Victorino Alojado, Sr. Narrator

Interviewer Lita Malicsi

January 28, 2011 West St. Paul, Minnesota

Victorino Alojado - VA Lita Malicsi - LM

LM: My name is Lita Malicsi and I am interviewing Mr Victorino Alojado, Sr. Today is January 28, 2011.

You are called Turing by friends and acquaintances. Turing is short for Victorino. Your family and relatives call you Papang, which means Pop or Papa. In this interview, may I call you Papang Turing, or Papang, which is how I've been addressing you all these years?

VA: Yes, please do.

LM: Thank you.

Papang Turing, when were you born?

VA: I was born on March 5, 1921.

LM: So, you will be ninety years old in a few weeks?

VA: That's right.

LM: How does that feel?

VA: I'm proud of it. I feel strong and healthy.

LM: I'm so glad to hear that, Papang.

Where were you born?

VA: I was born in Zamboanga City, Philippines.

LM: Would you describe Zamboanga City? What was it like when you were growing up?

VA: Zamboanga City is a very beautiful place, where we have rainy and dry seasons. I loved this city where I lived. Around it are coastlines with lots of sandy and pretty beaches. I had a lot of friends when I was growing up, and I used to go with them and with my brothers to the beaches. We would go there on weekends. Also, my brothers and I and our friends used to go to the United States Army reservations or barracks, where we played softball. Then we would go to the swamp, go fishing, and boating.

LM: Did you sometimes catch a lot of fish?

VA: Yes, we sometimes caught a lot of fish.

LM: What did you do with the fish that you caught?

VA: We brought them home to my mother and she cooked them.

LM: You obviously had fun days with your siblings and friends.

What dialect did you speak in Zamboanga?

VA: In Zamboanga, we speak Chavacano, a mix of Tagalog and Spanish, and some Bisaya, sometimes, because my parents are from Iloilo, and they also spoke Ilonggo. We learned how to speak Bisaya, as well, since that was the dialect of my parents.

LM: So, Chavacano is a mixture of Spanish, Tagalog, and Bisaya?

VA: Yes.

LM: What were your parents' names?

VA: My mother's name is Maura Camis. My dad's name is Teofilo Alojado.

LM: Do you remember where they were born?

VA: Both of them were born in the island of Iloilo.

LM: Do you remember what they did? What were their occupations?

VA: My father was in the U.S. Army and my mother stayed at home and took care of us.

LM: Did you help with the work at home, with the chores at home?

VA: Yes, I helped my mother all the time getting water, cooking, looking for firewood to use for the cooking.

LM: Where did you go to look for firewood?

VA: By that swamp near the U.S. Army reservation.

LM: Where did you go to get water?

VA: In a faucet, you know. Large public faucet.

LM: But did you have wells?

VA: No, not wells. Faucet, I filled my buckets with water from the faucet so we could use it for cooking and washing

LM: That's a tough chore.

VA: Yes, but I had to help my mother.

LM: What happened when you did not do your chores? Was there some kind of punishment for you?

VA: Yes, my father would get mad and spank us on our behind.

LM: Oh, okay. What about your mom? Did she punish you at all?

VA: Sometimes my mother pinched my tummy.

LM: Did it hurt? Did you cry?

VA: Sometimes I cried, sometimes not.

LM: About how old were you then?

VA: I was about ten years old.

LM: Papang, what were you like as a young boy, as a child? Were you nice and obedient, or were you naughty and disobedient?

VA: I always followed my mother's instructions and my dad's. I always helped them when they needed it. I would always go when they sent me to the market to buy food

LM: Was the market far from where you lived?

VA: No. I rode my bicycle to go to the market.

LM: What kind of food were you asked to buy in the market? What did they sell in the market?

VA: Some days I bought pork or fish. Other days I bought rice, vegetables, and eggs. We had a big market. They sold all kinds of food.

LM: Do you remember how much they cost during that time?

VA: At that time, everything was cheap. If you had two pesos, you could buy food that will last for the whole day.

LM: So if your mom gave you two pesos, what would you come home with?

