were all your sisters and things.

TV: And brother.

AH: And you have one brother?

TV: One brother.

AH: Yes.

TV: He's in college right now.

AH: Okay. But he never joined the military.

TV: No, he was too young at that time.

AH: Oh, I see, I see. Okay, so in the meantime when all of this is going on in Vietnam, you were in Washington. You're finishing your school at a Catholic university. You're still an engineer?

TV: Yes.

AH: Okay.

TV: But after that I worked in the software, computer software.

AH: Yes, and tell me how you got into that? How did you go from being an engineer to getting into computers?

TV: Well, what it was in school for electrical engineer, I prefer, I rather prefer the computer software. So [I took] a few courses about computer software and at that time, the computer software (inaudible) was very demanding for that period of time.

AH: Yes.

TV: Nineteen seventy-five, seventy-six [1976] so—

AH: So what drew you to that? I mean you didn't have any computer experience in Vietnam, right?

TV: No.

AH: So you just happened to take some courses?

TV: Yes.

AH: And you liked it.

TV: Yes.

AH: Yes.

TV: And I feel comfortable with them, come in and work. It's easy.

AH: So you must have learned pretty quickly then, right?

TV: Well, like many people I'm pretty good at that.

AH: Yes.

TV: But I couldn't do anything—music or drawing, anything about art or—

AH: Yes.

TV: No, nothing, but I like the programming and I do it very fast and very easy.

AH: Did you do a lot of cooking at that time?

TV: Yes, right.

AH: So you did cook, though.

TV: Yes.

AH: Yes. So when, how did it happen then to get into the computer training? Did you incorporate that into your curriculum, or did you have to get another degree?

TV: No, I just with the—when they looked at the resume and they hire me and then I just working, that's all, work and work and work.

AH: So what company? Or where were you working?

TV: We worked for the Computer Sciences Corporation. That was a big company.

AH: And you were developing software?

TV: Yes.

AH: You were writing code?

TV: Yes, writing code.

AH: Okay.

TV: This is easy for me. Some people are good in something. I'm pretty good at that.
(laughs)

AH: What kind of applications were you working on?

TV: Oh, believe it or not, that is considered—what is that—first of all I work with a system for the army recruiter persons in this country and sent to some camp for training. And then after eight weeks in basic training, they were sent to a professional school. Let's say a guy get into the recruiter and say, "I want to join the army." He'll say [recruiter], "Okay, take the test and so and so. What would you like? To be an infantry man, or cook—" or whatever it is.

AH: Yes.

TV: And then afterwards—so the program is a recruiter people and what school and what test score.

AH: I see.

TV: We go into (inaudible). Afterward we sent into another camp for the professional training or something like—for those—

AH: I see.

TV: —for the army at that time. And after that I joined the Computer Sciences Corporation to do the system programming to help other users outside.

AH: I see. So it's kind of an irony that you were then working really still for the military in a way.

TV: Mm-hm. (laughs) But another thing is after that few years with those companies, I was picked up by another company and they sent me to Saudi Arabia doing the software.

AH: I see. For what?

TV: Logistics system.

AH: Was that for the military or—?

TV: For Saudi Navy.

AH: The Saudi Navy.

TV: The Saudi Navy come in—

Side 1 ends; side 2 begins.

TV: —the Saudi Navy here, the rest is here and the Saudi Arabia here, one in Dammam here, and one in Riyadh here and so two naval bases.

AH: Okay.

TV: And during that time we do naval base—you send a person to the U.S. and over there—we trained them and we do ten of the PC CVBGs [or BBBG's naval/battle ships] those big boat, small boat and we (inaudible) guided missile on there about thirty PCs at that time in 1981 to 1988, okay. So we do the base. You send guys you got into the U.S. for the main boat training. We build the ship and after these guys are finished they take this boat and go back to your country.

AH: I see.

TV: (laughs) And they send Hughes and Bendix and Holmes & Narver. Hughes is a big company and Bendix and Holmes & Narver. Holmes & Narver is a building guide. They get together and make a joint venture company called HBH. Hughes, Bendix and Holmes & Narver, HBH.

AH: Okay.

TV: So the joint venture to build a contract and build the Navy. And they send—they recruit the people in this country and send over there to build all the logistics system, all the things—the weapons system—ready for these guys coming back.

AH: I see.

TV: We were over there—I was working over there for seven years.

AH: So, what kind of money were you making during this time?

