

Wing Young Huie
Narrator

Sarah Mason
Interviewer

March 25, 1979
Duluth, Minnesota

Sarah Mason **-SM**
Wing Young Huie **-WH**

WH: My name is Wing Young Huie.

SM: And when were you born, and where?

WH: I was born May 3, 1955.

SM: 1955. In Duluth?

WH: In Duluth. The only one in my family to be born in the States.

SM: So out of six children, is it?

WH: Six children: five boys, one girl.

SM: And you're the only one that's American born.

WH: Yes. The only naturalized citizen.

SM: Naturalized citizen. So this in itself would make a big difference, I'm sure . . . or do you see that as one of the main factors or not? As far as [unclear]?

WH: There really isn't much difference in being a naturalized citizen and . . . for instance, my brother, my next-oldest brother Ken. Okay, he was born in Canton.

SM: Yes.

WH: But . . . I'm not sure when he got his citizenship. But what's the difference when you're growing up?

SM: Well, I'm sure his citizenship wouldn't make much difference. I . . . I was . . .

WH: I mean he came over when he was young enough that his Chinese is very poor and his childhood was very much like mine. My sister, too.

SM: Oh, she . . . when we talked before, seem to have a little more . . . have a little different point of view from yours in some ways.

WH: Well, it's personality.

SM: I mean, she's very American.

WH: I think it's just personality.

SM: Okay. Although she remembers living in the village, right, in Taishan?

WH: Yes, I think she does. But it's very little.

SM: She seemed to have an idea of your father suddenly wanting to support the family and that seemed to have engendered certain kinds of feelings towards your parents. But . . . wouldn't be there if you weren't there, I suppose. Maybe I'm reading too much into this. Or she defended them when you said something like . . .

WH: I don't think she . . . I don't think she remembers. I think her . . .

SM: Maybe she was too young to remember.

WH: Yes, I think she was too young. No. It's just that . . .

SM: Is she younger than . . .? No, she's older than Ken, right?

WH: She's three, four years older than Ken.

SM: Okay.

WH: No, much of the information about my father sending things over and the whole history is pretty much knowledge she got from my parents, not from experience.

SM: She must have been five or six though at least, but it would be a very small amount of . . . wasn't he about two or three when [unclear] your brother [unclear].

WH: Hmmm. As for dates, they're all confused for me. I'm not sure what happened when.

SM: Oh.

WH: I'm not sure my father does either. [Chuckles]

SM: Yes, he had a little [unclear].

WH: Yes.

SM: [Unclear]. He's pretty alert, really, for his age.

WH: Well, for eighty-eight.

SM: He does very well.

WH: Is that what he said he was, eighty-eight?

SM: I didn't ask him exactly his age, but he came in 1909 when he was seventeen.

WH: 1909, is that American . . . ?

SM: Well, the year I'm sure he must have meant was American, but he did change his birth . . . when he . . . first he said he was fourteen and then he said seventeen, so maybe that was a change from when he came to Duluth.

WH: Yes, I don't even know how old he is.

SM: He must be either eighty-seven or eighty-eight.

WH: I'm sure it's at least eighty-eight.

SM: Eighty-eight.

WH: Yes.

SM: I should have asked him. [Unclear]

WH: That might [chuckles] be important to know, yes.

SM: [Chuckles] Well, what we're really interested in, in interviewing second generation is to see what, if any . . .

WH: Is your tape recorder on?

SM: Yes.

WH: Okay.

SM: Chinese values or Chinese attitudes or, you know, view of the world is retained. And it varies a lot. And maybe you just want to describe how you see your identity and what its roots are.

WH: Mmmm. Well, as I've said before, there were very few times in my childhood where I was . . . where I thought of myself as being Chinese.

SM: Yes.

WH: I always regarded myself as white. And the instances were few where it would come up, where I was different. Because, for the most part, I was the same. It's like . . . how did they refer to the Japanese during World War II, the Japanese that were over in America? It was . . . bananas. Yellow on the outside and white on the in.

SM: I can imagine that because of the . . .

WH: I remember something like that. But that's pretty much how it is. Based . . . I'm American, not white but American and that's the way I've been brought up and . . . I've pretty much lost contact with my heritage. As for Chinese culture, what I've learned . . . well, well there's still some . . . my parents, of course, are old fashioned. I come in touch with it there. But as for my lifestyle, well it's as American as can be.

SM: Did your parents ever make any attempt to teach you Chinese ways or did they just . . .

WH: No.

SM: See you as American and that was the way they wanted it to be.

WH: No. We all...well, my parents weren't . . . didn't have a lot of control over me. I was at school . . . when I was at school . . . if I wasn't at school I was out with my friends. We're not a *family* family. They didn't make any attempt to teach me Chinese.

SM: Oh, they didn't speak to you in Chinese even?

WH: My mother and father . . . you know, he never speaks to me in Chinese. Yes, he usually speaks English.

SM: How about your mother though? He must have talked to her some . . .

WH: Yes, well I can . . . of course I can relate to mother. I can communicate with her. But . . . that was inevitable. But they never made a . . . an attempt to, an overt attempt to teach me Chinese.

SM: You mean spoken Chinese?