J. Society J. Society VA: I could buy fish and rice, vegetables, and everything my mother needed for cooking our meals.

LM: Isn't that wonderful!

How many brothers and sisters do you have?

VA: We were four brothers.

LM: Do you have a sister?

VA: No, I never had a sister.

LM: You're all boys.

VA: Yes, all boys, and now we are only two left. Two already passed away.

LM: Your living brother - where is he now? Where does he live?

VA: That is my youngest brother. He is in Metro Manila, in Marikina. He owns a store that sells vegetables and fruits in Marikina.

LM: Do you sometimes see him or talk to him?

VA: Yes, whenever I go on vacation in the Philippines, I visit him and his family. When I am not able to visit, I call him.

LM: What is his name?

VA: He's my youngest brother. His name is Pio, P-i-o. He and his wife have four children.

LM: When was the last time you saw Pio?

VA: The last time I saw him was in 1997, when I went on a vacation to the Philippines.

LM: Do you have any plans to see him sometime?

VA: Not this time. Because of my age, my sons and daughters-in-law don't allow me to fly by myself...

LM: Of course. They're trying to protect you.

When you were young, did you have a good relationship with your brothers? Did you have good times together?

VA: Yes, I had a good relationship with my brothers and we played together and we respected each other. We got along very well. We played games all the time.

LM: What kind of games did you play?

VA: We played a lot of softball and volleyball with other kids. We also liked playing Sipa. We were very good at it.

[chuckles]

LM: Sipa. I remember that. I played it, too! Every Filipino child played it. For those people who do not know what Sipa is, can you explain it a little bit?

VA: It's made of a small metal disk that has a fluffy tail of shredded plastic or chicken feathers, and you kick it. [laughter] It is a game of kick. The Sipa is thrown upwards for the player to toss using his or her foot. The player must not let the Sipa touch the ground by hitting it several times with the foot. The player must count the number of times he kicks the Sipa.

LM: And the one with the most number of kicks wins the game. It is a national sport in the Philippines. Sometimes Filipino children use either a big bunch of rubber bands knotted together, or a small disk with colorful threads, usually plastic straw, attached to it.

VA: We had so much fun playing Sipa.

LM: I would think that you only played during your free time when you were not doing the family chores.

VA: Yes, yes. Otherwise, we'd get spanked.

[laughter]

LM: Let's talk about school. Tell me where you went to school.

VA: I went to the Ateneo de Zamboanga from Grade School to seventh grade. Then, my first year high school was in a trade school, or vocational school.

LM: At the Ateneo de Zamboanga, what were your school hours? Do you remember?

VA: Yes. We went to school from seven in the morning to four in the afternoon.

LM: You had long school hours.

VA: Yes, because there were a lot of activities, you know.

LM: That's true. Philippine schools in general have long hours. I'm sure you were given recess time.

VA: Yes, we got recess.

LM: What did you do during recess?

VA: We assembled out in the plaza. The school was right in the city and we could run around and then come back to class.

LM: Did you have lunch in school, or did you go home for lunch?

VA: We went home for lunch. In the Philippines, they gave you enough time so you could eat at home during the lunch hour.

LM: What did you usually have for lunch?

VA: Mostly rice and fish.

LM: Let's talk a little bit more about school. What were you taught in school?

VA: Besides the regular classes, they taught us religion, too.

LM: Because the Ateneo de Zamboanga was a Catholic school?

VA: Yes. Religion was an important class.

LM: Were you a good student in religion? Did you get good grades in that class?

VA: Yes. You have to know how to pray. You are graded on that. Then, every Sunday you go to Mass. When you go to school in the morning, you start with a prayer. In the classroom, we always prayed.

LM: So you prayed every day in school.

VA: Yes, every day, we'd go upstairs. Before we started class, we prayed.

LM: What prayers did you say?

VA: Holy Mother of God...

LM: Do you still remember your prayers?

VA: I forgot some.

[laughter]

iory Project LM: How about homework? Did you do a lot of homework?

VA: Yes, we did a lot of homework.

LM: What kind of homework assignments did you have?

VA: We were given different homework assignments Writing a letter was one of them.

