

Houston Asian American Archive
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Interviewee: Gordon Gee
Interviewer: Anne Chao
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Transcribed by: Steven Loyd, 2018
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Background: Gordon Gee was born in New Orleans and lost his father at an early age. He went back to China and returned to the United States as a teenager. He worked at a Gee family grocery store and later at a Gee-owned restaurant. After a few years he opened the first Chinese-owned meat supply company. He became very successful and branched out into other businesses, such as a roofing company and real estate ventures.

Setting: The interview took place in the office of Mr. Gee's cousin, Mr. Harry Gee Jr.

Key:

GG: Gordon Gee

AC: Anne Chao

HG: Harry Gee Jr.

—: speech cuts off; abrupt stop

...: speech trails off; pause

Italics: emphasis

(?): preceding word may not be accurate

[Brackets]: actions [laughs, sighs, etc.]

GG: I was born in 1925...and I guess he passed away around 1926. [**AC:** Wow.] Well, looking back, see all (?)—they also mentioned that in the old day, that um...I guess they mostly talk about they [coughs]...Cantonese in America. The Southwest part of U.S.A., New Orleans would be the place [**AC:** Uh huh.] for all the Cantonese stay. [**AC:** Oh.] New Orleans. [**AC:** Uh huh.] And at that time, my father...he was one of the representative—I guess once a year, he went to San Francisco for this big massive (?) meeting of Chinese or something, so he was...

AC: Uh, to the Chu Family, Gee Family Association meeting? [**GG:** No no no no.] Oh, no no.

GG: For all the overseas [coughs] Chinese there, Cantonese mostly. [coughs]

AC: In San Francisco?

GG: No, uh, they—they *meet* in San Francisco. [**AC:** Uh huh.] But he represented Southwest. [**AC:** Oh, okay.] See, New Orleans. And then, uh, for that, [coughs] talk about the Gee family, [coughs] in New Orleans...there was Harry Gee Sr., and I guess he's just a little bit younger than my father. And then Henry Gee's father and grandfather, they all were in New Orleans.

AC: Oh yes, Robert, (?) okay, okay. [**GG:** And...] So Harry's father was also in New Orleans. [**GG:** Oh yes.] Oh, okay.

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GG: Oh yes, you see. And he, later, you know, he traveled, you know, he came to...with us. You know, I mean, we left here in 1928, my mother took me and my other—took Wallace, and they all put, you know...uh, it was...must be 3, Wallace 5, and Elvis (?) 7, you know, was...it was, really was sad, you know, for my mother, [**AC:** Yep.] you know, being widowed, in the old days, [coughs] and seeing a foreign country, don't speak the language, couldn't make a living. So they decide, went to the village, be, you know, farm some land, you know, be easier. And that's what we did. [**AC:** Mhm.] Well, [coughs] uh...then, after my [coughs] father passed, so...it became Harry's father to...see. And later I...[coughs] he traveled, he wound up in Pampa, Texas. His father, very good on open business. [**AC:** Opening restaurants or grocery stores?] Opening restaurants. [**AC:** Restaurants.] At one town. If I'm gonna name the time, I'm just guessing, I'd say from the 30s to mid-40s. Every restaurant opened up in Houston, uh by Harry Gee Sr. [**AC:** Wow.] Partner with this one, partner with that one.

AC: This in 1930s to 1940s?

GG: I would, I would guess. [**AC:** Uh huh, right.] See, uh, those years, see. And he also opened restaurants in...in Pampa, Texas. [**AC:** Wh-why Pampa?] Well, he traveled. [**AC:** Uh huh.] Yeah, Harry Sr., he traveled. And then he also, uh, opened restaurants, Lake Charles, that right Harry? [**HG:** Mhm, right.] [**AC:** Uh huh, uh huh.] See? [coughs] [**HG:** Pampa, Pampa...] He's good about that.

HG: Pampa was because they found gas up there, [**AC:** Uh huh.] and so it was, uh...you know, typically when they have the gas find then all of a sudden, r-right now th-they're going to S—everybody's going to South Dakota. Because they've got all of this exploration that's ongoing and it's created a lot of jobs. [laughs] And somebody's created a, a business...what his business is, that he carries a portable shower so that people [all laugh] who are working in the fields out there...[**AC:** Smart.] There's nothing out there. So he charges them ten dollars to take a shower. [**AC:** Oh. [laughs] He makes money.] So, so, you know... [**GG:** How interesting.] Yeah, so... [**AC:** Yeah, he makes good money.] So when you're, when you're saying that Grandpa ended up going to Pampa, it was primarily [**GG:** Safe. (?)] for the gas find.

GG: [coughs] And the, and the point I like to make is, so...[coughs] Over a period of time, Harry Gee Sr. say...he used to need (?) the city. Not New Orleans. And that's where everybody (?) [**AC:** Ah.] come here, [**AC:** Wow.] and then beside a Gee, everybody come here too. [**AC:** All the other Chinese came. Okay.] Yes. All the other Chinese, not—after that, the Wong, the Zhou, they come from Mississippi, Arkansas, all of these, because...[breathes, coughs] I feel like...[coughs] Albert may have a lot to do with...and...[coughs] Albert would [coughs] tell the restaurant owner, say a policeman come to your place, drink coffee, no charge. Coffee made out of water, no charge. If they eat, charge them half prices. Don't make no money policeman. That way, you have police car parked on your places, nobody gonna rob you. Sure enough, [**AC:** Smart.] nobody ever, see, that's to start it off. And then by doing that, Albert say, [coughs] say, in the old days, if you could vote, you had to buy a poll tax, [**AC:** Mmm.] cost about two dollars. You pay, you sign up, and then you got paper and then when you—the time to vote, you can vote, see. So...right here in Texas, you sell poll tax, and Albert say well—[coughs] You volunteer, you go sell poll tax, or you could work for the Red Cross, hear about (?) do this, do this, do this. He...help out the community. Well...[coughs] on the end result...and then later,

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you know, we send our children to the public school...so...nobody look at you as a Chinese, treat you different. [AC: Mhm.] And our children went to school, everything cool. [AC: Mhm.] But it's not so [coughs] in Mississippi and Arkansas, those areas, see, they had to go to Memphis to get a haircut. [AC: Wow.] You see.

AC: Because nobody wants to cut their hair.

GG: Yeah, they don't want to go to the black place or whatever, see. [AC: Ah, I see, right.] So...[coughs] Among that is many other things, [AC: Mhm.] inconvenient if you're Chinese. [AC: Mhm.] But you come here, you're different. [AC: Mhm.] So we experienced, that is no part of it whatsoever. [AC: Mhm.] I thought [AC: Mhm.] Albert would have been the one that...[AC: I see.] to get credit for that. [AC: Right, right.] And see, right now...[coughs] They...Asian communities, you know, I never dream of a million-plus Asians [AC: Yeah.] to come to here, see. And plus the fact...New York, Chicago, San Francisco...uh...Boston, you know, all those big cities...they're uh, our own Chinese group, they group together. And maybe...would...demand some kind of fee, you know, to...so you stay in business, something like that, you know. So, that all kinda little stuff that, you know, [AC: Mhm.] in, in, in, in, everything, the merchant, (?) you know what I'm saying. There's only one city that have good relationship with the police, that right? The city of Houston. [AC: Mhm. Wow, that's smart.] So we all want to come to have business, you go right ahead, you don't need to pay... [AC: Bribery. Uh huh.] No, no group, say hey um, so-and-so, uh they might get uh...a little rocky, (?) when, you know, [AC: Yeah.] fool stuff (?), you know. [AC: Yeah.] So this is the one thing about Houston. [AC: Yeah. Right.] And...the weather is hot...[AC: Uh huh.] But the, but the—it's real peaceful.

AC: Ah, I see. So Wallace had a cafeteria, he operated police headquarter cafeteria? [GG: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.] How did that happen, how did they...?

GG: Good question. [clears throat] And that too...[clears throat] Both Wallace and Albert, we were real friends with the policemen, very friendly. And they know people from all the way to the top, and he wound up with the police cafeteria over there. [AC: Right.]

AC: But did he make money from the cafeteria or whatever? [GG: Yes.] He did, okay. [GG: Sure.] That's good. [laughs] [GG: He made money, yeah.] He made money. [GG: Yeah, he made money.] So may I ask a little bit about the economic, because, my paper would like to also find out how—how big were these restaurants, because one of my study has—there's a restaurant called the China Clipper. [GG: Yes.] And the estimated sale... [GG: Uh, his father openEd Chena Clipper.] Oh okay, well, the estimated sale was five hundred thousand dollars a year in 1952? Is that possible? Because it—[GG: Five hundred thousand?] Let me, let me find out the, the uh, I made a PowerPoint, so—[computer startup sound] Can you tell me a little bit, how much did it take to start a Chinese restaurant in the old days?

GG: Oh...[unintelligible background conversation] Hmm...I...[Skype startup sound] [long pause] [clears throat] To get a first one probably is...we'd probably start with, say, fifty thousand. [AC: In 1950s...[unintelligible]] 1955.

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AC: Oh, fifty thousand down paid, down for the beginning of everything. The, the land, the restaurant?

GG: Uh, see it's um...usually, very, in the old days, very few people...[coughs] would own the property. [**AC:** Oh, right, yeah.] You'd usually [**AC:** You'd lease.] *lease* it. And then you'd just get in there [**AC:** Uh huh.] and you buy the equipment. [**AC:** Ah, okay.] And then you have an operating capital.

AC: Ah, I see. So the operating capital is fifty thousand?

GG: Uh...yeah, I mean, for us, you know, just about that, because...[clears throat] We pretty much paid for the equipment, we have no payment, you know, things like that, see. And, and many others, I thought it would be much less. [**AC:** Uh huh.] See.

