

FHS Oral History Project – Valerie Boey Ramsey

Description:

Valerie Boey Ramsey was born in New York in 1967. She recollected memories of her upbringing, particularly growing up in a middle-class Chinese home in New York. She felt included within the city's larger multicultural environment, despite being the only Asian family in her neighborhood. She shared stories of her family's Asian lineage and how her father's side, in particular, immigrated to the United States. She remembered the challenges her parents faced in supporting the family economically, and how that resulted in her older brother raising her throughout childhood. Her father worked for Anaconda-Ericcson as an engineer, and the company transferred him to their newly built plant in Sycamore, Illinois. Valerie attended DeKalb High School, recounting the cultural shock she experienced moving from the urban East to the rural Midwest, feeling less included and more alienated during this time. Valerie enjoyed writing and found journalism as a way to fulfill that passion since high school. She served on the newspaper staff in DeKalb. Valerie studied for two years at Kishwaukee Community College before attending New York University during the late 1980s and early 1990s. She recalled meeting Connie Chung and the inspiration she drew from talking with the first Asian American woman to break a cultural mold in broadcast news television. Valerie also discussed her internship experience at NBC Nightly News in New York and how it contributed to her professionalization. In 1991, Valerie moved to Florida to work for WINK News in Fort Myers. In 1995, she received a promotion to work as a weekend reporter after impressing her director with a story she produced. In 2003, TSP Tampa hired her, initially covering state politics in Tallahassee. She detailed certain political stories from her brief one-year political coverage, mainly reflecting on Jeb Bush's interaction with her and other reporters. After reporting in Tampa for four years, Valerie left TSP to join FOX 35 in Orlando in 2008. She recounted in extensive detail her coverage from significant happenings in Central Florida during this time, including the 2011 Casey Anthony Trial, the 2012 Trayvon Martin killing and subsequent George Zimmerman Trial, and the 2016 Pulse Nightclub shooting. Given the national reach of these events, Valerie also explained how she engaged with national media as a local reporter, emphasizing the continued importance of local media. Additionally, Valerie highlighted how she has supported the Asian American community in Central Florida through her reporting, underscoring the COVID-19 Pandemic and the surge in Asian discrimination that followed as circumstances that affected her shift in covering this community. Lastly, Valerie shared her broader observations about Florida through her decades-long career covering multiple regions of the state, particularly the growth of the Asian American community in Orlando and the cultural changes and challenges Central Florida faces in 2025.

Transcription:

00;00;04 - 00;00;20

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: This is Sebastian Garcia interviewing Valerie Boey Ramsey on May 28th, 2025, in Orlando, Florida for the Florida Historical Society Oral History Project. Can you please restate your name, date of birth and where you were born?

00;00;21 - 00;00;28

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Hi, Sebastian, my name is Valerie Boy Ramsey. My date of birth is 11-27-67. And I was born in New York.

00;00;28 - 00;00;30

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Where in New York? Like New York, New York?

00;00;30 - 00;00;36

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Like Hastings on the Hudson. I do not know if you ever heard of that. But I grew up in New City.

00;00;36 - 00;00;51

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Okay, excellent. Before we discuss your childhood in New York, can you just please talk to me about your family's heritage? Where they are from and sort of their story briefly.

00;00;52 - 00;02;12

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Sure. So, my father's parents, they were out of Singapore, and, when my grandmother, my grandfather got married, my grandpa decided to go to New York University. He was invited to study over there. So of course he did. He got his PhD there, but unfortunately they ended up being separated for a long time after my father was born because of the war. And when that happened, then, it was tough. It was tough on my grandma. I always think about that. She really raised my father. He was only three at the time when the Japanese came into their village, and she had her mother in law to also take care of. My mom says that her mother in law had bound feet. It was something that they did back then. And so to have a mother in law with bound feet and to have a three year old child with you and to escape into the woods was not an easy task. But she did it. And she talked about bringing the frying pan with her and some clothes and not having much, but they survived. And so when I think about that, they did it to have a better life for their whole family. And that was pretty cool.

00;02;12 - 00;02;15

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Do you know what year exactly they came to the US?

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VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: I can find out. But so let's see. See, it was different though, because my father came here for college and he also was invited to study at Stevens Institute of Technology, and he became an engineer. And that is also a really great story. The fact that he ended up coming abroad and then learning the trade and becoming a really successful businessman.

00;02;46 - 00;02;53

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Can you tell me about your childhood growing up in New York during the mid to late 70s, early 80s?

00;02;53 - 00;03;29

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: I had a good childhood. You know, it was middle class neighborhood and people were pretty nice. I did not feel so alienated. I mean, we were one of the only Asian families in the neighborhood. I lived in a Jewish neighborhood, and so I learned all about matzah and Passover, things like that. And then my Jewish friends learned all about Chinese food and they loved it. There was just something about New York, I just felt very

accepted. And it was just easy. Maybe it was because I grew up there, or because I was born there.

00;03;29 - 00;03;35

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Right. And you mentioned how your father was an engineer. What did your mom do for a living?

00;03;35 - 00;04;31

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So my mom was a systems analyst. She was born in Brooklyn, New York. My grandparents had come over, and when they arrived here in, in New York, my mom had to told me these stories like, no one would sell them a home. And it was really difficult. They did not know where they were going to live. They had the money. They had plenty of money to buy a home, but no one would sell to them. So luckily they had Jewish friends, and they help them buy the home. You know, they gave them the money and then they turned around and sold the home back to my family. And they really loved it there. I mean, to this day, the house still exists. We moved out, the family moved out, but we go back, and we look at it and we are just very proud of it. It is along Ocean Parkway. And it was two families from my family that lived there. My mom grew up there with her cousins. Yeah. And then they ended up opening a Chinese restaurant, like one of the first, called the New Deal.

00;04;31 - 00;04;39

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Oh, really? Do you have any memories about that place, about the restaurant?

00;04;36 - 00;05;08

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So by the time I was born, they did not they did not work there, and they moved. So I did not really experience that. But it was really the place where my mom and dad met because my father, he wanted a place to work on the weekends when he was not in class, and he needed to make extra money. And so, somehow, like, his mom and my mom's mom knew each other, and they said come on over to the restaurant, we will give him a job. And that was when he met my mom, who was a hostess, and they fell in love.

00;05;08 - 00;05;09

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Nice.

00;05;09 - 00;05;11

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Yeah.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Were you an only child?

00;05;12 - 00;05;1

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: No. I have an older brother, four years older. His name is Chris, and I am very close to him.

