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**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Thanh My
Conducted by Anna Mallet
Date January 23, 2011
Transcribed by Aaron Kellerhals**

NOTE: Any text included in brackets [] is information that was added by the narrator after reviewing the original transcript. Therefore, this information is not included in the audio version of the interview.

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1 (Transcriber's Note: Interviewee's husband is present, named Dan Elliecott,
2 translates for Mrs. My)

3 Anna Mallet: This is Anna Mallet with the Vietnam Archive, I'm the Vietnamese-
4 American Heritage archivist, it is Sunday January 23rd, and it is interview with Thanh My
5 and the time is 3:09PM. And can you please state your name and spell it for the record
6 please?

7 Taana Elliecott: My name? Taana Myeian Elliecott.

8 AM: And can you spell it please?

9 TE: T-A-A-N-A, M-Y-E-I-A-N, E-L-L-I-E-I-O-T-T.

10 AM: Thank you, and what is your date of birth?

11 TE: Oh yeah, June 26th, 1964.

12 AM: And your age?

13 TE: I am forty six now.

14 AM: Where were your maternal grandparents born?

15 TE: My mom? That's my step-mom now? Oh, my real mom, My Bahti Oun

16 (Editor's note: The spelling of some Vietnamese names is written phonetically based on
17 the audio recording.)

18 AM: Your real mom's parents.

1 TE: My real mom, My Bahti Oun.
2 AM: Where were they—they were born where?
3 TE: In Pham Hue Lao.
4 AM: What are some of your memories and your favorite stories of your mom's
5 parents? Of your maternal grandparents?
6 TE: I don't remember my mom; she was a crazy old—I don't remember.
7 AM: Had they passed away too? Before?
8 TE: Yeah.
9 AM: I'm so sorry to hear that.
10 TE: My mom passed away in Vietnam a long time ago, when I'm maybe two
11 years old. It's okay, so I don't know about her a lot.
12 AM: What did she pass away of?
13 TE: When I come over here with my father.
14 AM: What did your mom pass away from.
15 TE: Vietnam. She sick, she got sick.
16 AM: And how about your grandparents?
17 TE: I know my father, my father's parents.
18 AM: Where were your paternal grandparents born? Your father's parents.
19 TE: They live Binh Long, Vietnam, Bhin Long. They from Binh Long, Vietnam.
20 AM: So, what are your favorite memories of them?
21 TE: Oh, I when I remember I'm, I think I'm five, six years old, I live with my
22 parents—my grandparents. I live with them.
23 AM: Did you like living with them?
24 TE: Yeah (inaudible). I live with them, my grandparent there.
25 AM: How long did you live with them?
26 TE: I live with them about when I'm nine years old, I think nine years old I go
27 back to live with my step-mom.
28 AM: So, you lived with them for about four years?
29 TE: I think I might know about when I'm six, because I left—not my mom Paka
30 when I'm three years old and then after three years I think I go back to live with step-
31 mom.

1 AM: Oh, okay I'm so sorry, I apologize I misheard, I'm sorry.
2 TE: That's okay.
3 AM: So, wow, so where's your stepmom from? Where was she born?
4 TE: She's in Vietnam.
5 AM: Where?
6 TE: Near Saigon.
7 AM: So, what's your father's name?
8 TE: My father's name Tan Van Man.
9 AM: And where was he born?
10 TE: He born Binh Long; I think Binh Long.
11 AM: What are some of your—what was some of your memories of your father.
12 What are some of your favorite memories?
13 TE: I remember when I'm school and I think I'm six, seven years old and my dad
14 always, sometimes he come back home, he stopped by school, and he picks up me. That's
15 all I remember. And then he leaves, and I cry. I remember that.
16 AM: What was his occupation? What was his job?
17 TE: My dad goes Army; he works in the soldier.
18 AM: Do you remember what he did? His rank or what he did in the military?
19 TE: I remember when my dad, he works on stuff I don't know, I'm nine years old.
20 He worked and he lived in Saigon—no no, we lived anywhere, so around soldiers, around
21 my house.
22 AM: From some of the records it looks like he was in the intelligence?
23 TE: Yeah, my dad you know, he bought offices. CIA agent, he was a CIA agent.
24 They call Vietnam, they call my dad (Vietnamese terms), it means CIA, something like
25 that.
26 AM: That's impressive. He did some training in Japan, and Malaysia, do you
27 know anything about his training?
28 TE: No, I don't know about that.
29 AM: He never told you any stories?
30 TE: No, he tells me a story of when he school in Saigon, you know? He says he
31 go over there, he mixed family Vietnam so he tell me, "When you go United States, you

1 know use that thing, you mix family Vietnam look like me when I leave. Food
2 (inaudible).”

3 AM: When did your father pass away?

4 TE: Oh, my dad passed away in November 2001.

5 AM: Do you know what he passed away from?

6 TE: Yeah, the American. Yeah, he (inaudible).

7 AM: What did he pass away from? Was he sick? Was it cancer?

8 TE: Yeah, you know that’s because maybe he lung cancer. Lung cancer because
9 you know I think he looked like—it was a long time since I saw my dad. There were
10 nineteen years you know, and then (inaudible) and then I think now later he gets sick, he
11 come to United States after four years he gets sick.

12 AM: I’m so sorry to hear that, but I’m glad you got to spend time with him. What
13 was your real mother’s name?

14 TE: Oh, my grandmother’s name, (Vietnamese). My father yeah, Bui Ti Yun.

15 AM: Okay that’s your father’s mother? That you gave me?

16 TE: Yeah mother, yeah father, my grand—my mother.

17 AM: Your real mom, what was her name?

18 TE: My real mom My Bahti Oun.

19 AM: And do you know when and where she was born?

20 TE: She was born Da Lat, I think my mom yeah, she from Da Lat.

21 AM: Do you know when? Like what year?

22 TE: Oh, my real mom I don’t. But she’s older than my dad. So, my certificate,
23 still has her name, I never look so I don’t remember.

24 AM: How about your dad? When was your dad born? Do you know what year?

25 TE: Hello? I can’t hear say again please.

26 AM: What year was your dad born?

27 TE: Oh 1934.

28 AM: In December, right?

29 TE: Yeah, September, yeah.

30 AM: Do you know what your real mom’s occupation was? What she did?

1 TE: I don't know. (Dan: "Oh your real mom? I'm sorry, her real mom was a
2 doctor.") Oh, my mom yep, my mom doctor yeah.

3 AM: Oh, wow what kind of doctor?

4 TE: (Speaking Vietnamese) She had pregnancy, and she had looked like—see
5 how babies when the people have pregnancy, looked like that. I loved to look like she had
6 children, she had people bring children.

7 AM: That is so neat, you come from a very smart family. Oh, my goodness.

8 TE: Oh, you love me (Dan: Third party says, "Oh that's not true.")

9 AM: Say again, I'm sorry Dan? Dan I'm sorry I couldn't hear that, what?

10 TE: (Dan: "She said not true, did you hear that?")

11 AM: Well, I think you come from a very smart family, that's really neat. And how
12 about your step-mom? What did she do?

13 TE: My mom a teacher, my step-mom teacher.

14 AM: What grade? Do you know?

15 TE: Huh?

16 AM: What grade did she teach?

17 TE: Oh, in what grade? About third grade.

18 AM: Did she teach a certain subject, or all subjects?

19 TE: What?

20 AM: Did she teach like English, Math?

21 TE: (Dan: "All subjects.") She teaches you know; I don't know but I think a long
22 time when she was with my dad, she doesn't teach no more. She quit.

23 AM: What are some of your favorite memories of your stepmom?

24 TE: You know step-mom still step-mom, she takes care of us. My sister hard
25 time, very hard time.

26 AM: So, is your stepmother still living?

27 TE: Yes, she's still in Dallas.

28 AM: That's neat, do you get to visit her?

29 TE: Oh yeah, yes sometimes. (Dan: "Yeah they talked on the phone last week for
30 one hour.")

31 AM: Oh wow, that neat I'm glad you can keep in touch with her.

1 TE: Yeah, she's still my mom.

2 AM: Well, that's good. So where were you born?

3 TE: I'm born up over Hue.

4 AM: And how many siblings did you have?

5 TE: I have real sister, I have two older sisters, two young brothers, and me

6 (laughing). Now with my mom, step-mom I have three step-sisters.

7 AM: Wow big family.

8 TE: Yeah, big family.

9 AM: So, did you like being a part of a big family?

10 TE: Yeah.

11 AM: Oh good. So, what was your favorite thing about having that many siblings?

12 TE: Thing about what? Hello? (Dan: "Did you have something favorite about

13 having so many brothers and sister?") What's it means? ("It means was there a favorite

14 thing about having—) A favorite thing huh? Oh yeah, I loved all of them. We grew up a

15 very hard life who so. Yeah. We loved sisters, brothers, we still talk yeah, we still talk all

16 the time.

17 AM: That's good, I'm the oldest of four and I liked it because there was always

18 something to do at home and someone to talk to, and play with, or do stuff. So, I liked

19 that. It was a lot of fun. So, would you say that you had an ordinary, or an exceptional

20 childhood?

