Robert Yu Narrator

Joyce Yu Interviewer

February, 1979 Minneapolis, Minnesota

Joyce Yu Robert Yu	-JY -RY
JY: This is an interviyou born?	ew with Robert Yu in Minneapolis by his daughter, Joyce. Dad, where were
RY: Fuzhou.	The capitol of?
JY: China.	, His coc.
RY: China.	
JY: Fuzhou is what?	The capitol of?
RY: Of Fujian.	coto cició
JY: Province, right?	Ces Hills
RY: Right.	Will, Ofto
JY: How old are you	now?
RY: Sixty-four.	
JY: Okay. How many	y people are there in our family?
RY: Now or then?	
JY: Then.	
RY: Two.	
JY: Who?	

RY: Mother and I.

JY: And you both started out in China then?

RY: Yes.

JY: Okay. What year did you come to the United States—first come to the United States?

RY: 1941, I guess.

JY: How many members were there in . . .? I guess before you said there was you and Mom. But before you were married, how many people were in your household? I mean, brothers and sisters and stuff. OCIETA

RY: Twenty, thirty.

JY: Who were they all? Twenty, thirty?!

RY: Mother, father, grandmother. [Pauses] Father's second wife.

JY: How many brothers and sisters were there?

RY: Five, six, seven.

JY: And then . . . what's the other thirty? I mean, thirty people; that doesn't make thirty.

RY: Oh. Oh, that's about it. Maybe thirty is wrong, [unclear] that many, at least.

JY: And then all the servants

RY: Yes, all the servants

JY: Okay. What did my grandfather, your father do in China? What was his occupation?

RY: Postmaster general

JY: So he had a lot of servants and other people in the same household?

RY: Yes.

JY: Okay. When did you and mom get married?

RY: 1941.

JY: Okay. But at that time then you only took one wife?

RY: Right.

JY: But your father had several wives.

RY: Three wives.

JY: Did all three wives live in the same house?

RY: Two wives lived in the same household.

JY: Where did the third one live?

RY: One of them died.

JY: Oh. So all those children were your brothers and sisters also?

RY: No. My mother had two boys and one girl. And my second mother had one boy, two girls. My father's third wife had four . . . four girls.

JY: Which wife was your mother?

RY: Number one.

JY: Okay. So you were . . . were your brothers and sisters then considered the main family?

RY: Yes. Everybody's no different. All the children are the same.

JY: But in inheritance then, would you get more than the other kids? Were you the . . . you were the oldest son?

RY: I think, in our tradition, if we are in Fuzhou, probably the older son will get double inheritance. In inheritance, get double share. Old tradition. Number one son gets double. The rest of them would get their share, too. No matter . . . no matter which mother they are of then.

JY: So our grandmother, was she the matriarch of the family? Did she make the decisions then?

RY: No.

JY: Or did the other wives also?

RY: Nobody made any decisions. The father made all the decisions.

JY: Oh, okay. When did you . . .? Then you got married to Mom in 1941?

RY: Right.

JY: Okay. Was this an arranged marriage?

RY: No. No, we went to the same school, same college.

JY: Okay. And then how did you decide to come to the United States? Or why did you decide to come to the United States?

RY: It is understood once you come to the United States you will have a much better position when you return. My father saved the money for me when I was . . . even when I was in high school he saved a few thousand dollars for that purpose. He never used that money. Even though he needed [it], he always saved that couple thousand dollars in the bank, in U.S. dollars. He always saved that three or four thousand dollars, four or five thousand dollars in United States money in some bank in . . . outside the country.

JY: Oh. And then you got married to Mom. And then was it unusual to have both college graduates? Of parents, you know, both of you [unclear].

RY: Yes. Yes, I would say so. Yes. But of course, somebody's got to get married, all the girls graduate from college, they have to get married.

JY: Yes. And then when you came to the . . . how did you decide to go to the U [University of Minnesota]? So you and Mom together decided, because you were married already, you decided together to come to the U.S.?

RY: That's right. The grandpa says so. Grandpa has money, safe for *me*. But then we got married, so Grandpa decided, might as well send both of them to United States.

JY: Yes. What about Mom's grandpa? Did he send her too then?

RY: No.

JY: He didn't want her to go?

RY: He doesn't care because the girl was married and she has . . . her real mother is not living. Her real mother died when she was about one year old.

