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Interview with Honorio Della

Honorio Della

California State University, Monterey Bay

CSUMB Oral History & Community Memory Archive
Chinatown Renewal Project
Interviewee: Honorio Della
Interviewer: Jeannette Copas
Date of Interview: October 27, 2011
Duration of Interview: 55:52

Jeannette Copas 00:06
Okay, so I am in the home of Mr. Della in Soledad, California. This is October 27, 2011, at 5:35 pm. And do we have your permission to record Mr. Della?

Honorio Della 00:22
Yes, certainly.

Jeannette Copas 00:24
Okay. So, I would like to know about your family and what your parents used to do.

Honorio Della 00:34
Well, let's see, first, my parents—my father came to this country. He was born in 1899. And he came to this country—actually, first he came to Hawaii. He was with a group of young Filipinos that went to work there cutting sugarcane. In fact, he told me that they would check their hands before they would hire them. If they were smooth hands, they wouldn't. If they were rough hands, they knew they worked in the fields or whatever. So that's how he came to Hawaii. And then after working there for a number of years, and then eventually, he and a group of his peers went to Colorado to pick sugar beets. So from Hawaii to Colorado, that's quite a change. But eventually, they ended up—the boys ended up in the Central Valley around Fresno, Delano, Reedley, that area. He worked there picking grapes, and for a number of years, and then he went back to the Philippines to—back to his hometown. He was actually born in the town of Santa Maria, which I was born actually in Santa Maria, California. And they were born in Santa Maria Ilocos Sur, which is in Northern Luzon. But he went back there and got engaged and came back to this country to work and actually worked for a number of years in order to get enough money to pay for passage for his fiancée, which of course my mom. They have—when he came, he was a, he grew up and went to a school. There was primarily a Methodist school to the sixth grade. So he's one of the rare Protestants—most Filipinos are Catholic. It's a Catholic nation—it's the largest Catholic nation in the Far East. So anyway, so he was Protestant and when he came to the—finally ended up in Fresno or Delano, I believe in Delano, in that area. He befriended—he went to a church and befriended the minister of the local Methodist Church and was working and all that, so when it was time to go back to the Philippines to get engaged, and then coming back, working to get passage. While he had the minister—his name was Dr. Wallace—found a place for him to stay because in those days, they were all young Filipinos. They lived in camps, and they were all single men. And then all of a sudden now here's this woman coming over. So Dr. Wallace found them a small rental. So my dad, you know, had this rental, and it was apparently a member of the church, someone that had this house. So my dad, of course, befriended them. And so Dr. Wallace said—well, they had to pick up my mom, they had to come—I think it was in San—she either disembarked in San Francisco or Oakland. I think it was in San Francisco. So they had to go over there and the only way was to go by bus or something. Dr. Wallace loaned him his automobile. So he went up to San Francisco to pick up my mom. Then, of

