

SHADES OF L.A. INTERVIEW PROJECT

INTERVIEW SUMMARY

INTERVIEW WITH HELEN BROWN ON 7/2/93 IN HERMOSA BEACH, CA

INTERVIEWER: AMY KITCHENER

TAPE 1, SIDE A

- 000 Introduction
- 006 Born in Manila, Philippines in May 1915
- 010 Background on parents, mother from northern Philippines, father from U.S. of Dutch and English parentage
- 016 Circumstances for parents marriage, father to Philippines in 1901, after college graduation -- historical background on American colonization of Philippines -- emphasis on education and English proficiency -- previously 89 languages in islands and need for common language
- 043 Father was English teacher
- 052 Few Americans in Philippines during this time -- background history on colonization of Philippines -- Philippine revolution against Spanish after 350 yrs. of colonization -- established own republic 1898 -- synopsis of historical events -- the Battle of Manila Bay -- Treaty of Paris 1898 -- Spanish sell Philippines to U.S.-- American Filipino War -- Philippines loses
- 127 Strategy of U.S. to pacify Filipino people through universal education -- influx of American teachers -- that was circumstance for Helen's father's immigration
- 144 Meeting of her parents -- mother was high school student in her father's class in the north -- married in 1910
- 154 politics of intermarriage -- Helen's maternal grandfather was revolutionary who fought against the Americans but her father was persistent and continued courting her mother -- mother was third daughter and was not supposed to be married first according to tradition

- 176 Parents married and had seven children -- father successful and transferred to Manila -- Helen was first child born there -- third of seven children -- father became one of the directors of the Bureau of Education
- 187 1933 immigration to the United States after her father retired -- college education for children was motivating factor -- high value on education for Filipinos -- motivation for other Filipinos to immigrate to the U.S.
- 206 Early Filipinos had different experience as agricultural laborers -- U.S. recruited them to come -- first to Hawaii on sugar plantations and later to the West coast -- followed the Chinese and Japanese -- Filipinos classified as nationals -- 1920s
- 227 Many of Helen's cousins and mother's friends came during 1920s
- 234 Motivations for Filipino immigration to the U.S.
- 249 Glorification of things American during U.S. colonization of Philippines -- examples: products, citrus, apples -- American produce given as Christmas gifts -- "worshiping oranges and apples" -- the native tropical fruits were not valued -- this mind set is still pervasive in Philippines (shoes, sheets)
- 284 Helen from "comfortable" upbringing -- had Western values, except for Filipino value on family and education
- 307 Experience upon arriving in the U.S. -- age 16 -- was adaptable to Western values, but she stood out -- was perceived as different -- she anticipated life to be similar to her life in Philippines, but it was not
- 330 Caucasian peers' reactions to her -- prejudice and ignorance about the Philippines --
- 349 Helen protected herself by fabricating identities -- ie. Czechoslovakian or Hawaiian
- 360 Oldest sister remained in Philippines and married another "mestizo" and remained through difficult time of WWII -- older brother was already in college in Ohio
- 382 Helen's first visit to U.S. in 1927 -- accompanied father and older sister on trip to scout out the possibilities in California for family's immigration

- 400 Bad time in U.S. -- the Great Depression -- Watsonville riot -- widespread prejudice against Filipinos -- came on Empress ocean liner and landed in Vancouver -- bought car and started driving down the coast -- father liked Washington and the University of Washington and decided to buy a house there -- when owner discovered his wife was Filipina and he was from Philippines they were not allowed to purchase house -- father decided to return immediately to Philippines
- 431 Father was retired and worked for Goodyear tires in Manila and then fully retired and brought family to California in 1933
- 438 Family was able to buy house in Arcadia, CA and children could attend school
- 449 Settled on one acre ranch near present day Rosemead -- Helen attended Pasadena City College which was nearest junior college and then enrolled in UCLA after two years
- 460 Experiences at UCLA -- she commuted during the first year then moved on campus in a dormitory -- Helen was lonely and felt the social differences among her peers -- the girls were interested in boys -- Helen turned to her studies which she loved
- 495 Favorite subjects -- education, history -- did not like math -- had music tutor because she needed to pass exam for education major -- father wanted Helen to be a teacher
- 524 Remembers mentors in education field and the new theories of the time -- Helen's application of ideas in teaching unit on transportation -- the new theories expounded the value of experiential learning, but were perceived as being socialistic in the school system
- 567 Earned her B.A. in 1937 -- continued education at UCLA for M.A. completed in 1939 -- college was pleasing experience for Helen -- received honors -- was "reader" for professors for grading exams -- Helen was tough grader
- 602 Helen felt she was more immature than her peers because of her traditional upbringing in the Philippines -- in graduate school there was more emphasis on studies
- 643 Worked as teacher -- Helen met future husband Bill Brown just after graduate school --

670 First teaching job -- first as substitute -- lived at 105th St./Hoover in L.A. -- married in 1941 -- was "white" neighborhood at time -- where she raised her kids -- taught at 96th Street School -- mixture of white, black and hispanic -- taught lower grades for eight years

727 enjoyed teaching, but not school culture --

733 END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

TAPE 1, SIDE B

000 Helen enjoyed teaching, but not school culture -- confined by school curriculum and classroom -- lack of freedom -- applied to be child welfare and attendance worker in the school district -- receiving referrals from teachers and working with families -- took job

022 Elementary education was dominated by women -- worked in system for 34 yrs. and saw many changes -- men began teaching early grades -- women began to get positions in management

046 Life experience was growth process -- new interests and became "social worker" -- good experience to understand social change -- lifelong passion

