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Albert "Bert" Thomas Nabor interviewed by Meleia Simon-Reynolds

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Albert “Bert” Thomas Nabor interviewed by Meleia Simon- Reynolds Part 1 of 2

Speakers: Albert “Bert” Thomas Nabor, Meleia Simon-Reynolds

Date: July 14, 2021

Scope and Contents:

In this interview, originally recorded in-person at University of California, Santa Cruz, Alberto “Bert” Thomas Nabor speaks with Watsonville is in the Heart team member Meleia Simon-Reynolds. Bert discusses his father, Alberto Nabor’s background in La Union, Ilocos Norte, Philippines; his migration to Hawai’i where he worked in the sugarcane fields and the pineapple plantations; and his migrant farm work throughout California and Arizona. Bert also speaks about vivid childhood memories of his whole family accompanying Alberto on the migrant trail. Additionally, Bert discusses Alberto’s and his own participation in a late 1970s strike at Carl Dobler and Sons in the Pajaro Valley as well as Alberto’s experiences as a member of the First Filipino Regiment during World War II. Throughout the interview, Bert reflects on his father’s work ethic and the values he passed on especially in regards to struggles with racism and discrimination.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 00:01

I’m recording on here. Alright, so I’m gonna ask you to state your full name first.

Bert Nabor 00:08

Sure it’s Albert Thomas with an H. Nabor.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 00:13

Perfect. And your date of birth?

Bert Nabor 00:16

February the 14th 1956.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 00:19

And, also your father and mother’s name.

Bert Nabor 00:22

My father’s name was Alberto [Unknown] Nabor. And my mother’s name was Erlinda Aragon.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 00:35

Alright, did your father go by Bert as well?

Bert Nabor 00:38

No, he always went by Albert.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 00:40

Albert. Okay. The other day when I was speaking with Eva I said I was interviewing Bert Nabor and she thought I was talking about your dad.

Bert Nabor 00:48

Yeah. Yeah. My dad was always Alberto or Albert and I was always Jr or Bert.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 00:55

Okay. Got it. Alright, so I wanted to start by asking about your father Alberto's history. So when did he come to the United States if you know.

Bert Nabor 01:11

He came before the depression, from the Philippines. He was a young man at the time. He had lost his parents and was raised by his paternal grandfather. I think he lost his parents when he was about three years old. And about the time he turned 18, and stuff, he decided to leave the Philippines. And he had actually a very good life in the Philippines. His, his grandfather was a farmer and was very comfortable. There was no emphasis on education. So he quit school at the third grade. And as I said, he came over as a teenager, and first he immigrated to Hawai'i. He worked in the cane fields there, and other agricultural businesses like the pineapple fields and stuff like that. And then he finally emigrated to California. And again, that was prior to the depression.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 02:10

Okay, um, what province in the Philippines?

Bert Nabor 02:14

He is from La, La Union in Ilocos Norte in Pangasinan.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 02:23

Did you ever hear any memories about the very early times in Hawai'i?

Bert Nabor 02:29

He said that he shared this with his mother and, he goes, when he first came, he never worked so hard in his entire life. And like I said, he was a very young man. And so for them to work, you know, 12 plus hour days, for, you know, was normal.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 02:47

Yeah.

Bert Nabor 02:48

You know, more out long hours, you know, they work like seven days a week. And he said that the, his first night that he was there in Hawai'i, he was crying because he wanted to go back home. But he had made that decision, told his grandfather he is going to go seek his fortune in America. And so he stayed.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 03:14

And [Bert's cell phone rings] did— Do you think that he thought that the fields in the mainland were a little bit easier compared to the fields and Hawai'i?

Bert Nabor 03:29

No, no, it's he shared with me that when he came here, he came to the central Pescadero area and stuff. And he was saying that though the work was just as hard. Yeah. The real harsh conditions, you know, very harsh conditions.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 03:51

He immigrated from Hawai'i to Pescadero region— he must have taken some sort of steamship or something.

Bert Nabor 03:59

Yeah. Yeah. He remembers that. He, I know that he was part of the labor movement, because he shared with me that when he was working in Davenport, that they actually blocked Highway One during a labor strike with pushing boulders down onto the road and stuff. So he was active in the, like all Filipinos were, in the labor movements and stuff to get better working conditions. They lived in labor camps, you know, with a variety of Filipino men. And then I've been to labor camps too, so I know exactly what they look like. You know, and they, I remember he said, it's like, they used to work for a dime a day.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 04:47

Right.

Bert Nabor 04:48

You know, and then after they would work their 12 plus hours. They would go fishing in Davenport to catch, you know, the fish and then 100 pounds of rice was a dollar. So, you know, that was a lot of rice. And then they had their own vegetable gardens. You know, so they have basically everything they could live on, at the labor camp, you know, and it was like, it was

common for them to share tasks. You know, like, on a certain day somebody would go fishing and then on his day, you know, he would go fishing and stuff and but it just sorta turned out that, you know, the best fishermen are the ones that went out fishing all the time. And my dad always loved to work in the garden, so he would always work in the garden, and he was really good at it. And he loved—he always worked with his hands, but he loved to. He always had a garden when we were kids.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 05:42

Yeah. Did you ever have a garden at the house? Where you all lived at?

Bert Nabor 05:47

Yes, yes. Oh, he always was growing something even into his later part of life, we had, he always had something there.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 05:56

What kinds of things would he grow at the garden?

Bert Nabor 05:59

You know, he liked these, the Filipinos like this stuff that is called chayote. And I guess they're green vegetable, and they have stickers on them. But they like them in soup. And so my dad had him growing all along the back fence, and we had a fairly sizable yard. So they'd grow and then he would harvest them. And he even in his after he retired and stuff, he made a gate to go beyond the fence onto the property because we live by the levee in Watsonville. And so you increased the size of his garden even more. But those, I remember, you know, tomatoes and stuff like that, I remember that they used to harvest watercress from the rivers. And now watercress is like, you know, it's like something that everybody buys like at Whole Foods and stuff like that. And yeah, so he, you know, spinach. They used like, like bok choy and stuff like that, because they, they get along with all the, they got along with the Chinese and the Japanese and stuff. And I guess it was part of their shared experiences that they had, because they all came over as agricultural workers and stuff. So I think I shared with you, it's like, where I grew up, there was only one white family at the whole school that I grew up, you know, I went to Lynn Scott school, there's only one white family that lived and you're all Filipino, Chinese, Japanese, Mexican. And then we have, we had a few Black families that lived in the area too.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 07:40

And everyone kind of took part in this shared like, community of everyone's growing stuff and making food in their gardens.

Bert Nabor 07:50

Yeah, yeah. You know, he shared with all of his friends and stuff. And then, you know, I know he shared with the same person stuff. You know, but if it was something like the chayote, you know, it's a, it's a long involved process where you have to peel it. And then you chop it and stuff, but I remember my dad loved it. And he used to share it with all of his friends you know.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 08:10

And they'd put that in soup. What kind of soup?

Bert Nabor 08:14

You know, they like pork and they like, but like any kind of soup. They would even put in fish soup and stuff. But pork and I remember fish. They just liked the taste of it. I never really cared for it too much. No, but he liked it.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 08:29

Did he like fishing too?