course, then he came back to and lived in Reedley. I believe they got married in Reedly, actually in 1933. And finally moved to Santa Maria, California. And worked in the fields and, of course, that's when I was born. I was born in Santa Maria in 1934. So after that, working in the fields, and they moved to this area, the Salinas Valley. Eventually ended up in a camp out here just on the other side of the prison actually. It was by—the company was H.P. Garin, called the Garin Camp. It was all Filipino men. And the only women on the camp was my mom and the boss. The boss had a wife. And so we lived in this kind of a duplex. There was a hallway down the middle and there was a unit on one side and on the other side. So my mom and dad and myself lived on one side, and Sam Makino and his wife lived on the other side. Sam married a Mexican gal. At that time, interracial marriage was outlawed. She happened to be Mexican, but I think they got married in Washington. That's the only way they could get married. So in this camp of all these Filipinos, we were the only ones living separately because of the two women. So anyway, that's—so we worked, you know, both my mom, dad, and myself worked for this company. And in those days, the crops weren't like they are today where there's crops all year round. You know, in the winter, you had to go south. So we had to migrate down to Imperial Valley. And they would—H.P. Garin, the company, would then set up camp there and the boys would stay there. And we would go down there. And I would go to school down there also. And then we would come back, you know, in the summer. So it was that sort of, kind of migration that we had to do. So through the years working for the—you know, as I grew up working in the fields, we would tie carrots. At that time, carrots were tied. They weren't, you know, topped or they're not bundled in little carrots and all that. They were actually bunch tied. So we'd tie carrots. As a little kid, we'd go out in the field, and I'd stay in the car. You know, sleep in a car because they go out real early. I'd sleep in the car until it was—you know, I'd wake up and look for my parents and find them. And then when we were little kids, of course we would play and as you grow older, then you start helping your parents. You know, pretty soon you're helping and helping and then pretty soon you're on your own doing whatever. Especially I always wanted—I wanted to buy something, you know. So I wanted to do my own thing and make some money for myself. So we were doing that. And so that was during the war. And it wasn't till later, my dad got a job with a company called Premier Company because that was a time when all the guys, all the men were off to the war. There was very little, you know, people to take care of the produce that was, you know, that was grown in the valley. My dad was older so he didn't go off to war, unlike a lot of the relatives I had that volunteered to go in the army, just because of this situation of Japan being, you know, invading the Philippines and all that and they felt they had to go do something. My dad was older so he wasn't able to go. So this is a time that the Bracero program started. And they brought in these Mexicans from Mexico to work in the fields. We also had here in Soledad, a prisoner of war camp. There were Germans that were incarcerated or captured during the African campaigns and the early parts of the war. So we had a prisoner of war camp here and these prisoners would also go out and work in the field. So they were brought out here primarily to do that. And my dad working for this company ended up being a foreman for Premier, and we'd have these, you know, these German prisoners, topping onions and doing whatever. In fact, I learned how to juggle because I'd be home working, or walking home from school and they happened to be picking onions right next to the roadway. And they were taking a break and this German was juggling these onions, you know. I stopped because my dad was there so I, you know—and this, this guy spoke some English.

Honorio Della 09:58
So I asked him about the juggling because I was intrigued, obviously, the juggling, you know. So he gave me two onions and showed me how to juggle two onions. And then so I went home, you know, practiced. And then the next day, they were still in the field. I noticed they hadn't finished the field next day. So he showed me how to do three onions. So I learned how to do three onions. And then he was going to show me some more but unfortunately they finished the field. So that was—so all I could do was to juggle three onions. And then the Braceros, of course—then it was just another situation where we had to—my dad then set up a camp. We had a camp there of Mexican nationals. And we ran the kitchen for them. And so they tried to do some things and my mom would—they would take pictures and my mom would take the photographs or the film into Gonzales and have them developed for the guys, you know, because they couldn't, you know, they obviously didn't go anywhere. And then my dad then decided one time, he says, well, you know, you need to do something for the boys. So he would—on Saturdays in general, they were either half day work or no work at all on Saturday and Sunday. So he piled everyone in the truck and we'd go to Salinas, and let everyone go and everyone had to meet at a certain time in order to come back. If they missed the truck, that's it [chuckles]. They were stuck there, had to find their way back to Soledad. So my mom had all these photographs—they just loved photographs. They'd take pictures and they would—she would have them developed and bring them to them, and I think she made some money off of it somehow. I don't know how, but anyway. But that was kind of—the other thing I used to do was the lettuce trucks. [unclear] was, you know, 10, 12 years old. I mean, I was younger than that, I guess. But the lettuce trucks would go from here to Salinas because they would—not like the way they do now, packed out in the fields and all that. They had to bring it to the packing sheds, and on Saturdays, I'd want to go to a movie or go to the matinees, you know, that they used—the way back in those days you used to have these matinees for, children's matinees actually, you know. And I'd hop on one of the trucks and go to Salinas, and then after the movie, I'd stand out there on John Street, which is where Highway 101 used to go through. And they would—the truck driver saw me, you know, they'd pick me up, they all knew me, so they'd all pick me up and take me back home, you know. That's how I kind of got around. And our, I mean, in your notes there you said something about, you know, our relationship to Salinas. We didn't have much, primarily because in those days you didn't travel much, especially during the war. Gasoline was rationed. So you went into Gonzales or Soleded for groceries. And you didn't do a heck of a lot of going anywhere else. However, since my parents were—my mom was also raised in a missionary school up to, I think it was the sixth grade, both until the sixth grade. There was on California Street, in Chinatown—there was a church, it was a Filipino—it was the first Filipino Presbyterian Church, even though they were Methodist, but it was, you know, Protestant church. So we would go on Sundays. We had a '37 Chevrolet, and we'd go to Salinas for their church services. The church is still there. It's a Mexican church—so right across from the Buddhist temple on California. And we'd go up there for church services, and then after, generally after church, then we'd go to the Republic Cafe and have lunch, and then we'd come home. I mean, that was—so our relationship to Salinas wasn't as much, you know, because of being somewhat isolated from that—our own, like I said our relationship was really, was through the church, for meeting some of the people that—the older families there. Most of the families now that are in this area are kind of families that came way after the war. Most, almost all of the old timers—what we'd call the old timers that came here, you know, during the era of my parents are basically all gone. Here in Soledad anyway, there's nothing left. There was a fellow, his name is [unclear]—no, oh, now I can't think of his name, but he was 90-something. And he just passed away a couple of years ago, and he was kind of the last of

