

# UC Santa Cruz

## Oral History Collaborations

### Title

Shirely Ancheta interviewed by Dr. Steven McKay

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## Shirley Ancheta interviewed by Dr. Steve McKay

**Speakers:** Shirley Ancheta, Steve McKay

**Date:** February 16, 2022

**Scope and Contents:** In this interview, originally conducted in person, Shirley Ancheta speaks with Dr. Steve McKay, a member of the Watsonville is in the Heart team. Shirley describes her father, Julio Ancheta's immigration from the Philippines to Kauai, HI in 1927 to work on the sugar plantations and his subsequent move to California where he worked as a migrant agricultural laborer. She provides an overview of his military service in the First Filipino Regiment during World War II and discusses how Julio met and married a Filipina named Delfina Rivera. She speaks about her family's small farm in Watsonville, her father's career in construction, and his passionate involvement in the AFLO-CIO union. Shirley also shares memories of manong, who she came to know by visiting the labor camps and participating in Filipino dances. Throughout the interview, Shirley also speaks about her relationship with her life long partner, Jeff Tagami. She describes how she and Jeff developed their political and intellectual consciousnesses through ethnic studies education as well as through participation in Third World liberation struggles and social justice activism. Additionally, she speaks about her and Jeff's careers as writers, specifically their poetry inspired by their upbringing in Watsonville, stories of the manong, and the histories of working-class people of color in the Pajaro and Salinas Valleys.

**Steve McKay 00:04**

Okay, so just want to read basically, just, you know, some of the things I said, but it's always good to have it recorded. So, again, you know, so thanks so much for just a willingness to—to share the story with us. And this is basically called the Watsonville is in the Heart oral history project. And so you know, this is a project we community initiated, really seeking to uplift the stories of Filipino families and the life of, you know, kind of what it was like in the city and in Watsonville—in the Pajaro Valley. And that, you know, the project team, its faculty, graduate students, and some undergraduate students, all part of the UC Santa Cruz and the Santa Cruz library, and then Roy Recio as part of the Tobera project. And then there's Amanda Gamban, who's also from she's helping with the project, and Olivia Sawi, who's also helping.

**Steve McKay 00:54**

So our ultimate goal is to document you know, your story and your family's story and to preserve it and, someday share it with others. So they can, you know, know more about Filipino history. And we hope the scholars may rely on the stories and, just to have a richer idea of what what it was like, right, the experience in the Pajaro Valley. So that's why you know, that's the reasons behind it. And in the future, we are planning to have an art exhibit that will feature some of the oral histories that we're collecting. And so I gave you the consent form to

sign. And that's just consent to participation in the project and acknowledges your oral history as a gift, basically, to the University Library. That's just the language they use.

**Steve McKay** 01:44

So the interview should be take no more than two hours and we can take breaks at any time. And stretch. And you know, again, I am recording it. And if you should feel free to discuss any concerns in detail about anything that comes up. And any questions you don't want to answer, that's absolutely fine for you. And so you, its in your rights to ask questions, including anything that minimizes any risk to you. So just anything you feel you don't want to share or if you want to strike from the record, we'll do all that. And you will have a chance, then when we finish, I'll send you a copy of the recording. And then—and we'll share it on Google Drive. And so you can listen to it, and take as long as you need to review it. And to make—we want to make sure you feel comfortable with its content. And so if you want to delete or remove any portion, it's yours, you can do. And definitely before we make it public or anything like that. And you may also request confidentiality and confidentiality, we can share that we wouldn't use your name in different points. Okay. So I just want to, you know, clarify all this.

**Steve McKay** 03:00

And, you know, it was really, we just want to have a conversation to learn a little bit more what what you're willing to share it was, it was so beautiful when you shared your poetry at that event. And I thought I need to interview her. I think she has a lot of stories that would be wonderful to, to hear. So, you know, I gave you some possible questions. But really, it's in terms of questions, it's, we can add topics, we can range all over the place, right? So don't feel hemmed in. Main topics will be kind of just growing up in Watsonville kind of histories and memories and family stories. You know, we're trying to, part of this is connected to better understanding some of the Watsonville's anti Filipino riots in 1930. So we're interested if there's any stories about about that from your family time or, you know, kind of subsequent issues around race in the Pajaro Valley, and then, you know, just some memories of places and feelings of what it was like growing up. So that's kind of the the general area of stuff that we'll talk about.

**Shirley Ancheta** 04:11

Okay.

**Steve McKay** 04:12

Okay. And so just, you know, partly for the record, I'm just going to ask you some of these things.

**Shirley Ancheta** 04:16

Sure I'm gonna follow your lead.

**Steve McKay** 04:18

Okay. So, it's okay, can I have your full name?

**Shirley Ancheta** 04:22

Shirley Angeline Ancheta

**Steve McKay** 04:24

Okay

**Shirley Ancheta** 04:25

At one time it was Shirley Ancheta Tagami after I married Jeff and that stuck for about a year and so it is Shirley Angeline Ancheta.

**Steve McKay** 04:39

Okay, great. And any nicknames you prefer? Shirley or?

**Steve McKay** 04:43

Okay. Okay. And, and when and where were you born Shirley?

**Shirley Ancheta** 04:43

Shirely is fine.

**Shirley Ancheta** 04:49

I was born in Salinas. 1954.

**Steve McKay** 04:56

And, and what are your parents' names?

**Shirley Ancheta** 04:58

Julio [Unknown] Ancheta and Delfina Rivera Ancheta.

**Steve McKay** 05:05

Okay, and where were your parents born?

**Shirley Ancheta** 05:07

They were born in northern Philippines or Ilocano. Bangui, Ilocos Norte.

**Steve McKay** 05:15

Oh, okay. And, and when did they come to Watsonville?

**Shirley Ancheta** 05:23

Well, they, my father came via Hawaii. So he arrived in Hawai'i 1927. Okay, so we didn't come to Watsonville till 1959, so a year after I was born, or less than a year after I was born, we moved to Mountain View and from Mountain View, California, we moved to Watsonville. Okay, and we were actually outside of Watsonville. We were in the rural. We're south of Watsonville. It was northern Monterey County near the Pajaro golf course. So that's where I did a lot of my growing up. It wasn't in the town of Watsonville, it was out there.

**Steve McKay** 06:11

Okay. Um, okay. And you know, what, how did they end up where your, your folks decided to come to Watsonville?

**Shirley Ancheta** 06:19

Um, we were living in Mountain View, my father was a—by that time he was into construction, no longer in the fields. And, but he kept his job in Watson- in Mountain View. And he wanted property. So there was two plus acres in Watsonville. Most of our—most of our family was in Hawai'i or LA. But it was like family friends that were here on coast road in Santa Cruz, and a few in Salinas. So Watsonville the real estate was cheap at that time. My dad was a veteran. I don't know, I'm not sure if he got a GI loan. But we ended up in Watsonville on two plus acres.

**Steve McKay** 07:15

Okay. All right. No, that's, it's always fascinating to hear, because the way that they—

**Shirley Ancheta** 07:20

yea my mom was—my dad during World War Two, he joined the Navy. So my mom was a war bride. And so she came in, she ended up coming in '48. Never to see her mother again. Never to go back until I think it was 1971 or 72 when she finally made it back.

**Steve McKay** 07:43

And did they know each other from back in the Philippines or you know?

**Shirley Ancheta** 07:47

No, she was a war bride. And he went back to the village after the war, because he was in Nagoya, Japan. And she was in Manila as a Yaya. You know, domestic help, because they're both the eldest in their family. So you know, they're offset out to go and help out the family. So he went back there, and he was looking for why, she was 20 years younger. And they got married. And he brought her here. So actually, I think she might have been the first female from the village to come to the US.

**Steve McKay** 08:26

Wow. Yeah, there were so few women at first. Yeah. So this is a common story from a lot of interviews, much older man who, who had come over so, so your dad came over to Hawai'i first. Did he work in sugar or—

**Shirley Ancheta** 08:42

Yeah, he worked in cane.

**Steve McKay** 08:45

And what's, do you know, like, his recruitment story, like did someone come and you know, like, yeah.

**Shirley Ancheta** 08:50

No I don't. Yeah, I know that he came with his first cousins.

**Steve McKay** 08:57

Oh, okay.

**Shirley Ancheta** 09:00

That's about all I know. And then they all went to different places. He ended up in Kauai, and I think my other uncle ended up in Maui. So yeah, I don't know.

**Steve McKay** 09:11

Okay. And how long was he in Hawai'i before? Or so, yeah, so did he stay in Hawai'i for a while?

**Shirley Ancheta** 09:19

About three years. And then he came to California, and I'm not sure where in California he roamed around? I, you know, I think back then they would just go up and down the coast. A lot maybe in Salinas, and, and in this area. Okay. Yeah. And but I know he was also Central Valley too, and things like that when they first came.

**Steve McKay** 09:45

Yeah, I mean, so many stories of following the crops and going to various places—

**Shirley Ancheta** 09:49

Right and the shared cars and all that, right. Yeah.

**Steve McKay** 09:53

Were there some stories that your parents, about their own childhoods that they shared with you or what were some stories like that your parents like to share?

**Shirley Ancheta** 10:02

Um, no, only that they were the eldest—the two eldest out of their group of I—there were usually eight or nine or ten kids in the family. That's about all I knew I wasn't, you know they—they didn't talk much about that—is that I don't know the language because they didn't even encourage us to learn the language because they wanted us to be really good at English. And that's how I ended up as an English major, I guess. But it was, you know, so to this day, I—I really can't understand Ilokano or Tagalog.

**Steve McKay** 10:48

Yeah. I think it's so common, you know, first generation Filipinos, myself included?

**Shirley Ancheta** 10:54

Really? You don't—you can't understand it

**Steve McKay** 10:56

Yeah. I tried. I studied, you know, afterwards, as an adult to learn Tagalog and— learn some. And I was so proud. I could speak a little bit, but then I started speaking to my dad, he just laughed, because that's such a bad accent. But, uh, you know, I got points for trying. You know, that was, but I think it's very common that first generation they encourage them to speak English.

