

Marvel Hum Chong
Narrator

Sarah Mason
Interviewer

June 8, 1979
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Sarah Mason **-SM**
Marvel Hum Chong **-MC**

SM: I'm talking to Marvel Hum Chong in Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 8, 1979. This is an interview conducted under the auspices of the Minnesota Historical Society, and the interviewer is Sarah Mason. Would you want to start by giving us what background you know of your parents [unclear]?

MC: Well, let's see now. Of course, my father was Chinese and he came from the village of Bak Sui, which is, I believe, Taishan province. And he originally located in this country in Willmar, Minnesota.

SM: How did he pick Willmar? Do you have any idea?

MC: Well, I think when he came to this country it was to work on the railroad. And you see Willmar is a railroad transfer center.

SM: I see.

MC: And he probably saw a place to work. He eventually bought one of the hotels there and operated that. [The Glarum Hotel in Willmar, Minnesota] And so I think that's why he settled there.

SM: I see. He came specifically to work on the railroad in the West.

MC: Yes. They came . . .

SM: You don't know what year it was, do you?

MC: No, I don't know. But I know it's, you know, before 1900.

SM: Yes. Probably after the Civil War, at least.

MC: So, let's see . . . It would be . . . he came when he was about sixteen, and I think he was born in 1865. [This age mentioned does not add up for his year of arrival, but this is what Marvel says. I did find a Minnesota 1905 Census record for a "Bang Humm" in Willmar, from China, who was 43 years old. (Despite the different spelling, it seems possible that this is the same person as her father Bing Hum due to his residence in Willmar at that time, his nationality also being Chinese, and his age range would also fit.) So that would make him born in about 1862 or so. There is also a Sarah Humm in the 1905 Census in Willmar who was 31 years old at census time (although her nationality is listed as Swedish) so that may also fit.]

SM: 1865.

MC: So it would be 1870s . . . yes.

SM: That's when they would have just been completing, I guess, the railroad.

MC: Right.

SM: Yes. So maybe the railroad was completed and then he moved on towards the . . .

MC: Well, not . . . do you know what year the railroads were completed across the land?

SM: I think about 1870.

MC: Oh, I see.

SM: In the 1870s, at least.

MC: Yes.

SM: So that's probably when many Chinese moved on east to Minnesota and so on.

MC: I don't know, you know, how many came this far back.

SM: Yes. Right.

MC: But . . .

SM: Well, of course, they might not come right away. [Chuckles] After the . . .

MC: And I think that he met my mother here in the Twin Cities.

SM: I see.

MC: And she was from Canada.

SM: Oh.

MC: And was Irish. But she had been married to a Chinese before.

SM: Really.

MC: Who was by the name of Young. And he also worked on the railroad.

SM: Oh . . .

MC: Because he was substituting for another person and was killed in a railroad accident. And so my oldest brother was a half-brother.

SM: I see.

MC: And my father was a good friend of this Young.

SM: Oh, that's how it happened then.

MC: Yes. And then a lot of the Chinese helped her, you know, because the baby was small. And the railroad accident was so sudden that she was widowed just, you know . . .

SM: Well, could that have been in Montana then?

MC: No.

SM: No.

MC: This is in Hastings, Minnesota.

SM: In Hastings. Oh.

MC: Yes. Because his father, this Young is buried in Hastings cemetery, I'm sure.

SM: Oh. And he was a railroad worker though.

MC: Yes.

SM: On the tracks, do you . . .?

MC: I don't know what he did on the railroad.

SM: You don't know. I see.

MC: But I know my mother . . . I remember her telling us that he had substituted for another person and this accident happened.

SM: So he was buried in Hastings.

MC: He should be in the Hastings cemetery.

SM: Yes. And he was working on the railroad when he died then.

MC: Yes.

SM: In some form anyway. Well, that might [unclear].

MC: And then a few years later then my father married her.

SM: I see.

MC: But I don't know what year they were married.

SM: Would that be . . . somewhat within Chinese custom then to marry the wife of a close friend who was . . .? It would be more, I suppose, if it was a relative . . .

MC: Well, I really don't know.

SM: That's very interesting.

MC: He was very practical because he [chuckles] he wanted to know if she could sew!
[Laughter]

SM: Ah. That was a practical question. [Chuckles] What else did he want to know, do you know?

MC: No, not really. But because that was in Hastings now, and at that time Hastings was quite a ways from Saint Paul.

SM: Yes.

MC: Because I can remember going from Minneapolis to Hastings to visit Chinese families in Saint Paul and it was like an all day trip, you know, on the streetcar and what have you.

SM: Oh, you went from Hastings to . . .?

MC: No, we went from Minneapolis to Saint Paul to visit.

SM: Oh, yes.

MC: See, there was a . . . there were three families in Saint Paul that had a restaurant. There was . . . oh, Hum Su.

SM: Yes.

MC: That's the Hum family that's here.

SM: The other Hum family.

MC: And there was Moy Hee. He was a Moy.

SM: Yes.

MC: And Hum Gin.

SM: I see. These were the three families.

MC: Yes. And they all . . . the three of them owned the restaurant in Saint Paul.

SM: Owned one restaurant?

MC: One restaurant.

SM: Together. Okay.

MC: Now Hum Gin also had a Chinese food store.

SM: Oh, I see.

MC: And they all had wives.

SM: Chinese?

MC: Yes, all Chinese wives. Yes.

SM: They had brought them over then?

MC: They must have brought them over.

SM: I see.

MC: See, they all came over, I think, under merchant's papers. And then they could probably bring the wife.

SM: Oh, sure. Yes.

MC: Because, you see, at that time there was no Chinese immigration.

SM: Right.

MC: You couldn't come in.

SM: Right. Yes.

MC: Or you could come in if you had merchant papers.

SM: Yes. But the laborers couldn't bring anybody in.

MC: No. No.

SM: I see. So these were friends of your family?

MC: These were friends of my dad. But then they had not too many children among the three of them. Oh, Hum Su had a big family. That's the Hums that are here.

SM: Oh, yes.

MC: Let's see . . . Hum Gin adopted a Chinese boy.

SM: Oh.

MC: And let's see, Mrs. Moy Hee, she has some adopted children. She isn't living, but she had adopted children.

SM: Oh, I see. Would they adopt them from China?

MC: No. Mrs. Moy Hee's daughter is an American girl.

SM: I see. Yes.

MC: She's an American girl, but I think she married a Filipino.

SM: Oh, they adopted an American child.

MC: Yes. Yes.

SM: Oh, that's interesting.

MC: This was long after when we lost track of them and later on.

SM: That's interesting.

MC: And Mrs. Moy Hee stayed in Saint Paul. In fact, she had a home in White Bear.

SM: I see. She isn't still living then?

MC: No. No, she died quite a few years ago. Let's see . . .

SM: Did her husband die earlier than her?

MC: Yes. Yes, she was a widow for quite a few years before she died.

SM: I see. But he was living when they adopted the child?

MC: Yes. Yes.

SM: Yes, I see. And do you know much about your mother's past then?

MC: No. I know that she came from Canada. And she had . . . evidently her brothers and sisters settled in North Dakota.

SM: Oh . . .

MC: Because I went with her to visit in North Dakota.

SM: I see.

MC: In the northern part up near the Canadian border.

SM: I wonder if she could have met her husband there, in North Dakota, building the railroad?

MC: I don't think so, because I think she was . . .

SM: You think it was in Hastings.

MC: I think she was here working in the city.

SM: Yes. Hmmm, that's interesting. What did her parents do? They were immigrants or . . .?

MC: I have no idea. I don't know anything about my mother's . . .

SM: Yes. Did you see her family much when you grew up?

MC: No, I saw the . . . there were three brothers in Dunseith, North Dakota, and then she had one sister that lived in Hastings.

SM: Oh, she did have a sister here, too.

MC: Yes. And let's see, she had a sister that married . . . now see, they were Irish, so this sister married a Scandinavian . . . no, a Dane. And she lived in Canada someplace.

SM: I see.

MC: Because their names are Sorenson. And later on, her son contacted me, and in fact, he lived here for a while.

SM: Wow.

MC: But, you know, that's the American side of the family. [Chuckles]

SM: Oh yes, right.

MC: But none of them are living.

SM: Oh, I see.

MC: None of that family.

SM: I see. Well, when you were growing up then, I suppose you spoke English at home.

MC: Yes. That's why I don't speak much Chinese.

SM: Yes.

MC: I know the food, but I don't know how to speak . . .

SM: Oh, I see. Yes. Did you learn that just through working or being around . . . ?

MC: No, because my father used to tell us to bring like butter and bread or, you know, different things.

SM: Yes, I see. So he spoke some Chinese to you.

MC: Oh, he spoke a lot of . . .

SM: But, I mean . . .

MC: Well, yes. But he really didn't speak enough to us to learn. See, none of us speak Chinese.

SM: Yes. Well, that would be easy to understand since your mother didn't.

MC: Yes. Right.

SM: And so they must have had to speak English together.

MC: Right. Yes.

SM: But you did pick up a little.

MC: Yes. And I can . . . you know, I know when I meet some Chinese and they start talking about you because they . . .

SM: [Chuckles]

MC: They always . . . easy, they always go back to the father's name and where they come from in China. So you can always pick up the names. [Chuckles]

SM: Ah . . . and then you get the clue.

MC: And now I know they're trying to tell the other person, you know, who you are.

SM: I see. So you and Stanley and your family then speak English.

MC: Yes. And my daughter never learned Chinese either.

SM: You have one daughter?

MC: Right, yes.

SM: I see.

MC: And of course I was, you know, born here in Minneapolis.

SM: Oh, you were born here.

MC: Yes.

SM: Okay.

MC: I'm the only one of the whole family that was born in Minneapolis.

SM: Oh, I see. And you're the youngest, right?

MC: Yes.

