

Interview Transcript

[Interview Starts at 00.00.03]

Juanita: Hi, my name is Juanita McJaphet. Today is October 21st 2003. I'm Interviewing Alison Kim for the Colby College Korean Oral History Project. Alison, do you agree to grant the College permission to archive and publish this interview for educational purposes?

Alison: Yes.

Juanita: Alright, without further ado, we're going to go ahead and get started. How are you feeling about this interview today?

Alison: Well, I'm very excited but also a little nervous because I personally don't have a lot of anecdotes. They're all stories from my grandma, and they're from five years ago. So, I hope it's helpful and mostly accurate. But other than that, I'm very excited.

Juanita: Thank you, Thank you. Are there some goals or something you are excited to share in this interview today?

Alison: My grandparents grew up on the north side of South Korea. So, just sharing more about their stories living and growing up during and after the Korean War. I think it'll be very educational for a lot of people who don't really know about what happened, especially those

in America who just hear it does a lot of American occupation and just the influence of America in Korea.

Juanita: Amazing. It would be amazing to hear about your grandma's experience and also your identity, especially, as well. Can you introduce yourself and explain your relationship to Korea?

Alison: I am South Korean. I was born in Incheon, South Korea in my grandpa's hospital. But my mom and I, we moved to America because my dad lived there, when I was less than a year, and since then, I grew up in California until I was in third grade and then we moved to British Columbia, Canada. Then we left when I was around eighth grade to Virginia, and I kind of stayed there until I'm here in Maine. I kind of grew up in a very Korean dominated area. We went to an all-Korean church and a lot of my close friends were Korean because their parents were Korean. They were friends with my family. So, I grew up with a lot of Korean Americans, and I've been to Korea from time to time and I have heard a lot of stories from my grandma, as I said before, and I've been to many historical sites because she would bring me there but I haven't had a lot of personal experience growing up in Korea like other Korean Americans or even just Koreans.

Juanita: Okay, you kind of just went into my next question actually, which is totally okay. Do you think you can tell me more about the kind of household you grew up in? I know you said you grew up with a lot of Koreans and you went to a Korean church. Can you expand more on that?

Alison: Yes, so actually so I grew up seeing a lot of Koreans, especially in California, but my neighbors weren't necessarily Koreans. So, that was in itself... I didn't feel like, "Wow! This is like a Korean place where I see a lot of Koreans." I still felt like I'm Korean and different from these people. So, you know there's like that, those stories of when you're younger, you're scared to bring Korean food to school and just being nervous about how other people react and trying to be a little careful. But, when I grew up in a Korean church it was very much like almost everyone was Korean. I think there were one or two people who weren't Korean. but that in itself was an interesting experience because of how uniform the culture at the church was, where it was a little overbearing for me being in a place that wasn't very diverse because of how just everyone assumed that everyone thought in the same way and really imposed traditional values—like traditional Korean values—which are not necessarily bad, like respecting elders and mainly the males were having the male figure heads at the church which in itself is not an issue but it was very different from what I'm used to like versus like the school I went to and things like that, and when we were in Canada actually there weren't a lot of Koreans I knew. There were mainly Chinese Canadian populations but I went to a Korean church, which in itself was very small cause there weren't many Koreans where I lived, compared to California. So, it still is very much I am in another Korean place where I can really share experiences with them living as—well not Korean Americans, but Korean Canadians but it was very similar between the two—and Virginia actually, (I was in a), I live somewhere where we actually decide to live outside of a Korean community purposefully, because, especially in an educational setting, it can be very competitive and toxic because in Korea the education system is extremely intense, very unforgivable [*sic*] and a lot of Korean parents who immigrated here kind of come with those mentality of that's how we have to approach education. My mom didn't want me to really go through high

school in that kind of environment. I actually went to a school where I only knew two other Koreans, I think. I still went to a church where is prominently Korean but they all lived somewhere much more north than where I lived, so I didn't really feel like I fit in, like there are a lot of cliques at the church, which in itself wasn't a bad thing. I got along well with the pastors and small group leaders, but it really was, to me, like the Korean American community, at least where I grew up, was very much a bubble, where it felt like this was its own Korea in America. So, it's interesting going in and out of that circle growing up.

Juanita: Yes, amazing. It's interesting to hear. Moving on from that, because I know you do want to talk about some stuff from your grandparents. Did your parents or grandparents tell you stories about your family or family history when you were growing up? If so, which of these family histories stuck with you the most strongly, and why?

