Modesto Orlando and Rita Louise Tuzon interviewed by Kathleen "Kat" Cruz Gutierrez
Part 1 of 2

Speakers: Modesto Orlando Tuzon, Rita Louise Tuzon, Kathleen "Kat" Cruz Gutierrez

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Scope and Contents: In this interview, originally recorded in-person, Modesto Orlando Tuzon and Rita Louise Tuzon speak with Watsonville is in the Heart team member, Dr. Kathleen "Kat" Cruz Gutierrez. Modesto Orlando and Rita discuss their father, Modesto Tuzon Sr.; his migration to the United States to pursue music education during 1926; his work as a farm laborer in central California; his experiences playing music at Filipino events, small venues, and for his family; and his marriage to their mother, Linda Ardell Craner in 1954. They provide an overview of their mother's family's migration to central California from Idaho and her career as a reading specialist at Hall School in Las Lomas, California. Modesto Orlando and Rita also speak about their extended family and friend network in Watsonville and the Pajaro Valley and reflect on their differing experiences growing up mixed-race. Finally, Modesto Orlando discusses interviewing his father about the 1930s Watsonville Race Riots and Fermin Tobera for a paper he wrote as a college student.

Rita Louise Tuzon 00:00
Want to silence your phone? Or your spam calls? Probably in a jacket pocket.

Kathleen Gutierrez 00:11
Thank you. So, good morning, and thanks for meeting with me. Just for the record. It's Sunday, May 16. And I'm here in the Tuzon household—

Rita Louise Tuzon 00:21
Tuzon-Stone.

Kathleen Gutierrez 00:22
—Tuzon-Stone household. So if you could just do me a favor, for good record and transcription keeping purposes, if you could just share your full name, and then your birthday, that'd be awesome.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 00:35
Modesto Orlando Tuzon. May 12, 1956.

Kathleen Gutierrez 00:40

May 12, 1956.

Rita Louise Tuzon 00:41
and Rita Louise Tuzon, which is April 25, 1959.

Kathleen Gutierrez 00:46
April 25 1959. Great. So could you tell me a little bit about where you were born? Was it in Watsonville?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 00:54
Well, technically, yes. But we never lived in Watsonville. Okay, we lived on the other—

Rita Louise Tuzon 01:00
—project, you blew it at the beginning.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 01:08
We lived on the south side of the Pajaro River. So notice the wrong side of the tracks. Yeah. Which is North Monterey County, but it's also tech— but it was part of Watsonville we went to Watsonville High School. We had a Watsonville zip code, lots of old phone numbers. I was born in the Old Watsonville Community Hospital in 1956. As was she, three years later, as was the sister between us who passed away a day before Rita was born. Her name was Denise Laine Tuzon. So we were born in Watsonville. But we never lived in Watsonville. We went to Watsonville high but we lived in Pajaro and then in 1963 when I was seven and she was four, we moved to Las Lomas, which is just like another two miles farther south, but still part of the, part of Watsonville, but really North Monterey County. So but we never actually lived in the Watsonville city limits.

Kathleen Gutierrez 02:10
Okay. All right. Were you also born in Watsonville?

Rita Louise Tuzon 02:14
Watsonville Community Hospital. The old, old, hospital. Three hospitals ago.

Kathleen Gutierrez 02:19
Yeah. Okay, great. Can you tell me a little bit about your parents then?

Rita Louise Tuzon 02:24
Sure. I'll go first. You go second? I am going to drink some water. So our parents met— our Dad, why don't we just start talking about him? Because he had a lot that went on before the

two of them. Right? So then you can start because you can talk about, you know, briefly where you know, when he immigrated and why.

Kathleen Gutierrez 02:38
That sounds great. Yeah.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 02:47
He came to America on a steamship that left the Philippines in 1926. But, as this paper shows, he didn't actually get off the damn boat until a few months later in March of 1927. And, according to him, the boat stopped at various ports and loaded more Filipinos on until the boat was full. And then it slowly went across the northern perimeter of the Pacific, like along, you know, past Alaska and then down to the Seattle- Vancouver area, which is where he got off the boat. Most of the people on that boat were recruited as cheap labor. My father came by choice, not recruited as cheap labor. But, he wanted— he was a musician. He wanted to come to America, and study music at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. And he did exactly that for almost two years, and then October of 1928, the Great Depression hit and it totally changed the course of his life and millions of other people's lives. And he wound up not pursuing professionally, the music, but he continued doing it for fun, and for community purposes, pretty much until the end.

Rita Louise Tuzon 04:14
And so what he did is he came down. Our uncles are the Lazos, Cipriano Lazo and Leon Lazo, and they were farming in Watsonville. So he ended up coming down and working with our uncles and working in the fields with our uncles. And then he would travel in the offseason because in Watsonville there's a several month long, it's because it's rainy and it's not really warm so you only have one growth, one long growing season. And he would travel coasts and play with little bands and play at the Filipino dance halls from Seattle up and down the coast to LA and back and forth. So that's what he did for many years until in the 50s. He was in the Arroyo Grande area, and that's where he met our mom.

Kathleen Gutierrez 04:54
I see. So because—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 04:55
A lot of the Filipinos and others now would migrate up and down the coast following crops.

Rita Louise Tuzon 05:03
Yes.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 05:03
So Pismo Beach, Arroyo Grande, etc. area is a very big ag—coastal agricultural area just like go Pajaro and Salinas valleys. And another branch of our family that are actual blood uncles is a DeOcampos and and the elder DeOcampo brother, Leon, lived in Arroyo Grande. He never lived in Watsonville. He came up occasionally. But it was not his home base. He maintained his home base as Arroyo Grande. Serendipitous coincidence or we wouldn't be sitting here talking to you. Our mother's family moved down from San Francisco where they lived to the Arroyo Grande area and that's where our parents met in the early 50s.

Kathleen Gutierrez 05:56
I see. Okay, so I've got some questions off of that. So first, do you know which province your dad came from?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 06:03
Ilocos.

Rita Louise Tuzon 06:03
Ilokano, Ilocos Sur. Yes he's Ilokano.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 06:06
From the village of Santo Domingo.

Kathleen Gutierrez 06:08
Santo Domingo.

Rita Louise Tuzon 06:08
Our uncles, so that you know, and you may have experienced this, I don't know how many folks that you've talked to, but just the Ilokanos were very close. So those are all our uncles, whether they're uncles or not right. Those are the families I think that our family socialized with more. You know, it, there's, we're tribal, right. I mean, Filipinos are tribal, if you're a Visayan so there's a lot of pride in the area you're from and connection. So. So most of the families that our family was close to, were either because they were our blood relatives, or because they were Ilokanos. And that's just ,that was the nature of the men, were friendly until the families became close.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 06:10
I never knew Roy's family. They're Visayan.

Kathleen Gutierrez 06:31

The Recios are Visayan.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 06:55
And there's others—[Rita and Kathleen laugh] there are other people in this year's calendar. The Cawaling family—they're Visayan. We— I never knew, we never knew them either. We knew they existed.

Rita Louise Tuzon 07:10
It's also generational. [Speaking in the background]. In Watsonville, it's a small community. And you know, one thing you always know is if you find, if you meet somebody on the street in any place in the world, and they say they're from Watsonville, you can figure out a connection. Because they're going to have a sibling, an aunt, an uncle, a cousin, a somebody, and you will find that connection. Oh, so and so's your uncle. Oh, I went to school with so and so— you always can. So, but that generational piece if there's nobody like within that circle, sometimes, 13-18 [years] like that, that difference, because he's kind of in between. He's not your age. His parents are not our parents' age.

Kathleen Gutierrez 07:27
I see, got it. And so you mentioned your Lazo uncles were these blood uncles?

Rita Louise Tuzon 07:49
Yes. Their first co— well, they're first cousins.

Kathleen Gutierrez 07:51
First cousins of your father.

Rita Louise Tuzon 07:52
Yes.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 07:53
They all had the same middle name of Jaramilio. Okay, their mothers were sisters. So Uncle Leon and Uncle Cipriano were their middle initials J—Jaramilio, as with our father's eyes, so their mothers were sisters. So they are actually pretty close blood relatives as opposed to— And then Uncle Skippy, the DeOcampos they are first cousins too. On the other side, I think.

Kathleen Gutierrez 08:21
I see, so your dad came along with your two uncles.

Rita Louise Tuzon 08:24

Our uncle's were already here. Your uncle's were already older than him.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 08:27
So they're all older than him except Veronica and Antoinette's father, Paul DeOampo who went by the nickname of Skippy. He was a couple years younger than our dad.

Kathleen Gutierrez 08:39
And DeOcampos had been here already. Or that uncle had been here too.

Rita Louise Tuzon 08:43
Yeah. He was here and very, they were very close. And they had kids our age like we were very close with them. Those two were very close. So we of course always called them our uncles. It was his first cousins, they were all Ilokano and the two Lazos had come and had established, you know, they were already farming. Leon J. Lazo was pretty successful and had some pretty good farming operation.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 09:07
He wasn't just a farm worker—he was a farmer, you know?

Rita Louise Tuzon 09:11
And then Uncle, Uncle—We call them Little Uncle and Big Uncle because Little Uncle would make you look tall and Big Uncle was five foot seven which was monstrously tall for Filipinos of that generation. Right? So that was, Leon J. Lazo was the, was Big Uncle and he was the one who was farming and was employing people to work. Little Uncle was in the Philippines. So Cipriano Lazo actually went to Hawai'i.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 09:37
He went to Hawai'i first.

Rita Louise Tuzon 09:38
—and was there for a long time. By the time we came along, he was there but he wasn't there earlier. So that's when after our dad was in school and working at the same time when he came down to join our uncles in Watsonville.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 09:52
Another thing that's interesting too. Is that Cipriano, who was the eldest of all these uncles, he never became a naturalized American citizen like the rest of them did. Our dad did. His brother Leon Lazo did. The two DeOcampo brothers did. Other uncles who we haven't seen since we were kids and don't have pictures of them, can't remember their names, I mean, there was one

who lived in LA I don't remember his name. Do you remember him? He came to visit once. Maybe. [Rita laughs]. Maybe that's the guy we couldn't identify?

Rita Louise Tuzon 10:23
No, no he came because that, he was visiting from the Philippines.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 10:25
Yeah. And one in Chicago that my dad—

Rita Louise Tuzon 10:32
Well, the family name, so the family name was T spelled T-O-S-O-N [Kathleen repeats]. Which is a Spanish word which someone told me means "big cough" who used to tease me, "big cough" [Kathleen repeats]. Oh yeah, after the Philip— after the Spaniards were, were left control of the Philippines. Then there were some families who changed, our family changed their name to T-U-Z-O-N because they didn't want the Spanish spelling, Because they were evidencing the commitment to moving on from Spanish rule. So it was changed. So if we ever see a T-U-Z-O-N we know they're related to us, because the name was changed,

Kathleen Gutierrez 11:13
I see. Okay, now I'm kind of getting the constellation of the family that kind of was first here. And then you know, when your father moved across the Pacific, and you know, before maybe even asking questions about your mother's family, which I'm also really curious. How did your dad know or get inspired to study music first in the Bay Area? I mean, what was it about the San Francisco Conservatory? Was there some inspiration from having his cousins—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 11:39
He, his number one instrument later in life was mandolins, specifically the Philippine mandolin. Okay, that's a Philippine mandolin, has 14 strings. The American mandolin only has eight strings. But, he wanted to be a banjo player, and at the time, a guest lecturer at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music was a guy named Eddie Peabody, who was regarded as the best banjo player in the world at that time in the 1920s. So he wanted to specifically go there to learn banjo from the great Eddie Peabody.

Kathleen Gutierrez 12:22
How did he hear Eddie Peabody?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 12:24
From newspapers and what-not, because he was the best banjo player in the world. So they even heard about him in—

Kathleen Gutierrez 12:33
Ilocos region?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 12:38
Sure, Ilocos Sur Times, you know? [Rita and Kathleen laugh in the background].

Kathleen Gutierrez 12:41
Just so my curiosity, you know, was your father one of other children? Were other people in the family musical?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 12:49
He was the youngest of eight.

Kathleen Gutierrez 12:50
Was he the only one of his siblings to make it to the US?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 12:52
Right. Yeah. All of our, none of our uncles are his siblings that came to America. They, none of them left the Philippines.

Kathleen Gutierrez 12:59
I see. Do you know if other— if his other siblings were as musical or musically inclined?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 13:05
I don't know.

Kathleen Gutierrez 13:06
Not sure? Yeah, don't know.

Rita Louise Tuzon 13:08
Don't know, given his age, because there's a, there's a thirty year age disparity between our parents. So at the time, he had kids, he was older, a lot of his siblings had passed away. So there's a piece of that history that we don't really have. We have a couple of first cousins [unintelligible].

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 13:22
We didn't, we didn't come along until they were gone.

Kathleen Gutierrez 13:25
I see.

Rita Louise Tuzon 13:26
Yeah.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 13:28
Our—similarly we never met and didn't even, haven't even seen photographs, because it would before cameras. Um, we never met our, our paternal grandparents. But so—

Rita Louise Tuzon 13:44
So we understand they lived to their hundreds.

Kathleen Gutierrez 13:46
Do you know their names?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 13:49
Not not off— by memory, but it's written down.

Rita Louise Tuzon 13:53
By June, whatever. When you come back, we'll have them. But I was not named after, I was named after daddy's mother. So yeah. And his sister was Luisa, I got my, my names came from them. You're named after our dad so—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 14:08
Yeah, so our father was also Modesto.

Kathleen Gutierrez 14:12
And then, and you said June 15th is his birthday? June and then do you know the year when he was born?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 14:19
1907.

Rita Louise Tuzon 14:19
1907.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 14:20
Ostensibly.

Rita Louise Tuzon 14:22
Because he really wanted to come to the US. And we're not sure whether there was some little story about maybe he used his brother's information.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 14:31
Well, that's my understanding. Yeah.

Rita Louise Tuzon 14:33
Because he was young.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 14:34
He when, He came here, he was really only 16 years old. And you were, had to be 18. So he used his brother's papers.

Kathleen Gutierrez 14:44
Let's say 1907.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 14:46
But we don't know. It's like that's on his headstone. That's—

Rita Louise Tuzon 14:49
That's his birthday as far as we know. But we, but we don't know if he then was using his own birth year or not. We're not sure, we don't know if he used his birth certificate of his brother and they had to change it. We just don't know. We just know that. It was clear that that was what our uncles and what he had said is that he came here, you know, it's always all that stuff is always a little murky, right? But that he wanted to come, he was young, and he found a way to come. And that was the way that—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 15:16
So aside from the fact that he was two years younger than he claimed to be when he got on the boat. Um, he was younger than all of them anyway, just by birth, so he was significantly younger than the Lazo brothers and Leon Lazo— Leon DeOcampo, the only one of them who was younger than him. And only by two years was Paul DeOcampo, aka Uncle Skippy.

Kathleen Gutierrez 15:44
Right. Right. Okay, yeah, this is giving me a good sense. I mean, and so banjo moving across the Pacific. And that's, you know, a unique story to hear too, especially someone who's so

musically inclined. And what you were saying was that, in addition to the growing seasons that were changing, the music touring was also really common for him.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 16:03
So obviously, while he was a student at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, which was and I believe still is on 19th Avenue in the Richmond,

Rita Louise Tuzon 16:11
I think it just, I think closed.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 16:12
It might have closed but it was still there when I lived in San Francisco in the 80s and 90s. So when he was in San Francisco, he obviously didn't wasn't a farm worker, while he was studying at the Music Conservatory. He was like a busboy in restaurants and the kind of jobs you get in a big city. But then during the off— when school is not in session, he would come down to Watsonville or Grindr or whatever, and work in the fields alongside his cousins, our uncles and others who weren't blood relatives, but who they formed— big we're a basically a band of brothers, who formed the community, blood relatives or not, and that was the core of our non-blood relative network in in Watsonville. Exhibit A: Max Sulay, you know? And, like I mentioned before you turned the recorder on, one thing about Max and his children. That is, we share, Rita and I, is that unlike most other families, we're half white. So we, frankly, that gave us a certain advantage or rather shielded us from certain disadvantages, because we didn't look Asian.

Rita Louise Tuzon 17:42
It's really funny to say that, because I have a completely different experience than you.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 17:46
You do? Oh, okay. Well, that was just me talking.

Rita Louise Tuzon 17:50
The deep voice, that was the tall one. Apparently looks very white. I don't know if you see him, you would say no.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 17:58
Well, no, but I don't look that Asian. No. And part of that is because I'm 6'2.

Rita Louise Tuzon 18:04

Yeah, I think I mean, one of the things is, we haven't talked about, you know, our parents and together yet, and that whole thing, but yeah. Our mom is Caucasian and they got married in 1954. And at the time, they got married, they went to Mexico to get married because no one wanted to marry them here because it was an interracial marriage. And as you know, and as we know, from the the history of this project, there were very few Filipino women who were Filipinas, who—that's redundant— [Modesto interrupts] who were able to come over because of the immigration laws, and that was, of course, intentional, because that was a way to limit the population. And so some of the people you are, are talking to their kids are. It's the manangs too, it's the, it's sort of these, those pioneers, but for the other men who are the manongs, many of them married women who were not Filipina because that's who was here, right?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 19:00
Or they stayed single right? Uncle Cipriano Lazo, but technically, he wasn't single. He was so much older than all the others. He already had a wife and kids that he left in the Philippines.

Kathleen Gutierrez 19:10
I see.

Rita Louise Tuzon 19:11
He supported him and so he wasn't—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 19:13
And then when he retired, he moved back to the Philippines and was buried in the Philippines.

Kathleen Gutierrez 19:18
Okay, yeah. Which is not the case for a lot of people who maybe decided to stay and not have their remains repatriated.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 19:24
Uncle CP, as we know— as one of his nicknames was, he kept one foot in the Philippines, you know, for decades. And then, at the end of his life, he returned.

Rita Louise Tuzon 19:36
It was really, a little, a little, a little anecdote, my dad, our dad went back to visit in the 70s, you know, under the, under Marcos, it wasn't, you know, it wasn't a safe space. It wasn't an easy place to get to, it was expensive. And in 71 he went he went back to visit his family—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 19:56

Which was the one and only visit he came here

Rita Louise Tuzon 19:59
and so when he went and and he came back and I will never forget the story—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 20:05
He was there for like—what three months?

Rita Louise Tuzon 20:07
Our uncle, Little Uncle? So Uncle CP is the one, he had built a house there, right? And so Daddy went back to escort him. He was a lot older, so he could go visit, he took uncle back. And that's why he went. And when he came back, and it was like three months, it was a long time. He— it was the offseason. So he went in the winter, came back, and he's, you know, telling us stories and that's when his, that cousin, but one generation younger came to visit that that we saw in those pictures. He was saying, this is so exciting, because he felt like it was safer to maybe to go but you know, under the Marcos regime, but he said, you know, you could come here, he said your mom could visit, you know, because the heat, the oppressive heat, she didn't do well with heat. That's why we lived in Watsonville. You know, it was like part of that. She could come, she could come and it would be okay. And I remember saying, Oh, they have, Uncle has air conditioning in his house. And he said, no, he has electricity. So you can turn on a fan. You know, it was, it was so interesting, because when he left, they didn't have that.

Kathleen Gutierrez 21:11
Oh, sure.

Rita Louise Tuzon 21:11
Think about the timing and being in the provinces. It was such a different—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 21:16
He came here on a steamship that took a long time to get here and flew back on a jet 45 years later.

Kathleen Gutierrez 21:23
Very different times, technologically speaking.

Rita Louise Tuzon 21:24
Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. So he was, he was—and then unfortunately, things got worse in the Philippines. And we never visited in his, you know, remainder of his life. And we didn't go as—

as a family. But that was, it was, it was nice for him to be able to go back and experience it. And [laughs] for the tape, Lanny is taking a brief detour into the other room.

