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Title

Francine Tabasa Lopes interviewed by Una Lynch, Christina Ayson Plank, and Meleia Simon-Reynolds

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Francine Lorraine Tabasa Lopes interviewed by Una Lynch, Christina Ayson Plank, and Meleia Simon-Reynolds

Speakers: Francine Lorraine Tabasa Lopes; Una Lynch; Christina Ayson Plank; Meleia Simon-Reynolds

Date: May 1, 2023

Scope and Contents:

In this interview, originally recorded in-person at Paradise Villa Assisted Living and Memory Care in Live Oak, California, Francine Tabasa Lopes speaks with Una Lynch, Christina Ayson Plank, and Meleia Simon-Reynolds, members of the Watsonville is in the Heart team. Francine shares stories about her parents, Jesus Torrente Tabasa and Rosita Dionisio Tabasa-Estrada. She explains how her parents migrated to the United States from the Philippines during the 1920s and 1930s and eventually settled in Watsonville. Francine discusses Jesus's agricultural labor and the restaurants and other businesses both of her parents owned and operated in Watsonville. She provides details about Rosita's restaurant business, Philippine Gardens (originally Oriental Cafe). She describes the restaurant's various locations in downtown Watsonville and the gambling operations that existed within the restaurant. Francine also reflects on her experiences growing up under the care of her maternal grandmother, Benita Carpio Dionisio.

Una Lynch 00:01

Okay, they're now both recording. I'll just switch my chair this way a little bit. Okay, so just once again, I'm Una. And if you're ready to start doing the interview and you're comfortable with me asking some questions, I think we're ready. Okay, cool. Well, I'm gonna start just by giving a little introduction. So my name is Una Lynch. And then today's date is May 1, 2023. I'm here with Francine Tabasa Lopes. And we're recording here in Live Oak in Santa Cruz, California. And so the first question I'm going to ask is just for your full name, and your date of birth.

Francine Tabasa 00:59

Francine Lorraine Tabasa. And my date of birth is 10/10/45.

Una Lynch 01:12

Nice. Um, so I first wanted to ask you a bit about your parents, Jesus and Rosita, and so I wanted to know, if you knew where both of your parents were born, and also when they were born?

Francine Tabasa 01:28

They were both born in the Philippines. They did you know, like crops and things like that, as a way of work here. And my mom owned a restaurant. And that was the Oriental Cafe. And she became quite—well her cooking was well known. And so she was—besides her being, you know, in all the women club and things like that. She became also very intuitive with that—I would say than the—what, what she could do, as far as a young Filipino woman to help her fellow Filipinos go into different things like, I'd say, organization that were either mix, Filipina, and American, or taking young American, young Americans into places that you'd like—that they'd like to investigate.

Una Lynch 03:25

Do you know much about your mom's life in the United States before she came to Watsonville?

Francine Tabasa 03:32

Before she came, oh, no she because, you mean? Her— What is it?

Una Lynch 03:40

Oh, I was just wondering if you knew about when she moved to the United States, but before she had moved to Watsonville?

Francine Tabasa 03:49

Oh, yeah. She came in thirty-three, three, 1933. And she and my uncle, who is now you know, I don't know if he died recently. But that's Uncle John, who was Philippine ambassador to parts of the United States like San Francisco, Los Angeles, things like that we went back and forth from Washington. Back home to his home in San Francisco. And his—educationally both of them were college—what do I want to say, college-groomed. If there are any questions you can ask me at any time.

Una Lynch 05:09

Okay, um, maybe do you have any memories of of your dad growing up?

Francine Tabasa 05:15

Yeah. My dad was well, always agricultural. And so his—while he was growing up—that he was usually like a foreman or something like that, ranch foreman, and worked for the different companies here.

Una Lynch 05:45

And what did that mean for him to be a ranch foreman? Do you know what that—what that job is?

Francine Tabasa 05:51

Excuse me, again?

Una Lynch 05:52

Oh, sorry. Um, you said he was a ranch foreman. Do you know what that entails? What that kind of job is?

Francine Tabasa 05:59

Yeah, he was into agriculture. And he was heavy into—I guess I'm trying to say, agricultural field as far as the crops around here, because Watsonville is primarily, as far as I'm concerned and as far as my dad was concerned, it was—I want to say—I can't say any specific places. But he worked in the fields as far as the strawberries and helped to conduct them going to and from the Philippines. So they were—he was—he was also very agriculturally-minded, as far as cucumbers, strawberries. Can you help me out?

