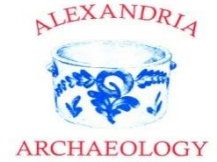




City of Alexandria
Office of Historic Alexandria
Immigrant Alexandria, Past, Present, and Future
Oral History Program



Project Name: *Immigrant Alexandria: Past, Present and Future*

Title: *Tu-Anh Nguyen*

Date of Interview: *June 30, 2015*

Location of Interview: *Tu-Anh Nguyen's Boutique, 113 Washington St, Alexandria VA*

Interviewer: *Dan Lee*

Audio and Video Recording: *John Reibling*

Also at the Interview: *Loan Nguyen*

Transcriber: *Kim Janoff, Adept Word Management*

Abstract: This is the second interview with Tu-Anh Nguyen. She was born in Nha Trang, Vietnam. In about 1984, after years of hiding from the Communists, Tu-Anh's family escaped by boat and came to the United States. They lived first in New Orleans then joined family members in Alexandria Virginia. She went to school in Alexandria, then moved to New York for education and training in the fashion industry. She talks about her time Charlottesville working for a bridal gown designer. She also discusses moving on to New York City, where she struggled in the fashion industry, and finally finding her way back to Alexandria, where she opened her boutique in Old Town.

This transcript has been edited by the interviewee and may not reflect the audio-recording exactly.

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INTRODUCTIONS 0:00:00	
Dan Lee	Okay. So, first of all, today is June 30, 2015. We are at Tu-Anh’s boutique, which is at 113 South Washington Street. First of all, let’s identify all of the voices in the room, so—.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Tu-Anh.
Loan Nguyen:	Loan.
John Reibling:	John Reibling.
D.L.:	And I’m Dan Lee. So, this is part two of our interview. Let’s go back first to where we left off. You were in Charlottesville, still working for your mother and you said that you had met one of her clients who was involved in bridal gown design. Is that correct?
LIVING IN CHARLOTTESVILLE, WORKING FOR A BRIDAL GOWN DESIGNER 0:00:59	
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Yes. Eva Forsythe for Arnold Scaasi.
D.L.:	Okay. And so, can you tell me a little bit about the process between meeting her and where you are today?
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Oh, I guess before her I was working in the fashion industry, but for much bigger companies—.
D.L.:	Right.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Where she had a bridal firm for a very long time. She lived in New York and she basically moved to Charlottesville to retire then and she moved her whole company to Charlottesville. So, she was one of the— she was—she was Hungarian, she was probably in her seventies, and she was a regular at the salon and every time she came in, she would just stare at me and smile and then she would complement my clothes all the time. So, then one day she asked me about—you know—how old I was and what I was doing and then I told her I had a design background and I was from New York and all of that. And she said, “Oh, I need a fashion illustrator.” And I said, “Oh, I can sketch.” And she said, “Yeah, I need somebody to translate my designs into sketches.” So, I told her that I could, so she had me come over to her studio for an interview and then she hired me as her illustrator. So, I— basically she would hand me napkins with pencil stick figure drawings and then I would put them on the actual fashion form and create a fashion illustration and design the bridal. And then put that into a design that actually her patternmakers and everybody else could read and understand, because she had a really bad temper. Because people couldn’t understand her sketches on the napkins, she would throw a

	temper.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	And she would break things and she would get frustrated why people can't understand what she's trying to explain to them. But—so, I came and I made that job easier, so that they can actually take the design and say, “Oh, okay. This is where the seams are and this is what we are supposed to do.” And also, it was a really great experience, because I experienced firsthand what it's like to work for a smaller company and the designer themselves, so I could see the whole process up behind the scene and the communication between the back team—you know—the draping, the sewing, the patternmaking, the styling, and then also seeing brides—her working with brides. And then that was also my experience where I'm thinking, “I would never want to work for these brides,” or “I don't want to be a bridal designer.”
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Because brides are very emotional and it's very stressful, actually, because everything was—when the bride comes in, she actually selects the design and then it basically will take six months from that idea to creation. So, the bride puts fifty percent down. Well, the next six months, when they come for a fitting or something and they pay the rest of the fifty percent, maybe they change their mind or they have broken off the engagement. And then they would try to get the money back and then she—my designer—would get really upset and she would have a—and she would get stressed out. And her husband actually worked for her. He was managing the operations and the finances. So, he was very even-keeled, like this, and then she was up and down emotional. So, it was really interesting. It was a great experience. She was really nice to me. I didn't have any problems with her, but just observing what was going on—you know—in the company and around that. That was just something I didn't want to do is bridal.
D.L.:	Okay. And so, how long did you work for her?
Tu-Anh Nguyen	I don't remember. Probably about two years.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Not more than two years.
D.L.:	And then this is all in Charlottesville?
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Uh-huh.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	And then I was managing my mother's salon at the same time.
MOVED BACK TO NEW YORK CITY AND STARTED TU-ANH LLC 0:04:46	