Kathleen Gutierrez 21:50
Is his nickname Lanny?

Rita Louise Tuzon 21:52
Yeah, he'll kill me for that. So our— Yes, our family said his middle name is Orlando. And his first name is Modesto, which was my dad's name, and my mom consented to have him named after my dad but never wanted him called Jr. Because that's a, that's a very junior like Henry, Henry Fuertes Junior. She didn't want him called Junior and our family friends who are—who are, I don't know if they're really cousins, but they were cousins more Ilokanos, the Fuertes who someone will talk to had a Junior—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 22:19
And in hindsight, it's totally understandable that they wouldn't wanted some 6'2 guy to be called Junior. Of course, when I was born they had no idea that I would get this huge. [unintelligible speaking in the background] But, yeah my family nickname is derived from my middle name.

Rita Louise Tuzon 22:34
And then he got really squirrely about the middle name. So you know, he would went by Modesto and his professional and like work and everything. It's Modesto or Mo, but we still call him Lanny. And sometimes we slip in front of other people.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 22:45
Well, any anybody in my family from either, you know, extended family, white side, Filipino side, whatever, anybody who knows me from Watsonville, anybody who meets me via any of those people, so most of my LA friends I've met through her, also when mom passed away, I kind of embraced that.

Rita Louise Tuzon 23:12
So anyway, we were talking about before that when our parents met, and, and the difference, let what Lanny was saying was that we were you know, we were, you know, the Sulays and us and our cousins, the Lazos we had—So we're half were half white, half Filipino. And I think what he was, it was what he was alluding to is the experience. And it's not just for us, it's for everyone who is biracial or multiracial. You know, you know, people try to define you, and try to figure out what you are. But we always felt although we were—although we felt totally a part of the community, that in a way, like the white community always saw us as Filipino. The Filipino

community always saw us as white, like, because we weren't full. Right. And so there was, there was, you always feel that belonging but other— there's an othering there that you don't really focus on when you're growing up as much. It's just kind of there as you get older. And then but the thing about Watsonville is Watsonville was a very, very multi-ethnic community. Which I think in many communities, growing up in Los Angeles was like that, it was, it's segregated. You know, it's when you're segregated by where you live, then you're segregated by where you go to school, which means you're segregated. And so your experiences are different. And sometimes your upward mobility is different, right? So in Watsonville, being put in high school, and everybody kind of, you know, came together there where it was agricultural, you know, the people who were the wealthiest were all white because they were the landowners and the ones running those businesses. But we had a lot of shared experiences with the Latino community because they were also field workers and kind of in the same place. And so the difference in Watsonville, because we lived amongst each other and went to the same school was that we talked about race is just part of like, you know, an apple and orange or you're Filipino and I, and when—I don't know about your experience, Modesto, but my experience when I left was that people, people got— people were uncomfortable, you know, in that time frame. They were uncomfortable being casual about, you know, race because they felt uncomfortable about race, which it was hard to figure out. I've been to Stanford after, and which was mostly white. And I think people are, were uncomfortable on how to embrace, you know, people who were different races, but they always wanted to define you and put you in a box because, you know, the never ending question of what are you? What are you? What are you? And you say, I'm an American. What do you mean, right? What are you? Like, all that, that, that stuff. So you have those experiences where people want to define you. And you have figured out how to define yourself. And I think, and I work with a school there's Catholic girls school that's close to here. And as—and one of the things I got looking at the thing, and I said, you know, you let people self identify, and you have, you know, Black, and I said and you have a checkbox for multiracial, that's very progressive of you but you ask nothing past that. So you don't have the information that you want about serving the communities that you have. And every generation, your multiracial and biracial bucket is going to get larger, because we live in a different world than we lived then.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 26:35
And that's a good, that's a good point. And so we came of age in the 1970s. Where in terms of high school and college, and the 70s were when things were—people's eyes are starting to crack open a little bit, you know, we'd had the civil rights movements of the 60s. And, you know, it is, and, you know, and as we can, as we know, that battle is not over just ask George Floyd, you know, but, um, it was a time when people were starting to embrace other cultures. But like Rita alluded to a couple minutes ago, they didn't know how it was, pun intended, it was foreign to them, you know, how to embrace other cultures, how the transition from exclusivity

to inclusivity was happening in the 1970s. You know, and it's still happening now. And there's still, there's still a long road. But we're a lot farther along that road now in 2021. And we were in 1971, or whatever. And certainly then in 1951. But you know, about the whole racial thing, you know, it's like, aside from one family's perspective, being different than another, as my sister just pointed out, her perspective is different than mine. We're absolutely the same DNA wise, you know, in terms of our ethnic background, but I'm male. And I'm 6'2, I got a totally different perspective of what I dealt with than what she dealt with. You know, um, and vice versa.

Kathleen Gutierrez 26:53
Yeah, yeah, I'm gonna definitely want to go into that, because this was something that came up in Juanita's [Juanita Sulay] conversation as well. Interesting. Not only you know, being biracial, but then also entering into a relationship and marriage with a Caucasian male, you know, and how that was perceived during her time. Yeah.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 28:40
Well and her mother, Virginia, was Caucasian, right? The only, I was racking my brain yesterday trying to think of other families besides us and the Sulays who were half Filipino and half Anglo. And, except the Tabulas, who are sort of our relatives as well, um, Frank and [unknown] Tabula, who are about pretty much age peers with Juanita and her younger sister, Manzanita Sulay—

Kathleen Gutierrez 29:10
Right.

Rita Louise Tuzon 29:11
So let me ask you, so with Juanita was, was the, was the pressure from the generation above? That she wasn't marrying somebody that was Filipino like that—

Kathleen Gutierrez 29:24
Actually, I think for her, she just was convinced that she knew she was going to marry a white person because she was so tall.

Rita Louise Tuzon 29:31
So interesting. Juanita is very tall.

Kathleen Gutierrez 29:35
She felt very tall. And then when I took a photo with her, she said she felt at home because I'm so small. [Rita laughs]. She got very comfortable, but that's the, you know, but the pressure,

the stares, you know, they actually, they didn't feel she and Allen didn't feel as ostracized, as you know, maybe as bad as it could have been. Yeah, but certainly, there were moments, you know, even in their experience in San Francisco that were pretty questionable. But you know, I think that they were able to sort of thrive with that.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 30:02
Oh that's right Juanita lives in San Francisco.

Kathleen Gutierrez 30:03
But, you know, what a lot of what you're bringing up as well was sort of how she felt perceived to. And I think she says that her mother did a lot of work to also instill a lot of pride and to not let her doubt herself in any of that identity crisis that can happen when surrounded by people who do try to categorize you.

Rita Louise Tuzon 30:22
Right. I think, you know, and it's, it's, look, Juanita's mother, Virginia, who was, you know, [unknown], a friend of our mom, I think, to have the, it's, in a way, it's courageous to make that step at that time, right? When you're, you know, there's going to be a lot of pressure, and there's going to be a lot of stuff. And so I think like our mother, they come knowing they have to be equipped to try to help their children along the way. And, you know, for our mom, she, she was, she was a fantastic person, and she—her way of dealing with—because the interesting thing, and I and I always say this, when I give talks on— particularly now it's very salient in the world, is that, you know, there's a, there's a, there is a assumption that only people who are white are the only people who can be racist or have those thoughts. And that is not true, right? Obviously, we know that. And so the not doing what you're supposed to stay within your group, there's pressure from all those. [Coughing in the background] So for actually, for our mom, you know, she had instances where she was made to feel uncomfortable within the Fil—community, which she felt really a part of the Filipino community. But I think that there was, there was some of that, and she really helped, you know, me, too, by observing her on how she elegantly dealt, you know, with those things, but you know, I think that also happened, it wasn't just external, from people looking at you. And they used to ask around, you know, like, what, you know, what are they? You know, if when you don't look like your parent, and people experienced that now in biracial families. What are they? What's that? Are you—you know? [unintelligible] So, you know, for her? She, you know, she helped, I think like Virginia's mother did try to help in that way. And some of it was, you know, she, she, she, she got a lot of comments, because within a community that has—the good thing about the Filipino community is there is a lot of cultural pride in, you know, who we are, and and where you are. But all those little differences matter. You'll see someone who says, I'm Ilokano and you're Visayan and there's like, you're there, and you're there. And so even if you put a big hat on it, we're all part

of the, you know, the Filipino culture. But you know, within that there's different cultures of different subcultures, depending on where you grew up, and what things were. And so, you know, the people that we socialize with, I think we're primarily Ilokanos within the Filipino community. And it was, you know, some of them were people who were more accepted when you had, you know, a mixed marriage instead of two Filipino parents. That was part of it. And intentionally or unintentionally, there was some of that, you know, there was some of that comment, not just from people outside, but some people inside the community. I will give you one, you know, example, and it's an example of how my mom dealt with things where she felt better about it, you know, it was not confrontational in a way but we were at my— we were at our dad's funeral. And so by then, we had—he died in 1981, we both gone to college, I had just started law school and one of the, one of the [unknown] one of the ladies who were the manangs came up to my, my mom and said, you know, you know, I have to tell you, your kids have done so well, they're so smart. It's so surprising because they're only half Filipino. Right? And so that's that you know, that superiority where, you know, it's like, how can that be? And my aunt and mom, she just without missing a beat? She says, I know, isn't that wonderful? You would think they might be stupid because they're half white. But they're not. We're all so lucky. And you know, I thought about— she didn't. It was just her way of dealing with—was, she felt better because she said something. It went over the lady's head, because she probably agreed with it. But she, but it was not the time in place to have a confrontation. But she got a lot of that. That was the kind of comments that she got a lot of and so raising us in that environment, to feel accepted in every part of the community. Whichever community we're, we were in was a really important part of something she had to give us.

Kathleen Gutierrez 34:45
I say, yeah, no, I get that. I get that.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 34:49
And to piggyback on Rita's story. And I told her to tell this story because I would have gotten pissed off, but that is Virginia Sulay also Anglo, married to Max Sulay, Ilokano Filipino. Know that Virginia had to deal with the same shit that mom did. You can edit that. The same stuff. You know that Virginia had to deal with the same stuff that mom did, you know, the same kind of comments. Virginia was the only white woman in the—in the Filipino Women's Association of Watsonville. During that time, if you look at the pictures in the calendar and other archival photos that Roy has on the website, it's a bunch of Filipino ladies and Virginia Sulay.

Rita Louise Tuzon 35:40
And good for her. I mean, it's good [unknown].

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 35:44

She had to deal with that. And she dealt with it straight on, you know, and just was damnit, I'm part of this group, you know, and I'm gonna stand here or sit here in the front row with everybody else. Oh, so hats off to her. You know?

Kathleen Gutierrez 35:59
I, you know if it's okay. I'd love to ask a few more questions about your mom. You know how she ended up in the Bay Area. You know, what her family's migration history may have been to when she met your pops.

Rita Louise Tuzon 36:11
Sure. So she, she actually was born in Idaho [Modesto speaks in the background]. And then her family went, when she was very young, moved to San Francisco. During World War II. She grew up in San Francisco, she has an older and a younger sister, all three have now passed. But she was there. And then the family moved to the Arroyo Grande area. And then they ended up in the Mont—they ended up in the Monterey-Pacific Grove. My grandmother was in Pacific Grove. But my—that was after Mom had met Daddy and they went to Watsonville. So kind of like the rest of the family sort of followed to there. Okay, and then lived there. And, you know, this is a funny part of the story. So my mom's family being from Idaho, were apparently Mormon.

Kathleen Gutierrez 36:54
Like Juanita's family.

Rita Louise Tuzon 36:55
Like Juanita's family. Interesting, right? And, and so my, but my grandmother—was, she was not, she was not raised Mormon. It was it was her—she converted to marry—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 37:13
Like a generation or two prior to our maternal grandmother, our branch of the family ceased to practice Mormonism. But we do the rest of them [unintelligible].

Rita Louise Tuzon 37:26
Well, actually, the funny story is that—so grandma, so it's our—when I say Grandma, it's our grandmother, my mom's mom. So her mom broke with her—apparently her parents heard her dad they were they were of that—the reason they were in Idaho, it was the, it was the, the bigamist version of Mormonism, you know, where you have multiple wives. So that they were—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 37:32

Polygamous.

Rita Louise Tuzon 37:37
Polygamous. Thank you. Not bigamist. Well, it is that too. [Modesto speaks in the background]. Right. Yeah. So she married, the man she married, so my great grandmother, was Methodist. And she was excommunicated.

Kathleen Gutierrez 38:04
From the Methodist church?

Rita Louise Tuzon 38:05
No from the Mormons [Modesto speaks in the background] because she married those crazy Methodists. [Kathleen repeats in the background] A Methodist! So that's why they were not Mormon, actually, because her mother had married outside that religion but when she met my grandmother, who was not really practicing, but she converted, she married him, but they promptly didn't practice Mormonism. And they raised their kids in, in San Francisco. And then my mom spent one I think, like part of one year in Idaho when she was 16, which was enough for her and then she and that's what and then she met—she was, she was working in a restaurant. So she met him in a restaurant. She was— In Arroyo Grande.

Kathleen Gutierrez 38:44
In Arroyo Grande.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 38:45
They're—specifically the reason that Mom's family moved from Idaho to San Francisco during World War Two when mom was seven and Aunt Pat was I think 11. And Aunt Kathy wasn't born yet, was our maternal grandfather, George Craner was a painter and he found a lot of work painting ships in the shipyards of the Bay Area during World War Two. And then they just stayed in California.

Kathleen Gutierrez 39:15
I see.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 39:16
Except he eventually moved back to Idaho, got it and then moved back to San Francisco when Rita and I were in high school but—

Kathleen Gutierrez 39:25
And so your mother's family name is Craner.

Rita Louise Tuzon 39:27
C-R-A-N-E-R.

Kathleen Gutierrez 39:28
C-R-A-N-E-R. And then your mother's first name?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 39:32
Linda Ardell Tuzon. Is her name.

Rita Louise Tuzon 39:34
That's another thing. In Watsonville, She was known as Ardell. She worked at the elementary school. We went to Hall District which is out in Las Lomas. She worked as a teacher's aide there from when I was starting when I was in second grade. She worked there for 40 years and she became a reading resource specialist so she took the kids who were— everybody would it's a Title One school everyone is English is the same. It's all migrants. That just was our neighborhood and is still today. So she would take kids and bring them to reading level. And that and she just, she had a love of reading that she instilled in me. She made everything fun. And so the kids, it's hard because they were still migrant kids, right? And so the families would leave and they get them for three months, and then they leave and they give them at the end of the year. I see. So that's what she did. And that was her career. That's what she did.

Kathleen Gutierrez 40:25
I see. And so Modesto has stepped away. [Rita laughs]. But I'm sure if I asked some more questions that I mean—

Rita Louise Tuzon 40:32
I'm sure he can hear from wherever he is.

Kathleen Gutierrez 40:35
So how did your your parents meet? [Modesto shows Kathleen a photograph of Linda Ardell Tuzon]. Oh, what a lovely photo.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 40:40
This photo was taken on Alaska cruise vacation that she and our stepfather Sam went on. This is the photo that we used for the program for her memorial service. And this is also the photo that attached to the plaque that hangs in the Wats— in the Hall School Library, which is now the Linda Ardell Tuzon Memorial Library.

Kathleen Gutierrez 41:03
Oh, how nice. [unintelligible speaking in the background]. Was that something that you had, you know, planned in honor of her?

Rita Louise Tuzon 41:13
Well, you know, it's something that, that the school proposed, because she was just beloved. And, and, and, and we, you know, we really support the school, we both went to that school, you know, and we know what the community is. And so they, you know, they proposed, they were trying to find a way to really honor her. And they actually suggested that. And so then we went with that, and it had to go to the city council. And it's just, it's great. There's a plaque there. And then the librarian who's still there was the girl who lived up the street. She's in between our ages, my brother and I, she lived up the street on the corner, and she's the librarian, and she's loved my mom. And so she still keeps that alive, which is great. She tells the kids about her.

Kathleen Gutierrez 41:55
That's great. Yeah. And so I'd love to know, I know, I think we got your dad's birthday. And your mom's birthday?

Rita Louise Tuzon 42:02
June 11, 1937.

Kathleen Gutierrez 42:05
1937. So she was 30 years, maybe younger than your father?

Rita Louise Tuzon 42:09
She was 30 years younger. And it was really, it was interesting, because I think when you find in our generation, there were a lot of kids who have a dad, like the Madaloras who was a lot older than their mom, because for the very reasons we talked about because of, because of immigration, because of the laws in terms of who you could and couldn't marry or and because of the pressure for marrying outside of your race.

Kathleen Gutierrez 42:35
Yeah. Did they ever talk about how they first met what that encounter was like?

Rita Louise Tuzon 42:41
Just Well, it was—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 42:43

Just that mom worked at a diner, restaurant, whatever, in, in Arroyo Grande, that my dad frequented. And I, there was some sort of like, almost like a karaoke kind of thing going on. And my dad would play mandolin and mom was a singer, and she would sing. And there were other people involved, too, that weren't our parents, you know, in terms of musicians. And this was in Arroyo Grande. So I don't know how much music played a part in their initial connection. But it continued to be a part of both their lives throughout and that's and they instilled that love of music in us. We were both in the Watsonville High School and, and played various instruments over the years and then I ultimately became a stage and wildly unsuccessful stage actor in the Bay Area. Actually, I was pretty successful, I was just not very well compensated. And, and, and I sing and that's the only thing I still do. And I still got the pipes frankly at the age of 65. But and, Rita sings as well and she played clarinet and other stuff and so that love of music came from our parents, but also that love of knowledge. Neither of them were particularly well educated, especially our father. He only went as far as seventh grade in the Philippines. But he read constantly he would come home from work all covered with dust from driving tractor for 14 hours, take a shower, sit down, read the paper, read a book. You know, Mom taught Rita and I to read before we started kindergarten, gave us a head start on all the other kids that we never relinquished to this day. You know, so and it's a wonder that we're—it's amazing. We're so smart because we're half-white. [Laughter and joking in the background]

Rita Louise Tuzon 44:52
See that's our way of dealing with that.

Kathleen Gutierrez 45:01
So how much longer after your parents first met that they got married? So I know they got married in Mexico, was that maybe within the year?

Rita Louise Tuzon 45:08
They got married in 19—they got married in 1955. He was born in 1956. No, they got married 1954. I don't know, when they met. When did they meet?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 45:20
Again, just like his age upon immigrating from the Philippines, the exact year and relative ages of our parents is a open question. Um, well, you were born in '56. I was born in '56. And—

Rita Louise Tuzon 45:37
I think they said they got married in '54. But I think they got married in '55. Because I think that she was probably—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 45:44
I was already a bun in the oven. When they got married. Yeah, we think that is the case. But they changed their dates to make it seem like I wasn't conceived out of wedlock.

Rita Louise Tuzon 45:53
So we— so that's.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 45:56
So aside from that it was the 30 year age difference. She was 17. He was 47. Right? Yeah, no, you do that now. And you go to jail. You know, but this was the early 50s. It was but it was frowned upon then. But now it's like, really, you know?

Rita Louise Tuzon 46:09
She says she hadn't gotten her— she didn't finish her high school education. So she went in, she got her GED.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 46:17
She got a GED before starting her career. 40 year career as a reading specialist at the Hall School.

Kathleen Gutierrez 46:22
Right. Right. Hmm, okay.

Rita Louise Tuzon 46:26
So to them education was really important. It was important. And so that was the best. Yeah.

Kathleen Gutierrez 46:30
And so how did her parents take the interracial marriage?

Rita Louise Tuzon 46:34
Well, I, you know, the, hence the going to the Philippines—going to the Mexico part. I think at first it wasn't the inter— I think it was not the interracial. It was the age.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 46:42
The age difference was a bigger deal to them [Rita speaks in the background]. It was the age difference.