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 07:24

What other crops did he grow? Did he grow lettuce?

Francine Tabasa 07:28

Yes.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 07:30

What about broccoli? Or cauliflower?

Francine Tabasa 07:34

Right. All of that.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 07:37

All of the big crops of Watsonville .

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 07:40

Mm hmm.

Una Lynch 07:43

Greg told me that he also worked in Alaska.

Francine Tabasa 07:46

Yes.

Una Lynch 07:47

Do you remember anything about him working there?

Francine Tabasa 07:50

Well my father went back to—went to Alaska, and he helped to do the canning and then catching of salmon. And if I remember, right, since I was the, I wasn't the youngest but I was the second oldest. As far as—so he went from Alaska, on back to like the Yukon, things like that. And he gathered the Filipinos that were— that were here in the United States that we're still adept at building and catching fish. And the other different things. I think my dad was— he was good at for— he was more or less a foreman, of all men and got them assigned to different areas. And I think he became proficient in that way. As far as from the North, Northern California and on down to Central and, and then Southern California.

Christina Ayson Plank 09:30

How long was he away for Alaska whenever he went up to work?

Francine Tabasa 09:36

About—I think it was about, it would be like a month or so.

Christina Ayson Plank 09:44

Do you remember missing your dad when he was gone for a month's time?

Francine Tabasa 09:50

Yes, very much because my dad and I were really pretty close. There were one, two, three, four, four of us. Do I have that right? Am I missing a year? So, one was—he was a stepbrother.

Una Lynch 10:14

Is that Danny?

Francine Tabasa 10:17

Yeah, it's, it's family. But apparently at one of his visits back to the Philippines, he and one of my aunts had become very close. And so, and I don't think I'm sharing any family business, but my mom would probably say, I am. She'd probably get after me .

Francine Tabasa 10:49

So, but my mom here in the United States, she helped as far as getting the Filipinos that were here acquainted with, with the office, work, office work and, and secretarial work like that. So she became much more positioned that way. And my dad was, was really, as far as labor and skill he was, he was great at that part.

Una Lynch 11:37

I'm curious about the things that your parents did in Watsonville in the Filipino community that were separate from work, it seems like they led a lot of organizations.

Francine Tabasa 11:48

Yeah, my parents, both my parents were officers in the Dimas-Alang. Okay, that was—that, followed them from the Philippines. Because I know I remember, in both cases, both of my parents were Worshipful Matron and Worshipful -Patron of the different— a couple of different organizations in the Philippines. It was, it was due to the Dimas-Alang organizations.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 12:40

They were in the De Dimas-Alang in the Philippines and in Watsonville?

Francine Tabasa 12:44

Yes. I think so. I think so. Because I, I remember my parents every, every time of—they had to go to, you know, the functions that would be either the, the, I want to say they were monthly type of organization, monthly type of—and I and I think Jess can— well Jess my brother passed away. But he probably had a lot more information on some of the uncles and aunts who became officers in that organization.

Christina Ayson Plank 13:49

What were some of those functions? What did they do in those functions?

Francine Tabasa 13:54

Well, I think not only did they were— they were making sure that Filipinos themselves in the world of, of the American functions— They were—they proceeded, my parents proceeded to involve—get my uncles and aunts involved in the growing, growing—I want to say works, but does not work. In the

growing, growing financially as far as the individual. Going from, like Sacramento all the way, all the way from— Northern to Southern, down to LA and and even gotten into other states like my— I've got a niece she's very involved with that and she's in, I want to say Barstow, but it is— it's further. She, she actually lives in—oh see if I look at my—

Christina Ayson Plank 15:47

Are you talking about Angela?

Francine Tabasa 15:49

Yes.

Una Lynch 15:49

She's in New Mexico?

Francine Tabasa 15:51

Yes. Angela and also her sister. Because her sister was younger of course, but she was involved with a lot of the training of nursing staff and stuff like that. So my family is fairly—well with my brother being a teacher, myself having a teaching background, my sister, also having a younger teaching, younger teacher, teacher of the young Filipino children, we all seem to gravitate to one being a teacher. So my sister was in the younger, with the young kids, with young kids and worked for them. I worked in junior high school and high school. And later it was even college.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 17:14

Do you think that you all gravitated towards being teachers because your mom and dad taught so many Filipinos and were so influential?

