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Interview with Paz Celso

Paz Celso

California State University, Monterey Bay

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Chinatown Renewal Project
Interviewee: Paz Celso
Interviewer: Martha Garcia
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Duration of Interview: 43:05

Martha Garcia 00:02

Okay, so today's October 20, 2011. We're in Salinas talking to Paz Celso about her experiences in Salinas, in Chinatown. My name is Martha Garcia, and Paz, do you give us permission to record this interview?

Paz Celso 00:20

You speak louder, please. I can't--

Martha Garcia 00:23

I'm saying we're conducting an interview today--

Paz Celso 00:26

Yeah.

Martha Garcia 00:26

--and just asking for your permission--

Paz Celso 00:28

Okay.

Martha Garcia 00:28

--to record the interview. Is that fine? So, we just wanted to start by asking you about your family history and your childhood--when you were a child, and your parents and growing up--

Paz Celso 00:44

Yeah, I grew up in--I was born in Manila, Philippines. And I grew up after my father got out from the Navy. We went to--we resided in the rural area, near the military camp that they called Fort William McKinley. And then, but in spite of the fact that we are from a rural area, I went school into the city.

Martha Garcia 01:26

And how did--how was your mother? How did she--

Paz Celso 01:31

My mother was an [unclear]. She was in a convent. They--she belonged to a poor family. But because she--her dad was a security guard in that school, that Catholic school they call Assumption Convent, she was given the privilege to go to schooling and then after that, she taught in one of the Catholic

school in Manila. And my father, as I say, was an ex US Navy. He just stayed four years in the service though.

Martha Garcia 02:07

Okay. So, and you going to school, is that where you learned a lot of the English language, going to—

Paz Celso 02:14

Yes, after that, in spite of the fact that we stayed in the rural area, I went to school in—the Philippines was in, was under the American government at that time. And then I went to a prestigious school, what they call [unclear] training school, run by the federal—funded by the federal government of America. And most of our, I remember our superintendent was Luther Bewley, and our principal was Mrs. Helen Green. And most of our teachers had American too.

Martha Garcia 02:56

Oh, okay. And did your brother—how many brothers and sisters did you have? Did they go to school with you also?

Paz Celso 03:03

Huh?

Martha Garcia 03:04

Your brothers and sisters?

Paz Celso 03:05

My sisters, my two sisters—because my brothers were younger than us. She younger than me. So, it's only my three sisters—my two sisters who went to that same school that I went.

Martha Garcia 03:25

And growing up, tell us about how you met your husband or your—when you started your family.

Paz Celso 03:31

And after that, as I said, my father worked for the military [unclear] electrician. And there I met—this was a time when—I was 18 years old when I met my husband. He was in the service for US Army already for four years, until we got married.

Martha Garcia 03:56

When did you get married?

Paz Celso 03:59

I got married before the war. That was way back 1940y, before the outbreak of the Second World War.

Martha Garcia 04:08

How did that affect you?

Paz Celso 04:11

Oh, it was really sad, you know, during the war. War is really—it's an ugly war. It's hard for families like us and my husband—I didn't even know if my husband was alive at that time, not till he was able to escape the Death March. And after that he joined the guerrilla movement. We had to—he has to hide from one place to another because they've been hunted by the Japanese soldiers, too.

Martha Garcia 04:47

So, did that influence you coming to the United States?

Paz Celso 04:52

By that time not yet, because my husband is scared that we might not survive having six children, you know. After that we had six children. And we know the cost of living in America is hard with being a soldier's family with meager salary, you know. So, he decided—we stayed in the island for a while until he finished his 20 years of service in Korea. [unclear] America. We took the—we boarded the army transport ship called SS Sultan, and it took us 21 days to reach the mainland.

Martha Garcia 05:45

How was that trip for you and your children?

Paz Celso 05:49

It's a sentimental journey, you know. But it's mixed emotions because you feel happy that you will be with your family—togetherness after so many years, after 20 years that things just have to come and go being in the service. You feel—it is, as I say, it's a mixed emotion because you don't know what lies ahead for you being in a strange—in a foreign country when you are used to living in your own native land, you know.

