## Margaret Woo Chinn Narrator

## Sarah Mason Interviewer

## May 27, 1982 Minnesota Historical Society Saint Paul, Minnesota

Sarah Mason -SM Margaret Woo Chinn -MC

**SM:** I'm talking to Margaret Woo Chinn at the Minnesota Historical Society on May 27, 1982. Margaret, do you think we could begin with your . . . your uncle who came first, right?

**MC:** Yes. Yes. He came in the early 1800s and when he first came here, I think he . . . this is all hearsay now.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** I think he had a laundry. And he worked that a good many years and then my father later joined him. There was also another uncle.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** The . . . my uncle that I speak of, Yee Sing, was the fourth brother. And my father was the fifth brother, the youngest of the family.

**SM:** And what was the family name? So we get that on the tape.

MC: I don't know what . . .

SM: Woo.

**MC:** The family name, the surname is Woo.

**SM:** Yes. So there was Woo Yee Sing . . .

MC: And the uncle's name, Woo Yee Sing. And my father's name was Woo Du Sing. And usually in one generation there is one name that's common among all the brothers so that they can tell that they belong to that generation.

**SM:** Yes. Was there still another brother here?

**MC:** There was another brother.

SM: Oh.

MC: I think he was the second brother, but I don't . . . I have no idea what his name was.

**SM:** Oh, did he not stay or . . .?

MC: I don't know what . . . but I know there was somebody else with my uncle when my father came. MAKIN

SM: Oh, I see.

**MC:** But later he probably went back to China.

SM: Ah ha.

MC: Because he would have been older than both the . . . both my uncle . . .

SM: Yes.

MC: Fourth uncle and my dad.

**SM:** So the fourth . . . So your father was the fifth son then.

MC: Yes, he was the fifth, he was the baby brother. [Chuckles] He was the last boy in the family.

SM: I see. So it was the youngest ones of the family that came first.

MC: Yes. Yes, he was the . .

**SM:** Yes. And so . . . well, Yee Sing came first.

MC: He came first.

**SM:** And what . . .?

MC: And they came by China Clipper, because my dad would . . . Du Sing would tell how long it took them. He said it's not like the so-called big ships in his day, which were the Empress lines, which could make it to China in about twenty-six days.

SM: Ah. Oh.

**MC:** The China Clipper took quite a few days more than that. I think it took months to get here, because it was a sailboat.

**SM:** Oh, just imagine!

**MC:** Because they . . . those China Clippers were sails.

**SM:** Oh. So Woo Yee Sing came on the China Clipper.

**MC:** Yes. My . . . well, that was the mode of traveling that was . . . China Clipper was the only way of coming.

SM: And what was the cull that Du Sing came on? Empress boat or . . .?

**MC:** No, no. That he . . . they would . . .

**SM:** No. No, that's much later, I guess.

**MC:** That's much later. The Empress line were the Canadian, but . . . those even . . . because when we went back to China in 1934, it took twenty-six days.

**SM:** Oh. What type of ship was that then? A motor . . .?

**MC:** Those were . . . it's on the order of like the Queen Mary.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** That type of a . . .

**SM:** I see.

MC: It was a Canadian Pacific.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** And then the American line. They had the American lines, the Blue Funnel that went out of San Francisco.

SM: Oh, yes. Yes.

**MC:** But the Canadian ships were bigger.

**SM:** But when Du Sing came, what did he . . .?

**MC:** He came by China Clipper.

**SM:** Oh, he also came by China Clipper.

MC: Oh, yes.

**SM:** I see. And he came what year about?

MC: He must have come in the late 1870s or 1880.

**SM:** I see. So he came really early, too.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Yes, I see. And so they worked together first in a laundry.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** And then they expanded the . . .

Story Proje MC: I mean, when they got together they worked at a laundry, but there was a time when my father said that he was with the Union Pacific when they were building railroad.

**SM:** Yes. Out West then?

MC: Yes. Yes.

**SM:** I see. And so . . .

MC: It might have been that that's the way he . . . he made his way here. I don't know.

SM: Oh, that could be. Yes.

... they are not . . . we were people from the country. MC: See, because they.

SM: Yes.

MC: We didn't have that kind of money that you could just pay . . . your way was all paid for you or anything like that.

**SM:** I think some people did work on it and then they would get a pass or something.

MC: I think that they would . . . you know, work coming in, probably coming East from the West Coast.

**SM:** Yes. Oh, yes. Yes.

**MC:** That's what . . .

**SM:** I wonder if Yee Sing did that, too?

MC: I have no idea about that. But I still would like to know how they landed in Minnesota.

**SM:** [Chuckles] Yes. Did they ever say why they . . .?

MC: No. I've never . . . I have never heard what the incentive was that they would . up this far north. lision/kin

**SM:** The only thing I would think about was . . .

MC: Because the union, those railroads didn't come up this far.

**SM:** [Chuckles] I know.

**MC:** So I don't know how they even came.

**SM:** Did they land in Vancouver or Seattle?

MC: No. He came . . . I don't know whether my father came first by San Francisco or Seattle.

SM: Oh. Yes.

MC: I know when we came, when he brought the family, my mother over, they came by Seattle. That's how I came.

**SM:** Oh. So that would be almost straight across then.

MC: Yes. Well, by then, that was 1912.

**SM:** Yes, that was quite a lot later. So he came in 1912.

**MC:** No, no. No, 1914.

**SM:** Oh, no, no, no, no. That's when he brought his family.

**MC:** In 1914.

SM: Ah ha.

MC: Because I was . . . I was born in China, so I couldn't have . . .

SM: Oh, 1914, he brought the family.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** In 1912 he went back to China?

MC: Yes.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** Evidently he went.

**SM:** I see. Hmmm.

MC: Well, he must have gone back previously because I was born in 1912.

SM: Oh. So he must have gone back at least by 1911.

MC: Yes. Yes. Yes.

**SM:** Yes. I see. Well, one thing is that in the 1870s and 1880s there was a lot of anti-Chinese violence on the West Coast.

MC: Yes.

SM: Some might have moved East at that time.

MC: Could have been. Yes.

SM: But they wouldn't talk about that.

**MC:** I don't . . . I don't know how long. I don't know.

**SM:** I guess . . . did they ever talk about whether they thought Minnesota was easier for Chinese or . . .?

**MC:** No, I never heard that either. So I don't know how . . .

**SM:** So we'll just have to guess, I guess. [Chuckles]

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Why they came. Well, what were the other businesses they had here together?

**MC:** Well, my uncle, in conjunction with the laundry, they had a gift shop.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** And they sold both Chinese and Japanese art goods then.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** And teas and things like that.

SM: Yes.

sion arch MC: And that was located where Westminster . . . next to Westminster Church

**SM:** Ah ha. And did your aunt run that store for a while?

**MC:** Well, see, she was in the store.

**SM:** But it was really their store?

MC: Yes. Yes. It was my . . . it was my aunt's and uncle's store

SM: Oh, I see.

MC: I don't know what my father did then even.

**SM:** Oh. Did he manage the laundry?

**MC:** Because . . . because by then we also had the restaurant.

**SM:** Oh, so by then they had three businesses.

**MC:** Yes. That they had . . . diversified. [Chuckles]

SM: Yes. I wonder what year that would be. But by the time you came they had three businesses?

MC: The restaurant was . . . John's Place, Yuen Faung Low, known as . . . better known as John's Place, was established in 1883.

**SM:** Yes. Did it have that name then, too?

MC: No.

SM: Oh.

MC: It was called the Canton Café, and that was located down near either Marquette or Second Avenue and Washington, down that district.

SM: I see. Yes.

**MC:** It was just a small restaurant.

**SM:** Yes. And then when it moved, it changed the name.

MC: Then . . . then they went up to Sixth Street where the upstairs Chinese place with the teakwood tables, the inlaid mother of pearl tables . . . History

**SM:** Ah ha. And that's where it became John's Place.

**MC:** Yes. Well, it was . . .

**SM:** How did that happen? Did people just start calling it :

MC: I think . . . well, you know, a nickname for . . . I think for anybody that didn't know the names . . . either John or Charlie, you know. [Chuckles]

**SM:** [Chuckles] So it was the name . . .

MC: So I guess John's . . . it was easier to say John.

**SM:** I see. So people just started calling it that and then . . .

MC: Yes. And then .

**SM:** You just took it as the name. [Chuckles]

MC: Yes, and then, you know, Chinese always put their surnames first, so my uncle was known as Woo Yee Sing and my father was known as Woo Du Sing.

SM: Yes.

MC: Well, many people called my uncle Mr. Yee Sing.

**SM:** [Chuckles] I see.

**MC:** Thinking that was his name. Or Mr. Sing instead of Mr. Woo.

**SM:** Oh, yes. They didn't understand, I guess.

MC: No.

**SM:** Well, what village did they come from and what district or . . .?

MC: We're from the four districts.

SM: Yes.

MC: And we're from the Hoi Ping District of the four. [Transcriber's Note: Hoi Ping is also known as Kaiping (an article by Sarah Mason refers to it as such) but I'll leave it to your discretion as to which one you think is more appropriate to use in the final edited version of this transcript.] OWIEH

**SM:** Oh. Yes. Hoi Ping.

**MC:** Yes. It's quite primitive back there.

**SM:** Yes. I wonder what it's like now?

MC: I don't know. But I know when we went back in 1934 it was still quite primitive, because we were the first ones to build a house with running water.

SM: Oh.

MC: We had a water pump that would pump the water to the cistern on the roof and then we could have water.

SM: Oh.

MC: Coming out of faucets and flushing toilets. [Chuckles]

**SM:** You had a cistern on the roof that caught rain or something?

MC: No, where this water would . . .

SM: Oh, pumped up to it. Oh, I see.

**MC:** Yes. I think, isn't that what you call a cistern?

**SM:** Yes. It would pump from a well up to the . . . yes.

MC: Yes. The well was pumped either by . . . I don't know how it was pumped, how the motor ran. Because we didn't have . . . we didn't have electricity.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** There was no electricity.

**SM:** Maybe it was run on gas or something?

MC: No.

**SM:** Hmmm.

**MC:** I don't know how that pump worked.

**SM:** But anyway, that provided the pressure then, for . . .

**MC:** But I know . . . yes. I know they could work the pump manually, too.

**SM:** Oh. So this was when you . . . let's see. When was the house built? Before you [unclear]?

MC: This was . . . the house was built in . . . let's see. 1935, 1936 . . .

SM: Oh, when you went back after your father died.

MC: Yes. My father passed away. Then we went back. So my mother built a home back there.

**SM:** I see.

MC: She had no intentions of coming back.

**SM:** Yes. So she really was kind of glad to go back home.

**MC:** Yes. Yes, it was home and she thought she could live happily, you know, the rest of her days back there.

**SM:** Yes. And that was the first kind of modern house?

MC: Yes. Yes. That was the first modern house in the village.

**SM:** That's interesting. Well, when she lived there before, while your father was here, did you and her . . . I mean, you know, the children and her live with his family, the Woo family? Or . . .

**MC:** I think . . . I think his folks had passed away already.

SM: Oh, I see.

**MC:** But I know we had a house that they said that was our house.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** We went back to the old village.

SM: Yes.

MC: And there was a house there. They said, "Oh, this is the house where . . ."

**SM:** Oh, so there was a family home.

**MC:** There is a family home, but somebody else lived in it now.

SM: Oh. I see. Did they come, do you think, for economic reasons mainly?

MC: Mmmm. Well, I mean, I know . . .

**SM:** It seems that would be the main . . .

**MC:** No. No, I think so the family would be together. Because my father had established himself over here.

**SM:** I mean when your uncle first came.

**MC:** Well, you know . . .

**SM:** Did he leave the village and come here to earn money?

MC: Well, yes, because back there it's farm country.

SM: Yes.

MC: And this is a . . . you know, the land of the golden opportunities.

**SM:** Yes, the golden mountain. [Chuckles]

**MC:** Yes, the golden mountains and then where you could just take your shovel and shovel up the gold, you know.

**SM:** [Chuckles]

**MC:** These stories that get around.

**SM:** That's the story anyway. Yes.

MC: Yes, they've always called it the golden mountain. That's the nickname for America.

**SM:** Yes, right, *gum shan* [gold mountain in Chinese].

**MC:** *Gum shan*, yes. *Gum shan*.

**SM:** Yes, *gum shan*. Well, was your mother from that village, too, then?

MC: No, my mother is from Hoisan. [Transcriber's note: my research indicated that Hoisan is also known as Taishan.]

**SM:** Oh, she was?

MC: Yes. Yes.

**SM:** I see. Which is nearby, I suppose.

MC: Yes, it's nearby. It's within walking distance. [Chuckles]

SM: Oh. Yes.

30 ciety MC: I think when we went though we did take a train because I am . . . I'm not that geared for walking, you know. [Chuckles]

**SM:** [Chuckles] I see. So probably it was an arranged marriage between one village and another?

MC: Oh, yes. Definitely from . . . yes. Definitely, at that time, it was an arranged marriage.

**SM:** Yes. Well, in your village was it mainly people related to you?

MC: Oh, yes. One village was all one . . . one surname.

SM: Yes. Oh, I see.

MC: You don't have any other surname living in that village.

**SM:** So you have to go to another village to find a wife.

MC: Yes. Yes.

**SM:** Oh, that's interesting.

MC: And so many . . . so many go to the same village, so a lot of them, you know, are . . .

**SM:** Oh, inter . . .

MC: Yes.

SM: Ah.