Alison: So, a bit of back context about my parents. Both of my parents were born and grew up in Korea. But, my father he moved to America when he was only in middle school and so his grandparents... So, the Korean war happened when my grandparents were very young, so they weren't really involved in all the fighting but they saw the impacts that it had on their families, especially the older members and their families. But, on my dad's side, they were very poor families, so they decided to move to America when my dad was very young. So he didn't have a lot of stories about Korea, but more about what it felt like growing up as a Korean American. My mom, on the other hand, like really grew up in Korea. She was very integrated in the Korean culture, and she shared a lot of stories of what my grandma went through especially, my grandma was also the first Christian in our side of the family, and there are a lot of difficulties with that, especially with a lot of political distress that happened after the

Korean War, and also on my mom's side, they were quite a wealthy family that had a lot of influence with where she was in Incheon, so she had a lot of stories of what that was like, especially since a lot of people sort of had connections with my grandparents, and how she had a very distinct upbringing as kind of being part of this upper class in Korea.

Juanita: Interesting, that's great to hear. Moving on, you kind of already talked about the kind of community you grew up in. You said you spent most of your time with Korean Americans. So I wanted to ask, what kind of community do you remember being most comfortable in, between being with Korean Americans and maybe with non-Koreans, because you mentioned living in the neighborhood that was not exclusively with Korean neighbors. Do you think you can expand more on that?

Alison: Yes. So, it's actually interesting cause I actually don't feel very comfortable being in very Korean American dominated places because of how uniform it is because in those places. With where I've been, the communities, they grew up there and they knew each other for a very long time. Well, for me, growing up, I moved around a lot, so I always felt a little out of place, where even the slightest of differences, between me and the others, felt very big. However, when I'm within communities like, not saying it's exclusive of Korean Americans, but involves a lot of different ethnicities and like cultural backgrounds, I feel a lot more welcomed, I guess in a way. It feels like there are less barriers because there are already so many differences. So any differences that I could have with the community doesn't feel like such a big gap. Compared to being with Korean Americans. But, also what is more complex, is that I do share a lot more commonalities with Korean Americans. Simply from like the food that we like to eat, the different family traditions that we have, and the kind of values that we were raised in. Like having those conversations is a lot easier with Korean Americans. I

guess it's like I feel most welcome in a very diverse community that does have Korean Americans but aren't solely Korean Americans.

Juanita: Since you mentioned you feel more welcomed in communities that are more diverse, in comparison to being in communities exclusively or like mainly Korean, Korean American communities. How do you think this might have shaped like your identity?

Alison: Yes. So it's actually really funny. I had a phase growing up where I didn't want to be Korean because, yes, Korea, I am proud to be Korean now—It's not that I don't want to be Korean anymore. I'm very proud to be Korean and I'm not ashamed of it. But I do acknowledge that there are a lot of downfalls in Korean culture, where it's very behind. There's a lot of patriarchy, and there's a lot of very traditional values, like a lot of stigma against socioeconomic classes, and the gender wage gap is very big, they treat women poorly and all these things. I'm not saying it's exclusive in Korea, but it's like very prone. I actually went to Korea the past summer, and I was like, “Wow, the culture here is way different!” What I think of identity is that the reason why I didn't want to be Korean was because there is a distinct difference between native Koreans and Korean Americans. So as I grew up, I was very confused, because I didn't know about the concept of Korean Americans. I'm like, “Am I American or am I Korean?” And even then, I was like, “Am I American?” Because I had spent my childhood in Canada. So it felt like I grew up in Canada, because yes, I did spend birth to third grade in California, but I was so young, so most of my childhood memories that I have are from Canada. So I also had this like, “Do I align more with like Canadians or Americans, or am I Korean?” And how it [identity] has really shaped this is was: Yes, I had these conversations with people, but was actually more of me, which, I guess media I watched a lot more. I know it's like it seems very funny, but I tend to watch more K-Dramas, and I love

watching Korean entertainment versus American versus Canadian entertainment. I didn't really understand that part, and wasn't really engaged in it. So it was harder for me to have those kind of conversations with friends who engaged in it. So, I ended up engaging more with Korean Americans, and over time, as I grew to appreciate more of the history and culture of Korea outside of the stigma and the stereotypes that it can hold, and as I grew appreciation for the history, like as I heard more stories about how my grandparents grew up and saw how Korea really has brought itself up from like the post war consequences, Now I'm like, "Yeah!" I'm like, "Yes, I am Korean American—in my own way." Like not all Korean Americans are the same. But yes, there were kind of ups and downs as I moved around.

