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Interview with Grace Mauricio

Grace Mauricio

California State University, Monterey Bay

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Interviewee: Grace Mauricio
Interviewer: Vanessa Silva
Date of Interview: October 14, 2011
Duration of Interview: 01:00:11

Vanessa Silva 00:03

Okay, so my name is Vanessa Silva, and I'm interviewing Grace Mauricio. Today is Friday, October 14, 2011. Do we have permission to record this interview?

Grace Mauricio 00:14

Yes.

Vanessa Silva 00:14

Okay, so I just want to start out with your family history. What can you tell me about where your family is from?

Grace Mauricio 00:21

My mom and dad are from the Philippines, and they came here in 1929, and we've been here since. We were all born in Salinas, in the Blanco area.

Vanessa Silva 00:34

What part of the Philippines?

Grace Mauricio 00:35

Well, I don't know if you've ever heard of it. It's Siquijor. It's Negros Oriental, I think. That's [unclear].

Vanessa Silva 00:45

Do you know why your parents decided to come?

Grace Mauricio 00:48

Work. So, they ended up in Hawaii, Kauai. My dad worked in a sugar plantation, and then they decided to come to America, and they ended here in Salinas.

Vanessa Silva 01:00

So, what brought them to Salinas?

Grace Mauricio 01:02

Agriculture.

Vanessa Silva 01:06

So, can you tell me about your family, like, how many brothers and sisters you had?

Grace Mauricio 01:09

I have two brothers and three sister. Two have passed away. We're just four of us left.

Vanessa Silva 01:22

So, where did you all grow up?

Grace Mauricio 01:23

Here in Salinas. Went to school here, grammar school, got married here, gave birth to one of my kids here, moved to Virginia, had another one over there.

Vanessa Silva 01:34

So, what was life like growing up in Salinas?

Grace Mauricio 01:38

Oh, it was nice. I liked it compared to what it is now. It was fun. We lived out in the country. We used to go trick or treating at all the homes there, and we never had to worry about somebody coming by kidnapping us. And it was nice, but I wouldn't do it this time. Not this time, with the way things are.

Vanessa Silva 01:59

So, growing up in the country, do you think that would have been different if you would have lived, like, closer to the city?

Grace Mauricio 02:05

I like living out in the country. It was quiet and all that, nobody bother you. Here you see everything happening. We had to move into town, because my mom's boss had to give up agriculture. So, we all had to move into town.

Vanessa Silva 02:20

So, what exactly did your parents do when you lived in the country?

Grace Mauricio 02:23

They work out in the field cutting broccoli, thinning, hoeing, potatoes and garlic and all that.

Vanessa Silva 02:31

Did you ever go with you parents to work?

Grace Mauricio 02:33

Oh, yeah, I went to work. I did thinning. I did hoeing. I did garlic, which was fun, because we get help from the older guys when we can't finish our lines. They'd look at us and feel sorry. They go, we better help these kids. [laughs] We'd look forward to break time [laughs] at ten o'clock and three o'clock to go home. It was fun, though. A lot of my friends and I worked out in the field. That's how us kids grew up. That's why when I see—kids says they don't like working or are particular about job, I don't think they really know what hard job is. Working in the field is hard. It's very hard. But we look forward to payday.

Vanessa Silva 03:18

What kind of—so, what was your day like when you would go to work with your parents?

Grace Mauricio 03:22

Well, we get up at 5:30 in the morning, because my mom would say, "Get up. Go to work." And we used to say, "Ohhh." [laughs] And then we'd get up, eat breakfast, and go with my mom and dad, and we'd go to work. And then you looked at the field, and you'd say, God, that line is long. So, you'd have to start, and my mom and my dad is right behind us to see, but we'd get help from the other people there. So, it wasn't bad. And we'd look forward to break time, which is ten o'clock. And then lunchtime, and going home time. It was fun. I mean, it's something we learned. We know what hard work is. You know, and some kids don't know that. They think it's easy. It's not. We went through hard work until we came to town and we got better jobs.

Vanessa Silva 04:12

So, what would you do with the money you made when you were a child?

Grace Mauricio 04:15

Well, when we had to receive Communion, we have to buy our veil and a cap and all that. But it wasn't bad. In those days you could buy those things. Not now.

Vanessa Silva 04:30

So, do you have any fond memories of Chinatown?

Grace Mauricio 04:35

Oh, yes. We used to go there. My mom and dad would drop us off at the movie, and they used to go rooster fighting. And they said, "After you finish the movie, you walk to East Market Street and go to Chinatown." We'd wait at the P.I. Market. Across was the Republic. So, we waited until my Mom and Dad came to go to the restaurant and eat. It was a good restaurant. I like it, because where you eat, on the booth, they have curtains. And we liked that privacy. Do you want me to tell you about [unclear]? [laughs]

Vanessa Silva 05:18

Yeah!

Grace Mauricio 05:19

Oh, anyway, we were young. My mom never bought us any gum or candy. So, under the table, they had a lot of gum that was stuck there. We'd peel it off, and ate it. I'm surprised I'm still alive. [laughs] And we sat there and my mom was very strict about buying us soda. We never had soda. We just had the tea, and then all the food, that's all. And the only thing about that restaurant, they had a spittoon on the side there by the [unclear]. Other than that, it's a good restaurant. I liked it. And we know the people that used to work there, the Ahtyes and the Chin, and some of them are still around. Mary and [unclear], the Chin brothers.

Vanessa Silva 06:09

So, you said there was curtains? What did the restaurant look like inside?

