

VAF-3

Interviewee: Loc Vu-Quoc

Interviewer: Nancy Tran

Date: February 25, 2005

T: This is Nancy Tran interviewing Dr. Vu-Quoc on February 25, 2005. So, Doctor, when and where were you born?

VQ: I was born in 1956 in Saigon, Vietnam.

T: Until what age did you live there?

VQ: Seventeen-years-old.

T: Tell me about your childhood that you had in Vietnam. How was your family life?

VQ: My father was an officer in the South Vietnamese Army and my mother was working. I have five siblings, three sisters and two brothers. We lived in a kind of like, not like, a military camp, but it's like housing for people in the military; because my father was in the army. I would say [I had] a sheltered life. My family was not wealthy, so [we] learned to save and to help out any way we could. I remember, at some point I would wash the clothes [by hand] for the whole family, by myself.

T: You didn't have, I guess, a washer or a dryer?

VQ: Well, [there were no washers and dryers in the those days.] We had what we called a maid. We do have some maids at home, sometimes just to help out the family. Also, I remember as a kid, in order to save electricity, I made a chart, very much like a medical chart, where I would follow the usage of electricity month by month to see how it fluctuates. I think my childhood was very nice. I remember the neighbors, and we used to play what we called cowboys and Indians. There were no Indians, of course, no shooting people.

T: You said your father worked for the army, right?

VQ: Yes, the South Vietnamese Army.

T: How did the war affect your family life?

VQ: I recalled Têt [New Year], 1968, so I was around twelve years old. At the Têt we [like to] play [with] the firecrackers. I remembered, one day the government just banned the use of firecrackers. They could not distinguish the explosion from the firecrackers from the explosions coming from the bullets. So they banned the use of firecrackers. That was strange for us because we always had [been able] to play with firecrackers. We were kids, so we were not allowed [to] ignite the

firecrackers.

T: Was the war constantly on your mind?

VQ: The war came close, but not too close. I can see helicopters, I can remember helicopters in the air shooting. The Communists were very close to Saigon, I think they even entered [Red] Saigon. They attacked the U.S. Embassy. Actually, it was not so far from my school, the middle school that I was going to. So they were in Saigon, in the south, but [so near to] my home we had a kind of bunker made of sandbags. In case of attack we would run into the bunkers. The kids just used the bunkers to play. We were never really directly attacked, but I just witnessed the war from afar. [We would] see helicopters shooting at night with tracing bullets. But it was far away, [near] the border [of Saigon city]. So that [was] about what I really remember of the war, otherwise, much of the information that I received [was] after I left Vietnam through French television or through American television. I saw how the war actually developed.

T: As a child did you ever imagine yourself out of Vietnam?

VQ: I didn't think about that, I just thought that I'd would go abroad to study. That was one thought, but it was really never realistic until after I passed the baccalaureate. It's like a national exam that everyone has to take in order to go [to] the university level.

T: Was that in Vietnam?

VQ: Yes, that's in Vietnam. It's the influence of the French system. It's a tough exam compared to the high school level here, it's much tougher.

T: When was the first time you left Vietnam?

VQ: October, 1974.

T: What were the circumstances?

VQ: To go to France to study.

T: You lived in a pretty big city, Saigon. Did you have western influences in the city?

VQ: Yes, of course. We had the Beatles' music, CCR, Credence Clearwater Revival, [etc.] It's too old for you, but I'm sure you've heard of the Beatles. They are too famous. We had a lot of American influence through pop music and movies. I remember seeing *Dr. Zhivago* [films] or *Oliver Twist* in Saigon.

T: Were these movies in English or were they dubbed?

VQ: [They were] in English and subtitles, or in French and dubbed in French.

T: Do you speak French?

VQ: I went to a French elementary school up to middle school and it was converted to a Vietnamese program. So French was a foreign language [class], four hours a week and English was my second foreign language, two hours a week. Otherwise, math, physics, Vietnamese literature, [etc.] were all in Vietnamese. Math, physics, chemistry, [etc.] Everything was in Vietnamese.

