

Chapter Three

Immigration in the Modern Era: 1965-1985

Modern Asian American immigration and history begin with the passage of the Immigration Reform Act of 1965. This legislation ended the years of selective exclusions, restrictions, and quotas that characterized the previous history of Asian immigration. It allowed Asians, for the first time in American history, to immigrate to the United States on an equal basis with Europeans. The resulting increase in immigration from Asia produced a spectacular growth in the Asian American population. The majority of present day Asian Americans are in the United States because of this legislation.

When initially passed, the new regulations actually favored European immigrants, although not explicitly, because the act made family relationships the most accessible basis for entry. However, relative economic stability lowered the level of immigration from Europe, reducing the initial advantage for Europeans over time. Conversely, there was high demand for entry from Asia and Latin America. As immigrants entered under the new regulations, and acquired residence and citizenship, they could sponsor additional relatives, who could, in turn, sponsor their relatives. The 1965 act encouraged this "chain" process. By the 1980s, immigrants from Asia and Latin America comprised a large majority of immigrants entering the United States.

The accounts that follow provide examples of immigrant experience during the new phase of Asian immigration that began in 1965. While earlier arrivals came primarily from southern China, Japan, and the Philippines, modern immigrants come from many other parts of Asia, as well as from a wider range of origins in the Philippines and China. As with Europe, immigration from Japan has been comparatively low during the modern period because of Japan's political and economic stability relative to other parts of Asia. In the past, Asian immigrants were largely working class but in the modern era there is considerable diversity of social and economic backgrounds. This increased social and national diversity is partially reflected in these stories, but they do not provide a complete sample. They all present records of immigrant adjustment and life in a new era of increased opportunities, new residential patterns, and growing Asian American communities.

A Personal Story by Danilo A. Daniel(1)

I am a first generation Filipino. I arrived, along with my brother and an aunt, in the United States on May 24, 1971, I was only three years old at the time and my brother was two. We arrived a year after my parents. We were all admitted in Hawaii and we settled in the city of San Francisco.

We weren't an impoverished family. My parents owned a house and apartment in Manila. In fact, by Filipino standards at the time, we were rather well off. My parents had two maids to help with chores and take care of the children. My parents were renting out the apartment units and they owned a car. My father was working as a general contractor for a construction company in the metropolitan Manila area and my mother was an accountant for a glass company, also in Manila. Both my parents have college degrees and are able to read and write in English (though it was not their native language). My father has an engineering degree and my mother has a degree in business.

It's hard to imagine the Philippines before the Marcos regime, yet my aunt, uncle, and parents do remember. They explained that, although the country as a whole was underdeveloped, it was peaceful and uncorrupt. It was in this period, right after my parents were married and had settled down (around 1966), that they decided to come to America. They explained that "we were well off, we kept food on the table, we had luxuries like two black and white T.V. sets and a washing machine. We both had decent jobs at the time." Their reason for coming to America was rather a surprise. "It was mostly for adventure," my mother says. They agreed it would be different and a challenge. Since they were a young couple at the time, they might as well "go for it" before they got old. It would be quite an adventure, they would have to be leaving friends, relatives and even economic security to go to an unknown land with no guarantee of actually succeeding.

My parents applied for an immigration visa as professionals. They applied in late 1967, five months after I was born. However, my mother was also pregnant at the time and my parents postponed the trip a year. In 1968, after my brother was born, my mother became ill and they waited another year, until September 1969, to file their immigration papers with the U.S embassy. Within six months the papers were approved and they made preparations to leave for Hawaii in March 1970.

Our relatives planned a large picnic that was held a day before my parents left. Relatives on both my mother's and father's side attended this picnic at Angat Hydroelectric Dam in Bulacan, Luzon. My parents had decided that my brother and I would stay behind while they went first. "It was, after all, to be a trial adventure" according to my mother. We would follow them after a year.

My parents knew a woman, who was a close friend and my brother's godmother, who had immigrated to the U.S. in 1969. They notified her by mail that they would be coming to America and she was more than willing to help my parents once they arrived in the U.S. She even agreed to pick them up at the S.F. International and accommodate them for at least one week at her house. It was thought that San Francisco would be a two week stop over before they headed on to Los Angeles, which was my parents original destination. So on March 29, 1970 they boarded a Japan Airlines flight from Manila International and headed for America.

Their U.S. point of entry was Hawaii. After going through customs my parents waited at the JAL airport terminal for the next flight to San Francisco. It was at the terminal, my mother recalls, that they realized that they were in a totally different country, yet not too strange. "You see", my father explains, "there were other Filipinos in that airport, as well as Chinese, and Japanese families who were tourists". The only difference was that my parents were there to immigrate to America, not just to tour.

On the morning of March 31, 1970, they arrived at SFO, where they were met by their friend, Mrs. Tamayo. It was then that my parents felt "apprehensive," for some reason this place felt "different." They recall that it was at that moment, on that cold March morning (they tell me it was drizzling), that they missed me and my brother. My mother wondered what they were doing in San Francisco and why they were not at "home" where they belonged. Mrs. Tamayo, however, was a very good humored woman, who welcomed them into her home and cured my parents negative feelings. She lived with a nephew and his wife in a house in the outer Mission district of San Francisco. It was their idea that my parents stay with them for at least a week before they went to Los Angeles.

Any plans for going to Los Angeles were scratched when my mother got a job one week later. She was hired to work at the cash vault at the Bank of America building on the corner of Van Ness and Mission Street. My father shopped around before selecting a job. He applied to about three different places for work in electrical maintenance. After two weeks at Mrs. Tamayo's, my parents found a place to live in with the aid of her nephew and his wife. So my parents moved to a residence on Clementina Street, in the South of Market area. They rented one room in an apartment which was occupied by another Filipino family. The rent was \$100.00 a month and they lived there for eight months before moving to another apartment in the Potrero district.

It was while living in the rented room that my father found his first job, three months after they had arrived in America. He was hired as an electrical

maintenance worker at a hospital on 30th street in June 1970. He kept that job for four months until he was hired at BART. BART had a requirement to hire only U.S. citizens but there was a loophole. If an applicant filed as a person with an "intent to become a citizen," then they would be considered for the job. My father explains that he was hired through pure luck. On the day he applied BART had an opening. He explains that part of his luck was that many parts of the BART system were still under construction and that, since BART was a new company, they were desperate for any worker who had some experience with electrical wiring. It seemed to my father that there was a lot of work but not enough qualified workers. My mother felt the same was true in her case, where her main job was to count the money that was processed there. She says that there were only three workers where there was suppose to be six. The ad was still in the Chronicle even after my mother got hired and stayed in the paper for four months until the other three positions were filled.

By November of 1970 they saved up enough money to rent an apartment with two bedrooms, a kitchen, a living room, and a bath. The apartment was in a two story apartment on the corner of 25th street and Alabama in the Potrero district. The rent was \$350 a month with garage, though my parents didn't have a car of their own at the time, they accepted the rent price. This showed good planning, because on March 1971 they purchased a used, 1966 Ford Galaxy. This was a month after my father received his California driver's license. The car cost \$500 and it came with it's own squeegee. Although the upholstery was held together with electric tape, the car's engine ran great. This was the first major purchase my parents made in the United States (That old Ford Galaxy was dumped in 1982, 11 years after my parents bought it. I think we turned over the mileage indicator twice.)

In April, 1971 my mother got her first promotion. From working as a counter in the cash vault, she moved up to filing department invoices. It was in this month that my parents began arranging for my brother and me to come to America. They sent money for the tickets and since we were children of employed parents, legally residing in the United States, it didn't take too long for my aunt to obtain visas. My aunt, who was to accompany us, only obtained a tourist pass. We arrived in Hawaii on May 25, 1971 and a day later met our parents in San Francisco International airport. I was only three years old; I knew what an airplane was, I knew what an airport was, and I fully comprehended the fact that we were in a place that wasn't our home, but I didn't know anything about "immigration to the land of opportunity." All I knew was that I was going on a trip to be with my parents, so it was all just images of sights and sounds to me. My aunt went back to the Philippines after a week.

My mother gave birth to my youngest brother in September, 1972, at Kaiser Hospital. He was the first second generation Filipino American in our family and

also the first actual American citizen because none of us were American citizens at the time. According to my parents, this was a pretty big event, even to my grandparents back in the Philippines. News of the birth spread back to relatives in the islands who became very excited. All I saw was a little rug rat who cried a lot and drank milk from a bottle and I felt it was no big deal. At the time my mother said my baby brother is important because he has a chance of becoming President. Well, I couldn't have cared less, all I wanted to do was to play with toys. Later, my father became an American citizen in 1975 and by 1986 all the rest of us were citizens as well.

The early years are all just images to me, images of playing and having picnics in Golden Gate Park. On December 1973, my father brought home our first television set. It was a used black and white Zenith and we could now watch t.v. Although I couldn't understand English, I did enjoy watching cartoons. We kept that set until 1978. By 1974 my parents had saved up enough money to begin paying mortgage on an apartment in the Bernal Heights district of San Francisco. It was a two floor apartment with two garages. In May 20, 1974 we moved out of the apartment in the Potrero district and moved into our own property. On June 3, 1974 we bought new furniture and replaced all the furniture we had from the old apartment, which were all purchased at the Salvation Army. We still live in the first story unit today and my parents are currently renting the second floor apartment to another Filipino family who immigrated in 1981.

School was difficult in the early years. My family only spoke Filipino at home, though my parents could speak and write English, so I didn't understand English. I learned English by watching television. I didn't learn by watching *Sesame Street*, like some other Asian Americans that I know, but by watching *Star Trek*. (Can you believe that? It's true!) When I first started school, I was the only Filipino in class. It must have been pretty weird for the other kids, since they were mostly Hispanic or Black and had never seen a Filipino before, to run into a "flip-kid" who spoke like Mr. Spock!

