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Paul Phillip DeOcampo interviewed by Dr. Kathleen "Kat" Cruz Gutierrez

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Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. interviewed by Kathleen “Kat” Cruz Gutierrez Part 1 of 3

Speakers: Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. and Kathleen “Kat” Cruz Gutierrez

Date: June 3, 2021

Scope and contents: In the first part of this three part interview, Paul Phillip DeOcampo speaks with Dr. Kathleen "Kat" Cruz Gutierrez, a member of the Watsonville is in the Heart project team. DeOcampo briefly discusses his father’s, Paul “Skippy” Talaban DeOcampo’s, and mother’s, Gloria Molina DeOcampo’s, migration and labor histories and their relationship. He briefly recounts a trip he took back to the Philippines at the age of eleven. Lastly, he details his experiences growing up mixed-race in the small town of Aromas, California, as well as the racial and socioeconomic demographic of his school and town.

Kathleen Gutierrez 00:00

Start this one. Great. So I am just going to begin this interview and it is Thursday, June 3, 2021. Around 10:30am, Pacific Daylight Time. Would you mind sharing your full name with me?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 00:16

Paul Philip DeOcampo.

Kathleen Gutierrez 00:18

Awesome, and what's your date of birth?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 00:20

July 8, 1967.

Kathleen Gutierrez 00:24

So, coming up. Um—[both laugh; unintelligible] Can you talk a little bit about where you were born?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 00:32

I was born in Watsonville, California. I grew up in Watsonville-Aromas area and went to Catholic school in Watsonville for eight years and then I went to Watsonville High and graduated Watsonville High in 1985.

Kathleen Gutierrez 00:53

Got it, and then did you leave Watsonville in 1985?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 00:58

No, I stuck around. I went and I did a little stint at Cabrillo College, so in Aptos. And then uhm, I uh—back in '80, '89, 1990, my—my oldest son was born. And we moved to Santa Cruz. And then I lived in Santa Cruz, you know, from—off and on from '85 or '90 all the way to 2006, 2007,—about 2009. And then I went back to 2010; I went back to Aromas.

Kathleen Gutierrez 01:40

So you had a little bit of a stint away and then you found yourself going back. Cool! I'll definitely get to your trajectory and your movement. Can you tell me your parents' names?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 01:51

My mother is Gloria DeOcampo and my father is Paul DeOcampo.

Kathleen Gutierrez 01:57

Okay, so you're Paul Jr. Do you go by Paul Jr.?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 01:59

No. I'm Paul Philip. He was Paul Tabalan.

Kathleen Gutierrez 02:03

Okay.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 02:03

Yeah. So they never—I think maybe one. Now, no one ever really called me Jr. It was just Young Paul

Kathleen Gutierrez 02:13

Young Paul?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 02:14

Yeah, yeah.

Kathleen Gutierrez 02:15

Paul Philip. Where in the Philippines is your dad from?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 02:18

Luzon. Santo Tomas, Santa Domingo-Santo Tomas region.

Kathleen Gutierrez 02:24

Do you remember when he was born?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 02:27

His driver's license says 1909.

Kathleen Gutierrez 02:30

Okay.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 02:32

So, question is 1909, nine [unintelligible] we're not sure. But the driver's license—and I, yeah, I actually kept one of his old driver's licenses that states 1909.

Kathleen Gutierrez 02:46

Okay. And what was his birthday?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 02:48

August 17th.

Kathleen Gutierrez 02:50

August 17th? Aw, my dad's is August 18th.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 02:53

Ah, there you go.

Kathleen Gutierrez 02:54

So when did your father migrate from the Philippines to the United States?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 02:58

It says it was uh, he was still almost—he was twenty 1920. So 1929 is from what I learn.

Kathleen Gutierrez 03:09

Okay.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 03:10

You know, he was young. And I don't know where the story came from. Could have been from my, you know, talking with my dad, my Uncle Lazarus, and whatever. But I—from what I

remember is they came over on a ship, ended up coming through Puerto Rico down through Mexico, then they came up through LA to that port. My Uncle Lazo was up here. But my Uncle Leon DeOcampo, he ended up staying in Pismo Beach. I think it's Arroyo Grande where he has his house and my Auntie Irene is down there still. And then my dad came up to Watsonville and—with the other group, and um, and then they, they came up to farm here in Watsonville.

Kathleen Gutierrez 04:06

So it sounds like your dad didn't migrate alone. So he had buddies or brothers with him?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 04:12

He had one younger brother and I forget his name. He went—we call it, well I call it "the pineapple way." He ended up in Hawai'i. And um, it's in the camps in Hawai'i, which I went when I went—you know, gone to Hawai'i quite a few times, and I learned that the pineapple plantations were not a fun place for the Filipinos over there. And then, going to Maui, I found one of the house cleaners came in and she was a Filipino lady and she saw my name and she says there's a lot of DeOcampos on Molokai. And I— not, I was gonna go, I was gonna take a ferry and go over there and go visit but I'd never gone over there to visit and so that's that was that was pretty interesting to find out that there were more Deo—and then you learn the history of how our name was developed and that was, you know, the Spanish gave us our name. And you know, from the camp you can go back and it's of the camp and so, I mean. My—I remember my Mom telling me she went and researched our name to see what it was about in Spanish. She'd found—I don't really quite recall what she'd found. But I just remember that—that's how we came about with our name. There wasn't royalty, there wasn't anything behind it. It was just a name that was given to this tribe and wherever they came from, and then they're like, okay, we've tried— they were doing—doing their Christianity thing—

Kathleen Gutierrez 05:15

Mmmm. Right? Yeah, there is record of that. Like in the nineteenth century, there was a decree, right, for delivering Spanish names or surnames, and somehow it was so arbitrary. (laughs)

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 06:04

They were just—

Kathleen Gutierrez 06:05

These names—

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 06:06

—very rude about it.

Kathleen Gutierrez 06:07

—were given.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 06:08

And, and—okay, this is—and here you go.

Kathleen Gutierrez 06:11

Right.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 06:12

Yeah. So—but, I mean, that's, that's history.

Kathleen Gutierrez 06:15

It is history.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 06:16

That's why, that's why I sit back and I'm like, well, we're not the only, I could not be—I thought, Aw, I'm the only DeOcampo. No, you are not. There—they're there everywhere.

Kathleen Gutierrez 06:26

I see.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 06:27

Lots of DeOcampos everywhere. Matter of fact, they mixed my email up with someone else's because they have the same name. They have a Philip DeOcampo that is a grad student here and his initials are P, D; same as mine, except mine are two Ps.

Kathleen Gutierrez 06:46

I see.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 06:47

And I— they were getting it mixed up. And I'm like, I hope you're not sending out, you know, classified information. But it was kind of interesting. So we had to ixnay that and I'm like, yeah, there's—

Kathleen Gutierrez 06:58

Yeah, a lot.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 06:59

—there's quite a few of us out there.

Kathleen Gutierrez 07:01

Well, you know, that begs the question: So, did your dad come from a big family, though? You know, in the Philippines?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 07:07

I went to the Philippines in 1978 with my Dad and my uncles. And our family's fairly big out there. Spread out. I know, there was only five, maybe—one, two—one, two, three, four: 4 brothers and a sister, or two sisters that I've met that I remember. And then the families kind of spread out from there. But it wasn't like, we didn't have this huge tribe, you know. But there was a lot and then the village where they stayed and everything.

Kathleen Gutierrez 07:44

I see.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 07:44

But when I went there, there was still no power. There was no electricity, no water. Everything was you know, like a camping trip.

Kathleen Gutierrez 07:53

I see. Are they the Tagalog speaking, Ilokano speaking?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 07:57

Yes. Yeah, yeah.

Kathleen Gutierrez 07:57

Okay, so Tagalog. Oh, how interesting.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 08:00

But I never learned the language. And that was a interesting thing that I always get asked. I never spoke Spanish and I never spoke spoke any Tagalog. And my dad knew all three and Portuguese. And um, my mom was a bilingual teacher.

Kathleen Gutierrez 08:22

Oh, wow.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 08:23

And they never taught me any Spanish in the 70s. It wasn't— It wasn't the— —the way. [radio feedback] So that was [radio beeping] that was the interesting part of that.

Kathleen Gutierrez 08:34

Where did your dad learn Portuguese?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 08:36

Well, here. And as he went—because he would, he really worked with them. So he learned Spanish here. And then it was funny because he would, you know, he would talk to him. I didn't know what it was, but that's what, you know he'd sit there and—because he worked with a lot of the Yugoslavian people, Portuguese people.

Kathleen Gutierrez 08:58

I see, he did it along the way.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 09:00

Yeah.

Kathleen Gutierrez 09:01

Well, so then, I'm going to go back a little bit then to his migration story. So he came with a younger brother, likely and then maybe some other people that he knew.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 09:11

The younger brother went the other way.

Kathleen Gutierrez 09:13

But then he went to the pineapple fields in Hawaii.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 09:15

And then his older brother, Leon, ended up with him. But that's all I know. They never really talked about that stuff. And I never really asked—

Kathleen Gutierrez 09:25

Yeah.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 09:26

You know, Hey, Dad, how did you end up here? You know, it was just never a question to ask. And my dad was—he was a hard worker. He was—you can say he was a workaholic, which he

pretty much was. And you know, he'd get up early in the morning, and then during the season, height of the season—like right now, right—he was growing, growing apples. He was an apple farmer and um,—sunup to sundown. I mean, you'd see him here and there. And then summer times when I got old enough, I was going out there working with him.

Kathleen Gutierrez 10:05

I see. How old was old enough?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 10:08

I think I was twelve-thirteen. Yeah, twelve-thirteen. And, you know, a couple years, couple years of working out the fields, I realized that's not, you know, I didn't want to drive a tractor. And I was, I was more inclined, I was very—I was a tinkerer, so I was more mechanically inclined than I was to growing— being a farmer

Kathleen Gutierrez 10:31

Being on soil? Yeah.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 10:32

Yeah. And so he uh, you know—I worked in that trade and started going that way.

Kathleen Gutierrez 10:41

Yeah.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 10:41

Yeah, to do that.