TV: I do pretty good at that time. In 198-, 197-, eighty-one [1981], eighty-two [1982], forty-five to fifty grand a year at that time.

AH: So could you have hoped to make a wage like that in Vietnam?

TV: No. (laughs) No way.

AH: Yes.

TV: No way. So, and they also send me to Riyadh, that being the capital city of Saudi, for a few years too. So I live in these three cities.

AH: I see.

TV: Remember Al-Khobar Hotel which was bombed by terrorists and lots of servicemen died over there?

AH: Yes.

TV: I stopped by there often. Every time I fly back there, I had to stay there one night before Dammam come and pick me up the next day. Because there's no transportation and they had to drive me and go down there and pick me up.

AH: I see.

TV: The Al-Khobar Hotel.

AH: Yes. Wow.

TV: (laughs)

AH: So, at this point you must have—and this was all kind of unexpected. When you came out of high school, did you ever dream that you would be working in Saudi Arabia? Working in America?

TV: No, I don't think so. (laughs)

AH: Yes.

TV: It's quite changing.

AH: Yes.

TV: Another thing is that during those seven years I worked here [Saudi Arabia], we had one month R&R, that meant we had one month for recreation and one month home leave. So the company would provide a ticket for that. So I have a chance to travel a lot during those years. Every year I'd go out to Asia, and Europe often. So I had a chance to taste different kinds of food and lots of things.

AH: I see. You did a lot of traveling.

TV: A lot. I loved that period of time in my life. (laughs)

AH: So you had no contact with your family though, right?

TV: I do. During this period of time I still contacted family.

AH: Oh, okay.

TV: You know, send them some money, you know.

AH: I see.

TV: And in 1984 and eighty-five [1985] petitioned to bring them here.

AH: All right, so by the time your family comes over from Vietnam then, is this all eight siblings?

TV: Yes.

AH: Okay. But your mother was already dead.

TV: Not actually eight, about six of them come in here. Three of them escaped by boat in seventy-eight [1978], seventy-nine [1979].

AH: I see.

TV: Two of them—one of them ended up in Japan. One of them in France, my brother, and one of them come here. And one in France, my brother, I petitioned for him to come in here.

AH: Okay.

TV: Now he lives in California. Another sister is in London right now and one in Japan just came here last year. So one in Japan, you'd go to (inaudible) and they speak Japanese only. They try to adapt to society right now.

AH: I see. So they're still living there?

TV: Yes—no, they come here already.

AH: Oh, they came here, okay.

TV: They came here, yes.

AH: So, by the time that they came over, actually came over in 1988 then?

TV: Right.

AH: Okay, so by then you were done with your stint in Saudi Arabia?

TV: At the end of—nearly the end of 1988 I know that they come in. So I finished that job as well.

AH: Okay.

TV: And we all moved out here.

AH: Okay.

TV: That's why we settle down. The reason I settle down in this Tampa area because my brother and my siblings are afraid of cold weather. So I said, "Okay, you're afraid of cold weather, so I have to stay down in Tampa with you."

AH: Oh, they don't want to have cold weather.

TV: Yes.

AH: Okay.

TV: So we go move down here in 1988.

AH: Okay, so had one of your siblings already moved down here and you joined them? Or you all just decided on Tampa?

TV: No, I decided to settle down in Tampa.

AH: So what drew you to Tampa?

TV: What?

AH: What drew you to Tampa? Why Tampa? Why not Miami? Why not St. Augustine? Why not California?

TV: Oh, there's a reason for that. I mean—it's not very cold, but I like the way here is economy-wise, not up and down often like the industrial city.

AH: I see.

TV: It's stabilized.

AH: Yes.

TV: Secondly, we're near a good sized airport. If we need to go somewhere, just hop in the airplane and go somewhere.

Ah: Yes.

TV: We don't need to drive—let's say if you live in Fort Myers or Lakeland, you have to drive a few hours to the airport—I hate that.

AH: Yes.

TV: I like the airplane. I like to go use the airport.

AH: Yes. So your background with doing so much traveling, it probably had a big impact then.

TV: Yes. It is necessary. An airport is necessary to me. (laughs)

AH: Yes.

TV: And for education, yes, we have a good sized enough university around here. So if the youngster grows up and needs something like that, they can have school.

AH: I see.

TV: That's what I'm thinking.

AH: Yes, okay, so you decided upon Tampa.

TV: Right.

AH: You came down and what was next?