Bert Nabor 08:31

He loved fish. My dad just loved fish.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 08:36

And fishing in the Davenport area. Or maybe everywhere around here?

Bert Nabor 08:42

Well, yeah. Because we eventually, he eventually you know, after, you know, because he was in the First Filipino Regiment. So he was able to get a citizenship and he had access to a VA loan, but you know, so he bought a house in Watsonville. Well prior to that, he was basically a migrant farm worker. You know, he traveled anywhere that was for work. You know, he didn't go to Alaska too much. But he would go to Arizona and work in the lettuce fields in Arizona. He'd go like to the Central Valley, Fireball and, you know, he knew, he had traveled extensively throughout the state and the West Coast. You know, so he knew where certain areas were, and he tended to stay mostly in California. You know, it's like, I remember his friends and stuff would always go to Alaska to work on the canneries and stuff. My dad didn't really, I don't ever remember him telling me he went to Alaska. You know, he liked it here.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 09:41

Yeah. I haven't. I haven't heard that many people talk about farms further up the One like near Davenport and Pescadero. Most folks that we've been talking to have been mostly talking about farms and just like in the Pajaro area. Did— so did he work at those kind of farms earlier on?

Bert Nabor 10:03

Well, the brussel sprouts. Yeah. And yeah, yeah, he always worked. I mean, he was, he was always a very hard worker, you know, he, he wanted to, you know, they wanted success here in the US. He really did.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 10:23

And was he still migrating to work when, once you were born or you guys moved into a house?

Bert Nabor 10:30

Yeah, I remember. We would pack up in the car. You know, I have a, I remember, we would go to labor camps. The whole family would go. And like you take my mom. My mom's head was like Grapes of Wrath. You know, where they'd have furniture on the car and everything. And we'd go from Watsonville where we had our house and stuff. And then we would go like to Yuma. I was born in Yuma. Yeah, so my dad was working in Yuma when I was born. All my other siblings who were born in Watsonville, because that's where he bought his house. And, but I was born in Arizona. And then he continued to do that, you know, until finally, my mom told him, I think, probably when we were when I was starting school, just about that time that, she goes, you know, Albert, she goes, you can go she goes, but I'm staying here with the kids. Because they all, they both wanted us to go to school, get an education was really, you know, the top priority for all the children was to get an education. So that's, but my dad, he continued to go. You know, he would go like to, like I said, Fireball and a couple other places. And you know, it's like, I didn't really remember too much until, you know, I was like a little bit older, maybe like 10 or 12 and stuff. Then he finally started to settle down, you know, when I remember he got a job. He loved working with flowers. He got a job working on Zils Road, and in the Watsonville area. It's off San Andreas and I still remember because he used to take me there. And he was you know, it's, it was kind of I forgot the name of— Anyway, a nursery. He loved working in the flowers, and he worked there for years and years and years and years. It was right next to Monterey Bay Academy. And, you know, he probably would have continued working there forever. He loved it, you know, and but they finally sold the land. You know, so he had to find another job. And then he ended up working in cabbage in Moss Landing for Carl Dobler and Sons. Then, as time progressed, Carl Dobler and Sons started to do the more, you know, like romaine lettuce, the specialty lettuces, not the iceberg, the specialty the lettuces and stuff like butter lettuce, romaine, red leaf, you know. And so, yeah, he worked there until, you know, he retired. Well he was forced to retire, he had a heart attack. And, you know, he's, he was like, in his late 60s. And he told me, he goes, I'm going back to work. You know, and I was like, I was already in college and stuff at the time. And, you know, I, this is where our relationship started to change. I think I shared with you as I know, you know, as he was going to go back to work. You know, the doctor said, No, you shouldn't and, you know, he probably

been would have been okay, if you went back to work. And then I remember my mom and I— I just talked to him when, I go, dad, you can't go back to work. You know, he was already beyond the age of retirement. So he, you know, and he had a little pension from there. And he had a Social Security. And my dad was very cognizant of saving money. You know, he didn't—and I'm not trying to be cruel or anything, but a lot of times, you know, I noticed in the Filipino community it's like, it's they spend a lot of money some of the families and they do well, you know, some of them are very well off and stuff, but some of them aren't. But my dad was, you know, it's like it was more a show and stuff whereas my dad was very conservative with his money. You know, and set it aside you know, and live a more conservative lifestyle so when he retired and stuff, he was fairly comfortable you know, the house was paid off, you know, that he had everything paid off. He, he didn't have very many bills, you know, he had like the I think that's where I get it from is like, you know, you it's okay to go in debt for your car, in the house and stuff. But you know, it's like other stuff if you can afford to pay it off. Yeah, you pay it off right away. You know, he goes like a refrigerator or something big like that. Yeah, you can take the year, he goes, but you don't want to build up credit cards or anything. He was really adamant about building up credit card debt.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 15:17

So I wanna ask a little bit more about the labor camps. Can you remember anything about what they are like?

Bert Nabor 15:24

So Specifics? Yeah, yeah. So it's, um, okay. It's like a big, long building. Okay, and they have a bathroom. Usually they have a Coke machine. You know, and they have bunks on both sides. It's like the military. It's like a military type of setup. So, you know, each has their own separate bed and their own little closet area and stuff. And they, they might even have a foot locker too, because, you know, it's like, um, yeah, my dad had it had a foot locker too. And he kept that thing forever. You know, my mom finally, you know, tossed it out and stuff. But he had a foot locker and everything. And they would keep their clothes there. And it was just like, being in the military. You know, there was certain rules, you know, you had to keep your— Those places, I don't care what they say, every labor camp I went to was spotless. And this is the ones where I just went with my dad, you know, and he went to go visit his friends. But I remember one where, I think it was Santa Maria. When we were kids, like I said, we did The Grapes of Wrath thing. So we went to Santa Maria with my Aunt Helen and my Aunt Josie. And I don't know what type of work my dad was doing. But I remember my aunt's, and my mom going in there. And their favorite thing to clean with was Clorox, Clorox or Pine Sol, you could always smell Clorox or Pine Sol. And they would clean the entire place, I mean, the walls and everything. So it was very interesting to see them clean, and then we would move in. But

everything was always clean. You know, and there was different families there. You know, and—

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 15:39

and you'd all stay in the same?

Bert Nabor 17:15

In the same area. Those were for families. Those were for families, like they had houses for families and stuff so the workers could bring their families. And then the other ones I was previously talking about, were all bachelor only. All bachelor only. I should have let you know about that. I'm sorry. But yeah, they were all very, very neat.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 17:40

And how long would you stay there when your whole family went with your dad?

Bert Nabor 17:45

You know, sometimes we would stay the summer. I remember staying the summer and stuff. Or, you know, the season, you know, like in the wintertime. You know, the agricultural fields are slow here. But you know, like an Arizona. It's warm, you know. So it's like, they're still working over there. So it must have been for in the wintertime when we went there. But I can't really recall. But I remember it's like a—one of the specific memories I have is like, I remember one time, it's like, you know, we're sleeping in the car and everything else. We're driving to Arizona and stuff. And I remember my mom and stuff and my dad putting down clean newspapers, and then sort of lining a garbage can and stuff. So all the kids could change their clothes. You know, because they put us in our jammies at nighttime, you know, and then we'd pass out in the car.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 18:39

What kinds of things happened at the camps, like, after everyone was done with work?