Martha Garcia 06:26

Was that trip hard for you? How was—how was the ship? Describe—

Paz Celso 06:29

It's nice. The kids enjoyed the trip because they can roam around a big ship. They can watch movie. They have a playing place there. There is what you call this—there's also this store they call PX inside. You can buy something there, see. But I say it took us 21 days before we reached the mainland, because they had to pick up some troops from Marshall Island, and we were really hungry for Filipino food. [unclear] So when we were given a chance when we stopped over at Hawaii, so we were able to get out of the boat and look for [unclear] restaurant until we reached the mainland. We [unclear] at Alameda, then we wind up settling in Salinas. We set—we lived in a leftover—a place that was left by the army they called—what is—a housing project. And my kids were really home—they were really homesick. Most of the time [unclear], we want to go back to the island. But after that we get adjusted. We were able to adjust ourselves.

Martha Garcia 08:08

So when you—when you reached the—when you came to the United States, you settled here in Salinas? How was—was that hard for you to find housing or to—

Paz Celso 08:20

Not really, as I said, because one of our friends who came ahead of us, also a military family, had already arranged for us that one of the housing place there. But after that we were given notice that they will demolish the place, so we—and this place was a, what you call this, [unclear], and they're trying to build this new housing here. So, we applied for it, but first we were being rejected because of our, you know, because of the low income we had. But the realtor told us not to tell them that we have six kids, so it is stated that we have only three kids, so we were qualified. We bought this 1957 until now we still have this house. [laughs]

Martha Garcia 09:17

So how was the experience for your children in school or learning a new language?

Paz Celso 09:23

Well, because they were given privilege for free lunch, because the daddy was in the service. But it didn't take them long to learn the English language, see. One or a—the oldest one was already 14 years old. Percy went to this Alisal High School—Alisal School—and then finally he graduated from Salinas High School.

Martha Garcia 09:35

And do you think your children ever experienced any, like, difference because of the English language? Like, did they struggle?

Paz Celso 10:05

At first. Then when finally, I remember when one of my—my son Edwin was able to master the English language. The teacher told me, oh, your son has mastered the English language. He cannot keep himself still. He [unclear] and he said, and every time I reminded him, he said, he just smile and smile like a monkey, you know [laughs]. I just take it like a grain of salt, you know. That time I don't really have the feeling that it's very insulting now. See, that time because I didn't know that I could really make an issue of that.

Martha Garcia 10:54

Right.

Paz Celso 10:55

I just took it with a grain of salt.

Martha Garcia 10:58

So, after you settled here in Salinas and everything, did you start working? Did you have any experience—

Paz Celso 11:09

I had to work because to augment my husband's income. I work in—first I work in the field. And the minimum wage that time was 75 cents an hour. But I—you don't care. We fight for survival. And then

after that I work in the big shed, you know. I bunch green onion with some military families, with some Asian people, Chinese, Japanese, and most—and some Mexican people. We work [unclear]. I like to work there because it is—that is piece work. You can come and go, come and go. You want to go home, you can go home. You are not under obligation to stay there for eight hours. And it's that—how much you make, you are not pressured to be working hard.

Martha Garcia 12:17

So, while you worked for the—while you worked was your husband—was in the military here in the United States? Or what did he do here?

Paz Celso 12:25

My husband?

Martha Garcia 12:27

Mm-hmm.

Paz Celso 12:27

He was with the [unclear] of engineers ever since he was—he stayed there for 24 years. That is demolition and construction under the US Army, and he got the rank of master sergeant.

Martha Garcia 12:51

So, did he build things around here, or what did he—

Paz Celso 12:54

Oh, he—so [unclear] when he was still in the service, you know, when we were still—we were still [unclear] with us, you know. He has to go to [unclear] during the atomic experiment. And then when we—we were already—at some time they had to assign him to Dugway Proving Ground, [unclear] wherever they have the atomic experiment. So, we were left behind.

Martha Garcia 13:29

So, you were left raising your children, but he was gone for a lot of the time then?

Paz Celso 13:35

Yes. That is part of the [laughs] soldiers' families. That's part of the game.

Martha Garcia 13:42

Right. So, you knew—a lot of the women you worked with were in the same situation as you?

Paz Celso 13:47

Yeah, most of them are, as I said, military family too.