SM: I see. Well, did your father . . .? I mean, you seem to identify with the Chinese community quite a bit. Did your father make an effort to bring this about or were you just with more Chinese people?

MC: No, I guess we just happened to stress the Chinese part of us, more or less.

SM: Was your family like a Chinese family, do you think?

MC: Not really. We were very American. But my father for his . . . oh, what should I say . . . era, was very modern thinking.

SM: Ah ha. I see.

MC: Now he's much more so than the other men of, you know, that we saw or got to know.

SM: More than the others here in the [Twin] Cities. I see.

MC: Yes, yes. Now, for instance, like having the students all come to the house, all of them.

SM: Oh, yes.

MC: Now like every Thanksgiving and every Christmas and every New Year's we had a great big Chinese dinner and all the Chinese students came.

SM: Oh, I see.

MC: We would have sometimes like forty.

SM: Oh!

MC: It was just like a home base for them, you see.

SM: Oh. For what dinner was it?

MC: All the American holidays.

SM: Oh, for the American holidays.

MC: Right.

SM: Like Thanksgiving . . .

MC: Right, yes. We always had all the students come for the dinner.

SM: Yes. And most of the Chinese families wouldn't have invited in all these strangers even if they were Chinese.

MC: I . . . I don't think so.

SM: Yes.

MC: Yes. They're not probably that outgoing. And like the Chinese students, when they would come here, they would have to learn to dance.

SM: Oh.

MC: So all our, you know, rugs in our family, [chuckles] in our house were taken up and everyone was taught.

SM: Oh, they would . . . your father would teach them?

MC: No, the girls would teach them. But I mean he would be home.

SM: Yes. So they would be American girls.

MC: Right. Right.

SM: I see. That's very interesting.

MC: In fact, we used to live on the streetcar line. We had a corner house, over Southeast, and well, now I guess it's called the Bryant Johnson car or bus line, and it used to go by the Great Northern Train Depot.

SM: Oh . . .

MC: And the students would get on from the Depot going Southeast to where they were going to be living. And the conductors would say, "You just stay on and I'll tell you which you want." [Chuckles] And then they'd stop on our street corner and say, "You want to go in that house on the corner!" And sometimes they weren't even coming to our house.

SM: [Laughter]

MC: But they got to know the fact that we had all these students all the time.

SM: That's really . . . the streetcar conductors would tell . . .

MC: Yes. Tell them, "Then you want . . . you're looking for that house."

SM: What street was that on?

MC: We were on 600 Eighth Street, right on the corner.

SM: Eighth Street.

MC: Yes.

SM: So this was like a haven for the students.

MC: Yes, it was really good.

SM: There were quite a few Chinese students then.

MC: Oh yes, the Chinese students.

SM: Sometimes as many as forty.

MC: Yes.

SM: That's really quite a lot.

MC: Yes. Well, of course, if they had friends visiting from other universities, you see . . .

SM: Oh, yes.

MC: Then they just felt free to bring whoever was there. [Chuckles]

SM: Well, that was very nice for you children, I imagine.

MC: Yes.

SM: Maybe that's part of why you identified with Chinese . . .

MC: Yes, I think so.

SM: Or maybe I'm putting words in your mouth.

MC: No . . .

SM: Did you identify with the Chinese?

MC: Yes, we did, we did. I'll tell you, because . . . if there was going to be any discrimination, you have to either pick one side or the other, you see.

SM: Oh, sure. Yes.

MC: And so we just leaned towards the Chinese.

SM: Yes. So it was partly due to discrimination against the Chinese?

MC: Well, I don't think that . . . you see . . .

SM: Or the possibility of it?

MC: Well, yes. See, in Minneapolis, you didn't have that. You didn't have it like the West Coast. West Coast had a lot of it.

SM: Right. It was much different than here.

MC: But here we didn't have that many Chinese, so there wasn't really . . . Oh, you . . . you get discrimination as far as renting and things, because I've had that happen to me.

SM: Yes. Right. Yes.

MC: But nothing like the Coast towns have.

SM: Did you ever get teased in school?

MC: Oh, yes. All the time.

SM: That's what many have said.

MC: Yes.

SM: With the Filipinos it seems as though the ones who were intermarried, those kids didn't get teased so much. And I don't know whether having an American mother made them maybe dress more like the other kids or what.

MC: Yes.

SM: But the others certainly got teased a lot.

MC: Oh, yes. Well, of course, see now again, we were, you know, a half and half mixture.

SM: Yes.

MC: But I had . . . my second oldest sister was . . . had the Irish . . . you know, she'd fight at the drop of a hat. [Chuckles] And she fought her way through all of grade school in every school.

SM: She was the . . . oh, the second oldest.

MC: Yes. But she was the fiery one, you know.

SM: Yes.

MC: Anybody called her a name, and boy, they were in . . .

SM: She'd fight back.

MC: Right. She would fight back.

SM: Yes. Did the rest of you not fight?

MC: No, I can't remember fighting, you know. But she was *always* having some kind of fight with some kid, you know.

SM: [Chuckles]

MC: And she was a fighter, too. She was very little and very petite, [chuckles] but . . .

SM: Did it make them stop?

MC: No . . .

SM: Which worked best? [Chuckles]

MC: I don't . . . I think that she proved to them that it wasn't worth their while to keep on teasing her [chuckles] because . . .

SM: Yes. Because maybe many Chinese children wouldn't fight.

MC: Oh no, most of them wouldn't. Now then, the next sister, she would do anything to avoid a fight, you see.

SM: Yes.

MC: This is just the characteristics that different children in the family take.

SM: Yes. Right. So the third sister didn't fight.

MC: The third sister is quite Chinese in her thinking and personality. Very passive.

SM: Is she still around?

MC: No. She isn't living. But . . .

SM: So some children were more Chinese than others in the family. That's interesting.

MC: Well, Chinese character.

SM: Right.

MC: Characteristics.

SM: Right, I don't mean they were any more Chinese . . .

MC: Although the one that was the fighter is the one that lived in China the longest.

SM: Is she the one that lived in Shanghai?

MC: Yes, and in fact, she died in China.

SM: Oh. Well, she certainly had a little of both.

MC: Once she went back . . . but she lived in . . .

SM: Oh, she died in China, you said.

MC: Yes, she died in Shanghai. But she lived in Hong Kong in the days when the bandits were quite bad.

SM: Oh.

MC: And she would . . . there were several incidents where, you know, you ride in separate rickshaws.

SM: Yes.

MC: And they carried a walking stick to whack the bandits if they approached you.

SM: Oh!

MC: And I know in one instance she wrote in her letter that they had engaged rickshaws. And hers had gone on, and she was wondering why her husband's rickshaw wasn't coming. And she had the walking stick. And they were bargaining with him for more money. And he wouldn't let his rickshaw man take leave.

SM: Oh . . .

MC: And so when she looked back to see why he wasn't coming, [chuckles] of course she summed up the situation and realized she had the walking stick. So she started on the outside of the coolie circle and whacked her way through the middle.

SM: [Laughter]

MC: And this is the type of person . . .

SM: This is the one that's a fighter.

MC: Right, yes. And then she got his rickshaw going and . . . but the other sister would never have done that. [Chuckles]

SM: She was a very interesting person.

MC: Right.

SM: Well, it does sound like your father was really outstanding in many ways.

MC: Yes.

SM: And being more modern.

MC: Yes. And another thing, you see, he was very interested in Christianity. He was Christian.

SM: Oh, he was.

MC: Yes. And he was interested in Christianity and what he . . .

SM: Before he came, you think? Or . . .

MC: Yes, before he came. Because his mother was real worried about him because he used to have these . . . he wanted to come to this country as a missionary, to be a missionary.

SM: Yes.

MC: And in the village, you see, this was not . . . she wanted to hush this all up because [chuckles] she thought he'd just bring some trouble on their heads.

SM: He wanted to be a missionary to America then?

MC: Yes. He wanted to come here.

SM: He really was ahead of his time, wasn't he?

MC: Yes. And he came here with this idea. And then he always wanted to go back to the village, you know, to carry these messages back.

SM: Oh.

MC: And the other thing that he . . .

SM: A Christian message.

MC: Right. And the other thing he would like to have been was a lawyer. Very interested in law and he read . . . you see, he could read English.

SM: Now how did that happen? Was it from missionaries he learned it?

MC: I don't know. I don't know where he learned to read, but he could read.

SM: Maybe he went to a mission school if he became a Christian.

MC: But he used to . . . his favorite pastime was to go and listen to the court hearings.

SM: Oh . . .

MC: Because he loved to go and hear . . . it didn't make any difference what it was, he would just go and follow the proceedings, you see.

SM: He'd go and listen.

MC: So it's too bad that he could never have gone into, you know, law.

SM: Yes, because he probably was very brilliant.

MC: And of course being one of the early Chinese, he was always called in, too.

SM: To interpret?

MC: Trans . . . interpret and translate.

SM: Translate. I see.

MC: Yes, he did a lot of that.

SM: Well, I suppose that made marriage to your mother a lot easier, is that he did know English, too.

MC: Yes.

SM: Because that would have been quite a barrier for most of the early Chinese. Hmmm. He really is a very outstanding . . .

MC: He was very, very modern as far . . . you know, because I know families that had children the same age as we did, and if the father was Chinese they had . . . they were . . . oh, they did everything the father told them to do, whether they wanted to or not. You know, I mean there was no . . . well, you did what the father told you.

SM: And that was it. [Chuckles]

MC: Right. Yes. But see, my father, you could . . . well, we could kid him, for one thing. And that's something that you don't do in the Chinese family. [Chuckles]

SM: Well, right. So he wasn't a real authoritative . . .

MC: He had a real good sense of humor. And he liked people and he got along well with people. In fact, when he had that hotel in Willmar, he learned to speak Swedish.