D.L.:	Yeah, so—okay. And then what was the next event after that?
Tu-Anh Nguyen	I think I went back to New York City and started my own company.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Meaning started Tu-Anh LLC.
D.L.:	Okay. And can you—what was different between—I mean you had already lived in New York for a while [inaudible].
Tu-Anh Nguyen	You know what's funny? I loved Charlottesville.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	And even though I went back to New York City and then why I'm here today, it's really I'm a small town or a small city type a person.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	I don't want to be in a big city. I love having—being around in a small city, where you can get around everywhere and people know each other and you're familiar with things. New York City is just so big and all over the place. I think it's just—even my recent trip to Italy, I love—as much as I love Rome, when I was in Florence, just for those three or four days, I loved it, because I felt like it was a much more—it was a richer and more cultured and just more sophisticated of a city than Old Town.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	But it gave me that vibe where I could walk around the city in a day—.
D.L.:	Right.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	And get to know it and feel very at home.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	So, yeah.
D.L.:	So, tell me a little bit about that second New York experience.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	You know, I can't—to be honest with you, I had so many struggles when I came back to that, that I think I only remember certain essential things, because I tried to forget about it. And it was more of not having enough money and struggling so hard to start the company and—you know—and then just living [beeping in the background] from one place to another and moving around and just really believing that I could have my own company and I wasn't going to give up and I'm going to do whatever it takes and then working multiple jobs in between trying to run my company. So, I don't know. And then—so, I kind of forgotten a lot of—I tried to forget a lot things.

D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	And I did move back to northern Virginia after I was in New York too.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	And then I worked for Nordstrom in the Cosmetics Department as a makeup artist and skincare consultant and I did some managing as well. While I was running my company.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	And then I got recruited by another company that was owned by Victoria's Secret to be a store director. So, I did that while I was running my own business. In addition to that, I was bartending four nights a week and also fitting in salsa dancing and playing volleyball.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	But I just never gave up, because I'm thinking this is where I want to see my career. Either I decide to settle down and have a family, where my fiancé at the time wanted to take care of me and said, "You know what? You don't have to make a lot of money. I want to have a family with you," and that was his focus. But my focus was, "I'm not ready to have a family. I want to build a career and I see myself as being very successful in my career," so I chose that path.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	And then, on top of that, I had a lot of school loans and I had a lot of debts, so I don't want to depend on somebody for my financial situation. I wanted to make it on my own.
ENDING FIRST RELATIONSHIP AND INFLUENCE OF HER FAMILY CULTURE 0:08:11	
D.L.:	Okay. So, did that difference of opinion like lead to the end of the relationship or—?
Tu-Anh Nguyen	It was my decision. So, I guess a lot of it was at the time I was young and I was influenced by my background and my family culture, that you kind of listen to your parents because parents know the best. So, it was in between—and I think it goes back to, again, I think it's a lesson I had to learn. But honestly, when I'm looking back, I think that if I went with my gut, rather than what others around me are saying to me, things would have happened differently.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	So, in other words, that it was the thing to do. All my cousins, at my age, in their late twenties, were getting married, having kids, and that was what you do. In the Asian culture, your parents raise you to have a