JY: Yes. Okay. So both of you came to America for what purpose?

RY: For going to school.

JY: Okay. And how did you pick Minneapolis-Saint Paul area?

RY: Because I came here as a visitor, on visiting passport, but the intention is to go to school. And I have no previous arrangement with any school. When we landed in Seattle I met a friend.

He went to . . . he graduated from Wisconsin. He suggested that we could . . . he could travel with me to Minneapolis and then apply to school there.

JY: Yes. And this was for graduate school?

RY: Yes.

JY: Okay. So you already had went to college in China.

RY: Right.

JY: What college did you graduate from in China?

RY: University, a university.

JY: What's the name of it?

RY: Nanking. University of Nanking.

orypriolec JY: Okay. And then when you arrived in Seattle . . . how did you get to Seattle?

RY: Take the boat.

JY: Well, can you describe the boat ride?

RY: Oh, because we . . . we have money, so we ride on the tourist cross. There are two in each cabin. We are served wonderful food, even though we are not accustomed to the American food.

JY: Yes.

RY: And occasionally the boat trip takes three weeks from Hong Kong to Columbia, Victoria... . oh, what's that? Vancouver, It takes three weeks. So the journey is long. And they served wonderful food on the boat, on the ship. And we are not getting used to the food, so every week or so the usher . . . is that right?

JY: Usher?

RY: Usher gave us real good Chinese food. And then all the Chinese students are gathered together. We sit in the same table, usually four to six in one table.

JY: These all must have been fairly well-to-do students then.

RY: Oh, yes. Very well.

JY: Okay. And then you and Mom came and then you arrived in Seattle.

RY: Yes.

JY: How long did you stay in Seattle?

RY: Two days.

JY: Okay. Did you have any trouble with your visas or anything like that?

RY: We came in as visitors, therefore, no trouble.

JY: Okay. Can you describe what Seattle . . . what were your first impressions when you came to Seattle?

RY: As I said, we were on the boat for three weeks. We ate American food all the time. We arrived in late afternoon, September. As soon as we can get off board, we see the Chinese restaurant saying, "Chow mein." We are so happy. Now we are going to have a real Chinese-style meal. But there is one boy from Wisconsin. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin. So he told us, "This is not real chow mein." He said, "It is American chow mein [chuckles] and you will not enjoy eating it!" So we did not eat the chow mein. But anyway, we went to a Chinese restaurant, so we eat [unclear – sounds like it is maybe lo mein?] instead. And then we went to a hotel and we are happy, very happy that we came here safely, and no trouble at all.

JY: Yes.

RY: No trouble with the immigration office because they didn't ask very much. We got through the customs and immigration office without much hassle.

JY: What year did you come to the U.S.?

RY: 1941, I think.

JY: Okay. Had you heard stories that other Chinese were having troubles or anything?

RY: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

JY: Like what?

RY: Like they will not let you land. They put you in some immigration compound, ask lots of questions. We were afraid they could detain us, too, but they did not.

JY: Yes. Okay. And then you stayed in a hotel. And then from the hotel, is that where you decided to go from next? Did you have anyone meet you or did you have any plans?

RY: No, nobody meet us. Just we have six Chinese people on the ship. There are other the four Chinese students who came with us, so we lived in the same hotel, six of us. And the next day we went out to see the town.

JY: So you had no plans to come to Minneapolis? You just ended up here?

RY: Right. [Chuckles]

JY: And then so you and your friend and Mom came to Minneapolis.

RY: Right.

JY: How did you get from Seattle to Minneapolis?

RY: By train.

JY: Okay. What was your impression of that train ride? That must have been beautiful.

RY: No.

JY: Oh.

RY: We . . . as I can remember, the train take a whole day. We didn't see anything, we just stayed on the train and got to Minneapolis. And then went to the Minnesota Hotel, which is no longer existing right now. It is the site of Washington Square.

JY: Where is Washington Square?

RY: That is the site now.

JY: What's Washington Square?

RY: That's it. That's a new building called Washington Square, it's a building now.

JY: Oh.

RY: It's a big building now called Washington Square. That used to be the Minnesota Hotel. We stayed there a couple days. And then I applied to the University of Minnesota. They accepted me as a graduate student in economics, department of economics. And then the next day we met Y.S. Jiang[sp?], who is my classmate. Then he takes care of me from there in school.