LM: What kind of letters were they, and who did you write a letter to?

VA: We wrote a letter to a friend about what's going on, you know. We also did arithmetic and other lessons.

LM: At home, did anybody help you with homework assignments?

VA: Yes. My older brothers helped me with my assignments. Sometimes I asked my father. Then he would help me.

LM: Did you get good grades in school?

VA: Not really. [chuckles]

LM: Tell me why, Papang.

VA: I was always lazy, you know. I was always playing around with friends. I don't think I was a serious student.

LM: What were the teachers like? Were they strict, very strict?

VA: Very strict, sometimes.

LM: Were the children afraid of them?

VA: We respected our teachers. We were also afraid, sometimes.

LM: What kind of punishment did teachers have for students who were not behaving?

VA: Sometimes, they spanked you. They always had a stick.

LM: Where were you spanked?

VA: On your behind.

[chuckles]

LM: Did you get spanked often?

VA: No, they didn't really spank me. They would only wave that stick. Then they'd give you a warning. We never complained. We didn't tell our mother, our parents. We're scared.

LM: Why?

VA: Our mother would scold and spank us. If we did something wrong or misbehaved, the teachers would tell our parents. Then our mother would scold us. They would protect the teachers. Our mothers would say, "You better behave or the teachers will punish you." You'd get punished in school, and you'd get punished at home. That's why we were scared to let our mothers know.

LM: Yes, that's right. In the Philippines, parents, mothers especially, are very supportive of the teachers.

Did you have a teacher or teachers who were really nice and encouraging? Did you have a favorite teacher?

VA: The Ateneo was a school for boys. Our teachers were all males.

Yes, I had a favorite teacher. His name was Mr. Carino.

LM: Why was he your favorite teacher? Do you remember any good stories about Mr. Carino?

VA: He's nice, you know. He taught us well. He was a good teacher. He's a good singer, too. He sang every Sunday in the church. Mr. Carino was Visayan. He was an immigrant in Zamboanga City - from the Visayas.

LM: And did you have a favorite class? What was it?

VA: I did not have a favorite class because I liked all my classes.

LM: That's great! You must have had an enjoyable time in school.

VA: Yes, I had a happy time. Whenever we had a break, I would go with my friends around town. It was really fun.

LM: How far away was your school from town?

VA: My school was right in the city. If you wanted refreshments, there were several restaurants in the city, and there were stores all over. They were right in the city.

LM: That's Zamboanga City, right?

VA: Yes. The church and our school were right in the city.

LM: Do you remember your very first job when you were young?

VA: I didn't have a real job at that time; I was still young, and going to school. But I remember earning some money by shining shoes of American soldiers in the U.S. Army barracks. Then when I got married, my brother-in-law who was in the U.S. Army, gave me a job.

LM: What kind of job was it?

VA: I had to cut firewood for the Army families living in the barracks That's the job they gave me.

LM: Do you remember how much you were paid?

VA: I don't remember, but they paid not by the hour, but by the day.

LM: Were you paid in pesos?

VA: Yes, we got paid in pesos. That's like a Federal job. That's the only job I had at the time, and it helped me support my family. We lived with my parents at that time, so that was helpful, too.

LM: Papang Turing, I am going to ask you to recall what might be a painful part of history. It's about the war. It's about World War II. Do you still remember World War II?

VA: Yes, I remember.

LM: How old were you when the war broke out?

VA: I think I was twenty years old, going on twenty-one when the war broke out. That was in 1942.

LM: Did you have to leave your home to evacuate to a different place? Can you recall that particular time?

VA: I clearly remember that day when Japanese airplanes, seven Japanese planes, air raided our place. We were so scared we had to quickly leave. People started moving up to the hills. There were people living there who let us stay under their house. That's where we slept. We got banana leaves, spread them on the ground, and that was our dwelling. We also used coconut leaves.

LM: You did not have to go to the mountains to hide?

VA: Yes, we did, too. The place started to be no longer safe, so we had to go up to the mountain. That's at least seven kilometers from where we were.

LM: Did you have to walk to the mountain with all your belongings?