Bert Nabor 18:47

Just from what I remember, you know, we would have dinner together. You know, and then, you know, it's like my dad would, the families would just come out it would be more like a community type of atmosphere and stuff.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 19:00

Have dinner, hang out.

Bert Nabor 19:03

Yeah, then they'd go to sleep early to go back to work the next day.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 19:07

And what did you all do while your dad was at work?

Bert Nabor 19:11

Play. Yeah, play play. I had my brother, my brother Glenn. And, gosh, [Bert's phone rings] I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. I can't get this thing. I don't know how to turn it off. I just got it. So anyway, it's my, my brother Glenn is actually the one who has the most vivid memories in that time. But he's very shy. He didn't want to be interviewed. But yeah, we were playing. I remember my brother Glenn and my cousin Glee. He's interested in it. His name is Milton Miranda. And he's, he's really knowledgeable about this stuff, too. You know,

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 19:58

Maybe we can show them your Interview and then they'll all wanna do it.

Bert Nabor 20:02

Well, no, they're like, I know, my brother Steve is interested in what's happening. My, my good friend, Ted Aduka. My mom's godson is interested, he said, You're gonna call let me know what happened, you know? Yeah. And then my cousin Glee is in Hawai'i right now. So he, he's interested to, and Glee has his Bachelor's here from in cultural anthropology. And then he's, he was a teacher for years in I think Salinas Unified School District. You know, he's a pretty intelligent guy. Yeah. Pretty intelligent guy.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 20:44

Okay, let's see. Oh, so I also was wondering about if your dad told you lots of stories or memories about the labor movements and his involvement?

Bert Nabor 20:57

The things he shared with me is, and then, is that they were always just trying to get a living wage. You know, it was very difficult at that time. And now, they weren't, you know? So that's what it would be about if the working conditions were terrible and the wages were terrible, then, you know, they would, I think it was very common among the Filipinos and stuff to try to change that. And the way they change that is usually, you know, as a group. They knew that they all had to stay together as a group. But I remember us because I worked in the fields for Carl Dobler and Sons, I started when I was 15. That's how, I think I explained to you I went to college and stuff. And then you would hear the stories of the other men as they were talking and stuff and it was the same thing. But my dad said it was more because of terrible, you know, working conditions or even living conditions, you know, it's uh, I remember some of his

friends actually lived in like refurbished chicken coops. Yeah, you know, and you're talking about thin walls. Just the tarp paper on the top, you know, it's really cold in there in the wintertime. And you know, it's like, like I said, communal shower. You know, they have the outdoor toilets, outhouses and stuff. So yeah, it's really hard.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 22:45

Do you know if he was involved with these types of things like throughout his whole different working careers?

Bert Nabor 22:54

Yeah, he did. Well, I remember we went on strike at Carl Dobler and Sons when I was there. And that's the thing is like, you know, they were all knew what they were doing. I had no idea. I was like, 19 years old, you know, it's like, and they are the unionized out there. But I remember there was a conflict with the UFW. You know, they didn't get along with the UFW and stuff here. And I think a lot of that had to do because, Ted Aduka probably could explain it to you even better than I can, because the Filipinos around here that were in the farm industry and stuff were Teamsters. And the UFW even though they, they work in Delano with Filipinos in regards to the grape strike stuff. Yeah, there was a difference here that existed. And so it's like, I think it was really common to is for like the growers and the owners and stuff to pit one group against the other. You know, it's like I said, you know, it's like, they always pit one group against the other.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 23:22

Do you know what— what year about was the strike at the Dobler?

Bert Nabor 24:09

Gosh, probably, probably in the late 70s. Yeah, cuz I graduated from high school in 74. So I would say about the late 70s. Yeah, and I forgot the name of the union. That was there.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 24:23

And that was—do you remember anything specific about what that was like?

Bert Nabor 24:28

Wages. It was more about wages, not working conditions and stuff. They just wanted to earn a little bit more money, you know, and the union was able to facilitate that. And of course, you never get everything you want. But they were able to facilitate a slight increase in wages.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 24:46

And when they, when they were on strike. Do you remember like how long it lasted?

Bert Nabor 24:54

I remember it was about a couple weeks? That's what I remember. It wasn't a long. It was a couple of weeks. I mean, because, you know, that's the cabbage is—it's like the lettuce in the summertime. You know, it's like, that's when you're making your most money. My brother Glenn probably remembers specifics.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 25:19

Specifics about that. Do you remember it being like, exciting or stressful or anything to be on strike?

Bert Nabor 25:27

No. The fact is I took off. I think most of the old Filipinos stayed there, you know. But the youngsters, you know, we weren't really involved. You know, some of the guys went surfing. You know, we're just like, typical. Yeah, it was like a break. Oh, man. We don't have to work. And so we took off, you know, and it was like, Yeah, I remember I had a girlfriend at that time. So, you know, she goes, well, if you're not working, she worked in the evening, and so its like I went to go hang out with her. Whereas the old Filipinos basically carried the load. And then they told us come back to work. Okay, we're coming back.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 26:05

Yeah. Did—was your dad very passionate about it?

Bert Nabor 26:13

He thought we were doing the right thing. Thought we're doing, he explained that to us, he goes, yeah we're doing the right thing, we need to do this. You know, and they did. And I mean, my dad was in like, it's like I said, in his 60s already. You know, so it's, it was like a, constantly throughout his life, you know? I think I explained to you, it's like, I took classes in Asian American Studies and stuff. And you know, that unionization, especially here in Northern California was a way to just keep out minorities. You know? And that's what happened. You know? It's even similar in law enforcement, you know, it's like, it's predominantly dominated by, for lack of better terms, white people. You know ? And it is, even, I remember my dad helping me, you know, because I would encounter such difficulties at work sometimes, you know, especially at the sheriff's office here. It's, you know, he would, he would talk to me, yeah said yeah son,, he goes, you know, and I think I told you, he said, life doesn't have to be fair, he goes, but you still have a good job. And he goes, you know, you have to understand, you know, it's like this the way things really are. So it's really, it's tough, you know, because he, he really ingrained in all of the children, you know, that the American Dream. And then at the time, I was, when I was growing up, you had, you know, Martin Luther King, JFK, you know, it's like,

you're all trying to reach those ideals and stuff. But the world, even in California at that time was, you know, it's like, you're sitting there going, whoa. And then, you know, it's like, I always tell my friends I go, well, who had the most racial discrimination? This the most loss in regards to racial discrimination? I was California. Yeah, I go, because there was more races here. You know, you had it not only against the Filipinos, but you know, the Mexicans, the Japanese, the Chinese, I go, this was a more diverse community. So you had more laws of that nature here in California, and people are totally shocked. Yeah, you know, and I got, well, you know, it's like, how do you know this? Oh, I studied it.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 28:39

Yeah, it sounds like your dad, kind of he was instilling the American Dream, he was also giving you the real life experiences based off what he experienced.