Kathleen Gutierrez 10:42

So it sounds like he didn't talk about, kind of, the travel out here. But did you ever tell you why he came to the United States?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 10:51

No. I can tell you, no.

Kathleen Gutierrez 10:54

Wow.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 10:55

I mean, the most I could figure is, you know, so he can come out here and work get a better life and, and, you know, send money back to the family that's, that remained. You know, they grew

tobacco. They had a huge tobacco drying hut and everything when I went there, you know, so they made their own. They made their own tobacco stuff. That's how they made—made their money. And, uhm, but as far as why he came out, now, I think it was just the opportunity because he came out before the war, and everything else, but it had been, you know, it wasn't easy coming out.

Kathleen Gutierrez 11:36

Right? Right at the brink of the Depression.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 11:40

Yeah. Yeah. So I don't know. I was never told, I was never told. My Dad was already, I mean, he was 58 when he had me. So by the time I was ten-twelve, he was into his sixties. You know, and then, and then when I really, you know, he was already in his seventies—

Kathleen Gutierrez 12:01

Right.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 12:01

—and everything.

Kathleen Gutierrez 12:03

Older.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 12:04

Yeah. And so here I am, this teenage kid one—or even younger—you know, and he was tired. I remember him asking him to go take me to the races because I love race cars— still do. And he'd just be butt tired but he'd take me. You know, and then, and I know it was loud and obnoxious. And then—but at that time, I was just happy that he was taking me to the races. So that was our together time. Or we'd—there'd be Saturdays that we—I'd go with a couple other of his Filipino friends and we'd go to the big time wrestling. Go, we drive all the way up to San Francisco, the Cow Palace, and we get tickets and we go sit in there and we watch big time wrestling.

Kathleen Gutierrez 12:53

Oh my gosh, so, you would go to wrestling and the races. Which track for the races?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 12:57

No, there in Watsonville.

Kathleen Gutierrez 12:59

In—

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 12:59

Yeah, it was right there at the fairgrounds. So that was far and in between, but I—I'd ask him to take me, you know, then we'd go. And I just remember the one time he was just really, really tired. He took me to them, you know. But um, but you know, and then that's, that's how many dad—you know, an older dad, that's—

Kathleen Gutierrez 13:19

Yeah, my dad had me at 55.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 13:21

Yeah.

Kathleen Gutierrez 13:23

[laughs]

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 13:24

And that's what happens and you go like, oh, okay.

Kathleen Gutierrez 13:27

Yeah.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 13:28

And I promised myself, okay, that's one thing I said, "I will not do that." So my boys are both thirty now. And um, yeah, you know that—I'm like, okay, that's getting up. I have a stepdaughter who's twelve. But that's, that's—that wasn't a part of my plan.

Kathleen Gutierrez 13:49

Sure, sure.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 13:50

It's a welcome. A welcome.

Kathleen Gutierrez 13:55

So then I'd love to know more about your Mom then. About Gloria. So was she born in California, where she from?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 14:02

Mom was born in San Antonio, Texas, and her family's still down there. I've only known a couple cousins of my mom's. But I know her family's down in San Antonio.

Kathleen Gutierrez 14:18

Okay.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 14:20

She's much younger than my father. She was twenty-five years younger than my father. And I remember going out to the fields with her. She was—she worked in the cannery. But I remember her working in the fields when I was young—when I was little—and I'd have to go with her. And um, and then when I started going to school, I went—I want to say I was in—I started first grade and second grade at Notre Dame. So Notre Dame Catholic School in Watsonville. And I think my sisters were already gone. Both are already out of the house. And I started uhm and mom started going to school. So she started, she went to [unknown]. She wanted to go back. She wanted—she's going to be a teacher. She didn't want to work in the fields anymore. So she was steadfast in doing that. And she did, she went school, she came, she ended up coming up here [University of California, Santa Cruz] to get her master's. She got her master's here.

Kathleen Gutierrez 15:28

Okay.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 15:28

And um, and then she never went back to the fields at all. So yeah, she was—and then she was an ESL teacher ever, on all the boards, and she taught. So I was already going to Catholic school, so I didn't have to go to any catechisms or anything, but she was teaching catechisms also on the weekend—

Kathleen Gutierrez 15:50

I see.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 15:51

—and doing that, so. I remember all of that stuff. And, but she was a very hard worker. So I had Dad working hard in the field, and I had Mom working hard on getting her teaching credentials. So then I was pretty much on my own. And doing my thing, grade school, all the way up, you know, continuing on through, leading through high school.

Kathleen Gutierrez 16:16

And were—it was a three of you? Now, I know that you have two older sisters.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 16:19

Just me and yeah. Just, just Antoinette. And Veronica.

Kathleen Gutierrez 16:25

And you were the youngest?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 16:26

Yes. I was the youngest.

Kathleen Gutierrez 16:27

Got it. Got it. Can you walk me through a little bit about your sister—Mom's kind of moved to California a little bit? And, kind of, where she was situated? Was she always in the Central Coast?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 16:39

There's another backstory that I, I never really learned a lot about. I know my grandmother lived in Watsonville. And one of my aunts lived in Watsonville. My grandparents—my grandmother was the only one that I knew when I was really, really young. And then um—but that was it. And my one aunt, her sister. And they both lived in Watsonville.

Kathleen Gutierrez 17:10

They had left San Antonio.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 17:11

Yes, yes. And um, yeah, I've never really talked to Mom about her past or anything. And she had recently she did the whole DNA thing. And then I learned she learned that she was adopted. And, and then some other things came out. But then we didn't, we didn't—she never finished out what had happened, how it happened. But she realized that her sisters who were my aunts, obviously—weren't actually her sisters. And then, so, but she's very private. (radio beeping)

Kathleen Gutierrez 17:28

Okay.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 17:48

She didn't really, she didn't really put out a lot of, you know, history to me. She knew she—and even like her family in Texas, I don't know a lot of them. I know two aunts: my Aunt Elvia and my Aunt Evelyn. My Aunt Evelyn is going to be ninety-nine.

Kathleen Gutierrez 18:10

Oh my gosh. Cool.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 18:13

Spitfire, and she lives with her daughter here in Prunedale. And then my Aunt Elvia. She is in San Diego. And then I kind of, I know the twin—I know her twins who are like a year older than me. And then another: her and then her oldest son, she has three boys. But that's it. I don't know a whole lot about mom, except for when I was around, you know. So her past and what she did.

Kathleen Gutierrez 18:43

Yeah.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 18:43

I, you know, looking at pictures and talking, she worked in the—I got it, I think Antoinette has the pictures of her in the cannery. And then, at work in [unknown] in the cannery and that's where my dad met her. Because he had to—he worked for her.

Kathleen Gutierrez 19:00

Okay.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 19:00

And then, and then the rest is history. I came along, I was later and I grew up when they moved out to Aromas that's when I came along. And then I grew up in Aromas. Now I just happen to—

Kathleen Gutierrez 19:04

It would be great to talk to your mom. I think if, you know, she felt open to conversation.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 19:23

You know I thought, well, you know, last two years ago would have been great. Now um, she she remembers some things. And it's kind of tough, because you know, the stories come out and there's some some things I know and then the story elaborates and something else. And then some things, I just I really don't know. She may or may—it may or may not be, you know. Some things were good for it, some things weren't. I mean, I know they were—I know they

stuck together, but they stuck together just to stick together. And they did to the end, you know, but it wasn't—when I grew up, I knew it wasn't easy. Because there were, you know, they separated. They lived in the same house but then, you know, it was, it was two different lives. And stuff. And, you know, I respect him for it. I know sometimes I think, oh no, that wasn't fair. But, what's fair? And now that I'm older I'm like, Wow, she sacrificed a lot and—in order to get where she was, she was wanting to go. Because it was an uphill battle. And him, it was constant, you know, leaving out. He had a lot of friends and everything, but then still there was like—there were times where you saw the prejudice and stuff, you know, towards him. And how people would, you know, if me and him were out and about, you'd hear it, but that was back in seventies and stuff. And it was like, oh, wow. I knew you didn't really realize it until you grew up and you're like, whoa, that's what that guy was talking about. That's what was going on there. Or it was blatant, oh, he's—that guy's a jackass. That's pretty much why.

Kathleen Gutierrez 21:13

Right, right. Yeah, I mean, I appreciate that she is still around and you know, I can understand to the, kind of, the bits of stories that you're still able to hold on to, which are good and solid and golden. And, you know, I find it, you know, charming too—so you said they met in the canneries? Is that—

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 21:34

Oh, yeah.

Kathleen Gutierrez 21:35

Yeah? Okay.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 21:37

She had been. She was working in Watsonville, working in the canneries. She was young. So it says on my birth certificate she had me when I was—she was 33.

Kathleen Gutierrez 21:47

Okay.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 21:47

So, um, twenty-five when she had Antoinette and twenty-three when she had Veronica. Yeah. And so, and you go backwards with Dad, he was fifty. Right. And, and, and forty-eight, forty-nine when he, you know. So that's when he started his family. And so he had, you know, forty-five years. So twenty, so, twenty-five, I'd say twenty-five, hard, rough years. And I know he went he went through the Watsonville riots and all that stuff. But I don't know what he portrayed in it. I don't know where he there's some pictures of him in his zoot suits and with his

friends and everything. But like when, you know, when he was older, this you know, I—they would also speak Tagalog, and I would just be kind of cruising around, you know, at my uncle's house. And they'd have the men, would have a barbecue on Saturdays. And he dragged me over and I tag along and it would just be the men, you know. And be an all day thing. We'd probably finish about 2:00 or 3:00, and then come home. And, you know, he was part of the Filipino community and he's part of doing the, you know, Sunday chicken barbecues after church, and stuff. And then my Mom was part of the Filipino community for a little bit. And then that was it. And then once, I think I was ten or eleven, then it just dissolved. You know, there was some things that how—you know, mom went her way, dad did his thing. Mom went, she did her thing. And made you realize that—I think I was twelve when I went to the Philippines. Eleven, I was eleven when I went to the Philippines.