00;05;19 - 00;05;26

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Were there any particular challenges your family faced during this time growing up?

00;05;26 - 00;06;13

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: I do not think it had anything to do with being Asian so much as being more hard working, right? The challenge was making money and supporting the family, like my mom and dad. They really worked hard to support their family. And my mom went to work, and I was a latchkey kid. So my brother raised me. You know, I would come home from school, and he would make me snacks. And that was how we are so close, because he really had so much to do with my upbringing. And there may be times where people may call us names, kids are kids, but it was one of those things where I do not think it ever really affected us. You may get a little upset sometimes, but it was not so like, "Oh my God, I cannot believe it."

00;06;13 - 00;06;23

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Right. Speaking of kids, what was your schooling experience like those early years? Elementary, middle school?

00;06;23 - 00;06;52

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: It was nice. I mean, I have no complaints. These were the kids I grew up with, so I just felt like I knew them. They knew me. And again, I felt like I belonged. When I moved to Illinois in high school, that was a harder one, because here I went from East Coast to the Midwest, and that was like a little bit like culture shock, right? Because everyone was like, "Oh my God, let's listen to her talk. She has a New York accent." It was not so much how I looked. It was so much how I talked.

00;06;52 - 00;06;59

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Interesting. Before we get to high school, what was the name of your elementary school and your middle school?

00;06;59 - 00;07;21

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So it was Felix B. Festa Middle School. Elementary school was Street School. But then, I know there was another one I am trying to remember, I cannot remember because it was like I started at one, and then I had to transfer to another because the first one closed. Yeah. It was like New City Elementary. Street School and then New City Elementary. That was what it was.

00;07;21 - 00;07;27

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What were the circumstances that prompted your family to leave New York to go to Illinois?

00;07;27 - 00;08;27

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So my father for many years he worked for Anaconda-Ericsson, it was a copper wire cable company, and Anaconda decided to start up a plant in the Midwest in Sycamore, Illinois. And so, my father, he transferred, and he moved the whole family there. And it was nice, it was different cornfields, lot of cornfields in the middle of nowhere. But it was a nice house, brick house, and definitely it was nicer than what I had lived in. It was not

that the house that I grew up in was a lovely house, but it was a middle class house, and this one was a lot bigger and a lot nicer. But, adjusting was tough, I am not going to lie, because I was only again, there was maybe one other Asian family there, and people were not as open. And maybe it was because I did not grow up there. I was not born there. It was not like the kids knew me from when we were kids.

00;08;28 - 00;08;30

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So here you felt more alien in a sense?

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VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Yes, I did, I did. It was harder, but eventually people got to know me, and I got to know them and feel comfortable with me.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What high school did you attend?

00;08;40 - 00;08;42

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: DeKalb High School?

00;08;42 - 00;08;45

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What was your favorite subject?

00;08;45 - 00;08;46

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: English.

00;08;46 - 00;08;47

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Why?

00;08;47 - 00;08;53

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Because I was good at writing, and I was terrible at math and science.

00;08;53 - 00;08;58

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Do you have any notable teachers during your high school time?

00;08;58 - 00;09;25

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: High school. You know, the funny thing is, my favorite class in high school was my typing class because I felt like I still use it to this day, and I got really fast at it. Mr. Shiverina, he was my journalism teacher. He was really good. My fifth grade teacher was awesome, Mrs. Shriver, she taught me penmanship. She taught me just about like, really like thinking and writing.

00;09;25 - 00;09;28

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So you took a journalism class in high school?

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VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Yes. I was in on the newspaper staff.

00;09;31 - 00;09;36

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Nice. So what attracted you about journalism at that age?

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VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So I enjoyed writing. I knew that was what my passion was even back then. And I got to meet people, and I learned about their stories. One of the first people I interviewed was Cindy Crawford. She went to high school with me.

00;09;51 - 00;09;52

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Oh, wow.

00;09;52 - 00;09;55

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Yeah.

00;09;55 - 00;10;03

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What were some other stories from your high school period, reporting for the school newspaper that sticks out to you to this day still?

00;10;03 - 00;10;21

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Not a whole lot. I mean, it was kind of boring stuff, classes and things. But I was on the pom pom team, so trips, sports. But it was not anything that was really impactful.

00;10;21 - 00;10;25

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Is there any skill that you learned there that you still use to this day?

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VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Yeah. The typing.

00;10;26 - 00;10;27

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Yeah.

00;10;27 - 00;10;37

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Is definitely excellent. That was like I could not believe it, out of all of them, like you take algebra and I was like, "I know I am never going to use this in my life."

00;10;37 - 00;10;52

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Yeah. How did your parents or your family maintain their cultural heritage during this period of your life, these formative years, whether in New York or whether in Illinois?

00;10;52 - 00;11;30

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So when we lived in New York, we were at my grandparents every weekend. And so my grandmother was the most amazing chef. She cooked Chinese food from scratch. And so on that part I know what good food is. And she would talk to me in Chinese. Both of my grandparents talk to me in Chinese, and I did not know Chinese because my parents never taught me. They were afraid that if I talked Chinese and went to school, that I would get bullied, and they did not want me to be different. They wanted me to blend. And now they regret it. Now they say, “Oh, we should have taught you.”

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And they did not teach your brother either whose older?

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VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: No. But our grandparents talked to us, and that was how we kind of picked it up. And you have an inkling of what people are trying to tell you.

00;11;43 - 00;11;46

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So through food—what other ways you feel like?

00;11;46 - 00;12;13

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Food, shopping, my dad would take us to Chinatown in Chicago and in New York. But that was a big thing. We would go shopping and just kind of go from store to store and see all the food, the duck and the chicken hanging in the window. He would call, “We would make it a day. We are going to make a day of it.” And I always get so excited, like, “Okay, let's make a day of it and just try the different things.”

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So after what year did you graduate high school?

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VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: In '85.

00;12;17 - 00;12;22

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: 1985. And did you go directly to college right after?

00;12;22 - 00;12;44

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: I went to community college in Illinois. And then I went to New York. My mom did not want me to go back to New York just yet. She thought I was too young. And she want me to focus on studies, which is fine, because it was really good. It was a good time for me just to really focus and get my grades up and then go on to NYU.

00;12;44 - 00;12;46

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What community college in Illinois?

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VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Kishwaukee Community College. Nice little school, it was out in the middle of cornfields.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And what was your experience there like?