T: You said you went to France in 1974, what was your state of mind? Was it normal for you to be going to a different country? Or was it a significant move on your part?

VQ: Not really a big deal, I was excited to go and see something new. To go to study at [an] engineering school. Because in France the school of engineering is [separate from the university], they are independent units. I was excited, it was a stage in [my] life. Going to a university is definitely an important step. To go abroad and see a new country, see a new culture, learning new things, it's a very important step.

T: You left in 1974, so the war was still going on.

VQ: Yes, the war was still raging.

T: Did you have any difficulty at all leaving the country?

VQ: No. At the time nobody really knew that the fate of South Vietnam was sealed with the Paris Accords in 1972, but the South Vietnamese government did not really let much of the information be known to the population, otherwise there would be panic [and] chaos. Gradually, I'm sure people from outside looking back would see that from the signing of the Paris Accord in 1972 [that] there would not be much more time before South Vietnam fell. And, indeed, they took only a few weeks. With the withdrawal of the American soldiers, I think, then President Thieu of South Vietnam had difficulty [in] getting military aides from the U.S. Congress [for] South Vietnam. It's a gradual fall, of course. [Then] came 1975, the [final] offensive

T: Did you have interactions with U.S. soldiers?

VQ: Not really, I don't recall knowing any U.S. soldiers. My parents, they didn't really deal directly [with them]. My father, he was [in some organization], what they called the ICC, or the International Committee for the Control of [Truce]. There

were Indians, Polish, and Canadians, [etc.] It's like an international organization from different countries to verify the [truce] between North Vietnam and South Vietnam. The [truce] didn't really last long, so the exposure to westerners [was] through my father. The CIC, Committe International de [Control], that's the French and translating into English [is] the International Committee for Control of the [Truce] between the two sides.

T: Did you go to France by yourself?

VQ: Yes, at the time I had my aunt in Paris. My aunt was visiting Paris because my cousin was studying there. They were in Paris, so I just stayed with them for maybe a few days. Then I took a train down to Lyon. Lyon [was] about five hours by train. Now it just takes about two hours. At the time it took about five hours. I just went down, but I had some friends who went there before. They greeted me at the train station and helped [me out]. Otherwise, most of the time I was by myself.

T: When you came to France for the first time, what was the first thing that hit you that was very different from Vietnam. What made you realize that you were in France?

VQ: Well, there [was] different architecture, different people, different language. I had to slowly learn to speak to understand. I remember I was late to register at the school by a month. So, I needed to catch up and I still remember sitting in a math course and beside me [was] a French [student]. He was originally from Poland, his father was from Poland, but he grew up in France, he was just like any other French [person]. He turned to me and asked me, oh, do you understand anything? I said no, I didn't! But, at the end of that semester, I was ranked twelfth [out of] close to eight hundred students. The way the French system works is that they sort of have a ranking from number one to the last student. It's not like here where it's basically only within a class [which] may vary [from] ten students to one hundred. In France, the first year we had something like almost eight hundred students and the ranking [was] from number one to number eight hundred. The first semester I was ranked number twelve. At then end of the year I was ranked number nine. The second year, there were [around] two hundred students who were kicked out, so there [were] only roughly five hundred students left. At the end of the second year I was ranked seventh. So I didn't do too bad.

T: Did you have any fears when you went there, since it was a new country?

VQ: Fears, no, not really. I was just amazed because of all of the new things, but not really fears.

T: What did you see as the biggest difference between the French culture versus

the Vietnamese culture?