Rita Louise Tuzon 46:45

But they loved him, I mean, within—so it's like they loved him. They, everybody loved our dad, like he was such a part of the family. There was never an issue after that. And our home was sort of the stable home for all the cousins and everybody coming there. They all wanted to be with our family, with our parents because they were so warm. And so I think it was, he was very accepted. He was actually a role model for a lot of the cousins on the Caucasion side.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 47:12
And still this day for some of our cousins even though he's been dead for 40 years.

Rita Louise Tuzon 47:15
One of our cousins—one of our cousins who, who had kind of a tough, you know, he, he was he was the boy who was Lanny's age. And it was, you know, he had kind of a tough childhood and my other [unknown] and he was so comfortable at our house. He actually, he ended up joining the Navy, he posted to the Philippines, he married a woman who was Filipina. He came back and he talked about how that culture and that was so important to us because of his relationship with, with our dad.

Kathleen Gutierrez 47:17
And this is your Caucasian cousin?

Rita Louise Tuzon 47:21
Yeah, yeah

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 47:21
He's six months younger than I am.

Rita Louise Tuzon 47:29
So it became like that to him was, you know, getting to know our dad, that was, it was, it was it really, you know, for his mindset, it changed his mindset, it actually became, he was, you know, really important to him. I think he's important to, the two of them are important to all of our cousins on the Caucasian side. So at the time, not thrilled about the marriage, not thrilled about the age difference, you know, and certainly, as Virginia's, you know, mother alluded to knowing it's going to be a tough road to hoe with an interracial marriage. Right? Yeah, that also makes it tough.

Kathleen Gutierrez 48:20
I see.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 48:20

I think that, listen, I think when you were in Watsonville, it wasn't as big of a deal because we had other friends who had the same thing. And, and then when you left, you realize like people— but then, you know, I came through that because I think this is an important part of our heritage, which is, why was that the case? Why was it that, you know, and the why is important and educating people too. One thing that helped warm up grandma, mom's mom, too was the birth of her first grandson. I'm number three, I have two female cousins that are older than I. Those are the first two surviving children of mom's older sister Aunt Pat. And I'm number three. So it was grandma's first grandson. And, but I think that even more so is like Rita said, Our dad was such a wonderful guy. How could you not like him? You know, so, but it wasn't so much the racial difference as the age difference which is not surprising. I am hesitant to tell people about it, depending upon who they are, in the circumstances, because their eyebrows go out. Well, your father was 30 years older and your mom?

Kathleen Gutierrez 49:29
Sure. Yeah, absolutely. And so, you know, kind of want to go to what you had brought up earlier much, much earlier in the conversation then about sort of growing up, not in Watsonville.

Rita Louise Tuzon 49:44
Born in Watsonville, but growing up in and around the Watsonville environment.

Kathleen Gutierrez 49:48
And then what was like to see your parents get to work? I mean, it sounds like your father was also on the road for a good portion of the year.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 49:56
No.

Kathleen Gutierrez 49:57
Okay.

Rita Louise Tuzon 49:58
He stopped when he had kids.

Kathleen Gutierrez 50:00
I see. Okay.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 50:02
When, when, basically when I was born, he stopped chasing the crops up and down—

Rita Louise Tuzon 50:09
and chasing the music.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 50:11
—coast and settled into Watsonville and just put his nose to the grindstone and was a farm worker.

Rita Louise Tuzon 50:18
He was a tractor driver. Tractor. Yeah.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 50:22
More elite than being down on the ground.

Rita Louise Tuzon 50:25
It's really elite because you're out there when the crop dusters dust you with all of the pesticides.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 50:29
Well that happens too. I got, I got sprayed a couple times myself because I worked out there a bit— upon occasion. But he didn't, he didn't travel or chase the crops or move from rural to urban or whatever once we came along. We were in Watsonville.

Rita Louise Tuzon 50:46
So we, they started out, he and he and mom started out and they were, they were farming sugar peas, you know, snow peas on land that our Uncle Lazo had so that's what when I was born, when he was born, that's what they were doing. And then he ended up taking a job for what was Sears Company, then there were smaller agriculture companies before they were all, because, became Giant, Driscoll. and you know, like the five companies that are now. And so he worked there for, for the rest of— and then it became Sears Schumann. The two of them went together. He worked there for the rest of his life. He worked for Sears Schumann driving tractor in the lettuce, he worked in the lettuce

Kathleen Gutierrez 50:47
In the lettuce.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 50:58
Occasionally other crops like cauliflower and what not, but mostly mostly lettuce.

Kathleen Gutierrez 51:33
I see. Okay, so this is distinct. So for instance, from Juanita's experience for her father was still kind of part of the migrant labor that was going up and down through California. And so your father stayed in place?

Rita Louise Tuzon 51:44
He did. And so what did that mean? It meant that in the offseason, when others were traveling, he was there. So we had a really, in that sense, we had it, we'd have very much money, but we had a very stable home.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 51:54
And that's when he had time to play his mandolin. When, when, because when the fields are muddy, you can't drive a tractor in them. So, and prior to the unionization of farm workers, he was just simply unemployed during the offseason. No unemployment. And then Cesar Chavez came along, forced the elections. Sears brothers who he worked for at the time, before the merger was Schumann Farms. The employees of Sears brothers voted and elected to become Teamsters, not UFW, but they were unionized. Suddenly higher wages, health care benefits, unemployment—eligibility for unemployment insurance. Thank you Cesar Chavez, you know. So prior to that, he would just like sit and look up out the window and play his mandoline during the offseason and we would eat the same cheap meals night after, night after, night like that. God awful. It was like little diced pork, diced potatoes, garbanzo beans and—

Rita Louise Tuzon 53:05
The ham hock. Well, you know, it's really interesting because of course, mom, so mom worked the school year, and our dad worked the farming year, so there was never a time that they were both off. There was never a time our family never took, besides not having any money, we never took a family vacation.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 53:22
We never went anywhere. The only thing I ever saw Yosemite until I was 27 years old. I'd never set foot out of California until I was 30.

Rita Louise Tuzon 53:34
So we went we went for Christmas up to my aunt's in Sonoma and drive up and drive back because they—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 53:39
And that was our big trip.

Rita Louise Tuzon 53:40
It was a big trip.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 53:41
150 miles each way.

Rita Louise Tuzon 53:43
But, you know, that was, they were working. They were very hard workers but they had a really good sense of community both of them and one of the things that they always instilled in us was, you know, it, you know, no matter how little we have, there's somebody who has less so there's always someone that you can we can help/

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 54:00
That was like one of Mom's mantras.

Kathleen Gutierrez 54:02
I see

Rita Louise Tuzon 54:03
And, and you know we're— we're driving to town. She sees, you know, a lady standing over with her little kid, we live five miles out of town so and she'd pull over and say you know, do you want, you want, let me give you a ride. We would, every, all the neighbors would exchange produce like you would always give stuff to the neighbors. And it was like that's really important instilling in, in, in kids that set a bigger sense of community and a bigger sense of gratitude for what you have no matter what it is. And what I learned what that is, and going through you know college and law school, is I can live on nothing. I can live on the can of beans and the thing of rice and tortilla and eat it all week and I could do that 52 weeks of the year if I need to, right? And it's something that that teaches you because you know that you can survive, right? And so they were very good at making—we had a comfortable home. Our cousins felt good there, but they didn't have a lot of money and it just shows you didn't need a lot of money to have, you know, we had both of our parents there all year. We were really lucky compared to some of our friends, you know, where they did have to follow the crops.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 55:05
Or they simply weren't around, had nothing to do with following crops, it had to do with daddy doesn't live with us anymore or whatever, you know, so they were single parent homes. We were not just amongst the community, but amongst our own family on mom's side. That's part of why our house was considered a safe haven by our cousins and a lot of our school friends

who weren't family. Because both our parents were there. And they were always there. Until, until they died.

Rita Louise Tuzon 55:44
They were welcoming.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 55:45
They were very, they were very welcoming, very inclusive, almost, almost excessively. In some cases, it's like, well—

Rita Louise Tuzon 55:52
Yeah, there are the times where the friends would go visit them instead of us. Or there were times where I would have someone who like, you know, someone who has a boyfriend, and then they're not and I come home, and they're visiting. They're visiting my family, and it's really awkward.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 56:04
So it's our friends and in her case and also with me, there was a couple of ex-girlfriends who'd maintain contact with my mother, you know, and later it's like, so it's like, wow, you know, begone.

Kathleen Gutierrez 56:20
So, sounds like, so it sounds like home was a center in many ways for your family, for the community as well, you know, and, and so I'm curious, then, I mean, we're seeing also a lot of other manong, kind of manong moving through your home? Coming through regularly? Do you remember them in your childhood?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 56:38
Oh, very much so.

Rita Louise Tuzon 56:39
Like, particularly, besides our uncles, the Ilokanos because we would eavesdrop, and because it's kind of Spanish based, we could sort of figure out a lot of that. And then there would be the words that were invented, because it was something like washing machine, but they didn't have that. So you'd like Oh! they're talking about this! And, and so our uncles would come through my dad, our dad's friends, some of his, then later it was his music friends. Right. Absolutely. And our—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 57:04

Yeah, it wasn't just our uncles, or, you know, other members of the community too. And like she said about the sharing produce stuff. It was like, you know, they would drop by and bring us "pish" in a bucket. [Laughing and joking in the background]. One time, one time, one of my white friends, Ernie [Unknown] was at the house and the doorbell rang. And he answered the door and comes back and he's got a bucket. And he brings it into the kitchen, hands it to my mom. She says, What's that? And he says, It's "pish." Because he answered the door and Big Uncle is standing there and he goes "pish!" And hands him the bucket and then he gets in his pickup truck and goes back home, you know, didn't even come in the house. But he brought fish.

Kathleen Gutierrez 57:45
A lot of folks from moving through.

Rita Louise Tuzon 57:47
Yes.

Kathleen Gutierrez 57:47
Did your, did your dad share stories too? I mean of his time from 1927, when he first arrived up until you were—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 57:55
Selectively shared stories.

Kathleen Gutierrez 57:57
Right, selectively shared stories. Right. And so, you know, a lot of this project two is trying to recover a lot of that history. Yeah. Specifically around the riots. Yeah. I mean, was that something that was also selectively shared?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 58:10
I had to pry it out of them. But once I pried the jar open, you know, it flowed quite well.

Rita Louise Tuzon 58:16
Okay. This was not something that was shared with me. It was, it was your project so—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 58:20
It was when I was interviewing him for that paper that I wrote and haven't found yet. Um, he was, as we discussed, he was a musician. He was in the orchestra at that dance hall at Sunset Beach where the riot occurred. I don't know if he was there that night. But he was occasionally a member of that orchestra, where the Filipino manongs would dance with the white women

and he got the white dudes in town all worked up and they had a riot and wound up shooting Fermin Tobera through the heart while he was asleep in his bed in the bunkhouse at a farm labor camp. You know, he knew Fermin Tobera. They weren't close pals, but he knew— all Filipinos who were in Watsonville in 1930 knew each other, you know, but so we talked about the riots and in general through the streets of Watsonville, and also at the dance hall and the dance hall in particular and his acquaintance with Fermin Tobera, because, you know, it's not like they were best pals or whatever, but they knew each other. But it, and there, there are other— other things that he would selectively talk about.

Kathleen Gutierrez 59:46
Did he ever describe Fermin Tobera?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 59:49
No, he just like, yeah, he knew him and that and this happened, you know, um, but in terms of describing him in detail, like what he looked like or what kind of a guy he was or you know that none of that.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:00:04
None of that? Did you talk about the riots with you when you were talking on that paper?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:00:07
It's not something that he talked about until I asked him?

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:00:10
Sure. Yeah,

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:00:11
I asked him for the purpose of doing research on this paper that I wrote, When I was a sophomore at Cal.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:00:17
Were you surprised to learn that he had that connectivity because you never heard much about it?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:00:18
I was very surprised to learn about it, because I hadn't really heard about it's not like they taught it in US history at Watsonville High School, you know. And it wasn't, it wasn't that it was sugar coated, or brushed under the rug, it just wasn't a topic of discussion. So when I became aware of it, and decided to have it be, not the focus, but a key part of the, this paper that I

wrote for that ethnic studies class at Berkeley, I started digging into it and— Wow, Watsonville 1930s. I bet my dad was there! And so I came home one weekend and asked him about it. And he's all yeah, I was there. I know about it. Do you want to talk about it? You know, so he wasn't unwilling to talk about it. But it wasn't something that he just brought up because to him, it wasn't relevant—in 1976.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:01:19
I think just like in the, in the Japanese community, there is a— when you want to establish yourself as an American, that was a really, really important, you know, part for all of them. It's to prove your, your American-ness, you know, I became a citizen, I'm here. Yeah, those are really hurtful, painful, terrible things that happen. And it's almost like, you know, a rejection, and you don't really want to as a parent, I think in that time, the sharing with your kids of, you know, you're part of a culture that was we were rejected, and we were chased and we were killed. Is not what parents then did, right?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:01:57
No.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:01:57
And, and as we see from today, that doesn't, that doesn't make it go away. As a matter of fact, sharing history is how you actually open things up for better communication moving forward. But that's not what our parents' generations felt.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:02:11
No, no, it, it wasn't that they were hiding it from us, the history. And so much as they were shielding us from it. Yeah, there's a big difference. In those two words. They were protecting us from this, from knowledge of this unpleasant history. So I knew nothing about it until I stumbled across it, while researching that paper. I had made the big overall decision of well, I have to write a paper for this ethnic studies class might as well write it about Filipinos, you know, and then it, and it really was an eye opener for me. Because it wasn't something I knew about prior to that. I hadn't learned about it at Watsonville High. I had learned it, heard about it from my dad or any of our uncles or anything, but it did happen. And now this project is bringing it to light. And I'm 65 years old now, you know, so I wrote this paper 40 years ago, you know, so its—

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:03:27
That's one of the things I love about Roy's selection of the, you know, which he talks about, this being called the Tobera Project to really capture, you know, the history of the community because it puts, it centers that story as an important part of it, so that we don't, you know,

people ask about it, where does the name come from? And I, and I think, you know, there's lots of parts of the story of those men who came here and why they came here and their history and their history in Watsonville that is interesting and, and it's different than subsequent immigration. But, particularly today with the racial reckoning that has been happening over the, you know, over the past year in many areas, particularly with the, you know, the focus on the hate crimes that have been happening against Asian American Pacific Islanders of all types and that have been happening but people didn't speak about again shielding not— right? It's really an important aspect. When I read articles and if you read any article today you know, CNN whoever, they have their stock information where they go back when they're writing it, you know, a stop Asian hate or AAPI hate article, and they'll go through the Chinese came and then the [unintelligible] you know, there was this, and, and this is a missing element, and it's from so long ago, and it's an important part of the bigger picture and that's why I really appreciate, you know, Roy, focusing on that as part of the bigger picture of— of the community's history and the Asian American Pacific Islander communities' history and history in California in particular.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:05:04
Right, right. It is something that you're right, sometimes you can get glossed over in the simplification of that history or news pieces are covering this presently, because it's such an important topic, or at least it's surfaced in a more public way. Yeah. You were mentioning that you maybe didn't hear these stories, because gender played a role. I'm curious about that. Because Juanita said the same thing, a little bit.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:05:26
Yeah, you know—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:05:27
Absolutely.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:05:28
Look, I think, I think there are things that our dad probably—because like her, you know, our histories coming through, our Philippine histories coming through the dad's side, right, and then those things. So you know, we heard stuff from our mom, both of us from our, their shared history from them, they were together. But I think that, you know, there are, there are their gender stereotypes because of generationally for those, you know, for those folks, and, and I'm going to tell the story that probably makes my brother crazy, but I love this story, because it really tells— we were growing up we were, we were we were told education is a key, you're an American. In America, you got to get a good education. And in America, you can be anything you want to be. And then Daddy would always say, you know, you can be, I'm pointing at my

brother, you can be the President of the United States. And he would in the same referee saying you can be anything and he would point at me and go and you can be Miss America. Right? I mean, you're laughing, but it is that because—

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:06:26
Sorry recorder, you can't pick up my laughing. Trying to keep this under wraps.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:06:27
That was, that was the apex, right? That was kind of like, oh, that's what you could be and, and so, and so fast forward to Lanny goes to Berkeley, he majored in theater, he's acting at that time, he's he's on stage, and—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:06:44
I was Miss America and she had a much more likely chance of becoming President.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:06:49
And I just started law school. And it was about six weeks before he passed away. And I was visiting, and he said, you know what, I want to tell you something, I was wrong all those years. He said that, he said that. At that age, he said, you could become the president United States. And then because he had a wicked sense of humor, he says, and maybe your your brother's gonna become Miss America. So it was just one of those moments to see full circle. There were a couple other things like that, to see, you know, he was able to progress beyond where he was in terms of what you know, when he was born and the generation he was born to be able to see that and to see that for a girl and a woman was really, really important and validating for me, that he could see that. You know, I would expect my mom to see it. I would expect to see women in, you know, see that. And it was believe me, when I became a lawyer and wasn't— I was the only woman in many courtrooms in that time and it's not that long ago. So it was not something that was generally accepted. So it was really, it was funny. It's, you know, I dined out on that story. It was funny.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:06:54
I was wondering what story you're going to go with.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:07:19
It was really, was really meaningful. But another way in which he, he, I think was able to, you know, evolve and really see things that, that I really appreciated. Lanny didn't know this because it was when I was in high school. He was already in college. You know, the Filipino community is very strong in community associations. So the Watsonville Community, Fil Visayan, those communities are very strong. And when I was a senior, there were three kids

who were Filipino. You know, one was full Filipino, the others were, there were four of us two were full Filipino, and two of us were half or halfbreed are often called. But we were all in like the top of the class graduating. And so the Filipino community was going to give a, it was $100. But $100 was—it was, it was the recognition, a scholarship to each of us, except they would not give it to one of the students, because her family was not, they were not members of the organizations. And they had, their dad had come over a little bit later. He was not one of the manongs. But they weren't you know, they had a bunch of kids, they were really, really bright. And they could have really used the money. And they said, no, we're not going to do it because they're not part of our group. And so, so Daddy went to his friends who were the manongs, the men, and he got a bunch of them to donate. And they made up something called the Filipino Pioneers Scholarship and they gave this person a scholarship which she, you know, put her on an even setting with everyone else and was appropriate. And for him to see that recognize, you know, kind of the injustice in it and recognize the community was bigger and kind of go against some of the —

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:08:22
And then to take action upon that recognition.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:09:52
What year would that've been?

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:09:53
1977.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:09:56
Because she was class of '77.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:09:58
And what Filipino organization had it been?

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:10:00
The Filipino Community Association.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:10:02
I see. Okay. And your dad had been a part of that?

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:10:05
Yeah.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:10:06
I see. And this was a non member. Yeah. Was she Bisaya or was she Visayan?