Bert Nabor 28:49

And one of the key things that, you know, he did, and my mom too, is that I'm basically English speaking only. And a lot of that was because of the fact, my mom was raised in New Mexico. And, you know, and you spoke anything but, in New Mexico and Colorado, you spoke anything but English in the schools they'd expel you. So if you spoke Spanish or anything like that, you know, it's like, that's it, you're done. Your school career is over for the year, you know. And my dad wanting to be not— basically not wanting us to feel that racial oppression or anything, you know, nope. Speak English only. You know, whereas some of my other friends, it's different. Yeah. You know, but my dad was different, you know, and then you're sitting there, you know, like, in high school level, because oh, you don't speak Spanish. Oh, my God. No, you know, even when I was at work at the sheriff's office, and the police who don't speak Spanish, you know, because I look, you know, I look like I should.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 29:58

Yeah. Did your dad ever speak Ilokano?

Bert Nabor 30:02

He actually spoke a little, he spoke Ilokano all the time. He knew Tagalog. He knew how to speak—He even spoke some Chinese and Japanese. You know, he could speak some Spanish too. So it was interesting, you know, he could understand.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 30:22

And what about your mom?

Bert Nabor 30:24

My mom, she's, she's fluent. She's fluent in Spanish, you know, but she's just different from the fact that she's from New Mexico. You know, so she's, she's like you, very light complected. You know, so it's like, and I've been back to New Mexico, you know, like the —a lot of the people, they're really light-complected, you know, they could pass for Anglo. You know, and it's like, it's really different. And then you have the people from Mexico, which are very different, you know. So it's interesting.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 31:01

I wonder, did your dad ever speak about some of the more horrific racial violence that happened in Watsonville? In the 30s?

Bert Nabor 31:14

He spoke about certain things. You know, it's like— I remember there was a lightweight, light heavyweight boxer that was I guess, a champion or contender from Watsonville.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 31:28

Was he Filipino?

Bert Nabor 31:29

No, he was Caucasian guy, anyway, tried to beat up this little Filipino guy. And the one on the bars and stuff and the Filipino, stabbed him to death. You know, because the Caucasian guy called him a monkey. This is a story as my dad told it. And he said, Yeah, when the guy went to trial and stuff, he said I didn't kill him. The monkey killed them. So that was a Filipino. And that was a common story that I heard, you know, repeatedly when I was a kid. We lived on that side of town and stuff. So it's like, it's, uh, you didn't really see it? He goes, but you felt it. Now, and I mean, yeah. You know, it's like, I remember going with my—you know, there was gentlemen who lived at my dad's house, you know, when he first married my mom, but prior to that, now, it's my Uncle Billy and my Uncle Benny. You know, because the three bedroom house, you know, the two bedrooms at that time. So it's like, I remember that. It was really strange, because they Filipinos have a very thick accent, you know. And then I remember, like, going with my Uncle Billy, and I would translate his English, so he can get things like, you know, auto parts, you know, or get work done on his refrigerator or something like that. And my Uncle Benny too. You know, but I remember doing that as a kid. So it was like— and then I remember going into the stores, and, you know, they they looked at my Uncle Billy and my Uncle Billy and stuff, and I was just a little kid that, you know, I was like, maybe 10-12 years old stuff, and everything he goes, well, he does speak English, doesn't her? So, you know? And I go, yeah. He's speaking English right now. He goes I can't understand him, you know, stuff like that. So, yeah, that used to happen. You know, then I remember it even happened later in life. You know, I was like, I was a new police officer at Watsonville. And they did the same thing to my

Uncle Billy. You know. So it was really, you feel the oppression. You knew there was that tension. And even when I was in school and stuff, there was a tension between, you know, again, for lack of a better term, for white people and us.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 34:05

In elementary school and high school?

Bert Nabor 34:07

More in junior high school. More as we started to head towards high school. There was really, that's when we started separating, it seemed like we got along really well until we started to go toward high school and then and then it was like, yeah, there was real differences. And I mean, it was us against them.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 34:29

Right. Which high school did you go to?

Bert Nabor 34:31

I went to Watsonville High School. So I went to school there. And there was a difference, you know, you just, you associated with—my group was called the Asian Contingency [laughter]. Yeah. I didn't know this till after, till after, you know, somebody was saying it at one of the class reunions, and I didn't hear this until like maybe 10 years ago. That's what they used to call us the Asian Contingency.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 34:58

Who called you it?

Bert Nabor 35:00

One of the guys that we knew, and he wasn't like, his name was Ed [Unknown]. And he goes, oh, yeah, there's the Asian Contingency because we'd get together and would always gravitate towards each other at the, you know, it's like at the reunions. Yeah. Because these were my friends when I was in school, you know, it'd be all the Japanese, the Chinese, you know, more of the Filipinos, and stuff and everything, but we had our own separation.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 35:24

Right. That's kind of a good name [laughter].

Bert Nabor 35:26

Yeah. No the Asian Contingency [laughter]. Yeah. So, but I remember it's like, yeah, it was. It was a real separation, even on the sports teams, you know. The tendency to pick Caucasian

people over, you know, my, my, what, they're both my friends. You know, Doug [Unknown] was the quarterback of the team, but he wasn't that good. The guy who was really good was his name was Manuel Platero. You know, and there was a lot of conflict, because, you know, it's like, Doug was a terrible quarterback. But his parents were real prominent in the boosters and all that other things. You know, like that. And so it's like, yeah, because I remember I go, you know, my senior year, my junior and senior year, I go, I'm not playing football. I can't play for a coach like this. Yeah, I want to win. You know, so it's, yeah, those things like that. It was really common.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 35:37

And what about, I guess, if growing up, if you felt that kind of tension at school, and in the community, what—What about, you know, gatherings where it felt like, just there was none of that tension, like, community gatherings, Filipino community events?

Bert Nabor 36:46

Well, there was still that tension at the Filipino Community events. And the thing is, like, I think I shared this with us, we weren't full blooded Filipino. You know, it's like, when people are saying, oh, their mothers Mexican. And they, you know, you're a little kid. You know, you're a little kid. And you know, you're being discriminated by, people who are supposed to be, yeah, you know, and it was tough. I think I, you know, when we were kids and stuff, I mean, that's like we even now, I don't really associate with the Filipino community that much. You know, when we were kids, it's all the half-breeds, man. We were we were our separate group. You know, we loved our parents, you know, and, you know, but it's like, we were on separate group. We were the more I think we're the very first the Americanized generation. And they had like, there was full blooded Filipinos and that, but we were truly, you know, you're you're going to be Americans, you're going to be Americans. So we, we tended to hang out with that group. And then the Filipinos that were full blooded, you know, who sort of looked down on the staying with us, it's like, you know, we didn't really care. It's like, we don't need you to validate our, our identities and stuff. And then, you know, I read something, you know, well, I think it was in Watsonville in the Heart, its too bad that, you know, that these Filipinos don't, you know, try to participate more in the community and stuff like that, and aren't more community advocates. I go, You guys never wanted us in the first place. So why would we want to go back to you now? It was really difficult, you know, because I remember, it's like, you know, they never really wanted you. But, you know, when I was when I got promoted to sergeant at the sheriff's office, it's like, you know, it's like, I'm like, their treasure. You know, it's like, I was, to be very honest with you, I think that there's, I was probably the first promotion, you know, of, you know, at the sheriff's office of a Filipino, you know, Watsonville they had several Filipinos that, you know, had progressed up the ranks, but I was the first Filipinos promoted at the sheriff's office, and racial issues at the sheriff's office were a little bit, you know, and I was a token, I knew it. I knew

