

## BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Emme Tomimbang

Emme Tomimbang was raised in Kalihi, Kaka'ako and Chinatown by her single father, Eutiquio Tommy (Pommy) Tomimbang, who was born on the remote island of Siquijor, in the Philippines. When she was just ten years old, Tomimbang had her own program called "Morning Girl" on a Japanese Radio Station KOHO.

Tomimbang attended Ka'iulani Elementary School in Kalihi-Pālana and Pohukaina Elementary School in Kaka'ako, followed by Central Intermediate School (renamed Princess Ruth Ke'elikōlani Middle School) in Downtown Honolulu and Farrington High School in Kalihi, where she was a cheerleader. She spent her time after school at Palama Settlement, which she saw as her "safe place." She learned to swim, as well as to dance, at Palama, where, she explained, kids from all ethnic backgrounds and every walk of life realized "We were more alike than different."

Tomimbang graduated from Farrington High School and the University of Hawaii. Although she intended to become a school counselor, the media beckoned her once again. At KITV in Honolulu she worked her way up from "weather girl" to a feature reporter. In 1975 she began producing and hosting her own highly successful TV show, "Emme's Island Moments." In 1987 Tomimbang married the late Judge James Seishiro Burns, son of Hawaii Governor John A. Burns.

Tomimbang's close friend, the late Police Chief Francis Keala, asked her to join the Palama Settlement Board of Trustees in 1984. The two were honored together at Palama's 2015 Malama Palama Gala.



Emme Tomimbang

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW  
with  
Emme Tomimbang (ET)  
May 18th, 2023  
Palama Settlement, Honolulu  
Interviewed by Paula Rath (PR)

- PR: Paula Rath is interviewing Emme Tomimbang, also known as Emme Tomimbang-Burns, for Reflections of Palama Settlement II. May 18th, 2023 at Palama Settlement. What's your full name, please Emme.
- ET: Full name is Emmaline, which I don't use hardly anymore. Emmaline Angela Tomimbang. After I got married to Mr. Burns, I was Emme Tomimbang-Burns.
- PR: And when were you born?
- ET: 1950 October 27th. I was born at Saint Francis Hospital. I was a preemie. At the time my parents were really scared because they'd never seen a baby that small. I was only 3 pounds and four ounces. In those days, there's no guarantee that a preemie will make it. So I was already supposedly challenged with life. But I fought through it and here I am today.
- PR: Well, you've always been a fighter.
- ET: Oh, thank you.
- PR: And where do you live currently?
- ET: I live in Kailua at the ancestral home of the Burns. And this is where---when I say ancestral, it's where Governor Burns lived and his wife lived and Jim Burns lived and then I came in to help Jim, you know, take care of Mrs. Burns. Then when Jim passed, I'm now residing in their home, which is now my home, too.
- PR: What's your ethnicity?
- ET: I am Filipino, Chinese, Spanish. Lately I had gone on to---what is it called when you look into your ancestral background? Jim had done it for me and he said, "You are Mongolian." (Laughs) And I said, "Well, that makes sense because the Filipinos have to come from that area, Malaysia, and then go up to the Philippines." So that's kind of my ancestral roots. Deep, deep, deep roots.
- PR: What languages do you speak?
- ET: I speak English, Pidgin, a little Filipino---several dialects, mostly Tagalog, which is the main language of the Philippines. I can do a little Visayan, which is where my family is---you know, speaks in the south. A little Ilocano---where the Marcoses came from. So people were really confused as to whether I was a local girl or born in the Philippines, because I crossed over now and then when I needed to.

PR: And let's talk a little about your parents. What's your father's name?

ET: My father's name is Eutiquio Tommy Tomimbang. My mother's name is Nina Tampon Tomimbang and that was while they were still married.

PR: How many siblings do you have?

ET: I have two stepsisters. How that evolved was when I was three years old, my parents divorced and I was raised by a single Filipino man. Back in the 50's, I'm not sure that was customary. But I did, you know, spend a lot of time with my mother, helping to take care of her two daughters from her second husband. So I hope that answers your question. I've had two sets of parents. And then, this is what complicates it, my father, when I turned 12, told me a story that he had actually left the Philippines to come work on the plantation and he was married and left a one year old daughter. So we're in the '70s, he went back to the Philippines after 30 years, brought his first wife here, married her, and she became my stepmother. Then all of a sudden, I have this entire family unit, which is my half sisters---kids from the Philippines.

PR: My goodness, what an interesting family background. So it was your father who raised you by himself for a while?

ET: Oh, yeah. Since I was three until I was 12. And I kind of felt that I raised myself. I know that's an interesting concept, but I remember ironing my father's white shirts, and I was only six. I could barely lift up the iron because in those days the iron was like really heavy. For a six year old, it was even heavier. I just remember that I was his daughter, but it was almost like I was his roommate. Father/daughter, but really an interesting kind of dynamic and at the time, you know, we were struggling and we lived in different places. We lived right down here by Palama at one point. When we settled in Kaka'ako---he found a house with Filipino fishermen and retirees and there were eight of them. My father built a little extension to the house in Kaka'ako. There I was living there with my dad. I remember the rent was \$11.50. So it was something I had to keep in mind. But those were the early days and the early years of of my childhood.

PR: It's an interesting way to grow up in a house with five men and a little girl.

ET: Nine men---eight men. Yeah. Yeah.

PR: Oh, let's talk a little about your maternal grandparents. Do you have memories of them?

ET: Oh maternal would be my mother's grandparents.

PR: Yes.

ET: The only one that I met. Because remember now, my father came from the Philippines. My mother was born here, but her father and her mother were plantation parents. My grandmother, I never met her---on my mother's side. She couldn't live here. It was hard. So she went back to the Philippines. But my grandfather stayed and he lived with my mom for a short time down in Palama, Akepo Lane. So that was about it. And he, you

know, he died, of course, when I was still rather young. But I remember him and the stories of coming here from the Philippines and making it in a relatively new country. And, you know, that whole immigrant experience.

PR: Your paternal grandparents, were their backgrounds quite different or similar?

ET: My father was the only one that came from an island in the Philippines called Siquijor. It's sort of an island known for its witchcraft and all these I guess sort of like---is that Potter---Harry Potter kind of things (laughs). Until today, it's known for the magic, the herbs and the different things. That's why they said don't ever cross someone from Siquijor because they can put a spell on you and you'll not have good luck.

PR: I think we need the spelling of Siquijor.