VA: Yes, but we got a carabao to pull our belongings. You know what a carabao is. It's a water buffalo. We loaded the carabao and took it on the hill.

LM: So you used the carabao for transporting your belongings up the hill.

VA: We built a cart and loaded it with our belongings. This cart was pulled by the carabao. When we got there, we built a house on the side of the mountain.

LM: What kind of house did you build?

VA: My brother-in-law gave us a thick canvas, so we made some kind of a tent and stayed in there. Then, the Japanese invaded the city. They kept shelling and bombing. There were Japanese soldiers going around, but they just stayed in the city. They didn't go farther. They just occupied the city. We felt safe up in the mountain.

LM: You mentioned the word air raid earlier. What was that like?

VA: The Japanese had seaplanes flying around and dropping bombs. At daytime, they dropped bombs.

LM: Were there civilian people who were killed during the air raids?

VA: Yes, right in the city, you know. But we were up the hill.

LM: I'd like to know what you ate during the war.

VA: That's the problem. I don't know why we weren't able to eat, but we got rice. We cooked it mixed with cassava. You know cassava?

LM: I do, I know cassava. You ate rice with cassava?

VA: Yes, we called it Kamanting.

LM: You boiled the rice with cassava.

VA: Yes. Then, sometimes, we ate rice with corn.

LM: You boiled the rice and corn together? Where did you get the rice?

VA: Some nice neighbors, and people leaving, gave us rice.

LM: Did you always have enough food for everybody or did you have just very little food to go around?

VA: That's what I'm saying, that we don't know how we survived during that time with very little food. We didn't even have salt, you know. But we still ate, and we survived.

LM: In addition to having very little to eat, what other experiences did you have to go through during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines?

VA: When the U.S. Troops surrendered, we were allowed to come down from the mountain and go to town.

LM: That was on May 12, 1942, when the last U.S. Troops holding out in the Philippines surrendered on Mindanao.

VA: Yes. We had to get an ID from the Japanese. Every time we passed security, we had to bow to the Japanese. We had to bow our head.

LM: What happened if you did not bow?

VA: They hit you. They slapped you.

LM: Did the little kids have to bow, as well?

VA: Yes. They had to bow, too. The Japanese were all over the city. We had to be careful of our actions. Sometimes you could be suspected of helping the guerillas.

LM: And what happened if you became a suspect?

VA: You got arrested and you knew you would get killed by the Japanese. You would not be found.

LM: You just would disappear?

VA: Yes, disappear. That's why you had to be very careful, because if somebody another Filipino, will tell the Japanese that you were helping the guerillas, you'd disappear, just like that.

LM: That, certainly, was a tough time for the Filipinos. But then things started to turn around. On February 16, 1945, the U.S. Troops recaptured Bataan. On March 3, 1945, the U.S. and Filipino Troops took Manila.

Tell me about that time the U.S. 8th Army invaded Zamboanga Peninsula. What did you do?

VA: Every night, the Americans came and dropped bombs at the airport. That was very close to our area, so the following day, we had to leave. We went south, about 22 kilometers from the city. That day, the Americans were shelling, bombing, doing air raids. It was a real invasion, and the Japanese retreated in the hills. We were lucky because we changed our evacuation, and instead of going north...

LM: You went south.

VA: Yes, south. The Japanese retreated to the North and the Americans went after them. Some civilians were killed by stray bullets, you know, crossfire.

LM: What else happened during the invasion?

VA: During the invasion, we were around twenty-two kilometers from the city along a ditch. We went to the ditch and saw that many American warships were landing. Every morning, the air raids passed by our place going towards downtown. That was the time Domi [Dominador] was born in that place we called Talisayan. It was during the invasion when he was born.

LM: Is Domi your eldest?

VA: No, Domi is the third in the family. My eldest [Manuel] was born during the invasion of the Japanese in 1942 and Virginia was born during the Japanese surrender. She was born in the city, in the hospital - Brent Hospital. Virginia was born at that time when the Japanese surrendered.

LM: Let me ask you about a very famous name: General Douglas MacArthur. What do you remember? What do you know about him?

