

Patrick Faunillan
Narrator

Lita Malicsi
Interviewer

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Patrick Faunillan - **PF**
Lita Malicsi - **LM**

LM: My name is Lita Malicsi. Today is Wednesday, the 22nd of December, 2010, and I am interviewing Samuel Patrick Faunillan.

Patrick, would you tell me your date and place of birth?

PF: Sure. I was born on May 7, 1991 in Quezon City, Philippines.

LM: Who are your parents?

PF: My parents are Edsel Faunillan and Susan Galvez Faunillan.

LM: How many children were you in the family, and where were you in the lineup?

PF: There are four children in my family, and I'm the youngest of four.

LM: Tell me who your siblings are.

PF: They are: my sister Susel, and my brothers Stephen Paolo and Sean Philip.

LM: How old were you when you came to the United States?

PF: I was three and a half years old.

LM: Did you come directly to Minnesota from the Philippines?

PF: No. We went straight to New York.

LM: Why New York?

PF: My mom left the Philippines before us. She left around six to nine months before us for her job, and she worked in New York first, so we all went to New York for that. My dad left before

us, as well. I don't know how much longer before. But my grandma and grandpa came with me and my siblings.

LM: How long did you stay in New York? And when did you come to Minnesota?

PF: We stayed in New York for around a year, and we went to Minnesota afterwards. In 1995, we were here.

LM: You lived in the Philippines the first four years of your life.

PF: Yes.

LM: Do you have memories of those years? What one or two stories do you remember most clearly about your first four years in the Philippines?

PF: I remember living close to my relatives and extended family. My dad's grandma was just across the street. It was a happy life, and there were, I remember, dogs. A lot of dogs everywhere. Stray dogs and our dogs, as well. And then I also remember our *yaya*, Ate Lani. I was really close to her, I remember that.

LM: You mentioned the word *yaya*

PF: Yes.

LM: Ok, Patrick. Let's provide a little explanation for the word *yaya*

PF: A *yaya* in the Philippines, I believe, is a woman employed to take care of the children. She is like a nursemaid. Sometimes she is also a family friend. She is not a maid who does the household chores. Her job is to help take care of the children as they grow up. In the long run she becomes close to the family because of her relationship with the children.

LM: And that's your Ate Lani

PF: Yes, yes. She helped take care of me and my siblings while my parents were at work. And yes, I remember Ate Lani would cook really good spaghetti. I think that's why I *love* spaghetti. It has become one of my favorite foods.

LM: You still like it?

PF: Yes, I love spaghetti.

LM: Is that your favorite food here in America?

PF: Yes, and any Filipino food, really. I like Asian food, in general. I also remember some food being sold from tricycles. It's liquid with little white bubbles.

What is that called?

LM: Oh, yes. It's called sago, and it's made of tiny white balls like tapioca and served with syrup. Did you like it?

PF: Yes, I did. It's sweet and very refreshing.

LM: You mentioned the tricycles. What did you think of them?

PF: They're fascinating. They're a mode of transportation, motorcycles with a sidecar, like a passenger-cabin on a third wheel. They're like taxis, but they are not. They go around transporting people. They're everywhere.

LM: Yes, they are everywhere, especially on smaller roads for short distances. They're often on roads where buses or jeepneys do not operate.

Do you remember how much you paid those tricycles when you wanted to go from place to place?

PF: I guess my parents would pay, or my grandma or yaya. But it was pretty cheap, like maybe ten, maybe even less than ten . . .

LM: Pesos

PF: Yes, ten pesos.

LM: And that would be equivalent to about 20 cents at the time.

So Patrick, did you have a best friend in the Philippines?

PF: I think my cousins would be my best friends - Den Den , and her brother Don Don.

LM: Den Den and Don Don.

PF: [Laughter] Yes. Yes, she's a year younger than me. And I remember we would play together a lot, her brother and my brothers. We had fun playing together . And I remember she used to bite me. [Chuckles]

LM: Do you still get in touch?

PF: Whenever I go to the Philippines I visit them, and we catch up right away. We can get along pretty easily. We are pretty good friends right away when we see each other. But currently I don't really know what they're up to. Well, I know that they're in college, and that's pretty much it.

LM: When was the last time you saw them?

PF: Last year, in the summer.

LM: You were in the Philippines last year?

PF: Yes. And this summer, as well, for Gawad Kalinga.

LM: I'm interested in having you talk about that, about Gawad Kalinga, and the time you did Gawad Kalinga work in the Philippines. We'll go to that in a little while.

Right now, I'd like you to talk a little bit more about the time you came to the United States and experienced your first airplane ride.

PF: I was three and a half years old.

LM: What do you remember about that particular experience?