ET: S-I-Q-U-I-J-O-R. It's the size of Moloka'i and to think that my father journeyed from that little island to Manila and then got a big---one of those steamship boats and crowded in the bottom of the boats like cattle and coming to a whole new place. I forgot how he said how long it took, but it was several months to get here from where he was originally from. I never knew my paternal grandparents, but I know that I was named after my paternal grandmother and her name was Angela. I've kind of over the years asked questions and she was the most---I don't know, how do you put it---not magical, but she had---she was psychic and she could see the future and all of these things. So I kind of got interested in her life story and my name, my middle name is Angela. So that's about the extent of my knowing that side.

PR: So can we talk a little bit about the places where you've lived and what ages? I believe you've talked about Kalihi, Kaka'ako, Waipahu.

ET: Jim used to say, "Where did you not live?" Let's start with that (laughter). Because I would drive around, "Oh, I lived here. I lived here." Anyway, I started---when I was born, Saint Francis Hospital, we lived in Kalihi. And I have a very short memory of my father and mother and me in the house together. Because as a three year old, there's not much I could really understand. So all I remember is from that point I went to live with my father and he would find these little places like the one in Palama. Used to be, I don't know, a grocery store or something. We lived upstairs and then we would live in 'A'ala Park in those single men dwellings. It was just my dad and I in one room. No kitchen, no nothing. Then finally, the Kaka'ako house was where things normalized for me because I stayed there from---I think I was there for like eight years, which is a long time for, you know, adolescent. So I lived in Kaka'ako with the fishermen and retirees, Filipino retirees. You want me to go further than that to my adulthood? (Laughs).

PR: No, we can get to that later.

ET: Okay. Because I've lived like I said, I never---okay, so I never lived in Hawai'i Kai, I never lived in Kahala, I never lived in 'Aina Hina.

PR: Other than that, you got O'ahu (laughs).

ET: That's kind of how. . .

PR: And you're in Kailua now.

ET: Yes. So, you know, and people don't even believe I live in Kailua because they go, "You didn't come from Kailua, you came from Kaka'ako, you came from Waipahu. And I have to like, "No. Last 35 years I've been in Kailua," "But you're so quiet about it." So this is one of the few times I've explained why I'm a 'Kailuan' (laughs) if there's such a word.

PR: So let's talk about the men in your life.

ET: Starting at what age? (Laughs).

PR: Oh, well, twenties?

ET: Okay. Well, we're making a big jump here, but that's good. My father was very strict, so I could not date and I went to the proms, it was all prearranged and all of that. My father didn't understand the concept of going to a prom. But when I got to Leeward Community College, I finally felt like I had to educate him that this is normal and it's okay. I was just going to go to Shakey's Pizza Parlor, remember Shakey's?

PR: Yes.

ET: So I went with this gentleman. He was a nice guy from the mainland. When we came home, my father introduced himself, had us in the kitchen, and he turned on the light and he said, "What is your intention with my daughter?" (Laughter). I was thoroughly embarrassed. But I said to myself, Okay, I'm breaking my father in about dating and being a girl. Of course, this poor kid was a military, you know, son of a military colonel or something in Hawai'i. He was like shaking in his boots and he said, "Oh, it was just pizza, Mr. Tomimbang." (Laughter) But, you know, I think during that time, I understood being raised by a man, the concern and and the, you know, just---and he was a Filipino man and I think he felt like he had to really prove himself. So that would come back to how I grew up, right? And how successful or, you know---I will tell you, there was a time we lived on Hotel Street and my father had a secondhand store. You know, and my friends were some of the ladies of the night, some mähūs.

PR: You were how old?

ET: I was 12. 12, 13. The thing that I remember about them is every Sunday they take the kids into Hawai'i Theatre and we got to eat popcorn and everything. That was a treat. I think that was the basis of my being open to that culture and anything---the word now is diversity, right? But I guess I was really taught by my dad because he used to say, "You have to be nice to everybody, rich or poor, whatever." And he would say, "And you have to be kind," and this is his simple way of trying to raise a teenager on Hotel Street. Hotel and River [Street]. And he would ask me, "You know, what do these girls do?" And I said, "Well, daddy, if I told you you're not going to make me hang out with them." And he goes, "Yeah, don't tell me." So then he realized I was getting to the age of knowing

prostitutes. Hotel Street was famous for gypsy readers, you know, what do you call it-palm readers? They always told me, "Oh, it's a front for other things."

I think he got nervous that I was going to grow up and be friends with---and yet I was going to Central Intermediate where I told you my friends all lived in Mayor Wrights Housing and I thought that was like, you know, modern day condominium because I didn't have running water, hot water, and my stove was kerosene. So, you know, my lifestyle was very different from everyone else. I used to be embarrassed to bring people down to the, you know, my place because the bathroom was outside. And you're doing your business in a bathroom that was a few feet away from the house. Nobody in my friends could understand that (laughs). Yet we were all underserved, I guess that's the word we say.

That's where Palama Settlement came into my life, because I was going to Central Intermediate seventh, eighth and ninth grade, and my dad decided to run for office. He was a Republican at the time, and he used to garner hundreds of Filipinos to 'A'ala Park. So I was part of his production team. I would get leis for Senator Orrin E. Long, Hiram Fong, all these Republican people running for office. I even remember Andy Anderson as a young budding senator. When he found out later on that I was the little girl that used to help this Filipino man put on events at 'A'ala Park on this old stage, he was shocked. He said, "You're that little Filipino girl." And I'd go, "Yeah, and you were this kind of, you know, strapping, handsome, young buck (laughs) running for office."

So it was interesting to meet somebody that I'd known from, you know, small kid time. I used to ask my dad, "So what are we doing here?" You know, I mean, I was always---I guess why I became a reporter. He says, "Well, I'm trying to get these Filipinos to vote and vote for me". And then I decided to ask him, "Can they all vote?" He said, Well, they have to be citizen[s]. I said, "Well, aren't you wasting your time if you don't ask them first if they're citizens?" And he'd go, "Oh no, it's okay. They'll be citizens later." And I thought that was my dad's way of bringing in Filipinos to a place in their life where they could make a difference and vote. I think at that time, there was a certain term that Hiram Fong introduced about---I can't remember right now, but it was bringing family to Hawai'i and it was a ruling and a law that became enacted in the '60s. So that was the beginning of my father wanting to go back to the Philippines to bring his daughter that he had never really met in adulthood and her kids to Hawai'i. There's a very fancy name and it escapes my mind right now.

But that's what---so my dad was always---I mean, he started in radio and he was the first Visayan announcer in Hawai'i. Visayan is---when you look at the Philippines, eight thousand islands, the north is Ilocano, where all the north coast people and their supporters are from. The middle center of the Philippines is all Tagalog, they speak 'main language'. They call it the 'main language' because everyone has to learn to speak Tagalog no matter where they're from. Then in the South, before you reach the real southern part, which is now mostly Muslim, I come from an island that spoke Visayan and so my dad could speak everything and he was waking up plantation workers [at] four or five in the morning.