For my first six years, my parents sent us to public schools. When I reached seventh grade we all began attending a private Catholic school. One reason for the change was that I was continually getting into fights in school. The fights began in 3rd grade and increased in 6th grade. My parents also knew that I didn't start any of the fights, so they decided to send us to Catholic schools. I also attended Catholic high school in the city. After graduating in May 26, 1986 I was accepted to three different colleges; U.C. Davis, U.C.L.A., and San Francisco State but opted to go to S.F.S.U because it would save costs by living at home. When we still rented back in the Potrero, my father taught us to always be thrifty and never be late with the rent, so that's the way I thought.

When I think about our family's social contacts I see that we mostly knew other Filipinos. The first person my parents came in contact with was Mrs. Tamayo, who picked them up at the airport and accommodated them for their first week in America. There was also the Filipino family they shared their first apartment with. My mother had frequent contacts with other Filipinos at her work, these were mostly wives of couples who had also immigrated the the late 60's and early 70's like my parents. These friendships continue to the present. Though these families live in the Bay Area, they don't live in San Francisco today, so our family has friends all over.

The first family we rented our apartment to in 1974 was also Filipino. They lived in there until 1978. From 1978 to 1986 three other families rented our apartment and they also were Filipinos with backgrounds similar to my parents. They left, not because they were poor, but for non-economic personal reasons of their own. All these families now own their own homes.

It was mostly myself and my brother who had contacts with other types of people, kids outside our own ethnic groups. Since the schools we went to were largely Hispanic, I personally didn't have Filipino classmates until high school. The contacts that my parents had with other ethnic groups, by contrast, were strictly for business reasons.

My father worked at BART from 1970 to 1987 as an electrical technician. He was earning \$3,000 a month (before taxes) when he retired in 1987. My mother kept her job at the bank for fifteen years. In 1980, she received a promotion and became a department supervisor. She attributes this to luck, because she had happened to be the only person around when the retiring supervisor came to her and asked if she wanted a promotion. She would have been at lunch break with her friends, except she had left her change purse behind. So, she says, she got the promotion because she was at the right place at the right time. She also had ten years seniority at the time. In 1984 she had to be hospitalized for high blood pressure and she eventually retired in August 1985.

My youngest brother, who was the only one born in America, is now seventeen and will be graduating soon. He plans to either go to San Francisco State or U.C. Berkeley, depending on whether he gets a track and field scholarship. At 5'6 1/2", 150 lbs, and still growing, he is now the tallest in the family. He's proof, according to my parents, that "American" made things are usually big. When I was young, Filipino was always spoken at home but now my parents communicate with my younger brothers in English. They still talk to me in Filipino because I'm the oldest, however I answer back in English and I have trouble speaking our former native

language. English is now the more spoken language around our home. A difference between my parents and my brother and myself is that not all our close friends were Filipino, unlike our parents. I had a group of eight buddies in high school that were a mixture of different races, there were three Filipinos, one Burmese, three whites, and one Latino. They were all American citizens. My best friend in high school was white and he was third generation Russian immigrant on his father's side. His mother was a second generation Irish.

The diversity in Filipino Americans is also seen where we live. The family renting the unit above our apartment immigrated from the Philippines in 1981. Though the couple is the same age as my parents, they don't have a college education and are also both divorced from previous marriages. Their two children are about my age but they both dropped out of high school. The family is not as thrifty as a whole, they own three cars, one they bought just four months ago, and still have to pay rent, which they are frequently late with. All three of their cars were bought brand new as well as their furniture, remote controlled t.v. and brand new C.D. player and stereo. The couple also tend to have a habit of vacationing in Reno every other weekend. This contrasts with my family, in that we bought everything used and tried to save everything we earned in our first years in America.

Since immigrating to the United States we have not visited the Philippines even once.

The Staircase by Judy Chan

My father was born on February 26, 1946 in a village called "Dai Won Cheen." My father was born into an extremely wealthy family, his grandfather was a self-made millionaire. Dad lived the first three years of his life comfortably with servants waiting on him hand and foot. Dad lived in a four-story mansion that contained six master bedrooms, eight bedrooms, two kitchens, three large living rooms, a large attic, and an endless amount of space. The outside of the mansion was almost as breathtaking as the inside. There was a beautiful garden filled with the finest plants, shrubs, and flowers. My great-grandfather was a very successful businessman. He owned a bank, a large supermarket, a store which sold the finest silk and fabric, and vast amounts of land which were cultivated by hired laborers.

In 1949 China became a communist country. My father, only three years old at the time, fled to Canton, China with his parents and older sister to escape death from the communist government. My dad's mother gave birth to a third child during 1949, but she gave her up to another family because she was too young to be taken to Canton. The entire family's estate, property, and empire was literally stripped away by the government. In Canton, my dad and his entire family were homeless. His

parents' work paid close to nothing but they had to take any jobs that were available in order to survive. When my dad was five years old, his father was taken away by the government and put into a concentration camp in another territory. Dad did not see his father until 30 years later.

My grandmother was left single-single handed to raise two children on her own. Grandma soon took a job as a live-in housekeeper which left my dad and his sister on their own. My dad barely got a chance to see his own mother. As a young child, he suffered so much. He was hungry a lot and had to beg outside restaurants, waiting for customers to give them their leftovers. My father also told me how he would pick up the odds and ends of green leafy vegetables that were thrown out by produce stores. With those odds and ends, he would stand out in the street to sell them with his sister. My father slept out on the streets for a few years until my grandmother saved enough money for them to stay at a decent place.

She rented a very small room for her two children to keep out of the cold. The room contained nothing. There were no electrical outlets, no plumbing, no furniture, etc. After years passed by, my grandmother managed to put my dad through a few months of schooling. Dad took a great interest in learning. He was very intelligent and studied very hard. Dad was always anxious to learn new things and to expand his knowledge.

By the time my dad was twelve, my grandmother decided that it was time to leave Canton. She wanted to move to Hong Kong because her father-in-law was residing there. He had managed to escape from China and had lived in Hong Kong ever since. My grandmother gave my father and his sister the address of the place where their grandfather was staying. Grandma sent her two kids off to Hong Kong by train as soon as she saved enough fare, then followed after her children a year later. Upon my dad's arrival in Hong Kong, he found the place where he would live for the next 11 years of his life. It was in the staircase of an old apartment building. Dad discovered that his grandfather had lived there for nine years. He and his sister looked for work immediately after that. The apartment building was located in the ghettos of Hong Kong. The area was awful! There were drug dealers, drug abusers, thieves, criminals, pimps, and rapists that lived in that entire area.

After my grandmother arrived in Hong Kong, she found work as a factory worker in a mirror manufacturing company. Dad stopped working and went back to school. He met my mom, who was one of his classmates, when he was fifteen. My mother's childhood was totally the opposite of my dad's. My mother came from a well-off family. Her father owned a construction company and my mother was able to live in comfort with t.v. sets, nice clothes, good food, and the latest hair styles. She stayed in school a lot longer than my father because her parents were able to afford it, but

mom stopped going to school before she would graduate from high school because her mother felt that it wasn't necessary for a girl to receive so much education. My maternal grandmother wanted my mother to go out and marry a rich man. Dad left school after he was 17. Dad couldn't afford to stay in school so he looked for work immediately after he dropped out. Dad took up a job as an apprentice for an electrician. Through his apprenticeship job, he received a license as a certified electrician and he later worked as a full time electrician and mechanic aboard cruise liners that docked in Hong Kong.

My parents dated for two years before they decided to tie the knot. They married in November 1968. There was no honeymoon to accompany their wedding and wedding banquet because they couldn't afford it, so my mother left her home to move into the staircase where my dad had lived for such a long time. It took my mother some time to adjust to her so-called "home-sweet-home" because it was nothing like what she had before. But it really showed how much she must have loved my father because she totally gave up her material life for years of hard work beside my father.

By that time, my dad's sister had married and moved to the United States with her husband and started a new life for herself. I was born in November 1969, one year after my parents were married. During my first year as an infant, I lived in that staircase with my parents, grandmother and great-grandfather. Actually, from what my father has told me, the staircase wasn't as bad as it sounds. He told me that he managed to make it quite comfortable by adding partitions to the top of the staircase for privacy. The neighbors never minded because they liked my dad and his family. My dad never harmed anyone so no harm ever came to him or his family. After I was born, my mother finally was able to find work to help with the family income. She took up a job as an assembly worker for an electronics company while my dad continued work aboard the cruise liners. Grandma took care of me and through lots of tight saving, my parents saved enough to finally move into a decent place to live. I was now one, my great-grandfather had already passed away, and my parents decide that they they wanted another child. My mother told me how glad she was to finally move into an apartment. She told me that back in the staircase, when you needed to relieve yourself, you would have to squat and relieve yourself on a piece of newspaper. Mom always reminds me of how easy my life is now compared to theirs.

During February 1972, my brother David was born. It was also during that year that my grandmother talked excessively about moving to the United States. Grandma told my parents about how easy she heard life was in the United States. Grandma kept telling my parents that my brother and I would end up nowhere if we stayed in Hong Kong. My father was very hesitant about moving because things for him seemed okay. Although my dad was not rich, he was happy and satisfied with

how his life was compared to his entire childhood and teenage years. My mother didn't really care whether we moved or not, but during the beginning of 1972, my parents made the big decision to leave Hong Kong.

My dad's sister lived in San Francisco and my parents asked her to sponsor us into the United States. My aunt agreed, and went to the Immigration office to file applications for my family to enter the United States. From June to August, my dad had a lot of paperwork to do. From what he told me, he had to first verify that his sister in San Francisco was legitimately his blood relative. My dad went through the process of trying to dig out old family pictures and old letters which he had to send to my aunt in San Francisco. My entire family also had to get complete physical exams to confirm that we were healthy and carried no known contagious viruses or diseases. We also needed documents from the Hong Kong Police Department stating that no one in my family was ever arrested or convicted of any felony. The results had to be brought to the American Embassy in Hong Kong.