21 TE: What? (Dan: "Did you think your childhood was ordinary or exceptional?")

22 What are my—what? ("It means like, did you have a special childhood because

23 remember you said your Dad takes you Cải lương, you always got to sit up at the very

24 first row? All that, you know when your dad—before Saigon fell?) I don't understand

25 I'm not? ("Oh sorry, does it mean that you just had an ordinary childhood or a special,

26 like special privilege childhood.") Oh, I don't know my dad he loved me. He loved me a

27 lot because he says I'm smart.

28 AM: So, you the like the Cải lương operas, right?

29 TE: Yeah.

30 AM: What do you like and enjoy about the Cải lương operas?

1 TE: What? (Dan: “Cải lương honey.”) Huh? Cải lương? (“Cải lương, one of your
2 favorites. Why do you like Cải lương?”) Cải lương? Oh, my favorite Cải lương. (“Why do
3 you like it?”) Cải lương because, why because Cải lương you know that Cải lương they
4 are talking about story in the family and about love in the family, so that’s why I like Cải
5 lương.

6 AM: You like the story lines?

7 TE: Yeah, Cải lương, in the family they why talk about family about love, about
8 hard times, so that’s why I like Cải lương.

9 AM: And do they do a lot of acrobatics.

10 TE: Yeah.

11 AM: Do you like the costumes and the colors and stuff?

12 TE: Mhmm, yeah.

13 AM: So, do you have a favorite opera? Is there one that’s your favorite?

14 TE: Oh yeah, they two. Operas are good (Dan: “Yeah she’s talking about a
15 favorite one, you know like the video you got?”) Yeah, I know. (“What’s the name of
16 that story honey?”) Oh, Cải lương (Vietnamese name). (“What’s that mean baby?”) That
17 means I look like in you know in—, she doesn’t want her children grow up poor, so she
18 killed them. He put her real son put in the dead people, she takes dead people.

19 AM: Very interesting, very different story-line. Going to the operas and going
20 with your father, that’s one of your favorite childhood memories, right?

21 TE: Yeah.

22 AM: You would often sit in the front row?

23 TE: (Dan: “When your dad took you honey, didn’t you have the best seats like
24 your dad wouldn’t go unless he set on the very first row? Honey?”) Yeah? (“When you
25 went Cải lương, your dad always had best seats right?”) No, not he no. Sometimes he sits
26 in back, he not home, only me and grandpa, grandpa my sister was it. No, my dad went,
27 we got but he doesn’t go with us. (“It was grandpa,”).

28 AM: So, your grandfather would take you? That’s kind of special that he would
29 take you. So, what are some of your other favorite childhood memories? Like certain
30 festivals, or holidays or foods, what?

1 TE: Oh, it looks like you ask me about holiday, favorite or something with
2 family?

3 AM: Yeah, some of your favorite childhood memories?

4 TE: Oh, child memories yeah, I remember when holiday of New Year my dad
5 always take family, my family, and we go down in September and the church and some
6 American how you know I don't know they work with my Dad, so we go visit New Year
7 away we go down there, and watch movies and they leave us candy.

8 AM: That's really neat. So, did you get to see a lot of family at Tet?

9 TE: I see my family a lot. What does that mean? (Dan: "Oh it means honey did
10 she say during the holidays did all the family get together?") Yeah, we do yeah always.
11 We go together, our family my mom, my stepmom, and my dad my—yeah, we always
12 celebrate New Year holiday.

13 AM: So, what was your favorite thing that you would get to eat at New Year?
14 Would it be like the special cakes? Or was there favorite dish?

15 TE: (Dan: "Hog.") Oh hog, they had hog. We ate lots of stuff, my mom she cooks
16 her favorite. New Year makes hog ("I thought you always ate dog at New Year honey?")
17 No! No not dog! No, we from South, we don't eat dog. ("Oh, North eat dog,") It's north,
18 not south (laughing). It's sweet and flexible.

19 AM: Sounds like a very cook. Wow. So, did you get red envelope with lucky
20 money and stuff like that? Would you get the lucky money in the red envelope?

21 TE: (Dan: "Oh honey, the envelopes on trees.") Oh yeah, oh yeah yeah yeah. My
22 dad stuffed my—we had the tree they call in Walmart the yellow flower, and they put
23 money in below the flag, so they say that that a good luck so maybe you get money or
24 maybe you get something else, yeah, we got that. Everyone takes one, take one.

25 AM: For the mid-autumn festival, did you get to wear a mask and go on the
26 children's parade? With lanterns? Or what did you do for the mid-autumn festival?

27 TE: What? (Dan: The lantern festival honey. Lantern festival, whenever
28 everybody made lanterns, is that a good time of year for you?") Oh, oh? ("Did you make
29 lanterns and masks for the festival?") No, no we don't. No, we don't.

30 AM: So, at mid-autumn, you didn't make lanterns?

31 TE: (Dan: "You know, lantern festival honey like we took Caden to.")

1 AM: In the mid-autumn, the spring kind of.

2 TE: (Dan: "I wish I could remember what they call that.") No, I don't know.

3 AM: That's like the second biggest holiday? Is the mid-autumn.

4 TE: (Dan: "Yeah when everybody where's mask honey.") Oh masks? No, we

5 don't have Hollywood look like that. ("No, I'm talking about mid-August. Remember?

6 You know like mid-Tet, mid-year?") August? (speaking Vietnamese) Tet Trung Thu

7 (Dan: "Tet Trung Thu Yeah okay.") Lots of children, we have that oh yeah that's for they

8 make, we call a Hang Nga I don't know how to—yeah, they lie on—yeah, we went, yeah,

9 we have that holiday.

10 AM: Yeah, so you would make yours into like a fish-shape?

11 TE: Yeah, fish, that my favorite always.

12 AM: So, would you read fairy tales too at that time? Like stories at that time

13 because—

14 TE: (Dan: "Did the parents read stories to you?") Oh no my parents, stories no.

15 AM: Okay, do you have a favorite Vietnamese fairy tale? Mine is of about the

16 monsoon where there's the rains. About the two princes who are both courting the

17 princess. Why the monsoon rains come—

18 TE: (Dan: "Hold on Anne I think the other phone died, I'm gonna have to get you

19 on this one, okay?")

20 AM: Because I love Vietnamese fairy tales, they're really neat, so I was just

21 wondering if she had a favorite.

22 TE: Hello? I'm sorry. Tell me, say again please?

23 AM: Fairy tales? Like stories—children's stories, I love Vietnamese fairy tales

24 and my favorite is about why the rains come, the two princes one from the sea one from

25 the mountains.

26 TE: That's my favorite too, my favorite one.

27 AM: Really? Oh neat. Like the one about the starfruit and the raven, I also like the

28 one about the tiger.

29 TE: (Editor's Note: Interviewee speaks off tape with Dan) I don't remember that

30 one. Now I don't remember.

31 AM: Did you work in your youth?

1 TE: Yes? Hello?
2 AM: Did you work when you were young?
3 TE: Yeah.
4 AM: What'd you do?
5 TE: What do I do now?
6 AM: When you were young?
7 TE: Oh, I'm young? I'm in school, and I failed school and I do nail in the shop.
8 Yeah, we open soft, in the shop, we do nails.
9 AM: So, in Vietnam, when you were young you worked in a nail shop? Oh, wow
10 so what'd you like about it?
11 TE: I moved when I was eighteen years old.
12 AM: So, once you graduated from high school?
13 TE: Oh no, we no take high school you know because actually my dad still in the
14 prison you know you couldn't go to school, they don't let you go.
15 AM: So, you couldn't go to school because your dad was in a reeducation camp.
16 TE: Yeah.
17 AM: Oh, I'm so sorry. So how far did you go to school? What grade?
18 TE: (Dan: "How far did you—you graduated high school.") Oh, when I (speaking
19 to herself). '78, '79 or something like that. Yeah '78, '79.
20 AM: So, you went to like middle school?
21 TE: Yeah, and we did classes at night.
22 AM: I'm so sorry, so were you really sad when you found out you couldn't go to
23 high school?
24 TE: Well, you know, no I don't because I think we know it and family couldn't
25 pay money to go to school and you could pay a lot of money. My dad still in prison and
26 my mom loved kids, loved children, and then she had eleven in total, that's a big family.
27 So that's why I know, yeah.
28 AM: How long did you work in a nail salon?
29 TE: Yeah, I do nails, nail salon yeah. That's how we open because (inaudible) so
30 that's why we open shop in the home. So, I work with my sister.

1 AM: So, you worked with one of your older sister's, right? And for how many
2 years did you do that?

3 TE: I do that until I'm twenty-two. Yeah.

4 AM: So, about six years?

5 TE: Yeah, a couple of years yeah.

6 AM: Did you like it? Did you enjoy?

7 TE: Enjoy, yeah you know—actually then we down work a lot, you know we go
8 up then nothing works, sometimes no everyday work, holiday you could work more, New
9 Year, holiday, you know people come late sometime and work all day. Open morning,
10 7:00AM work till tomorrow 7:00AM morning, that's a New Year.

11 AM: Well, I admire you very much, you're a very hard worker. You're a very
12 strong woman.

13 TE: Why I come here, for me easy. Holiday off.

14 AM: Well, I admire you, I think you're a very hard worker and a very strong lady.

15 TE: Oh yes thank you.

16 AM: So, what schools—what were the names of the schools that you attended?
17 What was the name of your elementary and middle school? Do you remember?