Francine Tabasa 17:25

Yeah. Exactly, and my grandfather, my mother's father, was a—he was noted for his paperwork—his newspaper work. As far as Filipinos, and, and educating them and stuff like that.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 17:52

What was, what was your grandfather's name?

Francine Tabasa 17:55

John? John, Dionisio, or Juan.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 18:01

Juan Dionisio?

Francine Tabasa 18:02

Uh huh.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 18:03

Oh, what was the name of his newspaper that he worked on?

Francine Tabasa 18:09

Um, it was, I think it—see, I remember he had me going to be a roving kind of newspaper person, but, but I didn't necessarily like being told what to do. And so I yeah, I think Grandpa Juan had us going to different places, like, you know, whether it be Texas or Seattle. So we would be—he would like—cause he had his newspaper stems from the San Francisco area where my grandfather landed from the Philippines. And worked, he worked his way down with his newspaper training. South and then also west—east.

Christina Ayson Plank 19:29

You it sounds like you also wrote for the newspaper?

Francine Tabasa 19:33

Excuse me.

Christina Ayson Plank 19:34

Did you also write for the newspaper then?

Francine Tabasa 19:37

No. Well, I didn't write for them like my grandfather did. What he, my grandfather, did was he sent many of his grandchildren to different places. And I think, I think the one that I remember best of all, is when he sent my—me to follow baseball, and that was essentially what—I know— I think my mom and dad got together, in the newspaper, things like that.

Una Lynch 20:19

Right? Was your mom sent to Watsonville to write an article?

Francine Tabasa 20:24

No. She-what my mom did in Watsonville is she owned the Oriental, Oriental Cafe. And it was quite noted by a lot of the Filipinos, not only for the good food, but you know, the Filipinos that would go there would also be you know, they'd be kababayan, they'd take care of each other, and they'd they know where their family's from and stuff like that. So that's, that's how my mom got into that. And then the easiest way for my mom to have figured getting into that was in her cooking ability. So she went ahead and she founded the Oriental Cafe. Which was, you know, it was, I guess from downtown Watsonville and up through Santa Cruz, and Capitola, stuff like that.

Christina Ayson Plank 21:46

Can you describe what it looked like inside?

Francine Tabasa 21:48

Excuse me.

Christina Ayson Plank 21:49

Can you describe what Oriental Cafe look like inside?

Francine Tabasa 21:54

Oh, what it was like inside? Yeah, we were—well, I think being—I was fourteen. And I think I was the oldest gal as far as the children. My brother went on to his teaching career. So he was in, in San Francisco State. But as far as my own ability, I was able to be, I was, I was termed as, as what would be the young dalaga, that was, that would serve coffee in the morning, and, and, and the main thing is my mom—it was a restaurant, so there was food galore. And my mom was a good cook. Which is, I'm sorry to say, not passed on. [laughter] Well, my mom was really good. And my sister started to be really good. But because her husband is Ilokano. And he's a different—well it's like, describing you know, from one state to another. But his—her cooking, Susan, her cooking was more, more like, like what Londo liked, you know, her husband and hers, she was more in into cooking because she had a lot of children. And, and cooking for husband and all of the children. They had, her cooking abilities really were good. She's got a few favorite recipes, and she even put out a recipe book.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 24:20

What was the best dish that your mom made? The best food that your mom made, what was it?

Francine Tabasa 24:27

Oh, of course, it was Filipino. And of course, that was adobo. Adobo and [unknown] which is shrimp. But my, my grandmother taught my mom. And so being in the Philippines, you didn't have many choices. So I think as far as—a lot of the home, dishes that my mom cooked, she, she sort of, developed them as far as—because she take some of the recipes and mix them. So it was— it was -my mom, is Visayan. And that's the middle, excuse me. Would you ladies like coffee?

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 25:42

Oh no, we're okay .

Una Lynch 25:43

We're great. Yeah. Thank you.

Francine Tabasa 25:45

You would like?

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 25:46

No, no, we're good.

Francine Tabasa 25:48

Okay.

Una Lynch 25:50

I have a question about the restaurant.

Francine Tabasa 25:57

That was called the Oriental Cafe.

Una Lynch 26:01

Right. I heard that it changed locations a lot of times over the years. Do you remember that happening?

Francine Tabasa 26:10

Excuse me again, you said over the years.

Una Lynch 26:12

Oh, sorry. I heard that over the years, the restaurant changed locations many times.