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VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: I mean, everyone was very kind. I had a journalism teacher. She was Filipino, and she was always so kind. I felt like she maybe gave me a little more attention because she knew I love writing, and she encouraged me to write. And when I studied broadcast journalism at NYU, she was so happy. And even to this day, I say she will comment on my Facebook post, and I will say, "Look, it started with you. And she loves it."

00;13;27 - 00;13;43

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Well, yeah, to that point, I was going to ask if she was really one of the first or if not the first sort of role models professionally that you looked up to, especially since she was Filipino or no, is that too bold of a characterization?

00;13;43 - 00;14;20

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Well, I think she was a mentor. Definitely a mentor. I remember when I was in college, I was trying to get a job. I was at a college, my Uncle Henry, he worked at CBS. I actually had two uncles that worked at CBS News in New York, but they did behind the scenes stuff and so, [my] uncle's friend had to, like, get Connie Chung to come and meet me. And I was, like, blown away because it was Connie Chung, right? She was the first Asian American woman to really break the mold and become successful, become this TV star. And I just thought maybe one day I could be just like her.

00;14;20 - 00;14;24

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Wow. So you were starstruck when you met her?

00;14;24 - 00;14;38;

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Yes. Because also, she did not act like a diva. She just act like a normal person. And what I really liked about her is that she wanted you to get better. She encouraged you to really try.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: How old were you when you met her?

00;14;40 - 00;14;46

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Well, so I was probably in my twenties maybe. Like twenty-two, twenty-three.

00;14;47 - 00;14;48

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: This is when you were already in NYU?

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VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Yes. Yeah.

00;14;49 - 00;14;54

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Did she give you any advice, tools of the trade?

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VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: I think to be persistent and to keep trying. You know, later on, I saw her again at the Asian American Journalists Association. They have a convention every year. So I am president of the Florida chapter. But every year all the chapters meet in different city. And so she was a guest speaker, and she just kept saying it was not easy breaking a barrier, but if you are good at what you do, you will be successful.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Absolutely. What did your uncles do behind the scenes at CBS?

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VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: They did photography. They developed the film.

00;15;39 - 00;15;45

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So you go to NYU, what year was this when you started at NYU?

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VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Probably 1990, 1991.

00;15;50 - 00;16;00

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Yeah. And just talk to me about that experience. I am assuming by that point, the classes you were taking were more specialized in journalism?

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VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Yes. Yeah. I had excellent teachers. A lot of them worked in news and I ended up getting an internship at NBC Nightly News in the New York Bureau. And that was really cool because they took you long on stories, and you could just see, how it was all made. It was different, though, at network. Right? Because they have the union, and you did not really have to do everything. Here, at this stage in life, you have to write, and you are doing the interviews, but there you have producers, you have people holding the equipment, and you have people operating equipment. So it was really neat to watch. But then as an intern, I also had my share of going downstairs at Rockefeller Center and getting everyone's cigarettes and snacks, whatever else they wanted. So I knew, like, I worked hard, I had to, like, do the run. And then there were times when I can go out on stories.

00;17;03 - 00;17;10

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What was or what were some of the more memorable stories you remember from that time during the internship?

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VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: I remember seeing Leona Helmsley in court and the Queen of Mean, right. I always enjoyed going to Helmsley Palace for tea. And to all sudden be watching this, it was, very, I guess incredible in a sense, just memorable, more memorable than

incredible. Yeah. And then you just kind of got a taste of seeing the correspondents doing their live shots and again, like, I did not think anybody had a big ego. They were all very real, all very kind.

00;17;47 - 00;17;54

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: I should have asked before, was NYU a deliberate choice of school, like you wanted to go there?

00;17;54 - 00;18;41

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Yeah. I missed New York a lot, and I figured I am going to be so different now. I am going to go from cornfields to the city because I am sick of the Midwest, and I am not even going to do a suburb of the city. I want the city. I never lived in the city. And so I learned that as a student, you really do not have a lot of money to spend in the city. So you focus on studies, but I have an aunt, and she would spoil me every once in a while with good meals and take me to Lincoln Center for the ballet or opera and Broadway shows. So it was because of my aunt I was able to really enjoy the city. Otherwise, if it was just me and my own, I would be eating ramen.

00;18;41 - 00;18;58

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Yeah. You know, explain to us sort of what specialization you chose in journalism because we say journalism and it is really broad term. So what exactly did he want to do at this time?

00;18;58 - 00;20;01

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So it was hard to know what I want to do, but I knew that I wanted to do TV. When I graduated from NYU, I got an offer. There was this magazine. It was called Mademoiselle magazine, and it was kind of like just style, like it was a very popular magazine. And they said, hey, you can come here, start as like an AP or something like that. And then I said, no. And my parents were a little disappointed in me because they said, "Well, a job is better than no job." And I said, well, I really want to go into TV. And if I start out in something that I do not want to go into, what good is it? Because that was not what I want to do. So then I waited, and it was tough because it was a good six months without work. And luckily my grandmother allowed me to stay in Brooklyn with her. That was when I learned more Chinese and at the time, my brother also, he was kind of in between jobs, so it was great, like we would put out resumes together and then we would go take the bus to Atlantic City, go to the pool hall. You know, we just had a good time like that.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Yeah. And sort of like rekindling back with your childhood in a way.

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VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Yes.

00;20;07 - 00;20;10

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Why TV? Why not print? Why not radio?

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VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So as a kid, I always watched a lot of TV, and my mother was always like, turn off that TV. So then there was something, I think, in the back of my head saying, I think I want to go into TV just so I can watch it as much as I want to.

00;20;28 - 00;20;32

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So after those six months of you being unemployed, what happened?

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VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So I send out 500 resumes to stations all over the country. Yes. 500. And then I started getting back letters. I mean, like piles of letters. And I remember I put them on the kitchen table, and my grandmother, she goes, "Oh, wow. Get job real easy, huh?" And I said, "Yeah, I guess so, grandma." And so then I started opening them up and I am like, "Oh. Thank you for submitting your application. But no thank you." And so it was a bunch of rejections, rejection after rejection after rejection. So out of that, I had maybe a few calls, maybe two or three calls from stations that actually were interested in hiring me. And one of them was a Telemundo. He was like, "Oh, you speak Spanish?" I go, "Oh, you are a Spanish station?" I go, "I am so sorry. I do not." And then another one was from Fort Myers, CBS in Fort Myers. And the guy goes, "Hey, I see that you interned at NBC Nightly News. I used to work the desk there. I know you do not have enough experience to be a reporter, but if you are interested, I will give you a job as an AP and an assignment editor on the weekends, and you could start there." And so I took it. Yeah. It was like a minimum wage job, but it was something.