PF: Yes, I have some memories. I remember I really liked it; it was a lot of fun. I remember there were movies. They were showing movies, and the movie screen was really big for me. I remember sitting on my grandpa's lap here and there. And then it didn't seem as long as it does, now.

LM: Were you scared being on the plane? Were you excited? What was it like?

PF: It was a lot of fun. I don't think I was scared at all being on the plane, because I was more excited about seeing my mom and my dad again and being together. I don't think I ever really noticed or felt that I was leaving the Philippines and not really coming back for a long time. It was just, oh, we're going to go see my mom and dad and be with them again.

LM: Your family came to Minnesota after a year's stay in New York.

PF: Yes.

LM: Why Minnesota? Why did your parents decide to come to Minnesota?

PF: It had something to do with my mom's job. My parents had three options, three other states to move in. I think South Carolina, Minnesota, and some other state in the West, I believe. And they felt that Minnesota was the safest among all of them, so we went to Minnesota.

LM: What was your childhood like in Minnesota? Do you have recollections of your really young days here in Minnesota when you first came?

PF: We lived in an apartment first. And I remember I had a best friend, James. He was also Filipino. We became pretty much involved in the Filipino community right away when we went to Minnesota. And my *ninang* (Godmother) was here, and visited a lot. Her name is Nilda Carlos.

I started Kindergarten in Minnesota at a Catholic private school, the Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton School.

LM: What do you recall about your first day in Kindergarten here in Minnesota? Was it a pleasant experience?

PF: I don't remember anything bad about it. That was a fun time for me. One thing that I remember in the beginning of school, back in New York—in preschool, actually—my parents could come and cook things from their own culture. I remember my dad bringing some dumplings that he made himself. And I *loved* it! [Chuckles]

It was *so* good. And my class loved it, and my teacher loved it, and now I really, really enjoy it when my dad cooks dumplings. So I remember that.

LM: That's a great story – something that is always fun to remember! Patrick, describe your parents. What are they like?

PF: My parents are awesome.

LM: Yes, I really see that.

PF: I love my parents a lot. If it wasn't for them, I really wouldn't be who I am right now. They're really, really encouraging, and really, really supportive in my decisions, and what I want to do. They are always there for me if I need them, and they also give me space if I need it, as well.

LM: And how would your parents describe *you* as a son?

PF: [Chuckles] Hopefully, they would say I'm a good son who works hard and tries to please them, tries to get good grades, and is strong academically, but at the same time pretty strong socially, as well. I can balance things. At the same time, I know my priorities, my values, and morals. My parents did a *good* job of raising me.

LM: They've done a great job! And how would *you* describe yourself as a son?

PF: I think I try my hardest to not disappoint my parents, and to work hard like they did, so they could come here. They really wanted to come to America to give me a good life. So I think I should take as much of the opportunity they've given me. And I think our values are very

similar. They want the best for me, and I want the best for myself, as well. So I think we're very similar in that.

LM: In what ways, would you say, have your parents influenced you?

PF: They've definitely influenced me to work hard in school. They are there when I have questions. And they also taught me, especially during college, to just relax, as well, and to have fun. They advised me to work hard academically, but at the same time, to do things that de-stress and relax. They've given me a lot of encouragement, and they've helped my self-esteem. They help me to really believe in myself, because they do.

LM: Which of your parents are you most similar to, and in what ways?

PF: Hmm, I think I'm similar to both, because they're both hard workers. My dad is more the fun . . . [chuckles] fun type, smiley type, and likes to get to know a lot of people. I guess I'm very similar to that. But at the same time, my mom is the one who's really, I'd say, [chuckles] more focused and organized, and I take that from her, as well.

LM: So you have the *best* of both.

PF: Yes, I do.

LM: Tell me something about your siblings, and your relationship with them.

PF: I love my siblings, but we're not as close as we used to be when I was younger.

LM: Why is that?

PF: I think it's because part of me has grown up. I feel like I've moved on. My sister and I are pretty close.

LM: I think it's great to have a big sister with whom you feel close.

PF: We've been close. But I feel like, my brothers, my two older brothers have stayed too attached to their video games most of the time, and are not seriously interested to move on from that. It's hard for me to relate to that. I have difficulty looking at a screen for hours and hours. I want to go out there in the world.

LM: Would you change anything in your relationship with them? How would you do that?

PF: Definitely. I would love to be closer to all my siblings. My brothers, I would love to see my brothers focus more on school or do what they actually want to do and socialize. Then I could socialize with them. They can be with my friends, and I can be with their friends. I would like to

get to know them more and what they really want to do. I would like to have more conversations with them. I try. I should try more.

LM: Don't give up. It will happen.
Now tell me about your school background.

PF: I'm a sophomore at Saint Olaf College. I went to a performing arts high school, and I went to a private school from preschool to eighth grade, a Catholic private school.

LM: How would you describe yourself as a student, socially?

