



Pat Sampan's Oral History
English Translation

Oral History Project

Interviewee: Pat Sampan
Interviewer: Christine Sumog-oy
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Good Afternoon. Nanay Pat, how are you today?

Glory to God, I am well.

Can you tell us a story about yourself?

I originally come from Hinunangan, Southern Leyte. When Yolanda struck, our sources of living were destroyed. Our farmland was swallowed by muds. We have a difficult life. I was not able to finish my studies. I worked as a housemaid in Manila. Working in private homes. But not for long. I have a cousin who owned a studio. My cousin told me about a work opportunity in Subic, which is a base for US army. An American family needed a housemaid. I went there. I worked there for a long time.

Until all my children had married. My youngest child got married to a US army. It so happened that when Mount Pinatubo erupted, it caused a massive destruction, which urged US soldiers to go back to the US. And I was asked by my youngest child to go with them to the US. The Americans left. I flew to the US with my youngest child.

I can't well remember all the impacts that the eruption of Pinatubo had caused. But I can remember that my house in Subic got smashed, and became uninhabitable.

How was your life in Subic when you were working as a housemaid for a US army?

It helped me experience comfort. My employers were all kind. I did not have an employer who was not an officer. I was able to work for the longest time with Lt Commander Nichols who is from Rhode Island. He has small kids. I took care of them. And you know what we can do as Filipina. We can take care of kids. We can take care of the household. We can do laundry. We can do cleaning. I did all of that. That's why I've been with them for a long time. And they wanted me to go with them to the States. I went to the Embassy, but the Embassy did not allow the family to bring a housemaid with them. So I was not able to join them. But what was good was that when they left, I was referred to another American employer, so I was still able to continue working, and I really stayed with them for a long time.



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You had mentioned that one of your children got married to a soldier. And you were brought here in the US. Can you tell more about your experience at that time? Can you also share about your imagination or expectations of the US?

What I know at that time was that life in America is great. That's why I have always aspired to come here. My previous US army employers had really wanted me to go with them when they go back to the US. But they were not allowed to do that. It just so happened that the Pinatubo erupted, and I was able to come here out of emergency, and also because my youngest child got married to a US army. I was with them. Although I was not yet taking care of their child. I was just lucky that I was also brought here. And when I finally came to Kansas, I found several work opportunities.

Which year did you come to the US at can you share what you saw or experienced here for the first time?

1991. I worked here. I did multiple jobs. I worked in a nursing home in the morning. Then when 4:00pm strikes, I would work in a restaurant, called Pan De Rosa, until it closes in the late evening, where I would work in the kitchen.

Why did you find the need to do multiple jobs at that time?

Because I have a family whom I left in Subic. I was also helping two of my grandchildren who were taking up nursing at that time. I was able to finance their studies until they reached second year level. However, they wasted the opportunity, because they also got married at a young age. So they only finished second year of nursing.

How many children do you have? Where are they right now?

I have four children. The first three are from my first husband. He passed away. That's why I resumed my studies. Because I also was second year at that time. That's why I went to Tacloban. We don't have college in Hinunangan. I have my brother in Tacloban where I could stay. I really wanted to finish my studies. But I was not able to do that because I was raped in the house. That was during that one night when I was sleeping. It is so painful to remember it. There were people who did not like my brother. My brother was a boxing flyweight champion. He could beat anyone. He was known as Young Tony.



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How did this experience impact you?

When I married my husband, it took us 10 years before I could bear my own child. Every day, I would pray to God for Him to give me a child. Until eventually I was able to have three children. My husband passed away because of an accident. But that did not stop all my miseries. The reason was..... it is so painful. I lost all my dreams. But glory to God, I was able to recover.

What gave you strength to carry on with your life when your husband passed away?

This brother of mine who was a boxer, I was very close to him. When I was in Manila, he really wanted me to go to Tacloban to stay with him. I thought at that time that I would be able to continue my studies because I was a second year college at that time. That one night, I was not conscious that I was already being molested. My body was covered. A handkerchief was used to cover me. It was only in the next morning that I realized I was dirty. That something bad happened to me. I asked myself, why am I bearing a child, to someone who raped me while being unconscious? I was molested. But I did not agree to abort the child. My sister-in law, who was working as a pharmacist, wanted to give me a medicine for abortion. But I did not agree to that. I realized I was pregnant when I started feeling nauseous, and dizzy in class. I did not agree to abort the child. I told them, it's a great sin we could commit to the Lord. But why did I still have to one more child? I already have no husband. I already have three children. If I was praying for it before, it was because I did not have a child yet. But when I already have three kids, I did not need an addition. That's why I was questioning why this still had to happen to me. Maybe there was a reason that I didn't know at that time. I suffered a lot. I left Tacloban, and went back to Hinunangan. Because this happened in Tacloban. I don't want to witness the vengeance that my other siblings will do because of the evil that was done to me. But my brother was not able to do anything. He was killed by six people. You know the Warays. They have weapons. They don't use guns. They have all of these weapons. That's how my brother died. He couldn't fight all six of them, even if he was a flyweight champion. I went back home in Hinunangan to see my mother.