18 TE: Oh yeah, the school I go Cairbaquat, yeah, the school I'm go to Caribaquat.
19 C-A-I-R-B-A-Q-U-A-T.

20 AM: Thank you. So, what was school like?

21 TE: It was hard, this school looks like basically the school (inaudible).

22 AM: Did you enjoy school?

23 TE: Yeah, I love it. Hopefully I wasn't going to school bus you know, and
24 somedays about that's why I can't go back to—I can't do continual school.

25 AM: Did you have a favorite subject?

26 TE: I don't know, I did like school nice, I don't know. I wasn't do school in
27 somethings; I don't know. I think when I come to United States, and I want to go back to
28 school, and I learned about nothing. My husband, he comes and work work, take kids and
29 then I know times nobody had so—so I'm quit school and take care of my son working.

30 AM: Did you have a favorite teacher in Vietnam?

31 TE: No, I can't I don't want favorite teacher, I don't.

1 AM: So how many days a week did you go to school when you were young?
2 TE: Oh yeah, we every day. We get off only Sunday.
3 AM: Okay, so six days a week.
4 TE: Yeah, six days a week.
5 AM: Was Saturday a half day or a full day?
6 TE: Oh no Saturday the same, when there was school, I take a noon class about
7 12:30PM about this time of six o'clock, six o'clock yeah.
8 AM: Long day. Did you have any studies after school that you did? Like music
9 lessons?
10 TE: Nope, we don't. They don't—when before 1975 you know I'm in the school
11 Catholics, yeah, we have that. Half-time you eat take something to eat and drink milk,
12 and after 1975 no nothing. Poor country, poor we don't have nothing.
13 AM: I'm sorry to hear that. Okay, once you came to the U.S. you were thinking of
14 going to nursing school, or did you actually get into nursing school? I'm trying to make
15 sure I heard you right.
16 TE: (Dan: Did you go to nursing school, or did you just try?) I try to go because
17 they take me a test, on how enough English—they didn't accept me, so we continued so
18 take again and take about a couple months, take classes you know reading and writing.
19 And then you know I don't know how to drive car. I don't have car yet.
20 AM: That's so hard I can't imagine.
21 TE: Yeah, so that's why I try, and they work food and school. And school now,
22 (inaudible) from that school and then I'm work nights—nighttime, looking for money
23 and buy car.
24 AM: So, what was the name of the beautician school? The beauty school you
25 went to.
26 TE: Oh yeah, we go John Beauty College.
27 AM: Where was it at?
28 TE: Texas. John Beauty call it. John, yeah John. John Beauty.
29 AM: So, what made you choose hair? What made you choose that?
30 TE: I work from my little apartment. And yeah, from my work over there not too
31 far.

1 AM: Okay so it was close?
2 TE: Yeah, too close yeah.
3 AM: So, you didn't stick with nails? You decided to do hair, what made you
4 decided to do hair?
5 TE: Because you know I go over there, I think it's because I pay for, so I think I
6 take about hair because if hair is full time one year, so you get lice and you do hair and
7 nails, face or whatever you want. Yeah everything. But you do, you just go to school for
8 the nail a couple of months, and you want to do hair you can do it. So that's why I take
9 license about hair and about hands.
10 AM: Well, that's very smart, more options, very smart of you. So, once you
11 graduated from the school, where did you cut hair at?
12 TE: Oh yeah, I'm in 1996 I'm school 19—after 1997. One year after school and
13 I'm stuck worker, you know Pro-cuts? Yeah, I'm working at Pro-cuts over there. And
14 every time I work in the company, Doctor Thieu that story, yes.
15 AM: So how did you get—describe for me your journey of owning your own hair
16 salon.
17 TE: Oh, after four years, after four years saving money after four years. Yeah, I
18 bought it myself yeah. I think it easy; you know because when Vietnam I'm on nail in my
19 home, and then I'm on the company for me I think easy. Only I don't speak English too
20 much.
21 AM: You do very well, you do very well.
22 TE: (Dan: "It was about saving money, and she saved money and buy whatever
23 she wants.") (Laughter)
24 AM: Well, I'm very impressed that you were able to do it—
25 TE: Yeah, my saving yeah, and looking for the cheap ones (Dan: "They need a lot
26 of water from (inaudible) selling some money.")
27 AM: Wow, well I think that's amazing that you did that so quickly, I'm really
28 impressed.
29 TE: Oh no, you know that's something you don't have to lie. In the Vietnam, hard
30 life you know that. Work sometime not enough money to pay for things and school. It's
31 American, new school don't pay for. No one pays/ So that why I live house, so that why

1 my son's school and I don't pay for. I'm go to school, and I'm worry nothing. Children
2 school you could pay for, we paid anything.

3 AM: Is it very expensive to—

4 TE: Not pay anything. So, I think that when they are here easy. (Editors' Note:
5 Third party speaks but is inaudible) So come over here, you know for me easy. You
6 worker, you pay in money, so you get anything you want.

7 AM: Well, I'm glad we have a free school system for kids, that's a really good
8 thing that we have here. But for like school in Vietnam, do you know how much it costs?

9 TE: Oh, you know it costs a lot. If it looks like I'm work at some coffee shop they
10 pay me three-hundred—look like twenty dollar a month. The school my son goes to
11 about five dollar a month, he just takes one class, something you know and he a little
12 something more look like English, so I pay because I think my son is just eight—nine
13 years old I want he learn English before he come to United States. So that's why I'm pay
14 the teacher.

15 AM: That's like more than a quarter of your income, that's expensive, wow.
16 Wow. You met your husband Dan Elleiott at your beauty salon, right?

17 TE: Yeah, I meet him. No, no, no I meet him in Pro-cuts. You know I work Pro-
18 cuts when I have the second, I'm—2004 I go back to Pro-cuts because I think okay, I'm
19 okay now, everything okay so I think okay just I work five day a week, have my days and
20 two days off so with my son have day off. So, that's why I go back Pro-cuts I sold stuff, I
21 go back Pro-cuts, so I meet him over there. He was my customer. Oh no he not handsome
22 (laughter). No, he's not yet no.

23 AM: That is so neat, that's a neat story. So, when and where did you and Dan get
24 married?

25 TE: I'm married with him I think 2009 September, yeah. (Dan: "My mom's
26 birthday.")

27 AM: So, you've been married for almost two years?

28 TE: Yeah.

29 AM: And so, where did you get married?

30 TE: Oh yeah (inaudible). He mom has her birthday the same day we get married,
31 and expensive.

1 AM: That's kind of special, that's really neat that you did that. So, can you tell me
2 a little bit about your son?
3 TE: Oh, my son? He's only twenty-four years old now. He got laid off, he makes
4 I want he go back to school, and we have him.
5 AM: And can you—I don't want to—is it pronounced Tri Lu? How do you
6 pronounce that?
7 TE: Luu Tieiu, L-U-U-T-I-E-I-U. Need a name like A-I-, A-I yeah.
8 AM: When and where was he born?
9 TE: He born at Saigon.
10 AM: When?
11 TE: November of 1986.
12 AM: Say again, I'm sorry?
13 TE: He born November 25th, 1986.
14 AM: And when and how did you meet your son's father?
15 TE: How I meet him? Because he medic with my uncle. So that's why I meet him.
16 AM: And what's his name?
17 TE: My ex-husband, his name is Lou (inaudible).
18 AM: Did he immigrate to the U.S. with you? Or no?
19 TE: Oh no, he didn't. He's a medic over there, he had children and all the family.
20 AM: So, he's still over in Vietnam?
21 TE: Yeah.
22 AM: Do you have any other children?
23 TE: Oh no, I have only one child.
24 AM: And do you have any step-children?
25 TE: Step-children? No. Oh yeah children yeah. I have three step-children,
26 Jeremiah Ellieott, and Stephen Ellieott, and Cathy Ellieott.
27 AM: Were they all born here in the U.S., in Texas? Or where were they born?
28 TE: Yeah, they Texas yeah. Oh, Stephen born in Maryland.
29 AM: So, are they older than your son? Or around the same age?
30 TE: Yeah, they are older than my son.

1 AM: So, what are some of your favorite memories of your son, when he was
2 growing up?

3 TE: Oh yeah, he when I open coffee shop, so I think my son six, seven years old,
4 he helped me clean a glass, a cup.

5 AM: That's so cute, that's so sweet.

6 TE: And easy. I told my son you know, yeah money wake up early so seven
7 o'clock time starts people work come factory so that's why busy. He helped me.

8 AM: Did he do a good job?

9 TE: Oh no, broke my glasses, oh no.

10 AM: He tried, he tried that's what counts.

11 TE: (Dan speaks inaudibly)

12 AM: That's sweet. So, was he good in school, or was he good at a certain sport
13 when he was growing up?

14 TE: He good school, yeah, he good. He smart, you know, he quickly moved away
15 from United States, he complained about this because of the war and put in the hard work
16 so he does the math quickly, he hurt somebody, so he got (inaudible). He smart, but he
17 lazy. He won't try work hard. That's why I tell him, "No, you wrong son." Sometimes
18 you know you have to work hard. So, I tell him.

