

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Southeast Asian Immigrants Project

Personal Experiences

O. H. 765

THUY MIRANDA

Interviewed

by

Porncharas Arirachakaran

on

June 7, 1981

THI-THU THUY NGUYEN MIRANDA

Thi-Thu Thuy Nguyen Miranda or "Thuy" was born on October 12, 1955 in Saigon, the daughter of Hung and Yung Nguyen. Her parents passed away since she was two years old, so she stayed with her grandmother. Thuy attended public school in Saigon but was forced to quit her education because of economic situations caused by the war between North and South Vietnams. Being the eldest sister in the family, Thuy took care of her two brothers and two sisters. In 1972, she worked in a house where she met her ex-husband, Richard Cook, and ex-Army soldier. They married in Vietnam in 1972. The couple left the country in 1974 with their one son, Niel. She got divorced in 1977 and married Edward Miranda. They have one daughter, Christine, four years old. She is employed by Packard Electric. In the future, she plans to continue her studies and move to Texas.

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INTERVIEWEE: THUY MIRANDA

INTERVIEWER: Porncharas Arirachakaran

SUBJECT: Saigon, orphan life, marriage, divorce, freedom,
family, life in Vietnam, life in USA

DATE: June 7, 1981

A: This is an interview with Mrs. Thuy Miranda for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on Southeast Asian Immigrants by Porncharas Arirachakaran, at 27 W. Woodland, Niles, Ohio, on June 7, 1981, at 12:14 p.m.

Where did you come from?

M: I come from Vietnam.

A: Where were you born?

M: Saigon.

A: Can you tell us about your family?

M: I have two brothers, two sisters, and a grandmother. My parents passed away when I was only two.

A: Did you go to school?

M: Yes, four years.

A: What happened after that? Why did you quit school?

M: I had to go to work to take care of myself.

A: What did you do?

M: I baby-sat, learned how to sew.

A: How did you come here?

M: I was working and I met this guy and I married him.

A: What is his name?

M: Richard Miranda.

A: Is he an ex-Army soldier?

M: Yes.

A: How did you meet him?

M: I was working in somebody's house.

A: Do you remember anything about Saigon at that time before you came here?

M: Nothing much.

A: It is the capital city; did anything happen to that when the Communists came?

M: I came here before that.

A: When did you come here?

M: 1974.

A: Before that was wartime, right?

M: Yes.

A: Do you remember anything about the war?

M: A little bit, not much.

A: Can you tell us a little bit?

M: There was fighting around and when I heard it I left. I went to Thailand for three months before I came here.

A: Why?

M: I have a girl friend there.

A: Did you go with your husband to Thailand?

M: No, just me and my son.

A: When did you marry your husband?

M: 1972.

A: Did you work after you got married to him?

M: Yes.

A: What kind of job did you do?

M: Like in a dry cleaning shop.

A: Are you still working?

M: Yes.

A: Did you first come to Youngstown?

M: No, Cortland.

A: Did you stay with his family?

M: Yes.

A: How were they?

M: It was all right.

A: What was your first impression in the United States?

M: First I thought I had to find myself a home and a job. My husband got a job with the government and traveled around.

A: Did you hear about the United States before coming?

M: No.

A: What do you think about your life in this country?

M: It's all right; all you do is go to work.

A: What about living conditions, do you like it here?

M: Yes, it is more free to do whatever you want.

A: How about in Vietnam?

M: It is the same thing but a little bit different.

A: What's different?

M: There are curfews and things like that.

A: Can you give more details on your life in Vietnam?

M: Over there you can buy whatever you want, eat whatever you want, do whatever you want, but curfew is at 2:00 or midnight.

You got locked out on the street until 6:00 in the morning.

A: What about the economy? Was it hard to find a job in Vietnam at that time?

M: No. You could find a job anywhere.

A: What about your religion, are you Catholic?

M: No.

A: What was your religion before?

M: Buddhist.

A: Do you find any entertainment around here?

M: Yes, a lot of things. After work I go out dancing.

A: What kind of job do you have now?