WH: Spoken Chinese, right.

SM: Yes, I suppose they certainly didn't make any effort to teach you written then.

WH: No. [Chuckles] No.

SM: [Chuckles]

WH: Well, I remember rare instances where they'd teach me a few characters. My name.

SM: Oh.

WH: Things like that. But . . . I know some families . . . and this is, I think, rare. And of course I don't know. They make their children speak Chinese when they're at home.

SM: Oh.

WH: This was never practiced in my family. And so we're . . . our Chinese is very poor.

SM: But you were able to communicate with your mother . . .

WH: With my mother, yes, that was inevitable, I would have to. She speaks very little English.

SM: Right. So when you talk to your mom you talk in English?

WH: No, Chinese.

SM: Chinese. So you do speak some Chinese.

WH: Well, yes. Enough to . . . well, that's the sad part of it, see. I don't know how . . . how generalized this is. But in my instance, my mother and I don't communicate very well. We never have. And in fact, it's the same thing with our whole family. I doubt this would be very good for your article and I don't think my father would like to see this printed.

SM: Well, I wouldn't, of course . . . use it just that way. [Chuckles]

WH: But that . . . that's how it is.

SM: I'll use discretion, I think.

WH: That's how it is. When . . . when a child doesn't stay home. And I just didn't stay home.

SM: Oh, this was sort of in reaction to the Chinese-ness of your family or just to the personalities?

WH: No, it's just . . . being a kid.

SM: [Chuckles] Well, many of the Asian immigrants, not only Chinese but Indian and Korean and . . . they have . . . they've voiced a lot of concern over bringing up their children. These are, you know, young parents now, and I guess . . . kind of fear that this will happen. But with . . . maybe your parents thought it was better for you [unclear] back then. Do you think?

WH: No. No, it had nothing . . . no conscious choice of what is better.

SM: Just sort of . . .

WH: This is what happened. And there are . . . are reasons why. Well, my father had to work a lot. He was never home a lot. Things like that. As in any family would result, when the parents aren't home a lot or when a father is away. And . . .

SM: Who was....

[Background noise]

[Recording interruption?]

SM: ...be hard for your mother, I would think, to be suddenly transported here and then to try to . . . you know, how to bring up children in a society she can't communicate with anybody in.

WH: Well, she can . . . no, she can communicate . . .

SM: Or does she have other Chinese friends here?

WH: No, she doesn't. No, that's a problem, and she's isolated.

SM: But aren't there Chinese here? Like there's [unclear].

WH: They are, they're relatives.

SM: Oh.

WH: And of course they visit once in a while but she's pretty much isolated.

SM: Is she pretty elderly or is she younger than your father?

WH: [Chuckles] She's twenty years younger than my father.

SM: Oh, is she?

WH: At least.

SM: But she's kept mainly to herself then.

WH: Yes. I don't know how . . . journalized that is either. I can think of certain relatives where the situation is pretty much the same. They come over when they're middle aged. By then it's too late to . . . start socializing.

SM: So really, all she had was her children, in a sense. I mean, your father was working a lot.

WH: Yes. Yes, well she can't . . . well . . .

SM: Or did she [unclear]? [Chuckles]

WH: She had me when she was forty.

SM: Mmmm. And she . . .

WH: Forty? Yes, about forty.

SM: Yes. So you sort of grew up on your own, in a sense.

WH: Wow. [Chuckles] As on my own as anybody else is.

SM: Probably not [unclear] feeding yourself or something like that, but . . .

WH: No. [Chuckles] No. No. Growing up on your own, no, you can't put it that simply. I mean how many kids are . . . I mean they're not spoon-fed by their mother, right? I mean they . . . everyone grows up on their own. [Chuckles]

SM: I guess what I was thinking of was in terms of picking from cultures.

WH: Yes. Well . . . it goes back to being disciplinarians and . . . setting up a path for your child to follow. And there . . . there was nothing set up, it was very . . . it wasn't strict.

SM: Some of it, it could have gone a different way? I mean if your parents were very determined to have you brought up as a Chinese son.

WH: Well . . .

SM: You would have maybe . . .

WH: Well, if . . . [sighs]

SM: Or would it have been worse? [Chuckles]

WH: Well, sure, it would have been different. It . . . right or wrong, I don't know. If it was me, if I were . . . no, I can't say that. But in my children, when I have children, if I have children, I would like them to be very conscious of the fact that they're Chinese.

SM: Oh, yes.

WH: Well, I suppose that is, they'd at least be half Chinese. [Chuckles]

SM: I mean so you really think it would be very beneficial then to . . .

WH: I think it's very important to be conscious of your nationality.

SM: It certainly seems to be [unclear].

WH: But not to be nationalistic.

SM: No, that's something else. Yes.

WH: Like roots, that sort of thing. It's good. You should know a little bit about your identity, where it springs from.

SM: It's really nice you started . . . So you really . . . feel as though you wish you had been brought up more Chinese, is that right? I mean . . . or it's not that simple, I'm sure, but anyway you feel a loss of something [unclear].

WH: Hmmm. Yes, sure. Sure. A loss of my Chinese-ness.

SM: Because that's rather different from rejecting, I think.