them. Last of the old timers, which we call the old timers that came, you know, in the late 1900s—somewhere around that era, before the war, basically. So that brings us up to, you know, when I went to school here, here in Soledad. I went to Soledad Grammar School, took the bus from the camp. They would—they had a bus that ran from Soledad to, you know, pick up kids. And so I went through kindergarten through eighth grade here in Soledad, and then Gonzales High School—four years of Gonzales High School. So I don't know if you have any questions at that period of time.

Jeannette Copas 16:40
Did you have any siblings?

Honorio Della 16:42
No, I'm an only child.

Jeannette Copas 16:43
You're an only child?

Honorio Della 16:44
Yeah, only child.

Jeannette Copas 16:44
And did you get married yourself?

Honorio Della 16:48
Oh, yes. Right. Well, after high school, then I went to a year at Hartnell. And I basically really just fooled around. Oh, actually, what happened was that my parents or my dad started to farm down in Imperial Valley with his brother. He had a half-brother down there. And so my parents would—he would go back down there and come back, and go back and come back, you know, visit or he'd, you know, bring a load of, you know—one time I remember he brought a load of watermelons because they couldn't sell them, and he would give them away to a lot of people, you know. But then one year my mom decided—and I was going to high school at this time—and my mom decided she wanted, she was going to go down and live with him. So I lived here by myself. Which is probably you couldn't do these days because you'd end up in juvenile hall, or somebody's gonna go to jail for abandoning me. I wasn't really abandoned. The vice principal of the school knew my situation and he lived right behind us, so he didn't say anything. And I went to school. I didn't miss any school. They would send money for groceries and pay the water bill and all those other utilities and stuff. And then when they'd come back they'd come back, but so, I don't know, I guess I had enough background to continue going to school and not take advantage of the situation and raise all kinds of hell, you know [chuckles], which a lot of kids I know today would have done. But so I didn't miss any school. The principal, I mean, the vice principal knew the situation, knew that I was here living by myself. He didn't say anything. Like I say, nowadays he probably would have been, probably fired for not saying something about it. And my parents probably would have been caught up in some lawsuit or something because, you know, you just don't—nowadays you just don't leave a kid by themselves. So, after high school, then it was the army. I mean, after a year of Hartnell, I mean. At that time, you know, once you got somewhat free, it, you know—kids nowadays, you know, once you get away from the structure of a grammar school and you go to a high

school where it's a little looser, and you can pick and choose classes and all that. When you go to junior college it's even looser, where you're going to do whatever, you know, I had a lot of time on my hands. And at that time they were drafting, and so a friend of mine decided that they wanted to—he wanted to join the army. And I wasn't doing that well in school, and I wasn't—I was kind of fooling around. I said, you know what, I think I'll do it with you. So, this fella that I went from kindergarten through high school, through two year—no, through a year—of Hartnell with them, and then we joined the army. This was during the Korean War. And fortunately for me is that I ended up going to Europe, everyone was going, you know they were going west to Korea, and I headed east to Germany. So I ended up two years in Germany. And actually, my army records show that I have a ribbon that's European occupation. It was about two, I don't know, about two or three months before Germany received their—whatever they receive, their—I can't think of the word right now.