VQ: Well, actually there's more differences between the American culture and the French culture and the Vietnamese culture than the difference between the French and Vietnamese. Well, let me put it this way, of course, from the point of your culture there's a lot of differences in the sense that France is a Western country. I mean, of course, the culture is different but maybe what I meant was, really, the human relationships. You see, I have friends in France that I've spoken to in school, and the friendship still lasts until today, even though we just write to each other once a year. It's as if the time has really never elapsed and the friendships last. Whereas, here, in the U.S., I do not observe that. It's just because the living condition here is very fast, its very dynamic, people moving around. It is easy to, let's say, make acquaintances, but not really, I'd say, [develop] friendships. Its easy to get acquaintances, people are very friendly but its superficial. Whereas the French, it takes longer time for, [in general, Europeans], to become friends. But the friendships will last.

T: Do you perceive the same thing in Vietnamese culture, friendship-wise and relationship-wise?

VQ: Yeah, I would say so. It's just because its more static. People tend to do the same thing, [have] the same job, they stay at the same place, unlike here [where people] jump around. When you move, you make friends with new people. I don't know, my own experience is that I don't recall long-lasting friendships with [Americans]. I have lots of friends but then when each of us goes our different ways, we meet new people. I think that's just the nature of life in this society.

T: When you were in France, did you try to really immerse yourself in the culture?

VQ: Yes. I would say I was immersed in the culture. I still had Vietnamese friends and at Tet we [banded] together, very much like the VSO here. The first year I had a roommate [who] was French and until today we still write to each other and his parents. I wrote to his parents and his parents wrote to me. His parents, actually his mother, found for me a job in the summer at the end of my first [year] at the bank. She was a high ranking executive at the bank in Paris. Now they are retired but they still write to me. I have a group of friends, French friends, that we hang out together. One of the members and I still write.

T: Was there a large Vietnamese presence in France?

VQ: Yes, I would say so. Historically, the French came to Vietnam, oh, maybe in the eighteenth, nineteenth century. There were interactions, wars, that was just historical. Also the educational system was basically based on the French system.

T: Were you treated differently at all while you were in France, either because you were Vietnamese or a foreign student?

VQ: No. I mean, France is a cosmopolitan country, there are many people coming from different countries: Africa, Asia, everywhere. When I was studying there [were] some people from China, a student from China. Not many, but some. Well, of course we look different, we're Asians, and France, unlike the United States, is more of a homogeneous society.

T: Did you encounter any discrimination?

VQ: No, not in the sense of what the black people in this country went through. Another reason [is] the Vietnamese people, in general, are very well-off. They are doing very well, economically. I'm not saying that everyone [would] be like that, but in general. The Vietnamese are educated people. I just had a [French] professor from France coming [to work] with me just a few weeks back. The people who really get discriminated against are those from North Africa; Tunisia, Algeria. They, I think, are most like the African Americans in the civil [rights movement] years. Maybe in the 1960s.

T: How did living in France effect you, did you see any changes in the way you think or your ideas compared to when you were in Vietnam?

VQ: I guess just the normal process of growing up intellectually. I don't see a difference, for, number one, I didn't have the experience of growing up in Vietnam. So, I cannot really compare, but I just see it as a normal process of growing up intellectually. Seeing new things, looking at things differently. Actually, I don't have a point of comparison but some of the thinking is probably different from traditional Vietnamese culture.

T: Do you have any examples?

VQ: You see the respect for the elderly is still there, it's part of the culture. That's how I was raised. Things like, taking [responsibility] for my life and my decisions in life, a kind of independence.

T: That was more French, right?

VQ: Yes. Of course my parents, they came here in 1990. My father was interned in re-education camps, communist labor camps. He was in the labor camps all the way up in the North. In 1979, there was some skirmishes between the Chinese and the Vietnamese at the border. He [was interned] nearby there. But you know, for example, things that still stay with me, when they came to visit me. That is what my mother [remembered] that when they came to Florida, to visit me and stay[ed] with me for some time, when I go to school, when I leave home to

go to school, I would go and say bye to them. [I] was a well-raised kid and my mother [remembered that]. Like selecting who I would like to be with, who would be my companion. That kind of outlook, I think would be more independent. I am not sure whether that independence would come from the fact that I studied in France or if I were in Vietnam, I may be the same. So it could be innate, I'm not sure whether it came from the fact that I was exposed to western [culture].