WH: Yes. Yes. Although I'm glad I'm American.

SM: Well, you're certainly American since you've always lived here.

WH: Yes. Actually, I didn't know very much about Chinese culture until I started taking some classes at the U [University of Minnesota]. Chinese history.

SM: Oh, I was going to ask how it was at the U, whether you came to the [unclear] Chinese students or . . .?

WH: No. No. No, not . . . not . . . a few. A few. But it's . . .

SM: You took some classes in Chinese history, you said.

WH: Yes. I took Twentieth Century China.

SM: Who teaches that?

WH: Angus MacDonald.

SM: Oh, I know him.

WH: You know Angus?

SM: Yes.

WH: He's not there anymore.

SM: No, he's out at Stanford.

WH: Yes.

SM: Just temporary . . .

WH: Kind of a maverick.

SM: He's a good guy. Yes. [Unclear.]

WH: He's a really good guy, yes. Eccentric.

SM: [Chuckles]

WH: Wouldn't you say?

SM: I don't know him really well, I've just talked to him a few times and [unclear].

WH: He's more Chinese than I am.

SM: [Chuckles] I don't know, that's [unclear].

WH: He certainly speaks it better.

SM: [Chuckles] Didn't he study in Taiwan or something?

WH: Yes, he did. He speaks Mandarin.

SM: Oh, right.

WH: Yes.

SM: Well, that's interesting. What else did you take? I mean [unclear].

WH: Oh, I took a year of Mandarin.

SM: Oh, you did?

WH: Yes. Professor . . . Chang.

SM: I don't know anything about her.

WH: Was it Chang?

SM: There's a Liu that I met [unclear]. But she's in [unclear]. I guess I don't know people in the language department very well.

WH: Yes. Well, it's . . . it's hard for me to . . . When I come in contact with Chinese who not from . . . who are born in . . . who were born in China, were from either Taiwan or Hong Kong . . .

SM: Yes.

WH: There is . . . such a marked difference that immediately on meeting them there's a . . . a barrier of sorts.

SM: So you avoid them? [Chuckles]

WH: No. Well, I don't avoid them. No, I became friends with a few of them. But it's just that there's a language difference, first of all. They speak with an accent. They *are* Chinese. I am *American* Chinese—or Chinese American.

SM: How did Chinese students relate to Chinese Americans? I just think it would a little . . .

WH: Oh, pretty good. Pretty good. But you know, Chinese Americans tend to . . . stick together as would any . . .

SM: Stuck together?

WH: Stick together, as would any ethnic group.

SM: Yes.

WH: Although . . . although . . . many of them are Americanized so they have friends who are both Americans and Chinese. But again, there is a language barrier. Difficulty not more than a barrier. Barrier is maybe too strong a word. But it . . . you know, it's hard to understand some of these people. Not for me, but people remark to me, you know, how can you understand this guy? He speaks English, but you know, with such a strong accent that it's hard to make out . . .

SM: They're speaking of Chinese from China?

WH: Yes.

SM: Yes.

WH: Students from Taiwan or . . . and then because of this, you know, they're bound to be more shy because they're self-conscious.

SM: Well, weren't there any other second generation growing up here when you were growing up? Been friends with or . . .?

WH: That I was friends with? No, none that I was friends with. I had a couple cousins.

SM: Cousins. [Unclear]

WH: But we didn't see them too much. Yes, they live in Minneapolis now.

SM: Oh. Oh, but they did live here when you were growing up?

WH: Yes. Yes. We visited them once in a while. But I had no friends that I saw on a...

SM: At school.

WH: A daily basis, or a weekly basis. No. They were . . . there just aren't too many, there weren't too many Chinese.

SM: Yes. It had already begun to grow smaller, the Chinese population in Duluth?

WH: Smaller?

SM: I mean there was a peak at one point, I understood. About [unclear].

WH: I don't know what the demographics of it is, but I'm sure if there was an increase or a decrease it wasn't that . . . it was marginal.

SM: Oh. I thought that in the last few years they'd lost quite a few numbers to the Cities, to jobs and . . .

WH: I don't know where, which . . .

SM: [Coughs] I don't have any very definite figures of their sort of estimates like that. So . . .
[Chuckles]

WH: I don't know. You know, most of the Chinese here are either related to me or they work at the restaurant.

SM: Oh, so . . .

WH: Or work at *a* restaurant.

SM: So you are in contact with a lot of Chinese in Duluth then. But maybe not on a really . . .

WH: It's pretty superficial contact.

SM: [Unclear] basis. Yes.

WH: Yes.

SM: It's because your part of this family.

WH: Yes. Well, yes. Well, there are Chinese families around. I don't know how many Chinese there are. I know . . . I remember when I was at UMD that I didn't see very many students, Chinese students around.

SM: That was just a few years ago, right?

WH: Yes, that was three years ago. Three and four years ago.

SM: It seems to me from what I can see just by looking through city directories of Chinese businesses, there were more earlier in the century. Like . . . like when your father was . . .

WH: Well, when my father first opened up his restaurant, there were quite a few Chinese restaurants.

SM: Really. There were about seven or eight, I think, in about [unclear].