Kathleen Gutierrez 23:45

Okay, so you went in the 70's?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 23:47

Yes, '78. 1978 and so that was, um, yeah, that was a good time. I wish I was—I wish I would have went back. Because it's tough when you're that young. And you know, I was very guarded. And, but we had a good time. I was there for a month. I got pretty sick at one point, [unintelligible] because of the water and everything. And then they thought I was—they thought I was, I was—I had voodoo on, you know. They were really—they thought I was hexed and then the doctor visited. They had to bring the doctor all the way in. And then she just shot me up with some penicillin and I was better.

Kathleen Gutierrez 24:34

How long did you stay in the Philippines that time?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 24:35

A month.

Kathleen Gutierrez 24:36

Okay. Good amount of time. And you saw your family, the DeOcampos?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 24:40

Yep. I saw my family. My cousin, Erwin, and another—another cousin, I forget her name. And then I went—Abelita, she was there and then I forget her sister's name. And then my—his younger, young, one of his younger brothers that have remained in the Philippines, they ended up bringing him back here. And he ended up—him and his wife—ended up passing here.

Kathleen Gutierrez 25:05

Okay.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 25:06

So their later years. And then um, but it was—yeah, there was some family that I remember going there meeting and hanging out with. And then it was a good time. Yeah, we spent a month there.

Kathleen Gutierrez 25:24

And it—were you in the province, were you in Manila?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 25:26

We were—we were out there in Santo Tomas-Santa Domingo.

Kathleen Gutierrez 25:30

Okay.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 25:31

So we stayed in majority with our family out there and their place. And a little bit over at my uncle's house, but that was just like a mile away through the rice paddies, we'd walk.

Kathleen Gutierrez 25:31

I see.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 25:35

And then, uhm we went up to Baguio for a week. Which was kind of like, you know, it's kind of like the foothills here. And then we went to, and then we ended up back Manila—we ended up in Manila for a little bit before we flew back. So four weeks flew by, and it was it was pretty cool. It was cool. It was a cool experience.

Kathleen Gutierrez 26:07

That's great!

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 26:10

But yeah, I never—we never went back. We never talked of going back. My dad did go back, you know, but uhm that was pretty much it.

Kathleen Gutierrez 26:22

And so it sounds like up to about eleven-twelve, you know, your whole family was really steeped in the Filipino community. And sounds like your dad also spent time on the weekends hanging out with other agricultural workers.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 26:35

His—

Kathleen Gutierrez 26:35

Other manongs?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 26:35

—no, yeah. And it was mainly his—my godfather Lazo—and my Uncle Cipi, who were brothers, Lazo and my Uncle Cipi Lazo were—they were brothers. And I know everybody's uncle. So those two live on San Miguel Canyon Road, my sister will show you that property. It's like twenty acres out there that they had and [Kathleen sneezes] bless you.

Kathleen Gutierrez 26:43

Like the ones who had been—who arrived a little bit later?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 26:43

And um, yeah, and then, you know, like, their hands that worked on the property, they come out and work, but it was never like a whole—it was like a different group. You can tell that the younger Filipinos—and then, you can tell the generation gaps. Because they talk to them, but then they wouldn't hang out with them. You know what I mean? And they were never really a part of our, our—the Sunday, the Sunday barbecues that we would go to— Yeah, or sons and daughters.

Kathleen Gutierrez 27:48

I see.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 27:48

Yes, yes. And who arrived a little bit later and everything and it was usually my dad my uncles. They would hire them to come out or—if they didn't like them, it was you know. But I was just what I knew, I was just a kid. But I knew that what they were doing was they you know, bring some goats and they would buy some goats and pigs and then they would butcher them. We would barbecue some but the rest would be cut up and then they all share the pieces, wrap them up and then put them in the freezers or—or you know, hang them, hang—you know, do whatever they needed to do with them. And—and that was it. They'd do that maybe once a month and summer time into the fall. And—and then that was it and— But, like, the church

barbecues I knew and then there was like some Filipino fundraisers that we'd go to. And—but yeah, I don't remember dad hanging out with the younger ones. There was a couple younger than him. My Uncle Tito though, he—I forget his last name. And a lot of these guys I don't really—Uncle Madi—I don't really remember their last names and everything. I could picture them because—but I was just a kid. I was a youngster. And then, you know, by the time I was twenty, twenty-one, I'm raising my own kids. And I was lucky enough to you know, bring my—my sons in and I named my oldest son Paul after my dad. And then he was able to—my dad was able to, you know, get to know him and—and my other son Philip, and—before he passed, but they were still young, they were four, two, or three.

Kathleen Gutierrez 29:48

Right. Right.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 29:49

So—

Kathleen Gutierrez 29:50

So would your family drive out to Watsonville? So you were born in Watsonville but grew up in Aromas. And so you would come out on the weekends. To spend time, kind of, spend your leisure activities—

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 30:01

Yes. Yeah, yeah, we go. I mean, usually be church or something like that, or a function at the Filipino community center.

Kathleen Gutierrez 30:09

I see.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 30:10

But those were far and in between. It was like, okay, well, we'll go to that, or to Sunday church function, and, you know, okay, and then they're cooking the chicken afterwards. And so I go to church early in the morning, and then I hang out— Spend, yeah, the day there —and then you're always, you know, I remember the cleanup and all that and then coming home

Kathleen Gutierrez 30:30

Is your family—your family's Catholic?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 30:31

Yes.

Kathleen Gutierrez 30:32

And you went to Catholic school for a little bit too?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 30:33

Yeah.

Kathleen Gutierrez 30:34

Okay. And so Aromas. I mean, you know, kind of paint the picture for me: what was that like when you were growing up as a kid?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 30:45

Uhm—you know, there wasn't a lot of people in Aromas when I grew up. So the population, I remember the signs 2—240. You know, so there's a group of kids that we, you know, I knew when I was growing up, and—and then, you know, as, as time went on, there were more and more people would come out there. But for a long time, there was like, it stayed between 240 and maybe 300 was the population. One store, and eventually it was the second store. But you're stuck. You're in the country, you're seven miles away from Watsonville. And mom and dad were—were busy, so I didn't really get into sports until I got into high school. So yeah, you're out there. You either worked, or you goofed. And it was easier to work. Now I like doing both, but you had to—I think the best thing was that they sent me to the private school, the Catholic school. Because it was mainly there was—I can actually count a handful. On one hand, there was there's maybe eight Mexican kids that went to school; girls and boys. There's only one Filipino, me. And the rest were white kids. And—and richer white kids, mind you. I mean, strawberry growers, apple growers, you know, lettuce, big, huge farms, you know, but they still own today. And so, they knew my dad, and they, they knew and so it was actually pretty good. You know, I got—I went there, I got to know them. I knew the kids out in Aromas. I got to know them. A lot of them were poor, Mexican, poor, white kids, you know. And—and so I when I went to high school, it made it easy. Here I have the richer white kids that hung out in the quad. I could walk in, I could say hi to them, I can hang out with them. I had this other group of kids, poor kids that hung out on the other side, kind of more of the smoking crowd, I could say, you know. And I could hang out with them, no problem at all. I played football so I can hang out with the jocks and whatnot. And then it became very interesting. I was in history class, and I'm sitting—I'm sitting there in history class. And I remember—I wanted to call her, say her name was Esmeralda. She sat next to me and she asked me, she says—she says, "So—" because, you know, call out your name is on everything. That was my freshman year. And she looked at me and she says, "Your mommy, is your mother Mrs. DeOcampo?" And I kind of looked at her and I laughed, and I go, "Well, yeah." And you're—back then I'm like, Wow, this is the only Mrs. DeOcampo around and go, "Yeah, yeah, that's my mom." She goes,

"Wow." And then she's telling this other girl. They're speaking Spanish and they're like, "Do you know— do you know your mom taught us how to speak, read, and write English?" And I'm like, "You kidding me?" So I got to know all these ESL kids. Some of them lived in labor camps. Some of them live, you know—but I had this connection with pretty much everybody in the school and I really didn't have—it made it easy. So who—I was developed—I developed in and I still use it to this day because I still—I still I am who I am but it makes it easy to get along with pretty much everyone. It gets a little bit harder now with the uniform and everything. But back then, it's like these kids knew, hey. And then word out around that, Oh, that was my mom. And word got around that how I, I do this or I—then the other kids, they knew me. And so I was accepted in that circle, or the circle, and it didn't really, you know, nobody really labeled me as, as such. So, it made it easy to communicate, and made it easy to get to know people.

Kathleen Gutierrez 35:25

I see.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 35:26

I could sit and talk to people and like you can go—there wasn't, there wasn't a segregated area. And then—and then there were the gangs. And I remember having to deal with them. And just—a little bit—but I didn't really have to, like stick up for myself or anything. I knew that was not the road I wanted to go down. So it was easy. I didn't have to deal with that. Some friends had a harder time because of the neighborhoods they lived in. But I didn't have so much—I was segregated being way out there and Aromas.

Kathleen Gutierrez 35:59

Right.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 35:59

You know, but then, you know, the more people I knew. I would catch rides with friends and do this and that. And it made it easy. So like, doing what my Mom did, made it, made it easy for me, because I could study with these kids. And I got through high school by studying with them. And then and then they kind of thought, oh, you know, I didn't have an issue with sitting down and having lunch with him or anything like that. And then I'd be—I get questioned and I'm going on just doing my homework. And like I said, it just it made it that much easier.

Kathleen Gutierrez 36:41

Right? Like your Mom's social standing in the community. Sounds like, even if Aromas was a bit far from Watsonville, because you sort of had two feet planted in the communities—

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 36:50

Yes.

Kathleen Gutierrez 36:51

—and knew students and young folks who were both from low income backgrounds and high income backgrounds, you can sort of navigate the different social dynamics.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 37:01

Yeah. And to this day, I can still. I still do. I use it, I use it wherever I've gone to work. Yeah. And, and, and it made coming and doing this job that much easier. Not that it's an easy job to do. But it's easy to sit and talk to people and say, "Hey, no." When—when you can tell somebody, "Look like, I get what you're going through," and tell them, "Well, hey I get what you're going through, you know, talk to me." Well, you're just trying to get them to talk to you. Well you can tell somebody, "Look, I understand what you're going through. I've been through it, and I get it. But this is your own. And so let me help you. If you can." And you'll get the answer right then if whether they want you to help them or not.