This was their connection to home. This was their connection to a place that was familiar in a place that was really unfamiliar to them. I mean, they're all single men, 18, 19 years old, and they're living in camps and they're far away from their families. The radio became their Internet (laughs). So I think because I watched my dad, I remember Aku used to have a radio show.

PR: Akuhead Pupule.

ET: Akuhead Pupule would have a radio show after my dad and my dad would put these two chairs together and it was my crib. But I slept with my dad in this radio station every morning watching things spin and the dials. And, you know, when you kind of---you know, you're very conscious of your surroundings and at that time, I thought, "Oh, what is all this?" And Aku and I became friends and he'd tell me later on, he said, "You know, I can't believe that you were that little girl that this Filipino man used to bring to the radio every morning." By the time he got in, my dad was wrapping up the show. So that was another person who remembered me. That's the only way I can remember---not even remembered, that's how I know how I grew up. By people that saw what my dad was---because he was so unusual at that time.

PR: Yes.

ET: And Aku and I became friends. But anyway, so my dad was in radio, then he was in television, and then he decided to do other things while raising me.

PR: And how about when you---did you get married?

ET: Yes, I was married in my early twenties. The story there is I married a man named Michael Ihara, who was---he was with Merrill Lynch. But before that, he was a waiter that I thought, "Oh, he's cute." So he was a waiter when I knew him and then he went into brokerage work with Merrill Lynch. We were married for five years, no children. Then the irony is that his mother, which is my mother-in-law, was best friends with Mrs. Burns. For seven years---now I'm not married, have no contact with, you know, my first husband's family---but when I started to go out with Mr. Burns, I couldn't believe how much he knew about my then marriage. He just had all these details. I thought, "Wow, is this what judges do? You know, that kind of, like, dig deep?"

PR: Stalker? (Laughs).

ET: Yeah! Or dig deep into someone's past that he would know, "Oh, yeah. You left Mānoa, then you came home, and then you went back again," you know, and it was---then he finally admitted, he says, "Well, your mother in law, Ku'ulei Ihara, who used to work at the Bishop Museum, is best friends with my mother, Beatrice Burns." So the irony of being from one family going to the next and then the two of them were very good friends. And in fact, Mrs. Burns spoke at my first mother in-law's funeral. No wait. Yeah. I'm sorry. The other way around. Mrs. Ihara spoke at my second mother in-laws---

PR: Mrs. Burns.

ET: Yeah, Mrs. Burns. It just showed me how small the island is and just this fusion of people coming into my life and having these connections. I mean, it was kind of like a movie, just watching things unfold. So my second marriage was to Jim Burns. We were married for 30 plus years.

PR: How did you meet him?

ET: I was a reporter already, and so I knew of him and, of course, the bratty son of the governor, right? (Laughs) In fact, I used to think of him as Prince Philip. You know, Hawai'i version of Prince Philip. Actually, how we met was very simple. I went to do a story about the bust of Governor Burns in front of Aloha Stadium. His mother was going to be there. So I thought, Oh, this a great opportunity to---now I [wasn't] involved with him at all at the time. I interviewed her and then I interviewed Jim and he says, "You know, that bust is really me." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I had to sit for that." And he was complaining how many hours he had to sit for them to get it right. So I said, "Oh. So this is really you?" He goes, "Yeah, but don't tell anybody because it's going to ruin the whole magical moment of Governor Burns, who started the stadium and everything."

So I met him there. But the big part of our getting together was I spoke at Chinn Ho's 80th birthday. I had done a story on Chinn Ho as a news reporter about this successful local boy who used to give out newspapers as a kid. Then one day he owned it. I was fascinated by that. So then all of a sudden the family asked me if I could be one of the speakers on the dais. There was Bishop Kennedy---it was all these people I wouldn't know and I thought, "Why would they want to ask me?" But it's okay. I gave a speech about how I got to know him and how he said, "Oh, yeah, I grew up on Hotel Street, too," you know, and this is the billionaire who built Ilikai and developed Mākaha and we were more similar than we were different. I just kind of got a kick out of that.

When I was done, I walked down back to my desk, to my table, and all of a sudden I see this wheelchair coming up to me with a tall gentleman standing behind the wheelchair. And he says, "Oh, Miss Tomimbang, I loved your speech. I hope you speak at my 80th." And I just looked at him and said, "Well, if you're here and I'm here. Yeah, okay, no problem. Just give me a call!" I mean, what do you say, right? But that became so serendipitous. I'm jumping ahead now because my husband died on his 80th birthday and we buried him, put his ashes at Punchbowl on exactly---I'm sorry, he died a couple of months before. The funeral services and the day that I entered his ashes into the niche was his 80th birthday. Again, right, like, wow, how does this work? I had no idea until we actually went through it. I was going to be burying my husband on this 80th birthday. So I told the story. I'll never forget Willie K was there and he was singing, you know, and he became really good friends with Jim and I.

He said, "Okay, everybody, I know this is going to sound really creepy to all of you, but let's sing Happy Birthday." So everybody was there at the services, started singing Happy Birthday. He goes, "And when you're done, I'll wait Emme explains why we're singing Happy Birthday at this funeral service," because it was Jim's 80th. So I said to them, "Well, Jim, Judge Burns, I got to speak at your 80th after all," but you know how

compelling it was to know that I had promised this 30 years ago. And now I'm---I don't know. You know, I'm standing there thinking, "How does life work like that?" Where you just have almost like a preview of what's to come and if you're aware of it, you'll go, Okay, yeah, I guess that's why it happened.

PR: Well, let's change tracks a little bit. Can we talk a little bit about your education? Where did you go to elementary, intermediate, high school?

ET: Well, I went to school in Kaka'ako. I went there from second or third grade. Actually, I think I went first grade to Kauluwela [Elementary], which is here in in this area, Pālama. Then when we when we moved to Kaka'ako, I spent my formative years at Pohukaina [Elementary], which was also dubbed as a school for unwed mothers (laughs). I'm like third, fourth grade and we see these ladies walking around with big tummies and we would wonder, "Well how come they're at our school?" Anyway, they don't have Pohukaina anymore. Then I went to Central and Central almost doesn't exist either because it's a different name now. I can't even say it. It's a name of a princess.

PR: Princess Ruth.