We waited until September of 1972 for notification that we were eligible for immigration to the United States. We had three months to prepare to leave Hong Kong. My dad sold his car, furniture, appliances, and t.v. set. We also had to immediately buy one-way plane tickets to San Francisco. Our departure from Hong Kong would be on December 31, 1972, New Year's Eve. My parents had to buy three adult tickets because my grandma was coming as well and two children's tickets. Tickets cost a total of \$2,400. My parents had to borrow money from my maternal grandparents and their friends to pay for the airfare. At the same time, my mom sent the stereo, records, china, and heirloom chests to San Francisco. We caught Pan-Am to San Francisco and arrived at the San Francisco Airport on January 1, 1973. Right before we left, there was a going away banquet that my family held to say good-bye to all their friends and relatives. Mom told me that it was a very sad occasion.

My dad told me that, when he first stepped off the plane, he immediately felt uncomfortable in this new and strange country. We were given our green cards after our arrival in exchange for our birth certificates and other documents verifying our existence. During the car trip to our aunt's house, my parent's first reactions to San Francisco was that everything looked so old-fashioned. My parents had always pictured the United States as a country with the greatest technology and advancement but, to their dismay, they said that it looked like Hong Kong. My dad even thought that the United States looked underdeveloped because all he saw on the way back from the airport were low buildings. He expected to see tall skyscrapers.

We lived in the basement of my aunt's house in the Sunset District. My aunt's basement contained one room that became my parents' bedroom. There was a bathroom with a toilet, sink, and shower. The kitchen was in the same combination living room, dining room, and bedroom where my grandma, brother and I slept. We used a sofa bed to sleep, three people in one bed.

My father was broke when we first came. My dad had only \$2.50 in his wallet when we first arrived here. He was eager to have work so he found a job as a busboy in a small coffee shop on Grant Avenue in Chinatown. The coffee shop still exists today, but with a different owner. My dad worked there for \$1 an hour. He worked sixteen-hour days while my mother got a job as a seamstress doing piece-work. My grandmother stayed home to take care of my brother, who was not even a year old, and myself, age three. My father hated his job as a busboy. The biggest problem was not knowing how to speak a word of English. Dad was fired from the coffee shop job after his second week because he threw away some chicken necks that he wasn't suppose to.

My father was jobless after that and was very desperate for a job. My father told me that we were not eligible for welfare because my aunt was supposed to help us. Dad became very frustrated because America had not met up to what he thought it would be like. His whole dream of a better life was nothing more than a nightmare. I recall seeing both my parents crying every night for six months because my dad couldn't find a job. Mom was working for very low wages and we had to keep borrowing money from my aunt to buy food. My dad also owed money to his father-in-law and friends. At one point during our first year here, my dad wanted to move back to Hong Kong. My mother said that we would only go back to nothing. Only with my mom's encouragement did we stay. Dad lost almost all hope. During the first six months in the United States, my dad went to a school called "the Skills Center" to learn to speak English and try to get a job. The school was located on Market and Van Ness but has since been relocated. The government funded the program and he even got paid to go to school. Dad eventually found a job through that program because they took their students to various job sites. This first real job was for a major company in San Leandro. He has been working there as a mechanical engineer to this present day, sixteen years.

My parents told me why they wanted to leave during our first six months in San Francisco. First, they didn't have any money because they didn't have any job. They felt extremely lonely because all their friends were in Hong Kong. My mother told me that loneliness was something that really depressed her. Language barriers were also another problem. My parents couldn't speak or understand one word of English. It was virtually impossible to communicate with anybody. But the one thing that made our stay here the most painful was my aunt. She charged us rent for her

basement. We had to buy our furniture from her. Whenever my dad asked her, his own sister, for money, she gave us very dirty looks and always bugged us to pay her back. When we first arrived here, she didn't help us once to get familiar with the city. My parents always had to take the Muni bus to Chinatown to shop for groceries, she refused to give us a ride even when she was going there herself. In so many ways, we felt her hate and we could all feel that she didn't want us around. My dad always paid people back but my aunt felt that we couldn't be trusted. In other words, she treated us like total dirt from the beginning. We moved out in less than three years to a new house we bought in the Sunset District.

My dad told me that when we first arrived, he didn't know or feel too much discrimination because he didn't understand English and he was too busy looking for a job to actually know what it was. All he knew was that not being able to speak English in the United States made things very difficult for the entire family.

As I have grown older, I now understand how much my parents have gone through just for the sake of their children. When I was younger, I never knew why my parents pushed me to work so hard in school. Now I know. They didn't want to see me live a life not knowing a single word of English, slaving over 16-hour work days, and suffering as much as they have. My father has never stopped working hard since he was three years old. My father is only forty-one, but he looks so much older because he has worked so much throughout his life. If it weren't for my parents, I don't know where I'd be today.

Where Were You When I Needed You by A. T.(2)

In 1978 I was too young to feel anxious. I thought of coming to the United States as just another trip the family was going to take, a vacation. I delighted in skipping school to go and get our passports ready because hitherto, I was never allowed to skip school unless I was sick. At the passport office I saw a poster of a white man smiling, his teeth impeccably straight and white. "America is full of people like that," I thought, "and I'm going there."

My mother had read and heard about America when she was younger, it was more of a dream than a reality. She was therefore pleasantly surprised when my father told her in early 1978 that the family would probably have to move to California. She hadn't thought the company for which my father worked was large enough for overseas assignments.

My father was the first in the company to be sent to the United States. He had been going to California on short-term assignments since 1970, thus it was no surprise to him when the company asked him and his family to go there for a longer

period of time. They said three to five years. The company agreed to provide housing, a company car and telephone bills. My father felt most anxious about the children. How well will they acculturate? Will they be able to find friends? Will they miss home too much? The company handled all of the legal process. Through the company my father acquired E-1 visa status, and everyone in the family immigrated with E-1 status, under his name and occupation.

My grandparents were more distressed to see my father and family leave than anyone else because my father's sister had left to Amsterdam with her husband six months previously. The grandparents felt left alone and subtly betrayed. They nevertheless encouraged my father on the challenge of being a father, a husband and a company representative abroad. So on April 10, 1978 we arrived in Los Angeles International Airport on a dry, overcast day at about 3 pm. We were driven straight to a hotel in Santa Monica where we were to stay until the house was ready for us to move into. My vision of the American mentality, its culture, spins out from this hotel. In a sense, I never left the hotel; America is a hotel for me, because one never refers to a hotel as home; as such, I doubt I would call America my home.

My father chose a house in Woodland Hills, an hour drive north of Los Angeles, primarily because it was walking distance from a public elementary school. Months before the family arrived, he had been searching extensively in Los Angeles Times and other newspapers to find a house; coincidentally, the house he found was owned by a young Nisei couple.

On my first meeting the owner's wife I said "hello" in Japanese as loudly as my childhood innocence would allow. For a moment she looked puzzled. But she smiled impeccably and said "hello" back in English. She is as American as the Kentucky Fried Chicken we ate the day before in the hotel, I thought.

My mother was immediately impressed by the large kitchen -- two sinks, two ovens; however, she was stunned by the tap water: it was non-drinkable. Buying bottled water once a week was something totally new to her. In a predominantly white community, she found some difficulty in finding friends. Because Japanese people were small in number she befriended any who were around, even those with whom she would not have befriended if it were in Japan. The house had no front gate or walls that designate private property, as we had in Japan. An unspoken sense of insecurity came over the family, though we might not have known it at the time.

Subordinates and superiors were on first name basis in the American business. My father, at first, could not fathom this frankness. Despite the closeness, all of the decision-making was done by upper management, whereas in Japan decision-making was done as a team, the workers as well as the executives. On one hand, the

American, bureaucratic decision-making process allowed for quick decision-making but left workers to feel isolated and unmotivated; on the other hand, the Japanese, consensus decision-making process slowed down the decision-making but made the workers feel like a part of the team and thus motivated them to work harder.

On his first day at school my brother made a friend who had short brown hair and pallid complexion. The next day this person wore an earring to school. The day after that, the person came to school wearing a skirt, which became the very first indication to my brother that this individual was a girl, not a boy as he had first thought. This had never happened in Japan to any of us.

At lunch, the teacher let us go one by one, whoever sat quietly went first. I tried my best to show my docility by sitting upright with my hands beneath the desk. Everyone else had his hands on the desk, prayer style. The next day I emulated this prayer style docility, accepted it as an American way of showing obedience. "It stems from the gun fighters' days when it was assumed that one held a gun beneath the table if his hands were not on the table," my mother said.

At the end of three years the company decided to take the necessary steps to issue us all green cards. Implied in the company's decision was our stay in America would be prolonged. This undoubtedly vexed my grandparents who saw, at this point, years more of separation from their son and family.

After four years we were moved to San Mateo county. My brother and I changed our names to James and Kenneth, respectively, upon enrolling in high school. I felt it necessary to come to an identity that would allow me to adapt to the American environment. My parents were deeply ashamed of this act. They felt something cut inside them, each time they picked up the telephone to hear, "Is Kenny there?" "Can I speak to Jim, please?"

I sat alone, on my first day at the new high school, on a concrete step, on a foggy day. I thought of the gray day I arrived in this country, the hotel in Santa Monica, and I thought of the days when my teachers had to sit with me for hours just to communicate to me that it was Mother's Day or that the class was going on a field trip. I thought of the time when I had to hold my head and express pain on my face because I did not know how to say "my head hurts" in English.

Just then a group of Asian young people walked up to me, to the lonely concrete step on which I sat. "Do you want to join our Buddhist Youth Group?" one of them said.