My admiration for you Nanay Pat is huge. I can't imagine all the hardships that you went through. But I admire you for holding on to your decision to save your child despite what happened.

I really sacrificed to raise my child. Because when I went home to see my mom. Other mothers would support you in whatever challenges you encounter in life. But my mother was different. She asked me to leave. She said she wanted me to go to school, but all I did was to flirt around. She did not believe in the truth that I was raped. That it was not my plan. She did not believe in the truth that I was molested. I decided to go to Davao City while being pregnant, and without really knowing where my life would lead me. But God had mercy. I landed in Compostela Valley.



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There I saw my father's cousin who owns an abaca plantation. And he needed a housemaid. He had several workers. So while I was waiting for nine months to bear my child, I worked with him as a housemaid. My uncle was actually nice. When I was giving birth, he brought me to the hospital in the City of Davao. I gave birth there. After that, I finally regained my strength to be able to travel again, I decided to go back to Hinanungan.

How did you feel when you first saw your child?

A mix of joy and anxiety. It was difficult to understand how I felt at that time. I was asking myself, can I raise this child?

Where is the child now?

I am grateful that I did not abort the child. Because if I had done that, I would not be able to come to America.

Ah she was the one who brought you to America?

Yes she was the one who brought me here. That's what happened. Because of the disaster emergency that urged Americans based in Subic to go back home.

Does she know what happened to you?

Yes she knows, because I shared the story with her. She is very beautiful, a mestiza.

How did this impact her? How did this impact her own life?

I told her. If she wants to see her father, she can do that. But she said she does not need to do it. That's how she was, even before she got married. She said, I do not need to know more about my father. She is not interested.

When you were finally here in the States, you had mentioned you had been doing back to back jobs, because you were supporting your children, and grandchildren. How do you compare your life here in the US with the Philippines?

Big difference. In the Philippines, we don't have opportunities there. There are limited opportunities for us who have not accomplished a lot. But here we have opportunities everywhere - from left to right. If you work really hard. And if you don't laze around.

What kind of job did your daughter get when she came here as well?



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She was not able to finish her studies. She did not have a job. They just left me in Kansas. I was the one who was working. She preferred that she would be the one working and that I take care of her kids. I told her I can't take care of all three children. That's why I said, let me be the one to work instead. We had disagreements on that with her husband, because I wanted to work. They transferred to Dallas, Texas.

So you were left in Kansas?

Yes, because I was working. I was doing a lot of jobs.

Since then, what types of jobs have you been able to do?

Because I was not able to finish my studies, I was not able to do any other jobs. I resorted to working as a housegirl. Any domestic job. And then I heard at that time, that here in Chicago, there were several Filipinos, and there were a lot of job opportunities. Since then, I braved myself to go to Chicago.

Which year did you move to Chicago?

I can't remember. But I have been here for a long time.

So you were able to work with several employers?

When my client here in Rockwell died, I moved to work in a nursing home.

What positive experiences can you share about your work as a caregiver?

My client here in Rockwell, she is Mrs. Niff, she has two children, all boys, Nikki the eldest and Mark the youngest. She had another child, but the child already passed away. Right now, I heard that Mark is based in Lowell, and Nikki in Milwaukee. I have lost communication with them. I do not know anymore about what is going on in their lives. But I remember when I was taking care of their mother, they treated me well. No one would be able to endure working longer in a house if the family members do not treat you nicely. That's for sure. And the family members were very kind to me. Because I was the only one who was liked by their mom. Their mom has an Alzheimer. Many other domestic workers attempted to take care of her but they did not last long. But with me, I stayed longer. For eight years. Until she died.

How did you improve your relationship with your client?



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Perhaps because of my patience. When someone has an Alzheimer, they think like a child. And it is so challenging to take care of them.

So the client favored you because of your patience?

I gave her my full attention. I gave her chair or a support for her back whenever she needs it. She wants to have you by her side all the time. She does not want you to leave her. When she has to walk around, you need to assist her with a walker. She can't do it all by herself. That's why you really need to assist her.

Of all your experiences as a caregiver, what did you like the most? What challenges did you encounter as a caregiver? What did you find difficult? Is there something you did not like? How were you treated?

When my client died, I had to move to a nursing home in Milwaukee and Devon. When I was working with my elderly client, I was living a comfortable life. We were only two people in the house. Her children live in separate houses. Although they visit everyday. I do all the cooking and caregiver for the elderly client.

Were you contented with how much they pay you?

They pay was low. But I did not know anything at that time.

What is it that you don't know at that time?

About the minimum wage. I still don't know yet about it at that time. Whatever is given to me, I just accept it.

So during that time, you only receive what was paid to you, because you still did not know about minimum wage at that time.

Yes I do not know about it yet. But they were kind to me.

Do they give you an opportunity to rest?