069 Met husband in early 1940s -- recalls recent Catholic wedding where priest addressed audience to recall how they first met spouses -- Helen laughs and says she was ready to kick Bill out of the house when she first met him -- Helen lived with girlfriend near UCLA -- roommate gave a holiday party that Helen did not attend because she was tired from teaching and needed to sleep -- party revelers set off fire crackers in the fireplace -- She was awakened and asked the guests to stop -- Bill was there and asked her roommate about Helen -- later he called her so they could meet

122 Helen had a previous long engagement with a boy from the Philippines

132 Started to date Bill Brown -- he captivated her interest -- after 6 months they married -- could not get marriage license in Los Angeles because Helen was Filipina -- went to Boulder City, CO to marry

154 Bill was student of History and Politics -- came from family of Irish entrepreneurs -- Bill specialized in building room additions -- taught children his skills -- Bill loved travel, people, learning

182 Family traveled -- Helen went on sabbatical for a year to travel around the U.S. with her family and brought her four boys (youngest was 2 yrs. old) -- spent 14 months in a trailer -- every four years they took trips -- went on three other major trips -- Bill had talent for real estate -- bought property in Hemet

220 Explanation of Helen's rekindled identification as a Filipina -- 1960's Civil Rights -- Black power -- Black Panthers -- Chicano movement in L.A. City schools -- Sal Castro, et. al

257 Filipino influx of immigration after WWII -- Women started coming -- Helen saw more Filipino families and kids from the schools -- Roy Morales worked in social agency at the time and Helen met him when she was invited to be on the board of the Neighborhood Youth Association -- worked together and became great friends -- people of color started working together -- having similar experiences

310 Position paper under office of human of relations -- issues in Asian Pacific community -- Helen was part of group with others -- late 1960's -- known as Asians Coming Together (ACT 1) -- ACT 2 and 3 followed -- students got involved -- Yellow Brotherhood -- political action and rallies -- University study centers for Asians, Blacks, American Indians, Chicanos

360 Helen was no longer shy and spoke out on many issues

379 60's movement was precedent for today's coalition groups around multiculturalism -- retaining differences and looking at similarities

397 Development of PARRAL (Filipino American Reading Room and Library) -- Filipino awareness of others defining them -- Filipino vs. Filipino -- "little brown brothers" -- Filipino Spanish surnames

455 Filipinos in U.S. focused on regionalism in past -- now building a common identity here in the U.S. -- not assimilation, but acculturation -- looking at how the Filipino culture contributes to American culture -- empowerment from politics and representation in school system

514 END OF INTERVIEW

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY
PART II -- HELEN BROWN
INTERVIEW CONDUCTED ON 7/9/93

INTERVIEWER: AMY KITCHENER

TAPE 2, SIDE A

- 000 Introduction
- 007 Childhood remembrances of Philippines -- values -- language (Spanish and Ilocano) -- languages defined the culture for Helen
- 039 Respect for elders -- anecdote from childhood about manners and greeting elders -- mealtimes
- 054 Absorbing mother's culture of northern Philippines -- children helping with chores -- relating with grandparents -- food -- privileged upbringing
- 070 Mother's difficulty upon coming to the U.S. -- unaccustomed to running a household -- Helen's love of gardening
- 091 Adjustments to new situation in the U.S. -- learning to make friends -- Helen felt immature compared to her new peers -- anecdote of seeing teens necking in a rumble seat -- blossomed later in career and marriage
- 135 First impressions of Los Angeles -- movies, houses, paved streets, traffic -- all day school (contrast to Philippines) -- Philippines siesta in afternoon -- L.A. very busy in comparison
- 163 Leisure activities in L.A. -- home life -- care of pets -- raising chickens and goats -- contrast with Philippines -- family always around -- unified by similar interests and social class
- 195 Home life in Manila -- socializing with barrio children -- not allowed outside fence of front yard -- Helen started rebelling -- snuck out to play with other kids -- giving firewood to their families -- farmlands and caribous -- playing with frogs and tadpoles in mud -- visiting homes of farmer's kids -- description of traditional housing -- gift of handmade jewelry box

- 267 Grandparents (maternal) -- grandmother from storekeeper's family in northern Philippines -- grandfather from prominent family -- story of grandparents courtship -- grandfather was studying to be friar and met grandmother at family's store -- she was 13 and he fell in love with her -- he left the church and married her -- grandmother had ten children -- elder children lived with maiden aunts because grandmother was too young to take care of all of them
- 320 Helen's mother lived with spinster aunt who was devout catholic -- mother religious -- religion among Helen's siblings -- father was Presbyterian -- siblings had double exposure and choice to attend church -- Helen went to father's church -- she liked the singing of hymns and church library with Bobby Twins, and excursions -- four siblings became staunch Catholics -- two were protestant -- Helen is eclectic and identifies as a "non practicing Catholic"
- 406 Great Depression did not affect family -- although it did deeply affect her husband Bill's family -- Great Depression did affect first wave Filipino laborers and it led to discrimination since jobs were so scarce -- compared to today's recession
- 463 Ties maintained with Philippines after immigration to California -- letters -- school reunions -- Helen returned to her mother's home and family every 2 years after she was married -- she took her sons and husband there too and toured the country -- sailing on brother-in-law's boats -- today's unrest makes such a trip prohibitive -- rediscovery of her heritage
- 558 Cultural dances and songs depicting diversity of cultures in Philippines -- gestures in dance -- anecdote about "training" vs. "educating" teachers -- 1954 Shrine Auditorium Filipino dance performance was inspiration for Helen -- beginning of rekindled pride in filipino roots for Helen
- 665 Traditional expectations of Filipino women -- egalitarian values -- "women control purse strings, but men are bosses" -- Spanish colonization put women down -- Americans restored some privileges (continued on side B)
- 731 END OF TAPE 2, SIDE A