Juanita: Thank you for sharing. You mentioned that over the last summer you were in Korea for a while. How long was that for?

Alison: It was only two weeks.

Juanita: Oh okay. For those two weeks you were there, because you mentioned that native Koreans and Korean American do then to be different... I mean, I don't know how much experience you may have had with that, but was there something you felt between the two communities being with [*sic*] native Korean, because I know with Korean Americans you said you feel somewhat relieved to share some experiences because they relate to some of the things you have, but can you expand more on how you felt being in a native Korean society?

Alison:

Yes, it was very different even within those two weeks, I was like, "Wow!" I learned a lot about what it's like to live in Korea, and so I guess one of the examples is that Koreans, like native Koreans, they're very much in their own space. I thought I was always someone who was always in my own mind, but no, like they were on a another level. They really are... they don't make

eye contact and they really don't say "Hi." They really don't interact with people around them, and that's just the culture that they have. It's not necessarily rude, but it's more of just how they live their lives because they're always on the go, always so busy, always trying to make everything efficient. So, it was sort of a culture shock for me because since it's been a while since my mom, my sister, and I have been in Korea, we got lost a few times. So we would always try to ask you like, "Are we in the right place?" But they would just walk right past us even when we try to go say hi. So that was like... I'm like, "Oh my goodness, they're so mean!" But it's really the culture. Another thing is [that] just speaking English in itself is a huge difference. So, yes, English is like the second language in Korea, but just by the fact that I spoke English in Korea already made me stand out, despite I am the most Korean-looking person that I know because I am 100% Korean. But even that I stood out a lot because simply because I spoke English, and people would always look at you if you spoke English, it could be out of curiosity, it could be because it's different, or it could be because of judgement, whatever it is, it made me like really stand out and felt like I was not one of them, which is very interesting because I've never met so many people who looked like me in a single place, but yet I felt so different from them. And also there was a couple other things that really stood out, but in general it was very much... I think it was a uniformity that really was the culture shock because... well, as just growing up in America, in general, you just see so much diversity around, even though you could say there are many issues that America has. I'm not saying America has it perfectly, but especially in comparison to Korea, where literally everyone is Korean and everyone follows the same values, the same mentality, same upbringing, history, culture. It was very interesting to see how they were sort of in their own bubble in a way, even more of a bubble than Korean Americans in America like those communities, so yes, it was very interesting.

Juanita: Thank you for sharing. Were there times you felt very connected to the culture, the Korean culture and history?

Alison: Yes, actually. I actually felt really connected whenever—it's actually kind of sad—but whenever really tragic things happen in Korea, like for example there was the Sewol Ferry tragedy (2014 disaster where the ferry called Sewol sank, resulting in the deaths of hundreds aboard, including ~250 high school students) that happened several years ago, and when I saw that happen I think... and also there was the Itaewon [crowd crush] (a 2022 disaster where hundreds of young Koreans were killed in a crowd crush in the neighborhood of Itaewon)... forgot what it was called, but it happened in Itaewon last year Halloween, where a lot of high school students died because of crowding issues, and I think why I really felt connected was because typically when I look at the news in America, yes these are Americans, I have a lot of compassionate empathy for all the victims of different tragedies that they are, but it's hard for me to see myself as them, simply because they look very different. But when I look at the breaking news that is happening in Korea, and I see all these families and all these students that were victims that could have [*sic*], and have passed, I really see myself and my family in them and that's when I really connect, being like, “Wow, these are my people and this has happened to my people,” even though I have no idea what's happening politically and things like that. Yes, whenever me or whenever Koreans gets together—even something as small as the World Cup—like I remember last year with the World Cup in Korea when Koreans were like, “Wow, we won!” And I was like, “Yes, we did!” I had never watched a single soccer game, like fully. The last time I tried, I fell asleep—but I think it's a very Korean thing, where these big

things happen, Korea really comes together, and even I feel that impact, and I think it's because of just how small Korea is historically as a country. And even when you go around, at least for me, I didn't see a lot of Korean, but when I suddenly see Korea in the media, even though they're horrible tragedies, I really feel connected and I want to learn more of what's happening and hear more about their story and really want to pray for them and support them in that way.