WH: Yes, but his was the only one with staying power.

SM: Yes, he really seemed to have been very successful in . . .

WH: Ah . . . yes. He's extremely hard working.

SM: Yes. Well, your brother [unclear] is very much more . . . Chinese or whatever you want to call it.

WH: Yes.

SM: Is that because he came as a teenager and [unclear].

WH: I think . . . well, I'm sure that had something to do with it.

SM: Yes.

WH: He came over at . . . I don't know how old he was when he came over. Was he a teenager?

SM: He was about fourteen, I think.

WH: Fourteen, yes. That sounds about right, yes.

SM: Maybe sixteen . . .

WH: Yes, sure. Well, he . . .

SM: He was already formed, in a sense.

WH: Yes, sure, he sure was formed. [Chuckles] He came over and . . . well, he had . . . you know, I'm sure he had a . . . the difficulty with the language at first.

SM: Yes.

WH: I think he had to . . . they had to send him back a couple grades.

SM: Oh . . .

WH: Didn't they? I think so. I know Gong, well . . . when he was in first grade he was already . . . well, he was much older than six.

SM: Well, Gong, who was he in the . . .

WH: Gong....

[Recording interruption]

WH: He would work . . . sixteen hours. An hour for school.

SM: Oh, yes. When he was learning English.

WH: An hour for studying. An hour to eat, whatever.

SM: About four or five for sleep.

WH: So yes, He'd sleep four hours, work the other sixteen, and the remaining four hours were spent at school and studying.

SM: That's incredible. I mean . . . well, wouldn't you, too? Work right after school and . . .

WH: That was the same thing.

SM: Oh.

WH: Yes.

SM: But he seems to have wanted to be very careful to bring his children up as Chinese.

WH: Well, no, they speak . . . their Chinese is much better than mine was at their age.

SM: So he's bringing them up rather differently from the way you were brought up.

WH: Well, his wife.

SM: Oh, she's from China.

WH: She's from China and they don't speak . . . Chinese exclusively at home but I know she does make an attempt to have them speak as much as possible. So their Cantonese isn't too bad.

SM: They speak Cantonese.

WH: Yes.

SM: Can they speak Mandarin at all?

WH: No.

SM: I was wondering whether they saw this now as a real asset, I mean, especially if they had Mandarin, I suppose, because they could go into some field where they could use this with things opening up in China.

WH: Yes, I think . . . I think she probably does want . . . Lily does want them to learn Mandarin. She knows a little Mandarin herself.

SM: Does she?

WH: Yes. But not enough to really teach the kids. I don't know. I don't know . . .

SM: Does she see them as possibly . . . working at any kind of work that they could this language or . . .?

WH: No, I don't think she thinks of it in those terms, just that it's good to know.

SM: Yes. [Unclear.]

WH: I don't think she has any . . . yes, foresight.

SM: Well, how do you relate to Wen Ying? I mean, it seems to me . . . maybe it's no problem at all, but it seems to me there is a real difference between . . .

WH: Well, he's almost twice my age.

SM: Yes. So that in itself would be certainly . . .

WH: That in itself. So, yes.

SM: Well, I suppose he was really . . . how old was he when you were born? Was he already an adult?

WH: Yes, well he was in his twenties. See, I'm twenty . . . I'll be twenty-four this year and he'll be thirty . . . forty-three, forty-four.

SM: Oh, yes.

WH: I'm not sure. Well, forty-four is . . . around forty-four. So he's . . .

SM: Yes. So he really didn't grow up with you then at all.

WH: So he was . . . yes, well, he was twenty then, when I was born.

SM: Well, have you ever thought of taking a trip to China, anything like that?

WH: I've been to Hong Kong.

SM: Oh, have you?

WH: Yes.

SM: Oh.

WH: I don't think I ever want to go back. [Chuckles]

SM: [Chuckles] Really?

WH: It's a slum over there.

SM: It's really crowded.

WH: Yes, it's . . . real crowded. That's one of the better things you can say about it.

SM: [Chuckles] What about the mainland?

WH: No, I never . . . Hong Kong was as far as we got. Sure, yes, I'd like . . .

SM: [Unclear] would be interested in anything like that?

WH: Sure, who wouldn't? [Chuckles]

SM: [Unclear] Yes, who wouldn't . . .

WH: But I don't have any burning desire to go to China.

SM: So if I understand you right, then you really wish you had a little more background in the Chinese culture and something [unclear].

WH: Well, it would be nice.

SM: To have understanding yourself.

WH: It would be nice. I don't want this coming out something like . . . putting the blame on my parents.

SM: No, it's just . . .

WH: No, no. It's just that . . .

SM: It's the dilemma of the immigrants [chuckles] I would say in this [unclear].

WH: Yes. Yes. Yes. It's . . . yes, it would be nice to speak Chinese fluently, to be able to read it fluently, but that's kind of asking quite a bit.

SM: You bet, it really is, to read it. [Chuckles] It's almost a lifetime.

WH: Sure, yes, I took one year of and I learned about six hundred characters. I remember one, maybe.

SM: [Chuckles] But you would bring them back.

WH: It would take a while. It would take a while, it's a tough language to learn.