	great education and then to graduate from college and then to get a great job and then to settle down and have a family. So, that was what all of my cousins were doing. And I was the only one that I guess they considered late. I was only like twenty-six or twenty-seven at the time, but—so my—yeah, so my father and my mother were saying to me that my fiancé at the time—he came from a great family, has a great education, he’s a good person, I love him, all of that. So, everything just made sense. And he asked me to marry him. It wasn’t like I wanted to get married. Yeah and then I was—as we were planning the wedding, I just said, “You know what? I would feel better if, instead of us buying a house and—or a townhouse, waiting until we get married to move in, I said, “Why don’t we move in and live with each other for a few months and see how things go?” And he disagreed, but he did it with me anyway. My mom didn’t talk to me for probably six or seven or eight months. My dad was not happy about it, but he was supportive, because you just don’t live with someone if you haven’t been married. But after three months, I knew, so I broke up. I broke off the engagement after three months or four months, because I knew that it is unfair for me to drag this further, when deep down inside, I’m not ready to have a family.
D.L.:	Uh-huh.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	That I wanted to pursue my business.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	So, I broke up with my fiancé at the time.
SIBLINGS 0:10:38	
D.L.:	You talked about having siblings, both older and younger. Are they married?
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Yes, all but one brother and myself are not.
D.L.:	And—.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Uh-huh. I just saw them last weekend.
D.L.:	Okay. And like kind of how did those—?
Tu-Anh Nguyen	So, my oldest, my second, and my fourth brother—brothers are married with children. The fourth one doesn’t have children, but he has two dogs.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	And because of his health situation, he’s just—it’s just better that they don’t have kids. And then my two younger sisters are married and each of them have two children, yeah.

D.L.:	Okay. And I mean—.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	So, I—my third brother and I are the only two that are not married with children.
D.L.:	And did they have similar experiences, in terms of like your parents having a—?
Tu-Anh Nguyen	No.
D.L.:	A large influence. No?
Tu-Anh Nguyen	No. I don't—I mean actually over the weekend we joked about that. I'm like, "Why is it that I'm the oldest girl and I'm always being told what to do and I'm being pushed around, when you guys are younger than me. You just—you do your own thing and nobody says anything." But part of it—part of it was that I think when I was younger, I was so trusting and they—my parents think that I'm a dreamer and I'm a very trusting person, so they tend to be a little bit more protective of me and they don't always trust my decision on things. But no, both of my sisters knew that they wanted to get married. They wanted to settle down and have kids. They never went through the questioning of, "What should I do?" and you know. And actually, I think when they decided to get engaged, that's when they told my parents. So, it wasn't like they went to my parents and said, "I think about—I'm thinking about getting married or engaged. What do you think?" They didn't—they just kind of did it.
D.L.:	Yeah.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	And then I was in Rome and Italy this past—two weeks ago and I was having such a great time exploring and learning new things and the culture and learning Italian and everything. I was thinking, in my head, "Oh my gosh! I am so happy I am not married with kids." Because when I see my sisters, as happy as they are, it's not easy having children in the United States. Because in Vietnam, you have your family and you can hire help and you can hire full-time, live-in person, a cook, and all of this stuff was so inexpensive. In the States, you don't get to do that. So, the parents work and then they come home and then they have the kids. And then on the weekends, it's all about the kids. So, I think, in some ways, I'm creative and an artist and I'm selfish.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	I mean, I admit it. I think that in the end, if I was to not—if something going to happens to me tomorrow and I was not living, at least my soul and spirit could look back and said, "Wow! I've explored the world. I've done this. I've tried this." And that and feeling like I was confined to a situation, without freedom.

D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	You know. Maybe freedom is my word. Yeah, I think it's freedom.
HOW TU-ANH MET HER HUSBAND 0:13:53	
D.L.:	Okay. So, after you broke it off with this fiancé, can you tell us a little bit about how you met your husband?
Tu-Anh Nguyen	<p>Yeah. So, I loved my fiancé very much. He was my first boyfriend and my first love and when I made that decision, it was very painful. So, even when I broke up with him, it was a very painful situation. So, I didn't allow—and also, it affected my work. So, when people say that relationships don't affect your work, it—they're lying, because anything that goes on in your personal life is going to affect your professional life, no matter how—what people say. And it affected my business. I had a lot of setbacks, because I was still so in love with him and I was so hurt with the situation, it got in the way of my work. I wasn't concentrating fully. You know, my productivity was being affected. So, what I did is I was thinking to myself, "Oh my God. The last thing I want to do is get in a serious relationship," so I didn't. I basically just dated a lot of people, but I didn't get serious with anyone, because I had a goal in mind and a vision in mind for my career and my business. So, instead of dating somebody seriously, one person, I just met people and had fun and just got to know them, but always kept them at a distance. And my husband—my ex-husband and I met by accident through a friend that—you know—that was trying to connect us for two years. And I said, "I'm not interested. I don't have time." And then we met by accident at like an event or something like that and we became best friends. Well, actually, he was interested in me. I wasn't interested in him. But then I got to know him and then he became my client. And then I did work for him. And because I was so good at what I did for him, we became—we had a professional relationship and then we became best friends. And then we spent every time together. We went on trips together, because I've never met another person who was just as entrepreneurial as myself and who was as passionate and driven in his business as myself. And also, whose in the personal development business, in industry and I'm such a—I love to learn and I love to understand things about myself, so I can improve, and that was his business. So, we spent a lot of time together and we became best friends. So, when he asked me to marry him, I had often hear all of my friends who are married or even my siblings, "Oh, my spouse is my best friend." So, when he proposed to me, it wasn't even—I didn't really think about it. It just kind of—I just said it. I said yes naturally, and it was because I keep hearing people say, "Oh, your spouse should be your best friend." But now I'm learning it differently. It's like you get married and then you become best friends with your</p>