JY: Yes. When you first came, did you intend to stay permanently?

RY: No. Just go to school.

JY: Yes. Did Mom go to school also?

RY: No, because the transportation cost us over a thousand dollars. We only have three thousand dollars with us after we get here. Therefore, we have to preserve the fund so one of us can go to school. Mommy did not go to school at all.

JY: Yes. Did she get a job then?

RY: No. At that time, we cannot work, and no intention to get a job.

JY: How did you think you were going to support yourselves?

RY: We carried three thousand dollars. We had three thousand dollars with us, or more, I forgot it may be . . . not much more than three or four thousand dollars cash. We put in the bank, First National Bank.

JY: Yes.

RY: Y.S. went with me to deposit the money in the bank.

JY: What were your first impressions of America, I mean, or Minneapolis?

RY: Nothing unusual, because the school is the same as the University of Nanking. Nanking, at that time we register, the register procedure is the same as in Nanking University. They have a mailbox, each of us assigned a mailbox—which you do not have now—which is exactly same as University of Nanking. We had a mailbox in University of Nanking. The classes are almost set up same way as in University of Nanking. So the school is practically the same. And I grew up in a big city, so Minneapolis is no bigger than the city of Shanghai, and . . . makes very, very, very little difference to us.

And then all the Chinese get together. And then there are a few Americans who are very nice to the Chinese students. They take care of us, you know, give parties, weekly gatherings. At that time, the University of Minnesota probably has only about less than twenty Chinese students from China. Less than ten of them study in main campus, and more ten of them study at the farm campus [University of Minnesota's Saint Paul campus]. So it's not a strange place at all, it's very, very . . . we get quite used to it. So no different at all from the way I had been living.

JY: Then both you and Mom spoke English?

RY: Yes.

JY: Yes. But what were some . . . how did you get your first apartment and a place to live?

RY: Most of the Chinese students lived in Southeast, near Fifteenth Avenue Southeast, so we just find a rooming house, live in there. Y.S. occupied downstairs, we occupied upstairs. That's why Y.S. is so close to me.

JY: Yes. How long were you here? I mean, how long did you go to school then? Describe what it was like to go to school.

RY: I wasn't a very good student to start with. [Chuckles] Therefore, the first year, I wasn't . . . the first quarter I was taking for granted that this school is the same as the school in China where I graduated. And I never studied very hard, but I always got passed. So the first semester I took four courses in economics. And I never studied too hard, but it's harder, much harder than I used to study. And the school is on the quarter system, which is real short. Ten weeks, it's over. And I didn't realize that that period is so short. So, by Christmas, it's over. And I think I failed three courses except one course, [unclear] banking. The professor is kind, nice to the Chinese students. He invites us to his house for a Christmas party a couple times. He's the only one giving me a "C", I think. The rest of them I fail.

JY: Then what did you do?

RY: Then I realized that the accounting where I wanted to major is not easy for me, because I don't understand the structure of American business. We spent so much time discussing the railroad merger, the bankruptcy of the railroad. Accounting courses are geared on that, on the reorganization. I don't understand what's going on. So I realized in accounting the business would be hard for me. So I decided to change my major, because the people on the farm campus tell me on the main campus, it's harder, because there are very few Chinese students. On the main campus, there are a dozen of them. It's much easier to get a degree. So for that simple reason . . . so I go to farm campus.

My major in China was accounting, minor was agricultural economics. So therefore, I went to farm campus to major in agricultural economics. When I registered, the classmate like Y.S. and many others tried to help me. And I do find the agricultural economics is much easier to get the "B" than at the business school. Another difference is in the farm school I'm considered a graduate school [student]. They tell me, "You should take graduate course and tell the professor you are a graduate student." While the first time I registered in the main campus, I competed with everybody and they don't consider me as a graduate student, so therefore that's much harder. I learned that difference between graduate student and non-graduate student when I go to the farm campus.

JY: Yes. How long did your savings last?