TV: Okay. Actually I came in here before I know that I was ready to get out. I looked at the area and I called my brother. At that time he was in California and he came here to join us. So I come here and look around and rent a house and I go to California because the other sisters from refugee camp in Philippines would come to California first. So I go there and get them and come back here. And come down here, they are not good in English. Some of them study cosmetology. Some of them study—was in college here and there. Finally we had a catering service before.

AH: You did? When?

TV: I did in 1988 to 1992.

AH: So that was here in Tampa?

TV: Yes, here in Tampa, a catering service.

AH: So what kind of things—what kind of events did you cater?

TV: We just have a catering job to cook American food.

AH: Oh, and then you went to different work places and sold there?

TV: Right, sold there.

AH: I see.

TV: So in 1992 I said, “That’s too dangerous. I don’t want to drive a car and I don’t want people borrowing the car.”

AH: Oh, yes.

TV: In case of an accident or something like that.

AH: Yes, what was it like to make all of this American food then? I mean you’re making—

TV: Hamburger and cheeseburger, very easy things.

AH: Yes, very simple.

TV: Yes, simple.

AH: I see. You actually cooked in the truck.

TV: Yes, cooked in the truck. So, in 1992 we said, “Okay, let’s do the restaurant,” because the idea of having a restaurant was with me a long, long, long time.

AH: Really?

TV: Yes, because even when I was in California, there are lots of Vietnamese restaurants.

AH: Yes.

TV: I come in and eat and I feel uncomfortable.

AH: Why?

TV: The reason is the—not clean. They had money, they can décor anything they like, but it’s not simple, it’s not elegant.

AH: Yes.

TV: Okay, good décor, they spend lots of money, but it’s not my taste.

AH: Yes.

TV: Maybe I'm different. Not that—it doesn't mean I'm good, but I'm different.

AH: Yes

TV: Secondly is, they tend to be more Chinese food—

AH: Yes.

TV: —which is not original. So I see the difference. I am not satisfied even though there are lots of Vietnamese restaurants over there.

AH: Yes.

TV: Another thing is during those traveled years around the world, I have a chance to taste different kinds of food in Asia.

AH: I see.

TV: So I can see the differences, how people can get success in that kind of food that I am going to serve. So that's why.

AH: So when would you say you first started dreaming about it? It was then when you were traveling all around.

TV: Yes.

AH: During the 1980s.

TV: Right. The seven years I was in Saudi Arabia.

AH: So was that the plan then, when in 1988, you knew they're [family] coming, did you know that you were going to try to get into the food industry?

TV: Yes. Deep in my mind I even, I feel disappointed, I say, "I'm going to have a restaurant someday."

AH: Yes.

TV: So whenever I taste some good food I remember in my mind and say, "Okay, that's the way it should be." You know?

AH: I see.

TV: So in 1992 I said, “Okay, go ahead and open the restaurant.”

AH: So, but you could have just kept making good money in the computer programming right?

TV: Well, the family comes first.

AH: Yes.

TV: So when my family get allowed to get into U.S., I had to stay with the family.

AH: Of course.

TV: Money is not critical. I’m single. I don’t need that much money anyhow.

AH: Yes.

TV: So I’m single and I don’t care much about that. I care about my brother and sisters, so I came here to make sure they stay in good shape.

AH: So you never floated with the idea of marriage?

TV: Not at all.

AH: No.

TV: It doesn’t happen to me often. I’m not the kind of guy to go out and socialize a lot.

AH: Yes.

TV: So. (laughs)

AH: Yes, I see. Let’s see. So the catering business, why American food? Why catering? Was it because it was you didn’t have enough money to start a business yet?

TV: The reason is my brother in California; he worked in a catering service before, in California.

AH: Okay.

TV: So he know the technical aspect of that. So he run this truck himself and I stay home and do farming all the time. I don’t run the business. I just come in and call and order something and make sure he stops by and picks up something in the afternoon, that’s all.

AH: So he actually drove the truck then?

TV: And my sister cooked. I don't actually work there.

AH: I see.

TV: I was retired for a year or two—

AH: Okay.

TV: —at that period of time, doing farming. I bought five acres of land and say, “Okay, let's do some experiment,” at that time. I have plenty of time.

AH: Yes.