SM: [Unclear] the language phonetic system, which makes it more discouraging to learn the [chuckles] characters.

WH: Yes, well, characters will be obsolete. Maybe not in our lifetime.

SM: But it will come.

WH: It'll come.

SM: But of course all that's been written before will still be in characters.

WH: Yes, well, it'll be like Latin.

SM: [Unclear]

WH: It's . . . it's a stupid way to write. Incredibly stupid.

SM: Well, it isn't exactly stupid, would you say? [Chuckles] I mean, it takes a lot of brains to master.

WH: Well . . . yes. I think it's one of the reasons why there's so much illiteracy in China. So that I've got to . . . I mean, you can't sound out characters. I think that's *stupid*.

SM: It was an elite thing.

WH: Yes. Well, alphabet. You know, you can't beat the alphabet. And I think that's why they're changing over to a phonetically sounded out . . .

SM: Well, especially in a modern industrialized era.

WH: Yes. Yes.

SM: It's hard to adapt.

WH: Well, it's just . . . it's awkward, that's all. And it's too hard to learn on a mass basis.

SM: It really is a hard language.

WH: Yes, it's a hard language to learn. That's . . . that's what I meant by stupid. [Chuckles]

SM: [Chuckles] It's inefficient, anyway.

WH: Yes, it's inefficient. Yes.

SM: Well, so how do you see, you know, your own work in the future? Is that any relation to your background or . . .?

WH: No.

SM: None at all?

WH: No. Well, I don't plan to be a foreign correspondent or anything like that, if that's what you mean.

SM: [Chuckles] Well, I mean, just reflecting your own perceptions, you know, the way [unclear] it all works.

WH: Well, my perceptions are not based on my being Chinese American, but as being an individual. And it is that as I grow older, I think of myself . . . less and less of even being American. I think that's too limiting. That has nothing to do with probably your story, but . . . [Chuckles]

SM: Oh, it does.

WH: That's more of an individual choice for me.

SM: I guess what kind puzzles me is that . . . I mean, although you seem so completely American, you do have this sort of . . . inner longing . . .

WH: You're going to have to explain that...

SM: To know your own culture.

WH: Oh.

SM: Yes, maybe I did read too much into it.

WH: Well, it's . . . I think it's . . .

SM: Maybe that's just a feeling that . . .

WH: I think that it's more a personal trait. Because I can think of lots of Chinese, ABCs, American Born Chinese, that really don't care to learn any more about the Chinese culture.

SM: Yes, that's . . . mostly more common . . .

WH: And it's no burning desire for me either.

SM: To just sort of reject that, at least for a while. [Chuckles]

WH: Yes. Yes. Yes. Well, it's . . . I'm not going to trace my roots or anything like that.

SM: [Chuckles] You wouldn't have to take a trip.

WH: Yes. Yes.

SM: Well, is there anything else you'd want to say about this or . . .? I mean, sheds any light on this whole problem. [Chuckles]

WH: Hmmm.

SM: You say you didn't see much of discriminatory [unclear] experiences [unclear].

WH: No, not in Duluth. Discriminatory . . .

SM: Well, I mean just childlike things like name calling, fights . . .

WH: Oh.

SM: [Unclear].

WH: A few times, a few times. That's inevitable, of course.

SM: Did your parents ever give you any advice on what to do or . . . did they have any . . . what did they say if you told them . . .?

WH: I never talked to them about it.

SM: You didn't tell them.

WH: Instances were very rare. Some might call me a . . . and I didn't know what "chink" was until quite late. [Chuckles] So I never heard anything like that. And if I do now, it's just kidding. I really can't remember any single instance in my childhood where someone singled me out or tried to heckle me or something because I was Chinese. They might . . . oh go like this at me, you know.

SM: They would do that? Out of hostility or just . . . kidding or . . .?

WH: I think so. I mean, they must have. But then again, those are the kind of kids that are pretty stupid anyhow.

SM: [Chuckles]

WH: And they'll use any excuse to do it . . . No, it's . . . in Duluth it's pretty . . . being Chinese isn't so bad anyhow.

SM: Well, it's simply . . .

WH: If you're black, you know, you're in trouble. If you're Indian, you're worse.

SM: Worse than black?

WH: I think so.

SM: Well, it seems as though the Chinese have a rather good reputation here. [Unclear]

WH: Oh, yes. It's pretty good. Yes, I'd hate to be black or Indian. When my father was here, when he first got here, maybe he was . . . maybe so. He said one time he couldn't get a haircut.

SM: Oh . . .

WH: But now things have changed so much now. Chinese are . . .

SM: Well, this has always been a really mixed population, for one thing. I don't know if that makes any difference or not. I mean . . .

WH: In Duluth?

SM: As far as like the Finns and Scandinavians, or [unclear]. I mean they might be all white [chuckles] but they're mixed origins.

WH: Yes. Well, I remember . . . I just remember trying to take out some girls and their fathers objected because I was Chinese.

SM: That was in high school?

WH: Yes.

SM: Hmmm. What about at the U?

WH: The U?

SM: Yes. Well, there's no parents involved there, for one thing. Or maybe sometimes but . . .