00;21;57 - 00;21;58

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: It was a start.

00;21;58 - 00;22;36

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: It was a start. And it was a tough start because I did not really know what I was doing. You think you know what you are doing when you are in school. You know everything until like you are doing the real thing. But I had really great teachers at the station, producers that had the patience with me to teach me how to edit, to teach me how to do the desk, and I did it for seven years. Back in the day, too, it was like when you are editing, you do it on a tape and then you have to run it back. I do not know if you ever saw *Broadcast News*. Yeah. So that was me. Like I actually had to run. I would take off my heels and I would run back and put the tape in.

00;22;36 - 00;22;43

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Fascinating. So seven years. What was the range?

00;22;43 - 00;24;01

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So I was at WINK for thirteen years, and seven years into my career, my news director, who was wonderful man, his name is Michael Castengera. He says, "Valerie, I have a project for you. I want you to write up a story, that is going to air on Fridays about things to do on the weekends." "Oh, okay. I will do that." And so what he did not know is I decided to do stand ups. I convinced the photographers, you give him food or something, you

buy him lunch and then they will do anything. So these wonderful guys, they went out, did creative stand ups for me. And then I came back, and I put it all together with file video about different events. And so my boss was like, "Oh, I did not know you could do that. But I like that, I like that." And then he realized that the different producers were starting to fight over my story, and he said, "Listen, when I have producers fighting over a story, I think maybe it is time that I promote you to a reporter." And he goes, "I am going to give you weekends." And so that was how I started just doing news, and it was great. I loved it, and I knew I loved it because it was just every day was different. You go out into the field, and you never know what it was going to be.

00;24;01 - 00;24;12

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So let's backtrack a little bit. So what year was it when you left New York to Fort Myers?

00;24;12 - 00;24;19

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Oh my God, 1995, maybe around there.

00;24;19 - 00;24;22

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And that that was—

00;24;22 - 00;24;58

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Wait a second. Probably like 1992, 1991. Yeah. I am getting them all mixed up now because I was like, wait I graduated high school, then I continued college, then I went to NYU. So it would have been around 1991. So then when I went to NYU, so NYU would have been around 1989.

00;24;58 - 00;25;03

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So '91 is when you came to Fort Myers? And that was what brought you to Florida? Work.

00;25;03 - 00;25;20

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Work. Yeah. My grandmother had a winter home in Florida, [in] Fort Lauderdale and that was fun. Yeah, we loved it. I mean, the flea market and the restaurants and even had good Chinese food in Fort Lauderdale. Bagels. It was really nice.

00;25;20 - 00;25;24

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So you had some experience with Florida before you took up this job?

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VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Yes. Every winter we go and visited her, and we loved it. And to be able to get a job in Fort Myers, Florida, it was a dream come true.

00;25;33 - 00;25;46

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: You mentioned, how what you learn in school compared to what you have to do in the field is different. Can you just elaborate a little bit on that.

00;25;46 - 00;26;17

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So they cannot teach you how a person is going to act when you knock on the door. They cannot teach you what it was going to be like when you get yelled at because they do not want to talk. Things like that. They cannot teach you, emotion. Right? What happens when someone starts crying during an interview? Those are the things. They can teach you questions: Who, what, where, why, when, how. They can teach you how to write, but they cannot teach you people skills. That is self-learned.

00;26;17 - 00;26;31

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Yeah. Well said. So coming back to this promotion, what year was this exactly when you got promoted to become a reporter?

00;26;31 - 00;27;19

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: That probably was around 1995. And then I got the Collier County Bureau, and that was when I moved to Naples, Florida. And that was like around 1998. So I did that for several years. And that was great, because having your own bureau teaches you everything, teaches you how to handle your own office. You are looking at different beats, but you are multitasking all of them. And so that, I think, set the tone. It was like being an assignment editor, set the tone on the weekends because I learned how to set up stories. You know, I was never given a story. I was the one finding it and then handing it out to my reporters and like writing up questions. "Try this question, and you are going to meet this person at like 8:00 or whatever, and then you are going over here." So I was the one that had to do that for them. And then when I got my bureau, it was me doing it for me. So I loved it.

00;27;19 - 00;27;28

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So when you were at the Bureau, you were really self-directing in a way. And this was in Naples?

00;27;28 - 00;27;29

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Yes.

00;27;29 - 00;27;31

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What was the name of it?

00;27;32 - 00;27;39

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: What was the name of the Bureau? So it would be the Collier County Bureau. Have you ever been to Naples?

00;27;39 - 00;27;40

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Yeah.

00;27;40 - 00;28;11

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Yeah. So you go to Naples and then there is a different Rolls-Royce every day and a Lamborghini. And so I felt like I worked in Paradise. I did not work in Paradise. Some of these stories were about farm workers, but then there was other stories where

a Picasso got stolen from this mansion on the beach, and it was just so different. But I loved every moment of it. Wherever I was, it was just a really great time in my life.

00;28;11 - 00;28;23

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Yeah. And that was going to be my next question. What were some of the first stories that you wanted to report on and find and seek?

00;28;23 - 00;29;01

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: I mean, a lot of it was kind of stories that I had to do because of the news, whether it was a court case or county commission. And these are the things that the residents want to know about. So a lot of it was that and it was not exciting. But then there was things like crime that you have to do. In Naples, I mean, I really enjoyed like Everglades City. That was when I got my first taste of hurricanes. Yeah, I had a news director, she did not really like me, so she put me on the twenty-fifth floor of the Marriott in Marco Island.

00;29;01 - 00;29;06

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What did you learn about Southwest Florida during this time?

00;29;06 - 00;29;44

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Oh, it was a sleepy little town and a wonderful place to start. I mean, I had really great mentors, great teachers at WINK. They were tough. I remember getting my script approval. I would get a stomach ache every day and the anchor who approved my script, he would be like, "What is this shit?" You know, "Do it better." And so then I started doing it better. And then he was less grouchy. So I was really happy, you know? Of course, now it would not ever be like that now. But I think because he was very disciplined with me in the beginning, it makes me better now because I know.

00;29;44 - 00;29;50

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So, how long were you at the bureau in Naples?

