

**Houston Asian American Archive**  
**Chao Center for Asian Studies, Rice University**

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Interviewee: Sarosh Jehangir Collector

Interviewers: Chris Johnson; Gabriel Wang

Date/Time of Interview: June 9, 2014, at 10:00AM

Transcribed by: Chris Johnson; Gabriel Wang

Edited by: Priscilla Li (5/12/2017)

Audio Track Time: 1:35:01

Background:

Sarosh Collector was born in Karachi, Pakistan in 1947. He went to Karachi Grammar School in Karachi, and attended engineering college in Pakistan during the time of the Indo- Pakistani War of 1965. After working as a high school teacher for a year, he attended the University of Oklahoma in Norman as a graduate student. He then moved to Houston with his wife, and ended up working as a CPA and running his own firm. He also helped found the Zoroastrian Community Center.

Setting:

The interview focuses on economy and capital; in particular, Mr. Collector went into great detail about his work experiences in several areas across the country. The interview was conducted at the Zoroastrian Community Center in Houston, in the Youth Room where Mr. Collector teaches. The interview spanned approximately an hour and a half. In the first half of the interview, there is a bird in the room trying to get out; the sound of it rustling and thumping against the window can be heard in the interview. Later in the interview, another Zoroastrian community member stops by the room and Mr. Collector converses with him for a short while.

Interviewers:

Chris Johnson is a rising Junior at Rice University, studying Linguistics. He is from Houston, and is one of the 2014 HAAA summer interns.

Gabriel Wang is a rising Junior at Rice University originally from Seattle, Washington. He is one of the HAAA summer interns, and is majoring in chemistry. He is also pre- pharmacy.

Interview Transcript:

Key:

CJ	Chris Johnson
GW	Gabriel Wang
SC	Sarosh Collector
IS	Isabelle Soifer
—	Speech cuts off; abrupt stop
...	Speech trails off; pause
Italics	Emphasis
(?)	Preceding word may not be accurate

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Brackets	Actions (laughs, sighs, etc.)
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**GW:** Alright, this is Gabriel Wang...

**CJ:** And this is Chris Johnson. And we're here today on May 9th in the Zoroastrian Community Center of Houston to interview Mr. Sarosh Collector for the Houston Asian American Archive. Um, so Mr. Collector, could you start off by telling us just a little bit about yourself briefly, uh, maybe where you grew up, perhaps?

**SC:** Sure. Um... [clears throat] I uh grew up in Karachi, Pakistan, I belong to the Zoroastrian faith, um, came to the States in 1970 to go to school in Oklahoma, and I've been here pretty much most of my adult life, in the United States. Um... uh, let's see, what else do we want to talk about um... my early schooling, my early schooling was in Karachi, I was uh at a Church of England school that I attended, so Karachi Grammar School is what it was called, uh went through the 12th grade there, uh what they call is a secondary school certificate, the equivalent of uh what they have in England, not at the local level they have a different, uh, schooling deal at the local level, so—but I was—we were the British level. They now actually in Pakistan, have both, both the local level and the English uh secondary school certificate.

[coughs] After that, uh... [coughs] excuse me, um, I ended up going to a local precollege program just because I had time to kill before admissions opened for engineering uh school. And then, once that happened, uh, went to engineering school over there, and studied engineering for four years. Actually, four, four and a half years, because we had school shut down for a while due to riots and stuff like that and the war. So... once I graduated from there, um, I, um... killed time again, I ended up taking a job teaching high school, uh, engineering technology at a Zoroastrian school there that we had, uh replacing their teacher uh who wanted to come to the States for about a year for a visit, so he ended up coming here, and uh I worked in his place for about a year, and when he came back, I came to the States to—to study. And been here ever since, they haven't been able to kick me out.

**CJ and GW:** [laughs]

**CJ:** Alright, can you tell us a little bit about the neighborhood that you grew up in?

**SC:** Uh... actually, we had a—we had a house, a big house, on a very major street, and then on our side of the major street they had uh these little gardens that divided the major street from the side street, [inaudible] just alongside the main street itself, there was like, uh... I guess, on—if—think about it as a freeway, but being the major street, and then on the freeway you've got the access roads, yeah it's—so we were like the access road to a major street. And we had a house beside us, and there were other big—big houses that had you know, families living in, and we kind of grew up, um, uh... uh not too far from us was a, uh... on... both sides, I think both to, uh I would say northwest of us and then southeast of us, we had populations that had uh apartments where a lot of Zoroastrians lived. So I had access to a lot of Zoroastrian friends that way, even though there weren't very many. And then I had other uh buildings, apartments that my Pakistani friends and we would play together and so on. And of course, I had the added uh benefit of living right across from the Young Women's Christian Association hostel that they had there, and a Parsi girl's school, so... you know, growing up it was a good time.

**GW:** [laughs] Can you talk about your family history, like had your family been in Karachi for a while?

**SC:** Uh, yes. [clears throat] My great grandfather came to the Karachi area from India with the British army. He was a bursar for the army. And when they came to the area that is inside Karachi right now, it was called Soldier Bazaar, and soldier means soldier, you know, any word, and bazaar was, that was the area that they were stationed at, and there were people, and hou—and uh, shops that had grown up around it. [coughs] And he was there with them for a while, then he ended up being uh appointed the collector for that area, so he became like a, um, you know, the tax collector for that area, from people, from businesses, as well as land and so on and so

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forth. And that's what he did, hence the name Collector. Uh and, uh... and then he retired from there, and he started his own business. As best as I can tell, he came to the area the 1850's, somewhere in that neighborhood, m'kay. Um, I've... that's about as far as I could go, I haven't gone over to the Indian side to be able to find what I have there for my father's lineage. But we feel he was there in—we found some documents that said that—that come sometime in the 1850's, maybe a little earlier, so, uh... because he established in 1874, he established a nice factory in Karachi, and in 1974, uh they ended up finishing its centenary and then they got rid of it, so the family got rid of it, so—so that's far back, I—I do know we've been there for that—since that long. Family has been in Pakistan, in Karachi for that long.

**CJ:** Alright, so in your household, when you were growing up, was it just you and your parents, was that right?

**SC:** No.

**CJ:** [quietly] Oh.

**SC:** [coughs] We have the extended family concept, so in the house that I grew up in that I remember, it was a large house, and we all had kind of individual minor apartments, okay, uh so on the—we had a two story house, uh well one and a half story, really, the second was not built out. Um we had uh my grandmother live there, had an uncle who was single, he hadn't married, so he lived there, I had an uncle who was married who lived there, my father, my mother when they were together, lived upstairs, okay, they had their—like I said, they each had... And then I had an aunt, my father's sister, who got widowed, guess in 1950 or somewhere in that neighborhood, early 50's or mid 50's, and so she then moved back to our house, m'kay, I would say mid 50's when she ended up moving back to our house. So that was there, my uncle had two boys, who—we—and so myself and my cousins, more brothers ended up growing up together in that one household. And every so often we had some other distant family relative that would come and stay for a while, over extended period of time, and then they would go back to wherever, and then somebody else would come, and so on, so. It was always a full household. So, um... yeah, and like I said, like that pretty much typical middle class upbringing over there, most of the time. Spoiled brat, yeah. [**All:** laughs]

**CJ:** Alright, could you tell us what sorts of jobs did your parents do, um, er...

**SC:** My mother and father separated when I must have been about three, two—two years old, something like that, two years old. My father uh worked at a bank, he was a manager in a bank, then he ended up working for as a manager out, stationed in a construction company. He came back and worked as manager at a bank again for a longtime. My uncle was the same, he ended up working as a manager in a bank, and then in the evenings he would go help out at the ice factory that the family owned, in the evenings he would go work there, uh taking care of stuff, looking after the accounts, things of that nature. Because that thing, after a long time, just ran itself on its own, we had a set number of customers who we knew they were gonna be coming, they'd come and, you know, we had enough ice ready and they would load it, or they'd bring stuff for the cold storage and leave it behind and that was it, and we had people who would work for us forever who ended up knowing exactly what to do. And then one of my—my father's cousins, the eldest one in the family, at that time, of that—of that level was the one who ran the place. He also owned the largest share of it, so he more or less would be there running it and so on, but uh that would be it. And my youngest uncle, he dabbled in small business, he had a little part in here in this business, and a little share in that business, a little share in that business, and I guess he was the consummate entrepreneur if you want, you know, wanting to invest into things, didn't want to work—he didn't want to work, didn't like working at a job, so. And none of the women in the house worked.

