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Interview with Grace Encallado

Grace Encallado

California State University, Monterey Bay

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Chinatown Renewal Project
Interviewee: Grace Encallado
Interviewer: Marissa Contreras
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Marissa Contreras 00:00
Perfect. So, thank you so much for doing this.

Grace Encallado 00:03
My pleasure.

Marissa Contreras 00:05
Just to kind of go over this interview, I'm going to start by giving you a leading question, and then hopefully you can take from that and just tell us your story. And I just want to listen to you and maybe ask a few, like, clarifying questions. But I really just want to hear your story. There will be a release form after this for you to sign, just to give us permission to share this video and use this video, only for educational purposes for the presentation, if that's okay with you.

Grace Encallado 00:33
Certainly.

Marissa Contreras 00:34
Perfect. So, my name is Marissa Contreras, and I'm sitting here with Grace Encallado, and it's October 8, 2011, in Salinas. Do we have your permission to record?

Grace Encallado 00:46
Yes, you may.

Marissa Contreras 00:47
Perfect. So, I would like just to start off by asking you about your family and how they came to Salinas.

Grace Encallado 00:55
Well, starting with me, I was born on November 28, 1936, to Demacio Puzon and Guillerma Martinez. My father was of Filipino descent, born in the Philippines. My mother is of Mexican descent, born in Texas. And I was an only child, but my mom and dad split when I was, I think, around two. And my mother ended up with another Filipino, as his common law wife. He was a field laborer, and my mom and I worked right alongside him in the fields. I would get up early in the morning with them when they had to go to work, like, four o'clock in the morning, and we'd drive to the fields, and they'd let me sleep in the car till the sun came up, you know. But primarily, the field work we did was bunching carrots. And I'd get up when the sun came up, and I would go in the fields and help bunch carrots. I—my mind went blank. [laughs] I would—I was a really fast buncher. Yeah, and tying. They used raffia, I think, like that in those days. But the old Filipinos used to say, "Oh, you're a very good worker, a very fast tyer," you

know. So, we always bunched carrots and other things in the fields. I remember when I was—in the wee hours of the morning, my stepdad and I, and my mom, were driving to the fields, and you were on your knees all day long, you know, to do this work. It was very hard. And I think that's why I have bad knees to this day. Anyway, we followed the crops all the time from, you know, like migrant farmworkers, from the Salinas Valley to the Imperial Valley, which would be, like, Yuma, Arizona, and Calexico, El Centro. And mostly, it was bunching carrots. I picked strawberries. I picked potatoes. I bunched onions in a warehouse. And I worked in the grapes in the Fresno area, where 100-degree weather. That was very hot.

Marissa Contreras 03:42
How old were you when you were picking grapes?

Grace Encallado 03:44
Oh, gosh, I was probably around eight, nine, something like that. But anyway, my job was to—in those days, they used to have this paper that was about, so big. And you would lay them in the middle of the rows of the vines. And I would lay them out and they would pick the—cut the grapes and put them on the paper. I would cut sometimes, but they really didn't want me to do that too much, because, you know, the knives were kind of curved like that and very sharp. But that was primarily my job. But I, like, you know, like I say, I didn't know anything else. I didn't know that that was too hard. It was a way of life, you know, and I just kind of did it. And we always had a hard time because we moved so much going back and forth from Salinas to the valley. We always had a hard time finding places to live, you know, when we got there. So, it'd either be a rundown motel or a labor camp. Sometimes we lived in tents that were on a cement platform. I said motels, but anyway, I can remember one time we went to Calexico, and we got there in the dead of night. And we were trying to either sleep in the car till the next day, or start looking for a place. My mother was so astonished that all of a sudden, they found a house, small little house to rent. So, it was already late, so we just—there was no electricity hooked up yet, so we slept in the living room on the floor, with just a few candles burning. And I was scared, so I insisted on sleeping in between them. Well, I was fine after that, but the next day, my mother learned that a couple of weeks prior to us moving in, there was two murders—two people murdered in that house. So, needless to say, we moved out real fast. [laughs] Anyway, a lot of the other types of living quarters were trailers, labor camps, tents, and I mentioned that. And we eventually bought a small trailer that we could haul around and not have to bother with having to rent, you know, a place. If you lived in the camps, or these tents, there was no bathrooms. So, we always had to use an outhouse. And if you had to go to the bathroom late at night, that was, you know, very hard. If you just had to go pee or something, my mother had a can there in the tent or camp, whatever. But I used to like to—if we were in a camp, labor camp, I used to like to go in the kitchen. And in the kitchen, they cooked for all the workers, you know. And anyway, they used to have these big pots. They're kind of a cylinder type thing with a lids, and they would cook rice in those huge vats. They call them calderos, which is pot, I guess. Anyway, I used to like—because at the bottom, it always had burnt rice. It was nice and crispy. And I would get the paddle and I would scrape it off. And it's—a lot of the kids did it. They called it dukot, and I used to scrape it out and just eat it like that. Or if there was butter available, I would spread some butter on it like that. It was really good.

