

Rudolph F. Runez
Narrator

Sarah Mason
Interviewer

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Sarah Mason - **SM**
Rudolph F. Runez - **RR**
Ruby [Knutson] Runez - **RKR**

SM: I'm talking to Rudolph Flores Runez on January 17, 1979. This an interview conducted under the auspices of the Minnesota Historical Society in Saint Paul, Minnesota. The interviewer is Sarah Mason. Rudy, do you want to begin with your early life and tell us a bit . . . ?

RR: Well, I suppose I can. Well, my name is Rudolph Runez. Most of my friends call me Rudy. But it was Rodolfo Runez prior to my becoming an American citizen on October 15, 1947, when I had it legally changed for good. I was born in the Philippine islands some seventy-six years ago and came to this country in 1922. I have lived here ever since.

I am one hundred percent Filipino, my parents being native Filipinos. And I have always been proud of my heritage. Like most of my countrymen who came to this country at the time I came myself, I had every intention of pursuing my studies and returning to the Philippines to help my people. But such was not meant to be for me, I suppose, because I am still in this country and failed to finish my studies. But here I am getting ahead of myself. I should acquaint you a little bit about my life in the Philippines before I left it for these shores.

I am the third child of a family of four sons and three daughters. My family was not what you would normally call wealthy, but my folks were fortunate enough to engage some two or three people to work for us at all times, so we were pampered so far as physical labor was concerned. Our going to school was then without much hardship. When the Americans came to the islands, schools were opened almost simultaneously where English was taught. You can gather from this then that I learned the English language at an early age. In the year 1918 my oldest brother, Sixto, and three others from my hometown of Cabala Union, Luzon Island, came to this country. They were induced by a visitor from Champlin, Minnesota, who came to visit her sister in the islands. She was teaching in the high school there.

They came, and for the first months after their arrival, they worked at their farm. They were not used to hard labor, so they experienced some hardship. Working . . . and they worked as mess boys at the West Hotel in Minneapolis where the soldiers were camped. They gradually met with

people who became their friends. They met other Filipinos who were also here and made the start of a Filipino community in this part of the country. Many of them were talented musicians who had helped make many new friends.

And now, Ms. Mason, have you any questions to ask? Just a moment, I got here from these tapes, from the Philippines.

[Rustling noises]

SM: Oh, one thing I wondered, maybe you could talk a little bit more about the way so many people came from Caba after your brother and his friends came. Did other members of your family come, and other people from your region?

RR: Actually, it got to be just like an epidemic.

SM: [Chuckles]

RR: When some started coming, a lot of them followed. It was a hardship on some of them because their folks had to mortgage whatever they had for their fare.

SM: Well, what were some of the reasons their families would mortgage their things to send them? What did they hope to get from that?

RR: Well, for one thing, I think they all wanted to come here to finish their studies, like I did, and like most of those who were here previous to when . . . my arrival. Some have gone back home after their . . . completing their studies here and they have made good in the Philippines.

SM: Yes. Were there some that came to study at the Mayo Clinic? Do you know about a program there?

RR: Well, I had . . . I had a brother-in-law, where he was not my brother-in-law before I met him, but my sister was here and she was in San Francisco. And somehow or another, we had this Dr. Casimiro Lara who . . . well, he turned out to be the director of the Culion Leper Colony in the Philippines for several years. By the way, he's now retired, but he still has an office in there. He has devoted most of his life to leprosy.

SM: Yes. And he did [unclear] research on leprosy?

RR: Yes.

SM: Oh. And he had some training at Mayo.

RR: Well, yes. He was . . . what would you call it? A scholar. He had a scholarship from the Rockefeller Foundation.

SM: I see.

RR: He was a doctor. And he was sent to Mayo.

SM: Was that a regular program in which Filipinos were always coming [unclear]?

RR: They had started to send some of the bright men to the United States to complete their studies so that they could go back home and be of help to their people. And my brother-in-law happened to be one of them.

SM: I see. You don't happen to know whether he studied anything to do with leprosy, do you? Or did he just specialize in [unclear]?

RR: He . . . I do not know what he was doing in Rochester, actually. But when he went back home to the Philippines, that was his life line. And he devoted all of his remaining years—well, he's still living, thank God—but he devoted his remaining years to the study of leprosy in the Culion Leper Colony in Culion.

SM: Well, did he mention other Filipino doctors in Rochester that were studying that?

RR: We did not seem to meet any Filipino doctors there then.

SM: So he might have been the only one?

RR: He might have been the only one there, because I'm not positive on that.

SM: Yes. Somebody had mentioned there was a regular type of program where about six came each . . . for six months each, but . . .

RR: Oh, that's probably what he was there for, but I think he was here for more than six months though. Yes.

SM: Well, do you know anything about Filipino Medical Aid Association? I think that was more like it was the 1940s after World War II maybe.

RR: No. I'm sorry, I do not know much about that, Ms. Mason.

SM: I guess it wasn't maybe connected with that program.

RR: Yes. Well, if it was, I was not aware of it.

SM: Yes. Well, you could talk a little bit about your first impressions of Minnesota when you came? This must have been quite a change.

RR: Oh. Wow. I arrived here in August.

SM: August?

RR: Yes.

SM: You didn't know what was in store!

RR: I did not know what was in store for me then. Of course, winter came along and there I was. My first view of snow.

SM: Oh, the first time you had seen it?

RR: That's the first time ever.

SM: Oh.

RR: Yes, snow is not prevalent in the Philippines at all.

SM: Yes. Hmm. Did it bother you? [Chuckles]

RR: Well . . . [Chuckles]

SM: [Laughter]

RR: It wasn't too much fun, especially when . . . when you go sledding and when you're walking in the streets sometimes, you know. I remember one time I was holding my Filipino mandolin. And out of a clear sky, why, my feet went under me and there I was, flat on the ground. [Chuckles]

SM: Oh, I hope you weren't on top of the mandolin!