I was a token promotion, because, you know, I covered all the bases, okay. That's half-Mexican, half-Filipino. You know? Yeah. And there was a lot of pressure from the community to promote somebody of color. So you sit there and ego, but at the same time, that's like, you know, it took me a while. But I remember my friends, you know that—I was in law enforcement with Jesse Valdez. He's a wonderful source of information, but he lives in Las Vegas. Benny Tumbaga. You know, they were like my role models because they were Filipino sergeants, or Jesse was a, a DA investigator for Monterey County. And Benny Tumbaga was like a sergeant at Watsonville. And, you know, they left the sheriff's office because they weren't going to get promoted there. You know, because of just the way the structure was. And I remember Jesse, and, and, you know, Benny telling me, he goes well Albert, he goes, congratulations, and I go, Yeah, you know, but, I go, I'm concerned, I'm a token. He goes, Albert, you deserve it. He goes, You're— you were a good candidate. He goes, you have to forget about that. He goes, they were holding you back before. He goes, You should have been promoted even earlier. You know, but it's, it's a paradigm. You know, it's like, you have to break out of the paradigm and at the sheriff's office, like promoting somebody of color to the rank of lieutenant. I don't think they've—my friend, Bob [Unknown] is Black. I think he's the only person of color that's been promoted to the rank of lieutenant and he retired over 10 years ago.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 41:19

Is this Santa Cruz County?

Bert Nabor 41:21

Yes, the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 41:24

Did you find when you were promoted that people in the community were happy too?

Bert Nabor 41:30

In Watsonville they were. You know, Watsonville? They were— it's, it's different. [Bert's phone rings]. Oh, my God, please, please. Trying to hang up. I don't know how to turn it off. Or I would. I'm sorry, Meleia. Like I said, I just— my wife bought me this swatch and like, I don't know how to use it. I guess. It's an I-watch, you know, one of those things. [Ringing continues] But oh, my gosh. [Ringing continues] They keep calling back. Maybe I should answer. Can you possibly cut out all that phone? I don't even know how to put it on vibrate. I turned my phone off. I was like—

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 42:22

Oh, okay. I wanted to ask a little more. A couple more things about your parents. But I think starting maybe with your dad serving in the First Filipino Regiment. Did he share any memories of you about that?

Bert Nabor 42:41

Yeah he did. He actually really did. There was—I remember, he was one of the first to join. He told me he goes, the minute they attack the Philippines, you know, everybody wanted to join the army, but they couldn't. Yeah. You know, and then they changed the law so they could, you know, and he remembers specifically I, you know, he was in his early 30s when he went into the military and he remembers training at Hunter Liggett, you know, Camp Roberts, he remembers specifically. And he really enjoyed being in the military. You know, he stayed a member of the First and Second Filipino Regiment Society until his death, you know, I have his card still. I have his wallet and stuff and everything. He has his card there. And then the American Legion. He was proud to be a member, you know. And he enjoyed being a soldier, you know, and even though it was a segregated army, you know, because, you know, his, his commander, I actually met him. I think it's Colonel Offrey—Offrey and stuff. When I was a little kid because he took, took me to the—to go meet. I think I was 12 years old. And then he took my brother Glenn. Yeah, you know, so we got to meet him and stuff. And we got to meet his comrades in arms. But he was very. It was interesting when he talked about it, I guess, you know, it's like you had D-Day where everything just basically went bad. And how they taught the soldiers to think on their own and stuff. He remembers that. He goes, his commander said, no, if something goes wrong, you need to think. You need to accomplish your mission. And I remember he said that he was part of the, I guess, reconnaissance of Leyte and that he remembers, you know, killing a Japanese soldier. You know, and with a knife, you know, because they had to do the reconnaissance of the island before the invasion. And he remembers watching the Battle of Leyte Gulf or parts of the Battle of Leyte, the naval battle from a mountain. You know, so he remembers that. But the one thing he always used to tell us, you know, he goes ingenuity. You know, that's what they trained me in, the ingenuity. Now, and he was, oh my god, he was a disciplinarian. But I think the army even pushed him more. Yeah, you know. And, you know, he was a private first class, he remembers, you know, killing seven to eight of the enemy. And this is, you know, he—I don't think this is inappropriate to share it because it was war time and you have to remember that, at this time, you know, it's like, the Filipinos wanted revenge. You know, and they said their first encounter with the, with the Japanese that—and I know this is true—that he and other Filipino soldiers went up to the dying Japanese soldiers and took the butt of the rifles and broke their jaws to take their gold teeth out. Yeah, yeah. He had these gold teeth for many years. And showed him to me as an adult. But he said that his commanding officer called every single one of them into—and he goes, it's against the Geneva Convention, you will never do anything against the Geneva Convention again. You know, he just, their commanding officer laid it out to him. He goes, this

is inappropriate. You know, this is not why we're here. And everybody got the, got the same story. You know, so they didn't do anything else after that. You know, but I remember specifically how he's talking about that. And he said he, during the wartime, he killed 7 to 9 Japanese soldiers.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 47:15

And when he would talk about it with you, was he—what, what, what was he like when he would talk about it?

Bert Nabor 47:26

It was verry strange. It was one Thanksgiving. My Uncle Willie, who was a combat engineer in the European Theater; my cousin Shirley's husband, Jack, was a Vietnam medic; and then my dad, were sitting there one Thanksgiving; and I don't know how it happened. But I remember I was just sitting there, but they started talking about their wartime experiences. You know, and all three of them, were having a conversation for probably about two and a half or three hours. And that is probably the only time I've ever heard my dad talk about his experience in wartime at length. Because I know they trained a lot. Yeah. And he said that we wanted to be the best soldiers. You know, we wanted to serve as an example for our country, you know, and they consider themselves truly Americans. You know, they were going to back the fight for their home country, the Philippines, but they always considered themselves American soldiers. But to answer your question, he was very—they spoke about it with great reverence. You know, about what they had done and the horrors they had seen. You know, and because my dad said that the Japanese were just vicious, especially to the Filipino people that were on the island. He goes, you know, they were just—he couldn't believe the atrocities that they had committed. Some of his friends never got over that. You know, till their dying days, they—any Japanese, they hated them, they didn't care. You know, it was funny because some of my dad's best friends were, you know, in the 442, the Nisei Division or regiment, you know, and how it's like, there were American soldiers.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 50:01

Did your dad, do you think he felt that way about Japanese people after the war?

Bert Nabor 50:06

No, he loved everybody. He was very, like I said, our neighbors and stuff. Like, you know, there's like tons of Japanese people. You know, it's like, Filipinos are on this street. You know, Japanese were on this street. It's like [phone rings] oh my God. So he, you know, some of his best friends were Japanese. You know, we'd always go to the Japanese market to buy fish on Friday, because we're Catholic, of course. Now, so he'd go to Japanese—very friendly with everybody. You know, he looked at it, you know? They didn't have anything to do with it. You

know? And most of the people that were there in Watsonville at that time went to internment camps. Yeah. A lot of them went to internment camps. And like a lot of his friends from the 442 they were like, in internment camps. Yeah. No, but very tight communities. But no animosity that my I ever saw in my dad.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 51:19

Did other people who were farm workers with your dad join— also join up with him. Do you know?