AC: I see, so if—so fifty thousand's a big restaurant, right? Your restaurant's fairly good size, how many seats—

GG: Well, I mean, I'm gonna try to steady you quick (?). [laughs] [**AC:** Okay. [laughs]] [clears throat] See, the only thing I can answer that...correctly, is, is to say...usually, the landlord [coughs] or the Americans look at the Chinese, the first word, honest. They don't do like the other people. [coughs] "I owe you so much, I'm gonna run off." [**AC:** Mmm.] But the Chinese could pay. [**AC:** Pay back.] Pay back. [**AC:** Ohh. Good credit.] So it's got a good name. [**AC:** Uh huh.] Chinese honest. [**AC:** Ohh.] I have seen Wallace [**AC:** Uh huh.] talk to people on thing. He said you know, the difference about us, you look at a...you people say Chinese honest. [**AC:** Mhm.] It's...important to us [**AC:** Mhm.] to live up to that. [**AC:** Right.] And he would make it feel like that going through. [**AC:** Wow.] They would trust us, [**AC:** Wow.] which is, eh, got a lot of base to it. [**AC:** Yeah, yeah. Oh that's, that's priceless, yeah.] You see. So now, now, get back to that. [**AC:** Uh huh.] [clears throat] So they would...buy a business from somebody. [**AC:** Mhm.] And that's when they cost may—it, maybe at a business run down they buy it cheap. [**AC:** Mhm.] They might buy it for ten or less. And the rest of it, they just paid a monthly rent. [**AC:** Oh, I see.] And then whatever money they got they used to operate.

AC: Uh huh. I see, this is, there, there's a credit agency called Dun & Bradstreet, and they...[**GG:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. I know them.] And they, yeah, and they left the 1952 report in downtown library, they did not take it back to their company. [**GG:** Oh.] Usually they had to take all the credit report back but they dropped this one and so the Houston librarian downtown gave it, showed it to me, and I found some of the Chinese restaurants. So these are estimated sales, because they didn't have the real sales figures. And so they said in '52, Dun & Bradstreet estimated that China Clipper had a five hundred thousand plus sales. [**GG:** Uh, yeah.] A year.

GG: That's uh, forty thousand a month. [**AC:** Yeah.] [long pause] Well...

AC: And the sales, so sales, does that, it's not net profit, it's just sales.

GG: The sales. See...eh, China Clipper...[coughs, breathes, long pause] Eight, see, I remember the address even. Eight-twelve Milam.

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AC: Wow, eight-twelve Milam, okay, and that's China Clipper, okay. [**GG:** Okay.] Uh huh.

GG: And I also remember, we used to write a letter to his father, carry China Clipper, [**AC:** Okay.] eight-twelve Milam. [**AC:** Wow, okay.] They...when it...[**HG:** Before my time.] In—huh? [**AC:** [laughs]] [**HG:** Before my time. [laughs]] [**AC:** Before your time.] That's right! [**HG:** Yeah, that's right, yeah.] And, and...uh, let's see, we went home in 1928, maybe the '30s, [**AC:** Uh huh.] see...I'm gonna say '35, something like that, see. [**AC:** Uh huh.] '35, uh, they...everything, you know, are so cheap. [**AC:** Yeah.] You know. Now of course, I'm not...you know, they, guessing at around—[**AC:** Yeah, guessing.] I would guess, you know, uh, in old day, [coughs] if they do ten-thousand dollars worth of business a month, [**AC:** Uh huh.] would be [**AC:** Really good.] big business.

AC: Okay. But this is '52 though. [**GG:** Huh?] You still—this is 1952, you think it's still too much, overall?

GG: Oh, no no no. '52 might be okay.

AC: Oh, okay. So in 1935, ten thousand is big. [**GG:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.] Okay. Wow, that's—wow. [**GG:** My guess, you know, see. See, see I...[laughs]] So it is big, because—because um, the, the newspaper in Houston—there's an old newspaper in Houston called the Houston Telegraph, in eighteen-seventy-something they said about the Chinese, they say, "They have no intention of being common laborers all their lives." So they know the Chinese came, saved money, and then their children will just go on and on and on. They don't, they're not, they're not gonna be laborers all their lives, they pool together money, they open restaurants, they become businessmen. So that's why they started studying. So the China Star, they estimated between seventy-five thousand to five-hundred thousand sales a year. The Chop Suey Café they don't have a number, Jimmy Gee Restaurant is much smaller; five-thousand, ten-thousand sales a year.

GG: Well that, if they're talking about like '50...[**AC:** '52.] That—that's cool. [**AC:** That's cool]. Yeah.

AC: Okay, and then the next one is this, um, this is the rating the grocery store in '52. Um, they're smaller, but the credits are pretty good because the rating goes from AA to LL, I think, LL's the worst. So the Chinese restaurant, F, you know, usually an F—F is pretty high rating meaning how solid it is. [**GG:** That's pretty good.] Yeah, and then the—and this is I think their asset, their assumption is how much they're worth. So like the Asian Food Market is worth about ten-thousand, twenty-thousand dollars. In 1952. So that's the kind of figures that I've found, um...

GG: The Food Market. [**AC:** Uh huh.] Oh...uh...in the fifties, huh? [**AC:** Uh huh.] Well...talk about food—you're talking about grocery store? In the—[**AC:** Yeah, this is grocery store, right, yeah.] See, now, eh, they, that's a mini, mini, small store. Eh—[**AC:** Uh huh. Many mom and pop shops.] Yeah, yeah, mom and pop shops. (?) Yeah, I would think that uh, uh, uh, the groceries and everything, it probably, see...[coughs]

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AC: So how much money can they make a month? If they, if the whole store's worth ten-thousand to twenty-thousand dollars...

GG: Well, in the old days, not a whole lot of money...[coughs] But they, they eat there, uh huh, okay. [**AC:** They sleep above or behind...?] Yeah, yeah, and, and they get by routine (?).

AC: And they don't pay their help because children help.

GG: See, I got a...little note here say, you remember See Wai Chu? (?) [**HG:** Yeah.] [**AC:** Yeah, yeah, he's very important in the whole development. Long To Chu's (?) brother.] Yeah, see. See Wai Chu, he got at least half-dozen stores. [**AC:** Right.] The Yik (?) store. [**AC:** Yeah, that's right, I have a picture.] Sun Yi—Yung Yik, (?) see. See. [**AC:** I have a picture, this is—I have Jun Yuk, (?) [unintelligible]]. Now this is the fact that I know, [**AC:** Uh huh.] they told me. Every store he opened up cost three-thousand dollars.

AC: Three thousand? Oh wow! That's good enough (?), so this would be nineteen...thirties? He came in 1926, right, to Houston?

GG: Yeah, well he See Wai Chu, he came from San Antonio. [**AC:** Oh, okay.] And he taught Chinese school over there, and then he come to Houston. [**AC:** Right, right, so he went, yeah, [unintelligible].] And he opened at least a half-dozen them stores.

AC: In 1926 he enlarged (?) a grocery store called Kwong Yik? [**GG:** Kwong Yik, that's right.] Yeah, that's the first one, so I had Kwong Yik here...[**GG:** Yeah. [laughs]] And then eventually, and then he'd help other people. [**GG:** Oh yeah.] Also very generous, like Albert, like your brother. [**GG:** [coughs] Oh yeah.] So he'd help others come and open more restaurants [**GG:** Oh yeah, yeah.]—er, grocery stores.

GG: See, he'd usually have a, have two Gees, you know, see. The managers in the front, one of the Gees, the other one is a butcher, and they cut meat. [**AC:** Ohh. In the—in the back.] In the back, see. [**AC:** Okay.] So he would always have two like that, [**AC:** Uh huh.] and two open—see, I used to work for Sun Yik myself.

AC: Oh, Sun Yik...where is Sun Yik...is he in here? [**GG:** [coughs] [unintelligible]] Sun Yik! Right here. Sun Yik. Sun Yik—okay. [**GG:** Huh? Sun—yeah, yeah. I worked with that. I—] Who owned—who owned Sun—who is the—who is the owner of Sun Yik?

GG: That, that's, um...[laughs] You got me.

AC: Is it another—a Gee? No—a Gee? A Gee?

GG: Yeah, a Gee! Yeah, definite, definite. Yeah, you see.

AC: Maybe I'll have [unintelligible]...[**GG:** And uh...] [rustling sounds] Yeah, Sun Yik is Wing Hong Gee, [**GG:** Wing Hong.] Wing Choi Gee. [**GG:** Wing Choi.] Yeah. [**GG:** Wing Choi's the

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butcher.] Yeah yeah. [GG: Wing Hong...Wing Hong is near the front.] Okay, so Wing Choi is the butcher. [GG: Yeah.] Okay, and Wing Hong is in front. [GG: In the front.] In the front, okay, okay. And so you were in the back?

GG: Yeah, I'm—I'm uh, I'm Wing Hong—uh, Wing Choi's helper.

AC: Oh, you were young. How old were you when you were helping him?

GG: Maybe fifteen. [laughs]

AC: Oh, okay, okay. So you were carving meat? [GG: Uh—] You were learning to cut meat? [GG: Oh yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah.] So later you, um...you went to a meat company to work, right? [GG: Yeah, I—] So how did—did you just go and find a job there? [GG: No no no no no no no.] Oh wait, oh, you opened your own meat company. [GG: Yeah, yeah.] Oriental Wholesale Meat Company. [GG: That's me.] Okay. Oh wow, so but is this your—[GG: You know...] Yeah.

GG: [laughs] Before I come here, because I'm thinking about all the stuff Harry did, [AC: Uh huh.] his father, [AC: Yeah.] and my two brothers, you know, [AC: Yeah.] I tried to mention to you that we have an old saying in China. That the, the cow form the land, the horse eat the rice, you know. [AC laughs] And I was going to tell you, I'm the horse, you know. [both laugh] [unintelligible] I don't believe (?) anything, you know. But uh...yeah. What was your question?

AC: Oh, my question. Well first of all, now I know, about three-thousand dollars to start a supermarket. Right? [GG: Yeah yeah yeah, that was See Wai Chu, yeah.] And this is 1930s or something, right? [GG: Yeah.] So then, it takes maybe, for you, your restaurant was fifty-thousand dollars to start, operating costs, is that 1940s, or 1950s...?

GG: No no. My restaurant start in 1955.