PF: I think I'm pretty social. I have a decent amount of friends at school, and back in the community, and back home. I have various groups of friends that I'd like to get to know. And yes, I like being able to know different types of people and hang out with them. I'm involved in numerous groups at school that are engaged in several school-related activities.

LM: And how would you describe yourself as a student, academically?

PF: I definitely try my hardest in my schoolwork. I study a lot. I'm in the library quite a lot in college. Finals just ended, so I was definitely living in the library for the past two weeks, preparing for finals.

LM: Yes, I believe that. Studying for finals can be quite labor-intensive.

PF: And yes, this semester was quite challenging. The course load was pretty hard, so I definitely studied a lot. One of my priorities is to work really hard and get good grades.

LM: Talk about the honors you earned and the recognitions you were given for your achievements when you graduated from high school.

PF: All through high school, I was on high honor roll, and President of our National Honor Society. I also received the Dr. [E.G.] Balcos Scholarship Award at the Filipino-Minnesotan Association Debutantes and Escorts Presentation.

LM: Yes, I remember that. The Dr. E.G. Balcos Scholarship is very competitive.

PF: I also received the FMA Arts Award and the Youth Leadership Award. I was President of the Fil-Minnesotan Youth Organization in 2009. I am also pleased to say that I had the opportunity to host and direct the first successful FMYO variety show in 2009.

LM: What can you tell me about the J.J. Ramstad Award that you received?

PF: The J.J. Ramstad Award is the highest award given to a graduate of MSSPA, an all-around student that excels in four disciplines: Music, Dance, Theater, and Life.

LM: You were given the SPOTLIGHT Musical Theatre Award . That is a prestigious award. Tell me more about it.

PF: I received the SPOTLIGHT Musical Theatre Award for the “Best Performance of a Leading Role” as Angel in the high school theatre production of RENT. This award recognizes top-notch high school theatrical productions in the metro area.

LM: Outstanding! What an honor!
You graduated High School Salutatorian from MSSPA with a GPA of 3.96.
You were also commencement class speaker on your 2009 graduation, is that correct?

PF: Yes, that’s correct.

LM: What was your message to the graduates?

PF: My message was basically to remember the last four years, what we contributed, and what we can contribute. I spoke about memories and experiences that our whole class could relate to, and we could reminisce together. I put some comedy into it, because it’s a joyful, not a sad event, but it’s bittersweet. And I also basically said that it’s the end of high school, but it’s okay to not really know yet what you’re doing with the rest of your life. It’s okay; we’ll find our way. My message to the future classes at our school was to take the opportunities high school offers because you don’t want to regret anything.

LM: That’s wonderful. Obviously, you did a great job.

One of your passions is theater. I would like you to talk about it, including your involvement with the noted Chanhassen Dinner Theatre.

PF: Yes. I have a strong passion for theater. It started around fifth grade, sixth grade. I think originally I wanted to be on the screen and be famous because I think that would be cool. But I started out auditioning for small theaters like SteppingStone Theatre, and I fell in love with being on stage and performing in front of people. I felt the impact it has on people, on the audience. I loved it so much that I continued auditioning for other theaters, and I also went to a performing arts high school because of it. I eventually auditioned for *The Easter Parade* in Chanhassen Dinner Theatre and got the child role in it. I was the opening number, and kind of the end, too, and other parts between in the show. That was a lot of fun. That was my sophomore year in high school when I was involved with the Chanhassen Dinner Theatre. There were about nine performances a week for about five months, and I had to miss school for it. A lot of shows I was involved in required me to miss school, but I was prepared for that. But yes, it was definitely a lot of fun. And my passion for theater continues to grow, and it’s still with me in college.

LM: So music and dance have also been an important part of your life. How did you develop a passion for these two disciplines?

PF: Music and dance, they kind of came along with theater. As I did theater, some shows required me to dance and sing, and I just started to really enjoy doing both. My performing arts high school required me to take classes in those places. I was involved in choir and I danced here and there, did hip hop. So I really enjoyed that.

LM: Is there any particular type of dance that you are inclined to do – more than others?

PF: I definitely like doing hip hop more. I'm not really experienced in it, but I go to hip hop club at school every once in a while. And if I had more time, I definitely would do it more often than that. I'm hoping to, next semester, be more involved with the hip hop club, so I can perform once again as a hip hop dancer.

LM: Have you ever taught dance? Is this something that you would want to do someday?

PF: Back in high school, for my senior project, I did choreography for a hip hop dance. This was the only time, really, I choreographed for a group of people. Other than that, I have not taught dance. Although it is not something I would want to do in the future, I will not say no to doing some choreography when the opportunity presents itself.

LM: Is there a teacher that you remember as having been particularly influential or inspirational? And how did this teacher inspire you?