**Shirley Ancheta** 11:21

Right, right. Yeah. And way back then they didn't have—you know, you couldn't go back to the Philippines or anything like that. And because no one had the money to do that. So it's like, we were basically cut off from family, my fa—my cousins were the, you know, the kids who were in the neighborhood or the, the other Filipino kids that they hung out with? Right?

**Steve McKay** 11:49

Yeah. And they were all our cousins.

**Shirley Ancheta** 11:50

Yeah. They were all our cousins.

**Steve McKay** 11:53

So yeah. So what kind of work when, when you did, so you moved to Watsonville? How old? were you when you moved to Watsonville?

**Shirley Ancheta** 12:03

I must have been five maybe? Yeah. Okay.

**Steve McKay** 12:07

And so what are your memories of—of Watsonville when you first came?

**Shirley Ancheta** 12:13

Ah, very rural. My dad wanted his—he wanted to farm. So even though he was still working over there, and he would only come home on weekends. We had rabbits, pigs and dogs and cats and pigeons.

**Shirley Ancheta** 12:36

You know, you name it. And we have to take care of those animals while my dad was gone. So it was yeah, it was kind of like that. And where we lived. I mean, there was just—would be one house and then two acres and then another house. So we weren't, we were a neighborhood but we weren't like this right? Wasn't that type of neighborhood. So it was like a lot of freedom to be there. And it's a historic neighborhood and I might want to use this for my, my own memoirs. Across the street, on Salinas road, there was the—the remnants of an old adobe and we would do our Zorro thing with, you know, charcoal or whatever on the side of the at adobe. But later on, I found out that that was the casa oh, what is it? The mother house of Viejo. The guy who was to later become the governor of California under Mexico. So that was his house, it overlooks the entire valley.

**Steve McKay** 13:53

Wow—

**Shirley Ancheta** 13:55

Yeah.

**Steve McKay** 13:55

—And that was on Salinas road?

**Shirley Ancheta** 13:57

Yeah. And it was—so it was right across from our bus stop, where all the kids used to go. We used to cross Salinas road, that's before I got real busy and people started getting killed. So we go back and forth, you know, there and go to the golf course pick up, you know, spare golf balls that got shot out of the golf course. So it was it was that type of childhood. It was a very mixed diverse neighborhood of color mostly. So we had Chicano, Filipino, Japanese American, Black, we would have Black families, Okies. Oh, yeah. That that's what we call the white



people because that's what they call themselves. Yeah, I'm not sure if we had Portuguese but we did have people who were descendants of the dust bowl people.

**Steve McKay** 14:50

Okay, yeah. So and were most of them, their parents farm workers or do they work in the town or what were those families

**Shirley Ancheta** 14:59

Well the guy at the end of the street was a dairy farmer. And so we had cows at the end of the street, and horses and, you know, it was just that type of a neighborhood there. You know, now there are houses that cover the meadows and everything where the palominos used to run. But the Japanese and Filipinos were mostly strawberry farmers. Okay. Some own, but a lot of them were sharecroppers

**Steve McKay** 15:32

Right.

**Shirley Ancheta** 15:33

Back then. Yeah.

**Steve McKay** 15:35

Yeah. Do you think your dad's you know, kind of wanting to own land? Why Why? Why do you think that was so important to him to to own land or have a farm?

**Shirley Ancheta** 15:45

It was—it was just to get a piece, right? Get a piece of that American dream and to have that and since he had a job that allowed him to tuck away money, but you know what, back then they gave up everything. I mean, they didn't go out. We didn't go out to eat out the way we go out to eat out all the time. Right. It was like Chinese food. Oh, yeah. on their anniversary or something like that. Right? So it was—it was that they scrimped and saved just to have property?

**Steve McKay** 16:19

Yeah. And then they finally could own property.

**Shirley Ancheta** 16:21

Mm hmm. And there were very few at the time, Filipinos who own property. You were either a contractor for the fields, labor contractor, or you were a sharecropper. But the majority of farm workers couldn't afford that because they couldn't even afford to pay for the health stuff

because they didn't have health insurance way back then. It was before Larry at Iltiong and Cesar Chavez, right.

**Steve McKay** 16:54

All the organizing that— No, that's, you know, yeah, it is rare to hear. That's why it's, you know, interesting, too, because so many of families stayed laborers and, you know, stayed living in camps and didn't—

**Shirley Ancheta** 17:09

Although downtown, we had the people who were merchants or the, you know, the Tabancays, and the Ragsacs own the laundry? Yes. And there were Filipinos who owned little grocery stores, that type of thing.

**Steve McKay** 17:24

Did you go to those stores?

**Shirley Ancheta** 17:26

Yes, we we did, we went to the—because they were friends of the family. So we—we did go to the laundry, get our, you know, back then women didn't—I guess the washing machines couldn't handle sheets. So you would bring you would actually bring your bedsheets to get, you know, dry cleaned or laundered or whatever. So I remember that. And the, the old Chinatown had, like the grocery stores. So we would go to a Chinese market. And we would go to the Japanese market for the rice. Oh, so the Chinese market for the groceries and the meat. And the Japanese market for the little things like, you know, your sesame seed oil, your rice and all that other stuff.

**Steve McKay** 18:15

And that was all downtown in Watsonville.

**Shirley Ancheta** 18:19

So we drive into town on weekends.

**Steve McKay** 18:22

Oh, yeah?

**Shirley Ancheta** 18:23

Do that.

**Steve McKay** 18:24

Was it like big—a kind of trip? You know where the whole family went? Or?

**Shirley Ancheta** 18:30

Yeah, I think so. Yeah. All of us piled in, but there were only two of us kids to begin with.

**Steve McKay** 18:38

Oh, yeah, I didn't ask that. Oh, so yeah. Can you tell me did you have siblings?

**Shirley Ancheta** 18:42

Yeah I have an older brother. And, and I have two younger brothers. Right? I had an older sister who passed before I was born. So she was the firstborn. And that was a hard thing for my mother here. She was a newcomer no family, no, nothing. She has two babies. And the first one passed away when my brother was nine days old. So she she went through a lot then. Um, yeah. And that was back in the day when my dad worked as a farm laborer.

**Steve McKay** 19:24

Okay. And how many years between you and your other siblings?

**Shirley Ancheta** 19:30

About six years. Six years with Julio and nine years with Mark. Yeah. And my older brother who has now passed on I think we had about two and a half years.

**Steve McKay** 19:45

So going into town was a big trip for the family.

**Shirley Ancheta** 19:48

Going into town going to the library, which we did, I believe once a week with my neighbors. And so my mom always made sure we had enough books to read and like other stuff so she'd make sure that we went to the library once a week also.

**Steve McKay** 20:03

And so what kind of books would you get out?

**Shirley Ancheta** 20:07

Fairy Tale books and that kind of—any kind of escape type of book. But you now she would just—but she would my mom was a really good storyteller. And so she would now tell us stories about being in the forest in the Philippines, how it would be dark. You didn't have flashlights and all that kind of stuff and she talked about how there were snakes in the forest and monkeys raiding your banana plantation or your bananas, that kind of thing. Right. And so she speaked longingly, I think of it because she figured she may not be going back to the Philippines.

**Steve McKay** 20:48

Yeah, yeah.

**Shirley Ancheta** 20:50

Although she wrote them all the time. And she probably I think she wrote them checks to kind of help out when ever she could, but you know, they were raising a family too so that didn't always happen.

**Steve McKay** 21:06

Yeah. So what are some other stories she told? I mean, that must be for you, I know for myself, you know, first generation. It's so exotic to hear the stories.

**Shirley Ancheta** 21:15

Oh, it was! Well, it was like—well, she always—I don't know not—I try to think of certain stories she would tell us, about her pet monkey. Here we have pet dogs and cats but she goes whoa I had a pet monkey because the mother left it behind when they raided the bananas. And you know, so she said she had she had stories about her monkey, and how it got big and started looking at her and started looking more and more humans. So they finally let it go. Because they thought this is wrong. Let this thing go right? But she, she, she didn't—

**Shirley Ancheta** 22:02

You know, I know that I think about the stories that I later heard were from her brothers or sisters, as they were told by their mother who never saw her daughter again. And so, their like secondhand stories, and when I would ask my mom she go, oh, I don't remember that.

**Steve McKay** 22:23

Oh, interesting.

**Shirley Ancheta** 22:24

Yeah. Yeah, so she doesn't—and my dad no he, he didn't even tell war stories. It was like—it was no—it was always kind of like moving forward. And you know, fun time would be—fun time for them would be when they would butcher a goat or a goat or a pig at the house and their friends would come to help butcher or we would go to one of the labor camps here on Coast Road and do that too. With our uncles, you know, and that would be it. And the kids of my generation were kind of freaked out, you know, cuz you know, here a pig would squeal and let—they drain the blood so they could save it and we thought oh, how cruel. How cruel is that? But, my mom always said no, they do it right. Because if they did it wrong, the meat wouldn't taste right. And that's how you kill a deer or a goat or something then I go well they're squealing don't ya think? No, no.

**Shirley Ancheta** 23:38

So that was that was their social life that and going to church. Yeah—And yeah, so we belong to a Presbyterian Church in Salinas. And we would go there. The family was originally I believe, Catholic, but because there was a Filipino community Presbyterian Church in Salinas. It was—it was that community that they belong to. And those were the people who supported my mom during times of grief when she first lost her daughter. So I was born and raised Presbyterian.

**Steve McKay** 24:22

Interesting. Yeah. That's where the community was. Yes. Yeah.

**Shirley Ancheta** 24:25

Right. Yeah.

**Steve McKay** 24:27

So, you know, you mentioned just they—your parents, you know, kind of having friends over or going—to going to the labor camp. So what were those occasions like? What, you know, were they for parties, were they for birthdays?