Juanita: Thank you for sharing, and I just wanted to slowly move into your interactions with your grandmother in connection to your identity. How did your interactions with her... or how do you think they may have affected your identity?

Alison: Yes, so actually my grandma is my hero, even though... So, it's very interesting because I don't know a lot of Korean, so there's a big language barrier between my grandparents and I. Because my grandma, she was an English teacher, so we can get something through, but it's been a while since she's been retired, so it's been difficult, but my mom is my translator in a way. But she was the first Christian in my family, and she really has gone through a lot, even within her faith because there was a lot of backlash. So, Korea, right now there's a lot of Christians in Korea, but historically it was, what's it called, an unreached people group, where Christians were really... they were really pushing back on them, like this is colonialism, we don't want Christianity to be present in Korea. And so when my grandma grew up, it was past that. There were Christians in Korea, but not a lot. And a lot of her family members were like, "What are you doing?" Like, "This is like superstition." So, I really look up to her a lot, and when she told me these stories, I really wanted to get as much out of them because I knew these were her unique experiences that I have the privilege of being able to receive, to have, to be able to hear her personal anecdotes, because I know a lot of people like they their grandparents have passed or they're not as close,

maybe because of language barrier issues and things like that or simply they don't have family members in Korea who lived during this time. So, just hearing her stories was very much of me getting to know more about her because I really do look up to her a lot.

Juanita: Thanks for sharing. Ahead of our interview, I sent you a [inaudible] questionnaire, and I was fascinated by one of your responses, stating that you feel like you didn't grow up with the same level of anti-Japanese feeling that many other Koreans or Korean Americans could have. Do you think you can expand more on this?

Alison: Yes, for sure. I actually had a lot of... this is one of the things where it's really connecting Korean Americans. It's like this anti-Japanese sentiment. It's very much a Korean, Korean American thing that maybe not a lot of people really understand. So, with me is, I knew about the war, and I knew what Japanese had done. It's not that I'm ignorant to it, but my family didn't really carry over those sentiments, even my grandmother. It could have been because she... Like I said, she was more in the north, so the most of these kind of really strong sentiments against like the certain people group is against North Koreans rather than the Japanese. But I grew up hearing the history of what Korea has done - I mean Japan - has done, I know how atrocious it is, but I grew up with my parents and my grandparents telling me, "These are not the people though, and the people who have done this, they're no longer here. You shouldn't hate the people for what they didn't do, and it's the same with us." It's not that Korea hasn't done anything horrible. Korea definitely has done many things horrible, but does that mean I have done them personally? It's like, no. But I do also have a lot of compassion on [sic] the Koreans that were heavily traumatized by what the Japanese has done, and I'm not ignorant to it, and I do believe that they deserve a proper apology. I know they didn't receive a proper compensation or apology for what has happened to them, but I'm not growing up being, like, anti-Japanese, and I

actually was shocked when I have Korean American friends or even Korean friends whose parents were like, “You can't be friends with Japanese.” I've had friends where the parents [say], “You can't be friends with him or her because they're Japanese,” or they're like, “You can't go to this Japanese restaurant because it's owned by Japanese people.” I myself was very shocked with that and the range of responses, and it's just very interesting how different families relate to that, because I know there are other Korean families, Korean American families, who are very strongly against Japanese because they grew up very [anti-Japanese] because it's in the education system, they're like, “Japanese are bad people.” So, they come over to America never growing out of that mentality, and there are also obviously Koreans in Korea who were anti-Japanese because they have close family members who are impacted and they're very much still in that mindset, but there are also Koreans who have seen Korea heal from it and have grown past it. So, it's a very interesting relationship that as a whole, that Korean, Korean Americans or whatever identity as a Korean that you have has with Japan.

Juanita: Thank you so much for sharing that. You mentioned something about this hatred, it seems like it was more towards North Koreans than Japanese. Do you think you can expand more on that?

Alison: Sorry, could you repeat that?

Juanita: You mentioned about [*sic*] this. It felt this hatred, this “anti” feeling more towards North Koreans, because you mentioned your grandma lived more in the northern part. Do you think you can expand a little bit on that, on why you feel like there was still that bridge between South Koreans and North Koreans from maybe your grandma's experience and perspective?