Francine Tabasa 26:19

Yeah. It had to because one during that time, from the time they first had found a place, the freeways came. And so they had to move. And so that I think right now, it's moved a couple of blocks north, of where it was. But my mom, as far as the restaurant goes, she was the main cook, and I think she's the best cook. And so, so a lot of people knowing about the restaurant, and having had some of the dishes, that sort of developed into a, you know, food that they could take out, and bring to their families. And that would mean, you know—I think 145 Main is the address I remember. But I think my mom had proceeded north just as the, the highway did. So there were different restaurants. My mom probably had about three different restaurants.

Una Lynch 27:56

I heard at one point, there was also a fire at one of the restaurants. Do you remember that happening?

Francine Tabasa 28:02

Yeah. You're talking about—I don't think it was— I don't think— see, the restaurant was two floors. And I don't think—I think the fire started in the back and it had also proceeded up. So, there was that, there were a lot of different hurdles, I think that the restaurant itself had to overcome. But one good thing is that my—both my mother had the ideas and my father had the wherewithal as far as the building. And he, he could actually build one floor to another. See. So that I think, I think that proceeded to let the restaurant grow and be known from family to family. Go from being one floor to two, I think and there was a time when there were—it had gone to the third floor, but most of that was bunks and places where lots of workers could rent per month. And, and I think that's how it became sort of— it grew.

Una Lynch 29:56

So there were rooms to rent for farmworkers?

Francine Tabasa 29:59

Excuse me.

Una Lynch 30:01

It sounds like there were rooms to rent, above the restaurant for farmworkers.

Francine Tabasa 30:07

Yeah, not only farmworkers, but see the farms themselves, they too had bunk houses. But my dad—I'm not sure exactly how the idea transpired, but I know he went—the restaurant was built with only, you know, the main floor, and then the one above. Okay, and then, I think that was the third one that was set up. So there were actually some restaurants that had two bunks, two floors. And and then I think, I think that's how my mom and my dad had the business grow. They had the bottom floor and second floor, and then the top I think, was mostly building in, in, in the gambling part.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 31:24

What kinds of games did they play?

Francine Tabasa 31:28

The Chinese came in, and they sort of liked it. They helped to build some of the floors. I think the best, the most that I remember is like poker. And then, then from there, I'm not sure exactly how it grew. But, you know, they had people, Chinese people coming down from the Bay Area, and actually coming to this pool hall—

Francine Tabasa 32:16

restaurant that had also steps, and another extra floor. That would make it be like a two, three story, gambling house.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 32:37

I see. I see.

Christina Ayson Plank 32:39

How many men would be gambling at the at one time?

Francine Tabasa 32:43

Excuse me.

Christina Ayson Plank 32:44

About how many men would be gambling at one time?

Francine Tabasa 32:48

How many places of gambling?

Christina Ayson Plank 32:50

How many men would gamble at your restaurant?

Francine Tabasa 32:56

Oh, quite a few because a lot of people would use this as end of the day recreation. So that came to be more or less pretty—that would fill up the restaurant. But as far as how many, I would say, every every—I don't know, every week, or maybe it'd be every couple of weeks, the Chinese would come down from San Francisco. And that would build really high gambling, what did they call it? Where they're able to gamble for really high stakes. So that would, that would increase the number of tables

and that would increase the number of people coming into the restaurant. But then, you know, as far as the restaurant, part of it, yeah, all those people would come to the restaurant and of course, have something to eat and things like that. And, and that was good. That was proficient that was able to make my—that helped our family as far as things like that go. My brother, like I said earlier, he was at San Francisco State and he went into teaching. And so he would come down and then he would—Pajaro Valley Unified School District was here in Watsonville. And he would, he would be a teacher for them. But not only for them, but you know, brothers and sisters of the students already in the school. So it would grow things like that. Any more questions?

Una Lynch 35:22

Um, yeah, I had another question. I know that when I talked to your brother, Greg, he told me that your family also owned some other places in Watsonville. He said they owned some rental properties, and a different restaurant, and also maybe a pool hall or a barber shop.

Francine Tabasa 35:44

Yes, all that is true. Well, talking about getting a business to open up. My dad did and my mom helped out. And she was the cooking part. And my dad was the building part. So that went ahead and built the restaurant. up as far as their, their reputation, and things like that.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 36:26

What was the other restaurant called?