T: Did you ever get French citizenship?

VQ: No, because it was unnecessary. I was a refugee in France, so I had all the paperwork. I did apply, but then I came here to study. The application process just didn't get to see the end.

T: So you went over to France in 1974 and how long did you stay in France?

VQ: Well, actually, in a total of six years, but not continuously. The [first] three years and then I did my fourth year in the U.S. as an exchange student [in] Chicago.

T: During your time in college and in Chicago, you never went back to Vietnam?

VQ: No, I didn't go back to Vietnam until 1998, that was like twenty-three years [after I left]. I didn't see my parents for sixteen years, from 1974 to 1990.

T: Were there ways you communicated with them?

VQ: Writing. You get used to that, you learn to survive. I never went home. In 1998, I did go back. The reason that I went back to Vietnam was [because I was a member of an NSF delegation to the U.S.-Japan-Vietnam workshop on research and education in Hanoi]. Then, I took some time off and went to Hue because I never saw Hue. Also I saw the Ha Long Bay, it was [awesomely beautiful]. I went to Hue, then I went to Saigon and I visited the home of my childhood. It was really run down. I had my aunt who [was] still living there. She died [a few years later]. She couldn't see well.

T: Were you not able to go back because you didn't have the opportunity to, or was it because of the government?

VQ: Well, there was a war and refugees were streaming out of the country. [There] was really no reason to [go back]. My father was in [labor] camp[s] until 1984. He was released [in 1984, and lived under the communist government until 1990].

T: When did you come to the United States and what were the circumstances?

VQ: Well, [the] first time, like I mentioned was in 1978, I was an exchange student.

Then I went back, finished my fifth year, graduated. The French program [was] five years so I graduated and worked for two years in France before I came back here in 1981. First [to] Chicago and then to Berkeley.

T: What was your job in France?

VQ: I worked at a research center. I lived in Paris and worked about fifty kilometers north of Paris.

T: When you first went to the United States, what was it that struck you the most as different?

VQ: Actually, that was probably less of a shock [compared to} Vietnam to France. Both [countries–France and the United States] are economically developed. So, there wasn't really anything that can be described of as shock. Except, I guess you can say this is a general reaction, but when I was registering, and I was only one of the two students who were sent from France. The other one [was] French. The U.S. paid for room and board, I [also] had a French scholarship for the trip, travel, and expenses. When I registered, I was in line and another student asked where I was from, and I said was an exchange student from France and he said I didn't look French. I guess it's both normal and also narrowminded.

T: Where did you live in Chicago?

VQ: I lived in a dorm.

T: When you went to the United States did you feel French or Vietnamese?

VQ: No, I didn't feel like [I was] French, [I felt] like a Vietnamese. I am a Vietnamese.

T: Did you know much about the United States before you arrived here, about the people or the culture?

VQ: Well, culture, like I mentioned to you, in Vietnam we had the music. No, there was nothing shocking, I don't recall anything. It was just really normal, it's just different. A different way of life. Not such a different culture from France. Except for the human relationships.

T: Was that the most blatant thing you could see as the difference?

VQ: Yes, the human relationships.

T: I know you said you learned English as a foreign language in Vietnam, but did you continue learning English in France?

VQ: Yes, before I [first] came to the U.S., but after I went back to France I didn't have to study anymore because I had completed it. Then I took German. I was a really lazy student and I skipped a lot of classes. I regret doing that, otherwise I would know German except for [just] a few words I still remember. I really focused on my thesis.

T: How well did you know the English language when you came to the U.S.?

VQ: When I was in France I tried to teach myself, reading *Time* magazine with a big dictionary on my lap. Actually, I still have [the dictionary] here. It was a gift from my uncle and aunt, Christmas, 1975. I [would] have this on my lap and I could check every word.