VA: MacArthur was the Supreme Commander in the Far East. We called it USAFFE, United States Army Forces in the Far East. During that time, he was in Corregidor [Allied Headquarters]. He lived there underground. They escaped by submarine with the President of the Philippines and Ambassador to the United States, Carlos Romulo.

LM: Who was the president of the Philippines at that time?

VA: President [Manuel] Quezon. Vice Pres. Sergio Osmena became president when Manuel Quezon died in 1944. Osmena returned to the Philippines with the first liberation forces that landed in Leyte on October 20, 1944.

LM: Then a most exciting time came. July 5, 1945. The liberation of the Philippines was declared. Gen. Douglas MacArthur came to liberate the Philippines. What was this like? What was the mood of the Filipino people? How did they react?

VA: Well, when he left the Philippines in 1942, MacArthur made his famous promise, "I shall return." The Filipino people never doubted. We believed him—and he returned!

LM: Yes, he did. On July 5, 1945, Gen. MacArthur announced, "All the Philippines are now liberated."

What happened to the Japanese military?

VA: After that, they were still fighting all over the country, even in New Guinea, in Burma. Then, the Japanese forces finally surrendered in 1945.

LM: Now the war is over. Did you go back to your old home?

VA: We did, but everything was destroyed during the invasion. People came back to their old place to rebuild. Those who came back early enough were able to gather lumber from what remained of their old home. They picked up the damaged lumber and tried to build a place to live in. My wife and I were able to build a small house for our family. We were right in the city where we lived before.

LM: The war has ended. You have rebuilt your home. Your family's alive and well. Let's talk about the happier times in your life.

When did you meet the girl who was to be your wife?

VA: I met her when we were both in school.

LM: Was this before the war?

VA: Yes, this was before the war. We called it peace time.

LM: True. That's how it was called – peace time. How did you two meet?

VA: She was enrolled in the Zamboanga Normal School and I was enrolled in the trade school. Close to each other, you know. Her father was a soldier in the U.S. Army, and my father was also a soldier in the U.S. Army. We lived in the housing they called Barrio, where enlisted men and their families stayed. The place where we lived was Santa Barbara.

We used to meet each other during school days. After school, we would meet and walk on the boulevard going downtown, going home, every afternoon.

LM: What's her name?

VA: Her name is Ursula Jacob.

LM: What was Ursula Jacob studying? What was she going to be?

VA: She went to Zamboanga Normal School. After graduation, she was going to be a teacher, elementary teacher.

LM: And she became a teacher?

VA: She became a teacher after the war. When the war broke out, she was in third year high school and I was only first year. I didn't continue anymore when the school opened after the war.

LM: First year high school in the Philippines is equivalent to a ninth grader here.

VA: Yes.

LM: You were a ninth grader and she was a junior in high school.

VA: That's right.

LM: Papang, were there other girls before Ursula? Did you like other girls?

VA: No. No. She had a lot of classmates, girls, but I was not attracted to any of them. I am not a playboy. [laughter] I stick with only one.

LM: It was just Ursula.

VA: Yes. Just Ursula. She was always nice to me. I knew she was the one.

LM: So Papang, did you have a long engagement before you got married?

VA: Yes. We were together for a long time. Weekends, we'd go on picnics with some of her friends and classmates. We would go swimming at the beach on weekends, or go to the movie. But I wouldn't go to their house. Her parents did not know about us.

LM: Ohhh. You were sweethearts in secret?

VA: Yes. When I took her home, I wouldn't go up to their house. I'd leave, and go home.

LM: What do you think would have happened if they had known that you were sweethearts?

VA: They'd be mad. But then later on, they knew about me.

LM: Were they angry when they found out?

VA: Her father was against it, because I was jobless at that time. But her mother was okay with it.

LM: Do you have a good recollection of your wedding?

VA: We were not wed. They arranged it in the courtroom. We got married in court.

LM: It was not a church wedding?

VA: No. Not a church wedding

LM: It was a civil wedding, then.

When was that?

VA: That was in 1941.

LM: But why was it not a Catholic Church wedding?

