Guide to the Tony Lam papers MS.SEA.058

Samantha Noelle Hilton
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University of California, Irvine
Irvine 92623-9557
spcoll@uci.edu
URL: http://special.lib.uci.edu
Language of Material: English
Contributing Institution: Special Collections and Archives, University of California, Irvine Libraries
Title: Tony Lam papers
Creator: Lam, Tony C. M.
Identifier/Call Number: MS.SEA.058
Physical Description: 2 Linear Feet(2 boxes)
Date (inclusive): 1965-2008
Language of Material: English and Vietnamese.
Abstract: This collection is comprised of the personal and political papers of Tony Lam, a refugee from Southern Vietnam who influenced Orange County, California for several decades. The collection documents Lam’s life at Camp Asan refugee camp, his campaigns for Westminster City Council, and his influence on Orange County’s Vietnamese American community. Materials include pamphlets, stickers, and other campaign objects, correspondence, newspaper clippings, and photographs.

Physical Description: Materials relating to Camp Asan are brittle and discolored. Newspaper clippings are brittle throughout box 2.

Conditions Governing Access
The collection is open for research.

Publication Rights
Property rights reside with the University of California. It is the responsibility of the researcher to determine who holds the copyright and pursue the copyright owner or his or her heir for permission to publish where the UC Regents do not hold the copyright.

Preferred Citation
Tony Lam Papers. MS-SEA-058. Special Collections and Archives, The UC Irvine Libraries, Irvine, California. Date accessed. For the benefit of current and future researchers, please cite any additional information about sources consulted in this collection, including permanent URLs, item or folder descriptions, and box/folder locations

Processing Information
Processed by Samantha Noelle Hilton in 2016.

Biographical / Historical
Tony Lam was the first Vietnamese American to be elected to public office in the United States. In addition to serving as a politician, Lam was a refugee from Vietnam and an activist who assisted Vietnamese refugees with their settlement in the United States and helped create an inclusive community for the Vietnamese American community in Orange County, California.

Before the 1975 fall of Saigon, Tony Lam worked for the U.S. government in Vietnam as both the assistant director of counterinsurgency at Vietnam’s embassy to the U.S. and as the U.S. government contractor in Vietnam. Because of his ties to the United States, Lam became a political target when Communism began to take over Vietnam; Lam, his wife, and six children fled in 1975. The family lived for a few months in Guam at refugee camp Asan. Lam utilized his leadership skills by serving as the director of Asan where he oversaw the activities of 60,000 refugees. From Asan, Lam was relocated to Camp Pendleton in San Diego, California where he assisted over 120,000 refugees transition to life in the United States.

The Lam family settled in the City of Westminster in California. Tony and his brother established an insurance agency and an immigration consulting firm that assisted fellow Vietnam refugees by connecting them with local language classes, ensuring that their homes and businesses were following legal codes, and helping to enroll their children in schools. Additionally, Lam was a leading force behind the establishment of Westminster’s Little Saigon district and he further fostered a sense of community by organizing the country’s first Tet festival in Westminster in 1980.

In 1992, Tony Lam ran for a seat on Westminster City Council; he wanted to make sure the populous Vietnamese American community was represented in local politics. His campaign was successful with the backing of the police and housing community and he became the first Vietnamese American elected to public office. Lam’s early political career was successful and he was well-received. That changed in 1999 with the Hi-Tek protests. Lam was accused of being a communist sympathizer and the Vietnamese American community was harshly divided over the unrest. In 2002, after serving 10 years on City Council, Lam chose not to run for re-election. Despite the tumultuous end to his career, Lam was recognized in 2005 for his many contributions to Orange County.

Content Description
This collection is comprised of the personal and political papers of Tony Lam, a refugee from Southern Vietnam who influenced Orange County, California for several decades. The collection documents Lam’s life at Camp Asan refugee camp, his campaigns for Westminster City Council, and his influence on Orange County’s Vietnamese American community. Materials include pamphlets, stickers, and other campaign objects, correspondence, newspaper clippings, and photographs.

**Arrangement**
The collection is arranged into four series: Political papers, Personal papers, Clippings, and Visual media.

**Repository Processing Note**
DACS minimum finding aid requirements met.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**
Orange County (Calif.) -- Politics and government -- 20th century -- Sources
Lam, Tony C. M.

### Series 1: Political papers bulk

**Physical Description:** 0.4 linear feet

**Arrangement**
Documents in this series are arranged chronologically by event.

**Scope and Contents**
The documents that comprise this series relate to Tony Lam’s political career. Materials include campaign materials, correspondence, information about various projects for the city of Westminster, and a copy of Lam’s speech about his own political journey.