**GW:** Mm-hmm.

**CJ:** Alright, um... can you tell us a little about your experience at the school you went to, the Church of England school?

**SC:** I think good experiences, and bad ones too. Um... a good one is I got to learn a lot. I have to admit, I mean, a very good grounding and very good education from it. Lots of good friends, still friends that are decades, ages whatever later, eons later we're still good friends, uh and we, once in a while we keep in touch, you know, every so often. Um... the bad one was it was a very strict school. And uh there were certain things that they would want to have done that I wasn't particularly crazy about. One of those was early morning assembly, and uh since it was a Christian school, you know, we had to start with hymns and a prayer and the Lord's Prayer and so forth. And it was fine as long as it was the Lord's Prayer and it was a—was kind of a non-denominational thing, didn't have a problem with it... [trails off] But when the hymns started, it became more Christian oriented, and so I wasn't that big a fan of it. So I would conveniently forget my hymnbook. And uh we used to have prefects, these are the kids, these are older kids, older cla—you know, upper classes who had to keep all the younger ones in line. Y'know... [trails off] And they were supposed to be responsible.

And so I ended up being reported pretty much every day to the principal, and soon as the assembly was over I'd go to the principal and they'd say, 'What?' and it was for the hymn book and [they'd] say, 'Okay.' And uh over time we came to an agreement that I'd just, after the hymn would go outside his class, and we'd go in there, we'd say hi to each other, and say good morning. And I'd get one cut on my behind with a cane, and I'd say, 'Thank you very much' and I'd leave. And that became [inaudible] routine, so you know, for a while that's what it was. Until the... country became a little bit more... Muslim centric. And then they ended up making it where you had to sing the national anthem in the morning for the deal and not the Christian songs and so forth. And so until then—that was about maybe a year and a half or so, at most two years... [referring to bird in room] Dumb bird, it's got an open door. [**GW and CJ:** [laughs]] But anyway, it—it, for—for about, just may—maybe two years before I graduated out of there, by that time I was a prefect, so you know, I could lord it over people. But uh, but uh, that's what happened, and so you know, we'd sing the National Anthem and go back to class and go to class to start with. Other than that, it was a fun time in school, I have to admit, very good fun time. More fun times in school and we got to learn a lot, trained [us] very well for it. Stood me in good stead going to engineering school.

**GW:** So were most of the other um class—were most of your other classmates at that school, were they Christian?

[**SC:** No.] Or were they of different faiths?

**SC:** No. They were—they were pretty much all, all faiths, mostly. Since our community is very small community, okay, but uh majority of them are Muslim, and a lot of them—some of them were Christian, yeah, but majority of them are Muslim, and uh, and you know, everybody had to do it at that time, and I think over a period of time, just said I... I just... well most people couldn't care less and they just did what they had. And I wasn't exactly thrilled about it, so I did my own thing and that was it. But yeah, and it—it was a—it was a mixed group, we had some Hindus there, we had a bunch of—a lot of Muslims because it was a Muslim country, a few Christians, and then Zoroastrians were there, alright, a lot of the... and like I said, it was, it was a private school, okay, and so we—we had probably upper middle—or middle class, upper middle class and the very rich coming to that school at that point in time, you—you know, in—in that time frame. We, subsequently we had a lot more private schools that showed up as I was getting out of school. We had an Ameri—two American schools start there and so on, and things of that nature, a lot more upper scale private schools showing up also. So there was more of an opportunity for other people, but at the time that we were there, the, the graduate—Karachi Grammar School that I went to, there was another called Saint Patrick's school, which was a, a Catholic missionary school, uh I think run by the Jesuits, I believe, and then there was a Parsi school. Those were the three elite schools in Karachi, that were—and most people wanted to get into that.

**CJ:** Um, so you said that after leaving that school, you went to engineering school, is that right?

**SC:** Right, engineering college, right.

**CJ:** Um and you mentioned that during that time, there were some riots or some sort of turmoil that took place, could you describe that?

**SC:** Well, this was in '65, and we had a India-Pakistan war in 1965, and so we lost close to about nine months of my first year in engineering college. [coughs] Uh you know, the war didn't last very long, maybe a week, ten days, something like that. But the tensions were always there, and because the tensions were there and after the war, of course, [coughs] you know, the economy went to hell in a handbasket, and things of that happening, and you know, people were upset, and the local population felt like the United States had let us down, and a bunch of the other population felt like the British had been double dealing, and, and so there was unrest, and so because of that unrest there were lots of riots and then, you know. That was about also the point in time that the college students were becoming politically active, so they started to riot, and they would shut the school down, and so when the school was shut down it would take a while before it could open up, and start things again and get things going. And yeah we pretty much lost, you know, almost nine—well I mean it was, you know, the school went for nine months and three months would be off, so you know, and in the nine months that was there we pretty much lost six months off that, so lost over half the school year, so the—the first year had to be repeated all over again. So that was it.

So yeah, it was—it was, and yeah, we were—we were in those riots, you know, and there were the—the—the... we were, a couple of times the riots would start while we were in school. Taking a class, all of a sudden we hear these, some of these students agitating outside, and so on and so on, the principal, the—the teacher would—they would say, 'My god, they started again,' yeah we started again! 'Well, I guess you guys need to go,' but you know, usually it's pretty late by the time we went—were let out of class, so we just kinda huddled around the—the engineering university, and the, right beside the engineering college was the law college, and there was a science college, and a uh commerce college, and a little further away was the medical college. So pretty much in that area, I would say, uh within a one and a half mile diameter, we had all these colleges. I mean, the—the—the other, the—the first four were close by, you know, the commerce college, the engineering college shared a wall, and the commerce college and the science college shared a wall, and the law college was just across the street from the engineering college, and those were very close by. The medical college was about maybe a mile at most away from us, so, you know, things would get uneasy very quickly, and then the cops would come, and the riot police would come, and so on and so forth.

And um they had these long sticks, they're about, they're rods, like you know, I don't know if you've seen a hiking rod—hiking stick, m'kay, it's like those, okay, straight and long and there's a brass knob on the end. And they hit you with that, and that hurts. So, and then of course they would tear gas you, stuff of that nature, try to break you up, so... Got caught in that a couple of times, stayed inside the school walls and you know, [coughs] had a couple of tear gas canisters burst close by, I would walk around a corner, I would see it coming, and I would walk back up, you know, back up again, let it burst out there, and then run the other way. But yeah, it was, it was life growing up, you know. [laughs] Nothing big, nothing bad, but that's what it was. So... yeah. It was interesting, what can I say?...So.

**CJ:** Um, so, was like—is this correct—so you mentioned that after that you went into teaching for a year, is that correct?

**SC:** Yeah, we had a Zoroastrian school there and uh the person was in charge of the technical division, they had a workshop there and they taught engineering drawing and they taught uh mechanical technology, electrical technology and stuff like that. It was an old friend of the family, he actually at one time had been our ne—tenant in a small house that we had beside our house, and then—and he'd known me since I was a kid, and then I knew the family. So when I was—I had uh, applied to the United States, and I couldn't get—I applied a little late, so I waited an entire year to be able to get to the States [coughs] the fall semester. And so I was at odds, I didn't know what to do. And I was thinking about just getting a job, either that or working at the ice factory itself, [inaudible], you know. And I did that, doing nothing else just to kill time, I did go work there. And found out how much I didn't know uh about stuff at that time, when all theory is theory and practical work is practical work, and uh mechanics they were teaching me and so on.

And all of a sudden I got a call from him, he says, 'I hear you're not doing anything,' and I says, 'Well... you know.' He says, 'I wanna go see my son in the United States, I'll be gone at the most a year. Why don't you

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come stay here and teach the kids while I'm gone?' So [I said] yeah, why the heck not, nothing else to do. So that's what I did, I would go there early morning at 7, and teach 'til about 2 o'clock, then go home, have lunch, and then go to the ice factory and work there 'til about 4:30, 5 o'clock, and then come back and, um, I gave tuitions to about three or four kids for about an hour after that. And then my time was my own. But, that's what I did for about a year, yeah, at the school. So I did teach school.