RY: Savings lasted me a little bit over a year. And then I got my degree in a little bit over a year. And then savings ran out. But we always saved one thousand dollars that is safe; that one thousand dollars for the trip back. By the time we used everything, except the last thousand dollars, we are ready to go home. And we say goodbye to various friends, lots of professors. And say goodbye to them, ready to go home. But since we'd only been here less than two years,

actually, we'd like to stay a little bit longer because at that time China is still at war with Japan. When we go back, we have to go back to Chungking. It's a long way home and it isn't very convenient to go home, so therefore, we kind of hesitated to go back. But the money ran out. So we have to go. It was decided to go. So other people invited us . . . at that time, many professors entertained the Chinese students, so you got invited every weekend if you wanted to go to those parties. So we went to Dr. Riley's party one evening for a farewell party. Dr. Riley is the department chief of plant pathology. I think they have Riley Hall on the farm campus. Then, all of a sudden, I have appendicitis.

JY: Appendicitis?

RY: Yes. So Y.S. sent me to the hospital. [Chuckles] And I get operated on right away at the health service. We have no money except the last thousand dollars. I talked to the doctor. He said, "Forget about it." And the hospital was free, the doctor was free. I stayed at the hospital maybe two weeks and then go home. And I'm still weak. And then, all of a sudden, there is a gentleman in Archer Daniels Company who wants to learn Chinese. So a friend of ours introduced Mommy to him. He's a junior executive in Archer Daniels. So he is willing to pay, oh, maybe sixty dollars a month to Mom to teach him Chinese. So with that we decided to stay on a little bit longer. And then I go back to school to take more courses, and re-registered again efore 40. Oh after I finished my degree. That was three months before Pearl Harbor. When the Pearl Harbor came, that's December 7th. What year is that? 1940 . . . I forgot.

JY: 1941.

RY: That's Pearl Harbor? Hmmm?

JY: Yes.

RY: Not 1942? Pearl Harbor.

JY: 1941.

RY: Anyway, when the Pearl Harbor came, then there's no way we can go back, and right away.

JY: Why couldn't you go back? Because of the U.S.?

RY: Yes. The U.S. is in war on December 8th. Right away, within a week or so, the [U.S.] State Department informed us that all the Chinese students in the United States will be able to get the grant permitting them to go to school, and the State Department will pay the tuition and also pay a hundred dollars for living expenses, which is enough for us.

JY: How come they did that?

RY: Because China is at war with Japan.

JY: Oh.

RY: We are allied.

JY: Yes. How did the executive order to imprison the Japanese affect you?

RY: We did not realize that was at that time, because at that time we are against Japanese. And the Japanese citizens in Hawaii and in California were making quite a bit of donations to the Japanese government. They raised quite a bit of money donating to Japanese government to help Japanese government to conquer China. So therefore that order didn't appear to us as bad at all. Because we considered Japan . . . Japanese is the Chinese enemy. We have no sympathy at that time that . . . to put them in the concentration camp, if you want to say that. We are not aware of that. The situation is changed right now. But at that time, really, we are happy about it.

JY: Hmmm.

RY: So therefore, people have to think back thirty, forty years ago. We are really happy about it that the United States put all the Japanese into . . . we don't know where they are. We know they are put in somewhere outside California.

JY: Yes. What do you think about it now?

RY: That things are different. But at that time, I certainly don't think so, I think we are happy to see that at that time.

JY: What do you think about it now?

RY: Well, now, it's obvious it's not right. Because it's inference by . . . the public opinion, the fairness, the . . . it's different. It's entirely different, what I think now and at that time what I think.

JY: Yes. How do you think that concentration camp then affects Chinese?

RY: Not at all. They do not realize at all.

JY: Oh.

RY: We do not realize it.

JY: Do you think it affects them today?

RY: Right now, we think it [unclear] will, because if there is a war between United States and China, twenty years later, in 1960s, in 1970s, the Chinese believed that if there is a war between Communist China and the United States, the United States will send all the Chinese to concentration camps and I believed that is going to be true in the 1960s.

JY: Yes.

RY: But I don't believe that now the United States would do that. But I don't believe in 1940 the United States could send Chinese to the camp because we are allies.

JY: Yes. I see.

[Background noises – brief recording interruption?]

JY: When you say that the Chinese . . . you felt that the Chinese might be sent to concentration camps if there were a war with China. Do you think now, after living in the U.S. for thirty-some years now . . .? When you first came, you didn't think that the Chinese and the Japanese . . . you thought the Chinese and Japanese were enemies, because of the war, of course, in China with the Japanese. But now do you feel that the Japanese are enemies, or what are your feelings about the Chinese and Japanese in America now?