Francine Tabasa 36:30

There was—well the, one was the Oriental Cafe, that was the main one. And there were a couple of—I think there was another one, but I think it was Uncle Marcy's restaurant, or at least he—sort of had the—he, he owned part of it. And he lent it to—he lent some of it to my father, and then my father picked it up. He'd go ahead and let it grow. So there were one or two, two, or three restaurants, you know, because they were smaller restaurants. And I think I'm forgetting some of the other things. There were—the restaurants themselves weren't the only ones. That wasn't the only thing that they did. But there were cleaners, like the Ideal Cleaners. And there was a couple of soda shops, things like that.

Una Lynch 37:57

Do you remember anything about there being a pool hall?

Francine Tabasa 38:01

Yeah.

Una Lynch 38:01

That your family might have owned?

Francine Tabasa 38:02

Yeah.

Una Lynch 38:03

Do you know where that was?

Francine Tabasa 38:05

Yeah, that was part of the main—that was part of that restaurant.

Una Lynch 38:11

Oh, it was connected to the restaurant?

Francine Tabasa 38:14

No it was, it was close. But it was like a part of the restaurant. Like, it's—you know, because if we had that restaurant—they'd come in for coffee and stuff like that. Then, then further, you'd have, some of the other restaurants, some of the other businesses, Filipinos would, would get into. And that, that itself would like the gambling part. And that would bring in people from San Francisco, and then it would grow that way. But there was ordinarily local, you know, Filipino groups that had, you know, just the everyday type of business. But as far as getting the—not necessarily international, but in a sense, it would because it would bring in people from San Francisco, San Bruno, a lot of the other towns that I think I don't remember all of them.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 39:49

Did you get to meet lots of people when you were at the restaurant? Did you meet people from places outside of Watsonville?

Francine Tabasa 39:57

Well, yeah, in a sense, yes, because, because my sister and I were dishwashers and grunt—like cleaners, you know, washing all the tables, wiping all the tables, stuff like that. And my mom, my mom actually had a—we got to the point, she got to the point of giving us little cards and they were like time cards. So we were able to work and get paid for it. So that was important. And so I think that that's what I remember.

Francine Tabasa 40:46

And then I haven't come up to—the, the one main thing in the organization the Dimas-Alang. they had the Queen contest. And so, they had daughters of, of various people, Filipino people, they had the daughters go into that as far as in a business association, what it was that we would sell—not necessarily sell ourselves but—so the ticks that that would be worth so many points and so many credits as far as the getting to be but—I don't I get called being a queen or something like that. But because each of them— because there was a lot of money in that. Because if I remember right, my sister became, what is necessarily—she became a queen. And I had started to, but unfortunately, I think I got sick in between times. So my sister did, she did go all the way. And she got even—she even got to become a queen.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 42:48

When, when you are a queen, what do you have to do?

Francine Tabasa 42:53

Um, I think the same thing that a lot of the ladies who are Queens. Not only, not only you'd be able to get to know people and become more more appropriately designed as far as a queen, then you would be able to do several things. Like maybe get some of the younger, the younger women, the princesses into going into becoming a queen.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 43:53

Did you have to wear fancy dresses?

Francine Tabasa 43:56

Excuse me?

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 43:57

Did you have to wear fancy dresses?

Francine Tabasa 44:00

Did I have to-excuse me ?

Una Lynch 44:02

Wear a dress? A fancy Filipino dress?

Francine Tabasa 44:05

Yeah.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 44:05

What was it like?

Francine Tabasa 44:07

It's with a large leaf. And then long, and it was, it was it—because the times that I remember, that I remember becoming a queen or princess. Yeah, you were dressed up in some really fancy clothes.

Una Lynch 44:35

Did you enjoy being in the pageant?

Francine Tabasa 44:38

Yeah, for a time because, but probably two or three years later, I came down with my meningitis. So that kind of put a stop to that. As far as—so I stayed home a lot, with my grandma and things like that.

Una Lynch 45:03

Was that your mom's mom?

Francine Tabasa 45:06

My mom. Yeah, my mom's mother.

Una Lynch 45:10

Didn't she live to be very, very old, like over 100 years old?