Grace Mauricio 06:14

It was, like, all a booth. And on the side of each—each booth had a curtain. It's private. [unclear] I think it was four on one side—four on each side. When you enter, they asked you how many people, and then they take you into a booth. So, there was six of us kids, plus my mom and my dad. So we'd go into a round table [unclear]. [Vanessa laughs] So, it was okay. I liked it. But Chinatown was a pretty town. I mean, Soledad Street is something you can go walk up and down, which I wouldn't do now, you know. And most of the people that goes there—a lot of Filipinos used to go there, because they go to the pool hall and play pool. And they had a lot of Filipino dry goods store there too. And my mom and dad, when we were small, the building across the Shell station, I guess he used to have keno. And my mom and dad leave us in the car, so we sat on the floor so nobody would get us, and they'd go play keno. And then they would get up, get ready to go home. But those kinds of things, they used to do in those days, you know. Now it's illegal. But, you know, it's—you remember all those things, and then you think, gee, that was a long time ago, but we enjoyed it. Some of my friends are still around, and some of them have passed away. But we all get together. We all get together. The group that, you know—we do things together. We join the same club, and we do fundraising and all that. We go barbecue and all this stuff, which is nice, because nowadays hardly anybody gets together. Like, classmates—like my sons, their classmates, some of them they don't know each other. But in our days, we know all the people that used to go to school, and we still keep in touch.

Vanessa Silva 08:22

Could you just describe to me what Soledad Street used to look like?

Grace Mauricio 08:26

Well, it was nice. It had all the stores and the pool hall and the P.I. Market, the restaurant, Loretta's. And next to Republic was Lotus Inn, or Green Gold Inn, and it was, like, a restaurant and bar. And then on the end was a hotel. I think it was a hotel. Then farther down they have all the small store, you know, dry goods stores owned by Filipino. But there was a lot of pool hall and P.I. Market, and all the rest was, like, people were living in it. We didn't go all the way down. We were mostly on this side, close to Market Street and Soledad Street. But it was nice. But like I say, I wouldn't go through there now.

Vanessa Silva 09:16

So, other than the Republic Cafe, what other places did you go to a lot?

Grace Mauricio 09:22

You mean in that area?

Vanessa Silva 09:23

Yeah.

Grace Mauricio 09:23

We used to go to the Valley Market. It's owned by this Filipino family. It's a grocery store, and we used to go shopping there. Then we'd go across the railroad track. There was a Lee's Market. It was a grocery store. Next to it was a [unclear] dry good, and then the Gin Supermarket. That's around there.

Vanessa Silva 09:48

The market that you talked about first, what did it look like inside?

Grace Mauricio 09:52

Well, the front was all open. They sell vegetables and all that, and they had the butcher. They don't have, like, the meats ready. You buy them by the pound. So, you ask what you want, and they weigh it for you, and the vegetable, everything was weighed. I mean, those days, it was—vegetable were nice, you know. It's not the same anymore.

Vanessa Silva 10:15

So, you went to Blanco School, right?

Grace Mauricio 10:18

Yes.

Vanessa Silva 10:18

Okay. What was that like for you?

Grace Mauricio 10:20

Well, it's a small school with about twenty-seven student. And it was three in the seventh, two in the eighth, me and my good friend, and [unclear] first—we never had kindergarten. It was first grade on. One teacher. And we all had recess. And I was a mean girl, because the teacher would fall asleep at the table, and we would go outside and play recess, and I tell the kids to be quiet. So, when I saw the time was 3:30, then we'd go in. The teacher have to say, "Well, you guys have to go in. It's already 3:30." I go, "Okay." [laughs] Rascal, huh? But it was a nice school. I liked it. And then I worked as a janitor, five dollars a month. In those days, it was big money. And we always had fun at the school. And those kids that we went to school with, we still keep in touch, which is wonderful. You know, it's really nice.

Vanessa Silva 11:23

So, what kind of—you say you keep in touch with a lot of the people. Do you guys do any type of involvement in the Filipino community in Chinatown?

Grace Mauricio 11:34

No, the only the recent one we do now is the [unclear] that we have, that we get together. And most of the kids in it are the ones that we knew—we did together in Chinatown, food at the same restaurant and all that.

Vanessa Silva 11:50

So, do you ever go to Chinatown now?

Grace Mauricio 11:54

Only when we had that Asian Festival. Then I go to the—on California Street, it's the Japanese, and it's the Obon every year. It has an open festival in July. And then they had their Chinese, where they had sometime fundraising, and then the Filipino community would have barbecue and fundraising also. But in Chinatown, the last time I was there when they had the Asian Festival, which is getting to look better, but on the other side of the street are the homeless. Makes it harder.

Vanessa Silva 12:28

Did you have any experiences involving the military and Fort Ord? Did you ever see the soldiers walking up and down the street?

Grace Mauricio 12:37

Oh, yeah, in Chinatown? Yes, a few of them, but then we were in Blanco School, there was a whole troop that would walk by our school, a troop that walk all the way to Fort Ord. And we were proud of them, you know. And then my husband is retired from the service too, so I'm used to service people. My brother and my younger brother was all in the service.

Vanessa Silva 13:05

Do you remember, like, what the soldiers would do, why they would go to Chinatown?

Grace Mauricio 13:10

Drink, I guess. They went to drink and try to find some girls. I hate to say what those girls were, but there were girls there. You know, soldiers are lonely.

Vanessa Silva 13:28

Do you have any particular stories that you remember about that?

Grace Mauricio 13:33

No, we just go to Chinatown, and we were still young, so we didn't know what those girls were until you see them all dressed up, you know. And then we'd with ask my mom, "Who's that?" She'd go, "Never mind."

Vanessa Silva 13:50

So, can you tell me about your Filipino culture, like the types of food you guys eat?

Grace Mauricio 13:56

Okay. We make sweet rice, cascaron, bibingka. We make pancit, lumpia, adobo. And I cook all that, you know. You want me to cook for you one of these days, just let me know. I cook all this kind of food. I was born here, but I learned from my husband's cousin. Used to go visit them. I watch what they're doing, because I love to cook anyway. So, that's why when we play poker, the first thing they ask is what's on the menu. I said, I tell them [unclear] will be there. So, I love to cook Filipino food. I try all kind

too. In my family, I'm the only one that cook Filipino food. My sister don't cook pastries or anything, which I do. I make that sweet potato fritter, banana fritter, all that. And one of the things I love to do is cook.