RR: I lifted the mandolin up though, instinctively, and saved it from crush. [Chuckles]

SM: So you went and played in different [unclear] and so on?

RR: Oh, yes. You know, we are quite musically inclined, actually, as a people. And some of us carried our . . . well, what would you call that? We carried our heritage, or whatever it is that we learned, here. And through our music, actually, we met with a *lot* of people who became our fast friends.

SM: What about some of the Filipino organizations during those early years? This would be the late 1920s and early 1930s.

RR: Oh . . . yes. Oh, yes. Well, I mentioned in my preliminary talk here how . . . how this, my brother and a cousin and these two brothers from our hometown met with some other Filipinos who had been here then.

SM: Yes.

RR: And do you know that they did celebrate Rizal Day in December?

SM: From the very beginning?

RR: From the very beginning. Because that's one date that we . . . we, in the Philippines, really celebrate the death of our hero, Dr. José Rizal [June 19, 1861-December 30, 1896].

SM: Could you explain a little bit about his [unclear]?

RR: Well, Rizal, of course, you know about him. He was . . . well, some . . . some authors claim that he was one of the most learned . . . from the Far East.

SM: Oh.

RR: He was a doctor, he studied in Europe and he came back to the Philippines to try and relieve his people of some of their sicknesses and he was a reformer, too, really. But he was a very peaceful reformer. He was banished finally.

[Unclear]

RR: Well, he was a poet, he was anything that you could name, actually. He was a doctor, engineer, poet, everything.

SM: Those are all fields that Filipinos have excelled in, aren't they?

RR: That's right.

SM: Well, was he a leader during the war against Spain? Was he or . . .?

RR: He . . .

SM: Or afterwards?

RR: Well, he wanted a peaceful solution to our problems with Spain. So he was not a military man, actually. But he was acknowledged a leader.

SM: But he wanted the independence of . . .

RR: Yes, to fought for our independence, yes. Well, what he really saw, mostly, was the hardship with the Spaniards were inflicting upon the people in the Philippines. And he wanted to uplift them from those . . . the injustices that were being done to them.

SM: I see.

RR: He wanted to educate their . . . he wanted to educate our people because he said that education was our only salvation. And to that end, why, he worked until the Spaniards snapped his life from him.

SM: Oh, was he executed by the Spaniards?

RR: He was executed on Bagumbayan near . . . on Luneta in Manila, on December 30, 1898, I think it was. [It actually was 1896.]

SM: Oh, so this is his death day.

RR: Yes, so we are celebrating his death around up around this 30th of December.

SM: I see. Well, education is a very important thing to Filipinos.

RR: It is. It is. Most any family would sacrifice all their belongings so that they could educate their children there.

SM: Hmmm. Could you talk a little bit about the American schools in the Philippines when the Americans first came [unclear]?

RR: Oh, yes.

SM: Was it very well adapted to Filipino life or . . . ?

RR: Well . . .

SM: I've heard a few amusing things about it. [Chuckles]

RR: I was . . . I was studying Spanish under a priest, a Catholic priest when I was small.

SM: Oh.

RR: And then the Americans came and they established schools almost immediately. And I . . . so then I went to school and learned the English language.

SM: Did they have American textbooks and American [unclear]?

RR: We had English textbooks, yes. Evidently, they came from this country. And through the years then, why they started to send American teachers to the Philippines to really give us the English language, teach us the English language. And I've had the good fortune of having several American teachers when I was going through high school in La Union.

SM: And were some of these from Minnesota then?

RR: Oh, yes. I think we had one Swedish lady from Minneapolis. And do you know that after I got here, I met with her. [Chuckles] And of course she remembered me as . . . like I did remember her. [Chuckles] And at one of our parties, you know, where she was present, why, she asked us to sing a native Filipino song.

SM: A party here in the Twin Cities?

RR: Yes, in the Twin Cities. It was in Minneapolis. And well, we obliged and sang a Filipino song, you know, and then when we told her what the title was, you know, [speaks in a high voice] "Oh, no, no, no, no. That isn't the truth!" [Laughter] So we really had a lot of fun with her.

SM: Well, what proportion of the teachers in your school might have been American? About half or . . . ?

RR: Well, not quite half, I don't think. Because they started . . .

SM: Did they get less as time went on?

RR: Yes, they started to have Filipinos teacher students, see.

SM: I see. Yes.

RR: Yes.

SM: At first they were all Americans?

RR: No, no.

SM: Never.

RR: No. No, they taught the . . . they taught some of the Filipinos, I guess, because a lot of them were quite . . . quite good at speaking English.

SM: Yes. Oh, yes.

RR: At an early stage.

SM: Well, yes, didn't [unclear] teach before he came?

RR: I think he did teach school in Philippines.

SM: Yes. I think when he was quite young.

RR: I'm proud to say that I taught . . . I taught for six months, too, before I came to this country. [Chuckles]

SM: You did, too! Oh. And what age level were you teaching?

RR: Well, I just finished high school and they needed a teacher in one of the private school there a few miles away from where I graduated.

SM: For young children, was it?

RR: It was high school and . . .

SM: Oh, in high school. You were just about same age as the students. [Chuckles]

RR: Yes. Yes.

SM: I see.

RR: And all of a sudden I got a telegram from the principal of the school there who I knew personally and it said, Mr. Rivera's recommendation accepted, report immediately.

SM: [Chuckles]

RR: And then [chuckles] there I was. I was not prepared to go. But I went there. I explained that I could not be there immediately, so I went there when I could.

SM: This was near your home?

RR: That was in 19 . . . yes, 1921.

SM: 1921.

RR: Yes. I finished . . .

SM: Where was the school located?

RR: Agoo . . . Agoo, La Union, that is about twenty-five, thirty miles south of my hometown, Caba.