SM: Really? [Chuckles]

MC: Well, because the girls were all, you know, Swedish. And in order to have them . . . to understand them . . . they couldn't understand the Chinese, and their English wasn't so good, so [chuckles] then he learned to speak Swedish.

SM: He must have been very good at languages then, to learn so many.

MC: Well, I think he was quite a versatile person.

SM: That is amazing.

MC: Because later on, he was living with me when he passed away. And he had a heart condition, and I took him to a heart man who spoke Swedish. And of course when he walked in the office [chuckles] he greeted him in Swedish and this Dr. Johnson could never get over this older Chinese man coming in and speaking Swedish to him.

SM: Is that here in the Twin Cities? Oh, I bet he was surprised. Well, you have no idea why he came . . . oh, he came to work on the railroad.

MC: Yes, he was working on the railroad.

SM: So it was to make a living.

MC: Yes. But you know, you had to be adventuresome to come over here in that day and age anyway, you see.

SM: Oh, yes. Did he come with others from his village, do you think?

MC: That I don't know. I doubt it.

SM: Because I think there were recruiters that would go to certain areas like Taishan.

MC: Oh. Yes.

SM: Or once they had persuaded some to come, then they would go to the same area again, because then they'd say, "Well, some of your village friends are there."

MC: Right, right, right.

SM: Oh, I wish we knew a lot about that. I guess we don't.

MC: It's too bad he isn't living, because you could really . . . I mean he was . . .

SM: Oh, it would be wonderful.

MC: He would talk.

SM: Would he?

MC: Yes. He would talk. I mean, yes, he would talk.

SM: Well, he seemed to be in favor of assimilation.

MC: Very outgoing. Right.

SM: If he was helping these students learn to dance and so on . . .

MC: Yes.

SM: So he wanted you to be integrated into American society.

MC: Yes.

SM: I see. Well, so your family was really an American family.

MC: It was an American family.

SM: In some ways.

MC: Right.

SM: Were there any particular ways you think of that your father's influence made it similar to a Chinese family? Or any things that he thought were important? Like doing well in school or politeness or whatever other Chinese families find important.

MC: Well, I think . . . I think when you are even part Chinese, you inherit this . . . oh, just having inborn respect. You know what I mean?

SM: Yes. Respect for elders and so on.

MC: Right. Yes.

SM: Yes.

MC: I mean, I'm not aware of the fact that it was ever being particularly taught to us, but . . .

SM: Yes. You absorbed . . .

MC: Yes. You just . . .

SM: So your mother sort of went along with that then, too?

MC: Yes.

SM: And were they interested in what kind of work you would do as an adult or how you did at school?

MC: No . . .

SM: They didn't worry about that.

MC: Perfect freedom as far as . . . you were expected to do well in school. I mean, that was just something that was understood. I mean, there wasn't any, [chuckles] you know, ifs and ands about it. That was expected of you!

SM: [Chuckles] You did absorb that, too.

MC: Yes. [Chuckles] You produced the best.

SM: But he didn't try to mold you towards any particular goals as work?

MC: No.

SM: I see.

MC: Now what else are we going to cover?

SM: Let's see . . . oh. He was a Christian. Was your whole family Christian?

MC: Yes. Right.

SM: That was . . . I see.

MC: Presbyterians.

SM: Oh. Was that what he had been when he came or was he just Christian?

MC: I don't know what he was when he came, but I know . . .

SM: Your mother wasn't Catholic?

MC: No, she wasn't Catholic.

SM: Oh. She was from Northern Ireland then?

MC: Right. Yes.

SM: I see. Oh, and that would be Presbyterian, I think. Maybe . . . I don't know. Maybe that's the Scotch-Irish. [Chuckles] I see. So your mother was Protestant then.

MC: Yes.

SM: Was she Presbyterian [unclear]?

MC: I don't know what her religious leanings were.

SM: I see. Well, were you associated with Westminster Church here?

MC: Yes.

SM: I see.

MC: At the beginning, you know, they had that big Chinese Sunday School.

SM: Yes.

MC: Chinese-English speaking. They would have services in Chinese and also in English.

SM: I see. And so your father went to the . . .

MC: But prior to that was this mission that Baldwin had, you see.

SM: Oh, yes. Right. That was called whatsoever . . .

MC: Whosoever Will.

SM: Whosoever.

MC: Whosoever Will Mission. And of course when he had the first three Chinese students come there, then they kept inviting all the other students.

SM: Oh, so many students . . .

MC: So the students would go there.

SM: I see. That's interesting. There were services in both languages then.

MC: At Westminster.

SM: Yes. But the Chinese Sunday School was a particular class for Chinese?

MC: Yes, that was any age Chinese. They would have older, you know, Sunday School classes for the older men and women. Then they would have for the children.

SM: I see.

MC: And they would . . . I think even some years they put on the Christmas Story in Chinese. And they always . . . the Chinese Sunday School always had it, you know, when they have all these little angels and then they're all little Oriental kids! [Chuckles]

SM: Oh, that's sweet. So that was a pretty active kind of program.

MC: Oh, yes. And, well, I think Westminster still is pretty active.

SM: Yes, it is.

MC: I think they do still have . . .

SM: Right. Because now they have the Chinese classes.

MC: Right.

SM: Because now that it's switched, now there's a need to learn Chinese.

MC: Yes. But I mean isn't that separate? Do they still have a . . .? See, the Sunday School used to be on Sunday afternoons.

SM: Oh. Well, they had this minister, of course.

MC: Oh, Stephen Tsui. Right.

SM: Stephen Tsui. But he's . . . you said Tsui?

MC: Tsui, yes.

SM: Oh, at the church it said [unclear] . . . but it looks more like Tsui.

MC: T-S-U-I.

SM: Tsui, yes.

MC: He's in Taiwan now.

SM: He's left though, yes. Right.

MC: He's kind of like . . . what should I say . . . a recruiter, I think.

SM: Oh, I see.

MC: Stephen is. He travels quite a bit. He goes to England a lot and he comes through the United States quite often.

SM: Yes. He was here not so long ago.

MC: Because he's a good friend of Lolita's, you know, Stanley's . . . well, Howard Woo's wife. Or Howard Woo and Lolita.

SM: Oh, yes.

MC: He always contacts them when he's in Minneapolis.

SM: Oh, I see. I see. Howard Woo is an architect, is that correct?

MC: Well, yes, he has a degree. He's . . . he's retired.

SM: Oh, he's retired.

MC: Right. Yes.

SM: I got it out of that book which was written quite a long time ago. [Chuckles]

MC: Yes. Let's see, he has a degree in architecture and he's got another degree. What was the other one? [Pauses] Gee, I don't know. They're out on the West Coast now because, see, her mother just passed away.

SM: Oh, I see. They didn't move out there though?

MC: No. No, they've only been . . . well, her mother is Stanley's mother's sister.

SM: Oh . . .

MC: Yes, they're really like first cousins. But they are even closer than that, because Lolita's mother was widowed before Lolita was a year old.

SM: Oh.

MC: And Stanley's family had five boys.

SM: I see.

MC: And of course the belief is . . . to be ideal, you should have a boy to raise.

SM: Yes.

MC: So Stanley's mother gave one of her boys to Mrs. Young to have, too, so she'd have a boy to raise. And the boy was Stanley. So Lolita and Stanley are more like brother and sister. So when Mrs. Young died, you know, a week ago Wednesday . . .

SM: Oh, that's very recent.

MC: Then Stanley went . . . that's why the Woos aren't back yet.

SM: I see.

MC: They're visiting with the daughter out there.

SM: I see. And Stanley went out, too, then.

MC: Stanley went out, right. Yes.

SM: And so that was Mrs. Young. But that's no relation to the Young that your mother married. A Young . . .

MC: Oh no, no. No, no relation.

SM: I see. So Stanley and Lolita must be very close then. I see. Well, it would be nice to talk to them, too, sometime.

MC: How many years do you have to do all this? [Chuckles]

SM: Oh, I don't have that many. [Chuckles] I have until next fall.

MC: Oh, really?

SM: So you can see it's getting to the crisis point right now. [Chuckles]

MC: Oh yes, right. Well, let's see. Now what else do we . . . ?

SM: Let's see. Well, I guess you've talked some about your identity.

MC: Oh, yes.

SM: How would you describe your feeling about how you see yourself? As Chinese American? Or don't you give it much thought? [Chuckles]

MC: Well, I think I can . . . no, I think I consider myself more Chinese than Irish.

SM: You do.

MC: Of the two, of the combination. Because we've always leaned a little more towards the Oriental.

SM: Yes.

MC: And, you see, all the girls in our family married Chinese.

SM: Yes. That's right, so that would make . . . that shows that you [unclear] yes.

MC: Right. Yes.

SM: Yes. They were all girls in your family?

MC: No, there were two boys. One boy died before he married. And my brother married a Scandinavian.

SM: Oh.

MC: Because in that day and age there weren't a lot of Oriental girls.

SM: No, so it would be really hard to find . . .

MC: Yes. Now there's more of them.

SM: Yes.

MC: But we still don't have a lot of Oriental girls in this part of the country.

SM: Oh, there's still many less girls than men.

MC: Yes. Right.

SM: I see.

MC: That's why so many of these families, you see . . .

SM: So many of . . .

MC: They object to their children marrying Caucasians, but they don't really have much choice.

SM: Yes. Right.

MC: I mean they never get to know . . .

SM: Right. Some have said their parents would prefer them to marry other Asians if they couldn't find a Chinese, but even that's not so easy always.

MC: Yes. Right.

SM: But . . . well, somebody told me there are less Chinese coming since the fall of 1975. Is that true?

MC: You mean coming to this country?

SM: Into Minnesota.

MC: Oh, coming to Minnesota. You mean from other parts of the United States?

SM: I think they meant from China.

MC: Well, see, our quota is very low.