**Shirley Ancheta** 24:42

Yeah. You know, christenings, somebody's birthday usually. Yeah. Something like that, you know, in the camps were like, Okay, there's the Ilocano camp here and the Visayan camps over there, but they were just scattered from here to Davenport and past Davenport and then they had some in Salinas too. But I would say we were mostly at the ones along here because those are the— those were my father's town mates that came from the same town. They might have they were probably related somehow, like cousins or whatever. But they were mostly bachelor's.

**Steve McKay** 25:24

Okay.

**Shirley Ancheta** 25:24

Yeah.

**Steve McKay** 25:25

So that's mainly San Andreas road or which—where were those labor camps? That—

**Shirley Ancheta** 25:29

Highway one.

**Steve McKay** 25:30

Oh Highway one. Okay. Okay. Yeah.

**Shirley Ancheta** 25:32

Right.

**Steve McKay** 25:33

Wow. Okay. Yeah, I know. Yeah. All the way up to Davenport and beyond all these camps that, okay.

**Shirley Ancheta** 25:41

Yeah, and I—I am aware that there were some on San Andreas like the the Ramirez camps were San Andreas I think there was one of theirs on Trafton road right at the corner there, but my parents friends were Santa Cruz.

**Steve McKay** 25:58

Okay. Oh, that's interesting. Ya I know, there was a Santa Cruz—there was a barber, right. It was a barber shop. Where now—on Mission Street. It was called like the Filipino Barber or something like that.

**Shirley Ancheta** 26:09

I wonder if it was Rose's father?

**Steve McKay** 26:12

Yeah, I'm not sure. But I was surprised to hear that they were. But it makes sense that they were also scattered up in, you know, kind of labor camps all the way up.

**Shirley Ancheta** 26:21

In fact when we were doing the interviews in 1977, that's where I focused it on. Were those camps. There we did go to—we—the accident happened all after one camp. So we were on the one that used to exist on Beach road, and it's not there anymore.

**Steve McKay** 26:46

Yeah. Yeah. So—So how old were you when you would go to—with your parents for these kind of trips.

**Shirley Ancheta** 26:53

Oh, from the time we lived in Mountain View?

**Steve McKay** 26:56

Okay. So you were all the way back there?

**Shirley Ancheta** 26:58

Yeah, yeah, it was always a trip for them to see their family or their friends or we had a few friends too in Mountain View. I had an uncle, my dad's cousin, who worked for Pan-Am. That kind of things, but he would come over here to see his buddies too. You know, that was that was where you go to have some fresh dinuguan and, and drink up a little bit before heading home and do all that and just be with your buddies, because that was their—that's how they bonded.

**Steve McKay** 27:40

Yeah. And he knew them from his work as an ag laborer, before when he was here before.

**Shirley Ancheta** 27:45

I think they might have even grown up together maybe even. Because they were from the same village.

**Steve McKay** 27:53

So he had been coming and seeing— Seeing these guys much before—

**Shirley Ancheta** 27:57

Probably from the days in Hawai'i.

**Steve McKay** 27:59

Yeah. Okay.

**Shirley Ancheta** 28:00

Yeah.

**Steve McKay** 28:01

And so some of them happened to settle here. And then he stayed connected. Okay, yeah, yeah. Yeah, so can you remember a particular time when you like, one of these times when you went to one of the camps as a kid? Like, who—what was it like and what were they cooking and who else was there?

**Shirley Ancheta** 28:19

Yeah, usually it was the same cook. There'll be one person sitting at a table playing solitaire. And he was alone.

**Shirley Ancheta** 28:30

Um, there may be a Playboy calendar on the wall somewhere or a Mexican calendar on the wall somewhere from the grocery store, right. And there would be lots of food. The women who would come, like the wives, like my mom and others they get busy cooking the pastries, things that she would make out of the sweet rice flour and fry up and put the brown sugar and stuff on top of it and the coconut milk.

**Shirley Ancheta** 29:05

So they would get busy doing that while the men did the butchering and the— They'd go down to the beach if, if it was low tide and do the muscles. There would be plenty of food and so that my brother and I, you know, when our parents would say okay, we're going to camp and we thought, oh when, when are we going to go to the real camp? Because we're thinking summer camp. When are we going to go to the real camp? You always say we're gonna go camping, but we're gonna go see those guys. And my mom would say don't talk like that cuz these are our friends.

**Shirley Ancheta** 29:49

What's happened to them is that they got stuck over here. This is their life and they're going to be living in those places until they get kicked out or what ever happens to them. And so as they got older—I mean, because they were working brussel sprouts and whatever. But as they got older, yeah, where did they end up? And they ended up and—some of them ended up in low income housing out here. Some ended up in like, little houses in some other rural place, right.

**Steve McKay** 30:22

Yeah. Yeah.

**Shirley Ancheta** 30:23

White wives, some of them Mexican wives, some of them. Yeah. Some of them had children from those wives, but the women had taken off. So you saw a lot of kids getting raised by Filipino fathers. Oh, yeah. Half-breed kids.

**Steve McKay** 30:42

Right. Yeah. Yeah. And so in your neighborhood, was that pretty common? A lot of intermarriage? I mean, there was an anti-miscegenation laws. So you know, there was earlier—there were real laws against it.

**Shirley Ancheta** 30:53

In my neighborhood—I'm trying to think. Did we have—we have some, but not too many. They were pretty much families that were intact and just, you know, Filipino with Filipino. Yeah, cuz



even with my husband's family, and they live, maybe four miles down the road that way, um, she was born in Hawai'i. But he was, you know, he—he came to Hawai'i too. But they met, I believe in Watsonville. In the 30s. They might have even met in Lompoc. I'm not sure. But you know, it was the people that I knew, my cousins who were half, those families are pretty much intact. But there were a few that we would see. They would come over the house from LA or the city or something. And, yeah. They were—

**Steve McKay** 31:58

So raised by the dad, mixed-race, but then stayed with their dad

**Shirley Ancheta** 32:02

Right. And even later, I mean, I was to meet people from out of state when I was living in San Francisco, who had been raised by their single dads, you know, from Pontiac, Michigan, places like that. This is— yeah. Her older sister raised her from the time she was nine years old. Right? Yeah. So those are, I would say, pretty rough times for a lot of Filipinos.

**Steve McKay** 32:29

Yeah, yeah.

**Shirley Ancheta** 32:31

Challenging. I need to get out of the sun.

**Steve McKay** 32:33

Oh, yeah. Yeah, we can. We can move Yeah, yeah. Why don't we just yeah, I get it gets kind of pretty warm.

**Shirley Ancheta** 32:45

It started hitting my back. Cool. I'm getting so warm. I just might pass out.

**Steve McKay** 32:50

Oh we wouldn't want that, okay. Is that gonna work for you?

**Steve McKay** 33:05

Yeah, no, just even my own grandfather was a plumber with the US Army. But from his parents, were from Scotland. He ended up working in Corregidor as a plumber and then my grandmother was a laundress for the US military and so then they got married. My dad who's mixed but was born in in the Philippines that was because his father was American. After the war, he was able to come here he grew up in the same neighborhood in Manila that my mother grew up oh, she's Filipina. So I'm three quarters but I'm also mixed. You know, I'm just interested in thinking you know, like there are a lot of and I mean and again talking with a lot of

folks so far in the project that there were a lot of Mexipinos or mixed race you know, Filipinos lotta intermarriage with the okies sometimes. Yeah, so—

**Shirley Ancheta 34:04**

So I mean, I grew up thinking, what the expectations from my parents that I was going—going to marry, hopefully a nice Filipino boy but the reality of it was that most kids my age were marrying out. Yeah. All you know, the other Asians the, there were a few Mexicans who were marrying a Chicana or Chicano, but rarely, you know, and it was just a freaky thing that I ended up with Jeff, because we both have the same political sensibilities. And that's why we decided we needed to get out because nobody thought, like us, right? But I kind of knew I was probably going to end up with a man of color. Oh, My brother married nothing but white and went out with nothing but white. And the same thing goes for most people that I grew up with. Right. There was a, I there was there was a because of the prejudice that existed back then. There was self hate.

**Shirley Ancheta 35:23**

Yeah. My parents made me really aware of, of the struggles of the farmworkers and I had an uncle who was in Delano. So we knew all about the strikes and everything that was going on my, my dad, he always made sure, as a union man, he always made sure that my underwear have that union label, I did everything else. So that's how we shop and stuff like that. So we, I was, I was more or less groomed to think Union for the better, you know, no matter what, and to support them.

**Steve McKay 36:04**

So yeah, in terms of that, was your dad very involved in the labor struggles and with the labor unions in Watsonville? Or what? Why was his consciousness so developed?

**Shirley Ancheta 36:14**

I guess, cuz he was a union guy from Mountain View. And he was afl-cio. And so when the Chavez thing was going on, and we knew it was Larry Itliong, and all that was going on, but a lot of the local people around here, didn't know that they just thought it was a Mexican struggle. And we're against it. They didn't want to be affiliated in that way, thinking, oh, yeah, they don't, they don't want what we want and blah, blah, blah, although this area has a history of going on strike, too, right. So, you know, my dad, during our visits to the labor camps, he would talk to them about the unions, how it would be good to have insurance and all that kind of stuff. But usually on deaf ears, because they just, they wouldn't. Then, he wouldn't—my dad was not the type to argue with them. He would just say, Okay, I just thought I'd let you know.

**Steve McKay 37:24**

But but he himself had benefited from being a union guy, right, understood it and things like that. But he didn't figure his activism started more when he was doing construction and roadwork in Mountain View was he involved, you know, in any other kind of labor stuff when it was earlier?

**Shirley Ancheta 37:41**

Yeah. You know, I don't know. But my I know, my godfather was, that he was part of that strike. And that's the poem that I wrote. Yeah. So I'm thinking that Yeah, my dad was probably part of that.