Marissa Contreras 07:49
So, what was your day like in the labor camp, being young and working in the labor camp? Did you wake up early? Would you do work all day? What was your day like?

Grace Encallado 07:58
Well, if I wasn't in school, you know, I was working in the fields with my parents.

Marissa Contreras 08:04
How long of a day would you have to work?

Grace Encallado 08:06
Well, like I said, we'd get up at four o'clock in the morning to start getting ready to have some breakfast or something and then traveled to the fields. But, you know, about the only day we were off were, like, Sundays, you know. But Saturdays they worked too.

Marissa Contreras 08:24
Within the labor camp, would you say there was a strong sense of community, like, between the families, between everyone? Would you say there's a strong community within that?

Grace Encallado 08:34
Yes, if there were other kids staying there too. Of course, we all played together or—the field workers were very nice. Nobody bothered you or anything, you know. It was pretty—we didn't have big shopping malls and things like that in those days, [laughs] you know, a Northridge or Del Monte Shopping Center. So, you pretty stayed—you know, we didn't have TV. We played with whatever you found to play with, you know, a stick, jacks, or whatever. [laughs] But that's what I used to like to do in the kitchen, and then I'll—another thing I loved—when they would make chicken soup, I would go and watch. They would take the chick—a live chicken. They would bend it's neck like that, and they would slit the throat. They would get a bowl, and the blood would drip into the bowl.

Marissa Contreras 09:26
And you liked to watch this? [laughs]

Grace Encallado 09:33
[laughs] At the same time, they would pour vinegar, and with a fork, beat it real heavy, and the vinegar cooks the blood. Okay. And in the meantime, once the chicken was dead, they would have boiling water. Then you'd dip the chicken in there and take it out, and they would pluck the straw—I mean, the feathers. That's how they came out real easy, by dipping it in the hot water. Well, they would clean it, and then cut it up and start their soup. Well, towards the end of the soup business, they would pour this blood into the soup, boiling soup, and it would form a clot. [laughs] And that was mine. And all the guys knew, that's Grace's, you know. They would give me—it was a lot, so they would give me a good portion, because they knew I loved it, so—

Marissa Contreras 10:35
The clot?

Grace Encallado 10:36
The clot. [laughs] Yeah. Now, I couldn't eat it today, though. I couldn't stomach that now. [laughs]

Marissa Contreras 10:42
You can probably still remember the taste of it—

Grace Encallado 10:45
Yeah, yeah. But just knowing how they did it, now I couldn't do that. Like, I used to be able to watch them kill a pig, and now I can't. That started probably when I was a late teen or something, because the squealing of the pig used to [laughs] nauseate me. So, yeah, but I used to watch all that. This was all done in the camps though. But I would get to do the stirring of the vinegar and blood sometimes, you know, but not very often. When World War II broke out on December 7, 1941, I was in the fields working. And that was on River Road, by just about where Toro Park is now. I don't remember too much about the day other than we were working, and all of a sudden, all hell broke loose. And I just saw people running, you know. I said, "What's going on?" Well, today, I can just assume that they were probably some Japanese co-workers that were working with us, and they were in fear of their life for retaliation or something.

Marissa Contreras 12:09
Do you remember how you felt that day that you saw everything going to hell? [laughs]

Grace Encallado 12:16
Well, I don't really, other than getting a little excited seeing everybody run every which way, you know, and it was just utter chaos. So, aside from that day, that's all I really remember, you know. Being—I still remember being in the field though.

Marissa Contreras 12:33
How were your parents reacting?