Martha Garcia 13:50

So, when you—were you involved with Chinatown or did you know Chinatown when you were—

Paz Celso 13:59

When I was working under this Japanese—the [unclear] Farms—every end of the year, we are treated there for—before Christmas you have to go there and we'd—and that place was a quiet place [unclear]. So clean. But after that when it became rowdy, we don't—they didn't [unclear] anymore. We just in that one place because they have a big shade there, and we had, they give, we had barbecue and give us gifts.

Martha Garcia 14:04

They treated you to the Republic Cafe?

Paz Celso 14:44

Yeah, Republic Cafe. Oh, that's the authentic food. They had there the good Chinese food. And they remembered—they had this recreation place run by the Filipino—[unclear]. And they have this Japanese grocery—Kitamura. And they have also fish stand there before, so quiet, you know. It's so clean.

Martha Garcia 15:19

How do you remember it looking? Like the Republic cafe? What do you remember about it?

Paz Celso 15:26

As I say, it's a nice place to eat. Good food. They serve good food there. Good Japan—good Chinese food. So quiet, clean. You don't see homeless people roaming around. No.

Martha Garcia 15:46

Did you visit any other places besides the Republic Cafe or—in Chinatown?

Paz Celso 15:52

Yeah, as I said, the groceries. We have grocery—the Japanese grocery.

Martha Garcia 16:00

And do you—I understand you were really involved in clubs, like, in clubs when—like, community clubs, like, Filipino club?

Paz Celso 16:09

Yeah, we belong to the Filipino Community Club.

Martha Garcia 16:14

And what did you do for the—

Paz Celso 16:16

Huh?

Martha Garcia 16:16

What did you do for that club?

Paz Celso 16:18

Oh, there we celebrate some—there are occasions we have to be together. Fundraising, bingo games, and celebration of some Filipino, like, what you call Heroes' Day, or some day like that. And we have fundraising. Sometimes they had to have beauty contests. [laughs]

Martha Garcia 16:48

How are the—how were they judged, or how were the beauty contests?

Paz Celso 16:50

They sell raffles, you know—raffle tickets—and based on their beauty, their talent too. And they have the coronation nights too.

Martha Garcia 17:01

Did you ever participate in—

Paz Celso 17:02

No, I never [laughs]. I don't even know how to dance [Martha laughs]. I just want—I just enjoy watching them, you know. And we always go to—there is a good close knit—every time somebody pass away, you have to get some contribution. And there's a—there is a time when we have to respond for something, raise money to give fund to the Filipino people who had, like, there's flooding there like that. So, we can give it to the Red Cross to help them. They depend upon the Red Cross to help them.

Martha Garcia 17:52

So, was the community club—was it tied to Chinatown or was it completely separate?

Paz Celso 17:57

It's separate. It's separate, you know. But they always have—they cooperate when there is the Chinese celebration. Filipinos used to go there too, vice versa. And, like, with the Japanese, also we go to their—we help them also, buy their tickets from there, attend the celebration.

Martha Garcia 18:03

How were the celebrations?

Paz Celso 18:26

Oh, it's nice. Japanese always have a nice celebration. [unclear] they have this—they have this display of the bonsai plants. And the food is good. So many—you can eat there or you can take home, can buy food take home.

Martha Garcia 18:50

So, were you an active member for—you're still an active member in the community, for the Filipino community?

Paz Celso 18:56

Now that I'm old [unclear], that I'm almost 90, I just pay my dues [laughs]. I just pay my dues, but I don't really [unclear] present anymore. The only time that we always [unclear] together is when there is somebody pass away, we always, you know, we have to pay respect to them, attend their funeral, attend the mass. But socializing, you know, [unclear] [laughs] due to my physical condition. Most of our people of my age [laughs] are not active anymore. Socially they're not active anymore.

Martha Garcia 19:46

So, for–throughout the time that you worked for Akita farms, was that the only job you held or–

Paz Celso 19:55

Then after that, after I retired there, I worked for–I [unclear] the Head Start–Head Start program. And I work for the school. I work at Sherwood School, Creekside. Finally, after that, when I–my physical condition can no longer afford–I stayed there. I worked for [unclear] for 12 years, helping teachers, you know.