SM: I see. So this was a common thing to have a high school graduate start to teach?

RR: Oh, yes.

SM: Yes. I remember they did that in the South here where my mother grew up. She taught right after high school.

RR: Yes.

SM: Now it's also professionalized, but . . .

RR: [Chuckles]

SM: I imagine those were rather good teachers.

RR: Well, of course, you . . . you misunderstand though that we have teacher . . . teacher schools now.

SM: Oh, yes.

RR: Normal . . . they used to call them in the Philippines, normal college.

SM: Right. I see. Yes.

RR: Where they taught pupils to become teachers.

SM: Yes.

RR: So they could in turn teach the Filipino . . . other people.

SM: Yes. I think I did mention about Filipino organizations and we got off the subject a bit.

RR: Oh . . . I think did in a way.

SM: [Chuckles]

RR: Yes. That [unclear] that started right away and that was around 1920 and they were able to celebrate this holiday, Rizal Day then.

SM: [Unclear].

RR: Yes. And yes, but they had no formal organizations then though. They just got together, see, and celebrated.

SM: Yes.

RR: But somehow or another . . . and they always seemed to engage some . . . some well-known American, just like the governor of the state and attorney general and presidents of colleges and stuff like that.

SM: Oh, yes, to make a speech to them?

RR: To make the speeches, yes, to make the address.

SM: Oh. I see. Well, were there some organizations already going when you came? Like the Cabeñan Club or did that get started after you?

RR: No. I . . . I helped organize the Cabeñan Club after I got here.

SM: Oh, I see. Were you one of the presidents of that?

RR: Well, I . . . I happened to be the first president of it.

SM: The first president.

RR: Yes.

SM: What year was that?

RR: Gee, I wish I could remember that date now.

SM: Sometime in the late 1920s?

RR: I think it was around 1920 . . . [unclear] around the 1930s.

RKR: 1935. This must have been one of the first . . .

RR: No, no. We were . . . we were active before that. I don't . . . around the 1930s, I imagine, it would be.

SM: The early 1930s.

RR: Yes, early 1930s.

SM: What about [unclear]? Were there enough Cabeñans around or . . .?

RR: There were quite a few Cabeñans here then. I think there were at least sixteen or twenty members from our . . . But then we included the friends, finally.

SM: Oh, I see.

RR: And even some good American friends who wanted to join.

SM: I see.

RR: They did join.

SM: So it wasn't strictly exclusive then.

RR: It was not exclusively a Cabeñan club then. We tried to . . . include outsiders.

SM: I see. And did the wives come, too, to this?

RR: Oh, yes. The wives were automatically members of it.

SM: [Chuckles] Automatically, okay.

RR: Yes.

SM: Well then was the Filipino American Club started soon after that?

RR: Oh, yes. Shortly after that, the Filipino American Club came up.

SM: And . . . well, Fil-Minnesotan started at the university.

RR: There was another organization of the Filipino students at the university, we called it the Filipinasotans [sp?].

SM: Did you belong to that?

RR: I did belong to that.

SM: And then later that became a community organization or . . . ?

RR: No, we had this Filipino American Club besides and then there were some other clubs, actually, though that came out. That's just like the . . . we got a Philippines Commonwealth Club, oh that was after the Philippines Commonwealth was established.

SM: Oh, yes.

RR: And then we had the Filipino Helping Hand.

SM: Yes. I think Paul Borge was active in that.

RR: Yes, Paul Borge was active in that, with that.

SM: Well, did . . . I'm sure they had a lot of different purposes, these organizations.

RR: Oh, yes. A lot of it, of course, was . . . to . . . to bring out what we Filipinos are to the American public.

SM: I see.

RR: Yes.

SM: To interpret the Filipino culture somewhat for the Americans.

RR: That's right.

SM: What about, was there any mutual aid kind of thing, you know, helping each other or . . . ?

RR: Well, the Filipino Helping Hand was supposed to be doing that.

SM: Oh.

RR: But I really am not too familiar with whether they were able to establish all that to work out that aim.

SM: I see. Well, so you planned to study and then I understand that the Depression made that pretty impossible. [Chuckles] So what did you do instead?

RR: Well, I did not finish my studies. I went and got married. That was 1928, that was six years after I'd been in this country.

SM: I see. And you married an American?

RR: I married a sweet Norwegian. [Chuckles] Her name is Ruby. [Chuckles]

SM: A sweet Norwegian.

RR: Ruby Knutson. That is typical in the Norwegian, yes.

SM: Yes. Well, was she the child of immigrants, too? Was she second or third generation?

RR: Oh yes, second generation.

SM: [Unclear].

RKR: Second. Second.

RR: Second. Oh, yes.

SM: Oh, yes. Yes. Well, where did you ever meet?

RR: Oh, that's just a . . . romantic . . . [Chuckles]

SM: [Chuckles] [Unclear]

RR: Romantic. We got acquainted with an older sister of hers. And they were having a party at her auntie's, to which I was invited, and some others were invited, some of the older Filipinos were there. John Orendain was one of them, Sixto [Runez], and . . . So, my wife was invited to it, too, but she refused to come. And I don't know how she ever got to be convinced to come there. Maybe as a . . . something working underneath there that she would meet her future husband or something. [Chuckles] So she finally came begrudgingly. Oh, boy! Was it ever. And the first thing she knew was . . . she noticed was me playing a ukulele with her younger brother and we were then seated right under the piano. [Laughter]

SM: Oh, with her own younger brother. Did you know him before?

RR: Her younger brother Vic. Oh, yes, he was there. He was there.

SM: Well, had you known him before the party?

RR: I think we had . . . I had seen him.

SM: Oh, yes. What did he play?

RR: He did not play anything.

SM: [Chuckles]

RR: But I was trying to teach him to play the ukulele.