AC: '55, okay, and that is the Gee's Restaurant. [GG: Yes.] Gee's Restaurant. [GG: Mhm.] Okay, then, um, may I ask how much money you made every month on the restaurant? How much money did you make?

GG: Well, we...my...my quick answer...would be...we make good. [AC: Mhm.] You know. And...the other answer is...I, I don't know if that's good to [laughs] put down or not, but [coughs] uh...we...I think I remember one year in 1967, [AC: Mhm.] that...we must make...I build a house, cost me a hundred thousand dollars, like about twenty-some dollars, to be a hundred thou—1967. [AC: Build a house that cost a hundred thousand dollars.] Yeah, I built my house, kinda— [AC: Must be a very nice house, yeah.] Kinda, if I, if I—(?)

HG: U-understand that back in those days, I think I ended up buying my brand-new, uh, uh, Mustang vehicle for about two- or three-thousand dollars. [AC: Oh, wow, okay.] So, you know, that's a lot of money that uh, but...you know, I think that after World War II, uh, there was a tough time because um, uh, you know, after the boom in the 40s and the 50s, the United States went into an economic decline [AC: Okay.] in the 50s, and so, I think it was the Korean War that

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ended up taking ‘em back out of that situation, but it was some tough times in the 50s. [AC: Okay.] And I don’t know that people [GG coughs] really made that much moneys [AC: Okay.] in, in, [GG: Well...] in, in, in terms of it. [AC: Okay.]

GG: We, we do...real good at the restaurant. [coughs] We run the restaurant from ’55 to ’90. [AC: Wow, 1955 to 1990?] Yes. [AC: Wow.] Thirty-five years of the restaurant. [AC: Wow, okay.] And very colorful in the old days. [AC: Uh huh.] [laughs] I don’t like to sound brag but, [coughs] from this...from the...from the 60s to the mid-70s, the twenty-five years...[AC: Mhm.] [coughs]...the good place to go eat, south of Buffalo Bayou, [AC: Oh, okay.] is Bill Williams. [AC: Bill William?] Bill Williams’ restaurant. [AC: Oh, okay.] North of [unintelligible] Gee’s Restaurant. [laughs] [AC: Wow, wow. So it’s a very good—wow.] [unintelligible]

AC: So how, um, how, how much did it—is it Chinese or American food that you served? [GG: Chinese *and* American food.] And American, okay. So how much would an entrée be? Like a piece of steak, how much did you charge for—in those days?

GG: Oh, I think we got some...I would say...uh...try, I try to remember, maybe seven dollars, something like that. [AC: That’s—that would be expensive, right?] Yeah, yeah, yeah. [AC: The steak would be the most expensive.] Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. [unintelligible] [AC: Then if—]

HG: Just in the 50s, when my dad operated the restaurant at Sun Deluxe, [AC: Mhm. Uh huh.] lunch was seventy-five cents. [AC: Wow.] Soup, [AC: Uh huh.] salad, meat, two vegetables, bread, drink, [GG coughs] and dessert. [AC: All of that for seventy-five cents?] All of it for seventy-five cents. [AC: Whoa.] And, and we used to have, I didn’t realize it, we had executives from Borden Milk Company that would come, you know, and the Houston Press, the n—the newspaper, they would come, and they loved it because, you know, for seventy-five cents, [AC: Yeah. Wow.] th-they really got a, [GG coughs] a, you know...[AC: A full meal.] Now that was in the 50s, that was— [AC: The 50s, okay.] That was in the 50s. [AC: Which restaurant...which restaurant—] That was Sun Deluxe. [AC: Sun Deluxe, okay.] Sun Deluxe. [AC: Wow.] But, you know, Gordon became the restaurant in the north side. [AC: Uh huh.] You know, it turns out that all the politicians met [AC: Wow, uh huh.] there, at, you know, at, at his restaurant, [AC: Uh huh.] at Crosstimbers and Airline. [AC: I see, Gee’s Restaurant.] And I think that, you know, the constab—uh, the councilmen and, and the mayor, [AC: Uh huh.] and all the other people used to always, you know, meet there at Gordon’s restaurant. [AC: Wow.] [GG: Yeah, yeah.]

AC: But see, I, you know, reading Albert’s history, it’s amazing, he became the President of the Houston Restaurant Association, and then he brought about integration, you know, so that it takes a Chinese to bring the black people and the white people to eat together in a restaurant. [GG: Albert is great. He, yeah, oh...] Oh, that, to me that’s amazing.

GG: Well, not only that, [coughs] he became the first national President for the CACA. [AC: Right, right, right.] The first one that ever made it outside of California, [AC: Wow.] you know, all the years, you know, [AC: Yeah.] you know, to all the grand presidents, [AC: Yeah.] come from California. [AC: Oh.] But when Albert ran, [laughs] [AC: Wow.] he from Texas. [AC: He’s from Texas.] See, yeah, yeah.

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AC: Well I also read that he got invited to uh, Governor Connally's ranch when Richard Nixon came to visit, [**GG:** Right, right, right, right, right.] it was like "whoa, that's very impressive." [**GG:** I saw in a picture.] Oh, you saw a picture, right. So then um, so, so, so, I, oh, got some indication of prices here. [**GG:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.] Um, I asked, oops, like—

GG: Well, you, [unintelligible] don't forget to brag about my cousin over there now [**AC:** Harry?], he achieved a lot.

AC: Oh, Harry, oh of course, Harry's, uh, I mean, UT Law School, [**GG:** Oh, oh, oh.] and the, so many awards, and then, the line of, of his achievements is like a whole list. [**GG:** We're so proud of him.] Yeah, yeah, but I think—Harry, did you give our student interns your entire list of board membership and all that?

HG: No. [laughs]

AC: It's on your website, right? [**HG:** I don't know that—] We need to put it in HAAA, we need to put it in the archive. [**HG:** Okay, we'll get that.] Yeah, all of the list of achievements. [**HG:** We'll, we'll, we'll, we'll check and see.] Yeah, we'll check, okay. [laughs]

HG: So really, today's your day, Gordon. They want, they need to know about your background and history. [**AC:** Yeah, yeah, we, we—] [**GG** laughs] They really—they need to focus upon Gordon's family. [**AC** laughs, **GG** coughs]

AC: But it's an amazing kind of [**GG** coughs] sort of person, (?) I was told um, of—

GG: See, see, it don't matter. [**AC:** Uh huh.] I'm an old, old man, see. [**AC:** Oh no, we have to have your history!] What happened is—it's important, the young—

AC: The young people, they have their day. [**GG:** That's right.] W-we need to have your story, 'cause you're the pioneer. But apparently a cashier in a restaurant is paid about a dollar an hour, in 1950? '50?

GG: Could be, could be, yeah.

AC: Okay, and a waitress is like two dollars per day?

HG: Uh, it was probably less than that. [**AC:** Really.] Because, [laughs] [**AC:** Uh, uh—] when I, in the 50s, I remember I used to do some of the payrolls, and some of the employees was...uh...dishwasher, would make less than twenty dollars [**AC:** A month.] a week. [**AC:** Oh, a week, okay, okay.] Twenty dollars, it's less than twenty dollars a week. [**AC:** Uh huh.] So that would be possibly eighty dollars a month, [**AC:** Right.] which is what, you know.

AC: But if, if a cashier gets paid a dollar an hour and he only works two to three hours a day, [**HG:** Uh, that's—] [**GG** coughs] so a cashier gets ten dollars a d—a week?

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HG: That, that I don't recall, eh, you know, it turns out that because in our restaurant [laughs] it was myself [AC: Oh, you didn't get paid. [laughs]] and, you know, whoever, it was family, yeah, it was family members who were working as the cashier, and now, you know, Gordon might be able to share some information with you on that. [GG: What is that? [coughs]] You know, what they paid the cashiers, but the waitresses, my recollection is that they were paid right about twenty, twenty dollars a week, plus tips. [AC: Oh, okay.] Yeah.

AC: Ohh, okay, so the dishwasher, yeah, the waitress get better pay (?) [GG: Yeah.] then, plus tips, yeah, that's, that's good.

GG: Well here's, here's what I remember. [AC: Uh huh.] I...I worked for—in 1941 I worked for Chinese Village.

AC: Mhm. Is that the drive-in? [HG: Yeah.] [GG: No. (?)] Oh yeah, thank you for the picture. [GG: That, that, that's, that's Harry's favorite, that's right, that's right.] Harry Sr.'s, Harry Sr.'s car, uh, restaurant.

GG: [coughs] I worked there, [coughs] the place must cover more than two blocks. [AC: Wow.] Huge. Huge. [AC: Wow, okay.] [coughs] The...they have carhop curb service. [AC: Uh huh.] We got, Harry might not even know that, [laughs] or he's too young. [coughs] We got twenty-seven carhops and one captain, outside. [HG: Wow.]

AC: Wow, wow. The carhops are women? Are the carhops lady—[GG: Women. Women.] Okay. [GG: See.] So one captain and twenty-seven...

GG: They, they wear, it, in the old days [AC: Uh huh.] they'd wear very little. [AC: Oh.] [HG laughs] We used to talk about...the carhop, you'd throw 'em two handkerchiefs. [AC: Two—] One for the top, one for the bottom, that's all they wear. [AC laughs] [HG: [unintelligible] business. [laughs]] [unintelligible] See? And then—

AC: But they're not Chinese women? [GG: Huh?] They're not Chinese. [GG: They're not Chinese.] Okay, 'kay. [GG: And—]

HG: There weren't very many Chinese women here though. [AC: Oh, that's right, after the expansion... (?)] Because the immigration law [AC: Did not allow women in.] such, you're right, and, so, [AC: Yeah.] you know, the number of Chinese women here are very small. [AC: Yeah. Yeah.]

GG: [coughs] And then, the pay...I think they make five dollars a week. And then they take out a dollar for uniform, dollar for broken dishes, a dollar for this, so they wound up with nothing. [AC: The carhops.] The carhops. But they—[AC: Oh, but they don't have uniforms, it's such a tiny, like, two handkerchiefs? [laughs]] Well, whatever. [AC: Uh huh.] But they make big money, [AC: The tips.] they make with all the tips. [AC: Ohh.] You see.