**MC:** Not intermarried, but I mean the . . .

**SM:** Not . . . no. But the ties are . . .

MC: Yes, the wives would be . . . they'd call each other sister, probably, you know,

SM: Oh.

MC: Like or distantly they'd be some cousins or something like that.

**SM:** So there would be a lot of wives from Hoisan married to men in [unclear].

MC: Yes. Yes.

**SM:** Well, that's interesting.

MC: You know, word gets around if they think that there's a nice choice there. [Chuckles]

SM: Oh, yes. Yes. I see. Well, and then the matchmakers would sort of arrange that [unclear].

MC: Yes. Yes. Well, when they say matchmakers, I don't know if they are professional. I don't think so.

SM: Oh.

MC: I think it's more like relatives that will hear of somebody that is ready to be married.

SM: Oh, I see. Yes. I see.

**MC:** Or there's a . . . someone that they'd like, you know.

SM: Yes. So it wasn't like someone you would pay to try to find . . .

MC: No, I don't think so.

**SM:** Yes. I see. Well, let's see. We got as far as the restaurant and . . . that's the three businesses mainly that they had then.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** The laundry, the . . .

**MC:** They had . . . then they had an importing.

SM: Oh. Yes.

**MC:** We did have an import store.

**SM:** That was different from the gift shop then?

MC: Well, yes. That one . . . later on, that Japanese . . . that small store closed. Then they opened a bigger one.

SM: Ah ha. Well that would qualify him as a merchant then.

MC: Yes. That qualified.

SM: Yes.

MC: See, that was the status that MC: See, that was the status that my father came as a merchant because he was with the store.

**SM:** I see. Yes. Ah ha. So that enabled him to bring your mother [unclear].

MC: That was . . . yes. That enabled him to bring a family. You had . . . there were . . . the status for family were very few. You know, that they could come in under.

SM: Yes.

MC: The status of a merchant was, you know, very qualified.

**SM:** Yes. Yes, and that was pretty important.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Well, he was a sort of leader in the Chinese community, too, wasn't he?

MC: Well, being, I think, one of the first Chinese here, and the older generation, people looked up to them.

**SM:** Yes. And being rather successful in business and . . .

MC: Yes. Yes. And they mixed with the American people, which meant a lot.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** They spoke English and they could read.

**SM:** Oh, so they intermingled quite a bit.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** They could read English, too?

MC: Well, they could read somewhat. I mean, they . . . enough to read a newspaper.

**SM:** Oh, that's quite a bit.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Where did they learn it?

**MC:** From the Westminster . . .

**SM:** Oh, from Westminster.

ed MC: They were very . . . very early they were affiliated with Westminster Church because they were so good to the Chinese. They took them under their wing and taught them how to read and write. They were very dedicated people there, you know, some of these teachers and . . .

**SM:** I think that made quite a difference in the early community, didn't it?

**MC:** I think it . . . yes, I think very much.

**SM:** Because they didn't just become one little Chinatown or whatever.

MC: No, there wasn't.

**SM:** Of course, there weren't that many maybe, but . . .

MC: No.

**SM:** But still, they intermingled from the start.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Which would make quite a difference.

MC: And, you know, many of these families were very generous in their . . . with their time, too.

**SM:** Oh. So like your mother or Liang May Seen . . .

**MC:** Not the . . . not my mother.

**SM:** Not your mother.

**MC:** My mother didn't . . .

**SM:** Oh, and your father didn't too much either.

**MC:** Not too much. But the Yee Sing family did.

SM: Yes, but the Yee Sing. And so she would go and visit in their homes and so on?

MC: Yes. Yes.

**SM:** Oh, that's really kind of interesting. Maybe you could talk about Liang May Seen a little bit, whatever you know.

**MC:** Well, my aunt . . . my uncle married her in San Francisco. She had come over and she was at a school there and he'd met her. And so they were married and then they came here. And I used to think it was such fun, because she said they went to the Columbian Exposition [held in 1893 in Chicago, Illinois] for a trip.

**SM:** Oh, she did.

**MC:** It was like a honeymoon, which was very . . .

**SM:** Well, that's quite a rare occurrence. [Chuckles]

MC: Very, very modern.

**SM:** That's really interesting, isn't it!

**MC:** Yes. I always thought that was interesting. I thought, oh, how romantic, you know. [Chuckles]

**SM:** Really.

MC: You hear these tales when you're a child and they're . . . they're so impressive.

**SM:** [Chuckles] Yes. Well, he must have been pretty well off, too, to do that.

MC: Yes. Well, no, they saved. They were thrifty, they didn't . . .

**SM:** I don't mean they were like the Rockefellers or something. [Chuckles]

MC: No. No. No, I meant that they were . . .

**SM:** Yes, they were very frugal.

**MC:** They worked hard.

**SM:** Yes. Yes, that's really something. He took his bride to that.

**MC:** Yes. Yes. To me, I thought that was *very* modern.

SM: Was she somewhat Westernized too, then, from San Francisco?

MC: Well, she must have been from . . . from San Francisco.

**SM:** So she spoke English.

MC: She spoke English, she played the piano.

SM: Oh.

MC: Not . . . not, you know . . .

SM: Yes. But a little.

**MC:** But she knew . . .

**SM:** She spoke and read English?

MC: She could read, yes.

SM: Oh. Was she younger than Yee Sing or about the same age?

**MC:** I think they were about the same. Not too much younger.

**SM:** Had he intended to marry in San Francisco or was he on his way to . . .?

**MC:** I have no idea. I just knew . . . I just knew that she was very modern, because she was one that didn't wear Chinese clothes and she always had . . . she . . .

**SM:** Oh, she never wore Chinese clothes?

**MC:** I don't . . . I don't . . . I can't remember my aunt in Chinese clothes.

**SM:** Yes. So she wore regular dresses.

**MC:** [Unclear] because you figure that she'd been here, because she sewed.

**SM:** Ah. So she sewed her own clothes.

MC: Yes, she could sew and she did all the nice . . . oh, she did beautiful handwork.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** Crocheting and embroidering and knitting.

**SM:** [Sighs] My goodness. Did she learn that at the school?

MC: I don't know where she learned it but . . . there's some people that are gifted like that.

**SM:** Yes. Really. They just learn it themselves.

MC: Because I know she'd . . . she'd make these . . . well, in the 1920s, you know, these embroidered tablecloths were so . . .

SM: Oh.

MC: She'd embroider them with all these little French knots and things, and they'd be crocheted.

**SM:** Oh, good night. She seems like a really unusual person.

MC: Yes, and then when we were small she made us sweaters. You know.

SM: Oh, for all of the children.

MC: Yes, for us kids.

**SM:** How nice.

MC: Yes, it was.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** And of course that was the . . . see, I remember that time because of World War I in 1918 . . . 1917, 1918. I mean . . . I can remember that far back.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** And I remember she . . . her knitting khaki colored sweaters.

SM: Oh.

MC: And these face kind of knitted helmet they wore.

**SM:** Oh, for the war effort.

**MC:** That they wore, that the solder boys wore under their metal helmets.

**SM:** Oh, that was sort of a patriotic contribution.

**MC:** Yes. And I can remember . . . even Howard, I think, knitted a . . . one of these sleeveless vests that . . .

**SM:** Your husband Howard?

MC: No. Howard . . .

**SM:** Oh, Howard [Woo] your cousin.

MC: Yes.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** She taught me to knit then. We used to . . . we just went back and forth, but, you know, you could make a scarf if nothing else.

SM: Oh. Yes. So she taught both of you to knit.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Oh, that's really interesting. For the war effort?

**MC:** Yes, the war . . . so-called war effort.

**SM:** Hmmm. That is interesting.

**MC:** I mean, little things like that, you know.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** [Chuckles] You pick up.

**SM:** Well, she was quite an influence on your life then wasn't she?

MC: Oh, yes.

**SM:** She was more Westernized than your mother?

**MC:** She was so Westernized, see.

**SM:** Yes. What about your own mother?

MC: Well, my mother never went out much, because she didn't speak English. And in those days, a Chinese woman . . . women didn't get the opportunity to learn to speak English.

**SM:** Yes. She didn't go to Westminster?

MC: No. I don't . . . at that time, I don't know if they had the so-called classes.

**SM:** Oh . . . it was too early.

**MC:** Because the women . . . they weren't . . . as a matter of fact, there weren't that many women.

**SM:** There weren't any women.

MC: Yes, there weren't that many women.

SM: Right. Ah ha. So that was really . . .

MC: Yes. I think . . .

SM: Well, when they first had their thing, that was mainly men then, I suppose.

MC: Yes, it was men mostly for the Chinese Sunday School.

SM: Yes. Yes.

**MC:** That . . . that Chinese Sunday School went back . . . I know into the early 1920s, because I can remember that.

**SM:** The 1920s?

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Yes. Of course, yes. That was the men's Sunday School.

**MC:** Yes, they had the men's there.

**SM:** And you went to just a regular American Sunday School.

**MC:** I went to the regular morning Sunday School with the . . . with the . . . like the schoolchildren went to.

**SM:** Yes. And Howard, did he go, too?

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Yes. Well, that must have been quite an Americanizing experience. Well, of course you went to school and everything else.

MC: Well, by then we . . . we were that Americanizer, because we all went to school.

SM: Yes. [Chuckles] You didn't need Americanizing.

MC: No. [Chuckles]

**SM:** Yes. Well, maybe we should get to your birth. Or do you want to talk a little more about your mother? I mean, she never really liked it very well here, would you say?

MC: Mmmm. No.

**SM:** I mean, she wanted to go back or . . .?

**MC:** Well, it's a lonely existence here when you have figured that the only ones that you speak to is your own family.

SM: Yes.

MC: And you have a telephone, of course, that you can call and talk to somebody.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** But the only one . . . at that time, I think, there was just a couple other women here that . . . you know, that were from China.

**SM:** Yes. Well, in the village she probably wouldn't have gone out too much. But there would have been a more extended family.

**MC:** Well, in the village you're . . . you're in your own group.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** Of . . . it's just like a small communion or where you'd have your other people to talk to. They'd meet outside if nothing . . .

SM: Yes.

MC: If nothing other than just going to get water or something at the well. [Chuckles]

**SM:** Yes. Right. So there would be a natural . . .

**MC:** Yes. Yes, there is a natural society of meeting anyway.

**SM:** Yes, but here she would be really isolated.

MC: Yes. Yes, really isolated here.

**SM:** I bet that was a really lonely existence. But was that at the same time that Liang May Seen was kind of intermingling because she knew English and . . .?

**MC:** Well, I think so. And then . . .

**SM:** She was a different person I gather.

**MC:** Yes. Her personality was entirely different.

SM: Entirely. Because your mother then was a very traditional Chinese woman.

MC: Yes, she was traditional Chinese.

**SM:** Yes. Yes. Well, you can hardly blame her for wanting to go back. [Chuckles] Do you know what kind of family background your mother came from? Like was her father a farmer? Or maybe most of them were.

MC: I... I imagine they were farmers. I don't know. See, you figure that when a Chinese woman marries. Her... you don't speak about your own family so much anymore.

SM: I see. Yes.

**MC:** Then only special occasions you go back to visit, you know.

**SM:** Yes. Yes. So she puts that all behind her.

MC: Yes. Yes. That's all you . . . in other words, you go where your husband goes.

**SM:** I see. So she didn't usually tell you about it.

**MC:** Well, it was . . . like it's almost like biblical times.

**SM:** Really.

**MC:** You figure when they were married they just left their family and you became a part of your husband's family.

SM: Yes. So she didn't usually tell you and your brothers about your relatives on her side.

MC: No. No. No.

**SM:** Because that wasn't important, I suppose.

MC: No, I suppose not. I . . . I knew . . . well, I knew that she had a brother and a sister.

SM: Oh. Yes.

MC: See, that's about all I knew. And then that they were in Canada.

**SM:** Oh, they were.

MC: Yes. Yes.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** Her brother . . . her brother went to Canada and then her sister married somebody and they lived in Vancouver.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** And her brother lived in . . . Edmonton. Edmonton, I think.

SM: Oh.

MC: So, you know . . . and I never saw the . . . I did meet the brother, her brother, when we went back to China in 1935.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** Because he came out to Vancouver to see his sister, my mother.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** And you figure they hadn't seen each other for . . . from fourteen to . . . to thirty-five. That's . . . thirty years anyway, see.

**SM:** [Sighs] So he came to Vancouver.

**MC:** He came to Vancouver.

**SM:** And saw both his sisters then.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Or did one . . .?

MC: Yes. Yes, because the other sister lived there, too.

SM: Yes. Oh, yes.

**MC:** But that . . . I think . . . I don't . . . I don't know my geography, but it's quite a ways, I think, from Edmonton, see.

**SM:** Oh yes, it is. Yes.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Well, let's see. They were already older people by then.

MC: Oh, yes.

SM: If your father had died.

MC: Well, see, I think my mother was . . . had not seen him since he was a boy.

SM: Oh.

MC: Well, see, she was in her fifties.

**SM:** When you went back?

MC: Yes.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** And you take forty . . . you know, take the forty years . . . no. Can't be forty years. It was twenty years, twenty-five years, so it's a long time.

**SM:** It's a long time. Do you remember their reunion? [Chuckles]

**MC:** No. It was just . . . as I say, Chinese don't seem to be very emotional.

**SM:** Yes. Don't show it.

**MC:** They don't show it anyway.

**SM:** But actually they are. [Chuckles]

**MC:** Yes, I suppose they are.

**SM:** But they are reserved, I guess you could say. Well, I guess we should get to your birth and childhood. Do you remember the village at all from your early days?