ET: Right. It's not Central Intermediate. And those are the years that I lived in Hotel and King Street and River Street. The formative years, seventh, eighth and ninth grade. Then we moved finally to Kalihi. My father found this space, it was in back of a---it used to be a store, a market. I don't know, he had this propensity to look for places that were not like your regular house, apartment, but he would just be doing all this construction work. Like in the River Street, in the store, he built a loft before lofts were in, you know, were popular. That's where we lived, upstairs of our secondhand store. Then in Kalihi, I lived in that other kind of makeshift house. I'll never forget I had run for---it was a Liberty House high board. They were choosing people from different high schools. I remember I never got it, but somebody else from my high school did.

I'll never forget thinking they wouldn't let they wouldn't accept me because I have a junkalunka house. You know, it's not a usual house, but something told me it's you, it's not your house. So I started thinking about the positive things I was doing to make up for this house that I could never invite anybody over to. I was a cheerleader. I was involved in thespian, drama. I had some awards. I became first runner up Miss KPOI, you know, which was a big thing then for all the public schools, having a girl. So I thought about those things and I thought, "Yeah, I can get there. Even if I live in this really junkalunka house." So whenever I would go to the prom, I would go to a girl friend's house and the guy would come pick me up and they didn't have to see where I lived.

But today I drive by that place and I think, you know, how does someone know that they're underserved or poor and yet can master such great feats and things? And I go, you know, I think it was because of my dad. He was a guy. I grew up with a guy, and he made me fearless. It didn't make me feel like I had a role as a girl because I was going to be a teenage woman and blah, blah, blah, blah. So I don't think I really understood my role as a female. I mean, and I'm not saying this sexually, you know, it's just the things that most girls do, I wasn't into.

PR: Your primary role model was a male.

ET: Yeah. My primary role model was a male who had a Filipino accent. But the deep founded characters of his life is what I took with me and never looked back until today. You know, sometimes people say, "Oh, who do you attribute your success to?" And I get really emotional, you know, I go, "Yeah, it's my dad." Because we also moved to Wai'anae (laughs). He built a house there. Then I went to college, I went to UH. Graduated in education. I wanted to be a counselor or a teacher, and I did do student teaching at Wai'anae Intermediate. And that was, you know, while I was living in Wai'anae. I mean, I lived in Waipahu for a short time. Like I was saying, it was really an evolution of getting to know the island Leeward side more so.

PR: So what first brought you to Palama Settlement, Emme?

ET: Well, those are important formative years. I had a bunch of friends and we either went to eat french fries at Kress Store or we would go to events that this place were having. I think it was just the primary social aspect of our lives. They would have dances. I think I had said to someone---I learned how to dance with a boy for the first time upstairs in this room every Friday. It was something we all looked forward to because it was social and acceptable to be 12, 13, 14, and dance with guys and not be afraid and just perpetual learning things that we acquired just being around Palama Settlement. Now, I didn't go to the dental part, but I just remember I swam here a few times. I tried to learn how to swim. I don't even think the gym was built at that time. I'm not sure. But all I remember is the whole aspect of me realizing I was a girl and that I'm going to have to learn how to interact with guys. And in this place---taught me how to behave and how to be appropriate. It was kind of my social upbringing, Palama Settlement.

PR: Were you ever a member of a club? We had a lot of clubs at Palama in those days.

ET: No. I know you mentioned that a while back. No, I didn't. That's why when you say Palama Settlement, my relationship with it was just kind of hanging out with the girls and, "Okay, we're going to go to Palama Settlement. It's almost Friday." And all the girls came from Kuhio Park Terrace or Mayor Wrights Housing and we learned---I remember coming here thinking, "Nobody's going to know I live on Hotel Street or River Street. I'm just going to have to dance my okole off and it's not going to matter." It gave me a sense of confidence and I could say I was part of Palama Settlement, which is at the time it was this really incredible place for all kinds of people, for all kinds of things. And I could see it happening, but my thing was just kind of learning how to discover---I was a girl. Gosh, I remember the first guy I danced with, it was kind of scary. I thought, "Oh, he's too close." (Laughs). But anyway, so moving along.

PR: Yeah. Your father would not like that, would he? (Laughs). Safety has always been a really big thing for Palama Settlement. It's very important to us that people feel safe. The participants have said over the years that they come here because they felt safe. What do you think made you---I mean, you felt safe even dancing close to a guy. You were a little bit like, "Uh oh," but you did it. So what do you think it is that has that safety image at Palama and what can we do to keep that?

ET: I think as a teenager, the consistency and just the organization of this place. It was always going to be there every day, any day, especially Fridays for our little dance canteens. I think at that time when you're growing up, the world was changing. It was evolving. The Vietnam War started around that time and nothing was certain. I think Palama Settlement for me and for a lot of my friends, was a place we could really count on. It wasn't going to disappear and it wasn't going to be torn down like much of O'ahu and Honolulu, because we saw a lot of the Palama area being torn down like Zamboanga Theater (laughs).

PR: Oh, yes (laughs).

ET: So things---when they weren't rooted in just being grounded into some form, I think it made us uncomfortable, made us uneasy. But Palama Settlement, as I remember, was a real sense of just a place we could count on to be there, no matter what happens in a place that we could congregate. Because remember now, I congregated with my friends and it gave us permission to do slang books and things like that that we would do as teenagers. It was just a haven for our neighborhood. We saw other nationalities and of course, it was mostly Polynesian at the time or Japanese.

In fact, I always told my dad, "Next life I want to be Japanese." My dad said, "Why?" I said, "Because there's so much of them and I being Filipino, I stand out too much." And so he goes, "Okay, your name is Emme Tominaga." I go, "Okay." (Laughter). But again, Palama Settlement was---anyway, for me, because remember now I lived all over the place. Every time I opened my eyes it was a different neighborhood. But this place was continuity and safety. I knew I would learn things and I knew that I could count on---and my dad, if he knew I was here, he wouldn't even question what time I came home because he knew that Palama Settlement was our institutional babysitter.

PR: Well, Emme, I have to ask you about the trajectory of your amazing career. I mean, it sounds like your first introduction to a work environment was a radio station where you napped while your father was on the radio at 4 AM. Where did it go from there?

ET: Well, my father gave me my own radio show when I was ten years old, so I was already spinning records and talking and interviewing. I mean, I'm ten, you know? In fact, it wasn't until I was 12 years old I realized I don't want to do this anymore because nobody my age is doing it. Yet now I look back and it was kind of a---it was really quite unique---

PR: Yes (laughs).

ET: ---for a ten year old to spin records and be a deejay and know how and when to turn the knobs and dials. I only wish I had recorded one of my shows. I never did. So I had half an hour of his one hour program on KOHO Radio, which was a Japanese station back in the day. Every now and then when I fall asleep, I remember those days like talking too much on the phone, and I don't have the next record ready (laughs). Or I'm trying to find---I used to play all kinds of music. My shows called "Teenage Corner," and my theme song was 'In the Mood'.