SM: Oh, you were teaching him.

RR: Yes.

SM: I see.

RR: And then her sister took her brother . . . her sister came and she noticed me there. [Chuckles]

SM: That was the beginning of it. [Chuckles]

RR: Yes, that's the beginning of a sweet romance that's lasted over fifty years.

SM: Yes. Well, it seems that several Norwegians and Filipinos . . .

RR: Somehow or another I've wondered, too, why a lot of us Filipinos married Norwegians.

SM: Hmmm. More than Swedes?

RR: I think it's . . . the majority is Norwegian.

SM: Yes. It seems to be, you know, very common.

RR: Yes, or some . . . there's some Germans.

SM: Yes.

RR: I do not know.

SM: Hmmm.

RR: They have a way with the Filipinos, I guess. [Laughter]

SM: I was going to say, do you think they're any more open-minded than the rest?

RR: [Laughter] It could be.

SM: What about, did you ever encounter any kinds of discriminatory [unclear] or . . . ?

RR: Oh, Lord. That is really a sad thing in my heart because we really were discriminated against until they learned more of us. But when I started going out with my wife, for example, now. Why, before we were married, why, we would be walking in the streets there and, boy, people would crane their necks to look back. For a Filipino to have a white girl beside him.

SM: Hmmm.

RR: And when we would go to wrestling matches, which we were crazy about, my people would do the same thing to us. But we learned to cope with that. And you know how we did it?

SM: How?

RR: We just looked back at them and stared at them. We out-stared them until they felt so foolish that they . . . they did not know how to act.

SM: Well, that was a pretty practical approach to it.

RR: Oh, you bet you. We gradually found that out, so that we could out-stare them, because . . . they would quit looking at us then, see.

SM: Yes.

RR: [Chuckles] I don't know what's going on in their minds, but they quit looking at us anyway, for the time being.

SM: Well, did this go into employment and housing and so on? Did you ever . . .?

RR: Yes. Yes, we . . .

SM: [Unclear].

RR: Even after we were married, you know, we tried to get into some houses there and we already got the place rented, and then when we were ready to move, why, they saw me and they changed their mind. "Oh, I'm sorry, but it's already rented." [Chuckles]

SM: And there was no recourse you could take? [Unclear].

RR: Well, I explained . . . I happened to be working for a private family then, and I told my boss that. And he says, "Rudolph, don't worry," he says. "We'll get a place for you."

SM: Yes.

RR: And so we finally found some places anyway, but that's one of those things where I was . . . we were turned away even after we . . . we had it all engaged to move to it.

SM: Yes. You mean Ruby would go and rent it and then they'd say, "Fine."

RR: Yes. She did see the place, yes. And then when they saw me, went there away. Nope, they changed their minds. Oh, I don't know. We really went through a lot of hardships that way there. They were . . . they called us different names. But somehow or another we . . . we lived. [Chuckles]

SM: Very well, it seems in some ways. What about jobs? What kinds of jobs did Filipinos get?

RR: Well, menial jobs mostly, actually. I did quite a stint of house work myself. But when you realize that only rich people could afford to have house workers, why, you knew where your bread was coming from anyway as long as you are employed.

SM: Yes.

RR: The other jobs were working as busboys or waiters at restaurants.

SM: Yes. Well, which was the better deal of these? Working for a family or working at restaurants?

RR: Well, we were not what you would call educated then, you know, so that we could get higher paying jobs. But working for a family was a means of . . . sustaining life. And I could probably say that even when the Depression came, I was employed so that I really did not suffer from the Depression at all. I was making my regular monthly wages, I had a home to live in, I ate at the place, I had my laundry done there. So we really did not experience any hardship during the Depression. When the . . . you remember when people started throwing themselves down from . . . way up.

SM: Yes.

RR: It's because their wealth was wiped out. Well, I didn't have much work, but I had something to feed me with anyway, and my family.

SM: So it was secure.

RR: You know, it was a secure job, yes.

SM: Well, did you ever feel resentful that Filipinos seemed to be forced into this kind of job anyway?

RR: Well, they were good at it. They were good at it.

SM: They must have been.

RR: And I could even say that my . . . my life as a butler, I . . . I have loved it because I could still use what I learned as a butler, for example, in those years, even in later years.

SM: I see. Let's see, what years did you work for the Pillsburys?

RR: I used to work for the Pillsburys, yes. John Pillsbury of the Pillsbury Flour Mills.

SM: Yes.

RR: My brother was working there when I came.

SM: Oh, he [unclear].

RR: And then when he had to go back to go to school, I took over.

SM: I see. When he went to the U or [University of Saint Thomas] or . . .?

RR: He went to the U, I guess.

SM: And then you took over his job.

RR: I took over his job.

SM: Well, did Juan Orendain work there, too?

RR: Well, he . . . that I could not state positively. But I know that he was working for another rich family.

SM: Oh, yes. Well, I suppose these jobs weren't limitless. I mean, was it hard to find . . . ?

RR: They were. They were looking for Filipino boys to work for them, all these rich people.

SM: They were looking for Filipinos specifically, hmmm?

RR: Yes.

SM: Let's see. What about the women? There weren't many Filipino women here.

RR: No, there were not very many Filipino women here.

SM: Were there a few?

RR: Well, the one I remember most all . . . oh, well, the one I remember is Mrs. Epperly.

SM: Oh, yes.

RR: Mrs. Samuel Epperly. But see, her husband is a veteran of the Spanish American War. And he brought her to the United States from the Philippines.

SM: Did they live in the Philippines for a while first?

RR: They did live in the Philippines for a while, yes. As a matter of fact, some of his . . . their first children were born there.

SM: I see.

RR: And then they . . . they came to the United States. He did not come to Minneapolis immediately. He was at some other town, too. Saint Bonifacius, I think, is one of them.

SM: What state is this? Oh, in this . . . in Minnesota.