TAPE 2, SIDE B

- 001 Roles of women in Philippines (continued) -- women gained suffrage -- established own university which was seed of cultural revival of dance -- first such university in Asia -- Helen received "Woman Warrior" award from Asian Pacific Women's Network -- 1st woman president in Asia today
- 032 World War II experience -- married August 1941 during this time -- taught school during war -- drills at school for air raids -- war impacted family in 1943 -- Bill had disability and did not go to war but taught industrial arts for school district -- Bill taught welding and riveting -- Helen pregnant with first son, Billy -- forced pregnancy leave from teaching for 6 months
- 060 Helen did not enjoy staying at home and wanted to participate -- Husband worked midnight shift with Bethlehem Steel at the harbor -- Helen's childhood friend, Lilly, lived with them too -- Bill got job as tester for welders -- many women were welders -- Bill encouraged Helen to join his class -- women welders included black and latino women -- Helen enjoyed welding -- process of welding was an art
- 120 Worked for Cal Ship -- Helen passed test and went to work in ship yard -- assigned to welding bulk heads of Liberty ships (Victory ships) -- description of work in ship yards -- rapport with women -- Helen worked on swing shift -- husband worked on night shift and friend, Lily worked on day shift -- rotated child care for son -- no child care for women workers -- Helen spear-headed program for child care cooperative -- beginning of women's empowerment -- first time for women of color to advance -- seeds planted
- 215 Helen did not return to teaching after her leave was up -- kept her job as a welder
- 248 PARRAL -- Helen started Pilipino American Reading Room and Library with her collection of books, clippings, etc. -- Helen is life long collector -- Royal Morales suggested First Filipino Christian Church as location for Helen's collection -- converted store room to library -- opened in 1985 -- Jackie Goldberg gave key note address at opening reception -- formed non-profit organization with leadership of community called PAMANA FOUNDATION, Inc. to support library -- Pamana means "heritage" in Tagalog

350 Present plans and goals -- expand to larger space for library and museum to promote the Filipino American culture -- people are unaware of contributions -- L.A. encompasses great diversity and provides a good place to learn about other cultures, including filipinos

404 newspaper articles -- relationship between ethnic groups -- part of Helen's collection includes cross-cultural themes

462 END OF INTERVIEW

LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY
SHADES OF L.A. INTERVIEW PROJECT
TRANSCRIBED EXCERPTS

INTERVIEWEE: HELEN BROWN
INTERVIEWER: AMY KITCHENER
DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW(S): 7/2/93, 7/9/93
LOCATION: HERMOSA BEACH, CA
ETHNICITY: FILIPINO AMERICAN/CAUCASIAN
OTHERS PRESENT: NONE
TRANSCRIBER: AMY KITCHENER

INTERVIEW NUMBER: SH-3
NUMBER OF DAT TAPES: 2
NUMBER OF CASSETTE TAPES: 2
LENGTH:

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Note: Interviews were recorded on DAT (Digital Audio Tape) and transferred to standard cassette tape for transcribing and listening purposes. The three digit numbers are indexed from the cassette recording and not the original DAT recording.

PART I -- 7/2/93

Tape 1, Side A (CORRESPONDS TO DAT TAPE 1)

HB: 187 It was only in 1933 when he was retired that he decided that the rest of the children would go with the family to the States and settle there so that the children could finish their education at colleges here.

AK: So education was very much a motivating force in your family?

HB: Not only in the family, in the culture of the Philippines education is very highly valued. In fact that's why Filipinos came to the United States because they felt, you know, that this is where they could get the kind of education that would enable them to succeed in life and actually go back to the Philippines and have a good job and a good life over there. And the American teachers actually encouraged Filipinos to -- those that they felt had the potential to come to the United States to better their education, their English and so forth. And of course it turned to be an all together different kind of experience for the early

Filipinos who were not the ones that were necessarily motivated like I've described by the teachers and others because of education to come to the U.S. It was the American industry, the agricultural industries, in sugar primarily, that motivated the United States to recruit the Filipinos to come in the -- first to Hawaii to work in the fields, sugar cane and other products, and later on to the west coast. So they were the ones that followed the Chinese and the Japanese as they were ousted. (AK: They shut down immigration and they would open it up for different groups?)

221 And since the United States was colonizing the Philippines they were classified as "Nationals" so that they could come in large numbers.

AK: And what years were this?

HB: Essentially most of the 1920s. 225

BREAK

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HB: My upbringing in the islands was very Western. So that when I first came to the States that was a problem for me because that was my orientation, yet, it wasn't that way in my relationships with other Americans here. By that I mean, they would look at me -- now remember this was 16 years old (laughs) and I was very sensitive -- And there weren't a lot of Filipinos in the cities where we had bought our house and were growing up. Filipinos at that time were out in the fields. The bulk of them, laborers and things. And there weren't the kind of middle class, upper class Filipinos that we see here today. So that with this Western kind of emphasis growing up in the Philippines and coming here I thought everything would be just the same, you know. But it wasn't.

324 I was at first relating to peers with my same age. We'd have parties and sometimes we'd have slumber parties and I remember we would be talking, sharing experiences. And, well, you know, "Where were you born?" (laughs) and they'd say, "Illinois," or they'd say, "California," or whatever. And I'd say I was from the Philippines and well, that would start the frowns, you know. "Where was that?" you know, "Where was that?" And I said, "Well, it's out there near China." (laughs) "Oh, oh yeah." Or "Was it near Hawaii?" "No a little bit further than that." "Oh, is that right?" So they'd look at me and they'd say, "Well, did you go to school there?" And I said, "Oh yes! I went to school like you went to over here." "Did you live in a house?" Well that kind of thing, you know. Also, they'd say, "Helen," when they'd ask, you know, "Where are you from? You seem to be (oh how shall I say it?). . . You seem to be like us but there's something different about you." And so I began to say hey -- that isn't the right thing to say to get along here.