Alison: So, the Korean war, my grandma... I don't have a lot of stories from my grandpa, but my grandma... Growing up she was a landowner 's daughter, and so around the time she

grew up, land owners had a lot of political power because the residents that each land—because they own giant buildings and they have a lot of residents and primarily back in the day a lot of Koreans weren't very educated politically—so the land owners would have a lot of influence over the residents' political views and how they vote. So, my great grandpa—yes, my great grandpa—he would be friends with a lot of politicians. He would have a lot of connections, because these politicians would want him to sway his residents voting to vote for them. So, when the Korean War happened, my grandma's house was very heavily targeted because he had this political influence. She would tell me, and my mom would also tell me, [that as] grandma grew up she watched her older male family members get executed in front of her by North Koreans or soldiers who were employed by North Korea, and then she would grow up always kind of on the run. Not necessarily because they didn't really target women, but you still live in a general sense of fear when you see that happen to you when you're very young, and she lost a lot in terms of influence and power. I'm not really sure. She didn't really talk about it, but definitely she lost a lot of family members because of North Korea, and since we still live very up in the north; there's an area in Korea where you can look at the Demilitarized Zone, and she brought me there once. It was so interesting because—I don't know if it's like really creepy or not—but there's this telescope and you could look into North Korea and see what's happening and it's very much a 1984 situation there, where they always have the announcements and speakers talking [things like], “Well, Kim Jong Un,” they're like “He's our great leader, he's always watching you,” and things like that, and I could hear it from that place. It's very loud. It was a very nerving [*sic*] experience because I... It's something that I always see on TV and I always read in books, but to see it actually being a thing was very shocking to me, and I think because of

that close proximity and that history that she had it's hard for her to let that go because that's been such a marked part of her growing up.

Juanita: Thank you very much for sharing. This is more related toward the politics. Do you think you can tell me how you may or may not relate to the politics of first generation Korean Americans or second generation Korean Americans?

Alison: Yes. So, I would like to preface, I am not very political. I don't know too much politics, especially if it's about Korea, but I... It's kind of funny, like the things I do know about current politics are because of scandals. You know Korea has a very interesting history in terms of presidents because they all have a horrible ending. They're either arrested, assassinated or just all these things, yes. So, I know a lot about that, but in terms of politics I don't know too much about like the common Korean opinion about it. I just know [that] for some reason every single president, they would elect them, but it would always be such a close competition and a good chunk of Korea does not like that president. Even now there's a whole thing going on. But, in terms of social issues in Korea, I do have opinions. For example, one of the issues that Koreans have with their current president is they don't like how, I guess, how strong of a presence the first lady has. I'm not... She's not necessarily a clean political character, but I'm also putting into context, like, are any politicians that clean? There's always something corrupt about [them]. There's, you know, I feel like in general, in this world, you have to be a little corrupt to get into that sort of power, but I also know that a good part of a lot of Koreans don't really like her because she has such a strong presence and she really has influence and she demands respect. Not demands respect, but she is a very respectful figure and they have issues with that. So, that I don't necessarily agree with. I agree with other parts where they have issues with her, where she is... she has been caught for lying and cheating, that I don't agree with,

but this sentiment that they have, I don't really agree with. And I also believe that Korea should really push for more equalities between females and males and the economy, because I also have a lot of, a good amount of international friends who are from Korea, and they talk about how they really don't want to work in Korea because they know how difficult it would be being a working woman in Korea, and I heard a lot of stories [of] how Korean women are laid off a lot more easily, and in fact are—what's the word?—they're really forced, they're really pushed and they're threatened to leave their work. In ways that are like where the boss would say something like—I'm not... this is an example, it's not universal—but they would say, “It's either you're going to be laid off or your husband's going to be laid off. Do you really want your husband to be so ashamed of himself, knowing that his wife is working but he's not?” So, this very patriarchal image of the husband is working, the wife stays at home is very strong in Korea. And I know that there was a feminist movement that happened, but it was quite short lived and quite small, and just, yeah. I just feel very strongly because I was very impacted despite living [and] growing up in America. Even just as small as beauty standards, that was very toxic and really influenced me growing up. It made me feel like I don't feel like I'm Korean enough because I don't fit into these beauty standards. I just feel very strongly about that, but I am also aware that I am not in Korea nor have I really grew [*sic*] up in Korea. So, I'm not like, “This is how you should do things and this is how I feel you should know about it.” It's just something that I hold within myself and just how I relate with Korean politics and social issues and things like that.