**GW:** And what was that experience like, did you like teaching?

**SC:** I like teaching, yes, I like teaching. I am not so sure I would have done that and got into that profession, I—I'm not positive I would have done that. But I do—I do like teaching, and so I now teach religious classes here. This [gesturing to room interview is held in] is the youth room, which I teach the youth group. And so it's the age between 14 and 18, 19, before they go off to college, so. And I've been enjoying it, I've been doing it for a while now, and I enjoy it and so yeah. That experience helped a lot, and uh being kinda yeah, give me the bug. 'Cause I don't want to go into teaching full time, um didn't think there was enough money in it, so you know. I am very mercurial about that, so. But, so, uh but I have been doing it for a while, I've been enjoying it. It was not a, it was a good, it was—it was—it was a good experience, I enjoyed it very much. And some of the kids still remember me, and some of the people that I taught there, the kids that I taught there are now here! And we talk about old times, so you know, it's there.

**CJ:** And so was that the year before you came to the U.S.?

**SC:** That was the year before I came. As soon as—as soon as the gentleman came back, 'kay, from there, **uh** I had already had my admission, I knew I was coming here in fall, and I said, 'You'd better get—be back here before it's time for me to leave,' and he says, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah.' And he came back, he came back in, uh, I think mid to late July, and I had to be here by August the 20th or something like that, so it was enough time. And so as soon as he came there we said thank you, hi, bye, good, enjoy, blah blah blah, and then I came here, and that was it. Came to, came to Oklahoma. That was an experience. Um on the trip over, I was travelling with another friend who also had admission to Columbia, to University of Oklahoma in Norman. So we left Pakistan, stopped in Iran, uh his cousin who used to work for the airline came up to the plane and and met and stuff, and he brought us some food and things like that, uh and so we met and they wouldn't let us off the plane, they kept us on the plane 'til he had come up, we went down, met with him on the tarmac and stuff like that, talked to him for about a half an hour, gave us stuff to eat. And we were on the flight back, came to London, so we decided to stay in London for about a week before we were coming here. While we were in London—we were running around London we ended up meeting some guy, uh at a, I think it was a restaurant or someplace, a uh guy from India who was in the travel business, and he said, 'You guys want to go to Switzerland?' 'Hell yeah, why not? Would it cost us anything?' 'No, it won't cost you anything! Lemme just reroute you guys.' So [we] says, 'Okay...' So instead of staying the full week in London we end up cut things short, and he ended up rerouting all of our tickets and changing things around, and send us to Switzerland, we were in Zurich! So we stayed in Zurich for about two days, two and a half days I think, and then flew to uh New York, and then from New York we caught a plane to Norman. And uh ya know, just sitting there talking, and you know, minding our business, and so some—there was a group of people travelling, they were on uh I guess one of these vacations or whatever, like you know, group, going on group vacation. So this old lady asks us where you guys from, what are you doing, where are you going, you know etcetera. We say you know, 'We're gonna go to Norman, gonna go to-' 'Oh, you're going to the hippie university!' Hippie university? I didn't know anything better, I mean, I thought it was a great university! [We] says, 'Oh, whatever it is, we're going there.'

And then she said, 'Oh, Oklahoma well—and Norman, we have—we have somebody from, in our group who's from Oklahoma!' So she says, 'Let me go introduce him!' So to both of us, and start to introduce him, and he was from Ada, Oklahoma, which is just north of uh Dallas, I mean this—Gainesville actually, just across the border, not too far, maybe uh 15, 20 miles. And we said hi to him and so on, and... We did—we had a small accent, no question about—we had a Pakistani question still there, and so we were speaking with small of an accent, and he started to speak, and I couldn't hear a word he said. I could not understand a word he said. And he says, '[imitates garbled accent, speaking gibberish].' And we said, 'What?' And I mean, he had this... I don't

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think he was from Oklahoma, I have a feeling he was from West Texas, now that I know about it, 'cause I've met other people from West Texas, and so I think he was from West Texas. But anyway, he spoke with an accent that we could not understand, just barely. So whenever he asked us, I'd say yes, and I'd say no, and my friend would say, 'Did you hear what he was [saying]?' I said, 'No,' and he said, 'What the hell were you saying yes and no for?' And I says, 'Well, I figured, a yes or a no, I have a 50/50 chance of being right, right? I'll take it!' That's what I did! And, but we talked for a little and then we went and sat down. And then I started to get scared, I said, 'You know, if everybody there spoke like that, I'm in deep trouble,' 'kay, I'm in class, I'm gonna work on a Master's, and I can't hear a damn thing that person's saying, can't understand it. And uh luckily, there was no problem. We landed, we met people, school people had come, the international students people had come to visit us, and then you know, they spoke and we understood it.

And uh you know, I'd been exposed to the American accent before, the United States uh embassy used to play softball and, with, and it... and digress a little, in Karachi I also belonged to the Zoroastrian club there, and we would play cricket and field hockey and swim and badminton and all those things, and they had a softball team. So my father used to play on it, and then so when I got to be old enough I played on it a little, and they would have uh tournaments. And so, you know, we played against the U.S. embassy and the U.S. military attaché general teams, okay, the two teams. So we understood *them*, so I didn't think there was gonna be a problem, and then all of a sudden I came across this guy and I really got worried. So it was, it was funny. But—but we got there, it was fine, and you know, things straightened out, and got to school and got settled into school life, um except when September came around and football season started. And I had no idea what football was like over here. You know, we played sports, we played popular sports, but the entire city never shut down. And here was this town that basically shut down on a Saturday because there was a ball game! But, I learned the ball game, enjoyed it, went to the games and had a fun time. And I absolutely—I mean I love football now, right, love football now, but it was, it was an experience when we first got together, when—to see the first time around, and all of a sudden on Saturday, nothing, not a *single* person on the street after 10:30 in the morning, 'kay. Everybody's trying to get the cars parked, run to the thing, at 10:30, the entire town, particularly the university, is deserted. And it was... it was interesting. That, and tornadoes. Never seen a tornado in my life. Never... been in a situation where I been exposed to a tornado, and so the first one that was coming, a friend of mine said, 'You wanna see one?' 'Yeah, I wanna see one.' So, 'Come on, let's go.' We went up to the biology building, climbed up onto the roof, and watched the tornadoes go by. And I said, 'Hmm...' And then we went to see the destruction it did in Oklahoma City itself. And I don't think I want to be—be in one of those anymore. [laughs] I thought it was a stupid thing to do, going up onto that building, but you know, when you're young you do stupid things and that was one of the ones I've done! But at least I got to understand the tornado, having seen that firsthand, and, and you know, university life was good too, it was, you know, first time around, learned a lot, saw a lot of things, so it was fun when I went there. So.

**CJ:** And then what were you studying for your Master's Degree?

**SC:** Engineering. I had a mechanical engineering degree and I was trying to get you know, Master's in industrial engineering.

**GW:** So going back a bit, did you apply to Oklahoma specifically? Or...

**SC:** [shakes head no] Oklahoma was one of them, I applied to Purdue, I applied to Lehigh, I applied to California, Southern Cal, and I applied to Oklahoma. Every time, you know, they charge a lot of money for applications, and for us, uh you know, 30-dollar, 50-dollar application fee, that's what it was at that time, was a tremendous amount of money. So I had to be limited in where I was going for. And uh USC had turned me down, they didn't think I was good enough, and that was fine...Purdue had said yes, Lehigh said yes, and Oklahoma said yes, but Oklahoma was the first one to say yes. And—and so when you get that... acknowledgement, it takes us for a very long time to set up for the foreign exchange and so on and so forth, to pay the fees and everything, and to arrange for, for travel and so on. So it was the first one that said yes, and that's why I said, take it. That was it. I figured that it was the first one for a reason, so we took it, where it was, but that's the one, yeah.