- box 1, folder 1: General: correspondence, articles, and photos 1:1 bulk
  - box 1, folder 2: Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce in O.C. (1 of 3) 1:2 1987
  - box 1, folder 3: Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce in O.C. (2 of 3) 1:3 1987
  - box 1, folder 4: Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce in O.C. (3 of 3) 1:4 1987
- box 1, folder 5: Campaign materials 1:5 bulk
- box 1, folder 6: Campaign materials 1:6 bulk
- box 1, folder 7: Asian Pacific American Law Journal Symposium 1:7 2001-03-09
- box 1, folder 8: UCLA Asian Pacific American Law Journal, Volume 8, Number 1 1:8 2002
- box 1, folder 9: City Council Farewell Party 1:9 2002-11-15
- box 1, folder 10: City of Westminster miscellaneous documents 1:10 bulk

### Series 2: Personal papers bulk

**Arrangement**
Series is organized chronologically by event and type of material.

**Scope and Contents**
The materials that comprise this collection detail parts of Lam’s life from his time at Camp Asan in Guam to his successes in Orange County. The series includes correspondence, biographical information, and information about various awards won by Lam.

- box 1, folder 11: General: correspondence and operations statements of Lam’s early life in the U.S. 1:11 bulk
  - Language of Material: Some documents in this folder are written in Vietnamese.
- box 1, folder 12: Camp Asan: correspondence, awards, and plans 1:12 bulk
- box 1, folder 13: Biographical information: resumes and timelines 1:13 bulk
- box 1, folder 14: Transcript of Lam’s appeal in Gilbrook v. City of Westminster trial 1:14 1994
- box 1, folder 15: Miscellaneous correspondence 1:15 bulk
- box 1, folder 16: Vietnamese American National Gala 1:16 2005-05-02
- box 1, folder 17: O.C. Register: 100 People Who Shaped Orange County 1:17 2005
Series 3: Clippings

Language of Material: Materials in this series are in English and Vietnamese.

Physical Description: 1 linear foot

Scope and Contents

This series is comprised of news clippings about Tony Lam's life and politics as well as articles about Vietnamese politics surrounding the Indochinese wars.

box 1, folder 18

Articles about Tony Lam (1 of 6) 1:18 bulk

box 1, folder 19

Articles about Tony Lam (2 of 6) 1:19 bulk

box 1, folder 2

Orange Coast magazine draft and final 1:20 1998-06

General

Orange Coast issue contains an article called "Sign of the Lam"

box 1, folder 21

Articles about Tony Lam (3 of 6) 1:21 1999

box 1, folder 22

Articles about Tony Lam (4 of 6) 1:22 bulk

box 1, folder 23

Articles about Tony Lam (5 of 6) 1:23 bulk

box 1, folder 24

Doanh nhan, Mr. Tony Lam 1:24 2006-12

General

Tony Lam article can be found on pages 32-36.

box 1, folder 25

Articles about Tony Lam (6 of 6), undated, partial, and miscellaneous 1:25 bulk

box 1, folder 26

Articles about Asan refugee camp 1:26 1975

box 1, folder 27

Articles about Westminster and Little Saigon 1:27 bulk

box 1, folder 28

Articles about Vietnam 1:28 bulk

box 1, folder 29

O.C. Register: 100 People Who Shaped Orange County 1:29 2005

box 2, folder 1

Westminster clippings 2:1 1988

box 2, folder 2

Articles about Vien Dong restaurant 2:2 bulk

box 2, folder 3

Articles about/b Lam's family 2:3 bulk

box 2, folder 4

Articles about Vietnamese refugees 2:4 bulk

box 2, folder 5

Orange Coast magazine 2:5 1990-03

General

Article about Lam's restaurant Vien Dong pages 113-119.

Series 4: Visual materials bulk

box 2, folder 6

Photos: Cam Ranh, Vietnam; Camp Asan, Guam; Florida; and Camp Pendleton 2:6 1975

box 2, folder 7

Photos: tennis tournament at Santa Ana High School 2:7 1982

box 2, folder 8

Photos: campaign headquarters 2:8 1990

box 2, folder 9

Campaign photos 2:9 1992

box 2, folder 10

Photos of Tony Lam being sworn in 2:10 1992

General

Lam's swearing in ceremony took place at the Huntington Beach Hilton Waterfront Hotel.

box 2, folder 11

Photos of re-election campaign fundraiser 2:11 1994

General

Re-election fundraising dinner took place at Grand Garden restaurant in Westminster.

box 2, folder 12

Re-election open house 2:12 1998-10-16

box 2, folder 13

Photos of Tony Lam with students at La Quinta High School 2:13 1990

box 2, folder 14

Various Tony Lam photos 2:14 bulk