Francine Tabasa 45:15

Yeah. I knew that would come up. Yeah, she did. She was a lovely person. What, what she did around the house for us not only cooking, but washing clothes and stuff like ironing, ironing them. And, and just hanging the pants and coats, dresses up on, on the doors for us to change into. And that would be my grandma's job. But on the other hand, she also became—she was very frugal. As far as I can, I think that's what I want to say. She, she saved a lot of her social security, money. And at different times, she'd call, especially on our birthdays, she'd call each one of us to come to my room. And, and she would, she would hand it over to us. And she—and it was an envelope with the money. And we go, being able to go to town and go shop. So see my, my grandmother was really frugal in that sense. But she wouldn't, she wouldn't abide any goofing off. You know, she, she'd say, "I told you not to do that. Don't do that anymore". And you know, and grandma was, she was really sweet. That's why I remember a lot of things that she used to have us do. But when we would be picking strawberries and stuff, we'd have to go out and, and undress the trees and all this fruit and, and put them in, in like the boxes, later in the day or the next day, they'd, we cleaned up the fruit. And they'd put it in boxes. And so they take it to the markets. And so, and she was—you know, for a little old lady, she was quite the picker. And, you know, she was quite the person that would tell you what to do when to do it, and how to do it. And, and she was just wonderful. There's a lot of times when I think of her and of course, you know a couple, there'll be a couple, three hankies, pretty wet after right, you know after I have this kind of memory of her what she lived to be over 100.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 48:39

What is your favorite memory of her?

Francine Tabasa 48:42

What it's my best memory?

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 48:44

Mmm hmm.

Francine Tabasa 48:46

Well for the fact that my grandma did all the things she still kept us well dressed and, and, and ironed. She. she takes care of our clothes. She'd wash them by hand. She ironed them up. And you know, you just don't you don't bite the hand that was helping you get dressed. She was a wonderful lady. And if I could become— she'd be my model. She really would. She not only took care of all of us kids, she also ironed for us. She'd sew for us, stuff like that, except—the reason I say except is because some of that ironing stuff, grandma would sometimes you know, she, she ironed well, but some things she would burn. And a lot of times they would be favorite blouses of mine and my sister, and you know, things like that. But after all, when things are said and done, my grandma was really the best if I could be a grandmother like she was, boy, I think I'd have everything in hand. I think the one name that my husband would really be super lucky. So, I don't know. How much more do I have?

Una Lynch 50:40

Not much more. Are you feeling like you want to talk a little more? Are you feeling almost done for today?

Francine Tabasa 50:48

Excuse me? you said to if I wanted to talk anymore?

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 50:52

Yes. Do you want to talk anymore?

Francine Tabasa 50:54

Sure that would be fine. I want— I have a lot of fond memories. I'd love to share with you.

Una Lynch 51:03

Yeah, we'd love to hear them.

Francine Tabasa 51:06

Memories like she would— oh, the thing I can remember what when I started my period my grandma would say, "oh, no, you can't do that with her. Because I have her scheduled for a doctor's appointment". So my grandma was, you know, more or less, she—what she said— she kind of ruled the house, but she didn't, because my dad was there, my mom was there and they both had their own things that they would say and that would maybe take precedence. But still my grandma was ruler of all, I think. At least when my mom and dad were gone. All of us kids: "yes, grandma, no, we won't do any of that, we'll be home as soon as you say". So you know, those kinds of things— those are my fondest memories. Because even though my parents were my parents, my grandma, she was really—she'd really be the best. As far as telling you what you can, what you can't do, and giving us, you know, two cents for here and three cents for that. And then, you know, you'd pay attention to her, if you paid attention to her, you know you'd be number one, you'd be really the one who got it all. So I think—I'm sure you feel that way about your own grandparents. So I don't know, am I adding to your list, your list of things that I would do or I wouldn't do?

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 53:25

Oh, yes.

Christina Ayson Plank 53:27

This is very helpful. Do you have any fond memories of growing up in Watsonville? Like any hobbies that you had as a kid?

Francine Tabasa 53:40

Well, my—you see that [indiscernible] when my brothers were here, Yeah. They did—they liked baseball, and all that kind of stuff. But as far as myself, I didn't do—go very far in the cooking. And I wish I did because, because—and my husband probably would say yeah, he wishes I did too. But, as, far as the things that my grandma taught me, they were, they were more like you do what grandma says, and you don't stray from that. So that was— that was my fondest memory of her. And especially

the fact that she taught me all I knew about my catechism. She was very, very good, and very attuned to that. So what more can I help you ladies with?

Una Lynch 54:50

Do you have any fond memories growing up with your siblings and spending time with them?