PF: I have a few teachers. Back in high school, there was a theater teacher named Mr. Thompson. Everyone loved him. He was really, really great. Just really nice, an all-around good guy, and he was also really strong. He had a passion for theater, and really knew a lot of his stuff. He pretty much pushed us to our full potential. And he could be harsh sometimes, but it was definitely constructive criticism. He really inspired me to continue on and know that theater can be a passion, but you don't have to do it all the time.

And in college, there's my advisor, Karen Wilson, who's also a theater professor, and who's just really awesome. I can talk to her whenever I want. I can talk to her about my problems in school and life, and she's really understanding and a good adult figure in college for me to go to. Recently, I just finished a biology course. I've always liked science, but I knew it wasn't always my strong point. But my professor, Professor Giannini, taught it in such a good way for learning biology. And now I *love* biology, and [it] gave me confidence in science.

LM: It's wonderful to have inspiring teachers.

Patrick, what do you hope to be, or aim to accomplish, after completing your college education?

PF: I am a nursing and Asian studies major with biomedical studies concentration. I definitely want to be a nurse. That's what I want to be after college. My dream would be to work at Mayo Clinic in Rochester and be a nurse anesthetist, a nurse anesthesiologist. That would require me to be an RN after college for two years, and then go back to school to get my education in anesthesia. That would give me a doctorate in nursing anesthesia, and then I would take a test, of course, to be certified as a nurse anesthetist. Yes, that's what I want to do with my life, and hopefully graduate with a nursing major. Currently, I just applied for the nursing major this semester, and we hear in January. I might be going to China and Japan during January this year, so I'll be hearing from them while I'm abroad.

LM: You have lofty aspirations. That's so admirable. You have shown passion for music, and dance, and theater. What happens to these disciplines now? Are you completely abandoning your passion for the arts? Will you not pursue this as a career?

PF: No, I'm not pursuing it as a career, but I'm definitely still involved. When people hear that from me, they also think the same thing, that, "Hey, did he just give up?" or whatever, but definitely not. In high school, in my performing arts high school, not only did I learn that I truly love acting, and I love theater, music, and dance, but I know that it's not what I want to do with my life as a main aspect. I was taught the hardships of being an actor. And if I was truly, truly in that career, then I wouldn't mind the hardships. But I do mind it. And also, I like to learn a lot of different things, as well.

I'm still definitely involved in music, dance, and theater in college. I'm in APO at school, which is Alpha Phi Omega, a theater society. You have to be involved in shows and the department in order to be in that society, and so last year I was involved in about four shows, and I'm in it now. This year I was in two theater shows, as well. I took a bunch of classes in music, dance, and theater during high school. I wanted to explore other routes. I definitely, definitely think nursing is the right thing for me. I want to help people medically. That's why I believe that that path is the right one for me, although I would definitely love to continue performing, I just think being on stage is not the only way to perform.

LM: So, let's try to paint a picture here, Patrick. Where do you see yourself ten years from now?

PF: Hopefully, I'll be a nurse anesthetist by then, or some form of a nurse in a hospital, maybe Mayo Clinic. Maybe have a relationship, maybe I'm settling down and owning a house. But I don't have too big of aspirations, because I don't want to be too disappointed. I don't want to set a goal and not achieve it. I have goals in life, but they're not set in stone. I'm open to change and options

LM: It looks like a big part of your young life is the volunteer work that you and the young people do for the community. Would you tell me about this?

PF: Yes. I've volunteered a lot since middle school and high school, and I'm still volunteering in college. For the Filipino community here, we've caroled during Christmas, we've done car washes, and performed for people in other Filipino events. Some of us went to the Philippines on a mission trip, Gawad Kalinga. In addition, I'm continuing to volunteer at school. I'm in Saint Olaf AmeriCorps Program, which is volunteering for a whole year, around three hundred hours, and if you fulfill that, you get a scholarship at the end. So I'm involved with that.

I volunteer at the Northfield Middle School Youth Center for about two hours a week. I'm also involved with Project Friendship. I recently started that, where I mentor a kid named John in second grade, for about an hour a week, and we meet every week. I am his "big brother," which I enjoy doing. Then next semester, I'm hoping to start volunteering at the Northfield Hospital, so I can start being familiar with the hospital setting and being there two hours a week. And hopefully, this spring break, I'm going to the Saint Olaf Spring Relief, which is all over America. We go around to about five places- Chicago, New Orleans, and just help out in the communities there.

LM: That is absolutely impressive! You were former president of FMYO, or the Filipino-Minnesotan Youth Organization. What kind of organization is FMYO and what does it do?

PF: The Filipino-Minnesotan Youth Organization is an affiliate of the Fil-Minnesotan Association., a nonprofit organization serving the Filipino American community for more than fifty years now.. FMYO focuses on helping young people in Minnesota learn more about the Filipino culture through workshops and various activities. It aims to help the Filipino youth understand their roots. It welcomes everyone. You don't have to be Filipino to be involved. We believe that knowing where you come from is an essential part of knowing who you are.