So I'd fabricate (laughs). I'd say I was from Hawaii, you know, or Czechoslovakia or whatever I thought of saying, you know.

AK: Did you have sort of back up information?

HB: They wouldn't say, "Oh where's that?" They wouldn't say that.

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BREAK

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HB: So we came over and that was the time that was pretty bad here in the U.S. We didn't feel it as with our group in the Islands. There was the beginning of the recession and also a lot of the discrimination against the Filipinos -- the Watsonville Riots and everything. And there were a lot of Filipinos in Washington where we first (AK: Did you come by boat?) Yeah, there weren't any airplanes at that time. It took us a month when we traveled in that time. We traveled on the Empress Liners and they docked in Vancouver and so we bought a car and started driving down. And we -- in Washington, in Seattle, my dad liked it a lot over there and he visited the University of Washington and he thought, "Gee that would be nice for the kids," you know. So he decided to buy this house that was kind of close to there. But when they learned in questioning his -- oh, the usual blanks to fill out -- he's from the Philippines, his wife's from the Philippines. They wouldn't let him buy the house because real estate laws were against any people of color at that time. You couldn't buy property, sometimes you couldn't go to school, couldn't get married. So, and then he'd be reading all these things so he was really upset. He says, "I'm not going to come back to the U.S. Let's go back home." So we went back.

AK: So you didn't come back down to California at that time. You just went to Washington and went back?

HB: Right. It was a very short stay. 430

BREAK

Tape 1, Side B

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HB: So he called and then we started dating. And I was impressed because he had so many things that he liked to talk about that I kind of liked. And he liked to go on long drives. And he always had a flashlight, and if it started to get dark he'd always -- if something interested him he want to flash the flash light. And so I said, "Hey, he's kind of interesting," you know (laughs). But in six months we were married. And we couldn't get our license to marry here. (AK: What happened?)

Well, we went to apply for our license to get married and again, the same old thing. You know, "Where were you born?" "Manila" "Do you have any Filipino blood?" "Yes. My mother's Filipino." Well, they couldn't grant -- They had the anti-miscegenation laws at that time. Those weren't repealed until 1965.

AK: So what did you have to do?

HB: We went to Boulder City Nevada and got married over there.

AK: Is that where most people went from L.A.?

HB: I don't know. I never made a study, but anybody of color, or any color in their background, they had to leave and get married someplace else. All of us married outside of California.

AK: Your siblings?

HB: Yes. 153

BREAK

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AK: When did you begin to identify yourself as being Filipino?

HB: Yeah, O.K. That's an interesting thing too. O.K. When I finished college and was teaching I would sometimes be assigned to a school where there were lots of Blacks in the neighborhood. Because the Blacks were beginning to expand from in the 40s, you know, where Watts was a small enclave, or it was down there. They were beginning to move outward and that was also the time when the Black Panthers and the Black Empowerment movements were taking place and there were all these lectures about the Blacks being discriminated [against] and they were having these community meetings about Black power and the fist (AK: Like in the early 60s?) Yeah. And I was very much interested in hearing that, you know. But I wasn't saying anything necessarily. I was just absorbing what they were saying, you know. "Oh that's kind of interesting, that's interesting, I wonder why?" You know, that kind of stuff.

Well the Chicanos started in on theirs. And of course part of that Chicano Movement was centered around the L.A. City schools. Sal Castro, I don't know if you remember that name or not? He was quite a student leader and you know, they had these student strikes against the schools. They weren't teaching identity and stuff like that. And Sal Castro is now a teacher at Belmont High School. And so they were -- the Chicanos were joining the Blacks, although they were different. There were differences in their culture and things, there were commonalities in terms of the discrimination and all of that stuff. And so I

was working in one of the, doing some of that social work, working with groups of kids, some of whom were groups of Filipinos because the Filipinos were beginning to come in greater numbers now, after World War II. You know, that's when the women starting coming, you know. And so naturally, you know families were there and so I was beginning to see more Filipino kids coming in the schools. And I was getting acquainted with their families. And then more of my family was also coming over. We were beginning to talk about, you know, what was happening.

Well, Roy Morales was working for a social agency in the same school area where I was practicing and working with troubled kids. He was working in any agency with troubled kids. And I got acquainted with him because they had come to, not him, but his agency, had come to the schools and asked for referrals of groups of kids who were troublesome and had problems at school and that kind of thing. So I was invited to be on the board of this particular agency which was called the Neighborhood Youth Association. So I went over and noticed this brown colored guy (laughs) social worker. "I bet he's a Filipino." And that was Roy (laughs), and so we became acquainted and I made several referrals, you know, to the agency. Not only, well a few Filipino kids, usually they were kid of quiet. You know, the troubled kids weren't only the misbehaving kids and the truant kids. We recognized kids who were very quiet, kids who didn't talk much and teachers got upset about because they wouldn't answer questions and things like that. 289 Well, that fit the mold of the Filipino kid, you know. So anyway, so Roy and I became great friends, you know, because of this commonality. So we followed each others career, all through the years. So he was getting involved with other Asians too. Because more Asians were beginning to come.

We as a group were hearing the Blacks talk about their experiences. We Asians began to hear about the Chicanos and we were saying to ourselves, "Hey, you know, we feel the same way. They're saying things that we feel that have never been expressed." And I heard some things there, "Hey that's right." Remember I told you I didn't relate very well. I was very lonely and lonesome because I was internalizing all this stuff instead of, you know, speaking out and that kind of thing.