00;29;50 - 00;30;36

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: I think I was at the bureau. Oh, my God, that was a good question. Maybe eight years. Oh, I forgot to tell you. Before I became a reporter, I got to shadow people, and they taught me, how to report too. And so one of the first people I shadowed was Hoda Kotb. And so I was in the backseat of the car thinking like, this is one of my first stories. This is so cool. And she turn back, and she goes, "Okay, Valerie. Now I am going to give you a lesson in writing. You get your interviews, and you put them in order of how you want them. And then you, you describe what you want..." It was just so cool. I just remember, like, how inspiring she was at the time and how kind she was. Good teachers like that go a long way.

00;30;36 - 00;30;42

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Absolutely. And what else did you learn from her?

00;30;42 - 00;31;08

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: The biggest part was formatting my stories. You know, a lot of people do interviews, but then all of a sudden you just have a clump of interview, a clump of sound, right, a clump of information, but you do not know where to put it. So in here, like I log and then I figure out, okay, this is my beginning, this is my middle, this is my end. And that was what I learned from her. I learned how to outline. And to this day, I still use it. And it makes me quicker and it makes it more logical.

00;31;08 - 00;31;20

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Nice. So you said eight years at the bureau? So you ended there around 2003?

00;31;20 - 00;31;25

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Yeah.

00;31;25 - 00;31;28

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What was the next step?

00;31;28 - 00;32;56

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So then TSP in Tampa hired me and they put me in Tallahassee to cover politics. And so back then Jeb Bush was the governor. And I remember walking in and thinking like I was a critic of him. But I came out a fan. I remember watching him during the hurricanes. It was like during the time of Hurricane Ivan, Francis, Jean, and Charlie. It was like one after another after another. And so we had to go to North Florida because I was in Tallahassee and just people around, they wanted answers. They were mad they had not had air conditioning in like, how many days now? No water. Nothing was working. And he came in—and he did not have to do any of it—but he came in and he met with everyone, and he apologized. And he was so, like, sympathetic and when I asked him questions, he would say, “I do not know, but that is a good question, and I am going to find that answer out for you.” And so that was what made me impressed with him, because he was able to come back and give me answers. I just did not know what to expect. And so I gained a great respect for him. It was like you had to go find these lawmakers at the airport or where you knew they were going to be, and he never once yelled. He was always like, “Come on, what do you want to ask me?” And it was great.

00;32;56 - 00;33;01

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: How long did you report on Florida politics?

00;33;01 - 00;33;14

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Like a year, it was not very long because I did not like politics. I missed the run and the gun. I miss being out there.

00;33;14 - 00;33;22

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: In that one year, though, any stories stick out? Any political stories that you did?

00;33;22 - 00;33;44

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: A lot of it was like medical malpractice. And that went on. It was just so boring, but you had to turn it into something really interesting. So it was like, “okay, how can I make this interesting?” And little things of going to the people, going to the doctor, going to the insurance agencies, and figuring it out of why would people care at home?

00;33;44 - 00;33;54;

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What were some similarities and differences between working in this station in Tampa to in Naples, southwest Florida.

00;33;54 - 00;34;43

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So when I moved to Tampa and did regular news? Oh it was definitely a bigger market in Tampa. And the photographers were much more experienced. They knew people, they knew how to handle people. And so it was just easier because we were not so young. In Fort Myers, that was a beginners market. And we were just out the gate. We thought we knew everything, but we did not it. It was about learning. And by the time you get to Tampa, if you did not know things, the guy you are working with already did. And he would be like get back or try this or whatever. And so it was a really great market. I had a great news director, too. His name is Lane Mickelson, and he was a photographer. He started out as a photographer, and he became a news director. And then, it was Gannett at the time. And then he went to corporate.

00;34;43 - 00;34;50

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And after that, when you are covering political stories, you went back out onto the field?

00;34;50 - 00;34;54

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Yeah, I moved back to Tampa. I missed it.

00;34;54 - 00;34;56

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: How long did you do that?

00;34;56 - 00;35;16

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So that was four years. Yeah. So my news director, he ended up going to corporate, and then a new guy came in and we did not get along. So then that was when I came to Orlando, and I thought, “Oh, I will be here for a couple of years, and then I am going back to Tampa” because I really like the beach and sixteen years later...

00;35;16 - 00;35;18

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So you arrived here in Orlando in two thousand and—?

00;35;18 - 00;35;36

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: 2008. Yes. And so I started working for Fox 35. I did the morning show. The morning show was like boot camp. You had to like, get up at like 1:30 in the morning, be ready, at the station at 3 am, and then be on air by like five.

00;35;36 - 00;35;38

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And that was your first time doing that?

00;35;38 - 00;35;39

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Yeah.

00;35;39 - 00;35;42

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Was it brutal that adjustment?

00;35;42 - 00;36;00

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Yes. It was like you cannot fall asleep at 5:30 at night. And then if you try to take a pill or whatever you are still out of it. Cannot focus. And then you drink too much coffee and then you realize at 6:00 in the morning, like there was not a lot of places open where you can go to the bathroom, so then you cannot drink as much coffee.

00;36;00 - 00;36;04

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And how long were you in the morning edition?

00;36;05 - 00;36;25

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: I did that for a couple of years. And then I was like, "Hey, I will do weekends." I had morning, Monday through Friday, but, I am like, I do not like the mornings. Just put me on weekends, I will do nights. And so I did weekdays and nights and then I ended up loving nights.

00;36;25 - 00;36;28

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What were some of the stories you reported during this time?

00;36;28 - 00;37;09

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So 2011, Casey Anthony, and I had to be outside the courthouse and get reaction when she was found not guilty. It was crazy wall to wall people. I mean, the whole thing was crazy. For weeks upon weeks, I had to stand outside her home and wait for her father to come out and get the trash, and we would all be like, "Hey, what do you have to say today?" And then some days he would give us something, and other days he would just not. Yeah. And then I covered the trial of George Zimmerman. I covered Pulse reactions. I covered a lot here.

00;37;09 - 00;37;40

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Yeah. So let's go through each of those a little bit more because those are really major events not only in Florida history, but also American history. The Casey Anthony trial, I am curious, first from a journalist perspective in the station, in the newsroom, whatever. How did you all sort of approach the event?

00;37;40 - 00;38;25

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So even before the event, it was craziness. **[SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** How?] You are out there in front of our home day after day after day. And because I was morning shift, I was going out there in the middle of the night. And even at middle of the night, you had protesters there. You had like weird people out there, and you just never knew

what to expect. And then you had the neighbors who loved us at first and then hated us because they did not want all those people there. And I do not blame them. It was a disruption to their lives. I get it. And then I remember when she was arrested, I mean, it was just wall to wall people. I mean, I could barely move because there were the crowd was just, like, at a standstill. You do not forget that kind of stuff.