PR: Really? (Laughs).

ET: It was. I thought that was kind of a teenage song. Yet when you think about it, it was really, you know, back in the '40s, during the war.

PR: Yes.

ET: But I didn't have access to lots of records. So that one I chose as my theme song. Then I think after high school, when I went to Leeward [Community College], I got involved in student government. I always emceed things, I was always the one picked to be---because I already had a radio voice and people said, "You speak well for a girl from Kalihi." And I didn't say, "Well, because I'm on radio." I just said, "Oh, yeah, well, there's some kids like me at Farrington [that] can speak good English." (Laughs). Because that was always the case. My dad always said, "I don't care if you don't finish college, you need to speak well. You need to use your voice for different things." I mean he really taught me a lot.

So after college, I went to---you know, of course, part of it was I went to teach at Wai'anae, and that was for my fifth year. I was graduating to be in---it was called Department of Education Compensatory Ed and you have to go live in a community and teach. My family moved to Wai'anae, so I was right there and I taught at Wai'anae Intermediate. Then I got my degree in education. I had a secondary ed degree and I could teach. I could have taken a couple more years and I would have been a counselor. But instead I got a phone call one day from Don Robbs, who was then working at KITV, and he said, "Some people have been talking about you because you were on the radio," not as a ten year old now, but when I graduated from college, my father and some Filipino leaders were starting a Filipino radio station that was in Zamboanga Theater.

PR: Oh, my goodness.

ET: So by the time I started my own radio show, which is called "Morning Girl," I had had, what, five years already of being on the radio at ten years old because I stopped at 15. I said, "I can't be on the radio while I'm a cheerleader, it's not normal." (Laughs). So I started at this Filipino radio station called KISA, and a lot of Filipinos remember me from that because I would play Filipino rock music that sounded like Filipinos. I mean, sounded like the original, you know, artist. But in fact, it wasn't. Like Tower of Power or different groups like that and they were Filipinos.

So that was really the beginning of my life opening up because I got a chance to go to the Philippines and discover a whole new world and a whole new aspect of what my life was going to be about. So again, that was a discovery of my heritage and not being born there, but having such a feeling for---and yet it was in entertainment. So I met all the Hollywood Manila types in movies and television. In fact, I got offered a job for radio in Manila. I'll never forget when I said, "Well, how much will I make?" A dollar is equivalent to 50 pesos. When I kind of converted the numbers, I wouldn't be making that kind of money.

It was different. It was so different. I wasn't sure I could really stay in Manila because the culture was a little different. I mean, it was different for me. But I tell you what, talking about the boys in my life, (sighs) I was a kid in a candy store (laughter). Everybody was

handsome to me. You know, they were Filipino, Spanish or mixed breeds and I would go, "Oh, yes, Oh, yes." You know? I mean, I'd never seen Filipinos like that. I mean, they were modern. They were forwarding and there's a lot of Spanish in the Philippines. So I had all the crushes here and the crushes there. In fact, my mother would say, "How come you never married somebody in the Philippines?" I said, "Mom, with all due respect, I'm not sure I could ever marry a Filipino man from the Philippines because then I'd have to live there." And I don't think I could really, really live there. So she just laughed. She said, "Well, I understand." So back to your question, and what was it again?

PR: Well, let's get back to Don Robbs and Channel 4.

ET: Great. Because that was the beginning of my career. He asked me to come work for him and he had this morning talk show and I had already learned from my own radio program how to get someone, how to book them and how to do this. I thought, "Well, if I can do it for radio, I can do it for TV." So when I went to Channel 4, it was 1975 and I had already done two years in radio.

So from college I went into two years of radio. Then from two years of radio, I went to see Don Robbs. But the job he offered me wasn't what I ended up doing because his show got canceled. So I go to KITV, and instead of being this hot shot producer or whatever it was that I was going to be to get people on the show, a booker or whatever you call it---a booking person. I was relegated to the back of KITV in the room where I had to learn about the logs and how I had to place the commercials and the system cues and just everything you see on TV. That was my job. It was probably one of the hardest things I've ever done in my life because I just couldn't get it. You'd see promos of football games with the wrong picture of the wrong team. I mean, because it was something that somebody who did it before me was doing it for five years. I kind of just stepped in and it was just---I cried. It was the first time I felt like, "Okay, this is not what I signed up for."

And then in walks this man named Stuart Jaffe. Before he came in---I'm sorry---I was doing some kind of, like, Dialing for Dollars, you know, take out a number from this big trough and then call somebody and ask a question. And I just did it. You know, and everybody thought, "Oh, she can do that. She's more adept to that than doing the logs for the whole TV station." So then this gentleman Stuart Jaffe came in and just like this, watching me. Then finally, my news director said, "We want you to do weather." I said, "Weather? I don't know anything about that." I said, "Oh my God, here's another trial by fire," right? And he says. . .

PR: Weather on TV?

ET: Weather on TV. They said, we're going to start a new newscast that has all local people. So the anchors would be two Caucasian people. But everyone else from the court reporter to the homicide---I mean, you know, not homicide, but police reporter---and the sports guy were all people that were not Caucasian. So I was relegated to learn how to give the weather. It was not as sophisticated as it is now. I mean, gosh, you know, there's none of that---all those graphics that come into play. But I did it. Again, because I just said, "Okay, I just got to do this. I don't know where I'm going to end up, but I just have to do

it." Then all of a sudden, the news director said, "I want you to start doing TV news." I said "How? I don't have any experience."

But you know what? Again, trial by fire. I just jumped in and I started with the weather and then all of a sudden, a couple of months later, the news director said, "Do you want to do you want to do a news story?" I said, "Okay, what does that entail?" I mean, this was like all these challenges. But, you know, I was up for it even though I felt stupid and I felt embarrassed and there are all these smart people around me in the newsroom, and here I am for Wai‘anae, Farrington---you know, what can I contribute?

Interestingly enough, the first story I went on was this gorilla's birthday party at the zoo. The cameraman, he was an older gentleman and he was great. I learned so much from the cameraman, and I didn't have journalism. I didn't go to school for journalism. He said, "Eh, just be yourself." I go, "And what is that?" (Laughs). You know? Because I thought, "Hey, you got to be a journalist. You have to be this and that and, you know, have to have that look and hold the microphone." He says, "Go interview the gorilla." I said, "What?" (Laughs).