Grace Encallado 12:37
I think my mother kind of just grabbed me, and we just went to the car or something, that I can remember. Like I say, that's—but I vividly just remember all these people running every which way. Anyway, I later learned that my real father joined the Army, and he was in the Filipino—I think it's the second regiment, Filipino regiment. And I traveled so much to the valley, that one time he came to see me, I was in Yuma, Arizona, and he came to see me just for a few hours. I get the feeling that he had a premonition that he wasn't going to make it back, so he came to see me. He traveled that far just to see me for a few hours. But I know when we were back in Salinas, my mother got some sort of a notice in the mail, and we had to go to the Western Union office in Salinas, and I still remember, it was on the corner of Main Street and Gabilan. It was right on the corner. But anyway, we went in there and she picked up the telegram, and it said that my father had been killed, you know, in action. And I was so—I cried so much. I—and I was so despondent, I just made myself sick. And I remember my mother told me that the teachers and my catechism nuns suggested that I stay out of school for a week or two till I sort of, you know, got over it. But yeah, my dad's buried in a military cemetery in the Phili—in Manila, right in Manila. Very, very pretty. I have pictures of it. I went to the Philippines once with my husband.

My father-in-law was dying of cancer, and he wanted to see his family one more time, so we took him, and we could only stay for ten days, because he had to get back on his medication and all that. But anyway, I didn't even realize my father was buried at that cemetery at the time. And I was so close and was able to—I would have been able to see his grave site. But my friend went back to the Philippines, and he took pictures and went by to visit him. That was nice of him.

Marissa Contreras 15:17
Do you know where he passed away, like, where he got killed?

Grace Encallado 15:20
It was in the Philippines, but I'm not sure, quite sure where the location, but it was in the Philippines.

Marissa Contreras 15:26
Wow. Were you close to your father? Like, did you hear much from him before then?

Grace Encallado 15:32
He would write me letters. But see, during the war, letters would come in photo form, because they censored a lot of your mail, and they would take something and black out, because they couldn't tell us where they were, you know, because the enemy could get ahold of it. You know, so a lot of things were blacked out. So, that's the only way I got to communicate with him, through a few letters, and that was it, you know.

Marissa Contreras 16:07
Coming back to Salinas, when did your family finally settle in Salinas? I mean, how long were you traveling, following the crop? Did you finally settle in Salinas?

Grace Encallado 16:16
Well, my stepdad and my mom finally split, and we settled in Salinas, and I was really happy about that. She went to work at the Fort Ord laundry, and I finally met a lot of the Filipino kids, because I was, you know, a loner, being an only child and going back and forth. It was hard for me. But I met a lot of the Filipino kids and started to get to know everyone and hang out. But I always—I'll tell you, I always envied all these kids, because of the fact that I had no roots, you know, and they all had homes here, went to school here. They were, I thought, all pretty smart, and they knew everyone, and I was just so envious, you know. But like I said—

Marissa Contreras 17:15
How old were you?

Grace Encallado 17:16
I was probably around ten, eleven, when I started mingling with the Filipinos here in Salinas, finally getting some friends, and I knew—I got to be very close to, like, the Reyes family, the Garcia family, the [unclear] family. I hung out at their homes all the time. [laughs] But they were all nice, very nice families. Somewhere along the way, I think my education kind of got screwed up. And the reason I say that is because traveling so much, it would interrupt my studies. And I remember—I don't exactly remember

where we were at the time working, but I remember we were living in a tent, and we were close to a large canal. And everyone around there fished in the canal for catfish. And I had to go to school in this one room classroom, and it must have had three or four different age groups being taught by one teacher. It reminded me—now it reminds me of Little House on the Prairie. [laughs] But just coming from California, I guess I was a little ahead, so I ended up helping the teacher with the students and, like, teach them to read and stuff like that. So, eventually, I got promoted.

Marissa Contreras 19:05
Really?

Grace Encallado 19:05
Yeah. I thought at the time, that was fine, but when I got back to California, now I'm one year up than I should be, and trying to catch up was tough, you know. And from then on, it was tough all the way. But I guess I made it—I got through high school anyway. [laughs]

Marissa Contreras 19:31
Coming into the Filipino community in Salinas, was it a large community compared to, perhaps, the Chinese community or the Japanese? How did the Filipino community fit in?