19 AM: What are some of your favorite—

20 TE: (Inaudible).

21 AM: What are some of your favorite memories of your son as an adult?

22 TE: You know he broke up a girlfriend, memory scare me. They stay together
23 from middle school until they go to college together. They both go, one goes to Houston
24 and then they see her have no boyfriend, broke up my son you know my son sad, he
25 doesn't want to go to school no more and that is he drinking, that's when he started
26 drinking you know, and I'm scared he's sad. He works now what scares me (inaudible) I
27 tell that to my husband. Then yeah, later he okay so. That memory scares me about my
28 son grown up.

29 AM: So, in a year later he fixed it, he overcame that. It took him about a year.

1 TE: He met another, now they have two children and another one on the way and
2 (both girlfriends) same name too. American name for them, so second girlfriend wouldn't
3 be too—

4 AM: So, what are some of your proudest moments as a parent?

5 TE: Oh, about him, about high school, and he plays football in the school good.
6 Yeah, he was good and then yeah, he's smart, he schoolteacher and more friends they like
7 him. Always I go with him to the school and when he at high school. He was actually my
8 son was a good boy.

9 AM: What's his job? What does he do?

10 TE: My son now he got laid off.

11 AM: Right but before that.

12 TE: Oh, before he works in the airport.

13 AM: What did he do at the airport?

14 TE: Be build, (Dan: "He did the cabinet work, and the customs airplanes, the 757,
15 747. He worked for Associated Airlines I believe, (inaudible))

16 AM: I'm so sorry he got laid off, I hope somethings comes up for him soon.

17 TE: (Dan: "Anne, alright this is Dan. He worked for Associated Airlines; he did
18 the cabinet work inside these custom airplanes. It was like—his uncle, his father's
19 brother, he worked there, and he helped him get a job there. You know like John Travolta
20 owns an airplane? They built that one for him. Yeah, he's met him a couple of times.")

21 AM: I'm so sorry he got laid off, that is so sad, I wish him luck in finding
22 something soon.

23 TE: (Dan: "Well that's the thing, we're—he talked to his mother and we're gonna
24 help him go back to school. We want him to get education, so.")

25 AM: Does he know what he wants to do? What major, or where?

26 TE: (Dan: "Yeah he's talking about Radiologist, he wants to become a radiologist
27 at the hospital. Yeah, I told him it was a great choice and then he can pursue his
28 bachelor's and master's, you know like our son Jeremiah he became a nurse and then he
29 went on to become an anesthesiologist. It's a good choice in medical field, if you know
30 he enjoys it.")

31 AM: I wish him luck.

1 TE: (Dan: "Oh we do too, thank you. Alright here's Tan My again.")
2 AM: Okay thank you so much. Hello, so what are your grandchildren's names?
3 TE: Oh Caden, and Kaylee a little girl Kaylee.
4 AM: How old are they?
5 TE: Caden is three years old, and Kaylee one year old.
6 AM: Oh, that's so cute. So, when and where were they born?
7 TE: Where they're born, them right here Arlington, Texas. Caden in September,
8 but Kaylee little girl in December.
9 AM: I love that picture you send of you and Caden together at Tet, that is so cute.
10 TE: Thank you.
11 AM: So, are they looking forward to Tet this year since it's in about a week and a
12 half? Are they looking forward to it?
13 TE: Yeah Friday, next Friday. They play music anything holiday and Friday to
14 Sunday in Hong Kong.
15 AM: So, you're gonna take him to go see some—
16 TE: Yeah, I will. You know that's my grandson, he wants to stay with us. Yeah,
17 he's smart. Anytime he leaves I call him he says, "Where papa? Where Sarah?" Oh yeah,
18 my grandson. He's much more than his father.
19 AM: He loves his grandma and grandpa.
20 TE: He know that's his mom, he always I pick him he says, "Ooh Ooh Grandma!"
21 He says, "(speaking Vietnamese)". Then he one years old, two years old he tries water.
22 He saw me outside; he tries open the door and go after me. I don't know why he love a
23 lot; I don't know why he don't live with me too much. I'm take care of him a couple of
24 times, a couple months, I don't know why but he always remembers me.
25 AM: You must be a very good grandma if he loves you. So, you looking forward
26 to seeing him for Tet and everything?
27 TE: Yeah.
28 AM: It's the year of the cat, right?
29 TE: Yeah, this is cat, this is cat.
30 AM: Is there a special dish you like to cook for your grandkids when they come to
31 see you?

1 TE: Oh money, actually I give them money toy, actually my grandson he likes
2 toys the way we go Dollar Store, pick up some stuff train yeah. My grandson, yeah, he
3 knows it know he wants a gold truck, he wants my husband drives a truck and he wants
4 to go buy toy in toy Dollar Store, train all time.

5 AM: That's so cute.

6 TE: He's so cute, I don't know I think of him before I could sing, I tell her about
7 myself, now I have grandson and we know how I love my grandson. He's tall, oh he can
8 do anything. He has a Vietnam look, he does not call grandma no he's like, "look, look."
9 He's always hold cell phone, text me this text me that, that's my grandson.

10 AM: That is so adorable.

11 TE: He knows how to use cell phone now, and he know how laptop, yeah iPhone
12 he has an iPhone, yeah, he knows how.

13 AM: So smart.

14 TE: Not me and my husband, don't know—touch this touch that don't know how,
15 he knows. "Grandma look."

16 AM: My little niece is one and a half and she loves her Dad's iPhone, she took—

17 TE: Oh yeah, they pull them out iPhone iThing. (Laughing)

18 AM: But that is so cute. And so, I've kind of covered some of your biographical
19 information and some of the stuff about your family, and now I'd like to talk a little bit
20 about life in Vietnam and how it changed for you. So how would you describe your life
21 in Vietnam from your earliest memories, kind of before the war?

22 TE: Life in Vietnam? (Dan: "What your life in Vietnam, what was life like in
23 Vietnam? Before '75. Before 1975, what was your life like? Happy life?") Happy life?
24 Oh before 1975? Happy life after 1975, whole country not enough food, clothes, poor.
25 Something about happy life, I'm grow up I see my young neighbor in neighborhood look
26 like teenager, but that's hard life, it's working, work and nothing. Sometimes I go to
27 school and don't have enough the books, not the books and pencils, the pen dry. Yeah,
28 anything we don't have enough, if you want to go school but you don't—you know
29 family don't can buy the book you stole it, how you do it? Can't do nothing to, yeah very
30 hard life after 1975.

1 AM: Wow, I'm so sorry but I admire you very much for getting through that and
2 then you know making something of yourself. Your very brave, you know that?

3 TE: Yeah, that's why make you stronger, sometimes hard life make you stronger.

4 AM: Well, you're a very strong lady and your—

5 TE: You don't have you nobody, can't have you and that's why I'm stronger.

6 AM: Well, I really appreciate that in you and admire you for that, because you're
7 very brave and very strong. So, is that kind of what you remember most about the War?
8 Are the hardships of it, or what do you remember most about the War?

9 TE: Oh, the war, oh yeah, the war 19—the date 1975 thirty in April I remember. I
10 don't know what happened, I told my family, "Move, move another place,". In the home
11 I saw people, they turn around I don't know. We just in the home, a different home. They
12 could lay better, that's what my mom thinks better for us. We don't go outside, I
13 remember that.

14 AM: So, you had to move around a lot—

15 TE: Yeah, we moved around.

16 AM: —And you couldn't go outside? Is that because of like bombing and the
17 fighting?

18 TE: No, we don't see it. Before happened, we move to another house so that's
19 inside, about gun, we don't see outside. We don't see outside, that's why I don't know.
20 Just seeing people talk, people die a lot and I think I'm nine years old.

21 AM: So, your parents' kind of protected you by moving?

22 TE: Yeah, uhuh yeah, my uncle yeah also.

23 AM: So, besides your father serving in the ARVN (Army of the Republic of
24 Vietnam), did you have any other relatives that served in the ARVN, The Viet Cong
25 (VC), or the NVA (North Vietnamese Army)?

26 TE: When they come, they take my father. Yeah, they only kill my uncle only two
27 all of them. Yeah, one comes to United States, the United States he's a pilot.

28 AM: So, you had an uncle in the ARVN that was a pilot?

29 TE: Yeah, 1975 he—yeah, he comes to United States, he's a pilot. Another one in
30 the Army too. What he did because he's sick, he goes, I think a couple months he go
31 home.

1 AM: So, one of your uncles was in the reeducation camps also?

2 TE: Yeah. Early, he says because he looks like he can use some stuff because he
3 couldn't breathe. Asthma, yeah. He can't breathe, he likes to use something, put in his
4 mouth.

5 AM: So, did your uncles make it to the U.S. afterwards? Or are they still in—

6 TE: Yeah, he come here a couple years over from our—I think about nine years
7 ago. My uncle does type of work so that they come over, now he's sick now. He's really
8 sick now.

9 AM: Now is this the pilot?

10 TE: No, no not pilot another one.

11 AM: The other one? So, the one—what did he do?

12 TE: Another one now he gets sick, he can breathe the oxy. Military? I don't know
13 he's just a regular soldier, yeah regular soldier.

14 AM: So, the uncle that was a pilot, did he make it to the U.S. too? Or no? Is he
15 still over there in Vietnam?

16 TE: Oh no now he's in America. Yeah, both of them, one in Pennsylvania and one
17 he lives in the north I think, north get cold, he's sixty-two now and he have problems. He
18 can breathe oxy, oxy help him. He lives off the oxy, not another one.