SM: Well, now since 1965 it's been opened up, you know, to . . . so there are no quotas anymore.

MC: Oh, no. No, Chinese have a quota.

SM: Well, each nation can't send more than twenty thousand, I guess. But . . .

MC: Yes, but the Chinese is . . . I don't know what the quota is, but it's very, very low. Because there's many, many people that would like to come here but they can't.

SM: Yes.

MC: And we have some cases where they're here going to school and they'd like to become citizens but they can't because the quota is filled, you see.

SM: Well, I suppose, because what . . .? They're coming from all over, like from Taiwan, Hong Kong, other overseas places. Well, but you don't think there's been any less number since the last four or five years?

MC: Well, that I really wouldn't know, because at one time Stanley used to work with Immigration quite a bit. But that was when they wanted all the Chinese to declare, you see.

SM: Now, why did they want that, I wonder?

MC: Well, there are so many that . . .

SM: It was mixed up, I know.

MC: No, there's many, many of the Chinese that came in.

SM: Using other names.

MC: Right. Okay, say illegally. And then when the Communists took over, they couldn't be deported, because they wouldn't deport them to a Communist country.

SM: Oh, I see.

MC: So then they wanted everybody to declare.

SM: I see. What year was that?

MC: Oh, this is back quite a few years, because . . . but you see, the families were afraid to do that.

SM: Yes, I can understand that.

MC: Because they've had to keep this hidden all these years, you see.

SM: That's really a burden to have to keep that hidden all the time.

MC: Right. And this was their one opportunity to declare and become eligible for citizenship.

SM: I see, and without any problem.

MC: Yes. That's when Stanley did a lot because, you see, he knew the families and encouraged them to declare.

SM: I see.

MC: And they would be reticent to do so. And then if he just explained, "Well, now this is your chance to come forth and say, you know, you choose to take on this." And a lot of them had been here many, many years and would like to be a citizen but they . . . being an Oriental, they couldn't.

SM: Right, right.

MC: So this was their chance to declare and become a citizen. That's why so many of the older ones are citizens, you see. They had a chance.

SM: I see. So many of them did declare.

MC: Yes.

SM: It must have been traumatic experience though, to . . . Well, it seems to me that's why many are reluctant to talk about their history and so on.

MC: Well, now there's . . .

SM: There's nothing to hide now.

MC: Nothing to hide. But see, many, many years . . .

SM: Yes, they're in the habit of it.

MC: Right, yes. They just don't want to talk about the fact that they were here illegally for all these years and then . . . you see.

SM: Yes, that's understandable. Sure. But we really aren't interested in that aspect anyway.

MC: But I don't know . . . no, I don't know how Ed Thom became a citizen.

SM: He said he was a citizen.

MC: Yes.

SM: But he didn't say when.

MC: But I don't know when he declared.

SM: Maybe it was during that period.

MC: Yes.

SM: Wait, was he . . .? He wasn't born here, was he?

MC: No, he was born in China.

SM: Oh, okay.

MC: Something that's unusual about Stanley's family is that his mother and her sister were born in Portland.

SM: That's what he told me, yes.

MC: That's unusual to have that generation, you know, American-born.

SM: But I think he said something about then when she married his father, she lost her citizenship.

MC: Oh, yes.

SM: That's really [unclear].

MC: Oh, that happened in our family.

SM: Oh . . .

MC: In my sister's family.

SM: When she married a Chinese?

MC: Yes. When my oldest sister married a Chinese, she thought she retained her citizenship.

SM: Well, I would think she would.

MC: No. And so she went to this small town, and she's serving on all these election boards. [Chuckles] And then my sister that went to France to live, she was married six months . . .

there's six months between the two marriages. One was married in January and one was married in June.

SM: Oh. Did she marry a French person then?

MC: No. No.

SM: Oh, it's a Chinese.

MC: Right, Chinese. And she had lost her citizenship.

SM: Well, that is crazy. Was her husband . . . her husband was a Chinese citizen then?

MC: Chinese, right. Yes.

SM: But when you marry . . . my sister married a French citizen and she didn't lose her [citizenship].

MC: Okay. She's a Caucasian though, see. There's a difference between your Orient . . .

SM: Oh, that is terrible.

MC: You look at all your books and even in order to . . . then they passed a law that if you'd lost your citizenship you could regain it by declaring. But if you were in a foreign country you couldn't, because they don't have immigration, you see. So you would have to come back to this country. And that's what my second sister did. She came back. And it's the same as applying for second papers.

SM: Oh . . .

MC: And so . . . and she said . . .

SM: This is the one that went to France?

MC: Right. And so she said to my oldest sister, and she says, "You know, you are not a citizen unless you declare your second papers!" [Chuckles] And she said, "Oh, that can't be." And she said, "Well . . ." And I went with my second sister to Saint Paul. And the immigration man said, "Oh, you know, you're wrong about this." And she said, "No, I'm not wrong about this." Because she was in France and was under Chinese passport. And during the war, World War II. And they said, "Well, why don't . . . well, how come you're not under an American passport?" And she said, "Because when I married a Chinese, I lost my citizenship."

SM: Oh!

MC: And they said, “Well, the best thing for you to do is to go back to the United States and get your citizenship.”

SM: Yes.

MC: And when we went there he said no, that she hadn’t lost it. And she said no . . .

SM: [Gasps]

MC: So he pulled out books and books and books. And sure enough, it’s you don’t lose your citizenship, except Asiatics. And the Asiatics is a small line underneath the big printing.

SM: Isn’t that terrible.

MC: And so he said, “You’re right. You will have to . . . it’s just like second papers.”

SM: So it isn’t quite as long.

MC: So you regained it. So then my other sister went to Duluth and got her second papers.

SM: I see. That is so incredible. As late as World War II. Good night. Well, I think it’s different now, hopefully. Well, let’s see . . .

MC: Well, there’s a lot of little things, you see, like that, that really . . .

SM: Yes, but even some of the immigration officers don’t know . . .

MC: Right, that relate . . . for instance, my nephew was president of student council. And they took all the student council to Canada. And my sister said . . .

SM: Which sister is that?

MC: This is the one that . . . my oldest sister.

SM: Oh, that lives in Hibbing.

MC: [Chuckles] In Hibbing. [This would be her sister May Hum, married to W.P. Pan. Their son is Harding Pan.]

SM: Yes.

MC: And Hibbing is not too far from the Canadian border, you see. So she said, “I’ll get his passport.” And my brother-in-law said, “Oh, he’s going with the student council from the school. You don’t need that.” So, sure enough, all the kids went in. Coming back, they picked out Harding and said, “Okay, well you have to produce your passport.”

SM: Really?

MC: And they held him there until Hibbing could get that passport up there.

SM: Oh!

MC: So you can always go out of the country, but it's coming back in!

SM: And when was this? Recently?

MC: This was . . . well, Harding's about fifty-five now. So it was 1920 . . . 1930?

SM: [Sighs]

MC: Well, we rented a houseboat out of International Falls two weeks ago. And you rent the houseboat and you . . . on Rainy Lake. You have to fish on Rainy Lake. And when we rented it, the fellow said, "Be sure you bring your passports." Now, they didn't ask us. We went up there and we went with Stan Hagen and a lot of other American people and . . .

SM: He said, be sure to bring your passports!?

MC: Be sure and bring your passports. And so we said, "Oh, okay, you have to have your passports." And all the rest of them said, "We go fishing every year in Canada, and we don't have a passport." And so . . .

SM: This is in Canada?

MC: Yes. But we went to Canada and we came back and they didn't ask us for our passports at all, but the man has a fleet of these boats. Now he must have had other Orientals where they've detained them.

SM: Oh, yes.

MC: So it's . . . so whenever we go out of the country, [chuckles] we always carry a passport.

SM: Isn't that something.

MC: Because you can get stuck. In fact, even in World War II, there were only two places on the United States border where Chinese could go through to Canada, even with papers. Only two ports of entry.

SM: Oh! Good night. One thing I wanted to ask you about was somebody told me just yesterday that there was an area along Hennepin Avenue between Fourth and Fifth.

MC: Fourth and Fifth . . .

SM: That back in the 1940s and 1950s, it sounds like the [unclear] . . . there was quite a concentration of Chinese businesses or something there. And I wasn't clear what . . . exactly what that [unclear].

MC: We used to have a small Chinatown but it wasn't on Hennepin, it was on Eighth Street and . . . let's see, Eighth Street and . . .

SM: Downtown Minneapolis?

MC: Yes.

SM: Oh, yes. By Glenwood, was it?

MC: No, no.

SM: No, not that one then.

MC: Glenwood had a . . . Yee Sing had a store there many, many years ago.

SM: Oh, he did?

MC: Yes, and it had some Chinese groceries, but lots of dishes and things.

SM: Oh.

MC: That was on Glenwood. Now there are two civic organizations that have . . . no, the Wong Club and the . . .

SM: Yes. Moy is it?

MC: No, Moys are across the street.

SM: They're different.

MC: But these are just headquarters.

SM: Oh. Yes.

MC: But what I'm talking about is . . .

SM: Eighth Street . . .

MC: Between Seventh and Eighth

[Recording Interruption]

MC: In fact, Hum Su's family lived there.

SM: Whose?

MC: Hum Su.

SM: Oh, yes.

MC: This one that has Allen and Fred and all these . . .

SM: Oh, yes. And what years would that be? The 1930s and 1940s?

MC: That whole block was down for renovation . . . oh, let's see now . . . Oh, it would be in the 1930s, yes.

SM: Oh.

MC: But I was trying to think of what year that they took those all down.

SM: Would it have gone back further than the 1930s?

MC: You mean when it was starting?

SM: Yes, or when [unclear].

MC: Oh yes, it was started. It was existing in 1930, I know.

SM: Yes. And then later this was torn down though, right?

MC: Yes. But it must have been in the 1940s when they tore it down.

