

My name is Anne Britt and I am interviewing Mr David Koh of 63 Clydebank Road, Wangi (sic) on the Koh family's return from Malaysia in 1987. It is hoped that this tape will help form an historical archives for the school to use for future research.

D.K. : Do my best (laughs)

A.B. : When you first came to Australia, did you come straight to Rathmines?

D.K. : No, I went to Newcastle first in 1980, and worked in a small restaurant in, uh, Wallsend.

A.B. : What was the name of the restaurant?

D.K. : Let's see... Angsara Wok.

A.B. : Right. And how long were you there?

D.K. : I been there for about a year, then I got a better place in Great Northern Hotel ... in Great Northern Hotel.

A.B. : Right.

D.K. : In Newcastle. So I worked there for another year, so I got all the experience. Then I ... then I went to Adamstown (laughs) So many places, but I didn't work long at Adamstown. Only 2, 3 months, then I stopped and start going on my own business. Right in... right in Warners Bay, this time.

A.B. : Warners Bay

D.K. : This time in Warners Bay. So I were in Warners Bay for another year. So that's altogether about 3 years before I came to Rathmines.

A.B. : And you bought the restaurant out here...

D.K. : Yeah. That.. at that time we were looking for a business

small business. So I found one at Rathmines. So that's how we came here.

A.B. : How long were you in Rathmines for ?

D.K. : Uh, since 1983, so that is about 8 years.

A.B. : Mm. And can you tell me what happend, was it 1986 or 1987 ?

D.K. : Yeah, they... they took us home in 1986... in 1986, June. And then we had to stay there for a year before we allowed to come back in 1987.

A.B. : Mm, mm. And how did the girls react to that ? Was Elaine born in Australia ?

D.K. : Elaine was two when we first came. Amy was born here in 1987.

A.B. : She was only very small wasn't she ? Yes.

D.K. : No, not 1987, 198.....

A.B. : About 1985 ? 1984 ?

D.K. : She's seven now, '83. 1983. The first year we came here.

A.B. : So, how did the girls react to going back to Malaysia

D.K. : For Elaine, she might have been a bit, uh, hard on her because she go to school here for about... from 2 or 3 years. And then she got to miss for one year.

A.B. : And she wouldn't have been able to speak the language either, would she ?

D.K. : No, she can't. Maybe she understand a bit but she can't really communicate with them.

A.B. : You must have found it terribly traumatic, the whole thin.

D.K. : Yes. We came here to... we considered lucky to come

here in one years time . And then we miss so much in one year.

A.B.: How did you get back in one year? It's normally 5 years, isn't it?

D.K.: Yeah, because of the local support, uh, a lot of nice people write to the government and then all the publicity helps, I think.

A.B.: Mm. So they just agitated.

D.K.: Mm. Yeah. You see we got a special case or something like that.

A.B.: When you were deported, you didn't get much warning, I beleive.

D.K.: Oh, a couple of months warning, actually.

A.B.: Oh, right. When you actually went, you had to sort of just go, didn't you?

D.K.: Yeah. When, when they think we got no, nothing to fight on. We, we try, we try stop going to the legal case, and then we find that they can take us from... they can take action.

A.B.: Can you tell me why you originally left Malaysia?

D.K.: Uh to be honest, looking for a better life

A.B.: Right. You saw a better life in Australia?

D.K.: Yeah.

A.B.: Do you think you found a better life here?

D.K.: Yeah. Much better from, from (indistinguishable), much better.

A.B.: Mm, um, what was the name of the T.V. channel that had the rights to your story that came to the school?

D.K. : Mike Willesee or "A current Affair"

A.B. : "The Current Affair", right.

D.K. : Used to be Mike Willesee show or something.

A.B. : Yes, well, that's how it affected the school, the day they came to the school. Can you tell us a little bit about the day they came to the school?

D.K. : Um. Yeah, because they, they want Elaine to go back to school to meet all her friends. And they having a small, small party for her, a small gathering in that same class. And the T.V. thought they would be nice to follow her there for some (indistinguishable).

A.B. : And the media reaction was incredible, wasn't it?

D.K. : Yeah. We don't expect so, so much media, actually.

A.B. : It was quite frenzied for a while, wasn't it?

D.K. : Yeah. Maybe because, uh, the Channel 9 ... Channel 9, Current Affair, yeah wants to make it like, exclusive, see.

A.B. : So, how did they make it exclusive?

D. . : Uh, actually, when, when we were in Malaysia at that time, the media, the Current Affair communicate with me a lot, so I get exclusive, exclusively help us with half the air flight here, you see.

A.B. : Oh good.

D.K. : When they found we are allowed to come back. So they start communicate with me. So I thought, "Why not?"

A.B. : Mm. Why not!

D.K. : (Indistinguishable) half of the...

A.B. : Take some of the trauma out of it.

D.K. : And especially at that time I didn't work for a whole year.

A.B. : Mm. Yes, of course. And you still had the house.

D.K. : I couldn't get a job there.

A.B. : Yes. Um. And the other media tried to hone in that day at the school, didn't they? They were quite rude.

D.K. : Some other... oh they just take a picture of whatever they can because that's their job. So I was actually talking to the Current Affair people. I said "Why, why don't let them take one little picture?" (laughs) He said, "I feel pity for them too". I not used to that. So they say, "No, if, if we were in the position, they do the same to us."

A.B. : Yes, yes. Dog eat dog. Was it hard for the girls to resettle back in once you came back?

D.K. : Uh, actually for, for... the girls pick up quite easily, actually, adapt to. When they first came they just... uh, yeah get easily to the condition

A.B. : Yes. Elaine seemed to take it like an old trouper. I was surprised how easily she settled back in.

D.K. : Yes. She thought it (indistinguishable) a holiday, or something.

A.B. : Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about that time?

D.K. : Um, I really don't remember much,