Vanessa Silva 14:20

What other parts of your Filipino culture did you get from your parents?

Grace Mauricio 15:03

We used to go to the dances, and my sister used to be on social box, where they bid, want to dance with them. And what they make that night, they split it to the club and then to the—I didn't go through that. Just my sisters. I didn't feel right doing social box where those men dancing, and most of them were agricultural workers. And they were the older guys. I was in for the younger guys. But it was fun. We used to go to the dance every Saturday, and then my sisters would be in social box, and then they get half the pay. That's it. Other than that, we just went to the dance. That's about the only thing. Then we went to barbecue, picnic. And sometimes they have—well, like, they go to San Martin to have their chicken fight. And we go there because our parents go there too. So, we don't go where the chicken fight is. We go where the food is, because they sell—they have vendors that sell food, and that's the one we go for. It was fun. That's where we meet some of our friends.

Vanessa Silva 16:18

Where were the dances held?

Grace Mauricio 16:20

At the Woman's Club, the Filipino Hall, the Armory, Knights of Pythias Hall. Those were the places we had dances.

Vanessa Silva 16:31

So, could you describe for me what it looked like inside of the, like, the Filipino Hall when you would go in for a dance?

Grace Mauricio 16:37

Well, the Filipino Hall is the way—it look a little bit like now. They have the band up on the stage, [unclear] door, they sell tickets at the door. Woman's Club was the same thing. They always had the tickets at the door, and then the band would start, and we all start dancing. And we like it when the younger guys were there. [laughs] Those older Filipinos, they didn't know how to dance. So, we used to tell them, "Come and dance with me. Come and dance with me." So, it was a lot of fun. A lot of fun.

Vanessa Silva 17:10

Can you remember a particular time when you went to a dance?

Grace Mauricio 17:14

Yeah, we went to the Woman's Club and this brothers were there, and they had tag dance. You know, where they tap—you dance, and the music—they tap the shoulder to take over, so they have to go find another partner. And one of these guys was dancing, and everybody got scared, because he had a

firecracker in his pocket. He said he want to dance with you. Everybody got scared. But that's how we do—we tag dance, and then the girls and I get together and enjoyed it. It was a lot of fun.

Vanessa Silva 17:48

How old were you when you would go to the dances?

Grace Mauricio 17:51

Fifteen and sixteen. My mother was strict. When it was time to go home, she said, "Let's go," and we would get embarrassed, because she'd holler, "It's time to go home. I gotta work tomorrow." So, we have to obey what she says. My dad was easier. Took my sisters to the dance. He forgot the time and what time to take them home. They enjoyed that one. But it was fun. We liked it.

Vanessa Silva 18:19

So, you say that your mom was strict? Did she have you guys do a lot of chores around the house?

Grace Mauricio 18:23

Oh, yeah. We were—being the oldest, I was—when I'd go home from work, I have to make sure I had coffee ready for them. And being the oldest, I always get blamed for my sister do something wrong. So, like I say, my mom was strict. My dad wasn't. But my mom was strict. But she protected us. That's like I tell my son, says, "Mom was strict, but I feel she loved us." That's why she was like that, because, you know, I could say I didn't like her, but no, I think she has a reason for doing that to us, especially me.

Vanessa Silva 19:02

Do you have any stories of when you would get blamed for something your sisters did?

Grace Mauricio 19:05

Well, like we went swimming in the ditch while my dad was irrigating. So, my sisters went in the ditch to go swimming, and the people irrigating was wondering why the water didn't go through. And then I see my mom and my dad coming home from work. I said, "C'mon, you guys. Here comes mom and pops," and they take out the wet clothes. And this is how crazy—they put it right in back of my mom's closet drawer, [laughs] and she finds the wet clothes [unclear]. And then there was one time—my mom don't buy us sweets. So, in back of the door, she had a row, and she had chocolate there. So, my sisters and I all divided it. And then my mom came in and said, "Who took my ex-lax." [laughs] We took ex-lax, and you know where we went. [laughs] But those are the things we did. My mom was strict. She didn't buy us candy or all that. It was—our sandwich was on the bread with sugar and canned milk to make it like peanut butter and jelly. It was good. It was good in those days. But my sister and I always think about, you know, when we were young, and some kids now don't remember, but we do. We remember what it was with us when we were younger. And we always recall something when we're talking. And then I said, "Yeah, that was in those days. Not anymore." And I have some people that I know that live in Stockton, Sacramento, San Jose. Those are the people we grew up with, but we still keep in touch. I like people though. Love people. I love people. [laughs] I go on the street and see them walking and they smile. I say hello. And my husband goes, "Who's that?" I go, "I don't know. They said hello, so I did too." It's just like when I was working at the deli, people would come in, they go, "Grace!" or Mrs. Mauricio, or they call me grandma. And my boss would say, "Is there anybody in Salinas you don't

know?" I go, "Well, there's somebody sometime I don't know." But most of the guys that go there are my kids' friend. They know me. It's all my son's friend. They call me grandma. And I like that they come to the house. We'd sit at the table, and we'd talk, and then I'd say, "Well, what's wrong?" He says, "Well, we have a problem with this and that. Can we move in?" I go, "Well, when you have your problem, talk to me and you can move in." "Can we move in tonight?" [laughs] I said, "That soon?" But my kids had a lot of nice friends. I got most of the kids, because me, I have two boys. So, it was boys that stayed at the place. And they still keep in touch with me. And I used to do daycare for fourteen kids for fourteen years, [unclear] today. And most of them has keeping in touch with me, send me their pictures. Some are married and divorced and have kids. But that's how good those kids are. I love kids, you know, just like I spoil my grandchildren and my great grandchildren, which I have five grandchildren and nine great grandchildren, and only have two boys. [unclear] "How come they got a big family?" I go, "[unclear] they have, but not me." [laughs] It's nice—my sister in Hawaii got seven kids. That's why she stopped there, because she left here with three, she got four more. [unclear] come over and visit us sometime. And—[laughs] I forgot you're taking picture on [unclear]. Anything else my dear?

