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Juanitas Family: Catherine Hufana (Youth)

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STOCKTONSpeaks!

CATHERINE HUFANA

Catherine Hufana grew up in Stockton, California. Filipino culture runs deep in her family, and she has always felt "Filipino." Nevertheless, after visiting the Philippines in 1992, Catherine realized that she identified much more strongly with Americans than with native Filipinos.

As an American, Catherine's upbringing was very different from that of her parents. She was raised in a household that spoke mostly English, although both her parents are bilingual. Her father immigrated to Stockton from the Philippines in 1961 and joined the U.S. Navy. Catherine's mother was born in the U.S. and worked as a registered nurse, but she was raised very traditionally, enveloped in her Filipino heritage. As Catherine struggled to fit in with her American peers, her parents continued to introduce her to their own Filipino culture.

Along with ethnic traditions, religion always played an important role in Catherine's life while she was growing up. Catherine and her two younger sisters and three younger brothers spent much of their time at the Catholic church, whether for parties or celebrations for sacraments. As a child, Catherine felt forced into the Church. She was expected to attend church services on a weekly basis, yet she had only a passing understanding of the religious tenets of Catholicism. However, as she grew older, Catherine began to appreciate religion and her Church. It has given her strength to endure life's challenges and difficulties. She has also learned to appreciate the valuable principles of the Church and deeply feels the importance of having faith.

Catherine's parents stressed getting an education from a very early age and she took that to heart. She attended public school, from elementary through high school, in Stockton. Catherine graduated from San Joaquin Delta College, San Jose State University, and University of San Francisco. She has also attended University of California at Santa Barbara and San Francisco City

College. Education allowed Catherine to follow her mother's footsteps into the nursing field.

In obtaining a strong education, Catherine has opened the doors of opportunity to live a more comfortable life. As her parents hoped, she can choose to avoid the struggle of raising a family on a tight budget.

Catherine's favorite childhood memory is of spending time with her extended family the Christmas before her grandfather passed away. All her relatives frequently would gather together as one, big family to celebrate various holidays. On this occasion, her grandfather was able to spend one last Christmas holiday with his entire family. Thinking back to the gathering of several generations on that particular time brings Catherine warm, happy thoughts.

Catherine's family holds a special place in her heart. It is one of the most important cornerstones of her life. The concept of family has influenced Catherine so strongly that she recognized her transition to adulthood through extending her own family. In Catherine's mind, she came of age when she gave birth to her son, now eight years old.

At that moment, everything in Catherine's life came full circle. Understanding her responsibility over another human being, she realized what it meant to be an adult. Catherine finally realized the influence her parents had during her upbringing. In raising her own son, Catherine is constantly remembering and using the lessons and values her parents taught her. For Catherine, there was no coming-of-age cultural ritual or ceremony to mark the occasion; it was just something that she felt inside.

Recently, Catherine, having moved away from the city of her birth, was forced to come back to Stockton to seek assistance from her family. Because of ill health, she needed help caring for her son. And, true to familial spirit, her family was here for her. Catherine says they have been wonderful in caring for her and her son, playing a significant role in restoring Catherine's health. Catherine's parents instilled in their children that "your friends will come and go, but your brothers and sisters will always be your brothers and sisters."

She has lived by these words and believes in their truth. Even now, Catherine recognizes that her journey to adulthood has been shaped by the family support she received every step of the way.

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Interviewer: Frank Gatdula
Ethnic Group: Filipino American
Generation: Middle