

Teresita Endencia

**Interviewed November 6, 2007
By Holli Connell
Midway Village Museum**

Holli Connell: If you could state your first and last name please.

Teresita Endencia: Teresita Endencia.

HC: Are you married?

TE: Yes.

HC: And your husband's name?

TE: Jerome.

HC: Do you have children?

TE: Yes.

HC: And how many children do you have?

TE: I have six children.

HC: What is your educational background maybe just pretty much from birth till now?

TE: Oh, I have been a teacher. My educational background is teaching and I got my education from the Philippines then I came here in 1956 to continue my education at DePaul University.

HC: How long have you been in United States?

TE: Well, when I first came here I came here in 1956 and then I got married in 1958 but I went back to the Philippines in 1961 and that's where I raised my family there. I had to go back to the Philippines because I had to take care of my mother and aunt in the Philippines and then after I took care of them there I came back here in the states in 1990. So since that time up to now that's where I am.

HC: And when you first came to the United States in 1956 where did you stay then? What city and state?

TE: I was in Chicago.

HC: And then when you came back in 1990 what city and state did you come to?

TE: I came back to Rockford.

HC: What work did you do here in Rockford?

TE: When I came in 1990?

HC: Yes.

TE: I was retired already so I didn't do any work except to volunteering to visit nursing homes and visit the elderly in their homes because I belong to our church the Legion of Mary and that is our apostolate. We visit all those who are lonely and those who need help and so that has been my work up until now.

HC: And where did you come from originally where were you born?

TE: In the Philippines.

HC: Was there a town?

TE: Vigan, Flocos Sur.

HC: Deciding to come here: what did you do before you came to the United States the first time?

TE: I was a teacher.

HC: And what did you teach?

TE: I taught math and algebra.

HC: What was your life like in the Philippines?

TE: It was a simple life, happy. I was brought in the tradition of our Catholic family because they were Catholics ever since they were born and they brought me up that way so I am very glad that I have that religion in me.

HC: What made you decide to want to come here?

TE: I was sponsored by an American missionary in the Philippines and he told me oh, you go to stay with my brother in Chicago. They have three sons and my sister-in-law would love to have you so I didn't know them at all but I was sponsored by father[Kolb] [not spelled out in interview] that's his name and he arranged for my papers, my passport, my visa, my admission to DePaul University. I did not do anything on my own except to just follow the instructions and they just met me at the airport, at O'Hare and they didn't know me. They just saw a picture; father described how I look like with a picture and my customs; our culture was very simple so he told his sister-in-laws you take her out shopping and get acquainted with the culture.

HC: And how old were you when you came here?

TE: I was 26.

HC: How did you make the decision to come here, through him or were you deciding gosh, I should go forward?

TE: Well, I would think at the time you know I thought that was a good decision so I went along. And my parents, I'm so glad that they allowed me to come because my parents took care of me. I was their only daughter; they did not want to part with me but because father gave an assurance that I would be well taken care of here so my parents agreed.

HC: And were you well taken care of when you arrived?

TE: Yes, very well taken care of. They treated me like their daughter so I was very, very blessed to have a wonderful family.

HC: Had you ever been to this country before 1956?

TE: No.

HC: How long did it take to make the arrangements to come here and what was involved? Were you a part of anything and what were the arrangements?

TE: Well, there is the form that you have to fill with DePaul University so he had a friend who is a teacher here and it was this teacher who arrange and for the form to be sent to him so it was all by mail you know, to send the form and then we filled it out and so that's all.

HC: How long did that process take when he first said you should go to the states to when you actually did arrive here?

TE: I would say six months.

HC: Did you come alone or were there any family members or friends that you traveled with?

TE: No, I came alone.

HC: And how did you travel here, what was your journey like when you left what did you take, did you meet anybody?

TE: It was an adventurous journey for me being alone.

HC: You were alone, okay. Did you fly, take a boat?

TE: Yeah, we flew from the Philippines. It's a 36 hour flight from the Philippines to Chicago.

HC: Were there any stops in between?

TE: We stopped in Alaska, I think; just to do fueling for the plane but that's all, the regular stopover for the plane.

HC: Did you speak English?

TE: Yes, the medium of instruction in the Philippines is English.

HC: Did you meet anybody on the plane trip that you talked about anything special?

TE: Maybe just acquaintance but nothing that I remember in particular.

HC: When you finished here where did you land in Chicago; do you know what airport?

TE: O'Hare Airport.

HC: And then did you know anyone here before you came?

TE: No.

HC: You knew nobody. Where did you get settled in; where did you live?

TE: I lived with this family who took care of me as their daughter that's where I lived.

HC: Did you live in a house or apartment?

TE: It was in a house.

HC: Was it in Chicago or the suburbs?

TE: In Chicago, in the suburb of Chicago and they taught me how to take the subway, how to take the public transportation which was all new to me, all new but the boys you know were glad to escort him me, the boys of the family. They would tell me oh I will take you to the park; I will take you to this place. They taught me how to do that and they had to teach me how to take the subway because DePaul, it was downtown and then from the suburb I had to take about two bus transfers and then go to the subway and then go downtown so it was really a lesson for me to learn. But at 26 years old, you know, I was still strong; I was able to take I and a. I enjoyed it.