T: Do you think your desire to learn was something you learned from your Vietnamese culture because there is a big emphasis on education?

VQ: I think it's both innate and also family education. When I was a kid I tried to learn [to play] the guitar but my father was afraid I would not focus on my studies. But I think it was a mistake. It's just that our parents were very concerned that we would just play music, like the hippie bands and not really focus [on studying].

[end of side 1]

VQ: I must say my parents were not against musical education; we had a piano for my sister to learn to play. For some reason they were concerned about the guitar.

T: Did they let you play the piano.

VQ: I didn't take piano lessons, but my sister did.

T: Do you think they expected your role to be different because you were male?

VQ: Probably, for the reason that I was the eldest of the sons, not the siblings. I had two older sisters. They probably expected more out of me. Of course, they were concerned that I would digress and not focus and study if I play[ed] music like the guitar, but I was not very gifted with the guitar.

T: How did life in France differ from life in the United States? Did you have to go through a lot of changes and adjustments?

VQ: Not really. I was a student in France and then I worked for two years. Then I came here as a student and in many ways I am still a student, in the sense that I am a learner and a person who continually learns. A student in that sense.

T: Did you feel more comfortable and at home in France or in the U.S.?

VQ: In the U.S. I feel very comfortable as a foreigner because this is a country of immigrants, so you have people coming from different backgrounds. From that sense I think I feel more comfortable here.

T: You see the U.S. as more accepting of differences?

VQ: Here people come from different backgrounds. In terms of a job, anyone can move up, [it's] much easier.

T: When you came over to the U.S. did you have anyone help you adjust to U.S. culture, for example, any form of government aid or educational programs provided to you by the university?

VQ: No, not anyone. I didn't need it. Actually, my first girlfriend was a Caucasian American.

T: Did she help you learn about American culture?

VQ: [No], she was actually interested in Vietnamese culture and she was an Asian Studies student. She was a history major too, at the University of Miami. She got a master's degree in East Asian Studies. She was interested in Vietnam. She has been working for the state department since 1986.

T: In Chicago, was there a large Vietnamese community?

VQ: No, at the time it was small. Now it's much bigger. I was there in 1978; there were a few, then by [the] 1980[']s. I was there in 1981 [and] 1982 and still there was not a lot.

T: Did you have a lot of interaction with the Vietnamese community?

VQ: Not a lot. Some. [I had] a few friends. We would hang out and get together sometimes. I had a lot of French friends at school, in Chicago. Particularly the second half of it when I went back. There were even more exchange students; I had both Vietnamese and French friends and also some American friends.

T: Did you have more of one or the other?

VQ: I would say about equal. If not, a little less of the Vietnamese friends. I was closer to my French friends in the second half. It's just the fact that educationally we were at the same level. Whereas the Vietnamese, they were undergraduates at the time I was a graduate student.

VAF-3, Vu-Quoc, page 11

T: Since you were living in an area where there were not many Vietnamese, how did you maintain your Vietnamese culture and identity?

VQ: I really never celebrated Tet or anything like that. I like to listen to Vietnamese music, certain kinds of music.

T: That would help you, in a way, keep in touch with your culture?

VQ: Yes. Now, I no longer listen to Vietnamese music. Before, when I went to France as a student, even in Chicago and when I came here my first year. Now, I just don't feel a need, I guess.

T: When you went to Berkeley there was a much larger Asian culture there?

VQ: [Now] I talk to my parents every week. I just talked to them this morning because there's a Buddhist monk who was imprisoned in 1975, when he was twenty-five years old. My parents are trying to raise some funds for him because he has cancer and he needs treatment. He was like a[n] outspoken supporter of a [banned] Buddhist organization. [The] Unified Buddhist Church in Vietnam. He's like a political prisoner. They didn't let his family know about his whereabouts or whether he lived or died. His brother thought that he died and then later found out that he was alive. So he was released on the second of February 2001.