TV: I don't go out to work. I don't do business. My business, my brother ran it. So I say, “Okay, grow this and grow that, and try to collect the Vietnamese herb and thing, and see which one can survive and which one cannot, and how do I do it?” Because even though when I was young I lived with my auntie and uncle in the countryside, I saw that, but I actually didn't grow anything until recently when I had the time.

AH: I see.

TV: So I do experiment about here. After that we opened the restaurant in 1992.

AH: Okay, that's when you opened it? And you opened this location first?

TV: No, I opened at Armenia [Avenue].

AH: Armenia.

TV: On Armenia first.

AH: Okay, so this was a way that you could then, all your relatives could be employed?

TV: Yeah.

AH: And you could all work together and spend time together.

TV: Right.

AH: So what was the biggest challenge, I guess, starting your own restaurant? What was the most difficult thing for you?

TV: I never worked in a restaurant before, so the question okay, how do—how much food do I have to have for each person for portion? I don't have experience like that!
(laughs)

AH: Yes. (laughs)

TV: I'm not a graduate from the cooking school and I'm not working in any restaurant, you know, so—

AH: What about your sisters and your brother? He just did the catering thing, correct? But he didn't—

TV: Yes, he did catering for the American food so, you know, we had no idea.

AH: Yes.

TV: We know how to cook because we know how to cook like we cook at home. We know how to cook because I traveled around the world, and I say which one we add and which one we subtract to make better taste, you know. But how much portion are we going to have? You know. What is a reasonable price to pay in the industry? I'm not experienced at all.

AH: So how did you work that out? Was it just trial and error for a long time?

TV: Yes, trial and error for a long time. It took a year or two before you know, we had to adjust it. (laughs)

AH: I see. So were there any major mistakes along the way do you think?

TV: Well— (laughs)

AH: Do you have any stories?

TV: One time my sister was sick and stayed home and other sister say, "Okay, cook soup today for her with Vietnamese ingredients."

AH: Yes.

TV: And ask uncle—ask me and say, "What should we put in there?" because that's complicated. And I'm busy and I'm busy and so busy and so I said, "Put everything you like!" (laughs)

AH: I see.

TV: I was just kidding them, you know.

AH: Yes.

TV: Whatever you would like to put in and they just—when I called down there and they put the thing in.

AH: So what did they do?

TV: I just laughed.

AH: They ruined the soup, what?

TV: Yes, they ruined the soup!

AH: Why, what'd they put in there that they shouldn't have put in there?

TV: The portion is not proportionate, not correct. They did the wrong kind of thing.

AH: Yes.

TV: Because (laughs) I'm busy. I thought I would have time to go back down there to help them, but when I come down it was too late. That's so funny. The pot of soup is wrong.

AH: So what, they had to start all over?

TV: Yes, right, the pot of soup is wrong.

AH: And that takes a long time to make it too, right?

TV: Yes, yes. I just laughed.

AH: What else? Any other kind of mishaps in the beginning?

TV: Not actually. We begin at about ten or fifteen items on the menu. So we add more, add more. We adjust it back and forth. Another thing of difficulty is supply.

AH: Yes.

TV: If we want to cook exactly like Vietnam, we don't have the ingredients like in Vietnam. Broccoli is the one we use here mainly; over there we don't have broccoli. So we use different things. Stuff like that. Some kind of salad we would like to have very much, but we couldn't find it here or it's very expensive, you know, in the grocery store. So we had to adjust it, but we survived. We survived.

AH: Yes. So you think you've found an overall good balance then with the supplies and everything else? And now your menu is pretty massive.

TV: Yes, fifteen items, now to hundred and forty items.

AH: Yes, that's a lot. And now you've incorporated—at first did you have a lot of vegetarian or vegan dishes, or no?

TV: We had about a few, two or three dishes.

AH: Yes.

TV: Now we have about forty dishes, vegan dishes. And nowadays we have lots of vegan people. The trend that we can see now—here is not as much as Europe. Europe about 30 to 40 percent of people eat vegan, now. And here we see it increased at least 15 to 20 percent right now—

AH: Wow.

TV: —of people who eat vegan.

AH: Yes.

TV: So, luckily that we are Buddhism.

AH: Yes.

TV: So we don't have to cook vegan food [for ourselves] unless—I told you yesterday was my mother's deceasing day, we cook vegan and every year we do that to worship our parents.

AH: I see.

TV: So it's for them. Luckily that we have it, like people come here and drink good tea and they ask me, "How can we pick up the good tea?" I have to bring the tea down there and show them why it's a good tea.

