

Houston Asian American Archive

Chao Center for Asian Studies, Rice University

Interviewee: Edward Chen

Interviewer: Juean Chen, Clarissa Cox

Date/Time of Interview: June 4, 2010

Transcribed by: Juean Chen, Clarissa Cox

Edited by: Priscilla Li (12/16/2016)

Audio Track Time: 1:21:12

Background:

Edward Chuck Ming Chen was born in 1937 and was one of the first Chinese-Americans to be born in Houston, Texas. He was raised in Houston, where he helped with a local grocery store and eventually followed his uncles in going to Rice University in 1955. He has since had a career both in the chemical industry, working both with petroleum and NASA, and in teaching chemistry at both a high school and college level. By compiling newspaper columns such as 'Golden Mountain on the Gulf,' he has earned himself the title of 'Unofficial Historian' of Houston's Chinese-American community.

Setting:

The interview focused mainly on his accomplishments in the field of chemistry, on his role as a professor, and his contribution to Asian-American society in Houston.

The interview was held in a study room in Fondren Library at Rice University. The interview took about an hour and a half, and Mr. Chen provided thorough answers throughout. An earlier, practice interview was held a week before that highlighted some of his younger life.

Interview Transcript:

Key:

EC	Edward Chen
JC	Juean Chen
CC	Clarissa Cox
—	Speech cuts off; abrupt stop
...	Speech trails off; pause
Italics	Emphasis
(?)	Preceding word may not be accurate
Brackets	Actions (laughs, sighs, etc.)

CC: Today is June 4th, 2010. I'm Clarissa Cox.

JC: I'm Juean Chen.

CC: And today we're going to be interviewing Edward Chen for the Houston Asian American Archive at Rice University.

(0:00:21)

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JC: So... Hi, would you briefly in-, introduce yourself?

EC: My name is Dr. Edward Chen, and I'm a Rice graduate from 1959 in chemistry. Anything else you want? Do you need more information at the beginning? Born in Houston, 1937. Uh...what else do you want?

JC: Mm, so um today we're gonna talk more about um labor and capital. We'll focus on probably your career life-

EC: Okay.

JC: Rather than um other—[Your, yeah.]

EC: [Background. Good.] Good. Good.

(1:13)

JC: So, um can you briefly highlight some of your mm important achievements in your career life? In your career?

EC: Well, I guess I can go back to mostly the scientific area, that's where I consider the, the greatest achievements, and perhaps the most important thing that I've done is to be able to teach students, uh, the things that I know. And really, the, the greatest accomplishments that I have are, are my, my students. I think that's, as a teacher, that's the most important thing that I have that's going to be a legacy for the future that can continue to do the type of research work that I've done and uh—so that is, probably, my most important uh occupational uh achievement that I have is the fact that I have been a professor, and I have had students who have gone on to work in industry and also to work i-i-in universities and things like that.

(2:10)

JC: So um, how do you think about your, your academic life?

EC: Well, of course, I actually had a uh mixed career because uh I originally worked in industry, and after I got my— Oh, even before that, I was a rocket scientist. And even before *that* I worked as a laboratory technician for Shell Development Company when I was uh a student at Rice. I did that because uh my father passed away when I was a junior at Rice, and in fact, uh the Rice people arranged me— for me to go to work so I could continue my education— even though, at that time there was no tuition for Rice. I know it's a lot different now, but at that time it was— all we had to do was to buy our books and, and, and pay for laboratory fees like that. So I went to work originally at a company, it's a big company, Shell Development Company on Bellaire, and I worked on the secondary recovery of petroleum. And of course, that's a, a big important area right now. Uh, and so at that particular time I, I worked on uh seeing how you could get more oil out of a uh oil reservoir. Of course, now with the thing out in the Gulf there's too much oil coming out, and they can't control it. But at the time, once the well got to the point where there was enough—not enough pressure to push out the oil, then you had to do something else. They had what they called secondary recovery, and so what they would do, is they would push steam in there in order to push it out, or water and things like that. So that was my first uh occupational uh achievement that I had: working as a laboratory technician and developing models for [coughs] this process called secondary recovery of petroleum. So uh that was, like I say, the very first thing that I did. Uh, we had a paper published uh in uh one of the petroleum journals. They didn't put my name on it, but I had an acknowledgement because at that time I was, of course, just a laboratory technician. But they did acknowledge the work that I did on that particular uh area.

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JC: So, why—uh why they didn't they put your name on it? Just [because-]

EC: [Just] because I was, I was, you know, I wasn't—well, first of all, I didn't have a degree at the time, and uh I was, I was basically a laboratory technician. And that was my job to do the work, and I essentially did what somebody else told me to do and uh worked with them to interpret it. But I really had no basic fundamental uh contribution, but they did acknowledge me in that particular thing. And I think, actually, in the company report I was put on, uh the...the company report, but I didn't get published in, in the article. So...

(5:16)

JC: Um yeah, how do you describe the oil industry by the time you worked for Shell Company? Is it very uh promising industry at that time?

EC: Actually, uh right after that there, there came an economic depression, just like everything else, the economic cycles, and so uh at that point then I uh didn't know exactly what I was going to do. And so I decided to go uh to teach high school. They didn't have a permanent position for me after, after that particular time they were starting to cut back people, and I had actually been hired to replace a person who had been drafted in the army. And so the person who came back then obviously he got his job back, and so then I didn't have a job and they weren't hiring people. So I decided that, well, I needed to get a job to make a living, ultimately, and I wasn't an outstanding student—I was halfway in, in the middle of the class at Rice. And so I went to the University of Houston to get a teaching certificate so I could teach chemistry in high school because there *always* is a need for teachers. Besides, I, I really wanted to become a teacher at that particular time, so that's, that's what I, I did.

(6:23)

And then at that point I met my wife, uh my future wife, at the University of Houston, and so I decided to go ahead and, uh, uh because I was deferred and I didn't—I met my wife—by, by deferment, at the time there was a draft system, and so you could get a college degree, you could continue to go to college uh with what they called a deferment. But at the end of the deferment then you would be eligible for the draft. Well, at that particular time uh what they did is they took numbers, they gave numbers to people, and so uh it was a lottery system and my number was very low so uh I decided, because I was getting married and all that, I decided to go ahead and, and just volunteer for the draft so I could get that over with and come back and, and, and work along those lines. So that's what I did, and I volunteered for the draft. I went to uh Fort Hood, Texas for my basic training, and then after that I did very well. I found out that my Rice education was pretty good because I scored very high on the, on the exam. And what they did is that they told me,

'Well, we need you to work over in Huntsville, Alabama on the rocket program,' because at this particular time, they were splitting out uh the um army program for a space program that was— what was called NASA at the time uh because Russia had sent up the Sputnik and we were getting behind in that particular area. So they sent me to Huntsville, Alabama, and I worked there as a rocket scientist. And so that was where I really got my first publications uh and decided that was really what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. And, uh, so I started, started to work at Huntsville, Alabama as a what we call a G.I., a draftee, and, uh, there what we did was we tested rocket motors because uh, as I say, they split out the uh army and the uh NASA program and NASA was going to go to the moon. And we were supposed to still protect the country by developing rocket motors. So during the two-year period of time that I was there in Huntsville, Alabama, uh, there my greatest accomplishment that I had was to uh develop a method for uh anti-ballistic missiles.