Bert Nabor 51:30

Oh, yeah. Sometimes friends. Could I take a quick break [unknown]?

Albert “Bert” Thomas Nabor interviewed by Meleia Simon- Reynolds Part 2 of 2

Speakers: Albert “Bert” Thomas Nabor, Meleia Simon-Reynolds

Date: July 14, 2021

Scope and Contents:

In this interview, originally recorded in-person at in-person at University of California, Santa Cruz, Albert “Bert” Thomas Nabor speaks with Watsonville is in the Heart team member Meleia Simon-Reynolds. Bert discusses his father, Alberto Nabor’s involvement with Caballeros de Dimas-Alang and the Filipino Catholic Association. He remembers going to dances and community events with his family as a young child. Bert also discusses his father’s marriage to Erlinda Aragon, a Mexican American woman from Colorado. Bert reflects on his father’s life and the values that he instilled. Finally, he discusses his experience attending UC Santa Cruz in the 1980s and how the school has changed over the years.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 00:00

Alright. Perfect. So we’re recording now, for part two. Um, so I wanted to ask you about your father’s involvement with the Filipino lodges. And if you have any memories of him being involved or if he shared anything about that?

Bert Nabor 00:12

Oh, yeah, I definitely get. He used to take me along. He used to take the family along to their functions and stuff. But I remember the Caballeros de Dimas-Alang. And then there was another one that was on Old Watsonville Road, in the Morgan Hill area, they had a lodge there. So he was involved with them. Filipino Catholic Association, of course, and then, you know, Watsonville Filipino Community, but there’s probably more than that. He was very active in the Filipino community.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 00:32

Right. Right. And can you describe the, the outfits that they would wear to the lodge events, the men?

Bert Nabor 00:52

Well, they actually had, like a full uniform. And I remember, I don’t know what they’d call them. The the—fez. That’s exactly what I was thinking, they had a fez. And then they would have—I remember they would have their swords and stuff. And they hadn’t epaulets on their uniforms. That’s pretty sharp, actually. You know, I was like, and they would dress up, and they would have these functions. As I mentioned, you know, they, they provided a service for my father at his services when he passed away. And then, but I remember going to these parties as a kid,

and they would have a whole ceremonial type of thing. And, you know, it's like, we'd always watch and everything. And so it was interesting.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 01:53

What did you think about that type of like ceremony when you were a kid?

Bert Nabor 02:03

I didn't quite understand what it was, you know, but I as I've grown older, I've learned more and more about it. You know, it was like, basically an organization that was designed to help each other, you know, so, I guess, maybe a fraternal organization, because it's mostly dominated by men at that time. But if anybody knows anything about ladies in the Filipino community is that they are the power base of the family.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 02:33

Right, Right.

Bert Nabor 02:35

I mean, they truly are.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 02:37

I know. We've been hearing a lot about the Filipino Catholic Association and the women involved in that. Did your mom ever get involved in that group? And even though she wasn't Filipino?

Bert Nabor 02:50

You know, she may have been involved peripherally, but, you know, it's like, like I said, there was that exclusionary type of thing. But you know, some of the pictures, you mentioned that Mrs. Sulay had. Some of them look like my aunt, my Aunt Josey Miranda, you know, I was going, man, that sure look like my Aunt Josey. You know, and then I was just thinking about it if, if my Aunt Helen was also pictured in those photographs, too,

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 03:19

Right. I know, yesterday, when we were looking at Eva Monroe's pictures of the Filipino Catholic Association, she showed us a picture. And she said that the people in the front row were probably Filipino. And then the people in the back row were probably associated with Mexi-pino families. So I thought that was kind of interesting.

Bert Nabor 03:21

Yeah. Yeah. That's—and then you'd notice there were some Caucasian women there. And like, I remember. Yeah, I can't remember their names and stuff but if you mentioned them, I'd be like oh, yes, I know her. I know her.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 03:55

So you all probably went to some of those parties.

Bert Nabor 03:58

Oh god, yes, when we were kids. And then when we're old enough, you know, not to go. Stay home. We stayed home.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 04:06

Did you ever have to participate in any of the dances that they did?

Bert Nabor 04:13

Well, in fourth grade, we did. But you know, that was a classroom type of thing when we did that dancing with the bamboo poles and everything. Yes, yes. But the dances and stuff? No, [laughter] it was like, you know, we're just like most kids, you know, our parents would go and we'd be running around. You know, it's like, I remember going to the CPDs Hall in Santa Cruz by Costco. It's a huge place. Yeah. And then to keep us in line they'd warn us about the cemetery across the street, so we'd never leave the hall. I remember that. You know?

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 04:51

Those dances seemed like really big affairs, all of the community dances.

Bert Nabor 04:55

Yes, they were. And then they had some in Live Oak too. On 17th Avenue, there's a community center on Live Oak. So but those are the ones I remember going to. And then like I said, the, the one, the place in Morgan Hill that was more like a picnic grounds. It had a hall and stuff. But it had like beautiful picnic grounds. You know, I just remember going oh my god. It's like my, my dad loved it there. Yeah. And what was really nice, and I can't remember the name of it for the life of me.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 05:08

Do have any specific vivid memories of one of those types of events?

Bert Nabor 05:38

No, I really don't. I just remember that we always played and we had a really nice time. You know, I don't remember. You know. Well, yes, I do. I have one vivid memory, right. So we went

it's a, it's a hall down here. And it's in downtown Santa Cruz. Its across from the print shop and stuff used to be the Eagles. It's the Eagles Hall. But I don't know what it was at the time and stuff. Well I was, you know, I was probably about six or seven years old. And I didn't want to go, you know, and so my mom said, okay, well, you can go to the car in the parking lot. Which was right across the street, because there was nothing there. Well, somehow, I ended up walking all the way down to the bar across the street from the post office. So that's a pretty good walk for a little kid, right? And then I remember going in there and you know, I went into the bar and stuff. And I remember I was just a little kid. And I remember I was crying. I go, man, I'm lost. You know? And the gentleman, they gave me a soda and made me a hot dog called the police. You know, they stood me up in the middle of the car and stuff and drove me back down to the Eagles Hall. I always wondered if that's why I became a policeman later in my life.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 07:12

Because they helped you out?

Bert Nabor 07:14

They helped me out. They didn't yell at me or anything. And I remember my mom was— they were looking for me. They just started looking for me. And so I was like, they were happy when the police drove up with me inside. So that's my really vivid, vivid memory [laughs].

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 07:29

Yeah, it's kind of a scary memory too.

Bert Nabor 07:33

Yeah. I always remembered we had a nice time. Usually you played a lot and stuff. I don't remember anything really negative. I remember of course, like it would be little kids, they had the benches and stuff. So when they were doing the ceremonies and stuff, we'd be laying there and just sort of watching you know.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 07:50

I bet the uniforms with the swords probably seemed cool as a kid.

Bert Nabor 07:56

Well, every once in a while the older Filipinos would play with their swords, you know, they'd have sword fights, really. I remember one time. My dad clipped my Uncle Benny's ear, you know, and actually cut him and drew blood. So I think after that they didn't let them play with swords like that anymore.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 08:20

Wow, did your family ever go to the beaches around for gatherings?