"Where in the hell were you when I really needed you?"

Our Life And Immigration Experience by G.Z.

My family is from a small village in the Zhong Sang area of Canton, China. I have an older sister, a younger brother and a little sister who was born in the U.S. Although I had a very joyful childhood with many fond memories, much of what I remembered about my childhood and my homeland faded after coming to the United States in 1983. But for a month during the summer of 1990 my family and I went back to China for a visit and this revitalized many of my memories.

Our village is about an hour drive from Macao, a port city on the other side of the bay which separates Hong Kong and China. Like many of the villages there it is situated at the foot of a mountain. There are quite a few mountains around where I lived, many about the size of Mount Tamalpais in the Marin County. The terrain is actually very much like Marin County. The difference is that there are endless fields of flat farmland next to the mountains which is predominantly used for growing rice and unlike the often dry mountains in Marin, the mountains in our homeland are lush and full of green grass, shrubs and trees because it is in a subtropical zone. In spring, it rains very often and heavy. After the rains, you could find fruit trees sprouting from the seeds of fruit which had fallen the year before and all sorts of other plants and flowers would also grow or bloom. When I was little I would patiently try to dig out young tree sprouts hoping to grow them in some pot but always ended up wrecking the roots and killing them. The summer is usually hot and humid, perfect weather for wearing a T shirt or even no shirt, summer nights after a hot summer day. Although it doesn't rain as often in the summer, when it does it pours the rain is from thunder clouds. After immigrating to the U.S., I missed the warm humid air, the sounds of rain, the flashes of lightning, the crack and rumble of thunder which could sometimes be felt when close by, and I also missed the fresh air, and the lush greenery and beautiful, sweet scented, tropical flowers.

Our village, called "Chin Loon Chuin." is actually quite small compared to the big streets and buildings that I am now used to in San Francisco. When I returned to visit it looked smaller than I remembered it to be when I was little. From one end to the other end our village is about three blocks long. There are two main streets with no names that cross the village. The streets are just dirt roads for the most part but in some parts were laid coarse stone slabs. Most the roads are quite narrow; a car could barely fit through. Many of the homes have are tile roofs with usually one one story and seldom more than two stories. Because the houses are quite simple in construction, with no running water or much electrical wiring, many like ours were built by the families themselves with the help of friends and relatives. On our visit, I almost did not recognize the house in which I used to live, even though it not changed at all other than being a little discolored from not having been painted for some time. It seemed much bigger to me then I was small. I guess that was because from

the perspective of someone who is little in size or who has not seen more than the village everything naturally should look larger. This would probably explain why everything looked smaller and different on our trip back to my homeland. I was comparing how things looked from the perspective when I am grown up physically and mentally to how things looked to me when I was young in mind and small in height.

The entire population of the village then was probably around one hundred people. We were a very close community, peaceful and very social. Everybody knew everyone in the village. When something special happened to someone in the village, then either no one other than the person himself knew or the whole village knew. That's just how it worked. We knew our neighbors well and socialize with them often. All my friends who I played with everyday all lived in the village. In the evenings many neighbors around us would flock to our house to watch television and go home when the show's over because we were one of the few families who have a small TV at that time,

Almost every family in our village were farmers. Each family had government owned fields on which they grew rice. Usually families used a small patch of the land to grow vegetables for their own use. Spring and fall were the seasons when the farmers had to work like hell. Their children usually helped out with whatever they could do. Before the rain came in early spring, the farmers tilled the soil to prepare the fields for planting rice. That process was really hard work because no machinery was involved. After that, the rice seeds were planted and when they were a few inches tall, they were pulled out by hand and replanted in rows. It took quite some time to do although it isn't hard. That was one of the times when the children would come to help. Over the summer, the farmers would watch the rice grow and hope for a bountiful crop. They would irrigate and fertilize the field while looking out for weeds. In fall, the rice was harvested and process, which was just as hard and tedious as planting it.

We were required to give back a certain amount of rice to the government annually for using the land. In years when there is a drought or when there is a typhoon, then the farmers have a really hard time, not because they will not have the rice to give back to the government but because they may not be able to feed themselves and their family since there isn't much government aid in a poor country like China. My father has sometimes joked about people who don't work hard enough or about times when people are in real unfortunate situation, "you have no choice but to eat the rice seeds that are for the next year." Fortunately that didn't happen often because most families would get help from friends and relatives first; that's why having a big family was so important. Secondly, everybody tried to make some money whatever way is feasible or worthwhile for them. Many people earned a

little money by doing various things, such as raising some pigs, chickens, and ducks to selling at the markets.

We, or at least I, had a happy life when in China. We had our relatives and lots of friends. I have an aunt on my mother's side who lived in a small town about 30 minutes from our village with my maternal grandmother, her husband and three children(our cousins). On my father's side, he had three sisters. Now both my grandparents are in the U.S., along with the youngest and oldest of my three aunts. Though we had much to be happy about in China, making a living was not easy. Children had to help out in the rice fields and my older sister had to do many house chores. She had to look over the water buffalo, taking it out for it's feeding when she was only nine years old. I would have to also do so if I had stayed in China longer or if I had been a little older but at that time I was too little to do any heavy work. I only had to help get water from the wells and things like that. At other times, I could to go out and play with my friends and I had a lot of fun and was really happy with my life, something I lost after immigrating to the U.S. When I was in China was very much involved with nature. I found all kinds of things to do, from catching fish and tadpoles with my bare hands to hiking up the mountain. I picked fruit and berries, climbed trees, played with insects - catching dragonflies and tying a string to their tails to watch them fly around or catching humming cicadas or the flying fireflies when they're in season - and enjoyed many other things there are in nature. I was like a curious little kitten out to explore the world. My lifestyle and happiness changed dramatically after we immigrated to the U.S.

Our family's immigration history started off with my oldest aunt. She was the one who sponsored everyone here. Back in 1960, when Hong Kong was easier to get into, my aunt who was 17 years old at the time, heard many people were going to Hong Kong and she went look for better living. A few years later, my grandfather also went to Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, my grandfather claimed to be five years younger so he would be more pleasing to employers. My aunt worked hard as a seamstress while my grandfather worked in restaurants and other jobs. They sent money back to the family now and then. My aunt met someone in Hong Kong who became her husband. It was also there in H.K. where she made a very close friend at work who she still is close to today in the U.S.

After getting married, my aunt was sponsored by her husband and came to the U.S. in 1967. Since arriving in the U.S., she has lived in a three story flat situated close to Chinatown. Another one of the flats is used by the close friend she met in Hong Kong. She worked as a seamstress for a couple years, then stopped working for some years due to bad health. She had two children and studied to be a citizen. After becoming a citizen, she sponsored my grandfather to the U.S. in 1974. A year later, my third aunt came to the U.S. and three years after that, in 1978, my grandmother

came. At that time, I was only three. I didn't realize or care that I had a paternal grandmother or grandfather until I met them again after coming to the U.S. I only knew my grandma on my mother's side because when she came to visit the village.

When I was little I father having occasionally mentioned to us that someday we will go to America, land of the beautiful and prosperous. He didn't tell us when. As a matter fact, I didn't know that we were going to the United States till the very day we left our village. The day before we left, my sister and I were still going to school just like any other day. I did not have a chance to prepare myself mentally as to what I could look or hope for when we left the village. I didn't have the chance to gather any of my belongings. I remember telling my one of my parents that I wanted to bring along my school bag and some other things while we're speeding away in the small truck\van. They said they'll get it latter but they never did. But most of all I wish I had was a chance to say good-bye to my friends with whom I had so many fun and happy times. I missed them and the fun childhood times I had very much, I still miss them even today.

My parents didn't tell us that we are going to the U.S. in advance because they couldn't trust us to keep a secret. They knew that if they had told us, we would tell our little friends, and they would tell their parents and soon the whole village would know. Even though the people in our village already had a sense that we would be going to the U.S. soon, my parents didn't want them to know exactly when because going to America was a really big deal. If the secret was out, we would probably have been the center of attention in the village. Our little privacy would probably have been raided by nosy neighbors asking for little favors and we have been the gossip of the whole village.

Everyone around us dreamed and often talked about how good and beautiful "America" is even though they had never been there themselves. They as well as we didn't know that there are a lot of poor and homeless people in the U.S., nor do they or we realize that there are also different kinds of problems here in the U.S. which they did not see. After living here, we see that the U.S. is not really as good or beautiful as people have said it to be. People have to work hard and there are hardships in the "America" which get filtered out on the way to the ears of the people in my homeland.

Our reasons for coming to the U.S. were simple. Economically, the U.S. is in much better shape than China. Life in China is hard and is limited. Unless some miraculous thing happened, it seemed very likely to our parents that our generation would also be farmers just as they were farmers and their parents and generations before had been. Though we were happy with our life in many ways, my parents wanted for themselves and us not to work so hard and be somewhere with more

freedom to grow and make a better living. They wanted us to be better fed, better educated and to have the chance to grow out of the hard and limited life we had in China. They wanted us to have the freedoms they never had and it was assumed that if we come the U.S., we could make more money and from that a better and happier life. Even though the U.S. does have many of the things they dreamed of and more, they did not realized the new problems they would face trying to build a new life here.

It must have been sometime in October when we left our village because we left after harvesting our rice. The rice didn't grew well that year. There was more pulp than kernel. But fortunately, my aunt from mother's side helped out. When we left our village we went to my aunt's house where my grandmother was. We had our last dinner with them. My aunt, uncle, grandma, and my three cousins who were about our age talked with us during and after dinner. They repeatedly preached to my sibling and I to "listen to our parents, be more mature" and to "do well in school" when we were in the US. We left the next morning, everyone said good bye and my mom cried as though she will never see her mom and sister again. I guess my grandma and aunt's family, who had always us so quite well throughout my childhood years must have felt sad that we were leaving and yet happy for us, seeing that we will be leaving our hard life as farmers and have a chance for an easier and better life. Everyone, my relatives, friends, and village people wondered where our life would lead and how different my siblings and I would grow up to be. As always, they saw "America" as being better and wondered how much better than them we grow up to be. Would we forget our language? Would we lose our culture and grow up looking like "Americans"? We heard many weird stories passed around that we forget our language and grow to look and be like "Americans." Many people thought we would. As for ourselves, we did not know and wondered about it.