Honorio Della 21:18
But it was 10 years after the war. And so I was there for a couple of months before that happens. So my records show I'm European occupation. People—you know, when I tell people that and they say it can't possibly be. Because that was World War II, you know [chuckles]. And I said, yeah, really—says I'm older than you think I am [chuckles]. Anyway, so after the war, of course—or not after the war—after my stint in the army, then I went to Hartnell for another year, for a year, and got the AA—received the AA degree and then decided to continue studies at Cal Poly. And education was a very big thing with my parents. I think it was with most of Filipinos at that time. One of the things is that I could understand— my parents spoke Ilocano. They were from Northern Luzon, which is Ilocano. That's what they spoke in Northern Luzon. This is before Marcos declared that there should be a national dialect, which is Tagalog, and Tagalog is the dialect that's spoken—that was spoken in Manila. So my dad, my mom spoke Ilocano and English. They spoke to me in Ilocano, or even, or English, but I always, they always wanted me to answer in English. So I could understand the language and never really spoke it. Went to the Philippines with my dad, and the first time I ever saw it Ilocano even written, was I picked up a comic book—one of the cousins had a comic book—and I was, you know, looking at a comic book or reading it, and I says, "Oh, that's how you say that," you know, or "that's how it's spelled," you know. So, and they couldn't believe that I could understand them. I remember we were walking along—this was, had a trip back there. This is what they call balikbayan which is, you know, going back home. They would be speaking in Ilocano, and one time they were speaking and I answered a question that they were talking about and, you know, they were kind of surprised. And I said, "I told you I can understand," you know. I just don't speak it [laughs]. So, anyway, that was the trip to the Philippines. So after—let's see I decided to go to, you know, continue my education and went to architecture school at Cal Poly. There was at that time—the first year I went to Cal Poly was the first year it became co-ed, and a lot of people don't remember that it was a men's college. And the year I went to school was the first year it was co-ed. I graduated in '61, so it had to be—I think I spent three years there because some of the things that I had taken, it wasn't transferable. It was that whole thing you run into. So anyway, at that time, there were three girls in the—no, there was two in the curriculum, and in the second year I was there, there was another one added to it. So anyway, that's where I met my wife. She was a student there in architecture. She actually is the first female graduate of the school of architecture. So that was, let's see, also I was getting, you know, at that time, because I was going under the GI Bill, you know, I received $110 a month or so. But I worked also. What happened was I worked for an architect there in San Luis Obispo. So I worked during the holidays, sometimes on

weekends, and sometimes—and also I lived in his wife's studio. It was really funny when I came back to Soledad, you know, during one of the summer breaks, and I got a job with a fellow in Salinas, actually drafting for an architect in Salinas. I don't know if he's still alive or not. But one day I get a call here. My dad says—or, we get a call—my dad says, "You have to call this guy from San Luis Obispo." And I called him—I didn't know who in the heck he was. Well it turns out he's an architect in San Luis Obispo, and he says, "I'd like you to work for me." And I said, "Well, I'm already working for someone." He says, "Well, what you can do is you can live rent free in my wife's studio while you're going to school. You can also work for us when—during vacations or any other time." So, you know, I told my boss in Salinas and he says, "Gee, go for it. You'll never find a situation like that again." So I went down there, and I lived in this warehouse. It was basically a studio. It was big enough—I drove my car in and that was my living room. My car was in the living room. And what I did for this woman is I framed for her, stretched canvases, did all kinds of things for her. And she would—sometimes she would leave me notes while I was going to school. She would leave notes and say, you know, you have to do this or do that or whatever, or I'm going to be working on some other things. And so for three years there, I learned a lot about not only, you know, working in an architect's office while I'm going to school, but also a lot about art. In fact, that painting right there is from her. Her name is Elaine Stranahan, and that was before she got married. Her name's Elaine Badgley. So—

Jeannette Copas 27:51
What is that a picture of, if I don't—I'm sorry.

Honorio Della 27:53
Well, it's just a railroad station there in San Luis Obispo, where they were, you know, coming around the corner there.

Jeannette Copas 28:00
Okay.