**Steve McKay 37:58**

It's such a beautiful poem. I reread it and, you know, just you know, thinking about Salinas in 1933. Can you tell me a little bit about like, what inspired you to write the that and I didn't realize it was your, you know, that was you had family connections?

**Shirley Ancheta 38:17**

Yeah, it was because he told me the story. And then it may—it forced me to do the research I already knew about. Okay, so a couple—a little bit—So before that, Jeff and I, after high school, we went to Cabrillo. I graduated from Aptos High. He graduated from Watsonville High. But we took—we nearly had—we had an interest in ethnic studies, but we weren't sure if we wanted to major in it of course right? But we wanted to know what was everyone's history. So we took Asian American Studies. That's how we heard about Tobera from Sandy Lydon. We took we took Black history we took women's studies history, and we took Chicano history. Where did we get the Native stuff? We got the Native stuff later on through through literature and stuff like that. So we had some kind of idea about what that was like.

**Shirley Ancheta 38:17**

I can remember Jeff going back home and saying to his mom, hey, did you know that did you know America's in the Heart? She goes I knew Carlos. He was after me in Lompoc. She says yeah, poor guy. He was always sickly and always needed some money, you know? And he'd hang around the pool halls wait for the guys to come out and you know, ask for money. But so she goes, Oh, I have a letter of his too right. Check. Have you have an edge being from the depression, you know, she Yeah, she saved everything. Yeah. Yeah, she had it in 10 minutes in Jeff's hand, you know, Xerox, Xerox Xerox, right.

**Shirley Ancheta 40:05**

But so we have that background and interest of looking for those stories. So, the next time I talked to my godfather, I said, you know, what was it like living in the camps back then? Yeah. And he—he had heard about the Watsonville race riots. But he says, we had our own, we had,

you know, when we tried to strike and they burned all the rice down. And so he told me that story, and I just thought, Okay, this is the poem.

**Shirley Ancheta 40:38**

Tony Galinato. And he went through— as my godfather was, he loved me unconditionally. He was a bachelor. He lived in Salinas. He was a photographer also. So he, you know, I used to have all these pictures where he would just—he would take a picture of me every month of my life, right? I don't have those pictures anymore. So I would tell him, he would tell me those stories. And, you know, later on, he lived in Chinatown in Salinas. You know, that was once a thriving place too before it became what it is now. So, yeah, we would, he would just tell me those stories, and I'd just soak it up. But that's the one that stands out. The others—I don't have total recall.

**Steve McKay 41:13**

And what's his name?

**Shirley Ancheta 41:35**

And I guess, so. I had to follow up with Sandy and with the Takaki book about how much exactly were they asking for? What was the increase and all that because that's, that's the one wonderful thing about writing is that you get to do the research so that you learned something, and you're teaching somebody else that the same thing. Whereas, you know, other writers who just are just writing about whatever they write, you know, the sunset or whatever. I say, it's gonna fall flat because you're not gonna have to do any research about anything. Right. and—and mine, when we realize Oh, my God, you mean, we just can't write about butterflies and sex? Yeah, right. We're gonna have to write about the stories that are not told from our—the people that we're from. Yeah. So I just thought it was gonna be hard shit really really hard shit To do. And, you know, and because it was about everybody, it wasn't just about being Filipino. It was being with everybody else. In the town, in the neighborhood in your schools. Everybody else was going through their own version of self hate. Growing up as a person of color in Watsonville. Right. Yeah.

**Shirley Ancheta 41:35**

Wow. That's amazing to then recover those stories, like from your mom and or from Jeff's mom, and you know, that she met Carlos. That's wonderful

**Shirley Ancheta 43:13**

That's right. Right. Yeah.

**Shirley Ancheta 43:17**

Yeah, they—

**Shirley Ancheta** 43:19

The old timers had it, had it rough. I mean, going into a—you know, being on the road, going into a restaurant and finding out you weren't going to get served dinner. I was, you know, I was with—I witnessed that happened to my father a couple times where he would just ask for a glass of water and they would take forever to get him the glass of water and then they come out with, you know, it looked like a snow cone cup. Didn't look like a real cup, right? And he—they would just kind of give it to him. You know, with that kind of— with a scowl. Here's your water with a scowl. It was that kind of thing or, or even the decent kind of racism. You know, where you go into town, you're asking for certain things, and the white person is asking my dad, well, how are the strawberries this year? You know, like everybody was a strawberry farmer and my dad he would just say oh, good. No explanation there man, good. Doing Good. It was that easy to do.

**Steve McKay** 44:35

Yes. That and its so interesting. Of course, the story of the manongs as uncles and the bachelors so that was your—that was your godfather. Was that very common that manongs are the, you know, not related but became godfathers to to a lot of kids?

**Steve McKay** 44:35

Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, cuz They were all we had, right there. all my godfathers were usually living in a labor camp unless they were married. And then they had, they usually had a house. And I think I only had two or three. I mean, some people have a whole mess, right? I think I only had two or three.

**Steve McKay** 45:19

Okay. And then would you go and visit them? Would your parents take you to their labor camps? Or would they come over for these events? Or?

**Shirley Ancheta** 45:26

Yeah, it was both. Right. We would trade things like, you know, way back, it was like, if they worked in an onion field, in Gilroy, or Hollister, they bring over a whole sack of onions and we trade them up for whatever we have. Right? My mom would fix them dinner and that kind of thing. There is always that system of "here. we've got some extra food for you guys."

**Steve McKay** 45:58

Yeah.

**Shirley Ancheta** 45:59

So it was—it was—it was a warm community. And so there were also like, I was saying the social dances where that was their fun and entertainment and their way for making money. on weekends so weekends in the summer will usually CPDES Hall, or the Vets in Watsonville. They'd have the dances and the music would be a Filipino band. Usually from the Bay Area, or a local band here. There were several Filipino local bands. I like the ones from the Bay Area because they brought in their sons.

**Shirley Ancheta** 46:41

And their sons were usually mestizos and they were cute, right? They were really, really cute. So, yeah, those are always good times too.

**Steve McKay** 46:49

Yeah, walk me through one of the dances you remember? Like? What? How did it happen? who came?

**Shirley Ancheta** 46:56

Yeah no, it's Portuguese Hall, it would be like—Okay, so all my dad's friends from the labor camps would show up, because they would try to get me for queen for the night. And it's whoever made the most money.

**Steve McKay** 47:07

Okay, yeah.

**Shirley Ancheta** 47:07

And, you know, they'd line us up at midnight. And there would be dancing, and special dances to it, you know, \$1. Every bit—this would be a special dance with a raffle and everything, right. But then, at 12 o'clock, they'd lined the daughters up, and chairs and there would be maybe a dozen of us. And then we would be given five minutes and one song. And we would dance with whoever came up. And it was called the social box. They would tell the guy who was doing the bidding and everything how much they were willing to give; some gave five, some gave one, some gave ten, some gave twenty. At the end of the night, the girl who made the most money was the queen for the night. And she got to keep half the money. The people putting on the dance got to keep the other half.

**Shirley Ancheta** 47:31

Wow. That's—That's fantastic. So how old were you when you were—when you were queen?

**Shirley Ancheta** 48:37

So my mothe-in-law, she never let her daughter's do it cause she had to do what when she was younger, she hated it. Right? Cause she's the one who was born in Hawai'i. "You're never

going to see my daughter's there.". But she would go cause they would you know, it was their form of entertainment being around. They get to get all duded up. Put on the makeup and stuff. And so everybody got duded up, back then in the 70s, like, girls we were mostly in mini skirts, right? And we would dance with the manongs and I hated it at first.

**Shirley Ancheta 48:45**

But man am I so glad I did it because the other Filipina girls that I went to school with they never got to know the manongs, and their pulse, and their heartbeat, and their aches and pains. And, you know, that dialogue. All they could remember were their parents and their relatives, but I got to know that community. And there were the guys who—aside from my uncle who was in the Navy, who also taught me how to dance— they taught me how to do the swing and the Cha Cha, three step waltz and that kind of stuff.

**Shirley Ancheta 49:17**

Oh, it was between the ages of 15 and 20, 22 maybe. And I went off to college. You see it was really good money. I mean my mom probably made me see the light. It was good money. And— but I was giving up my date nights and football games right? But it was okay and usually after the dances there would usually be a Chinese restaurant that was open at twelve in the morning or one in the morning that we would always go to. It was. And you know, I can't think. Yeah. So those were, those are really good times when I about it. And also just awkward times because you're going through your, you know, coming of age in a Filipino dance hall. But I met a couple of boyfriends there. Because they were the sons. Yeah. You know, hooked up. A couple of times Jeff would come with me. He came with his parents. So it was alright. But they didn't like—the manongs didn't like the fact that if I had a boyfriend, so a lot of times, you know, you had to keep it on the down low because they wanted to know that you were single, weren't going to get married or pregnant. And that you're gonna go on to college. That's what they always wanted you to do, right.

**Steve McKay 50:59**

So it was your dad's friends and they would always come and they would, they would dance with you and pay. They were proud of you if you were the ones to become queen.

**Shirley Ancheta 51:08**

Right, right. Yeah. Yeah it was fun. But those things had been going on for a while, because that's how my mother-in-law had met her first husband. Because back then the guy who bid last was stuck with the entire bill. And so that was his way of showing his love.

**Steve McKay 51:37**

Wow. That's yeah —nd those were every week, or how often were they?

**Shirley Ancheta 51:42**

During the summer, they were almost every week. So I would you know, there was Salinas, there was Santa Cruz, and there was Watsonville. So it was, you know, there, it wouldn't be straight Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz. I'd do that. And then when I was doing the Queen candidate circuit, cuz like my parents were Legionnarios people, right? I would have to go to San Francisco in different places to do that kind of stuff and support the Queen candidate. There's and she came over to support me in, Salinas, Santa Cruz, or wherever so it was—it was that kind of thing.

**Steve McKay 52:22**

But it was a social thing for your parents then do

**Shirley Ancheta 52:25**

Oh, yeah, they loved it.