**CJ:** So during graduate school, did you live in graduate student housing?

**SC:** Uh there was an international dorm that was off campus, and I stayed in that, m'kay, and ate at the cafeteria for about the first semester. And then decided I had to go find a rooming house because you know, even though I like hamburgers, and since I couldn't cook there, uh that was it. So I had to go find a rooming house. Later on they changed the rules in that international dorm, and they allowed us to have hot plates and stuff like that, so you could do—you could cook. But that was—by that time I already was in the rooming house, and I had a bunch of Pakistani friends and so forth, they had a couple of rooming houses that they all lived around, and so I went and stayed with, into one that had a bunch of Pakistani friends and we'd get together and cook. I was a lousy cook so I didn't get to cook; I usually do the dishes. But that's what it was. So, so...

**GW:** Did you have any difficulties in adjusting to U.S. life when you came to um Oklahoma?

**SC:** ...Nothing specific as such, 'kay. Um because I was fluent in English, I could speak and I could understand it and can read and, you know, do everything else with it. The fact that I had a couple of other South Asian languages that I spoke and uh could—could—could converse in helped. Um the biggest issues were the food when I first got here. I—you know, even though I like European food and used to enjoy it, I couldn't cook it, and then whatever I could find it did go on (?). Uh the, and—and—and—and the initial stages, I would—I liked it, but after a while, I missed the, you know, Pakistani, Zoroastrian, Parsi style food. And uh, and that—that was, to me it's not that big an adjustment, it is what it is.

Uh the other thing was the inability to get around, you know. Didn't have a car, didn't have anything else, uh campuses are huge, right. Uh I think if you took a look the Rice campus, okay where you guys are, imagine [University of] Oklahoma at *that* time being two and a half times the size of Rice, so—and you know, and you have to get around over campus. And they didn't have what they have—they've got, *now* the campus is almost another two and a half times of what it was when *I* was there, and uh you know, from getting from one point to campus another point is like five, six miles! So they now have some transit stuff that run, buses that run, at the time they had nothing. So uh and uh it was sticker shock, you know, for us because we used to get, I think I remember I used to get about 100 dollars a month to spend on everything, okay. My tuition money I got separate, and I paid tuition and so forth, and I had about 100 to 150 dollars a month for living expenses and food and everything else. And trying to buy a bicycle at that time, you know, 20 dollars even, was a lot of money, so, you know, we got—but that was a big culture shock to me, not culture shock but it was a shock, trying to get around campus easily and, you know, when I had been used to either having a car or a motorcycle or a scooter or a bicycle, whatever, even to get started. And a lot of uh public transport in Karachi, so we could always take public transport, [here] much, much more difficult, so. That's what—that was the only—other than that, we were single, you know, nothing to worry about. Spoke the language, good to get along, uh you know, once in a while you met some idiot but you know, beyond that there wasn't, really not difficult to assimilate here.

**CJ:** Um and so after Norman, was Houston the next city that you moved to, or...?

**SC:** Yeah, in Norman I met my wife, okay, we were in school together. I actually, after about a year and a half over there I ran out of money, didn't have any money, had to go to work. And so I was working there and uh I met my wife, within about six months, seven months of being there, we met each other and we started to go out. Um... had not really decided whether each one of us was for the other or not yet, but we were going out. And, uh... I think we got married in uh '73, and right about that time... well, before we got married, uh I think she was in her third year of engineering, a—a professor asked her to apply at NASA as a co-op student, you know, you work the semester and then you go back to school for a semester and you come back and work a semester. And so she kept putting it off so he finally did it for her, NASA said yes, come on board, so she was here for a semester, that was in '73, the early part of it. Uh came back to Norman, went to school there for the summer session, and we decided to get married, and then she would come here. So while she was here, I'd come and visit her, you know, about once or twice a month, and whenever she could she'd come back there. So we would commute like that. And we did that for another year, through '74. And at that point in time the economy in the United States was bad, we just had the oil embargo, so the economy was really bad and getting a job was very,



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very difficult. I had an engineering job with a company, I was doing fine, uh so when she was graduating, NASA said, 'If you want, we think we can take you full time.' Her—her, the department she was in, they said, 'We could keep you and we could use you if you want a job.' So she said yep, had to go get a job. She came to NASA, and uh I ended up giving notice to my firm there, when I told them I would leave in about August of '75, we had a couple of projects that were going, I said I'd finish all of those and I'd leave. So I ended up here in '75, but yes, we have been coming back and forth to Houston, because of uh her, you know, co-opping that we have, and so yeah. So yeah, Houston was the next major city.

In—while I was there, I had gone to Chicago—while I was in Norman during the summertime, I had gone to Chicago to work, 'cause that's where the money was being made, 'kay. It'—the, uh, they had lots of factories there at the time, and if you were a student, if you—if you were from the No—East, if you were a student, and you were single, you'd go to Chicago, you'd go join on with the factory, you would have a one bedroom apartment that had about eight people that lived in it, who slept in shifts, because one would [laughs] work one shift and one would work the other shift, and you know, made a lot of money! Alright, at that time it was a lot of money, making six bucks an hour, seven bucks an hour, while everything else was about a buck fifty, so, was a lot of money. So yeah, that's the other lot city I stayed at, but that's it, three cities here. So. But that's, you know, '75 is when I finally moved here, and uh been here ever since.

**GW:** Um what type of work did you do in your city and when you went to Chicago, was it engineering related, or...?

**SC:** No, it was plain workshop work, and you know, basically you started cleaning out and sweeping out the floor, is what it was. And then if you could show that you could uh be at the right position at the right time on the assembly line, okay, then make sure all the parts were all there, you got to go to that, and then you know, over time most people ended up becoming more proficient and could do a lot of assemblies, uh but I was only there for that one particular summer, so, you know. But I did work as an engineer at Oklahoma City, after I ran out of money I ended up being I worked for two companies, one company made feeders for agricultural animals and stuff like that. I don't know if you've been to a farm, but—a large farm, but they have these automatic feeders where they have all the cows and all the things lined up, okay, for a feed lot. And uh they have grain that comes down out of a hopper, and underneath it is a vibrating blade that just puts out the right amount of feed as it goes along the road for the thing. So I was design those, we designed air dryers for corn and things like that, it—big huge towers that if you drive along you'll see, and storage bins and things of that nature.

And then I left that one and I ended up going to work for another company, uh headquarters out of Illinois, uh that made road building machinery. And pretty much any of the road building machinery that you see over here, our firm used to make those. And so there I was an engineer, was a design engineer, I was responsible for two lines of product that, you know, design and build it whatever, and change the designs to make it work, there were modifications to the designs, I ended up having to do that. And then I also was in charge of the uh research uh workshop, research and development workshop, where we had a uh individual in uh Illinois who would come up with these crazy ideas and designs, and it was my job to see if I could get them built and then test them, so, you know. Uh I think his name was Doctor Javorek, and we used to call him Javamo (?) the crazy Russian, but you know, he wasn't, he was East European, but, you know, and uh he came up with some really weird stuff, but we would have to build it, then he'd come down and we'd test it, and then you know. But it was—and I—I worked there for about two and a half years, it was a fun time, enjoyed it. And then moved to Houston, and uh no engineering anymore, after that. 'Cause at the time I moved here, it was all oil and gas, completely totally oil and gas. No production, no manufacturing, nothing, at that time. And I got a job, and all I did was write specifications. And I said, you know, if I wanted to be an author I would have been an author so, you know, in about four months I quit that job, and it was driving me crazy, I went back to school to get a uh business degree. And then stuck around business after that, 'kay. Um, while I was in school at the time, uh, there was a guy who came over and he was teaching me cost accounting as part of the course. And all of a sudden he says, 'You seem to understand this, you seem to—have you done it before,' and I say, 'Well, never taken the course before, but as an engineer I had to come up with these things, I mean I had to figure out what it cost, and make sure it was economical and so on and so forth,' I told him all this, he says, 'Oh okay, you have a good grasp and

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understanding of accounting,’ and I said, yeah. And I said, ‘You know, do you have a job, a part time job or something, even in your firm.’ ‘Cause he was a CPA [Certified Public Accountant]. Uh I said, you know, ‘Sure you could use it, if nothing else, at least needs to pay for my books.’ And he says, ‘Let me go find out,’ and comes back later, I think, and he says, ‘Yeah my partner said we could probably use somebody.’ He says, ‘I’m gonna tell you right now, you’re gonna do now is book-keeping.’ I says, you know, ‘Anything is anything, it’s money in my pocket, pays for my books at the time.’