00;38;25 - 00;38;30

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What were some of the reactions that you got once the verdict came?

00;38;30 - 00;38;54

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Some people supported her, and some people hated her. And it was to be expected with a lot of the stories that I was doing, because you just never knew. I mean, you would think that a lot of people would not have supported her, but they did. They felt like she was innocent. And so she was found not guilty, so.

00;38;54 - 00;39;11

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And the George Zimmerman trial. Did you have any influence in terms of reporting when Trayvon Martin was killed, or you were just focused on the trial?

00;39;11 - 00;40;24

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So I had to cover after he was killed. I had to cover the fact that George Zimmerman had not been charged with the crime yet. And that was a big deal because, I know a lot of people were like, "Hey, we have this kid, and he is dead, and no one has been held responsible for that." And so it took a while, but eventually he was charged. And then that helped ease the tension, because that was the very beginning of the unrest. That was where it all started, right? Because Trayvon Martin's family had hired Benjamin Crump, and then George Zimmerman had hired Mark O'Mara. And I will say, even though both sides so different, those attorneys were such gentlemen, and they worked well with each other. They were class acts. Even to this day. They are both just right on, always polite but yet to the point and firm, you knew exactly where they stood.

00;40;24 - 00;40;31

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And once the trial happened, how did your reporting change or if it changed?

00;40;31 - 00;41;32

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So then he was found not guilty, and it was not as crazy as when he was not charged. That to me was craziness. I mean, I remember KKK said that they were going to be there. Black Panthers said they were going to be there. The station hired security guards because they did not know what was going to be happening, and it was really scary. That was what was the crazy part of it. So after he was charged, everybody seemed to have calmed down, and then when he was found not guilty, I think they felt like at least it went through the system, and they heard the whole story of what had happened. And I think that had helped a bit. Obviously there was a lot of pain because of the death of Trayvon Martin. But there is a museum now there in Sanford. And there is a lot of people that remember him and respect him. So I think that makes a difference to the family.

00;41;32 - 00;41;50

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Yeah and it ignited sort of the modern Black Lives Matter movement in a very legitimate way. So then four years later, the Pulse shooting happened in 2016. So just walk me through that from your journalistic perspective.

00;41;50 - 00;42;37

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So I remember the day before, I think it was Christina Grimmie, the concert. And like there was a shooting there. And then the next day or overnight, then Pulse happened. And so I was not there the night of when the craziness was happening. I was there coming in the next day, and I just remember it was so hot out and wall to wall media from everywhere. And so it was a lot of press conferences. FBI was there, and like we wanted answers, but we were not getting a lot of answers at first. But they obviously they did the best they could. But even to this day, now, how many years later we are going on...

00;42;37 - 00;42;39

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: We are ten almost.

00;42;39 - 00;42;53

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Right. Ten years later. So now you see more information coming out. And that was an eye opener because of what we saw back then and what we see now coming out in records...makes you wonder.

00;42;53 - 00;43;04

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Yeah, absolutely. I am curious as you are recounting these experiences, these were all national events, but you are—is it fair to say local media?

00;43;04 - 00;43;05

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Yes.

00;43;05 - 00;43;17

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So how did engage, maybe I do not know if that is the right word, with national media during in in these moments, it is—

00;43;17 - 00;44;28

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So national media was always got the interviews right. They were always ahead of us. And people usually want to talk the national media before the local media. But I think in the case of George Zimmerman, there was an issue with NBC News. And I remember the correspondent was ahead of me, and I had to wait like a lot longer to get my interview. But she did the interview with the attorney. And, anyway, there was some issue with the 9-1-1 call being spliced, and it made it sound wrong, like they splice it in a bad way. And so they got in trouble. And then I ended up getting an interview with the father. And I just remember that moment, like, I am not national, but they talk to me and that was a really incredible moment.

00;44;29 - 00;44;31

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Why is local media still important?

00;44;31 - 00;44;54

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Because people feel closer to a local media. And I think that if a person is at home and they see you every night, that they feel comfortable with you and they trust you, whereas someone who they do not see in the grocery store or maybe working out or something like that, they do not know them and so they do not know how they are going to be.

00;44;54 - 00;45;10

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Overall, throughout your entire career, not just Orlando, what has been the most rewarding story you have reported on? And also what has been the most sobering?

00;45;10 - 00;47;17

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: There has been so many sobering stories, unfortunately, a lot of death. I do not know if I can even compare them because they are all terrible. I mean, I have been death after death after death, and you have to just go with it. And some people want to talk to you, and some people want to yell at you, and either way you just go with it. I had a young photographer working with me not too long ago, and he said, "I do not want to bother them." And I said, "Well, it is not bothering them. You have to ask them if they want to talk, because that is what is fair."

And then I remember I did a story about a little boy, who had some issues at the lake, and I was told that he was revived, everything was fine. And then I got a letter in the mail from the mother of the child saying, "No one has done a story on my child. He died." And I was so mad because I remember calling the fire department saying "You told me the kid was okay. He died." And so they called, and they apologized, and they said, "We gave you bad information." I was like, "You were trying to protect the family, but the mother wanted to talk," so you cannot gauge it and try and protect them, because a lot of times people want to talk. And she talked and she showed us pictures of her beautiful baby and wanted to talk about him. So that is why every story is different. Even though, I do not think like one goes over the other because they are all really special.

And I had one, just the other day, a missing woman, who has been missing for over ten years. And I asked the father, "Hey, do you want to talk?" And he said, "No, Valerie. I cannot talk anymore. It has just consumed my life that I cannot allow it to consume my life anymore. I am so sorry." I am like, "Do not be sorry," I said, because I know all those years he did talk to me. I said, "Now it was time for you, and it was okay." So you just kind of get attached to these people and you go with what they need.

00;47;17 - 00;47;36

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Right. Absolutely. Transitioning to sort of your reporting, in terms of the Asian-American Pacific Islander [AAPI] community, when did you start reporting on the AAPI community here in Orlando?

00;47;36 - 00;48;16

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So when I first moved here, I started. And that was when I met Shally Wong at the Earth Day Festival, at Lake Eola. And we just kind of connected because there not that many Asian Americans here. So I gave her my number and then she asked me to get involved in events, and I did. You know, it was something my mother always want me to do, “get to know your community, be part of it.” And so I emceed for her. And I did whatever she needed me to do. But I also loved it because I felt like, “Oh, that looks like my grandmother. Or that looks like my mother.” And so on the weekends, it just felt like I belonged. And it was a very calming feeling.