Honorio Della 28:01
It's a watercolor. She's a water—she paints oil, but this is one of her watercolors. So I did a lot of things for her, and did a lot of them—of course, worked for her husband in the office. He also had a gallery, so I hung the gallery as well. It was a real diverse learning experience that I had going to school. So after that, of course, we graduated and then I ended up marrying Pat, who was like I say the first female graduate. She was a classmate and first female graduate of the school of architecture. We ended up working—she worked in Santa Barbara. Got a job in a small office in Santa Barbara as a draftsperson. And I did the same thing in Ventura. And we lived in Carpinteria, which is a town in between Santa Barbara and Ventura. So we live now in a three-story—no two-story—over, actually it was a three-car garage. There's two stories. It was on an old estate, and the chauffer's quarters was upstairs. So one-bedroom apartment upstairs over the three-car garage. So we each had to have a car because I went north, she went—or I went south, she went north. So, but anytime people would come by and visit, you know, we'd have a place for them to park their car [chuckles]. And we had a lot of visitors because, you know, you're halfway from Santa Barbara to—or LA to San Francisco. You know, seemed like a [unclear], so we had all kinds of visitors there. [pauses] You have to break in here some time [laughs].

Jeannette Copas 30:02
[laughs] I'm enjoying listening to your story. I want to know—I know that you said that you went to church down in Chinatown and that you visited the Republic Cafe. Now you were a child obviously when you went there. How does your view differ on the buildings now that you're an architect from when you were a child? You know—

Honorio Della 30:30
Well, now, I mean when I was a child I wasn't really interested in that. All I remember is going over for food [chuckles]. So we would go there and across the street there was a Japanese grocery store, so we'd [unclear]. Next to the church also was a Japanese mechanic, and we used to have our car serviced there. And of course, soon as the war broke out, you know, he was gone, he disappeared. We had here in Soledad at the grammar school, we had one of our classmates—her name was Helen Takahashi. And, of course, you know, when they interned all the Japanese, and of course her and her family was interned also. So she kind of disappeared and we all kind of, you know, "Well what happened to Helen?" And, you know, and the teacher would tell us what happened. But in terms of going to Republic Cafe, all I remember there is there were booths—I mean, not booths, they were—yeah, they were little cubicles, you know, under the curtains. Typical Chinese restaurant—if you go to San Francisco you'll still see some like that. And a dumbwaiter—they always had a dumbwaiter. Seemed like they had a room upstairs as I recall. But that's—and the Buddhist temple, of course, was across the street. And I remember they had that big gong up there, and then, of course, when the war broke out, they took the gong down. I don't know where they sequestered it, but they, you know, did a lot of things. I mean, they certainly didn't have much time to do much of anything, the Japanese. You know, at time they had, you know, 24 hours, 48 hours to get their affairs done, and off they went and they ended up being, you know, corralled over at the rodeo grounds before they were then shipped off to other areas, concentration camps. When I was working in San Luis Obispo while I was going to college, one of the fellas at work there was Japanese, and he was telling me about some of the things that happened. Well, he ended up in Santa Anita racetrack and then off to, I don't know, Idaho or someplace. As, you know, and he was just going to high school at the time.

Jeannette Copas 33:19
Did you yourself experience any racial prejudice or—

Honorio Della 33:23
The only time is—you know, we were going back and forth. One time we were coming back from Imperial Valley, and we stopped at this one place to have something to eat—a restaurant. And we went in, and then my dad talked to the proprietor and then all of a sudden, my dad says, "Well, we have to go. They're full." I was just a kid, you know. I mean, I looked and it didn't look full to me. But, you know, it wasn't until later that I really realized that what was happening is that, at that time during the war, you know, if you're oriental or even looked oriental, or, you know, look Japanese or anything close to that, you know, they didn't serve you. So that's the only time I've really had any—the only other time was

that, here in Soledad, my parents were trying to buy a house, and they built a new track over here, and we couldn't buy into it. And that's when they bought this house, because they couldn't, they weren't allowed to buy into this track. That's about the only—other than that I've never really, never really felt—I kind of liked it when I was in the service. I kind of was right in the middle of things. I had all these black guys that, you know, I'd be buddies with, and all the white guys I would be buddies with. You know, when you're Filipino you can kind of travel down the middle of the road [laughs]. Yeah, so I've never really experienced anything outwardly like when I was a kid at that restaurant. The only other time is my dad's saying we could, you know, buy over there, and I never really thought about it at that time. I wasn't really—that wasn't in my, either my vocabulary or thinking. You know, just didn't think about it.