	spouse, but you don't marry your best friend—like, you know. But yeah and then we got married.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	It was—we had a tea ceremony. I'm still really good friends with his family and the two families get along really well. And we got—honestly, we made a decision to get—to separate first and then get a divorce is because we realize that we love each other so much, but you really can't have two people who are similar being together, whether it's business or personal. You have to have your yin and yang, right?
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	He's just as impatient, as independent, as passionate, as driven, as expressive, and as emotional as me.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	So, it's not—and we got coaching, but we just figured, “You know what? Life is too short. We're still going to have a great relationship. We're just not meant to be married.”
D.L.:	Okay. How would you describe the courtship as—how differently would you describe the courtship between this one and your first boyfriend?
Tu-Anh Nguyen	You know, it's completely different and because I was younger with my first boyfriend, I didn't know anything about relationships and I just kind of went with the flow. And my first boyfriend was more of a—he was very old fashioned, so it was very like step by step and it was like a whole courtship. Which, to be honest with you, I find it much more—that's what I relate to a lot more. Whereas, with my ex-husband, it was that, but it was—everything was shortened.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Because he was kind of like he. He's not that—he's not that patient.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	So, everything is that you skip around certain things.
D.L.:	So, I guess between the time in which you met and when you got married, like can you give me an approximation of how much time?
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Oh, I've known him—by the time I got married to my ex-husband, I have him for about seven or eight years already.
D.L.:	Oh, okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Yeah. And then we got married for three.
D.L.:	Okay.

Tu-Anh Nguyen	So, now we probably have known each other about eleven or twelve years.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	So, it was like something I met him and then I got married now.
MOVING BACK TO NORTHERN VIRGINIA 0:19:22	
D.L.:	Okay. Let's talk about you had moved back to northern Virginia. You were still running your company, but you were working in these different—approximately when did you move back to northern Virginia?
Tu-Anh Nguyen	I don't know. Maybe—maybe 2001.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Maybe 2001 or—two thousand and—either 2001 or 2002.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Like permanently.
D.L.:	Okay. And when you started running your company, I assume you didn't have your own boutique right away, like can you give me—?
Tu-Anh Nguyen	No. At that time, I was doing wholesale. So, wholesale's different. You don't need a storefront. Wholesale is basically you have samples and then you go to tradeshow and then you display that and you sell to boutiques like mine right now. So, I had an apartment that is—that was off of Route 7 and 395 in Alexandria. And it was a cute little two-bedroom apartment and then I share with my sister, who was my roommate, and then I stuffed all my samples in the apartment closet. So, I worked—when I—when I'm not traveling, all of my stuff is there.
D.L.:	Okay. And—.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	And all my work. You know, the dining room was my office.
EVOLUTION OF DOING TRADESHOWS AND WHOLESALE TO OWNING A BOUTIQUE 0:20:44	
D.L.:	And so, can you take me through the evolution from going to trade shows to having your own boutique, I guess is what I'm trying to do.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Oh yeah. You know, it's kind of a lot. I mean I don't know how to sum it up. But basically, after a few years—maybe after five years or so of doing tradeshow, I just got burned and I got tired, because I ran out of money. And it's not an easy business to be in in the business of fashion. I was naïve at the time too, because I was trying to be competitive and work like all the other fashion companies. So, the way they worked was that if you're a buyer and you go to the tradeshow and you come to my