Grace Encallado 19:41
Oh, it was a very big—like I said before, if you were Filipino, you knew every Filipino in town. You knew every one of them and you hung around with them, things like that. And they had a lot of large organizations that always had events going on, like the Dimas-Alang is a lodge, Legionarios Del Trabajo, the Salinas—the Filipino Salinas community—and there's a lot more. Those are kind of the larger ones. And they always had events going on, like, oh, picnics. They would have banquets. They would have queen contests, and the every Saturday night dance. Okay, the picnics, they would have, of course, barbecues, and they would have volleyball games and baseball games. The barbec—I mean, the banquets, they would always have at a nice hotel. At that time, it was probably the Cominos Hotel on Main Street. It was a very big hotel. They tore it down already. But anyway, they would have big dignitaries as their guest of honor, you know, somebody from the Philippines or, you know, whatever. But the queen contest, they would ask several girls to run. And they would have to be able to sell a lot of tickets, raffle tickets. Okay, and the one who sold the most won that title of whichever organization was sponsoring it. You would win that title by selling the most tickets. Then the Saturday night dances, they would either be held at the Women's Club, the Armory, the rec center, or the Knights of Pythias hall. And they would—there they would have social box. I don't know if you've ever heard of social box.

Marissa Contreras 21:53
I haven't.

Grace Encallado 21:53
Okay, they would get, oh, probably anywhere from eight to twelve girls that were willing to run in this contest. They would sit them up in the front of the hall, probably underneath the stage, and they would have what they call an escort. Okay, and they would give the girls a wrapped gift of some sort. And it would start out by—I don't know what they call it in those days. I'll use the word auctioneer. Okay, the

first girl they'd call up—they appointed an escort from the crowd. Okay, and these are all Filipino laborers that go to the dance for entertainment on a Saturday night. So, they would—say you were one of the contestants, and I'm your escort, I've been appointed as your escort. I'd come over and stand you up, and we would dance, okay. The auctioneer would take your gift, and he would walk around the hall, you know, trying to get people to dance. Okay, say Joe Blow here wanted to dance with you. So, he would have ten dollars in his hand. Okay, so he would now take the girl and dance with her, and the escort would walk off. Okay, so he's dancing. They would go around doing this, and people—you want to put five dollars, or ten dollars, twenty dollars, whatever. And at the end, when he could get no one else to dance, that was it. And he says, he would yell, "Okay, Marissa's box has been sold for $250." Okay.

Marissa Contreras 23:38
Wow.

Grace Encallado 23:38
Yeah. So, then you're done, and they get the next girl. They do the same thing, and the next girl, and so on and on till they've all danced. Okay, then whoever got the most sold, like your $250, she would get half of that and be elected queen of whichever organization. [Marissa laughs] Yeah, Miss so and so, you know. Miss Filipino community or whatever. And that's how she would win that contest.

Marissa Contreras 24:12
Did you attend a lot of these?

Grace Encallado 24:14
Most of us all went to the Saturday night dances. It was—there was nothing else to do, and we had fun, you know.

Marissa Contreras 24:22
Did you run for queen?

Grace Encallado 24:24
A few times, yes.

Marissa Contreras 24:26
What would you wear to something like that?

Grace Encallado 24:27
It's very casual. Well, of course, in those days, we didn't wear pants like we do now, you know. You did if you went to a picnic or, you know, whatever, but for the most part, it was a skirt and sweater or dress, you know.

Marissa Contreras 24:44
Were you a part of many of these organizations?

Grace Encallado 24:47
Not really, those were probably for the—they were for the older group. We were teenagers, you know. Well, we'd walk into the dance and we'd say, "Look at all those old Filipinos over there sitting down." And now we say, "That's us now." [laughs] Yeah, anyway. Yeah, that's the social box. And we all—every one of us, I think, participated in that at one time or another, but I got a lot of my clothes like that with—if I won, I got half the money, you know, and I'd buy clothes with it.

Marissa Contreras 25:22
Where would you buy your clothes in Salinas?

Grace Encallado 25:24
Well, I did a lot of shopping at the Vogue. That was a nicer place in town. But like I say, I've worked hard for my money, so I bought some nice things. There really weren't many stores like they have now. So, you really—I think they had a Montgomery Ward's, and a Vogue, a Brown's. They were all on Main Street. But yeah, I bought a lot of my stuff like that.

Marissa Contreras 25:50
Where did you live in Salinas?

Grace Encallado 25:52
Oh, so many places. Like I say, traveling back and forth to the valley, we'd have to come back—I can probably name twenty-five different places in Salinas that we lived in. My mother finally bought a small house on the outskirts of Salinas, when we finally settled in Salinas. But I've lived in Alisal, and probably motels or rundown motels, and rented houses and trailers, things like that.