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Technically, there's a problem in trying to catch a missile that's coming in because if you put enough fuel on your, on your rocket motor to go up in there and then to go to catch it that fast, then it's too much weight and so you lose ground. So what happened is I, I went to the Navy—at that particular time, I was a uh in the Army, but the Navy had been working on uh what they call pop-up submarine missiles uh program. So what they did was they actually had what they call a gas generators which would generate pressure inside of a tube so that it was just like shooting a bullet out of a gun. And so that would get it up in the air, and then uh it was supposed to, at the point, go on to uh, to attack somebody else with a warhead. But I said, 'Well, this is a good idea for an anti-ballistic missile,' so we did the same thing with the anti-ballistic missile. About that time, though, I, I finished my time in the army, so I, I left. And after that in going back and looking at, at what they developed for the anti-ballistic missiles, I, I knew that that was the same idea that we had used—that I had proposed to use for the uh, for the Army at the time. So that, that was like my second accomplishment, and actually, we did get a paper and also got a uh report— at that time they called it the 'Army Ordinance Ballistic Missile,' AOMC, which is what I was a part of at the time in Huntsville, Alabama.

(10:41)

So, I really was a rocket scientist, but then at that time I decided to come back and, and work on my Ph.D. Uh, my wife really decided to because she said that she wanted to have a Ph.D. for a husband instead of a—just a scientist with a, with a Bachelor's Degree, so I came back to University of Houston and started working on my, my doctorate degree here. And very early, we got a paper published uh because a particular person that I was working with, his name was Professor Wentworth, uh was looking at measuring the energy that uh is released when an electron reacts with a molecule. This thing was called electron affinity, and he had a, he had a way of doing this that was new. In fact, it *is* and was the first method to do that and the values that are out there are still uh the very first that—the very first values are still valid values. In fact, any time you do an experiment, as long as the person can reproduce that, as long as you haven't made a uh huge mistake in analyzing the data, that data is, is valid because supposedly somebody else could go back and do the same experiment and get the same results. So any time that you have uh data that's obtained and you haven't made a mistake in interpretation then those uh values are, are in fact still valid values. Well, that's still the type of work I've been doing uh in my uh later career.

(12:15)

Uh before that— before I went back to academics, though, I did get a job at uh, at a Carbon Black company. Carbon Black is used to uh make uh rubber tires last long. And so uh when I got my Ph.D., I decided I was going to go work in industry for a while, and I did. Uh so I worked in industry for about five years uh in the Carbon Black area and got a couple of patents in those particular areas. Uh one was to—a way to analyze for Carbon Black, to, to find out how much surface area there was on Carbon Black. And so tha—those things were like my uh additional publications. Although, actually on my doctoral thesis I probably got uh something like six or seven technical publications, and even after I went to work in industry, I continued to work with my professor at the University of Houston. Uh I would go there on Saturdays, and after I would work and, and would uh continue to do research. And so we were doing that all along from the time that I graduated, which was in 1966, all the way up until the time uh that he passed away, which was in, in 2004. So I've been continuing that type of work.

Uh now I have about 100 publications. I have uh several book chapters, and uh I have a uh book that I've written with my son uh because he also got a Ph.D. from the University of Houston and uh we've been working on that type of thing since then. At the university, I ultimately got to the position where I was a full professor uh, and uh again, as I say, we had a lot of publications there. Uh actually, now I probably have about 150 publications. The thing that was uh interesting there is that we at the University of Houston: Clear Lake were not a Ph.D. granting institution. So that research, to a certain extent, was not uh required. It was that something you could do if you wanted to, so I continued to do research, again, with my major professor at the University of Houston. Uh and uh that's how we

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were able to get a lot of different publications, and I got my students to work me on those types of things also. But— We had a very heavy teaching load at the University of Houston: Clear Lake. We had uh like twelve semester hours that we would be teaching each semester, so that's a pretty heavy load for, for teaching. But I was still able to do research. And another area where we got into besides the electron uh reactions was uh, solar energy. We developed a technique to be able to store solar energy so that we could uh use, use that in the, in the future. So uh those are kind of the highlights that you were asking me about as far as what, what we'd done. So...

(15:24)

CC: Um well, kind of going back to Alabama, I was wondering, 'cause you were there for two years-

EC: Right.

CC: Um, what did your wife do during that time? Were you married?

EC: Yes, I was married, and in fact, we had our daughter there. My daughter was born in Huntsville, Alabama uh just before I left there. She was born in 1962. So uh my wife actually worked at uh Montgomery Wards. Uh *that* was an interesting story, here, too because earlier she had uh worked here in Houston. In fact, that's how I really met her because she worked for my uncle uh, Albert Gee, at the restaurant. And I went there one time. It was the time that I was just uh leaving Shell and going to uh to work on my uh teaching certificate at the University of Houston. So she was there, she was the book- the bookkeeper at the time. And at the time it was actually illegal to actually sell liquor by the drink, so in order to be able to buy liquor, you had to be a member of what they called a 'club.' And so in order to do that, in fact, it was the person whose job it I had taken while he went into the service, I took him up there while we were having a party. And I said, 'Well,' I had to get this club membership first, so she was there busily working and then I got up there and I said, my uncle said, 'Well, here take care, take care of my nephew because he's got to do this. He's going to bring his friend here.' Anyway, uh so she was all in a, in a tizzy, but later on I met her at the University of Houston again. And then we got to-, to-, together and here in Houston she had learned how to use this machine. It was a Burroughs accounting machine. Uh there was a, a temporary job that she had here in Houston, so when she went to Huntsville she uh went to apply for this job at, at Montgomery Ward and it was exactly the same machine that she had learned how to use here in Houston. So she, she said, 'Well, I know how to do this machine,' so she, she was very fortunate to be able to do that. So she worked at Montgomery Ward. At the time uh, the uh amount of money, of course the food and things like that and, and uh actually a place, if I had wanted to live in the barracks of course I could do that, but she, obviously, wouldn't be living in the barracks. So they gave us a housing allowance. I got \$91 and then they got, my wife got like \$121 uh as a, as an allowance.

So that's uh- But that's what she did in Huntsville, she worked in, in there at Montgomery Ward.

(18:15)

CC: So she continued accounting when she came back [to Houston?]