So there was a Japanese fellow, I forgot his name now. And he was in the County Human Relations Department. And he called on Roy and some other social workers working in the agencies to form a position paper under the auspices of the Office of Human Relations to begin to identify issues impacting the Asian Pacific community. So he asked Roy to get some people together to talk about this. And he asked me if I wanted to be part of that group. And I said, "Oh, yeah. That sounds very interesting." So we got a group together and we got a hold of, I think it was Harry Kitano, at UCLA who was in the School of Social Work at

that time, or School of Social Welfare, or Social Psychology, or whatever. So we identified each of the different Asian groups: Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Pacific Islander, Filipino. And so we in the Filipino group, each one of us, in committee wrote the position paper. That was in the late 60s. And that came to be known as Asians Coming Together, ACT I, and then there was an ACT II and then there was an ACT III.

And then, the young students were getting involved and interested in the high schools and things. And there were organizations like Yellow Brotherhood, you know. And they were bringing out the fact that there were suicides occurring among young Japanese. There were Japanese girls running away from home, becoming pregnant and things. And so we were speaking out about those issues among ourselves, trying to involve the families. And the families said, "No, no, we don't want any of that. We are families. We will take care of it," you know, kind of thing. But it was too big a problem for families to take care of. So we became a group speaking out just along the model of the Blacks and the Chicanos. And so we had this so-called Asian --

AK: Did you have rallies or what kind of --

HB: Rallies, people would get up and talk. We organized and the University started talking about, you know, getting an Asian Studies Center along with Blacks and the Chicanos, and the Indians, by the way. And so, I would go out. I was no longer the withdrawn shy type (AK: the little girl) (laughs) speaking out. I was volunteering, you know. (AK: You would get up there and give a speech and things?) Yeah, I'd say, "Hey, I have something to say. I want to say this." And I'd say -- And so, because of my work in this, they didn't call us social workers in the district, but I was identified as a social worker in the social work community because I was getting my training from trained social workers. But the district never identified us as social workers, they called us -- Oh, I've been called a truant officer, I've called a child welfare worker, I've been called an attendance worker, but finally towards the years when I was retiring then they called us pupil personnel workers (chuckles) -- Finally began to give us a very positive identification. So I was part of that movement.

AK: How did other groups perceive this movement? Other groups of people? How was this group perceived?

HB: 380 Well, it was perceived as something that had some identity with the others so that today what's happening, we're having coalition groups, you know, within the context of multiculturalism. We have common issues, but yet in a way we are different so what we want to say -- We want to retain our differences, but at the same time there are certain

commonalities, that were all the same, which is the concept of multiculturalism. So what's happening now in the schools, that's what they're focusing on. And that's when the library, the Filipino American library, because along with this concept developing Filipinos have recognized, "Hey, you know, we've been too quiet in the past. We've been letting people identify who we are, giving us our names." That's where the thing comes about whether to call ourselves Filipinos with an F or Pilipino with the P. (AK: Oh, could you explain that?) (laughs)

Well, so as Filipinos have learned more about their own history, about the long years of colonization by Spain, and other western countries and then the colonization by the United States, they have given us what our identity is. "Little brown brothers," you know, who couldn't govern themselves so we had to establish the kind of government that they should have, you know. And the Spaniards saying, "Hey you're Filipino name is too hard for us to pronounce and too hard for us to remember, so we're going to give you another name." And so that's why Filipinos were given all these Spanish surnames, you know. And then they gave us our name: Filipinos with an F. And we didn't even have an F in our alphabet, see? And they're defining who we are and everything. So the students with the socially conscious leadership were beginning to say, "Hey, you know, if we don't do anything, you know, they'll continue saying who we are. And we're not telling them really who we are." And so to heck with this F business, you know. We're going to use Pilipino, because that's more consistent with really who we are, within our alphabet and that kind of thing. So that's how largely the young students and the leadership have now been calling ourselves Pilipino. It's the same thing as the Hispanics who are third, fourth generation who've grown up here and they know nothing about Mexico and they wouldn't know how to live in Mexico. And so they call themselves Chicano, the more, well it's the same thing, the change of Filipino to Pilipino. But we don't downgrade people who want to -- in terms of the historical sense, say why change it? We were called Filipinos. Why not, we're Filipinos. So we don't quarrel with that, you know, if they want to do that, go ahead.

So that's the basis of that thing and so today what's happening now, instead of this regionalism that's been transferred from the Philippines here to the United States where the social structure here in the United States is based on where you came from. (AK: Really?) So you have your Ilocano fiestas, you had your Visayan fiestas, you have your fiestas of the Muslims from Mindanao. So now, what they're doing is to begin to think in terms of -- Yes, we are from different regions of the islands, but still we're from the Philippines. And so if we're going to have more of a part of this country here in the United States -- We're making it our home. We want to be a part of this, you know, we have to make our part known too. It's not

assimilation, it's more of an acculturation. So we keep our differences as Filipino, but we also become a part of the United States. This is the Philippine culture contributing to this society. So as a result of that we're getting more involved. How are we going to do that? How are we going to empower ourselves so that we can be felt as a part of this country? So the empowerment is coming politically now. More Filipinos are realizing the power of politics, to get involved because after all, that's where the decisions are being made. We're getting some being elected now in different parts of the country and to the different governing bodies -- The councils -- and Hawaii has an assistant governor in Hawaii, for example. In the school system more teachers are feeling that they can be more than teachers, you know, empower themselves by becoming middle management. We've had some being appointed now. And so as they are they're inculcating into the district in the curriculum things regarding to our contributions to the U.S. The farmers that grew the crops, that feed the nation when the other men went to war, and things like that. And so, that's what's happening right now.

AK: I'm going to pause here for just a second.