SM: I see.

MC: And there used to be some Chinese stores, food stores there.

SM: Oh, I see.

MC: There used to be some . . . there used to be two Chinese restaurants on Hennepin, maybe that's what those people were thinking about.

SM: Maybe so.

MC: Because there used to be Kin Chu and oh, what's the other one . . .

SM: Sun Chu[sp?], or was that . . .?

MC: No, Sun Chu was on Fifteenth and Lake.

SM: Oh.

MC: Kin Chu and . . . hmmm.

SM: Were there a number of laundries at one time on Washington?

MC: Yes. Well, there were quite a few laundries all over Minneapolis.

SM: Right.

MC: Chicago Avenue had some and downtown had some. East Hennepin had some.

SM: There wasn't any particular concentration then, though?

MC: No. No.

SM: Yes, there were really a *lot* of them.

MC: Yes, and Glenwood had . . .

SM: Oh, Glenwood, too.

MC: Yes. And around . . . oh, in that Glenwood area like Hawthorne and all in there.

SM: I see.

MC: They had laundries. Because there's a Lee family here. Another Lee family that had quite a few kids in the family. And their father used to have a laundry over on . . . oh, Chestnut or something, one of those streets.

SM: Oh, yes. Oh, I should get your father's different businesses or . . .

MC: Well, my father worked . . . for a while he . . . well, he had several restaurants.

SM: Oh, he did?

MC: Well, we had the hotel.

SM: You did. First was the hotel in Willmar.

MC: Yes. And then there were . . .

SM: Does that have a name?

MC: I can't . . . I don't know the name of the hotel.

SM: Okay.

MC: And he had three restaurants that I know of in Minneapolis.

SM: Oh. Simultaneously or at different times?

MC: No. No, different times.

SM: Did he ever have a laundry or anything like that?

MC: Yes, I think he had a laundry. Let's see . . . early, early days I think he had a laundry in Northeast Minneapolis.

SM: Oh. Were there many Chinese businesses in the Northeast area?

MC: No, I don't think so. No. There weren't very many . . . well, there weren't a lot of Chinese, you know, in the early days.

SM: No. [Chuckles] That's true. Right. Well, I mean you lived in Southeast part of the time.

MC: Yes.

SM: So he had a variety of different businesses.

MC: Yes, and then he spent a lot of his time interpreting, too, in those days.

SM: Oh, and so he earned more with that.

MC: Well, I don't know whether he made much money interpreting, but . . .

SM: For the government, immigration status?

MC: Well, sometimes it would be for private people that for some reason or other were having, you know, court proceedings. And they would speak all Chinese, and so they would, you know, have no way of taking a statement from them.

SM: Right. Oh, sure.

MC: And so he would do that.

SM: Did he have a gift shop at one time? Or am I thinking of someone else?

MC: No. No. No, Stanley had the gift shop.

SM: Oh, Stanley and you. That's right.

MC: Yes. Yes.

SM: Yes. Well, he must have been a pretty enterprising guy.

MC: [Chuckles]

SM: To have all these different things. Well, I've probably worn you out entirely. Let's see if I've forgotten anything. Can you think of anything I should . . . oh! Ed worked here for a while, didn't he? The [unclear] Tea Room?

MC: No.

SM: I thought he said it was . . .

MC: Ed Thom?

SM: Yes. I thought he said he did. But it may have been really long ago.

MC: [Unclear] Tea Room . . .

SM: He said it was owned by Japanese.

MC: Oh, really?

SM: Which seems strange, because that's a Chinese name. Or it could have been bought by a Japanese from a Chinese, I suppose.

MC: But you mean early, early days?

SM: Yes.

MC: You mean Ed Thom in his early days?

SM: Yes. Well, it would be after 1928. Oh yes, I think when he came back to Minneapolis in 1928 he first worked . . .

MC: [Unclear] Tea Room . . . I don't even remember . . .

SM: [Chuckles] Maybe I misunderstood him. I'll ask him again next time I meet him.

MC: Let's see . . . Walter James had originally started the Nankin.

SM: Yes.

MC: It had a tea room and was in the . . . it was downstairs. You went down the steps from the street level.

SM: Oh.

MC: Oh, what in the heck did Walter call that? And it was a cafeteria.

SM: Oh, was it the Canton Grill?

MC: Canton Grill, right. Yes.

SM: Oh, yes. Ed Thom told me about that. Oh, yes.

MC: And that's the first restaurant I ever remember being Chinese. And then there was another one, let's see . . .

SM: He was saying that . . .

MC: There was another one, opened up later. And it was something like Su Chao[sp?], they called it. But it was a restaurant.

SM: Yes. I see. Ed was saying that in the early days they often served American food, too.

MC: Well, because the Chinese food wasn't so well known, you know.

SM: They didn't know about it, right. Oh, and also he said on Washington, where it was more of a working class neighborhood, they would be more apt to serve American food to the workers that would come in and weren't used to Chinese food, I guess.

MC: Oh, you mean the restaurants around Washington Avenue? They would serve American food?

SM: Yes.

MC: Yes, I can see that, because . . .

SM: The working class area.

MC: Right. No, I don't remember any Chinese restaurants on Washington Avenue.

SM: Oh.

MC: One of the oldest ones that I can remember when I was a kid was the Ohio. And that served American food.

SM: Oh. But it was owned by Chinese?

MC: Yes.

SM: I see.

MC: Because my dad had a part interest in that restaurant.

SM: Oh.

MC: I don't know that he was there very much, but . . .

SM: The Ohio.

MC: Right, the Ohio.

SM: That's interesting.

MC: That's when they had all white tiled floors and these . . . all these tables weighed a ton.
[Chuckles]

SM: Oh, I bet. Well, were there very many Chinese restaurants with American names like that?

MC: No, most of them had Chinese names.

SM: Most of them had Chinese names.

MC: Yes.

SM: Because I've been looking through the directories, city directories, to try to get an idea of the number. And of course I would have missed them if they had a name like that.

MC: And then a long . . . yes, a long time. Then they had Shanghai Low.

SM: Oh yes, Ed said that one was *very* famous.

MC: Right. Right. And that was upstairs.

SM: Oh, that was upstairs.

MC: Yes. But it had all, you know, like . . . did you know John's Place at all?

SM: No. I wish I did.

MC: You weren't . . . oh, okay. Well, they had all the carved, you know, archways and the marble topped tables, inlaid.

SM: Oh, I see. Who made those?

MC: They all came from China.

SM: Oh, they came from China.

MC: Oh, yes.

SM: They were . . . they were later in John's Place? Or they were similar?

MC: No, John's Place brought all theirs over.

SM: I see. But the Shanghai Low also had . . .?

MC: Yes.

SM: I see.

MC: And oh, gee, there's so many old ones . . . Now lower Hennepin about Fifth there used to be . . . Oh, Ed should remember those.

SM: Yes, he does. He's pretty sharp on all that.

MC: Because, see, he would be old enough to be working in those restaurants.

SM: Yes. Right.

MC: You know, I just remember them.

SM: I brought him some lists out of the city directory and he knew every one of them almost.

MC: Oh, yes. Yes.

SM: There were some mistakes, too. They put their laundries in the restaurant list or [chuckles] vice [versa].

MC: Oh, yes. Right.

SM: I'm sure the people making the directories were confused sometimes. But mostly they got it right, you know.

MC: We used to have quite a few laundries.

SM: Yes. Some years, just in Minneapolis, there were like seventy, seventy-two, seventy-three . . .

MC: Yes. You see, because you could always open up a laundry and make a living, you see.

SM: Right. It didn't take any capital.

MC: I mean, doing laundry was like . . . cooking Chinese. And I mean it's just [chuckles] an area . . .

SM: Very natural.

MC: Yes. [Chuckles] And well, and then in that day and age, you see, they didn't have American laundries.

SM: Right. So that . . . they didn't have the automatic . . .

MC: Because the German Chinese family in Hastings had . . .

SM: There was a German Chinese family?

MC: Oh, yes. There's a Hum family down there but they're German and Chinese.

SM: Oh. [Chuckles]

MC: None of that family is living, but the children of those are living. But then, of course, they all married Americans, you see, so then you lose the Chinese [unclear].

SM: Right. Well, were there quite a few Chinese in Hastings? You've mentioned Hastings a few times.

MC: Yes. There's . . . let's see, my mother's first husband must have been headquartered there. And then . . . I don't even know the father's name of the Hum family. I mean his first name, you know, the Chinese name.

SM: Of this German Chinese family?

MC: Yes, of the German Chinese family. But now, let's see, this is a funny connection here. The mother was German and she married a Chinese man by the name of Hum. But her brother who was a William [unclear], married my mother's sister, you see. That's how we know the families in Hastings.

SM: Oh . . . that is something!

MC: She . . . there was a Chinese that wanted to marry her.

SM: Oh, and he was . . . she's Irish then.

MC: She's Irish. But she married this German.

SM: Yes, I see.

MC: But his sister, who was German, married a Chinese. So the Hum family in Hastings are Chinese German.

SM: Wait a minute. Okay. The original Hums, the mother was German, the father was Chinese.

MC: Father was Chinese.

SM: Then her brother married an Irish. Your mother's sister.

MC: Right. Right. Yes.

SM: And then which one married a Chinese? Oh . . .

MC: Mrs. Hum married . . .

SM: The mother married a Chinese man.

MC: Yes. Yes, the German mother married a Chinese.

SM: I see.

MC: But a Chinese wanted to marry my mother's sister.

SM: Oh.

MC: And she couldn't see it at all.

SM: I see.

MC: But, you know, my mother always said if she'd married the Chinese fellow she would have had a much better life. [Chuckles]

SM: Better off. That's true. [Chuckles] I see. A Chinese wanted to marry your mother's sister, right.

MC: Yes. But she couldn't see the intermarriage part of it, you see.