EC: [Right,] that's what she was doing when she uh- that's the degree she was getting. She was actually getting a degree in accounting. Uh she graduated with a bachelor's degree from National Taiwan University, and then she came to the United States uh to uh study. Her father had actually been in uh Texas, and so that's why she decided to come to Texas. Another reason why she came to Texas was that one of the military people uh became a friend of hers. He wanted to learn how uh to speak Chinese, and so he uh got her to start teaching him Chinese. And so her— his family was here in Texas, and so there was a contact here in Texas. And besides she had been admitted to the, to the school here at the University of Houston, so that was one of the things that, that, that drove her to come to, to

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Houston. So, uh, uh yes, that was her particular degree that she got was in accounting, and then after that, though uh, she worked uh at a company called Baroid while I was getting my Ph.D.

It's uh, again, it's an oil, drilling mud company which is uh interesting now because the way in which they were trying to, to stop the uh oil leak out in the Gulf was to pump, pump mud, and that, that mud is what this company called Baroid used to sell. And so anyway, she, she was hired as a, as an accountant uh for Baroid chemicals and while I was getting my Ph.D., she was working there and basically supporting the family to a certain extent. Although, I did get some grant money in order to be able to uh continue my Ph.D. Uh it was a NASA grant, again, going back to my rocket—although, I didn't have anything to do with that because the rocket part of it didn't have anything to do with that. But they were giving out Ph.D. uh grants here in Houston because Houston, of course, would become the center for NASA, and uh I got a, I got a NASA grant and she worked for Baroid. She worked there for five years, and she actually got, got her uh, sort of like a pension. It really wasn't a pension. But it was the money that they put in for retirement she was able to take out after that. So that was her work experience uh was uh at uh part time jobs here in Houston before we went to Huntsville, then in Huntsville she worked for Montgomery Wards then when she came back here she worked for Baroid Chemicals and then after that she retired to take care of the family. She didn't really retire because she went into real estate, and so uh we had bought a particular piece of property in uh what's called 'West University,' it's just west of Rice University that's why they call it 'West University.' But anyway, uh that's where we lived uh while I was going to the University of Houston. Part of the time. Uh and uh so she continued to rent that particular property out and we found additional properties that she bought, uh so uh that enabled us to get into real estate.

(21:49)

Uh I think I left out a period of time when I worked for Signal Chemical Company between the time I was uh with the Carbon Black company. I went to work for the Carbon Black company, and then they decided to move out of Houston and I didn't want to stay there. So I went to work for another company that was called Signal Chemical Company, which I eventually became the, the chief chemist for. Um and there we got some patents on some, some uh processes that, that we developed, but they finally uh went broke. Uh and they sold the company to uh another company, which was called Big Three. The main reason why they sold—that Big Three wanted the, wanted the property was that they had a plant that was right next to the particular plant that, that we were working on, and so they bought it for like ten cents on the dollar. At the time, we actually thought we could make a profit—we, the people who were the scientists who were working for them—but we couldn't get enough capital together to buy the company. And so they finally sold it to uh to Big Three at ten cents on the dollar. So then I went to work for Big Three for a short period of time and continued to consult uh for the Goodyear Chemical Company that was buying the product that was being manufactured. And also the Big Three just kept on uh making the same product at that particular plant, and so I was working with, with them on that also. So we got some patents in that particular area. That was an area of my work experience, which I left out earlier, so...

(23:28)

JC: Did you get any stock share from this compa—this company?

EC: They went broke, so [laughs] it wouldn't have made any difference anyway.

I got, I got uh some uh rewards for the patent, I think. I think they gave me \$1000 for some of the patents that we had, but other than that, no. Basically uh, I did get a pension from uh from Signal. Again, same thing, retirement money. Uh when they—because I hadn't been there for five years, but because the company uh closed and was sold they gave me what, what I had in there for my retirement. But uh I actually can't complain too much about uh Signal Chemical Company because during the time that I was working with them uh there was a strike that went on in the

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facility, they had a refinery in addition to the chemical plant. So uh the people who were working in the refinery uh went on strike, and so somebody had to keep it going. Well, they took the people who were at this research facility which was close by and got them to just at least just look at the things and make sure nothing would blow up and things like that.

(24:42)

So uh there I was able to make time-and-a-half, and that's where some of the money came to buy those properties that I was telling you about that my wife uh actually, ultimately uh, we were renting them out, and then when it got to the point where the taxes were too much so we were not making money on it, what we did was we, we tore the houses down and we got a contractor. This is going back to my wife's occupational work too, we got a contractor to build the houses on those particular lots and then we sold the houses. So there we were able to make uh a good profit on it. And so my wife really was a house-builder, a homemaker, from that standpoint. Not only making, making our own home from the standpoint of having the children and taking care of the children, and doing all of the, the stay-at-home mom things, but she also uh first of all rented the houses and then she uh got the contractor to work with her to, to build the houses and she took care of all those books. And so that's the reason why I was able to retire, when I was uh 63, from teaching. And then actually since then I've been doing—continuing to do research and publications and, and, and that type of thing.

(26:03)

CC: Um I was wondering, and I'm not sure whether you were teaching or in industry at this time, but I, I was looking through the archives you submitted to the Woodson Research Center, and you wrote a series of articles called uh 'The Golden Mountain on the Gulf.'

EC: Yes. Uh-huh.

CC: Um how did you manage your time to be able to do, I assume you were working at that time, and also...

EC: I would just set aside, you know, maybe four hours a week in order to uh just sit down and write those articles. Uh actually, they started out before that. At the uh uh, uh uh a different newspaper, not the *U.S. Asia News*, *Southwest Chinese Journal* was what that was, and that's the one that Gene Lee, and I don't know somebody's going to interview [Gene Lee and Hedy Lee]

CC: [Mm-hmm, today.]

EC: I don't know who that's going to be. But uh I actually started uh on my newspaper writing career at that particular time, and what happened is that it, it ties in, as I told you all earlier, that uh my grandmother passed away. And she was the last link that I had between my uh ancestors and when she passed away, I said, 'Well, you know, I, I really need to record a lot of this. Not only this, for myself,' but also just like you all are doing you're doing these things for free and all that which I do very much appreciate. Uh and so I decided, well, not just for my own family but also for the whole Chinese community because there is no record of, of what happened in the Chinese community. And I've learned an awful lot about it, but so I started writing those particular articles. At that time, it was like uh just a chronology, which was a list of the events that took place. Like I had the people who came to Rice, I had went into the Rice library here and looked through all the old dissertations and found all the Chinese names and all that. I looked through the earlier uh annuals and found out the Campaniles and found out when there were Rice students. I actually had a uh an easy time of doing that because I had uh an aunt and two uncles who had graduated from Rice. Well, my aunt didn't graduate she got married instead. That's Jane Gee, and my two uncles that did graduate from Rice uh and they were the first Chinese men who graduated from Rice. I think there was one

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other Chinese woman, and I'm not sure that she graduated but I know that she, she attended about the same time that they did. Uh her name was Clara Eng, in fact.