00:48:16 - 00:48:23

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So for you the reason, the purpose was for a sense of belonging, personally?

00:48:23 - 00:48:52

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Yes. And then I think for them it was like, “Wow, this girl, she speaks perfect English, and she could be a role model for our kids.” And that was how I try to do it, but I also remember too, when I started in this market, Wendy Chioji, I saw her anchoring and I thought, “Oh my God, she is my idol” She does such a great job and such a class act. And when I got to emcee with her at one of the events, I was just blown away how nice she was.

00:48:52 - 00:48:56

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What were some of the first stories you reported on the Asian-American community here in Orlando?

00:48:56 - 00:49:20

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So it would be like Chinese New Year's. It was all featuring stuff. We never talked about racism. We never talked about the issues. It was all about, “Hey, this is Chinese New Year. It means good luck and prosperity and we eat this food. And we do that. And there was the dragon dance.” And so it was about that type of education. And that was fine because it was fun.

00:49:21 - 00:49:27

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And did you ever shift to reporting on deeper issues like racism?

00:49:27 - 00:50:55

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Yes, and that was after the shooting in Atlanta, remember, there was a bunch of people killed at the spa. It was then that all of a sudden people wanted to know about the community, but it was also because when COVID hit, everyone was blaming the Chinese, right. Because it came from China. So then you must have been responsible for it. And it was really an eye opener. I remember being in church. I would go to church with my parents here in Orlando, and we are Catholic. And there was a moment where you say, “peace be with you.” And so I realized that no one wanted to shake our hands. Yeah. And so I thought, “oh, that was kind of disappointing.” But then I kind of take it as if I get mad, that does nothing. So I look at it as ignorance and that you just need to teach people. And that was what it became. It became about teaching people what we were about. We are Americans, just like you are, and I am. And so that was where it all started. You know, we got the different leaders together in the

community and we talked. And then they worked together on how to help prevent Asian hate. And then the liaisons were created, the deputies to help the people if they had any issues with Asian hate. So it was like huge. I was really proud of my community because they stood up.

00;50;55 - 00;51;04

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So COVID really was the impetus for this more serious reporting on the Asian American community here in Orlando.

00;51;04 - 00;51;05

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Yes.

00;51;05 - 00;51;25

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Can you share some other examples of certain instances of either Asian hate crimes or hate instances here in Orlando or just reporting that you all did to sort of combat those narratives and promote the community in other ways?

00;51;25 - 00;52;18

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So sometimes I would think, like when I was driving, sometimes I thought I heard somebody yelling, my husband would be like, “they are not yelling, right?” And so I thought, was that my imagination or did it happen? And so then my other friends were like, “Hey, that kind of happened to me too.” And I was like, “Yeah. Maybe it is a thing, right?” They were not out there calling us troublemakers, but we just felt like the pressure a little bit. And so that was when, like Mimi [Chan] she came up with education. Like she helped lobby a bill into law requiring the AAPI education. And I think that is wonderful because then it teaches kids about Asian-Americans and then are learning. So then they know, “Okay, you look different, but you are still the same, and you still want the best for the country.”

00;52;18 - 00;52;24

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Talk to me about the AAPI Icons event that you hosted at the History Center about a few weeks ago.

00;52;24 - 00;52;28

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Oh, so much fun. But I was so nervous. Yeah.

00;52;28 - 00;52;29

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What was the inspiration for the event?

00;52;29 - 00;53;13

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So they said, “Hey, Valerie, can you do a lecture on these icons?” And I thought, okay. And I did not really know which way I was going to go with it, but I just started doing research, and it was hard because there was not a lot of information back in the day of icons, back in the 1800s because they were not really recording themselves, unless there were someone like the Valencia orange guy, Lue Gim Gong, it was hard to know if there was more out there. And I think there are. I just think that people need to come forward and

share that. That was why in the beginning of lecture, I said, “Hey, I know I am missing people, and if you know of anybody, just let me know so I can keep adding on to it.”

00;53;13 - 00;53;15

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So in a way, it is still somewhat ongoing.

00;53;15 - 00;53;32

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Oh, it is very ongoing, I know, I mean, I even know like even with the modern day ones, it was just like a taste of it, of the people that I thought, “hey you have made a difference in the community, I am putting you up here.” But there was so many more out there and I cannot wait to expand on it.

00;53;32 - 00;53;36

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So why did you select those three individuals in this past event?

00;53;36 - 00;54;5

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So it was just through research, like, Ann Yao and her music, as I was studying and seeing what was out there. I was like, oh my gosh, she has this Chinese instrument. And that was really neat. I never knew about this. And the fact that she was on all these famous places performing in New York, and then the fact that she was here in Orlando. Oh my gosh, how cool is that? And as I researched it more, I saw a picture of her with Shally. And I am like, oh my God, you know her? I literally like wrote up my whole lecture and later on I was like, “Shally, you know her?” “Oh yeah, I know her. I got her number.” “Yeah? Invite her to the lecture, please.” And she did. And she came and we did not even know if she was going to show up, but she did. So we were really happy with that. And then Ricky, Rickie Lee I mean, everyone knows Ricky the food blogger, but he is an engineer in his real job. But I mean, I chose him because he has been such an inspiration. He has really helped restaurants get their names out there and people have taken his idea on the food blog and copied it. And I also think he was the one that helped build up the Mills District because of his blog. And more restaurants start there and just the Vietnamese community really trust in him and believes in him so he could talk about it and I trust him.

00;54;56 - 00;54;57

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And what about Doctor [Puxiao] Cen?

00;54;58 - 00;55;35

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Oh my gosh, she is so inspirational. The fact that this doctor, she knew that there was a whole population out there of people that needed help and could not speak the language, and she hired her own Chinese speaking nurse out of her own pocket. I mean, that to me is like above and beyond. So she definitely to me, in my eyes, is just a superstar. And yet she is so like laid back, right? She is definitely an icon. She was the very first story that we did for Asia Trend.

00;55;35 - 00;55;51

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What do you think, through those three individuals, but also we connect it to the reporting you have done more generally on the Asian-American community, what can we learn about the Asian-American community in Orlando?