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:10:11
They, you know, that's a good question. They were, they were full. And the two parents had immigrated together. You know, later.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:10:18
I think they were from Metro Manila.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:10:19
I think. Maybe they were Tagalog.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:10:22
Yeah. Well, they were definitely not Ilokano.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:10:25
I think they were later immigrants from Metro Manila, which is sort of how the pattern went.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:10:31
They were, they were and the kids were all, I mean, they've all like done really well.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:10:38
We could name names, but we're not going to.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:10:40
Well, you know, I wouldn't name names. I mean, they've been very successful, but they, but it's just like, you know, I wouldn't do that. But I think the funny part, then after that is that year in the, because Watsonville, has had a little parade every fourth of July, and the band would march and they have floats. And so the Filipino community association had a float. And so our dad with this little band was going to play on it. So they said, Oh, that's good. And they designed it. And then one of the manangs decided that we would have to be on the float, because if we got, if we got a scholarship, we had to be on the float. We're like, oh, okay. And then we said, well, if we were on the float, she's on the float. So we—we were on the float, and then the boy didn't have to be on the float. So the boy didn't have to. So there was another gender thing where we all had to, then they told us, we had to wear gowns, and we arrived at the manangs house, and she's giving us tiaras and white gloves. And I think I've destroyed all those pictures by now. But that's one of those things where you're like, really, and I will never forget riding on the float down Main Street, Daddy's playing with the band. Everybody's lining

the street, we're told, you know, we have to wave at people. My brother is working that day at the Daylite Market. And he comes out and he see and the sight of him laughing hysterically at me for having to do that was just one of those—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:12:00
I wasn't in the parade. I wasn't in Watsonville High School marching band anymore. But I was home for the summer from Berkeley to work at Daylite Market. Okay, which I, you're not only not from Watsonville, but you're too young. But Daylite Market was like a Watsonville institution 235 Main Street, the best meat in town.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:12:22
So, so yeah, so we were all very compliant. We did what we were told to do. And it was, you know, cultural. We were supposed to do it. And so we did it. But then we had the rude awakening when we're about to get on the float. They're like, they're like, oh, no, we oh, we are putting the tiara on your head—like, no, please. And you know, I would have put that tiarra on in a heartbeat because you know I was Miss America. [Laughing].

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:12:46
I think you know, I'm actually surprised because we're almost hitting 12. I'm wondering if you are feeling open to having this conversation again when I come back in late June?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:12:59
Absolutely. Or more than that, you know. Now and now that you have read his email or phone number as well as mine. You know, it. We can set, stay in contact with eachother set that up, you know, and there, we might find ourselves up there. Yeah. as well.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:13:32
Do you live in Santa Cruz?

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:13:33
I live in Oakland. I'll be moving to Santa Cruz in 2022.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:13:36
You commute from Oakland to UCSC?

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:13:39
You know, it's still remote. So I haven't had to commute just yet. But well, we can set up for late June, you know, since I'll be around, maybe if you know, early enough to sort of schedule

another Sunday date. But, you know, one angle that might be really interesting, too, is if your kids are around. I mean, talk about intergenerational knowledge.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:14:00
Well I don't have any kids. I the reason I moved to LA is I get have gotten vicarious parental fulfillment via my sister's now adult kids,

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:14:13
I wouldn't call just turned 19 adult. But okay, or 20. But the boy like—

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:14:19
I mean, because for our next conversation it might be nice to talk a little bit more about your childhood growing up, living in, around— living in around Watsonville. You know, and it might actually be pretty meaningful for them to hear it too.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:14:33
They never knew their biological grandfather. He died in 1981. And Jared wasn't born until '98 and Sophia in 2002. Their grandfather was our Japanese stepfather. That's the only grandfather that they've known.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:14:53
But what's really interesting for both of them and this is the kind of the point in the intergenerational is because— because my husband is white. And so they are one quarter Filipino and they are 100% both identify as Asian American. 100%. And yeah, I know, I know. And my and my daughter, Sophia. They used to call her Snow White. She's like, she's so white. And yeah, she's like, She's ready. She's ready to fight you. If you say she's not Asian American, she's like, what do you mean? I'm not, you know, that is their identity. [Indistinct speaking in the background] And she is, she's almost 5'9. She's very fair. She's a soccer player. She plays for Johns Hopkins. She just started there. She actually got to go.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:15:40
Under this is a Hopkins shirt.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:15:43
But what's been really good for her is, you know, I added identifying with that history and, and, you know, and I think she hasn't had it's very nascent for her in terms of experiencing it in an academic way, for Jared, who, who just turned 23. He is, and he's a debater. He just won the national championship. They had to do it virtually.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:16:09
But gosh, I used to do forensics too. Oh my god, that was my thing.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:16:13
Yeah. When it's your thing. It's like you're thing, right. Yeah. So this was his thing. It was his thing in high school, then it became his thing in college and he was supposed to go to the nationals. He'd been before and then COVID happened they didn't do it. And so they told all the kids who would have been able to do it, if you can qualify again, you can, you can do it. We're going to do it virtually. They did it a few weeks ago. So in the course of the— because the style of debate that he does, you prepare in-depth case studies like research, whatever, right put it together. And he had a number like he would tell you that he did a number on the Philippines on, on trade and global trade, on, you know, on Marcos, and then they just did one with his partner who is Japanese American on internment camps, and the no, no questions. And it was, it's like, it's, that is a way that he has kind of connected with the history. He reads all the time. And I think it would be really interesting for him to hear it.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:17:09
He's in the building. But he is managing the dogs, right? But where Sophia is involved more.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:17:15
She'll be back.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:17:16
She'll, she'll be home for the summer, a week, we asked. She'll be in and out.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:17:20
And I'm happy to bring if they're interested even on being recorded as part of the conversation, you know, to keep it more dynamic. I think that's the beauty of oral history. We don't really need to stick to a particular structure. Yeah, we can open it up to them, you know, and to have that conversation continue. So we can wrap up, I'd love to take some photographs, and then we can stop the tape and then you know, pick up and then maybe we'll see if there's like a Sunday again, when I'm down here. Yeah, that'd be great.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:17:48
I mean, and we could do it a third time too, it if we need. [Laughing in the background]. Or you can come to her house in Carmel Highlands for Thanksgiving, or whatever.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:18:00
Do you vacation there?

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:18:01
Well what happened— well, we I actually, we still have our family home in Las Lomas and the lady who lived with my mom, who was a teacher after my dad died, she continued living with her so she would not be allowed. And then when mom was ill, she was very concerned about Mary, who had also had some health problems. And she just and we said, we will, she can live there as long as she needs to live there. So we've always maintained the house. Lanny talks about retiring there, you know.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:18:26
First thing we did, was when after mom passed, well, not the first thing, but we were there in the house. And it was Mary's house too. And when we went to Mary and said we're not selling this house. We don't need the money, just we have a sentimental attachment to this house. Its the house we grew up in and this is your home until, if and when you no longer needed or wanted. And that is where— and that's a promise we will be keeping.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:19:02
And we—so Rick and I our family had gotten a place in, in Park City in Utah. So we would take the kids which is great. And then Rick realized it's too long to drive with all of his many rescue dogs like you did it once like oh my gosh, that was a nightmare. So this was my earthquake planning like we're on the other side of that we could go there when kids were younger. So we ended up selling that house and we bought a place up there, so which is where Rick is right now driving home from. So we can drive the five hours to go up.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:19:31
And our maternal grandmother, mom's mom lived in Pacific Grove for decades and aunts lived there at various times as well. And Kathy graduated from Pacific Grove High.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:19:49
So like you coming home like this is home you know it's so for us that whole area is home and you know would we have bought a house there at that time if we had you know my mom's house, we would be staying there? Maybe not because we could stay at mom's house. But Mary, that's Mary's house and Mary's living there now. So now we're able— I feel good because the kids, particularly Jared is connected to Watsonville. He really likes it. He was very close to his step grandfather, who was his grandfather. And so I like being able to go up there and spend the time. Now it's been recent, and it's been COVID, ao I think this summer, we'll be able to spend more time and they can experience more.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:20:25

Lovely, great.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:20:26
So the point being is that occasionally we are up there.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:20:33
Okay, great.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:20:34
We with me— with Uncle tagging along. Did our last two Thanksgivings at the Carmel house, we most likely will this year, I would presume. So sometimes we're up there and pre-COVID We were up there together, or separately more frequently. Sadly, often for our funeral. But well, we haven't been to a funeral during the pandemic, because that's been one of the worst sort of super spreader events of family gatherings like weddings and funerals and birthdays and bar mitzvahs and christenings and whatnot. So, point being sometimes we're up to here, okay. And sometimes you're down here so we can do this a second time, a third time.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:21:19
You know, like I said, you're gonna be moving in.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:21:23
You can interview me on my deathbed.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:21:26
My brother's best friend is just around here. He and his partner work at UCLA and so yeah, and so that it's so great that he could spend the morning. And actually because my brother and I are so close too, I was wondering if after you know he comes to pick me up if we can all take a selfie together fine. It'd just be so fun.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:21:43
Yeah, yes, yes.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:21:45
He's just around anyhow, I'm gonna turn off the recorder.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:21:47
Okay.

Modesto Orlando and Rita Louise Tuzon interviewed by Kathleen "Kat" Cruz Gutierrez
Part 2 of 2

Speakers: Modesto Orlando Tuzon, Rita Louise Tuzon, Kathleen "Kat" Cruz Gutierrez

Date: June 28, 2021

Scope and Contents: In this interview, originally recorded in-person, Modesto Orlando Tuzon and Rita Louise Tuzon speak with Watsonville is in the Heart team member, Dr. Kathleen "Kat" Cruz Gutierrez. Modesto Orlando and Rita discuss their mother, Linda Ardell Tuzon's integration into the Filipino community and culture through food and music as well as her feelings of exclusion from the Filipino community as a white woman. Modesto Orlando and Rita also discuss their father, Modesto Tuzon's band, the genres of music he played, and the Filipino songs they learned to sing as children. Additionally, they speak about Modesto Tuzon's farm labor and the families' exposure to dangerous agricultural pesticides. Finally, they reflect on community silences surrounding the 1930s Watsonville Race Riots; their fathers' and other manongs' opinions of the United Farm Workers (UFW) movement; and undocumented migrants who worked in Pajaro Valley fields alongside Filipinos.

Kathleen Gutierrez 00:00
All right, so we're back on tape. It is June 27, 2021. We're at the Tuzon-Stone household in Los Angeles, California. And I'm here with Rita and Modesto Tuzon again. So thank you for agreeing to another interview. Well, you know, we can jump right in, if you feel comfortable, maybe talking a little bit about your mom. You know, based on our last conversation, you shared how she participated in a lot of community events. I understand she wasn't part of the Women's Club in Watsonville. But can you talk a little bit more about how she integrated with the community, what that looked like?

Rita Louise Tuzon 00:13
Sure, um, you know, I think there's a difference from when we were younger, and when we were older. And, and when we were younger, I think all of our families were more connected in terms of the manong families by, mostly by, you know, our blood relatives, right. So the DeOcampos and the Fuertes who, actually I don't think we're blood relatives, but they were they were, they were Ilokanos. And they were, they were, we were always together, they had boys who were my brother's age and my age. So we, that we were together a lot. And I think those sort of family based things we were with, we were together a lot with, with my mom being a part of that. My dad taught her how to make all the Filipino dishes. So she was very good at making those so she could cook all the Filipino dishes. And I think it was the, you know, it was sort of family.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 00:31
Her adobo was the best.

Rita Louise Tuzon 00:43
Everybody says that. What made it the best?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 01:18
The vinegar.

Kathleen Gutierrez 01:32
What kind of vinegar? Was it—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 01:34
White vinegar or apple cider vinegar. You definitely don't want to use a flavored vinegar like balsamic [Rita reacts in the background] because it just changes the whole, you know. But yeah, I mean, um, I don't know. But I admit, I'm biased. But I've had a lot of other people tell me your mom made the best adobo. And our cousin on our white side of our family, Johnny, went to join the Navy and went to the Philippines married Filipino woman, Amy, they're still together. And he had some of my Adobo a few years ago, and he whispered to me, this is better than Amy's. It tastes just like Aunt Ardell's.

Kathleen Gutierrez 02:15
So you're making your mom's recipe?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 02:19
Well, there was never a written down recipe. But you know, eyeballing. Eyeballing the relative amounts of the ingredients

Kathleen Gutierrez 02:29
So you remember your dad teaching your mom Filipina recipes?

Rita Louise Tuzon 02:33
You know, it's funny, she learned how to make—she learned how to make them and sometimes he would, you know, come in and say—but then he'd bring home, because he loved to go—he would fishing and he'd bring home like random stuff. Because he had a crab pot. And I will never forget when he brought home, in his crab pot, he caught a baby octopus. He was in there and comes in—[Modesto reacts in the background] the baby octopus, and then he goes like cook it. He tells you just like cook it. She goes well, how can we? It was still

alive like with its little arms. And so he goes just put, you know, make a pot of boiling water, throw it in. I'm taking a shower. In the kitchen and she's— you're freaked out by those things but she's, she's game. All these crazy things that Filipinos eat that she would, you know—So she takes it she puts in the pot, she puts a lid on and breathes a sigh of relief, and then boom little arms start coming [laughs] knocks the lid off— [Indistinct talking and laughing in the background]. It just one of those like crazy— like you cook what you catch and just let, you know, he didn't give her any—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 03:40
And octopus keeps lifting the lid up was like— you're not old enough to remember this, but there was a guy named Senor Wences way back when, he used to be on The Ed Sullivan Show a lot. And one of his key routines was puppets, you know, like—and one was in a box [Modesto impersonates Senor Wences] "close the box, close the box." And so the octopus keeps, like opening the box. But mom learned how to cook a lot of stuff that she wouldn't eat herself. And that was one them. Hell, I won't even eat octopus. I don't eat any—{Rita interjects in the background]—I don't eat anything with tentacles. No octopus, no squid. No—

Rita Louise Tuzon 04:12
But she cooked those dishes a lot and the two of them would eat it. I was a super picky, super picky kid.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 04:16
The two of them being my dad and I.

Rita Louise Tuzon 04:18
Yeah, we would [unintelligible].

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 04:21
But not the octopus . But I would eat other random shit that he would bring home.

Rita Louise Tuzon 04:24
Yeah, you know, whatever. Whatever he caught and the cr— you know, the crabs, live crabs in the bushel basket, the apple bushel basket and then they push the thing up, they're all over the garage running around and just crazy stuff like that. So she was very game. She did all that and I do remember one time and she, you know, she, she said to me, she got really— she got really upset. It was Friday and it was Good Friday. And she had forgotten its Good Friday because she was not Catholic and he was Catholic. He was culturally Catholic. I call it, you know, meaning your Filipino your Catholic. Catholic light.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 04:44
Yeah, Catholic light, like oh three times you go okay. So, but it was Good Friday, and she'd made whatever. And she got super upset like, oh my gosh, I forgot it was Good Friday and I made this and he's gonna— he worked all days and he's in the shower, and I remember looking, you're saying, it's not your religion, it's not your holiday, if he doesn't remember, why are you feeling bad that you didn't remember? And he doesn't even remember and she just looked at me was like enlightening, like, oh, you know, that's a good point. But, but that was the— she worked very hard, I think to culturally make those dishes and make that, you know, cook the food that even though like Lanny said she didn't eat that he would— he ate a lot of it. Oh. I really miss long rice with ginger and soy and he would put bitter melon in it. You know what that is? And chicken or chicken giblets. And sometimes fish and occasionally pork. But the key thing is that, is the is the long rice. Which are— is really noodles. It's not rice.

Rita Louise Tuzon 05:59
Yeah.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 06:00
And that's not easy to find in, in LA in 2021. Although I bet if I went to the 99 Ranch Market I can find some.

Kathleen Gutierrez 06:09
Yep. Yeah, Juanita and Allen gave me chicken and long rice for lunch. [Indistinct talking and laughing in the background].

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 06:16
She posted a picture of long rice for lunch! Maybe that was that day. [Indistinct talking and laughing in the background].

Kathleen Gutierrez 06:24
It was really lovely. It was so good. They fed my dad too. Because my dad lives with me, also a pandemic circumstance and the decision made, but yeah, he's been coming along—

Rita Louise Tuzon 06:35
So who did you say lived in Watsonville? Came from Watsonville? You had mentioned when you were— your uncle?

Kathleen Gutierrez 06:39

So he's from the Segundo family, but they're from Visayas. So he's from Bohol, but I actually have a feeling that Segundos may have been known. They were kind of around the central coast.

Rita Louise Tuzon 06:50
Yeah.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 06:50
That, that surname sounds familiar. [Speaking in the background] Vaguely familiar.

Kathleen Gutierrez 06:56
Visayan. Back to the food and back to you know, sort of her becoming culturally [Modesto speaks in the background] aware of, you know, being Filipino in the United States. Were there other things that she did for the family? Aside from food?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 07:11
She phonetically learned how to sing several Filipino songs. She had no idea what all the words meant. For example, she and my dad would play the mandolin, and she would sing along "Dahil Sa'yo." Rita and I learned the song too phonetically. We can hit the notes [Modesto sings] "dahil sa'yo" [indistinct]. You know, and—but I don't know what the words mean. [Kathleen laughs]. Because Daddy wouldn't teach us any of his dialects. Like I told you last time.

Kathleen Gutierrez 07:43
So she would sing.

Rita Louise Tuzon 07:44
Yeah she would sing, yeah she would sing with his little band. But she's saying, she, she learned she did —I'm sorry I just— She learned a number of those songs. And it was part of the, you know, that was important to him. And that was very cool. I didn't think of that until just now. That's right. She sang all those songs in dialect. And then when he later, when he was playing, you know, he would play, he convinced her to sing with them. And they would do a lot of— That was the part two of the Filipino Community is, when we were older, he got more involved in Fil Community with this little, his little orchestra and she would go with him and they would sing. She would sing with his little band.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 08:23
And I missed all of this because I was up in Berkeley.

Rita Louise Tuzon 08:25
Phonetically, phonetically [laughs]. Not knowing what she was saying.

Kathleen Gutierrez 08:28
So she would sign with the band. Well, I'm going to go back to your mom, but a little bit more on the band. And I'd love to hear more about this group. Were there—so there were other manongs in the band. Do you remember their names?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 08:40
Well, one of the Castro brothers I think was Eddie not Ray. It was Eddie who played guitar. Yeah. He could also play mandolin but my father was lightyears better at mandolin than he was so Eddie played guitar. Daddy played the Philippine mandolin, which you got one sitting in front of you there, and there were a few others in the band as well. Whose names I don't remember. But Eddie Castro, although he wasn't related to us, Eddie and Ray Castro the barbers who were the ones that we gave the third mandolin to, that I can't locate now decades later. We were close to them because of their history with our father. It's—and so we gave them the third mandolin.

Rita Louise Tuzon 09:31
I have a picture which I'll find.

Kathleen Gutierrez 09:32
So one of the Castro brothers—or both Castro brothers were in the band?

Rita Louise Tuzon 09:36
One. I have a picture of their little band.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 09:38
Just Eddie. Eddie was the elder of the two brothers. And the taller of the two.

Rita Louise Tuzon 09:42
Okay, relative term. The barber shop of course—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 09:45
Eddie Castro kind of looked like a Filipino version of Jack Benny in my memory. He had those big glasses like and he was about the same height as Jack Benny. Somebody else you probably don't remember [laughs]. Was a social hub. [Indistinct talking in the background]. Daddy would go down there just to hang out and play mandolin. He didn't need a haircut. He

just wanted to—because it was winter when you can't drive a tractor in the mud. So he was off work and you can't go fishing every day. Well, you can but—

Rita Louise Tuzon 10:20
So those were the pictures of him playing the mandolin to the cat.

Kathleen Gutierrez 10:23
Yeah.

Rita Louise Tuzon 10:24
And hanging out at the barbershop. [Indistinct talking in the background].

Kathleen Gutierrez 10:28
Did you ever actually see them play like the full band?

Rita Louise Tuzon 10:31
Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah. So, and I was gonna say, I have, I know I have a couple pictures. One was mom singing. They were on the stage at a Filipino community event. That was the one, I think I told you where they decided to invite a date for me, like a Filipino community appropriate date. I'm like, wait, I brought somebody. I was in college. I came home like, this is really embarrassing.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 10:51
You were in college and they did, they did that?

Rita Louise Tuzon 10:53
They did. I was a sophomore when they did that one. And. And then when we were on the infamous float, where he had his little band, and they're wearing the, the little hats, and they had their— that I know I can access. The problem with that picture is that, you know, we're also in a picture. We meaning Darlene and [laughs]. That picture.