RY: For decades, at the time when the Japanese tried to conquer China the Japanese always say, "We are the same race, same culture, same civilization. We are brothers." So therefore, even though China has been fighting years with Japan, I still do not have ill feeling toward Japanese. Chiefly because living in the United States there are racial prejudices. Japanese and Chinese are the same race, which helped me to forget this hatred.

JY: Yes. Do you have any friends who are Japanese or have you had any?

RY: No. No friends are Japanese. Some of their friends in Japanese I met at work in the party. I . . . I'm very nice to them. Just treat them same as Chinese.

JY: Yes. Yes. When you talk about your job, what was your first job after the grant ran out? Or what happened then?

RY: The grant was never run out. It lasted many years during the war. But they only paid me a hundred dollars, Incidentally, Mommy go to school, too, because she could get tuition free when she go to school. So she went to school. But she's not too ambitious [chuckles] about it. And then later we had children, so she couldn't go. She did go one semester, one quarter, I think. Then, during the war, we know for sure that we cannot go back. Taking the grant is not too much [money] and I don't enjoy going to school.

So therefore I was looking for a job. It's difficult to find a job in this area. I do part time work with cooperative auditing service, but their work is seasonal so I was looking for a job, very difficult to find it. Finally, I talked to Mr. Philip Pillsbury. And he asked me to come to see him. So right away I went to his office. He was president of the company at that time. And he suggested that I go downstairs to see the personnel manager that whether I would be able to work with Pillsbury or not. So I thanked him and left his office and then made an appointment with the personnel manager. The name is John [unclear] so I came to see him. He [asked] what kind of

work I can do. I said, "I know accounting; I can work in the accounting department." So he sent me to the accounting department. The personnel and then the chief accountant talked with me. Then he told me, "I will let you know when the job is available. I will call you; you don't have to call me." So that's it.

A couple weeks later, I never hear from him. I don't remember whether I called Mr. Pillsbury or Mr. Pillsbury called me. But anyway, I didn't get a job. And then Mr. Pillsbury knows that. And right away, he finds out and he picked up the phone. No, I think I went to his office. I tell him, "I didn't get a job in your company." And he picked up the phone and he told the personnel manager, "Mr. Yu is going to work with us." That's how I got the job. istory proje

JY: Well, that was pretty good.

RY: [Chuckles]

JY: What did you earn then? What was the....

[Recording interruption]

RY: ...quit the job and went to Washington, D.C.

JY: Yes. At this time already, Bob and Vic have been born?

RY: Yes. Bobby . . . Victor is about . . . a little bit over a year. Bobby just a few months [old]. So we went to Washington, D.C.

JY: How did you decide to go there?

RY: Because [unclear] tell us to go to Washington, D.C. to see a general who is military . . . who is head of military mission in Washington, D.C. He said I could get a job there.

JY: Yes. And did you?

RY: Well, we went. There was . . . he did not hire me. That general did not hire me because he told me that all his staff came from China there already. He cannot employ me. Why he cannot employ anybody in the United States is that all his personnel has to come from Chungking. However, at that time, I have a job offer from Department of Agriculture, and then I worked pretty hard to get the job. I did get that job working for the Department of Agriculture.

JY: The United States Department of Agriculture?

RY: Yes. Yes.

JY: What did you do there?

RY: As an agriculture economist. Because during the war they want people knowing the agriculture condition in China, especially coastal areas where they planned to land our men in China. So during the war they . . . they want to land on the Chinese coast, so they have to know the agriculture condition in those areas. Since I have a degree in agricultural economics, that's why they hired me. I worked there for three years. But they never took any military action at that time, so I just worked there for three years as an area specialist.

JY: Hmmm. At that time, the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

RY: Right. Right. The war ended.

JY: What did you think about that?

RY: Oh, we think it's very nice. Gee. Otherwise there was no way that United States can win the war, because island hopping from one island to another, the U.S. casualty is very, very high. And I believed at that time the Japanese still have the most powerful army in the world. That is quantum army. The main force of quantum army is in Manchuria and we believe in this. I believe that the best Japanese army is in Manchuria. To conquer to invade Japan is not an ultimate victory because Japan could move their headquarters from Japan to Manchuria and who won the war. So . . . and this, I think, even though United States could occupy Japan, but Japan could convert their military operation from Japan to Manchuria and still have ability to carry on the war, because they can't use China as a base to fight against allies. So therefore, when the atomic bomb use came out, we didn't know the associated risks. We just see this is part of the war game, and the United States is going to win the war.