Kathleen Gutierrez 37:50

Right

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 37:50

So it does all that stuff.

Kathleen Gutierrez 37:53

Kind of follows you in your career.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 37:55

And the same thing with my Dad. I watched my dad navigate through the rich white Italian folks, the Yugoslavian folks, the Portuguese, Hispanics. And, and, and—and then also the Filipinos, you know. And it's you know, there's—and you watch. I saw the there's, there's jealousy. There's, there's, you know, the—just the resentment and stuff for how my Dad made it to where he was, and then you can see it, and then also the gratitude respect too. And that a lot of people more so than the others gave to him. You read and I fed off of that, and I got, okay. You don't treat—you don't treat people this way. You treat people this way. And you get—you're better for it. In the end. You know, so it's, it's, it was a learning curve. You learn a lot from your parents.

Kathleen Gutierrez 38:57

Oh, yes.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 38:58

Yeah, you learn a lot like what not to do? [laughs] You learn a lot, okay. This is what you do do. And this is—this is actually this is the way and that's the way you evolve, so.

Kathleen Gutierrez 38:59

Well then I'm curious too, you know, did growing up mixed-race also play a role in that? So it sounds like, you know, people acknowledge that you were both Filipino and Mexican. You know, they knew who your mom was, they knew who your dad was too. How did you also navigate that?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 39:29

You know, if it wasn't so—it wasn't so bad. I mean, you can tell when, you know, some of the—some of the other kids. If, if they hung and it's typical with anything. It didn't matter what race it is. It really doesn't. It matters who clicks with who. And they could be mixed, but it's like who grew up with who? And all of a sudden they were together and you're coming in from this other side, and you're not actually and they you know. They'll portray it. I think, when I really, really started seeing the prejudices is when I started—when I grew up and started going to college. And then I really saw it, and then you really said, "No." Okay? And then they, they think less of you in that is what hurts. Is when you go to feel—okay—this is—I know, x, y, z, but it's not easy, knowing x, y, z. But I got there. And I feel like I earned it. And then you got somebody coming in here and telling me, "No, you know what, even though you know all that you're still—" and they treat you like you're, you're, you're that, you know, remnant of whatever, you don't deserve it. And I have. I'm like, wait, hold on. And then you kind of—it makes you question yourself. And I've learned from that, but that's when I was young. I think, when I was in, when I was in my twenties—no, before that. Because I was—I was still nineteen,—yeah, nineteen-twenty. And what I started to realize, oh, and the prejudices were on. But when I grew up, it was you know, there were some, it all depended on where you had—but I always gravitated to the kinder, you know. And—and there was some, you know, the older kids, they—deal with you. And—but nothing outrageous. Nothing like I had seen, you know, before. And then raising my kids. I raised my—my youngest son is autistic. You had to really keep your guard up on that one. And I realized that, okay, things aren't fair. But you know, you teach him to, you know, hold your head up and understand and recognize the things. But then to watch him, it's like, Wow, this person's really not treating you correctly. But it's really not fazing you. How interesting. And that's kind of getting to that person. But it's really not fazing you because you're not seeing it because your social connection isn't—you're not receiving it that way.

Kathleen Gutierrez 42:16

Right.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 42:16

But I am. And so—

Kathleen Gutierrez 42:19

You know, and that's telling I mean—you know, and I resonate with some of that, too. Growing up in LA, finding that it was really the people that I had the benefit of growing up with. I mean, I have friends from when I was still growing up from the age of six. I still have high school friends that I hold on to. And you're right, college is something kind of startling because at this point, you have a very—a larger mix of students because they're coming in from a bigger swath of communities. And so I'm guessing that was when you started at Cabrillo?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 42:46

Yeah.

Kathleen Gutierrez 42:47

When you sort of started seeing that—

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 42:49

And then you start, and then—but then you start to see that it was more of the entitledness.

Kathleen Gutierrez 42:55

I see. So it was class dynamics?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 42:57

Yes it was class dynamics.

Kathleen Gutierrez 42:58

Less so race.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 42:59

Yeah. And then you—and then you realize you're like, Oh, alright. And then you pick and choose. You pick and choose and when that's when you realize, Okay, it isn't so bad. It's like when I went to Watsonville High we were a farm community. And we learned to get along with that farm community. And we knew what was good, bad, and indifferent. Gangs were bad. Stay—they can stay on the outside. They really didn't last in high school that long, you know. Maybe sophomore year and then they were gone. Maybe sophomore year, but you knew who was not going to stick around who was. And then and then once you got to coll—[laughs]—once you got to that college, I'm like okay. And then you get out of that and you

go into the working force and you kind of see it out there a little bit, but then as long as you work they really don't have any complaints about you.

Kathleen Gutierrez 43:50

Right.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 43:50

And that's one of the, that's one of the—this is one of the traits I got from my Dad. My Mom was like, "You work hard, you get which you reap your rewards," you know. So I just always kept my—I never, I never wanted to be stuck in one place. I never thought I'd be a police officer for twenty odd years. Never thought I'd being a police officer from day one. Until I needed a job and it was staring me in the face and I went and did it. But, you know, like you set your mind at something you can always—you can do it.

Kathleen Gutierrez 44:24

Yeah. We are. I'm curious then, you know, to maybe even go back to those really formative years when you were in Aromas. Who were your neighbors? What—did you play in your neighborhood?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 44:36

Uh, yeah. I mean, um. Like—so my wife, her uncle is, was my best friend. And they live they—I grew up with him and his family. Then there's four sisters and five brothers. And he was the youngest of the sons

Kathleen Gutierrez 44:55

Okay.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 44:55

And I grew up with him and hung out with him for a long time, but he was three years, four years older than I was. And then there were some other kids that I grew up with that were around, but now they're—everybody's moved away and gone, or they passed. You know, we really didn't have a—I mean, it was rough. It was a—it was a rough upbringing as far as kids dying in accidents, motorcycle accidents, car accidents, and just plain stupid accidents. And more than what any kid should have to deal with. But I mean, but I dealt with it, and it was kind of, you know, kind of a chilly, morbid thing. Because by the time I turned nineteen, I'm like, I really didn't want to go to funerals anymore. You know, it was that bad. So but as far as the neighborhoods went, everybody was, everybody was good. We were—everybody was working class. Everybody had their own issues and problems. There weren't very many houses around us. And then they started springing up, popping up, and then more so in the hills and

everything. And then there were new kids coming along. But as you grew up, you grew up and then once you got a car, you were out of there. Yeah. And then you were on your own and doing things and I got my car. And I started and I —then I started working, and I work. I started working at an electric shop in Watsonville.

Kathleen Gutierrez 46:19

Okay.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 46:19

And then I never went back to the farm. I never went back to farming or anything like that.

Kathleen Gutierrez 46:26

You said you had two seasons in the fields. Two years—

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 46:28

No, I had several seasons in the fields.

Kathleen Gutierrez 46:31

—several seasons.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 46:31

I was young. Yeah, it seemed like forever I was working in the fields. And, uh—But yeah, I work in—to help with the apples. I'd be out there. I'd mow lawns. I'd do—we were doing everything. I was traveling around with my dad all the time.

Kathleen Gutierrez 46:51

Where did you two travel to?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 46:53

No, no. Watsonville, Corralitos.

Kathleen Gutierrez 46:55

All really kind of more local.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 46:56

Yeah, because J.J. Crosetti owned all these orchards. And J.J. Crosetti's ranch house, I went every Friday. I had to mow the lawn and they were huge. Mowed lawns, and then there was this huge barbecue area that was covered with oaks. I'd have to rake the oak leaves. So I'd

mow the lawns and rake up the—and that would take me all day. By myself, all day, and I clean all that up.

Kathleen Gutierrez 47:21

It sounds like your Dad then didn't have to migrate up and down California?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 47:25

No, yeah. He didn't. He didn't, he was mainly in Watsonville.

Kathleen Gutierrez 47:28

Because he worked for the Crosettis.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 47:30

Yes.

Kathleen Gutierrez 47:31

I see.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 47:31

Fifty some odd years.

Kathleen Gutierrez 47:32

Fifty some odd years!

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 47:34

Yeah, he had—he worked for them for over fifty years.

Kathleen Gutierrez 47:37

This was before you were born when he started?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 47:39

Oh yeah, he was there way before I was born.

Kathleen Gutierrez 47:41

I see

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 47:42

He ran—he did all the orchards. He was a foreman for all the apple orchards.

Kathleen Gutierrez 47:47

I see. And did you get to see other migrant manong? Like who were coming through Aromas or Watsonville?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 47:54

They've worked with Dad often. I—Oh, he had his own. He had his own crew that came and worked the apples. And then, you know, there was a set crew of Hispanics and Filipinos that came out and worked for my Dad. And then um, thinning, pruning, and then when picking came along and he'd hire, you know, he'd have to hire everybody else. And so—but like I said, I was never like—by that time I was back in school. By the picking time, I was back in school. You know I'd be going September you're back in school and doing your thing. And then um, and that was that was the main thing. He just wanted to make sure I went school.

Kathleen Gutierrez 48:41

Right. Right. So tell me a little bit more about, you know, kind of growing up and what your free time was like? Your leisure, you know, you shared a little bit about the races, the wrestling, the Filipino community

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 48:54

My leisure. I mean we've been around. We—young—we'd go down to the river, we'd swim in the river, we'd fish. Play baseball at school, but there's only so many of us so we can only do, you know little pickup games and whatnot. There was a little rec hall and then as I—as you grew up, you know, obviously when I turned sixteen or before I turned sixteen there was a—there was a group of us. And there had to be about six to ten of us. Tight knit group was six of us and we'd hang out and—but you know, we would you know we'd—someone would have a car and we go to the beach. And we come out this way. And that was back where there was no traffic or anything. We just have to take side roads and everything just to go slow. But, like close friends and everything, they—when we were stuck, we were stuck. You couldn't go anywhere

Kathleen Gutierrez 50:02

Yeah.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 50:04

And we just, you know, figure out what to do. Sometimes we were a little more boring than we'd want to be. But you were more secluded. It wasn't like living in the city.