00;55;51 - 00;56;28

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Oh, so much, especially as I see the population increasing. We can learn about just the differences in the cultures among the Asian Americans. It is not just Chinese, it is Japanese, it is Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese. I mean, all that different culture in there. Also, I believe that they are resilient. They are close knit. I used to think, "Oh, they would just keep themselves." But no, they really want to know each other, and they want to learn about you. And they also now want to teach others about what their lives are like and what they believe in.

00;56;28 - 00;56;48

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Speaking of change, I could ask Orlando specifically, but you could also mention Florida since you have been in different places around the state, how has Florida, Orlando's Asian community changed since you have been here?

00;56;48 - 00;57;26

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: It has gotten larger, for sure, and quick to I think that was another blessing from the pandemic. Everyone moved here from California, from New York. We got better chefs at the restaurants. We just got business people opening up more businesses, whether it is restaurants or something else. But I just think that, seeing, I mean, like, seeing it grow. The Mills District has grown, right? Chinatown. I go into Chinatown, it used to be kind of desolate, and now it is booming. I mean, there is a restaurant or a business in every slot there. And I think they are expanding to.

00;57;26 - 00;57;33

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: How has Florida's cultural landscape more broadly changed since you have been here?

00;57;33 - 00;58;02

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Just the amount of people has been a blessing, and sharing each other's cultures and information and just being able to socialize with them, that has changed because before it just used to be maybe Chinese New Years, but now we have the heritage celebration with the county, and we have Vietnamese, Korean there, Japanese there, Hawaiian, there, it is a wonderful melting pot of everybody.

00;58;02 - 00;58;07

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Why is it important to report on immigrant minority communities in Florida?

00;58;07 - 00;58;35

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Because if we do not report on them, how will people know? If we do not tell them what is going on in their lives, I think people would react differently because they have no idea what they are going through. And that is why I believe the education

will make a huge difference soon within society because it will start at the kids level and then they will get it.

00;58;35 - 00;58;43

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What impact do you think you have made here in Central Florida, through your reporting specifically with the Asian community, but more broadly?

00;58;43 - 00;59;07

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: I love being able to give them a platform to talk about themselves and their inspirations. To me, that is the best gift ever, because they take pride in being a good American and making a difference in their lives of others. And so doing that gives me great happiness.

00;59;08 - 00;59;17

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What have you learned about Florida through your thirty plus year career of reporting on the state in various parts of the state, various stories? What have you learned about this state?

00;59;17 - 00;59;40

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: I think Florida has grown. I think it has matured. I think the fact that they are willing to even do AAPI education, that says a lot. I mean, it was not just about business and making money, but it is about having a better understanding of the AAPI community and each other.

00;59;40 - 00;59;44

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What challenges the Central Florida face today?

00;59;44 - 01;00;28

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: I think there needs to be more help for Asian Americans elderly, the elderly ones. There is no senior centers for them. There is really no place for them to go. It could be more isolated, and I would like to see help for them, but also help for all senior citizens. I think that needs to be improved. I mean, I was just approaching a lawmaker about a bill that I would like her to create requiring security at senior living facilities because we had a guy break into two of them here in Orlando. And the fact that they could just walk in something needs to be done. They should have security at these places, like schools have SROs [School Resource Office].

01;00;28 - 01;00;32

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Are you worried about the state of media currently?

01;00;32 - 01;01;08

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: I am. I am worried about the state of media. But I do think that by mentoring them that there is still journalists out there, young journalists that have a lot of passion to get it right and to be fair. And so I think that the more we mentor them and teach them, the better it will be. But I think there is a lot of opinion out there. And you do not know who to believe anymore. So my job is to make sure that they tell the facts and not their beliefs.

01;01;08 - 01;01;13

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Where do you see your career heading in the next five years, ten years?

01;01;14 - 01;01;52

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: So my career has changed because now I have elderly parents, and I have learned that life is so much more important than money. And so as long as I can balance it with still doing what I love—I love going out in the community doing stories—but also I love my family. And if I can do both and still be good at it, that is where I see it. That is where I see my career going, still doing the same thing, but also balancing it out because this profession, it can be unbalance and that is where issues arise.

01;01;52 - 01;02;36

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Absolutely. You emphasized in your previous response the facts. I am curious as I am sure you know, the often famous quote, “journalism is the first or [newspapers] is the first draft of history.” As someone that studies history, this is more of a selfish question admittedly since I am talking to a journalist, I am just curious, are you all, and I do not mean to generalize you all, but you or others, are you all aware of sort of that reality of your stories will be probably seen and used in for posterity?

01;02;36 - 01;03;35

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: I do not think like that. I think of because in my life and in the newsroom, you are constantly just trying to generate more, more stories. That is my job. Go out there today. “What do you got?” “I have got two stories,” and we call it feeding the beast. Right. And so sometimes the beast gets filet mignon and sometimes the beast gets sirloin. That is what it is like because every day I tell a story about a different person and I just got to get it right, because if I do not get it right, then I did not do my job. I just try to think of it like that. And so, yeah, sometimes people may go back and look at them, but I always just think like there is two sides to every story. And you got to tell them both. And sometimes they may not talk, and it is what it is. But we got to try.

01;03;35 - 01;03;39

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: From your perspective, how will Orlando change in the next twenty five years?

01;03;40 - 01;04;06

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: It is definitely going to get more populated, and I hope they do it wisely. I hope, as more people come in, there will be a better understanding of each other and with the growth just—acceptance. Yeah. That is what I hope to see. Acceptance of each other.

01;04;06 - 01;04;18

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: How has your Chinese heritage, Asian heritage, influenced your perspective on life generally and living in Florida specifically?

01;04;18 - 01;04;48

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: I do not think it has influenced it so much as, “Oh, well, this is great. I can go to the Oriental Market, and I could pick up some groceries.” Whereas when I lived in the Midwest, it was a long trip to Chicago to have to go to Chinatown. So just being able to travel fifteen minutes and get what I need, it is really neat. And then there is a bakery, and I can get all the groceries. So I really enjoy that part of it. It is just easier to be Asian American here.

01;04;48 - 01;04;57

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Lastly, if someone is listening to this recording fifty or a hundred years from now, what do you want them to know about your culture and the state of Florida?

01;04;57 - 01;05;14

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: I want them to know that Asian Americans here in Orlando are really proud to be American, and they are trying to make a difference in the lives of everyone, and they are trying to improve it. And I just hope that they are greeted with acceptance.

01;05;14 - 01;05;18

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Valerie, thank you so much for taking some time out of your day to share your life story. I really appreciate it.

01;05;18 - 01;05;21

VALERIE BOEY RAMSEY: Well, thank you for being interested in it.