Martha Garcia 20:30

So, after that did–as your family, as it grew, do you think that–were there–did they have any involvement, like, with Chinatown or did they–do you know if they went there, like, your children or–

Paz Celso 20:45

I don't think so because my children are not–they're scattered all over the–two are in the Philippines, one is in [unclear], other is in Carolina, so–

Martha Garcia 21:00

So after, like, remembering how Chinatown used to look because, you know, you said it looks really different. Like, what do you–what would you like to let people know of how Chinatown used to be, of how it looked? Like, people that, you know, never experienced it.

Paz Celso 21:20

I think Chinatown now is getting better. I think it's cleaner now, due to the–I think the city's helping them, and some volunteers too. I heard that some volunteer–some students are, help them clean the place too. It's getting better.

Martha Garcia 21:42

Do you think that, like, the Filipino community could have, like, more of an involvement with Chinatown now or–

Paz Celso 21:53

Not really because most of the Filipinos are getting old. Most of them passed away too. And this young generation are also busy with their own activities, you know.

Martha Garcia 22:12

Yeah, that's the big thing. So, after you retired from, you and your husband retired from—him from the military, and you from Akita Farms—what did you do after your retirement?

Paz Celso 22:26

After retirement? As I said, I worked for Head— I volunteered for the Head Start program.

Martha Garcia 22:34

And he built—because you said that you lived in the back before, right? When you got here?

Paz Celso 22:39

Where?

Martha Garcia 22:40

You lived in the back apartments, when you first came?

Paz Celso 22:43

No, we stayed at the housing project [unclear] that was left by the soldiers [unclear], where they have these [unclear] company. [unclear] store.

Martha Garcia 23:03

So how did you—so after you bought this house, was it like this or did you, or did your husband fix it? Did he build around it or—

Paz Celso 23:12

Oh, my husband needs to—has to make an additional. He added this part. Before the front, the entrance was only here, and then he built that upper three bedrooms, two bathrooms, out there.

Martha Garcia 23:30

Oh, okay. Oh, because he—did he build everything by himself?

Paz Celso 23:36

Yeah. The kids help him in some of those, you know, when they have this Bracero program—some Filipinos who came here, they helped my husband.

Martha Garcia 23:51

Were you close to the Braceros that came on that program?

Paz Celso 23:54

Oh, yeah, because they don't have their family here. So some—most of the time we have to pick them up from the camp [unclear] sleep here.

Martha Garcia 24:09

Do you know how those camps were? Do you know how they—did they ever tell you if it was really bad there, or—

Paz Celso 24:16

They were recruited in the Philippines, but most of them are—goes to this agricultural college in the Philippines thinking maybe that they won't be working the field, or maybe light work, but lighter work, but they wind up working the fields. And most of them got married here. So some of them stay here in America now.

Martha Garcia 24:48

Okay, but you took them in and you helped them out a lot with the—because they were homesick or—

Paz Celso 24:56

Some of them [laughs]. We cooked some food for them [laughs].

Martha Garcia 25:04

So, did you have any other experiences with, like, other Filipinos or, like, did you feel like really you—did you feel like there was a really close-knit community with the Filipinos or did you experience—

Paz Celso 25:18

Yeah, and we are not—we're also get involved with the Filipino community in Seaside, you know, and Marina. You know, they have bigger Filipino—they had more Filipinos. They had more military families there. And most of them people that we know each other way back in the Philippines, as being military families.

Martha Garcia 25:46

So, did you—when you were—the military families, were you really close to them also because you guys had so much in common or—

Paz Celso 25:54

Yeah. Every time I go to Fort Ord commissary, we always see each other there at the PX or we see each other—we used to have closer attachment with them.

Martha Garcia 26:10

Yeah, but—

Paz Celso 26:11

Oh, no. Sometimes you won't recognize each other because, you know, as you grow old you [laughs] look different. So, you say, "Wait, what is your name? Oh!" [laughs]

Martha Garcia 26:26

[laughs] Can't tell—

Paz Celso 26:26

Yeah.

Martha Garcia 26:26

Yeah, that's how it happens. So after, like, after the whole, like, military, you know, like, your husband—did you—do you feel like you, like your husband experienced any, like, any hardships here in the United States as compared to in the Philippines when he was in the military there?