But you know what? Looking back, it was really a monumental moment because it was the gorilla's birthday and he was eating from a cake that had fruits and vegetables. When I put my microphone up to him, I said---I called him 'sir' (laughs). I said, "Sir, happy birthday!" And he just took some of his poop and he throw it at me. And it was like, "Oh my God, this is my first debut on television. And I've got gorilla poop!" The cameraman was going, "No, this is great stuff. Keep doing it. Keep talking." (Laughter). And I just thought, "I don't get it" you know? But he said, I'll take care of it. So he edited it and he even told me what to say to make the voiceover match. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Everybody loved it. I thought, "How can they love me making a fool of myself?" You know, local side you go, "Oh, I no like make ass."

But fast forward, I learned how to do feature stories on the job. But the one defining moment was when I met Barbara Walters. She had just gotten on the anchor position with Harry Reasoner. The first woman to anchor news. I was there and I happened to be in New York because I'd done something in New York. I said, "I want to meet Barbara Walters." So they did. They set it up. I saw her with Harry Reasoner. It was the first newscast of a male and a female. She came off the set and she said, "Hi, you're from Hawai‘i." I said, "Yes." She goes, "So what do you do?" I was embarrassed because I couldn't say "I'm an anchorwoman from Hawai‘i." I said, "Well, I just do features," and she goes, "Oh, features. I started with features. That was my favorite place in the newscast." And she said, "Emme, you just do a feature and if it's the story that everybody will be talking about at the water cooler in the morning, you've made it."

I just stood there and it was like I discovered God or something, you know? I mean, the the room lit up. I just had never forgotten that because then she said because after all the hard news, all the car accidents, the shootings, the da da da, that they want---you leave them with fresh air. You give them a breath of fresh air and if you can do that every day, she said you will be the star and not the lead story because it doesn't matter where your story is, it's if you just deliver the best of where you are. I swear to God, when she died, I



felt so bad because I always wanted to write her and thank her for that, you know, for being a local girl, just doing the weather and then doing an interview with a gorilla and then go to New York and meet the top news anchor of the time and she would suddenly just be so open to what I did and give me such praise. It was like Mickey Mantle, playing a baseball game with Mickey Mantle, right?

I'll never forget that moment, because then I also learned that I just had to be myself, but I didn't know what that was. I asked people, "What is it about my stories?" "Well, Emme, you're so natural." I go, "What does that mean? What's natural?" They said, "You go out and you go do the marathon and you're interviewing all the Japanese tourists, I mean, all the Japanese runners, and they don't know what you're talking about, but you still did a story on it. It was funny. You did Carole Kai's bed race and all these girls are wearing negligees and you asked one girl, 'Would your parents let you do this if they saw you on TV wearing a nightgown?'" Yes, it was naive, but I think that's what taught me and it made me realize what being natural was about.

Just recently, I asked this television owner, Don---his name was Dick Grimm. I said, "You know, Mr. Grimm, can I ask you---I always felt cheated. Was it because I was a local girl and I didn't know any better---but you always gave me, outside of the news---" I was the only one that had to do the Kamehameha Day Parade, help out. Then I had to do Aloha Week Parade. Then I had to do the bed race. Then Merrie Monarch, I hosted the Merrie Monarch by myself for the first six years, seven years. I said, "You know, I made X number of dollars, but it felt like \$1.35." I was all over the place. I'll never forget. He said this to me just six months ago. He said, "Because you were the ultimate local girl and you made us laugh. You made us smile and you were natural." And again, how do you define that? I don't know. I just did what I did. Then I learned that this---and then I wanted to be an anchor. So I worked hard. I did some hard news, and then I finally got to anchor two years at 10:00, and that's before I left television news altogether.

PR: And you started your own production company?

ET: Yes. That was because I got tired. Of just doing a minute and 30 seconds of something that I went out to do all day. Then half the time, if I didn't---if the news was running long, they wouldn't get to my piece. (Laughs) I'd be so upset, you know, I mean---I wish I could put into words how these are lessons, life lessons. How to not be embarrassed, not be shame, not to worry about making ass, because it's part of your growth. It's part of what you take from it, not being upset by it. I think that's kind of a self-imposed mantra, I would do. That this was something totally unusual for me. I don't do this, but I'm going to just dive in and learn. If I come up and they make fun, Okay, go to something else. In fact, the first reviewer for that newscast, they called me the 'Achilles heel'.

PR: Really?

ET: I didn't know what Achilles heel meant. So I said, "Isn't that an important part of the foot?" (Laughs). Then I was told an Achilles heel is like probably the worst part of your foot or I'm not even sure, but it's not like what I thought it was. But again, being embarrassed and being upset, I just said, "Okay, I'll just keep doing it until I get it right."

Because I had to learn how to do TV news on the job. I didn't go to journalism school. I didn't go to television school. It was trial by fire and then that's kind of how my life went for a long time.

Then when I had my own business, yeah, that was like another 20 years of being the only---they say---they say I'm the only newscaster that went on her own to have our own production company. I was giving material to the stations, which is what I still do now. I haven't been on the air for a while because I took a break. That was a whole other story about my medical issues. But I didn't want to be doing a minute and 30 seconds. But you know what? A whole hour shows still not long enough (laughs). Because I would do features on Jason Scott Lee or the late Rell Sunn or whoever. Even 15 minutes for each segment seemed too short and my editor would go, "Emme, you're spoiled." I said, "Not really, because I used to know how to do it in a minute 30 and now I own the show. I'm finding the sponsors. I get to do what I want." And the editor would go, "Hey, that's that Filipino Farrington Kalihi spirit." I go, "Okay." (Laughs). So that's how I went into my production company.

PR: So let's just make one trip back again to Palama. Knowing Palama in 2023, are there some things that we could perhaps be doing better in reaching people like little Emme?

ET: Well, I think your programs and everything---because I was on the board here with Francis Keala and I learned about Palama Settlement in a whole different way. (Recording pauses).

PR: So who invited you to be on the board?

ET: Francis Keala.

PR: Okay. And when was that?

ET: That was back in the '80s.

PR: Okay.

ET: Yeah. He kind of saw it before me. He said, "This is where you grew up. This is where your childhood was spent. Come back as an adult and tell us what we can do better."

PR: Do you remember what some of the issues were at that time that the board was addressing? I know it was a long time ago.

ET: Yeah. No, no. I think, as I recall, it had to do with---I'm sorry, I'm thinking about---but it had to do with the changing face of the neighborhood. I remember saying, because I had that experience, right? From being Filipino and going to the Philippines and how it's a massive undertaking for anyone. So whatever culture---and I remember saying we should do things that if you want to attract them, you should do things that their culture does and make it okay for them to share the differences of their cultures. Samoans are not Tongans. Tongans are not Samoans. You know, they have their own, you know, culture and traditions. It's kind of like when someone Caucasian would say, "Well, we can't tell the

Asians apart," right? Because they all look like the Chinese or they all look like they're Filipino, You know, we can't see them. . .