VA: There was already bad news, you know, so we could not have a proper Catholic Church wedding.

LM: Bad news about the coming war?

VA: Yes. Then, since we were already legally married, her mother brought her to my parents and we lived there – with my parents.

LM: How many children did you and Ursula raise?

VA: We have nine kids. Danilo is our adopted son.

LM: You had eight boys and one daughter?

VA: That's right.

LM: What was it like raising a family of nine children?

VA: You know, in the Philippines at that time it's really not expensive to raise eight or nine children. Those children really never complained. Whatever you had, they would accept. They were contented.

LM: Obviously, you were a happy family.

VA: Yes, we were happy. At that time, my father was living with me. My father was a widower. He was a U.S. pensioner and helped me support my family at that time.

LM: Virginia was your only girl. Did the boys spoil their little sister?

VA: Sometimes they loved her. Sometimes, they fought. Kids, you know.

LM: Yes, of course.

What dialect did you speak at home?

VA: We spoke Chavacano at home

LM: Chavacano, that's the mixture of Tagalog, Spanish, and Bisaya.

Do you use it here in Minnesota?

VA: Sometimes. But we mostly speak English so my daughters-in-law will understand what we talk about.

LM: That's very nice.

Please tell me about your children and where they went to school.

VA: Most of them went to college. The first one graduated from high school and joined the Navy. This was the eldest, Manuel. He was recruited by the U.S. Navy in 1960. He has now been retired for twenty years.

LM: Where is Manuel presently?

VA: He lives in Savannah, Georgia.

LM: Do you see him there?

VA: Yes. He has a family there.

LM: Who comes next after Manuel?

VA: Next Virginia. Virginia graduated from Zamboanga City High School and took nursing at Zamboanga General Hospital. She finished nursing in 1965.

LM: You remember your dates. You have a good memory.

Where is Virginia now?

VA: Virginia was recruited as a nurseworking visa in Rochester, Minnesota, [Mayo Clinic] in 1968. She lived here in Minnesota.

LM: Is she still here in Minnesota?

VA: Virginia got married and is retired. She lives in Sun City, Arizona.

VA: Then, Domi, or Dominador, finished social work in Ateneo de Zamboanga.

Victorino Junior was supposed to take pre-engineering, but he changed his mind and applied in the U.S. Coast Guard. He was recruited in 1968 in the U.S. Coast Guard and he was stationed in Miami Beach, Florida. I lived there at that time with him.

Mar, or Marcelo, graduated Salutatorian from Zamboanga City High School. He was chosen as an Exchange Student in American Field Service, and went to Wautoma, Wisconsin, where he stayed for a year. That was in 1965. Then, after a year, he came home and enrolled in the University of the Philippines where he obtained his B.S. in Geodetic Engineering. While at the University of the Philippines, Mar obtained a two-year scholarship with the U.P. Filipiniana Dance Troupe from 1968 – 1970.

Moises graduated from Zamboanga Trade School and took nursing, because we kept telling him that if he finished nursing, he could go to the United States. So he finished nursing in 1972 and, then, he went to Manila to take the Board. Then he worked over there in Manila as a nurse.

Jose enrolled at the Adamson University, but he only studied there for one year, because he got scared of the bombings over there at that time. There were bombings here and there in Manila. So on vacation, I bought him a ticket, and he came home. He never returned to Manila to continue at Adamson University. That's it. He finished his B.S.in Chemistry at Zamboanga Normal College..

LM: What about Ephraim? Tell me about him.

VA: Ephraim obtained his B.S. in English. He was going to teach, but my son, Victorino Alojado Junior petitioned us way back in 1974. My wife was teaching at that time, so we had to do a lot of thinking, and finally decided that we would go, Then, she asked for a one year leave. We each filed a petition. In 1976, we were approved and then we flew to Minnesota on January 21, 1976. Ephraim stayed with Virginia in Lakeville, Minnesota. We got application forms for the kids. My wife filled out all those forms and filed them. At that time, the fee was only ten dollars. Then, the same year, they were approved and my sons left for the United States. It was October 1976. They all arrived, all of them.