AH: Yes.

TV: Explain to them what is that, what is that, what is that in the tea and why it's good tea. Because when I was growing up, my father worked in the tea plantation.

AH: Yes.

TV: And we look at the seafood, look at the fish and we know how fresh it is. So I was born in that area, I mean growing up in that area, and looking at the fish I can tell immediately.

AH: Yes.

TV: I don't have to, you know, technically—I don't know anything technically, but by using.

AH: You know by look, by feel.

TV: Yes, I use them.

AH: So when you first started, when you first got into business, what proportion would you say—did you have a lot of Vietnamese customers at first? Or was it mostly regular Americans?

TV: Vietnamese—actually the Vietnamese is not—actually Vietnamese came in here [U.S.], they don't have enough skills, their level of salary and wage financially is not well off. So they don't eat in restaurants often as other people. Secondly, they can cook their own kind of Vietnamese food any day.

AH: Sure.

TV: So Vietnamese food, Vietnamese food, they don't want to spend money for that. They can spend money for something different, that they couldn't do it.

AH: Yes.

TV: But not Vietnamese food, they know.

AH: I see.

TV: So we have a portion of the Vietnamese people, but a portion of them are original people in this area. And the difficulty is—Tampa is not a big city like Houston or Washington D.C. or somewhere in California. The majority of people in this area is not familiar with the Vietnamese food.

AH: It's true.

TV: So every time they come in and eat the dish I have to tell them what to do with each dish. Our (inaudible) meat over rice noodles and (inaudible) toss it for them. Or the beef fondue (inaudible) hot platter and to keep the rice paper in the water to soften it down.

AH: Happy pancake with the roll?

TV: Oh, yes.

AH: And there was a gentleman over here that wanted to know if that was shrimp because you know, he doesn't know.

TV: (laughs) But I feel fun because that is why I do this. I don't want just throw a menu in front of customer and just let them choose. I usually go through the menu with a new customer coming in and saying, "What is that, what is that and how does it cook and what is that?" I go over with lots of customers the items in the menu so they know generally what is there. And other time we serve the food on the table we talk to them about the way we eat. Whether they would like to do it or not is up to them, but that's the way we eat.

AH: Yes. Was there ever a point after opening the business that you or your family had doubts about whether or not you'd be able to succeed?

TV: No doubt.

AH: You never had any doubt.

TV: Not at all. Not in my mind.

AH: So was there ever a point though where you knew that like that you were doing really well—like, when did you know that this is it, we've made it, we've done it right, we've overcome all the challenges? I mean, was there ever any time when you got written up in the paper or that a customer said something to you that really made a difference or that you—?

TV: Yes, about six months or eight months after we opened first restaurant down there, we feel very comfortable.

AH: Really?

TV: Because we have a good write-up and the rating is excellent by the *Tampa Tribune*. And another thing is every customer loves it and they come back.

AH: Yes.

TV: The key thing, if we can measure our success, we just look at the number of customers coming back. If there are more people and customers coming back that means we feel comfortable. If we don't see them reappear, then we have to think something wrong. (laughs)

AH: Yes, when did you open this restaurant here?

TV: Nineteen ninety-seven, or something like that.

AH: Okay.

TV: Yes, 1997.

AH: That was the same year that I first ate here.

TV: Oh, okay.

AH: And I keep coming back. (both laugh)

TV: That's a good thing then. That's a good thing.

AH: And I take all my friends.

TV: You don't have to be studying in the book about marketing as long as you treat other people as you would like other people to treat you. That's the marketing. The whole thing of marketing is you treat customers like you would like other people to treat you. And that's it.

AH: Yes.

TV: (laughs) That's it, right?

AH: Yes, definitely.

TV: Marketing, I don't know.

(both laugh)

AH: Yes, well you can spend a lot of money on ads, but that doesn't mean that people will come.

TV: Yes, that's another thing. That's another thing.

AH: So, what else? Were there any other times that you really feel rewarded any times over the years, that you really felt like, you know, you've ended up in the right place?

TV: Yes, because usually every year or two, I have the party that is free for the people, the regular customers coming back here, for no charge. The reason I postponed for last year too because I would like to wait for my wife to come here so we can organize.

AH: Your wife? Your wife.

TV: Yes. I just married about two years.

AH: You just got married?

TV: A year and a half.

AH: Because I remember I came in here—it must have been several years ago—and you said, “Oh, nobody would want to marry me.”

