

Interviewer: Melissa Schellinger

Narrator: Brother Francis Tri Nguyen

Interview Questions – Session One

- Do I have permission to record this interview?
- Please state your full name.

Early Life/Religion

- When were you born?
- Where were you born?
- When did your family leave China for Vietnam? Where did your family settle in Vietnam initially? Why did they choose to leave China for a life in Vietnam?
- To what extent did religion play a role in your childhood?
- At what age did you experience your calling to live a life in service to God?
- What, if any, experience did you have with the Christian Brothers prior to your calling? Why did you choose to enter the Christian Brothers order?

Education/Career Prior to 1975

- At what age did you begin formal schooling? Was English part of the curriculum? If not, when and how did you learn English?
- When did you decide that you would pursue higher education? What role did your family play in this choice? What were their feelings on education?
- Why did you choose the field of Sociology? Did any life experience lead you in this direction?
- What was your career in Vietnam prior to 1975? Why did you choose teaching?
- Do you remember your first years as a teacher in Southeast Asia? Do you recall any memorable experiences that you'd like to share? (ie. students)
- What, if any, impact did America's presence in South Vietnam in the 1960s and 70s have on your life? How did you view America's presence in your country?

- What constraints did the war place on the process of educating the youth in Vietnam?

Transition to American Life

- Why did you come to America in 1975?
- Can you describe some of your feelings upon leaving Vietnam in 1975?
- Did you expect your role as a Christian Brother to change when you began a new life in America? If so, in what ways?
- In which area of the United States did you arrive, initially? Did you live in one of the internment camps with other Vietnamese refugees, or were you placed in a home with other Brothers right away?
- At Fort Indiantown Gap
 - o What were conditions like?
 - o How were you received by the Americans?
 - o What do you remember about your feelings while you were there?
The other refugees?
- When you compared yourself and your fellow Christian Brother refugees to your American peers in 1975, what were some of the major differences that you remember?
- Did your interactions with American Brothers influence any paths that you chose once you got here? (ie. education)
- In your article, “A Tale of Three Cultures,” you make an observation that Americans are “equal but different, different but united.” In what ways did you see American Brothers expressing their individuality when you arrived in the United States? What was your initial reaction to their more individualistic lifestyles?
- Do you feel as though you have exercised more of your own individualism since you moved to America? If so, in what ways?
- You state in the same article that, naturally, you experienced some degree of culture shock upon arriving in the United States in 1975. What element of American society was most shocking to you when you compared this country to that of your native Vietnam?

- Do you feel as though Asian society was more accepting of the Christian Brothers order than American society? If so, why do you think that is?
- You were a Christian Brother in Vietnam for 20 years, and have been a Brother in America for 32 years. From your experience in both societies, do you think that the role of a Christian Brother is easier to fulfill in Asian or American culture?
- What do you feel was your greatest asset in transitioning to the American lifestyle?
- What do you feel was the greatest obstacle that you had to overcome in your transition?
- In the Spring 2004 edition of La Salle Magazine, you noted the extent to which Confucian philosophy molded the role of the teacher in the schools you taught in in Southeast Asia. Teachers, you said, are held sometimes in higher esteem than parents. Do you feel as though, once you arrived in the United States, your role in the classroom changed? Was your relationship with your students different in America? How did you adapt to the American classroom environment?
- In the same article, you note that, to a certain extent, it was sometimes necessary to “detach” yourself in order to adapt to your new surroundings. From which facets of American society do you feel you needed to detach yourself in 1975? Do you still sometimes find this strategy necessary, 32 years after your first arrival?
- When did you begin working as a mental health counselor for Vietnamese refugees?
- How did you come to be involved in that field?
- Did your work with other refugees have an impact on your own transition and coping?

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Interview Questions – Session Two

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Sociology at La Salle

- What led you to choose the field of Sociology?
- Are there any Sociologists who have significantly influenced your studies?
- Are there any research projects you have conducted in which you take particular pride? If so, why?
- In what ways has the Sociology Department at La Salle changed over the past 20 years in terms of faculty? Curriculum? How have these changes impacted students?
- Has the Sociology program been altered in response to the ever-changing social environment that college students face? If so, how?
- What do you believe is the most critical responsibility of the Sociology Department at La Salle? Do you feel as though this responsibility has evolved since you first arrived at La Salle?
- When did you first begin teaching in the School of Nursing?
- How did you become involved in studying the Healthcare field?
- What is your role in the School of Nursing? What first interested you about the ways in which people cope with stress?
- How do you feel this interdisciplinary approach benefits nursing students entering into the Healthcare field in the 21st Century?

La Sallian Identity

Your most recent research project focused on the 21st Century La Sallian identity across the globe. I'd like to ask you some questions regarding that research.

- What sparked your interest in studying La Sallian identity on a global scale?

- How did you choose the regions of the world and institutions that you visited?
- You used interviews as part of your data collection. What made you choose this method of research?
- In what ways did the material you obtained from the interviews supplement your other research?
- You state in your research paper that La Sallian institutions have had to adjust in order to meet social challenges.
 - o What are some of the social challenges that you see here in the United States? (specifically the ones that pertain to college students)
 - o Did you find different social challenges in other regions of the world? If so, how did these challenges vary from region to region?
- You mention that there are now “heterogeneous stakeholders” at many of the institutions around the world.
 - o What effects do you see this having on those institutions?
 - o Has this institution changed at all since the days when the Christian Brothers dominated campus life? If so, in what ways?
- What do you see as being the most significant challenge to La Sallian institutions today, in terms of fulfilling their mission to educate those who are less fortunate?
- Some of your research included studying the ways in which La Sallian institutions play a role in their surrounding communities.
 - o What role does this institution play in the surrounding community? Has this changed during the time that you’ve been here?
 - o Did you find that community involvement varies internationally?
- Do the institutions that operate in the more secularized American society differ much from international institutions in terms of how they have adapted to social problems?
- In order to conduct the research for this project, you traveled to many areas of the world. Can you think of any particularly memorable experience you had during your travels?

God in Our Contemporary Social World

In 1987, you wrote an article on seeking God in our contemporary social world. I'd like to ask you a few questions regarding that article.

- How do you personally define an experience of God?
- How has your life as a Christian Brother helped you to construct this meaning?
- What are some challenges to college students in regards to recognizing experiences of God in our modern world?
- In what ways do you think the Christian Brothers can (or do) help students facing these challenges at their institutions?