PR: I'm shocked anybody on the board at Palama would say that.

ET: No, but nobody, nobody said that. I'm just saying that the neighborhood was starting to change and I was just bringing that up as. . .

PR: The next wave of immigrants.

ET: Right. The next wave of immigrants and how to lure them by making something familiar to them first. Also, when I taught at Wai'anae Intermediate, I taught history and something called ethnic studies, but it was called, 'Saimin, Chop Suey, Adobo'. (Laughter) It was about ethnic studies and every Friday we would pick a certain culture and we would have them bring in food or music and they would teach the class. So it became this immersion of, "Hey, I might be Hawaiian, but this girl whose," you know, Hawaiian mix--I might be Filipino, but someone from a Hawaiian background who is really Samoan, you know, will teach me about their culture. So I was already teaching ethnic diversity and how to meld our differences and say, "Hey, we're more alike than we're different." It would make the kids more accepting of certain people.

I could be wrong, but I totally think I remember Israel. I mean, not Israel. Yeah, but brother Iz coming to Wai'anae Intermediate. He would always be in the back of the room with his 'ukulele. Sometimes disruptive. But then one Friday I think it was him. You know, it's so bad for me not to be able to be sure. Or it was another Hawaiian kid that was big and played music. He gave us a concert and from that time on he knew I was really on his side and I wasn't trying to make him stand up because he was different. Till this day, I don't know if that was Israel or not and there's no way I can find out because Israel is gone, right?

But I think Palama Settlement, it had to change. It had to suit the neighborhood. And it takes really---[the] kind of person that understands it and gets it to be able to come up with programs to say, okay, how do we get, for example now, the Micronesians. How do we make the Micronesians feel comfortable, feel safe the way I felt when I was growing up on River Street and Hotel Street? I think to me, that's the model of bringing up these kids into a neighborhood institution that gives them a place to just be themselves, learn whatever they can learn accept the different cultures, including their own, and grow up to feel that they're inclusive.

PR: Absolutely. Thank you so much, Emme, for this wonderful interview.

ET: Are we done?

PR: Well, unless there's something that you want to add?

ET: Really? Okay. I have always been very, very grateful to my dad for everything that he's given me. I remember one day I spoke to him because he had a heart attack and we had surgery, took care of it, everything. He said to me, "I thank you for letting me have my

surgery," because he didn't want to do it because it was going to be costly. I said, "Are you kidding? I'll do it. You know, I'll do it." And it was Dr. Mamiya that gave him his surgery.

PR: A Palama boy!

ET: Palama boy! Yeah, see, we're all, you know, we're all part of each other. (Recording pauses.) Oh, I know, I know, I know. Okay. Something I wanted to say and I think---I wanted to share that---like everything I said, when my dad told me, "Thank you for, you know, taking care of you." And I said, "Well, I'm proud of you no matter what." He said, "Well, I'm proud of you." And mostly because he said, "You really me make me feel like everything that you are was because of things that I taught you." And I said, "Well, Dad, I'm sorry. I didn't make, you know, millions of dollars to be able to buy you a new car," and da da da, whatever. He said, "You gave me something better. And I said, "What was that?" (recording pauses).

He said, "You gave me a good name." He said before Filipinos would look at my name, Tomimbang, Tomimbang, you know, it was not as famous or respected. He said, "Now when I go round, if I'm supposed to have a ticket for expired meter, I would say, 'Oh, you know Emme Tomimbang, that's my daughter.'" And then he wouldn't get a ticket. He just said, "What you gave to me was much more than buying me a new car you gave me--- people would respect me and know that who you are is because I raised you." So I felt at that moment---going to get emotional---that I had acquired the place in life. I was on the news, doing documentaries, everything. I felt like all of this came from him without my knowing. I was so glad that before---because he died shortly after that, that we were able to talk about that. His pride for me.

PR: Yes.

ET: And my pride for who he was. So now---I used to even give talks about if you think you only have one parent, it's not a loss. I said I was raised by my dad, you know? I mean, when I had my first menstrual period, he didn't know what to do and he bought me a whole case of pads. I said, "Daddy, I don't need this much. It's only once a month." he would go, "It's okay. We'll be ready any time." (Laughter) So those are the moments of innocence that there was all these life lessons behind them. Then now, moving forward, I had two great men in my life, my father and my husband of 30 plus years, that was Jim Burns. I remember when Jim said, "You know, I think I need to get serious about you." I said, "Oh, why is that?" He said, "Because my mother adores you." When I stayed over, we'd watch "Golden Girls" together and we would laugh, laugh, laugh. Then she would say, "Why don't you stay over?" I go, "Oh, okay. You're giving me permission?" Then my husband would say, "That's really telling that she would invite you." Then I ended up taking care of her, helping Jim take care of his mother. She's in a wheelchair.

I think my health issues have been pretty phenomenal. You know, I had a---when my husband got sick in 1990, I believe, I took care of him. He had a cancer problem, throat cancer. I had to not only navigate through that whole part of taking care of him and trying to keep him alive, but I had to also learn how to be a nurse. he would say, "Hey, it's

supposed to come natural, you're Filipino." I'd go, "No, it doesn't come natural." I had to feed him for about a year. Then we had to go back and learn for him to swallow again and speak again. It was like four years of very, very traumatic---talk about trial by fire.

Then at one point, I sent him to get his radiation. I was home with my other dog at the time. It was a Rottweiler, Rufus. I fainted out of the shower and I didn't know what happened, but my dog just tore through the screen and tore through the door and saved my life. My husband finally came back right away and I went to the hospital and I had a four hour surgery. I had burst an aneurysm in my brain and it had to do with all the stress. Because I was still trying to do television at the time. I was doing the history of Hawai'i Five-O. So between doing that and taking care of my husband, my brain short circuited. The doctor till this day, he's my neurologist, said, "You know Emme, you're lucky you have a dog that knew how to break your door down and wake you up and get you to the phone.".

PR: Fantastic dog.