Marissa Contreras 26:27
Thinking about the restoration of Chinatown, and Filipinos in the area, do you have any memories, to go back to Chinatown, growing up here in Salinas?

Grace Encallado 26:40
Oh, yeah. We, as kids, were kind of always there, starting off when we were little. The older folks used to like to play what they call loterya. I can't pronounce it too good. It's the lottery. And it's basically played just like it is now. You mark numbers and, you know, hope your numbers are pulled. The old Filipinos used to like to ask the kids, "Will you mark my ticket?" Because they thought we were lucky, you know. And because we were so little, we weren't allowed to go into the gambling casino. So, we would stay in the car. Well, with me being an only child, my mother would stay with me. But my other friends, they always talk about—maybe they have five brothers and sisters or whatever. They said they'd all stay in the car, and at least they played with each other in the car, you know. [Marissa laughs] They had someone. But, yeah. And then there was so many businesses in Salinas, in Chinatown, that, you know, we knew the people that owned it, and we'd go there and nobody would ever bother us. So, we were safe. There was the Republic Cafe, which, when you wanted to eat chop suey, you always went to Republic, you know.

Marissa Contreras 28:11
Did you frequent the Republic a lot?

Grace Encallado 28:13
Yes. My mom and dad—stepdad—did. We always went there, you know, but I used to enjoy it because there's tables, okay, and then there's partitions. They're kind of removable and all that. And it'd be just three of us, so we got a little small one, and they just put a partition around it. And what I liked about it, on the wall, they had a button. If you wanted the waitress's attention, you'd just push the button. I used to love to do that. [laughs] But I learned to eat chop suey at the Republic, and by that, I started off—I was small, and I was still one of those picky eaters, you know. So, all I would have is rice and butter, [laughs] the chop suey. I progressed to rice and soy sauce. And many years later, I went to rice and Chinese style spareribs. So, yeah, and it was just great in there. And if you had a ban—they had banquets in there, and then they'd open up all the partitions. If somebody had, like, a baptismal or something, they'd go eat there, and they'd open up all the partitions, and they had a lot of long table.

Marissa Contreras 29:30
You have some great memories.

Grace Encallado 29:31
Yeah. They had—across the street was Loretta's Cafe, owned by the [unclear] family. It was named after their only daughter, Loretta, and they served Filipino food. And we were always there too, you know. Then there was the Chin Brothers Market. Now that is located on North Main and, what is that, Rossi Street? But that's still there, but not owned by the Chin brothers anymore. I think they sold it, but it still carries the name. And their daughter, Nancy, we went to school together. She was a year ahead of me, and we became very close friends. And I used to—they lived right across from the Republic Cafe. And so, I used to sleep—I had a lot of sleepovers with her there, you know. She had a lot of brothers and a couple of sisters, I think. But anyway, her brothers became, like, the brothers I never had, you know. We were all very close. Then there was a few bars. There was a barber shop. There was even a cleaners my mother worked at for a while. There was—right around the corner was the Valley Market, owned by the [unclear] family. And there was the PI Market. And we, like I say, there was just a lot of good times there. Nobody ever harmed us. There was a gas station too, right by the railroad tracks.

Marissa Contreras 31:12
And what were these places like? Like, can you take us there? Can you—into the, I believe, the Loretta Cafe you mentioned. Like, what was it like inside? Was it—

Grace Encallado 31:19
Oh, it was a long place with—I mean, long, the way it was built. Very long and had stools, and we ate Filipino food there of all things, when we could eat it at home, but we just enjoyed the company. It was—and Loretta was one of our best friends too, you know. So, she would be there all the time, too. But it just—it was one of our hangouts, you know. A lot of the kids—we were just all teenagers then, you know. I'm trying to think of the—oh, and did I mention that the—Leon's Pool Hall. Okay, that was there, owned by Leon Deasis, Sr., and his son took over and carried on after his father's death, and he

eventually bought a bar at the end of Soledad Street, on Lake Street. It was called Leon's, and he just recently sold it. But all these people are just all dear friends to us, you know.

Marissa Contreras 32:34
I can imagine. Knowing everyone there—I mean, everyone was really, like, tight knit, it seems. I mean, do you still keep in contact with these people?