**Steve McKay 52:28**

Yeah, that's fantastic. You know, these stories, like the manong, we only hear such a thin story that's usually about work or something like that. So to hear these stories, you know, them sponsoring your dance or doing all that stuff. It just gives us a much like richer picture of their lives and then the lives of those that they touched.

**Shirley Ancheta 52:48**

And I'll always remember, like the other girls that I ended up going to the dances with, in Watsonville like Francis Tabancay, her sister didn't have to do it, but she had to, you know, and then there's the Ragsac. So we, you know, we would see each other at every— And then there were people were territorial, too, right. So if a girl came from let's say Stockton and she thought she was hot shit, well, she get followed in to the bathroom by a group of girls from Watsonville or Santa Cruz and say, "Hey Lula. Hell do you? You know you're on our territory. Quit acting like you're such hot shit and quit, you know, leave our—leave our uncle's alone or leave our boyfriends alone." You know, that kind of thing?

**Steve McKay 53:37**

Sure. Yeah.

**Shirley Ancheta 53:38**

So there was always that kind of competition too. So it was just it was you know there was all it was—Yeah, they were—they were so different that it would be hard to explain to our friends in high school our white friends or our Japanese American friends, what we were doing on a Saturday night because they would go "ooh you dance with a 65 year old geezer? Did he squeeze your tits?" You know, all that kind of stuff. "Yeah, he did." You know, I don't want to



dance with a FOB too. Oh my god. Right? You know that guy? Because the FOB started coming after 68, right. And they were at the dances looking for— And you know, I feel sorry for them now, but back then. We wanted to make that clear line of demarcation that we were, you know, yeah, we were American born and they were like—FOB.

**Steve McKay** 54:39

Yeah, no, that is a whole different generation.

**Shirley Ancheta** 54:42

Oh, yeah—Yeah, this is delicious. And no, we're good thank you.

**Steve McKay** 54:46

thanks. Oh, that's so funny. Yeah, that's, that's Wow, it's just so ah—there's so many rich kind of veins of different—

**Shirley Ancheta** 54:58

You know—we were you know—we were—there were some women who were just interested in dating Mexican guys when they weren't at the dances, right? Some were "Oh, I only I only date white guy" kind of thing. I'll come to this for the money. Yeah, and that kind of stuff. But it was an interesting mix and there was alcohol served. Because most of the time, like at CPDES hall, they had a bar, the Vets Hall had a bar. So you know, there's drinking going on. There were girls getting caught in the backseat of cars, right? You know, with their boyfriends, not with a Filipino, a Manong or anything like that, but you know, and shame shame on her. Right?

**Steve McKay** 55:02

So it was—it was they were mainly—so it sounds like, you know, mainly Filipinos, but—and the manongs and then the families but also some younger generation that—

**Shirley Ancheta** 55:54

Yeah, and you know, the wives who would come were White, Mexican and Filipino. They we weren't—we were a mix. Yeah. Um, so, yeah, it was—it was different, but it was—it was okay. Once you could—once you get past what it was that you were getting auctioned off and all that kind of stuff. Because by then I was a feminist. Yeah, I was an emerging feminist. And, you know, I was already reading *Our Bodies Ourselves*. And I was thinking, Dang, this is wrong. What I'm doing is absolutely wrong. But I had I struggled with myself about that. Yeah. But I'm glad I continued on and got to know these guys.

**Steve McKay** 56:43

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, it's complex. You know? These guys and things like that. That's—that's really fascinating. So—So when did you meet Jeff? So you guys grew up a few miles away from each other?

**Shirley Ancheta 56:58**

Fourth grade, Moss Landing school.

**Steve McKay 57:03**

Yeah, so that's wonderful

**Shirley Ancheta 57:08**

We knew each other, we didn't—we were—we didn't become boyfriend girlfriend till maybe high school. Junior high we kinda eyeballed each other, danced a couple dances together, but it was never anything serious until high school.

**Steve McKay 57:26**

Did your families know each other before or, you know—

**Shirley Ancheta 57:29**

We met—they met through us but you know, I was sixth grade. Right? Everybody shops, the same stores in Watsonville. Yeah. I saw Jeff. His mom's buying him clothes. My mom's buying some. So that's how our moms met. Oh, okay. Yeah. So that planted the seed in them thinking, oh, maybe. Maybe these two.

**Steve McKay 57:56**

And they were okay with that. Because he was Filipino? Was he half? He's mixed?

**Shirley Ancheta 58:00**

He's mixed. He and—He is mixed because his parents are mixed. So yeah. So he didn't look—he kinda looked like you, he didn't quite fit. He looked Filipino but he didn't look quite Filipino. Yeah, you see some of the photos, right? Jeannie Houston [Unknown], he's always said "Ah Yeah, Jeff always reminded me of a Japanese movie star."

**Shirley Ancheta 58:29**

So yeah, I—his family. We got along. And we started going out when we were about 16-17 years old. Yea and when we got to Cabrillo, we were taking all those classes together. But we figured, hey, when we transfer, we break up. Because we've all—this is always known as each other and we need to just branch out. And so I mean, my dad wanted me to go to UCSC since he was part of that construction crew that put up UC—that cleared the land, to even put the foundations for these buildings. So he wanted me to go to UCSC I wanted to go to the big city.

I was either gonna do San Francisco or Los Angeles because I have relatives in LA too. And so we thought okay, well, we'll break up then. But we didn't, we ended up together and taking classes at State. And we missed the students strikes by a couple years, but by then, at least there was some ethnic studies in place that we were able to—so we were—we—we benefited from all of the struggles right before us. The students there during the Hayakawa years.

**Steve McKay** 59:58

Right yeah. First ethnic studies and all those, you know, those are third world studies and all those big struggles.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:00:04

Yeah, back then we were called third world.

**Steve McKay** 1:00:08

So you mentioned before that you and Jeff kind of bonded because you both wanted to get out of Watsonville. Can you say a little bit, like you know, you said that you just sorta had a budding consciousness maybe early on and—

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:00:20

Yeah, it you know when we were at Cabrillo. Okay, so there were Black struggles going on, we had heard about the stuff that was going on in LA, Garfield High and all that kind of stuff. So we knew all of those things existed outside of the safe, hippy realm of Santa Cruz right here. The struggles were anti-war, feminist kind of stuff. But here there was one, the the Native Americans when they were—when they found burial grounds and on Lee road in Watsonville. And they wanted to, they didn't want them—The Natives didn't want things being built there. So we joined that struggle. AIM joined.

**Steve McKay** 1:00:42

Oh, wow.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:01:01

And so it was kind of a big deal. So that was part of our initiation into, you know, being part of that struggle.

**Steve McKay** 1:01:29

Or what did the—what did your—the Filipino community, in terms of this kind of stuff?

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:01:29

No, no, no, don't get involved. Right. Just go to school. Be a good girl and you know, get good grades. My—Yeah, it—Kinda remember how things turned out.

**Shirley Ancheta 1:01:29**

So that's just kind of got us on track for third world lit as well. So we had to do that balancing act, whether, you know, we would go with the classic literature, and at the same time, study this other literature but there weren't, there weren't that many—There weren't that many publications. Yeah, right at the time, right. So we really had to go and search for it. But thanks to Alan and thanks to Sharon being real feisty and everything like that, we were on track to do that. You know, those are back in the days when Jeff would put on his blue Mao hat and jacket and, and you know, we we kept the Little Red Book and everything else. It was like, that's where we thought, we had no idea that people were suffering in China. Yeah, but we just thought socialists that's the way to go. Malcolm X, everything, right, by all means necessary. So we were—

**Shirley Ancheta 1:01:45**

Sharon, one of the people who died in that car accident, she was very political she—she decided to move from Sacramento to go to Cabrillo so she could bond with her grandparents, her Chinese American grandparents. And their stories interesting too because her mother was—her grandmother who had been born in San Jose and her grandfather. His family had gone back and forth—back and forth, China there but they were from the railroad people. But when her grandfather married the grandmother, she lost her citizenship, even though she was born in San Jose. Oh, and so it wasn't until Sharon's father was born that they could buy property. So Sharon was so—she was by her parents, they really instilled that thing about how important it was to fight for your rights, and social justice.

**Shirley Ancheta 1:02:50**

And so we met her. And we met Alan Lau, who is another writer from San Francisco, but he had just come back from Japan with a Japanese wife because he had been teaching English there. But he was taking art here at UCSC. So with their input, like he introduced us to all of this literature, he goes "here, you got to read Ishmael Reed. You got to read Yarborough Reader. You got to read this, gotta read that." Yeah, well, I'm still reading my Steinbeck. No, no. Yeah. You know, we're reading Langston Hughes and stuff. But we didn't we weren't reading all of the Asian American stuff yet. Right. But when Lawson Inada came to town. And he, and it was Morton Marcus, who introduced us to Lawson. And we found out how Power to the People stuff and working-class poets and all that kind of stuff. Because Lawson Inada studied under Philip Levine in Fresno.

**Steve McKay 1:03:35**

And what did people in Watsonville think of this?

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:05:00

They thought, well, no Watsonville was conservative Salinas is different from Watsonville, in that they're even worse. Even the Filipinos are different. They're more like wannabes. "I want to be a redneck." Whereas Watsonville People veered more towards the Santa—Santa Cruz sensibility. Okay, but I want to be a white surfer. Right? I want to be not a cowboy. But I want to be, you know, white surfer. Do that. And I wanted to be with people of color, you know, and just be marching with them. And, and that's what we did moved to San Francisco and got into it right away.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:05:13

Yeah. And so many historic struggles that you're a part of.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:05:52

Right and by then, you know, it was like, you know, we were reading Chicano lit a lot. Jeff made friends with Gary Soto. People like that. And we were on track for writing about where we were from. Being okay about where we were from. The people at Kearny Street Workshop just kind of had their arms around us, and just welcomed us, and said yeah, we're all in this together. You guys are from Watsonville. So historic. Right.