MC: No. No. I came over when I was eighteen months.

**SM:** Oh, yes. But you were born in Hoi Ping then.

MC: I was born in Hoi Ping, yes. In Canton, they call it Canton.

SM: Yes. Yes.

MC: And so I was eighteen months when we came over.

**SM:** And what year was that?

MC: That was in 1914. June 1914.

**SM:** Yes. We have that nice picture of you with the . . . [Chuckles]

MC: Yes. Oh my.

SM: [Unclear].

**MC:** Got the [unclear]. They said I immediately fell out on the steps in the . . . in the train station [unclear].

**SM:** Oh, no!

**MC:** That's how I got such a swollen lip in that picture.

**SM:** Oh. Oh, I see. You were just at the toddler stage.

MC: Yes. Well, yes. See, when you're . . .

**SM:** Yes, you fall easily. [Chuckles]

MC: Yes.

SM: Well, did you have relatives in Seattle that you stopped with?

MC: No. No.

**SM:** You just got right on the train.

MC: Yes, right. I suppose as soon as they released us through, got through immigration, then we came here.

**SM:** I see. Boy, that was a long trip, probably.

MC: And then we . . . we just came and lived with my aunt and uncle then.

**SM:** Oh, you lived with them in the same house?

MC: Yes.

**SM:** And that was in Minneapolis?

MC: Yes.

**SM:** What part of Minneapolis? Right down by the store or . . .?

MC: We lived on Yale Place and Twelfth Street.

SM: Oh.

MC: Which is . . . I think there's a gas station there now or something.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** Well, maybe it isn't even the gas station anymore.

**SM:** Sort of downtown?

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Yes, with the Yee Sings.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** So how many years did you live together then?

MC: Well, we . . . we lived in the same house, you know, we lived . . . then we moved over to the other side of Hennepin on North Twelfth Street.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** And we lived upstairs and they lived downstairs in a house.

**SM:** I see. North Hennepin.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** So both families lived there, too.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** They lived upstairs?

**MC:** No, we lived up.

**SM:** Oh, you lived upstairs.

y all History Project MC: Yes, they lived downstairs. And we lived there until 1922, I think. And then they bought a house up on Aldrich, where we're still living. [Chuckles]

**SM:** Oh. Who bought the house? Du Sing?

MC: Yee Sing.

SM: Oh, Yee Sing. I see

**MC:** Yes. And then . . . then we bought a house on Clinton a couple years later.

SM: Oh. I see.

**MC:** So each . . . we each had our own house then. We each bought houses then.

**SM:** I see, in 1922.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** When was it you moved to the North Hennepin one, or do you know?

**MC:** I don't know.

**SM:** It may be kind of little to [chuckles] remember.

**MC:** But it was . . . it was North Twelfth Street.

**SM:** North Twelfth Street.

**MC:** Yes. That house is gone now, too.

MC: We each . . . yes, one family. It is a one . . . but we do have our, you know, upstairs and downstairs where . . .

**SM:** You have your own kitchens?

**MC:** Yes, we both have our own kitchens.

SM: I see.

MC: But we always eat together.

SM: Oh, do you?

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Well, that makes sense.

**MC:** Yes. It's . . . well, it . . . it does.

**SM:** Yes, saves effort. [Chuckles]

**MC:** Yes, for one thing.

**SM:** And food, I think.

**MC:** And it's more convenient.

**SM:** Yes. Much more.

MC: You know, instead of cooking for two.

SM: Yes. It's hard to cook for two. [Chuckles]

MC: Because the children are all grown up and gone now, so . . .

SM: Do you take turns cooking or you both cook together?

MC: No. Like Lolita will cook the Chinese and if it's American cooking, I usually cook it.

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SM: Oh, I see.

MC: But then we do things together, too. I mean . . .

**SM:** Yes. Do you alternate Chinese and American food?

**MC:** No, we don't . . . whatever we feel like.

**SM:** I see. But you both cook every day?

**MC:** Yes. Yes. Well, we go out to eat, too. [Chuckles]

**SM:** Yes, that's always fun for a change. [Chuckles]

**MC:** It's very nice because we're very adaptable.

**SM:** Yes. Oh, that helps.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Yes. Well, it's nice to be so close, too.

**MC:** There's . . . there's no conferences as to what we're going to have. We just . . . you know.

**SM:** You just start. [Chuckles]

**MC:** We just . . . well, I know one time somebody was questioning my niece about something about . . .

**SM:** Beverly?

**MC:** No, her sister. About . . . you know, she goes . . . her children used to go over to her dad's. And they said, "Well, how much rent do you pay?" If the kids will stay there. What do you mean to *pay*, you know.

**SM:** [Laughter]

MC: Chinese don't pay. You just . . . no. You just . . .

SM: You share.

MC: Yes, you just share.

[Recording interruption]

**SM:** [Unclear] first part doesn't...

**MC:** No, I know my mother was horrified when she heard that some kids were . . . had to pay room and board at home, because they worked.

**SM:** [Chuckles] Chinese would never do that.

**MC:** No, Chinese would *never* do that. I've never heard of anything like that.

**SM:** Well, so . . . I don't know why it is I'm so curious about this, but does one of you just go start cooking and the other one comes and cooks something else or . . .? [Chuckles]

**MC:** No. We know what it is . . . no. It's about time to cook and we'll say, "What'll we have for dinner tonight?"

**SM:** [Chuckles] I see.

**MC:** And then we'll say, "Well, let's have this." And then we just . . .

**SM:** I see. Yes. And how do you arrange the shopping? You just both buy some of the things and . . .?

**MC:** Well, we both . . . yes, we go out.

**SM:** Oh, you go together to shop?

**MC:** We go to the store a lot of times if we both . . . so that we can kind of, you know, decide what we're going to have. We don't want duplicates of everything.

**SM:** [Chuckles] Yes. That would be . . .

MC: And it doesn't matter . . . like if she can take a cart and I'll take a cart and we'll go buy. Then when we come to check out, we'll say, "Put it here." And we'll . . . one will pay for it or the other will pay for it. It makes no difference.

SM: I see. So you go together and get what you would maybe want to cook or . . .

MC: Yes. Yes. Or sometimes we'll go and we'll bring a surprise home, you know, for them.

**SM:** [Chuckles]

MC: Oh, gee, what a treat, you know.

SM: I see. You mean, for the men or for each other? [Chuckles]

MC: No. No, for us.

SM: Ah.

**MC:** Well, like sometimes we'll say, "Well, tonight let's have lobster or something." Well, that's a big treat.

SM: Yes.

MC: You know, and then we'll bring it home and it was ready to be . . . we don't have to go into conferences as to what we're going to eat.

SM: I see.

**MC:** No matter what the other . . .

**SM:** It's like two sisters would do it, I guess.

**MC:** Yes, whatever . . . well, we're . . . I think we are.

**SM:** Yes. You are sisters in a way. Yes. [Chuckles]

**MC:** We are. We're better than sisters. Because we never fight.

**SM:** [Laughter]

MC: Really!

**SM:** Yes. I mean, when you said you would sit there and say, "Well, what should we have for tonight?" It's just like when my sister comes to visit, we just, you know, there is no conference about anything. [Chuckles]

MC: Oh. Yes. Yes. Well, we'll say, "Let's have this." "Oh, no." "Then we won't have that." The guys don't like it, you know. [Chuckles]

**SM:** [Laughter] Well, do most of your children live in the . . . oh, your daughter lives in Ohio or something, right?

**MC:** Yes, she lives in Cincinnati and our son is gone to Des Moines now, so he isn't at home anymore. And then their . . .

SM: Oh, yes. So you have the two . . .

MC: Yes. And their daughter is married and lives out in Tacoma, so . . .

**SM:** Oh. So you're really spread all over.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Do Howard's children . . .? They're spread out too, aren't they? Your cousin, Howard.

**MC:** Well that's my . . . it's his daughter who lives out in Tacoma.

**SM:** Oh! Oh, his daughter.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** I see.

**MC:** They only have the one.

**SM:** I see. They have a daughter and she has five sons, is that right?

MC: Yes. Yes.

**SM:** Yes. He talked about that when he came here.

**MC:** Oh, yes. They really enjoy . . . they go out there and they play golf, you know.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** They like the weather out there.

**SM:** It's nice weather out there, yes.

MC: Yes.

Y Project SM: Well, I guess we should backtrack to your childhood. [Chuckles

MC: Oh.

**SM:** So we suddenly jumped up to your grandchildren.

MC: Oh, yes. We were talking about Chinese . . . you know.

SM: Yes.

MC: Being so flabbergasted when somebody has to pay room and board at home.

SM: Yes. [Chuckles] Yes, right.

MC: I mean, I guess if you are . . . you belong to the family, you always belong to the family.

SM: Sure. And you actually grew up really right with Howard.

MC: Yes. Well, yes, because Howard's mother was always like a second mother to me, because she used to say, "If you don't want her, give her to me, you know."

**SM:** [Chuckles] You were the only girl in all the children.

**MC:** Yes, I was the only girl.

**SM:** Yes. Oh, did she say that to your mother?

MC: Yes, she used to say that. "You can be our girl."

**SM:** [Chuckles] What would your mother say then?

**MC:** Well, she . . . actually, she likes a little girl, too, you know.

**SM:** [Chuckles] Well, you know, you always hear that the boys are so favored, but actually I suppose they want a daughter, too.

MC: Oh, I don't know. I think . . . I don't think that I missed much. [Chuckles]

**SM:** It sounds like you were quite favored. [Chuckles]

MC: No, I don't think I missed much.

**SM:** Well, I suppose a Chinese mother would want to have a . . . at least one daughter.

**MC:** Well, my mother was quite, you know, old style, that she always said that . . . because she always . . . she never told me what I should do or what I couldn't do or what . . .

SM: Oh.

MC: She said, "You know what's right."

SM: Yes.

MC: "You make up your mind."

SM: I see. And she meant that you knew the American ways?

MC: She knew . . . she . . . no. She knew that she had taught me the difference between right and wrong.

SM: Oh, I see.

MC: She says, "You've been taught what's right and wrong."

SM: Yes. I see.

MC: And so she says, "You do what you know is right."

**SM:** Ah ha. So did she, at a very early age, tell you what was right and what was wrong?

**MC:** Well, no, she . . . she figured she'd brought me up and . . .

**SM:** You just absorb it. Yes.

**MC:** Yes. You knew that there were things that you could do and things that were not to be done by a girl.

SM: Oh, yes. Like you wouldn't go to the cemetery with the . . .

**MC:** No. That's traditional Chinese though, that's . . .

SM: Yes.

MC: But no, but I meant like we were not raised to be tomboys. [Chuckles]

**SM:** I see. Yes. That would be . . .

MC: And you were supposed to be a lady, you know. [Chuckles] You don't . . . you don't go . . .

**SM:** Yes. And being polite and . . .

**MC:** Yes. I was going to say, you don't go around screeching and hollering. You're supposed to be a lady.

**SM:** I see.

MC: And Chinese . . . it's not . . . and she always said, "If you do anything wrong, you're not the one that's going to be blamed. We're going to be blamed."

**SM:** [Chuckles] That's a good point.

MC: See.

**SM:** Well, were there . . .? The things your . . . the way your brothers and cousin would be would be a little different story then?

MC: No . . . I think that . . .

**SM:** Not necessarily?

**MC:** I don't think they were . . . they . . .

**SM:** They had to be polite and so on, too?

MC: Yes. Yes.

**SM:** That's interesting that she always said . . .

MC: And . . . and because there were so few Chinese, you have to set the shining example . . .

SM: Oh, yes. Yes.

**MC:** . . . of what nice Chinese girls are like. [Chuckles]

**SM:** Right.

MC: And a nice Chinese family, and a family that's not, you know . . .

**SM:** So that was the first Chinese family then here.

**MC:** I think we were . . . well, the Wong [unclear] were here then.

SM: Oh. Yes. But you were among the very first.

MC: Yes. Yes. But I mean, we were still . . . you know. People would still ask us, "What nationality are you?"

**SM:** Oh, they did?

**MC:** And me, not knowing what the word meant, would say, "Presbyterian." [Chuckles] [Margaret Woo Chinn pronounces it 'press-bi-terian' instead of press-bee-terian' imitating her childlike pronunciation.]

SM: [Chuckles] Oh, that's cute!

MC: [Chuckles]

**SM:** How old were you then?

**MC:** I must have been four or five. Because I can remember at school they used to ask me, "What nationality are you?" "Presbyterian!" [Pronounced childlike]

**SM:** [Chuckles] Presbyterian. [Pronounced childlike]

**MC:** Yes. And I didn't even know Presbyterian [pronounced normally], I just knew Presbyterian [childlike pronunciation]. [Chuckles]

**SM:** I wonder where you got that [unclear]?

MC: I don't know.

**SM:** Did your aunt say it that way?

MC: No, I don't know. I don't know where I heard the term, if I knew it was . . .

**SM:** [Chuckles]

MC: I knew it was Westminster Presbyterian Church.

**SM:** Oh, yes.

MC: But probably I thought it was pronounced 'Press-bi-terian'.

**SM:** [Chuckles] That's cute. Well, so the children were all treated somewhat similar then.

MC: I think so. Yes.

**SM:** The boys and girls. And they were really brought up sort of together?

MC: I think yes. You know, Chinese like, the brother was always very protective.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** My older brother, Beverly's father, was always very protective. He . . . when I went to school, he took me every day and brought me home.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** And in the wintertime I can remember it was . . . it was about eight or ten blocks over to Emerson School from where we lived.