Vanessa Silva 22:56

Yes. So, how would you get to school when you went to Blanco School?

Grace Mauricio 23:00

We walk, and we live in a farm. It was a muddy road, so my dad had to park the car right there by the highway, and we'd go walk to the highway, change our shoes because it was muddy. And then sometime in summertime, we'd walk to school. It was about a mile. We didn't mind, and then we'd stop at this house, belongs to the [unclear]. We know them. They have a nice pear tree. We'd climb on the fence and get some pears, and then we walk home. But it was nice. Walking in those days were really nice, and we liked it. We know what country living is. I don't know if I want to do that again, but living in the country would be nice as long as, you know, nothing—but we didn't have a phone. We didn't have a phone in our house till before I went to high school, because that's why we never went to high school. If we cut school, we got to make sure we get on the bus, because we can't call my parents to pick us up. So, we run, catch the bus to go home. Aren't we naughty? Aren't I naughty?

Vanessa Silva 24:18

Do you remember a story about that, like any time that that really happened?

Grace Mauricio 24:22

Oh, yes. It happened. It's a good thing I went with my girlfriend who had a phone. I said, "Take me home, [unclear] get mad at me." So, she did. Like I say, we get together [laughs] [unclear] when we're in trouble.

Vanessa Silva 24:36

What would your mom say to you when you would get—

Grace Mauricio 24:37

Well, she didn't know, because we get home before she gets home from work. So, right there we'd go, phew.

Vanessa Silva 24:46

So, what would your family do on the weekends?

Grace Mauricio 24:49

Well, my mom and dad never go out any place. Saturday was when they take us to the dances. We'd go shopping first so we could get new outfit. Then we'd go to the dance, and then on Sundays we'd go to the movies. That's about it. Which was nice. We loved going to the movies, but then, it was only fifteen cents each, you know, compared to now. And we always see all the—well, mostly all of them were cowboy movies. So, it was okay. Now I don't even go to movies. [laughs] Isn't that weird? [laughs] I tell my daughter-in-law, says do you want to go, I go, "Sure, I'll go with you." So, I wanted to see Footloose.

Vanessa Silva 25:32

Oh, yeah. That's a good one. [laughs]

Grace Mauricio 25:34

And Julianne Hough and her brother are good dancers on Dancing with the Stars. So, I'm going to see that. I'll wait for my daughter-in-law to invite me, because my husband don't like to go movies. So, I said, "Well, you don't want to go out, so you have to [unclear] home." Only way I go out is my daughter-in-law and my son. They're like me. They love to go out. They took after me, you know. I can't [unclear] stay at home. I have to keep myself busy.

Vanessa Silva 26:09

So, your parents would drop you off at the movies, and then you would walk to Chinatown. How far was that?

Grace Mauricio 26:14

Let's see—one, two, three, four—about five blocks. We hit Main Street, Market Street, Soledad Street. It was far, but it was nice. It wasn't that bad. They didn't have any homeless on the street. We never had homeless. The only one we used to see is hobos that get on the train. Those are the only ones we saw. We never seen homeless, the way they are now. We've never seen any of those. We just see hobos that get on the train. And it was weird because now we see all these homeless, but now it's all young kids. That's what I can't get over.

Vanessa Silva 26:54

What types of people would be on Soledad Street when you would walk?

Grace Mauricio 26:59

Oh, Filipino, Spanish, and we'd see the Chinese. And mostly Filipino, Chinese, and Spanish people. So, those are the only kind of people that go there, because Filipinos are gamblers. They gambled. [laughs]

Vanessa Silva 27:21

Did everybody get along?

Grace Mauricio 27:23

Well, I guess so, if they know each other, you know. But other than that, I never seen a fight there, yeah. Not a fight. The only one that had a fight was when we went to the dances, the first group that went in there were the Army, and then when the Navy came in, they had a fight. Then the rowdy Filipinos, they had another fight. They had chairs flying all over the dance hall. They fight because they try to say, you guys took my girls to dance with [unclear], which was silly. But I never got involved in that. I sat aside. [laughs] But a lot of them, they do start a fight. And the Hawaiian guys came in, and they started a fight. But it was like that, you know, how they start fighting against each other. You dance with certain girls, and they do tag dance. They won't let them loose so you can dance with them, and they start a fight. But that's how it was in those days. But at least it was better that way, punching each other, than the way they're doing now with guns. That's the way I feel. Now guys, they think gun is their protection, but to me, I think they're coward when they use guns, because they look tough, you know. Before you shoot fist, or hit them in the head, box. It's different now. Everything is, like I say, it change. Everything is not the same like before.