Jeannette Copas 35:30
And you mentioned that your parents were—can't think of the right word—they were proud to have you go to school. That was very important to them.

Honorio Della 35:43
Oh, yeah.

Jeannette Copas 35:44
When you finished, what was the, you know—

Honorio Della 35:47
Well, to begin with, is they weren't sure what architecture was about to begin with [chuckles]. So they didn't know. I mean, yeah, they had a limited education. So, but certainly education was a primary thing. It was just like my children. It was—there wasn't a real decision about going to college, it was just where. That was the only thing. So incidentally, my son went to Cal Poly. I went to Cal Poly. My wife went to Cal Poly. However, my daughter went to Berkeley [Jeannette laughs]. So, and they're doing very well, both of them. Let's see, I guess after we got married—like I say, we had, both my children were—my son was born in Santa Barbara. And my daughter was born in Goleta, which is, you know, right there. At that time Goleta was just a—wasn't even an incorporated city. But we lived out there and bought a house out there. And then a classmate of mine dropped by and was talking about how she had this interior design firm in San Francisco, and she needed help, and blah blah blah, and says, "You should come up there and buy, you know." Well anyway, she talked me into it. So we packed up everything and we moved to Mill Valley—I don't know if you know where Mill Valley is, it's just north of the city—and went to work there. So the firm's name was Design Research, and we were at the, right at the—you know where the beach and bay, which is right down near the cannery in San Francisco? That's where our office was. So we did interiors. We did a number of interiors in the city, couple of other things. Then I, quite frankly, I was—that wasn't really for me. I didn't particularly care—it was a lot of shopping and stuff like that. And I says, [unclear]. And what really killed it actually, it was—we had a firm, then moved from Los Angeles—the law firm moved from Los Angeles to San Francisco. The elderly partner moved to San Francisco. So they wanted to build an office. They rented a space in the Russ Building in downtown San Francisco, and we were kind of, were contracted to do their interiors, remodel their offices. So we did a lot. You know, I actually built some tables for this whole thing. We had these Markham chairs that were made out of suede and bronze, and the one thing was a—he had an old roll up desk that he used. And we decided, well, that roll up desk was—we had it refinished, and

we used his roll up desk as a credenza behind him. And in front of him, we took a—we got an old toilet partition. It was a marble toilet partition. Back in those days old banks and [unclear] had these toilet partitions that were all marble. So we had one—it was big, huge. And then we had it ground down and all the scratches taken out of it, and had them chrome legs. So they're very contemporary, just a big slab of marble. And a big chrome drafting lamp. And that was his desk, but he'd just turn around and behind him was where he did all his work because it was a roll up desk. The other thing was there was another piece, very long piece that we put on the other end of the pit, the room. And in this old building, it was too long to get into their freight elevator. And I says, "Jeez, how in the heck are we going to get this thing up there, you know?" Talked to the superintendent, and he says, "Oh, we can get it up there." Says you'll have to come down, we'll have to do it at, I forget what time, it was a slow time, it was, like, 2:30 or something like that, or two, or maybe it was after that. I don't know, but anyways. [unclear] a slow time. So we did—we took this this thing, it was a very long piece of furniture. It was like that table right there right behind you. You know, only it was about, you know, it was much longer, maybe a little wider. And I said, "Well, well how are we gonna do this?" He says, "Well, we'll take the elevator and drop it down to floor level, the top of it to the floor level. We'll put it on top of that and take it up. I said, "Oh [chuckles], so we're going to do this?" Yeah, he says, "I'll, you know—this one elevator, we'll just shut it down, and I'll control it." "I don't know. Okay." So we wheeled this thing off the street, you know, and he brought the elevator down. So the top of the elevator was floor level, and we took this thing, you know, and then just propped it up there and hang on to the cables. You know, there's the cables. You know, we're hanging on the cables and this thing here in this bank of elevators. And it's just like the movies, you know. You see these movies where they–where guys are falling or something's happening with the elevators and cables, you know. Well, this is the same thing. So he says, "You guys okay?" "Yeah." So he starts it up, you know. Goes up, and we get to the–I forget what floor it is–sixth floor. But anyway, that was the scariest thing I've ever done in my life. I was hanging on these cables, hanging on this piece of furniture–another guy was with me–and besides us were these elevators going [makes whooshing sound], you know, and the other [makes whooshing sound]. And you look down, whoa, that's a long ways down there, you know! [laughs] And we finally get up to where we are, and then he adjusted the floor until we got off, and then we pulled the thing off, and that was, that was the craziest thing I ever did. But anyway, right after that whole incident, and we did all of this stuff, we get a call from the client, and he says, "We need to talk." And I says, "Oh, okay." We go over there, he says, well, his secretary, that's been his secretary for the last 900 years, decided she didn't like what we were doing. It was just too slick for her. So [laughs] that was the death knell. I said, "Oh, jeez. This is ridiculous. You know, forget it. I'm out of here. I'm going back to architecture." So I ended up getting a job with Sandy and Babcock, which is a fairly well known firm in San Francisco. Then after that I ended up going to Santa Rosa and working with an old classmate of mine, and then from that point, after–I forget how many years–I opened up my own office. So I practiced in San Francisco–in Santa Rosa.