And so when I met the uh gentleman, uh his name was Mr. Mallow (?), and uh it was funny because I was gonna go to a picnic that day, and it was a Saturday so I stopped off and I told him, I says, ‘Look I’m sorry, I’m gonna be in shorts and a t shirt,’ he says, ‘Ah, no problem.’ And when I walk into his office he walks out from behind and he’s got this, I guess a bush shirt or whatever you call it, those shirts that you don’t tuck into your pants, you know, and uh pants, and he’s got, you know, slip-ons on, and walks out and he was a golf nut, so that’s what he did, that’s—they would dress whenever he could. And we hit it off. And, you know, and then we talked some more about what his firm did. And they—he did more consulting than accounting. [coughs] Did accounting because you had to, and did tax work because you had to, but he didn’t [inaudible], he was a turnaround expert, he would take businesses that were in trouble, and help reposition them, and turn them around into profitability, and that’s what his expertise was. And then he would also consult with other businesses, make sure they were doing things right or not. And I said, ‘This is fun, this is not accounting as I knew it, this is not the bean counting.’ So got into that, so he went out and got some more uh production and manufacturing companies around, brought those in, and so together we would work with that. And I’ve been doing that for a while now, ‘kay, for, I stayed with him for a while, became a partner, he retired, got the firm, started our own firm and doing that, and now I’m just kind of off-counsel, help out with my old partners. So, try to stay out of trouble, but, slowed down a little too, but—but that’s what I’ve been—I’ve been enjoying that for a long time now, so. [coughs]

**CJ:** I guess, jumping back a little bit, can you tell us, or can you describe the first neighborhood that you lived in in Houston?

**SC:** Well, let me go back to Oklahoma, the first neighborhood that I lived in in Oklahoma. It was the southeast part of town. *Very* low income neighborhood. There was a rooming house, again, and it had a electric stove, and a bed, and that was it. And I stayed there for a while, I stayed for about a year and a half. And then uh moved into an apartment closer into work, and then moved into, well Caroline (?) and I got married, we moved into an apartment at the university. That area had married housing over there. And then when she moved here after ’74 and I was still there, uh, I went back to the rooming house, because, you know, why spend money unnecessarily, and saved about, almost 200 dollars a month. And so on. And so we went back to the rooming house. When we came here, we were right next to NASA. It was a nice house, coming along, right next to NASA, in an apartment complex. And we stayed in the apartment complex for four years. Uh moved a couple—I think—moved once out of the apartment complex, to another apartment complex. But we stayed in that area for four years.

Uh, she was working, you know, we could afford it, when I went back to school I was still working part time getting a little bit of money to take care of expenses, pay for tuition and so on. So it was fine, you know. Didn’t have any uh real money problems in that sense, um we had enough to get by on and live on. And then uh in ’79, we ended up buying a house, again in the area, in League City. But we bought a house, and we’ve been there ever since, so.

I mean economically, I have not had a major problem honestly when I came to the United states. Uh if I wanted to work, there was always opportunity to work. Put in the time, do the stuff. And I have worked all the way through school. At—at University, uh I worked at the, as a—as a waiter in the university cafeteria. ‘Kay, we got decent money, right, a buck an hour plus tips. And tips used to be a nickel to ten cents. There weren’t very many, [laughs] but hey, you know! But still, it was fine, uh and uh after that, I ended up working the night shift at 7-11, I worked over there. And then when I fin—you know when I ended up still running out of funds I just couldn’t pay, because we were getting very difficult, a very difficult time getting money out of Pakistan into here. And so, in—so, by—by that time, you know, I’d already gone to work as an engineer, I was getting paid as an engineer, it was a decent salary, so, you know, worked, and had an apartment of our own, and so on, it was fine. So money

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wise, I don't think, yeah, you know, in the initial stages, we did have some, but not where I was gonna starve, where I had to go on anything like that. Just couldn't afford a brand new car, that's fine, so I bought a used one and kept turning, and things of that nature, so that was fine, that's all.

**GW:** How would you um compare Houston to Norman or Oklahoma, besides changes in local industry?

**SC:** Houston was a huge city compared to Norman, okay. Norman was a school town, even though it was big, it was still a school town. Oklahoma City was also a small city, um... Even when we moved to Houston, okay, uh from Conroe to where we were would take you an hour plus, right. I could go from Norman or Noble, Oklahoma, which is south of Norman [inaudible] and all the way up to the— the north end of Oklahoma City, okay, in 35 minutes. So, [laughs] that's the size of the difference between the two cities.

Uh Houston was a lot more cosmopolitan, I have to admit. In Oklahoma, um we used to have to drive about 40 miles, maybe a little less, to go get any spices and stuff like that. So when we were—the—the Pakistani guys would say 'Everybody wanted spices to cook with', we had to drive forty miles, go load up, there were these two Lebanese ladies, sisters, who ended up owning a store in the north part of Oklahoma. We'd go there about once a month or whatever, load up on spices, and bring them back. And even then, they didn't have all the spices we wanted, we just had to make due. And, uh, we got tired of eating beef, and we wanted goat, which we grew up on, you know, that was what we grew up on, we would have to drive about 70-80 miles out to a small town called Weatherford, Oklahoma. And we found a farmer there who raised goats. And we would go over there and buy one, and slaughter it, and skin it, and cut it up, and bring it back and be able to cook it, you know, in the different ways, and that would last us. Uh and when we came here, right, find everything pretty much. I mean, it—it was, it's not like it was now, okay. In—in—in '74, '75, it was not as easy as it is to find East Asian food, or Asian food, or Malaysian food, or whatever, South Asian stuff. There were only about one or two restaurants, one restaurant, I think, in the Rice Village area at that time. And another one came on about two or three years later. But, it was limited. But it was more than what we had! We had nothing there in Oklahoma. So, you know, was a big difference. And it was a larger city, it was a little bit more cosmopolitan city. And it had more people from my community here, in uh—in Oklahoma from 1970 through '74 or '75 when I left, we had about maybe five Zoroastrians there. Four of whom had come from Pakistan just like me. We knew each other. One was from India. Okay, so, we didn't have a whole lot of people there. Over here, I come in, and of course, we got some friends from Pakistan, also. But went from four to about 20-something, 25. Big jump. And it was fun—I mean, we enjoyed it, so, it was a big difference in that respect.

And so Houston felt a lot easier, much better, and we fit in a little easier. Plus it was near the water, which was what I wanted. I grew up at the water, I want to be near the water, Oklahoma had no water, 'kay. Oklahoma, you went to the lake, you came out red. No, seriously, the mud there is red! The clay over there is red! All over the state. So when you went to the lake that's close by the university, okay, and you went to swim in there in the lake, you come out, your—your trunks and everything else is red. It just soaks in there. It's difficult to get out, too, you wash them, however many times you want, you bleach it, it won't come out! So, so you know, here at least I had the water. It was not the cleanest or the nicest, but it was better than anything else that was around, so. But that was a big plus. I enjoyed moving here, and I'm glad we moved here. I don't have any regrets with it. I've lived in Oklahoma—I mean, I've been to Chicago, I've been to just about every other city in the United States other than—we just went to Seattle, so we've been there now. Um, I would live here, even now. To me this is, I like the climate. Yes, it's hot, but I'm used to hot, okay. If it's hot, you can always put the air conditioning, okay, simple as that. So, you walk out of the building, into the car, you've got air conditioning in the car. Who cares if it's hot? You know, so, I don't want cold, I don't like cold, I hate cold. And so I'm happy with this. And I, I haven't even decided—didn't think twice about wanting to move, ever again. So, that was it. Enjoyed moving here.

**CJ:** Um so, since you've been in the Houston area for quite a while, how would you say that you've seen the demographics change over the years?

**SC:** When we came here, it was a white town, okay? It was. Okay, so, and uh over time, it's changed. We've had

a lot more East Indians moving in, a lot more Vietnamese moving in. Okay, it's always been a large Chinese population, I don't think any could be in a large influx of Chinese, I think the Chinese have just grown, and you know and people with it, because I don't think there's a large influx from overseas into—Chinese into this area. But definitely the Vietnamese. Definitely the Asian population, which is the East—South Asian population, has increased tremendously, alright.