Vanessa Silva 28:52

How would you feel when you saw a fight happen at one of the dances, like—

Grace Mauricio 28:57

Well, they have to break it up, and guys would pull them apart and all that, and we'd just watch, and we'd say, gee that was stupid, you know, to start something like that. But that's how it was in those days, just fighting like that. No gun, no stabbing or anything. Some of them end up at the police station, but it's just that boxing and using their fists, not like what they do now. So, I hear when you go driving, don't look at the car next to you. When you see four Hispanic guys, young ones there, they said, don't turn around, especially when they have the loud music on. I feel like saying, "Lower your radio!" But you can't. You have to just mind your own business. That's how you do it here, because they shoot you. It's sad. Like, here, we're the older ones here, and you see kids so young [unclear], all that stuff. It's really sad. That's why most of the people here stay home, which I don't. I go to a nicer place when I go to the movie, eat out, and all of that. And we used to go to the Filipino restaurant, Loretta's Cafe. They used to have a Filipino restaurant. They closed it down. Now hardly any Filipino restaurant here in town except for the one by Goodwill. The Manila Ranch, they serve food there, and you could eat there. Other than that, there's not that many Filipino restaurant here. I don't know about Seaside and all that, but hardly here in Salinas. But I never go to the Filipino restaurant, because I don't need to. I know how to cook those kind of food, you know. So, I go to different kinds. I go to Italian, Chinese, Japanese. So, Filipino food, I go, why should I? I know how to cook that at home, so—

Vanessa Silva 30:57

When you were little, would you ever go with your family out to eat Filipino food, or would you just make it at home?

Grace Mauricio 31:04

We make it at home and we do potluck. When my sister would make the lumpia, I cook the main dish and the rice. I always loved people at my house. Thanksgiving, Christmas. They said, "Where shall we have?" I said, "You guys can have it here," which we do, when my sister's husband passed away. After

we do the celebration, then we get together, the family get together after that. And then my sister from Hawaii with them, and she stay here with me. So, she liked it. I had to drag her half the time. She come here. She called, "Grace, do I have a reservation at your place?" I go, "Yeah, anytime." So, when I went up there, I had reservation at her place. But I'm that kind of person. I always had my house open to people, you know, because I like people. Anytime you want Filipino food, call me up. I'll cook for you guys.

Vanessa Silva 31:57

[laughs] Is that how your parents were too? Do they like to have people over?

Grace Mauricio 32:02

No, they weren't like that. They weren't like that. They hardly had visitors, only the people they work with. No, my mother and dad wasn't that outgoing. My dad was shy. I think I'm the only one in my family, and my sister Helen, the one that passed away. She always had people at her house, relatives or a family. I have the people here, because we play cards, and they eat, and then they play cards, and then I said, "If there's any left over, you guys can take it home." My husband does not eat left overs. So, they bring [unclear]—they take it home. I rather do that than have it wasted. because I always cook more than enough. I know which one, what kind of food they like. So, they like—one of this girl like oxtail with salsa. The other one like menudo, my Filipino menudo. I make roast ribs, spare ribs, and I make all the dessert. So, you guys want to come here, just let me know. I'll have it cooked for you.

Vanessa Silva 33:11

[laughs] When you were a child, did you go to your friends' houses to, like, have playdates with them, or did they go to your house?

Grace Mauricio 33:20

What's this?

Vanessa Silva 33:21

When you were a child, when did you interact with your friends? Like, where did you guys hang out?

Grace Mauricio 33:28

You know, the only time we met was in school. Our parents never go house to house to be with our friends. The only time we had fun with them was at school. And my friends wouldn't come to the house, or we couldn't go to their house. It was more just, you know, we get together mostly at school or at the dance. That's the only time we see each other. But then our parents were strict in those days.

Vanessa Silva 33:57

So, Chinatown for you, what was it like going there? Like, were you excited when you would go?

Grace Mauricio 34:04

Oh, yeah, because we'd get to eat at Republic Cafe. [laughs] We'd go there and wait for my mom and dad to come so we could go at the Chop Suey house. That was the best chop suey house in town in those days. And that's where we go to eat. We always look forward to that. And like I say, we know the

people that work there, who the cook was and all that. So, and then we used to go to the dry goods store or we'd go to Loretta's Cafe and have some Filipino foods in those days. But that's about it. We would go to the dry goods store.

Vanessa Silva 34:45

What did Loretta's Cafe look like?

Grace Mauricio 34:48

It was a—well, it was Filipino way, you know. I know the daughter of the one who owned that, because she's in a home in Fairfield, and they serve all kinds of Filipino food and they have a bar and all that sort of stuff. It used to be across the Republic. And then they had—next door would be the pool hall. So, they'd go eat there or Chinese food, and play at the pool hall.

Vanessa Silva 35:14

Did you ever go into the pool hall?

Grace Mauricio 35:16

Oh no, my mom wouldn't allow us to go there. Like she said, ladies go there. We never went to the pool hall. We just went there to eat the food. And Chinatown, like I say, it was nice before. It was really nice. You could park—parking was good, because you parked right there. If you have to find parking, you could park right in front of the Republic Cafe, which was good, or across the street. Now it's hard to find the parking there. And one of my friends said that she went through there just recently before—about two or three years ago, and, you know, they had those women standing around, and one of them even went to solicit her husband while she was sitting in the car. [laughs] She goes, "Can you believe that she solicit my husband, and I'm sitting right next to him?" Well, that's what those women are, you know. Can't help it. I guess that's their life. But it's not the same anymore. Like I say, I would go there when they have Asian Festival. And I attend a lot of those things, and the Historical Society for Monterey. We do that. And it's very interesting what you learn about things here in Salinas and Spreckels, Castroville, and all that. You get to learn a lot of those [unclear] live here longer, because I—when my husband retired from the service, from Norfolk, Virginia, he asked me where I want to live. I told him San Jose. Well, I've never been there, and I'm still here [laughs] in Salinas. See, I could have been your neighbor.

Vanessa Silva 36:58

[laughs] So, let's see, how did you meet your husband?

Grace Mauricio 37:09

At the dance. I met my husband at the dance [unclear]. I was gonna hook him up with my friend, but he's the shy type. Most of his other friends were loud and all that. He was a shy—when there's a fight, he's behind the drape. [laughs] So, he didn't get involved. And that's how I met him. And I married him when I was nineteen. And he was in the service for ten years. I had my son a year later, my younger son in Virginia two years later. And he retired, and we came back. That's when I wanted to move to San Jose, but he said, "We'll see." And I'm still here. It's okay. My family are here anyway, and my friends, so it's okay. I like Salinas. Born and raised here, got married here, graduated from school here. So, I'm a Salinas [unclear].