Jeannette Copas 35:48
Now you mentioned you had children, how many do you have?

Honorio Della 36:24
I had two. My son is—he did very well. He ended up starting a company and unfortunately got caught up in that dot com business when it, you know, when it crashed. He went into computer science. In fact, he was—I still have one of his old computers, but the dot com kind of killed him. You should have

gotten out of the business, gotten out or folded up the company before it got, you know, but he always kept saying, "Oh, it's going to turn around, Dad. It's going to turn around." Well, shoot. It never did. So he lost all that, and he ended up consulting. So, actually he made—he was better off consulting, I guess. Because you didn't have to pay anyway, you know [chuckles]. So he did consulting, and I always told him, he says, "Well, consulting is tough." When I, you know I used to tell him, "You know, I'd look in the Yellow Pages under the C's for clients, and I can never find any. Then I'd look in the White Pages under C's, and they weren't listed there either." [laughs] So, I says, "What you got to do is you gotta go beat the bushes, you know. You gotta find clients." And anyway, he did all right, and he, you know, because at that time, that particular business, it was still a fairly close, I mean, community. It wasn't that large yet. Everyone—a lot of people knew each other in those businesses, so he did okay as a consultant. He had a girlfriend that—and they had a child, and unfortunately they—she died before they got married. She died young. She had cancer. In fact, my wife died of cancer also. She had breast cancer, and after about 10 years—after 10 years, we said, Oh God, this is great. Because you know there—the incidence of reoccurrence and cancer is after so many years, you know. Your chances are—diminishes after seven years. It's, you know, they figured, well, your chances—I mean, there's only a small percentage that would reoccur. After 10 years we thought, well, you know. But unfortunately she was that—one of those small percentage, and so she passed away from breast cancer. And so my son, he has a boy. He's eight years old, and they live in Scotts Valley. Right now he's actually working for Hewlett Packard. They got a hold of him and offered him a job. And I says, "Take it." At least you get health insurance and all that, you know. Because since he has a little kid, a little boy. My daughter—she has three children. They live in Plano, Texas. She was director of operations for a company in Phoenix. And then she was offered a job she says she couldn't refuse, so they moved to Texas—Plano, Texas. Unfortunately, as right at the time, they were trying to sell their house and just when things just crashed, and they still have the house in Scottsdale, which is becoming a burden now. Even though she makes, you know, she makes a lot of money, but even then it's still a big burden. And her husband—he has a small company, and about the only thing I can describe what he does is that he makes a—it's like a microwave oven. You know, it's about that, but it's controlled by all kinds of computers and all kinds of other paraphernalia. But it goes to I think, like, 3000 degrees instantly. And the—or maybe it isn't quite that, but it goes way up there. And his market are basically research labs, universities, things like that. It's something that, just no one, I mean, right off the street you don't just buy one. One is they're very expensive, and two it's a very limited use. That's what he does.

Jeannette Copas 48:07
Sounds like they've done well for themselves.