Juanita: Thank you. Thank you for sharing. So, to wrap up, I'm just going to go into play and entertainment, and I just want to know what do you do for fun?

Alison: I watch K-dramas. I love K-dramas, but not like the... I like K-dramas that really show more about Korean life, especially K-dramas that are dated back to the 1980s, the 1990s, because I feel like I see part of my parents in that, because that's sort of the times that they grew up in. I find it so interesting, like just "Reply 1988" (tvN, 2015-2016). I love that show because it really shows the small things, like cultural things, that happen in Korea, and I love watching and being like, "Wow! My parents went to those arcade games! They went to those places, they lived in these kind of neighborhoods," and I know it's an ideal depiction of Korean life, but still, having those little tidbits. But, in general, I just... I do love to learn about what's happening in Korea culturally, just to... Because I do relate more with Korean media than American media, despite growing up in America, like western media. And I think it's probably because [with] my parents I grew up watching Korean dramas, listening to Korean songs rather than American, so yes. I do a lot of other things, but I would say the thing that takes most of my time are K-dramas because they're extremely long.

Juanita: Thank you for sharing. Can you share what you remember your grandmother telling you about her own definition of entertainment, and living in that time period, what she did for fun and what it was like during her time?

Alison: Yes. It was so cute and funny, just like something I remember, cause when I went to back to Korea, I saw my grandma watching a K-pop concert in her bedroom. I thought that was the funniest thing because, I don't know, I always have this mentality that old people in Korea are just very much on their own times, you know? Like almost like an old soul kind of vibe. But I see my grandma sitting on her bed watching a K pop concert. No, but it's fun. Like my grandma, she was also very much a girl, like any other girl growing up. She had her own favorite singers, her own favorite actors, and sometimes they would come back on these

Korean variety shows she'll point out, like "I watched him growing up." So it's like, "we are very similar! Maybe this is where I got it from." Korea was very different from back then, but the general growing up; you're just a teenage girl, you just... you have fun watching these stars on TV. My grandma was not much different from that, but she'll also talk about how she was always in the field. She was like, "I was so dark," because she would always be outside in the sun. She had nine other siblings, I think. I think she was right in the middle. So she would always say, "I would always bring my younger brothers out. We liked playing in the fields. I would hit them [and] we would fall." She was very much out in the world. She also liked drawing a lot. She loved to draw. She wanted to be an art teacher, but she later decided to become an English teacher. But yes, she had so many drawings that she did when she was younger, and I will see a lot of my sister, actually, in my grandma. She once showed me her childhood photos, and I'm like, "Wow! That's Chara, my younger sister." So, she's very similar to my sister and I, which I think is very endearing and something I didn't expect, but also expected at the same time.

Juanita: Thank you, Thank you for sharing. So many similarities. You said that you kind of see there are some times where you see yourself in your grandma. How was your definition of fun and entertainment maybe different or similar to your grandma's experience? Do you want to expand more on that?

Alison: I think it's pretty much similar. Because, for me, having fun is just having freedom to do whatever I want, whether that means going out, whether that means staying in; and actually I think there's not a lot of difference in the fact [of] what access we have. I remember even when I went back to Korea, my grandma just randomly going on a walk, and I'm like, "That's what I do!" Sometimes I just spontaneously go on a walk because it's fun and sometimes she just wants to

stay inside and watch a K pop concert. I necessarily wouldn't want to do that, but I would stay inside and watch a K-drama. So, I actually don't really see a difference. We both love eating good food, like we always go out. We love to eat good food. Actually, I think the only difference is just cultural difference of what we engage in and of how we perceive different entertainment stimuli, but other than that, I think we're very similar.

Juanita: Thank you. Thanks for sharing. Thank you for sharing about your grandma's experiences as well, and just kind of like to wrap up, I want to know what—because you've spoken a lot about your grandma—but I want to know what are the overlaps between your entertainment life and your parents and maybe your siblings? If you want to expand on that.