Kathleen Gutierrez 11:12
The float.

Rita Louise Tuzon 11:13
But they’re, yeah, but they’re— they were, they were playing. They did that. It was good. It was I mean, I think it was really—it was ,it was the music that and that brought them together brought them back, you know, connected to the community. He never—he never didn't play.

Kathleen Gutierrez 11:28
So this is great. I mean, it sounds like too maybe this bad wasn't consistent numbers. It sounds like he's playing with a lot of different folks.

Rita Louise Tuzon 11:35
He would—whoever he can scrape up—

Kathleen Gutierrez 11:38
So I'm guessing some other manong were pretty musical, too. I mean, this is something that we're learning definitely in the project. Many had talents that they brought with them from the Philippines, especially in music, singing, dance.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 11:51
Well, I've seen pictures on the site. Yeah, the Watsonville is in the Heart. And maybe some of them that I saw were on Juanita's separate site with the long name, Filipinos of Watsonville and surrounding areas in the 1920s through the 1960s, fit that on a URL. But there were some guys, whose names I can't recall, who played horns. You know, like trumpet or saxophone or whatever. It wasn't all just strings. But yeah, like, Rita said, it was a, it was fluid. It was basically kind of like the Blues Brothers, whoever you can scrape together, you know.

Rita Louise Tuzon 12:31
He was the glue.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 12:32
He was the glue. In terms of the—

Rita Louise Tuzon 12:34
Because it was so intrinsic to his personality and, and happiness in a way, right. And he'd spent so much time and he's the reason he came here was because of the music that I think he was, he was, he was always chasing the— chasing the band, chasing the gig. And they asked him a lot, you know, we're doing an event for the Filipino Community club, you know, and will you play you know, the band play? So he scraped the guys together and, you know, and go.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 13:01
And they didn't just play Filipino songs like "Dahil Sa'yo" and [Rita and Modesto sing indistinctly] and no idea what those words mean. [Kathleen laughs] But I can hit the notes. They will—they played classic 1920s era Ragtime stuff too. Which was the music of the day

when they came to America, the roaring twenties like "12th Street Rag." [Modesto and Rita hum "12th Street Rag"].

Rita Louise Tuzon 13:29
And then he would pick that with, with this mandolin. [Rita continues to hum]. It was like so amazing when you think back.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 13:35
And later, later—

Kathleen Gutierrez 13:36
And to do that with the mandolin not on horns.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 13:40
And then later, I would play along on "12th Street Rag" with him in the kitchen on my tenor sax.

Kathleen Gutierrez 13:46
Oh wow, fun.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 13:46
One of my fondest memories.

Kathleen Gutierrez 13:48
Oh, how great. Would you practice with him?

Rita Louise Tuzon 13:52
I did not play along with the clarinet [laughs] The instrument I was given to play.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 13:57
But he—like before you turned the recorder on we were talking about sheet music. I remember he had written out the sheet music in his in a preferred key for more recent American pop hits like a "Killing Me Softly."

Rita Louise Tuzon 14:14
Oh, yeah.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 14:16
Which was a Dionne Warwick song, I believe, or was that somebody else? I don't remember whose song it was. And um, you know, um, so it wasn't just Filipino traditional ballads and

whatnot. It wasn't just ragtime from the 1920s. He played, you know, he passed in 1981. And he was learning how to play songs that were recorded by, that were like basically pop from the '70s.

Rita Louise Tuzon 14:44
And part of the reason why he would do the pop songs is because then mom would sing them. That like he would do that. So she would [indistinct] yeah, she had a beautiful voice and she would sing with them.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 14:53
And also people didn't want to just hear Filipino traditional songs.

Rita Louise Tuzon 14:58
At a certain point.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 14:59
They wanted to hear something more modern. So he learned, he learned how to play "Strangers in the Night" for example.

Kathleen Gutierrez 15:08
Did you ever get remunerated for his gigs and for what he was playing?

Rita Louise Tuzon 15:12
I—in the old days, right. When he was actually traveling and playing but you know, he did this as part of [indistinct].

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 15:18
He did it for fun and, and, and just involvement in his later years. But yeah, like Rita said, he did get paid not handsomely. But it was kind of like, you know, tip jar, sort of thing, you know. Just like it is, to this day, you know, you're—you've got a small band playing in a bar, they're not paying you anything, but you're getting free drinks and you have a tip jar. And you pick up the microphone and periodically solicit tips.

Kathleen Gutierrez 15:54
Would you say that music was sort of a leisure activity for your entire family when you were growing up?

Rita Louise Tuzon 16:00

Yeah, yeah. 100% for, for all of us, even, you know, even in between squabbling when we wash the dishes. [laughs]

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 16:09
Yeah. Um—

Rita Louise Tuzon 16:12
You can only imagine [laughs, unintelligible speaking in the background].

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 16:18
We were fortunate to grow up in an era prior to Proposition 13, where there was money in schools or in public schools in California for the extracurricular stuff like band and orchestra and choir. Our little Las Lomas elementary school, Hall District school, that mom worked at and Rita and I attended, had a string orchestra, let alone band. So my first instrument starting in fifth grade was cello.

Rita Louise Tuzon 16:52
Because they provided the instruments and they provided—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 16:54
They provided the instruments and they said, and Mrs. Bivins, who was the teacher was like, you're gonna play cello. I was like, okay.

Rita Louise Tuzon 17:02
[Unknown] farmworker kids. Like, it was pretty, when you think of it. It's pretty cool. And we're still involved. The school has done very well, in terms of addressing, now it's 100%—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 17:13
Privately funded?

Rita Louise Tuzon 17:15
Well, no. I was gonna say the school's population is 100%, ESL, and mostly Spanish speaking, you know, first generation, and they're migrant and they're really migrant. This is when mom was working there. This was the— she was very, very, very passionate about what she did. She was a teacher's aide and about, and she about teaching, teaching, reading, love of reading. [Speaking in the background]. And she became a reading specialist out of the classroom. And she would, she would have kids, she would have a handful of kids who she would work with. And by the end of the year, they would be English fluent on grade. Now, that's hard to do, because they start the year with you and then the families move to the Central

Valley and they're gone in the middle, and then they come back at the very end, right. And so that was always the challenge, was for the migrant families, you know, how do you, how do you do that? And she was, so she was, it was her—That was her passion if you're talking about— and all the kids loved her. She still had, she lived in our little house in Las Lomas forever and kids would, you know, come by and stop by.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 18:14
Kids would stop by decades later and bring their children to come visit Mrs. Tuzon. Just two days ago, somebody in Face— I made, there was an exchange about you know, somehow Mom was mentioned, and somebody that I don't even know who she was comments, your mom scared the bejesus out of me when I was little. But later in life, I came to realize that she was a very sweet and caring person. You know, so she was very strict and no stricter with Rita and I than any of the kids at school. Um, but, But beloved, um,

Rita Louise Tuzon 18:59
She had a great sense of humor. So it wasn't like she was like the mean teacher, but she would, you know, she would be like, she would call you on it and she was— Well she was actually a kind of shy and quiet person. In that sense. She developed her personality there because she was very, very funny and loved to laugh. And she was just very warm at school and very, you know, like huggy warm, nice and, and a second mom to a lot of people. And are all of our kids, when I became a parent I realized how smart this was, our doors were always open to all our friends so people would gravitate. His friends, my friends. If you're going to get together whether you're doing homework to go to they would hang out at our house.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 19:33
People would come over not to see us, but to see Mom.

Rita Louise Tuzon 19:35
And then later to see her, to see our parents. But what I realized as a parent, is like that's the parent you want to be. Because now you know where your kids are. And you know who the—and it was very smart. But it was never—It was always we have food, we have whatever, we have a game closet, do your homework here. You know, it was facilitating that, so that, so that we would become kind of the central hub. And that's why a lot of our friends knew our parents so well. Because you know, they were there a lot.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 20:02
Yeah, quick, quick, funny story about Mom. And that strict but kind and loving dichotomy. Um, I remember one Halloween. I was too old to trick or treat. I was hanging out in the living room. Kids ringing the doorbell mom's answering. At one point, there's a big group of kids out there

and she goes, Oh, what a cute costume. Oh, you're adorable. What are you a ghost? Oh, a little cowboy. Hey, you in the back. You were here five minutes ago. Get out of here! No double dipping! [laughter] You've been here already, get out of here. [Laughter in the background]

Rita Louise Tuzon 20:55
Now the good thing is, is the neighborhood got rougher in the gang, gang activity got pretty bad it was after he was gone and right when I was leaving right after. That, they were, she was protected. She lived there. She was protected. The kids knew her. The kids knew her. Even the bad kids knew o in terms of the kids, when I say bad, I don't mean bad kids. I mean, kids who were, you know, involved in gangs and had issues. It was a it was a tough time.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 21:17
One of the worst gangs in Watsonville was called the Las Lomas Boys.

Rita Louise Tuzon 21:21
So, so but I never worried about her in that sense, because they kind of watched out for her. Nothing was going to happen to her or her house. And it was just the— And nothing ever did, the you years of her being there. You know, for people, you know, she said, Oh, you know, Tommy, I had you in first grade. You know, it just is. I remember when I would come home. And we would she knew, you know, hundreds, thousands of kids that had gone through that school in 14 years. And of course, I didn't remember them all, because they were her kids. But she'd say, she said—we had a code worked out and and and we'd see somebody and they'd say Oh, Mrs. Tuzon and Rita! And I'd look at her and she'd say, Rita you remember— You know, it's, it's like the partner thing, when you remember so and so. Of course. But it was you know, everywhere we went she was—

Kathleen Gutierrez 22:09
So many people.

Rita Louise Tuzon 22:10
So many people.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 22:11
Well she was so friendly. Not just like people who were, knew her from Hall School, but just the whole town which was a smaller town then. Because she would strike up conversations with complete strangers that—

Rita Louise Tuzon 22:26
Mortified us when we were kids.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 22:28
We're standing there for half an hour while she's talking to somebody at Daylite Market or, or Nob Hill or whatever.

Rita Louise Tuzon 22:36
We used to say she would talk to a rock. And then I became like her, it's that way of making other people feel comfortable, you know. But she was, she would, you know, she talked to a rock. You would talk to a rock. But she was like, Hey. How—she would talk to a rock, she would talk to anybody. [Indistinct in the background] She was very open. And she lived in a town where it was very, it was—it was weird for her when she would come to LA to visit and she'd be at Gelson's and she'd start talking to the people in line and then they'd look at her like, why are you talking to me?

Kathleen Gutierrez 23:02
Why are you so friendly?

Rita Louise Tuzon 23:03
Why are you so friendly? People aren't friendly here. It was out of character. But for a town like Watsonville, which I think in many ways, in retrospect was very unique. It was very racially diverse. It was not terribly stratified meaning, yes, there were some families who it was a lot of the [unknown], who who were landowners and business owners who were very established, but it didn't feel it didn't feel very class stratified because most of us it's what our parents did. They were very blue collar, you know, they were in the fields, they were doing whatever. And, and in— and because you know, it was just a big jumble of races and ethnicities, you had a lot of exposure. When I moved to LA it was so interesting. And I think I've mentioned this before, that people were very uncomfortable talking about race, like it was not a comfortable thing for people. If I said, you know, yeah, I'm Filipino, it would be like [unknown], you know, it's uncomfortable for people if they haven't been raised in a more diverse community. And I realized that what Watsonville did for us made us very comfortable with, in that sense, because we were raised around a lot of culturally comfortable and more inclusive.

Kathleen Gutierrez 24:14
Sure.

Rita Louise Tuzon 24:15
And there have been a lot of studies on, including in LA, on where you live. So geographic. Geographic segregation, which is where bussing came from, you know, is leads to—is kind of the precursor for a lot of things where people, you know, grow up and they haven't had

exposure and that was the idea behind bussing which was to, to, to change that. But I think until, unless and until you have neighborhood change, and neighborhood schools, and people growing up and seeing people as individuals instead of something else. You can't accomplish that.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 24:54
Our little, our little Las Lomas neighborhood—and, and what—Las Lomas was and still is pretty rural. There's more houses now, but they're spread out. But our part of it was like, at the intersection across a two, small street called Willow Road and Berry Road. And just within that area, when we first moved in there, it was very diverse, more diverse than it is today. Um, you know, aside from us, you know, there were, there were a few Japanese families around several Mexican families, there was a Danish family, and some Italians, you know, Portuguese.

Rita Louise Tuzon 25:41
A lot of first generation families ,first - second, you know.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 25:45
Some, some, some—and some, some Anglos as well, that weren't Croatian or, or Danish or whatever. But yeah, the Danish and that's the Nielsens I'm referring to, they were from Denmark, you know.

Rita Louise Tuzon 26:01
And what was really interesting growing up, growing up, I was just thinking about this in that neighborhood is a lot of people worked in the fields or worked in agriculture, or had, you know, you know, berries or, or something. And so our dad would come home and he was, he worked in the lettuce and so he'd have lettuce and— I was the lettuce girl, that was the lettuce girl, he got out of this very quickly, I need— I had to go to the neighbors.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 26:26
It's because I got a job.

Rita Louise Tuzon 26:27
That's bullshit. Because you were a boy. I had to go around the neighborhood and bring the lettuce that my dad had brought home to give away to people because it was almost like an informal cooperative. Like we would, he would, when he would get vegetables or cucumbers from my uncle's he said, like let's give it— so I knew all the neighbors really well the Nielsens across the street, then I would bring them there or whatever was brought home and then—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 26:49

And then in return, we would get free flowers from them. Or, and free strawberries from so many people in such huge amounts from so many different sources that they would rot on the back porch.

Kathleen Gutierrez 27:01
So I'd love for you to talk about that kind of informal cooperative setup. I mean so did folks like manongs have excess to take home from their fields?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 27:11
It's more that they had permission from the owners of the fields to take a little bit home. So on the way home, our, our dad primarily worked in the lettuce, which was exclusively Iceberg lettuce in those days, not Romaine and Red Leaf and, and all that. And then later on, he worked in cauliflower a bit, but he had permission, or supposedly, from the owners, or foreman of all these other companies that he did not work for. So he on the way home, he would like he'd throw a couple dozen heads of lettuce in the back of his pickup and he'd stop and grab a dozen bunches of celery and throw some cauliflower in the back from another field and artichokes and, and so he didn't work and all these crops, but he would bring them home.

Rita Louise Tuzon 28:03
And then— and the thing was, is it was, that was a common, a common practice.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 28:09
A lot of people did that.

Rita Louise Tuzon 28:10
And it was, you know, nobody was rolling in dough. Like it was really valuable to families to have that fresh produce. And, and we were really spoiled. Our uncles that, the Lazos, had, were farming and they planted, they planted corn just as a windbreak along the road. So we would have fresh corn. So he would, you know, he'd bring home and I remember we would—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 28:31
That was the best corn and it wasn't grown for market. It was grown as a wind and dust break.

Rita Louise Tuzon 28:36
If it was, it was one day old, we wouldn't eat it. It was like oh sugar this, the sugars turned. Like that was the— it was just everything was really fresh that you ate.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 28:44
And free [laughs].

Rita Louise Tuzon 28:45
And, but it was the, the flavor. The first time that I went to college, And I was in my second year when I was out of the dorm, and I went to the grocery store to buy and they wanted 63 cents for a head of Iceberg lettuce that was about three inches and it was brown on the cut. I was like I'm not paying that. That's and that's terrible. And, you know, it was a hard, it was hard to get, to get used to that in the real world. That the food had been, you know, wandering around for weeks in my trucks. So it was very fresh and, and our uncle worked in the brussels. [Unknown] who is truly my dad's uncle— Yeah, Uncle Frank Tabuno. — the Brussels. So unfortunately— Tabuno, Francisco Tabuno. He no one liked brussels sprouts and they smell terrible. So he would bring them like—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 29:26
You love brussels sprouts now.

Rita Louise Tuzon 29:28
Yeah, wel I eat a lot of things with anything. And we would, my mom would say thank you. When he came to pick up his mail he came to our house because he lived in a farm labor camp. He was he was not married. And so, and he just liked to go and to gamble. So he would ride the bus to Reno and, and go and like have this little weekend and come back and he would take him. But he was he was just like that bachelor. Like that guy who he was older and he just worked in the fields.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 29:54
He and our father are buried side by side in the St. Francis Catholic cemetery on what is now called Green Valley Road used to be called a Messy Road near the Wa—near the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds

Kathleen Gutierrez 30:07
Was that by choice?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 30:08
What do you mean by choice?

Kathleen Gutierrez 30:09
For them to be buried next to each other?

Rita Louise Tuzon 30:11

Well, we, Uncle died. And we, they had two plots. And so then my dad died and he died. And he died young and somewhat unexpected-expectedly in the sense that he was only 74. And for these Filipinos who lived I mean, his parents lived to the hundreds it was, it was unexpected. So I think that was the feeling is like that would be— that would be a comfort he would be with his

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 30:35
And what did he know he wasn't a devout Catholic. He did want to be buried in a Catholic cemetery. Mom was not Catholic and she's in a different cemetery.

Kathleen Gutierrez 30:44
I see which one?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 30:46
Moss Landing.

Rita Louise Tuzon 30:47
She's buried with our sister who died as an infant, as a toddler. So right, which was a good place for her. I think it was near the ocean, which she loved. So Daddy was, what did he die of? It's very interesting. If you ask then, and you ask now, and this is something probably you don't even know Lanny. He, he was he—when I was a senior in high school, he started having these fainting spells and they couldn't figure out his blood sugar blood pressure was very low. And they did lots of tests. Watsonville hospital so you know, you kind of get what you get. Right? And, and then ultimately, during the, during the course of that year, he couldn't, then he couldn't work. Because he couldn't, you know, and he was so he was at home and my aunt, my mom's sister, my aunt came so she could she could still work at the school in the days and he was in a hos—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 31:05
Aunt Pat?

Rita Louise Tuzon 31:05
He was in a hospital bed because he couldn't— he needed and he needed help. And it was not it was not, you know, your heart this your that. It was interesting because most people have high cholesterol, high blood pressure, high. It was the reverse. That when they did all the tests they like, well, you have a little of— It wasn't any of those things. And then he ended up a year later, so in 1981, then he, he passed away suddenly in the night. Now what I have learned since then, is there is a there's a heart condition, and I don't think they really knew this at the time, but it's called Long QT syndrome. And a lot of Asians, particularly Filipinos, and it's

sudden cardiac death in the night, and, and people pass away. It's a genetic. And it's your heart beat, there's too long of a space. QT is the time, the space where your heart recovers. And, and I have that. And my daughter has that.

Kathleen Gutierrez 32:33
How did you find out?

Rita Louise Tuzon 32:34
I found out because I was it was, I you know, I thought—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 32:38
Well hell, maybe I got it too.

Rita Louise Tuzon 32:41
Yeah, yeah, I wouldn't worry about it. [Laughs] At this point. It's really like, are you out running a mile? I don't think so. So you're—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 32:48
I could [Rita speaks in the background] I could use a cigarette right about now.