19 AM: What are their names?

20 TE: They, one Win Minh Dook, the pilot, and another one Win Minh Lee.

21 AM: And so which one was in the reeducation camp? The one—? Was it the one
22 that wasn't a pilot correct? Was in the reeducation camp?

23 TE: Win Minh Lee.

24 AM: And he was in the camps for like a couple months?

25 TE: A couple months. He no cancel, he looks like, you know before he gets his
26 away—blood—asthma. So now you know and blood, they have problems. Blood, yeah
27 some of the that. He can't walk no more; he just sits in the wheelchair.

28 AM: I'm so sorry, but they're very brave. So, what did you think of U.S. Forces
29 when you lived in Vietnam?

30 TE: No, no no I don't see it.

31 AM: So, you didn't see American soldiers in Vietnam?

1 TE: Oh yeah don't see children, just a main—yeah, just soldier. No, they are nice,
2 no they nice. We love come peace with them, they have how on the phone oxy and he
3 became the yeah, they say, “(Speaking Vietnamese)” something you detect you know
4 they tell you what you do, that's the (inaudible).

5 AM: Oh neat. So, you met some American soldiers, and they were nice to you,
6 and gave you candy as a kid? Right? Is that what you're saying?

7 TE: Oh yeah, they gave me candy, yeah, they good they good.

8 AM: I just want to make sure I hear you right.

9 TE: Oh yeah, I told them, “Go visit candy now. And watch movie.”

10 AM: Oh, you'd watch movies too?

11 TE: Watch movie cowboys yeah, I remember that.

12 AM: Did you have a favorite movie?

13 TE: Oh yeah, my favorite movie when that go down over there you know away,
14 we saw movie cowboy, we heard and yeah, we like American movies. Awesome movies.

15 AM: Which one do you remember the most?

16 TE: I remember, when you know yeah. They don't have TV, big screen TV look
17 like that, they had look like what? Oh yeah, they pulled the big one.

18 AM: Is there a movie you really remember?

19 TE: Yeah, a movie, cowboy.

20 AM: Which one? Do you know the title?

21 TE: Title? I just remember cowboy and Indian, I like that's a movie.

22 AM: Was it like maybe John Wayne? Or—

23 TE: Maybe John Wayne, I don't remember name, I don't remember just watch a
24 cowboy horse, you know gun shot. They were nice yeah.

25 AM: You just remember the experience in going, that's so neat. And so how did
26 the ARVN soldier you knew behave?

27 TE: Oh yeah, they are nice, yeah, I like them. They were nice, actually you know
28 when we don't see people outside a lot, the soldier out, yeah, they nice, they nice. They
29 love us, you know that they are nice.

30 AM: Did you have any contact with any Allied soldiers like from Australia, or the
31 Philippines?

1 TE: No, I don't know, we don't have (inaudible).
2 AM: So, no?
3 TE: No, (inaudible).
4 AM: So, you didn't have contact with Allied soldiers?
5 TE: No, we don't have any of that.
6 AM: In what ways did the War most affect you and your family?
7 TE: The War? Oh yeah after my father go to the prison, you know, so that's why
8 always they want my mom and they roll in the farm, they called a (speaking Vietnamese)
9 roll over there. When my mom a lot of children, she never farms over there. They
10 thought, "Wait that's my mom, my mom has a house and money," so we lived in money,
11 and we'd stay in the outhouse. I don't know a lot, my brother always they my Mom, we
12 both go, and my mom say, "No," my mom can go, but whole family die okay. This can
13 go, take long. Eleven children, how does she do it? Can do it. Yeah farm. They call it
14 (Speaking Vietnamese).
15 AM: When did you move to the U.S.?
16 TE: Move? Say again please.
17 AM: When did you move to the U.S.? When did you arrive in the U.S.?
18 TE: U.S.? Yeah, we can really about 1996.
19 AM: 1996? Do you know like what month or day?
20 TE: (Dan: "Oh sorry, Anne what did you ask?")
21 AM: When did she move to the U.S.?
22 TE: (Dan: "She—yeah in 1996.")
23 AM: Does she remember the day and the month?
24 TE: (Dan: "Honey do you remember what month and day you came?") May, I
25 remember May 1996.
26 AM: And do you know where she arrived?
27 TE: Yeah, we go fly. (Dan: "Where'd you come in at honey? Wasn't it San
28 Francisco?) Yeah, we stop by San Francisco first. (Dan: "And then to Savannah,
29 Georgia.)
30 AM: How long was—were you in Savannah, Georgia?

1 TE: (Dan: “Honey how long were you in Savannah?”) Oh Savannah, say about I
2 think one month—two months, just two months. Two months I stop by San Francisco,
3 California about one month, and then I go back.

4 AM: So, have you been in the same place since then? In Texas? Or have you
5 moved around in Texas?

6 TE: Yeah, I’m just (inaudible). (Dan: “In Grand Prairie.”).

7 AM: So, what made you choose to come to Texas?

8 TE: Why they choose? What they choosing right? (Dan: “Why did you come to
9 Texas? It was because of Chu Leu her ex-husbands family sponsored her here.”)

10 AM: That’s kind of neat, that they sponsored her.

11 TE: (Dan: “Yes.”)

12 AM: What other relatives came to the U.S. besides her uncles? Did she have
13 sisters and stuff?

14 TE: (Dan: “No, she—honey she asks what other relatives come to United States,
15 it’s just your two brothers right?”) No, only me and two brothers. (Dan: “Her two
16 brothers are here.”) Yeah, Savannah now. The two brothers, and me, and my father,
17 (Dan: “And stepmom,”) yeah, no stepmom after two years I think after one year—two
18 year my mom come over. Just me and my son’s father and two brothers come first.

19 AM: How old were you when you came to the U.S.?

20 TE: I’m thirty one.

21 AM: Thirty one. And how old was your son?

22 TE: My son I think he eight or nine. (Dan: “He was eight,”) Yeah, he is eight or
23 nine years old.

24 AM: Wow that’s a big change for him. So, did he enjoy coming to school in the
25 U.S.?

26 TE: Yeah, yeah, he enjoyed it coming, he’s smart because I told you see. I pay a
27 couple money learn about English, so he come over, he like it. He tells mom, “They talk I
28 don’t understand it. I don’t understand what they say mom, I get mad,” so you know
29 that’s—he never stayed American, they (speaking Vietnamese) I said, “Son,” I asked
30 him, “Son, they talk to you and don’t understand”, “Mom I learn English.” That’s why he
31 never takes ESL (English as a Second Language) English, not my son never takes ESL.

1 He tried hard, I have no—quickly, he learned easy. I don't stay home, I don't turn meals
2 Vietnamese no, no nothing. No meals in Vietnamese, no movies, no—only TV English.
3 (Dan: "That's how they learned English so quickly, and they didn't watch Vietnamese
4 movies, they didn't listen to Vietnamese radio, they only watched English movies and
5 TV.")

6 AM: So, kind of totally immerse themselves.

7 TE: (Dan: "Yes.")

8 AM: Well, that was very smart, because that had to be hard to change, you know
9 'cause the culture and the language and everything is so different that—I just, it just
10 totally boggles my mind being a new immigrant, with the culture being so different and
11 language, I really, really, admire them for that. I know that's not easy. So, I think that's
12 really good that they learned a little bit before they came here and makes a lot easier
13 'cause sometimes they don't like school because you know the language barrier, or stuff
14 like that. So, I'm glad to hear he liked school, that it went well. What were some of your
15 reasons for moving to the U.S.?

16 TE: Me? I like some the movies. I like movies, look like— (Dan: "No, honey
17 what were the reasons you wanted to leave Vietnam and come to the United—") Oh
18 reason, because you know hard life over there. That's the reason, I'm going from
19 Vietnam, so they don't take you, they think you have children they don't get mad at you,
20 hard life. Reason you know I like family here, work and my son, we better so that's why I
21 love, I come over here. I dream it.

22 AM: So, what was your mode of transportation to U.S.? Did you come by boat,
23 by plane, or how did you come?

24 TE: By plane.

25 AM: You flew?

26 TE: (Dan: "Yes.")

27 AM: Okay. That was good, and you applied to ODP (Orderly Departure
28 Program), right?

29 TE: They say to go get my dad released and you know long time, they say ODP.
30 (Dan: "I think it's same thing honey, political prisoner.")

1 AM: Well, the political prisoners, through ODP, they qualified and with the
2 FVPPA's (Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association) help with the
3 paperwork, and that's how we have your file. Which is so neat because this is the first
4 interview with someone who's in our records who emigrated through ODP with the help
5 of the Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association, so that's why this is such
6 an exciting interview. Did you or relatives have to spend time in a refugee camp before
7 you came to the U.S.?

8 TE: (Dan: "Honey did anybody in family have to go to refugee camp like no,
9 that's no and then everybody just left Saigon and came.") Yeah. (Dan: "No, Anne.")

10 AM: Did any of your relatives have a sponsor different than your own?

11 TE: (Dan: "Who was your uncle's—oh he just escaped in 1975 right?") Oh yeah,
12 my uncle here in Savannah. (Dan: "Did he have a sponsor?") Yeah, he had a sponsor. He
13 looked like— (Dan: "Yeah, but who sponsored him honey? Did he have sponsor, or he
14 just escaped when he was able to?") I don't know honey.