JY: Yes. What do you think about the atomic bomb now?

RY: Now that is different. Right now we know that we only have . . . we only have two bombs. We shouldn't have used the bombs at that time, because at that time Japan has lost the naval power, the quantum army wasn't in existence. So Japan is ready to surrender before the bomb was dropped.

JY: Yes.

RY: So, at that time, I don't believe we know that. We are so happy that they dropped the bomb. Of course, we'd also . . . we do not know how serious is the bomb. See, we thought it's just like any other bomb. Maybe this bomb is a little bigger than other bombs.

JY: Yes.

RY: The war ended like that.

JY: Then what happened at the end of the war to you? Did you go back to China or what happened?

RY: Yes. So we have three children.

JY: [Speaks in a high, little voice] Me!

RY: We have no intention to stay here in the first place. So therefore . . . I was looking for a job in China, so I applied at one place which is a relief rehabilitation work in China, so I applied for the job. It's a government job. They accepted me with one condition, that they will furnish . . . they will pay my transportation back to China but I have three years obligation to them after I arrive. And at that time I thought that three years obligation is too long and the passage from Washington, D.C. to Shanghai is only about two or three thousand dollars, which I can afford to pay. So therefore I decided I don't want to accept the job and rather go back home and pretty sure I will get a job when I get to Shanghai.

JY: Yes. And then so then you took . . . you went back to China?

RY: So I went back to China, 1947, I think.

JY: Yes. And then you came back to the United States.

RY: And I came back to the United States.

JY: And when did you come back then?

RY: 1949, I think.

JY: Yes. What were you doing in China just before you left again?

RY: I was a vice president of a Chinese government bank.

JY: What was it called?

RY: Bank of China, Farmer's Bank of China.

JY: And what city was that in?

RY: Shanghai.

JY: Yes. And then all of us came back to the U.S. in 1949?

RY: Right.

JY: Can you describe what happened then? Under what conditions did we leave China?

RY: First of all, we have three children, and they'd only been in China about . . . less than two years. They are not quite getting used to Chinese surroundings, because when I go back to China, I still carry lots of food stuffs such as canned goods, milk powder, Jell-O, vitamins, when we go back. And the reason we leave is we are afraid that these three kids may not be able to adjust to the real Chinese living too well if the Communists come, because we've been living pretty good.

If the Communists come, I'd still be able to teach or still be working for the [unclear]. But the standard of living will certainly be . . . certainly be depressed. And politically, I was not concerned about it, because we are not war criminals, we are not capitalists. I knew that Communists would not punish us. But all the intellectuals are afraid of that, so some of them want to leave China. Lots of them went to Taiwan. Y.S. and I are still good friends. Incidentally, Y.S. now is the Foreign Minister of the Taiwan government. So Y.S. suggested to me, "You'd better go to the United States." So I still had a chance to come, so therefore we took the last boat and left for the United States, and came to Minneapolis.

The reason we came to Minneapolis was two reasons. One is this city is good to raise a family. Another reason is if I couldn't find a job elsewhere, I know I could get a job with Pillsbury. So the first thing I come to Minneapolis, Pillsbury wanted to hire me back. And they also gave me an option for me to look around whether I will be able to find other better job elsewhere. So after I put you guys in the Atmore Hotel downtown, I went to New York and Washington right away and looked around. I finally decided Minneapolis is a better place to live. So therefore I came back to work for Pillsbury. And that's life story alright.

JY: [Chuckles] Okay. How did we get from China to the U.S. the second time? We took a boat?

RY: By boat. It's a transport; it's not a luxurious ocean liner. It is a transport boat.

JY: Yes.

RY: But we still had some savings from me to pay that passage for five of us. And we still have a few thousand dollars on hand because if I couldn't get the job right away, we'd still have money to carry us through. As a matter of fact, it took about one month for us to get settled. During this month we had to use the savings.

JY: Yes. Did anybody in the U.S. help you out other than other Chinese students or . . .?

RY: The second time, no Chinese student helped me, only American friends.