Kathleen Gutierrez 50:14

Right.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 50:14

You know, where all your friends come out and there you got something to do. Or you go down to one rec hall—

Kathleen Gutierrez 50:19

Sure.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 50:20

or anything like that. And then like I didn't do any—like I said I didn't do any organized sports until eighth grade and I played basketball. But that was just briefly and then I went to high school and then that's when I was—I got full fledge in the sports and everything. And—and then everything branched out from there

Kathleen Gutierrez 50:37

Right, right.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 50:38

So it was fun.

Kathleen Gutierrez 50:39

Yeah, sounds like you were—even though it was in an urban environment, you were able to make use of the beaches, you know, the local river.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 50:47

Ten, ten miles—yeah. And that back then it was nice.

Kathleen Gutierrez 50:48

Yeah.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 50:50

I don't think I could dip myself in that river anymore, right.

Kathleen Gutierrez 50:53

[Laughs]

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 50:54

But you know, we did what we had to—we did what we had to do. And we—I remember going to summer school and I would ride my bike seven miles into Watsonville just because I could.

Just cruise along the railroad tracks and get to—and then I come back home. Fourteen mile round trip. Summer school couple hours.

Kathleen Gutierrez 51:17

Did you—do you know why your parents lived in Aromas and not Watsonville? Was there a decision around that?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 51:22

They started and my sister will show you the house that they were, the area where they first—where my sisters grew up. And that was the one picture that, of my Uncle Leon and Veronica—

Kathleen Gutierrez 51:32

Okay, we have—

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 51:32

—that's that house. And then they moved. My Dad found the property in Aromas. You know, and then back then for \$29,000 they got the house and then they got—and plus five acres of land.

Kathleen Gutierrez 51:49

Okay, so sizable.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 51:51

Yeah. And then he—then he leased—he farmed it. I remember being little, running through the rows and stuff. And they farmed the land and then they sold the produce. They took it to—they took it to the uh—they took it to the market to go get shipped or whatever and then they sold it out of the—out of the garage as well. And to the neighbors and whoever would come by and that was uh, that was an old memory. That was a long—I was—I was little.

Kathleen Gutierrez 52:29

Yeah.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 52:30

My sisters were still around. So—can I take a quick little—

Kathleen Gutierrez 52:34

Oh, please. —break real quick. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 52:35

—I'm sorry.

Kathleen Gutierrez 52:36

Sure. Take a quick break. [unintelligible] All good. [door closes]

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. interviewed by Kathleen “Kat” Cruz Gutierrez Part 2 of 3

Speakers: Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. and Kathleen “Kat” Cruz Gutierrez

Date: June 3, 2021

Scope and contents: In the second part of this three part interview, Paul Phillip DeOcampo speaks with Dr. Kathleen "Kat" Cruz Gutierrez, a member of the Watsonville is in the Heart project team. DeOcampo discusses his experience learning about the Watsonville Race Riots later in his life. He also speculates why his parents and uncles hid their experience with racism and intolerance. DeOcampo also recounts growing up with a large age difference between him and his sisters, Antoinette DeOcampo-Lechtenberg and Veronica Hernandez, and with aging parents.

Kathleen Gutierrez 00:00

We're back on. We're going to resume once more. Cool! Uhm, you know, maybe I'm wondering if we can take a few steps back—

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 00:09

Okay.

Kathleen Gutierrez 00:09

—back to the Manong and the uncles that you grew up around. And your dad, of course. And I know that you had mentioned that he didn't talk a whole lot about his migration story, a lot of the impetus for leaving the Philippines—[radio feedback].

Kathleen Gutierrez 00:26

Did you grow up hearing at all about the riots and struggles of the 1930s?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 00:30

No, no. And [radio feedback] they didn't share any of that with me, I can really tell you. I think there was—I had an Uncle Marty. And I think he wanted to share that with me. He was a little bit younger—he passed before my Dad—but can't say if he was younger or if he was older.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 00:57

But I know I remember him maybe trying to tell me a couple things. But never about the riots or never about any of—because they didn't want to bring that up. They didn't feel like I needed to . . . this is my assumption: that I didn't need to relive that, or know about it, or anything. That it

was a different time, that was the past. I was in, you know, they didn't want to relive it. And I'm sure they've lost a lot of friends along the way that aren't documented. You know, and they've seen things along the way that aren't documented. And they choose not to remember it. Or they just choose not to speak about it.

Kathleen Gutierrez 01:46

Yeah.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 01:47

Now, I only learned about the past through the newspaper clippings. And every so often there would be these newspaper clippings that would come out. And I kept the file up— I might have a file of them—and I saw my Dad's name and my Dad's photos in there. And he came in with that group. But he wasn't really part of, I mean, I can't say if he was part or not because he never talked about it with me. My Mom never shared it with me. And the only reason I would know is to look into the papers or the historical society. And . . . but as far as I know, I was mainly shielded from all that. That way I can grow up with a clear slate. And maybe I had—my, my theory is maybe I had a better opportunity. You know,

Kathleen Gutierrez 02:46

How—

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 02:46

I wish, I wish he would know—I wish he knew where I ended up right now. That's the only regret I have: is my Dad's not around to see that his grandsons turned out okay. And the one thing—I will say this, is that the one promise my Dad made me give him. And I can tell you this, it was the only one that he ever asked me for and it was in his. . . on the last night he was with us. And I—he was clear as day. He was sharp as a tack. I sat there at his bedside and he just told me, he goes, "You just need to take care of one thing: and that is you take care of your two boys. That is it. And that is all. And you promise me that."

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 03:31

And he told me that. I mean, he was clear as day. And I said, "Yeah, no problem. I can do that." And I remember leaving that night—and that was it. And a couple hours later, we got the call. And he was gone.

Kathleen Gutierrez 03:44

How old was he?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 03:46

He was eighty-seven. Eighty-seven, eighty—so, it's twenty-five years ago. Twenty-five years ago was it, uhm? Geez, you send—you just, you just start forgetting after a while. Again, it's over twenty-five years ago, so 1995, right?

Kathleen Gutierrez 04:09

Um-hm.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 04:09

A long time ago. Long twenty-five years ago.

Kathleen Gutierrez 04:12

Yeah.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 04:13

Twenty-six, now. So, I just—I held on to that. And I did. I was a single dad and I raised my kids. I never turned my back on them. I never, I never—you know. I did, I did my thing. I had to do some growing up down the lines, but I could say, "Fair enough. I did okay. And they're doing fine."

Kathleen Gutierrez 04:39

I'm curious too, you know, about sort of your paths with history. Learning it yourself, in some ways being guarded by your dad and your uncles to not know that past. How do you—do you talk about the past with your sons? Are they familiar a little bit with what's kind of happened locally?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 05:00

You know, I think I did share with my older son. I talked to him about it. And, you know, just—I tell them, "Look remember where you're, you know, where your roots are," I go, "But you have two different sides because, your mom, your mom is from"—she's got Indian background, French—but I go, "Your Grandpa on your Mom's side is from Wichita, Kansas, son. Understand that. And then your grandpa on this side, he's from, you know, the Philippines." Then he'll go, "It doesn't get more vast than that." So what's he doing? He's working for fisheries, a diver, up in Olympia, Washington now.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 05:48

[laughs] I just—I go, "Wow, go figure?" He goes, "Yeah, you know, go figure. I'd be like, I'd be a fisherman." And I'm like, "Well, you wanted to be a geologist." So there are, there's—I became a police officer and who knew, you know? But you're still, you know, you're thirty and you're working your way through life.

Kathleen Gutierrez 06:09

Right.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 06:10

And so yeah, I talk to him. I, you know, they understand where they've come from. And he asked me about our last name. I told him, I go, "This is where your last name came from." My sisters kind of got a little pissy. His wife is Thai. And their name was given to him by the Royal Family of Thailand; and there's this long drawn out, you know, that royal family has been around. But, here we go. They gave him a name, again. But it holds little, so he took her name. And it didn't—because I knew the history—it didn't bother me. It bothered my—it bothered my Mom, it bothered my sisters. And I'm like, "Why was, why would it bother you?" I go—maybe, you know, I don't know.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 07:05

But anyhow, it was—it kind of struck. But if you go back in history, you look and you're like, "Yeah, they—we're from the camp." And I'm like, "I'm gonna take that that's my name." That's how—that's why I'm not—you know I'm not.

Kathleen Gutierrez 07:23

Right.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 07:23

But, you know, growing up and understanding where my Dad and how my Dad got here, it would be nice to go back and trace his footsteps and be able to go, "Hey, okay, yeah, you got on this ship, they've, they worked you. You ended up having to work your way or fight your way off and jump ship, then make your way, you know, through a port, either Mexico, San Diego, or however. And then you hopped a rail or did whatever you had to do to get your butt up here and then start working in the fields. And then you— and then you had to show your worth by working in the fields. You had to work hard. And you had to deal with the racism and the bias and all of that stuff in order to get through it."

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 08:16

It would be great to know that history, but it's lost. And I'm afraid—you know, there's some things that can be—you know, people can say, "Oh, this is what the Filipinos went through at this time," and I get it. And I understand it because that's what they went through. But you know, my Dad was an—he was such a happy guy. That you're kind of like, "Wow, did that really happen to you?" But then he had temper too, you know. He had that Filipino flare temper and I'm like, "Well, you know, maybe, okay."

Kathleen Gutierrez 08:55

I think that that's kind of the—one of the goals of this project is, you know, so far in the history books and most of popular understanding of Watsonville, we know about the riots and we know about Fermin Tobera. That's probably the most well investigated part of it. And I think part of the project is not only to like expand that history, but also to show the very multifaceted ways that people lived. So leisure, finding joy, pastimes, making it through, both as young people well into adulthood. And not to say that that violent history is any less important, but I think like you're saying, there are other sides.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 09:36

Oh, no. I believe, I believe these guys, they loved to—they—because they camped. That's what they did.

Kathleen Gutierrez 09:45

They camped?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 09:46

It was, it was—well, that was part of their—they had to grow up. So they lived in these makeshift camps.