Francine Tabasa 54:55

Yeah, my sister and I were very, very close. My brother was well, he was the oldest though. And so what he said was sort of law. And so you had to, you had to pay attention. And he could easily tell if you were, telling a fib or not. And he could, you know, he'd bring you the hard hand of, hard hand on your backside. That would— that would hurt. And so, so yeah, as far as my childhood, my brother was the head honcho. He—we all respected him or we paid. And as far as the younger brothers, there were five of us—well there were my brother, my brother after him, two, three. And they became the third, the reason why I say three last is because he was born in the Philippines, of another woman. And so that was, and please stop me if you know, that I shouldn't be saying what I should do, like, I'd hate the back hand of my father, so please stop me.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 56:49

I think you're good.

Francine Tabasa 56:52

Okay, as far as I know, as far as I know, the rest of us were all pretty much under my father. And then my older brothers— who— that's Jess and then my sister and I hung together. Probably because it was girls for girls. And then after that, there was another little girl and she was our stepsister.

Francine Tabasa 57:31

And then see my brother— oh, see—I was second of the children. Then my brother. And another brother, brother, and baby sister. I guess you would say stepsister, but she's still a sister.

Una Lynch 58:02

What's her name?

Francine Tabasa 58:06

You know, that would be a good question. Her name is Mary.

Una Lynch 58:14

Mary?

Francine Tabasa 58:17

Is she married ?

Una Lynch 58:20

I don't know.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 58:22

What was it like when you and your siblings were picking strawberries and picking fruit from the fruit trees?

Francine Tabasa 58:30

Oh, yeah. Let's go back to that. That I really, I know about that. Because as far as the fruit ,yeah, we'd shake the trees and fruit would fall and we'd have to capture all of them before or else we'd get captured. [laughter] You know? So as far as getting the trees—and because we have peaches we had walnuts. We had apricots. We had, God, all of the fruits you'd want.

Christina Ayson Plank 59:17

Was this at your home?

Francine Tabasa 59:19

Yes. That was at my dad's and my and my mother's house.

Christina Ayson Plank 59:28

It sounds like you had a very large garden.

Una Lynch 59:32

Yeah.

Francine Tabasa 59:33

We did as far as—because well I'm telling stories here but you can kind of pick and choose what you want. I'm—some of the garden was fine, as far as it being our property. And some of the other were just late crops. And my mom—when my mom said go get the crops and hurry up we do it. And then she—there'd be some mix so—

Christina Ayson Plank 1:00:20

Did she use some of the stuff that you grew to cook at the restaurant?

Francine Tabasa 1:00:26

Excuse me?

Christina Ayson Plank 1:00:27

Did—the stuff that you grew at home, did you use it to cook at the restaurant?

Francine Tabasa 1:00:34

I would say, no. My mom usually, you know, cooked up all the stuff. And they'd get the stuff from, like the Daylite Market. And the chicken and meats and things like that. But as far as you're saying, as far as the leftover fruits?

Christina Ayson Plank 1:01:12

Yeah, from your home garden.

Francine Tabasa 1:01:14

Yeah, we, we pick them and leave them for us.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 1:01:19

So some was for you at home and was some to take to the markets to sell?

Francine Tabasa 1:01:24

Yeah, well, some, but not all that much because we did keep them for us.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 1:01:32

I see.

Francine Tabasa 1:01:34

If I remember right.

Christina Ayson Plank 1:01:35

We also heard that your mother loved roses.

Francine Tabasa 1:01:41

She loved her roses, her rose garden as far as, as far as treats because they would be able—she would be able to put, pin them on our blouses and then tell which one was coming up behind her. Because she smelled the fragrance on us and then she said "I didn't call you. I called your sister the one who's playing where she's not supposed to". So you know that that was some of the things that you figured out and then you had to figure those things out and keep them in your mind because otherwise you'd be the one to get in trouble.

Francine Tabasa 1:02:43

But see that—one thing about our house there were a lot of people. As far as uncles and aunts and plus in one case my mom had certain women staying with us that were to take care of us during the day, but at night they got to get all dressed up and and go out and bring money back to my mom.

Una Lynch 1:03:23

Did they live with you guys?

Francine Tabasa 1:03:25

Hm?

Una Lynch 1:03:26

Did they live with you?

Francine Tabasa 1:03:27

Well see that's the thing. My father had three floors and so he allowed my mom to use the two floors anyway and as places where her, well for want another word, her girls could stay. And that was that that

way they had their place to stay and we had ours and my mom and dad had theirs. But there was one gal and —now this I think I am telling too much. But anyway, this was a gal, an aunt ,that she and my dad fooled around. And they had a child and then I had a brother, another brother. And and I think I had a sister by them too.