RR: Saint Bonifacius, yes, in Minnesota. Yes.

SM: Well, he was from Minnesota then? Do you know?

RR: That . . . that I could not document.

SM: Yes.

RR: If he was from Minnesota or not.

SM: So she was probably the first Filipino woman to come here.

RR: As far as I know. As far as we know. Then of course some of the boys went back home, got married, and brought their wives here, their Filipino wives here.

SM: Oh, like Balbuenas.

RR: Balbuenas and Custodio.

SM: Oh, was he here first and then he went back and got married?

RR: Yes.

RKR: She came here. He didn't go back and get married.

SM: Oh, she came here to marry him.

RR: Did she come with him?

RKR: [Unclear]

SM: Oh, I see.

RR: Yes.

SM: They're still in the area [unclear].

RR: Yes, they're still in the area. Yes.

SM: I see. What was Mrs. Epperly's first name? Or her . . .

RR: Who? Mrs. Epperly?

SM: What was her Filipino [unclear]?

RR: I wish I could remember her first name. Her Filipino name.

SM: Well, I guess her children are . . . some still in the area.

RR: Yes. [Unclear]

SM: Yes. Well, then there really was the largest numbers married in the 1930s [unclear].

RR: Yes. That's right.

SM: Yes. Would you say that those students who came earliest like Juan Oredain and Sixto [unclear], they had a little better chance of success, it seems, before the Depression?

RR: Well, sometimes I wonder if it is that or it's just that because they were . . . they were anxious to finish.

SM: Yes. It seems as though the earliest ones came and although I'm sure it was a terrific struggle, they finished and then went back to the Philippines.

RR: Oh, yes.

SM: Whereas in the 1930s it became almost impossible it seems.

RR: Yes. It was impossible, yes. That's true.

SM: Just to survive was . . .

RR: That's true.

SM: Hmm. Well, were they some exceptions to that or did some make it through the 1930s with higher degrees or [unclear]? Maybe they had money.

RR: They were . . . they were ambitious. And they did work for a little bit, you know, until they had a little money saved up and then they went back to school again [unclear].

SM: Yes. They would alternate.

RR: Yes.

SM: Yes. Well, did any Filipinos in Minnesota take up that United States Government Office offer of free passage home after independence? I understood it got a pretty bad name, [chuckles] that offer. But was it . . .

RR: It was not a free passage though. The only thing free was that they were not . . . examining your baggage at the customs when you got there.

SM: Oh. I thought that during the Depression when so many people were out of work they thought it would be a good idea if some went home to look for work or something.

RR: Oh . . . yes. Funny, I never heard of that.

SM: Well, I think not too many people took them up on it.

RR: Maybe not.

SM: [Unclear] as rather insulting thing [unclear].

RR: Yes, maybe not. They would rather suffer here and live under the prestige of being in the United States than being home.

SM: Was that . . . why was that more prestigious to be here?

RR: Well, to come to the United States is really something that's looked forward to, you know. They recognized that in the Philippines as having come from the United States. I do not know what for, but it just seems to make them a little bigger. [Chuckles]

SM: Was that . . . do you think that was fostered by the American teachers or the press or . . .?

RR: I . . . I don't think so.

SM: But how did this American dream get started? [Chuckles]

RR: The common people, you know, they . . . they think that to be able to come to the United States is something great, actually.

SM: Well, it doesn't always [unclear] be what they think, unfortunately.

RR: That's true though. That's true though.

SM: But it seems to have been a very prevalent [unclear], I guess.

RR: That's true.

SM: Well, let's see, you got your citizenship then after World War II, right? So all those years you were [unclear]

RR: It was . . . yes, it was hard to become an American citizen. When I went home to the Philippines in 1947 for the first time after twenty-five years in this country, my wife and two children, they were American citizens but I was still considered a Filipino citizen.

SM: Yes.

RR: So that I really traveled back to the Philippines in 1947 as a Filipino citizen with a Philippines passport.

SM: [Unclear].

RR: When I came back, the American . . . the United States Government rather made it a little easier for some of us older resident in the United States to become American citizens. And when I qualified under their . . . one of their rulings to become an American citizen, then I applied immediately.

SM: Yes. How did you hear about this change? Was it in the newspaper?

RR: It was in the newspapers, yes. It was in the newspapers and then it was talked about amongst us, too.

SM: Oh, yes.

RR: Because we were . . . a lot of us were anxious. Now if you joined the Service, you most . . . wouldn't you just about automatically could become an American citizen by application, see.

SM: Oh, yes.

RR: But if you had not joined the Service at all, which I was not . . . which I did not, it was a little harder for me until . . . just like I said, the government made it easier a little bit by telling us, telling people that if they hadn't been in this country prior to a certain date, they could not become American citizens.

SM: They could not [unclear].

RR: No.

SM: Well, could it . . . ?

RR: Well, if they were here, then yes, they could become by applying.

SM: You don't remember when that date was, do you?

RR: No, I do not remember.

SM: Hmm. I see. Well, was that a point of concern for you when you were here all those years with a family that were Americans [unclear]?

RR: It really was funny, you know. Because [chuckles] I go home and visit after twenty-five years, Filipino citizen. My family here, American citizens. You know, I . . . I realized the folly of it all.

SM: [Chuckles]

RR: So when the chance for me to become an American citizen made it . . . was issued, then I applied immediately. I tried to get into the Service, you know.

SM: Oh.

RR: But I was too young for the First World War when I was in the Philippines here. And then I was too old for the Second World War.

SM: I see.

RR: And the moment I go to a recruiting office there and volunteer my service there, as soon as they found out that I was over-aged, then they just shook their heads. So I compensated by going to work for a . . . in a defense plant.

SM: Oh. Yes. Where was that?

RR: That was . . . I worked as an inspector over at the Gray Company in Minneapolis.