SM: Yes.

MC: And it would get cold, and he'd carry me because I was little.

SM: No kidding

**MC:** You know, it was hard for me to . . . I was very tiny. Because I remember in the first grade I even had to have a footstool to put my feet on. [Chuckles]

**SM:** Oh. Oh, I see. Because your legs dangled.

**MC:** Because I must have been . . . I must have been tiny.

**SM:** Hmmm. Well, that was Charles, right, that took you?

MC: Yes.

**SM:** And he was your older brother. Was he protective of your younger brother, too, or maybe not as much?

**MC:** Well, see, the younger brother was still . . . yes, he didn't go to school. By the time the younger brother went to school, my big brother went to high school already.

**SM:** Oh, yes. So he had to fend for himself. [Chuckles]

**MC:** I . . . I had to. I had to take him.

**SM:** Oh. I see. And you took your brother.

MC: Yes. Because I remember one time I didn't find him after school closed.

**SM:** Oh, no. [Chuckles]

MC: I cried all the way home because I couldn't find him.

**SM:** Where was he?

**MC:** And of course . . . of course I had to go back. He was just late in coming out of school. [Chuckles]

**SM:** Oh, I see. [Chuckles]

**MC:** So I had to backtrack and . . . I'm sure he knew the way home, but it was just the idea. I'm the big sister, I'm supposed to take care of him.

SM: Right. I see. So that's one of the things that Chinese children are taught right off.

MC: Yes. Yes, well you are always taught you take care of your brothers.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** And you're not supposed to fight, you know. [Chuckles]

**SM:** Yes. Well, was Howard then right in with the same protectiveness or . . .?

**MC:** Howard was a . . . no, Howard's . . .

**SM:** He was older?

**MC:** No. See, because my brother, when he came from . . . my brother came from China he was already twelve.

**SM:** Oh, I see. So he's quite a bit older then.

MC: See, so he, naturally, was behind in school. But of course they skipped grades in those days so that he . . .

SM: Oh.

**MC:** He . . . I think . . .

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Storical Society **SM:** Oh, your brother was a little behind because he had to start a new life.

MC: Yes. Yes.

**SM:** How old was he when he came?

**MC:** He was . . . twelve.

**SM:** Oh, Charles was twelve.

**MC:** Yes, when he . . .

**SM:** And how old was Howard then?

MC: Howard is younger than Charles. Howard is

**SM:** Oh, I see. I see. Howard is . . . so he was . . .

**MC:** He's younger than . . . let's see. Howard's only . . . is Howard six years older than I . . .? Six or seven years.

**SM:** Oh, I see. This is Howard your cousin.

MC: Yes. My cousin.

**SM:** He's six or seven years older than you.

**MC:** Yes. See, he's . . . seventy-seven . . . he's seven years older than I am.

**SM:** Seven years.

MC: See, so he's five years younger than my brother was. But he was ahead of Charlie in school.

**SM:** Yes. I see. Well, yes, because he had started school here.

MC: Yes, he started in regular school then. So Charlie . . . Charlie caught up. He went . . . well, he graduated from high school in 1923, so he must have caught up pretty much, you know.

SM: Yes. That's what David Yip said. Sometimes he'd do two or three grades in one year or something.

**MC:** Yes. Yes, they used to skip . . .

**SM:** Yes. Well, he went to school in the village then, your brother? Or was there a school there? istory Projecti

MC: I don't know. I don't know whether . . .

**SM:** Oh, maybe there wasn't.

**MC:** Whether . . . what kind of school they went to.

**SM:** Yes. Was there a clan school, do you think?

**MC:** But that would have been all . . . pardon?

SM: Was there a clan school, do you think? That's what David Yip mentioned.

MC: There must . . . I don't know. They must have had some kind of schooling.

SM: Yes.

MC: But he forgot all that when he came. Because . . . because none of . . .

SM: Yes. But I mean, it would help with like math or something.

MC: Yes.

SM: Oh no, they didn't have math in the traditional schools . . .

MC: They must have. They must have some kind of arithmetic though.

**SM:** Well, I don't know when it changed. Maybe by then they did.

MC: Oh.

**SM:** But in the old traditional Chinese schools it was literature and . . .

**MC:** It was just reading and writing. Yes.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** Just the reading and the . . . the writing.

SM: I'm not sure when that would have changed. I see. And then your younger brother was how much younger than you?

**MC:** He's two years.

**SM:** Just two years.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** And that's really . . .

MC: Because he was born at the end of the year after we got to . . . so my mother must have been pregnant when she came.
SM: Oh, I see. Yes.
MC: See, we came in . . .
SM: Must have been quite a trip for her.

**SM:** Must have been quite a trip for her.

MC: Yes, we came in June. We arrived here in June. He was born in October.

SM: Oh, I see. So he became a citizen right away.

**MC:** Oh, yes. He was a . . . he was the American citizen right away.

SM: [Chuckles] I see. Well, when did you become a citizen? Not until after World War II or [unclear]?

let's see. It was in . . . I have been a citizen . . . I didn't get my papers until . . . MC: Not very. I can't remember even.

**SM:** Yes. But it's since you grew up?

**MC:** Oh, yes. It's since I've had my children.

**SM:** [Gasps] Oh. But you could have maybe gotten it during World War II, could you have?

MC: No.

**SM:** Not that soon?

MC: No. No, there wasn't passed then.

**SM:** Yes. My goodness.

MC: See, there was a law passed that those that married the soldiers, they were eligible, see.

**SM:** Oh, yes. That's right. Or if you went into the army, you could get it a little earlier.

MC: Yes. Yes.

**SM:** I see. Well, did your brothers go into the army then?

**MC:** Oh . . . No, Charlie was too old.

SM: Oh.

MC: And my younger brother worked in a defense plant and he lost a fingertip on a band saw.

SM: Oh.

MC: Physical, you know, disability.

**SM:** Yes. What about in elementary school? Did you say you didn't experience any kind of teasing or . . .?

MC: I never experienced any teasing but I . . . I'm conscious of . . .

SM: Yes. That was in Emerson School?

MC: Yes. Well, I only went to Emerson School for . . . I think until the third grade, because there was another smaller school, Lafayette School, and that was closer to the house.

SM: Oh. Oh, I see.

**MC:** And since Charlie went to high school, then . . . then they said it was too far for me to walk. So they transferred me to the other school.

**SM:** Oh, I see. And that was from third grade on, you went there?

**MC:** Yes. And then by the fourth grade we moved. We bought the house over on Clinton Avenue, so we went to Madison School.

SM: Oh. Okay. So you went to three different schools. [Chuckles]

MC: Yes. I can remember the lovely teachers I had, because we used to go back to see them.

SM: Oh.

MC: Well, you know, I think being Chinese and the teachers always . . .

**SM:** They couldn't forget you. [Chuckles]

**MC:** No, they always liked me.

**SM:** Oh, that's really nice.

**MC:** I was just like the teacher's pet.

**SM:** No kidding!

**MC:** No, but one teacher told me, she says, "Margaret," she says, "Why we like you," she says, "You have gumption." She says, "You don't have to be *asked* to do things."

**SM:** Oh . . .

MC: Which I thought was very nice.

**SM:** That is very nice. Well, they always say that . .

**MC:** You know, the time . . . the time that, you know, if the sun would shine . . . you know, how they used to have those curtains in the windows, school windows?

SM: Yes.

MC: The sun shone on her desk. I would pull the shade or something.

SM: Oh.

MC: You know, something like that. And they said, "That's so thoughtful." Well, we always did that at home, you know. If something needed doing, you did it.

**SM:** [Chuckles] It does seem like the thing to do.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** But a lot of kids wouldn't, I suppose.

**MC:** Well, I don't know why not.

**SM:** [Chuckles] Brought up wrong.

MC: Well, I don't know.

**SM:** So they really . . . well, you were probably real cute, too. [Chuckles]

MC: Well, I think Chinese . . .

**SM:** Judging from your picture.

**MC:** Yes. The little . . . the little round faced one, you know.

**SM:** Yes. You were the only Chinese in your class?

MC: Yes.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** I don't think . . . through grade school, I don't think there was another Chinese—other than my brother, you know, he'd be in the same school.

SM: Yes.

MC: But I don't . . .

**SM:** Was he usually in the same school? Charlie would be . . .

MC: No, Charlie was gone to high school by the time I went to grade school.

SM: Yes.

MC: And well, we both started Madison School, I know.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** We were both there. But then I graduated from eighth grade. And then, see, my brother was always behind. So then they went to junior high then.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** Because we were the last eighth grade class out of Madison.

SM: Oh, I see.

**MC:** Then by then they had built a junior high.

**SM:** So you went fourth to eighth grade in Madison.

**MC:** Yes. And I tell, when you see these . . . I still see some of the kids, you know.

**SM:** You do? [Chuckles]

MC: The kids. Because Central High School had a class reunion.

**SM:** Oh, you went to Central High School.

MC: Yes. I went to Central High School. And then we had a class reunion. Even some from Madison School were there.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** Because see, they had gone to Central.

SM: I see.

**MC:** Quite a few. As a matter of fact, I was so flattered at the high school reunion, because a lady came and she says, "Are you Margaret Woo?" I said yes, I was Margaret Woo. She says, "My husband said that when he was in the seventh grade, he says you were one of the smart ones and you tutored him in arithmetic."

**SM:** Oh. [Sighs]

MC: I said, "Oh, I don't remember that." [Chuckles]

**SM:** [Unclear].

**MC:** She says, "He had . . . he had come from the country. And they were behind in their arithmetic." That must have been the multiplication tables or something like that.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** She says, "Well you, evidently, were one of the smartest, because he . . . he remembered you tutoring him."

**SM:** [Chuckles]

MC: I said, "Oh, for gosh sakes!" [Chuckles]

**SM:** That's probably why the teachers liked you, too. [Chuckles] That's really interesting that they remembered that.

MC: Yes. [Unclear]. But the wife—I didn't know the wife—but she said her husband had told her that. And I said, "Oh, for goodness sakes." And then I said to my husband, I said, "Oh, people say, 'Margaret, I remember you anyplace.' But," I said, "oh, they can't fool me." I said, "I was the only Chinese girl." [Chuckles]

**SM:** [Chuckles] Well, it does make it easier to remember.

**MC:** Yes. Well, you know, when you go to a fiftieth reunion.

SM: Yes. Yes.

**MC:** And you think . . . when people . . .

**SM:** Was that the fiftieth?

MC: Yes. And then when people say, "I remember you," aren't you flattered? You think, oh, I look the same. But I know that's not true, and I think about it. I was the only Chinese girl. [Chuckles] I said, "How can you forget?" [Chuckles]

SM: I bet it was harder for you to remember them. [Chuckles]

MC: Yes. Well, it is.

SM: Yes. Yes.

MC: We all change though. But I... you don't change from Chinese. [Chuckles]

**SM:** To something else.

MC: No.

SM: Yes, that's right.

MC: Yes. [Chuckles]

**SM:** Hmmm. So you felt really accepted and well liked and so on.

**MC:** Oh, yes. I always felt like I was very liked.

**SM:** It would be interesting to know whether that was the times or whether you were . . . had a sort of unusual experience or . . .

MC: No, I don't think so. I don't . . . I can't remember any teacher, as I say, until that one in high school, not liking me.

SM: Yes. Yes.

**MC:** And especially in the grade school.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** Because the teachers, you know, they . . . it seems like they were so close to pupils in those days.

**SM:** Oh. Yes. And the kids all seemed to like you, too.

MC: Yes. Yes.

**SM:** Hmmm. And did Howard and your brothers have about the same experience, too?

**MC:** Yes, I think so. They have . . . we had . . . I know they have friends that we keep in contact with for a long time.

SM: Yes. Gee, it's terrible to think it has gotten worse in recent years. [Chuckles]

**MC:** Well . . .

**SM:** But probably, you know, in the very early years, there wasn't any reason for all this sentiment of, you know, [unclear].

**MC:** Yes. Well, I don't know. Like these girls that I know from when we were in the fourth and . . . we still correspond.

**SM:** Really?

**MC:** And they . . . you know, everybody there . . . they're talking about their grandchildren already, you know.

SM: Hmmm.

**MC:** And I have one girlfriend that used to be a neighbor girl. And she lives in California and . . Well, her family still lived here, and every time she came back, she would call me and . . .

SM: Oh.

MC: And we'd get together. But now . . .

**SM:** So you really made close friends.

MC: Yes. We really had . . .

**SM:** And you went to their houses and so on?

MC: Yes.

SM: Yes. Now, David Yip says he never visited in any classmates' houses. So . . .

**MC:** He didn't know I was . . . because I can remember going to a friend's house after school. The only thing is I had to let my mother know before that.

**SM:** Yes. She didn't object to it then.

MC: No, no. So and so had invited me to their house to play after school.

SM: I see.

MC: And then sometimes the mothers would say, "Well, would you like to stay for dinner?"

**SM:** Oh. So you were totally accepted.

**MC:** And then I'd . . . yes. And I'd call my mother and my mother sometimes . . . oftentimes she'd say no. She said, "They're only asking you because you're there."

**SM:** [Chuckles]

MC: She said, "You should know enough to come home early."

**SM:** [Chuckles]

**MC:** But this is before they fixed dinner. I mean . . .

**SM:** Yes. They really wanted you to, probably.

MC: Yes. [Chuckles] Yes. Oh, sometimes the girl said, "My mother wants to know if you'd like to come over and play tonight and stay for dinner."

SM: Oh.