512 End of interview, part I

PART II -- INTERVIEW WITH HELEN BROWN
7/9/93

TAPE 2, SIDE A (CORRESPONDS TO DAT TAPE 2)

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AK: What did your family do for leisure?

HB: Well, I think -- My memory is it wasn't so much going out as it was staying at home. We lived on an acre of land. We were kind of isolated. It was undeveloped land at that time, which is now west Arcadia. It's not too far from where the race track is -- not anywhere near like it is here. So lots of our activities were at home with my brothers and my sister. And I loved -- That's where I started liking, you know, gardening and taking care of pets. And I used to earn extra money by raising chickens (laughs). And we had goats. That's my early memory of, you know, of what we did. I don't remember going out to too many places at all.

AK: That must have been very different from your life in the Philippines too. Kind of back to the land [here]--

HB: -- Well, yeah. In the Philippines you had a lot of family around and everybody was the same. I mean we liked to do the

same things. We liked going to the ocean. We lived kind of near Manilla Bay. After school we'd go the Y, you know. And our interests were the same, you know. And there was nothing different between us because too we were all, with the groups that I went with -- were more or less comfortable families.

And I'd compare this with the children who were very low income. They didn't live in the city. They lived kind of on the border and they called them the little barrios. And I used to -- and that was another thing when I was a kid -- We used to have a large yard and gardeners would come and take care of the yard -- throw the wood and trash and stuff behind big bamboo trees over the fence. And I used to get acquainted with the little children who used to come over there and search for wood and throw away things. And they lived across the field in what we called the little barrio with the typical nipa hut that was up on stilts, you know, to keep it from getting wet during the storms. So I used to be friends with these little children. And I enjoyed it, you know, my mother, or the family, would not allow us to go outside the fence. Well, I guess that was -- I'm thinking maybe that was the time when I started rebelling (laughs) -- being an activist. Because I'd sneak out the fence and play with them, you know. And there -- And that thought just came into my mind. And there was a big field, you know, in the back. And then there was a railroad and you'd look across the big river which was called the Pasig River and on the other side was the palace of the governors -- Malacanang Palace they called it -- in the distance. And in between there, there was this little village of nipa houses and things where these little kids lived. And so I used to get wood from the house and stuff, you know, and go out there and give it to them. I used to go out and play with them.

The caribous, you know the, the caribous would be in those fields because they are the beast of burden, is that what you call for the farmers? -- and they didn't have any sweat glands. They're not like the ones you see in India, you know with the hump. So these caribous would have to eventually dig their own round pond. And of course with the frequent rains there would be water in there and the caribou would come and immerse themselves in there. And we used to watch them and whatnot. And when they weren't there, especially during the rainy season, why the frogs would come and of course they would have these tadpoles all over the place. And the kids and I would catch those tadpoles. And I still remember -- I would be bare foot -- Am I going out of the -- (AK: You're doing fine.) I would go out there barefoot with these kids -- they were barefoot. And I can still feel that mud oozing through my toes. It was a very nice feeling. I loved it, you know.

Well anyway, we became so well acquainted they took me to visit their house and it seemed like their father -- and you had to climb up a bamboo ladder to get up to the first floor. And it

was one all big room with bamboo slats for the floor because everybody slept on the floor at night. And the kitchen was one part of the house and so forth. So it turned out that the father of this one particular family was a box maker. And that's how -- one way he made his living. He made these jewelry boxes. And they were made in the form of a book. Here comes the books now (laughs). Well, anyway, you know these old fashioned covers that you see on books that are old -- for the inside cover. They were all covered with that kind of paper and you open it up and it was a jewelry box, kind of. Or a box that you could keep keepsakes in. So I was given some of those to take home. And I know that was a big thing for them to do. But I always remember that and I brought it over with me when we came over, but unfortunately I don't know what happened to it. I wish that I had it, but anyway so those are some of the kind of fun things, you know, we kind of did when we were kids. 267

BREAK

464

AK: What ties did you maintain with the Philippines after you had come here?

HB: Well, of course there were letters coming all the time. My mother would get letters from the family. And I'd get letters from my schoolmates that would still be there. By the way, most of them are here now. In fact, we have reunions of the school where we went every other year. I'm going to one in October this year in Daytona Beach. So, but because of the large family of my mother's and the good times we had there, in fact it's only just recently that I haven't been back to the islands. Usually after I was married after finishing school -- on the average I would go back for a vacation for a least a month every two years. And I wouldn't stay too much in Manilla because Manilla's so much like any other western city. But I'd just love to go back to my mother's place and that's where you'd really get, feel the hospitality of the people. And their sincere joy in being together again, enjoying the conversation and the food and the picnics and the swimming and so forth and so on. Eating the native fruits (laughs) -- no more, no more thinking that the oranges and apples are the greatest. Go back there and enjoy the mango and the chico and the camachili and santol and the duhat -- delicious. I hope to take you there someday, maybe. (AK: I would love to go.) So I keep a very close relationship in fact, Bill and I have been back together there at least three times.

And one time we took the whole family there -- all the four boys and Bill and myself. I think it was during one of my sabbaticals. When I was growing up there, the only part of the Philippines that I knew was from Manilla which was located by Manilla Bay which is about half, about half the length of the big island called Luzon. And a day's trip by bus to the northern

part of that island which is Laoag, my mother's place, via Baguio, which most of the western world knows about because it's up in the mountains and it's cool and that's where a lot of the government officials and foreign-borns would go for their vacations. That was about the only place in the Philippines that I knew. But then when I went back after being married with my four kids. We went all over the Philippines and I enjoyed that with my own family.