Grace Encallado 32:44
Well, for the most part, yes, you know. We run into—those that are still living in Salinas, we run into each other occasionally. Or if we go to a wedding or, you know, a funeral or whatever, of course, you run into these people. They all—but there was a lot of labor contractors in those days. They were all wealthy too, you know. But I got to hang out with them. Clem Morales—Mrs. Clem Morales, she was a Filipino lady that did so much for the community, the youth. She also was a very—she was—what do you call it?—underground. She went underground in the Philippines, from the Japanese. She—but anyway, she taught us all to Filipino folk dance. Now, before I came on the scene, they had already had their roots dancing and what not. They had different age groups, you know, the little ones, and the teenagers, and then the older ones. But the little ones were so cute, because they were in their little Filipino Tagalog shirts, and the girls had their little Filipino dresses, and they were just darling. But I—she eventually taught me too, and she'd take everyone everywhere to perform, you know. I recall one time she took us to Los Angeles, and we performed at the Ambassador Hotel. That's where Robert Kennedy was assassinated. Anyway, yeah, and I still remember this, she decided she was gonna give me a solo. Now me being shy, a introvert, I thought, no, you gotta be kidding. [laughs] But I got through it. And like I said, I thought I was gonna die, but I got through it, thank God. By the grace of God, I got through it. But then she took us on a tour of Hollywood, and it was just amazing though. She was a really great lady. Very, very dedicated to the youth.

Marissa Contreras 33:46
Now you said that you would dress in a Filipino dress. What does that look like?

Grace Encallado 35:04
Well, they're—the tops have butterfly sleeves, they call it. They're made like this, and about this length. They're made out of pineapple material. They're stiff, very stiff. And you had different designs, but mostly the sleeves were like that. And they would sew on sequins and whatever in the bodice of the dress, and the bottom was, you know, of lace or—what do you call that?—silk or whatever. But some were just beautiful, beautiful dresses. And the teenagers had them too, and, of course, the boys had the Tagalog shirts, which are white. I believe they're made out of, like, a linen or pineapple material, or linen, or something like that. Very nice. They're long sleeve, and they're just all white, and they wear them out to come to probably right below their—but yeah, we just kind of went all over, and we got quite an experience.

Marissa Contreras 36:18
Going back to Chinatown, did you mingle a lot with the Chinese or Japanese, or was there a separation? I mean, because I know—I mean, there's distinct communities. Did you—I mean, did you

socialize together? I know there was some, like, separation of the Chinese, the Tongs. How was that like, being Filipino in that area?

Grace Encallado 36:39
I don't remember any of that. We had friends that—Chinese that we went to school with, and we were just all friends, you know. I don't recall—like I say, I was so close to the Chins, you know, living at their house—not living but, you know, spending the night and all that. They were—I didn't have any qualms about them being Chinese or whatever. I don't think there was a lot of—amongst the teenagers, there was a lot of prejudice in those days, you know.

Marissa Contreras 37:15
Thinking also about the community, how often would you go to Chinatown, and how often would you visit there? And was it the happening spot to go to when you were younger?

Grace Encallado 37:29
For the teenagers, I would say aside from going to football games or, you know, the beach or whatever. When we wanted to just go have something to eat, you know, like, at Loretta's, or the Republic, we all hung around there. Just, you know, you'd drop by with your boyfriend or something and go by there and eat, but we didn't hang out there too much, you know, because there's a lot of bars and things like that. A lot of things, like, we would do is, like, on Sundays, they would have there, the sabong, which means cockfights. And you would go with your parents and, of course, they would watch the cockfights, and the kids would eat all the goodies, you know, like, biko, which is the sweet rice, and cascaron, and bibingka, and whatever they had we would always eat, and play, you know. I don't remember being interested in watching the chickens fight. [laughs] I had no interest in it. But you always had to watch for the Sheriff's, because that was illegal, you know. Yeah, so, I don't remember ever being there when one came around, but I know they ran, you know. Like I said, I think to you earlier, that if you were Filipino, you just knew everyone in town, so that's—we hung out with each other. It wasn't that we were discriminating—no, you can't come to our group, in our group, like that. No, we had—we hung around with Henry Hibino, who was the mayor—who later became the mayor of Salinas. Yeah. Don Ikeda, who, you know, owns these farms. And I'm trying to think of—just everybody you can think of, we just—we mingled with them, you know. Yeah, there was no racial barrier.