WH: No, there isn't. No. No, they . . . those kinds of instances are [unclear]. Are rare, I wouldn't say they're rare, but . . .

SM: At the U are you talking about?

WH: No, just in Duluth, in general. In general, that's all. You know, I'm sure parents would be happier if you were white. Just as my parents would be happier if I took out Chinese girls, you know. It's just . . . normal, natural.

SM: You haven't had any contact with like Pan-Asian groups at the U around the Cities or like that MAAP organization [Minnesota Asian American Project]?

WH: Pan Asian?

SM: Yes, believe it or not. [Chuckles] And Minnesota Asian American Project. We've had . . . they've got [unclear] now, they're working on this cultural center in the Twin Cities. They've got funding now for the commercial part of it.

WH: You know, you see how out of touch I am with that sort of thing?

SM: Do you know Dennis [unclear]?

WH: No.

SM: And [unclear] center.

WH: Japanese?

SM: Yes.

WH: No, no.

SM: See, he's now the president of it though. He's Chinese [unclear].

WH: No, I was never involved with it. My brother was when he was down there.

SM: Oh, I see, which one?

WH: Gong. He went to the U.

SM: Oh.

WH: He belonged, he was a member of the Chinese . . . whatever the association they had down there for Chinese . . .

SM: Oh, it was a student organization.

WH: Yes. He was involved in that.

SM: He's the one that's in Florida, right?

WH: Florida, yes.

SM: And he's next to Win Ying in age?

WH: Yes.

SM: Oh, so he did get into those organizations and that.

WH: Yes, I think he did. I'm pretty sure he did. Most of his friends were Chinese.

SM: At the U or here?

WH: At the U.

SM: Oh. What years would that have been then? In the 1940s or something?

WH: 1950s.

SM: 1950s. Hmmm. Win Ying didn't go to the university here?

WH: I think he went to UMD for a year.

SM: He did?

WH: I think. But he's married.

SM: Yes.

WH: He married a Chinese girl.

SM: Right.

WH: So he speaks Chinese much better than he does English, although no, his English is really good.

SM: He speaks very good English, it seems to me.

WH: Gong, I was talking about Gong.

SM: Oh, Gong. Oh, excuse me.

WH: Yes.

SM: Win Ying seemed to speak very good English.

WH: Yes. Yes. He's gotten better, too.

SM: Has it?

WH: I think so. Well, he's . . . he's just . . . he's naturally . . . he's just very intelligent.

SM: Yes.

WH: And so I think he picked up the language pretty well. And he . . . I think he's always concerned with the way he spoke.

SM: Oh. He could be very linguistically apt [unclear].

WH: Yes. Well, I think people do have trouble understanding him sometimes.

SM: Oh, do they? Oh.

WH: Yes.

SM: Hmmm, he seemed very articulate to me.

WH: But I think, yes, I think he's very articulate.

SM: Hmmm. Do you have any other insights into all this? Well, what about . . . you said you're going into journalism - or you are in it.

WH: No, I graduated with a journalism degree.

SM: Oh, okay. I mean, do you plan to work in that field?

WH: No.

SM: Oh, you don't plan to do that then.

WH: I think I picked the wrong major.

SM: [Chuckles] Oh, no.

WH: Yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

SM: [Chuckles]

Unknown Woman: Excuse me, Young?

WH: Yes.

Unknown Woman: [Unclear] would like to talk to you.

WH: Yes, where is he?

Unknown Woman: On the intercom.

WH: Right now?

Unknown Woman: Yes.

[Recording interruption]

SM: [Unclear] have covered it.

WH: Well, who else have you talked to?

SM: In your family?

WH: No, who would be in a similar situation.

SM: Well, there's Frank Tsai. I'm going to him on . . . his parents came over in the late 1940s.

WH: Yes.

SM: They were students. And he's grown up in the Twin Cities.

WH: Mmmm. How old is he?

SM: Oh, he must be in his early twenties. He worked . . . he's [unclear] and he works for the state health department.

WH: Born here?

SM: Yes. He's [unclear] but he's . . . very interested in his background. He's active in all these organizations.

WH: Well, see . . . well, yes. Okay.

SM: I mean he want to interview . . . he's interested in the Chinese Americans kind of thing more than the Chinese [unclear] I mean they go together, obviously. But he wants . . . he's interested in interviewing other Chinese Americans, their history and [unclear].

WH: Oh. State health department, hmmm?

SM: Yes. He analyzes health maintenance organizations.

WH: Mmmm.

SM: Very personable kind of guy.

WH: Hmmm. He went to school down in Minneapolis?

SM: At the U.

WH: At the U.

SM: Yes. Joyce Yu, do you know her at all?

WH: Joyce Yu, no, I don't know.

SM: They're both real active in this kind of stuff.

WH: Yes, well, you know, I didn't know too many . . . I met a couple through my language class.

SM: Oh, yes.

WH: I met a girl who . . . I think she's about my age, maybe, no, a little younger, couple years younger. I think she was born here. Well, she could speak Mandarin fairly well. And . . .

SM: That could be the reason you maybe speak too much.

WH: Yes.

SM: Some.

WH: Yes.

SM: [Unclear] Mandarin [unclear].