AC: So how much did people tip? Like fifty cents, or twenty cents, or a dollar? [GG: I would say yeah, everyone, see.] Okay, so any, every day you have [unintelligible]

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GG: Yeah, in, in the old days, the trend...[**AC:** Uh huh.] [coughs] A lot of [coughs] men, young men, [**AC:** Uh huh.] they would come there and get carhop service [**AC:** Right.] and talk to the girl and this and that, [**AC:** Yeah, yeah.] the girl make real good. [**AC:** Wow.] You see.

AC: And is it Chinese food? No, is it like hamburger, french fries, western food?

GG: Yeah, more than likely, yes, [**AC:** Oh.] yeah, yeah, yeah, [**AC:** Wow.] see, so, it was, you know, why...

AC: Were there many [**GG:** Huh?] drive-in, it was, was that one of the new, the few drive-in restaurants in Houston?

GG: Uh...[coughs] Got Bill Williams, got the...[**AC:** Oh, Bill Williams is a drive-in restaurant? Okay.] Yeah, well a restaurant and drive-in. [**AC:** Oh, both.] And so was Chinese Village.

AC: Oh, oh, both. You can go inside and eat or you can sit in the car. [**GG:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.] Oh, okay. Wow.

GG: And...and then the Famous Chicken House, [**AC:** Uh huh.] you know, and [coughs]...what I would say, maybe less than half dozen in town. [**AC:** Oh.] But they all big, [**AC:** Big.] you gotta have big lot [**AC:** Uh huh.] and everything, you know. [**AC:** Wow, okay.] Oh. [**AC:** That's fascinating.] I, yeah, I, I need to tell Harry this. [laughs] He's one got a little—[coughs] see. You know, right now, I own a few houses, couple of stores, collect rent, see. But I need him to know, you see, in the old days, you know...it must be, I got here, uh...March the 12th, 1941. [**AC:** To Houston.] Houston. [**AC:** Oh, okay, okay.] Yeah, see. And then, uh...uh, you know, eh...they got Chinese Village, and this and that...and then, um...so I worked in Chinese Village for few months, you know, you know, uh, you know, first few months, I don't talk English, nothing, you know. [coughs] But I see what's going on. [coughs] You know, in the old days, you know, his father, I guess, lived in tired, hard time (?), did not make the rent on time, you know. [**AC:** Oh, okay.] See. So I saw the landlord took some wooden horse, blocked all the entrance, [**AC:** Oh my goodness.] so no car can get in. [**AC:** Wow.] see. Harry maybe didn't know that. [laughs] [**HG:** Nope.] [**AC:** Oh my goodness.] Uh, see, so the landlord parked (?) that, [**AC:** Uh huh.] and I saw that, you know. [coughs] And then I learned why, what happened, you know. [**AC:** Mhm.] Of course he hustled, you know, and [coughs] went and got money and paid, you know. [**AC:** Wow.] And I say to myself, in the United States, being a landlord, if you couldn't pay rent, you can block the business. [**AC:** Mhm.] That's a powerful... [**AC:** Mhm. Mhm.] And I tell myself, one of these days, when I grow up, [**HG:** [unintelligible]] I got money, I'm gonna own some property instead of rent from somebody. [**GG** and **AC** laugh] You know. [**AC:** And that's powerful, powerful.] Yeah, powerful, you know, I always remember that. So I wind up, first chance I get, Harry.

AC: So what did you buy the first time you were able to buy a property? [**GG:** Don't—no— (?)]

GG: You know, when I have a Gee's Restaurant, [**AC:** Oh, okay.] instead of...you know, and we move in, but that's a house being at the back of the restaurant, we move in there. [**AC:** Uh

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huh.] And I got a house that I own, [AC: Uh huh.] instead of selling that, I rent it. [AC: Ah. Ah, smart.] [laughs] So how I start—[AC: So you're the landlord. You become the landlord.] I became the landlord. Because I—[both laugh] you know, I, eh, you know, I mean uh, so, so that's, that's what give me the thought, you know. [AC: Yeah, yeah.] You know.

AC: So in the, so many um, many um, uh, I understand there are many partnerships, right? Maybe two or three people together pool together money [GG: Yes.] to become owner of a restaurant. [GG: Yes, yes.] And is that just by handshake, or was it like...?

GG: More than likely by handshake, yes. [AC: Okay, okay.] But as I look back, [coughs] the...in the past, I thought Harry's father did a lot of people a lot of good, see. [AC: Hmm.] Those guys, you know, just partner, own these restaurants, and partner owned that one. You know, he'd kinda lead them into do things, you know. [AC: Yeah, yeah, very generous, yeah.] Yeah, well, you mention here that people gonna have their own business, something like that. [AC: Yeah.] 'Cept me and, who was that? (?) [AC: Um, um, whose business?] Is it—said that I got some money they took (?), who was that? [AC: Uh, say, say one more time?] Who—one of these, in the recording, [AC: Uh huh.] he said somebody got some money together and go in business themselves. Could be me, could be somebody else. [AC: Uh....] But either way, [AC: Uh huh.] okay, you see, I remember years ago, [coughs] Albert took me and Wallace, [unintelligible] he mentioned something, he also say..."I don't believe...we have ever had to work for anybody." [AC: Mmm.] Now, he said that to his two younger brothers, [AC: Mhm.] which, neither of us have education. [AC: Oh.] [both laugh] You know, [AC: Uh huh.] and, you know, we wound up that way. [AC: Yeah.] I—[coughs] I worked for three people, [AC: Uh huh.] total of five years. But the rest time I'm my own boss. [AC: Wow.] See. [AC: Wow.] So—

AC: So you only worked in the grocery store? Like that's one, [GG: Yeah.] that's one of the five jobs you worked for other people? [GG: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.] Okay, and who else did you work for?

GG: Well, I worked for Reyna Meat Company as a salesman. [AC: Oh, okay. Yeah, yeah, I saw that too. Yeah.] Yeah. [AC: Okay.] And Wallace took me over there, he got my job. [AC: Oh.] See. [AC: Uh huh.] So, you know, of course, all that's the past. Uh—[coughs]

AC: So you got the job in the meat company because you knew how to cut meat.

GG: That's right, that's right. [AC: Oh.] I sold meat. [AC: Right.] And then later on I, I had my own meat company. [laughs]

AC: Yeah. So, so when you got your job at this Reyn...? [GG: Reyna Company.] Reyna Company, um, did they hire you because they noticed your family's supermarket? Or because they just needed somebody who...

GG: Well see, my brother Wallace, he's...[coughs] a good salesman himself. Wallace, sharp. [coughs] And, he'll tell you, Wallace went and talked to Mr. Reyna. [AC: Ahh.] Took me over there, say, this and that, that...and...say my brother, [coughs] speak English and Chinese, talk with (?) Cantonese, and read and write a language, so for, (?) if you hire him...see, see, right

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now you compete with this, that, that, that, but the chances are, he will represent you in a Chinese way. [AC: Wow.] So, so Mr. Reyna say “Well...eh, Wally, you think your brother can do all of that? I will give him [coughs] fifty-dollar car allowance.” [AC: Okay.] They were giving me fifty dollars a week. I s—I used my own gas, everything, more or less, my business, you know. So I got fifty dollars. Of course, the rest of commission, you know.

AC: Oh, so you sold meat? [GG: Uh, I s—] You went, you went around and sell the meat of the meat company.

GG: [coughs] Yeah, I went to all the Chinese stores. [AC: Ah.] Even at one time over three-hundred-and-forty Chinese stores right here in town. A lot of stores.

AC: And did they buy from you? [GG: Oh, yeah.] Because you’re Chinese, and they buy from you because [GG: Well...] the price is good, or...

GG: Yeah, I guess all still leads back to that. [coughs] Salesmanship, you see, see, Mr. Reyna himself...he was top salesman for Swift Meat Company [AC: Ohh.] for over twenty-seven years, right here in town. [AC: Okay.] See. For me...I like to learn something [AC: Uh huh.] from the master salesman myself, you know. [AC: Yeah.] [coughs] So, you know, I, I guess I...

AC: So how many years did you work for Reyna before you had your own meat company?

GG: Three years and eight months.

AC: Oh, that’s a very fast learner. Very fast. Three years and eight months? [GG: Three years and eight months.] And then you opened your own company.

GG: The, the, the third month on, I was top salesman [AC: Wow.] until the day I quit. [AC: Wow. Oh wow.] [laughs] And let me finish this, see. And then...some of the time, [coughs] Mrs. Reyna, you know, I’d become friends with Mrs. Reyna, she would, she’s there. [coughs] They, they got a company there, they open every day. Lot of people just walk in and buy meat. That’s not the salesman sale, that’s the house sale, see. Mrs. Reyna had told me...many times, many months, that my sale were equalling to more than half the business. There were nine salesman, I’m one of the nine. [AC: Really.] [laughs]

AC: So how, they were not working...they don’t know how to sell the way you know how to sell.

GG: Well, I mean, they, my comment is...[coughs] That’s no big deal. [both laugh] [AC: Wow.] It’s not. [AC: Wow.] You see. [coughs] So, you know, and uh, well, you know, you, you work at it, you work, you know what I mean, [AC: Uh huh. Yeah.] I don’t know how to explain it, but...see, that’s why [coughs] uh...[coughs] Mr. Reyna had a bad habit. You know, he’d drink, [AC: Mmm.] some time, I know a couple of times, [cough] he’d fire everybody. [AC: He’ll fire everybody?] Everybody. [AC: Uh huh.] But a lot of city, the, the, the, the, the white folks, you know, they get scared, you know. And he, one by one, hired ‘em all back, and then, it’s, few of ‘em, just don’t hire back. If they don’t work, (?) you get fired, you know. [AC: Uh huh.] But

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Reyna know me. And you fire me... [AC: You leave, you don't come back.] You know. [AC: So he never fired you.] He never fired me. [laughs] You see. [AC: Wow.] He would fire his nephew Smitty. You know. [AC: Ah. Uh huh.] Smitty told me, he said, "I don't know how come," you know, "you got the job, you see, he fired me." [AC: Oh.] He, he say, Miss, Mrs. Reyna kept me on, [AC: Wow, wow.] you know, but anyway, I mean, that was a...

