

Galedo Family: 100 Years in America
PRODUCTION NOTES
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Congratulations to the Galedo Family for the foresight, insight and team work required to produce a wonderful film that captures your immigrant roots and ongoing immigrant legacy in America.

It is important to also acknowledge the Carlos Bulosan Book Club and in particular, Jaime Geaga for taking on the important responsibility of collecting the stories that created, shaped and add to the tapestry of the Filipino-American diaspora.

Thanks to Remy for spearheading and leading the process and to Memie, Lillian and Don for literally opening their hearts and sharing their memories, which is the “soul” of the content. Given that your recollections were off the top of your heads, your vivid descriptions coupled with sincere emotions provided a cogent chronicle of your lives.

Hopefully this film will inspire the creation of more oral history projects, no matter what format is chosen. The main thing is to capture the histories and to make them accessible for families and communities in general.

These production notes are for the purposes of explaining some of the technical processes involved with a multi-media production; and to provide an understanding into the decision-making and aesthetics that would create a story respectful of the interviews.

PRODUCTION

Video and Source Materials

At the onset It was decided that the video would be produced on iMovie. It was an accessible tool and somewhat intuitive. Thus, Remy and Vince attended a class to learn the basics. Then it was trial and error to learn the program, produce a first draft then collaborate with Mateo for post-production details and finalization.

An internal goal of the Production Team (Remy, Vince, Mateo) was to tell the story in a coherent fashion, matching recollections with family photos.

The source material (interviews) was conducted in a roundtable setting. This would present both wide-open opportunities and at the same time, technical challenges. The interviews benefited from some prepared questions that provided the general direction of the discussion. Because the interviews were unscripted, it allowed for

pivots in the conversation and simultaneously opened up new subjects for discussion.

In general, the interviews followed a historical sequence, but as individual stories unfolded, the subjects diverged, complemented each other or started new storylines that later had to be organized into a logical collective narrative.

From an editing perspective, this created the challenge of combining different voices into a coherent storyline, because all siblings remember things in their own way and express those recollections and emotions differently. This individuality had to be respected throughout the video.

Prior to filming, Gary advised that technically, interviewing 4 people would be a challenge. We were limited to a single camera angle (there were 2 other cameras available but no one could operate them). This prevented close ups or different shooting angles (such as around a table). Thus, a wall “line-up” became the best option for a stage. This set up would mean non-speakers would normally be fidgeting (and caught on camera) and the chances of talking over each other would likely create sound editing issues. Gary also warned that unexpected and uncontrolled background noise, uneven voice volumes and lighting would also create issues for the editing process. Indeed, all of the above occurred.

Vince assembled a rough-cut video to pull the individual interviews together by organizing them into a tentative storyline. The very first versions without extensive editing were over one and a half hours long. Remy set the goal of editing down to just the essential story to a more reasonable 30 minutes.

Transcription and Script Editing

The raw interview tapes were full of information. The next step would be to figure out how to pull out relevant passages and quotes to create the story. We found that this could not be done from working from the video itself. Thus, all of the interviews were transcribed by a transcription service.

Next, Remy developed a first draft by mixing and matching interviews into general categories (the precursor to the chapters seen in subsequent video versions). This was distributed to the siblings with Lillian contributing to the text editing.

Another rough-cut was produced to get a general “feel” to determine if an actual story was being told. The process of paper and video editing occurred several times until there was general agreement that the story was unfolding in a logical manner.

In the meantime, narrations were written and recorded to fill in certain gaps to enhance the story; condense cumbersome conversation; reinforce certain points; or to act as a transition for the next chapter. These were inserted as “placeholders” into the draft

video.

Photos

Remy reviewed and digitized hundreds of photos from family albums. The task had started before the interviews, during and throughout the entire script and video editing. This was a very tedious process as each photograph had to be (potentially removed from an album), examined and scanned. The scanner automatically color and/or contrast corrected photos, but when inserted into the video itself, had to be edited again for cropping and/or effects. We decided that photos in the video should look like they came from the family photo album, thus the “white border” on most photos was kept (or created) to have that “look.” Grainy, out of focus and badly lit photos were used “as is” to capture the quality of photos during those times.

The photos were then sorted into categories to match the sections of the videos. For example, pre-war Bohol; early photos of Memie arriving in the US; baby pictures; school pictures, Manongs, etc. These were then uploaded into the timeline. They would be arranged and re-arranged many times and new photos were inserted as needed.

Also, stock photos were researched and uploaded as a supplement to the family photos. These photos, such as photos of Stockton sites, field workers, government program food, Japanese internment and so on were interspersed to provide a wider visual context beyond the family photographs.

One unexpected benefit from Remy’s curation of photos was that she was able to identify relatives and friends of her parents. By examining the backs of photos she found dates and personal notes which sometimes identified the people. In some cases she could see people actually age in time. She was able to identify Sotera’s siblings and friends, which had not been identified prior. Thus, people she saw only through these photos when she was young, actually came to life as their identities and relationships became revealed.