Rita Louise Tuzon 32:51
Yeah, exactly. So in any event, I was gonna, I was gonna have, I think I was gonna have a colonoscopy and they said, oh just get your bloodwork done and had always been fine. And they did my, they did my EKG and the doctor came out and your EKG is really like this, you should go to the cardiologist, you know, and find out. Because the, the number was really high for this lag. And I have low blood pressure and a slow heartbeat. So every, all the doctors were always this fantastic you're, you know. And this is the same as my dad had. And so long story short, UCLA, ended up, I got tested. They did a series of tests, and they finally did these genetic tests. And they found out that there are a couple of genes very associated, that you definitely have like an extreme case, and some that is associated, and in the Filipino and Asian community. In the Philippines, there's these mysterious like they died in the night. And now they're relating that back to this, you know, genetically. So that's what makes the most sense, because they could never figure it out at the time, what was going on with him. But for me, the reason I got up was because I was you know, taking a lot of medications, increase it. And if you just don't take the medications, then I just have to make sure anytime, like you have to take an antibiotic to see if it's on the list that, like then that. And so it's fine, but it was important to find out. So for my daughter, who's an athlete, that's very scary. But now we found out that you know, her EKG as EKGs you know, routinely, they're fine. And she just has to know about the things environmentally that might make it—so. So that's the difference between science in

1981 and science now. And I don't think I would have known it but for this this task that had happened. So there's nothing they could have done at the time for him. You know, it's not like in retrospect, had we known, he could have done something differently. But it is in terms of, it's the— it's the thing that finally makes sense of that because when people say what did he die of, it's always we're always kind of like, well, it's not an easy story.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 34:55
My tendency with no significant facts to back it up, but my tendency had has been to assume that his passing was related to pesticide exposure. But hearing what Rita just said, which I've never, I didn't know this until now. Perhaps it wasn't pesticide exposure.

Rita Louise Tuzon 35:17
He had a lot of pesticide exposure and he did have like a low grade Leukemia they found they didn't even treat. And that I think was from the pesticides when they were doing all the tests. They're like, you know, this isn't doing anything. But he was crop dusted a lot and then he would go—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 35:30
He was also the spray man. Aside from being crop dusted, he would drive a tractor that was pulling a pesticide spraying farm implement. And he's the one who loaded up to the toxic chemicals into the equipment. So—

Rita Louise Tuzon 35:48
And brought them home for home use. Yeah [indistinct talking] before anybody knew it was bad.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 35:55
Spray them all over the driveway in the backyard to kill those weeds.

Rita Louise Tuzon 35:58
Yeah.

Kathleen Gutierrez 35:59
Did, did he ever voiced any concern about the spray?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 36:02
No.

Rita Louise Tuzon 36:03

Well, he did. When he got, so when he got crop dusted, he got sick. He would be home from work sick because he just got, you know. And but I remember he would come home and he'd wear coveralls and all those layers and mom would be, you know, washing she ended up, she died of cancer. She had breast cancer and then ovarian bile duct cancer later.But she got a lot of exposure because she was always washing and hand washing through this old Rringer style thing.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 36:27
Plus, he brought home pesticides and herbicides that were later banned by the EPA, such as DG, and 24D, which is the agricultural equivalent of the military chemical Agent Orange. And you bring that shit home and spray it all over the place to kill weeds and bugs. And mom lived in that house and continued to live in it for decades after he passed away. And ultimately developed cancer.

Rita Louise Tuzon 36:55
But, but it was not known at the time. Like it was like, oh, I got sprayed, but it wasn't known at the time that these were so bad. So, so it was after he had passed away. And then I'm looking at your yard and I said you can't plant anything to eat any more in this yard. It has to be in a raised bed. You just can't do it. Yeah, whatever is in the ground is in the ground for a long time.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 37:14
And not long before she passed there was a major remodel done to our house, including exterior landscaping. And the contractor had to remove what 18 inches of contaminated topsoil from, from the yard and back and driveway.

Kathleen Gutierrez 37:35
Didn't— do you know if any of the other manongs ever commented on the spraying? I mean, folks didn't know it was, you know, deleterious for your health. But were they you know, annoyed? Was it frustrating?

Rita Louise Tuzon 37:45
Yeah, we never had any other conversations, I think because when you're in the tractor, you can get sprayed on when you're the tractor pulling it where you're the crew, you're probably not as aware of it. Somebody's gone through and sprayed and you're down there working but you're not seeing it, it's on the plants. You're getting exposed. So I don't think two and two was put together for most people back then.

Kathleen Gutierrez 38:04

Right right. Over time for folks, you know, more aware of it becoming angry? I mean, DDT obviously at some point became reviled.

Rita Louise Tuzon 38:14
Yeah.

Kathleen Gutierrez 38:14
Was that something that was ever discussed?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 38:16
No.

Rita Louise Tuzon 38:17
It might have been but not in our circles because our dad passed. So yeah, you know, I mean, now so, so yeah so early. As that was [speaking in the background] that was, that was just kind of coming into the, you know, Rachel Carson, Silent Spring—coming into being right. But it was definitely, I connected back with that. And I'm looking at and we're thinking back and we're like, oh, that canister in the garage maybe— What's in that? Oh, that's what he was spraying and then you look at it and you realize— you start, you know, connecting all of that.

Kathleen Gutierrez 38:49
Were you ever sprayed?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 38:51
Once.

Kathleen Gutierrez 38:52
Once.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 38:53
I was, I had parked my tractor to hide behind the bushes and take care of business because we just wouldn't before outhouse, outhouses were mandated. Not for tractor drivers who are out by themselves they had them for cutting crews, as you know 40 something guys, but not for a singular tractor driver who was half a mile away from anything but lettuce and seagulls. So while I was behind the bushes next to the ditch, the field next door was being crop dusted, and the pilot didn't know that I was hiding in the bushes and I got sprayed. And I got sick and went home. But I didn't get seriously ill. I was back to work within a couple of days.

Kathleen Gutierrez 39:46

What did you feel?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 39:47
Nausea. You know, dizziness. But I only drove tractor one summer in 1979. When I came home from Berkeley, and I needed to get a real job because acting wasn't paying any money. Right? And never did.

Rita Louise Tuzon 40:07
I will never forget that when Daddy said like, you know, well, you could, you know, you can get [unintelligible] or you could come home and work with me. And you had your summer of, wow, this is really tough. I want to go back and get a real job.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 40:21
It gave me such an appreciation and even greater respect for him and what he had done all his life to, to earn a living to put food on the table for, for us. Because I was out there eating dirt and getting sprayed too.

Kathleen Gutierrez 40:39
Can you describe some of those work activities that you were able to observe that your dad did?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 40:44
Well, he, he was, like, we have said a few times, he wasn't on the ground.

Kathleen Gutierrez 40:49
Right.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 40:50
He was a tractor driver. It was a little bit more elite. And I believe he did get paid a bit more.

Rita Louise Tuzon 40:57
Yeah but it was still dogshit money. I mean, honestly, it was no it was—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 41:02
It's not like, you know, lavishly more, but it was—

Rita Louise Tuzon 41:05
But he would walk in on Friday and he would hand my mom his check. My mom took care of all the finances.

Kathleen Gutierrez 41:11
Your mom took care of the finances.

Rita Louise Tuzon 41:12
Yeah he'd hand her his check.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 41:13
In fact, he had to cash his own check for some reason and the bank questioned signature because it wasn't mom's version of his [laughter].

Kathleen Gutierrez 41:25
Why did your mom manage the finances?

Rita Louise Tuzon 41:27
Because when they were running their own, they tried, they—sugar peas. They ran their own business when we were very, very young.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 41:35
Yeah, we're still on Lewis Road. So I was at most seven and she was at most four.

Rita Louise Tuzon 41:40
Yeah. And then I think after that, it was you know, we have a, we have a family, you know, he was then working a job as opposed to them doing it. We have a family, we have to make sure we're paying our mortgage payment. We're paying this, we're paying that. And he in, he's like, okay, and he just would give her— which I think was very uncharacteristic for Filipino men. And our Uncle in particular who would take the wad, have the wad. Remember the manongs who would have the— Lanny?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 42:05
You're talking about Uncle Frank?

Rita Louise Tuzon 42:07
Yeah, a lot of —explain the wad of—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 42:10
He carried around a huge wad of cash.

Kathleen Gutierrez 42:14

Uncle Frank.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 42:15
Yeah, he cuz you didn't trust banks.

Rita Louise Tuzon 42:19
He didn't bank. He kept, he kept even more cash buried in a coffee can in the yard. But he would carry around. And then he would pull this out in the middle of the supermarket, where anybody standing by could see hey, that old Filipino dude has a huge wad of cash and follow him out in the parking lot and bonk him and take it. Which never happened but it could. But the funny thing was is that we would always joke about how it would all be ones with a twenty on the outside [laughter] flashing— [Indistinct speaking in the background].

Kathleen Gutierrez 42:55
You know, that actually makes me curious then. What came up around, you know, managing finances and your mom's position in that? Because I remember the Sulays for instance, their residence was paid for in the name of Virginia Sulay because of the laws against Filipinos owning property at the time. Your home in Las Lomas, was that owned by your— in the name of your mom?

Rita Louise Tuzon 43:16
We didn't —the, in Las— well, no, because— It was later. For one thing. Yeah, that was later, it was later than the Sulays because they're the 10 years. It's like Paul DeOcampo, us—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 43:26
Even though Max Sulay and our father were approximately the same age, Max and Virginia married much earlier. They had— that's why their eldest kids, yeah, Juanita is 13 years older than I am.

Rita Louise Tuzon 43:39
But it's really, that's a really interesting issue because the anti-miscegenation laws and all of the laws that prohibited landowning that affected the Japanese families as well and in the sort of the immigrant generation before. Which was— is, is —were real. You know, people don't realize that was real. It was related, you know, it was related to your family or one generation before you, then we're not talking about the 1800s. And it doesn't surprise me that that happened. For our family didn't. Lewis road that was renting. When they bought the house on Willow road, they bought it, it is it was in both of their names as joint tenants.

Kathleen Gutierrez 44:16

Okay.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 44:16
Yeah, but that was 1963.

Rita Louise Tuzon 44:18
1963.

Kathleen Gutierrez 44:19
1963.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 44:20
When we moved from the second Lewis Road house, which was owned by our Uncle Leon. As well as the land that Daddy grew sugar peas on, um, that was adjacent to that house. But, we moved from the second Lewis Road House to Willow Road in, in Las Lomas in the summer of 1963, August to be specific. And then, and then I started second grade a month later and Hall School. I did kindergarten first at Pajaro School because we lived in Pajaro. And Pajaro school hadn't yet been temporarily condemned for due to— for seismic safety. And then Rita started kindergarten at Hall school a little later.

Rita Louise Tuzon 45:09
But [unknown] Lanny went to, went to school and then he brought home all the childhood diseases to me. Every single one. Like I had them all before we started because he went to school you know, there were no vaccines for any of those then.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 45:22
Mumps, measles, both, both types of measles. Chickenpox.

Kathleen Gutierrez 45:26
Just brought it all home. Oh gosh.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 45:28
Yeah, the gift that keeps on giving. [Laughter in the background].

Kathleen Gutierrez 45:34
I'd love to go back to your mom again. So I know that we were talking a little bit about—actually, even in our last interview, about her integration with the wider Filipino community. So can you talk a little bit about that? I know, she navigated it pretty expert, kind,

but also savvy way. And I know that you also kind of reference some of the struggles around growing up as a multiracial, biracial family. Would you mind sort of going into that?

Rita Louise Tuzon 46:01
You know, I think she, I think navigating is a perfect word for it. Yeah. She navigated it well. Because she wasn't super accepted by the women's Filipino club. And I think, and she was very shy back then. Right. And, and so I think she navigated. She was polite, she managed it for her family, for my dad, for us to have those relationships. But it's not, you know, like other than the the women who were, you know, who were family members who she was like, and, you know, Aunt Gloria and [unknown], and, who were family members, and, and, and Aunt May, you know, there was more of a connection with. But she was, she was friendly. I don't think if you talk to any of those women, they would say that they didn't have a good relationship with her. But it was from her perspective, she didn't feel like— I don't, I don't think she felt like she had a genuine, you know, friendship with a lot of those ladies. And it was just because of, you know, it was, it was, it was kind of because of the way she was treated, which they weren't even recognizing, you know. Some people say things that they don't realize are hurtful to someone else. But you know, people are now like—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 46:22
Like the comment that Rita told you about last time where somebody, I can't remember exactly who it was, said to her your kids are so smart and they're only half Filipino, you know, and her reply was, was very veiled sarcasm and tongue in cheek, but spot on.

Rita Louise Tuzon 47:34
I think, look, and I think that's when I say and when you say navigating, it's a really good word because she wasn't bitter. She was part of the, you know, she would go and join and do whatever. But she found a way to just like, deal with that in her own way where she didn't feel like she was being victimized and accepting being a victim. And I learned a lot from her about that, the navigating in terms of like, if Tammy Isedro said something, I would probably say something different to her. First, I know her, but you know, in the way to navigate those things, because I think a lot of people are just not self aware of what they're saying.

Kathleen Gutierrez 48:10
Do you remember any things that were said? Or did you witness or did your mom ever relate that to you?

Rita Louise Tuzon 48:15
I witnessed a lot of those things just because, just like the one at the funeral, because I would, I was with her I think more than Lan. Just you know, being a daughter, being younger, and she

would cart me around. And it was, it was just it. There's a— women can be catty, without understanding they're being catty, you know, and, and so I don't think that depends on race. I think that can just happen. And I think in many ways, she was accepted as part of the group, she would come, she would bring. So in that sense, it wasn't like you can't come. But I don't she was accepted from the perspective of the women, but I don't think she felt fully accepted based on—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 48:52
To be honest, I think that a lot of the Filipino women didn't realize that— of that generation didn't realize they were saying hurtful things to Mom, in reference to her being white and Rita and I being half-white. They didn't— it's not like they were evil or mean, they just were oblivious to their attitude and the impact of their attitude and words on, on us.

Rita Louise Tuzon 49:26
But there's a cultural class system, right? Because there were very few in that generation with the manongs, there were very few kids were who were full blooded, right? That I mean, because there weren't that many women who were there. So it was kind of, from their perspective, an elite-ism of those kids in those families that were, that were pure. That were 100%. Because they could carry the traditions and it was good they carried through traditions because you know, the guys didn't carry that many of the traditions and really was the women who carried forward traditions for all of us to learn. So it was valuable. [Indistinct speaking in the background]. I just lost my thought train.

Kathleen Gutierrez 50:14
Yeah, women sort of maintained traditions. Even if they weren't Filipino identifying.

Rita Louise Tuzon 50:18
Yeah. And, and then yes, and then picking them up but it was the women who were Filipinas were the ones who carried a lot more of those for the other women to pick up and institute in the families.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 50:27
Because the men were too busy working in the field. frankly .

Rita Louise Tuzon 50:30
Just like men don't usually carry cultural traditions. They just don't.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 50:33
They were more—

Rita Louise Tuzon 50:34
They were guys.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 50:35
C'est la vie about it.

Kathleen Gutierrez 50:37
What cultural—

Rita Louise Tuzon 50:39
No one would know the tinikling if it's left up to them.

Kathleen Gutierrez 50:41
Yeah. So what kind of cultural traditions did you see sort of get transmitted, you know, over time in the community?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 50:48
Well number one is the food frankly, which we discussed already. I'd love to talk about long rice some more, but you rather have a big bowl in front of me. But the songs in terms of our family's perspective, because we were all collectively so musically oriented. But the traditional Filipino songs there's another one, a kid song—[Modesto and Rita begin singing a Filipino children's song which indistinct lyrics]

Rita Louise Tuzon 51:31
And then there's more. There's more. [Rita sings more] I can't remember it. That's like out of some lizard brain in the back.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 51:37
We have no idea what those words mean. [laughter] I have a question for this archive. Will it actually be audio? Or will this audio be transcribed to written page or both? Cool, they'll be able to hear our lovely rendition of [unknown].

Kathleen Gutierrez 51:53
You know what I find so great about that is that it's Ilokano. I can't understand a thing of that, you know. My dad would probably be able to recognize it, because he's Ilokano. That's awesome. Yeah. And I was telling Rita as well. But you know, we're having this exhibition in 2024 at the MAH. And, you know, people are thinking about either reviving some of the foods because we have recipe books from the time, but definitely the music. I mean, because it's

such an important factor. Even when you think about the riots, right? Fermin Tobera, that history.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 52:26
I'm such a ham and the only performing thing that I still do is sing. Oh how fun. I'll gladly get up there and sing "Dahil Sa'yo" for everybody.

Kathleen Gutierrez 52:37
And that's why you know, I—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 52:39
Do my Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos impression. [laughter]

Kathleen Gutierrez 52:43
The sheet music because you know, if being able to revive those songs and like connect. Do you have any of that sheet music?

Rita Louise Tuzon 52:49
That's what we're just talking about. I'm gonna when I'm up there, I'm gonna go, I'm gonna by the house, I don't have the sheet— I don't have the sheet music. I can visualize it but I'm going to ask Mary so—

Kathleen Gutierrez 53:01
Did you participate in any of the Filipino Association events?

Rita Louise Tuzon 53:05
Oh I—I almost said had to. But I did. I don't think Modesto had to.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 53:11
One time, I remember performing the tinikling but I of course was the stick boy.

Rita Louise Tuzon 53:18
An ankle breaker.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 53:19
I was to stick boy no— goes only the girls who jumped up and down between the sticks.

Rita Louise Tuzon 53:24

What was funny about it, was interesting it was we had the bamboo sticks at home and we, you know, like our friends in the neighborhood sometimes we would do— like so they learn some of these dances too because we, it was fun. That was, you know, sorry.

Kathleen Gutierrez 53:37
Yeah, it was a fun one. [Laughter]

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 53:40
I posted, I posted this on my personal Facebook a few weeks ago, but have you seen this picture?

Kathleen Gutierrez 53:44
I have. Such a good photo. It's the photo of your dad—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 53:49
It's the one where he played mandolin for Smokey the cat.

Rita Louise Tuzon 53:53
For the kitty cat. Yeah, so so, I was, so I was more— I said had to because when your kids like I have to go to the thing and there were lots of you know barbecues are a really big thing and Filipino community that's the get-togethers Sunday if you're not working—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 54:10
Well we had family only ones almost every weekend at the Lazo properties. There was also overall community events where a lot more people were invited and, and it would be like a hall like, yeah, the VA Hall on Freedom Boulevard or something like that. [Indistinct speaking] There was another hall on Eastlake Boulevard.

Rita Louise Tuzon 54:34
Yeah, yeah, that's the that's, that's the—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 54:38
Veterans Memorial.

Rita Louise Tuzon 54:39
Yes. Veterans' Memorial was like, that was the fancy place. So they would have everybody bring food and they'd have these you know, events. So yeah.

Kathleen Gutierrez 54:46

How did those go? Can you describe them a little bit?

Rita Louise Tuzon 54:49
Yeah, I yeah, I feel like it's so, it's so interesting because that's where a sense of community is. Like the, the different generations. Like you would go but then you'd see all the people kind of your age and you would, would connect. And when you're in school, you'd see him all the time. But it was after that, like, that was the thing that brought you back together. It's like my brother with Facebook. He's getting together with everybody and connecting. But now, when I look back at it, I realized there was, you know, there were people who you knew, we had a really big high school because it was only one and people you wouldn't see even our cousins like, yeah, you know, Antoinette and Veronica, we weren't close in high school. We weren't the same year, but they, we all did our own thing. But these are the times where you'd be together, and then you kind of catch back up and spend time. So it was, it was the thing that you know, was not a funeral or a wedding or a christening, right. It was the other thing that kind of brought you together in a more festive and more regular way. And that was the nice thing about it. And it was nice after I was at college to come back because you appreciate more, right. We appreciate seeing everybody when it was different generations of people.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 55:55
One of the many beautiful things about this project and and me joining this, Watsonville is in the Heart before, before I even knew about the project and then immediately became involved in thanks to Roy, is reconnecting to that after all these decades. Because like Rita mentioned, for us, and for many people in our generation, the only time to see each other now is funerals. Occasional weddings, but not many, because we're of an age where there's not a whole lot of people getting married. Because we're all in our 60s or, or more, or, in the case of Paul DeOcampo a little bit less, but you know, we be old now. And so we're much more likely to see each other at a funeral than something more festive, like a wedding or a christening or a birthday party. And when we run into each other at funerals, you know, Bert Nabor and I hug and say, we got to see each other at something that's not a funeral, you know.