After leaving my aunt's house, we headed for Sek-Key and stayed with my paternal aunt for a like a week. Sek-Key was nice, the streets and houses were bright and clean unlike the gloomy and uncolorful streets and buildings of Guong-Zhou through which we later passed. In Sek-Key, I remember raiding a small food store which belonged to one of my uncle's close relative. I indulged myself with ice-cream, sodas, candies, and other junk food.

After that, we went to Guong-Zhou and then to Hong Kong. We stayed in Hong Kong for a two weeks. Distant relatives there showed us around and helped us buy new clothes, blankets, and all kinds of things to prepare for the U.S. My parents thought things in the U.S. would be more expensive. With all the possessions we've brought from China and the things we bought in Hong Kong, we really have our hands full when we left Hong Kong. At the airport, everyone was carrying more than they could carry. I was like a little Rambo packed to the teeth.

One thing my dad brought along was a big jug of water from China for drinking because he thought or had heard somewhere that we might need some time to adjust to the new water in a new land. It was about five gallons or so and my dad carried it along with other things all the way to San Francisco. During our stay in Hong Kong, I drank sodas the whole time, not because I like drinking sodas but because we didn't have access to plain water when we were in our room. When I told my parents that I am feeling thirsty from drinking all that soda, they said that it is what people in America drink and I better get adjusted to it. I believed them and drank sodas whenever I'm thirsty while I felt more thirsty every time I drink. Somehow I made through the two weeks drinking mostly sodas. During our visit back to China in 1990, one of the villagers I met seriously thought we drank salt water from the ocean in the U.S. which shows how little we villagers knew about another country when we were in China.

There were a total of nine people from our family and my second aunt's family that were sponsored here by my aunt at the same time. Some say we were fortunate to be able to come here together as a family at the same time. My grandmother was the one who paid for our nine airplane tickets from what she had saved from work as a baby sitter and as a seamstress.

The twelve hours or so plane ride from Hong Kong to San Francisco was great. That was my first plane ride obviously and I felt really wonderful when we were in the plane. The big, well lit interior of the 747 plane looks so beautiful along with the well dressed stewardesses. Everything looked bright and modern and it was very much like what I had dreamed everything in America would be. Everybody in the group were feeling ecstatic about going to the United States and were feeling as wonderful as I did for just being on such a beautiful plane. During the flight, some of us got motion sickness and did throw up after eating the wonderful airline food. I really thought that the airline food was good even though it is different. I remember how good I thought the food tasted and I remember telling my parents and everyone in our group how nice it would be if I my little friends were there to try the food with me.

Through the plane ride, we talked with one another about the life we had and wondered what our new life in the new country would be like. I was enjoying myself, feeling good looking at the beautiful interior of the plane, nibbling at the food we have not finished and thought a little about what the United States would be like. But being very naive then, I did not think deeply about what my new life will be like.

On November 21, 1983, we landed at San Francisco International Airport, had our documents checked, and had a complete medical checkup. We had to take all our

clothes off. Taking my clothes off was easy for me because it isn't something special being a kid. I didn't care but for the adults, they hit their first cultural barrier. They were embarrassed about having to take off their clothes. In China, it is OK for a kid to strip naked and run around in the village, no one really cares too much. But as an adult, taking all their clothes off even for a medical exam isn't usually done unless it is absolutely necessary. I remember my parents and relatives talking about this physical exam they had to go through. They said, "it is fine to check the kids but grown ups?"

After going through the immigration checkpoint, we were greeted by my uncle. That was the first time I met that uncle, my third aunt's husband. He drove us to our new home in San Francisco. The place we first lived in was an one room apartment in a building on Stockton Street near Sutter. There was one room, a small kitchen, a bath and large closet. The closet was big enough to fit in a twin size bed so my mom and sister used it as their room. My father, brother, and I slept on a mattress on the floor of the medium size room. I don't want to call it our bedroom because it was also used as our dining room, living room and our work and play room. We lived in that apartment for about two years. My grandmother helped us pay our rent for the first two months and everyone helped us a little when when we were not yet able to support ourselves. We later moved to a larger, two bedroom apartment on Columbus Ave and live there for six years.

My uncle enrolled us in school soon after we arrived. I started out in third grade while my little brother went to second and my sister to fourth. The school we went to was called Chinese Education Center (CEC). Most or all of the students there were recent immigrants like us and did not know much English. Many were from the Canton area as well so we were able to speak Cantonese with one another. We became friends and played with one another in school. After school all I could do was to watch TV or do my homework. I had nowhere to go because I was too little and my parents told us to go straight home or to my grandparent's place which was just across the street from CEC.

The teachers in CEC were able to speak Cantonese. Before we were transferred to another elementary school, our teacher recommended everyone in the class choose an American name. He said it would be easier for the English teachers to pronounce and remember an American name than our Chinese name. I kept my old Chinese name as my middle name on my IDs because my parents initially feared that I might forget my Chinese name if I didn't use it. We concentrated on learning English, mainly simple everyday words but I wasn't really able to speak in full sentences with other people till I was in fifth grade. At home, I spoke in our dialect with my parents and my siblings. Today, I usually speak in English with my siblings but with our parents we continue speaking Chinese.

After the first year, we were transferred to another elementary school. Most students who were in my class at CEC were transferred to the same school and were in the same class, which was also taught by a Chinese teacher. I was happy that we were still together but later, when we graduated from elementary school, everyone slowly separated. Some went to the same middle school I went to but for the others, I don't even know which middle school they went to. It's the same for friends I made in middle school and high school. We see one another less and less often as the years pass but luckily I make new friends as time passes or when I go to new places. Occasionally, I bump into old classmates and friends from elementary, middle, and high school. It's interesting to see how we, with a similar background as a group of new immigrant children, are slowly dispersing in all directions.

My father got his first job in the U.S. in a food store in Chinatown while my mom, with the help of friends, found a job as a seamstress. The wages were low and we had just enough to pay the rent and bills. We were living in poverty, sort of. My siblings and I didn't get allowances like other children, when we wanted something like snacks we asked our grandmother for the money. As for things like clothing, they were seldom bought from stores. The clothing we wore for many years were either made by my mom or were used clothing given to us by my aunt. My dad worked in several restaurants in Chinatown and now works in a restaurant with better pay and some benefits down in Foster City and also works part time as a janitor, doing two different jobs to pay the mortgage of our house. My mom has worked as a seamstress and as a cook assistant in various places through the years.

During the first few years when I was in elementary school, I did well in school and was feeling fine with my new life. Living in the United States was different since I couldn't do the same things I did when I was in China. I couldn't go play with friends after school since they didn't live close to me and I couldn't go out to enjoy nature for example. I was in a big city where we didn't even know our neighbors in the apartment building as compared to the tight village community where I was free to roam around and be with friends. But I could find new things to do or new ways to get things I needed or wanted, as for entertainment, I could satisfy myself by watching TV instead of playing with friends.

My happiness changed when I got to middle school. I did feel happy for some reason and I began to miss the fun happy times I had when I was in China very much. This continued through the years when I was in high school. I often felt very bored in a way I had never felt before and I would sometimes get depressed with my life. I did well in school but I didn't feel I learned much. I initially blamed this being in a bad school and sometimes on bad teachers, or on the school cutbacks and with the way the school system is. I still believe these were factors but that doesn't

explain why other students in same class did better than me. During my last year in H.S., I was able to finally see that the reason why I didn't feel I was learning much from school was also because of me and not solely because of my school environment. I didn't know how or didn't have the sense to take care of myself, to go do the right thing for myself. It was something I had when I was little which I lost after immigrating to the U.S.

What I am seeing symbolically is that there are two different things interacting with one another, one is the person and the other is the environment. Whether the person will do well in the environment depends on whether they are basically compatible with one another. If the person for some reason does not have the sense to get what is really needed then no matter how supporting his environment is he will not be able to utilize it. I am like the malfunctioning person. This is what I believe to be the reason I wasn't acculturating successfully to the new culture and environment. I wasn't using my own sense to get what I needed because of what had happened to me after coming to the U.S.

What caused this? I think the cause was that when we, my siblings and I, came to the U.S. we weren't able to do what we used to because of the new environment and we became more dependent on our parents to lead us. My parents told me what I should do and how I should do things. I was slowly forced to listen and to do what my parents say was good for me. I was not allowed to follow my own feelings or senses to do what I liked or felt good for myself, a freedom I did have when I was younger in China. I slowly lost the freedom to think for myself. I wasn't able to follow my own senses, to decide what works or not works (right and wrong) for myself. And the more I was not allowed to follow my own feelings and senses, the worse my life became. I could feel that my life was getting less enjoyable and everything was becoming harder for me. I concentrated in school the way my parents, like many other parents, have always emphasized to their children. I did well in school in terms of getting good grades even though I didn't feel I've learned anything important for myself. But in my personal life was very different, everything was falling apart.