TV: (laughs)

AH: And I said, “I’ll marry you! If you cook like that I’ll marry you!” (both laugh) So you found yourself a wife.

TV: Yes.

AH: So how’d you meet?

TV: My sister came back there [to Vietnam] a few years ago, and people tried to introduce her [wife], and then we communicated with each other, and a year and a half ago I went back [to Vietnam] and married her.

AH: Married who? Someone that your sister introduced you to?

TV: Yeah.

AH: Where was this? Where, in Vietnam?

TV: In Vietnam.

AH: Okay.

TV: So, I file a petition to bring her here for nearly two years, but she’s not here yet.

AH: Oh, I see.

TV: I would like her to come here and we have a party like that.

AH: When was the first time you went back to Vietnam?

TV: First time? Four years ago.

AH: Four years ago? Before then you didn’t think it was safe?

TV: No.

AH: Yes. What prompted you to go four years ago? How’d you know it was safe?

TV: Well, I had lots of relatives back there say—a few years ago—years ago they say, “No, don’t come back, don’t come back, don’t come back.”

AH: Yes.

TV: So at that time they say, "Okay, it's a good time, you can come back."

AH: So, you went.

TV: Yes. (laughs)

AH: So what was that like for you? That first time going back to Vietnam? What was that like?

TV: I had trouble the first time.

AH: Why?

TV: I went back and I was in Nha Trang and I go back to visit the area which I lived with my auntie and uncle and to visit half-sister over there. And when I go back to Nha Trang, the Communist intelligence agency, security agency, followed me to Nha Trang and they cooperate with the agency in Nha Trang and interviewed me for four hours.

AH: So more like interrogate.

TV: They interrogate me for four hours.

AH: For four hours. So what kind of things were they asking you?

TV: "What are you doing in the U.S.? Why do you come here? And what do you do?" And so and so.

AH: Yes. So at the end of the four hours they thought that you were safe and they let you go.

TV: Yes.

AH: Were you scared?

TV: Yes, they could put me in jail any time and there's nothing we can do about it. Even a U.S. citizen, it doesn't mean a thing.

AH: True, true. So you became a U.S. citizen though.

TV: In 1981.

AH: In 1981?

TV: Yes.

AH: Okay. What about your sisters and your brother?

TV: They came here in and most of them have got their U.S. citizen—

AH: Citizenship?

TV: Right. Citizenship.

AH: Well, so it's been an amazing journey for you then.

TV: I know. (sound of exasperation)

AH: Yes.

TV: Yes. I live everywhere in the world.

AH: After you got interrogated though, what was your visit like after that? I mean, you must have had a lot of memories coming back to you.

TV: Well, I don't care, I don't dare. I don't dare to come back to this province. I hate those guys over there.

AH: Oh, you never got over it?

TV: No. When I have five sisters there, even my parents' cemetery over there. If I go there to see cemetery, I just go there hoping to tell the driver to go there and do something and see my parents' cemetery and go back. I never go there again.

AH: Why, you don't feel you're welcome?

TV: No.

AH: No.

TV: (laughs)

AH: So what other kind of places. I mean that first time, was it emotional for you to go back?

TV: Yeah.

AH: It was?

TV: See things changing. You know everything changing in the world. You go there and we see things changing.

AH: How do you feel about the Communists now?

TV: Oh, I never liked it at all—

AH: Yes.

TV: —all my life. Until I die, I still don't like it.

AH: Yes.

TV: It's not right.

AH: Yes. But your sisters were there for a while, and they saw it change. I mean, did they see things kind of get back to normal at all, you know?

TV: Well, of course there's no war.

AH: Yes.

TV: So the people have a chance to develop the country. I mean we have more roads, more house and same thing here and there. Still under Communists is something wrong. Everything go back to bribe. You can give them money for—

AH: Corruption.

TV: Corruption, yes, the worst thing. And they can catch you, or they can put you in jail anytime they like. There's no justice system, you know?

AH: Yes. So, how about, what was the low point in your life? When were things the hardest for you?

TV: Things hardest for me when I was about four, five, six years old.

AH: Yes.

TV: When I look back in my life, that is still the worst time in my life.

AH: Yes.

TV: At that time my father in jail, my mother carry in belly, carry my brother. You know we live in very poverty, low, low poverty.

AH: She was happy, but not happy.

TV: Yes.

AH: Yes.

TV: She would have a child, but (inaudible). Five, six years old, that was worst time in my life.