	space and you buy my designs or you purchase things from me, you don't have to pay me at all. So, basically, you don't pay me until thirty days to sixty days after you have already received my products.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	So, I was being naïve. Every company was doing that and I was doing that. But what happened is I come back from a tradeshow with a hundred thousand dollars of order, but I don't have a hundred thousand dollars to go into production. So, then I was running around borrowing money from friends, from the bank, and everything, and then by the time that the production was done and I start to ship to you, you change your mind. But because we didn't sign anything, other than an order form and you didn't put in any deposits, when you change your mind, I had to eat up all the merchandise. So, it became really stressful and then it became—so, what's stressful even more is in the industry—and I was shocked at the time, but now I'm kind of jaded—but there are boutique owners that don't have the money. And they would start a new business, they'd go and they'd place all these orders and by the time the production is ready for you to ship, they had gone out of business. So, it just—it was almost like, “Wow! We just talked to them three months ago. What happened, you know?” So, it started becoming really, really stressful, so I started reducing the wholesale and then I started doing museums and trunk shows and hotel—like country club shows. So, they were what they call trunk shows and what it is is basically the hotel or the museum or the country clubs have an event and then they would rent a booth—space—to designers or artists like us. And then we'd come in and whatever we have designed, we just sell there and then. And we don't have to worry about waiting. We don't have to—it's just—and then I started doing that. And then I opened a little kiosk at Tysons too that is just a kiosk, but my rent was probably ten times more than the rent I'm paying in a hotel, which is—because it was the right clientele. And I was there for, I believe, two years—maybe three years and I didn't renew my lease because basically I was making money, but it all went to my rent and then my staff. So, then I stopped and then I went into teaching. But at the same time, still doing fashion, but I took it to a whole other level where I was styling and producing fashion shows and fashion photograph and make-up and home décor and all of that. More on the consulting side, less than the design.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Yeah. And that made me more money and it actually helped me to be successful, so I had money to put aside to open a boutique.
OPENING THE BOUTIQUE IN OLD TOWN 0:24:20	
D.L.:	Okay. So, how long have you had the boutique in Old Town?

Tu-Anh Nguyen	We've only been here since—the boutique officially—let's see. We are a year and three months.
D.L.:	Oh.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	But not the boutique, the space. The boutique only opened to my clientele on November 1 of last year.
D.L.:	Oh, okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	And then on April 11, which is about two-and-a-half months ago, we opened to the public.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	So, really we're a few months old, really.
D.L.:	Wow.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Yeah.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	But because I already have a set clientele and a following for the past ten years I've developed, the boutique is doing pretty decent compared to any new boutique, because I don't have to depend on walk-in traffic, because I already have my clientele.
D.L.:	Okay. And are most of your clients, do they live in Alexandria proper or do they live just in the general DC area or—?
Tu-Anh Nguyen	No, they live in the general DC area, yeah.
D.L.:	Okay. And so—?
Tu-Anh Nguyen	So, I'm trying to build the business here for the local Alexandria clients, like Old Town.
D.L.:	Okay. And why Alexandria and why Old Town?
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Because I always felt like it was charming and it's a city, but it has a small town feel. And I feel like in this area—DC, Maryland, and Virginia—Old Town, I feel, has—it's sophisticated, cultured, and I feel like I'm in Europe when I'm here. And I love Europe, so—and then I love being by the water. I love water. It's just something Zen about it for me. So, I'm not—that's how I like it. And I love the houses and I love the streets and the small feel of it.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	And the uniqueness of it. But I think if it starts to become really commercialized, like Georgetown, I would not like it, because I used to love Georgetown, because of the individuality and the uniqueness of businesses and things that you can find, you know.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT WORKING FOR YOURSELF? 0:26:16	
D.L.:	Can you tell us a little bit about working for yourself? Like what would you love about it? You said that you—yeah, that you’re a very adventurous person, that you’re artistic, but—.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	I—I love working for myself. I think, since I was younger, I realize that I don’t need people to entertain me or make me feel safe. I like being by myself. I like—I’m more productive when I’m by myself, because that’s when I can create, that’s when I can do things without having any people hold me back. So—and I love the flexibility—the flexibility of making my own schedule. The only thing that I could say that I could do better at is a little bit more life balance, because I probably work fourteen, sixteen hour days without realizing it. But because I love my work, I don’t even think about it. But I think if I had a little bit more life balance, I would have a more regular schedule to see my family—you know—and see the people that are important in my life. I think that’s probably—.
WHERE DO YOUR SIBLINGS LIVE? 0:27:24	
D.L.:	Okay. And just because I forgot, do your siblings still live in the area or do they—some of them left with school?
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Just my oldest brother. His family lives in the area.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	And then everybody else is in Houston and Florida and New Jersey.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	It used to be New York, but they moved to New Jersey, so.
D.L.:	Okay. Kind of in closing, what are—?
WORKING FOR YOURSELF, CONTINUED 0:27:46	
Tu-Anh Nguyen	And then the other thing about working for yourself, too, is I’m a perfectionist and I have very high expectations on myself. So, when I work for myself, I feel that I’m responsible for my own results. I don’t have to depend on somebody else to make my results perfect. That I can do that. And so, I think that’s very important to me, because—and I can work as a team, but it’s just that the quality that you produce when you’re working on your own and you’re a hundred percent responsible for your work, it’s like the possibilities are endless.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	You know?
WHAT SHOULD NEW RESIDENTS KNOW ABOUT ALEXANDRIA? 0:28:25	