From all this, you may believe that it is freedom that I am not getting but the problem still isn't the freedom I'm forced out of because that is only temporary, I could still have the sense to fight back and get what needed/wanted. The real problem is that my parents are slowly persuading us to not follow our own feelings and senses. They made us believe that their intentions are good and somehow made me not believe in myself, in my feelings and senses. (Isn't this the opposite of what many successful people advice others to do?) My parents would reason with us that what they are telling us to do is what is good for us because "why would parent hurt their children?". And pressure, like scolding or holding back things we want or need that they have control of, is used when persuasion doesn't work. When a person has

lost their own sense or isn't able to use it for some reason, then their well being will dive down as I did. I now realize that even though my parents may have good intention for their children, good intention do not necessarily mean that they know what their children's real conditions and needs are at a certain moment. Everyone should or must follow their own sense and feelings. Nobody could tell what another should ultimately be doing although they could give their recommendation. The person himself should decide whether something works for them or not.

I now live my life with that philosophy and feel much better than I did before. I feel that I am getting my life back and that I am acculturating to the culture and environment I am in. I now concentrate on taking care of myself. In school, I have shifted my concentration to learning something for myself rather than simply doing the work for the grade which I did in high school or middle school. I am not doing as well as I did in high school in terms of grades but I think that will change. Now I truly feel what I learn is helping me with my future.

Today, we are living in the house we bought a couple years back. My parents are still working very hard but we now know our new culture and environment better. Even though we still miss our homeland very much, we see that we do have some kind of life here now. My sister is going to City College and is working part-time and plans to become a nurse. My younger brother is still in high school but is graduating soon and he plans to continue school. As for me, I am in S.F. State and just want to learn more about myself. My major is something in the behavior and social area. I have really learned a lot about myself in the last two years and I do feel I am going somewhere now. I feel optimistic of my future.

Immigration From Korea by Myong Cha Sim

According to my mother, my aunt (who is an older sister of my father) came to the United States in 1971 through sponsorship of her American friend. In Korea, she had worked for a large American trading company with many American employees. My aunt met a lawyer who came from the United States to visit the company. She fell in love but he had to return to the United States. When he got back to the United States, he sponsored my aunt to come to the U.S. as his fiancée.

When she arrived here they got engaged and she lived with him for about a month. Unfortunately, she found out he was married to someone else, so they separated. After that she had a really hard time adapting herself to the new circumstances. She didn't know anyone and she did not have a job until she found one as a bank teller, then her life improved.

After five years she became an American citizen and sponsored my grandfather, grandmother, uncle, and my family. At that time, my family didn't want to come to the U.S., so we stayed in Korea and only my grandparents and uncle left my country. My aunt quit the teller job and joined another company as an engineering technician. She met a man there who was an engineer in the same company and they got married. He is also an American.

In 1983 my grandfather went to visit Korea and while there died of a heart attack. After this, my family decided to move to the U.S. and the process of our immigration started in March, 1983. There wasn't any specific reason that we decided to move. In Korea my father owned his own business so we did not have any problems economically. When I asked my parents why we decided to move, all they said is they wanted us to have a good education. They said it's better to study in the U.S. There was much paperwork and we went to U.S. consulate so many times. My family went through physical examinations and finally, we passed interview with a person in an embassy. Right after the interview we all got our visas. My father sold his store and my sisters and I quit school. We left our country in January 1984.

When we arrived at the San Francisco airport the weather was foggy and windy. I felt very cold even though I had just arrived from my country where the winter is extremely cold with ice and snow. My uncle came to pick us up and we all went to his house. We lived there about a month. The first week was okay, but my parents started to regret their decision to leave Korea. I missed all of my friends and relatives. I wanted to go back to my country and I cried secretly every day. I hated my parents at that time because my mother also cried every day and my father didn't speak any words at all. We couldn't go out because we didn't know anything and we didn't know how to get anywhere in San Francisco. Nobody took us out because they had to go to work. My aunt hardly ever took us around to see San Francisco.

One day, my aunt took my family to apply for social security numbers. A month later we moved to a new apartment which my aunt found in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. In February my sister and I started to go to school. My aunt had taken us to San Francisco Unified School District to enroll at the end of January and that was the first day I went to McDonalds. I couldn't eat anything because the food didn't taste good. I lost my appetite for while when I first came to the United States. My older sister and me were placed in Newcomer High School and my younger sister in Presidio Middle School. My youngest sister who was one year old at that time stayed home with my parents. I was envious of my youngest sister.

I had really hard time adapting to the new school. I couldn't speak any English and I couldn't eat any food from the school. At that time my health condition was poor. Every time I felt tired and sick I cried because that was the way I could express

my feelings. I couldn't make any friends because of my shyness. I didn't want to talk to people I don't know. I never spoke a word in the classes. I was always alone.

After awhile my father got a job as a house painter and of course his boss was a Korean. My aunt took my father to Korean Community Service Center, where they offer jobs and English programs. The wage was very low because my father didn't have any experience in that field. He was having hard time because he had never worked as hard as that before. My father started to hate being in the United States and I saw many times that he cried secretly. My parents didn't have any friends and they were alone, too. However, my father started to attend English class at the center. There he met some friends but he couldn't make any contact with people outside the particular ethnic group because he didn't speak English.

My mother stayed home for three years to take care of my youngest sister but then in September 1986 she started to work as a maid at the Fairmont Hotel. My aunt took my mother to the job interview and translated everything. My mother also had a really hard time working. Because she worked too hard and was nervous all the time her blood pressure went up too high and her right eye was damaged. After my mother started to work, my mother found a babysitter in the Korean newspaper for my youngest sister. Every morning I had to take my sister to the baby-sitters house because my parents left about 6:30 in the morning. My youngest sister didn't want to go a baby-sitter so she would cry all day and never eat until I went to pick her up. It was really hard for all of us to adapt ourselves to new circumstance. I still have language problems and have a hard time taking notes in the classes and with long reading assignments. I often wish I was born here or I complain to my parents that we shouldn't have came here. But I think we are almost settled down and my family is getting used to new life in America.

A Korean Immigration Story by Stevekyoo Young Chang

Our immigration was started by a distant relative who is my uncle's older sister. She married a U.S. Army soldier who participated in Korean War in 1952. I don't know his name. They met in the hospital. My uncle's oldest sister was a nurse and he was wounded in the arm. While she was nursing him, they both somehow fell in love. After the Korean war, they married and went to the United States. My uncle said that he doesn't have any idea how they managed to communicate all those years, but they still live together in Hawaii.

In 1967, she sponsored my uncle's second oldest sister and her family and in 1973, my uncle, aunt, and their three year old son were sponsored by his oldest sister. He told me that he thought he would have much more time with his sisters, but really didn't have time to meet them because he spent most of his time working.

He first worked as a dishwasher, getting only forty-five dollars a month. My uncle and aunt had to work but only got thirty dollars a month. My uncle and aunt had to work sixteen hours a day for five years to make better living. Uncle even told me that he and aunt sometimes had to eat oranges for days because they did not have enough money to buy the meals. After five years of hard work, my uncle was able to buy his own sandwich shop. He ran the shop very well. He bought his own house and was able to spend a lot of time with his family. In 1979, my uncles and aunt became United States citizens. In the same year he had his second son. He invited my grandmother, who was in Korea, to visit and see his son. However, it turned out that my grandmother stayed here to be with the baby. My grandmother returned to Korea in 1987 because she was sick and she wanted to be with her other son.

I was born in Seoul, South Korea. When I was five years old, my father and I had to go to Japan because of my father's business but my mother stayed home with a baby brother and a sister. She thought it was not a good idea to go to a foreign country with babies. At this time my father was doing international trade with Japan and some other countries. I started to forget Korean as I started to speak Japanese. Father and I went back to Korea when I was seven to start my education. When I first saw my younger brother and sister, I did not know they were my family. Even though we were brothers and sister, we were like strangers who never seen each other before. It was hard for me to be friends with them because we used two different language, but as the time went by we got closer. I started to go to the school and relearned Korean very quickly. I was not allowed to speak Japanese when I was with family. Father had to get another job. Mother did not want him to move around while we children were growing because we really did not receive much attention from our father. He was too busy doing outside work.

With help of a friend, father was able to find a job at a t.v. station. Mother never worked except for house-work. It was Korean tradition that women should not work outside of the house. Mother simply had a good husband. But everything did not go well for us. In February 1982, father was told by the doctor that he had cancer. Father had four operations and fought hard to overcome his illness but never came back to us. That year in June, just a day before my sister's birthday, he died, leaving us forever. Mother struggled to manage our living. The most difficult thing was my mother did not know about the outside world. Also, it cost a lot of money to go to school. Somehow mother managed. Later I found out that my grandmother sent money to my mother every month from the United States.

In March 1983, we were sponsored to the U.S. by grandmother and uncle. Even though we were sponsored, mother was not sure whether to go or not because she did not want leave father behind even though he was dead. However, mother's older brother persuaded mother to leave the country by telling mother that it is mother's

job to give her sons and daughters the best education. Mother finally decided to leave just to give us opportunities to study. It took mother two months to get all the official papers including passports, visas, and so on. It was very sad departure when we left. Our relatives came to see us leave and they all cried with mother because everyone knew it would take years to see each other again. So in June 1983, we came to the United States with only three bags of clothes.

We first settled in Reno and we all had a high expectations to become somebody. However, after two months we wanted to go back home and were afraid to go out. We thought we never would fit in this society because we afraid to meet new people and could not speak English. In August 1983, my family and my uncle's family moved to California, to a town called Fremont. We did this after uncle lost a lot of money gambling. He said that he would never gamble again. In Fremont, mother started to work with uncle and aunt in the uncle's hamburger shop. Mother also started to meet new people, talk to them, and made new friends. My brother, sister, and I started our first education in the United States without knowing any English. I always had to fight for my brother, sister and myself. The other students picked on us because we could not speak English. However, it was a good experience because it encouraged us as brothers and sister to study harder to learn to speak English. We lived with uncle for a year.