**MC:** Well, that's . . .

**SM:** So that's really ahead of time.

MC: Yes. Yes.

**SM:** Yes. Did they sometimes come to your house to play?

**MC:** No, we'd go down to the restaurant sometimes.

**SM:** Oh, and eat there.

MC: Because, see, at home we always ate Chinese food. My mother . . .

**SM:** Oh, did you usually bring the food from the restaurant?

**MC:** No. No, my mother would cook.

**SM:** Oh, she would fix it. Yes.

**MC:** But I mean . . . but we'd . . . like sometimes on a Saturday we could go downtown. You know, we weren't allowed to go downtown too often.

SM: Oh.

MC: It would be a treat to go downtown and go to the dime store.

**SM:** [Chuckles] On Saturdays?

MC: Yes.

**SM:** With friends or with your family or . . .?

MC: No, no, the girl. Just the two . . .

SM: Oh, I see.

MC: If like maybe you and a girlfriend would go downtown.

SM: I see. Oh, yes.

**MC:** And then sometimes you could . . . once in a *great* while you could go to a show.

SM: Ah.

**MC:** It only cost a dime then, you know.

**SM:** [Chuckles] That was amazing, wasn't it?

**MC:** Yes. But you were always to come immediately home. You don't . . .

**SM:** You didn't linger around.

MC: No, there was a time you were supposed to be home, and you were home at that time.

SM: Yes. I see. So if friends came to your house, did you say, you would go to the restaurant to eat?

**MC:** Oh no, we'd play at the house.

SM: Yes.

MC: But then . . . but that wouldn't be the day that they would stay for dinner.

SM: I see.

MC: Then the times that we'd go downtown, then we could go to the restaurant. We weren't allowed to do that very often either. MC: Because you're not supposed to go down to . . .

SM: To your restaurant, you mean?

MC: Yes.

SM: Yes. I see.

MC: We're not . . . you're not supposed to go down and bother the restaurant, because that's business.

SM: Ah. I see.

**MC:** You know, there was a place and time for everything.

**SM:** But sometimes you did take your friends to the restaurant.

MC: Yes. Yes.

**SM:** Would they order Chinese food or American or . . .?

MC: No, usually American.

**SM:** You had both . . .

**MC:** Because that was a treat for me, too. [Chuckles]

**SM:** Oh, I see. So your restaurant served both.

**MC:** Yes, we served both. So sometimes they would like to have noodles.

SM: Oh.

MC: You know, noodle soup. Noodles.

**SM:** They liked that?

**MC:** Yes, they liked that because it was a treat for them.

**SM:** So it was a treat for you to have American food? [Chuckles]

MC: [Chuckles] Yes.

**SM:** That's interesting.

slottlettl stortettl MC: Well, like at home, you know, you have like steak and things like that. But that . . . as far as ... we never had casserole dishes or anything like that. [Chuckles]

**SM:** Oh, but you did have steaks or something?

**MC:** Yes, like the . . . like the standard meat and potato dishes.

**SM:** Oh, your mother would fix that.

MC: Yes. So she fixed that.

SM: Hmmm.

MC: But we never had the . . . anything that you had to read a recipe to fix we didn't have. [Chuckles]

**SM:** Oh, I see. Yes. Well, your father liked American food then or . . .?

MC: Well, yes, you know, I think that as far as the American it was the pork chops or steak and potatoes, you know. That . . . that kind of American food.

**SM:** Yes. But not complicated dishes or . . .

**MC:** No. We weren't into the gourmet stage then like they are now.

**SM:** [Chuckles] That would take another generation. [Chuckles] I see. But in high school then you did have a sort of unpleasant experience with a teacher?

**MC:** Well, that was the only . . . that one teacher I had, that I . . . the first time I felt like somebody . . . somebody didn't like me because I was Chinese.

**SM:** Oh. What kinds of things would he say? Did he call you any names?

**MC:** Oh no, he never . . . never did say . . .

**SM:** You just had that feeling.

MC: See, but you just feel like you don't get the help that you . . . you do, you know, like usually you can ask a teacher sometimes and . . . and sometimes . . . Now I know we had one teacher who said, "Now Margaret, you be careful when you do your chemistry. See that spot on the ceiling? That's what happened when somebody did it wrong."

**SM:** [Chuckles] That's the student [unclear].

MC: Yes. They'd like . . . they would even tease you, but this one was so stern and . . . and just like . . . he was condescending to answer your question. At least that's the way I felt. Maybe I . . . I was a little too sensitive.

SM: Well, if you . . . you know, if you never felt that about someone else . . .

MC: I'd never felt . . . yes. If you never felt it before, you know. That was the first time.

**SM:** Yes. You know when it's . . .

**MC:** But then I . . . I knew that he was from the South. I said, well, that was my excuse for him. That maybe he didn't . . . and I know he treated the black . . . I think we only had two black students at Central at that time.

SM: Oh.

MC: And when he . . . you know, you just felt like he wasn't quite . . . they weren't spoken to in quite the same manner that the others were. And as I say, when you never have that experience, it's . . . you're very sensitive to it.

**SM:** Sure. Well, did that upset you quite a bit? Or you just looked at it as . . .?

**MC:** No. It . . . it was . . . my excuse was, well, he's from the South.

**SM:** Yes. So that helped [unclear].

MC: Because, you know, at that time, day and age, you were still . . .

SM: Yes. Sure.

**MC:** They still rode on different cars and everything, you know.

**SM:** In Minnesota?

**MC:** No, no. In the South.

**SM:** No, but in the South. Yes.

MC: I know . . . I remember . . . this was in . . . this is getting off the subject now, but in, I think it was . . . in the 1940s. It must have been in the late 1940s, Lolita's mother had gone down to . . . I think she went down South with . . . to visit her sister, Lolita's aunt.

SM: Oh.

MC: And she had visited the sister and she was going to come home by train. She was going to come up here by train. And she says when she got on the train they made her get on the car with the . . . the black people. But then she said afterwards somebody came running and told her they had made a mistake and transferred her, see.

SM: Oh. I guess they never knew quite where everyone fit.

MC: And to her it didn't make any difference.

**SM:** Well, yes, I mean, she wouldn't mind sitting there.

MC: See, she didn't mind, she didn't think anything of it. And she said when they told her that there was a seat available there, she just went there and she thought nothing of it. She said they had made a mistake. Once they realized, she said, gee, she says, they sure treat them bad. Well, see, we don't . . .

SM: Not here, fortunately.

**MC:** No. No. You know when you don't . . . I suppose when you don't feel that . . . it must be a terrible feeling.

**SM:** Oh, really, it must be a shock to go to the South.

MC: Yes. Yes.

**SM:** Although I guess it's changing somewhat.

**MC:** Yes, I think it's changed a lot now.

**SM:** Well, and in your neighborhood then you felt really accepted, too, the children.

MC: Oh, yes.

**SM:** Well, they were the same as your schoolmates, I suppose.

MC: Yes. Yes.

**SM:** Yes. And their mothers welcomed you and . . .?

**MC:** Yes, and I know that there was . . . on Clinton Avenue there was another couple, an elderly couple that they were Westminster people.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** And they were the kindest people. As a matter of fact, I'm always talking about this. She gave me all her doll furniture from when she was a little girl.

**SM:** Really?

**MC:** And when I went to China, I gave it to another little girl and to this day I begrudge the fact that I don't have it, because they're antiques.

SM: Oh, yes.

**MC:** They . . . she had the nicest . . . well, they were the kind for a dollhouse, you know. And I can remember all these pieces. [Unclear] there were these little Victorian couches and these little cupboards.

SM: Oh.

MC: And these little upholstered chairs and things. I mean, they . . .

**SM:** Had someone made them?

**MC:** No. They were hers when she was . . . they didn't have any . . . she had a little girl and the little girl had passed away when she was an infant, I think.

**SM:** Oh, I see.

**MC:** That's the only child they had.

SM: I see.

**MC:** But I said . . . so to think that she gave me all that furniture. And I said, "And I gave it away." Well, there's no way that when you're going to China when you are . . .

**SM:** You can't take dolls furniture.

MC: You're twenty. When you're in your twenties, you know, you don't . . .

SM: No.

MC: And in that day and age, you know, if you had it, you gave it to somebody

**SM:** Sure. So you closed up your house and . . .

**MC:** Yes, we just got rid of things.

**SM:** Did you sell your house or was [unclear]?

MC: We sold the house. We sold the things. And a lot of stuff we gave away, you know.

**SM:** So you really went on a permanent kind of basis. Yes.

MC: Yes. My mother . . . it was . . . it was on a permanent . . .

SM: Yes.

MC: The only reason . . . the only reason I came back was because of the war.

SM: Oh, I see.

MC: It was then now or never, you know.

SM: Yes.

MC: Seeing I wasn't a citizen.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** I already had overstayed my extension.

**SM:** But did you think you would stay there when you went then?

**MC:** I think so. I . . . I probably would have gotten married. I could have gotten married before I came back. But I just . . . it was the choice of staying there or coming back.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** So I just thought, well . . . I'd better . . .

**SM:** You were sort of half American and half Chinese.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Well, how did you think of yourself as a child? Did you think you were American or Chinese or a little of both or . . .?

MC: Well, I knew I was Chinese, you know.

SM: That was your main identification?

MC: Yes, I mean, I was Chinese. But I didn't know the Chinese customs, like . . . you know.

**SM:** Oh. That's kind of a bind, isn't it? [Chuckles]

MC: Yes.

**SM:** You mean, when you were in China you felt as though you didn't quite know the customs or . . .?

MC: No. In China . . . I . . . that was bad, too, because we went to Lingnan. And there is the overseas group.

SM: Yes.

MC: So you all stick together.

**SM:** So they were all in the same boat.

**MC:** Yes, we're all in the same boat. We don't get that . . . really . . . it would have been better if we didn't have a group like that.

**SM:** [Chuckles]

**MC:** You know, you would have been . . .

**SM:** It would have been harder, but . . .

**MC:** Yes, you have fitted in with the rest of them better.

SM: Yes.

MC: But there's always the overseas . . . so they had quite a big exchange group, you know.

**SM:** Yes. Right.

MC: And so . . . so when you mixed with the so-called oversea Chinese, everybody's . . . can hardly wait to get your nylons and your . . . to be sent from here, you know. [Chuckles] And your ... your Western ...

**SM:** So you were sort of American, too.

nod? MC: Yes. And then you'd . . . you'd go and have the Chinese dresses made, but that was more of a novelty.

**SM:** Yes. For special occasions?

MC: Yes.

**SM:** So you wore American clothes then.

MC: Yes, we wore American clothes.

**SM:** What about . . . did you eat Chinese food?

MC: Oh, yes. That was really . . .

**SM:** That was a treat. [Chuckles]

MC: That was the Chinese . . . we went to all the Chinese restaurants and . . .

**SM:** [Chuckles]

MC: But then we still went to the Columbia where you would get the Western food, you know.

SM: Oh. Where was that?

**MC:** It was right on . . . gosh, I can't even think of the name.

**SM:** Over in the city?

**MC:** Yes, in the city.

**SM:** Oh, yes.

MC: We always used to go over. Every Saturday, of course, we'd go over.

SM: [Chuckles] You [unclear] over and ate American food.

**MC:** Yes. But then we always went to the Chinese places, too, and had the nice Chinese cake . . . you know, dim sum . . .

**SM:** Oh . . .

**MC:** Oh gosh, we tried all of those. All the way from down by the . . . I can't think of the name of the places, but there was really these big garden places where they . . .

SM: Oh, yes.

MC: [Unclear] oh, they're beautiful. You know, from outside, you don't know what's inside behind those walls.

**SM:** [Chuckles] I know.

**MC:** Until you get back there.

SM: Well, were there some American students in that overseas program?

**MC:** Oh, they were all Americans.

SM: I mean some Caucasian students.

MC: Oh, the exchange . . . that's what I mean.

SM: Oh.

MC: The exchange students were all Caucasian.

**SM:** Oh, exchange. I was thinking of the overseas.

MC: No, the overseas was Chinese.

**SM:** Was that two different programs or were they kind of together?

**MC:** No, the . . . we . . . well, we mixed with the exchange students, see.

**SM:** Ah ha. Okay. Yes, I know some of the missionaries' children went in those exchange programs.

MC: Yes. Yes.

**SM:** So the exchange program and that overseas group kind of together . . .

MC: Yes. Yes, that's why I say we don't get . . .

**SM:** Did you live in the same dorm?

MC: Yes. Yes.

**SM:** Oh, it was one program then.

MC: Yes, but the . . . well, see, the girl . . . they only had one girls dorm there.

**SM:** Oh. That's . . . oh, I see.

MC: So all the Chinese, the Hong Kong girls and the Chinese, the real local . . . the local girls, you know, [chuckles] and then us oversea girls, and then the exchange girls who had the third floor.

**SM:** Oh, I see. The third floor of the dorm.

MC: Yes.

SM: So there weren't too many girls there.

**MC:** Well . . . well, see, were there . . .? I can't remember what they were. There were under two hundred, I think.

SM: Oh. About two hundred.

MC: But the ones that we thought were modern were the Hong Kong girls.

**SM:** [Chuckles]

**MC:** You know, their ideas of living American style is far in advance of ours. There . . . theirs is Hollywood style.

**SM:** That's where they get it. [Chuckles]

MC: Yes.

SM: I see. Well, I think Hong Kong girls still are pretty much that way. [Chuckles]

**MC:** Yes. Oh boy, I said, they . . . those girls, their ideas . . .

**SM:** What kind of ideas that would shock you the most? [Chuckles]

MC: Well, I don't know . . .