15 AM: Can you describe for me your father's experiences in the reeducation camp?
16 Like how long he was in the camps, and did he talk about it at all?

17 TE: (Dan: "Yeah did you dad ever tell you about his some of the things that
18 happened to him when he was in prison?") Yeah, he told me some later. He told they no
19 good, they are not good person. Well, you know when they moved him from Saigon they
20 call Saigon, and go in the North in Hanoi, so they sit in chains, they look like prisoners
21 they saw people tied together, so you can't move. They become; they call it become they
22 pair everybody. "This one no good, kill your family," so they have something you know,
23 they fight they in the woods, so my dad and everybody bleed, and you can do it. My dad
24 says no they no—they mean, they mean. (Dan: "Anne, they tie them together and march
25 them through the city and tell them 'These people kill your family' and then they stoned
26 them.")

27 AM: Oh my gosh. How long—he was in the camps almost eighteen years right?

28 TE: Yeah.

29 AM: Exactly how long was it that he was in the camps? Do you know?

30 TE: (Dan: "He was in eighteen years.")

31 AM: Why do you feel your father had to spend so long in the camps? And was—

1 TE: Oh, they don't want because they think my dad with big office it looks like,
2 my dad (inaudible). You know big office, so that's how he wasn't—. He dies but he
3 doesn't die. (Dan: "They want him to die because he's the equivalent of CIA, but he
4 lives.")

5 AM: Because of his intelligence work?

6 TE: (Dan: "Yes, intelligence, yeah.")

7 AM: Was that why you feel he was one of the last one hundred released?

8 TE: (Dan: "Is that why—honey, that's the reason he was in there so long.") So
9 long yeah.

10 AM: He was one of the last one hundred political prisoners released, correct?

11 TE: (Dan: "No he was—honey did you know that he was one of the last one
12 hundred that were allowed to go?") Yeah, he the last one hundred people still fight. (Dan:
13 "But they expected him to die, they didn't expect him to live.") They make you hard life,
14 no easy work, no food, nothing. They make you pay, do this do that, they make me starve
15 my dad say, they starve, and die. Sometimes harm family is some stuff. My mom and my
16 dad. So that's why okay. Some people don't come home family leaves it, so they die and
17 no food, sick. (Dan: "When—Anne—When stepmom visited dad, she took money and
18 helped buy food with guards to help him survive.")

19 AM: Because from some of the stuff I've read that they were often given bad food
20 or didn't have enough food to eat and no medical care. What a survival story, oh my
21 gosh. Did they move him around a lot? So, was it hard to find him? To give him supplies,
22 or no?

23 TE: (Dan: "Honey do you know if they moved him around a lot, transferred him
24 from prison to prison?) Yeah, yeah, they move him couple of times Yeah in the Saigon,
25 and I remember one time a couple of years after my dad long time, a lot later they put
26 him in the north Hanoi.

27 AM: Was it hard to find him?

28 TE: (Dan: "Was it hard for you and your stepmom to find where he was at?")
29 Yeah, very hard, found him and my mom it was dangerous over there. My mom just rode
30 the train about a couple of days so that's only her goal, so we can go and just explain
31 things. (Dan: "Anne, what she says mom had to bribe, you know, guards to find him.")

1 AM: So, she had to bribe to find out where he was, and to give him food and
2 medicine and stuff. Yeah, they often, from some of the accounts I read, they often did
3 that to kind of break some of the ties, and it was hard for the families to give them
4 supplies or find where they were. That's quite a survival story, but I'm glad that your
5 stepmom could find them and give them supplies. Can you describe for me the
6 experiences of your brother-in-law? Vanh Vin Tam in the reeducation camp.

7 TE: My brother Tam? Yeah, I ask him he doesn't know because he goes Army, he
8 has his something he cut up, so he just goes recent a couple of weeks so he go home.

9 (Dan: "He lost a leg, right?") Lost leg yeah, he just a soldier normal. Soldier normal, so
10 he goes home, and he said that in the recent couple weeks, so he home.

11 AM: Was he in the Easter Offensive?

12 TE: (Dan: "What was that, Anne?")

13 AM: Was he in the Easter Offensive?

14 AM: (Dan: "Honey, do you—I don't think she knows the actual duties because
15 she was so young. But honey do you remember if he was in what they call the Easter
16 Offensive?") Oh, I don't know. (Dan: "You know right after Tet, in '68 I think, wasn't
17 it?")

18 AM: Because it almost looked like from his dismissal from the Army records
19 where he lost his leg that it was around that Offensive, so I was curious if that was what
20 he was in.

21 TE: (Dan: "Yeah I don't think she knows. Hopefully they'll be here soon.")

22 AM: Well, that would be neat.

23 TE: (Dan: "Yeah that'd be great.")

24 AM: Can you describe your, in your family's experiences after they were released
25 from the reeducation camp? What was it like for your family, when like your dad was
26 released?

27 TE: (Dan: "Honey what she meaning is after your dad released, he was treated
28 like a prisoner remember he had to report to government every week wasn't it? Honey?
29 What was it like for your dad after he got out of prison? They make him report like he
30 was on probation from prison?") Oh no he, after he get out recet he home, they go look

1 like they do every day. Outside the paper, what he does today. (Dan: “He had to report
2 everyday like he was parole.”)

3 AM: Everyday? Wow. ‘Cause I’ve heard stories of like weekly, or you know in—
4 plus the household registration with the local police department, but I haven’t heard of
5 one that’s daily before. So, did he have to register with the local police department too?

6 TE: (Dan: “Honey when dad got out, he had to register with local police of course
7 right?”) Yeah, yeah, he could go yeah. They give him, look like paperwork they give him
8 that. You can go decide what you do, how money they you know, about around a couple
9 of months, so they test you what you do. (Dan: “They come around and check what he
10 does on top of that, Anne. Did they allow him to work honey? Was he able to work
11 anywhere? Honey? Did they let him work anywhere?”) No, no, no them work no, they
12 don’t care how he no he doesn’t, he don’t do nothing.

13 AM: How about for the rest of your family? How did it affect you and your son
14 and your stepmom?

15 TE: (Dan: “Well what she’s saying is how did him being political prisoner affect
16 you and Chu Lieu and your mom and sisters? Remember they couldn’t get good job
17 because they say you bad people and all that?”) Yeah, my sister looks like yeah, and my
18 yeah, they say my dad and they look they said they call and look like some hit story, my
19 dad still in prison, so they don’t say nothing. They put—they don’t say nothing, so you
20 apply off a new school, no that’s—my family they say the best family. They told my dad
21 still in prison. (Dan: “And even when he got out too right?”) He got out; you know he get
22 out we older honey. We get to do something, you know we do we tell some stuff saying
23 some stuff, we do it because we know the government, they— or some companies they
24 can’t hire. So that’s what we had to look like, I do nails I take company off my sister
25 yeah they do something then.

26 AM: Can you describe for me your immigration experience through the UNHCRs
27 (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) ODP?

28 TE: (Dan: “When you applied to come here to United States, was it good
29 experience or bad experience?”) They a couple—they good or bad? (Dan: “Yeah when
30 you were trying to come here to United States.”) Oh, when I come here, over there, over
31 there still bad. Still poor country. (Dan: “Yeah but the paperwork and everything to come

1 here.”) Oh paperwork. They interview so they—first time they interview American lady,
2 I think. (Dan: “Is it a good experience or bad experience?”) Good, yeah.

3 AM: So, with the interview, was it hard to get? Or did they have to pay bribes,
4 was it hard?

5 TE: (Dan: “When your dad applied for you and family to come over here was it
6 hard for him to get a way out of Vietnam? Or did he have to wait long time and was it
7 hard? Did he have to pay money to get interviewed?”) I don’t know, I think it take too
8 long I don’t know paper can help problem. I don’t know paper can help problem, actually
9 my dad forgets when 1992, so I think ‘93 we interview, then ‘96 we go, and we love it so
10 help problem I don’t know because my parents’ bad parents, so we don’t know.

11 AM: So, you didn’t why there was a problem?

12 TE: Yeah, no I don’t know. (Dan: “Well wasn’t some of it because your mom lied
13 about names?”) Yeah couldn’t— (Dan: “When her mom did applications, she tried to get
14 her, not her natural—not Tan My’s dad’s son, she’s lied about their names, and they got
15 mad about that. That’s why they didn’t let her come in ‘96.”) Yeah, she come, yeah, she
16 come later. (Dan: “And then your dad’s papers, he born Binh Long but they had also Sa
17 Dec, and because it had Sa Dec, Binh Long they thought he trying to lie and did—was
18 lying about things, they were not sure if he was really the person, they said he was.”)

19 AM: Do you know why the papers had both? Because that was one of my
20 questions too when I went to his file, because I was trying to figure that out.