Paz Celso 26:44

I don't think so. He make it as a profession—as a soldier he made the [unclear]. He gets [unclear] to [unclear], even white American soldiers he—

Martha Garcia 27:03

He got along with the—

Paz Celso 27:05

Yeah, he get along.

Martha Garcia 27:05

—with the American soldiers here?

Paz Celso 27:07

Yeah.

Martha Garcia 27:07

Okay. So, when he, when he finally, like, retired, do you think that—because I thought you mentioned that he was exposed to atomic radiation or something like that, I believe.

Paz Celso 27:22

Exposed to?

Martha Garcia 27:26

He was exposed to some radiation?

Paz Celso 27:28

Oh yeah, my husband—that's why he retired of service-connected disability.

Martha Garcia 27:34

Do you know how that happened, or—

Paz Celso 27:38

As I say, because he has to go to experiment, like, in Bikini Atoll, you know, in Eniwetok Atoll, where they have the experiment with atomic bomb. And after they found [unclear] so they—after so many participation, he was pulled out already from participating in the experiment, you know.

Martha Garcia 28:00

From any of the experiments? And do you think that affected him?

Paz Celso 28:05

I think that's one of the—one factor that he got sick.

Martha Garcia 28:12

Okay. So, after that, he just—you guys came back and you always lived here right in this house?

Paz Celso 28:19

Yes, [unclear]. We are the original owner of this house. The only family who still own this house when we bought this 1957.

Martha Garcia 28:28

1957? Okay. And all the families in the neighborhood were all Filipino when you lived here?

Paz Celso 28:38

There were—yeah, but some of them died already. My neighbor—they're all military families, but they died already. Husband and wife, [unclear] the house, plus they just sold it.

Martha Garcia 28:57

So, the whole—basically the whole neighborhood was all Filipino then, back then when you bought the house?

Paz Celso 29:01

Most of them. Most of them.

Martha Garcia 29:01

Okay. And did you experience any differences, like, in the rest of—because this was this part of Salinas when—

Paz Celso 29:11

Yes.

Martha Garcia 29:12

—when you bought the—so do you remember any, like, experiencing any racism or anything when—

Paz Celso 29:19

No, so far no.

Martha Garcia 29:21

Everything was—

Paz Celso 29:22

Everything was [unclear]. And that time when we came here is quiet. You can leave your door open, you know. Nobody did ever bother you.

Martha Garcia 29:35

So, you liked it here when you got here, you liked it a lot?

Paz Celso 29:38

Yes, I liked it a lot.

Martha Garcia 29:39

Did you miss the Philippines at all, or did you ever want to go back or—

Paz Celso 29:46

The truth is that—what was, two years ago—I shipped most of my—most of my furniture to the Philippines, deciding that I gotta stay there for good. But the longer rest—I stayed there for—how many months, Edwin? One year?

Edwin 30:03

Almost a year.

Paz Celso 30:05

The longer I stay there, I see the difference. I feel homesick, so I came back.

Martha Garcia 30:11

What were the differences that you noticed?

Paz Celso 30:13

It's the, you know, the weather is—can no longer stand the weather, too smog, too polluted because the Philippines is already, especially [unclear] is already heavily populated. And, you know, see the Philippines—the cars, there are two lanes, and then they can make it four lanes. The motorists can make it four lanes. Cannot drive there.

Martha Garcia 30:50

You didn't like it at all then?

Paz Celso 30:52

There is no road courtesy, not even the pedestrians.

Martha Garcia 31:00

It was really different?

Paz Celso 31:01

Yeah, it was different.

Martha Garcia 31:04

So, did you—do you notice the difference even here in Salinas from how it used to be when you got here to now? Is it really different also, or—

Paz Celso 31:14

No, not really.

Martha Garcia 31:15

It's the same for you.

Paz Celso 31:16

Yeah. And, you know, there are some good [unclear]. I like the celebration of Memorial Day in the Philippines. It's more significant because [unclear] the American Battle Monument Commission Cemetery. And every year when they have this Memorial Day, [unclear] all representatives—there is, they have, they celebrate it with—there is representative of different consulate office that they [unclear], you know. There's a nice celebration.

Martha Garcia 31:54

Oh, okay.