Vanessa Silva 38:06

What year did you get married?

Grace Mauricio 38:09

1950. I've been married for sixty-one years. My son gave us a fiftieth wedding anniversary in 2000, and a lot of my friends came. Like I say, I was married young. But it's not the same anymore. Some of them get married older. They don't stay that long, you know. But, you know, we had to—my husband was overseas most of the time. Now that he's home, I have to get used to [laughs] because he's home. That's why I go with my daughter-in-law, because you're not used to it, you know. Even when I was working and he'd be home, at least I was at work in the morning, come home at five, so I just cooked dinner and we ate. But now I'm here, like, twenty-four hours, so it's good to get out sometime. After sixty-one years, you need a break.

Vanessa Silva 39:06

[laughs] What was your wedding like?

Grace Mauricio 39:10

It was a big wedding. We had a church wedding and had a reception at the hall. It was a big—all his Navy friends were [unclear] that did the cooking for our wedding. We didn't go on any honeymoon, because after he got married, he got to be—has to go to Virginia and be stationed there for a while. And then we went to—then he asked for us to go, my son and I, because he was still a baby, but he was a crybaby. And then I went to stay with his brother and his wife in Washington DC, and that's where I learned about segregation. I didn't know what seg—because we didn't have it in California. And, like, my son was a crybaby. We'd go in the bus with my sister-in-law. She was a Caucasian, and she said, "Grace, come on and we'll sit over here." I said, "No, I better go in the back, because my baby is a crybaby." The bus driver told us to go to the front. Thank goodness he didn't cry, you know. But I learned a lot of things being over there. That's where I learned how to drink iced tea, because they have warm weather over there, and she made iced tea. But you know what's so funny? When I arrived there, I had a jacket. I didn't know the change of weather over there. So, when we got out of the plane, I heard a lady go, "Where is she from? Alaska?" [laughs] because I had a jacket. I had to wear my shirt ripped, because I breastfeed my son. [unclear] from Alaska, and it was about ninety degrees over there. One thing I learned over there is hurricane. They had real bad hurricane. You couldn't go out. And my neighbor—we live in an apartment facing each other. A lady there with her daughter always knock on my door. "Can I stay with you, Grace?" I go, "Yeah, why?" "I'm scared of hurricane. At least if you're getting blown away, I'll be with you." [laughs] So, she stayed with me until hurricane's over.

Vanessa Silva 41:11

What would you have to do when a hurricane hit?

Grace Mauricio 41:13

Well, you just have to stay still. You can't go to the store or anything. It's very windy, very windy. And it's scary. It's scary. But look at it now, it's worse. We never had it that bad. I see it in the news now. It's worse. They got flood and all that. But in my days, it wasn't that bad. The world is getting worse—

hurricane, tornado, flood, and all that. And I'm still here. I hope to live a long life. My mom was eighty-six when she passed away. She was completely vegetarian. She just had high blood pressure. She never had her tonsils out. She never had her appendix out. All—she was all stillbirth. We were all—what do you call that? Normal birth. She'd never go to the doctor [unclear] shots. So, my other sister, the one that passed away January, was younger than me. And the rest are still living. And my older brother passed away. And I have a younger brother who just got out of the Army and he has Agent Orange with him. And the thing is, we had to stop because he's alcoholic. So, like my sister and I say, "You know, Grace. We're the only three here now." I go, "Yeah." So, we keep in touch with each other. I praise my sons, because I have one here. I always hear from him. But my son in Modesto always calls every day to see how we're doing. And then he told me, "Don't call on your phone. Use your cell phone, because it's cheaper." So, I said, "Yeah, but my cell phone's only for calling out. I don't know how to do all that junk stuff on it." When I see a voicemail, I don't touch it. It doesn't work. So, he had to show me.

Vanessa Silva 43:20

After your parents moved here to Salinas, is that where they lived the rest of their lives?

Grace Mauricio 43:24

Yes, here in Salinas in the Blanco area, Cooper Road. You know my Social Security card? I filed for tax. My Social Security card still have 6 Cooper Road. The IRS man, "My god, this is a long time ago." I go, "Yep." Still 6 Cooper Road on my address, on my Social Security card. The old one is the smaller one. Now you guys get the big ones. I don't know what it look like. But I have the small one, and it's at 6 Cooper Road. And she said, "My goodness, you still have the old ones." I go, "Well, yes. That's the one I got." So, now I do a lot of interpreting for a lot of this—Filipinos that came from the Philippines, and they didn't work long enough to get Social Security, so they go on SSI. And what happening is that they buy life insurance for—the kids buy life insurance for their father or mother, and what happened is that they didn't know that that dividend that they get, those are resources when they get money. And one of this family got resource of \$4,000. They stopped their SSI, because they said, well, you could use the money and—use that money instead of getting SSI. SSI is really welfare. And so, I always go with them and appeal. I appeal for them, and I tell them that, "Oh, what are these people going to live on?" So, they win. I try and help them, and the girls there at the Social Security said, "You're lucky you have her [unclear]." I'm the one that [unclear]. I go, "You know, they're old. They need the money." But I have to warn that if you go to Philippine and you're on SSI, you're only allowed thirty days. Other than that, you have to pay back. So, they listen. Though I don't mind. I like doing that for people too. I used to go with my brother at the courthouse. I do a lot of things for my mom.

Vanessa Silva 45:26

So, it sounds like you're really involved with the Filipino community. What other types of things do you do?