**SM:** Wearing lipstick and . . .?

**MC:** No . . .

**SM:** Not that kind of thing.

**MC:** I think it was their freedom in going around with the boys.

**SM:** Oh, I see.

MC: See, we were . . . we were all pretty conservative over here, you know.

SM: Sure.

[Recording interruption]

MC: assertiveness And it seems to me that

MC: . . . assertiveness. And it seems to me that .

SM: Well, the [unclear] communities are usually conservative

MC: But it seems to me that most of the overseas groups were conservative.

SM: Yes. Yes. I think that's true. So you were saying, just so we can get this on the tape . . . [Chuckles]

MC: Oh. I was saying

SM: The difference between the Hong Kong girls and the . . .

MC: Yes, I said the mistake of us going to school was that we didn't mingle so much with the real native Chinese.

SM: Yes.

MC: We mingled with the exchange students who were all Caucasians and the oversea groups of Chinese, which were brought up in the United States but they . . . we were really brought up quite conservatively. And the . . . I noticed that the Hong Kong group, the girls were much freer in their mixing with people. For instance, they would go on dates with the Caucasian boys, which us . . . while us conservative oversea Chinese groups, we'd just go out among our own group and with the Chinese boys. [Chuckles]

**SM:** Oh, some of the other Chinese boys, too.

MC: Yes.

SM: Yes.

MC: It seems . . .

**SM:** Oh, so some of you did date regular Chinese boys.

MC: Oh. Oh, yes. Well, we were college age already. [Chuckles]

SM: Yes. Right. Men, I should say. Well, the Hong Kong girls then, you don't count them as StoryPri overseas girls.

MC: No. No. No.

**SM:** They're regular Chinese.

MC: They're Hong Kong but they are . . . they were

**SM:** Yes, but *modern*. [Chuckles]

MC: Yes, very modern. Very moh dang, you know. [Chuckles]

**SM:** *Moh dang*?

MC: [Chuckles] Yes. Have you heard that term for quite a while?

SM: No, I'd almost forgotten it. [Chuckles]

MC: [Unclear] *moh dang*: the modern Chinese.

**SM:** I see.

MC: That's why we used to think it was Hollywood style that they would get their idea of Western living.

**SM:** Well, what about . . .? Were there some more conservative girls from say the countryside? Or didn't they go to the university so much?

**MC:** No, most of the Lingman girls are city . . . city girls.

**SM:** Most of them are city. Yes. Well, those from Canton itself, were they pretty *moh dang*? [Chuckles] Or . . .?

**MC:** Well, they're . . . they are like we are, I think.

**SM:** Yes. A little more conservative?

**MC:** Yes, a little more conservative.

**SM:** Well, when you were growing up, did your parents emphasize that they wanted you to marry a Chinese?

**MC:** Oh, definitely.

**SM:** Did they say it outright, or you just understood it, or . . .?

MC: Well, no. They wouldn't mention it to me. But . . . but that was understood.

SM: Oh. [Chuckles] But you understood. I see. And that was always made to be an important . . .

**MC:** Yes. I think . . . [chuckles] I think I used to worry my folks, because they didn't know how they were going to marry me off, because there was nobody here that . . .

**SM:** You were the . . .

MC: Yes.

**SM:** But there were more men than women.

**MC:** Yes, but . . . but there were . . . nobody that they would approve of. [Chuckles]

**SM:** Oh, I see. Yes. Their choices were limited.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** I see. But they did make a point of it.

MC: Knowing that you've been brought up freely, you know.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** In ideas. They . . . they are not going to cramp down on you right away.

**SM:** So they were thinking of marrying you to a *real* Chinese?

MC: Yes, and that's . . .

**SM:** And that you might be a little too American, was that their worry? [Chuckles]

MC: [Unclear].

**SM:** So did they encourage you to find a spouse at Lingnan or . . .?

MC: No. Well, when we went back to the village, I mean, they would come with these offers. And I said . . . so I told my brother, I said, "I'm not having none of that."

**SM:** Oh, they came to the village?

MC: Yes. Yes. I mean . . . I made it known that I was not going to be shoved off to some remote corner. That's . . . that's why the school was the best thing. Storyking

SM: Yes.

**MC:** I always wanted to go to school anyway.

**SM:** Oh, to go . . . then you went to Lingnan after.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** There were quite a lot of offers as soon as you came there?

MC: Well, there's . . . I don't know if there were a lot, but I know there was talk and . . . I wanted to squelch that right away. [Chuckles]

SM: [Chuckles] So you told your brothers that you weren't into it.

MC: Yes, I told my brother. I wouldn't tell my mother, naturally.

SM: Oh.

MC: Because, see, my mother . . . seeing that my mother was widowed already, she . . . they figured that she would not have the say that my brothers would have.

SM: Oh, I see.

**MC:** See, they were . . . they were the head of the family.

**SM:** Oh, yes. So he was in charge. Yes. I hadn't thought about that.

MC: [Unclear] you know, my brother's not going to make his sister do things that she doesn't want.

SM: Oh.

MC: Within reason.

**SM:** Yes, because he had always sort of protected you.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** What was your mother's view of this? Even though she wasn't the one in charge anymore. [Chuckles]

**MC:** Well, I suppose the . . . if they hammered at her long enough, she probably would, you know, be swayed.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** You know, you'd be surprised how people can be persuasive when they think that they know better than you.

**SM:** You mean your brothers could convince her that you didn't to marry someone there?

**MC:** No. Oh my . . . I know my brothers could convince my mother. But my mother could easily be swayed by the women that would come, you know.

**SM:** I see. Oh . . .

MC: I mean she would accept it.

SM: I see. Yes.

**MC:** But when the last word came, I'm sure that my brothers . . . I didn't . . . I didn't have to worry too much that they were going to ship me off someplace.

**SM:** I see. So it was really your brothers you had to . . . think about. [Chuckles] That's interesting. So then you decided yourself to go to Lingnan? Or did your brother suggest it?

MC: I don't know. I was interested, I wanted to, and my mother said, "Well, you do what you want."

SM: Yes.

**MC:** I mean, I've always said that you . . . you can choose, you know.

**SM:** How did you hear about it? Or did you always know about it?

**MC:** What, Lingnan?

**SM:** Lingnan, yes.

**MC:** Well . . .

**SM:** I guess if everybody knew . . .

MC: No. When I was in Canada, one of my cousins on my mother's . . . my mother's sister's . . . she had a brother-in-law that was going to Lingnan.

SM: Oh.

MC: And she gave me a letter of introduction for one thing.

**SM:** Oh. She had a brother that was going there?

MC: Yes.

SM: Oh.

story bright MC: And also, I have another cousin who had brothers that—you know, from the village—that had brothers, had family members going to Lingnan.

SM: Oh, I see. Ah. I see. So it was pretty well known

MC: Yes, it was known.

**SM:** So people from the village did go there then.

MC: Oh, yes. Yes. Yes, they . . . I mean, they were city-raised, you know. I mean, not everybody stayed in the village.

**SM:** Right. That's where they originated.

MC: Yes. Yes

SM: Yes, I see.

MC: The people went out to Canton to go to school. They went to [unclear] and . . .

**SM:** Oh, did they?

MC: Oh, yes.

SM: Oh, yes. Yes. I see. So all those students didn't all come from Canton or Hong Kong or . . .

**MC:** No. No. No. No, there's . . . Yes, there are some brains in the village, too. [Chuckles]

SM: Oh, I know there are plenty of brains. [Chuckles] Whether they get a chance to use them though was more . . .

**MC:** Yes, and then I mean that they are . . . they tried to . . . [unclear].

SM: Yes. Well, actually, those areas with overseas people probably have more chance to go to school maybe.

History Project MC: Yes. Yes, I will say [unclear] they have outside money, you know.

**SM:** Yes. Was it expensive to go to Lingnan?

**MC:** Well, not . . . according to . . .

**SM:** Well, then you could . . .

MC: Not according to the exchange at that time, see

SM: Ah. Yes. Yes.

MC: The Hong Kong dollar was favored at that time. I remember it was four and three to one.

**SM:** Was it?

MC: Yes.

SM: You mean American to Chinese?

MC: Yes. You would get four Hong Kong dollars for . . . for an American dollar at that time.

**SM:** Oh. I see. Well, that was handy.

MC: Yes, it was.

**SM:** Then when you came back here, did you go to the U a year or two or . . .?

MC: Yes, I went . . . I went just to pick and choose, you know, a little bit.

**SM:** [Chuckles]

MC: [Unclear] I took some extension courses and some night school classes and . . .

**SM:** Oh. Yes. You were working at the same time?

**MC:** I never got a degree, that's what I . . .

**SM:** Were you working at the same time?

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Oh, [unclear].

a. Orallisociety MC: Yes, I was working at the restaurant then. I was cashiering up at John's.

**SM:** [Unclear].

**MC:** Those were . . . those were lean years.

**SM:** Right. The 1930s.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** That would be hard to go to college then.

MC: Yes.

SM: Yes. So you were working as cashier.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Well, let's see. Howard went to the U, didn't he?

MC: Oh, Howard went to the U

SM: Yes.

MC: Howard went and he got two degrees.

**SM:** Yes, he really seemed like he liked it.

**MC:** Yes, he liked it, truly.

**SM:** Did your brothers get a chance to go?

**MC:** No, my brother went to work.

**SM:** Yes. And the younger one did, too.

MC: And the younger was . . . he was in the stage where he always lost out on . . . you know, he ... we went to China when he was ready to ... got through high school and we went to China. So he didn't go to school.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** And then he got married.

**SM:** Oh. And that usually puts the squelch on things. [Chuckles]

MC: Yes. Yes.

e mai SM: I see. So he was just out of high school when you went. Well, did he marry someone in China?

MC: Yes.

SM: Oh.

MC: I'm sure it was one of these arrangements. He was happy

SM: Oh, I see. So both of your brothers had arranged marriages.

MC: Arranged. Yes.

SM: Hmmm. Well, it was a handy time to go, I guess, then. [Chuckles] Well, let's see where we are on this. Oh, I was going to ask just a little bit about the family structure in your home. I mean, who was the authority? And between the two brothers, was there kind of an even . . . were they both the authorities for all the children and women or . . .?

MC: Well . . . no. You mean .

**SM:** When you and your cousin were living . . . when say the two families were sharing a house.

**MC:** Well then the fathers were . . .

**SM:** The father. The two fathers would be.

MC: The fathers would be.

**SM:** Sort of equal authority or . . .?

MC: Well, no. I still think that my . . . because my uncle knew more than my father—in society, you know what I mean.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** He . . . he was the outside man, in other words. My uncle was the outside man and my father was the inside. Like my father was in the kitchen more and my uncle was outside.

**SM:** Yes. Yes. So Yee Sing was somewhat the leader.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** In that he . . .

**MC:** And then when my uncle passed away, then my father came outside. Then my brother was also downtown then.

**SM:** Oh, so your father became the outside man after Yee Sing died.

MC: Yes. Yes.

**SM:** Oh, so he was the main authority then.

MC: Yes, because I can remember my father in the kitchen doing . . . making noodles. That's when they used to roll it by . . . we always made our own noodles.

**SM:** Oh. Oh, those are really good, aren't they?

MC: Yes. And I remember him doing that.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** And then he . . . he used to buy the things, you know.

SM: Oh. Yes.

**MC:** He was the one that shops for the things. He'd have to get up early and go down to the market, you know.

**SM:** I see.

**MC:** He didn't do it all by telephone like they do now.

**SM:** [Chuckles] Yes, it was a different day.

**MC:** You know, you liked to see what you're getting.

**SM:** See it, yes. That's important.

**MC:** Yes. You like to feel the goods. [Chuckles]

**SM:** Yes, that's why they got better things in those days. [Chuckles]

**MC:** Yes, really.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** Nowadays you call by phone. You never get to see it.

rallision the SM: You don't know what you're going to get. [Chuckles] That's true. So then when Du Sing became the outside man and then your brother became the inside?

**MC:** No, then they was both. You know, I mean the . . .

**SM:** Oh, your brother worked with him?

**MC:** With my dad outside.

SM: Oh. Yes. That was Charles.

MC: Yes. Yes.

SM: Yes. I see. And so then the women would all be somewhat subservient to them.

MC: Mmmm. No. they wouldn't be .

SM: Or not subservient but.

MC: They were home.

SM: Home

MC: Yes.

SM: Yes. But maybe would most of the decisions be made by the man or . . . depending on what kind?

MC: No . . . I don't know what decisions there would be. I mean like my brother would always ask my mother if . . . if there's things that they wanted to do, you know. Still . . . she's still his mother, so that you . . . I suppose he would consult with her.

**SM:** He would ask her for permission to go somewhere or . . .?

**MC:** Oh no, he didn't have to ask for permission to go.

**SM:** Oh, well, I mean, when he was young.

MC: Oh, yes. Oh, when he was young, yes.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** But I mean like when he got to like high school.

**SM:** Oh. Yes. Yes, then he would go freely.

MC: Yes. He . . . then he's free to go.

SM: Yes.

MC: Whereas when I went to high school, I was not free to go, because I was a girl.

SM: Oh. I see.

MC: In other words, a boy always has more . . . because he had a car by then and he could do his own thing.

**SM:** Yes, in high school.

MC: Yes.

SM: But you weren't. Big decisions like to buy a house or what . . .

MC: Oh, my father. My father.

**SM:** Or where the children would go to school or something, would that be . . .?

MC: No . . . [unclear].