JY: Yes. Then you worked for Pillsbury.

RY: Yes.

JY: And then when did we buy our first house? When did we move to Southeast?

RY: I got a job at Pillsbury. We lived in the hotel. Then we rented a house when the professor was at the lake, so we rented the house in summertime for two or three months. And then we

looked around and bought the house at 822. I still have enough money to make the down payment.

JY: Yes. Was that pretty unusual then for young students or young . . .?

RY: Oh, yes. My case is very, very unusual. The first time I came, I came from Chungking. At that time, no Chinese . . . practically no Chinese students came to the United States to study because there is no transportation from Chungking to outside world, very little transportation or communication from Chungking to outside world. I'm lucky enough to come in the first place in the first time. In the second time, I took the last passage from Shanghai to the United States before the Communists take over the country.

JY: Yes.

RY: It's very . . . my case is very, very unusual. I don't believe anybody have . . . are that lucky.

JY: Yes. What was it like in Shanghai when we left?

RY: Well, I think I leave about end of April. Two weeks and the Shanghai . . . the Communists has captured Nanking, the capital of China, which is only about two hundred miles away from Shanghai. And at that time, the Chinese national army disintegrated. Exactly like South Vietnam when the Saigon army disintegrated. And the soldiers, the [unclear], the air force has no will to fight. The Communists just ran over everything from Nanking to Shanghai only take about one week to capture the city.

JY: Yes. But our family were members of the Kuomintang party?

RY: Yes.

JY: Who lost.

RY: Yes.

JY: Is that part of the reason you left China?

RY: No. My dad wasn't a party member. Mother's father is a government officer, but wasn't a party member. I think lots of intellectuals don't want Communism. That's one reason they left. Not necessarily associated with party affiliation.

JY: Yes. What do you think about the recognition of China now?

RY: As a . . . as a personal reason, I hate it. I see no reason for United States to recognize Communist China. That is entirely a personal reason, because from my past experience you can see that. But as a Chinese, as a group, the Communist government is a better government than nationalist China except the freedom. Under Communists, there will be no freedom. Under the

nationalists, you may not have a hundred percent freedom but I'm sure we have more freedom under any other regime than the Communist regime. So as long as I can . . . as now as from the freedom point of view, I don't believe we should support Communist China. If you have no bread, you're hungry, I'm sure you would do everything to get food. Once you get food, you've lost your freedom; you will never regain the freedom back. In Communist China or Russia, I've seen the same story as free, see same story as true. You have better living but no freedom. You cannot say what you want to say. You have to obey all the orders.

JY: Yes. Okay. Maybe let's go back to some of the other stuff. Have you ever returned to Taiwan or China?

RY: I have returned to Taiwan many times. And I intend to retire there. The reason is very simple: because my friends, my relatives are still enjoying good living there.

JY: Okay. So you feel that you will be more comfortable in Taiwan in your retirement than here?

RY: Yes.

JY: More comfortable just financially or otherwise?

RY: I don't believe financially, because it just costs as much here as Taiwan. However, I will be more comfortable in Taiwan because same race, the racial problem come into the picture. You do speak the same language, you have same social background, and nobody will ever ask you how long you have been here, and nobody will ever ask you where you come from.

JY: Yes. Do you feel in all these years in the U.S. then that . . . or in Minneapolis even, in Minneapolis here, that this isn't your home?

RY: That's right.

JY: Yes. Would you like your children or all of us . . . Bob and Vic and I to return to Taiwan, too, someday?

RY: I think so. If they return to Taiwan they can find out . . .

JY: Yes.

RY: . . . whether they belong to there or belong to here. I don't believe the next twenty years things will change too much. But third or fourth generation may be different. I'm sure, right now, people will still ask you where you come from even though you speak excellent English.

JY: Yes. Do you feel there's racial prejudice against you here?

RY: Yes. I'm lucky to be advanced from a clerk to an officer in the bank. The first job they pay me two hundred twenty five dollars per month. After twenty-seven years, I'm making more than three thousand. No, I'm making more than . . . I'm making thirty thousand dollars a year. So my income increased more than ten times from the time I'm employed to present time. That is excellent for . . . it's better than most of the people. But my employer, my coworkers, did not discriminate [against] me, they gave me a fair chance to promote me. Because I'm doing a good job, they are fair enough to recognize my good work and they reward it. I always thought that if I . . . during these twenty-seven years if I go out to look for another job, I'll still have a hard time to find an employer who will employ me. I still have a doubt that any organization in Twin Cities will willingly hire me based upon my ability. Going back, who hired me at the First National Bank, Mr. Pillsbury is the director of First National Bank. So there is a racial prejudice in employment at least, at the time when I applied job at First National.