(28:56)

But, you're talking about how do you manage your time, well you just—what you do is you set aside a certain time to do a certain thing, and then you just go ahead and do that particular thing. Once you get that particular goal accomplished then, then it's there. So that's, that's how I would do things that I was doing with the articles. And so I started with the *Southwest Chinese Journal* and when Wei Li got the *U.S. Asia News* and he asked me to start writing the articles. So I wrote those articles for about five years. And sometimes it was difficult to do because uh I would have other things that would come up, but I would always just make about four hours every week, and set aside the time, and then take the articles down. At the time, we didn't have e-mail and those things, so I had to actually physically take the articles down to the uh the *U.S. Asia News*, which is down on Bellaire Street. So that's how I did it. [laughs]

(29:56)

CC: Were you paid per, per [article]?

EC: [No,] I was the same way that you all are. [laughs] It was totally volunteer. [laughs] It was totally volunteer. Uh...

JC: Did you also try to get your—those articles published on mainstream newspapers like the...?

EC: No, uh but I do have them all collected in there. There's a copy of each one of the articles here in the Woodson library, and I've got most of them scanned in. And I'm going to try to get the rest of them scanned in. Uh what I did was to just—each week I would cut them out and paste them in. But here's, here's one of the situations where I, I—that was not something that absolutely had to be done, right? So I just got a, a lot of them uh that are just still there that I need to cut and paste, and paste them up so I can then scan them in. But now with the scanning devices that we have you just feed in there and they all just go on through. It's, it's really amazing. What we can do.

(30:56)

JC: Um so do you think they, like during the time you worked for those companies, did they like reward you properly? And like did they give like you bonus or anything like that?

EC: Actually, the companies were, were very good, in fact uh. You know, I got promoted up to be the chief chemist, and I, I didn't really find the things that uh people talk about, glass ceilings. I didn't really find that at, at the at the uh companies because, of course, the companies had a profit motive, and maybe it's also because the companies that I worked for were small companies, they weren't large companies. Maybe in the larger companies there are those types of things that where there are glass ceilings and I do know that, that there are situations where people don't get uh get to go and, and achieve a higher-level position. And, and you know, I consider chief chemist was pretty good, uh but as I say, the company eventually went broke anyway so—[laughs] But actually, I found more uh bias in the academic area. In fact uh, maybe it wasn't racial bias maybe it was more academic bias because I had my Ph.D. degree from the University of Houston, and I was applying for the job as a, as a dean at one time and uh they gave it to a colleague of my who had, actually, his Ph.D. from Harvard. And so uh to a certain extent I felt I was more qualified for that particular position than he was, but uh they gave it to him because of his academic credentials. But by the same token, it turned out to be good because he was teaching a course using a, a program, a computer program uh, and since he became dean he couldn't teach the course and so I took—taught the course. And it turned

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out that that had become a very vital part of the research that I've been doing uh with my son. It's something that you can do on a personal computer you can actually calculate uh, for instance, the energies—the energies that I was telling you that we were measuring. You can actually calculate them uh using a personal computer, and uh in the old days you would have to have a huge computer, maybe like the whole size of the floor of this library here, in order to be able to do that. In fact, it was the particular program uh that, that, that uh we used, it was called uh 'Austin Model 1'¹ because the particular person who developed this program was at the University of Texas at Austin, and his name was M.J. Dewar. Uh and so uh anyway it turned out that uh, just like so many things, when one door closes, I didn't get to be dean, but it turned out to be much better because in, in my later life and my later career I've been able to use this particular thing and we're still publishing with it. And it turns out that this is the best way to be able to calculate some of the things that, that, that you have in DNA. I don't know if you all know about—do you know?

JC: I know.

EC: You know, yeah, you're in biochemistry right?

JC: No. Um I learned biology in high school.

EC: Oh okay, yeah. You're—I know you're political science. You're like my dad who was in political science, right? But uh anyway uh so you can understand or start to understand more about DNA by using this particular program, and uh you know I have it on my personal computer. And we've published things uh with it, in fact.

(34:44)

CC: So the research you do now, do you do it all—do you do all your research from home, then?

EC: Yes. Well, not really, I shouldn't say that. Uh...I know it won't come off here, but I could talk about it and show you real quick. Here is a paper that we just published. It has to do with stuff on DNA, and that was the particular program that uh that we used in calculating the energies uh of the components of DNA. This is published in 'Molecular Simulations.' That just came out uh this last year. So you're asking about the research I do now. Yes, uh most of the time it's at home, but uh the uh—my son works at Baylor College of Medicine so he does some work there. And besides that I, I work with some kids, young high school students at Kinkaid uh High School. And so uh that's—you want to talk about accomplishments and, and things that I'm proud of. I had one student, quite a long time ago, who won the Houston Science Fair. Grand Prize Winner. He didn't uh advance further than that, but he did win Houston prize. And now he's got a Ph.D., and I haven't kept in-touch with him but his father was a colleague of mine at the University of Houston: Clear Lake. And then uh four years ago, in 2004, I had another student, who won the Grand Prize here in Houston, and he went to the National Science Fair and he uh won third place in chemistry. And he went to the International Science Fair and won first place in uh, in the International Fair in Brazil. I'm a little bit disappointed because he just graduated uh from MIT with a perfect record. I'm not disappointed of that, but he is not going off for his Ph.D. immediately. I just hope that he does eventually get into science. Right now he's going off to work in industry, but just like I did too. I went to work in industry and then went on to, to get my Ph.D. later on, but I certainly hope that uh—he's a lot smarter than I am. A lot smarter than I am, and so I hope that he'll be able to—but just this last year, I had uh a grand pri—another Grand Prize Winner from Kinkaid uh who went on to the National Science Fair, but unfortunately he didn't uh win anything. I think that he didn't sell his project as well as Charles Herder—who is the one who won in Brazil, ultimately. So talking about things that I'm proud of, those are, those are the things that I'm proud of. Students, you know. That's the future. Just like you all are, and [incoherent] like I say, I do appreciate very much that you all are doing something. Now you don't know me or anything, you didn't know me before, but you're doing something and carrying on something that I feel is very important. And you're doing it for free too, just like I did. [laughs]

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I tell, I tell, tell the people that I advise that in Kinkaid, you know, I said, you know uh, ‘The advice that I give you is what— is worth what, what, what you’re paying for it, which is nothing. If you want to take it, you can take it. Okay? It’s not costing you anything. All you have to do is listen to me talk.’ And, and so uh and...you know, that’s, that’s, that’s the way I feel about it. But I still feel that that’s, that’s, that’s something that I need to do uh, and I think that I mentioned earlier, uh in the other interview that we had, uh what drives me to try to do so many things and, and and—what drives me is the fact that I almost died when I was thirteen-years-old of appendicitis. My mother took me to the doctor, and uh they immediately took me to Memorial Hospital on Main, here in downtown. And they took my appendix out.