And, of course the Spanish, Hispanic population has grown. I believe all for the good, don't get me wrong. I just think it's great, because it's now become a true melting pot. What—and in my mind, Houston now signifies the United States more than anyplace else in the United States itself, okay. They talk about New York? Nah. I think Houston shows how each of the different cultures *can* live together and survive and grow together as opposed to like you have in New York and California. I don't think even California's been able to do that as well as we have, 'kay. I do miss certain things, though. When we first moved here, I would go to Kemah, and I would be able to get stuff off the boat, fresh seafood off the boat. Can't do that anymore, okay. It won't even get to the pier, it's already been taken care of, it's already gone. I could get good shrimp, good fish, fresh fish, you know, by the igloo-full at a decent price. I got all the roe in the world that I wanted for free because White America didn't know what to do with it. They would throw it away, 'kay. But as soon as the Vietnamese population came in and the South Asian population came in, it became a very high demand commodity. And what they used to give away for free, now they would pack up and sell. So, I do miss that, okay. It's just a personal quirk, what can I tell you. [All: [laughs]]

But it is, and I—to me, I think that the thing is more people are exposed to eating it, so more people are get—and—and—and get that, and, and but I—I, no, no regrets again, with the way the city has been growing, alright. Yes, we got a lot of traffic, but absolutely enjoy the diversity that we have in here, and, uh you know. That diversity allowed my kids to grow up with a lot of different cultures and understand them, and be used to them, and I think that was great, absolutely. Because around us, [coughs] we talk about neighborhoods in Houston, but we really don't have a neighborhood in Houston. Yes, we have what we call 'Chinatown' and that, right? But is it really—that's only business oriented. If we think about it, if we really see it, okay, Vietnam—'Vietnam-town' is only because it's lots of Vietnamese businesses there, but the people don't live there, they're spread out. So with the Chinese, Chinatown's the same way, 'kay. Hillcroft, South Asia, same thing, alright. People don't live in that area. They commute there, they come there, they're close by, or whatever, but they're spread out. And *that's* the difference, 'kay. You *don't* find that in New York or California. You have enclaves of people living in the neighborhoods, which I have not seen that here. And that's what I like about it, we really grow well that way, because of that reason. And it's a lot more calmer city as opposed to having the type of inter-ethnic strife that we otherwise hear about, including the Hispanics, even though we do have *barrios* and Hispanics, we still don't have that same kind of situation with the others, and so that's, you know, it's just different. And it grew up well. So, I'm proud of Houston for that.

**CJ:** Um... So I guess on the flip side of that, what would you say is the hardest thing about moving to Houston, if you had to pick one thing?

**SC:** ...the distances. Distances. Um, we live in League City. And, uh, if I was to get to, before the beltway was made, if I was to get to the airport, Bush Airport, okay, it's an hour and a half drive, alright. Although, done it faster on a Sunday, it's an hour and a half drive. Um just about anywhere, okay, in the center is, on a good day, it's 30 minutes from where I live. On a bad day, it's an hour from where I live, coming here, going there. So, it's not easy to get around Houston very quickly. And that's um the other part of it is, is, it's a little bit more expensive city to live in here, okay, unless you happen to live in the inner city.

So, for example, I don't know if you guys live in the inner city, or if you live outside Houston, but imagine if you didn't have a car, and you have to come to Houston, alright, getting a bus here, getting to the bus first, all that kind of stuff, is not—it is not a city that is built for mass transport, which is the one thing that is missing, alright, um, and, and that's a difference. And it's a chicken- and- the- egg issue. The reason is, I think, is because you can't have mass transport unless you have enough people able to use it. And the mass transport develops around the inner city, and since we don't have a whole lot of people living in the inner city, you know, [laughs] you

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know, so which one do you get first? Do you get the people living there first, or do you get this one, and it's just, it's a difficult deal to solve, okay. That—that's, of course there are options, don't get me wrong, but it's a difficult deal to solve. And the fact that you, for this city you have to have cars to be mobile in, and if you don't, then you really have a much more difficult time surviving in the city. That's the one negative I see here. Other than that, really, I see everything that's been positive. I—I like the area here.

**CJ:** So can you tell us a little bit about, um, your experience starting your own firm, you mentioned that a little before...

**SC:** Yep. Well, I had already been in the firm that I had been a partner in, okay, and the permit going, and then the senior partner ended up having a very bad heart attack, this was the guy who was mentoring me, and one day, I think it was in '84, we, uh, tax season had begun, it was in October, October 14<sup>th</sup> or so, 15<sup>th</sup>, and we were going, we were teasing each other, we were going down, we were—we were in the Greenway plaza area, and we got down to the parking lot, and I walked over, and I see his car and I see his antenna laying down, and I say 'What the heck is that for?' He said, 'Oh, the doggone thing came off.' I said 'What do you mean came off?' And I looked at it, and I said 'Ah.' And I took it off, and I screwed it back in for him, I said, 'Man, you really are useless, you know that, don't you?' This was my senior partner, okay, don't get me wrong, my—my mentor, but I was teasing him, and I said, 'You really are useless mechanically, okay, I can't believe you can't even open and close a valve.' You know, the—the valve. 'What valve?' I said, 'You know, the tap in your house, that's a valve!' 'Oh.' He cursed me, and he gave me a—we said bye to each other. And all of a sudden, that night, at about 8 o'clock, I get this call saying he's in, um, emergency room at the hospital, at St. Luke's. And then he had this huge, massive heart attack. He more or less died twice, you know. They revived him, put him on the table to do an angiogram, or, angioplasty, and he died again, you know, stopped again. And they had to revive him, and, by the time he came out, he was a vegetable. He basically couldn't remember anything, and even though we still kept him going, we had to fund a lot of his funds. And that firm ended up getting into trouble. So we merged with the larger firm, a national firm. And things are going fine, but I just don't have, uh, the national, or, you know, the uh 'Yes sir' compliant mentality. I just, it's just not me.

Earlier, thinking, telling you, when I would go get a cane—I would much rather get a caning every day than be forced to do something I don't want to do. So, for about 8 months, 9 months later, after some soul- searching and after having a bunch of run- ins with some of the senior members, I decided, you know, I really had to go out on my own. I had my clients; I had a lot of clients. One of the other guys was a partner, junior partner with me. I told him, I said I'm gonna go, and so on, letting you know, as a courtesy. He says, 'Would you mind if I joined you?' I said, 'Heck no, I'd love to have you.' And, so we started our own firm, and uh that was in '87, September, end of September—early October of '87. And I've had my firm since then. Then in 2004, my health wasn't doing well, my back was hurting again, I'd already had two back operations before then, looking at a third one, wasn't happy with it, and I said, 'I think I want out.' So we ended up finding somebody to buy the firm, sold out, and I semi- retired. The person who bought it wanted me back again to help them with it, on a part- time basis, I did that. And then about two years after that, or three years after that, that person offered the firm back to my other two—you know, other partner. And so, there was a young lady who had been working with us for a long time, so the two of them decided to buy the firm back. Asked me, 'Do you want to come in?' I said 'No. I don't wanna own a firm, I don't wanna have that hassle again.' They said, 'Will you hang out and help us out?' 'Yeah, sure. Why not?' Gives me something to do, so, that's been it. I've been hanging out with them more or less, I act like a firm manager, owner, I'm not, okay. But I do get the respect for it, and, and uh and you know, still get to do stuff that I enjoy doing. I don't know, keep doing it as long as I can. But that's been it. And it—it wasn't—financially, it was a little tight. Don't get me wrong. Because we're— we're brand new, but we had enough clients that I thought we could retain, and we did retain most of them. Where, about 5, 4, 4 years, 5 years, we were very well settled. So, you know, it was a little, until that it was a little tight, we couldn't do everything I wanted to do, what I had been used to doing, but that's okay. That's what you do when you start a business. And so we did that. And that's been good ever since, no complaints. Nary a complaint about it.

**CJ:** Um can you tell us about how you became involved, at least, initially, with the Zoroastrian community in Houston?