AC: So uh, can I ask how much uh, did you, what was your salary at this company?

GG: Um...yeah, I um...in, in dollars and cents I probably don't remember back, eh, compare it, inflation today, you know, and...[AC: Mhm. Mhm.] I might've made...five- to seven- or eight-hundred a month. [AC: Oh wow, in the old days. In 1950s.] Yeah, that, that considered to be... [AC: That's a lot. That's a lot of money. Yeah.] Yeah. Yeah. Five hundred and made that. (?)

AC: So is that commission-based, or is that just a strict salary?

GG: Uh, well, it's got a base, low base. [AC: Okay.] And then uh, uh, see, Reyna cheat, you know. [laughs] [AC: Ah, oh yeah.] You see. He, he would say, "If you do," um, "three-thousand dollars, your base will be this much," see. And later on, he'd...I [unintelligible], he'd say four thousand. [AC scoffs] But, you know the work, I have to, [laughs] I already climbed up here. [AC: You have to make even higher. Ohh.] Yeah. And the stepladder kinda... [laughs]

AC: Keeps moving. 'Cause he doesn't want to pay you more. [GG: I mean, that...] Yeah.

GG: That were okay, you know, see. [AC: Yeah.] But uh...

AC: So how, how did you decide to open your own meat company?

GG: Oh, well...I'm not there...[coughs] [unintelligible] I mean, they...see, they sell cut meat, but what we sold over there is whole pieces. [coughs] The others cut it up to sell to cafés and restaurants, you see, but Reyna don't do that. So I met some of the people, so I learned, and I learned to meet some of the Jewish people [AC: Mhm.] that do that business, I communicate with 'em, see. [AC: Mhm.] See, he sent, I'm out there selling, [AC: Yeah.] so I, I have to meet everybody, [AC: Yeah.] see, you know. It's no law against for me to meet these...[AC: Yeah.] meat people, and meet their supplier and like, [AC: Uh huh.] I got it all lined up, you know.

AC: So, so you sold whole chunks of meat? Or did you cut them up and sell them?

GG: Well, well *they* cut 'em up, [AC: Uh huh.] you know. See, so when I went and did my own meat business, and I already lined up some restaurants and everything, you know, things like that. And then besides that, I'm a butcher. [AC: Mhm.] I, I, I know something, [AC: Mhm.] you know. So every little bit helped.

AC: Wow. So when you left, you started selling to the same people you used to sell for Reyna? [GG: Uh...not—] Or you went in a different direction?

GG: Not exactly the same... [AC: Uh huh.] The same...but the...uh, you know, eh...

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AC: And how many years did you have this business, the meat company?

GG: [laughs] Let's see...I...well, I...I finally...I think that, eh...[long pause] Well, the, the Oriental Meat Company was quite...colorful, you know, and, um...have to think about that. [laughs]

AC: Uh huh, okay, okay. Was it in 1950s? In the '50s?

GG: Yeah, I built my house around 1950s. Uh... '55. [**AC:** Mhm.] And uh...no no, I built my house in nineteen-sixty-something. [**AC:** Okay.] You know.

AC: So the meat company came before you built your house. Or—[**GG:** Yes, yes, yes. Yes.] Okay. Okay. And then did the Gee Restaurant come after the meat company?

GG: Uh...yeah, that's right. [**AC:** Okay.] That's right. They...[**AC:** So...] When I opened up Gee's Restaurant...um...I opened up the store in 1955. [**AC:** Oh. Okay, okay.] [coughs] May the 12th. [**AC:** May 12th, you still remember. May 12th, 1955.] Yes. [**HG:** Yeah.]

AC: Wow, opened—so b-by then you already, you were still with, you still had your meat company.

GG: Yes, I still got the meat company. [**AC:** Okay.] [coughs] [**AC:** [unintelligible]] Instead of, uh, selling my meat company, [**AC:** Mhm.] I went to their supplier, I gave them all my accounts [**AC:** Oh.] and let them handle it. [**AC:** Okay.] So I just give it to 'em. [**AC:** Okay.] And I guess I could've sold 'em for so much, you know. [**AC:** Uh huh.] See, but I just, and they feel real grateful that...[**AC:** Wow.] Yeah. [**AC:** You just gave, gave it away?] Yeah, well, give the company up. Yeah, yeah. [**AC:** Oh, wow. Oh wow, they must be really grateful.] Well, I, I, I feel like, I like to do that, [**AC:** Oh.] you know. [coughs] Got good relationship, [**AC:** Yeah.] because I'm good friend, they're good people. [**AC:** Right.] And then also, see, to me, [coughs] those people I build some customer data (?) for them, I give it to them. I, I feel like they can take good care of them customers. [**AC:** Mmm.] The customer doesn't make me, so I have my...[laughs]

AC: Restaurant, the customers for your restaurant. [**GG:** Restaurant.] Ohh, wow. [**GG:** That's right, see what I mean? [coughs]] Yeah, very smart, very good, very good strategy.

GG: Yeah, you know. [**AC:** Yeah. Yeah.] See, the customer make my restaurant, you know. You see, so all of these in one, [**AC:** Yeah.] it, it, it, it worked. [**AC:** Wow.] You ever think what, you know, see. [**AC:** Yeah.] And then, you know, it kinda, you know...family of course, I...I got a good boss, you know, we call her Mrs. Gee, she's... [both laugh] Yeah, yeah, she—

AC: Good boss, right? [**GG:** Yeah, she's really...] And great children. So then—

GG: Yeah, yeah, the family. [**AC:** Yeah.] Harry can tell you.

AC: Yeah, wonderful family. Yeah. So the tidings—

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GG: Hey Harry, you know, Molly's in China right now. [**HG:** Okay.] Yeah. She—

HG: Is she back to roots? Has she gone back to the village?

GG: Oh yeah. You know, I forgot to bring you the book, you know. They, they, they took some picture of the, of the village.

HG: Uh huh. And the school?

GG: And the school, and all of that, and I need to, one day, show you the picture, show you the book. And also, the fish farm I used to run, either when I was 13 or 14 years old. [**AC:** Uh huh.] I have a store in the village, [**AC:** Really.] and I run a fish farm. [**AC:** Oh, fish farm.] Yeah.

AC: Oh my gosh, in the '30s, when you were 13, 14. [**GG:** 13, 14.] Wow. It's still there?

GG: Still there, see.

AC: Oh, it hasn't changed much.

GG: And then I, so, what happened—you know, I drew a picture. [**AC:** Uh huh.] [coughs] When Molly and Jeff, my son, went to the village, I said, "Yeah," [unintelligible] tell 'em, okay, they took the picture. See. This is second trip Molly went in first two months. [**AC:** Uh huh.] This first trip. For me, [coughs] when I was 14 years old, 13, 13 and a half, [**AC:** Mhm.] [coughs] I did all of that. Naturally, my children don't believe me, [**AC:** Yeah. [laughs]] but still, you know...and I'm 87. [**AC:** Wow.] You see? [**AC:** Yeah.] So, can you ima—you know, somebody say, look...[**AC:** Yeah. [laughs]] that... [**AC:** Right. Right.] you know, that kinda...[coughs] [**AC:** Oh wow.] So, see I have to take movie, you know. [**AC:** Uh huh.] And then uh...[unintelligible] they show some of that [**AC:** Mhm.] that we can see, you know. [**AC:** Wow.] So...[coughs] [**AC:** That's fascinating.] All of a sudden...[coughs] [**AC:** Uh huh.] Uh, the camera showed this guy, and he's in Chinese, and [speaks Chinese], you know, [**AC:** Mhm.] because, I know who [speaks Chinese] is, you know. [**AC:** Mhm, mhm.] And Molly, Molly talk pretty good Chinese. [**AC:** Mhm.] Molly tell him that my father have a store over by the gate [**AC:** Mhm.] in front of the village. When Molly say that to him [**AC:** Uh huh.] in Chinese, he said "I know where, I sh—let me show you." [**AC:** Wow.] That makes my faith... (?)

AC: [laughs] You're—it turned out (?) you were telling the truth, right? [laughs]

GG: You see what I'm talking about?

AC: Wow, wow, what a, that's a, that's amazing. That's amazing story. So how old, that man must've been old too, right?

GG: No, well, he heard of it.

AC: Oh he heard of it, oh wow. [laughs]

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GG: Yeah, I mean... [**AC:** That's great.] Yeah, see, see. And a matter of fact, after that I got to thinking about it, I have *two* stores. [**AC:** A-ha.] I built two stores. [**AC:** Wow.] Well, in the village. [**AC:** Yeah.] You take bamboo and some thread, [**AC:** Uh huh.] you know, it's easy. [**AC:** Yeah.] Two, three, four hours, you're built. [**AC:** Village. (?)] Yeah.

AC: What did you sell, in the [**GG** coughs] [unintelligible]?