ET: And, you know---there were a lot of lessons again at that time because I now had to juggle my life and take care of Jim while I was also having issues. I just remember at one point he and I had a hard time trying to take care of each other. So I brought in a nurse and she was able to kind of separate me---because I was automatic, just trying to take care of him. In fact, when I had gone into surgery---it was several hours---and when I came out of it, the nurse said, "Mrs. Burns, what's wrong? Your blood pressure is sky high." The first thing out of my mouth, as they tell me, was, "Who's feeding my husband?" Right? Because he can't tube feed himself. So then I realized I had made that complaint and I told them, "Could you please send a nurse to take care of my husband while I'm here?" Because I was in the hospital for, I don't know, five days. Five, six days. Then I remember the nurse said, "Emme, you were just a perpetual caregiver, even in your bed," not death bed, but, you know, "all you think about is your husband." Yeah, so there was so much going on and I just knew that I had to keep my husband alive because I didn't want to lose him. But God had other plans and he died in 2017, which was a couple of years after my aneurysm.

PR: So he was sick from 1990 to 2017?

ET: No, he was sick from 2000. He was off and on, but he died in 2017. But it was like 2014 that I had the aneurysm. I just remember turning this amazing---I turned 60 and I had a big party and blah, blah, blah, and then all hell broke loose. [Coughs] excuse me.

PR: Cough drop?

ET: But so after, you know, I was able to kind of---we called it 'togglng'. He became my caregiver. I became his caregiver. We would just toggle. I think it brought us closer. It made us realize, the frailty of life. I remember, he said, "You cannot leave me because you need to have a life and you've given so much of your life to me and I want you to have a good life and I want you to enjoy and be prosperous and all of that." So, you know, he died in 2017 and I always kind of believe that he probably found a way to cut

short his life---because I was supposed to bring him home. The day before I was supposed to bring him home, he died. But he could hear me arranging for oxygen, the feeding tube and you know, "Don't worry, Jim. I got this. I got this, don't worry." He was just looking very sad and upset.

He told another judge later on, I found out. He said, "I can't let anything happen to Emme because she's given so much of her last few years of her life to me and she can't go before me. She's got to have her life." And you know what? It didn't matter to me. I just wanted to keep him alive. I wanted us to have a journey together in our old age. But his body couldn't handle it. It was very difficult for him with throat cancer. He was already turning 80, and he had all these issues health wise. So I had to---the last six years, I was out of it. You know, I was in the abyss. I not only had to get through my aneurysm---which is life long---I was traumatized by my husband's death, and I couldn't think. I couldn't---and I didn't care. I had friends who tried to do things with me. I said, "You know what? I don't want to see folks. I need to do this by myself."

I even pulled out all our phones. I only had one cell phone because I didn't want to take calls. I didn't want to---it was just this kind of overcome---I was overcome by Jim's death and who he was, and he was a governor's son and blah, blah, blah, blah. It was just so overwhelming and I said, "God, you've given me all these things to go through, but I don't know if I can get through this one because it's the hardest." I was with this man for 30 years and he's gone and I'll be by myself. My dad left me. My husband left me. That's how come I got close to my dogs. I'm trying---I'm at the point now where I'm trying to get back to life. I'm trying to, you know, be like, what's that guy? Rumpelstiltskin? No, not Rumpelstiltskin. The guy that slept for a hundred years?

PR: Oh, Rip Van Winkle.

ET: Rip Van Winkle. I keep saying, "Okay, that's who I am, because I'm going to finally wake up." Five, six years doesn't seem like a long time. But to a lot of people, it was a long time. I've had people that call me now like the dean of the medical school or the dean of the law school, all of Jim's people would always say, "Are you okay? Can I do anything?" Because at the very beginning, I didn't want anything. I just didn't want any---you know, I wanted to just drop out. So I had to learn how to grieve, right? And accept all of that that happened. It was tumultuous. I just told some of the other day I'm really looking forward to finishing up what I have to do and go see Jim and if I get there and there's no such thing, I'm going to get really upset. Because I use that seeing him again as the---what do you call it, the dangling carrot.

PR: Mm hmm.

ET: And I'm at the place now where I think I've done all those shows I've wanted to do, and I've had the prestige and the popularity. Even when Palama---when I had that event and you folks honored me, and I said, "Oh, I'll do it with Francis Keala." So you folks had him as well as myself---him posthumously. But, you know, I had a great run. I had a great ride. I can't believe there's still more, you know, to come, because everybody said, "Oh,

you're just beginning, blah, blah, blah, blah." No, no, I'm you know, I'm in the what do you call it?

PR: Winding down.

ET: Yeah, the autumn of my life. In a strange way, I finally came to be grateful about the six years because I said never in my life have I had a moment of pause for five years where--I could only look back and think about the life I had with my husband, the life I had with my career, because I was just so busy living it and I went from one thing to the next to the next to the next.

PR: Pushing yourself.

ET: Yeah, pushing myself. That's why I had the aneurysm. So now I'm helping this organization and we're going to try to get groups for people to talk about aneurysms or head trauma---if it's football or whatever. Cause, you know, I've learned that this is your computer, your head. I mean, once something's wrong with it, everything else is---not be as accurate as possible, either. I feel like that's kind of where my life is right now. I don't know, maybe you need to not share all this, but I'm still getting through the aneurysm, the post this, post that. I'm hoping that I have enough years left (laughs) to be able to enjoy something. But you know what? I did enjoy. I enjoyed everything I did and all the time that I did it. So there's no grand plan to retire to a life of bliss. I think I just want to retire to just looking for joy in little things. Simple things. Like going to the beach with my now dog, Montana, who's, you know, my soulmate, my date mate. I tell people I'm dating my dog. Which is great. But I just also wanted to thank you, Paula and Palama Settlement because I remember at that event when you honored me and Chief Keala and I said, "How many Filipinos in my house?" And my husband stood up because he was wearing his Filipino shirt. He goes, "I may be the tallest Filipino here," (Laughter) But, you know. . .

PR: He looked fabulous, too.

ET: Oh, I know. I know. And, you know, this is crazy. But only now I look back at pictures like, "Wow, he was a handsome man."

PR: Yes, he was.

ET: He was smart, he was witty and always made me laugh. I always remembered, too, that every night if we had dinner at home or in a restaurant, we entertained each other just by events of the day or stories. I don't think there's anyone like him. Somebody said, "Well, there's nobody else like Emme, too." I said "Okay, I'll take that," you know? So how I live my life now is just maybe connecting the dots and maybe like doing this interview and leaving a little bit of my life behind when it's time and I hope people can learn that there's really nothing you cannot do. Even the mistakes and the make ass moments because it's all part of your journey. I'm grateful for everything from small kid time to--- I'm even grateful that my mom gave me to my dad when they got divorced. That was a really big moment because I could have been different, right?

PR: It must have been hard for her.

ET: Yeah, it had to be. Anyway, that's a whole other story. Another chapter.

PR: Sure.

ET: Thanks, ah? You made me very emotional. I hope I covered everything.

PR: Yes, absolutely.

ET: I think you're going to have to cut out so much.