Paz Celso 32:05

It's more significant.

Martha Garcia 32:08

But you brought a lot of your culture here also, right, with the Filipino community and everything? It's really, like, culturally rich also?

Paz Celso 32:16

Huh?

Martha Garcia 32:17

What celebration—do you celebrate any of those events here with the Filipino community or, like, do you have any traditions that you brought from the Philippines over?

Paz Celso 32:30

We had Christmas and, like, Easter, like, Lent season. Lenten seasons I love to have. I celebrate each year.

Martha Garcia 32:47

Okay. So, every—is it just here in your house or is it within—it's a celebration within the whole community?

Paz Celso 32:54

With my kids. We always have get together, especially Thanksgiving, Christmas occasion. And they come here and–

Martha Garcia 33:04

So, they come from everywhere where they live and they come to Salinas?

Paz Celso 33:06

Yes, they–

Martha Garcia 33:08

Oh, that's really nice. So, do you have any memories of when you got here, any other stories that you remember?

Paz Celso 33:22

Stories?

Martha Garcia 33:22

Chinatown or your work or anything?

Paz Celso 33:25

As I said, we used to go to do our shopping going to the fish market at Chinatown before, and buy the groceries there, Asian food. Because there is one grocery there run by the Japanese, Kitamura. I remember the name Kitamura. Sometimes, you know–Filipinos love, they love rice, you know. We have–always eat rice [unclear] and sometimes I have, they have to bring me–every end of the month they has to bring me 50 pounds. I buy it [unclear] them and they just, they bring it here to me.

Martha Garcia 34:16

So, the food was different in Chinatown than it was in the regular grocery stores or–

Paz Celso 34:21

Yeah, it's different. Now they don't have that grocery now. Most of the grocery, Asian groceries are run by Chinese and I think Indians.

Martha Garcia 34:36

And do you remember, like, any of the other shops in Chinatown or–

Paz Celso 34:44

I don't remember. I know the churches they have there–the Japanese church, the Buddhist church.

Martha Garcia 34:53

Oh, did you go there or–

Paz Celso 34:54

Yeah, as a matter of fact when my [unclear] passed away we participated in there—

Martha Garcia 35:02

How was that? How was that church? Do you—

Paz Celso 35:04

It's very nice church. It's very—they have a nice solemn ceremony, very solemn.

Martha Garcia 35:14

Did you go there, like, every Sunday or how did that—

Paz Celso 35:17

No, it's just, it just happened that I attended the funeral of [unclear].

Martha Garcia 35:24

But when—back when your children were younger, did you go there frequently, or is it just—

Paz Celso 35:28

No, I go to the Catholic church. I go to Sacred Heart.

Martha Garcia 35:34

Okay.

Paz Celso 35:35

And my kids were—had their First Communion at St. Mary Nativity Church, Catholic Church.

Martha Garcia 35:45

Okay. Well, do you have any—do you remember any of the others? Did you just go to the fish market and to the Republic Cafe or did you—because there were a lot of other shops there, weren't—

Paz Celso 36:00

All the time, we have this [unclear] in rodeo time. I used to bring my kids to watch the Colmo Del Rodeo Parade at Main Street with different—out of town participants with beautiful floats. But nowadays they don't have it because there's so much population in Salinas. They—sometimes they get out of control, no?

Martha Garcia 36:32

Do you remember because they said that there were—I've heard that there were a lot of, like, bars and, like, a lot, like, card playing in Chinatown. Did you remember any of that or—

Paz Celso 36:44

I think there's one bar there. I just don't—I don't—run by the Filipino. As I said, it is also card games.

Martha Garcia 36:44

Was it mostly men that went to the—

Paz Celso 36:59

Yeah, some of them—I know that my husband, when we were not here, he was stationed at Hunter Liggett. Weekends he'd spend with some of his co soldiers in Chinatown. They have to, they have to play cards.

Martha Garcia 37:16

They went to—was it just—it was just one bar that was there that you remember or were there a lot of them?

Paz Celso 37:24

In Chinatown?

Martha Garcia 37:25

Mm-hmm.

Paz Celso 37:25

I think that's the only one I remember—[unclear] Place, I think.