GG: What? Eh...[exhales] It's crazy, you know. I was 13 and a half, I guess. I got a cousin, he's 47, first cousin. [**AC:** Mhm.] [coughs] And...[coughs] He's good at walking. [**AC:** Mmm.] You never heard of that. [**AC:** No.] See. [coughs] In China, transportation's bad. [**AC:** Uh huh.] You know. I mean, don't even have bicycle hardly. [**AC:** Uh huh.] [coughs] So if you want get to one place to another, mostly walk. [**AC:** Right.] See. See, from here to...Conroe, from here to Galveston, it just...you might at first say, walk from here to Chicago somewhere. [**AC:** [laughs] Right. Yeah.] I mean you're Eastern. You know, [unintelligible]. [coughs] We got a seaport, Kong Hoi (?), you know. Produce good fishing. Soft fish...[coughs] And, and a deep seaport, see. The tide come in, an hour, [**AC:** Uh huh.] thirty feet. [**AC:** Whoa. Uh huh.] When the tide come in, [**AC:** Uh huh.] lose thirty feet. [**AC:** Uh huh.] When tide went down, it dropped thirty feet. [coughs] Deep seaport. [coughs] That's how come the Japanese couldn't take the port. [**AC:** Ohh.] Because the...the aircraft carrier or some [**AC:** Uh huh.] warship, they did not get to it fr—for deep end. [**AC:** Right, because when the tide falls they're stuck. Right.] When the tide falls, they're stuck, see. [**AC:** Right.] So that's the only port [**AC:** Uh huh.] they don't keep, you know. But that's, that's the...[unintelligible] [**AC:** Uh huh.] [coughs] I do know that port got a lot of good stuff there. [**AC:** Ohh.] Cheap. [**AC:** Uh huh.] So I'd get together with my...first cousin, [**AC:** Uh huh.] [coughs] so...I send him to the port, [**AC:** Walking.] three-and-a-half days. [**AC:** Whoa.] And three-and-a-half days back. He bring back maybe a hundred and fifty pounds of stuff. [**AC:** Wow. He—uh—carrying?] Carrying. [**AC:** Oh, like bamboo-pole carrying?] Yeah, yeah, yeah. [**AC:** Wow.] See.

AC: Whoa, three-and-a-half days coming back. [**GG:** Yeah, you see.] Wow.

GG: But before that, [laughs] we have a professor in school. [**AC:** Uh huh.] He's eight—he was 83 years old. And he's principal of the village's school. [**AC:** Mhm.] One day, he taught like, say our country an agriculture country. The law's designed to help the farmer. [**AC:** Mhm.] So, if you, if the farmer take the land to the people, say, "I've got some land," [coughs] "I bring you the land here," [coughs] "I sign up to you lend me five-hundred dollars." [**AC:** Mhm.] And it was written in such a way...that I never lose my land, see. [**AC:** Mhm.] In that it says that...eh..."I owe you five hundred, and I promise to pay...twenty dollars a month...principle. And three dollars a month interest." [**AC:** Mhm.] And it continued to say..."As time went on...I must continue to pay principle and interest. If I can't pay principle, I still have to pay interest. But if I can't p—pay both, the land will go to you in a receivership." Okay? [**AC:** Mmm. Mhm.] And then you farm the land for interest. [**AC:** Mhm.] That's all it say, okay. [**AC:** Mhm.] And fifty years from now, maybe my great grandson come in with say four-hundred dollars, say, and, "my great grandfather owes you the note, still four-hundred and seventy dollars, here's my four-seventy," and then the land will go to my great grandson. [**AC:** Right.] Because you farm the land for interest. [**AC:** Right. Right.] But in the village, lot of these guys wrote on it, "if you

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don't pay both..." [AC: The land is mine.] It go—the land will forever go to you, no more talk, see. So I asked the principal, I hear what he say, [AC: Uh huh.] I say, "will you teach me the the legal?" [AC: Ahh.] And he took time, taught me, in Chinese. [AC: Wow.] And then he make me take a test, [AC: Ah.] you know, the test, he's saying in, say it, you know...the book, [unintelligible].

AC: Oh, you re—you re—memorized, you memorized the whole book.

GG: Yeah, [unintelligible], see. [AC: Wow, uh huh.] And then he say, he got a little stick, you know...you know, he hit my, he hit me in the head. "You got it." [AC: Oh, you...okay. [laughs]] You see. So I know the legal. [AC: Mhm.] [coughs] The word get out, I change seven of greenwood (?) in the village for somebody else. [AC: Wow. Wow.] So I wrote one for myself, [AC: Uh huh.] my mother to sign, went up there to this rich lady, [AC: Uh huh.] borrowed five-hundred dollars. [AC: Uh huh.] That's why I go in business at the store.

AC: Ah, I see. Wow, that's amazing. [laughs] You're a very good...business sense and legal sense, a lawyer. [GG: Well...] You're a lawyer like Harry. [laughs]

GG: Well, you know, I—[laughs] Before I come to this, I have a note here—[coughs] I wrote something there for the...somebody, younger than I am...eh...I wrote that...you know, I wrote some...account of...what I did. [AC: Mhm.] And to show that...you and I...I have...I'm in American school nine months, and, I got sixth-grade education in Chinese, you know. [AC: Mhm.] So well, let's just say no education, you know. [AC: Mhm.] See. And when I worked for Reyna, something...he did not take care of my customer. [AC: Mhm.] Not me. [AC: Mhm.] You know, I mean, I'm willing to work for whatever, [AC: Yeah.] that's okay. But...you know, I quit Reyna three times now, and they hired back. [AC: Uh huh.] And at that time...I got small children like this, you know. I'm not scared, you see. [AC: Yeah. Yeah.] So what I did in the village, I do, and you know, I did...see I'm not smart, [AC: Yes you are. [laughs]] but I do...I'm not scared. [AC: Right.] You see. [AC: Yeah, you know...] You see, I made it so just... [AC: You know how to do things, right.] Be a man, just, just do it. You know. [AC: Wow. Uh huh.] See. And I got...[laughs] I got some friend in the, in the, in Gee's Restaurant, tell me, and he say, "You know the Kennedys," you know, [AC: Uh huh.] he said, "They're a bunch of doers," you know. [AC: Uh huh.] John Kennedy, and all them, Ted. [AC: Mhm.] They all do things. [AC: Right. Right.] See. He said, "Gordon, you need to be a doer too." [AC laughs] I told him, "I've been a doer long time."

AC: Exactly, all your life you've been a doer. [laughs] Yeah.

GG: You know, I mean, I mean...the thing about it is, if some youngster learn about it say, "Hey, you know what," you know, 'cause...lot of time, they just want to make sure everything. Don't do any wrong things, [AC: Mhm.] but if you want to do something, think it out, [AC: Yeah.] try it.

AC: Try it. And don't be afraid to take a risk. [GG: Yeah, yeah, yeah.] Yeah. So, so when did you have the Tidy Roof International? When did—what is that?

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GG: Oh. [laughs] Yeah, you know, come to think of it I did quite a few things, haven't I?

AC: Yeah, yes you did, it's very interest—it's very amazing variety of...jobs.

GG: I, as a matter of fact, if, if I'm um, money hungry, I mean, you know, I mean...I don't...basically I'm quite a lazy...[**AC** laughs] [coughs] I probably can take the company even today. Probably...make...well, say multi-*billion* dollar might be, say, too much, you know. Easy you can multi-million million dollar thing...see. I have a formula. [**AC:** Uh huh.] I still got it. [**AC:** Uh huh.] But I knew it, you know, that...you see, [coughs] take city of Houston. [**AC:** Uh huh.] You build a house, [**AC:** Uh huh.] you say, "Oh, I'd like a...the reddest roof," [**AC:** Mhm.] "the shingles." He might want kinda green or, you know, every roof a different color. [**AC:** Mhm.] But believe me, [coughs] the first year, year and a half, it turned black. [**AC:** Oh. Uh huh. With the sun?] You notice, you can see 'em. [**AC:** Yeah.] You know. It all grows a bit sun on it. [**AC:** Uh huh.] You know. The break in the wall, you know. [**AC:** Yeah.] Everything the, the s—the sun hit, the moisture hit, and those things grow on it, [**AC:** Mhm.] you see...then, then you don't have the original color [**AC:** Uh huh.] that you want before. [**AC:** Right, right. Right.] You got there and say, see, "I got the thing with spray on it." [**AC:** Ahh.] Clean it off. [**AC:** Uh huh.] See. And then during the night, the dew, you know, [**AC:** Uh huh.] come on the roof, [**AC:** Oh.] the moisture hit, cleans 'em off, see. [**AC:** Ohh.] Other words, I clean your roof today, [**AC:** Uh huh.] you say "Wow." Take a picture, you take it, you know. [**AC:** Uh huh.] See. Pay me silver, okay. [**AC:** Uh huh.] Thirty days later, I come take another picture. It's cleaner than the first one. [**AC:** Uh huh. Wow.] You see. [**AC:** Uh huh.] We can do that, it lasts over a year. [**AC:** Wow.] You see. [**AC:** Uh huh.] And then uh, you know, course the weather, it's no guarantee [unintelligible]. [**AC:** Right.] I got those, I used to do their roof.

AC: Wow. Well how did you go from restaurant to that company? [**GG:** Oh...] Did you have a, did you have a, I don't know, a friend who, a partner who introduced you to this business? [**GG:** Well...] It's very different from the restaurant and a meat-packing business.

GG: [laughs] You might say crazy Gordon done a lot of things. [**AC** laughs] You know, I always do different things, you see. [**AC:** Uh huh.] And even in the old, old days, see...and, well, might just surprise you, I was in the oil business.

AC: Oil business? Oh, wow.

GG: See. [**AC:** Uh huh.] I...I got a friend named Lawson, [**AC:** Uh huh.] see. And I...financed him, and he went to the Mexico and Texas border, and he was an oil scout. [**AC:** Mmm.] See, in the old days, when they drilled oil everywhere, tried to find oil...one night, see, his name's French. French was at this beer joint, you know. This people worked at an oil field, drilled oil. [**AC:** Uh huh.] At night, they all drank beer, see, my friend...at night, he'd dress like those oil field workers. [**AC:** Mhm.] He went over there, he went from one beer joint to another, drank beer with them and talked, tried to learn something. [**AC:** Mmm.] One night...he, in this bar, they were talking about, "Boy, you oughta see what we hit today." "Look at my shoe," they go, "you hit something down there?" You know.

AC: Yeah, it comes up.

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GG: And got oil in his hair, everywhere like that, and he's "whoa, whoa, whoa," [**AC:** Uh huh.] so he learned whereabouts. [**AC:** Uh huh.] So he learned enough, so he slowly got out of there, [**AC:** Uh huh.] went to the motel, [**AC:** Mhm.] washed up, put on his suit, everything, see, and went, traveled, one, two, three days, and found those people that lived around, owned those land around there, and he signed them all up. [**AC:** Wow.] By the time he come back to Houston, in the Eskimson—Esperson Building, right here, [**AC:** Uh huh.] that's where all the oil people hang around. [**AC:** Right, right.] Esperson Building. What he f—what he wrote...that's the old days now. [**AC:** Uh huh.] All write-ups over a-hundred-thousand dollars.