Video Editing

Once the written script was whittled down, video editing followed the written script.

To maintain the story timeline, some sections were pieced together from various clips of interviews and made to appear as they were in sequence in the conversation. Some sentences were actually pieced together to appear as a single train of thought — without altering the meaning of the speaker. For example, the part about “learning Visayan” was pulled from different times and speakers but appears as a spontaneous conversation. Memie talking about the Buddhist Temple and the Japanese is another example.

Because each sibling was asked questions “on-the-spot” it was only natural that there would be frequent pauses, stutters and speech fill-ins such as “you know.” If these were distractions (some were, some were not) or we could save time (every second counted), they would be edited out to make completely seamless sentences.

When people talked over each other in conversation, these were edited, as much as possible to sound as if there were no interruptions. For example, the discussion on Sotera going to college, working at Sharpe Depot etc.

These types of edits were done because there are four characters talking, sometimes solo and sometimes to each other. Thus, the less confusion for a viewer who does not know the siblings, the better. Additionally, each edit had to be done without changing the intent of the speakers.

Another challenge was to give “equal” screen time to each sibling, where appropriate, in timing, sequence and subject-matter.

Ultimately, Jaime’s voice as the interviewer was cut. However, his role in driving the storyline and picking people’s brains should not be undervalued. But we decided that since his face was never going to be on-screen, his voice added another character to an already crowded stage. After hours of listening we concluded that the siblings could stand alone, talking to each other and telling the story. They actually talk to the viewing audience — and secondarily to the interviewer. It was less confusing and more expeditious to eliminate the question/answer format.

This is most evident in the Reflections chapter where the subjects appear to be thinking out loud, rather than being subjects for an interview. Credit Jaime for having the skill to just let each sibling talk without interruption.

We also noted that this video could not be responsible for telling the entire story of Filipino immigration at the turn of the Century and settlements of the 1950s. Thus, our approach was to have the interviewees tell their own story that laced in and out of broader Filipino-American history.

POST PRODUCTION AND PRODUCTION STYLE

With the working draft in place (February 2020) the bulk of post production started. Although, “post production” functions were already in process by that time and the working draft benefited from certain added features.

Visual Consistency

We decided that visual consistency would be important so that the viewer is focused on the story and is not distracted, particularly in a documentary style format. Thus, all chapter headings, sub-titles on photos and credits have the same font. All chapter

titles have the same timing and fade-in and fade-out time.

The “Ken Burns” effect is used sparingly to create motion on certain photos to avoid a “slide show” look. Also, jumps between photos avoided high-contrast selections. Where appropriate, at least three color photos were made black and white to keep in line with an existing set.

The “Stage”

We already mentioned that the interview “stage” limited angles. A major issue of concern was that the group was shown too often. However, we felt that the group was a touchstone and needed to be referenced from time to time as an ongoing conversation. To mitigate this, shots back to the group were very limited — only when certain points were being emphasized and body language was important; when it was clear that people were talking to each other and when speakers changed within a chapter. We also panned in for close ups of individuals to cut out the rest of the group. Also most of the group shots were eventually covered by photos, which also had the benefit of hiding the visual “jump cuts” created from editing dialogue.

Narrations

Professional narration is a skill-set matched to particular films and documentaries. Gary commented that he often called in trained broadcasters to narrate/perform for some of his videos. Given that standard, we actually did a number of re-takes that concentrated on timing and enunciation. The final versions we believe, are very professional and work well within the context of a family-based documentary.

Prologue and Epilogue

The beginning of the video starts with a brief preview of each sibling. This is a device used on many documentaries to 1) set audience attention, 2) give an idea of what is to come and 3) introduce characters.

In this story, there are 4 main characters who are unknown to casual viewers. These four characters eventually tell a story and are introduced more fully in their own narratives. We realize what they say is repeated, but not until almost 40 minutes later at the end of the video. Our approach to the entire documentary is that both audio and visual cues were important because this was not a term paper or book where passages can be read and re-read. We felt that introducing ideas at the start (as well as 4 different characters) introduces some of the main themes that become revealed as the story unfolds and thus reinforced. Two different photos were also used twice because they served as an exclamation point — the children on the bicycles to contrast 1952 and 2016; and the 1967 family portrait used in the body and end credit (and also used

as the opening title close up).

We received comments that the epilogue scroll was too fast and that it was too difficult to read and look at the pictures. Moreover, it was important to know what happened to the children after learning about their parents' immigrant experience. Thus, instead of a scroll the information is static.

Chapters

The use of chapters/segments we believed helped to guide viewers through logical steps to understand the Galedo family's multi-generational journey. They also create "breathing space" so that the viewer is not running from one subject to the next. This is also a common device.