D.L.:	Yeah. A couple of questions in closing. What should new people moving to Alexandria know about our city?
Tu-Anh Nguyen	I think what they should know is that—well, I think it’s a given, but that it’s very dog-friendly. That’s another reason why I moved to Old Town too, because I have a dog.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Also, most of the boutiques and businesses or restaurants here—I’m not saying all of them, but most of them—you can walk in and meet the owner and the visionary and the creator of that business and how that came about, so it has a story. So, it’s unique and interesting. You know and then the fact that it’s just—the location is so convenient and you can get—there’s a lot of diversity. You walk out the door and you can have Italian, Greek food, Lebanese, Asian. You can have everything, you know. And also, it’s the type of place where—I think it’s a fine balance. I mean I heard it’s kind of conservative, but I think it’s a place where people are interested in preserving the history of the city, you know. So, they kind of step in when something—let’s say if it’s a new road or a new business is coming in, they have a say in it, because they want to make sure they preserve the look and feel and the theme of the city. Now, maybe—I didn’t experience this, but I heard that sometimes they can go to the extreme, where they’re so conservative and set in their ways, that they’re not open, but I haven’t experienced that at all. We didn’t really have a hard time being here or setting up business in Old Town.
ADVICE ON GOING INTO THE FASHION INDUSTRY 0:30:03	
D.L.:	Okay. What advice would you give for other people who want to go into—growing up in northern Virginia who would want to go into the fashion industry or to become more like you?
Tu-Anh Nguyen	There’s not—[Washington] D.C. is not a fashion place. I always tell people that they need to be in New York City, in Paris or London or—you know—Milan or Rome or any of those cities or Hong Kong and Tokyo. So, they need—if they’re coming here and they have a fashion background in one of those major cities already, then that’s great, because it’s going to be easy for them, because they’re going to be big fish in the small pond. But if they are coming to start a fashion business and they don’t have a fashion background, it’s going to be difficult because this area is not a fashion—people may be fashion conscious, but they are not so much into individuality, but they’re so much into, “Oh, what’s the latest designer or fashion,” and they kind of follow everybody else. So, I just think that stick—you know—stick true to your vision and what you want. I don’t even read—I mean I have all these magazines. I don’t even have time. I’ve never follow fashion and

	copy what's out there. I've always follow what my vision is for what fashion means to me.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	So, I wouldn't know.
D.L.:	Is there anything else I haven't asked you about that you'd like to talk about?
EMBRACE AMERICAN CULTURE, BUT DON'T FORGET WHERE YOU CAME FROM 0:31:40	
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Um, no. I don't know. But if I was to give any young people advice about growing up here, is—you know—is embrace the culture. Embrace the American culture, but don't forget where you come from.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Because I actually think that is what—I think that's what makes us unique. And you know, an example was that I was in Italy and I met some locals and I'm just sitting there having conversations with them and they said, "Wow. You're not a typical American." And so I said, "What's a typical American like?" And they said, "Well, they don't know anything except English or America. And you've been sitting here and in an hour, we've had conversations about art, you travel, you can speak different languages. You can talk about where you came from. You understand about our Italian culture." So, things like that. So, I think that if I was—if any young Vietnamese people are listening or paying attention to these types of things, I would tell them do not be ashamed of where your parents are from, where they were born, and embrace the culture and the language, because it's important because it makes you richer as a person, you know.
D.L.:	Okay.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Yeah.
THANK YOUS 0:32:55	
D.L.:	Great. I think with that—those were all of my questions.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	I don't have anything else.
D.L.:	Okay. Thank you so much.
Tu-Anh Nguyen	Thank you.