**Steve McKay** 1:06:23

Right. Right. Yeah. So is that when you started writing both of you about Watsonville in this period? Or when when did you start? Like,

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:06:31

Well, Jeff kind of started while he was here. And he was actually more of a fiction short story writer. And he veered more to the poetry, I don't know, well, I don't know when that happened, when he started going that way. And I was thinking "man you're on my territory now! Wait a minute!"

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:06:56

But he, actually, he ended up publishing first before me. And I think he had a clearer view of how things were. But you know how—you just need to process all that historic information and see where your place is in the world. Right. And it took a while to get that footing and then to write. Within that—without feeling like I was writing identity poems, that would be the worst thing because I knew that that I heard identity poems and I was "Oh shit, this is fucking propaganda" right? Or this is really weak poetry and they don't understand it. It's just, this will be good for the Third World, whatever. But it's not gonna cut it if you want to make it in the literary world, right? So it's like, okay, we need to do this. And then Jeff was able to pull it off

successfully, where I was still trying to make sense of the developing my poetic voice and incorporating my history and identity into it without having to write an identity poem.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:07:14

Yeah, well, that's what's lovely about Salinas 1933. It doesn't read—it reads—is a really great poem.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:08:23

Thanks.

**Steve McKay** 1:08:23

That, you know, really, it's historically important, and that's important, but it's, it's, it's— It's as a poem that's so moving.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:08:33

Oh, thank you.

**Steve McKay** 1:08:34

The burning rice that was just that.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:08:35

Yeah. And it was all true. You know, no, no, but no writer could have come up with that image, right?

**Steve McKay** 1:08:43

I was wondering, you know, like, that is so specific. So— you know, it's from a real, you know, eye-witness.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:08:51

yeah, yeah, it was and I yeah, I forgot to say my uncle stru- my godfather struggled with depression most of his life. I mean, I can remember visits to Agnew because the depression would get so bad and back then they treated depression with shock treatment. They didn't have a lobotomy done but, yeah, and I—whether or not that was caused by all the racism and the hard times here in America. Oh, no, it didn't change him. But he was just a really gentle sensitive man. Yeah, yeah. He got caught up in that but, you know, good man. He loved me unconditionally. And like my dad, who was just Filipino tyrant, right. Do it this way. Yeah, yeah.

**Steve McKay** 1:10:00

And so So you move back to you move to San Francisco you're active there what—When did you come back to Santa Cruz and—

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:10:10

It was the kids cuz we— it was a struggle driving them to daycare—both of us were working full time. We weren't getting anywhere financially, paycheck to paycheck, I worked in the financial district. But so what, the cost of living in San Francisco was just so high. And my mom said, if you come back, you have a house to live in. Because by then my, my parents some over the years, they—they, my dad had du—that they built a duplex, and they had another half, the original house that we lived in. So they had three rental units. And by then my dad had died. So my mom had fixed up one of the houses and she says instead of renting it, why don't you just live here just pay for the insurance but you raise your children here. Ohlone was a brand new school. So if I had moved my kid there that year, he would be like the first kid in the first year. And and Ohlone elementary school, which was just across the—over the fence because my parents were forced to, eminent domain, they were forced to sell the property. So we went from two acres to less than one acre.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:10:29

Kids.

**Steve McKay** 1:10:32

Oh, okay.

**Steve McKay** 1:10:37

Oh.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:10:38

Because they have to make way for that school.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:11:28

So we that's that's why that it was it was easier for us to move back. Jeff and I hadn't finished our degrees at that point. So we ended up back—we ended up here at UCSC. Okay, which meant we had to do all of our upper division all over again, because here we were in the state system, right, which wasn't recognized by the UC system, but which was fine. You know, it was okay. You know, it was like, oh, no, two more years. And here we had come real close.

**Steve McKay** 1:11:28

Oh.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:11:37

That— what messed me up, I think was a car accident. And so there was hard to get back into, because I suffered from survivor's guilt. So it was hard for me to get back into school back into

and I had all kinds of problems like I needed surgery every so often. So that yeah, that that kind of made it hard. For me returning to school or staying with it, staying with school, and at the same time, working full time. And it also affected my writing the survivor's guilt. So I didn't write for a while and everybody else in Kearny Street was getting published. I was just going, oh well it's okay, I can do this, or I can be editor I can do this. And that. And I just it. I don't know when that happened. I think it was after my son was born. And I actively gave myself permission to go on with my life. And then I, I, my writing started coming back to me. But before that it might—the editor in my head would not free me. I was stuck in my own head. Yeah.

**Steve McKay** 1:13:43

So what year did you start writing again? Or when did you start?

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:13:46

Hmm, well, I always was writing but I was never—my—I didn't feel like my writing was good enough to send out. So shoot it—but I would say it was probably after the return home here that I—it freed me up. Although, I can remember the room that I would write in in San Francisco before the kids were born and you would tl had more time back then. Once the kids are born, it was like, oh, wait until they're asleep. So I would my writing hours were 12:30 to 2:30.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:13:54

Wow. And what year were you—was your oldest born

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:14:33

'85. How old are your kids?

**Steve McKay** 1:14:36

My kids I have one is 27. And one whose 23.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:14:42

Oh really! Grown kids. You're younger than you look.

**Steve McKay** 1:14:56

I look older than IY—eah. So I'm 54. Okay, so people, yeah. And so my kids, one in Seattle, and one in New York City.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:15:08

So UW?



**Steve McKay** 1:15:10

He is now teaching. He's a fifth grade teacher at a, at a school up there. So which is nice. My wife is also a teacher.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:15:20

Because my kids seeing how we struggled as—as teachers.

**Steve McKay** 1:15:26

They didn't want anything to do with it.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:15:27

Yeah.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:15:28

I mean, he did that for a while, and he did the after school program. But then after a while he was like no. I was like you'd be a good candidate because he—my, my older son, he's really good with analogies. And I can remember when he was here, because he went to school here, he had a whole study group. And they would just flock around and because he'd have these analogies and he'd show them how to get from this point to this point and thought and process. Yeah. he says "no, I don't want to be a teacher." Hmm, not enough money there.

**Steve McKay** 1:16:05

Yeah. Well, that's true. Where's he now?

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:16:09

San Francisco. But during this COVID. I think I saw them twice last year.

**Steve McKay** 1:16:21

Yeah. Now, my dad still lives—So I grew up in. I was born in San Francisco, moved to Daly City. And then we moved to the East Bay. My dad shipped out with APL, he's a Merchant Marine.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:16:34

Okay. I think my dad was a Merchant Marine for a while too.

**Steve McKay** 1:16:36

Oh, really? Yeah. There were a lot of Filipinos he shipped out right. So that was one of the thing but so his home port was Oakland. And so we lived in the East base. I grew up in El Cerrito, went to school in Richmond.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:16:50

Oh, that's a nice area.

**Steve McKay** 1:16:52

Yeah, yeah my dad's still—still—he's 91. He lives in the house that we grew up in. And so we just had— These orchids or his—He gives us orchids.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:17:02

and so your dad is one who's half Filipino? Yeah, okay.

**Steve McKay** 1:17:07

Yeah. So, so,

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:17:10

Were you in San—Were you born in San Francisco?

**Steve McKay** 1:17:13

Yeah, yeah.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:17:14

So what hospital

**Steve McKay** 1:17:15

Off Geary? I guess French hospital.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:17:17

Oh, yeah. Yeah. We—we lived in the Richmond District.

**Steve McKay** 1:17:21

Oh, okay. Yeah. Yeah.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:17:24

Fifth and Geary. Yeah.

**Steve McKay** 1:17:25

So that's where I was born and then—then my and by then, my parents were already living in Daly City on School Street. And, you know, it was, it was funny, because it was mainly—when my dad moved there. It was still Italian. It wasn't really Filipino yet when he moved back in Daly City, but then, you know, became very Filipino. And then they moved to the East Bay. So yeah.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:17:50

How old were you when you guys moved to East Bay?

**Steve McKay** 1:17:53

I was—I just I only went to kindergarten in Daly City. Okay. And then I moved to first grade.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:17:59

Okay, so it's kinda like me and Mountain View.

**Steve McKay** 1:18:02

Yeah, it sounds like that. Yeah.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:18:05

But so enough to know—

**Steve McKay** 1:18:09

Yeah, yeah. No, I remember, you know, what, Daly City and some of the places we would go, or, you know, we'd get stuff or I remember the school. It's so funny to revisit your elementary school because I just remember it this vast, huge place and they go—

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:18:27

Are you the eldest?

**Steve McKay** 1:18:28

I'm the youngest.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:18:30

Oh of how many?

**Steve McKay** 1:18:32

Of four? Yeah, so my siblings all still in the Bay Area, which is nice. And one in who's in in Auburn, she's the farthest, and then my brother lives in Richmond, my sister in Berkeley.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:18:49

So, is your mom's still alive?

**Steve McKay** 1:18:52

No, she passed three years ago. So you know, I mean, like Roy, the the project of, you know, kind of going through the stories—family stories are really important, you know, and I wish I asked her more—was more patient to hear some of her stories and things like that.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:19:09

Speaking of Roy, he was at those Filipino dances. Roy with his sister. Always there with a cuckoo eyes and in the glasses. All that kind of stuff. They were the little ones.

**Steve McKay** 1:19:23

Uh huh. Yeah, cuz he's. His dad had him so much—you know—he was so much older.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:19:28

Yeah, than the mom, right.

**Steve McKay** 1:19:30

Yeah. But similar kind of logic.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:19:32

And I didn't realize it his mom, Sally, was part Filipino all this time. I always thought she was 100% white.

**Steve McKay** 1:19:40

Oh, okay. So she had. That's right He did say he's three quarters because we bonded over being three quarters.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:19:46

She—She looked very, very white. And I met the little girl for the first time, his little girl. I couldn't get over it. She looks just like his mom.

**Steve McKay** 1:19:57

Oh, really? Wow.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:19:58

So you know there's that home town thing. Yeah, I just feel like he was like my little brother.