SM: The Gray Company?

RR: Gray Company, Minneapolis, yes. They were making dies for bullets.

SM: Yes. It seems as though quite a few of the old timers worked in New Brighton or . . .

RR: Oh, yes.

SM: During the war.

RR: Well, a lot of us were working for families, you know, but then we realized that they would perhaps draft us anyway into some kind of a war work.

SM: Oh. Yes.

RR: So we went to work immediately in the defense plants.

SM: I see.

RR: Yes.

SM: Well, I guess this was somewhat of a change, at least, because of the labor shortage.

RR: It was.

SM: And you could get into industries.

RR: It was. And you know the funniest part about it is Filipinos were . . . were recruited as inspectors at this plant where I worked at.

SM: Especially Filipinos were recruited?

RR: Well, there was . . . the head inspector was an American who has had some dealings with some Filipinos in Chicago.

SM: Oh.

RR: And he brought that fact to the management of the company there with the result that they were looking for Filipino inspectors but there were not too many that went there though. I was one and then there was another one before me, so there were really two of us, actually.

SM: I see. Well, although the Filipinos couldn't vote, you know, until after the . . .

RR: That's right, after we became citizens.

SM: 1942.

RR: Yes.

SM: Did they have any particular ideas about American politics? I noticed that Orendain said in his interview that he . . . some Republicans didn't care too much about the Filipinos. [Chuckles] But he was speaking of the Philippines independence and that kind of a thing.

RR: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I don't know. I was reared to . . . to [unclear] Democratic Party, somehow or another.

SM: Oh.

RR: Because I think they were . . .

SM: In the Philippines you were reared to think . . .?

RR: Well . . . here.

SM: Oh, here.

RR: Yes. Because I think that they were a little bit more liberal towards the Filipinos in their aspirations for independence.

SM: Oh, yes. [Unclear].

RR: I could not document that, but it's just some feeling that came to me, that, well . . . maybe because . . . of course, under a Democratic president there that, for example, now that we've got our Philippines Commonwealth and so on and so forth.

SM: Yes. Right. What about now, with the new immigrants and so on? Is there any pattern or preference for either of the two parties or . . .?

RR: Not that I could notice, actually.

SM: Right, I suppose that is very [unclear].

RR: [Chuckles] Yes.

SM: Well, did the church play any particular role with the Filipino immigrants [unclear]? Well, the Catholic Church, or I suppose that's what most of the people were.

RR: Well, the Filipino . . . yes, the majority of the Filipinos are still Catholics.

SM: Yes.

RR: But when the missionaries started coming to the Philippines, you know, they divided the islands into three groups, see.

SM: Yes.

RR: One Protestant group was in the northern part of Luzon, or the Philippines. And then another group, another denomination in the middle center part of these isles, and I don't know whether it was a third one in Mindanao, but of course that's a moral . . . what they call the moral province where the Muslims live.

SM: Yes. Which missions worked there?

RR: Oh, there was the Baptists, Methodists, and then the one that came to . . . to my part of the country were the United Brethren Church, they called it the United Brethren Church.

SM: Oh. Did your family join that church?

RR: I'm proud to say that my father was the first convert to Protestantism in our hometown.

SM: Oh, that's very interesting.

RR: I was the last one in the family to be baptized Catholic. But I have an older brother and sister, of course, before me. But the rest of the children were baptized Protestants.

SM: I see. You were baptized Catholic though.

RR: I was baptized Catholic but I was re-baptized Protestant.

SM: You were re-baptized.

RR: Yes. So were the other two.

SM: I see. Do you know why your family changed or did they ever talk about that or . . . ?

RR: We never talked about it.

SM: Yes.

RR: All we did was to follow Dad's advice. [Chuckles] He . . . he was the first convert, like I said.

SM: I see.

RR: Yes.

SM: What year was that about?

RR: Oh . . .

SM: I don't mean . . . [chuckles] I don't mean exactly what year, that would be awkward. [Unclear].

RR: It must be around 1908 or 1910.

SM: Oh. Oh, that's very soon after . . .

RR: Yes.

SM: [Unclear] or after [unclear] Americans came [unclear].

RR: After the Americans came there, yes.

SM: Yes. Well, [unclear] you think you made the right choice [chuckles] to stay [unclear]?

RR: Well, like I always tell my wife, I have never been sorry.

SM: Do you think Minnesota was a good place for Filipinos in any particular way?

RR: I don't think . . .

SM: A little more open? It doesn't sound like it was completely open. [Chuckles]

RR: No, that's right. I do not know. There's a lot of Filipinos, of course, that are going off to New York and to Chicago.

SM: Oh, they're leaving Minnesota to go there? Or they came to Chicago and [unclear]?

RR: That came [unclear] yes. I'm satisfied and all of the boys, older boys that I know in Minnesota are . . . seem to be satisfied here. They seem to be settled, they have their own homes and families here.

SM: Yes. What brings the new immigrants here? Jobs or relatives or . . .?

RR: Well, a lot of it, there's through relations, relatives, too, that are . . . that have been here before them.

SM: Is that one of the main pulls these days?

RR: Yes. That is, more or less.

SM: Yes.

RR: Well, of course, if they dislike it here, they could always move away.

SM: Right.

RR: Just like quite a few that came here from Caba, for example, now. Well, we have some other people living in Chicago, so they moved to Chicago.

SM: Yes.

RR: But it's just a matter of personal preference, I guess.

SM: Yes. Well, one more question I wanted to ask you was about the use of the term Pilipino and Filipino. It seems like most of Minnesota's . . . Minnesota Filipino use Filipino. Is that right or . . .?

RR: Yes. Well, if they want to . . . Pilipino, actually, is . . . is I think a Tagalog word.

SM: Yes. I think that's what somebody told me.

RR: Yes, Pilipino. But that stands for Filipino.