AC: Wow. Well and so, so uh, he signed up those people to give...so he, he bought—no, he didn't buy the land, he just signed up for the oil to be sold by him? [**GG:** Yeah, yeah.] Oh, he signed up the rights, oh my goodness. [**GG:** [unintelligible]]

HG: Not—normally they would buy peace agreements to the mineral rights. In other words, so, the leave, [**AC:** [laughs] Right.] they don't get any of the property, they get the mineral rights. [**GG** laughs]

AC: Which is more valuable, right?

GG: I guess I surprised Harry too. [laughs]

AC: Yeah. Yeah. So this was your employee, you sent him.

GG: I financed it, he's the one who do all of that.

AC: Yeah, he's a Caucasian, right? [**GG** coughs] Anglo. He's not Chinese. [**GG:** Yeah yeah yeah yeah, see.] So he, and then he signs them up, and then he comes back to Esperson Building, and then he sells them to the people there?

GG: Yeah. Hey Harry, [**HG:** Yeah.] [**AC:** Wow.] you know what zapa de conda (?) is? [**HG:** Yeah.] That was *us*! [**HG:** Huh.] *We* found those!

AC: Wow. So did you hold on to them? [**GG:** No no no no. [laughs]] You just sold them. Oh wow.

GG: I know something, see, [coughs] have a lot of fun doing it, you know, [**AC:** Uh huh.] so I, you know, I don't really, but he, he, in and out, [unintelligible] see, [coughs] I know a couple of times, that he sold something, [**AC:** Uh huh.] [coughs] it amount to some big bucks, [**AC:** Wow.] you know, and...and then so, you know, but I have fun, [**AC:** Uh huh.] in and out all that. [**AC:** Uh huh.] If people try to [laughs] prove that I, I didn't tell the truth, [**AC:** Uh huh.] [laughs] I can find French Lawson. [both laugh] [**AC:** Uh huh.] You see. You know who, um...I think that George Bush, [**AC:** Uh huh.] that group, they, they, they, they...[**AC:** They bought your—your oil?] Well, well it...I don't know how many transactions, how they do it with French Lawson, [**AC:** Ohh.] you know, see. You know, see. [**AC:** Wow.] And then uh...

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AC: Why did you not continue?

GG: Well, that's my sideline. [**AC:** Oh, sideline. [laughs]] I don't...you know, I don't... [**AC:** It could've been a big sideline.] no no no no, I don't, you know. Yeah, see. [coughs] Even this thing here, you know. [**AC:** The Tidy Roof? The Tidy, uh?] The Tidy Roof, see. [**AC:** Uh huh.] You know. I couldn't...I think—[**AC:** Continue to...?] I, yeah, I, I got a guy, a kid, uh he made the ride to go to China, you know, all that kind of stuff, you know. [**AC:** Yeah. Today. Right. Right. So—] But I don't sit with him, you know, see, so, it's uh...I have a lot of fun. [**AC:** Yeah. Yeah.] That's it, you know.

AC: Then the Gee Investment Company is all of these businesses put together? Is that the...?

GG: Oh yeah, that's right, that's...[laughs] [**AC:** Yeah, the Gee Investment Corporation.] No no, that, that... [**AC:** And you're the President, CEO.] That, that, that's me. [**AC:** That's just you.] That's just me. [laughs]

AC: Okay. So by then you were still—but you still had your restaurant [**GG:** Oh yeah.] and your meat company, you held them together all—[**GG:** Yeah.] Oh, I see.

GG: See, what I do...that's my main thing, see. [**AC:** Right.] But the other stuff, you know, see. [**AC:** Wow.] And some of the stuff, if... [coughs] Mrs. Gee learned, [**AC:** Uh huh.] or heard what we're talking about, she might...[laughs] She don't know a hundred percent what all I do. [**AC:** Right.] But she do know that I'm involved in different things, you know. [**AC:** Wow.]

AC: And you still are, right? You're not really—because you're a landlord still, so you're still—you're still involved.

GG: Oh yeah, I, I own a few pieces of property. But right now, I'm, I'm up in age, [coughs] I begin to sell, you know, I mean, I'm gonna sell all everything, you know, see. [**AC:** Oh, okay, okay.] So, you know. [**AC:** Wow.] And only thing I can say is, it's been...lot of fun, [**AC:** Uh huh.] and um...I'm totally, just about totally comfortable. [**AC:** Comfortable. [laughs]] That's what counts. [**AC:** Right. Yeah.] Yeah, that's what counts.

AC: Well it's an amazing story. Well, I think, um...to recent—uh, the, to me the Gee family is much more organized than the other big Chinese families here. [**GG:** Yes. Yes.] But I think also more successful. And I think a lot of the success has to do with some of the elder family members [**GG:** Yes. Yes.] who are so generous and int—smart. [**GG:** Yes.] I mean, See Wai Chu, Won Tu Chu, (?) and then Albert, Wallace, you, [**GG:** Yes.] and then Harry Sr. [**GG:** Well...] I think you are not only generous in helping other people come in, but you're smart, I mean, to know, like to allow the police to eat at half price so you have not only protection, and then you build up very good relationships with them and with the city politicians. That's, that's priceless, I mean, that's already, not only buy yourself protection but making yourself good citizens of Houston. [**GG:** Yeah.] Right.

GG: Talk about the politicians, [**AC:** Yeah.] you see. When Louie Welch became mayor, [**AC:** Uh huh.] [coughs] see, we got a friend named Tom White. Oh, he knows things. He'd tell me

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things, everything, and he's just so sharp. And he's totally a great Christian. Everywhere he went, he got a Bible with him, all that. So it's... Tom is um... [coughs] so when Louie, uh, make mayor, [coughs] Tom... would come in, "Gordon, what do you want?" I say, "I don't want nothing!" [AC: Mhm.] He'd come back in, "What do you need?" [AC: Mhm.] "I need nothing." [AC: Mhm.] He said, "Look, the whole bunch eat on you, you feed them steak," this and that, you know, I mean, [AC: Mhm.] the politics, you know.

AC: Yeah. The ones that come to your restaurant.

GG: [coughs] Yeah, yeah. You got to have something. That's uh, I don't know. So Tom come in three days in a row, morning, lunchtime, and evening. [AC: Wow.] Just keep on hittin' me, you know. [AC: Uh huh.] So he hittin' me in such a way that I have to think, [AC: Right.] you know. So... I guess one day after lunch, he come just bug me. [AC: Mhm.] "What do you want," see. [AC: Mhm.] So I look at the telephone, I dial Albert's number. [AC: Mhm.] I say like this, like this Albert. Tom say what I want, and Albert right away, he say, "Yes, you do want something." [both laugh] And he say, "Sam, he's a lawyer, he read good, da da da da da, and he graduate," this and that, you know. And he's, you know, I think he's just graduate, become a lawyer, [AC: Uh huh.] you know. Sam Eng (?) you know? [HG: Uh huh.] Eh? And he explained to me, how good Sammy is, this and that, he said, "You know, at the city, there's some substitute judge." See." [AC: Ohh.] "You tell Tom... the city needs one of the good substitute judge, Sam is the one." [AC: Ah.] That's what I told Tom. [AC: Uh huh.] The following Sunday, Tom brought Louie Welch in, we went to my private dining room, we sit down and eat. Tom say "da da da da da da da, let's eat." [AC: Wow.] So Sam become substitute judge. [laughs]

AC: Yay! Now who is Sam? He's a...nephew? [GG: Sam Eng.] Elder's...nephew?

HG: Well, he's... Sam is, uh, I think he was the second Chinese attorney here in town. [AC: Oh, okay.] The first one was Jimmy Lee. [AC: Oh, okay.] And then Sam was number two. [GG: Oh, really?] Jimmy, Jimmy practiced criminal and real estate. He had a real estate, and... his secretary was, um, Hannah Chow. [AC: Oh!] [GG: Oh, that's right!] [AC: Hannah, Hannah was mentored... by Jimmy Lee.] That's right. [AC: Oh, okay.] That's him. You know, Jimmy used to come into our restaurant to eat all the time, [AC: Oh.] and so we had a chance to get to visit him. Sam is... uh... Jane's brother. [GG: Brother.] [AC: Oh, brother!] Jane Gee. [AC: Okay, oh. Another E-n-g.] Okay, so he's Jane Gee's brother. [AC: Okay, okay.] And so he was in the insurance business. [AC: Oh, okay.] And then he became an attorney. [AC: Uh huh.] And when he became an attorney, uh, to supplement his income, [AC: He began—] Gordon and them were able to get him appointed... to the... [AC: Substitute judge. Wow.] That's right, corporation court judge, and so, you know, that enabled him to be a successful attorney, [AC: Uh huh.] because, you know, he was... he, he had the income from serving as the judge, [AC: Uh huh.] and then of course he had his insurance business, and... [AC: Right.] in, in, in terms of it. [AC: And the connections too.] But Sam never got very engaged with, uh, the community. [AC: Oh, okay.] He just did not, you know, his personality apparently was such that he just didn't uh, you know, associate or get involved with the community as such, he was very happy with those arrangements [AC: Uh huh.] and and and and circumstances, but... [GG laughs] I became the first... practicing attorney. In other words, all I did was practice law, I didn't have a, a side business. [AC: Uh huh.] And Jimmy... sold real estate and earned real estate commissions, [AC:

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Oh.] and, you know, because, at that time, [laughs] our community really didn't have that much legal work [AC: Oh, okay.] that was, that was out there. [AC: Uh huh.] And, you know, I, I think that, and I was surprised, because when I started my practice, I'd go, "Well, I'll get all my relatives come in," and they all stayed away, so, [AC laughs] I realized after one year that it, it ain't coming from that source and that, you know, we need—'cause I think that later on, I, you know, I, I, I basically found out that...people didn't want you to know about their personal circumstance or, [AC laughs] situation. [AC: They stayed away from you.] Yeah, and, and, and, you know, we have one case where...little old Chinese lady came and hired me in her divorce case. She didn't want anybody in the f—in the community to know about it. [AC: Uh huh.] Six months after the divorce, my mother came to me and she said, "Oh, I understand Mrs. So-and-so got a divorce." Only then could I let her know that I was the attorney [AC: Ohh, I see. [laughs]] that represented Mrs. So-and-so in the divorce. [AC: Uh huh.] Because until she heard it from another source, [AC: Mhm.] I was, you know—[AC: Confidentiality. Okay.] Yeah. It was confidentiality, and so I didn't, you know, so, [AC: Wow.] it was one of these situations there that uh, [AC: Yeah.] uh, but, you know, I think that our community did not realize the concept of confidentiality and [AC: Right.] you know, each of those circumstances. So, that's when I realized I need to build my practice elsewhere [AC laughs] other than from our community [AC: Right, yeah.] because, you know—

AC: But, but the j—in Jimmy Lee's time, was he not able to practice in the non-Chinese community? Did he...