Kathleen Gutierrez 09:52

I see.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 09:53

So they barbecued. And that was their together, their family time. And so forever, that's what they did. And then, you know, they—oh, that's why the Filipino culture is all behind their cooking. Their cooking and their family time and their prayer time. And that's why they are so big into family. And, and it's really with every culture. But, you know, that's what they did. And that's what I learned how they did it, and why it was so important to them even just to sit around talk business, and talk—and you know, it was family business. And Dad, I knew Dad took care of family in the Philippines. Even to the end until he couldn't work anymore. He was still sending money back to his sisters and whatnot in the Philippines. And that's, that's the what—that's what he came here to do. And he did it till the end.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 10:56

And then you know, it's funny, because I'll talk to my sisters like, "You don't get it." I go, "He sent a lot of money back, you know. It wasn't like just to invest here. But he was working for the family back there, too." And they just, like, "Well, what do you mean?" I go, "What do you, what

do you think I mean?" I go, "He's got family back there. That's the first initial thing he came to do." That was his primary thing to come here and do. And a lot of them, that's what their primary thing was to do—come and do: make a better living so they can take care of the family. And that's one thing I learned: family comes first.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 11:32

But that's why they always sat back and, you know, everybody like having their big cookouts and whatnot. And it's fun. Like I have a Filipino family that lives across the street from me. And they're doing the same thing. But they're the younger generation. They're not much older than I am. But they're the younger generation and, and they're carrying—but they're, they're all Filipino. They married in a Filipino family. And so there's the difference. And I—and sometimes I think, well, if I went back and married into the Filipino culture, maybe that was—but that wasn't in the cards for me. I think about that, though. It's interesting to sit back. But as far as the history and the culture, I do miss it, because I still cook it. I still do it. I just—

Kathleen Gutierrez 12:27

Do you make Filipino food?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 12:29

Yeah, I make the—I cook the adobos. I don't cook the pancits and all because I'll get fat.

Kathleen Gutierrez 12:36

[laughs]

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 12:38

Like the lumpias and all that. I love going and grabbing the bags and then . . . but—

Kathleen Gutierrez 12:43

Yeah.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 12:44

Yeah, you can.

Kathleen Gutierrez 12:45

Well—

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 12:45

But rice, too.

Kathleen Gutierrez 12:46

[laughs]

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 12:46

I kind of had to cut the rice.

Kathleen Gutierrez 12:49

I think we all need to cut the rice a little too, it's sad truth. You know, and I'm curious, then, you know if, if it's—how you feel about, you know, your dad's decision to kind of shield you from that, you know, from that history from the violent history of that past? And so really like you were saying, sort of start with a clean slate. You know, how did you feel about that kind of approach?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 13:12

You don't feel it because you don't recognize it. I didn't recognize it. I didn't see it. I don't see it until like I grew up later. And I'm like, "Wow, okay, that's why he did that." Or "That's why he told me he was so emphasized on me working." You have to work hard to get what you want to get. Because, society doesn't like lazy people. That was one of the biggest things.

Kathleen Gutierrez 13:37

He would say that?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 13:38

Yeah, yeah. Well, he didn't have to say. He didn't have to say it. It was like, "Hey, you're going to come work, you're going to earn your money. We're going to save it for you. This is what you do." And then all of a sudden you have this much money. And all of a sudden you're hearing, "You can do this. You can do this, you can do this." And so, him shielding me from anything is just really, you know, it's just like me shielding my kids from harm's way.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 14:06

Like my son, my son, who's—who's diagnosed autistic, Philip. When he was three, before he turned three, his mom and I took him up to UCSF to get diagnosed. And they came out after running some tests with him and everything. And they literally told me and my wife—kid's mom at the time—that we needed to prepare ourselves to institutionalize him. And I didn't say anything. It hit my—it hit their mom like a ton of bricks. And I said, "No, we're going, we already have him scheduled to go to school and everything." So he went in, he got all his education and all that.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 14:54

But like now, he drives. He's got a full time job. He lives with me still and he'll always probably live with me, I don't have a problem with that. But he took off to San Francisco this weekend, for two day—for a night, he spent the night in San Francisco. And I'm like—I remember I sat there like, "Look, you gotta watch out for this, this, this, this, and this."

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 15:18

So in a hindsight way, my Dad would like, "No, you know, I don't want you hanging out with these people," just like any other dad would. You know, because bad things happen. Gangs, you know, you don't hang out with these guys because this is what happens to them. And back then, in the seventies, they were killing each other. I mean, that was like, "Whoa, hold on. Okay, I don't want to be any part of that." And I knew family members and family members who were murdered. But I didn't know that until like later. So he was protecting me from all of that.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 15:52

So it wasn't anything that I needed to know about their past. He was trying to protect me of the present at the time. And I don't think it had anything to do with how he grew up. He just—I don't think he just felt like telling the story. You know, that's—those are, those are sad times. And even today, I think that's just human nature protecting. That's that shield, "the Kronos", like they would say. Everything in your past, people kind of bury it inside and then it'll come out every now and then. But those are either under really, really stressful times, or under very, very private times. And either you knew how to control it and you knew when it was coming out, and then, you know, you take your breaths, and you do it. So I think that's what they did, but in their own way.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 16:54

Because everybody had to deal with that stuff in their own way. The Hispanic people, the Mexicans from, you know, every—I mean, even now, today. Everybody with the traumatic stuff that's going on now today, you have to learn how to, how to cope with it. But back then, what tools do they have, except for self preservation?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 17:18

So you're going to protect your kids, no matter what. Just like I was telling you. Take care of your kids. When my Dad told me, "You're going to take care of your kids," because—maybe I didn't ask him why? I just told him, "Yes, I will." I made him that promise. But if I asked him why, those are the questions that I ask myself. If I asked him "Well, why are you telling me that? Is it because you did something that you shouldn't have that you're you, you're thinking about right now? Or is it—Or are there some regrets? Or there's, or there's something that you're thinking you should have told me?" But I don't think any of that stuff that they didn't say about what happened during the riots, or happened with the people down there.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 18:09

I remember, there were stories of the Yugoslavian women. They liked—their men would just drink and they were just doing their own thing. Well the women wanted to go out with the Filipino men. While they were going out they were having these dances and these get togethers and everything. And then the women were coming over and they were dancing and that's what started everything. That's what I know. But that's just from reading.

Kathleen Gutierrez 18:36

Right.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 18:36

No one told—no one sat me down and said, "Oh, yeah, we used to do this. And we used to do that. And then we'd have these parties, and then all of a sudden, that was it."

Kathleen Gutierrez 18:46

How did you get inspired to read about it? Or where did you come across those clippings?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 18:50

They came—they, they were doing a Historical Society thing in the Sentinel. Have you read any of that? Any of those clippings or anything?

Kathleen Gutierrez 19:02

I have.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 19:02

Yeah, so that's where I got that from.

Kathleen Gutierrez 19:04

Wow.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 19:05

And then—

Kathleen Gutierrez 19:05

When would that have been?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 19:08

I want to say it was in the nineties.

Kathleen Gutierrez 19:10

In the nineties.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 19:11

Yes, because I was I think I was still at the [Santa Cruz Beach] Boardwalk. I have the clippings in my file. And I'll—I have still a lot of those newspaper clippings in my files. And, and even Frank Borba. Matter of fact, Frank gave me some stuff. And he's got a ranch. His family, his dad, and his mom lived up above on the hill, by me. And yeah, his family was pretty well involved, along with the history and stuff. That's kind of funny, I remember him. But yeah, that's how I started reading. And then I was curious. But my Dad was already passed by then.

Kathleen Gutierrez 20:00

I see.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 20:00

Yeah, yeah. So there was really—and there was really no one to ask.

Kathleen Gutierrez 20:04

Right.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 20:04

There's no more uncles.

Kathleen Gutierrez 20:05

And you weren't able to ask your mom?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 20:07

No. And, and—and Mom's already has her bias thing about, you know, maybe what happened. But see, she was a lot younger. But she was still there, she knew about it. She knew it was going on because she was part of the whole situation but she never— and now if I asked her, I don't know what you'd get.

Kathleen Gutierrez 20:27

Yeah. And so the name Fermin Tobera became, you know, a familiar name—

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 20:33

Yeah, that's—

Kathleen Gutierrez 20:34

—much later too.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 20:35

—that's the only way I knew that family at all. Roy starts throwing names out. I'm like, "Roy." I go, "Unless I run into someone—" he goes, "No, no, they know you." And I go, "Yeah, they know me, but they know me as that little kid that ran around with Skippy"—that was my Dad's nickname. And I'm like, "That's how they knew me." And then so now if I run into them, I don't know, I don't know these people from Adam.

Kathleen Gutierrez 21:02

Right. Right, right.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 21:03

And then if I tell them my name, "Oh, yeah!" And then like—

Kathleen Gutierrez 21:07

Right. And there's a little generational difference. So I think like, when we're thinking about the other narrators we've been talking to, some are a bit older. Some are maybe even twenty years older than you.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 21:18

Yes, yes.

Kathleen Gutierrez 21:19

Yeah.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 21:19

Because, I mean, look at my sisters. So my sisters were in the middle of a gap.

Kathleen Gutierrez 21:23

I see.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 21:24

Because my Dad was sixty—fifty, fifty something. He was almost fifty—he was fifty-eight when he had me, so he was at that point. But there were those other guys who were having kids when they were in their forties. So there's another ten years, right? Thirty-five, forty. And then all those guys are sixty-five, going on seventy now. And they kind of knew me, but I was a kid. And they were in their teens, they're in their twenties. And, and I tell you what, the older guys

really didn't like their attitude sometimes. And because they were that huge generation gap, you know. And you—and you could tell, you could tell because older men are like, "you little, you guys," you know? And it was that whole thing that, "You guys don't know; you guys have no idea." And for me, they couldn't say that to me, because I was just, I was just a kid. I was just a kid. I remember I turned twenty. I turned twenty-one and my uncles were still around. And that was it.

Kathleen Gutierrez 22:32

And what's fascinating is that—so you were born in 1967. You know, immigration law changed in the United States in 1965. So we saw a huge influx of professionals from the Philippines and other countries coming in. And so, as I've been talking to more folks, people sort of distinguish that generation: pre-'65 and the post-'65. And so since you were born in '67, you know, you kind of grew up when the waves started coming in.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 23:01

Yeah.