SM: Yes. Is that used more by the new immigrants that come here? Or maybe in writing it's used more?

RR: Yes. Well, I think that to . . . to emphasize some doings that they are putting up here, you know, just like the . . . Philippines Christmas. That [unclear] they celebrate here in a big way now, see.

SM: Yes.

RR: And they call it Pilipino just to make it real

[Recording interruption]

SM: . . . a Christmas program.

RR: No, I think . . . I think that's all I could say about how they make it more . . . native, I suppose, if they say Pilipino. [Chuckles]

SM: Oh, yes. Well, that emphasizes the consciousness of it, Filipino culture.

RR: That's right. That's right.

SM: Well, I suppose if it was Filipino it was Spanish pronunciation or was that . . . ?

RR: Well that . . . I really . . . it's really hard for me to explain that. The Pilipino is that . . . I think a Tagalog term.

SM: Right.

RR: And you know that Tagalog and English are our dialects . . . or our official languages in the Philippines now.

SM: Yes.

RR: They . . . they are trying to teach the Tagalog language to . . . in all the schools all over the Philippines now.

SM: Yes.

RR: After our independence.

SM: Yes. Right. Well, did you favor independence? Did most of the old timers . . .? I mean who weren't old timers then, but . . . [Chuckles]

RR: Well, I think that's inherent to anybody, you know, to want to see their country independent.

SM: Yes. But it made it harder for the immigrants here.

RR: It did. Yes, it did. Yes. But I don't know. We have always seemed to carry on a very friendly relationship with the United States, too, and I hope that that keeps on.

SM: Yes, it seems to be a very [unclear].

RR: Of course, we . . . we . . . you probably would come up with some Filipinos, you know, that try to . . . well, exert some authority and try to . . . buck you, you know. But in the long run I think that Filipinos have been very fortunate to have the United States over them and looking, even now, while they are independent.

SM: Yes. Ruby, could I just ask you to comment just . . . on whatever you want to say or [unclear] the Nordic, Norwegian life to this Filipino community. Since there seem to be quite a few, I think it might be very interesting to get a little insight into what it was like. [Chuckles] Or how your family reacted and . . .

RR: Tell it . . . tell it the way it is, Ma.

SM: [Laughter]

RKR: Well, it does seem rather a coincidence that so many of the Filipino fellows who came here somehow were married to Scandinavian girls.

SM: Yes.

RKR: It must be that the Scandinavians are very broad minded.

RR: [Chuckles]

SM: Must be. Also, there were quite a few of them. [Chuckles]

RKR: There were a lot of Norwegian and Swedish girls around.

SM: It really is a very interesting phenomenon.

RKR: Yes. We had rough going, as Rudolph said, during our courtship and early marriage, but . . . it seems that God was always with us, and we . . . we never really had any too bad experiences except for the stares, which we could just stare back and wear them down.

SM: Yes.

RKR: We've been married fifty years and we have had a good life. God always provided food and shelter for us and gave us two beautiful daughters. I don't know what more we could ask.

RR: And seven grandchildren.

RKR: Now we have seven beautiful grandchildren.

SM: Do your children identify with the Filipino culture to any important extent or . . . ?

RKR: Not really. Both of our girls married . . . well, one is a Swede.

SM: Oh. [Chuckles]

RKR: And the other one is a mixture of Swede, German, Finn, and what have you. But they are fine fellows and our . . . it's kind of too bad, in a way, but our girls did not have too many friends amongst the Filipino American families. We lived in White Bear and they just didn't get to know too many of them. And consequently didn't associate much with the . . .

SM: Yes. I suppose living in an outlying area like that it would be [unclear].

RKR: It's too bad that they didn't get to know more of the Filipino American children when they were growing up.

SM: Yes. Would you say you didn't go to some of the organizations or weren't as active in them [unclear]?

RKR: Yes. Yes. We had contact with them, but what I mean is they didn't make fast friends because they didn't get to see them that often.

SM: Yes.

RKR: And that closely.

SM: So, by and large, they're very American?

RKR: Our daughters and their families are very American, yes.

SM: Do they feel some roots in the Scandinavian or more roots in that or . . . ? Or are they just . . . American? [Chuckles]

RKR: Well, I'd say they are mostly . . . pretty much American.

RR: So would I, yes.

SM: Well, it's really natural to [unclear].

RKR: The grandchildren are very proud of their grandfather.

SM: Are they?

RKR: Yes, they are. They are. They're very happy to . . . well, not really showing off, but like our oldest grandson is in college and he's just so happy when we can go there and watch him play football.

SM: Oh, where is he going?

RKR: He goes to Lawrence College in Appleton, Wisconsin.

SM: Oh, I see. Good school.

RKR: Yes.

SM: Well, is there anything we should have talked about that we didn't? [Chuckles] Anything you'd like to add to this?

RR: No, unless . . . unless you want to add in some of my Masonic relationships I'm really proud of.

SM: Oh, sure. Yes. Add that on.

[Shuffling, sliding noises]

RR: Yes, I . . .

RKR: [Unclear].

RR: Oh, that's alright.

SM: Oh.

RR: Yes. Oh, I became a . . . I became a Mason and I have been very happy ever since. A lot of my Masonic friends have recognized me and . . . and . . . well, I was able to go up Masonically as I would ever want to be.

RKR: In fact, one fellow Mason got up at a meeting and said . . . introduced Rudolph as . . .

RR: My Masonic godfather.

SM: Oh!

RR: But . . .

RKR: Mr. Mason of Minnesota.

RR: Oh, yes.

SM: [Chuckles] Well, that's interesting.

RR: Yes. And that came from one of the highest Masons in Minnesota, too. He introduced me as Mr. Mason of Minnesota. "I could almost call Rudy Mr. Mason of Minnesota," he said.

SM: Oh, yes.