LM: I'm so impressed. You have an excellent memory for these details.

Where was your wife teaching before you left for the United States?

VA: She taught high school in Zamboanga City High School after finishing her Bachelor of Science in Education. Then she got her master's degree. Her major was Tagalog, and her minor was English. She was given a teaching job at the Zamboanga State College.

She was teaching there up to when we left for the United States. Then she had to resign.

LM: Is the whole Alojado family now here in the United States?

VA: Yes, all the family is already here.

LM: How do you feel about all of you being here in the United States?

VA: Well, I'm happy because they are all grown up and they're all married. It is a wonderful feeling. We already have grandchildren and we are happy. My wife got to see some of them before she passed away. She died too early. She has missed some of our grandchildren and great grandchildren.

LM: When did she pass away?

VA: August 5, 1994. She was 69 years old.

LM: Did she pass away here in Minnesota?

VA: She passed away here in Minnesota. At that time, we were still living in Bloomington, Minnesota with Domi. Domi, at that time, was living by himself. That was when my wife got Alzheimer's disease.

LM: I'm sure that was really tough.

VA: I took care of her more than a year at home. I took care of her by myself. The nurse who used to visit recommended that I had to talk to my family and have a short meeting about putting her in the nursing home, because it's hard for me if I got sick. So we had the meeting, and we agreed to put her in the nursing home. There, she passed away in just three months.

LM: Let me ask you this, Papang Turing. If you were in the Philippines and she was sick with the same health problems, where would she be?

VA: Well, if we are in the Philippines, we can get a lot of Filipinos over there and we can hire a maid, you know. We can hire. But it's better here, because we can get everything we need, and we can get them faster. Medical care is readily available here, and doctors who will treat you will live longer.

LM: So you think this is really a better place?

VA: Better place, yes.

LM: Are you happy that you made the decision to come to America?

VA: Yes. We decided, because during that time, we had martial law there under President [Ferdinand] Marcos.

LM: What was it like during martial law in the Philippines?

VA: It's difficult. You had to be home at a certain time. They told you when to be home There were too many restrictions and a lot of people suffered.. But it's okay. All my sons who are here, they saw how life is much better here than there. So they are worried about going over there. They prefer living in the U.S.

When we were here, we became American citizens, way back in 1985.

LM: How do you feel about becoming an American citizen?

VA: Well, if you are an American citizen, you enjoy more privileges. You are proud to be a Filipino American.

LM: Are you happy here as an American citizen?

VA: Yes. I've been here more than thirty-four years now. I'm happy here.

LM: So you think that you have achieved the American dream?

VA: Yes. Yes.

LM: What was your dream?

VA: When I was young, I was always dreaming of coming to America. I was thinking of how I could come here. At that time, every afternoon before I went home, I would buy a newspaper, *Manila Times*, because newspaper comes in the Philippine Island in the afternoon. Every time I got home, I would read the newspaper looking for opportunities. Then I saw a choice. The U.S. Navy was accepting applications from the first to the fifteenth. So I told my son, "Let's do this." He passed, and that was the start.

LM: That was the start of your achieving the American dream?

VA: Yes.

LM: Why did you choose to live in Minnesota?

VA: That's what some people were asking, and we told them that my daughter lived here. That's why we were here. We stayed with my daughter in Lakeville. Then, it got too cold, so we stayed only two or three weeks here. We then flew to Miami, Florida, and stayed with my son.

LM: How long did you live in Miami?

VA: We lived there for s while. I stayed there more than, I think, ten years. But twice, we came back here. The first time was in 1982. Then, we came back in 1985. We came to help—take care of our grandchildren, and we were always happy to help out. Of course, we really enjoyed being with our grandchildren.

LM: Do you know how many grandchildren you have all together?

VA: Now?

LM: Now.

VA: I have, thirty-four grandchildren and twenty-five great grandchildren.

LM: Thirty-four grandchildren and twenty-five great grandchildren! Wow! That's amazing.

What do you enjoy doing here besides being with your children, your grandchildren, and your great grandchildren?