**Steve McKay** 1:20:03

That's nice. Well, yeah, it's, I mean, this project has been just great. I mean, it's, it's, you know, because it's a pretty tight group of families really, you know, in Watsonville. And so but and everyone seems to know each other somewhat, you know, kind of like, like you and Roy that, you know. So, as being an outsider, I feel privileged just to get to talk to folks.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:20:29

I feel like I can't really speak for Jeff's family. And it would be nice if maybe I'll give you the name of some of his siblings and see if they would be willing to talk to you about their family.

**Steve McKay** 1:20:43

Yeah. That would be wonderful

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:20:44

That would be nice. Again, Jeff, and I were like, the only ones in our family— Well, my two younger brothers because I have a lot of influence on them. They got to know, you know, being American Filipino. But on his side, you know, being Filipino means Adobo and that kind of stuff, right? That's how there's no knowledge of their history past their grandparents. With my son, he took—my younger son—he took on what Jeff was doing and started researching more about the family and his side. And he's found out so much more about, you know, that. I mean, his great grandfather was actually the labor commissioner in the Philippines. Varona, Francisca Varona is his great grandfather.

**Steve McKay** 1:21:50

Wow, wow. That's fascinating.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:21:53

So, all of those things, so they can, and then so he's connecting with the people in the Philippines and finding out Well, where did the Veronas come from the Verona's came from Cuba.

**Steve McKay** 1:22:06

Oh, really? Oh, wow yeah.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:22:08

Cuba, who came in during that? The Spanish time? So interesting.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:22:14

Yeah. That is very—

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:22:15

It's so— he's now he—he is Muslim, my brother, my son is Muslim. So he goes, but you know, now that you go back farther, there was a great, great grandma, who was the Datu's daughter in Mindanao. You know, yeah, he could just go on and on. And I go, Well, let's get a grant. And then we can research the Japanese side. Because the people in the North people hardly know that, but the people in the North are—actually— have Japanese blood in them. Because the Japanese came in, when they were getting kicked out by the—in the 17th and 18th century by

the the Japanese government who didn't want any Christians in the country. So even I have some in my DNA.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:22:15

Yeah. I mean, the Philippines is such a melting pot, you know, of all that stuff.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:23:21

Here I thought for so many years that I was 100% Filipino, and I was telling everybody, there's nothing in there until I got diagnosed with you know, being a Thalassemia carrier, having anemia and all that and finding out that it was —this—the European one and not the Asian one that I had.

**Steve McKay** 1:23:44

Oh wow.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:23:44

Right, and I go okay, so somebody messed up somewhere.

**Steve McKay** 1:23:49

Yeah, I like the term 100% Hapa. Because—

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:23:53

That's a good one.

**Steve McKay** 1:23:54

Yeah. Right. Because, you know, we're all so much mixed. You don't have to go too far back.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:24:00

Yeah. Did your kids identify as being—

**Steve McKay** 1:24:04

So you know my kids aren't real, they're interested in it. My—my son for his senior thesis compared he'd spent some time in Cuba. And so compared Rizal to what's his name in Cuba.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:24:20

Guevara. No, no.

**Steve McKay** 1:24:22

Er No. The first revolution. You know, the National hero. God. I'm terrible, I forgot. But you know, so they—he's curious. You know, they don't identify—one looks a little more mixed a

little more Filipino than the other. So, but both of them are pretty curious that neither has been, well, no, I'm not. So I had some time where I was at the University of Singapore. And so the kids came and we went to the Philippines and I did my dissertation in the Philippines. So when they were really babies we went over, so they've actually been to the Philippines.

**Steve McKay** 1:24:31

Wow you did your dissertation there? So yours is in sociology?

**Steve McKay** 1:25:00

Sociology. Yeah, it was on—on labor, but in women who worked in electronics factories. So that was interesting.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:25:10

Ah now that's interesting. Assemblers?

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:25:11

Now I think they acquired that property after I moved to San Francisco. So that's fairly, to me, I say, it's fairly new, but it's been there. For some people, forever.

**Steve McKay** 1:25:11

So, hm yeah assemblers, exactly. So I've always been interested in Philippine labor. But more contemporary, so Philippine labor and then and then my other big project is on seafarers, guys who work on merchant ships now. And so, you know, when I came, and I remember driving on, I guess it was Freedom Boulevard or whatever, just in Watsonville. And I remember driving by and seeing, you know, Filipino community center, and I was like, there's a Filipino community center there, you know, and I could see there's not much action there. You know, it's kind of an old building. But I was always really curious, like, what's the Filipino community in Watsonville? And I knew vaguely about, you know, of course, the labor history. But you know, didn't have any connection to the actual—

**Steve McKay** 1:26:15

But it is supposedly 65-68 groups, for what I've heard from Roy, that, you know, that they weren't that interested in this project,

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:26:24

No yeah they're a different group.

**Steve McKay** 1:26:26

And Manuel Bersamin, also, you know, was talking to him. And he was a—Yeah. When he was mayor, they asked him to do something over there. And he started talking about, you know, manongs, and stuff like that. And they're like, yeah,

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:26:38

no, they're not.—

**Steve McKay** 1:26:39

They don't like trace themselves to kind of working class history, because they're kind of post 65.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:26:45

Right, there is that division. Yeah.

**Steve McKay** 1:26:47

And they're more like, nurses and some more professionals. And so that was interesting to me. I didn't realize but—

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:26:55

Just as we made that deviation, they did too. Yes. It was like, we were that they are the more educated of the bunch. And well, some of them were educated, because there was some relative who came here a long time ago.

**Steve McKay** 1:27:02

That's right

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:27:11

But not always.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:27:13

Right.

**Steve McKay** 1:27:14

Yeah. So, you know, I got interested in it. When I met Roy, you know, in just tracing out some of this, you know, it's both labor history, but you know, just, you know, Filipino American History and just American history, right. Just—

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:27:29

You know, because the Japanese, the labor in Watsonville, that was important. Yeah, the Chinese history is very important, because they're the ones who created those ditches on



Beach road so—so that that land could be fertile. Because at that—that land was kind of underwater for a long time. Right. So um, yeah, it was all of these groups, right. That helped and that, you know, and I guess the commonality I had with the other Asian Americans is most of us all came from people who went to Hawai'i first. Yeah, that's true. And that's why I kind of bonded with others. That although the Japanese American community was very conservative, they were anti-union.

**Steve McKay** 1:28:21

Yeah.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:28:21

Way back. So they were a little different from us. You know, everybody had their own kind of thing. I don't hang out with those people—I knew I wasn't, I couldn't marry. Even if I did like a Japanese guy. I wouldn't be able to marry him because I don't think his parents would have ever approved, right.

**Steve McKay** 1:28:44

Oh right yeah could be. Yeah, I think the generation difference is interesting. You're right, you know, kind of

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:28:50

right.

**Steve McKay** 1:28:54

For at least for the folks that have been interviewing and, you know, it seems that you and Jeff are among the first kind of like wanting to, you know, kind of—

**Steve McKay** 1:29:04

—Consciousness get out but then also maintain. Now, Jeff wrote—did also write a lot of poetry about Watsonville. And that. So was he writing that in the once you guys came back?

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:29:05

Get out

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:29:16

Came back. Yeah. Well, no. So the one about the lumberyard was when he came back to be with me while I recuperated, because I had to go through surgeries and physical therapy and stuff like that. So he moved back with his parents that much they didn't like that at all, because they want him to be finishing up SF State. But so he worked at the Where do you work at the lumberyard, and when they were mostly people from the Azores, and a few Okies, and a few

Chicano guys, right? And so that is often that—but before that, he also worked with his uncle and his mom in the orchards, right during the summers and stuff like that. Okay, so he was always working in that kind of stuff or in factories and stuff like that.

**Steve McKay** 1:29:18

So he had a lot of first hand experience.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:30:15

Yeah, he went about that kinda stuff. So yeah, I had to give him a lot of credit for wanting to write for them and breaking ground for them. Right. Where I was, I was still writing my spacey stuff. Yeah.

**Steve McKay** 1:30:45

It's, so this has been fantastic. It's really fun. I gotta say, learning all this stuff. This is great. I'm trying of others. I mean,

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:30:57

See, the thing is, I'm—because I'm the poet's wife I'm working on you know, as well as the fiction part, I'm also working on, like Memoirs of our family and, and us being together and the things we did as we struggled to be these bohemian, Filipino American writers. And so, you know, that there are some things that I probably will use, but they'll probably be anecdotal, rather than historically based, but they will be based on truth. Unless it's fiction, then I'm going to just, you know, call it as it comes, right.

**Steve McKay** 1:31:41

Yeah. Well, I think that with oral history, you know, I mean, it's, it is history, and, you know, and, and we all know, histories from different perspectives. And, you know, so that's fine. And, you know, we hope that the archive will make room for all kinds of histories in that sense, right? Like, it's not just names and dates and places, but memories and texture and feel of what it is. So you know, I appreciate it. If even if you know the stories, however you taught them

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:32:15

Right a friend of mine, he just finished his, he's African American. He just finished a film. I don't know if you've heard about it. 100 years from Mississippi. And his mother Mamie Kirkland died when she was 112. So he started the documentary when she was about 100.

**Steve McKay** 1:32:34

Oh my gosh.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:32:35

And it's all about lynching. Because the reason her family left Mississippi was her dad and his buddy were about to get lynched for something they had been framed. So they went to St. Louis ha. Which is another awful place to be at right. And his best friends after a couple years, or I don't know how long said, "You know what, I'm only for my family." So he went back to Mississippi, and guess what happened? Yeah, so he's one of the famous ones. They're all famous. But it's. So [Unknown] started this thing about 100 years back then his mom said, I'll never go back to Mississippi. I never, never, never, but when she was 101. I think they returned back.