**SC:** Yeah. I don't know, I guess I'm a weird person who likes to get involved. I don't know why, but I do, okay.

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Sometimes, I question myself and my sanity, but I do. When I was in Norman, I got involved, they had an international student's union, and—and so on. And uh Pakistan was not represented there, so a bunch of Pakistani guys and I said, 'Oh, lemme just drop on (?).' So, we started one over there. And then we ended up having, we—we ended up representing Pakistan student's union at most of the international union gala banquets, and this and that, and the meetings, and so forth, and we drafted up a charter and stuff like that. Then we ended up calling the Pakistan embassy in Washington, and saying, you know, 'We'd like to be able to host you guys, come on over, you guys can bless our charter, give us a stamp of approval, and, you know, acknowledge us as being a representative.' So, we got involved in having a seminar, uh like a long weekend seminar, started Friday, ended Sunday. Those guys came, we had all kinds, we did that, so did that. So, when I came here, I'd done something like that, being involved. When we came here, we felt a need, so a couple of people, once I got to know some of the members here, I knew a few people over here already from Pakistan, that, we were there, we knew who they were, and so on. I hadn't met any of the people from India.

So, we kinda got to be, okay, and we would meet once in a while, about, once every yea—you know, three to four times a year, we would have something to do, a picnic or this or that, a couple of, you know, New Year's celebrations, and stuff of that nature. And then uh we decided, 'We need to get a little bit more organized, we've gotta do something.' We had about, maybe, 30 or 40 people at the time. So, we had a meeting, everybody introduced themselves, and we said, 'We wanna start a organization, the Zoroastrian Association of Houston'. So we did, a bunch of us volunteered to work on and draft uh the documents, and we would meet for about six months. We met once a week, on a Su—on a Sunday, at different people's houses. And it was more an opportunity to sit and argue, and have good food, as opposed to doing any real work, 'cause you just couldn't get anything started. Finally, we just said 'We're gonna take a break'. And while I was gone, I man—I managed to get a couple of two or three other documents from different organizations, and I used that, and I drafted up the document for this place. And then we started to meet again. I said, 'Look, here's the documents, let's start, and you guys can parse it, close (?) it, do whatever you want, change it to be whatever you want it to be,' which they did. And about another three or four months later, we held a meeting, at Rice. And we ended up, over two weekends, we ended up accepting the document, changing a few things, accepting it, and that's how we got started.

And then um, since then, I've been involved in here in one way, shape or form, doing something, in the original instances I was involved as an officer of the entity. As a treasurer, and, you know, a vice president, and we do have a vice president, but, people, you know, starting things on. Then I stopped doing that, and got involved in teaching uh religious classes. Uh I felt the need, my son was at the point in time that he really needed to, he was becoming a teenager, 10 or so, 11. The person who used to be doing it had moved away to Australia to go, you know, he was a professor, so he went over there. And so we lost, we didn't have anybody else, and so, you know, they said 'You want him to learn? You better step up and do something about it!' So I did. So, I've been teaching since, I guess, 1989, somewhere in that neighborhood, I've been teaching the youth and uh and so, I've been involved that way. Certain projects come up, I like to get involved in it. When we were trying to get together funding and organization, being able to get this building, got involved in how to raise the funds for it and so on and so forth, and got involved in building the building and all of that type of stuff, you know, just basically, so um... you know, so, it's—everybody's quoted him at some point in time or the other, but you know, I do believe in Mahatma Gandhi's, or, you know, Mohandas Gandhi's statement: 'Be the change that you want to be' [sic]. And so, yeah, I just basically said, oh you, 'If you want something to change, you do the work to make it change,' it's simple as that. And so, that's, that's what's driven me I suppose, all along, and that's what keeps driving me for the community.

Uh I enjoy being around the community, I enjoy my kids being involved in it, that they will know. We have a very rich history from a long time ago, uh going back, documented history, going back as far back as Cyrus, the Achaemenian, and the first uh charter of human rights, 'kay. And we feel that the religion and our community has offered a lot to the world. I'm glad, I mean, I take pride in telling them that the first canal was not the Suez Canal, it was the canal that uh Darius built to uh invade Greece. He ended up cutting across the Greek isthmus, to be able to take his ships through there, as opposed to sailing all the way around, to be able to get into that. Now, that also created another problem, but, you know, 'cause he got defeated at that point in time, because of some bad generalship, you know, in there, but the point is that was the first one. The first post office deal, you know,

post-delivery was done by them, 'kay. They used to have, like we say, Benjamin Franklin started it for the United States. The outriders and the post riders, Darius did that as far as Xerxes, and Darius did that in Iran. That's what they used to have. They used to have rest houses for people when they traveled. So, when you got from one place to the other, if you're getting dark, you had a place to be safe at, people had a place to rest. So, guess what, created the first motels wherever you wanted to. Ended up building cities on a grid, 'kay, so the old city of Persepolis, Pasargadae, et cetera that you have in Iran, where the ruins are, they're all built on grids, that's where it started. So yeah, we have a very rich history, and a very rich past. Uh majority—once we ended up coming into India from Iran, after the Muslims conquered Iran, okay, within about 150, well, maybe about four— yeah, 300 years, we ended up becoming very, very, uh I guess, important to the British rulers. Because we were go- between, we, A) We understood business, B) We had been around the country and we were not aligned with any of the local indigenous people who were there, who are either Muslims or Hindus, okay. We were kept a step apart, and so they utilized us, and we became very good businessmen, and uh some of the houses that started here- the house of Tartar, okay, and, what they also called the House of Golderage (?) and a bunch of others, were started at that time. And when people made money, and, by the way, our money, initial money was made in the opium trade, which was a legitimate trade.

And the British flag at the time, a lot of people who created that kind of funds, ended up giving back boats to England and to India at that point. It was a lot—a lot of the largest civil hospital over there, okay, free hospital, was built by our community, the largest orphanages were built by us. A lot of those things were done, you know, so, I said, the community has a very big history on being, on—on helping wherever they are develop, whichever country they were living in develop. So, we did the same thing in Pakistan. And so, you know, I'm proud to have been involved here and to keep that trend going, okay. Um we've got four or five Zoroastrians in California, who ended up doing very well in the IT business, and have started funds, and have put out a lot of charitable institutions doing that. We get involved over here, um we go ahead and volunteer uh a lot of the hospitals, my youth group consistently volunteers at the hospitals in our medical center, okay. We send a contingent every year to Honduras, to a very small village over there to man the hospital there, clean up, do the stuff, they actually, for the last 7 years, we have been building a hospital and the clinic in an area, now building a place for the doctor to stay there, live there 24/7, and so on, so we do that, you know, they, they get involved with that, all the kids are involved with other, other activities, and that kind of practice, you know, needs to go on. And so we can have a presence in this community, and let people know that this is what we are. And, so, that's what we, and uh I do my little part with the youth because of that reason, you know, and the community does its part that way.

**GW:** On your form, speaking about service, on your form, you mentioned that you're involved with the Interfaith Ministries of Houston?

**SC:** Yes.

**GW:** So how has that experience been?

**SC:** Well, it's been great, okay. I'm not as involved as I used to be, right. But, a while back, actually this started with a program that Councilman Gordon Quan started out a long time ago. Uh I've known Gordon for a very very long time, business-wise. And he used to sponsor a uh interfaith meeting group, I can't remember what it's called. Uh, YC, something or the other. And uh we got involved with that. And basically, it was a group of kids from each of the different faiths and different churches. We would visit each other on a consistent basis, going around, back and forth, trying to develop an understanding of each other's faiths and each other's stuff. And that was great, we did that for about two years, and then, of course, he ended up retiring out of there, and nobody else wanted to take it up. But through there, I ended up meeting a couple of people from the Interfaith Ministries.

And so, they have programs, exchange programs, as they go along. And so through them, we've had interactions with the different faith groups, okay, so the youth will interact with that. And then they've now—excuse me. They've now brought out iLead, so we've had a couple of our kids join that, over time. And so we get involved, and then whenever they have some kind of a program going, we show up to help as much as we can. Uh the youth get involved in it, the adults, also, I've been involved. Uh I have not been as much as I used to be, because

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I've got other people who take the youth and take over, you know, and they are ones who are doing it right now. The other gentleman in the, in the community that does it, let him take care of it, because he's also there representing the community at the adult level, as well. So, I said, 'Why don't you just take this one over, too?' It's easier for him, than for me. But uh, yeah, we've been involved, through the youth group, I've been involved in the Interfaith community that way. And I—you know, we get—we get requests to speak at different times, so, whoever's available goes and speaks, whenever needed.