**SM:** More like the house would be.

**MC:** That's still a home, that's part of the family.

**SM:** Oh, I see. So the men made the business kind of decisions.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** So your mother would decide more about where the . . .? Well, I guess there wasn't too much to decide about where you . . .

**MC:** No, I was going to say, what is there to decide. There was nothing major, you know.

**SM:** Yes. But the children would be responsible to the women at home then.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Because the men would be working most of the time anyway, I think. Does that sound . . . right? [Chuckles]

MC: No, each of the men worked.

SM: Yes.

MC: I know when my brother was married in Seattle, my dad didn't go to the wedding because, you see, somebody had to stay . . . stay to take care of the business.

SM: Ah.

MC: And I didn't go because my dad had that bad leg of his.

SM: Oh.

MC: And he has to have somebody to put on his shoe for him. He can't bend the hip.

SM: Oh, I see.

**MC:** So I mean I stayed home so he'd have company.

SM: I see.

**MC:** Which was very well, because I could get his shoe on and take off his shoe for him and . . . you know.

**SM:** Yes. Then did your mother go?

**MC:** Yes, my mother went. Yes. She and my little brother went, see.

**SM:** Yes.

**MC:** So I stayed home with my dad, which was very fine.

**SM:** Yes. What about between the two families, did you eat together?

MC: No. We [unclear] kept separate houses. Yes.

**SM:** You had separate . . . really separate houses. Did you sometimes eat together for special occasions?

MC: Oh, yes.

**SM:** Or birthdays or . . .?

MC: Oh, well, no. Sometimes we'd go down . . . my aunt would cook like American style.

**SM:** Oh, did she?

MC: Yes. Then we'd go down and eat, you know, downstairs. Or, a lot of times we didn't even do that. She'd cook and she'd bring it upstairs and give it to us.

SM: Oh.

MC: I know she used to . . . she used to always make us jelly.

**SM:** Oh, really?

MC: Yes. And oh, it was big. We waited for her to bring us the jelly.

**SM:** [Chuckles]

MC: And she used to make the most delicious sponge cupcakes.

SM: Oh! [Chuckles]

MC: And things like that, that we didn't get at home, you know.

**SM:** That were really American.

MC: Yes. And you know, we . . . like in seventh grade we had home economics in school.

SM: Oh.

MC: And then I learned how to bake a little bit.

SM: Oh, I see.

**MC:** But see, but it's not . . . it was . . . you don't throw a thing in the oven every other day like you do now, you know.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** You didn't . . . you didn't even light your oven for maybe a month at a time.

**SM:** Oh, really.

**MC:** You know, to bake a cake or something.

**SM:** Yes, it was . . . yes. Because it would be too wasteful, I suppose.

**MC:** Yes. Oh, I suppose. And then, you know how ovens that are . . . they were not regulated or anything in those days.

**SM:** [Chuckles] It wasn't as much fun as now.

MC: No.

**SM:** I see.

MC: But then . . . yes, it was fun. And we had a sewing machine, so it was fun . . . you know, we could always . . .

SM: Oh, did you?

MC: Yes. [Unclear].

**SM:** Between the two families?

MC: No we each had one.

SM: You each had one.

MC: And my aunt sewed a lot. She used to make me things, see.

SM: Oh.

MC: And then I learned how to sew in school and I used to make things. I could even make dresses for my mother.

**SM:** Oh, how nice. Did your mother sew?

**MC:** Yes, she sewed, but not the American style.

**SM:** Yes, with the hand or . . .?

MC: Yes, hand sewing. And like she used to make things for . . . for my dad, you know. Like pajamas and things like that.

SM: Oh. Yes.

MC: Things that . . . nothing that you had to cut from . . . She had her own way of making patterns and cutting things.

**SM:** Oh, she did make a kind of pattern.

MC: Yes. Yes. They do their own . . . they can . . . they're self . . .

**SM:** Were they like paper, like ours?

**MC:** Well, you know, she would . . .

**SM:** Or she would just know how to cut it?

ordieta MC: She could know how to cut. She could take a newspaper and she would like . . . to make a collar or a yoke, she'd cut one out until she thought it was right, and then she'd cut it out and then . . . then she'd sew it.

**SM:** Sometimes I think that's just as good. [Chuckles]

MC: Yes. Of course, see, then in school I learned how to follow a pattern, you know, in sewing.

SM: I see. Oh.

MC: Do you remember we had sewing

SM: Yes.

**MC:** Did you have sewing and cooking in junior high school?

SM: Yes. [Chuckles] Yes.

**MC:** Well, that's . . .

SM: Well, when I went to junior high school we also had woodworking. It was the time where . .

**MC:** Oh, they let the girls do it?

**SM:** Yes, well . . .

**MC:** I wanted to so bad! They wouldn't let . . .

**SM:** I think it was very unusual, because I found out later that hardly any girls got to take that.

**MC:** Oh, I wanted to take that because I... oh, I love to do things. No, the girls weren't allowed. Because ...

**SM:** I think it's only recently that . . .

**MC:** Yes. Because none of the boys took cooking either.

**SM:** Well, none of the boys took cooking in our setup, but we did get to take woodworking. [Chuckles]

MC: Oh. Well, anyway, I know I . . . I loved sewing and I was the best sewer, see.

**SM:** Oh, do you sew a lot of your clothes now?

MC: Yes I... or not now anymore. I used to sew all of my daughter's clothes because she was tall.

SM: Oh. Oh, how nice.

MC: But I can remember . . . now, see, at the class reunion, I'd talk about these kids remembering things. He says, "Oh, Margaret. You're the one that used to sew so beautifully. You'd take all these tiny stiches."

SM: Oh. They remembered that.

MC: Yes. They . . . see, they remember things like that. That's when I said, "Well, maybe I did have some sort of a reputation."

SM: Hmmm.

**MC:** I was the kind that always . . . I could always finish something faster . . . sooner than somebody else, then they'd give you another project, you know.

**SM:** [Chuckles]

**MC:** Then you learn more.

**SM:** Yes. You get more things made, too.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Do you want to talk just a little bit about Yee Sing's funeral? Well, what did he die of? Did he die of . . .?

MC: He died of cancer of the liver, I think it was.

**SM:** He did?

MC: Yes.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** They had gone out West and he came home ill. They used to go on these . . . they liked to take these coastal trips by train.

**SM:** Oh, back to San Francisco? Oh, [unclear].

MC: They'd go up to Seattle and they'd go down the coast

SM: Oh.

MC: And then . . . you know, and then make the circle home by Denver.

**SM:** Oh, that sounds . . .

**MC:** We did that one year, and I thought it was just *great*, because those were the days when you really traveled well on the train.

**SM:** Yes, with the white tablecloths and all that.

MC: Yes. Yes, and the drawing room, you know, or the little compartment cars. Oh, I thought that was living it up. [Chuckles]

**SM:** I remember that, too. It was very *special*. Not like now.

MC: Yes. Yes, not like now.

**SM:** Oh, and so he came home sick from a trip?

MC: Yes Because he came home sick and he was ill. And then they found it was . . . but nowadays they call it cancer of the liver. I'm not sure what they put it down as then.

**SM:** Yes. Well, you usually die quickly from that, too. Was he sick very long?

**MC:** He wasn't ill too long. Probably . . . maybe a couple months or something . . . something like that.

**SM:** Oh, yes. That's [unclear]. And then . . .

**MC:** They had a regular Christian service at the church.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** And then they had this Chinese version of a funeral where you visit the places where you've done business, you know, you go around to the different places where . . . they . . . I hear so many stories, I don't really know what it was. It's just like it says you gather the rest of your soul. The places . . .

SM: Yes.

MC: I don't know. I've heard that.

SM: I've heard that, too. Yes.

MC: So I know that we passed the restaurant and we passed the store.

**SM:** Yes, I see.

**MC:** And then they had a band that played Chopin . . . I remember them playing Chopin's *Funeral March*.

SM: Oh.

MC: That's when . . . in . .

SM: Was it a Chinese band?

MC: No, no.

SM: It was a regular band.

**MC:** A regular band, some unit that they could hire that . . . and they went down Nicollet Avenue, I remember, from the church, see.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** And then they turned on Sixth Street in front of the restaurant. And then they went over to . . . it was . . . then it was called Western Avenue. It's now called Glenwood Avenue.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** And then he was buried at Lakewood.

**SM:** Yes. And were there other Chinese buried there at the time or . . .?

**MC:** I don't know.

**SM:** That was later, I guess, that they bought more plots for Chinese.

MC: Well, that plot that they had there, Walter had gotten that because there was a lot . . . he had some of the men that had worked for him so long that were just single fellows.

SM: Yes.

MC: And so that he liked to have them kind of together so that . . . see, the Chinese, they used to have, every Memorial Day they'd . . . they'd have some people that go to the business places in both Minneapolis and Saint Paul and they'd have donations.

**SM:** Oh, yes.

MC: So then they'd go around and they'd decorate every grave with a flower.

SM: I see.

MC: So that they figured that no one was forgotten.

**SM:** Oh, that was nice.

**MC:** Yes. That was . . . I think that happened up until wartime.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** And then . . . by then, you know, they didn't have that many people that could get around, the older school of people that . . . that would do that.

**SM:** Yes. I think David Yip was talking about how his father taught him to prepare these things that they sold at the cemetery. Chicken and rice and . . .

**MC:** Oh, did they do that here?

SM: Yes.

**MC:** I've never . . .

**SM:** I think over in Saint Paul though.

**MC:** Maybe [unclear].

**SM:** Yes, at the cemetery up here.

**MC:** Is that Oakland? Is it Oakland?

**SM:** Oakland, yes.

**MC:** Oakland, that's the old cemetery there. I've never . . .

**SM:** Yes. Before Lakewood it was . . .

MC: I know out in Butte [Montana] I was surprised. They have a Chinese . . . when we were there last summer. Howard went out because his folks . . . his mother and some of them . . .

**SM:** Your husband Howard?

**MC:** Yes. Yes. And they have a regular little thing that he said that's for the Chinese . . . it's this Chinese section. But they built a regular little . . . like a little grate there. Where they can . . .

**SM:** Oh. Where they cooked it right there?

MC: No. They could burn their incense there; so that it's . . . it's not a fire hazard.

SM: Oh. Oh, I see.

**MC:** You know how Chinese burn the paper money and the incense?

SM: Yes. Well, that was a good idea.

MC: Well, he said that was built there for that, so that's a place to put those. There's like an urn with sand in it that they put their incense in.

SM: Oh, yes. Yes.

**MC:** So I thought that was . . . he said, "Well, that's the Chinese section." And see, Butte is a . . . it's an old one.

**SM:** An old Chinese settlement, isn't it?

**MC:** See, there were a lot of Chinese in the old Chinese.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** And the place really is very crumpled and run down. The grass is overgrown and everything.

**SM:** Oh, nobody takes care of that.

MC: No. No.

**SM:** That's too bad.

**MC:** See, there's . . . there's not very many Chinese there anymore.

**SM:** No more Chinese there, yes.

**MC:** Yes. See, they've all gone.

**SM:** Hmmm. Probably wanted to get out. [Chuckles]

**MC:** Yes, well, you know [unclear] they say with the mining, what it is, you know, there's no livelihood there anymore.

**SM:** Nothing to do. Yes, that's true. And then he was buried in Lakewood. And then your father though . . .

MC: My father passed away in 1934. So my mother wanted to take him back to China.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** So he had a regular funeral here and then we kept him here until he was ready. We kept him in the mausoleum at Lakewood until we were ready to go back.

SM: Oh. I see.

MC: So we shipped . . . you know, took him back with us.

**SM:** And that was in 1935 you went back?

MC: We went back in 1935, yes.

**SM:** And then he was buried in the village?

**MC:** He was buried in the village. My, that's really an ordeal to get somebody back.

**SM:** I can imagine. That's such a long trip.

**MC:** From there, from up the river there, they had to take . . .

**SM:** Yes. Oh, up the river, too.

**MC:** They had to . . . I think there was some kind of a barge that they . . . because I can remember them pulling. They have . . . you know, these little things. It's like a little motorboat that pulls these things.

**SM:** Oh. That pulls the barge?

**MC:** Yes. That pulls this barge with the coffin on it.

**SM:** Oh, I see. I bet that was a long trip.

MC: That was a . . . you know, it's very vague to me, because I'm not . . . it . . . everything was so strange, Sarah, when you get back there.

SM: Yes. Yes.

MC: See.

SM: Since you hadn't been there since you were a baby.

MC: I've never . . . yes. And I'd never seen anything like this.

**SM:** I suppose that was an immense experience. Goodness. Hmmm. Let's see if there was anything else we missed here.

MC: And then when they go back, we had a regular funeral for him.

**SM:** Oh, in the village

MC: Yes. And I think it was one of these . . . I don't know. It was almost . . . it lasted almost a week.

SM: [Gasps] Really!

**MC:** You do so many things and you feed so many people.

SM: Oh, yes.

**MC:** They always . . . they always feed. But they say people come from all over. I don't know where they could . . . I mean, these strange people come, because you always pass out food.

**SM:** Yes. So that's traditional?

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Yes. So even strangers would turn up.

**MC:** Yes. Yes. Beggars, you know, and . . .

**SM:** Yes. So that's a time you wouldn't turn down anyone.

**MC:** No [unclear]. And as I said, everything was so strange to me that I...it's vague and forgotten in my mind because I just can't...it was too big a thing for me to comprehend.

**SM:** Yes. You were . . . how old were you then?

MC: I was . . . in 1935 I must have been twenty-three.