Rita Louise Tuzon 57:02
For us, also, after my dad died, there was less of a connection with the Philippine community, right, because neither one of us were in Watsonville. And my mom was there. And so, you know, Lanny's like reconnecting is really important, because it's after it's been a long time. It's been a long time. Because he died in '81.

Kathleen Gutierrez 57:23
Yeah, it has been a really long time. Was your dad part of the lodge?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 57:27
No.

Kathleen Gutierrez 57:28
Do you know why?

Rita Louise Tuzon 57:32
Don't know.

Kathleen Gutierrez 57:34
That's curious.

Rita Louise Tuzon 57:36
Yeah.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 57:37
Maybe you didn't like those weird hats they had. I saw a picture that Juanita posted about a week ago with all these blanks. Does anybody know who these people are? And one of them is Roy's father, Dioscoro Recio Senior. And they're all wearing these weird hats.

Rita Louise Tuzon 57:57
It's interesting as he was social, like he was social. It wasn't like, some guys were just quiet. I think Bert Nabor was I know I'm picturing Bert—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 58:05
Bert senior.

Rita Louise Tuzon 58:07
Albert Nabor in hats, so maybe?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 58:11
I think he was in it.

Rita Louise Tuzon 58:12
He was in it. But I remember seeing him. One of those weird fez. [Indistinct speaking in the background] Yeah. No, maybe mom told he couldn't, I don't know. [laughter]

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 58:22
Yeah you're not joining that club if you have to wear that silly damn hat.

Kathleen Gutierrez 58:27
Because that's curious too, your mom wasn't a part of the Filipino Community Women's Club and your dad wasn't a part of the lodge, but they were still very participating.

Rita Louise Tuzon 58:34
The Uncles weren't either.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 58:35
The Lazos, the DeoCampos. [Indistinct speaking]. Our blood relatives. The Nabor family and ours are intertwined, very much. Bert Jr. is my age and Valerie is Rita's age. Our fathers were very close. Our mothers were very close. Erlinda Nabor is still alive.

Rita Louise Tuzon 58:59
She actually, she's been shy about getting interviewed and I know Bert, they're trying to get her to do it. But she knows, she is that generation like our mom just passed away. She's, our mom's, she knows. Like she'll be one of those people who can remember things that we can't fill in the blanks. It would be good if— Erlinda? Erlinda E-R —Erlinda Nabor. She's still in her little house in Watsonville. In her 80s and she's doing well,

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 59:24
Yes, she is, she, she's, she is painfully shy. And I was not voice call but messaging Bert about this a few weeks ago, and I was, and I said, hey, it was after we had our first interview with you and I said, Bert, you got to get involved in this. And he said, well, Steven and I are scheduled, is the youngest Nabor sibling of four. Stephen and I are scheduled. Glenn, of course, has politely declined. Valerie and Mom don't want to do it. Because they're both too shy. Or reluctant for whatever reason.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:00:00
Valerie's shy and Erlinda's, like, oh, what would I remember? You know? Like, maybe I don't remember something like it's not okay. It's not today. It's really the, you know, the history so hopefully they can get her to do it. But she's, she's a very good, you know, connection and they live right next door to the Tabancays.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:00:16
Okay.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:00:17

So we're connected with the, you know, and that and the Ragsacs were right down the street. Like that street had a bunch of Filipino families right on the levee. The levee was their backyard.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:00:25
Right, right. Right. Yeah. Wow, you know, getting to learn a little bit more about your blood relatives. And you know, I've spent some time with the DeOcampos. And that's been really fun. I mean, can you kind of paint a picture for me about what it was like even maybe from childhood to your early, by the time you left for college, you know, having that community of the children of manongs kind of with each other?

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:00:48
Well, it's interesting because for me, it, it, it moved from the community being the relatives like the girls, Antoinette and Veronica, because we all had different interests for kind of doing different things. Although I continue to say, to say that Veronica DeOcampo is the most beautiful person I've ever seen in my life. She's just and she still is. She's just beautiful. A beautiful person and beautiful. And my friends became, they were children of manongs, but they were not relatives. So Veronica Madalora was one of my best friends. Valerie Nabor was one of my best friends. Darlene. So we had this connection, it was very, it was good because it was very culturally comfortable. You know, who we were, and, and, and kind of supporting each other through different things. I remember when Veronica's dad died. And I think Frank Madalora has done interviews. And he's very close with Roy. And Frank was quite a bit older than Veron— and Veronica Madalora is only one year older than me, right. So her mom decided she needed to stay home, you know, the Filipino tradition and the daughter and you stay home, you take care of the parents. She's like you don't need, you shouldn't go to college. It's too far away. But she'd gotten into Pomona. And her mom wasn't going to let her go. This is Gloria? No, this is the Madaloras. This is the friends supplanting the family as the as the children of manongs who we were close to. And, and Frank interceded, He interceded and said, you need to let her go. And as did college counselors and everyone else in trying to support the ability for her to move from the traditional, you're the daughter and your responsibility as your parents' first, to give her this opportunity to really, you know, do this. And I think that was, you know, it was great that he was able to do that because he was older, he was a boy, he'd already left, he was gone. You know, like he was living his life. Frank, and he helped to allow her to, you know, live hers. But you know, that is not that long ago and even today in the families we know, you know that it is, it is you know, there's a different expectation in many families for, you know, for a daughter to be there to make sure that they're there for their aging parents.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:03:09

Another thing too, that Rita touched on, regarding non-family, from the Watsonville Filipino community becoming a key part of our social interaction is that a lot of my dear friends, many of whom are members of Watsonville is in the Heart, who were also my class of '74. We didn't know each other because we were Filipino. We knew each other from school and because we were the same age. Dana Sales, our fathers weren't close. They knew each other but we weren't part of each other's circle of friends. Dana and I met as freshmen at Watsonville High because we didn't go to the same elementary schools because we lived in opposite sides of the Pajaro Valley, but became immediate, fast friends and have stayed very close to this day. More so than a lot of people. Dana and I have stayed close. When we were seniors, I was student body president. He was student body vice president. We were the marching band together. We were in the Model United Nations debate group together. And Dana has showed up. He was at Daddy's funeral. He was at our mom's funeral eight years ago. You know, Dana shows up. You know, we're close not because we're Filipino, but because we were the same age and had a similar path through Watsonville High. Um, and there are other [Unknown] Tejada. We didn't know the Tejada family. They lived out in the [unknown] or whatever. Just like Dana's family did. We knew each other from Watsonville High again, because [Unknown] and I were two of the smartest kids in our class. And we were also both in the marching band. [Unknown] played clarinet. And there are others. That it's just a coincidence that we're Filipino kids, or we're not kids now we're all 65 years old. [Speaking indistinctly in the background] Oh, thanks. It's just a coincidence that, that we were Filipino. What brought Dana and I together had nothing to do with us both being Filipino. It was that we were in the similar activity, student government, marching band, Model United Nations, et cetera, at Watsonville High. And we're the same age.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:05:45
Um, but I think for us, for me, that there was a part of that was a shared connection of experience of, for some of my friends. It was—It wasn't that we were doing the same thing. It was, we were friends, despite the fact we weren't doing exactly the same things. And you're thrown together like with the Nabors. We were thrown together.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:06:03
Oh yeah. K-12 crucible for relationships with people that you will never maybe meet again, later in life, because of the way we self segregate. Based on profession and interests.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:06:13
Which was what's so interesting about Roy's group and, and Lanny, like reconnecting with people. Because you think it's like high school reunions, where you always have to go to just one to see how everybody turned out. But you probably don't need to go to a lot because they're going to be and anybody who you would be close to, you probably keep connected

with, with individually. But I think that's what's been good about this is, it's post a lot of things. It's so much longer from childhood, that, that people are kind of where they are. And they connect about the past, or they connect about the community. They connect about the shared history. So it's been, right. It's been, it's been nice. Whereas at the time, we were just, you know, you're thrown in together, like you said, and very rarely do you come out the other end, you know, together. You may be close, like you could sit down in a room 20 years later, and you could just pick right up, but you haven't been together.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:07:04
Oh, yeah. Yeah, it's how I feel when I come back to LA. Yeah, for sure. Yeah, I want to actually follow something that you both brought up both at the last interview, but then also just now, the gender difference, you know, about—

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:07:16
I think I bring that up on [unknown].

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:07:18
It's fascinating. I remember about the riots we talked about, I think Modesto you're saying that you'd like that was maybe share with you a little bit more explicitly. And then you brought up that it probably wasn't going to be talked about with you, because you were the girl in the family.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:07:32
Well, aside from the gender difference, I actively sought out that information.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:07:39
But she knew about it, it's that—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:07:41
And I already knew about it a little bit, just a vague overview. But then when I wrote—

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:07:48
In college?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:07:49
No prior to that.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:07:50
How?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:07:51
Just because like Rita said, our father would talk to things and talk about things with me that he wouldn't talk about with her because I was a male. I'm not that, that's a good thing or a bad thing. It just it is what it is. That was what it was. And then later when I was a sophomore at Berkeley, and I was writing that paper that I can't find. I came home specifically for the purpose of interviewing him for that paper. Came home for a weekend from Berkeley, and, and I and I just perfunctorily also interviewed the La— our two Lazo uncles. But they were nowhere near as informative as our father was nor were they as involved because he was in the orchestra at that dance hall. [Unknown speaking in the background]. Where the some of the riots occurred.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:08:51
No Manong CP wasn't even here because he was in Hawai'i.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:08:54
He's already left for Hawaii? No, we'll be where he was in Hawai'i before he came here. Oh, you mean then? Yeah. But he was, I thought you meant he was in Hawai'i when I interviewed them. [Indistinct speaking in the background]

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:09:07
So you're saying that even in passing before he left for college, he had mentioned maybe vaguely about the riots?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:09:13
I wrote around riding shotgun in his pickup with him a hell of a lot more than Rita did. We would go surf fishing together at five o'clock in the morning and just be, aside from being side by side in the pickup truck, we'd be side by side at Sunset or Manresa beach.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:09:35
I didn't ride in the pickup truck. I always wanted to ride in the back for which he and I would get in trouble because my mom would say don't let them ride in the back. Don't let them ride the back. Like it's, and then it wasn't, it's dangerous, it was, it's too cold. Too cold. [Indistinct speaking in the background]. Go figure. Yeah. And so then we're coming home and I remember we'd love to go with him in his pick up on Sunday and then he'd give us, he'd say get a dime out of my drawer. He'd have change in a drawer and we stop at the candy— he let us get candy at the corner store, like he was the enabling fun, you know versus mom was the the was all about business. And so we would come home and she would, she'd say,were you in the back of the truck? No, no, that's, you know, we were in it together. No, no. And then she go to kiss me, like she would grab me and feel my ears. Your ears are cold, you were in the

back! And so then we would stop at the corner, get the candy, wait at the corner. I would warn my ears up and we would go home.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:10:29
There was also that gas station of Pajaro that had the old school chest—

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:10:33
Candy cigarettes?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:10:34
No, no, the coke machine.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:10:35
They had candy cigarettes. [Indistinct speaking].

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:10:40
But that and that the guy who owned the gas station would give us free Cokes. And it was the Cokes, the classic Cokes in those little bottles. And—

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:10:51
Great. Would you mind sharing? I mean, some of the things that your dad would share with you in those early hours when you had so much time together?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:10:57
I don't really remember. It's not like you know, it's just not a specific segment. But it's like we would talk about stuff. A lot more than he would talk about stuff with Rita, for two reasons. One, he and I spent more time together, just the two of us than he spent with her. And also, I was a guy, I was a boy and he would talk about stuff with me. They might not talk about her with her. But there was plenty of stuff he wouldn't talk about with me either, you know. But he had casually mentioned those riots and the Tobera incident long before I —when I was like in elementary school long before I was researching that paper that I wrote in 1970.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:11:49
And maybe that connected for you? Because I had never heard of any of that. When I was in college. It was about interment. It was about the Japanese community and internment. It was when there were a couple of court cases that were going through and they were trying to get reparations. And there were court cases were going up to Supreme Court afterwards to try to [unknown]. So it was more top of mind. So in a class for me, what I did is I interviewed our Japanese American neighbors, the Yoshidas, Kay Yoshida. They had, that community never

spoke about that. It was like, it was interesting how, just like with the Fermin Tobera, like the kids of this generation normally didn't know about it. They didn't talk about stuff that was upsetting and felt racist and felt, you know, unAmerican, you know, it wasn't a conversation. And so it was very, I mean, Mrs. Yoshida, that was, it was the first time she'd ever talked about it. As a community, they didn't talk about it, you know. [Unintelligible speaking in the background] And so, so I think you're right to be a little surprised that he knew something about it, because they, you know, that was, those were the kinds of things it was just we don't talk about these things, you know. They did like, my parents didn't talk about, I didn't know until much later, like, you know, they, they got, they got married in Mexico.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:13:07
How did you find out about the riots?

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:13:10
I didn't find out until much later. And just in reading, and because I do, I do a lot of reading. I do a lot of reading, you know, for pleasure and I and that the, to me, California, such as a Californian, is such an interesting place because people always have this view of California as this very open and inclusive and wonderful place compared to like the south. And that's people who don't really know California's history. Right? It depends on who you were in California. And so California's history has always been something that I am interested in, in reading about and and there's just more being published now about different incidents and different you know. You learned about internment, not in we didn't learn about in high school US history class, but you learned about that. We learned about it because it was part of our community. But many, many other things like Fermin Tobera and others you didn't learn about until later when it was, you know, spoken about more, as there are many different kinds of indignities that the Asian, broad community has suffered in these ways of immigration and continuing today. And it's the connection to today that I think really put a spotlight people in learning more it.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:14:24
Also the great majority, the overwhelming majority of the Asian, Asian immigrants and Asian Americans who experienced things that Rita was discussing, the internment, the Anti-Filipino riots, and everything else. They're all dead now. And the ones that aren't dad are really old and probably don't remember very much. But virtually, they're virtually all dead now. Our father has been dead for four years, or it will be 40 years in October. So you don't have that direct connect. But the people who are revisiting the sub— those subjects now are their descendants. Descendants of the Nisei, who may or may not even been interned themselves, but they remembered the stories of their parents and grandparents. Same with Roy— Roy Recio is even younger than I am or not as old as I. You know, but doesn't have them. [Laughter and speaking in the background] I just turned 65 last month.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:15:43
Well, we've been interviewing like a range—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:15:47
Roy is, I don't know, about 10 years younger than me. I'm not sure how old Roy is. Um, but he hasn't already enrolled in Medicare like I have. So Roy was certainly not directly involved and have a specific memory of these incidents that happened decades before he was born. But he is picked up the torch to make sure that it does get remembered and hopefully never forgotten. You know, and the same with so many different Japanese Americans.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:16:23
That's, I mean, you'd look at the classic example of that is the Holocaust. Right? And, and the people who, who can pay—give testament to things that happened in the first person. But it's what that's why it's so important for projects like this, to capture those. And you know, Mas Hashimoto is still alive and kicking. And he is the number one. He was in, that he was in the internment camps. And he is very active in the Asian American community in Watsonville. He was a history teacher at the high school, but I was just reading something, you know, he has just turned 90. And he and his wife were— she, his wife is now the head of the JACL, Japanese American Citizens League. And what, and the beauty of that organization is not only that it's inclusive, but it's about civil rights. And it's about and I think it started from something that was to show white Americans that that Japanese Americans were, this in the 40s and 50s, were, were patriotic citizens. And now what it has evolved to is defending the civil rights of everyone, and focusing on all Asian groups, and not being divisive, but being inclusive and so embracing, you know. They weren't, they were behind— there was a little, there was a little, a little rally and a demonstration in Watsonville at the little town plaza. There were like 25 people there. It was great. I mean, people drove by and honked and they had signs that said stop Asian hate and, and so I think those are the places where for somebody like Mas who lived through so much, it's horrifying to see what's been happening in the last year because they lived it. And I think they feel an urgency to testify.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:18:05
And like she said it's not so insular. Now, with what's going on today, um, there's members of the Japanese American community who support the BLM movement, per example. And there are Japanese American, people of Japanese descent in Watsonville ins in the Heart group, you know. I believe Bob Akamodo or isn't it? Or somebody Akamodo.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:18:36

And this is what we talked about the last time, that I mentioned was that the more you have intermarriage, the more you bring cultures together and and share that, like our Filipino community history is shared with those that, you know, like on our mom's side of the family. You're exposed to lots and lots of people and traditions and food and cultures that made them I think, much more open and tolerant people than they might be had they not had that. And I think that continues, you know, on.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:19:07
Oh you're absolutely right, very much. So Melinda has pointed, Melinda is our cousin. She's on my mom's side on my Anglo side of the family. She's the eldest of our generation of cousins. She's four years older than I and she is frequently commented to me either directly or in Facebook or whatever about how multi ethnic and diverse her extended family is. Primarily because her Aunt, our mother, married a Filipino. But also her younger brother, John went to join the Navy and went to the Philippines and married a Filipina. So and then conversely, there are totally white people of Croatian descent on the Philippines side of our family who were married into the Lazos. Johnny Rosser, who you may have heard of. He and I consider each other cousins. We're not blood relatives at all.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:20:16
That never stopped anybody Filipino. [Laughter] That's, that's a nicety.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:20:21
We claim everyone.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:20:22
He was related to our uncle Leon Lazo's wife, who he passed away quite some time ago, Aunt May and so—

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:20:36
And Big Uncle, Leon Lazo was a father figure to him. So he was—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:20:43
John Rosser refers to our blood uncles Leon Lazo and Paul aka Skippy DeOcampo as my two dads. And he lived in that house on, on Lewis Road. Not the one we lived in the second time, but we, all of us lived in a different house on this road. It was closer to the railroad tracks which actually burned down.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:21:09
Our starter house, like we all ended up there—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:21:12
Which was also owned by Uncle Leon but that house burned down while some of Johnny Rosser's relatives were living in.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:21:20
Oh, wow.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:21:21
And his sister, Betty, was actually rescued from the house by what were then called hobos from the, from the railroad yards across Lewis Road. Because they knew that— because she worked the night shift and she slept during the day and they saw the house burning up and they went, oh my god, Betty's in there. So the hobos broke the door down and pulled Betty out of the burning house.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:21:44
What caused the fire?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:21:46
Electrical?

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:21:47
It was the shack okay. We call it a house, call it a shack. It was really not in any kind of, you know, it's barely—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:21:54
Actually our second. Actually, our second Lewis Road house around the bend was basically just a shack too. We didn't live in a real house until we moved to the Willow Road house Las Lomas in 1963.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:22:12
And then so this was something that I am curious about too. Just your descriptions of your homes, you know. Because you lived in a few different places. I mean, what were they like? Shack-like? You know, how big were they? Did you have yards?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:22:26
Very small ,very small. Not really painted, faded whitewash. Ever look through a John Steinbeck type photo book, coffee table book? Right, it was a John Steinbeck farm shack.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:22:41
Like the aged wood. And what I remember because I, I was only four when we moved to the house that I only remember but I have little glimpses of remembering like everything is dirt outside, you know. It's not like there's the paved road and the paved this and the [unknown]. It's just dirt and weeds. And we shared a room and I was in what I call my jail bed. It was the crib was in there and then my brother would boost me out and we were early in the morning and we would play and when we heard my mom getting up he would boost me back in and then we would pretend to be asleep. I have that memory of that house.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:23:15
Those, those cribs with the bars and the posts sticking up that I have since been banned because kids would like strangle from hanging from their collars. Yeah. I remember one of those times when the crabs that daddy and Grandpa John had brought home and they had him in a gunny sack thrown underneath the utility sink on the porch, and they clawed their way out in the middle of the night. And there's like dozens of crabs crawling around all over the house. Gee, I wonder what contributed to my arachnophobia. [Laughter] You know, plus those shacks were full of spiders. Um, and I, one of them had an outhouse. That was just absolutely inundated with spiders.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:24:06
Rita wasn't even born yet. Rita was born after we moved to the second Lewis Road house when I was probably three and not yet three and Denise was still alive. The other thing I remember from that time frame is being really little and Daddy going fishing on the pier and Mom must have said you have to take them. Right? And so not to be deterred by his fishing, he took his belt and he latched me to a post so I wouldn't— the two of them are fishing and was like play with your doll. And so I'm like, okay, and I was I was—

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:24:43
You were belted to a post.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:24:46
Try, try tying your toddler—

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:24:49
Don't fall in because we're fishing!

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:24:51
Your toddler daughter to a post on a public pier today. [Modesto laughs, indistinct speaking in the background]. No, no, no, child protective services will not be calling you.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:25:03
Wow. Can you describe the environment? What that was like? The environment of what those houses, not so much even the houses, but your neighborhoods, I mean the dirt, the farmland.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:25:15
Until we moved to Las Lomas we didn't have a neighborhood. We lived in little farm shacks that were surrounded by nothing but fields of whatever crops. There were no kids nearby at all let alone kids our age.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:25:28
Probably why we kept all the family members because that's— they would have to bring them in, import them. When it later we would have neighborhood friends.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:25:37
Yeah, right. When we moved to Los Lomas we had kids our age living right next door who spoke English. Wow! You know, instead of being next door to sugar peas and burbs.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:25:53
And the house, that the house that I was born in, the Lewis Road house, that was where they were farming the sugar peas. That was like the little house and that it was right outside. There were the fields. And I remember that we always have these balls of white twine, because that's what you string with for them to grow up. And so the cousins, even on my mom's side, it'd be the summer like, oh, you're here for the weekend, grab a ball of, you know. And I was little, so my mom would have me out in the, I would just be in a row, you know, and they'd be stringing and they'd be growing. And it was, that, that's what I remember about that house. It was not—there was there was the Del Pieros lived across the street, which is a very, which is a well known Watsonville family. And they the boys were older than, than my brother, but the fen— they were very kind like the— the woman, who were, they were white. And they were very, very kind to us. And my mom always really appreciated that, that, that Mrs. Del Piero was so— because I think it was fair class-based then. Like today, I would look at it differently, but I know for her, she's thinking I'm here, we're here, we're doing this and these people who live in a really nice house, it's over and across are just very, you know, kind.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:27:14
Talking about the Del Pieros? Yeah, yeah. Um, so it's by no means the only thing. Yeah, but I think something that greatly contributed to how close Rita and I were, and still are, is, we didn't have neighbors. We only had each other to play with, to interact with. Because we, we didn't have kids next door to play with instead. So I'm boosting her out of the crib. You know, when,

when I'm middle like, four, and she's there—when I'm five, and she was two or whatever. Because we, we had no one else. That's by no means the only contributing factor to our closeness. But I think it's a big part of it. And it was certainly the driving force at the beginning. Sure, sure.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:28:08
Well, family, you know, like, family, it was always family is important. It's better, because I told my kids, my kids are four years apart. And what they always heard growing up is that, you know, you, you know, you will always be your brother and your sister. And that should be your best friend for your whole life. You will always have each other. So if you have a squabble or whatever you need to, you know, put that aside and see that's the most important relationship you're going to have is with your sibling, for the rest of your life. And you always think you're like howling into the wind, and you just don't know what they pick up on. But, but when Sofia was in second grade and Jared was in sixth, we had a girl with us that we have taken to something and she had a twin brother, and she was saying, you know, I hate my brother, and I wish he would just go, you know, and me and my dad [unknown]. And they had, the parents work split and I and we're sitting there and Jared says, my son, oh, no, no, your brother is the most—and he just verbatim spits it all out. I'm like, oh, he was listening. [laughter]

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:28:21
Yeah, I have that relationship with my brother. The one that you met. Yeah, he's like my bestie. Camille, he's 10 years older than me.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:29:20
Really?

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:29:20
Yeah and he came from the Philippines when I was nine years old. And I also had another brother. I have another brother who's five years. We're very close, just so close. We call each other like twice a week long.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:29:33
I followed her to LA.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:29:35
That's so sweet. I would still live with—you know. He lives in an apartment in Silverlake.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:29:41

I used to despise Los Angeles. I am very much a San Franciscan. You know, and I still am very much a fan of the San Francisco teams. The Giants and the 49ers and whatnot. But, you know, after Jared was born, I was coming down here often and I mean like once a month to visit and get vicarious parental fulfillment via my sister's kids. So then finally, when Jared was three, and Sophia wasn't born yet, I decided to hell with it. I'm tired. I'm just stuck in a rut here in San Francisco. I, I might as well move down there instead of jumping on Southwest Airlines once a month to go visit for a long weekend.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:30:30
But was your dad down here? And now he is with you up there?

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:30:34
So my dad was in the Philippines. So he had planned on retiring there. So he was here for about 30 years. Moved back in 2015. He had a plan. Yeah. And then his dementia accelerated very fast.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:30:47
Do you live in Santa Cruz?

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:30:48
No we live in Oakland so—

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:30:50
Did he have anyone—no one to care for him there.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:30:52
He had my maternal family. They were very sweet. But he was living alone. Yeah, you know, and it just was the lockdown really, really was brutal. And so I did operation bring dad to Oakland. And you know, he's been with me since.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:31:04
Was it during, after the pandemic started? You got him here?

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:31:07
It was during. It just, it made the most sense. And he kind of recovered, you know, the brain is interesting in that way. And I think, you know, he was a botanist. And so I think that's also added some protective quality to his brain. So he's, you know, he may be at mid stage Alzheimer's, but it looks very early. It's hard. You know, he's 88. But he's been loving, you know, the project, you know, and he reads the calendar all the time. I took him to see Juanita

and we went to Aromas. And Antoinette really liked him. She said that he was really similar to her dad. Its because he's Ilokano. He's loud and curses. That's about it. Not to discount Antoinette's connections with you.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:31:50
I gotta say that sounds like Uncle Skippy because he was a little bit of a—I don't know. He was like a mix between Daddy and Big Uncle in that he was very confident. You know, like a little swag? [Indistinct speaking in the background]

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:32:06
Actually, he had a lot of swag. Yeah. If you look at some of the pictures of Uncle Skippy, he's always got his hat jauntily tilted, you know, to look cool.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:32:20
And he had this squint. This attitude that like—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:32:23
He didn't always have that squint.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:32:24
I don't know as long as I knew we have a squint because I even say it now when there's a picture of me, I say I'm doing the Uncle Skippy squint.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:32:31
When you look at pictures of him when he was younger, long before we or his kids were born, he's not all squinty. He might have had an eye injury or something at some point.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:32:40
Okay, this connects the dots a little bit more for my dad and Uncle Skippy. I have two more things to talk about. I know that we're going to be approaching almost two hours on the recording, but you brought up something that I hadn't planned on asking and then it just dawned on me. [recorder stops] Thankfully, we have this one for backup or quarters, the card is full per usual. I was talking to Antoinette and actually, Jeanette Crosetti, about women in the fields and the things that they had to do when they worked in the fields. They talked about laying down irrigation pipes, they said it was sort of the woman's task because the pipes were lighter, they could be directed more just to where they needed to go. Whereas the men were sort of expected to know the tasks already coming into the fields. Were you ever expected to work and were there things you did?

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:33:31
No, it's really interesting because my, in terms of fieldwork, because Lanny worked for the uncles right. And then he had that one summer he worked with Daddy, but, but for me, it was it was I was not expected to. I mean, when I worked I was a tutor. I was like the nerd brain. So I was a tutor. I tutored kids and then I worked in food service in town like getting the pizza or whatever. [Unknown speaking in the background] Yes, thank you, honey. Yes, I had all those jobs. I smelled like pizza, I smelled like, like whatever. But I I didn't I didn't work in the fields. I don't think my dad wanted me to work in the fields. I think that was part of it. It's interesting you should say that about the pipe laying because I was just talking to you know, I was telling you about Junior who's here, his family is from Mexico and his brothers are working in Oregon, I can't remember where they're working in now, it's not in potatoes. But he just told me that the two brothers, the one learned how to drive tractor while he was home. So now he has an elevated position and the other one is laying pipe. He's moving irrigation pipes that's considered the like lowest job. So it sounds interesting you should say that because that was the first I heard that moving the pipe. I think that the crews, the one thing, I don't know did they show you, did the girls show you the short hoes? The short? Yes because the guy—[indistinct speaking in the background] You know its a huge political battle because it's back-breaking work to do that. Because and in the Filipino men, like Albert Nabor, was in the fields until he was 70 bent over doing it, but they were smaller and they were considered, you know, like you can do that work because you're smaller than then the Bracero program when the Mexican man would come in to do it, because it was harder for them to do. And it was that was something that the unions were able to do was to replace the short hoe with the long hoe. It was a big political issue, because the owners would say you're not as accurate with a long hoe as a short hoe. And it was just debilitating, debilitating to your body to use a short hoe. But there nobody cared because it was just about the work product. Right. And I mean, you see it today. It is very obvious during the pandemic, how crews are still treated today. Forget the union and forget the laws, forget the whatever. They're out there in the in the, in the the cutting sheds, and they're in the field, and they're side by side. They say put some little plastic. They're still standing side by side, and they weren't vaccinated, and they were getting really sick. And a lot of them lived in congregate housing, and then people were getting sick. So that, you know, the, the the experience of farm laborers, which is really what most Filipinos came in [unknown] and certainly a lot of us had experienced—

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:36:12
In Watsonville, not the Filipinos in big cities.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:36:14
Yeah, no. But the manongs of that generation and this process—it's the it's it's still today. It's still some of the same kinds of issues in terms of—and the reason that in Monterey County,

they started changing conditions is because in Monterey County, and I think Newsom did this, the whole county, the numbers in terms of COVID was for the whole county, you couldn't say so the west part of the county, the more affluent part, they were doing just fine. It was all the rural agricultural areas, it was. you know, Watsonville, which is Santa Cruz County, but it was in Monterey and Salinas, Salinas Valley, terrible numbers. And then they, that forced the, the farm owners and the communities there to say, we have to prioritize the health of the workers, because those numbers are hurting us, are causing a bigger lockdown and worse issues. It wasn't out of the kindness of their hearts to take care of the farm laborers. But the result of it was, it ended up being brilliant. Because it did say as a community, your community is not micro communities, it's the whole community. And you have to have health in the areas that are five miles away from you, not just in your more affluent area. And, and so that's, you know, the idea that, that, oh, these Filipino guys, these old guys, these guys in their 60s are out there. Well, they can do it. They've been doing it their whole, you know, their whole life. It wasn't until it became a bigger issue that it was finally pushed through to have better work conditions for them that benefited them. And those short hoes. Daddy had the short hoes too. They had them at the house.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:37:47
So backing it up to your original question about women in the fields and laying irrigation pipes. I didn't see that at all. Now, I don't know the Crosettis, our dad never worked for the Crosettis. Uncle Skippy was a foreman for Crosetti. I don't personally know Jeanette Crosetti. But I do of course, personally know my cousins Antoinette and Veronica DeOcampo. Their perspective is kind of unique in terms of for a couple of reasons. One, Uncle Skippy, in addition to working for the Crosettis and others, had his own land and grew his own crops. And his kids were girls. [Indistinct speaking in the background] Until Paul came along. So Antoinette and Veronica were young females laying agricultural pipes because somebody had to do it. And that's what Uncle Skippy had was two daughters. I saw very little of that. I saw a lot of women in the fields but not laying agricultural pips. What did they do? Picking strawberries mostly.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:38:57
You saw it a lot more in the Mexican families.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:39:00
Or harvesting something.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:39:02
But not as many in the Filipino families?

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:39:04

They wanted their kids in school.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:39:06
Another thing that gets overlooked is there was a lot of flowers and still is grown in the Pajaro Valley greenhouses. And a lot of those jobs were held by females. One of my very early ag-type jobs was very briefly I worked for the Yoshida family, who lived two doors down, and they had a few greenhouses behind their house and grew carnations. And I would pluck the buds off the lower part of the stem so it would produce one long stemmed flower. And I did that for just a couple months. It was an after school job when I was like in fourth or fifth grade or something like that. Before I worked for Big Uncle, but after my first job picking berries for mom's, the teacher that mom worked with—Yeah, that was out on Buena Vista out on San Andreas Road, close to Manresa beach. But yeah, I did not see that myself. He would see an occasional woman out in a in the cutting crews or in a in, in the thinning crews, which is where the short handle hoes were used. And even less often and laying agricultural pipe. So I did not see that. Yeah it's interesting, because when I think about like, [Unknown] Tabancay, so she worked in the, at Smuckers in the canning. That, that was you saw him in there in those jobs. And then a lot of the other women did not have, unless it was you, you had family farming did not have, in our experience agricultural jobs. And, you know, we were having our asses kicked to go to school. Right, right. That was the, the American dream. So.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:40:57
You know, I, I do want to go back to the labor question too, because that was something that, you know, I think, even prior to recording, was really interesting. The UFW, right? And so the organizing and you were coming of age really, in that time too. The organizing was accelerating. What was your dad's position on all of that?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:41:17
He was all for being unionized. And getting paid a little bit more and suddenly, suddenly having access to benefits such as unemployment insurance and, and company provided health care. But he was very much against the confrontational aspect of the organization of farm workers. He was somewhat conservative politically and socially. And he just didn't like the idea of Filipinos and Mexicans and others rioting in the fields over over unionizing. He just wanted to go to work.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:41:59
Yeah, but the really interesting thing, because that was your, that was that was his, his first experience of that was, it wasn't, I think a lot of the Filipinos of that manong generation were not supportive of unionization in general, or it's or the and probably because of the tactics. But it was, and this is what we were talking about a little earlier, I think there was a, there's a

different cultural relationship with the United States for the men who came over from what was colonized and then liberated by, you know, the US, to the US than a lot of the people who were coming up from Mexico and either working through the Bracero program or not, because they identified more with the company. I think a lot of them I know, you know, Uncle Skippy did, our dad did. They were doing the right thing, they were doing the right thing, it was the loyal thing. It was the thing, you know, you're not you're not not refusing to work, you're not agitating. That's not the way you know, things are done. And, and, and so even when people, people had walked off the job in the, in the fields, and, and they had been saying because there was some violence in the fields, and he Daddy was still out there. He's like, well this is my job. Like Lanny said, I'm still plowing the fields and, and the, his foreman told him you need to go home because it's not safe for you because there'd been some incidents of violence, including somebody who was pulled off a tractor. And that was a time frame where I think, yeah, he didn't like the confrontation. But I think they were very skeptical of the UFW because of that. And I think also because it was, you know, run by and focused primarily by Mexican Americans and Mexicans and they didn't relate as much, you know, to that. They certainly benefited from it once unionization happened, and I know what you were saying. They didn't, they didn't vote for the UFW.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:42:40
They held an open free and fair election. And as it, as it grew, though, the workers for Sears Brothers voted to become Teamsters, not UFW. Now, another thing too, it all depends on, it's all about the money. It's all about the money. When it comes, when you boil it down. That's true. It's so many things in life. In terms of your position and your outlook. Our uncle Leon Lazo, was not a farm worker. He was a farmer. He owned the land, grew the crops, and hired other people to work the land. He was very much against unionization because it was gonna take money out of his pocket. Had nothing to do with being Filipino or Mexican or Japanese or anything like that. It was follow money. And Big Uncle as we called him, Leon Lazo was very much against. I remember him talking about it. I was around 12 when this happened. So I was already fairly aware and he wasn't, he wasn't adamantly, pound your fist on the table against unionization, but he wasn't for it because if he had to pay the workers more and provide them health care benefits, then he'd make less profit.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:45:12
The funny thing is, you're saying that I'm just remembering. Remember our Christmas presents from him [laughter]. So he didn't have to worry so much about unionization because most of his workforce were undocumented. And at Christmas, sometimes he'd write us a check. And he'd say, it was from the payroll for that he called it the wetback payroll, that's what he called at the time. But that was, you know, a lot of the workers were undocumented that were coming

up. And so they were, they, they were in, they were in the fields, and that was, that was different than the Filipinos to, you know, they, it was not the same experience.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:45:50
Yeah, very different.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:45:52
Manong Leon was very, very big on hiring undocumented workers to work in fields. Remember, I was, when I was picking zucchini for him. This was the summer between seventh and eighth grade, I believe. So I would have been 13 or so. I remember, there was a bunch of us on the crew cutting zucchini. And I remember, and I only worked in the summer, because like Rita said earlier, it was all about getting an education. So I didn't work in the fields after school. In that, in those days. I remember seeing the green plane circling around. And this went on for a couple of weeks. And then one day, a bunch of green vans rolled up to the fields. And the crew that my uncle had hired was a bunch of Mexicans, two Chinese guys, and me. And the Chinese guys were illegal too or undocumented is the is the more approved term now. But illegal as much [speaking in the background]. And immigration took all of them. And they were going to take me too because I was pretty brown. I was even browner than I am now because I was working out in the sun every day. But I was also one of the smartest 12 year olds you'd ever want to meet. And I started using all these big words in English that even these immigration agents didn't understand. And they were like, well, he's obviously American. We'll leave him here and they hauled away everybody else. And then Big Uncle comes at the end of the day to collect a harvest and pay us. And he's like, Lanny where's everybody? I said, immigration took them away Uncle. They're gonna take me too but I use big words and they left me here. Two weeks later, all Mexicans were back.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:48:02
Do you know how?

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:48:03
It's the way it happened every time they'd take them, they'd go over the border, they'd come right back and they go back to their jobs. That's what always happened.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:48:09
The Chinese guys never came back because it's a lot harder to swim across the Pacific Ocean than the Rio Grande.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:48:15

But our neighbors, like our neighbors after Mrs. Brown died, our neighbors, the family that lived there, they had lots of folks coming, the [Unknown] brothers. They got raided a couple times. Everybody always came back. It's just like they're back real fast.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:48:28
Wow. Yeah. Gosh, thank you again, for such a good conversation. Will you believe we're almost at two hours?

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:48:36
Do we need to have a third one?

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:48:38
Well, you know that's up to you.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:48:39
Do we have topics that, do you have topics that we haven't covered? I could keep going? I would be perfectly happy to do it. Third round?

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:48:49
That'd be great.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:48:50
I can't speak for her, but I think you probably would, but she obviously would have to be available.

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:48:54
You know, I think so for me, because so June 30 is sort of my cutoff date for when I just wrap up personally for the academic year. And then I'm on research leave. But this is technically research, so I get to actually do this now. I'll be back in LA in August. And for my dad's birthday, we're getting him to like a cabin in Fraser Park.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:49:16
Fraser park up by?

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:49:19
There by like Angeles.

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:49:23
You and your brother?

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:49:27
Well my siblings. Yeah. So there are four of us here and my Dad—So I have half siblings. You met Camille, he's my one of my half siblings. My full brother is here to my mom. And so we're just going to be there for a weekend. I'll have Ryan come by. Well, I'll be back in August.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:49:43
Well and the only other thing other than whatever is going on in our lives but related to this project. The only other thing is we got to get our shit together for the calendar. Now Roy had said four to six pictures. But I noticed, I counted 10 or 12 different smaller pictures. I need to check with Roy about whether or not we're supposed to do the layout ourselves or submit pictures that he does the layout I would rather do—

Rita Louise Tuzon 1:50:14
You are talking to two very controlling people, so we'll probably do the layout.

Modesto Orlando Tuzon 1:50:18
You can do that in Shutterfly, right. Yeah. And do— is the recorder on?

Kathleen Gutierrez 1:50:24
I'm gonna turn off the recorder now