**Shirley Ancheta 1:33:26**

And so the documentary is about—about his mom. And I just think it was just such a wonderful gift. Because, you know, she was mentally intact to give that story. Yeah. And, you know, he had always worked for KPFA and other other stations as a journalist, so he knew what to look for and what to ask her for. Yeah. So when I see friends do these things. And it's still happening. I just think Yeah, right on. And I've always said, it's the Black people that we all that—form that foundation for us. That left so much of a guide for us to follow, I would think, yeah, and, and for us, in particular too it was because Jeff always taught, you know, The Fire Next Time and everything out and Langston Hughes, but it was also Frank Chin, who made and we knew him when he had his place up in the city. And it was Frank Chin's feisty craziness that, you know, that brought us to this point.

**Steve McKay 1:34:46**

Wow. Well, like you know, ours is an ongoing project, and it's really wonderful to be thinking with an artist. You bring a different view than maybe some of the other community members. And so one thing just just curious, just for you, like, if you're, you know, like, how do we remember? Properly, kind of Watsonville. And Filipinos. Like, you know, what, what else should we be doing? Or what's important to you in terms of that? Bringing your vision of that, you know, your own sensibility to like, if we're trying to capture something like that, for Watsonville? And for Filipinos?

**Shirley Ancheta 1:35:27**

Well, you know, when I teach writing workshops, it's always starts with Where are you from? Who are your people, right? And right from that, because that's the truth. And that's how you stay true. It's not like, you made yourself up, you recreated yourself. Now this is a construct, right? You got to do that research. And that's your foundation. So you start you have to map it up from the beginning, I used—I didn't go to the Philippines till two years ago. And I went there for the first time and I thought—and I thought I had always had that spiritual connection. I was hospitalized. I you know, I ended up getting hospitalized and the and then the hospital, they kept me there because they collect—keep collecting on my money and saying, "There's something else wrong with me something else wrong with me." And they were over drugging

me Oh, and I had to call my uncle in LA, who then called the FBI over there, to get me out of there. So my experience in the Philippines was not spiritual at all. So my—could—I home for me is here, Hawai'i, and San Francisco. I know that, that my people are there in the Philippines, and someday I will maybe go back after I get over this trauma. But that connection to Watsonville. Well, I used to hate Watsonville. Well, you think when we moved out, that shouldn't be out there for me. When we moved out, Jeff even told a reporter at the Register Pajornian, you know, I'm never coming back. You know, quickly when he came out with his book, he's a no, I never came . Okay. He didn't go to his high school reunion or anything, cuz it was just like, what do I want to do that for?

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:37:27

Right and well, you know, if I haven't looked up those people in 25 years, why the—why would I look them up now, right? It was like, it all have to do with how you evolved. Yeah, right. Yeah. But we did come back for funerals. As we heard about the manongs dying and things like that we would come back for funerals, but coming home to serve the community met, coming home to serve the Mexican community that had, you know, that was now in Watsonville it it wasn't all about serving the Filipino community anymore, because everybody had moved out. But it could be re—re-educating that community about the people who used to be there, right. And reaching out to any Filipino descendants and telling them hey, do you know who died here? And you know, that kind of stuff. But as you know, it's kind of like you have to feel people people out before you educate them, because not everybody wants to seek—wants to know. Yeah, right. Right. But hopefully you've probably hooked up with will probably Frank Madalora, right?

**Steve McKay** 1:38:43

Yes.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:38:45

I don't know who's still in Watsonville. The Tabancays is any of the Tabancays like Francis? Delfino?

**Steve McKay** 1:38:52

I don't know if they're in Watsonville? I mean, they've definitely been interviewed, but I'm not sure where. Okay. Yeah. I mean, there, there are a few, but you're right. Dan Fallorina, I know, he's still here. And there are a number of folks that we've interviewed that are, but, you know, so part of the project is developing because there's now an ethnic studies requirement, and in that's going to be part of public education generally. And so PVUSD is interested in a unit about, you know, Filipinos in Watsonville. So that's actually some of the material that we collect will be telling this story. You know, as part of the ethnic studies curriculum, you think about, you

know, your own trajectory from San Francisco State and push for ethnic studies, to some degree is starting to reach finally, you know, even high school curricula.

**Steve McKay** 1:39:48

And, and there are folks in the, in the school district that would like, you know, what, what really did—who are the people of Watsonville what are their stories, you know, that we don't see Now, but were really important to it. And so that—that's part of the project actually, is to develop that curriculum. So we'll use some of the digital stories, or some of the archive and oral histories to be part of that. So

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:40:19

Yeah, there are some colorful stories coming out of there, but I can't mention them. They're not quite they're not my family's. The murders and the, you know, murders of passion with the Filipino families and stuff like that. Yeah.

**Steve McKay** 1:40:37

Yeah.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:40:38

It'll have to come from those families. Yeah, that's some kind of research. And it's just like, you know, the story about the woman who was murdered in Stockton?

**Steve McKay** 1:40:49

Yeah.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:40:49

The way that came out, yeah.

**Steve McKay** 1:40:52

Yeah. So you know, and we want people to be in control of their own stories. So we respect when, what people want to share and what they don't want to share. But, you know, the goal of the project is to paint as rich a picture of the community as we can. And it's made up of all kinds, right? So it's—

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:41:17

Because there's not— the Ramirez family. There's no one left there to tell that story. And they were the early contractors. See, from Ramirez family, who else was there? Tabasa? Did were you able to Jeff Tabasa? Or is he just is he frail now?

**Steve McKay** 1:41:38

Yes, but yes. But I believe we have other Tabasas who were interviewing. Jess, I think is a little frail to be interviewed

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:41:52

How bout people from—Are there any people from FANHS? Who are part? And live in Watsonville?

**Steve McKay** 1:41:59

Yeah, not so much live in Watsonville. So they've been interested. A group of FAHNS, folks from Stockton actually came to one of the events, hoping to do something and I think we're gonna, along with Roy, and Olivia, go to the FAHNS conference this summer.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:42:17

Oh, okay. [Unknown] was telling me about that one.

**Steve McKay** 1:42:21

Oh, yeah. Yeah. So it's it's in in August, up in Seattle?

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:42:25

Because I mean, it'll be interesting to hear some of the stories too, because a lot of the manongs would go to Alaska. Yes, that's right. Yeah. During the summers, when they or. Yeah, they would go there. They go to El Centro. You just kind of make their rounds to make their money, especially if they were into the—or if they were into the lettuce, they would follow where the money was. So I know, my father-in law would go to Yuma, Arizona. When he was younger, those kind of places.

**Steve McKay** 1:43:00

Yeah. No, I mean, they really all across the West, right. You know, Seattle, Western Washington. Yeah. There's—

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:43:09

Some of the sons what I know my, my brother-in-law. Jeff's older brother would go to Alaska with his dad sometimes. Yeah, yeah. And it was either the salmon or the crab. Right?

**Steve McKay** 1:43:21

Right. Yeah. Yeah. working those canneries.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:43:25

So that'd be interesting if you would be able to get some of the stories about—

**Steve McKay** 1:43:30

Yeah, actually, one of the things we're going to go because the FAHNs archive those that Dollar a Day ,10 cents a Dance. Do you know Jeff Dunn? So he said he has extra footage and he donated it to Fred Cordova and so it's up there.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:43:48

Wow.

**Steve McKay** 1:43:49

And So we want to go and visit those archives and try to find some of the other footage that he said he didn't use.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:43:56

Okay, cuz he had yet because they were—The guy, Fred in the thing? Was a relative of mine.

**Steve McKay** 1:44:05

Oh, really? Okay I didn't realize.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:44:09

Yeah. Because he's from the camps up here on Coast Road.

**Steve McKay** 1:44:14

Exactly. Exactly. Coast Road.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:44:17

He was one of the cooks.

**Steve McKay** 1:44:18

Oh, yeah. So they kind of sort of adopted Jeff. And so he got to know them. But okay. I didn't realize that you were connected to Freddy.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:44:27

Yeah. And then I— we do know Jeff.

**Steve McKay** 1:44:31

Okay.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:44:32

From way back.

**Steve McKay** 1:44:33

Uh huh. Oh, that's great. Yeah, so we might try to find more footage of Freddy if we can find it. You know, anything else from that film.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:44:41

Right. There might even be some stuff from Mrs. Tabasa's restaurant there too, because I think there was a bit I think he interviewed Mrs. Tabasa. That's right. Yeah. Cuz she was a big deal in Watsonville. She was like, head of the committee, you know, President of The Filipino Community. President of the Women's Club, all, this, my mom was treasurer. Right.

**Steve McKay** 1:45:05

Okay. uh huh

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:45:06

You know. Okay.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:45:09

So yeah, they had all kinds of little clubs and—

**Steve McKay** 1:45:14

Yeah, well, I think this is the 33rd interview from our project so far.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:45:19

Oh, good. Three three I like those numbers.

**Steve McKay** 1:45:23

But you know, we'll keep going for a while I think.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:45:26

Good luck to you. I'm glad you guys are doing it. Yeah, it's, it's, it's, it's nice to know that someone is writing it down. I always thought I would come back to it. But it was just too hard for me. And then by the time I said, okay, like, I'm ready to do it. Most of them had died.

**Steve McKay** 1:45:49

Yeah. Yeah. I think that's I think, you know, it's bittersweet seeing that film, because you know, that they're already quite a bit older. And then there's no one left for that film.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:46:01

Right Right. If you saw, I mean, if you saw the, The Fall of the I Hotel by Curtis Choi. And you saw those manongs too and I knew Those manongs. It's the same— It's that same deep



feeling that we have for our elders since you know, it's yeah, it's, it's way down deep. And it's because of them that I'm here.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:46:32

Yeah, that's right. That's right.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:46:34

And the manangs too, of course.

**Steve McKay** 1:46:37

Right. Yeah.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:46:38

They put up with the manongs, those poor women.

**Shirley Ancheta** 1:46:43

They put up with those crazy dudes too, you know.

**Steve McKay** 1:46:46

Yeah. Well, yeah, it's been great. And one of the things and I can stop this.