VA: I can not think of anything better I would like to do than enjoy the time with my grandchildren, really. I like to see them get a better education, go to school, help their parents when they grow up, respect and obey their mom and dad.

LM: You are a wonderful grandfather! Those kids are lucky!

Papang, what do you like doing here? Do you have pastimes? Do you enjoy doing other things, in addition to being with your grandkids?

VA: I like watching TV, and I enjoy following baseball and basketball games, and other sports on TV. I also like being with my friends and our family friends.

LM: What do you consider the happiest moment or moments in your life?

VA: The happiest time in my life is the time I spend with them - with my children and with my grandchildren. I like seeing them enjoy life.

LM: That really makes you happy.

VA: Yes.

LM: You are so family oriented.

VA: I am always ready to help. When my daughter needed help taking care of the children, I flew from Miami to Arizona to be with them and take care of the kids until they found a live-in babysitter.

LM: Do you remember any sad moments in your life?

VA: The saddest time in my life was when my wife passed away. I took good care of her, and it really hurt when she left me. That was the saddest moment in my life.

LM: What do you think are some of the changes in society that you have seen in your lifetime?

VA: In my lifetime, I have seen some important changes in our society. I have seen the advancement in medicine and science. Now, they are able to make us healthier, and to live longer lives. Our doctors tell us how to eat right and how to eat healthy. They tell us to exercise. There are better medications for sick people.

But I think the biggest change is in technology. Everybody knows how to use the computer. Everybody knows how to email, and how to be on facebook.

LM: Do you?

VA: No, I don't bother with those things. My children and grandchildren are very good at those things. I'm not.

LM: What about the historical events? What important events have you experienced in your lifetime here in the United States?

VA: I will never forget the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001 when they crashed their planes on the World Trade Center and killed hundreds and hundreds of innocent people. I have never seen anything like that in my life, except maybe during the war.

I have also seen a lot of changes in the government - about Social Security, about economics, and about medical care. I am 90 years old. I have lived in the United States for more than 3 decades. I have seen changes, good and bad.

LM: Well, you certainly keep up with things, with issues, with events going on around you. That's wonderful.

Papang, is there something that you're really proud of? Why?

VA: As an American citizen, I am proud that we have elected for the first time an African American President of the United States, Barack Obama. Why am I proud? That shows that the American people have a sense of fairness. That's a good thing in America.

LM: That's great. Absolutely.

And what are you most grateful for in your life?

VA: I am grateful to our Lord for giving us a peaceful life. All my children are healthy and they are happy, so are my grandchildren and great-grandchildren. They get together all the time. That pleases me so much. I am grateful for that.

LM: Papang, do you think you have realized your American dream, what you came here for?

VA: Yes, I have reached my American dream. I have given my family and myself a better life in America – very different if I had not left the Philippines. Here, I have running water; I do not have to be carrying water from the faucet. I have a washing machine. I have food, more than enough food, in the refrigerator. My children live happily in homes that they own, and they are doing well in their chosen careers.

LM: Do you now consider Minnesota your home?

VA: Yes. I want to stay here in Minnesota, because all my grandchildren and great grandchildren are around, and my wife was buried here in Riverview Cemetery, Saint Paul. I want to spend the rest of my life here in Minnesota.

LM: Papang, I am now going to conclude this interview. Is there any final statement you want to make?

VA: Yes. I have been so blessed with wonderful daughters-in-law who love me as I love them. They ask me for advice. I am always happy to give advice whenever they need it. I respect them and I don't interfere with their lives. I always tell them, "Less talk, less mistakes. And think before you say anything."

I'm lucky to have a wonderful life. I have good children. My daughters-in-law are like my own. I had a happy childhood in the Philippines, and I live a peaceful life here in the United States. I enjoyed life with my dear wife Ursula for fifty years. We had a happy life together.

LM: I want to thank you so much, Papang Turing, for being such a wonderful narrator, admin. fun doing

.yo. [laughter] and for your willingness to share your great life story. I absolutely admire your remarkable ability to remember dates and details. I had so much fun doing this interview

VA: It's my pleasure, Lita. Maraming salamat din saiyo. [laughter]