And they said that if they hadn’t gotten the appendix out at that particular time that uh I probably wouldn’t be alive. And so anyway, I feel that, you know, I’m here for a purpose. And even if there are people that—they say I talk too much and give too much free advice, I still feel like as long as I’m still here I need to be doing that sort of thing. That’s what kind of drives me. You’re talking about why do I, why do I want to do so many different things. I feel like I have something that’s worthwhile that needs to be passed on to other people and students in particular.

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JC: Um so what’s the um major motivation for you to switch your career life to academic rather than continue doing uh work in the industry?

EC: Well uh, I guess the major thing is because they closed, they closed the facility. [laughs] Because I didn’t have a job um in, in, in, in uh, in the industry. I told you that they sold the facility. I did have a consulting job, but they didn’t uh hire—well, actually that’s not really true because what happened is the opportunity came about to uh to go back and to teach. University of Houston was uh becoming uh a—*more* than just one-campus university, they had the downtown campus, and then they established the campus in Victoria and then they ultimately established the campus in, in Clear Lake, uh so they became a, a multi-campus university. A system that is what they call it. So uh I had the opportunity of going to uh Victoria. At the time, they were setting up a, a chemistry program and a science program in there, and uh as I said, I didn’t have a job and so I went and, and found out about this particular job and it turned out that the uh dean of the University of Houston: Arts and Science School uh was a man named Alfred Neumann, who uh taught with my father. He was a German professor. My father as at the time a political science and, and, and languages, and so I went there and said well you know uh, ‘What can I be doing?’ And so he said, ‘Well we’re getting this campus in Victoria, and maybe we can get you a particular position there.’ So it turned out that the contract that extended back a long time uh were—when I decided to go ahead and go to Victoria. And so I went there then in a couple of years they closed that particular campus.

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But then again, uh this uh Dean of the Arts and Sciences uh became the chancellor out of the new campus the University of Houston: Clear Lake,

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and so when they closed the facility at uh at Victoria, as far as science is concerned, actually the Victoria campus is still in existence. But it doesn’t have any real science program, uh so I went to the University of Houston at Clear Lake to, to start teaching there. So I was on the charter faculty, as far as the science program at the University of Houston: Clear Lake. And uh I actually was given an award for Outstanding Teaching and Research uh out at the University of Houston: Clear Lake, so that’s how it all happened. That’s how I went from industry to academics.

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JC: Um so you were talking about uh your father was uh political science professor at UH.

EC: Yes, uh-huh.

JC: Um so how he get into...

EC: How did he ever get to that job?

JC: Yeah.

EC: Well, okay, originally, he came to Houston as a secretary to the Vice Council of the Republic of China, which was established in Galveston in 1932, and of course, throughout the war uh with Japan, uh the office was there. And of course at the end of uh Second World War, then uh the Korean conflict came up, and so uh, and, and the Republic of China didn't send any money. So he had to, had to support his two children and his wife somehow, so what he did is he, he had been going to the University of Houston and, and teaching part-time languages and political science. He, he wanted to be able to think in uh many different languages. His native tongue actually was Chinese because he was born in San Francisco, and, and, and throughout his youth, he actually uh spoke Chinese more than he did uh English. So he thought, he said he would think in Chinese and so he wanted to be able to think in English and a lot of different languages. So he got his—he came to University of Houston. In fact, he was the first Chinese to be graduated from the University of Houston uh with any sort of degree. He got a Associate of Arts, which was a uh, a junior college degree. At the time, the University of Houston was a junior college. Then he got his bachelor degree and he got his Masters degree. Throughout that time, he was teaching at the University of Houston.

So uh when, when the Nationalists lost the mainland and went to Taiwan, they weren't sending any more money back. Then he had to get a job, so he got a full-time job with the University of Houston, teaching, at that time, languages. One of the reasons why they wanted to have a program in, in Chinese language was because uh, of course, after the war, they thought that China would be a good trading partner, and they needed people to be able to, to uh read, write and speak uh Chinese. And so they had courses in Chinese here at the University of Houston. In fact, I'm sure that was the first Chinese language course taught at the college level uh in the—probably in the whole state of Texas. Uh but anyway, then he later on, got his uh work in political science, and so he got his master's degree in political science, actually. And so then he started teaching because uh there they needed people to be able to teach American history, American government because that's the requirement of the State of Texas and Texas government, that you have to have courses in those particular areas in order to get a, a degree from a state supported—at Rice I don't think Rice requires that, but if you have, if you want to get teaching certificate here in Texas, you also have to, uh, have those particular courses. So anyway, that's how he got into the, the teaching area, because he knew the people there, and the people knew him, and uh then he started working on his Ph.D. later on.

JC: So what was the time uh he started to uh take the part-time job and then what was the time...

EC: Uh he started teaching about 1942, I think. Right after he got his Master's degree, he started teaching uh, actually, Spanish, French and Chinese, and then after the War, of course as I say, they uh they wanted to have a language courses in Chinese, so he started teaching that. The other thing that he did is, he was, I guess, I was sort of like he was because uh in addition to his work with the consulate, he would uh go to Galveston because the University of Houston had an extension course in Galveston. And not everybody would want to go teach things in Galveston, you know, because it was at night. So he would uh go alone there and teach, teach government and history in Galveston, in these extension courses. And so in other words, they needed him as much as he needed a part-time job. Uh and then of course ultimately, that worked in to the full time job that he got as, as an assistant

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professor. Eventually, he got tenure as an assistant professor, and then he was going to uh get his PhD. So he could become an associate, a full professor after that.

CC: Uh, did your father ever teach Chinese outside of U of H, or like trying to teach you maybe?

EC: [laughs] Well, I would actually, there was a Chinese school here in Houston. And we—all of us went to that Chinese school. Uh yes, he taught, he taught elsewhere besides the University of Houston. He taught FBI agents how to read, write and speak Chinese. He developed the whole course for them uh at uh Washington D.C. and this was after the Korean War started. Uh, in fact, at that particular time, uh the FBI uh was going to intern the Chinese, just as they had interned the Japanese because they thought the Chinese uh could possibly be subversive. And there were people who were supportive of the Communist uh Chinese government. And so uh they came down while he was working for his Ph.D. at the University of Texas, and uh they asked him, 'Is this a good idea? Should we intern the Chinese like we did the Japanese?' And he said, 'No, it's not. The majority of American Chinese are loyal to the United States, and we've been here for a long time,' he was born here. So he said, 'What I will do is I will take and translate the intelligence,' because they didn't have people who would translate, uh who were able to read, write and speak Chinese and he had both the language skills. So he would go down and the uh information that would come in would come down to—they had an office, an FBI office down in downtown Houston. And so they would send the things down there. And he would translate the information, so that the government would have the uh intelligence that was coming in from uh from Communist China. After, of course, Communist China went across the Yalu River into Korea, that whole thing actually exploded into the, what was called the Korean War. So he said that basically, 'Don't do it, and I'll help you then find out those people who are supportive of Communist China and the Communist principles that, that—and they want to try and overthrow the government.'