Francine Tabasa 1:04:58

So anyway, but that but we were still, like I say, my dad took care of us. And so for that reason, I can't be too—I can't consider it being too mean to us. Because he still took care of us. And every day, he'd each go to our, our section of a cardboard that he kept for us. And in every section, he'd leave whatever money we could have that day. And so, that's one thing about my dad, at least he was fair.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 1:05:50

Yeah.

Francine Tabasa 1:05:51

Other than that—no I am a person that has a step brother. Or a brother by my father, and another woman. And, probably the telling thing is that the other woman was an aunt. So that that—and I guess maybe you're not too surprised because in in countries where there are a lot of population that happened.

Christina Ayson Plank 1:06:36

Well, families are very complicated.

Francine Tabasa 1:06:40

So I didn't want to, I didn't want to shock you. But that's true.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 1:06:46

Yeah.

Francine Tabasa 1:06:49

And he's my—it's crazy, but he's sort of my favorite brother. But not really. But he is kind of it—I'll tell you his name, Danny. And his sister is my half sister. And I think that, that's about it. Unless you have more questions.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 1:07:22

I think there's one more question. Did you know that they're putting up a mural that shows your mother in Watsonville?

Francine Tabasa 1:07:33

The mural?

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 1:07:34

They're putting up a big painting of your mom in Watsonville.

Francine Tabasa 1:07:39

Oh, yeah.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 1:07:40

What do you think about that?

Francine Tabasa 1:07:42

That's my mother. And she was a beautiful lady. And so it's, it's a pretty special picture to me. And I assumed to my dad as well. Cause I remember—I can remember when I was real small, they, you know, how you listen, and your mom and dad are fooling around. So, so, and those were special times. Because later on, I learned that the woman he had my brother with, married another person in the family. And so that was that, that was that. But my mom, I think, was always number one. And that I think means the most to me. I don't know how it is necessarily in your family, in your families, if they have a strict code of honor. Do any of you have a similar thing?

Una Lynch 1:09:08

A strict code of honor?

Francine Tabasa 1:09:10

Well you know a sister by another person.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 1:09:16

I do. I have a half brother. And another half brother and another half sister.

Francine Tabasa 1:09:24

Oh, all right!

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 1:09:25

Yeah. So I know what that's about.

Francine Tabasa 1:09:29

You and I can actually shake your hand. [laughter] I'm glad. You know, because when I realized it. I figured, well, you know, they were at that time. What he conceived, when she conceived my, my, my half brother—that was the time when things were really rough. And so I, I kinda feel bad for people that can't understand that those things can happen. And, there's really no one to blame.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 1:10:19

Right.

Francine Tabasa 1:10:20

So.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 1:10:21

Yeah.

Francine Tabasa 1:10:22

I'm glad you said that.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 1:10:23

Yeah, we understand it's real complicated sometimes. Well, is there anything else you want to share before we wrap up?

Francine Tabasa 1:10:35

Well, do you have any more questions?

Christina Ayson Plank 1:10:38

I think we're good for now. But if you want us to visit on another day, we would be happy to continue the conversation. We would love to visit you again.

Francine Tabasa 1:10:48

Okay. That'd be fine. You guys can feel free. There's probably some cookies and things .

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 1:10:57

Okay.

Francine Tabasa 1:10:58

Left on the table. And, and one of the ladies can bring some coffee if you want.

Christina Ayson Plank 1:11:06

Okay, that sounds lovely. Yeah.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 1:11:09

Yeah. Well, thank you so much for talking to us .

Francine Tabasa 1:11:12

You're welcome.

Francine Tabasa 1:11:16

I don't know how my other brothers would feel but that's how I feel. You know, if you want to include that, in your interview with me, that's fine.

Una Lynch 1:11:36

Yeah.

Christina Ayson Plank 1:11:38

We would love to include it. Perfect. Well, thank you again.

Francine Tabasa 1:11:44

Okay.

Christina Ayson Plank 1:11:45

Shall we stop the recording ?

Una Lynch 1:11:46

Yeah, definitely. Yes.

Francine Tabasa 1:11:48

Okay, you got the door is—where's the door?

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 1:11:52

Right over here. Would it be okay if we-

Francine Tabasa 1:11:55

you found it.

Meleia Simon-Reynolds 1:11:56

Would it be okay if we took a picture with you?

Francine Tabasa 1:11:59

Yeah, yes.

Francine Tabasa 1:12:01

Really, really good. If you want to do some of the cook-