Grace Mauricio 45:31

Well, they always asked me to—when they have fundraising, they always asked me to do something or donate, which I like to do, you know. I know a lot of people that they ask, "Can you donate?" Or, how about going to Reno, doing all that, to help them with the flood, you know? So, I do all that, even though I'm born here, but I help them. There are older Filipinos who I like to help. And they call here, "Can you

help me?" And I go, "Okay, bring what paper you need? And I'll look at it." So, I explain to them, and then the word go around. Like this family go, "Who help you on this?" "Oh, this lady named Grace." So, they called me, so they come here and I help them. You know, I don't mind doing that. I helped this Filipino guy at the lawyer's office, because he got caught for hitting his wife, but, you know, he didn't mean it. She was mean, not him. So, when I took him to a lawyer's office, and I was saying a lot of things, the lawyer made me laugh. He goes, "Grace, you should sit here. I'll sit with him," [laughs] like I was the lawyer. I thought that made me feel good. But I do help a lot of those Filipinos. And I know a lot of them, like, when my friend would say, "Oh, you know this so-and-so?" I go, "Who?" [unclear] "Oh, I know who that is." [unclear] She knew the names of those people. And I just remember names and places. Like, my friend called me yesterday. She said, "Oh, they had a lot of people who are [unclear]," at the dinner thing there. I go, "What family name?" "Ramos." I go, "I don't know. Are they from Salinas?" She go, "Yeah." I said, "I have to see their faces." If I know who they are, then I'll tell them, yeah, I know who they are.

Vanessa Silva 47:32

Did your parents ever tell you anything about what it was like in the Philippines for them?

Grace Mauricio 47:35

Hardship. Very much hardship. They had hardship. My mom and dad didn't get married till they met in Hawaii. They were married in Kauai. But it was all hardship. That's why they—in those days, you didn't need to have a passport. I don't know what they call that stuff. They could just go on a boat, travel to Hawaii, and work there. And a lot of women did that. And my mom said it was hardship over there. Sometimes they didn't have any rice or something. My mom was the only one in her family that came here. She didn't have any relatives here in the country. My dad had a brother and a lot of cousins. So, it was better for me. My dad was a tall man. He was about five eight, five nine. For Filipino, he was tall. I took after my mom. She was short. My sisters were taller than me. That's okay, I was strong. You know, I could still lift a gallon of water. I'm used to that. And I—lifting—I go grocery shopping. I got eight bags. I out four here and four here, and I lift up, go in the house. [unclear] "Why you do that?" I said, "I hate to go back and forth from the car." But I'm not bragging, but my kids says I'm Superwoman. I do a lot of heavy lifting, that's one thing. I've always been like this. Even my mom used to say that. "Grace is strong." So, I used to say, "Don't mess around with me." I just—like I say, I like people. I like people. I like living here. I used to go to Chinatown to eat. And that's it.

Vanessa Silva 49:41

When your mom went to Hawaii, did she go with her whole family?

Grace Mauricio 49:44

No, no, just her.

Vanessa Silva 49:45

She just went by herself?

Grace Mauricio 49:46

She went from the Philippines. She was a single lady, and she went in a ship to Hawaii. My dad was on another ship in Hawaii. They met in Kauai. And we were—when they had to look for their marriage license on her sixtieth anniversary, and we found out she was married in Kauai. So, I have a lot of cousins over there. My dad has a lot of relatives in Waimānalo and all that, mostly in Oahu. But my dad was in Kauai, from Kauai, and then they came here. And we never went back. A lot of my friend says, "How come you didn't go back to the Philippines?" I said, "My mother had six kids. She couldn't afford to take us over there." And besides, like she says, "We're all here," because her family passed away. And my dad's family passed away, so we're here. But a lot of my friends says that I should go visit the place. And they said, you know, if you go there, you don't have to worry, because you know the dialect. I speak my parents' dialect. And they said, if you go there, make pretend you don't know, you know, so that way if they try to bargain if you want to buy something, and they try to sell it higher to you, then speak your dialect, and then they're gonna be saying, "Oh, my god. We talked to someone who understand." [laughs] But I do understand her dialect. I interpret—that's how I interpret for a lot of these Filipinos at Social Security. Now, if I can't find the right word, I have English in between. But they understand. That's the main thing. But one of these days, I might go Philippine. I better not wait too long, [laughs] because I'm old. I'll be eighty next year. I told my girlfriend, you better go. But I want to go with somebody who's been there. You know, that way they can show us around. It's a long flight—sixteen hours, you know. I just go as far as Hawaii, five hours, which is good. [Vanessa laughs] Is this going to be on TV?

Vanessa Silva 51:55

[laughs] No.

Grace Mauricio 52:01

It better not. [laughs]

Vanessa Silva 52:01

Your father, did he work on the plantations in Hawaii?

Grace Mauricio 52:05

Yes.

Vanessa Silva 52:05

Yes?

Grace Mauricio 52:05

The sugar beets—sugar beet plantations. He stopped working there because the sugar beet fell in his eyes, and he lost the sight of his eyes. So, that's when they migrated here. So he has night blindness. That's the only thing that my dad—had night blindness. He couldn't drive at night. You know what my sister used to do, since we weren't allowed to go anywhere? My mom and dad would work out in the field, and he'd have his car there. I'd be the driver, my sister, and my other two sisters. We'd go back and forth in the garage. When my dad saw that, he ran home, because he thought [laughs] we were gonna wreck the garage. And that's how I learned to drive. And when my husband was in the Navy—

stationed at Postgraduate School, I drove into the Greyhound bus depot, and he was driving, and I saw the red light and I said, "Oh, boy. Police." It's a good thing we were small, but he jumped over and I got scolded. "You shouldn't—you're driving too fast." I go, "I did?" It was wrong. He said, "Don't do it again." I go, "I won't." [laughs] I told my husband, "See what I do for you?"

Vanessa Silva 52:08

[laughs] So, speaking of police, were there a lot of policemen on Soledad Street?