HC: That's fun. An interesting experience. I'm sure that was a big deal at first. How different was that transportation from where you came from?

TE: Oh, in the Philippines we walk to school.

HC: What about like a car ride when they picked you up did you ride public transportation or was there a car involved?

TE: Yeah, the car ride that's what I remember. They ride the car? We didn't even have a car. So how did they get there? Oh, by cab.

HC: What did you think of Chicago when you first saw the city or even the airport when you got off the plane what you think?

TE: Oh, it's a really so modern and so how would you say it, I don't know the right adjective for it but it's really amazing. Like visiting the Sears Tower at the time it was the tallest tower so the boys took me there for a ride. They took me to all of those good places and it was really a very, very new experience for me to see this big shopping mall like Marshall Fields and Sears Tower. Those are what I remember. The boys were very thrilled to see how excited I was.

HC: Did any of the members of your family come after you did?

TE: Yes, only after oh that was in the 80's already.

HC: So they came much later?

TE: Much later yes.

HC: You weren't even here yet because you went back?

TE: Yes.

HC: Were there other people from your country that lived in your immediate neighborhood when you first came here in 1956?

TE: No, there was nobody and I felt at home though with everybody because the one with whom I stayed I called her my mother and she introduced me to all of her friends and cousins and relatives so they were all like my family. I call them Aunt Ann; I call them all by their names and I called her my mom you know. In fact when I got married. I got married here. He was the one that gave me away. The couple was the one who arranged for my wedding because I got married here.

HC: Okay, now when you first came to Rockford, this is coming back, going ahead in a time in 1990 had you been to Rockford before?

TE: No.

HC: And why did you come to Rockford?

TE: Because my husband had a job here and so this is where I came.

HC: And where did he work?

TE: He was with the Knights of Columbus Insurance Company.

HC: How did you find a place to stay when you first got here in 1990?

TE: I stayed with my husband because he had an apartment already.

HC: And did your husband live here and you came here or was he in the Philippines with you and came in 1990?

TE: My husband was with me in the Philippines. We raised a family but he came here earlier about two years before to prepare the way for the transition because he had a job here and the job opportunities here were better so he came here.

HC: So he came here first and then you and your family followed in 1990?

TE: Yeah.

HC: What part of town did you live in?

TE: He was in Machesney Park and then as soon as I came here we decided he was waiting for me to buy a home so we bought a home right away as soon as I got in.

HC: And currently you own your home and we are in Rockford?

TE: Yes.

HC: And did you raise your children here as well; how old were they when you moved here?

TE: No, my children were already grown up.

HC: So they were all raised already. Did they travel with you back here or did they stay in the Philippines?

TE: One of them traveled with me. The others came earlier. We came here, my children came here at different times except the last one my youngest daughter came with me already.

HC: Now is there anyone from your home country that lives in your neighborhood now?

TE: Oh yes, we have many Filipinos here.

HC: In your neighborhood or in just your community?

TE: Just the community.

HC: And do you visit with those people or did you know any of them?

TE: No, we know them here because we have a gathering every Christmas to fulfill the tradition of [listen to tape, interviewee names the tradition but does not spell it] preparing for Christmas. It's a novena of masses to prepare for Christmas.

HC: When you arrived here in 1990 you were already retired?

TE: Yes.

HC: And so your work now since 1990 you came here has been what?

TE: It's been mission work I would say. It has been voluntary work.

HC: And that's work that you're working with the church?

TE: No, come to think of it as a now I work part-time in some nursing homes; that's why I have the insight into what is going on in nursing homes.

HC: And the name of your organization now that you are developing nursing care is called?

TE: This is not nursing care that we are of this home this will be a family home. We are not going in to give them nursing care. The name of this organization is Grace Homes because our purpose is to help the elderly age with grace and dignity.

HC: And how did you go about working towards that; working towards Grace Homes? What was it that you thought you needed to do to develop Grace Homes?

TE: Well, somebody gave me the inspiration to start to take care of the elderly because she has a friend in San Francisco and so she gave me the idea and I went to visit that family in San Francisco and when I came here to Rockford I made inquiries at the city hall but they said there is no such thing as a group home for the elderly and so from our church I made inquiries about how to go about it and they recommended that we form a not-for-profit group and have a board and have a name, pick up a mission so that we will get incorporated. So therefore, with the help of my husband and a friend of who is the lawyer,[listen to tape for name; interviewee does not spell], the three of us got incorporated and after six months it was accepted.

HC: And now you have property and architectural design for your home and it's been about 10 years and we have that paperwork on that.

TE: Yes.

HC: Now when you came here in 1956 or 1990 you'll have to answer this question for me by the year did you have a visa to allow you to work and what kind of visa did you have to go to work or school?

TE: To go to school I had a student visa, to come here because my husband is an American I had a green card so with a green card you are allowed to stay for, you have to wait for five years before you apply for citizenship so as soon as I was in here for five years I applied for citizenship.

HC: So in 1956 you had a student visa?

TE: Yes.