Bert Nabor 08:27

I remember we used to go to upper Sunset Beach. I don't know exactly what they call it. But remember that going there because they had a picnic grounds at the bottom. And then they had this huge sand hill. I mean, huge. So basically, by the time we were done, at the end of the day, we were exhausted because we'd be crawling up that hill all day long. You know, but that's the one I remember the most, you know, and then Palm Beach too. But I remember going to a few of the functions, but mostly the one at the upper Sunset Beach. You know, it's like, it's just down the road from Palm Beach with that hill. Oh, gosh, we loved it there. Because, you know, it's like, we're kids. We used to roll down it. Of course, you know, get sand in our mouth and everywhere else, but it's like, we have fun.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 09:20

Yeah, those seem like really fun events.

Bert Nabor 09:23

Yeah they were. Yeah,

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 09:25

Super cool. All right. Awesome. Thank you. Um, I think the last thing I wanted to ask you about was your parents, how they met, maybe their love story, if you ever heard about that?

Bert Nabor 09:39

Well, I have. I think it was more of an arranged marriage. You know, my Uncle Milton Miranda, and my Aunt Josey Miranda, you know, they lived in Pajaro right over the bridge, you know, in Monterey County and so I think they arranged a meeting between my mom who was 17 at the time and my dad who was 43. You know, and they, I think it was more of like an arranged marriage and stuff, because my mom was from, like I said, she was from Colorado at that time. And, you know, they were just, they had a huge family and stuff. And so I think it was really common at that time. You know, it's like, my dad was older and stuff. And the one thing my mom told me, and she goes, my dad told her, he goes, just don't ever embarrass me in public. You know? And they were together for forever until my dad passed away. You know, and so, and they got married in Salinas. I have a couple pictures of them. You know, my mom was really strikingly beautiful. My dad was very happy and stuff. You know, that's, that's what I remember.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 11:03

And so they got married in Salinas. That's pretty close by I know, a lot of people have been telling me that their parents had to travel far to get married. But that was for them marrying white women.

Bert Nabor 11:16

Yes, yes. Yes. That's very true. I know stories about that. But I guess, you know, it's like when they got married, I guess it was okay. You know, but, yeah.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 11:29

Can you describe what your close family was like when you were growing up as a kid?

Bert Nabor 11:39

My dad had a sister that was in the Philippines. And my sister was sharing with me, my sister Valerie was sharing with me, that during World War II, I guess somebody was hiding in a cart filled with hay. And they said that my father told her that the Japanese soldiers were bayonetting the cart. And there was actually somebody in there in the cart. And they said his sister never recovered from that. You know, she was so mentally traumatized by the whole thing. So we didn't have any relatives per se, from my dad. But my mom, my Aunt Josey lived in Pajaro. I mean, we could walk over there. And my Aunt Helen lived across the street, you know, and so we always, you know, like, every Sunday would go to my Aunt Josey's for Sunday dinner, you know, and she would cook I remember, she always would cook. And then, you know, and then my other aunts who are younger came from Colorado, my Aunt Mary and my Aunt Margaret. And then, who knows, so we would always see them, and stuff. But my dad always had these, like, like I said, My Uncle Billy, and my Uncle Benny. You know, my Uncle Johnny. You know, it's like all these. I had tons of uncles all over the place. And then we would always, you know, to go and visit people like Paul DeOcampo's family. And, you know, we're always visiting people. I can't remember the names of everybody. Like Mr. Mariano. He did the First Filipino Regiment banner and stuff. I'm over there going, I remember going to his house and saw that. It was a smaller community. So we knew each other, you know. Yeah, that's what I remember. You know, and my mom and dad are like, going back to that stuff. It was like, yeah, it seemed more like an arranged marriage and stuff.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 13:55

All right. Do you think that—was—did you ever hear anything about it? Like from your mom's perspective? The, the marriage to someone who was much older?

Bert Nabor 14:10

I know my dad was very set in his ways. Man, he was a hard man, boy. All five foot two Oh boy, who is tough. It's like he was very discipline. I remember when were kids and stuff, we

had to do things his way. Absolutely his way. And I'll give you an example of that. You know, it's like, and it has carried over into my life even now, like washing the dishes. I have to do them a certain way. The way my dad showed me. Sweeping the floor. I remember my dad, you know, he watched me sweep the floor and then I'd finish and he'd didn't make me do it over again. But he'd give me instructions on the right way to do it. You know, he was really tough, you know? You know, it's like you were always going to college. You know, it's always ingrained in you that you're going to college, you're going to college. But of my, you know, like my brothers and sisters went to JC. But I was the first one actually graduate. You know, from, you know, it's like, not that I was, you know, did go straight four years and stuff. I, you know, I think I shared with you, I was like on the seven year plan, I had, like, three or four different majors. You know, I went to different schools, you know, and that finally ended up here, graduated from UCSC. But, yeah, he was tough. Yeah, I mean, you're talking, he was very disciplined and stuff. I think I drove him crazy. When I was older though in my teenage years and stuff, he became a little bit. Yeah. It was like, I used to cuss a lot when I was that age and stuff. And my sister tells a story, I hope she comes in, she goes, my dad had a very, you know, distinctive accent, and I could share this with you, he goes [mimicking his father's accent] goddam Bert, fuck this, fuck that, fuck this, fuck everything, he goes fuck, fuck [laughter] something like that, you know, my sister tells the story, because I cussed all the time. I was really rebellious teenager.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 16:26

And your dad was not liking that?

Bert Nabor 16:28

No, not at all. You know, it's like he, he didn't like that at all. Well, like I said, older, you know, as we grew older, we had an adult relationship. I was no longer a son. I was a man just like he was. You know? So it's interesting. It's very interesting. I remember, you know, I was working, I was having a tough time at work. You know, it was really having a tough time at work. And you have those in law enforcement all the time, you know, you hit these stretches where you're just like, you just going oh, man, it's like, I don't know if I should do this job and stuff and everything. And I remember going— going and talking to my dad. No, you know, it's like, everybody's asleep. I was working the night shift. I go I don't know, Dad, he goes, Man, he goes, You know, I was telling him a few things that were happening when I'm working he goes [mimicking his father's accent] Oh, well, he goes, you could still be working in the fields son. Talk about putting something in the crystal clear perspective. And I go, oh, I got a great job. You know, and, yeah, so he would, we would always have these talks and stuff. You know, and I know, my mom loved my dad, you know, it's like, he was like I said, he was very conservative with his money and stuff like that, you know. I don't think he bought his first new car until he was in his 70s. And I remember going with him because he wanted me to go help him. And he bought himself a white Honda Accord. That was the first new car he ever bought. Because he

would always buy used cars, you know, and try to save money and stuff. But I remember that. Then after he retired man, its like he, you know, he bought a new Mazda truck, you know, he was into buying new. And he, you know, it's, it's okay and stuff. Yeah. So he enjoyed that. You know, and it was tough. You know, it's like, when passed and stuff he was having—I remember I was on the first week at the police academy. You know, here, I'm studying this, like, you know, I have to— staying at home going to the police academy, because I was putting myself through the academy to get a student loan. I said, man, I got to get a job because the field that I was in disappeared after Proposition 13. So, you know, I said, okay, well, I'm gonna do this. You know, I tried teaching for a while and stuff and my dad was very supportive and stuff. And I'll never forget, you know, it's like, he comes up to me and he goes, my first weekend, please, can we go. He goes [mimicking his father's accent] Bert, he goes, I think I'm having a heart attack. I go, oh, my God. So he goes, you know, he goes, you get the car you take me to hospital. So I took him to the hospital and he was. He had five bypasses. My mom was out camping with my cousins and stuff. She calls me the next morning she goes, what's wrong with your dad and she's crying and stuff. She knew something was wrong. So they came back down from Shasta and I remember it's like four days later I was having—I was having my first major test at the academy and stuff and you have all day testing. So it's like I'm, here I am, you know, waiting for lunchtime to see how his surgery went in the morning and he pulled through. But I remember, you know, when he passed and stuff, what happened is they went back in for his heart. But he was having gallbladder issues. And so the surgery was risky at that point, you know, because he's having heart issues and gallbladder issues. But he went and had his gallbladder removed and didn't tell any of us. You know, he figured he'd roll the dice and figured he would get another few more, because this was 12 years after his first heart attack and stuff, and he just couldn't make it. You know?