So that's when he said up this course for the FBI agents. So after—he uh, so that his work could be continued, like what I am talking about now, he wanted his work to be able to be continued, and uh it was only one person. And he didn't know he was going to die at age 48, but as only one person, he said, 'Well, what I need to do is to be able to get people who can go into the community and maybe not be recognized as Chinese. So that they could listen and see who was a subversive person and who wasn't. And in fact, a lot of the, a lot of the people that uh that he helped identify were eventually deported uh back to Communist China. So the, the, the point is that uh he was able to teach his students Chinese, you were talking about uh teaching Chinese elsewhere. And uh I actually, he told me at the time, uh that he was writing a white paper for the FBI and J. Edgar Hoover, and uh this white paper actually identified the Communist sympathizers who were here in the United States. And I actually found that particular document. I know it's his. I mean, it was when he was alive, and nobody else would know what he knew because he worked as a newspaper person in, in, in uh in New York, and a lot of those things are about some of the newspapers in New York that were basically communist sympathizers. I mean, you know and so anyway, after that particular time, uh the—Hoover sent this particular document to the Defense Department. And later on, I looked, I looked into the record and uh, I don't that it was this particular document, but the Congress passed a bill outlying—outlawing membership to the Communist Party in the United States. Now it's since been repealed, or I don't know if it's really been repealed or not because, but of course, there are people who are in the current government who claim that they are Communists.

And so, you know if, if, if, if it weren't repealed, then that would be illegal. You know, I don't know, I haven't followed it that much, you know that. To answer your question, he taught Chinese elsewhere, but he didn't teach it to me. And I went back and tried to look back at some of his lessons to teach myself. I have a copy of all of the Chinese...uh, uh oh, in fact, I gave the originals—when I went to uh Washington D.C. to pick up all his belongings after he passed away, they give me a complete set of the documents of the lessons that he had written up, and I've got them all scanned in and I also gave the original copies to the, to the Woodson Library here. So those are here in the library.

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CC: So those are from his lessons to the FBI?

EC: Yes.

CC: Oh okay. That makes sense.

EC: Those are...those are, those are the FBI lessons. Uh and some of them have my little notes on there. And some of them actually have my daughter's notes because she went back, now she's actually probably uh better than I am in Chinese because she, she took Chinese at Bellaire High School. And she took that for, for three years. She got her, her high school degree in three years instead of four, and then she came to Rice and she got her, her bachelor's degree in electrical engineering here at Rice. And then later on, my son went here to get uh, to work on a Ph.D., but then he decided he want to go into computers, and so he went to University of Houston, so he got his Ph.D. in, in uh, in, in biochemistry using uh using computers in order to look at DNA and try to figure out the sequences in DNA that cause different things. Uh...so he got right into the forefront of that. That's why he's now working at, at Baylor College of Medicine. My daughter is working in uh Portland, Oregon, her son, actually her son, her husband, my son-in-law, also graduated from Rice and they're both in the electrical engineering area.

JC: So uh when you were uh the professor at UH, did you participate in any uh administrative work? Or...

EC: Not really, like I said, I tried to become dean at one time, and then they gave it to the guy who graduated from Harvard. Uh of course, you always have to do administrative work because with your students you have to get them through; you have to do that sort of thing. But I've never had an administrative position. Uh oh, I take that back. At—when the very, very first, they had a research administrator uh when they first set up the, the campus, and I was that for about a year, uh in addition to doing all the twelve hours of teaching. But at that time, we didn't have that many students in science, and so I, I had extra things to do. I didn't really even have uh the full twelve-hour courses that I could teach at the time because we just didn't have that many students. And so I did that for a year, and then as we got more students then I didn't do that. So that was basically trying to get grants uh in the science area. So that's the only administrative work that I did.

JC: How, how did you get the grants or the funding for research?

EC: Uh actually, we really didn't. That's why I worked a lot with the— with my professor at the University of Houston. He had the grant money, and so I was doing that. But the, the cost of doing the research really wasn't that much, but as I said I did work with, with my professor and he got grants, and so I was—not again, it was volunteer. In other words, it was doing it because I wanted to do it because I thought I had something that I could contribute to uh, to the students. So, uh one summer I think they paid me off of a solar energy grant, uh when we were doing the uh work uh to try to get storage for solar energy. But in general, I would be teaching during the summer as well as uh, as doing the research. Research wasn't a vital part of the work at UH: Clear Lake. I mean it was something that you had to put on there to be able to say you're doing your part in research. In order to get tenure, in order to get promoted, you have to have a, a research component, but it wasn't a real crucial part of it. So we really didn't have to get money. Uh there was a departmental grant to the University of Houston, which meant that the money was spent in all of the sciences, not just individuals. But now, that there are other people who are getting grant money there at the University of Houston in Clear Lake, and they're thinking about going to four years instead of two years. Right now it's only junior, senior and master level. But they're talking about, sending it down to the freshmen and sophomore years. That was an experiment in education, upper level institutions where you would take people who graduated from junior college and go ahead and finish it. Top it off. It was good for us and good for the students around where we were because a lot of people had just only gotten two years of education. And they needed to have a bachelor's degree. Like working in the chemical plants, and so they were able to come to do part-time work that's

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how we were able to build up our programs in chemistry. And now the program in chemistry is a certified American Chemical Society uh program. So...

JC: So how, how do like manage to research after you retire from the university?

EC: Well, a lot of the things that we did earlier still are cutting-edge type of things. Uh research is defined as looking for something that nobody else knows. If you know what the answer is, then that's not research. Okay. It's like you don't know what I'm gonna answer with these questions. So you're doing research right now. But if you know, in science, if you know, for instance, if you throw the ball up it's going to come down, then you don't have anything to research, right? Because gravity is pulling it down. But if you throw the ball up or, if you're playing, for instance, badminton where you have a badminton shuttlecock, and you hit it up, and it never comes back down, then you got something to research. You got to find out that why that didn't come down. Well, maybe there was an eagle that came by that was flying by, thought that that was a bird that it could catch, and so he caught the shuttlecock. Now eventually the, the eagle went to the nest, but then you'd have to find out. You'd have to look around, maybe some cameras up there to see whether there were eagles or something like that. But that's research. So you can do research anything as long as you have a problem and you know that there isn't—is not an answer to it right now. Then you can do research anywhere, especially now with the Internet. With the, with the iPad, I can go, I can go to the Internet, and I can do research that way. As long as I know what the question is and as long as I know that maybe somebody else is looking at that same question and I have some different ideas about the answer to that question, and I have a way to, to be able to do it. In other words, they talk about now that they have computer experiments, and you don't have to necessary have test tubes and pour things together, okay? And so you can do these computer type of experiments, and as I said, the programs that, that, that are available now, you can do it on a personal computer.

JC: Meaning that you don't need to build a laboratory?