HC: And then when you got married in 1958 and so at that point because your husband was an American you had a green card?

TE: Yes.

HC: So then when he went back to the Philippines in 1961 did you then apply while you were in the Philippines to become a citizen?

TE: No, I applied for my citizenship when I got here.

HC: And are you a citizen now?

TE: Yes.

HC: What was that kind of process for you to become a citizen then when you came here in 1990 what did you have to do?

TE: Oh, you have to study the Constitution, you have to take the exam and that's all.

HC: Did you have any special ceremony that you are part of?

TE: Yeah, we had a special ceremony for all these citizens at a certain time. They gathered all those applying for citizenship and then we got citizenship.

HC: Where was that ceremony held?

TE: I think it was Rock Valley College.

HC: How long was that process; how long did it take, a year, two months?

TE: I had to follow their schedule. We were going along with when it will come so about a year.

HC: Were your children considered American citizens because your husband was?

TE: Yes.

HC: But were they born here or the Philippines?

TE: Two were born in a there and four were born in the Philippines but whether they are born here or the Philippines they are still American citizens because they follow the citizenship of their father.

HC: So really the two born there and the four born here were all American citizens?

TE: Yes.

HC: When you came here to Rockford back in 1990 and your husband was already here did you get a drivers license to drive?

TE: Yes, I had to get a drivers license.

HC: Was it hard to find your way around?

TE: A challenge.

HC: How long did it take you to get comfortable in Rockford?

TE: Six months.

HC: Six months sounds good and again I know I've asked this question before but did you speak English upon arrival?

TE: Yes.

HC: Did your children also?

TE: Yes.

HC: Did you attend church or temple or synagogue when you first got here?

TE: Yeah, my church, regularly.

HC: And your church's name is?

TE: Holy Family.

HC: How did it feel to come here to a foreign country for you? How did it feel even in 1990 or 1956 how did it feel when you got here to a foreign country?

TE: I felt coming here is, I am on a mission to come here.

HC: How were you treated by people upon arrival both times?

TE: Very kind, very kind.

HC: Where there any people that you didn't get along with in your neighborhood or workplace because you were from another country?

TE: No, I didn't feel that way.

HC: What did you think about the United States before you came here the very first time and how did that change or did it change?

TE: I would rather not answer that. I don't know how to answer that. I cannot explain that in words.

HC: Was it a positive feeling?

TE: Yes.

HC: And has that positive feeling ever changed?

TE: I still have a positive feeling but now I feel sorry for the United States for the way it is. The morality of the nation is going down. I wish we had good dedicated leaders to uphold our morality, especially against abortion.

HC: Has your move here to the United States either time turned out like you thought it would be? Has your mission been fulfilled?

TE: It's beyond my mission.

HC: What has been the best part of coming to the United States?

TE: Best part, I enjoy everything. I like the community. The community is very good.

HC: Has there been a hardest part or disappointing part coming to the United States?

TE: No.

HC: What do you miss most about your former home in the Philippines?

TE: The Catholic traditions.

HC: Have you gone back home to visit since you moved here?

TE: No.

HC: Since 1990 you have not?

TE: No.

HC: When you went back in the 60s, when you went back after the first time what was it like after being here a few years?

TE: It was nice to be home, yeah. See I'm a person who is very critical who likes change you know. I wish there would be a change for the better whenever I go to a place I feel frustrated when I see things are not being done as how I wish it would be.

HC: So things were the same after so many years?

TE: Yeah.

HC: Do you think you are a will spend the rest of your life here in the United States?

TE: I think so.

HC: What do you want your children to know about the culture of your homeland? I know four of them were born there but they moved here what you want to keep with them in hopes that they will keep with the culture of your former homeland.

TE: I want them to keep the culture of our Catholic traditions.

HC: This is an odd question I'm going to ask you but what do you like to do for fun?

TE: I play the piano. I love music.

HC: What kind of music you play?

TE: I play classical music, yeah.

HC: What has been the most difficult thing to adjust to in the United States either time that you came back just something weird something you were not used to or still not used too. Any foods that you think are strange that we eat or something like that or music, anything?

TE: I don't want to waste too much waste here. There is too much waste around. That's it that's my disappointment when I hear and I read about many people who are homeless and they don't need to be homeless in this rich country. It's so rich but there is so much waste. If only the people will think about ways and means and how to recycle the things that are wasted and give it to the poor, give it to the homeless

HC: Were you nervous at all about moving here?

TE: No.

HC: Either time?

TE: A little nervous maybe but not that nervous.

HC: Last question; this is a big one you can answer, you don't have a, whatever you want to say; how do you feel about the current debate in this country about immigration?

TE: What are they debating about I still don't understand what they are debating. I wish they would allow immigrants; they have been allowing immigrants for all these years they just put their laws in place then there won't be any illegal immigrants. I think it's all up to whoever is enforcing the law they could enforce it and at the same time I think they are helpful to the immigrants you know so but there are some who are not obeying the laws so therefore those who are not obeying the law I don't think they could be immigrants. That's what I feel. You have many good immigrants here. In fact United States is built from immigrants from all of the different countries so if they all follow the law. Immigrants are following the law so we are all united together.