M: I do air conditioning that goes into cars. I do power locks, power windows, power steering. I build the cars. Everything is power in the car that I do.

A: Do you like it?

M: Yes.

A: What kind of job did you do before you had this job?

M: I worked in a nursing home for a little bit. I sewed a little bit. I did anything. If people needed me to work I would give them my phone number and they would call me and I would go. I didn't have to, but I wanted to; I wanted to keep myself busy.

A: Do you plan to do anything in the future? Do you plan to bring your brothers and sisters here?

M: I plan to move away.

A: Where?

M: Texas. I have an aunt and uncle there and six cousins.

A: Did they escape from Vietnam?

M: They came here the same time I did.

A: What do you think about your new life here?

M: It's all right.

A: Do you miss your country?

M: A little bit now and then.

A: Looking back, what would you like to see happen in your country?

M: I hope they go back to the way they were before so they don't have to be this way with the Communists. I don't like Communists.

A: Why?

M: I never had them and I don't want to know what it's like to live with them.

A: Do you have any good impressions about your country, the things you remember the most?

M: A lot of things. There is nice weather, nice people, and things like that.

A: You can't compare the life here and there?

M: Yes. Over there it is nice. If anything happens I will go back home. I would still like to go back home.

A: Do you miss your family?

M: Yes.

A: Do you still have contact with them?

M: No.

A: Is it hard to contact them?

M: No, I just don't want to. It's too hard. If I do that it will make me feel like going back home.

A: Do you have a lot of Vietnamese friends in Youngstown?

M: Not a lot of friends.

A: Do you want to add anything?

M: No.

A: Did you have your children by your first husband?

M: Yes.

A: Why did you move from Cortland to Youngstown?

M: I stayed with my ex-in-laws and after that I moved out and

lived in Warren for one year. I went to night classes for one year; that's where I met my husband, at the school.

A: You were divorced at that time?

M: Yes.

A: Did you work at that time too?

M: No, I just went to school. I learned how to write a little bit.

A: Do you still plan to go to school?

M: Yes.

A: Do you plan to do anything else, like find another job?

M: No, I like the job I have now. There isn't a better job that can pay what I get.

A: What time do you go to work?

M: I work all kinds of different shifts.

A: If you had a chance to go back home what would you like to do first?

M: I would go see my family first.

A: Can you find them?

M: Yes.

A: Do you know if they want to come here?

M: No.

A: How is their life there now?

M: I don't know. I heard people say hard. You have to do work and certain things.

A: What do you think you would like to do with your life?

M: If I think about it now I am like an American. I think about now, not later. I am around Americans all the time and I was even when I was home.

A: Why?

M: It just happened. They would live next door or I would see them at work.

A: Are they friendly?

M: Yes, they are nice people. They never bother me and I never bother them. We talk, that's it.

A: Did you learn to speak English before?

M: Yes.

A: Where?

M: Back home. After I would go to work I would still go to school for English sometimes.

A: Did you have to pay for that?

M: Yes.

A: A lot?

M: Yes.

A: Did all of your family one by one study with a teacher?

M: Yes.

A: Did you do speaking?

M: Yes.

A: Do you have any language difficulties now?

M: Not too often.

A: Do you still speak Vietnamese?

M: Yes, almost every day.

A: Do you plan to teach your children Vietnamese?

M: Yes, I have been.

A: Can they speak it?

M: They don't speak it, but they understand. The little one speaks more than the older one because she doesn't go to school.

A: How do you plan to keep children with the tradition, will they be Americanized?

M: They can do whatever they want. As long as they go to school now and after that they can do whatever they want.

A: Do you plan to teach them about Vietnamese history?

M: Yes, I think they have to know where I am from and what I do and stuff like that.

A: How can you fill the generation gap between your children and yourself?

M: I have to talk and explain to them what they want to know. Once in a while I sit and talk to them or read a book to them or watch television with them.

A: Do you enjoy being a housewife?

M: No, but I have to.

A: Do you plan to have any more children?

M: No.

A: Thank you.

M: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW