

10-10-2011

## **Interview with the Cacas Brothers**

Ben Cacas

Eugene Cacas

Ron Cacas

California State University, Monterey Bay

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/ohcma\\_chinatown](https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/ohcma_chinatown)

---

This Oral History is brought to you for free and open access by the Oral History and Community Memory Archive at Digital Commons @ CSUMB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Chinatown Renewal Project by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CSUMB. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@csumb.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@csumb.edu).

CSUMB Oral History & Community Memory Archive

Chinatown Renewal Project

Interviewee: Ben, Eugene, and Ron Cacas

Interviewer: Alma Perez

Date of Interview: October 10, 2011

Duration of Interview: 48:34

**Alma Perez** 00:00

Perfect. Thank you. Thank you so much all for being here. Today is Monday, October 10, 2011. My name is Alma Perez, and I'm here with Mr. Ben, Mr. Eugene, and Mr. Ron Cacas. And we're here at John and Adelia's residence, which is the parents of these three gentlemen. May I have your permission to record?

**Cacas Brothers** 00:30

Yes.

**Alma Perez** 00:31

Thank you so much. So, tell me about your family history. How did they come to this area?

**Eugene Cacas** 00:44

Would you like to start Ron?

**Ron Cacas** 00:45

Okay. [laughs] Well, our parents both came from the Philippines. My father—our father came around the latter part of the 1920s and our mother came at the early part of the 1930s. Our father came over as a laborer, a young man, and came as a laborer, stopped in Hawaii, worked there for a few years in the sugarcane factory, our plant, and then proceeded to San Francisco, where he became a labor contractor by accident. He was a kind of a natural born leader. So he had several Filipinos who had been with him in Hawaii and on the ship, and he ended up as the spokesman. And the farmers and growers used to wait at the San Francisco piers looking for foreign workers, and they asked him if these Filipino men that were with him—I think there are about 10 or 15 or so—were with them, and he said, "Yes." And so he—that was his first experience as the labor—farm labor contractor [laughs] and his whole life that became his business: farm labor contractor. Our mother came over because her cousin, Mrs. Ramona Losada, her first cousin, sent for her because she had four daughters here in Watsonville. In Salinas and Watsonville they were living. And she sent for her mother to help her take care of the four girls. And she said, help me take care of the girls and you live with us. And you will send you also to school. And so that's how our mother came here. And she was one—I believe one of the first Filipinas to graduate from Hartnell College, which at that time was Salinas Junior College. And then our mother and our father met. That's how they both got here, and that's how they met.

**Alma Perez** 02:55

Wow. Do you know how they met?

**Ron Cacas** 02:59

I'm not sure. Do you guys know? I would just—I'm guessing socially, probably. [laughs]

**Eugene Cacas** 03:06

I think at the social functions, and then my father spotted my mother there, and then that's when he started courting her. That my—I remember that. That's how it got started.

**Ben Cacas** 03:26

They started dating.

**Eugene Cacas** 03:27

Yeah.

**Ron Cacas** 03:28

Chaperoned. Very much—they had to bring one of Auntie [unclear] children with—always with a child with them. That's right.

**Ben Cacas** 03:37

That's right, yeah.

**Ron Cacas** 03:39

Auntie [unclear] being the one who brought her over.

**Alma Perez** 03:42

Mm-hmm.

**Ron Cacas** 03:42

She said, "Okay, you're gonna go on the date with him, but you have to bring one of the four girls." [laughs] That's right. That's correct.

**Alma Perez** 03:43

Good. I heard that your father became a foreman by accident.

**Ron Cacas** 03:56

I say by accident because when they arrived in San Francisco—as I remember his story—the grower or the farmer approached him. And of course, he had just arrived, he wasn't a farm laborer. I say by accident because he was a natural born leader, apparently. And he became the spokesman for this small group, and the farmer was looking for workers. So, by saying—he asked the men, "Are you with me?" And they said, "Yes." So that's his first experience with being a farm labor contractor. So using that same theory of having men and supplying labor was his whole business his whole life.

**Ben Cacas** 04:43

I believe the farmer asked him if he could get some men for the farm, and he volunteers, you know, I could get you some men, even though because he is very—

**Ron Cacas** 05:01

Outgoing.

**Ben Cacas** 05:02

—outgoing and so that's how he got started to become a farm labor contractor. And he started here in Salinas. And then as years go by, he started also in Yuma, Arizona. So and also he bought a farm in Yuma and started farming there also at the same time, and from Salinas he also started in—

**Ron Cacas** 05:45

Tucson?

**Ben Cacas** 05:47

No, Tempe.

**Ron Cacas** 05:48

Tempe, Arizona.

**Ben Cacas** 05:49

Tempe, Arizona. So he had labor camps here in Salinas, labor camps in Yuma—

**Ron Cacas** 05:54

That's right.

**Ben Cacas** 05:55

—and a labor camp in Tempe.

**Alma Perez** 05:59

What do you remember about the labor camp here in Salinas?

**Eugene Cacas** 06:04

When I was—I remember when I was a small boy, we lived in the camp, and from the outside, you can see it through the camp. But then my mother was—she loves to interior decorate. So as she made that little cabin, that little room into a beautiful house. So as you go, you see the outside looks like a camp, but once you open the door to where we live, it was a beautiful little place. She decorated the whole house and everything. I remember—first we had just one bedroom, and like a little living room, that was all. Then my mother and my father expanded it because the family got bigger. Then they put another room, because we used to share the kitchen with the laborers. My mom would cook for us, and we would eat there. Then later on my mother would—they put a kitchen, and then they put another bedroom. So we had three—two bedrooms, and then they put our own bathroom, because I just remember when my mother used to have to take a bath, she would put me outside so the laborers wouldn't come in while she was taking a bath. So that's how the little camp, our little house, expanded.

**Ron Cacas** 07:33

Yeah. So we lived in the labor camp with the laborers. Didn't have our own kitchen. Did not have our own bathroom. So our mother had to take a bath where the workers did, but she would have one of us there so nobody could go in [laughs] while she was bathing. That's right. I remember that now. That's true. And when it would rain, she made a game. She'd say get the pots and pans so you could get the water from the house [laughs]. Yeah, that was in the Boronda district out there, out in Boronda district. We owned that camp for many years. Kept it. That's how they started with the family.

**Alma Perez** 08:19

So were there more families on the camp?

**Ron Cacas** 08:21

No.

**Eugene Cacas** 08:22

No, we were the only, because my father was the one that—

**Ron Cacas** 08:28

Was the farm laborer contractor.

**Eugene Cacas** 08:29

—labor contractor. That's how we made our living. We room and board the laborers, the workers. And that's how we would make—my folks made their money.

**Alma Perez** 08:42

How was it for you, like, just ordinary morning to wake up?

**Ron Cacas** 08:49

What period in our life? [laughs] As a teenager?

**Alma Perez** 08:55

One that is, like, memorable to you?

**Eugene Cacas** 08:58

Well, I used to—I remember I would—our folks spent good time with us. I remember when it was raining, we couldn't go out, so our folks would—we would play inside the house. We would play blind man's bluff. Now the house was really small, so I remember my father would put the handkerchief around his eyes. And then my mother and the brothers, we would hide. I mean, just get on top of the table or get on top of the heater, and my father would grope for us. And then after he grabs one of us we would clap, and things like that.

**Alma Perez** 09:42

How about when you went to eat in the kitchen? Was there a lot of people there, or how was it?

**Ben Cacas** 09:52

Well, yes, the workers would be there, and they would be in one table and we would be on the other table as family. Yeah.

**Alma Perez 10:07**

Yeah. Do you remember the menu, or what was your special dish?

**Eugene Cacas 10:10**

They would have—because what they serve when—I mean, we would eat whatever the cook would cook for the men. And then they had all types of stews and vegetables and things like that. And then at—like I said, after we built our own kitchen and our own bathroom, then we would—my mom would prepare for us in our own little house.

**Alma Perez 10:46**

How was it for your father and your mother in those days? Do you remember any story that your parents probably shared with you?

**Ron Cacas 10:59**

Well, I remember that they were really struggling. They were very poor, actually, at that stage of their life. But I remember mom and dad saying that their big night out was to go to a movie. And they'd go to movies where they would give like green stamps, or they'd have a drawing for plates or cups. And they'd have also a drawing at the theater. And from—I guess it's like a bingo or something. They'd win \$10 or \$15. But I remember mother saying that one of the evenings, they went to the movie. They won a couple of dollars and they were so excited, they went next door to the restaurant after the movie and had pancakes. And so that was a big evening for them. But they were a team. They worked together. Mom said she used to save the empty bottles and get the deposit on them. And they did that. And they were a team. They talked about investments together. Dad had mom's input. He didn't just impulsively go out and do business. They always discussed it. And I think mom used to kind of, like, be behind the scenes. She wanted dad to be the spokesperson. And she would—but she would encourage him and confide with him. And I think that was their strength. That was their—not only good luck, but it was using the opinion and experience and intelligence of two people coming to a intelligent decision. Not so much egos involved, but teamwork. I would say teamwork is—

**Alma Perez 13:00**

Extraordinary. And you mentioned that your mom graduated from college?

**Ron Cacas 13:07**

Hartnell College, which was I think Salinas—

**Ben Cacas 13:11**

Community.

**Ron Cacas 13:12**

—Community College. Yeah.

**Alma Perez 13:12**

Was she involved in any way in any clubs or any fraternizations?

**Ben Cacas 13:22**

Those years, you know, she just came from the Philippines, which, I guess she was not very active then.

**Ron Cacas 13:32**

But later on—

**Ben Cacas 13:33**

Later on.

**Ron Cacas 13:34**

Later on. She was very active later. Very active, oh yeah.

**Alma Perez 13:37**

How was that so?

**Ben Cacas 13:40**

She was—in fact, she was president of the Filipino Women's Club. Yeah, and she was very active, and also they used to have a Dimas-Alang fraternity. They have—what do they call it, Women's—

**Ron Cacas 14:01**

Yeah, Auxiliary. She was matron for the Women's Auxiliary of the Caballeros de Dimas-Alang. She was in the Women's Club—president, like Ben said.

**Ben Cacas 14:12**

They would go to San Francisco and Washington, all over.

**Ron Cacas 14:18**

Conferences.

**Ben Cacas 14:19**

Conferences.

**Eugene Cacas 14:19**

Conventions. Yeah, that's right.

**Ben Cacas 14:20**

Conventions, like that.

**Alma Perez 14:24**

How about on your dad's side? Do you remember when you were probably younger, when you were little boys maybe—do you remember going to Chinatown anytime, or was it Chinatown here then? Or I don't know—

**Eugene Cacas** 14:44

Yes, it was Chinatown. In fact, in those days, they only had maybe one or two Chinese restaurants, and it was in Chinatown, and every Sunday—usually most of the Sundays after church, we would—the family would go to Chinatown, and we would have our lunch down there, which was nice.

**Alma Perez** 15:04

Are you remembering something?

**Ron Cacas** 15:06

Yeah. [laughs]

**Alma Perez** 15:08

Can you share?

**Ron Cacas** 15:11

The—well, it was special. You got me. [laughs] It was special, because you look back now. Nowadays, everybody's—let's face it—got those little iPods, computers. Even at the dinner table the kids are playing with that, or the cell phone. But in those days, that Sunday, going to that—I guess it was Republic—

**Eugene Cacas** 15:36

Yeah.

**Ron Cacas** 15:38

—Chinese restaurant. It would be just—actually, we were four boys at that time. My oldest brother passed away. But we would be the four boys, my mom and dad, and we each had our favorite menu. And I mean, it was a special time because dad would get a kick out of seeing his sons there all eating with him and my mom. I mean, it was just a happy thing. It was just a family Sunday, quick afternoon Chinese dinner at the Republic Cafe. And I guess we look back now, we can appreciate those moments because it was just pure family fun, talking, and we all had our own menus. I think Gene's favorite was sweet and sour. Ben would be—

**Ben Cacas** 16:24

A bean cake or something.

**Ron Cacas** 16:25

—a bean cake. And I don't know, I liked this [unclear] soup and our dad liked pig head, remember? [laughs] And our mother said, "No, no, no, you can't be eating that." But those—to me, that's Chinatown. It was a happy time, Sunday afternoon, as Gene said. A moment with the family together.



And you can—as I look back, you can appreciate it. We took time to share and talk and just relax with each other. That's it.

**Ben Cacas** 16:47

Yeah.

**Alma Perez** 16:57

Tell me a little bit more about those special Sundays in the Republic Cafe?

**Ben Cacas** 17:04

[laughs]

**Eugene Cacas** 17:06

Well, then after—well, it wasn't necessarily Sundays, but we used to work in the fields.

**Ron Cacas** 17:13

Yeah.

**Eugene Cacas** 17:13

And then after we got home, wash up, take a bath and everything, we brothers—we were four brothers—we would go eat down there in Chinatown. And like I said, we'd have our special order, whatever we'd like. And that was a treat for us. We'd get our pay day, and we said, "Let's go to Chinatown and eat." And so that's what we used to do.

**Ron Cacas** 17:35

Ben, tell them tell them about the tassel.

**Ben Cacas** 17:39

No, we were not necessarily just four of us. But we had some friends also that worked in the fields, you know, with us. And after we came from the field, we'd go straight there and have a good dinner. And—

**Alma Perez** 17:58

You can tell me everything!

**Ben Cacas** 18:00

Well—[laughs]

**Alma Perez** 18:00

Because I know you went back! [laughs]

**Ben Cacas** 18:04

Yeah, and our oldest brother, he was kind of naughty, you know?

**Ron Cacas** 18:09

[laughs] Yeah, he was.

**Ben Cacas** 18:10

You know, the Chinese restaurant, they would have this tassel—

**Ron Cacas** 18:14

Tassel, the shiny red tassel from the front—

**Ben Cacas** 18:17

Yeah, hanging, you know, like that. And when the waiter turned around, he would, you know—

**Ron Cacas** 18:25

Cut it. Steal it. [laughs]

**Ben Cacas** 18:27

Cut one or two, you know, because he would hang it—

**Eugene Cacas** 18:30

In his car.

**Ben Cacas** 18:31

—in his car. You know, where the rearview mirror, he would hang it there.

**Ron Cacas** 18:37

But we did it every time we'd go there to eat. They kept cutting the tassels.

**Ben Cacas** 18:42

And so finally they noticed that. [laughs]

**Ron Cacas** 18:47

They talked to our dad, I think. [laughs]

**Ben Cacas** 18:50

Yeah, so we had to stop that. Oh, we had some fun.

**Ron Cacas** 18:56

And that was the safe place to go, Chinatown during those days. I mean, they still had the cabaret, but we didn't—as Gene and Ben said—we thought nothing as young boys to go there Sunday afternoon or in the evening. I mean, it was just a very simple, clean, local place.

**Ben Cacas** 19:14

Those years, it was safe then, you know.

**Alma Perez** 19:18

You mean Chinatown?

**Cacas Brothers** 19:19

Yes.

**Alma Perez** 19:20

How so?

**Ben Cacas** 19:22

Well, not too many violence like the way it is now, you know. I remember those years, they would have a newspaper stand open, and they—that would have an empty can, see. And you just drop a nickel or whatever, a dime.

**Ron Cacas** 19:40

Oh, that's right. [laughs]

**Ben Cacas** 19:40

And you take one newspaper.

**Ron Cacas** 19:41

That's right.

**Ben Cacas** 19:42

And nobody would bother taking the coins or anything. That's how—

**Ron Cacas** 19:47

Safe.

**Alma Perez** 19:47

Only the tassels.

**Ben Cacas** 19:48

Only the tassels, yeah. [laughs] Those days—but nowadays they even get—

**Eugene Cacas** 19:56

Chains.

**Ben Cacas** 19:57

They chain the [Ron laughs] dispenser, you know, [Ron laughs], take the whole thing.

**Ron Cacas** 20:02

Yeah, that's true.

**Ben Cacas** 20:03

But in those days, it was pretty safe.

**Alma Perez 20:06**

Great. I hear one of you say that you worked in the fields yourself. Would you like to share some stories? Was it—

**Ben Cacas 20:16**

Yes, our father wanted us to experience, you know, how hard it is working in a field. And I remember in Yuma, like I said, we had a farm. We used to grow—he used to grow cotton. "And okay, kids, go out there and thin—or hoe the field," you know. And I remember Eugene, he started chopping the cotton [Ron laughs]. It was already thinned down, you know. And he wanted us to just take the weeds out, and he started chopping. [Ron laughs] And the cotton was supposed to be, you know—

**Ron Cacas 20:24**

A seven-inch space.

**Ben Cacas 21:04**

Oh, and the lettuce, also the lettuce. But when he went out there, and he saw Eugene chopping everything, oh, he raised hell.

**Ron Cacas 21:14**

But it's true. He—dad wanted us to experience what it was like to earn and work and appreciate what the workers were going through. And we would just work during the summer really, for our pocket money for—to buy our clothes and stuff like that. But these people that work, that's their only income. It's for survival. And that's the only future, if you call it a future, that they had to look forward to. But at least we experienced that. I mean, we used to wash dishes, for example, in the labor camp. Also—he wanted—we used to drive the pickup trucks to the field and serve the lunch. We used to work out there hoeing and thinning with the short hoe, which was the big issue. We experienced that. And I'll tell you, it was hard. And I never lasted as long as those—we might start right with them, and we'd be even fast. And they'd say, "You guys better slow down. This is a long day ahead of you." And sure enough, maybe an hour later, you would see them way—rows and rows ahead of us, and we were practically crawling with that short hoe. So we understood that.

**Ben Cacas 22:32**

We could only work half day.

**Ron Cacas 22:34**

Yeah, couldn't last. Could not last.

**Alma Perez 22:37**

Hard work, huh?

**Ben Cacas 22:38**

That's how hard it was. Yeah.

**Ron Cacas 22:39**

But we also had a sense of pride, because on pay day, we did have our money. And again, one of those things that Gene said was our big treat on pay day is go home, shower up, change and then straight to Republic restaurant for Chinese food.

**Ben Cacas 22:57**

Yeah.

**Alma Perez 22:58**

Looking forward to that. Anything else you remember or you want to share with us, growing up or your parents?

**Eugene Cacas 23:14**

Well, I remember one time that we were coming home from town and the men—they treated us like family. We treated each like family, and they treated us the same way. And when they would treat us—when they'd—I remember they used to bring me bags of candy. And all the time they had candy or cookies, and then when our parents would go someplace, they would babysit us, and they would take care of us, you know, while our folks went out and things like that.

**Alma Perez 24:01**

Tell me your story, each one of you. Your story. Can you share that?

**Eugene Cacas 24:08**

Well, I remember when we—like I said, the Filipino community was small, but they were a close-knit family. And we grew up with the second generation, with the children of our folks. And we grew up together. We had folk dancing. We had drum and bugle corps. We had—

**Ron Cacas 24:39**

Basketball, sports, I guess.

**Eugene Cacas 24:40**

Basketball for the youth, and we also had dance band. And as I grew up, that's how I remembered our culture. We were all—because like I said, Filipino community was close. When we had that, we used to go to Stockton and Tracy, San Francisco, and do the folk dancing and the bugle corps and drums marching band. And as I grew up, we grew up—part of our life was also in Arizona, like my brother said. And so we went to part grammar school there, and my high school. So when we were there, there was hardly any Filipinos at all—family—in Arizona. So, when I graduated from high school, I said, I miss the Filipino family knit. So, I decided to go to San Francisco City College to go get close again with the Filipinos. And so when I went there, I—we mixed with the Filipino children, or, I mean, teenagers there, and I went back to enjoying my culture. And that's where I met my wife, and we've been married now for 53 years. So that's how I remember my Filipino culture.

**Alma Perez 26:25**

Culture. How about you?

**Ben Cacas 26:29**

Well, it's pretty much the same, but after I graduated from high school, I went to the service, the US Army, and I was shipped to Germany and then France, and after I was discharged, I came back here and worked for my father. I used to run a crew in Arizona, and also it was seasonal. From Arizona, we would come back here to Salinas, and that's where I met my wife, here in Salinas. And, well, after we finished harvest here in Salinas, we would go back to Yuma again. And also, go straight to Tempe. And that's how I started my family. And I have three boys. I mean, three children—a girl and two boys. Yeah. And they're all grown up right now. So, now we're living here back in Salinas again. We love Salinas, yeah. So, that's about it.

**Alma Perez 28:13**

Okay, how about you Mr. Ron?

**Ron Cacas 28:16**

Well, I'm the youngest. [laughs]

**Ben Cacas 28:21**

He has a long story.

**Ron Cacas 28:22**

[laughs] I'm the youngest, and I always use to, I think, get in mischief and troubles. I was pretty talkative, outspoken, and more adventurous, I guess, than my conservative brothers. But I always had a lot of fantasies, really. Daydreaming a lot. I remember that. We went to a movie, and we saw a cowboy picture, and you could see Hopalong Cassidy or somebody jumping from the roof of someplace and jumping onto a horse. I'd be doing that too, because in Arizona, we had a couple of horses. Or if it was about a detective, I'd be running around dressed up as a detective or whatever. So I've always had that kind of, leaning towards fantasy and acting and so forth.

**Ben Cacas 29:20**

Alright. I used to watch him playing by himself [Ron laughs]—"bang, bang!" and he would fall. [laughs]

**Alma Perez 29:32**

So you're corroborating what they're saying? [laughs]

**Ron Cacas 29:33**

[laughs] Really did. I really had quite imagination, but—so growing up, I used to—in high school, I was in a band, in the marching band for the high school. Then later on I learned to play the drums. So, we had a combo in high school so I ended up playing in the dance band. And, again, that was kind of my experience of maybe being on stage in a way too. But I think back now and I think it was a way of not having to ask girls how to dance. Because I had the excuse for not dancing because I was in the band. And girls would come up say, "Hey, Ron, can't you get off that drums and dance?" So I think back then

it was kind of kind of a protective way of not being embarrassed. But that gave me an exposure to, actually, entertainment. Because on Saturdays we'd play on the local television station. At that time it was popular to have, on Saturdays, teenage dance program or something on TV. So I was—in youth, I enjoyed doing that. And then later I went to, like Gene, I went to move back from Arizona, Yuma. I moved to San Francisco to go to college. So I went to City College, San Francisco, later University of San Francisco. There I was pretty active in Filipino students' club. I was, like, the president of the Filipino student club at City College, president of the Filipino student club at the University of San Francisco and stuff. So again, it was being on the mic. It was mixing with people. I enjoyed that, socializing and taking part in discussions and representation of the students from the Philippines and that type of thing. I met my wife who was from the Philippines at one of these social dances. That's where we met. And then she went back to the Philippines, and we were separated for—actually for several years, but we wrote and so forth. I remember I didn't really know what I wanted to be. I just knew I wanted adventure, whether it was the movies or—but in those days, you didn't think of being an Asian newscaster or an Asian movie star. It wasn't that way in those days, you know. But now you look, you've got major anchor women of Asian heritage and Hispanic, everything. But those days, no. But I still tried. I had a little exposure to that. But anyway, in the long run, because of the fact that our parents were active in Filipino communities, politically, socially, civically, I got to know the Filipino communities and so forth, and I was in life insurance for a while, which was really tough. And I worked also in the fields, tried it for about a year later, contracting also down in Arizona, like Ben. And then one weekend, I went to San Francisco—this is after I was married. And I understood they were looking for a Filipino American for a position at Pan American World Airways. They were looking for a person of Philippine ancestral background that could develop the Filipino market, tourism to the Philippines. And so I was recommended by a travel agent, who was a friend of my father's family, and I interviewed and they got me. And so because of the fact that I was born and raised in the United States, of Filipino ancestral background, the fact that I knew about the Philippines but also had assimilated into American society. It's what they were looking for. So by not denying my ancestral background or ethnicity, but actually taking the best from local American society and Philippine cultural—it's exactly what this Pan American World Airways was looking for. And that's the reason that I got the position of them as manager for Philippine sales, and I was trained by Pan American in New York, London, traveled all over the world. I was instrumental in helping develop tourism to the Philippines through Pan American, met so many people, wonderful experiences, and I think I made my parents somewhat proud. I think, thanks to Pan American, I was kind of, without being egotistical, kind of a role model for Filipinos also, because they could see a Filipino with a major international American company be Filipino. So I think it was kind of a bit of a role model. But none of this would have happened again, as I said, without the—our first generation of Filipinos sacrificing, setting standards and goals and examples, creating the opportunities and activities for young Filipinos to participate, to be recognized, to be respected, giving us—saving and working hard and giving us opportunity to be educated. All of these opportunities—there are many, many stories of young Filipinos who have become professionals—lawyers, dentists, businessmen. But again, we must remember that first wave, that first generation of Filipinos who experienced prejudice and all those negative things, but in spite of that, within the American system was able to progress. And that's what I want to acknowledge, that whatever I accomplished or I think the second generation accomplished, it's because of the sacrifices of the first. And like our own parents—our parents, were I think a really good example of that attitude.

**Alma Perez 36:45**

I hear you when you say sacrifices. I heard you when you said the significance of your heritage that you were missing, and you came back. And then I heard you when you said that you serve your country and come back. And then I heard you when you say sacrifices. For all three of you, what would you think would be the greatest sacrifice that first wave did?

**Eugene Cacas 37:14**

They opened the doors for the next generation to come. Now, after they started working in the field, later on they sent for their family. And their family came and then they did better than their parents. They became doctors. They became lawyers, with nurses, which opened the door for them. Now you have a lot of professionals that are from the Philippines and they're Filipinos. And I believe that they opened the door now for all the generations to follow.

**Ben Cacas 37:54**

And also before that, Filipinos, if you're not a citizen, US citizen, you cannot buy a property here.

**Alma Perez 38:05**

That was back then?

**Ben Cacas 38:06**

Yes.

**Alma Perez 38:07**

Is that the prejudice that Ron is talking about?

**Ben Cacas 38:10**

Part of that, yes. Also in some restaurants you could see a sign outside, "No Filipinos Allowed." Those are just like before, "No Black People Allowed" or—

**Eugene Cacas 38:28**

One situation I remember, we were Catholics and we would go to church early to sit in the front row. And I remember the priest came to us and says, "You cannot sit here. You have to sit in the back." So that's how we started the Filipino Presbyterian Church. And like I said, the small community started our own church. I mean, the Presbyterian church, but the Filipino congregation in it.

**Alma Perez 39:05**

Do you remember any other time when you felt this sentiment?

**Eugene Cacas 39:17**

That was my only situation that I remember, going to church and they said couldn't sit in the front.

**Alma Perez 39:23**

If you would have the opportunity to make a legacy or leave something behind you for your future generations, what would it be?



**Eugene Cacas 39:41**

In my opinion, I believe that you should learn your heritage, know—like I was born and raised here in the United States. I'm Filipino descent, but I'm a United States citizen. But I remember my family always speaking in our dialect, in Tagalog, and growing up I could not speak it. I could say words and phrases, but I always learned to understand it. And then as I grew up, I went to school, and I took a course in Tagalog so I could learn more how to speak our language. Now, I believe that even though I'm born and raised here, I should know my Filipino descent of our language, our heritage, and what our—dialect, and what we eat, and things like that. And I believe that they should, even if they're American born, they should learn their culture and be proud that they're Filipinos, even if they're born here in the States.

**Ron Cacas 41:12**

I would—my legacy would be somewhat like Gene's, piggy-backing a bit. Number one, they should know something about their ancestry, and their [unclear], and their ethnic background because—and try to accept those positive and wonderful things about their culture, take advantage of them. We have certain customs of respect and attitude. The desire to progress. That's kind of in our culture, and respect for the elders. I think we must remind them of those values. We also should remind this group how brave and how much of a sacrifice the first generation did, because if you think about it, that first wave in the 1920s and 30s were not very well educated, did not speak English very well, had no relatives or contacts here in the United States, had—didn't even know what it was like. They only had a dream. And that's bravery, to leave the security and familiarity and warmth of your country and your home and go to the unknown. That's like being Christopher Columbus, going to the unknown only with a dream. And they accomplished that. They accomplished more than what they dream. And they did it, I repeat again, within the framework of the United States, of this democracy. Under these rules, regulations, and this Constitution, the first wave of Filipino Americans opened the door and opportunities for the next generation to come, through birth or through migration. So we must always think and remember that sacrifice. And I would also say, take the best of both societies. Take those factors, those positive things from the Filipino culture, and take the positive things from this society, America. And so by combining the positive from both, you become a plus. [laughs]

**Alma Perez 44:17**

How about you Mr.—

**Ben Cacas 44:18**

Well, it is very important to share your experience with your children, with your grandchildren, how you became and become successful with what you have, what you have accomplished here in the United States. And I always share those things, my experience with my children and also grandchildren. I think that is very important. And always, never forget your experience. And it's always good to share it with your children so they can pass it on to their children also.

**Ron Cacas 45:24**

You know, I was in a play once. It was called—at the Western Stage—called the Seven Colored Flowers. Basically, it was about the various cultures of various Asian cultures. But there was—I just

thought of it now. There was phrase there that makes sense. It's basically what we're saying. If I remember right, the phrase went something like this: That which is engraved in stone will eventually wear away, but that which is told from one generation to the next will live on forever. That is very true.

**Alma Perez** 46:14

Wonderful. Is there something we're missing or we want to add?

**Ron Cacas** 46:26

Gene? [laughs]

**Eugene Cacas** 46:27

I can't think of any more.

**Ron Cacas** 46:32

Ben?

**Ben Cacas** 46:33

I can't think of anything offhand right now.

**Ron Cacas** 46:39

What was the question again? [laughs]

**Alma Perez** 46:42

Would you like to add something else?

**Ron Cacas** 46:46

Well, I think we're all grateful to our parents. But we're also grateful, with all the shortcomings of America, but there are so many positive—but we're grateful to this great country too for giving us the opportunity to have a chance to progress and have the security of this country. I'm grateful for the experiences that we've had. And it's been a wonderful life, I think. I think America has fulfilled the dream for our parents, maybe more. I hope we just don't all just take it for granted, but just keep remembering. But no, we are grateful, grateful to this country—what it stands for, with all the shortcomings. But the fact that we can identify them, see them, and speak up. So yes, thank you, America. [laughs]

**Ben Cacas** 48:00

Like they said, only in America.

**Alma Perez** 48:02

[laughs] Well, and with that, thank you, Ben. Thank you, Eugene. And thank you, Ron. And we're here at your parents' home, John and the Adelia's residence. And what I take for this is thank you so much for your time.

**Eugene Cacas** 48:20

Thank you.

**Ron Cacas** 48:21

Thank you.

**Ben Cacas** 48:21

Thank you very much.

**Alma Perez** 48:22

Okay.

**Ron Cacas** 48:22

Did you get what you wanted?

**Alma Perez** 48:29

I got more than what we wanted. You guys were really good.