Alison: So, with my dad, I'm not really sure what he does. Okay, so it's really funny but growing up, he loves cars. He's a car fanatic, and I think he's a genius when it comes to cars, because both of my parents are very fidgety, which makes sense because I'm a very fidgety person. When I'm doing something, I always have to do something with my hands, and what my dad would do is he would [take] this blank sheet—he has an entire notebook, it's so thick—but it just has a lot of numbers on it; random numbers and random letters on it and they're all information about cars that he just has logged in his memory. He just loves watching car videos and he's very hyper-focused, hyper-fixated on cars. My mom is also very fidgety, but she's a lot more of an artistic. My mom loves K-dramas even more than me. I remember once we were trying to watch a series together, because you know we want to have that mother-daughter bonding time, but I couldn't make it. She stayed on that couch for over five hours. I couldn't make it past two hours, and she just watched. It's like she just zoomed ahead on the series, and I'm like, “Okay, I guess.” She made it to the last episode within three days, and I'm like, “I love K-dramas, but I can't binge watch that.” I physically can't do that. I need different stimuli, but I

feel like both my parents, they have this... Rather than a type of entertainment, it's just once they find something, they go all the way. They're very hyper-fixated on it. That's very different from me. My sister, on the other hand, is very much like that. She has this book series that she's loved since she was in kindergarten [that] she still reads and keeps up with right now, [and] my mom's telling her to stop. She's like, "This is not good for your reading skills because you found this when you were an elementary school student." However, me, on the other... I am very much... I go between a lot of different subjects, and I think I got that from my grandpa because he's very much... He can get hyper-fixated, but on very different things. He always needs a different thing to hyper-fixate on, and I think that's very much me. Even though I love K-dramas, very rarely do I actually make it through one. I think I give it three episodes, if I don't like it, move on to the next one, and that's also why I like tinkering with a lot of other things. I love to read, but actually finding a good book I will dedicate time to takes a bit. I love learning Korean but sometimes I'm bored with it, and I decide to learn Japanese. Right now I'm teaching myself Japanese. So yes, rather than the similarities and differences being on what we engage in, it's more of like how we engage in it, I think.

Juanita: Thank you. Thank you so much for coming to this interview and sharing your experiences, and also your grandma's experience as well. Is there anything that I may not have asked about that you'd like to speak about?

Alison: Yes, I guess I would like to speak more [about] my grandpa's side. I didn't hear any stories from him, but these are stories that my mom told me, just very quick because I don't know too much. Unlike my grandma, he grew up very poor, and he always wanted to grow up to be a farmer. But then, the Korean war happened. So his family was very [sic] struggling a lot. So then, he decided to be a doctor, and that was [a] very independent decision of him because his

whole family, they were all farmers, so the safe choice was to be a farmer. But he actually went to Seoul National University for his medical school, and he became an OBGYN, and I was actually the last baby to be delivered in his hospital. But he grew up very wealthy, very influential, and he had a very interesting relationship with his family in that they would kind of keep taking advantage of him for his money. He had a very hard time letting them go because they're his family; they were for him since day one. My grandma, in the end, was like "They're not good for you. They're just taking advantage of you. They're making you miserable." So, I think that's why I don't know a lot about my grandpa side because he had an upbringing where he really kind of, I guess, ran away, but not really. But he really just doesn't have external family outside of the family that he has now, with like my sister and I, his other grandchildren, with my grandma's side of the family, but yes. I mean, he did the mandatory two-year military training but he doesn't talk a lot about it. But, just hearing about the economics of Korea that happened during that time. When people say, in Korea, that it's super hard to move between social classes, you can't marry up or down very easily, and they said, "You only have one chance to move up in social class and that's the college entrance exams." I think my grandpa is the very definition of that because the only way he was able to become who he was and give the life to my mom and my uncles was because he was able to get into that Med school and become this influential doctor cause he had a lot of connections. Because of that we have a lot of privilege. My grandpa has a VIP in a bank. I remember we went to the bank because he gave me money, it was like an inheritance thing, and they're like, "Okay, we'll bring you to the back room." It's so fancy; I was like, "That's crazy! That's absolutely insane!" And when my older cousin, before she was born, there were a lot of complications with her being born, so then my grandpa reached out to the top surgeon in the world because he had a

lot of connections and they were able to move up the waitlist and get treated, and I think that was just so interesting, because it's a life that I always saw on TV, but it's just—it's in my family.

Juanita: Thank you. Thank you so much for sharing, and I'm really glad you were able to make it.

Alison: Thank you for listening [Laughter].