21 TE: (Dan: “Honey do you know why some of your father’s records have him born
22 Binh Long and some say Sa Dec?”) That’s my—that’s Vietnam people do—what he
23 looks like they do they think that’s normal; people don’t school over there but they got
24 others they take care they don’t want that; they want dried out (inaudible) so we don’t
25 think about that. Sometimes now I call my sister I see paper, my dad he has problems
26 Binh Long and Sa Dec, so I call them over there I tell (inaudible) so-so, could you where
27 you they at? They tell? Oh yeah, they put wrong, look like they pick now if you are there
28 and away over there, they don’t care about that. They think not important. So, they put Sa
29 Dec but Binh Long look like the same, they don’t know. Actually, I’m here when my dad
30 Binh Long, but before Sa Dec, I don’t know. (Dan: “Yeah it’s considered close area, and
31 when the government employs a like, Tan My say, they don’t think it’s that important.

1 AM: So, they just kind of put the general area. So, it was just kind of more
2 important where the general area was to them. ‘Cause were more people familiar with Sa
3 Dec versus Binh Long?

4 TE: (Dan: “Think more people from Binh Long, right honey? Binh Long bigger
5 right”) Yeah.

6 AM: So how did the Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association assist
7 you and your family members in the ODP application process?

8 TE: I don’t know. (Dan: “Honey, she’s asked—Anne’s asking about the, that’s
9 the Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association? They sponsored your father
10 to come here, do you remember how they helped him?”) No, who sponsored my dad?
11 (Dan: “Oh the Political Prisoners Association. Anne, I don’t really think Tan My was
12 aware of all that. She was working and you know.”) Yeah, I’m work. (Dan: “And her dad
13 was trying to get all that done.”)

14 AM: Okay, could—the founder and the president with Khuc Minh Tho and she
15 would help by talking to legislators by keeping the issue alive and then she would help
16 with the paperwork. And with problems with it, she would do all the contacting and make
17 sure they had all the records right and kind of just helped them with all the red tape and
18 stuff they had to go through, and then getting the records they needed. I was—my next
19 question was gonna be like how they learned about the FVPPA? ‘Cause some of them
20 learned through news, others through newspaper articles and some undergrounds were
21 just word of mouth, so I was wondering also how her family learned of them?

22 TE: (Dan: “I imagine it was through her pilot uncle in Savannah, that helped you
23 know. Honey do you know how your dad found out about that political association or
24 was it his brothers that really worked hard to help him get over here?”) Oh, they worked
25 hard, because I don’t know him my brother, my uncle and his wife they work, they tithe
26 me money they help us, they help us. I don’t know about lot about that, but that and my
27 uncle he spoke, I don’t know. (Dan: “It’s really from her uncles here in the United States
28 that helped that.”)

29 AM: So, they kind of helped a lot with it too so maybe they did the contact the
30 FVPPA? Upon leaving Vietnam, what did you think about the war?

1 TE: (Dan: "Honey what did you think about the war that your dad fought, and I
2 fought? Do you have any thoughts about the war?") Oh no we don't. (Dan: "She was
3 very young.") I don't know. I just work and school busy, that work I don't know about
4 that. (Dan: "Just trying to survive.")

5 AM: It's a very good survival story. 'Cause your right, exactly she was. She was
6 working very hard. Have your thoughts on the war kind of, since you've come to the
7 U.S., have you formed some thoughts on it or have your thoughts changed from when
8 you were young about the war? Or no?

9 TE: (Dan: "Honey what do you think about the war now? You told me one time
10 it's good that the country's one country again. Didn't you?") Yeah, it's a good country.
11 (Dan: "No over Vietnam.") Vietnam? (Dan: "Do you have any thoughts about the war?
12 Or you don't really, do you?") Oh no I don't, I don't know about that. But now I think
13 now better, now better. Then before. (Dan: "Well I'm better now, but.")

14 AM: Describe the most significant ways in which the Vietnam war affected you
15 and your family.

16 TE: (Dan: "Honey what she is asking is the most significant, the most important
17 thing that affected you and your family with the war.) The what? (Dan: "Well I think
18 what she is saying, what is the most important or specific thing, the biggest thing, that
19 affected you and your family about war. It would be probably when the war ended, and
20 they put your dad in prison right?") Yeah.

21 AM: You still have a lot of family in Vietnam. Do you still have contact with
22 them? And if so, how frequently?

23 TE: I still have four sisters around my age in Vietnam. (Dan: "How often do you
24 talk to them honey? About once a week now, isn't it?") They call me sometimes, from
25 Vietnam, have something they call it. I don't call them unless they call me because sleep
26 over there. (Dan: "Anne it's cheaper for them to call here than it is for us to call there. So,
27 they call about once a week, once every two or three weeks.") Sometimes they call often,
28 sometimes a couple months they don't call.

29 AM: It was the same in Taiwan, which is when I lived there, I never let my
30 parents or family call me because I'm like "It's so much more cheaper for me to call you,
31 so."

1 TE: Yeah, you right.

2 AM: It was so expensive for them to call me, I'm like "No, no, no don't. It'll cost
3 you a fortune it's real." (Laughing)

4 TE: (Dan: "Yeah we made one call to Taui Tien in Taiwan one time, it was kind
5 of a mercy call, we were worried, that was forty five dollars for I think six minutes.")

6 AM: Yeah, very expensive. So, you have a sister in Taiwan—

7 TE: I have one, yeah Taipei.

8 AM: And can you state the sisters name for me.

9 TE: Vietnamese name? T-A-U-Y. T-I-E-N. (Dan: "Tuay Tien.")

10 AM: And she lives in Taipei, right? And how long has she lived in Taipei?

11 TE: I come United '96, I think the year '97, '98 she after me. Taipei over there.

12 AM: What made her go to Taipei?

13 TE: (Dan: "Honey, she married a man from Taipei, right? She had a restaurant in
14 Saigon, and she worked for him and then she married him and moved to Taipei with
15 him.")

16 AM: So how were your relatives treated by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam
17 after the war?

18 TE: (Dan: "She's asking how your family was treated after the war. You know
19 they couldn't work.") They couldn't work yeah. But you can work for food. (Dan: "They
20 were told they couldn't get jobs because they couldn't hire them, the government would
21 not allow it.") Because you go to work, you pay in prison. They look, you're sorry, your
22 father your mom, your father still in the prison. (Dan: "Yeah because he's a political
23 prisoner in reeducation camp, they were not considered—their family could not get any
24 kind of good jobs.")

25 AM: So, it's like the whole family was punished.

26 TE: (Dan: "Yes, exactly. The whole family punished right honey?") Yeah.

27 AM: So, have you or any of your family members returned to Vietnam?

28 TE: (Dan: "Honey yeah, she's asking you know you went back to Vietnam in
29 2003, right?") Yeah, uhuh 2003. (Dan: "And then mom's stepmom goes back once a
30 year.") My mom often—

31 AM: How are you and your family treated when you went back to Vietnam?

1 TE: (Dan: "Is everything kind of okay now honey?") They are okay yeah. (Dan:
2 "But they still not allowed to work for government or are they now? Is your family still in
3 trouble—") No, no they (inaudible) themselves. They work for themselves. Nobody
4 works in the government no. (Dan: "No they still can't.")

5 AM: Were you treated well when you back to Vietnam for a visit?

6 TE: Yeah, they don't do nothing. Over there and I think after you leave the
7 country in the airport, so you can pay money, twelve dollar I think you can pay that I
8 don't know. So, I'm just three day I want to go back home. (Dan: "Good honey,") I don't
9 know. (Dan: "She don't like Vietnam anymore.") No, I don't my family here, so my son
10 is here, so I don't.

11 AM: Did returning to Vietnam have an impact on you? And if so, how?

12 TE: (Dan: "When you went back honey, did it—were you glad to Vietnam again
13 or were you sad of what it's like now? Or what?") I don't know. I'm just—I don't know.
14 (Dan: "It's just the same, isn't it?") The same, yeah absolutely same.

15 AM: Can you tell me about your efforts to sponsor your family members? 'Cause
16 I know your trying to sponsor your sister, and your brother-in-law—the one who lost his
17 leg, and stuff like that.

18 TE: (Dan: "She's asking about your experience trying to get sisters over here
19 United States honey.") Yeah, I try do it, because they want to come over before my dad
20 passes away. My dad doesn't do paperwork because (inaudible) so that's why I do it.
21 (Dan: "It's been harder hasn't it because your dad's gone?") Yeah, Dad had an easy a
22 couple year, twelve years different with my sister, it's very hard but I try do it.

23 AM: So, it's harder to sponsor them because he's the one who had the status?
24 Who qualified? Is that why you think? Or why do you think it's harder since he passed
25 away to get them sponsored?

26 TE: (Dan: "Do you have any idea why you think it takes so long honey? I think it
27 was because of 9-1-1 here.") Don't know, always (inaudible) ten years, twelve years from
28 sister.

29 AM: Did you mention that it was harder since her father passed away?

30 TE: (Dan: "Yes. Honey you think it's been harder since your dad wasn't able to
31 help sponsor?") (Inaudible). (Dan: "Oh she's wondering if you think it why it was harder,

1 I mean it's harder because your dad passed away, he wasn't able to help sponsor her.
2 Sponsor her sisters.") Oh yeah very hard because dad, they get your daddy continue his
3 little game, you know he prison long time, so first they say who gets married? After I
4 come over here, they say okay now they can't have children, people recent get medics
5 they come over so that's my dad get sick so he can't do type of work my sisters. (Dan:
6 "When they originally came over, they didn't want her sisters to come, they wanted to
7 come, but because they're married to men in Vietnam, they didn't approve them. And
8 then, when he could sponsor—it'd be easier for a parent to sponsor children but since he
9 passed away it's harder for sister to sponsor.")