T: Your parents live here in the United States right?

VQ: Yes, they are now U.S. citizens. They came here in 1990 under the Humanitarian [Operation Program]. That's a humanitarian operation program, it's a program set up between the U.S. government and Vietnam to allow former South Vietnamese Army soldiers who were interned in reeducation camps for them and their families to come to the U.S.

T: Are they used to living in the United States?

VQ: Now they are. It [was] a gradual process of adaptation. Not just in terms of living, but also in terms of getting used to a different way of life, a different way of thinking.

T: What do they think is the biggest difference between Vietnam and America concerning how you live?

VQ: I'm not sure whether it's a cultural difference, but we tend to have our independence because we are economically independent. I think if we were in Vietnam, I am not sure whether that would be different. I would say we are still very close culturally. Now independence, I think . . . after the last presidential

election, my parents voted for Bush [George W. Bush – U.S. President, 2001-present; Texas governor, 1995-2001] and I voted for Kerry [John Forbes Kerry – U.S. Senator from Massachusetts, 1985-present; Massachusetts lieutenant governor, 1982-1984]. They hated Kerry because of the anti-war movement, just like most of the Vietnamese. Most Vietnamese are Republicans, particularly those who suffered under the hands of the Communists. They tend to think [that] Republicans are stronger anti-Communists or, at least, have a strong stance against Communists.

T: When you were in Berkeley did you find yourself interacting more with the Asian community, or the Vietnamese community in particular, since there was a larger Vietnamese presence there?

VQ: Actually, not really. I didn't get involved with the VSO. In a way, I regret it. You see, I like to really focus on my research. I [did] have Vietnamese friends, but they tended to be younger, undergraduates. Maybe because I came from France, the way that I think is different from the Vietnamese [who] came directly [from Vietnam] to the United States. I think that people like me who went to France and studied, probably tend to be more the open-minded [type] than [other] cultures, more than the Vietnamese who came [directly] to the U.S. There is a reason for that, the reason is the intellectual Vietnamese in France tend to be closer to the French than the Vietnamese [to Americans] in America.

T: Was there anything about the U.S. culture that you didn't like?

VQ: It's just a different way of life. It's a free country. Everyone has a voice. I don't really see anything that I'd have strong opinion [on]. It's a free country and people have different opinions. For example, issues like abortion, issues that people have different opinions about.

T: What about the Vietnamese culture? Is there anything that you disagree with?

VQ: I don't really think that you can say that you disagree with cultures. There is a saying that, if you enter a house you would follow the custom of the family of that house. Actually, that is a Vietnamese proverb. It says, if you enter a house, follow their custom; if you enter a river, you would [adjust to the launch site].

T: Do you think many of the Vietnamese people have that kind of thinking?

VQ: Something that I may have an issue with is there is probably a lack of freedom to think. For example, politically, one should be able to have different thoughts without [being afraid]. That requires some intellectual [maturity]. [The] last [presidential] election was very emotional. There was a [deep] divide [among family and friends]. Those [who] came from Vietnam and suffered from the Communist[s] tend to support Bush. It's a very strong opinion.