And my sister that I mentioned before, remained in the Philippines because she got married. 532 Her husband was in the shipping business so during those trips we were able to use the company ships to go sailing all through the islands. And not only the ships, but different places in the islands, they would have their company houses complete with housekeeping facilities, servants, and even a car and a chauffeur. So we really travelled all over those islands and I'm so happy that my family really had this opportunity, because today you couldn't do that same thing because of the unrest, you know in the Highlands, so that even created even stronger feeling for my identification with the Philippines and being part Filipino. This is my heritage. (AK: This experience of going back, yes?) 556

Going back and then the culture depicted in the dances and the music which has flourished since I left has become so rich that when I saw that Bayanihan, which is called the comprehensive, comprehensive isn't the word I'd choose but it's close enough, shows all the dances and the songs that shows and depicts the diversity of the Filipino people, in terms of their languages, so many languages, their dress is so different, so diversified, their actions, even their dance actions. Up in the northern where they're very saving and -- their dances would be like this (gestures) where they would hold their fist like this (gestures with closed fist) because they're so tight with their money, you know (laughs) (AK: They hold their fist straight up) In the middle Philippines its a little bit more open (gestures) (AK: The hands are little more open.) But then in the Visayan islands, further south, they're very happy and carefree and their hands are all like this, you know (gesturing with open hands). 588

BREAK

611 And anyway I saw this for this first time at the Shrine Auditorium in 1954 when a dance troupe called the Bayanihan came to perform. And I hadn't gotten to the time when I was visiting back in the islands regularly, this every two years like I was saying, but -- So I read in the papers about this dance troupe coming from the Philippines to perform. I said, "I wonder what that is?" So I went over to see it and I'm telling you, Amy, this was the most beautiful presentation that I've ever seen, you know. It was coming from, traveling from the Philippines to

Europe. I forget whether it was Belgium or where Sol Hurok saw it performed and invited the team to come to the States to perform. And it was all this Philippine music with all the dances and costumes and everything. It was just beautiful. And I said, "Hey, you know what, that's part of me." And that was really the beginning of my pride in being, you know, who I was. And I still remember going home and telling Bill all about this. And since then I've become very good friends with this, they now call her Tita Betty, it's kind of a nickname for her. 647

BREAK

AK: 662 I wanted to ask you what the traditional expectations for Filipino women were and did your family have certain expectations for you?

HB: 668 The Filipino women very early even before the time of the Spaniards -- they were very egalitarian in their relationships with others. They had more or less an equal division of labor, the men, sometimes the women would, you know, go hunting or whatever and the men would stay with the kids or else it would be changed around but, and so -- However, they shared things, and this is what I've heard from others who have researched all this and whatnot. And we're very proud of the fact that even after the Spanish and the American -- When those colonization periods ended it wasn't very long before the women again, regained their position. The men would usually laugh, you know and say, "Yeah, the women -- they control the purse strings, you know... (inaudible) but I'm the boss of the family." That's the joke that goes around. 710

*** BREAK ***

TAPE 2, SIDE B

064 ... And I didn't like staying home, you know (laughs). And all of these things were happening all around me, you know. Men were leaving, women were wondering what to do and women were going into airplanes -- becoming airplane -- Rosie-the-riveter kind of thing. And I told Bill, I said, "Bill I wish there was something that I could do." And so I had a friend of mine who was staying with me at the time. She grew up with me in the Philippines, Lillie Barcus, she's still around but she lives up in Idaho. And so, and then Bill -- besides his teaching was also working a midnight shift at Bethlehem Steel, you know on the harbor. Well, while doing that he got this job to -- later on in '43 -- to do the test lab, to test welders that were needed to build the ships because the U.S. was caught way behind in their shipping and airplane. And they needed welders like mad and most of the men were gone, you know, to work. And so the call went out to train the women to do riveting and welding. And Bill was teaching this, he was also assigned to Banning High School

because he was in Industrial Arts. And so he would come home and he would tell me the stories of these women coming, you know, and learning how to weld and they were having a good time. And he says, "By the way, would you like to learn to weld?" (laughs) And I said, "To weld?" (laughs) And he says, "Yeah, as long as I'm teaching there, why don't you come with me and Lillie can watch Billy." And so, "Well, O.K. Let's see what happens."

And when I started learning welding, boy, there were Black women and Hispanic women. And I remember one old Filipino man was there also teaching. When we would have a rest period for lunch, he says, "Time to eat, time to eat" (imitating Filipino accent). And we'd all have fun, you know, like this. And so I really enjoyed that welding. To me it was kind of like an art because you had to get these pieces of steel and you had to learn how to weld those two pieces together. And then later on you had to know how to weld an upright -- That was called vertical welding. And then you had to learn how to do it above, you know this way (gesturing above her head), but you had to wear these hoods, you know, with the glass. Boy, did my eyes get burned the first few times. They were really painful. Sometimes it was worse than a child birth, when you get your eyes. Because you're not quite used to it and sometimes that spark light would leak through the hood. Well, anyway, you get used to controlling all of that. But what I enjoyed in terms of the art was -- you had to control that rod, you know, in terms of when to increase the heat, when to reduce it, you know, kind of like this (gestures). And then the beads, you call those beads where the melted steel that you would form to form the bonding of those pieces of steel -- made beautiful designs. And I still remember that and I thought it was really a great art. But anyhow -- (AK: Was this for the ship yards?) 122

For Cal Ship -- was where I eventually went to work. But we learned to weld under the L.A. City schools at Banning High School where Bill was an industrial teacher. And then when he thought that you were ready to go for your test to see if you could pass the welding test, and then, you know be hired by Cal Ship. So I took my test and I was able to pass. You had to pass the three positions. And so I was able to pass and so that's how I got to weld. In the meantime, I had gotten acquainted with the others -- the Blacks and the Hispanics and so I went to work with many of them in the shipyard. And I was assigned to weld the sides of the ships -- they were called the bulk heads of the ships, these Liberty ships -- later called the Victory ships. And I remember telling you I saw this article in the paper where one of these ships was now being used as a tourist ship between San Pedro and Catalina. Well, anyway, and these ships were used for the landing ships and I was so interested because some of them were used to land the troops or the marines in the Philippines as well as the other islands.