**SM:** Yes. Gee, that must have been really something. Well, I suppose by the time you lived there a while, you felt a little more at home? Or at Lingnan?

MC: Oh yes, at Lingnan I was home but I was never at home in the village.

**SM:** In the village.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** That was like a world apart.

MC: Because I went back . . . even . . . even summer vacation I'd stay . . . because they would take trips. They'd have . . . you know, the overseas that didn't go . . . Naturally, the overseas are there, you know. They don't go back to America for their vacation.

**SM:** Right.

**MC:** And some of them . . . I know that last year some of them went up to [unclear].

SM: Oh.

**MC:** But they said they had an awful hard time getting back because of the war.

SM: Oh. [Gasps]

**MC:** That started, you know. They'd bombed the bridge already.

**SM:** That's right. It had already started.

**MC:** And I knew some of the girls. And I said I'm glad I didn't go because I wasn't a citizen. I wouldn't have had the protection, see.

**SM:** That's right. Yes.

**MC:** Well, anyway, one summer I went back. I'd go back home for about . . . oh, maybe three weeks or so, then I'd come back out to school to stay for the summer.

**SM:** Oh. You'd go home for a month [unclear].

**MC:** Yes. Well, it's . . . I went home that year that the house was finished. And . . . that's the last time I saw my mother.

SM: Oh.

MC: Because she . . . she . . . they sent a telegram, told me to hurry home because she was ill. And then she died before I got home.

**SM:** Oh. That was after you'd gone back to school.

MC: Yes. Yes.

**SM:** But your brothers were there with her?

MC: Well, my brothers were home, but . . . but I wasn't.

SM: Oh. Well, it's such a . . . you know, a different life that you had from your parents.

MC: Yes. Yes.

**SM:** And I suppose your children had again a different one.

**MC:** Well, and another thing, see, when you go back there, everything is done traditionally Chinese and seemed . . . it's all strange to me.

**SM:** Yes. Oh, those were the traditions you said you didn't feel you knew?

**MC:** Yes. So when my mother died, you know, see, in the village, they don't even have regular embalming.

SM: Oh.

**MC:** So it's just . . . you know, they do it as fast as you can, you know.

**SM:** Yes, especially in that climate there.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Well, I suppose your mother did teach you some of the traditions here. But it wouldn't be possible to learn all that.

**MC:** No, no . . . yes, some of the . . . See, like Chinese are very strange when it comes to death. They don't talk about that when you are living. It's always . . .

**SM:** That's right. It's not supposed to be talked about.

MC: No, you don't talk about that. So I said this is all strange to me, they . . . you'd only do what the . . . as I say, the rest of the people in the village, well, they are . . . some are cousins and everything.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** They . . . and they take it into consideration that we don't *know* these things.

SM: Yes. So they didn't make fun of you or something.

MC: No, they didn't. No. And they didn't make us do things that we . . . like my brother says, it's like . . . you know how they always go up to . . . and you even see in these funerals of these big Chinese, where they go and they kowtow and . . .

SM: Oh, yes.

**MC:** And my brother says, "You don't have to do that if you don't want to." He says, "You can just say a prayer and whatever you want. Just, you know, you don't . . . you don't have to feel like that you're being . . . not filial, you know, or anything like that, if you don't do it the way they tell you. Do what's in your heart."

**SM:** It sounds like they were really sympathetic to you.

MC: Well, I mean, we'd been brought up that way.

**SM:** Yes. Does that . . . is some of that from your father or uncle or . . .?

**MC:** No . . . we just . . .

**SM:** Just a Chinese way.

**MC:** Just something that we've . . . and as we've always had the freedom of doing what we think is right. Don't . . . don't feel like . . . you know, you don't have to be conscience stricken that . . .

that I didn't do it the way that you . . . that I should have done. I only did it the way that I thought I . . . you know, just because . . . if you think it's right, that's . . . that's it.

**SM:** I see.

**MC:** Which to me is a big . . . is very flexible.

**SM:** Was your family then more flexible that way than most Chinese families?

MC: I think so.

SM: Yes.

MC: I mean, more than the so-called older school of the Chinese.

**SM:** Yes. Because many have told about how *strict* it was in their family.

MC: No.

SM: And maybe your family was a little unusual that way.

MC: I think . . . I think they can bend with the times.

**SM:** Yes. Was it when they came here they became more flexible or . . .?

MC: Well, I don't know how they would have been there.

**SM:** Yes, [unclear] there. Yes. But you figure it was more flexible than say earlier families, or traditional ones in the village or . . .?

MC: I don't know.

**SM:** It's so hard to know, I guess. [Chuckles]

MC: You know, I can't think of any other Chinese girls that were here.

**SM:** Yes. Well, Marvel. Well, she was in a mixed marriage though.

**MC:** Well, she did. But Marvel, you would hardly call her a . . . a girl from China, that's what I meant.

**SM:** Right. Oh, yes. There weren't any others from China.

**MC:** See, there weren't any. Everybody else I knew here was born here.

SM: Yes.

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

**SM:** So it would be very hard for you to learn the traditional things.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** I mean, you wouldn't fit in if you . . .

MC: Because I mean, I... the other family I know, they had boys, but nobody had a girl, a girl that was brought up...

**SM:** That's right. So you were really kind of unique.

MC: I'm . . . I'm the one, the one and only. Only one that I can think of.

[Recording interruption]

**SM:** ...just briefly, how does it change in the generations? I suppose your parents spoke mostly Chinese.

MC: Well, my mother spoke only Chinese.

SM: Ah ha.

**MC:** And probably with a . . . maybe a little English thrown in once in a while. An expression she would have heard a lot, you know.

SM: Yes. A few words.

MC: Yes. Yes. But then nowadays, in my generation, my children don't speak Chinese.

**SM:** They don't know it at all?

**MC:** They don't know . . . my daughter can . . . she can understand some, but she doesn't know how to answer.

SM: Ah.

**MC:** And my son hardly understands it when somebody speaks it to him.

**SM:** He's the younger one?

MC: Yes.

**SM:** I see. But when you were growing up, you knew both, I suppose.

**MC:** When I was growing up, well, I knew only the kind of Chinese that's spoken yet at home.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** Now any kind of . . . literary Chinese, I do not understand.

**SM:** So it would be hard to go to college in . . .

**MC:** Yes. Well, whenever we went to a college, and when in college whenever anybody spoke in assembly, I never knew a word they were saying.

**SM:** Oh, I see. Yes. It was more family . . .

**MC:** Yes. Yes, I only know the family idioms.

**SM:** Yes. That's the kind of Chinese I learned, too, the in-the-home, kind of.

MC: Yes. Yes. Because I never know what they're talking about in assembly.

**SM:** Ah ha. Oh, that's kind of interesting.

MC: Well, and when anybody gives a speech, I never know what they're speaking about.

SM: Because that's classical or whatever.

MC: Yes. Yes.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** Well, I don't even know . . .

**SM:** And maybe not that, but educated [unclear].

**MC:** Not classical but still it's . . . it's not the kind that you speak every day.

**SM:** I see.

**MC:** And what we speak is colloquial.

**SM:** Yes. That's what you had [unclear].

**MC:** Yes, that's what I'm trying to say.

SM: But you grew up speaking Chinese first, I suppose, before you spoke English. Did you?

**MC:** Well, I suppose . . . now . . .

**SM:** Did you know English before you went to school then?

**MC:** Oh, yes. When you play at home . . .

**SM:** Oh, I see. So from the neighborhood.

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Because, you know, even the next generation, like Judy [unclear] didn't know any English before she went to school.

**MC:** She didn't?

SM: Judy [unclear]. Well, she knew . . . she could understand a little bit, but . . .

MC: Well, maybe because her mother and father would speak Chinese all the time in her house.

SM: Yes, they spoke Chinese all the time at home. But you . . .

**MC:** No, we spoke English.

**SM:** Oh, and that's an earlier . . .

MC: Yes.

SM: Oh, so you spoke English with your parents . . . I mean your father?

MC: No, with my brothers.

SM: With brothers. Oh.

MC: And Howard. And . . .

**SM:** I see.

**MC:** And then you play with the children and you just pick up . . . they . . . it's a surprise how fast you'll pick up.

SM: Oh, yes.

MC: [Chuckles]

**SM:** Well, now, her parents didn't really want her to play in the neighborhood very much.

**MC:** Oh. Well, who else is there to play with?

**SM:** They'd play with the little children they met at Westminster.

**MC:** Well, are they [unclear]?

**SM:** The other children of those women in the picture upstairs.

MC: Oh. Yes. But are they . . . do they live close enough together so that they play with them?

**SM:** Well . . . you know, they were a big family. Six children.

MC: Oh.

**SM:** So they played mostly with themselves, I suppose.

**MC:** Well . . . oh, I was going to say, they can play among themselves when you have large families.

**SM:** Yes. Yes. Well, she remembers . . . I don't know why I'm putting this all on the tape, but she . . . maybe I'll take it....

[Recording interruption]

**SM:** ...yes, so that would make a big difference.

MC: The way we speak, we still call it the American [unclear].

SM: Kids. [Chuckles] Yes. Is that what you are, too, then?

MC: Yes.

**SM:** I've noticed that that term is used. [Chuckles] But . . . well, meaning Caucasian [unclear].

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Yes. But then, what about when you had talked to May Seen and Yee Sing? Did they speak Chinese to [unclear]?

MC: Well, they spoke both Chinese and English.

**SM:** Oh. To the children, too?

MC: Yes.

**SM:** Ah ha. But not your parents, did they?

MC: No. My . . . my parents usually spoke Chinese to . . . and now, naturally, if my dad was with my mother then he'd speak Chinese, you know.

**SM:** Of course, yes.

**MC:** And my dad . . . of course his English was broken.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** It's not his . . . you know, clear as our English.

SM: Yes.

ion Project MC: Well, like somebody told me they thought I had an accent. [Chuckles]

SM: Oh, no. I don't think you do at all. You're completely without accent.

MC: And I was . . . and I figured, where would I get an accent?

SM: [Chuckles] Since you've never lived overseas after eighteen months. I mean, except when you were grown.

MC: Yes.

SM: But Yee Sing and May Seen would sometimes speak Chinese?

MC: Yes. They . . . well, I imagine they spoke Chinese quite a bit. But . . .

**SM:** I mean, they spoke English to you sometimes.

MC: Yes. Yes.

SM: Yes.

**MC:** And now I cannot carry a conversation in Chinese without putting my English words in.

**SM:** [Chuckles]

MC: Even Lolita says that, and she knows a lot more Chinese than I do because she grew up more Chinese.

**SM:** Oh, did she? [Unclear.]

MC: Yes. Out West, you know, you grow up with more Chinese, because she had grandparents, she has aunts and uncles that speak Chinese.

**SM:** I see, yes.

MC: No. Like Barbara's children don't know any Chinese.

SM: That's your daughter?

MC: No, that's Howard's daughter.

M: Oh. Oh! Yes.

C: Her children don't. Their grandel.'

!: I see. And she'

MC: No, she's married to a Chinese.

**SM:** Oh . . . that's right.

**MC:** Wong Wen's son. He's a . . . he's an oncologist.

**SM:** That's right. I remember he told . . . but they . . . neither of them speak Chinese at home then.

MC: No. They don't.

**SM:** Well, *can* they speak Chinese? [Chuckles]

**MC:** I don't think they know that much.

**SM:** Yes. It's not easy anyway.

**MC:** Not . . . not . . . yes, no. Not enough to carry a conversation.

**SM:** Yes. So they . . . her children don't speak at all.

MC: Yes. And my Howard said, "It's your fault. Because you didn't speak Chinese." I said, "How much Chinese do I know to speak it to them?"

**SM:** [Chuckles]

MC: You know, our children. Because Howard knows Chinese, see.

**SM:** Oh. Did he speak to them in Chinese?

**MC:** Well, not so much.

SM: Oh. Yes.

MC: I mean, it comes easier to speak English.

SM: So the four of you at home will speak English.

MC: Yes. Mostly English.

**SM:** Oh, mostly.

ak English. MC: But . . . but I know . . . our daughter says she can go to the . . . she likes to buy Chinese groceries. She says, "I can make myself pretty well understood in a Chinese store." As to what she wants.

SM: Sure.

MC: But not my son. He'd never be able to.

**SM:** [Chuckles] Does he live around here?

**MC:** No, he lives in Des Moines now.

**SM:** Oh yes, you've already told me that. Right. And is he married to a Chinese?

**MC:** He's not married.

**SM:** Oh, he's the one that's not married.

**MC:** No, he's not married.

**SM:** And your daughter though is married to a . . .

MC: Caucasian, yes.

**SM:** Yes. Well, did that bother you a lot or . . . you were resigned or you just didn't . . .?

**MC:** I . . . it didn't bother me as much as it did Howard. History Project

SM: Oh. Yes.

**MC:** I've got that . . . have you got that on or off?

**SM:** Yes, do you want it on?

MC: No, off.

**SM:** Yes, okay.

[Recording interruption]

SM: Thank you very much, Margaret, for a very interesting interview.

MC: Well, I enjoyed this. I hope you got down what you wanted, and not just chit-chat. [Chuckles]

SM: Oh, I think this . . . no, I think this . . . we'll have, actually, very interesting information on .

**MC:** Yes. I wish I had more really precise information though.

SM: Well, oral history is more for your . . . you know, attitudes and impressions and that kind of thing. Fill-in for where the statistics can't tell you, you know. [Chuckles]

MC: Oh. [Chuckles]

**SM:** Thank you. The interviewer is Sarah Mason.