Chapter names were carefully thought out and benefited from input. For example, Lillian thought that the original "Language and Culture" title sounded too sociological. We most definitely agreed as this video is not a term paper, but rather an audio visual experience that uses certain cues to create a mindset to receive information. Thus, we changed it to "Becoming 'American'" which 1) presents a certain amount of irony because assimilation is a fluid concept, 2) everyone, even the 4 siblings have their own interpretations of what it is to be American and 3) becoming "American," no matter what the circumstances or definition, is generally a matter of cultural survival, particularly for immigrants. Other titles also received similar scrutiny.

Music

The music was selected for various reasons:

The opening sequence with "As Time Goes By" matches the time of immigration to the US in addition to having the theme of timeless devotion.

Philippine folk music, in particular "Paru-Parong Bukid" was requested by Remy and Lillian, being a song their mother sang to them.

Popular songs during WWII were chosen as Memie specifically referred to singing them for her Dad.

The garden photos included "Since I Give My Heart to You" because Remy had mentioned years ago that her Dad sang that song.

The Manong chapter featured "Beyond the Sea (Le Mer)" by Django Reinhardt because the rhythm of the song was reminiscent of Filipino-American jazz and dance bands of the 40s - 60s. Also, the title "Beyond the Sea" simply reflects that their journey in America began across the ocean.

“We Are The Children” was an obvious choice as an ending theme from the very beginning of the editing process.

Other period music was matched and generic mood music that was included in the iMovie program was also used, but not included in the credits.

Sound

The source material had volume jumps throughout the video. This is because different microphones and different environments had been used. Mateo and Gary had advised that the range of ambient sounds would effect consistent sound quality, so we knew that going in.

When the 4 were recorded together, the sound level could not be perfectly controlled because some people are naturally louder, or the microphone placement was not even. In one of Don’s segments the lavalier microphone accidentally disconnected from the recorder and the camera mic automatically took over.

Narrations were initially recorded in varying environments. For quality control, all narrations were done several times not only for sound quality, but for content, pronunciation and timing. Originally, some of the narration was done on the camera mic, but ultimately all of them were re-recorded on the digital recorder with consistent ambient background noise.

Ultimately, our video sources consisted of group video/audio tracks, individual interviews, and separate narration segments. All of these plus a musical soundtrack had to be balanced. These diverse recordings presented major challenges because iMovie does not allow for discrete channel sound-mixing.

Some glitches that required fixing were stereo music tracks dropping channels, interviewees too soft or too loud, etc. Since all siblings spoke at different levels when recorded together, editing within the same conversations had to be done, which was very time-consuming.

Not everyone had the same vocal baseline, so volumes were adjusted to the most common level.

The final solution to balance the sound, was to separate the entire audio track from the video and import it to another computer using Adobe Premiere software. At that location, the audio could be re-mixed. After that, the audio was imported back into iMovie and re-synchronized with the video tracks.

However, sometimes iMovie had a mind of its own, and the edited soundtrack would

continue to jump volumes at random locations. Thus, the soundtrack was re-edited a number of times. Completing each version was time intensive because of the individual sound adjustments and download time. After each attempt to balance the audio, the new track had to be imported back into iMovie and double-checked to make sure the video and audio stayed synched together.

Thus, the final product is what we believe to be a fairly balanced audio soundtrack without dramatic volume ups and downs; what we can “live with”; and what would be acceptable to a viewer without being a distraction.

Editing and Technical Guidance, Reviewers and Future Projects

In addition to the original interviews, literally hundred of hours of digitizing photos; production and post-production work; script review and editing; writing; recording narrations; additional photography and photo editing were required to produce what we believe is a coherent story gleaned from several hours of raw unscripted video edited down to less than 40 minutes.

Most of the heavy lifting was done by Remy, Vince and Mateo. But a significant amount of content input and perspective from Lillian, and expert critique from Gary informed the final version. Also, there were reviews from several people who were not involved with the process who had no relationship with the Galedo family’s history or scholarly knowledge of the Asian-American experience.

The final version took almost exactly 2 years to make — from when Lil was first approached by Jaime prior to the interviews in October 2018 — to the final edit in September 2020.

Another benefit is that many more vignettes can be produced from the initial raw footage and unused photos. Remy used a couple of genealogy sites that provided ship manifests, draft cards and other original source documents. Certainly there is more information out there. The photos, documents and video can be used in book form, more videos and other formats. The Galedo children and grandchildren are fortunate to have these resources to further explore their heritage and legacy.

Congratulations again,

Vince / Mateo
Materials organization

All original video interviews are filed electronically.

All digitized photos used and unused exist electronically in multiple digital

locations. All photos credits are assigned and documented.

All music credits are documented.

Original interview transcripts exist in hard copy and electronically. Edited transcript versions exist in hard copy and electronically.

All narrations are filed electronically.

Working drafts are filed electronically.

Original movie working version resides in Vince's Mac in iMovie. Final video version is uploaded to Mateo's Vimeo account.