AH: Yes. What was the best? When was the best?

TV: The best time, probably the time I get my brother and sisters in this country in 1988.

AH: Yes.

TV: I say, "Okay, forget you Communists, bye-bye you guys, the whole family safe."

AH: Yes, we're all together again.

TV: (laughs)

AH: If you could change anything, what would you change?

TV: This is a free country. (laughs) That's the only thing I like.

AH: Do you think you'd be living in Vietnam? Or would you still be in America?

TV: If it freed?

AH: Yes.

TV: I would go back.

AH: You would go back to Vietnam? So if it was free tomorrow, you would go.

TV: I would leave and go.

AH: Yes.

TV: Just retire over there.

AH: Yes, I see.

TV: Yes.

AH: Favorite things and least favorite things about the restaurant industry.

TV: Favorite thing is I like to get in touch with people. My most favorite thing is that people enjoy the food. That's a big, big wow for me.

AH: Yes.

TV: Because it's wow, people enjoy, they love the food.

AH: Yes.

TV: More than money. We do everything to make money. This is one way to make money.

AH: Sure.

TV: The money is money.

AH: Yes.

TV: I made more money when I worked in Saudi. It doesn't mean a thing. I quit the job because of my family. So it's not the money that is critical in your life. There is something more important than that. Therefore I am not rich and everything. (both laugh) But mostly people happy because they love the food.

AH: So what do you like least about running your own restaurant?

TV: Well, some machine broken down. (laughs)

AH: Yes.

TV: One time I have power outage for three days. We could not fix the power system.

AH: Oh, wow.

TV: That's the worst thing, something broken down.

AH: Yes.

TV: I don't mind to work hard.

AH: Yes.

TV: But heck, what can we do without those, you know, systems? Within this month, I have walk-in cooler, the compressor down, death, walk in freezer compressor death, water heater death.

AH: Just this month?

TV: This month!

AH: (laughs) Well, I can see why that would be your least favorite.

TV: Yes, the least favorite is the system down, (laughs) but I don't mind to work. I mean I've been here all day long. It doesn't matter. It's fine.

AH: Yes.

TV: (laughs)

AH: So what else? Is there anything else you—maybe we didn't cover?

TV: I think pretty much, pretty good.

AH: How—so how do you think your life's going to change once your wife comes over?

TV: Oh, I think I'm happier.

AH: Yes.

TV: Some people give me a hand. (laughs) (inaudible)

AH: So are you actually married yet?

TV: Yes.

AH: You are. You married in Vietnam?

TV: Yes.

AH: Okay.

TV: But I think not much change. I still work.

AH: What is it about her that made you want to marry her?

TV: I don't know. Good question.

AH: Yes.

TV: She very, very country girl.

AH: Country girl?

TV: Yes.

AH: Yes.

TV: She live in a very remote area. She's not materialized yet. (laughs)

AH: Yes. Yes.

TV: Maybe she'll be in the future, (laughs) but at least not for a few more years.

AH: Yes. True. So how old is she?

TV: More than thirty years old. Thirty-seven years.

AH: What's that?

TV: More than thirty years old.

AH: Yeah, okay.

TV: So, she's okay, mature.

AH: And that's—

TV: Very country girl.

AH: Yes, you like the simplicity.

TV: Yeah.

AH: Does she speak English?

TV: Oh, very light.

AH: Yes, very little.

TV: Very simplicity, that's good, good, good, good.

AH: Yeah. I see.

TV: (laughs) I don't know about married life coming up, but I hope it should be okay.

AH: Well, I think you'll have a lot to share with her.

TV: Yes.

AH: You have so much experience.

TV: Yes.

AH: And I'm sure there'll be some culture shock too.

TV: Oh, yeah.

AH: Coming from the country here to Tampa. So what is it that you—let's do your least favorite/favorite again, about Tampa.

TV: In Tampa city?

AH: Yes, what's your favorite thing about Tampa?

TV: Economy very stabilized. How many times we see the economy up and down. Tampa—I like live in city where the economy that is not up and down, like Houston in 1981, Detroit 1984, something I do remember. Or let's say San Jose, where my brother live right now, he out of job for last eight months.

AH: Oh, wow.

TV: You know, I don't like the headache.

AH: Yes.

TV: Here money-wise not good, but stabilized. Like Washington D.C., Tallahassee here, those cities—Washington D.C.—

end of interview