LM: Does FMYO offer opportunities for current and/or future leadership in the community?

PF: Yes, definitely. I think FMYO tests your skills in leadership. As president and as peer with the whole group, it was difficult at times to be leader and friend. We're in high school, you know, we're teenagers; we have our own problems here and there as teenagers. Having another teenager tell you what to do can be pretty difficult, since most of the time you're listening to adult figures. So it's really a challenge to be a leader and/or listen to someone who's your age or even younger. But it definitely was the first light on me for leadership skills, and could be for the next generation, as well. It teaches them to be organized and focused, to lead a group of people, and to have a goal for the group.

LM: Would you say that there were merits, socially and academically, in having been president of FMYO? Do you feel that it helped you grow in leadership skills?

PF: Absolutely. It taught me things I could do better, and things that I can continue; it set a ground stone for future leadership roles. I was also president of our student government in senior year and National Honor Society. I was FMYO President around my senior year, as well, but I started being president for FMYO before all of those other groups, so it set a ground work and I enjoyed it. I'm currently still doing that in college. I'm part of the Sophomore Leadership

Institute, which is a group of sophomores learning about leadership, and how we can perfect it, even though there is no perfection to leadership. However, there are different ways to lead people; there's no one best way. Yes, I've certainly learned that. FMYO set the ground work and laid a strong foundation for me.

LM: Kudos to FMYO! For the record, FMYO is the Fil-Minnesotan Youth Organization.

Now, let's talk about Gawad Kalinga. Talk about what it is, and why it sparks considerable interest in you.

PF: Yes. Gawad Kalinga means "to give care." One of the goals of Gawad Kalinga is to empower people through the elimination of poverty. Building homes is one way for GK (Gawad Kalinga) to help millions of people in the Philippines start rebuilding their lives.

LM: That makes so much sense. People could be empowered by making them feel dignified, and a way to do that is to provide them with one of the basic necessities of life : a place of shelter.

PF: Yes, yes. Initially, I just really wanted to go back to the Philippines, and I thought this would be a great way to do it, and something my parents would support. I didn't really know what I was getting myself into. I knew that I was going to a village, help out at the village, and help build a house. I thought it would be very similar to the other volunteer opportunities I've had here in America where I go to a place, volunteer, help out, then that's all. But with Gawad Kalinga, we had to live in a village for two weeks, and we had our own host family. That made such an impact. It opened my eyes to how poverty can strike a country and a family, and it really showed me that there are hard things in life. It showed me how fortunate I am, here in America.

I thank my parents for bringing me here. That is probably the reason why they wanted me to come to America. They wanted me to have the opportunities America can offer to make my life better....unlike those deprived kids in the poor Philippine villages. That's why it hurt me when the time came to leave. All these little kids we got close to had only the village and the hard life, while we would fly back to America and continue on with our, fortunately, good life. And that's why I wanted to really come back and help other poor countries, or help the Philippines, medically, because they can't afford health care. There was a nursing major there, volunteering as well, and she was telling me how great it was to be a nurse. I felt like I really wanted to consider that. I didn't know if I wanted to be a nurse at the time, but I definitely knew I wanted to be part of the medical field, because I wanted to help these kids out, and other people in poverty, medically.

LM: You mentioned something about coming to America and enjoying the opportunities this country offers. Let me ask you, had you not left the Philippines, do you think your life would have been different?

PF: Yes, I definitely think my life would be different if I'd stayed in the Philippines. I don't know if my self-esteem would be as high or if I would be as happy, because I really enjoy being here in America. I've seen other places and how less fortunate they are, like the Philippines. I'm very fortunate to have grown up here. And after going back to the Philippines the past two summers, I can really see that. I like to strive for the best, and I really believe America is giving me more of a chance to be my best. I think the Philippines wouldn't give me as much of a chance or opportunity to really explore what I want to do. I think that's why my parents wanted to come here, to give us better opportunities. And I thank them for that, because going back there, I see all of these poor people, and how a lot of them dream of going to America, the land of opportunity. So, to be kind of the first generation in my family to really grow up here is really nice. I feel blessed.

I guess if I lived in the Philippines I'd be able to speak Tagalog, which would be pretty good, because I can't speak it. I can understand it, but I can't speak it. If I stayed there, I definitely would be able to. And I guess if I stayed there we'd be closer to our extended family, literally closer, and emotionally closer. I would have better relationships with them that's how different it would be.

LM: You've mentioned the pluses of staying in the Philippines, one of which would be, being able to speak the language. Tell me why being able to speak Tagalog is important to you.