Honorio Della 48:07
Oh yeah, no, they they've done well for themselves. So I have no—they make more money than I do [laughs].

Jeannette Copas 48:16
I guess my last question would be, if you wanted the younger generation to know, the younger generation to know one thing about the Filipino culture, what would it be?

Honorio Della 48:31
Well, you know, it's really funny that when I was growing up, most of my relationships to the Filipino culture was in the labor camps and all men. You know, there was a lot of cockfights, barbecues. I mean, every time someone had some, they'd kill a pig. I remember in a camp, you hear this—at five in the morning, you hear this squealing. You know, you says, "Oh, they're killing a pig," you know. So they'd kill a pig and then there was a—in the camps they would, they would have different things going on. If someone got married—and especially after the war when you could get married interracially, then we'd, you know, we'd go to those things when I was a young kid. So that was basically the most of the activities. We didn't get into much as you might get into a larger city, where there's more cultural activities that go on, versus here, it was just basically parties. You know, weddings or baptisms or that sort of thing. And in the church, again, it was more—it was more Americanized, you know. The pastor we had during the war was—he was Danish, I know that. And then after that, there was—well first, before, just as the war started, there was a Filipino minister at this church, and of course, he went off to war and became a chaplain. Then we had this American that took over, and then after that, then there was another Filipino. But, I don't know, in terms of culturally—I didn't know a heck of a lot was happening. One of the things in my generation, you didn't ask your parents a heck of a lot of things. They, you know, they told you what to do. And, you know, we never had any big deep discussions about what was going on, which I do today, but there's a whole different thing. I mean, we were basically farm laborers. We didn't really get into any, you know, heavy discussion about some book or whatever—didn't have any books. Basically, the only books that we had was, basically, you know, books added from school. So I don't know. Most of the Filipino culture that I know of I actually read about more than participating in it. Like I said, I think if I lived in a larger community where there was a lot of Filipinos at then you would have these other things going on, versus what, I mean, we're—it is kind of, you know, I have to say that we're kind of isolated living in a labor camp or living in this area. We're just working, just been farm laborers, basically. And I just happened to break out of it. That's about all, you know.

Jeannette Copas 52:11
I appreciate you letting me interview you, Mr. Della, and welcoming us into your beautiful home. Beautiful home.

Honorio Della 52:17
Well, thank you. Well, I hoped I answered a few questions. I don't know if that gave you an insight of the Filipino culture. Like I say, it's—I've read more than I've basically participated in. And no that's about it. I don't know what else. The one thing about the—even the younger, the Filipinos that are, that have come over from after the war, which is another wave of Filipinos. They also—I've noticed that they kind of stay—there's a number of them here in town. I don't know a number of them, but they still, just like the wave of Italians and other that came over, they kind of stuck together and all this, you know. I know here in town, you know, I'm fairly active. I'm on the planning commission, and I get involved with a lot of other things. I've been delivering meals on Meals on Wheels. I think this is my 10th year that I volunteer for that, and in fact, I had gotten a bunch of—last year I was given a citizen of the—volunteer of the year. And I got all this stuff from Congressman Farr and the Board of Supervisors and all these plaques, and they're all stacked up in the other room, you know, for that. And I've been active in the planning commission. I'm on the—right now I'm on the Board of Directors of—I was on the Board of

Directors of Meals on Wheels, and then I was on the board—I'm now still on the Board of Directors of the Woodward Graff Wine Foundation, where we give money to scholarships at Cal Poly and also at Davis for anyone in oenology or any wine related subjects—oenology, fermentation practice, or, you know, winemaking. And so those are kind of my activities. I still work. I work—I used to work for Chalone Vineyard for years and years and years. And I work up here at Hahn. I just do just tasting. I only work a couple of days, maybe three days a week, two days a week. You know, I enjoy it because I meet people from all over, you know, from—interesting people. Anyway, so that keeps me active. Keeps me off the streets [both laugh]. So I don't know if that's—if you have anything else or—I don't know if I covered, I just—

Jeannette Copas 53:39
You did a very, very good job. You have a very rich family history, and it came through. And I just want to thank you very, very much for doing an interview with me.

Honorio Della 55:44
Well, I was wondering when you were going to say something [both laugh].