SM: Yes.

MC: And yet she was always at our house. [Laughter]

SM: Ah ha.

MC: Our house was kind of a gathering [place]. Would you like a cup of tea?

SM: Oh, you don't have to go to trouble like that.

MC: No, it's right here.

SM: Oh, okay. Just a little then. But she was always at your house? [Chuckles]

MC: She used to . . . she loved to come to our house.

SM: [Chuckles]

MC: Because that German family in Hastings were very, very frugal.

SM: Oh . . .

MC: And of course they had a very hard time in the First World War.

SM: Oh, yes.

MC: Being German, you see. And Mrs. Hum, oh, my gosh. They really . . . you know that they put the Japanese in concentration camps, but the Germans were watched as closely in World War I.

SM: Yes. They were . . . right.

MC: And what I was going to say is they had a large steam laundry with the big mangles and they did all the hotel linen and things.

SM: Oh.

MC: So they had a Hum's Laundry down there, but it wasn't a hand laundry, it was a big laundry.

SM: Well, that's [unclear]. They did laundry for hotels then.

MC: Yes, I can remember going visiting and they had these big mangles running, you know, where they'd run the sheets through.

SM: Oh. Were there quite a few hotels in Hastings?

MC: I don't know. But I just remember . . .

SM: Hastings must be a pretty old town.

MC: Oh, it is an old town.

SM: Yes.

MC: If you'd ever go there and look at these buildings, you know, they're really, really old.

SM: I should go down there and see if they have any city directories that would list Chinese . . .

MC: You know, they had that spiral bridge, remember?

SM: Yes.

MC: That was quite a . . .

SM: I've heard of it anyway, yes.

MC: Right.

SM: Yes.

MC: But I think they did away with it.

SM: Yes. Now there's just the reputation left, I guess. [Chuckles]

MC: But yes, Hastings is an old town.

SM: I see. And you think there might have been a number of Chinese there then? I know Stillwater had a number of Chinese laundries before 1900 and then they kind of disappeared. And I think they came here to the Twin Cities, because that was older than the Twin Cities.

MC: Oh, I see.

SM: Before 1900 that was bigger than the Twin Cities.

MC: Yes, Stillwater's an old town, right.

SM: Yes. It might be somewhat similar in Hastings. I should look around there.

MC: I don't know of any . . .

SM: [Unclear].

MC: I don't remember of any Chinese families outside of the Hum family there. And yet . . .

SM: Oh, and then your mother's first husband.

MC: And yet my mother's first husband, you see.

SM: Yes.

MC: And why he was buried in Hastings, I don't know.

SM: Yes, that is interesting. And you think that's where they lived before he died?

MC: I'm sure that . . . I'm sure they lived there. Because her sister lived there. The two sisters lived there.

SM: Oh, yes.

MC: And I think that's why my aunt came to our house a lot.

SM: Oh.

MC: But I'm pretty sure that my mother's first husband is buried in Hastings.

SM: That's interesting, I should go look in the cemetery there. And that might give me a clue of whether any other Chinese lived there, too. Although in the early days, I suppose, many were sent back after they died, but not . . . I think Ed said not after the Revolution though, after 1911.

MC: No, no. And it just happened that with Mrs. Young dying a week ago, her husband, see, died when . . . I don't know what year he died, but . . . Oh, and she just kept every kind of a paper and receipt and Lolita has to go through all of this stuff. So when Stanley came back, he brought back a big box of stuff and a big suitcase full of pictures. Because when they all get together now, they're going to identify all these kids when they were little and stuff.

SM: That's wonderful.

MC: So we get the suitcase of pictures at our house.

SM: Don't throw anything away! [Chuckles]

MC: But in among the papers that Lo gave to Stanley, she said, "Here, now these pertain to your family." It's his mother's . . . when she was in the hospital and when his father died and all the sympathy cards and everything that . . . she's kept all that stuff in envelopes. And among that was a paper made out to Young, and it was 1925. And it was evidently when she was negotiating to send her husband's body back.

SM: Oh!

MC: She went to talk to this person who wrote the letter and it said that they would, you know, take care of the business that she had come to see them about. And it was something about the returning the bones to China. And so what we figured was that that was when she made arrangements to have her husband's body sent . . . well, let's see now. If I was born in 1910 and Lo was three years older, she would have been born in 1907.

SM: Yes.

MC: Yes, well see, 1925, if she had sent her husband's remains back in 1925 . . . well, he would have been buried in this country for quite a few years.

SM: Yes, right.

MC: See, Lolita is three years older than I am.

SM: Yes.

MC: So I was trying to figure dates, you know.

SM: Yes. Yes, right.

MC: And if she was . . .

SM: Did she send them then? Or was she just negotiating and didn't . . .?

MC: No, they're gone.

SM: They did send them.

MC: See, that's one thing that Lo wanted to know when she went to pick out the lot. Because see, Stanley's father was like . . . well, he was the first Chinese to Yakima. And he owned a lot of downtown Yakima. And this is . . .

SM: Oh, downtown.

MC: You know, when you had *boardwalks* and things, you know. And when his mother came to Yakima, they had a regular Chinese wedding with the firecrackers and she was coming from another town into this town.

SM: Oh.

MC: Oh, a lot of people in Yakima remember that. I mean he really was a pioneer in Yakima, Washington, you see.

SM: Well, yes, the first. Yes. So when he married, there was a big celebration?

MC: Yes, they had a Chinese . . . and then Lolita's mother married his business partner. And so she ended up living in Yakima. That's why those two were so close together.

SM: Oh, I see. I see.

MC: And then Mrs. Young's husband died. And then Chinese style, see, she was welcome to keep on there. And then Stanley's father would take care of any, you know, thing that she would need. So she lived in Yakima for a while, and then she went to Portland to take care of her parents.

SM: Oh, okay.

MC: And they lived in Portland. And so Lolita lived for a while in Yakima, Washington, too.

SM: I see.

MC: Because in the house Stan's dad bought her a piano because she wanted to play the piano. So the piano in the house was Lolita's. [Chuckles] All kinds of things in that house. Everybody left their stuff there.

SM: I see. Well, I think that's most of what I was going to ask you. It would be interesting to talk to your relatives from Hibbing sometime when they come down. But that will be a while, I guess.

MC: Oh, they should . . . if the building is ready, they're supposed to move in about in July.

SM: Oh. [Unclear].

MC: Now my sister can tell you about Willmar, because she would remember Willmar. See, she's my oldest sister.

SM: Oh yes, that would be good.

MC: In fact, sometime after she moves down here, I want to take her to Willmar.

SM: Oh, that's a good idea.

MC: Because one of the fellows that I went to high school with . . . see, I lived with her in Hibbing and finished high school in Hibbing.

SM: Oh.

MC: Because that was the end of our house, you see. I mean . . . and so she's eleven years older than I am. And so she . . . she's just like, well, you know, she took care of me when I was a kid.

SM: Yes.

MC: And one of the fellows that I went to high school with eventually settled in Willmar, and he's real . . .

SM: Is he Chinese?

MC: No, he's an American fellow, but he knew we lived in Willmar. So he's just been digging up everything to find out what he can find out about the Hum family. [Chuckles]

SM: Oh . . . would there be any pictures of the old hotel?

MC: I know she hasn't got any.

SM: Well, I should mention to you that in 1981 there's going to be a Chinese exhibit here that's the main . . . well, not the main exhibit. Part of the exhibit is coming from the Chinese Cultural Foundation, which is going all across the country, an exhibit of Asian Americans. And then locally, since it's coming here, too, we're going to have an Asian American exhibit of . . . we're going to extend it to Asians besides just Chinese because it's such a small group of you.

MC: Yes. Right. Where are you getting all these things?

SM: Well, the one in San Francisco started on its own and then a group of us here got wind of it [chuckles] and the MAAP organization, do you know that? It's a group of young, mainly second generation Asians. They're not only Chinese, but it stands for Minnesota Asian American Project.

MC: Mmmm.

SM: And the Minnesota Historical Society and something called the China Council. Are you familiar with that? We've been . . .

MC: Well, you know . . . CAAM [Chinese American Association of Minnesota].

SM: Oh, yes. CAAM is a Chinese organization.

MC: Because Stanley was the first president of CAAM.

SM: Oh, was he?

MC: Oh, yes.

SM: Ah.

MC: Well, the reason they wanted him to be that is because he knows the business people.

SM: Yes.

MC: And then, see, we had the store. And so the Chinese students . . . well, we had the store on Washington, so the student group. And then the professionals.

SM: Well, you [unclear] on Washington Avenue?

MC: Southeast.

SM: Oh, that's when you had the gift . . . ?

MC: No. No. No, that was just the grocery store.

SM: The grocery store.

MC: We thought that they were going to take this building, so we moved the store over there, but they moved so slowly that . . . [Chuckles]

SM: When was that?

MC: We moved there in 1967.

SM: I see.

MC: What is this? This is 1959 and we've been back here five years. We stayed there . . . 1975, 1974.

SM: From 1967 to . . .

MC: Yes.

SM: Oh, I see. Oh, but they come here, too, right? The students.

MC: Oh yes, they come here, too.

SM: [Unclear] students.

MC: But they thought Stanley would be the ideal one to start this group because he had contact with all the . . . see, we have business, we have student, we have professionals.

SM: Yes.

MC: The ones that have finished school and are working for like 3M and Control Data and all these, you see.

SM: They all come here for their groceries.

MC: Yes. But see the earlier ones, we knew when they were students before they finished.

SM: Sure.

MC: And now they've gone on to work for different companies, so they're . . . so we classify them as business, student and professional. [Chuckles] Just three classifications, you see.

SM: Yes. When did CAAM start then? Soon after Stanley came here?

MC: Oh no, CAAM is new.

SM: Oh . . .

MC: CAAM is . . .