PF: My parents speak it all the time when we're at home. My brothers can speak it and my sister can speak it. They may choose not to, here and there, but they can. They are able to. I do not have the ability to speak it. I can understand it, though...

LM: So, understanding Tagalog is not enough. It is important for you to acquire a speaking knowledge of the language. Please continue. I would like to hear more.

PF: I think it would be awesome to speak another language. I think it's a really low part in America, in American culture, that we just learn English in school, while all the other countries around the world learn English, and their own language, and possibly another language. I don't understand why we can't do that here. I guess America thinks that English is a universal language, and I guess most people know it, but it's not the only language. And yes, I have other friends who can speak Tagalog, and they're in my same situation, so I don't understand why I can't speak it. But that's okay, for now.

So yes, I would love to be able to speak it, because I think it would be really cool to speak another language. And it would be nice to communicate with other Filipinos when I go back to the Philippines, because some may not be the best in English.

LM: I totally understand what you're saying. Now I would like to shift my line of questioning. Patrick, you are a brilliant young man. You're poised and confident, and filled with admirable enthusiasm. Do you have any fears? What is your greatest fear?

PF: I guess my biggest fear, per se, is failing, or to disappoint my parents, or to disappoint people in general. I hate the word disappointment. I don't like hearing, "You disappointed me," or, "You're a disappointment." And if that ever came out of my parents' mouth, that would *really* hurt me; that would be so painful, because I've worked really hard. And yes, that would just crush me if that came out of my parents' mouth. Other than that, I guess other fears would be, in terms of working hard and not feeling the satisfaction. Or being alone because no one appreciates you.

LM: You have always been a high achiever, and there is never a point in your life when you have failed. How do you feel about that?

PF: I guess that's why that's my biggest fear. I try to prevent that from ever happening.....as much as possible. And again, I'm very fortunate to have grown up with the values and morals that my parents have given me. I have learned to work really hard. So I'm really fortunate that "failure" hasn't happened yet. But, you know, if it does happen, I know that I can overcome it. It will not be the end of the world.

LM: Patrick, are you a politically conscious person?

PF: Honestly, I would like to be, but right now I am not. My priorities are really just in school, to focus in school. I know I should be more politically aware of what's happening, but my goals don't really involve politics at this time. I know it will happen, eventually.

LM: Unavoidably, there are political events that occur during your life. What do you consider to be the most important political event that has occurred during this young life of yours?

PF: 9-11, September 11, 2001. Definitely the most scary event in my life, politically, yes. That was just crazy. I definitely remember that day. I was in fifth grade when that happened, in Mr. Mace's class. Yes, I remember that day because it was so big and so terrifying

LM: What impact did it have on you as a young person? What did you feel? What was it like for you?

PF: I guess that was my first time being presented with this danger, this horror of the world. Because for the first, I guess, twelve years of my life, there wasn't really a big war going on with America. We'd go to school and hear about all the past wars and stuff, and they're all just in

books. We're in no war. We had peace. Then 9-11 happens and then all that tragedy comes and now we start wondering. We started going to war in Iraq, and you realize there was a war going on with America. It was just really, really different for me, because I hadn't ever lived through anything bad like that in my life.

LM: So your sense of peace was disturbed.

PF: Yes. It was definitely challenged. There was that feeling that I could be in danger, here, in America.

LM: Because your sense was that you're in America, there shouldn't be any danger around you?

PF: Yes, not that there shouldn't be any danger, but that there's less probability of that happening. After 9-11, everyone's on red alert. Another terrorist attack could happen, and that was just pretty different.

LM: Is there a political figure that you most admire?

PF: The political figure I admire right now, I guess I would say Barack Obama

LM: Tell me why.

PF: He is America's first black president. This is inspirational. It shows that America recognizes diversity, and that there is hope for those who believe in democracy and fairness.

LM: Have you ever fought for a cause, political or otherwise?

PF: Hmm. I don't think I've ever fought for a political cause yet. I did support the movement to end the war in Iraq. I also support gay rights, but I haven't really done much more than support these movements. Maybe in the future I can take some action. But right now, I can only be in the background.

LM: Patrick, there's nothing wrong or shameful about staying in the background. You've been doing forefront jobs most of the time. Certain things can wait.

Now, if you could meet any historical icon, for example, be it past or present, who would it be, and why?

PF: I would want to meet a few people. [Chuckles] I'd want to meet Confucius, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Watson, and Crick. I can go by each person. Confucius. I'm in this program at school called Asian Conversations, which is the reason why I'm going to China and Japan in January. We learned about Confucius and his analects and his values, and it was just pretty cool that this guy came up with all these things that inspired China and other people around China, with his teachings. I learned about the Tao, and that everyone has their own Tao, their own way

of doing things; that my Tao is different than your Tao, and that if you're not happy, it's because you're not in your way, you and your Tao. That is an interesting concept.