HG: Well, he was, but I mean, you know, he, he, he has to differentiate himself, he has to—[AC: Ohh, I see.] The other thing is this. At that time, it was un—unethical to solicit business. [AC: Ohh.] So the Supreme Court changed that in the late 1960s [AC: Uh huh.] and the early '70s when they made the ruling that attorneys could advertise, [AC: Uh huh.] but before that, attorneys could not [AC: Ohh.] go out and seek business.

AC: So you had to wait for business to come and find you.

HG: That's it, yeah. [AC: Oh, boy.] And, and so, you know, we're of the older school. Now the younger generation didn't, doesn't know this, and so they're out there knocking on doors and trying—well, you know, it's great...to have that ruling when you're an established attorney. [AC: Mhm.] Because you're an established attorney, you don't want [laughs] the younger people come in and, you know, and get access [AC laughs] but...with the change in the late 1960s, then attorneys began going out and soliciting and calling the ball (?) and doing things to—to get, but, previously it was unprofessional [AC: Oh. [laughs]] to go out there and ask somebody, "Hey, you know, send me your legal work," and so, we'd sit back and wait for the people to come to us. [AC: Right.] And they didn't, [AC laughs] but, you know, the...so...and when you stop to think about it, why...take it to somebody who was brand new, [AC: Uh huh. Right, right.] when you've got experienced lawyers that have already been established and the people have had a relationship with over a period of time. [AC: Yeah.] You know, and as you think through it, [AC: Yeah.] you, you, we understood. [AC: Right.] But at the beginning of my law practice, it was, you know, [GG coughs] it was a lean, it was a lean period of time there, [AC laughs] in terms of getting it started. [AC: Uh huh.] And so it was, it was, real—and, obviously we were very grateful to Wesley to give us that opportunity to represent them. [AC: Oh, okay.] You

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know, over a number of years that uh, [AC: Oh wow.] that we, we did the work, I think uh...Ed Chen [AC: Uh huh.] was the one who brought Wesley to us.

AC: Really?

HG: Yes.

AC: Oh wow.

HG: Ed, Ed Chen, uh, worked at Westlake and, uh...

AC: Ed Chen? Our doctor Ed Chen?

HG: No, this is another Ed Chen, you—I don't know. [AC: Oh, [unintelligible]] He may have been, I don't know if you were here at that partic—what year did y'all get married?

AC: Oh, we were married '73, but I, I, I came in to Houston eighty—'76 and '86, but I'm never involved with Albert's business, [HG: Yeah, no, that's right.] I don't know who's in there. Yeah.

HG: So, well, anyway, he's the one who...uh...it so happened that we had a dear friend called, his name is Ping Chao.

AC: Yeah, Ping Chao I remember, [HG: Yes. Ping—] we met him from TCB.

HG: Ping was a Texas congressman. [AC: Yeah, right.] And Ping was the one who introduced Westlake to us. [AC: Oh, wow.] You know, and then Ed Chen came, we had a chance to visit, [AC: Uh huh.] and then, you know, when we got the chance to visit, and we delivered all of the Westlake personnel to Lake Charles.

AC: Right, the immigration, [HG: That's right. We took care of—] right, all of the immigration issues.

HG: An entire, you know, group [AC: Right, right, right.] that the Chao family brought that was such a, [AC: Wow. Yeah. you know, key, you know...

AC: They're, they're the old people who worked for Mr. Chao [HG: Yes, yeah.] in your day, and then my father-in-law. You, Gordon, you remind me a lot of my father-in-law. [GG laughs] He's like you, very quick and able to find profit in all these businesses. [HG laughs]

GG: Who is your father-in-law?

AC: T.T. Chao, he passed away. T.T. Chao, he's with Westlake Chemical. [HG: West— Westlake Chemical.] From Taiwan. [GG: Huh?] [HG: Westlake Chemical.] He's from Taiwan.

GG: Oh.

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AC: Yeah.

HG: Yeah, yeah, yeah, they're from Taiwan.

AC: Yeah, he, as a young man, he's just like you, very, very entrepreneurial. He can see things other people don't see. And then there's profits that you can make. [**HG:** Well—] [**GG** laughs, coughs]

HG: So, you know, it—it was through that situation [**AC:** Uh huh.] that we got a chance to get to know him. And we'd always been encouraging James and Albert to get more involved with our broader community, [**AC:** Thank you.] and we're pleased to see basically...sh—you know, she's the one who sort of got Albert out of his shell, [**AC** laughs] 'cause she got more, she got involved with a number of the activities and whatnot, and so Albert began...

AC: But Albert got onto the Houston Grand Opera board because of Theresa Chang. [**HG:** Yeah.] Theresa put him on that board, [**HG:** Sure.] and then he started going—

HG: Well, no, no, and this is as it should be, I mean, you know, because I think that we, we want some of our best and brightest to be involved and engaged with the broader community because, you know, they honor us, I mean, you know, hey, uh, we want [laughs] good representatives out there, [**AC:** Yeah. Yeah. Honesty.] [**GG** coughs] because we want our children to have good opportunities, I mean... [**AC:** Yeah.] Gordon's...[laughs] daughter, Molly, was a nutritionist.

AC: Yes, my mother-in-law saw her [**HG:** Okay.] as a nutritionist, the expert, yeah.

HG: My, my old c—roommate from law school [laughs] gained so much weight he ended up hiring Molly [**AC** laughs] to help him, you know, and, and...he preceded Joe Dilg. [**AC:** Ohh. Oh really?] He, he was the managing partner of Vincent and Elkins before Joe. [**AC:** Ohh, who—who's that?] Harry Reasoner. [**AC:** Harr—oh, Harry Reasoner, oh my gosh. Okay.] See, Harry, Harry and I went to Rice together, [**AC:** Ohh, oh my goodness.] and then law school together, and so, you know, it turns out that uh...and then Harry was helpful to me when I was getting started because... Vincent and Elkins had some cases that they didn't—conflict of interest or whatever, and they had to pass it off to somebody else, and so they passed it to me. [**AC:** How nice. Wow.] And so that enabled me to get, you know, *some* work at the beginning, [**AC:** Wow.] of my law career, and it, it enabled me to go ahead and, and get started, I mean, [**AC:** Wow.] and that's why, you know, getting out to the broader community is such an important aspect of it.

AC: Wow. [**GG** coughs] Well Harry, you lead the way. You're showing us.

HG: Well, you know, I, but, you know, see...Gordon and Albert, all them set up the Gee family that enabled us to have a degree of, you know, recognition within the city here [**AC:** Yeah.] and so that made it—the job easier [**AC:** Yeah.] and, you know, and it works to everybody's benefit. [**AC:** Right.] 'Cause when they think, well, of any of our Chinese, they think, well, all Chinese. [**AC:** Yeah, exactly.] And if they start thinking badly, [laughs] that's it. [**AC:** Well, good...[laughs] Yeah.] I mean, so, you know, it's important.

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GG: This is so nice that... [**AC:** Thank you.] the Gees have you [**AC** and **HG** laugh] to do all of this.

AC: Well, I'm, I'm very, uh, honored to [**HG:** Well—] be able to do this, I hope I do a good job. [laughs] But uh—

GG: Hey, I wanna ask you. [coughs] You, were [coughs] in Austin serving the state of Texas. [**HG:** Right.] You got some kind of title, what was that?

HG: Well, as an assistant attorney general, one of hundreds, I have a, you know—[laughs] What happens is that...we, we did a good enough job that they did give me some opportunities, uh, you know, I worked the uh, attorney general's conference and a couple of other things, because, uh...what we didn't realize is that when they put me into the franchise taxes, I was collecting taxes, I tripled the amount of collections in one year. [laughs] [**AC:** Wow. Oh wow.] [**GG:** See that?] [**AC:** They should thank you.] And so, and so w—and, and, and, the attorney general's office got a percentage of it. So if they got a percentage of it, they were watching what I was doing all the time because it increased the amount of moneys [**AC:** Wow.] they got in their budget, and so, you know, we had a chance to, to, to work with them and, you know, in that area, but uh, yeah, it was, it was, it was, [**AC:** Wow. [laughs]] it was rather interesting. It was nothing more than hard work, I mean, you know, it's just that the previous people they had there were political hacks [**AC:** Oh. [unintelligible]] and so they really didn't...yeah, they...they just, they were there, [**AC:** Wow.] holding a position, they really weren't working. [**AC:** Uh huh.] And so, you know, when I came in and they started working, it tripled their collections. [**AC:** Wow. That's really great. [laughs]] You know, [unintelligible] and so they were just absolutely ecstatic with that particular situation.

AC: That is great. Wow. [**GG:** Yeah. Oh yeah, see?] That's very impressive. That's so much—so many impressive people. But I think uh, it's just so intelligent, Albert and Gordon, you and Wallace, [**GG** laughs] you know, you just think very hard. But I'm ta—I think I'd better stop becau—

[recorder shuts off, interview ends]