Grace Mauricio 53:16

I never noticed. I never noticed hardly any. Maybe they go through it, but not that many. We don't have, like, the police that walk around at the place. I didn't see any there. I didn't see any there. One thing about Chinatown before the—like, the Filipinos in China—people would stand outside, you know, Filipinos in front of the [unclear]. They'd be talking, smoking, [unclear] I see them before. Used to see them out there smoking, talking to each other, going in the bar, drinking. That's the way it was in those days. They could stand out there, but now you'd better not stand out there, because they have drive-by shooting. [laughs] My son always laugh at me. He says, "Gee, Mom." I said, "Well, it's true. You gotta be prepared nowadays." And you'd get a big bang out of me and my son.

Vanessa Silva 54:07

So, was it—it was safe on Soledad Street then?

Grace Mauricio 54:15

Oh yeah, in those days, yeah. It is not the same like now, or anywhere around here, it's not safe at night. You better not be walking by yourself, because it's not safe anymore. Like me, when I walk the dog, I always bring a stick. But they said I should bring a Mace. [laughs] Anybody come to me, I could Mace them. [laughs] And my son used to say, "Mom, all they have to do is look at you and they'll be scared." [laughs] I go, "You're so mean." Are we [unclear]?

Vanessa Silva 54:53

Can I ask you a couple more questions?

Grace Mauricio 54:55

Yes.

Vanessa Silva 54:55

Okay. So, you said that you got married in a church? What church did you—

Grace Mauricio 55:00

Sacred Heart. That's where I received my communion, my confirmation, Sacred Heart Church.

Vanessa Silva 55:06

And then your reception was in the Filipino Hall?

Grace Mauricio 55:09

Yes. No, I had it at the Dimas-Alang temple. It's on Gabilan Street. It's not a temple. It's a association called Dimas-Alang before. They don't have it anymore.

Vanessa Silva 55:19

Okay.

Grace Mauricio 55:20

Yeah, that's where I had it. It was upstairs. And yeah, and then my other sister, she had hers at the Woman's Club. My other sister had it at the Cominos Hotel. Now, my younger sister eloped, so—My brother got married here, but through the judge.

Vanessa Silva 55:46

So, what would you want future generations to know about Chinatown?

Grace Mauricio 55:52

Well, I think they should go see what it's like. And if they see it being renovated—I'm gonna see what it looked like better than what it used to be. Because before Chinatown was [unclear], they had railroad tracks that go this way, and we used to see people getting killed trying to cross that. And nowadays, there's no railroad track where people can cross. You used to see people cross the street, taking a chance in their car, and get hit by the train. But I think it'd be better, like, if they clean up the place, it's going to be a nice place. If they build, like, something where people can go to, you know, have a business, something around there. I don't know if it'll happen, but if they clean up the place, it can be nice. Now the Japanese people have their temple, and it look really nice. When they have their Obon, it's beautiful. A lot of people go to it. And then the Chinese has their church here. And they—what's it called?—but if they fix Chinatown, it look better. If they cleaned it up, make it look good like before. Because I don't know if it's going to ever happen, but if it does, if they go build something there to make it where people would go and not get scared. The thing is they have to shoo all those homeless people there, because they live right there on the street, and it's [unclear] don't look good. Because when we were there the last time, we were on the street of the Republic Cafe, and then on the side of the street you see all these guys sleeping. It didn't look good. Like I say, you could ride through before, but now I wouldn't. [unclear] gonna do to Republic, just renovate it and make it a museum. I wonder what they're going to do with the other places. That's gonna stand out, and then there are other places not gonna look good.

Vanessa Silva 57:39

Yeah.

Grace Mauricio 57:40

Yeah. Make it harder.

Vanessa Silva 57:44

Were you ever there—you actually saw something happen on the railroad tracks where somebody got ran over?

Grace Mauricio 57:49

Oh, yeah. We used to go to the Lee Market. We'd park here, and we saw a guy drive across and got hit by the train. We see a car. That's why I think [unclear] don't have railroad tracks anymore where they cross, because it's very dangerous. Yeah, we saw a guy got hurt there when he try to cross. Think he was going to be fast, you know, crossing, and the train just came by. And then the rest are the hobos. You know, they jump on the train to go somewhere. You know, it's not homeless. Like I say, I've never seen homeless before. Now I see a lot of it. But the thing that gets me is they're all young. I see them standing by the post office, say, "I need food. I'm hungry." And I don't know. I feel for them, but for me, if they said they're hungry, I'll buy them McDonald's food. I don't want to give them money, because I feel that maybe they're using it for something else. Because one Filipino ladies, I went here to McDonald's, she asked me, "Can you give me a dollar for gas?" I said, "Oh, I'm sorry. I don't have any money." I was lying. And she said, "Gee, you're a good friend. We're all the same." I said, "Well, I'm sorry." Then I had to leave, because I was going to go get a hamburger, and she gonna call me a liar, because I had money to buy hamburgers. I said, "Oh, I'm sorry." So, I just back out. I didn't stay there. But I know what she was, because she was [unclear] a lot of people that day. She asked for money. I know who needs it. And, like, one of this guy, he was with a little kid. I just gave them five dollars so they could get something to eat. I feel for kids, that's why. I don't know if it was his kids, but, you know, I feel for the kids. My girlfriend only buy them sandwiches and food, and make sure they're eating, because that's what their excuse is—help me, I'm hungry.

Vanessa Silva 59:46

All right, well, thank you so much for your interview.

Grace Mauricio 59:49

Okay. That's recorded. [Vanessa laughs] Oh my god!

Vanessa Silva 59:54

[laughs] Thank you.

Grace Mauricio 59:55

Vanessa, I'm gonna get [unclear]. [Vanessa laughs] Oh, like I say you guys, if you want Filipino food, just give me a ring and I will prepare something, and I'll invite all my friends. [Vanessa laughs] It's a lot of fun when you get all your friends together.

Vanessa Silva 1:00:10

Yeah.

Grace Mauricio 1:00:10

You know?