And anyway, (AK: Were there mostly women welding?) Oh yeah. They were mostly all women. And that, we used to work on what they call the skids which were floors really that were held upright, you know. They'd place these slabs of steel and as soon as another ship was ready to get these bulk heads then we were busy. But sometimes in between we didn't have any work to do and we'd -- the men -- There was always a man that was always the leader (laughs) -- the head man -- He didn't want to loose his team when he got used to them, you know. So if any other lead man, maybe there would be some who would be welding the interior of the ships or something like that. If they thought that you weren't busy they could take you and go and work for him. So when they weren't busy, they'd be walking through the shipyard and if they'd see somebody not working they'd would get them. So our lead man would always shove us under the ship so they couldn't see us, you know, if they came by and saw that we were waiting for some sheets of steel to come. Because he didn't want to loose us because he was experienced and we were experienced with him and knew exactly what to do.

So while we were under there, we women would be talking with each other. And there were all kinds of women, there was even one flapper, (laughs) kind of, young thing, you know, that she'd make us all laugh with all of her adventures, you know. Because I worked on the swing shift, Bill worked on the graveyard shift and Lillie, my friend, worked on the day shift so we'd always have somebody to take care of little Billy. (AK: Wow.) 176 So we'd be talking and so -- one of the things, so -- We'd get serious too. And the thing that was serious was they didn't have -- the women didn't have places to babysit their kids, you know. And so what should we do? Well of course I was kind of interested in that because of my work in school where I had learned so many times that kids were not in school because they were taking care of -- And so we talked about that, and so what we decided that -- we had friends in the other shifts too. And so we decided we'd talk -- I'd told them about my experience having, although that was within my family -- but maybe you have friends that might be working different shifts. And maybe you could trade off, you know. And so that really worked. And I always attribute that to the first time for babysitting, for child care. Because we didn't have that before but that seed was planted there. And it's interesting because many years after the war we started the Head Start program, exactly that same kind of a concept, you know. And then also, I know that was the beginning of women's empowerment because it was the first time that women of color really had the chance to earn a good living, because the pay was very good. And enjoy themselves, and they learned this skill. First time they were out of their homes, you know.

AK: How did you feel? How did it make you feel?

HB: 199 Made me feel? Oh, I enjoyed it. I really did. It seems like that's the kind of thing that I kind of like to do. I think I've kind of followed that all along.

*** BREAK ***

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AK: Can you tell me about PARRAL, the library, and how that came to be?

HB: Well, yeah, O.K. I've been a collector all my life and it seemed like I could never throw anything away that had any relationship to what I was doing that I enjoyed. It seemed as if I didn't want to forget. So I was always keeping things. And Bill was the same way. We had different interests. But, you know, he was into keeping records of real estate of travel and things like that. So this kept piling up. I even brought stuff from the Philippines -- some of my Dad's stuff too. Because he was a collector too (laughs). Well anyway, it was his scrap book of some of his experience in teaching in the Philippines -- So that when I was High School getting ready to graduate I said, "I have to make my own scrap book." So I did a scrap book and kept things, took pictures. Well, it seemed that that just grew and grew and grew and finally after several years after retirement Bill said, "What are going to do with all of this stuff here in the house?" And so, "Are we going to throw it away?" "Oh, no I can't throw this stuff. That's my life." (laughing)

And so by that time I all ready knew Roy. I don't know if I told you about my meeting with Roy? (AK: You did) And I was sharing this with him and he says, "Well, Helen, you know what?" And I says, "Do you know of any place, storage or whatever?" And he says, "Well, you know our church has a place in the basement of the church and it's nothing but a store room where we just dump stuff into it, but you know I have an idea. Why don't you go look at it and see what you think about it?"

So I went over there and like that article said, it was a "sliver of a room." (That JQ is really -- I enjoyed his interview) Well anyway, it looked all right to me so I brought Bill over, he looked at it. He said, "Oh, I think so." So he was very good -- he not only was interested in -- his mother was a teacher by the way -- He was not only very intellectual, he was also very good with his hands and he was very earthy and interested in many things. And so he and the four boys all came down and we cleared it out, you know, cleaned it up, painted it, built the shelves and began to fill it up (laughs). It really wasn't a library of the church. It was that they donated the room. They didn't ask us for any compensation. Well, in the first place they couldn't because that's part of the tax thing about the church, that they can't charge things. So that's how

we've kept it up. (AK: What year was this Helen?) I think it was in 1985.

And so when it was done and ready to be opened I was then good friends with Jackie Goldberg and she had invited me to talk to her classes at Cal State Long Beach because she was teaching a class on library. And I told her about the Filipino collections and things. And I told her about this library and she was very much interested and supportive. And so we invited her to be the keynote speaker when we opened and she cut the red ribbon on the door. And so ever since then, why we've just gone on. And then the leadership of the community -- They were largely professors in the Asian Studies Center as they began to learn about the library and things. "Why don't we form a foundation?", you know, and let's get incorporated. And so we worked hard on that and that's how we got this PANAMA foundation incorporated, it's a 501C non-profit corporation. So that's relatively new -- supports the library -- that's the main goal. Well, they're very busy people that are on the board so it's really hard to give 100 percent attention to the library, but we're moving little by little. (AK: What does PARRAL stand for?) Well, PARRAL is the acronym for Pilipino American Reading Room and Library. PAMANA stands for -- is a Filipino Tagalog word for heritage. It means heritage. 336