EC: You don't need to have a laboratory to do it. It's just like I didn't—last night there was a particular journal, that, that has a lot of the types of things that I'm interested in, it's called the Journal of Chemical Physics and I've published in it before. So last night when I was on the Internet—hooked up to the, to the university and just did what I would normally do while browsing. I've noticed that they actually have a lot of the uh actual volumes down here. At one time, I think they were going all the way to not having any of the hard copies. But then I just went down there and went through some of the volumes that I would not normally browse through, while I was waiting for you all to come. And I found some things that are very pertinent to the type of research that I'm doing right now. So that's how you do research. And then two weeks ago, they had a meeting of the American Physical Society here in Houston. And so I attended those meetings. Now, I'm fortunate there because my professor although he never paid me while I was working for him, he left the proceeds of his patents to a foundation, which we call the Wentworth Foundation, and the proceeds amounted to something like fifty or sixty thousand dollars. So what I do is I take and, and use those things to go to the meetings like this, and to be able to promote the work and, and, and to be able to continue those particular things. It's getting to the point I need to write another book to update the one that we wrote in, in 2004, my son and I wrote. In fact, that was probably the last thing that my professor ever wrote that was published. He wrote a forward to that particular book and then he died the next year. But he did leave the, the proceeds, and so I've been working along those lines. So you asked me why do I keep on doing these things and how do I keep on doing them is partly because, you know, I'm here, as I've said, I didn't die when I was 13, and I'm still here, past these people that I think a lot of, and I think that I need to do what I can do to preserve what they thought and what their ideas were. And so in that particular case that's one of the things that I've—that, that, that motivates me to keep on doing these things.

JC: So can you list the professional association you're participate in?

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EC: Uh right now, American Physical Society, American Chemical Society, those are the only two that I actually belong, oh, Ameri–American Mass Spectrometry Society, uh those are the three that I belong to right now. Before I was a member of the American Solar Energy Society, uh American Institute of Chemists, I was actually president of the American Institute of Chemists here in Houston. So uh those are the professional organizations that I've participated in the past. I don't think there's any other ones. American Rocket Society... American Rocket Society, I was part of that when I was a rocket scientist. So I don't think I was ever in anything in the petroleum area. Those, those are the ones that I participated in.

JC: So do you attend the meeting uh constantly?

EC: Yes, I went to the American Chemical Society meeting in, in uh San Francisco this year. I went to the American Physical Society uh meeting here in Houston. There's another group that I'm participating in right now, it's not really a society or anything, but it's called the Gordon Conference, and the Gordon Conference uh is something where they get experts in a certain field, and just the last two years, they started having this in Galveston, and so since it's local and all of that, and some of the areas are, are very interesting to what I work with—I've been going to those particular meetings. And they're very reasonable. Uh it's like a thousand dollars you spend the whole week there and your hotel and everything is paid for, and your food and you don't have to—in other words for, for me, of course, I just take and ride the car out to Galveston, so for a thousand bucks I can basically participate and, and be there with these people who are all experts in this particular area. So this was established by someone uh in, in the, in the uh New England states, in the Ivy League areas, uh and it's been his legacy it's called the Gordon Conferences, and he's probably more famous for that than anything else that he's ever done. I would like to really do this with some of the high schools because I think that that's one thing that we're missing out on. We're not encouraging the young people to, to go into science here in the United States, and I think that's, that's just not a good thing.

JC: So uh, do you, do you still participate in the Asian American [societies]?

EC: Yes, very definitely so. Uh in fact I would like to, that's another thing that I would like to do before I die. Which is you know, you set up all these goals that you have, things that you wanna do, the hundred things that you want to do before you die, right? And this is one of the hundred things that I want to do before I die. Is to I really would like to get a Texas Asian uh Historical Society set up here in, in, in Houston because there is no such a thing. And it's like the director of the Chao Center was saying, Tani Barlow, was saying is that this is probably the only major city, city that has a major Asian concentration that doesn't have some sort of a historical archives, and of course that's why you all are working on these archives, and again that I think, is a very important contribution that you all are making. Uh so that's one thing that I would like to do, but I work with the Chinese American Citizens Alliance. I worked with the uh—I was a chairman of Chinese American Voters League at one time, and I basically promote uh forums between the candidates, the Democrats and Republican candidates to come before the Asian community. Uh recently, of course, it's been mostly Republicans, because Republicans are in control here in Texas right now. But of course after the last election, with President Obama, it's tending to go back to the point where you have people in both parties who are contesting for a particular position, which is not a bad thing. And so I will probably go and try to go back and do some more work along those lines again. So um that's uh that's part of the work that I do. I don't participate in Chinese Baptist Church anymore. I'm a member of that, but I don't participate in that any more. Uh and other Asian organizations I still participate in what they call the Association of Chinese Organizations, uh which is an umbrella organization for Chinese organizations here in, in Houston. And I participate in that. Uh I guess that's about all the ones that I really can think of right now.

CC: Are you doing anything at present to encourage Asian participation in politics?

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EC: Yes, I am, and that's a difficult thing to do. Um...there are a number of Asians who are participating in politics right now, Gordon Quan for instance, is running; you said you interviewed Esther. Uh Gordon Quan is running for County Judge, uh I don't think that he has much of chance this time but you never know. If some scandal comes up or something like that with the current County Judge, it, it just might, you know, might turn out to be that, in fact, the—there's a Chinese person that actually won a City Council position although she also happened to be black, and that was when uh Jim Westmoreland made his comment about the 'N-Word Airport' that was named after Mickey Leland, and he was kicked out of office. And I can't think of her name right now, but her grandfather was one of the Chinese uh who uh worked on the railroad in 1869, building in between Houston and, and uh Dallas, who was released from the contract, basically fired when the economic situation, there was an economic downturn, so he went to work in, in, in Robinson County as a sharecropper, and so uh he married a, a, a black person, and uh his descendent actually won this particular position but I can't remember the name right now. But she's Chinese but she's only like a fourth Chinese, okay? But she, she is probably, she *is* the first Chinese person to uh be elected to City Council.

And uh I was running for City Council at one time, uh but I wasn't selected. Judson Robinson, Jr. uh had died, and so they were gonna select a person to replace this City Council person and uh they eventually they gave it to the wife, and then after that, the son ran for the position. And so he got that particular position, but I was up for that. The first person that actually did win a City Council position was uh was Martha Wong, and then after that Gordon Quan won and now we have a, of course, we have a, well, we've had...a Pakistani who also happened to run for Controller. M. J. Kang was in city council. Now we have a Vietnamese uh person who is on the city council, so I try to encourage people to participate in politics, and I still work with the, with the Republican Party, I was Vice Chairman of the Harris County Republican Party. The Harris County Republican Party—Harris County is larger, as far as population's concerned, than many states in the whole, in the whole United States, so I was—but that was an appointed position. I was appointed to that particular position. So I do—the answer to your question is: Yes, I do try to encourage people but it's very difficult to uh to get people to, to run for a particular offices. I think the first person that was actually elected, who was a, a, a Chinese person, was Hannah Chow. She was a judge, and that was a countywide election. But at the time, the Democrats had control, and so if you ran as a Democrat then you would be elected as a judge, so to a certain extent, [laughs] I mean, she didn't have a real problem there. But she was also the last Democrat to be basically thrown out of office, so that all the Republicans, all the countywide elected Republicans, uh uh countywide elected officials, were Republicans, and that happened during the time that I was Vice Chairman of the Harris County Republican Party. I didn't have anything to do with it, but... [laughs]

JC: What's the—what are the major difficulties to encourage Asian Americans?