We tried not to have trouble with uncle's family but uncle always asked my mother to remarry because it was not the place for housewife to live by herself and three kids. Uncle did not understand how mother felt when he told mother to remarry. Mother was really mad at my uncle and wanted to leave his home and that place. Therefore, in August 1984, we left my uncle's house with the help of my mother's friend. Uncle was at the shop and we left without telling him. We came to San Francisco with only three hundred dollars to make our new living. Mother's friend helped us get a place to stay, it was called garage bedroom. Mother also got a job at a Korean restaurant as a cook. Mother had to work more than twelve hours a day to support us. I started high school as a freshman and my brother and sister started middle school in seventh and sixth grade. We arranged school enrollment by ourselves. We were just happy to be by ourselves even if we did not have money to do other things. Mother started to make contact with other Koreans. We also went to a Korean church to meet people.

A year later, somehow uncle found out our place and came to ask my mother to manage one of his hamburger shops. Uncle also told mother that he would never ask mother to remarry again. Mother agreed because it was our hope to be with family and uncle is our only relative in the United States. Uncle told us that he had been mad at us and never wanted to see us again but he now understood why we left. I think this was the turning point in our lives because then mother did not have to

work as hard as she used to. Our family had a lot of more time together. We started to make a better living too. We moved to apartment three years ago and now are looking for a house in Fremont near my uncle's house.

Aspects of My Family Immigration by R. K.

My great grandfather was a simple farmer back in China. He owned cows, chickens, and some land in the Chungshan district of Kwangtung province. However, he had a desire to leave the country because a lot of people were doing that. He was very curious and he was looking for some adventure. Sometime before 1900 he left his wife and two sons (my great uncle and my grandfather, then three years old) in China to follow his dreams of new lands. Four months later, he reached Peru and started working on a plantation on the coast.

He saved his earnings. After several years, he quit the plantation and, in partnership with another immigrant from China, opened an *abarrote* (grocery store) in a suburb of Lima. All this time he sent money to his family in China. According to my grandfather, he was a very responsible father, he found people who he could trust to take money to his wife. After five years working in that *abarrote*, he got sick with an infection in his right leg that originated from when he worked on the plantation. When he became ill, he sent a friend to China to let his wife and sons know that he was very sick. A year later my grandfather, now seventeen years, left China to join my great grandfather in Peru. He took a Japanese boat called *Lok Young Yind* to Hong Kong to get his immigration papers. According to my grandfather, getting papers was easy because his father had friends in the Peruvian consulate. When the papers were ready he took the first ship to Peru.

When my grandfather got to Peru, his father decided to go back to China to retire but he didn't make it. On the way to Panama, he died on the ship. After my great grandfather passed away, my grandfather took care of business alone. He worked hard for almost seven years until at the age twenty-four he decided to get married. He sold the store and went back to China to get married. He stayed in China for almost five years and during those years my mother was born. He stayed in China was because the Peruvian government didn't let him go back but later he was able to make arrangements and he went back to Peru, where he opened a store. My grandmother and mother stayed behind in China, farming, while my grandfather sent money back from Peru. After World War II started, however, they didn't receive money for almost eight years because there was no way for my grandfather to send it. After the war, my grandfather went back to China and bought a lot of land which he leased to other people. In 1951 the situation became very rough with the coming of the communists and my grandfather had to leave China.

My grandmother and my mother suffered a lot of humiliation from the communists because of having land but after three years they were given more freedom. Once they had freedom, my grandfather applied for visa for my grandmother, my mother and my uncle. Peru approved the immigration papers but China wouldn't let them leave except for my mother. So they sneaked across the Chinese border and went to Macau to wait for the papers. In 1958, when Javier Prado was the president of Peru, they left Macau and flew to Peru. "I won't have to do hard work anymore, when I'm gonna be there, I'm gonna eat a lot, buy beautiful dresses, and finally I'm gonna be with my father". Those were the words of my mother when she left Macau. When she got to Peru she loved it. However, after a couple of months she was depressed and frustrated because her Spanish wasn't good enough to communicate with people. Then she made friends with a Peruvian born Chinese woman and learned about the city and started talking better. She worked in the store that my Grandfather had run since he was thirty years old.

She didn't date any one because she kept in touch with my father by letter or by phone. My father was a guy who she had met in Macau when she went to school to learn Spanish. My father wrote letters for almost eight years telling her to wait for him. During those eight years, he struggled a lot. My father is from Chungshan, too. At the age of thirteen he went to Macau and asked a tailor to teach him that trade. In return, he helped the tailor by cooking, getting wood, and shopping. In 1955, after four years, he was ready to work as a tailor. He didn't go back to China because the pay was better in Macau. He worked two years in Hong Kong and then went back to Macau again and opened a sewing shop with his savings. After he opened his store, he heard from friends that Venezuela was a good place to make a living because the currency situation was very good there and it was an oil country. So he went to school to learn Spanish and that is how he met my mom.

He tried to get papers to go to Venezuela, finally he bought a tourist visa from a friend. So now he had a illegal visa and after some complications he was on his way to South America. When he got there, he met a girl, who later became his friend. She taught him to speak Spanish and he found a job in a bakery. He worked 12 hours a day, seven days a week. He also told me that there were a lot of jobs and that some employers preferred Chinese people rather than Venezuelan citizens. Every three months he used to pay a fee to the immigration officials and even though he was an illegal resident, they let him stay.

After eight years of saving money, he flew to Peru and married my mother. They took a honeymoon back to Macau and they stayed there almost a year. During that time I was born and they bought a house with the money that my father saved. However, they felt insecure and they were also afraid that what had happened in China would happen in Macau, too. So they both decided to leave. My mother and I

went to Peru while my father had to go back to Venezuela. He couldn't go to Peru because he didn't have resident visa for Peru. Later on, a year after we left Macau, he received a visa based on being the father of a resident of Peru. When he arrived to Peru, my father borrowed some money from my grandfather and open a small business that sold toys and kitchen appliances. My father dedicated almost seventeen years to that business.

When I was three years old I went to school and most of my friends during that time were Spanish Peruvian boys. Because of that I had a lot of problems. First of all, my parents spoke Chinese and the first time I went to school my Spanish wasn't good. In fact, I used to have a very heavy Chinese accent and all the kids used to make fun of me. From three years old to five years old, I had a really hard time at school. Learning Spanish for me was very hard because I spoke it only at school or on the street. In 1972, I transferred to another school named "Diez de Octubre" which translated in English is October the tenth. This school was a Chinese-Peruvian school that only accepted Chinese or Peruvian Chinese students. Most of the students were like me and I felt more comfortable and made lots of friends. I still remember the first year of school I had a very good teacher who always helped me with my grammar problem, specially the pronunciation of the letter "r" which most Chinese people have a problem with. I had friends in my neighborhood too, they were all Spanish. I started being friends with them at the age of six. I used to play with them on the street and my father didn't want me to hang around with them, because he used to say "don't hang around with those guys because they might hurt you". I had a hard time getting them to accept me in their group even though we were very close friends.

Later on my Spanish improved considerably and when I was 15 years old I graduated from high school. After that I decided to work in my father's store, a small toy store located 30 minutes from downtown Lima. Business was going pretty well in 1982 despite the great inflation Peru was suffering that year. However, a couple of years later the situation started to become more difficult with terrorist actions in the capital city, police murdered every day, fear of being kidnapped, and higher cost of living. My father was afraid that Peru would turn into a socialist country and he had asked his brother who lives on the United States to rush papers for our resident visa to the United States. His brother always said he had to wait until our turn come, so we had to wait almost nine years to for our resident visa. During the period from 1982-1985, I was in charge of the store and didn't buy much merchandise because we were waiting for the visa. Then the day finally came when we received a letter from the United States Embassy directing us to go for physical exams and an interview. After we were approved, we sold the store and we went shopping. We bought new clothes, some alpaca blankets for presents and we also went to exchange Peruvian currency for dollars. Then it was time to leave.

The day that I left I met with all my friends. We drank a couple of beers and we said goodbye. When I was inside the plane many thoughts came through my mind like; "I'm going to start a new life in the United States, I'll try to save money and buy a car, a VCR and a color t.v." When we arrived at the San Francisco airport, my uncles were waiting for us. They greeted us and drove us to one of my uncle's homes where we were to stay. When we got there I met my aunt and my two cousins and we had a traditional Chinese dinner. A couple of days later my brother and I decided to take a bus and go downtown. We were very impressed by the clean streets and how well organized the streets were. Three weeks after I came to the United States, I decided to go back to school. I asked my uncle to help me find a school. He helped me fill out an application for City College of San Francisco and two months later I started. My uncle also found me a job at a produce market located in the Mission district. I used to work ten hours a day, six days a week and earned a thousand dollars a month. At City College I took nineteen units per semester while working at the time. During my two years at City College I made some friends, most of them were Chinese.

Later on I met a girl who became my girlfriend. She is an American born Chinese. She influenced me greatly. I started to get used to American life, clothes, eating, and thinking. I also dealt with people outside my own group. My English improved and I spoke more English than Spanish or Chinese. My attitude toward life changed too. I didn't have such a Spanish attitude of arrogance and now I'm a competitive person, who always expects more of myself. In fact, my brother and I are acculturated to American life. Now my brother is an eighteen year old guy who left home after graduating high school and is at U.C. Davis, living by himself. If we had stayed in Peru, he would never have left home. Now I want to move out because I want to be independent and I don't want to have my parents on my back, knowing what I do. In conclusion, in these three years I have changed considerably. I have a dream to become a civil engineer and to get married and have kids.

After Arrival by A. H. (4)

I remember during the first two weeks in the United States we lived in my grandparent's home, then they found us an apartment in Chinatown and we moved out. They paid the first month's rent. My mother told me it was hard to find a place to rent because our family is pretty big, six people. Most owners only wanted four people. The rent was very expensive, \$500 per month, and did not include electricity. There was one small bedroom which could only fit one bunk bed and one full size bed. The beds had to be right together to fit into the room and it was always dark because there was no window. There was another room that was both dining room and kitchen, the same size as the bedroom, with a window which opened into the

garbage collecting area. When I opened the window, I could always smell the stinky and spoiled garbage. Even with the window, the light was dim on a sunny day. The restroom was small but it was OK. We lived in this apartment for five years and life was very difficult.