When I was working with them, I did not have a day off. Also because I really did not know where else to spend my day off. There was one time I was given a one-week vacation to go to Las Vegas. The three siblings had granted me the vacation. They said they will just look for a reliever. So I finally went to Las Vegas. But after a few days, I already received a telegram from



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one of the siblings asking me to go back to working because the relievers are not able to do the job. The client only wants me to be taking care of her. She was crying a lot. She does not want to eat. So I decided to cut my vacation short. And went straight back to work. When I finally reached home, I did not realize that that's the last time I will be seeing her. I told my client, "Ma'am I am home!" But that was it, she already stopped breathing. I asked her children why did they not take her to the hospital right away. They were just waiting for me to call an ambulance. She did not make it to the hospital. She was just waiting to see me again, and that was the end of her life.

So with your work as a caregiver, you have really established that close relationship with your client.

Yes, she did not really want me to leave. She wants to be always close to me. I don't know if there's anyone who can ever exceed the sacrifice and efforts I have done for my client.

When did you retire from caregiving?

I can't exactly remember when? Because after working with this elderly client, Josie took me. Then I also worked in Maryland. Doing laundry. It's also like a nursing home. But I was not taking care of the elderly clients. My last client was just here.

I am interested to know if you have heard about the Bill of Rights? The law that talks about minimum wage?

Only now, when I get involved with AFIRE.

How did you know AFIRE? How were you invited to join?

Through Sally Richmond. We were neighbours. Together with my other friends like Carlita Aquillano?

What did you learn from joining with AFIRE? What do you learn most?

It was given emphasis how to take care of yourself. To take care of your heart. Be conscious about what you eat. That's how I learned. That and also about domestic workers.

Were you able to join the Healthy Heart Healthy Family training? Did you gain friends? Did you like the training?



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Yes, I was able to apply to myself what I learned. If I did not learn about it, maybe I am no longer in this world. That's why I appreciated my learnings a lot.

I also heard that you went to Springfield as well.

Yes that's how I first involved in the trip.

Can you describe your experience there?

If I did not join AFIRE then, I would not be able to go to Springfield. I have been working here for several years. But that was my only first time to see Springfield. I was able to face the Senators. I was one of those few people chosen to lobby with the Senators in their respective offices.

What did you do in the Senator's offices?

We were advocating for the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights. I was one of those who were able to express my concern. There were many of us in the bus but I was chosen to be part of the lobbying group.

Were you heard by the Senators?

The bill was passed. They guaranteed our rights.

You were able to go to Springfield many times.

Yes I kept coming back to Springfield a lot of times.

Because of your effort, you were able to help urge our policy makers to pass the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights. They were able to directly hear from your personal experience as a caregiver, and you were able to express your support to the bill.

Yes, I know my experience as a domestic worker. That's the only job I know because I haven't finished my studies.

What can you say about the Filipino community in Chicago? Can you tell us about your support system here? We recognize that it is challenging to be a Filipino here in the US especially because of the changing policies of the US government regarding immigrants. What do you think about it? Are we helping each other out? Are we united? Tell us your experience.



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I have been working here in the United States for the longest time. From Kansas to Chicago. I have met a lot of Filipinos. But I have never been interested in getting involved with a community except for AFIRE. With AFIRE, I learned a lot about our well-being.

AFIRE is grateful that we have known you. You have been with Sally. We value your experience.

I was the only woman who was able to walk so rapidly for two miles to downtown. And another two miles back!

If you could talk to a caregiver right now, what advice can you give that person?

We need to be devoted. We need to really devote ourselves to the work we are doing. Other people don't care about their work. Whether they have already fed their client. Or whatever.

Of all your experiences from Philippines, Leyte, Tacloban, Davao, until you finally came here in the US, what is one thing that you are grateful about?

I am thankful to the Lord for giving me physical strength which allowed me to do my job. For giving me patience. I have very long patience. I work really hard. That's how I'm able to do my job. Patience and hardwork.

You mentioned earlier that in comparing between your life in the US and Philippines, one of the differences is that there are no opportunities in the Philippines for development. If you have a message to the government, what would it be?

I really don't understand how the government is running the country right now. You can observe that by watching TFC. The President has a unique way of leading the country.

Is it the responsibility of the Philippine government to support overseas Filipino workers?

In my own opinion, it is their responsibility to help the Filipinos who are suffering. If we look at the situation of the country right now, a lot of people are suffering. You watch TFC now. That's why when Filipinos are able to come here, they do what they can to find a job here. I am grateful to the Lord that He sent me to America. But everyday I watch TFC. Our people are suffering. They are affected by the war on drugs. A lot of people are killed. Because of the command of the President. Kill them all. But the problem still remains present. A lot of people are still selling drugs. Why can't we stop it despite the war on drugs? That's just my opinion. Here we feel safe. I don't know anyone involved in drugs here.



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Thank you so much for sharing your story. And your insights. I learned a lot. I really admire you for your courage. Thank you for your trust.

I feel embarrassed. But these are the things that happened to me.

Your courage could inspire a lot of people. It is not embarrassing. You fought for the life of your child.

Yes I was strong-willed.

Thanks a lot for sharing.