RR: Because of my accomplishments Masonically. I did something that I have enjoyed to do and I have never been sorry ever since. And I'm very deeply connected with a lot of Masonic bodies. As a matter of fact, I have been secretary of my lodge in White Bear now for a few years.

SM: How did you get interested in this organization? Don't you have to be invited to join it?

RR: Nope. It's got to be on your own volition.

SM: I see.

RR: Yes, we cannot invite a person to be joined Masonry, but we could tell them but we cannot invite them.

SM: Oh, it has to be approved, right?

RR: And . . . but, see . . .

RKR: But they invite themselves.

RR: They invite themselves. It has got to be on their own accord, actually.

SM: I see. But then you have to be approved by the organization.

RR: Oh, yes. You have to petition the lodge and then you have to have two signers from the lodge recommending you.

SM: Yes.

RR: And you will be balloted on. And if you qualify according to the so-called brothers who will be balloting on you, why, you will be allowed to take the degrees. And after you take the degrees, why, and actually, you become a master Mason like the rest of them.

SM: Yes.

RR: Because there are several bodies in Masonry to which any Mason could join. And I chose to join everybody, so [chuckles] I am known in every Masonic circle in Minnesota.

SM: I see. Well, did you have friends in it or how did you [unclear] like to join it?

RR: Oh, yes. You cannot help but make friends in Masonry, actually, because the people that belong like you do, we all feel such a brotherly love feeling that you cannot help but make friends.

SM: But before you joined did you have friends that were already in that [unclear]?

RR: Oh, yes. You have to be recommended by a Mason.

SM: I see.

RR: And we had two such good friends in White Bear when we moved there that . . . it didn't take me long to get in through the recommendation.

SM: How did you happen to move to White Bear? Was there some reason you moved there particularly or . . . ?

RR: Well, it was a little hard for . . . we were . . . I was working for a family then and they have their summer home in White Bear.

SM: Oh.

RR: And come time to move to Saint Paul again, why, I told my boss, Mr. Ordway, that . . . I do not want to experience any hardship in getting a place to live in in Saint Paul.

SM: Yes.

RR: So I mentioned a place that was for sale, and do you know that he went and paid the house up for us.

SM: In White Bear?

RR: In White Bear.

SM: Oh.

RR: Of course, we paid him eventually, but . . . we did not put one cent down on it.

SM: Oh.

RR: He went and bought the house and then one day he told . . . called me up and said, "Rudolph, you and your wife come to the Empire National Bank." That was the Empire National Bank then. See now, what have I done now?

SM: [Chuckles]

RR: So we got up there and then we had to go and sign papers to the effect that we were buying a house from my boss, which he paid . . . he paid outright.

SM: I see. Yes. So you had worked for him after Pillsbury . . .

RR: Oh, yes.

SM: Or after . . .

RR: After the . . .

SM: After the Gray Company.

RR: Yes, surely, after the Gray Company, too. Yes, that was before that.

RKR: But you were at Ordway's when you went to the Gray Company.

SM: Oh, I see.

RR: Well, I was with . . . I was with Ordways then but I would work for them for a little while after that, too.

SM: Oh, I see. What was their first name or . . . ?

RR: John G. Ordway.

SM: John G. Ordway.

RR: Yes.

SM: So they were one of the wealthy families . . .

RR: Oh, boy. Sure. His father, Lucius P. Ordway, was one of the original 3M men.

SM: Oh, I see.

RR: As a matter of fact, he was the one who loaned them five thousand dollars to keep them up from Duluth.

SM: Well, this info. I'm really glad we added that on about this.

RKR: [Chuckles]

RR: Yes. Well, that was . . . I am happy to be a Mason and I . . . I'm not trying to brag, but I have had a lot of grand offices for which I'm real thankful and . . .

SM: Oh, what were the offices? Maybe we can . . .

RR: Oh, Lord. I was Grand Chaplain of the Grand Lodge.

SM: Oh.

RR: And I was Grand Prelate of the Grand Commandery.

SM: Hmmm.

RR: And I was Grand Master of the Grand Council of Minnesota for one year.

SM: What would you call . . . if you're talking about all these different positions, they were . . .?

RR: Well, they are different bodies, see, the Grand Lodge is the main body.

SM: Yes.

RR: And then the other appendant bodies, of course, are the Council, and the Chapter, and the Commandery.

SM: I see.

RR: And then there are a lot of honor . . . honorary societies, too, or lodges . . . no, not lodges. Honorary bodies to which I belong and over which I have presided.

SM: Hmmm. Well, haven't you been pretty active in your church here?

RR: I was active in my church.

SM: And which church was that?

RKR: First Lutheran.

RR: First Lutheran Church in White Bear Lake. We belong to . . . we joined that church there in 1939 just as soon as we moved to White Bear Lake and I have been . . . we have been members ever since.

SM: I see.

RR: I have been honored to be elected to the board of trustees and to the board of deacons. And as a matter of fact, I was vice president of the board one term.

SM: [Unclear]. Oh, well, you've been a pillar of that church then.

RR: Oh, yes. We are. We are old members of that church and we . . . we have been . . .

SM: Was that while you were the Grand Chaplain? Or no . . .

RR: No.

SM: Nothing to do with that.

RR: Nothing to do with that, although I have preached. I have preached in my church, too. Twice.

SM: Oh.

RR: See, we have a layman's Sunday in church once a year. And I was . . .

SM: Oh.

RR: I was elected . . . selected to preach at . . . twice, actually. Once when we were in our small church and then once after we moved to our big church on Highway 61.

SM: Hmmm. That's very interesting. I'm glad we've got that in, too. I'm sure I'll think of a lot of things we should have added.

RR: [Chuckles] I know.

SM: It happens every time. [Chuckles] Thank you very much. And I think this will be a really good addition to our archives.

RR: Well, I have enjoyed being with you.

SM: Thank you both.