10 AM: Because he's the one who qualified for ODP and because of the McCain
11 Amendment, because originally ODP allowed all the children to come, whether your
12 married or not, then they changed it. They said, "Well if—they have to be under twenty
13 one and unmarried," and then (both talking at once).

14 TE: (Dan: "That's exactly right.")

15 AM: So, he, Senator McCain fought for that to change it back to including the
16 children who were over twenty one because I mean the children grew up on them when
17 they were in the camps, especially cases like her dad where he spent almost eighteen
18 years in the camps, and you want to keep the families together.

19 TE: (Dan: "Yeah, that I wish they would've changed it back.")

20 AM: Well, he did, he fought for it.

21 TE: (Dan: "Oh did he? Oh, very good.")

22 AM: And actually, they just reopened it, but then they recently re-closed it. They
23 reopened the ODP cases and the McCain Amendment for a little bit. But it just closed
24 like a year or so again.

25 TE: (Dan: "Oh jeez.")

26 AM: Yeah. 'Cause they realized they had left too many behind.

27 TE: (Dan: "Yes, they did.")

28 AM: But then the window that they reopened it, just closed. Like I said about a
29 year or a year and a half ago. I'll have to look up the dates for you. So, what do you miss
30 the most about Vietnam?

1 TE: (Dan: “Honey do you miss anything about Vietnam?”) Nope. No. (Dan: “No,
2 she had a hard life after her dad went to jail.”)

3 AM: Not even the food? Okay yeah, I can understand, ‘cause if you have a hard
4 experience there yeah you wouldn’t miss it. But I’m surprised she didn’t say the food. So,
5 where and when did you learn English? I know you mentioned the movies, but did you
6 take a little bit of English before that? Or—

7 TE: Oh yeah before. (Dan: “Oh honey, didn’t you take class for English here in
8 United States?”) Yeah, I’m going night class. (Dan: “Was a night class, once she got here
9 to Grand Prairie. Was it at the church?” Yeah, in the school. (Dan: “Oh yeah, Tarrant
10 County College, right?”) Yeah uhuh.

11 AM: So, did that help a lot?

12 TE: (Dan: “Did that help with your English honey?”) Yeah, the English before I
13 come, Savannah first come Savannah and they have the church. Yeah, they teach your
14 free class English so yeah, I’m go over there about one or two months, I come over here
15 so I school night class and love it. Before I come to United States, I take a couple of
16 classes in English. So that’s why, sometimes I said even you writing, reading I am
17 reading am okay I understand it, I’m talk messy and my boy my accent still Vietnam.
18 (Dan: “Anne, it’s easier for Tan My to read it then to hear it sometimes. Just like for me,
19 when I tried to learn Vietnamese when she writes it down it’s easier for me to understand
20 it.”)

21 AM: ‘Cause it’s tonal so you have to really—

22 TE: (Dan: “Right baby?”) Yep.

23 AM: Have you become a U.S. citizen?

24 TE: (Dan: Honey when did you become U.S. citizen?”) What year did I— (Dan:
25 “I think it was five years after you—it was 2001 wasn’t it?”) No, no no baby we applied
26 in 2002 I think 2002, they one year they call your name. 2002 yeah.

27 AM: So, was it hard to study for the citizenship test for you?

28 TE: No, one hundred percent. You know that? And I learn they had started four
29 thousand licenses. (Dan: “She studied for her—to get her license as beautician and for
30 citizenship at same time. She said it’s easy because there were so many more questions
31 for become licensed cosmetologist.”)

1 AM: Well, I'm very proud of her.
2 TE: (Dan: "Yes me too.")
3 AM: 'Cause that's a lot. And especially at the same time, I'm very proud of her—
4 I'm very proud of you. My hat is off to you.
5 TE: (Dan: "Anne, we can barely hear you.")
6 AM: I said I'm very proud of you, my hat is off to you because that could not
7 have been easy to study for both at the same time I'm impressed.
8 TE: (Dan: "Honey she says she very proud of you for working so hard.") Thank
9 you, thank you. And you tell me you do the same maybe you work hard the same, I think.
10 Thank you.
11 AM: Did you face any difficulties in adjusting to life in the United States?
12 TE: (Dan: "We can barely hear you, I'm sorry. She said, I've got it, honey she
13 says were there any difficulties getting used to life here in United States?) Difficult?
14 (Dan: "Yeah, was it hard—was there anything hard about—") No, not hard for me. No
15 thank you.
16 AM: And how would you describe your treatment while living in the United
17 States?
18 TE: (Dan: "How were you treated coming to the United States? Everybody treats
19 you well or did—") Oh they nice, they good person. They help me, I live housing free
20 they give me money and food so that's why I'm go to school, and I don't worry. One year
21 till my son's school I don't pay for it, yeah, they are nice.
22 AM: Good. I'm glad to hear that, that you had a good experience and that you've
23 been treated well. How did you learn of the Vietnam Archives, Families of Vietnamese
24 Political Prisoners Association Collection?
25 TE: (Dan: "Honey she is asking how you learned about those records. Actually, I
26 found the records for her father, I looked them up and I told Tan My about them. That's
27 when I got the copies for her because I wanted to preserve her father's memory.") I'm
28 surprised how he find, I never thought, I don't know how. (Dan: "I found all those things
29 for her and surprised her with the records.")

1 AM: Yeah, I remember you contacted me, and it just—I want it on the record for
2 people to hear. So how did you learn about our collection? Was it the website? Was it
3 something, an article you read?

4 TE: (Dan: “No it was the website actually.”)

5 AM: And if I remember right, you said you found it user friendly, how would you
6 describe our website and using—

7 TE: (Dan: “Yes it was very user-friendly, very easy, very easy. I’m not that
8 great.”)

9 AM: So, what did you like about the name-search database on our website? And
10 if you have any pointers of how you think we could improve it?

11 TE: (Dan: “No I don’t have—it was fine. It was very easy, I just inputted Tan
12 My’s fathers name and Tan Van Man and it identified it immediately.”)

13 AM: You were trying to preserve the family’s history, which is why you
14 contacted me. How has finding and obtaining a copy of your father’s ODP application, I
15 mean what’s it meant to you? How has it impacted your family?

16 TE: (Dan: “Honey is it important to you that we have the record of your father’s
17 immigration here to the United States?”) Uhuh, yeah. (Dan: “Is it—you know it’s a
18 matter of record for Caden and Kaylee.”) No, no, yeah.

19 AM: Was there anything you learned from his record? That you didn’t know
20 before?

21 TE: (Dan: “Honey did you learn anything in these records you didn’t before? You
22 had mentioned that you found some paperwork your mother did that—you know she kind
23 of had lied about.”) Oh yeah, now I know. I’m come over I want to see. (Dan: “She wants
24 to show her sister the records, because the reason her stepmom couldn’t come right away
25 because she had lied about some of things about her children before she married her
26 father and they’re in there.”) But you know that, that people always make good things she
27 does bad things, but she can help. (Dan: “Her heart in the right place, but—”) She tried.
28 She tried, you know and because don’t know how long my father get out see? (Dan: “She
29 tried to bring children here before.”) That’s when I see but I don’t get mad her, I still love
30 her because if something like that happens you try the best, you do it you don’t know
31 happen later, you don’t know the bad things. (Dan: “That’s right honey, that’s right.”)

1 AM: But it just kind of explains something to you. Kind of figured out, kind of
2 like showed you why okay this is why we had to move, the problems. But like you said
3 she was trying to help so. Well, I am so thankful to you for agreeing to this interview and
4 I really appreciate, it's been an honor and a privilege. Do you guys have any questions for
5 me before we adjourn here? And finish—wrap up this oral history, do you have anything
6 you want to ask me?

7 TE: (Dan: "Honey you got any questions?") No, no thank you a lot. (Dan: "Oh
8 Anne I got one question, should you happen to hear before we do about them reopening
9 the McCain Amendment, could you kind of email us or something because we're trying
10 so hard to get the rest of family out of Vietnam here.")

11 AM: Yes of course, and I'll email that stuff to you about when I learn that it did
12 reopen and re-close recently. I don't know if they're going to, but if I ever hear anything
13 yeah, I will definitely let you know.

14 TE: (Dan: "Well we sure do thank you.") Thank you for—have something papers.
15 (Dan: "We just so desperately want to get the family back together.")

16 AM: I mean I would too, I mean my heart goes out to you for that and I just wish
17 you luck with all your efforts to bring them here and thank you so much it's been such an
18 honor and privilege to interview you. Really, you have an amazing story, you just really
19 do. It's quite an amazing story of strength and overcoming adversity, and I just really,
20 really appreciate it. And if you guys ever need anything, just email me, okay?

21 TE: (Dan: "Okay, thank you.") Thank you again.

22 AM: You have a happy New Year, and you be safe and take care, okay?

23 TE: (Dan: "Okay, alright.") Yeah, thank you, have good day.

24 AM: You too thank you so much.

25 TE: (Dan: "Okay bye-bye Anne.") Bye.

26 AM: Bye.

27