JY: So you think it was the help of Mr. Pillsbury that got you in?

RY: Right.

JY: Otherwise, you don't think you would have got in.

RY: Right. However, when I got promoted, I don't believe Mr. Pillsbury had anything to do with it. They don't even know that. It's my ability.

JY: Yes. Did you encounter any discrimination at work?

RY: No. No. No.

JY: Not with your coworkers necessarily but institution?

RY: No, not the whole organization. No.

JY: Was there anything there that you wanted to do but couldn't because you were Chinese?

RY: No. No. Never have that. And as a matter of fact, I still speak poor English. They all realize that. I have a good mind ability but I do have a language handicap.

JY: Yes. Do you feel that . . .?

RY: For instance, they never want me to make a public speech because they realize that they will put me in a spot asking me to do so.

JY: Yes. Okay. In raising your children then, what was it like do you think for them to grow up in Minneapolis? What did you like about it, rather?

RY: Well, my thinking is the more education you have the better opportunity you will get. The people you are associated with will be better if they have better education. What I try to say is,

when you deal with a laborer they are more prejudiced. If you deal with an intellectual, they probably will be less prejudiced. So that's why I . . . I think all the Chinese want their children to be educated, so they could be started out at a better level and encounter fewer embarrassments or prejudices.

JY: Yes. Did you want your children when they were growing up to only associate with Chinese children, too?

RY: Not necessarily. It would be nice to associate with Chinese children, because they get along better, because they are same race.

JY: Yes. But we didn't have any Chinese friends, I mean children friends at all, Dad. [Chuckles]

RY: There are very few families . . . few families around.

JY: Yes. We did not associate with any of the Cantonese families here.

RY: The language is a big barrier. The Cantonese speak Cantonese. The other people not from Canton speak different dialect. Because of the dialect, they separate them [unclear]. Someday, I don't know whose fault is it, all the people from the Canton, they don't want to change or the people from Shanghai, they don't want to change. Because of a language barrier, the Chinese people are not very united.

JY: Yes. Do you wish they would be?

RY: I hope so. I tried so hard here to get them together. But . . .

JY: What do you mean by "them" together?

RY: The Chinese who come from Taiwan, get them together with the people who come from Hong Kong or Guangdong.

JY: Yes. What about with the Japanese or Filipino or other Asian races, other Asian peoples?

RY: I think we should be together on the same front but I think the bad thing is the language keeps them apart.

JY: Yes.

RY: So in a few years, English to . . . group them together, then you become all United States of America, not as a minority group.

JY: Yes. Did you and mom want to bring us up in Chinese traditions? What traditions did we have, do you think, in our family?

RY: We wished we could bring you guys up in Chinese tradition, but first of all, we, ourselves, do not know too much Chinese tradition. We come here right after college. I think we are naïve.

JY: Naïve?

RY: Naïve and we . . . we don't know too much Chinese tradition. And so therefore I don't believe we know enough Chinese culture to teach you guys. Therefore we figure out things you are going to be in the United States. There's no way that we can teach Chinese tradition to you, so we just leave everything to your way.

JY: Yes. Do you feel then your children are pretty Americanized?

RY: I think so.

JY: Do you feel we are more American than Chinese?

RY: I think so.

JY: Yes. When we were growing up, did you or Mom belong to any Chinese organizations?

RY: Yes. But the Chinese as a group is like a bunch of loose sand. The Chinese are so individualistic. They never work as a group. Two of them never work together. Three is worse. They have no . . . group power. They are very selfish. They are smart, they are intelligent, but they are always selfish. Selfishness. They . . . the group never works too well. We joined the group, it's a social function, that's all.

JY: Yes. Do you wish that these various associations . . .? What groups did we belong to?

RY: Well, Chinese Association, Student Association. It's just a social function. When we come down to group events, group benefit, group projects, we never do too well.

JY: Yes. Yes.