- T: In one of the articles I read by James Clifford, the author of "Travel and Translation in the Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century," he said that many immigrants felt like outcasts in their hosts' society and long for their home. Do you identify with this?
- VQ: No, I think it's more among the elderly. The old people, they prefer to live in Vietnam particularly if they came here and from the point-of-view of careers, it's difficult to remake their career and to study again. Actually, I heard that some old people went back to Vietnam [to live]. They didn't have any kids here and life here is probably not very compatible. If they have a good job often they would stay. If they cannot be trained themselves then its probably harder and the language, they cannot speak the language, it may be harder.
- T: This is a hypothetical question, let's say the war didn't happen, would you have preferred to stay in Vietnam or would you have preferred to work and live outside the country?
- VQ: Well, that is hard to say. It depends on where the opportunities are. I know for myself I like to be abroad. So I would say that if the war had not happened, I would still go [abroad] and study. I am trying to help Vietnamese universities by sending them books, by helping Vietnamese students to guide them towards a Ph. D. if they are Ph. D. students. I do care about the education in Vietnam. It would just depend on the condition in Vietnam, if it would allow me to blossom [intellectually]. The same can be said of France. It is not because of the human relationships, but more because of the opportunities and a feeling that I feel more comfortable as a foreigner here rather than in France.
- T: The Ph. D. students that you mentioned, are they from Vietnam or Vietnamese Americans?
- VQ: [They] are from Vietnam. Some are [studying] Sweden, [or] Japan.
- T: Do you help them get used to the U.S. culture and get them situated here?
- VQ: I think they learn on their own. I have Vietnamese students shar[ing] an apartment [with each other]. I always tell [them] not to speak in their native tongue [among] themselves, but they should speak English.
- T: What do you think is the best way for a Vietnamese or foreign student to learn English?
- VQ: Not to speak in their [mother] tongue and to develop friendships here with Americans. I have students in my classes speak[ing] in English. I also give them a recorder so they can record their voice, listen to their own voice so they can

correct their mistakes. Even me, I continue to consciously correct myself. I will never be like an American, but it's something that can be consciously maintained. If I had learned English when I was much younger then that would be better.

T: When did you obtain your U.S. citizenship?

VQ: 1994.

T: Was it because of work that you had to obtain citizenship?

VQ: No. If I wanted to travel it is much easier.

T: What did you have before your citizenship? A work visa?

VQ: Yes, I was [on a] permanent [resident].

T: Did you receive any government aid when you came here?

VQ: No, I was a student employee. I worked as a research assistant.

T: How did you end up at this present position at the University of Florida?

VQ: After my Ph. D. at Berkeley, California [I found a faculty position at UF].

T: Was there anytime that you found it difficult to find a job?

VQ: No. That's the nice thing about the U.S., as long as you get your degree you can go as far as you can. Be all you can be, like the U.S. Army.

T: Are you glad you decided to come to the U.S.?

VQ: Yes, and to help out my family in northern Virginia. Lots of Vietnamese and my siblings. I only have one sister [in France], she's married. My parents and my four other siblings—two brothers, two sisters—and my uncle, [and] aunts [are all in northern Virginia].

T: They are all out of Vietnam?

VQ: Yes, of course.

T: When you went back to visit could you see yourself living over there?

VQ: Probably not, but if I can do something to help the universit[ies] and help the students because it will take a long time for Vietnam to catch up. They have

[not] had the same working conditions.

T: When you went back there and you saw the people of the country, did you feel very different from them?

VQ: It's probably the way that I talk. Because I think directly in English, so my Vietnamese is translated.

T: Were there other differences other than that?

VQ: Yeah, differences in the way you dress, thinking also in some [respects]. Here, it's freer, so you can express your views openly.

T: The United States has a very fast culture, is this the same in Vietnam?

VQ: No, Vietnam [is] slower, just like the French. It's just the same in Europe, it's slower because the people tend to move slower in their culture.

T: Would you like to add anything else?

VQ: Well, actually a lot of things we talked about today you would find it in the article [in the *Gainesville Sun* in October 1994, just after I became a U.S. citizen.] It's a good thing because the reporter from the *Gainesville Sun* also asked me questions relating to culture. There were some contrasts and differences in terms of behavior and things like that, thought processes.

T: How did the differences affect you?

VQ: The way to express and communicate. Here you can speak more openly, more forcefully. Sometimes it may run into conflict. I think it is normal, it's not because we are Vietnamese. I would say the same thing even among American[s], like a New Yorker speaks differently. When Christopher Columbus came over to the Americas they brought a lot diseases, [and] just because people [were] biologically different [and isolated before they met].

T: This ends our interview today. Thank you very much.