SM: Did that start in about the 1960s or so?

MC: Oh, 1969 . . . it must have been 1968.

SM: Oh, I didn't realize it was so new.

MC: Because the first year we had CAAM was the year that the Aquatennial . . . they did all the seas of the world as their theme. And so when they came to the Oriental, we . . . that was the first year we had CAAM. Because they said, "Okay, Japan . . ." You see, Japan has so many big business companies and they just sent stuff over.

SM: Yes.

MC: And so on Nicollet they gave the [J.C.] Penney's block to Japan.

SM: Oh.

MC: And they gave between . . . let's see, that's . . . Fifth. Filipino, let's see, must have had Powers. Penney's had Japan. Well, anyway, then they gave Taiwan a block, they gave Hong Kong a block, and they gave Macau a block.

SM: My goodness.

MC: Well, we had three blocks on Nicollet where it was the same group who had to furnish all the stuff.

SM: [Chuckles]

MC: And, you know, we don't have that many exporters like Japan's exporters, and oh, all kinds of displays, you know, like Kikkoman and all these Japanese companies. And so we said, "Well, you know, the . . ." You have to . . . of course, Aquatennial makes the contacts with the foreign countries.

SM: Oh, I see.

MC: And gets things sent from their tourism group.

SM: Oh, yes.

MC: But we said, "Gee, there's three blocks on Nicollet that . . ."

SM: [Chuckles]

MC: [Chuckles] You've got to have something going besides to enter into either the parade or something.

SM: Yes.

MC: So of course the Japanese built a torii gate, which wasn't very big. And then they had the backing of all these Japanese companies. And so I said, "Well, you know, Chinese are not very . . . they do not belong to organizations. And you cannot get them to stay together very long."

SM: [Chuckles]

MC: And so Stanley said, "Okay." So he went down to what we call Chinatown, over here on Glenwood. And . . .

SM: Oh, you do refer to that as Chinatown?

MC: Well, this is the closest we have, you know. And he said okay. And then the . . . oh yes, the Koreans had a block. And they only had students here at that time; they weren't old enough to have people gone through school and working, you see.

SM: Yes.

MC: And so he went down to the organizations and he said, "Okay, now this is the proposition. The Japanese have all these companies and they're going to have a block and China has three blocks." And he said, "We're either going to make a good showing or we're not going to do anything." And then he said, "It's up to the people." And so they . . . oh and then the Chinese said, "Oh, you can't have the Japanese, you know, having all this Torii gate . . ."

SM: [Laughs]

MC: "And all this display and everything and all these giveaway things." They said, "Yes, we'll go behind you a hundred percent." So then we go to the professional group and he said, "Okay, now the business people want to do this, and the student groups."

SM: [Laughs]

MC: So we pulled somebody from every group and we said, "Okay, now you set up a program." And so we got the Lion Dance.

SM: Oh . . .

MC: We trained three teams for that Lion Dance because the parade is so long, you see. One team couldn't possibly work that line. We had to train three teams to do the lion. We had the lion dance in the parade and we got the drum corps, girls drum corps from San Francisco [Saint Mary's Chinese Girls Drum and Bell Corps] who are crack drum corps. They've won many, many prizes. And they have different . . .

SM: Are they Chinese?

MC: Different Chinese costumes, and one is all red and pretty, the next time it's black and yellow.

SM: My goodness.

MC: We brought them here. But you see, you have to arrange housing.

SM: Oh yes, that's a big job and expense.

MC: You have to feed them. And we had about two hundred kids in that drum corps.

SM: Oh, boy.

MC: And so, again, you say, “Okay, these kids are going to be here. You have to have a welcoming dinner for them.” And so everybody says, “Okay. We’ll do it.”

SM: That’s amazing.

MC: So, and you see, the business houses, they just say, “Well, you donate a thousand dollars.” And then all the restaurants, at least a hundred to two hundred, most of them five hundred. But the professionals, you see, they said . . . Well, we had this book. And then one of the professional fellows took over as treasurer and he said . . . and they call him the chow mein dealer, “The chow mein people donate a lot of money, don’t they?” And I said, “Sure.” And they said, “And look at the professionals.” Because we hadn’t.

SM: [Laughter]

MC: And he’s, “But yes, but they’re on a salary.” It doesn’t make any difference! The restaurant also has a budget, you see.

SM: Yes. [Chuckles]

MC: So I said, “Alright, now, that just goes to show you.”

SM: [Chuckles]

MC: The students, we didn’t ask them for money, but we asked them for their talents, because they wrote Chinese on chopsticks and on badges.

SM: Time and so forth. Oh yes, sure.

MC: And we just had Nicollet just *filled* with Chinese stuff. [Chuckles]

SM: Oh, that must have been an incredible, big thing.

MC: And after that, they all split up.

SM: Oh. They got together for this one thing.

MC: They got together for that and then they had a . . . you know, Miss Chinatown.

SM: Oh, yes.

MC: Well, one of the girls won, and she went to San Francisco and she won Miss Chinatown USA. Won, the Minneapolis girl.

SM: That's what I heard. This was in 1969 about?

MC: Yes, 1969.

SM: Well, how did that get organized? Miss Chinatown. Is that all over the country?

MC: Oh, that's San Francisco.

SM: Oh.

MC: Yes. And Albert, who has [unclear] out in San Francisco, Albert and his wife went all through the United States trying to get the Chinese communities interested in it, to have a candidate, you see.

SM: Oh, I see. I see.

MC: And Albert came here because I order all the vegetables from Albert every week! [Chuckles]

SM: Oh, he's a food distributor?

MC: He's a produce . . . yes, he's produce.

SM: What's his last name?

MC: Albert, Albert . . . Lum[sp?].

SM: Lum.

MC: Yes, he had [unclear] company in San Francisco.

SM: I see.

MC: And then Albert had never really traveled through all these little towns, you know, so he knew us here. "They're okay." He came and visited us. And then he was going to Milwaukee and . . . my nephew is in Milwaukee.

SM: Oh.

MC: Harding is . . . oh, he's half Chinese but he's . . . no, he's three-quarters Chinese.

SM: Yes. Yes.

MC: But he works for Ciba, which is . . . he's a district manager for . . . it's a Swiss pharmaceutical company. [Chuckles]

SM: Oh.

MC: Well, yes. His wife is Chinese, too.

SM: Ah.

MC: And so they do Chinese cooking and everything. But he's dealing with American people all the time, you know. So I said to Albert, "When you go down to Milwaukee . . ." And I called up Harding and I said, "Okay, Albert's coming to Milwaukee and you take him under your wing and, you know, see that he . . ."

SM: Harding lives in Milwaukee.

MC: Milwaukee. So that's the sister in Hibbing, her son.

SM: Oh, sure.

MC: So, oh, Harding is real good because, see, he has to set up all these meetings for these salespeople all the time. So he took Albert all over and did whatever he wanted to do, and he wanted to contact all the Chinese and get Milwaukee to have a Miss Chinatown candidate and all this, you know. And he must have really treated Albert well, because Albert said, "Oh, he is a fine young man." Everyone's always saying, "How's Harding doing?" It's the only time he ever saw him, you know.

SM: Oh, so Minneapolis had a contest then.

MC: Yes, we had a contest.

SM: I see. And didn't she win for the national or something?

MC: Yes. She won. She was Miss Chinatown USA. Shen, her name was Shen, she was from Taiwan.

SM: Oh, she was a student?

MC: No, her family lived here, yes.

SM: She lives here.

MC: Yes. They've left since. Now I don't know where they went. Linda. Linda Shen.

SM: I see.

MC: But there was . . . I don't know what the thing was about. Somebody else . . . Helen Fong's sister. Oh, okay. She was Miss Chinatown Minneapolis. And she won Miss Chinatown USA, so the runner up thought she should be Miss Chinatown Minneapolis.

SM: Oh . . .

MC: We said, "Well, no." She won both of the titles, you know. So there was a big division there.

SM: Yes. So the runner up was Helen's sister? Was the runner up related to . . . ?

MC: Helen Fong's sister.

SM: Oh.

MC: So they said, "Well no, that's not right. The runner up shouldn't be, you know, Miss Chinatown Minneapolis. Because she didn't win it."

SM: Oh, I heard there was a big split.

MC: Yes. Right. A big split. And then the Chinese business . . . now like these are all restaurants, mostly. They started the Chinese Chamber of Commerce.

SM: Oh, so that was started *after* CAAM then.

MC: Yes.

SM: Oh, so they're both really recent.

MC: [Chuckles] [Unclear] well, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce . . .

SM: That's a national.

MC: Yes, that national. It was only Minneapolis that didn't have [unclear].

SM: [Laughter]

MC: So then they're going to . . .

SM: That started after this?

MC: Right. The Chinese Chamber of Commerce must have started about 1972 or 1973.

SM: Oh, I see. I see, but they're both still going, right?

MC: Yes, they're both still going.

SM: And I heard that after World War II there was an organization called Chinese American Club.

MC: Chinese American Association . . . well, that's CAAM.

SM: Oh. I thought . . . there was something that didn't seem to last too long, and it was to teach English to G.I. brides or something.

MC: Oh . . . oh no, that was . . . that was more or less Walter James, the one who started Nankin. Walter wanted to . . . he thought we should have an association with different levels of interest for different ages. And at that time there were a lot of what we referred to as the G.I. brides.

SM: Yes.

MC: So we had a Chinese New Year's. And the Nankin was closed on Sunday and we had it on Sunday. And Walter, you know, opened the Nankin for it.

SM: I see.

MC: And we made all these Chinese tea cakes because we thought that the women from China could teach and would feel part of the organization.

SM: Oh.