WH: Yes. Yes. Yes. Hmmm, no I didn't come into contact with too many.

SM: Maybe there's many more than I think.

WH: There were a few I wanted to meet. I never got a chance to meet them though. There was this one guy . . . oh, what was his name . . . his father owns the restaurant down there, the big restaurant. Jack E's . . . Howard Wong's.

SM: Oh.

WH: Howard Wong's.

SM: Oh, yes.

WH: His name was . . . what? What was his name?

SM: He was a student, too?

WH: He was a student at the U, I think, in journalism or something like that. I wanted to meet him. But . . . I wanted to meet his girlfriend, is who I wanted to meet with.

SM: [Chuckles]

WH: But I never got around to it.

SM: [Unclear] made quite a difference there, didn't it? Some others . . .

WH: Of course, he's half Chinese.

SM: Yes.

WH: Yes, he's half Chinese. But sure, yes, I would like to meet some ABCs [American born Chinese]. See how they . . .

SM: This Cheng-Khee Chee up here, he's not an ABC, right? He's Chinese?

WH: Who?

SM: At the U library, UMD here.

WH: Chee?

SM: Yes.

WH: No. No, I don't think so.

SM: He came from China?

WH: Sure, yes, I think so. From Korea.

SM: Oh, is he from Korea? Or did you think I said that?

WH: No, I think . . .

SM: Oh, you think . . .

WH: Something up there says Korea.

SM: That name looks like it might be, doesn't it?

WH: No, I think he's Chinese though. But he might be from Korea.

SM: Yes.

WH: I don't know why that . . . maybe not. Maybe not. No.

SM: He might have been partly Korean.

WH: Hmmm. But I was going to say that . . . I might be somewhat of an anomaly.

SM: Oh, surely there must be others similar to you.

WH: Yes, but . . . I might have grown up a little more independent.

SM: Yes, that's kind of unusual for a Chinese family, isn't it.

WH: Than . . . than . . .

SM: Well, do think that was more a result of just the struggle for survival of your father, you know, with his work and your mother coming here late in life and [unclear]?

WH: Yes. Yes, there's an age barrier. And so I . . . grew up on the streets. No. [Chuckles]

SM: Yes. [Chuckles]

WH: No, I . . . no, I don't know. I don't know. I would like to meet some other . . . well, what did he have to say, this Frank?

SM: Yes. I think he was very American, of course, but I don't why he's so interested in . . .

WH: How's his Chinese?

SM: I'm not sure. I mean, I don't speak Mandarin, in fact. I speak a little Cantonese. But, I mean . . .

WH: You speak what?

SM: I speak Cantonese.

WH: You do?

SM: I grew up in Canton. See, I'm the other side of the coin here.

WH: Oh, I didn't know that.

SM: [Chuckles]

WH: Fluently?

SM: Yes.

WH: Really.

SM: Yes. Right.

WH: How was that?

SM: It's well, interesting to see the other side of this. [Chuckles]

WH: You learned English . . .

SM: Because I always felt more comfortable in China. [Chuckles]

WH: Oh. Well . . .

SM: I mean, it was a horrible culture shock. [Chuckles]

WH: Exactly.

SM: You know, when we came here.

WH: Oh, wow. Wow, I didn't know that. You . . . you learned English simultaneously?

SM: Oh, I guess I spoke Chinese first but pretty simultaneous. Now the Chinese is pretty rusty. [Chuckles]

WH: Oh, well, that's great. You don't have an English accent then?

SM: I guess not. Or, you know, at one point I could speak with [unclear].

WH: Yes. And you had no Chinese accent.

SM: No. Well, my parents [unclear].

WH: No, I envy you that, see. You know, my teacher, she . . .

SM: Well, it's the same kind of thing, in a way, in that I was really alienated when I came back here.

WH: Yes.

SM: But go ahead. What were you going to say?

WH: My teacher, my language teacher, not the professor but the assistant, a T.A., she was more than a T.A. though, I think. No, maybe she was a T.A. She was Jewish.

SM: Yes. Wow. She . . .

WH: She knew seven languages.

SM: Did she live in China or something?

WH: No, she learned in New York City in Chinatown.

SM: Oh, she did?

WH: She went to one of these classes for children.

SM: No kidding!

WH: They . . . they . . . yes, and she was sixteen, seventeen at the time.

SM: She must have been very good linguistically.

WH: Yes. Real good. She . . . if she talks to someone over the phone, they can't tell, they don't know that she's not Chinese, or that it wasn't learned. That's . . . that's great, seven languages.

SM: And she didn't grow up there.

WH: Hebrew. Yes, Hebrew, French, Mandarin, Cantonese, Japanese. I think she's learning Korean now.

SM: My goodness. That's really something. [Chuckles]

WH: That's tremendous, yes.

SM: Yes. Yes, that is.

WH: Yes, she just . . . she just has that ability. But that's interesting. You were where in China? Canton?

SM: Yes. [Chuckles]

WH: Missionary?

SM: Oh, my father taught at Lingnan University. Have you heard of that?

WH: Lingnan?

SM: Yes.

WH: No.

SM: It's something else now [unclear].