LM: Yes, that is, indeed, a fascinating concept. Tao is a path of behavior, a force that flows through life. A happy life is one that is in harmony with the Tao. I'm sure you know about the Confucian maxim of the famous Golden Rule: "Never do to others what you would not like them to do to you."

Now, tell me about your other icons.

PF: I admire [Mahatma] Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., for their non-violent ways of going through a political action and trying to change something in a peaceful way. [James D.] Watson and [Francis] Crick were the scientists who found the DNA molecular structure. And I think that's just really cool. I think that happened in the 1950s. It would be awesome to be a scientist, do research, and then find something that would really impact the rest of science.....

LM: and humanity. At this time, let me ask you about an essay that you wrote, and won first place, right?

PF: Yes.

LM: The essay was entitled, "Reflections on Growing Up as a Filipino-American in the United States." In that essay, you talked about your views on the Filipino culture. Would you elaborate?

PF: Yes. In the essay, I put in my experiences from the start of going to America towards the present. At the beginning, I didn't quite embrace the Filipino culture. I didn't really want to be a part of it. I would go to school with all these Americans, with the white people, and then I would go home and I would eat rice, *adobo* and *sinigang*. At first that wasn't different or weird to me at all. And then in middle school, when my friends would come over, they would question what this food was. I just never questioned it before – ever. I just thought that was normal. My friends were surprised that I ate rice all the time with a fork and spoon. And it was these little things that made me ask questions, "Why are we still doing this Filipino stuff?" I mean, we're in America, so we should just embrace that culture and forget about the Filipino culture. That was my thought back in middle school and before. And yes, the essay elaborates on those experiences.

Eventually, when my parents kept being involved in the Filipino community and they dragged me along, I started being involved with FMYO, and I liked it. FMYO opened my mind and gave me a better perspective. It sort of said: "Hey, you might have moved to a different place, but your culture, your parent's culture, is something you should respect, and should continue on. That doesn't mean you'll turn your back on the culture you currently live in, the American culture. But it definitely doesn't mean that you should just throw away the Filipino culture, your roots, you know. So find a compromise.

LM: Did the Filipino culture embarrass you in the beginning of your stay here in America?

PF: Not in the beginning. I noticed it more during middle school, really, when I did feel embarrassed and ashamed. I don't know. I just didn't want to be different.

LM: Did you ever experience racism here in the United States, here in Minnesota?

PF: Yes. In my essay, I talk about an experience I had in middle school. Do you want me to elaborate on that?

LM: Please do. Talk to me about that.

PF: Okay. Well, one time in middle school, I was just staying after school for math homework. Yes, math help. And I had dropped my book. I was about to leave, when I dropped my book across the hall. Then came these big guys. I think I was in seventh grade and they were in eighth grade, so it was *very* intimidating. They grabbed my book and they just basically said, "Oh, look at him, he needs help in math. Aren't you guys supposed to be smart?" And then this other kid said, "Stupid Chinese boy." I thought that was kind of funny at first, because I was like, "Hey, I'm not Chinese!" in my mind. And then I thought about it some more and I was like, "Whoa, they were actually serious." That was kind of mean.

In my mind, at first I sided with them and I said, Hey, you know what? You're right, and this is dumb, and I shouldn't be like this, or "I shouldn't be Filipino." And that really hurt when I went back home that day. I wanted to be more like my middle class white friends.

At another time, I had been playing volleyball with a group of friends, just recently this year. And this guy yells out, "Hey, stop yelling you . . ." And then he used some Mexican terms, pretty bad ones. And I thought, why? This is Minnesota and it is 2010. So it was just really surprising that things like that can still go on here. Yes. And there are small things that people say that . . . they mean it to be a joke, but they aren't really funny, and it can still hurt.

LM: So is racism a topic that you discuss with your family or with your friends?

PF: I don't really discuss it with my family. I discuss it with my friends, sometimes. This summer I took a class at Saint Olaf called "Race and Class in American Culture." It's a prerequisite for nursing, and it really opened my eyes and enlightened me on how there is no biological explanation to the color of our skin. Race is all socially put upon us; our society puts so much importance on race, and how we can be different according to race. But really, the only difference is our culture and not anything biological. That was pretty interesting.

LM: Patrick, you recently participated in a workshop on bicultural issues and experiences. Tell me what that was about, and what you thought of it.

PF: The bicultural workshop was a workshop for Filipino youth, such as myself, who were raised here; hence, bicultural - two different cultures. It was for us to see what the impact of growing up here has on us, and on those who have grown up that way, too, but are adults now. I thought it was a great workshop. We performed a mini play about a family that was having struggles with their cultural identity, and then it also had speakers, guest speakers who grew up either in the Philippines and they came here, and vice versa. They talked about their experiences and what they're doing now. They talked about how they're trying to incorporate both cultures for their kids. So it was just a great, great workshop to talk about these issues.