**CJ:** Um out of curiosity, have you ever gone back to Pakistan at any point in time?

**SC:** Yeah. I had family there until just very recently. I still have cousins there. I don't have immediate family, we have our cousins there, to me they're still immediate family, but you know, they're cousins. The younger are same age, so they don't have to worry about it. But as long as my father was alive, as long as my uncle and aunts and everybody was alive, I used to go back there. We would go there about once every three years or so, four years. Over the last ten years or so, I've been going back every year, sometimes twice a year, just to make sure that my uncle, my aunt, my aunt, everybody would be taken care of, they didn't have any issues, if we needed to take care of it, you know. Not that they were, that they had any financial issues, but just wanna make sure that something was coming up, wanna make sure that they were being taken care of. We had some friends over there who kept an eye on them for us, whenever needed, and just show up to show them there is, but yes, I had been going there regularly. This is the-

[Man walks in, 30 sec conversation takes place. Interview resumes at 1:25:26]

**SC:** Sorry. Um, [sighs] last year my aunt, my—the oldest member of the family passed away, so I haven't been since then, that was in last May over a year ago. Uh and I'll probably go back again, okay. But definitely not to stay. The situation's terrible. And I would not have stayed anyway. In—in '74, I made my mind not to go back, in '74 when they ended up selling the business, okay. Originally, I had every intent to go back there, and run the business, and so on and so forth. But when the eldest, my father's cousin, the eldest uncle, if you wish, in the family decided they wanted to sell the business, and everything else, and I said, 'Well, there's no need to come back now.' Might as well make my life here, and that's where I was, so. But, yeah, I've been going back, and you know, don't always enjoy it, but I've been going back.

**CJ:** And you mentioned a few minutes ago that passing on your culture is really important to the next generation. Um so you mentioned in the interview and also in your questionnaire form that you spoke several languages, do you speak any of those at home, and have you taught any of your children those languages, or?

**SC:** I speak them around friends and so forth. I have tried to teach my children both Gujarati and Urdu and that, they—it's not been very—it has not been a consistent effort, okay. However, they've picked up enough where they can understand it, they say a few words in it every so often. Um my eldest son will say some, my daughter is much more versatile in that. She has a knack for so—for, for languages, so she will. My youngest, absolutely not, he refuses, okay. Even refuses to speak the language he does know, he refuses to do that, so, I don't know what, he is just, you know, they are not fluent in it, no. They are not fluent in any of the other languages, okay, other than English. I take it back, no, my daughter and my youngest son are fluent in Spanish, alright. I know a few words in it, and we will—I will attempt to speak with them once in a while in that. They will speak Gujarati to me once in a while, very very once in a while. When they know that nobody else is listening, so that nobody will laugh at them, okay, but they do. Uh and Urdu, the same way. My son, not so much, eldest son, not so much, youngest son, absolutely not. My daughter once in a while will say that, she will speak that also to me. But they do understand them, and it's what I call uh 'selfish understanding,' okay, to the extent that even though they do understand it, they'll ignore me. They'll say that they don't understand because it's convenient for them to ignore. It's—it's—it's, it's uh knowledge of convenience. They do understand, I know they understood it, okay, but they'll pretend they didn't. Or when I don't want them to, they will have understood it perfect, and come back and tell me 'Oh, you know, you said this and this!' [laughs] But yeah, no, it has not been consistent, they are not fluent in it and it's mainly my fault. Mainly my fault.



**GW:** So, last week, we were speaking with Deborah Kolah, who is the wife of one of the-

**SC:** Right.

**GW:** Members of this community-

**SC:** Mm- hmm, mm- hmm.

**GW:** And she mentioned you, and that you were the nephew of a cookbook writer? Um, is that true, or?

**SC:** No, no. I'm not the nephew of a cookbook writer, no.

**GW:** Maybe someone else.

**SC:** No, sorry, I think she's got me mixed up with someone else. Um... I can't think of who she would be talking about...

**GW:** That's fine.

**SC:** I'm sorry. No. I use a lot of cookbooks! Whenever I feel like cooking. But uh, no, sorry. But, yeah, Deborah and I, you know, good friends. Known each other for long.

**CJ:** Um, so you're clearly very involved, but in your free time, do you have any hobbies or anything you like to do for-

**SC:** I read.

**CJ:** You read?

**SC:** I read voraciously right now. I have been reading all kinds of just plain, non- thinking novels, okay. Uh people, very commercial novels, lemme put it that way. People like Robert Ludlum, Tom Clancy, Ken Follett, uh and you know, that—that ilk, Jeffrey Archer and those kind of guys, you know, escapist, not having to think about it, not having to, you know, no serious thinking of that kind of stuff. Like usually I am so tired, I just need something to—to distress, and that's what I read. That's what I love to read. And my son gave me a Kindle about three or four years ago, I think, [murmurs] lemme see... yeah, I think four years ago, he gave me a Kindle, uh, that I just enjoyed. I would download these books, and then, you know, end up reading those, and took it with me, usually when I would go to Pakistan, and one of the other kids would, I'd end up stacked up on paperback novels, and you know, I'd have at least ten, twelve with me. Uh take with me, and I'd leave some behind, and bring back other books, but they gave me the Kindle, that was it. I had more than I could think about taking and, I'd been using it, it finally died on me, so I bought some new Nexus. I bought the uh the latest Nexus, the Galaxy, or whatever it was. 30... 32 gigs, or whatever, so I bought one for me, and one for my daughter, and then one for him. And it happened that they had two 32 gigs, so I said 'Gimme a 16-gig one.' So it's sitting around, he gave me his old one, and then that one finally clunked out, so I'm back to using my new one, the 16 gig one. But that's what I carry with me. When I'm going places, when I know I have some dead time, I turn it on, and I'll read. And I usually have at least about 10 to 12 novels that I haven't read, and that's in the queue to read. So, but, you know, those are the kinda things I read right now. Once in a while, I'll get something that's a little bit more highbrow, but uh but that's when I've got some excess time, I'm not doing anything else. I can think about it, but when I'm just reading for the heck of relaxing, it's that. I like to travel. That's the other thing I like to do, so. I travel.

**GW:** Is there any particular genre that you enjoy reading?

**SC:** No.

**GW:** Just anything?

**SC:** I like—I like historical novels, okay. I really like those. I like this, you know, fantasy—not fantasy, but I like Western novels. I've been reading some Western novels lately, and then this where, you know, Tom Clancy, war, and that type of stuff, you know. Novels that take current situations and build a scenario around it, some—some of it being really, you know, uh, I—I like those. As a matter of fact, this one— there was one, one Tom Clancy novel that I read, and they talked about an India- Pakistan dispute, in the, in the uh Ladakh area, which is way up in the high glacier, which is very true, it was built around historical deal, right. And uh within three months of his writing that novel, it actually happened. So, that's the kinda stuff, you know, it was fiction, it was fantasy fiction about, you know, military, but it did have geopolitical thinking behind it, and some of the stuff that I like, and then all these people that come up with scenarios that were very real, and you know, I'd see those things happening, so that's the kinda stuff I like right now: don't have to think too much about it, but it's fun to read, so.

**CJ:** Alright. I guess, starting to wrap up a little bit.

**SC:** Sure.

**CJ:** Um what would you consider to be one of your biggest accomplishments in life so far?

**SC:** My kids. My kids.

**CJ:** Alright, and is there anything else you'd like to add to the archive, or be recorded, or...?

**SC:** No, I, you know, just, I've lived my life, I'm happy with it. Won't—don't regret anything that I've done. Hoping I was of use to somebody, at least. Uh and uh, you know, I wanna be a citizen of the world, and of the United States, I mean, it's my adopted country now. And I've never regretted the day when I decided to make that decision, so, I've been enjoying it. Alright.

**CJ:** Alright, well, thank you so much for your time!

**GW:** Thank you!

**SC:** Appreciate it!

**[The recorder is turned off, the interview ends]**