MC: So they came down and then showed everybody else how to do these things. And we made all these cakes in the basement of the Nankin. They have a big bakery, you know, down there. And then everybody came. And so we said, "Well, what are we going to eat?" So Walter said, "Well, we'll have the restaurant. And we'll fry chicken, we'll have this . . ." And so he said, "Well, let's make *juk* [thin rice dish]." You know what *juk* is? [Chuckles]

SM: Oh, yes!

MC: Well, *juk* is a good thing to have because, you know, you can have people come all from the noontime until night.

SM: Yes, just keep it hot. Yes.

MC: And have all this stuff cut up that they want to put on top of their *juk*.

SM: I love *juk*.

MC: So do I. “So what do you think?” We . . . [chuckles] and we all decided that juk was real good. [Chuckles] And the older Chinese said, “You don’t feed anybody juk on New Year’s! Juk is made out of, you know, what you’ve got at home and that’s [unclear].”

SM: [Laughing] We always had it when we were *sick*. [Laughing] Because it’s very good for your stomach.

MC: “You can’t have that on Chinese New Year’s . . .”

SM: [Laughter]

MC: And then he said, “Now what are we going to do?” Well, all the younger generation said, “Yes, that’s good,” because they all liked it. And the older ones said, “That’s a *terrible* thing to offer.” [Chuckles]

SM: [Laughter]

MC: But anyway, we said, “Well, what would you think that we should [unclear]?” [Chuckles] Of course, they wanted all the Chinese tea cakes.

SM: They wanted a real big feast!

MC: You see, this is what you run up against in the tradition.

SM: Yes. [Laughing] I can just see them saying, “Don’t give anyone that [unclear].”

MC: And so we said, “Well, what else are you going to have?” And so then they decided, well, it was pretty hard to have a lot of stuff that was really Chinese. Of course, the chicken and all that was food for them to eat. But . . . so that’s what *that* was. [Laughs] And we used to have a Christmas party and Chin was the Santa Claus [unclear]. [Chuckles]

SM: Oh, he was?

MC: All American Santa Claus with this Chinese face. That’s the funniest thing you ever saw. [Laughs]

SM: That’s Howard Chin?

MC: Howard Chin was our Santa Claus, because he was a big fellow, you know.

SM: Oh.

MC: And see, the third floor of the old Nankin had a big hall. It used to be a hotel. And it had a big hall where we could have programs and they built a stage.

SM: I see.

MC: And then a lot of the cooks lived there, see, because it was like a hotel with a hallway and the rooms off of it.

SM: Oh, so there were living quarters [unclear] as well.

MC: Yes, there were living quarters up there. And then we had these two great big rooms for club rooms.

SM: I see.

MC: And Walter donated all that because he just felt that the community should have something. Oh yes, we worked hard on that thing. But you know, it's hard to get Chinese to stay together, unless you have them, you know, really nailed down to a job.

SM: [Chuckles]

MC: But we had a lot of stuff. We *did* have a lot of stuff. We had a young married group and they played bridge. And we had a good stereo up there and the kids could dance. And then we had the kids that were in high school. Oh, my gosh, we had sleigh rides, we had [chuckles] all kinds of stuff.

SM: Oh. Walter James was really interested in doing this.

MC: Yes. Yes, he was very civic-minded.

SM: I see.

MC: He was a wonderful Rotary.

SM: Oh.

MC: He had . . . any Rotarians that had a birthday could come to the Nankin and have a very special dinner.

SM: Really? He belonged to the Rotary.

MC: Yes. And he had special birthday cards, Chinese birthday cards he sent to each one. Yes, he really did a lot. Walter did a lot for the Chinese.

SM: Well, he was active in the Rotary Club then.

MC: Yes, very active in Rotary. In fact, when he retired and was getting older, he wanted . . . he came and talked to Stanley and wanted to know if Stanley would take his place in Rotary.

SM: Oh . . .

MC: Because he . . . I said, “Well, at least it’s a compliment. Walter felt as though you were business-like.” You see, Walter was a very good businessman.

SM: Yes. I see.

MC: Which many Chinese are not. They can work and everything, but they’re not too good at business.

SM: Well, judging from the number of businesses in the Twin Cities, they certainly . . .

MC: Well, they can run a small business. But, you know, to really be sharp . . .

SM: Yes, that’s true.

MC: And that’s why the Nankin, you know, was as well-established. And Walter was . . . and of course with the other Canton Grill, you know, my gosh. I was a little kid when that Canton Grill was going on.

SM: That was real successful too then?

MC: Yes. I can remember when Nankin, you know, had an orchestra and dancing.

SM: Oh, my goodness. Well, it’s still pretty fancy. [Chuckles]

MC: Yes, but in those days, the Chinese restaurants, the big ones were kind of like nightclubs. Where we didn’t have nightclubs then, they had, you know, the restaurants. The cafés had orchestras and . . .

SM: Oh, the restaurants tended more to be that way in early days.

MC: Yes, they were pretty big. Like Golden Pheasant. Golden Pheasant and the Nankin and then the one on Fifth Street, they had an orchestra and a dance floor. The Pheasant even had an upstairs. And they were upstairs to begin with, but they had a second floor that had a dance floor, too. They used to do tremendous business, when I think of it.

SM: Good night, yes.

MC: You know, a tremendous nightclubbing business. You know, after the dinner hour, then . . . and like New Year’s Eve they used to be just packed.

SM: Oh.

MC: I can remember my sister was a good friend of Walter's sisters. They were the same age group. And the New Year's at Nankin, they'd always ask my sister if she would help them out in the cashiering. And it was Prohibition and people would get *so* drunk. You know what? They would take them out of the kitchen and lay them in the alley of the old Nankin to revive them. And it was cold! All the evening gowns and the tuxedos and everything. And when they'd wake up, then they'd come back in. [Laughter] And you know, we always had wine and liquor in our house, but none of the kids ever drank much. Well, kids, you know, students in those days, they didn't . . .

SM: No.

MC: They're not like the kids now.

SM: I know, but now it starts so young.

MC: And of course we had all these Chinese students who had so much Chinese background, you know, that why . . . just to come over as a student, they would *never* think of drinking a beer or anything. But I know my sister was working that and she said, "You have *no* idea what American people are like on New Year's Eve." [Laughing] She said, "*These women* are just . . . they're just laid out. You know, really passed out."

SM: [Laughs] Your sister said that to you?

MC: Yes. "It was just a revelation," she said. "Honestly, the things you see!"

SM: [Laughter]

MC: She used to always help Selma.

SM: [Chuckles] Well, so . . . when Chinese have a celebration like their New Year's and so on, they don't drink a lot then.

MC: No, they have . . . at banquets they will have liquor. And it's *strong*. Well, you should know some of the . . .

SM: Yes.

MC: You know, like [unclear] and that rose liquor.

SM: Yes, it is strong.

MC: It's very strong. But they drink with their meal and in small cups, you see.

SM: Yes.

MC: Well, I don't think any country drinks . . . any country drinks like this United States drinks, where they just . . . *drink*, you know.

SM: Yes, just for drinking's sake.

MC: Yes. Now like sometimes you have a business, like these brokerage houses will have a seminar. And sometimes they have a free bar. These people just come and they drink like it's going out of style!

SM: Yes. I know, it's like that's what they came for.

MC: Yes.

SM: Yes. It's a problem.

MC: And when we went on that trip to the Orient, the . . . oh gee, this pen's . . .

SM: Oh . . .

MC: Oohhh . . . all over me.

SM: Oh, no!

MC: Yes, the top came off.

SM: Is it the kind that will wash off?

MC: Well, I think I can get it out with wash and wear.

SM: Oh, maybe you want to put something on it now?

MC: No. This . . . oh, these aprons really get banged around.

SM: That's too bad it got on your [unclear].

MC: But anyway, what was I going to say?

SM: On the trip to China . . . or to the . . .

MC: Oh, when all the Oriental airlines have free cocktails.

SM: Yes.

MC: These American people thought that was the most wonderful service in the world. And I had elderly widows, you know, very . . . from good families here. I know the families. They

were, you know, people in the grain business. And I just couldn't believe it! They said, "Oh, this is just wonderful." They'd just drink one cocktail after another because it was free!

SM: These were older women?

MC: Yes! That's just . . . it's just amazing.

SM: It is. [Chuckles] Drank one after another.

MC: And they said, "Believe me, the American airlines have a lot to learn." [Laughs] And I thought to myself, they're smart if they stay out of this line of business!

SM: [Laughs] Yes, they do drink much too much in this country.

MC: Yes. And it's kind of silly drinking, you know. They drink . . . they don't . . . a lot of people don't enjoy the taste of it.

SM: [Laughs] I know.

MC: I mean, why do you sit and drink something that is obnoxious to you just to be drinking?

SM: Numb yourself to the situation, I suppose.

MC: Well, now like we run into different business people who will invite us out to lunch. And they'll say, "Do you want a cocktail?" And I'll say, "No." And they think that you're kind of funny because you don't have a cocktail.

SM: Yes, and that's lunchtime. Think of what it's like by night time!

MC: And when we were in the food business, we would have, you know, these different brokers that would handle our product. And getting to know them and then their wives. And they said, "Yes, this is an occupational hazard." Because these fellows have to take their principals, you know, people that are using them for brokerage, out.

SM: Oh . . .

MC: And they always have to have a cocktail or two. And then they get in the habit, you see, at lunchtime and have one at dinnertime, and they're expense paid. And this one woman said, "Well, we went on vacation," she said, "And [unclear] leaves a twenty dollar tip." And she said, "You must be crazy!" You know, the bill wasn't even half that. And this isn't in the day and age of fifteen percent, this is the tip ten percent age. And she said, "He just gets used to leaving this money. It belongs to the company. But," she said, "We were traveling on *our* money!" and she said, "I wasn't about to leave a twenty dollar tip on the table."

SM: That's quite a lot, isn't it?

MC: Yes. And she said they just . . .

Asians in Minnesota Oral History Project
Minnesota Historical Society