Marissa Contreras 39:32
Do you have one memory that just stands out about growing up in Salinas? I know it's kind of a hard question. [laughs] But, like, something that—something that you're, like, wow, that happened, or I was a part of that, or something historical.

Grace Encallado 39:49
Not off the top of my head. [laughs] Let me see. Yes, see, I don't remember too much about the riots in Watsonville.

Marissa Contreras 40:08
Okay.

Grace Encallado 40:08
That one—I don't know where I was. Maybe I was too little to even remember. I'm trying to think. My mind's gone blank. [laughs] Well, I know, I attended Sherwood School, elementary school. I went to Roosevelt Elementary for a while. I went to Washington Junior High, and I graduated from Salinas High. And in Washington Junior High is when I first spotted my husband, and I had a mad crush on him. [laughs] But he didn't even know I was alive. But we finally got to know each other in high school, and in my senior year, we started dating, and he was attending Hartnell College—just for a short while he attended. And we finally got married. We ended up having a large family. We wanted a large family. I was an only child. He was raised by an aunt and uncle. So, we wanted a large family. Not quite as large that we did have. We had eight. I have a set of twins. And we love every one of them. We have—what is it?—ten grandchildren and seven great grandchildren. And they're all so cute. [Marissa laughs] My twins, I think I was telling you earlier, they're identical, and I can't even tell them apart sometimes if they're at an angle, certain angle, or instead of looking at me straight on, or even their voices sound so much alike. They call and I don't know which one I'm talking to. They've had some cute things happen to them too. I worked most of my married life. I started out at Ford Ord. I was the secretary to the transportation officer. I worked at DMV for a short while, just temporary. I worked at the prison in Soledad for—two different times. And I ended my career with PG&E after twenty-one years at Moss Landing, as the senior clerk there. But I love Salinas, no matter that it's changed so much, you know. I was born and raised here, my children were, and I'll probably just die here and be buried with my husband. [laughs] But I love it.

Marissa Contreras 43:02
Your husband was Filipino as well?

Grace Encallado 43:04
Yes. He came from a large family. He had, I think, eight. Yeah, there was eight of them too.

Marissa Contreras 43:13
And he's from Salinas area?

Grace Encallado 43:14
Mm-hmm. He was born in Salinas also. They tell me he was born off of River Road, under a tree.

Marissa Contreras 43:21
Really? How did you hear that story?

Grace Encallado 43:24
His mother tells me—told me, before she passed away.

Marissa Contreras 43:27
Under a tree.

Grace Encallado 43:28
Under a tree.

Marissa Contreras 43:29
Is that tree still there?

Grace Encallado 43:30
We tried to find it one time, but everything's changed, and I have no idea where it was. We went along River Road there trying to—she kind of described where it was, but it was hard to find.

Marissa Contreras 43:42
That would be incredible if—

Grace Encallado 43:43
Yeah, it was delivered by his grandfather.

Marissa Contreras 43:45
Wow, incredible. And when you met your husband, I mean, did your families, like—were they approving of you getting married so young, and—

Grace Encallado 43:59
They didn't say anything. They didn't care. My mother didn't care. You know, [unclear] you love him, you know. He was— he and my family are—all my family—he was a great golfer, and my whole family is. They all golfed. So, we treasure that. We have all his trophies and things like that.

Marissa Contreras 44:22
After your husband and you were married, would you visit Chinatown, downtown Soledad, or—

Grace Encallado 44:29
Not as a rule. You know, we had our children, and it was at that point starting to go downhill, you know.

Marissa Contreras 44:39
When did it start to go downhill? Like, what started to happen in Chinatown that you think started to—

Grace Encallado 44:44
Well, you know, the homeless started to move in, and the drugs and the prostitution, things like that. And places were closing down anyway, you know. So, we didn't frequent that very often. Well, there was—I think the Republic Cafe finally shut down. I was surprised the day it did, you know, but it finally shut down too.

Marissa Contreras 45:09
How did you feel when you heard the Republic Cafe shut down?

Grace Encallado 45:12
I thought, how sad. It's such a landmark, you know. And I'd started thinking of the days we used to go there when we were kids. It was sad. I'm glad they're trying to do something to bring all this back and restore things. Very glad.

Marissa Contreras 45:29
So, have you gone back and visited Chinatown since?