WH: No. I don't . . . Peking University is [unclear]. [Chuckles] Beijing. I don't know what it is in Cantonese.

SM: [Unclear]. [Chuckles] Yes, well, anyway . . .

WH: How old were you when you came over?

SM: Back here, you mean?

WH: Yes, when you came to America.

SM: Oh, when I finished high school, which was a long time ago. [Chuckles]

WH: Ah. Yes. But the thing of it, you look Chinese.

SM: Say, thanks. [Chuckles]

WH: [Laughs]

SM: I always wanted it. That's really funny. When I was little, I just . . . you know, I just thought Westerners were plain ugly. [Laughs]

WH: Yes.

SM: I really wanted to look . . .

WH: Is that right?

SM: This was when I was pretty young, you know. Later, I realized it wasn't very realistic [chuckles] to wish this kind of thing.

WH: Hmmm. You know, I think my . . . some of my relatives think just the opposite.

SM: Your what?

WH: Some of my . . . well, they think that . . . my relatives think that Americans look much more handsome than Chinese.

SM: They do? Why would they think that, I wonder? They've lived here all along?

WH: Yes. No, no, no. They're from China. They think that their features are much prettier. They don't think Chinese features are very pretty. I used to think . . .

SM: It's just the opposite of [unclear].

WH: I used to think all Chinese thought that way then.

SM: Oh, did you?

WH: Well, because, you know, like, you know, they . . . Chinese actresses.

SM: Yes.

WH: They have operations on their eyes to give them a double eyelid.

SM: You mean Chinese actresses in Hong Kong?

WH: In Hong Kong, yes.

SM: Oh.

WH: To make them look more American, and that's their concept of beauty.

SM: Well, that's in Hong Kong though. It wouldn't be in the mainland.

WH: No, maybe that's in Hong Kong. I don't know.

SM: Hmmm. That's very . . . well, they're probably . . . there must be some reason they think that. That it would sell better or something?

WH: I don't know.

SM: I don't know why in the world it would sell better.

WH: I don't know. Maybe they're just too influenced by the West or something. I don't know. Well, did you go to college here?

SM: Yes. That's why I came back.

WH: At the U?

SM: Oh no, in Ohio. But then after that there was no chance to go back. Now there is, if I had the money. [Chuckles]

WH: Yes. To live?

SM: I could, but all my family is all here. My husband works here and then . . . but I'd like to go back at least for a visit to Canton.

WH: Ah. Mmmm.

SM: Well, anyway, it's an interesting . . .

WH: How come you didn't interview my father in Cantonese?

SM: [Chuckles]

WH: I don't think it's very good though, his Cantonese.

SM: It's probably a lot better than mine is, at this point. [Chuckles] I should try to find an opportunity to brush it up [unclear] because . . .

WH: Oh, I'm sure that you . . . And you don't . . .?

SM: I can understand it when I hear it.

WH: Yes.

SM: I've heard it and, you know, of course restaurants.

WH: Yes.

SM: But different places I've gone in this interviewing, it's definitely...

WH: Yes. How about your Taishanese, can you . . .?

SM: What?

WH: Taishan?

SM: No.

WH: No?

SM: It's just [unclear] that I've had.

WH: Just . . . yes.

SM: It's really frustrating.

WH: Yes. Yes.

SM: Maybe if I heard it more. I would get [unclear].

WH: Yes. I'm sure, yes. Yes.

SM: It drives me crazy trying to . . .

WH: Yes.

SM: I mean, it sounds like I should understand it and I can't understand.

WH: Yes. Yes.

SM: [Chuckles]

WH: Yes. Well, that must be . . . a real shocker. I mean, that's pretty odd. Just, you know, a non-Chinese, speaks Chinese.

SM: There are quite a few

[Recording interruption]

SM: Yes, I guess it's not too well . . .

WH: No, that's . . .

SM: I mean, but quite a lot of people are fluent in Chinese.

WH: I mean, especially when . . . if you're among, around Chinese that don't know you and they start . . .

SM: Oh, yes. [Chuckles] That's pretty nice.

WH: Jabbering away and they might make a comment about you and then you understand exactly what their saying.

SM: [Unclear] [Chuckles] Yes.

WH: That's a great . . . yes, that's a great one.

SM: Well, I guess it's why I'm sort of interested in this whole business of, you know, cultural heritages.

WH: Yes. Assimilation or . . . yes. Well, yes. Well, I'm glad I could help you out, if I did.

SM: Oh well, thanks a lot. I mean it's very nice to talk to you again. You're going to stay around here a while or . . .?

WH: I want to move to Minneapolis.

SM: Oh, do you?

WH: Yes.

SM: You should get in touch with some of those people [unclear].

WH: Yes, I would like to.

SM: That MAAP organization is mostly second generation.

WH: The what organization?

SM: MAAP. It's Minnesota Asian American Project.

WH: Oh.

SM: And Frank Thai's the one you could get in touch with.

WH: M-double A-P, hmmm? Or just M-A-P?

SM: Two As. And I don't think there's anything in the phone book under it. But . . .

WH: Yes. Mostly second generation, hmmm?

SM: Well, the Vietnamese and Koreans are, I know.

WH: Oh, yes?