The family hardly had any time together. My father worked as a cook in South San Francisco as night and came home during the day. Early very morning, before he could sleep he had to go deliver newspapers with my 14 year old brother in Japantown. After that he would sleep until 3 pm and then he would go to work again. I remember I never got a chance to see him, by the time he got back from delivering papers, I was in school and when I came home, he was already at work.

My mother and I worked in the sewing factory. I was eleven years old and it was illegal for children to work at age eleven so I had to work under the pressure of being caught by the government officials. Every time the door bell rang I had to run for the rest room or out the back door of the factory. At first I helped cut threads on cloths and I earned only about \$5.00 per day. Pay was determined by the number of garments, my mother says I was paid one penny for each garment regardless of how big it was. Although the amount was small, I was very happy because I could afford to pay for my physical education uniform, which cost \$10. I worked from 7:00 am to 9:30 pm every week end and from 4:00 pm to 9:30 pm on school days. After one year, I learned to sew, due to my curiosity. Life seemed to be getting better because I could earn up to \$15 by working from 7:00 am to 9:30 pm.

On the way home, we always went by the restaurants in Chinatown to see if there were any uncooked vegetables in the garbage cans. Most of the time we got a lot of vegetables to take home. I didn't have time to do homework at night so I had to do it at school during recess. I copied my notes so I had one set in my note book and the other copy in my shoes. It was easier to get to the shoes and pull out those notes to study on the bus, walking on the street, or even standing in line for school lunch.

My younger brother was 6 years old and my younger sister was 9 when we arrived. My sister had to help my older brother in cooking and taking care of our younger brother. My mother said that after five years life started to get better. My grand uncle happened to meet a high school friend, who told him he was hiring and also had an apartment to rent. So we moved there and my father went to work for him. My mother found a sewing factory job south of Market Street but this time she could earn \$600 a month while in Chinatown she was only earning about \$450. I still help out sewing but only on weekends until 7:00 pm.

Our life totally changed due to our encounter with the united States, the only thing the same is we still work hard every day. My life in China was a lot better, if I

compare it to my lost childhood in America. I still see a lot of elderly in Chinatown go after the garbage cans for food. I feel very sorry for them when I see it

The Thridandam Immigrant Experience by Priya Thridandam

America. It is considered to be a promised land, a gold mountain, a place where dreams can come true. It is a land of immigrants, but how many of those people thought they would settle here permanently when they first arrived? My parents never dreamed that they would settle in the United States but like many others they never left America and, over time, grew to believe that this is the only "home" they would ever have.

My parents' story of immigration began in the summer of 1960, shortly after they were married. My father was 27 and he was finishing up his master's degree in physics. My mother was not yet 21, and she had just moved from Jamshedpur in the north of India to Madras in the south to be married and to live with her husband's family. My father was an "ace-class" student, popular all around and successful academically. His professors thought that he would be an excellent candidate for overseas studies, and one of his professors, through his contacts, helped my father get into a Ph.D. program at the University of Liverpool in England.

My father's family knew that this would be a great opportunity for him. Attending foreign universities could be a stepping stone to greater mobility and recognition in India, especially for someone from the "Scheduled" classes. This is a term that was used in British and independent India to describe those people who did not belong to the Brahmin, or highest, caste. Those who were not Brahmin did not have access to education, and in turn, to well-paying jobs. My father and his siblings were able to attend schools and universities through grants and scholarships made available to the Scheduled classes. His parents never had this opportunity; my grandfather only graduated from high school, and my grandmother never even finished grammar school, never learning to read nor write more than her name. My mother's parents, on the other hand, were able to take advantage of scholarships. She is not sure why her parents were able to obtain this advantage and my father's parents not, except for some discrepancies within the Scheduled classes. My mother's father attended university and was a metallurgist by profession. Her mother attended university too, and was a teacher for a time before she was married. At any rate, my father was urged to attend school in England. All, including my parents themselves, believed that the couple would only be in England for three or four years, enough time for my father to earn his degree. They thought they would return to Madras and start their family in India.

My parents left India in January, 1961. The professor who suggested to my father

that he attend university in England helped him sort out much of the paperwork. My father had to travel to New Delhi himself to procure the exit papers he and my mother would need. Traditionally, when a man goes abroad to study, his wife will remain in India. My mother though, did not want to stay in Madras alone with her in-laws, especially as her own family was hundreds of miles away. Although she did have relatives in Madras (my parents are related by the marriage of my mother's uncle to my father's auntie) she did not want to stay there by herself, in a house with a family she had only known for six months. So she had to obtain exit papers as well. A curious thing happened to my father in New Delhi. An official spelled my father's surname incorrectly, and my father, who hated dealing with the infamous Indian bureaucracy, did not bother to tell the official the correct spelling, and to this day our family name is Thridandam and not Thirudandum.

My parents lived in England much longer anticipated. After my father earned his Ph.D., he landed a job in another part of England. My father worked there until, through a contact of another professor, he was offered a job at Zenith Radio and Television in the United States. Although my parents were still Indian citizens. My father gladly accepted this new job in the States. He saw it as both a career opportunity and as an opportunity to get out of England, a country he came to dislike because of its prejudice against Indians. At this time more Indians were entering the U.S. than ever before, thanks to the 1965 Immigration Reform Act. Indians were desirable because of their educated and professional status, and especially because they spoke English (coming from a former British colony). My family came here on a American ship and landed in New York harbor on March 26, 1969. My father and mother recalled how excited they were to see the Statue of Liberty. They had a sense of hope that America would be a good place for them. The first thing they ate was pizza, just as they had when they landed in Italy on their way to England. From New York, the family took a train to Chicago. Zenith helped my parents locate a place to stay in Oak Park. Later when the company moved to the suburb of Elk Grove Village, my parents decided to relocate too. My parents bought their first house in Elk Grove.

We lived in Elk Grove Village until 1978, when my father was laid off. He found a job at Texas Instruments in Houston and we moved there and our troubles began. It was the start of the downturn in the Texas economy, and eight months after we moved there, my father was laid off again. He searched all over for a job, found one in Silicon Valley and we moved to California. My father had a hard time adjusting to the new aggressive way companies did business. He was a Research & Development man who did not know how to be a marketing man at the same time. My father says that as things changed, he was not able nor willing to change with them. He had always called himself an intellectual coolie, understanding that no matter what you do in this world, you are most likely someone else's slave. When he was laid off from

his position in 1987, he gave up on the business world. He was going to be no one's coolie again.

Their belief in the American Dream is one thing that definitely changed over the years. Although they realize that it can work for some, they do not see it as working for them, and only hope it will work for their children. Although my parents worked hard all this time in the U.S., my father readily admits that he is not able to adapt well to the "cut throat" style of American business and of capitalism. After 24 years of living here (the last 14 as an U.S. citizen), he still does not feel that the U.S. is his country. My parents always looked back to India as their home. But after their recent visit, they see that India is their home only in their hearts and not in their reality. India has changed so much in the past 32 years, and so too have my parents. The country they loved is there no longer, and it is slowly falling apart. Raised as nationalists, they see India returning to regionalism and are deeply saddened by it.

Our family's material wealth increased for many years but my parents' wealth has decreased in the past six years. Although they have many consumer goods, these are old and relics of better times. No one can say if they are better off than they would have been if they had stayed in India. My father's relatives back there have all the material things we do in the States. They have risen above our family's traditional working class role into one of upper middle class status. Other material changes for the family have been not as noticeable. We still eat Indian food every day, but sometimes on weekends or when there is little time, we will eat spaghetti or a sandwich. All the children wear western clothes, but my mother has always worn a sari. Only in the past month, has my mother begun to wear pants and tops. (After her lengthy stay in India, she finds the Bay Area temperatures too cold for bare legs.)

The change in non-material culture is subtle. My father has always been an individual in a society that looks towards being acceptable to your social group (family). In America, he can be his eccentric, individual self with little repercussions from society at large. Since 1987, he has not worked steadily, but is happy with himself. My mother accepts him and their life together, too. Although the local Indian community frowns upon my father's unwillingness to conform to the group, he pays no heed to them. He firmly believes that he and his family should do what they believe is right, regardless of what other people think. As long as you can take care of yourself and are not a burden to others, what business is it of other people what one does? This is a fairly western belief that my father can act upon here in the States without worry about other people constantly butting in as they do back in India. He does not get close enough to the Indian community to let them butt in. Although my parents mainly socialize with local Indians (mostly South Indians: Telugu, Kannada and Tamil people, because we are Telugu speaking), they do not find it necessary to

follow those people's proper conventions. Another partial change is in the belief that children need to be responsible for the parents in the parents' old age. Even though my brother and sister and I would do anything for our parents, our parents never make us feel obligated to do so. They expect no sacrifice from their children, although we would at any time sacrifice for them, and have indeed helped them these past six years, both financially and emotionally.

Even though my parents and myself have not always felt that the United States is our home, we accept that this is the closest we will ever come to having a home. Like many people from a different, old world culture who come to the U.S., we at times feel schizophrenic but have come to accept that this schizophrenia is more understandable to American society than it would be to Indian society. For everyone in my family, everyday is a day to come to terms with who we are and how to make and take the best of our two cultures. It may be difficult, but as my father points out, "it has to be done in order to survive."

Notes

1. Personal names have been changed at request of author.
3. Personal names have been changed and initials are a pseudonym.
4. This is an excerpt from a longer paper. Title is provided by the editor.

[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)