EC: They don't want to, they don't want to participate. They don't want to... I think to a certain extent, uh it's been because in the past, of course, Japan had an Emperor in China and had influence on them and people thought that the government's always gonna be there to do what they need to do for me, and I shouldn't try to participate. I don't need to because the government's gonna take care of me. And so, and the other thing is that maybe they just want to make more money and, and at the time of course, nowadays, it gets to the point where you make more money if you go into government service— service, if you call it service—I consider it's just uh like a regular job, but to a certain extent, now people make more money in, in government work than they do in uh, in the private sector. But I think that's—I think that that's part of the problem—that Asian people in general think that the government should be taken care, should, should do his job and take care of everything, and they don't have to participate in it. Now this is—causes some real problems in, in some of the countries, where they, they actually, for instance, force the people to take on uh, uh different names in Chinese. Uh...what did they call...Thailand?

JC: In Thailand?

EC: That's right, if you're a Chinese person, you have to take a Thai name instead of using your Chinese name.

JC: So they try to uh like eliminate your Chinese...

EC: Chinese—you're right, they try to eliminate your Chinese-ness, yes exactly, but they can't of course. We have dark hair, we have slighted eyes, but I mean, you know, there's a visual identity for Chinese. Just as there's a visual identity for blacks. Now for Hispanics, it's not so much, but in, in those particular—well of course, that's what they call, you know what—brown, black, yellow, white...red and yellow, black and white.

(01:14:15)

And so there is a visual identity that you cannot get away from.

JC: So what do you think is uh, um what— why do you think it is important to get Chinese into politics, like to become— uh, to take position in politics?

EC: Because it's our government, if we really want to be a part of it, then we have to participate. If it's—if you're gonna be an outsider, you don't want to be a real part of the government, then, yeah let somebody else do it. But in order to get good people into government you have to, be willing to work at—but unfortunately now, I think maybe the government is more like as I say it, it gets to be almost like a tenured professor job. Once you get in there, you don't have to do anything, and I think that's wrong. I think that what we need to do is we need to have more citizen politicians instead of political citizens, I think that's what's wrong with our governmental system right now is that politics plays too much of a role in governing. You know, I don't know if you've all seen this recent thing about the baseball where the perfect game was lost because the guy, the umpire blew the call. Okay? I don't think he did that on purpose. You know...you know what baseball is a perfect, if you have a, if you, if you don't—if you strike out, if you only face 27 people in a 9-inning game, that's a perfect game, and it only happens very very seldom, and they just had one, and I don't know how many number games it happened. Less than fifty, I know, perfect games that have ever been pitched in the Major League. So the referee made, made a mistake, he... the guy was out and he called him safe. And so there was a hit and therefore the guy didn't have a perfect game. So the point is that I don't think that the referee was, was, was doing that on purpose. But I do think that sometimes that politicians do things on purpose that are, that are not for the good of the, of the country. That's why I think we need to have more citizen politicians, and whether it's Asian or Caucasian or black or whatever it is, Hispanic?

I think that when—until we start to participate in the government, and we the people take control of the government, and we the people means that everyone who is a part of the government, takes control of the government, then we're gonna have situations like what we have now, and I think it's, it's bad. It's not just Republicans, and it's not just Democrats. I think the problem is that these people instead of talking about governmental service, they talk about governmental tenure, and being there forever. I, I don't think the professor should be tenured, I really don't. Now they should be protected, they shouldn't, you shouldn't have people to be able to just criticize the people—the professors for their ideas, but by the same token, you shouldn't have a guaranteed position. I—you know I—that's a very— well I gave up, I gave up the guaranteed position, I could still be teaching now. There is no way as far as the time that you have retired as a, as a tenured professor. I could've been teaching now, but I have more the fun doing what I'm doing now, I couldn't be doing what I'm doing...so.

CC: Were you ever on a tenure track?

EC: I was tenured, I was full...I was a tenured full professor. I was a tenured full professor. I mean I got as high as I could go, and then I was tenured, so I could still be, I could still be teaching now if I wanted to.

(01:18:03)

JC: But you gave up your tenure?

EC: Sure, 'cause I wanted to do something else. My wife ended up making enough money so I didn't have to work.
[laughs]

JC: So is your wife working on real estate?

EC: Yeah, well, she built the houses and all that I told you, she built the houses and sold it, and she built the house that we live in, she built the house that my son lives in now, and, and so you know...uh it's all paid for, I don't have to worry about house payment or anything like that ...so now... She lets me do what I wanna do.

(01:18:40)

CC: So she's still working in real estate?

EC: No.

CC: No? Okay.

EC: She's retired now, too. Tired and retired. Uh I still work on the Miss Chinatown Pageant, too. Uh we did set up a scholarship, for the Miss Chinatown Pageant. In fact, we were the first ones to set up the—an endowed scholarship in, in honor of my parents, uh then other people now have done the endowment. So Miss Chinatown Pageant is gonna be on the 30th or the 31st this year, right around my birthday. So every year I say when I get up there, I'm the emcee, that gets things started and I say that they're having a party for me on my birthday because it's typically right around July 30th. And...so.

(01:19:24)

JC: Um so, how, how do you manage your personal finance?

EC: My wife takes care of it. My wife takes care of it. [laughs] I play in the stock market a little bit, and I've been doing pretty good. So that's but other than that, she takes care of all the finance. She's done that all the time. I very seldom will write a check.

JC: This is probably pretty much we're gonna do for this interview, and thank you very much. Um, so um we hope that um there's—if there is any question happened like during transcription, we may probably come to you...

EC: Sure, yeah right, right, we can go back and...

JC: and if we need some—ask some other question we may probably...

EC: Sure, there's no problem, no problem... whatsoever you know, I was supposedly gonna be helping. What, what is the plan, with respect to the other interviews? That you—you've done one with Esther, and you're gonna do one with someone else too besides me?

JC: Um that, that will be one week later, like next week, we, all the group will start on transcribing.

EC: Okay.

JC: Then, we're gonna come here, do another three people.

EC: Okay.

CC: It's three people every week, so I just happened to be the person who doubled up this week.

EC: Okay, okay, okay. Okay, well uh I guess uh...Anne, or who is working with you? Anne Chao, or, or?

JC: Yeah.

EC: Um yeah. Bryan's not back yet. Although Anne left for China today?

JC: Yeah. But I think he will be back uh.

(01:21:14) [The recorder is turned off; the interview ends]