Grace Encallado 45:32
No, I was at the festival they had here last year, and we all met at the Filipino Hall on Calle Cebu. And I was supposed to walk over with everyone from there to Chinatown, but my back had gone out, so I didn't even make it to Calle Cebu, at the Filipino Hall. But my back—I have a bad back, and it kind of went out on me. So, I didn't get to see—everyone went over there, and they were going through all the things. They told me about it, though. But I will make an effort here very soon [laughs] to go see it.

Marissa Contreras 46:10
You mentioned that you grew up with a lot of people who owned a lot of stores. Were many of them part of the labor movement? Or, I mean, I know there were labor camps in the area, so did you have a lot of friends that were a part of that labor movement, or worked in the labor camps, or had anything to do with that?

Grace Encallado 46:31
The labor camps?

Marissa Contreras 46:33
Wasn't there a labor camp?

Grace Encallado 46:34
There were—oh, there were a lot of labor camps, yeah. Not that I know of. Like I say, I was probably too young or even concerned about, you know, that at the time. But there was very, very many labor camps. I could rattle off names, [laughs] you know. They were just friends to me. I don't know.

Marissa Contreras 47:02
Yeah.

Grace Encallado 47:03
You know, if they had kids my age, of course, we all hung out with each other, go to parties, same parties, things like that.

Marissa Contreras 47:15
Thinking to the next generation of Filipinos, and thinking about the restoration and everything that's being done, is there something that you want them to know, or want them to know about what happened, or Filipino history in Salinas?

Grace Encallado 47:35
Yes, I would. I try and tell my kids once in a while when we're together, you know. I'll start talking about what we used to do and things like that, and they'll say, "You're kidding, Mom," you know, especially when I tell them about that clot and the chickens too. [laughs] They want to barf. No, I really would like to be able to take them into that museum, you know. And they've gone into Steinbeck and seen some things. We have—at one time there when Steinbeck first opened, they were soliciting people to buy a brick with your name on it. So, we got one for my husband and his family, which are the Taporco family. They got one for one of the uncles and one for the family and their name. But no, they've gone there, and I would like to see them see Chinatown again. They don't believe a lot of the stories that I tell them though, you know, because they see it now and they say, "No, you didn't go there." [laughs] "You, Mom?"

Marissa Contreras 48:51
Are you excited about all the restorations that are happening?

Grace Encallado 48:54
Oh, yes. Yes. Like I say, I didn't get to see it that time because of my back, and I haven't gone there. You know, I don't—my husband passed away, and so, I mean, I just don't go anywhere by myself. When they have another activity going on, I am going to go there and look at—my daughter takes her kids. She has actually one older son. He's in his late— middle twenties, and two teenage boys. And she takes them to the Dorothy's Kitchen and makes them help once in a while, you know, just to see how it is.

Marissa Contreras 49:40
Are there any other memories that you want to share with us? Anything you want people to know about you and your life growing up in Salinas?

Grace Encallado 49:47
Well, just off the top my head, like I say, I felt so alone when I was young and, you know, sort of, out of place or different. But I'm glad I finally settled, got my roots in Salinas, and got to meet everyone, and we all became dear friends. And we keep in touch. In fact, we still play poker on Saturday nights, a few of us, you know, every Saturday night.

Marissa Contreras 50:20
Are you part of the organizations now as you're older?

Grace Encallado 50:24
Except for FAWN, that's the only thing I belong to right now. Some of the other ones have belonged to some of the Filipino club or, like, the community, or Laoaguenians. They belong to them, but I never did join those.

Marissa Contreras 50:44
[laughs] I think we got a great interview.

Grace Encallado 50:50
Well, I said, my mind might have gone blank here. I'm reading my notes, which I can't even read my writing. [laughs] But no, I enjoyed this. I'm glad you had me.

Marissa Contreras 51:03
Thank you so much.

Grace Encallado 51:04
I hope everything works out.

Marissa Contreras 51:06
I think it went great. I really, really appreciate you taking the time to sit down with us. We're all really excited to hear everyone's story.

Grace Encallado 51:14
Oh, my pleasure.

Marissa Contreras 51:15
Your stories were amazing, so thank you so much for your time, and your patience with us. [laughs] I feel like you took us there. It was great.

Grace Encallado 51:26
Good, I'm glad. I couldn't memorize all this, so [laughs] I probably missed out a lot.

Marissa Contreras 51:31
No, it's okay. I myself had to put a little note, but it was really incredible.

Grace Encallado 51:35
Okay, it was my pleasure.

Marissa Contreras 51:36
Thank you so much.