LM: How do you think the young people benefited, if at all, from that workshop?

PF: I think the young people benefited by talking honestly about it, because I don't think they've really talked about it with their peers or other people. There were group sessions where people asked questions, and there were topics that were kind of personal sometimes that normally they would not talk about. So I think it enlightened them, and helped them to think about these cultural issues. They were able to talk about it with a group of people, and be more comfortable with it.

LM: Do you think that the adults/ parents, benefited from this conversation, as well?

PF: Yes. Some of the sessions included both youth and adults. I think it was nice to, again, be comfortable to open up and talk about these issues with each other, and at the same time hear from different perspectives- perspectives from the youth and from the adults. This way, the adults could see that the youth do care about this situation, the issues of cultures, and how they can be growing up differently than their Caucasian peers. It's good for the adults to see whether their parenting styles are "right," or...

LM: Or if they should make certain changes in their parenting style for the well-being of their children as they (their children) embrace the two cultures.

Is there a memorable moment in your life? A time that you probably will never forget?

PF: Yes. My first time on GK mission trip, definitely.

LM: GK or Gawad Kalinga.

PF: This was the summer before my first year of college. So 2009, last year. And yes, that was just a great, great experience that opened my eyes to a lot of things, and again, inspired me to what I want to do with the rest of my life. .

LM: Which brings me to the next question. What are the goals you have set for yourself?

PF: Right now, I'm just getting the prerequisites out of the way for the nursing major. There are eight of them, and I have to get accepted into the major, so I'm just working really hard to get good grades. We had an interview and an essay portion of that, already, so I'm hoping that went well. Overall, I just want to get good grades. I sense that my parents, my mom especially, would be very happy to see me, hopefully, graduate cum laude at least, which carries a GPA of 3.6 and above. Right now I'm there. But, you know, things can change, so I'm hoping to just stick with that. We'll see.

LM: Patrick, I know it's going to happen.

PF: Hopefully, yes.

LM: I'd like to know what you think is the biggest challenge facing our young Filipino-Americans in today's society.

PF: I think that a lot of the things that are challenging all of the minority youth in general are the same things that are affecting our Filipino youth, as well. I think a great challenge is being able to accept both cultures: the Filipino and the American culture. This is something that we need to pass along to our next generation. Our generation is a combination of both cultures, and our children will acquire, I guess, just a little bit of Filipino culture. If you look at it in a more biological way, we're fifty-fifty, and our kids will be a fourth of the culture. But unlike biology, that can be changed. So I think our challenge is to seriously pass on the traditions and the Filipino roots. If we don't, the culture will die.

LM: Well, do you think that your generation has become too assimilated in the American culture? That you are probably losing the practice and awareness of your own heritage?

PF: I don't know if we are becoming *too* assimilated. It depends on what we're doing with Filipino culture. If we're taking in nothing but the American culture, then yes, we will be too assimilated in that culture. We need to have our parents and the leaders of the community really help us out in that situation. They have to keep the Filipino traditions alive. If they don't, the culture will not survive.

LM: What specific things should we do to help our young people face this cultural challenge? How can we help bridge the cultural gap?

PF: Through workshops like we've been doing. The Filipino-Minnesotan Youth Organization and the Filipino community here in Minnesota is pretty big and pretty strong. So I think being aware of it, and being with other Filipinos and older generations really exposes us to the Filipino culture. One of the best ways, I guess, would be to go to the Philippines. This will really open your mind and make you see who you really are. And another thing that we can do is expose the youth to cultural events, Filipino events such as José Rizal Day, which is an event to honor the Filipino national hero, José Rizal, and what he did for the independence of the Philippines.

The community should keep doing the Philippine Independence Day celebrations and keep the young people involved. That's a good way of showing us the culture. Paskong Pilipino is a great cultural event that the youth could benefit from. We should have more bicultural workshops, and certainly more artistic presentations that showcase the various talents of our local artists and young people.

LM: That's excellent, Patrick! Thank you for that. I would now like to conclude this interview. Is there anything I haven't asked about, that you would care to comment on? Would you like to say some concluding words?

PF: Yes. I would like to say that, growing up Filipino in Minnesota has been really, really great. I like how my family has really been together in Minnesota, the land of opportunity. We've achieved, not only the American dream, but the Filipino American dream to live in America, to have opportunities for the next generation, and to take up those opportunities. And I think my parents have seen my siblings and me attain some degree of success. Hopefully, that will continue on in the future. And yes, we have an optimistic view of our future. So thank you.

LM: And thank you for your time, Patrick. I had great fun interviewing you.

PF: I had great, great fun doing this interview with you, Tita Lita.

LM: Maraming salamat, Patrick.