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 20:52

I'm sorry, that must have been hard.

Bert Nabor 20:54

It was really hard. I remember when he had his, I was in the hospital with him, I took time off from work, and just to stay with him and stuff, you know, and just talk to him and stuff. And yeah it was really hard. You know, he's a hard man, but he really taught me everything I needed to know. You know, it's like how important it is to maintain your character and your integrity, no matter what people can tell you. You know? He was very Catholic. Yeah. You know, I mean, God. He was so Catholic. And I remember he had me run all of his services. He goes, it's like, I always felt like that scene in The Godfather, where he's telling me how he wants everything to go. And, you know, he's laying out the plan for, you know, his, his services, and telling you how to deal with other things in life. When he's gone. That was interesting. He was a really good man. I always find that hard to believe he's only like five foot two inches tall.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 22:11

He probably seemed a lot taller. Because he was such a big—he had such a big life.

Bert Nabor 22:17

Yeah, I think so. It's like, yeah, he was—I remember when he came, he said that he knew he needed to learn how to read and write. So a lot of the Filipinos and stuff that were educated and stuff, would teach the other Filipinos in the labor camps, how to read and write. How'd they do it? The newspaper. Because they would teach them to read and write from the newspaper. And my dad has a very distinctive way that he hand writes. And his letters are a little bit smaller than mine, but I'm very similar in handwriting, because he taught me how to handwrite before I even knew how to print, because I would have to sign the house checks. The, you know, the well, actually the money orders that would send in for the house payments every month. So I was doing that since I was a little kid.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 23:22

Wow. That's wonderful. Wow. Thank you so much for sharing that about your dad. I did want to ask you one last thing. And then since we're here at UCSC, what was it like to go to UCSC? When you were here, switching gears a little bit.

Bert Nabor 23:45

You know, like I said, I went to UC San Diego for a year. I did good. You know, I did good there. And like, I just couldn't get past chemistry and stuff. And I went to Cabrillo for a while. Oh, I went to USC for a while I broke up with my girlfriend. And I was just left school after that. And then I went back to work in the fields. And I went to Cabrillo. And then I said, man, you gotta do something to kind of get a job and stuff. You know, and you know, I you know, I was, I had a child at 19. So I go, man, you got to do something. So I came here. It was a beautiful campus. I mean, there's so many buildings now. I mean, there was like, now, I drive here and it's like, as I was driving up, Hager, I was going man look at all these buildings. Yeah, it was really, like I said, sort of overwhelming. Because it's changed so much. And now. You know you have College 10 Now, right? I mean, there was no College 10 when I was here, you know, it's like it's pretty interesting. And then walking into the library. I remember coming in here to study you know, and its like, it was, like I said, it was just like I remember I was like, well, I have flashbacks, right, trying to read like 1400 pages a week for two different classes. And at that time that we had five unit courses, is it still that way?

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 25:13

There are five unit courses.

Bert Nabor 25:15

Yeah, five, and people don't understand. I tell people, you know, I went to schools, this was absolutely the toughest school I've ever been to, you know, 10 week, quarter system, you can't get sick. If you get sick, you better go to class anyway. You know, because it's like, you have to keep up.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 25:36

Right. And that's still how it is. It's so hard for students to keep up with the 10 week quarter.

Bert Nabor 25:43

And now they give you grades, right?

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 25:45

Yeah.

Bert Nabor 25:45

When I was here, they did narrative evaluations. So the teachers actually had to sort of know you, or the TAs had to know you to give you your evaluations and stuff. So it's a beautiful place. You know, it's like, I know, my daughter, Celeste wanted to come up to school here. And now it's going oh, my God, that would be like, pretty wonderful. Have she she's able to come up. You know, and then I guess they some type of computer glitch when she was signing up and stuff. And so, her paperwork didn't go through. So she ended up going to Humboldt. You know, you know, it's such I said, okay, well, which as a parent, I was going, she goes, Dad, it's cheaper. I go, she goes, it's cheaper. And she goes, it's a good program too, Dad. Okay. Okay. Just yeah, but I would like to go to UCSC. And I know, I know. I know. It's a beautiful place.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 26:43

Yeah, I wonder, was it nice to go—finally come back and go to finish school somewhere like, that's your hometown?

Bert Nabor 26:53

You know, I've never planned that stuff. I never did. But that's the way it worked out. I know my cousin loved it up here. You know, he was one of the original. I mean, there was no slug when he was here. He was, you know, because they had, the mascot was the walrus or something like that. So there was no slug. There was no slug and there was no slug when I was here. Yeah, it wasn't until after we graduated that they came up with the slug.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 27:22

When did you graduate?

Bert Nabor 27:23

I graduated in 81. January of 81.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 27:28

It must have been sometime after that that they got the slug.

Bert Nabor 27:31

Yeah, I think so. I'm pretty sure. But like I said, I remember going up, oh I remember paying my fees here and stuff and everything. And then like I said the parking, Oh my god. The young lady said, oh, well, we have meters. And I'm over there going? Oh, no. Because I remember the meters were few and far between when I was here as a student.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 27:54

The parking here is still a nightmare.

Bert Nabor 27:57

Yeah. Yeah. You know, and it's like, I remember parking in the east and west remote catching the shuttle. You know, and God forbid that one of the shuttles broke down, because we didn't have a lot of shuttles and the buses at that time. You know, it's like, we just had the shuttles. When I was yeah, we just had to shuttles. And the buses came towards, after afterwards, you know, I don't remember. But the shuttles were the most dependable you know.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 28:25

It's funny, it's funny how the same stuff is too even though a lot of stuff is different. I bet a lot of people who are undergraduates here would have had the same thing to say about the shuttles. Undergraduates have to park in the east and west remote. I'm allowed to park in the other parking lots as a grad student.

Bert Nabor 28:43

Wow, that's changed, that's changed because we could find a meter we could park, you know, we could find—but that's the thing. It's like we'd drive up here. You know, and if students lived here, most of those spaces were gone. It was very few and far between it. Take one quick grab to the lot. Oh my god, there's one empty, you know, you could use your sticker. Most of the time it was parking meters.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 29:12

Well, I think we're good. Thank you so much.

Bert Nabor 29:14

You're welcome.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 29:16

I'm going to stop the recording.