Kathleen Gutierrez 23:02

And so it sounds like you were also—that's, it sounds like what you're referring to is like the young ones and the older ones, and some of that is also divided by that.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 23:09

Yes, yes. Because they were coming in and then they're coming in from the islands, but they're coming in as professionals and different—But my Dad did respect the young. He had—did he have a Filipino doctor that he—I don't remember. But there were some. There were some doctors, I remembered doctors in their thirties—well, I can't say how old they were. But I was young and I remember meeting them and everything at the barbecue set and at the function dinner. But I don't remember who they were. My Mom, she—gosh, now I'm remembering but I don't remember who they were. Certain doctors. Those are the ones my Mom would gravitate to because she was an educator and so she would educate.

Kathleen Gutierrez 24:01

Was she an ESL teacher in Watsonville?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 24:03

Um-hm.

Kathleen Gutierrez 24:04

I see, okay.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 24:04

Forever.

Kathleen Gutierrez 24:05

For Watsonville Unified, or for PVUS—

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 24:07

Pajaro.

Kathleen Gutierrez 24:08

—Pajaro Valley? Yeah. Nice.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 24:10

She worked at E.A. Hall and then she worked at Hyde and that was the funniest thing is what those girls would tell me. And they were so nice to me. They were like, you know, we're here, we are in history class. And then we go to another history because you have to take four years of history and we'd kind of goof and stuff. But you know, and I didn't—yeah, they would help me I'd help them and we go through, we go through our—and that was just—and I learned to learn. So it was, kind of, it was—they made, they made high school fun. Because it wasn't so intimidating. I wasn't really school person.

Kathleen Gutierrez 24:51

I was a school person. I wanted to go back to kind of what I had brought up a little bit about gender, right. And so being the youngest, definitely there was a generational gap. But then also since you were the only boy with two older sisters, do you feel like some of the things that you learned were different from what Antoinette and Veronica were learning?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 25:14

Oh yeah, it was totally different.

Kathleen Gutierrez 25:16

Oh really?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 25:16

Yeah, I can—you know, like I said, I could do no wrong but I could do wrong. I was—I stuck around. I didn't you know, I wasn't you know—I'll tell you both of my sisters were young. They were still teenagers and they got pregnant and then they had been moved out. I didn't do that. I went to high school. I went and did my sports. I stuck to my stuff and, and I didn't leave till I

was twenty, twenty-one—after I was twenty-one, I was twenty-one. Somewhere around there. Twenty-three when I had my first son, yeah. So I was around. And then that was around the time where my Dad's health started to deteriorate and then I was twenty-five and he was gone. Twenty-five, twenty-six, twenty . . . twenty-five, three, one, two, three, four, five, six—twenty-six, twenty-seven and then he passed.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 26:19

So that was, those were—that was it. So there's twenty-seven, that's twenty-seven years of my life. Gone. Dad is gone. So, young and I got to sixteen and I had a car and so there goes ten years of me bouncing back and forth. My sister used to take my Dad to my football games and then—that was Veronica, she used to take my my Dad to my football games and whatnot. And—but yeah so there was—but I didn't have any competition with my sisters because they weren't around. But I was the boy, you know. I did notice that I was easy to, you know, they just hate, hate—you know I go to work and I do my—when I started working I had my own money and I was doing my own thing. But then I'd ask when—if I asked for something, okay. And I was like—

Kathleen Gutierrez 27:18

Were you held to a different standard then?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 27:21

I didn't know what the standard was because of my sister—my sisters were gone—

Kathleen Gutierrez 27:26

—already by that point.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 27:26

Yep.

Kathleen Gutierrez 27:27

Yeah.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 27:28

I was like, okay, I got a car when I was sixteen. Dad got me a car when I was sixteen and I was off and running. And—but I did know, I did know, when I was twenty-three, I did know I needed to have a job. I needed to have insurance. I need to take care of my kids and from now on that's all I've been doing, you know. And now here I am, I'm fifty-three, I have a twelve year old daughter, my adopted daughter, and—but yeah things are different. And, you know, you

prepare now, you prepare for the next twenty-five years because you got to figure out—well. Hopefully prayers are answered at twenty-five and anything after that is bingo, right? [laughs]

Kathleen Gutierrez 28:18

Yeah, one would hope. [laughs]

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 28:22

The standards—I didn't really have anybody to compare it to.

Kathleen Gutierrez 28:27

Right because you were so young. It was probably hard to observe how they were maybe parenting your sisters.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 28:33

Oh I didn't see. I remember arguments and I remember—that's what I remember most—

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 28:37

—is the arguments and the tough times. I don't remember any—you know, I remember my sisters and me having to tag along and them taking me near the swimming pool you know, during this hot summers and whatnot, but that was it. The rest of it was you know, me on my own. So I was pretty much a latchkey. So I would—if I was home, I was home.

Kathleen Gutierrez 28:37

Uh-huh

Kathleen Gutierrez 29:02

Because your parents were working quite a bit.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 29:04

They were working. And if I had to stay home sick, I was home sick by myself. That was it. You were out there stuck in Aromas by yourself with a two-channel black and white TV. Right? Nothing like this, right? I told my daughter, I'm like, "You know, you don't get it." I go, "There was one TV and the handle went click and I got two channels if I was lucky. Stormy day, I got one. And it was soap operas. So it was like, who wants to watch soap operas in the afternoon?"

Kathleen Gutierrez 29:40

Yeah. Wow. And I'm curious then too, you know, so, did your mom and dad share insights with you? It sounds like your dad, you know, had that one promise that you had to really make before he left. Were they telling you other facts of life and how to navigate? You know, it

sounded like he also knew how to avoid gangs. I mean, was that something that you were able to pick up from the community or from their guidance?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 30:05

I had to. That was, you know, so a lot of it was self preservation, a lot of that stuff—

Kathleen Gutierrez 30:13

Going back to self preservation—

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 30:14

—because I had to. I learned that on my—I learned what I didn't want to do. I saw it. And I just, you know, it was one of those trying to fit a square peg in a round hole, and I didn't fit. And I didn't want to be any part of that. So that was the hardest thing is, is navigating through the teenage years of who do I fit in with? Where am I going to go? What are we—you know, I can look, I can go hindsight and look at it like, wow, it's like, wow, I should have bought Apple stock back in the '80s, right? Now, you can't say that. You can't. It's like, "Wow, yeah, I wish I would have known. I wish I would have thought of that." And I would have went down that path.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 30:58

And I think all the decisions and the steering and the raising was correct for what I had to go through. And I don't regret one bit and their decisions, again, it was a hard worker. I don't, I don't take anything away from what he did because he made it. I'm sitting on a piece of land right now that he was able to purchase. And there's not a lot of people that can say that. And, and I was able to preserve it. And I keep it up. And that's him and my Mom. That's them. And I was able to turn around and purchase that from my Mom and say, "Hey, look, okay, now you can go take care of yourself," because, you know, they took care of me. So, yeah, hindsight. You take care of them, so I did. And I'm like, "Here you go." And she's—now she's able to live comfortably and, and she can make a decision on what she wants, what she wants to do. I remember Dad, when he left, he left with, you know, whatever he had in his bank account and the property. That's all he had left. And so, you know, it all worked. They work hard and they got a piece of the "American dream." And I'm able to sit back and keep that alive for the time being. You know, and it ain't easy, but, you know, we were able to do it.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 32:32

So yeah, I don't—I think what they did they did the best they could. I won't take, I won't take it away from them. You know, and with me, you know. My sisters have a whole nother—a whole nother story and everything to tell. But I, but with me—But there was a time, "Man, I wish I had this, I wish—" but now you can because you make do with what you have. And there's good decisions that you can make, and there's bad decisions you can make. And I've made both.

And I'm happy to say, I can say them sitting here talking to you Kat and I'm happy with the decisions. There's no regrets. There's no regrets. Yeah, there's some things that I would change. But still, there's no regrets.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 33:23

You know, even with my, my kids and the relationships in my past and everything. You know because now—because with, with my youngest son, Phil, and my oldest son, Paul; my wife now is very close with both. She got Phil to—he couldn't ride a two wheeled bike— she showed him how to ride a two wheeled bike. My sister and, and, and—and my wife were very patient with Phil. Showed him how to drive a car. We got him a Jeep, I got him a stick shift and I told him to go drive it and he drove it. He learned to drive it and then he graduated in a month and now he went bought himself a new car just a couple months—two months ago.

Kathleen Gutierrez 34:07

Right on.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 34:08

On his own. I didn't—I just went there to make sure he didn't get ripped off and he got like the best deal anybody can get. And he's driving a brand new car right now. And I'm like, "Well, you can't beat—"and he's holding a steady job. A good union job. He's, you know, and—so you, you just be persistent. That's the one thing that they both taught me: persistence,

Kathleen Gutierrez 34:35

Persistence.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 34:36

And, and—and you stick to your guns. You know, I know when people tell you you can't do it, that's the one big thing—that's, that's the one stickler with me. If any. If people tell you you can't do it, then you know what, shame on them because you can pretty much do anything you set your mind to and you just do it. So that's what I learned from both Mom and Dad. And in two totally separate ways. My Mom was set on her ways. She wanted to be a teacher. She wanted to get her degree, she wanted to be, you know, and get her master's. And she—so she did in, her own way. She sacrificed some time and some things for me. And I learned to live with it.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 35:26

My Dad on the other hand, he was a workaholic. He worked and worked and worked. His—he worked with the seasons and took care of his family both here and there. And you gotta, gotta

really understand that that's what, you know, that's—back then that's how they had to deal with those.

Kathleen Gutierrez 35:48

Yeah, definitely. Well, we're coming up on the two hour mark of our time together.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 35:56

My, my phone is blowing up now. [laughs] That's alright!

Kathleen Gutierrez 36:00

That's—Yeah.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 36:00

Just check real quick.

Kathleen Gutierrez 36:01

Sure. Sure. Sure. Go ahead.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. interviewed by Kathleen “Kat” Cruz Gutierrez Part 3 of 3

Speakers: Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. and Kathleen “Kat” Cruz Gutierrez

Date: June 3, 2021

Scope and contents: In the third part of this three part interview, Paul Phillip DeOcampo Jr. speaks with Dr. Kathleen "Kat" Cruz Gutierrez, a member of the Watsonville is in the Heart project team. DeOcampo discusses the value of oral history archives and the importance of the Watsonville is the Heart project. He also discusses learning about Filipino involvement in the United Farm Workers (UFW) riots of the 1960s and 1970s.