Martha Garcia 37:32

You never went in there? It was just—

Paz Celso 37:34

[laughs] No.

Martha Garcia 37:35

Women didn't really go there?

Paz Celso 37:38

[unclear]

Martha Garcia 37:38

Okay. So, it was just—do you remember any other restaurants there, or was it just the Republic Cafe that you went to?

Paz Celso 37:44

As far as I know, that's the only one that I remember. I don't know if there's some other restaurant—that's the thing, I don't know.

Martha Garcia 37:53

You don't remember any of them?

Paz Celso 37:54

I don't remember.

Martha Garcia 37:56

Okay. And do you think that if Chinatown were, like, renewed like the way it used to be, do you think it would be as popular today? Do you think people would—

Paz Celso 38:09

I don't think so. It's more popular that time.

Martha Garcia 38:11

Why do you think it was more popular back then?

Paz Celso 38:17

Because they're—essentially it was quiet that time, not like now that many homeless people there. It was cleaner that time.

Martha Garcia 38:29

Do you know why, like, it stopped being as popular as it was, or do you know what happened or—

Paz Celso 38:39

That time? Because most of us Filipinos has to go there and do the shopping [unclear]. As I said, there was a fish market there. And some—and we have to buy some Asian foods there too.

Martha Garcia 38:58

Do you know, like, what year it was that it started getting, like, when the homeless people started coming in or—

Paz Celso 39:03

I think that was [unclear]—maybe by the 70s, like that.

Martha Garcia 39:12

The 70s?

Paz Celso 39:13

Yeah.

Martha Garcia 39:13

The Filipinos just started going away when it started getting—

Paz Celso 39:17

Yeah. And by that time there are already Asian markets here.

Martha Garcia 39:27

Okay. So, it was more that they abandoned Chinatown, and they started markets closer.

Paz Celso 39:32

Yes, we patronize other groceries.

Martha Garcia 39:38

Okay. Okay, well, I just, do you think that there's a possibility more than anything that—like, do you miss the way that it used to be, or do you think that it would be, like, nice for it to be renewed or—like, you know, for those memories that you used to have of Chinatown or—like, the memories that you had of when you were working for Akita Farms or—

Paz Celso 40:04

Yes.

Martha Garcia 40:05

Like, do you kind of—would you like to see that come back to life, like the way that it used to be?

Paz Celso 40:11

I wish [laughs]. I wish, but even Akita Farms, they quit their business.

Martha Garcia 40:22

They're not around anymore?

Paz Celso 40:23

There are—only two are survivors. There were three brothers, but one is in bad condition, only one is—so as far as I know, they already quit doing the farming. And they handed lease to one of the Japanese farmers, the Hibino.

Martha Garcia 40:52

Okay, well, just to wrap up, do you have anything you'd like to say to the younger generation of Filipinos that, you know, about your experiences or about your—

Paz Celso 41:01

Yeah, what I can say in spite of the fact that I have my natural American citizenship, I can never forget my culture and my heritage. Because I still have to practice it. That is the only way I can show my identity as Filipino. I cannot forget my—I still practice our culture and our tradition.

Martha Garcia 41:34

And you hope that they practice it the way that you—

Paz Celso 41:37

Yeah, my kids still practice that. Still practice that. As I say, that is the only way, you cannot forget your identity, regardless of how you look, you still Filipino.

Martha Garcia 41:53

Right. And what aspects of your culture do you think are the most important that they should hang on to?

Paz Celso 42:02

Respect for the elders, and helping the elders, you know. Like him taking care of me.

Martha Garcia 42:10

It was one of the more important—

Paz Celso 42:14

Yes, more important. Yeah, that's the most important thing.

Martha Garcia 42:18

Anything else you'd like them to know or—for anybody that sees this, for the younger generations?

Paz Celso 42:27

The only thing I can say is that—just what my mother said. Education is different from honor. People, person might have education, but if you don't have honor, education is nothing.

Martha Garcia 42:49

Well, thank you very much for letting us—

Paz Celso 42:51

Oh, thank you very much too.

Martha Garcia 42:53

And thank you for all your experiences.

Paz Celso 42:55

I hope I have given you good information.

Martha Garcia 42:58

Yeah, you definitely have. We really, really appreciate it. Thank you.