Kathleen Gutierrez 00:01

We're starting again. You know, I know that we're kind of approaching the two hour mark of our time together. But I am curious, just to hear from you what, what you think the value is of cataloging and collecting these stories of the Filipino community in Watsonville?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 00:20

Well, just like every other well, background and and every other individual and all the different races and how they've all commingled and now we're coming out with, you know, inner mixed races and everything. You don't want to lose that. So it's good that, you know, we're collecting it. That way, the future, they can say, "Oh, yeah, you know, my dad, my mom, they contributed to this, you know, this library, we should go check it out, we should go, you know, delve into it." And then maybe even dig a little bit deeper and see, hey, you know, what goes on. Because that's what I keep those newspaper clippings and stuff and pictures of my Dad and whatnot. My sisters do the same thing. And that's the handout. So like, look—and I always tell my boys, like, "Remember where you came from." And it's not just from my part. That's why I always say, you know, like, my son, I told him, "Do you remember your grandpa's from Wichita, Kansas, your great-grandma has part Indian—I don't know what kind of Indian—but you know, just remember that."

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 01:35

It's important. Because as generations go, things get lost. You know, I'd love to know, where my Dad's mom and dad were from, and what they did. And they were from the Philippines. They were straight from, you know, Luis, Santo Tomas, Santo Domingo, and living in the jungle, in [unknown] because that's what it was. And then the rice paddies and all that. And they went through their rough times dealing with what they had to deal with back then. But

what history do we have back then on the jungles of the Philippines? You know, and even further back than that?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 02:17

So it's kind of interesting, that background. Same thing with my Mom. Where did she come from? And we kind of get lost because her DNA doesn't come back to my grandmother. It comes back—yeah. So I'm kind of at a loss there. And so was she. She would kind of throw him back a little bit.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 02:35

But I think it's very important. I think it's a good thing that this is getting done. And, and it's not easy. It's a lot of hard work a lot of stuff that is back and forth. Because not everybody remembers it the same way. My generation is a whole different, different— and I don't know of anybody younger than me, you know, growing up in the '70s because they came from that other that—the next set that came over.

Kathleen Gutierrez 03:03

Right? Yeah, yeah and hopefully we can do it justice.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 03:08

I'm sure—

Kathleen Gutierrez 03:08

It's just—

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 03:09

—anything is going to do.

Kathleen Gutierrez 03:10

Yeah, you know.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 03:11

Just anything. Even just scratching the surface of it because maybe it makes people dig in a little bit more, a little bit more, and you find out, "Oh, okay. That's why." Or something to that effect.

Kathleen Gutierrez 03:27

Right. And then these varied stories are really, I think, what we want to get at. Just how different they are. And you're right, I think you are kind of one of the younger folks that we're able to talk still which is great.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 03:40

And, it's interesting that the bias and, and the racial—but I didn't really, I don't feel that I did. Maybe I was in certain points. But, like I said, that didn't happen 'til I, 'til—'til it was in my face in college. I was like, "Whoa, okay." That was that. This is very important, I think.

Kathleen Gutierrez 04:04

Thanks so much, Paul.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 04:05

No, thank you!

Kathleen Gutierrez 04:06

And if you ever want to chat again, happy to do so.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 04:09

Yeah!

Kathleen Gutierrez 04:09

I actually mentioned to Rita and Modesto. I'd love to have Rita's kids, you know, present while they're sharing some of their stories. And so hopefully two of them—the two will be there, maybe at the end of June and chat. I'll be in LA to hang out with them. And so you know, I think Rita is closer to your age, from what I remember. And so, you know, it might even be nice for her kids to kind of hear them recollecting stories of Watsonville.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 04:36

It would be interesting, could be interesting, because those—there's a lot of them. It wasn't just a couple of them. It was a lot of them. And they were a big majority. And then, and then they shared the ranks with with the Hispanics; like the whole Cesar Chavez thing, that whole thing. You know, I come to find out that it was the Filipinos that brought that whole movement up.

Kathleen Gutierrez 05:01

Right. Did you hear about that history, by the way, when you were growing up at all? The union organizing?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 05:05

I was in the middle of it. I was young, it was a '70s. I was in—they had a riot there in our field. Because we had lettuce, we were leasing out to J.J. Crosetti for the lettuce crop. And a bus came to bring a bunch and then there was a big riot. I wasn't there. Matter of fact, my wife's uncle was there, and he was watching it. And they were like, "Dude, yeah, there was a riot with hoes and all kinds of stuff out in the field."

Kathleen Gutierrez 05:34

This was run by the UFW? That had saved it—

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 05:37

Yes, yeah.

Kathleen Gutierrez 05:38

What was it like for you? I mean, seeing—

05:40

Well, I was with my Dad. And they were, you know, they were flying the flag, you know, and everything and—the Huelga flag and all that. And that was in the beginning, that's when the gangs started up and all that stuff. So it's history.

Kathleen Gutierrez 05:56

What was your dad's interpretation of that time?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 05:58

Oh, he was on the other side.

Kathleen Gutierrez 05:59

He was on the other side, I see. Not the union organizing—

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 06:01

He knew the union, but he was a company man. He worked for the company for, back then, it was like forty some odd years. And so you want to be—you want to collect a paycheck, and hit between him. He—I mean, he even had me one time out there with a hoe thinning the lettuce with him. And I remember a carload of guys driving by with the flag yelling at us, and he didn't care. He didn't care that he had me out there. And I didn't know there was any threat. Thought we're out there just thinning, you know, the rows, and we had a whole five acres that we had we had to thin, you know.

Kathleen Gutierrez 06:36

Was there any altercation that your dad had with the union organizing?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 06:40

No, no, no. They left him alone. They were like—he'd drive by and I remember we'd drive by in his Crosetti truck and they'd yell at him. And he'd just drive by him.

Kathleen Gutierrez 06:48

Were these Latino and Filipino workers?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 06:51

No, no, they were mostly Latinos. I think. I don't know. I don't remember. I—that, those are like the only two, three incidents that I recall.

Kathleen Gutierrez 07:01

The riot and then being yelled at while—

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 07:03

I wasn't there at the riot. I came afterwards and I saw the field was all trampled and everything, and the lettuce was all messed up. I went out there to look and my friend's like, "Dude, you should have seen it." And then it was all over the newspaper and everything.

Kathleen Gutierrez 07:16

And you said you learned only later that Filipinos were a pretty substantial part of the union organizing?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 07:21

Yes. Yeah, they were a big part, you know. And then—and a lot of it had to do with the short hoe and all that stuff. You know, because they were using the short hoes. They're out there breaking their backs. Then you know, and you just—this is word of mouth, and you start learning the history of and everything.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 07:38

But they never taught it to you in school. That's like, it was really interesting. I had a talk with my Mom about—we were watching the Tulsa massacre. And I go, "Well..." and my Mom says, "Well, the Filipinos were treat—" So now that you mention it, it would be very interesting for you to talk to my Mom. Because she started talking to me about that. I didn't tell her I—matter of fact, I—oh, I did tell her I was interviewing with you.

Kathleen Gutierrez 08:05

I'd love to talk to your mom, I'd be so happy to do that.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 08:08

Maybe I'll just—I'll mention that to her. I gotta go by and see her. I go—on my Friday, I will go by and see her.

Kathleen Gutierrez 08:14

Maybe I'll bring my dad by.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 08:15

Yeah. And then it was funny, because she did mention— she mentioned that—that, that Filipinos were, you know, they went through the same thing. Like, well, yeah everybody pretty much did and that's where it goes down to.

Kathleen Gutierrez 08:30

Sort of in her—

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 08:30

She's like—she's like, "Well, that was a really horrible thing. I think they had it the worst." And then we and then—because she's, you know, I talked to her I go, "Wait a minute. You remember the Indians?" She's like, "You're right." I go, "So this is like history. This is the way it goes."

Kathleen Gutierrez 08:47

You know, and it would be great to get her opinion on it too. I mean, she's probably very kind of aware of also even the—

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 08:55

You know what, I'll get a hold of my sister and have my sister plant the seeds, see what she says.

Kathleen Gutierrez 08:59

I think it'd be great! I mean, of course, if she felt comfortable, if your sisters felt comfortable. But I know I'd like, I think my dad would love seeing someone who's also kind of closer to his age. You know, I'm curious at all, and this is something that I think one of our—a colleague of ours has been really interested in—is sort of the Communist elements that were running through the labor organizing at the time.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 09:21

Oh.

Kathleen Gutierrez 09:21

Did you hear any of that?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 09:23

No.

Kathleen Gutierrez 09:23

About any of that?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 09:24

No, I didn't.

Kathleen Gutierrez 09:25

Or stories?

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 09:26

No, I was just young. And no, I've never heard—that's the first time I've heard of that.

Kathleen Gutierrez 09:31

Oh, yeah, no, there were kind of some pretty large—not large but I want to say there were communist politics present. Oftentimes it was used against the union organizers as sort of a ploy to kind of break up the unions. But, you know, he's sort of investigating that and the Central Coast and the Central Valley are really important to that history. So—

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 09:53

Let me see. See, now there's something I'd like to learn.

Kathleen Gutierrez 09:56

Yeah, I mean—

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 09:57

That would be very interesting.

Kathleen Gutierrez 09:58

—and going into that labor history, too. But thanks for that. What a gem.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 10:03

It's interesting. Now there's so many things in these. Like I said, you know, [radio feedback]. I'll get—the more I remember. It was hard after talking to Roy but it was the more you remember it's like, "Oh, there's—" but with me it's just bits and pieces. Like I said, I had twenty-seven years with my Dad and you know, obviously ten of them is you know, zero to ten years old. You're living in your own menagerie. And then from ten—and then from ten up, you're given—you're going through all these changes, but you're still hanging out with them. That's it.

Kathleen Gutierrez 10:40

Yeah, yeah. Thanks, Paul.

Paul Philip DeOcampo Jr. 10:41

Okay, Kat, thank you very much.