

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

Interviewee: Shahid Javed

Interviewers: Dan Wellman (Junior); Yichen (Connie) Zhang (Sophomore)

Date/ Time of Interview: November 25, 2014, at 3:10 pm

Transcribed by: Dan Wellman and Yichen (Connie) Zhang

Edited by: Chris Johnson and Patricia Wong (May 24, 2016)

Audio Track Time: 1:06:40

Background:

Shahid Javed was born in Lahore, Pakistan in 1967. At the time of this interview, Shahid, 47, lives in Houston with his wife and two daughters. He is currently employed at BP in Houston, but the journey that brought him here is a fascinating story about a self-made man striving for the classic American dream: achievement and success through hard work and a little bit of luck. His path took him from Pakistan through Georgia Tech and Stanford and through several jobs at A.T Kearney, Transora, and others, along with several relocations before ending up at BP.

Setting:

The interview centers on the areas of labor and capital to develop a working history around the context of childhood experiences, family life, and daily activities. Shahid discusses his path to US citizenship, his current involvement in various community and entrepreneurial groups in Houston, and discusses the ups and downs of his career in great detail.

The interview was conducted in study room 202 in Fondren Library on the Rice University campus. Including set-up time, and the time spent after the interview taking photographs and scanning photographs that Si wanted to document for the archive, the whole interview process took approximately two hours.

Interviewers:

Dan Wellman is a junior at Rice University, originally from Doylestown, Pennsylvania. His family is from Gallway, Ireland, and Dan heavily identifies as Irish or Irish-American. He is a student in ASIA/ANTH 387, Asian American Contemporary Communities, instructed by Dr. Linda Ho Peche. He is majoring in Anthropology, Asian Studies, and Religion.

Yichen (Connie) Zhang is a sophomore at Rice University originally from Shanghai, China. She is a student in ASIA/ANTH 387, Asian American contemporary communities instructed by Dr. Linda Ho Peche. She is majoring in Chemical Engineering and Asian Studies.

Interview Transcript:

Key:

DW	Dan Wellman
CZ	Yichen (Connie) Zhang
SJ	SJ: Shahid Javed

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—	Speech cuts off; abrupt stop
...	Speech trails off; pause
<i>Italics</i>	Emphasis
(?)	Preceding word may not be accurate
Brackets	Actions [laughs, sighs, etc.]

DW: All right. This is Dan Wellman, a junior at Rice University. I'm here with Connie.

CZ: This is Connie Yichen Zhang. I'm also a sophomore from Rice University.

DW: It is about 3:13 in the afternoon, on November the 25th. Uh, we're in the Fondren Library at Rice University. And we are here with Shahid? Did I pronounce it right?

SJ: That's correct. Shahid Javed.

DW: All right. And can you just tell us a little about yourself? Uh...I guess we'll start at the beginning. Where were you born and when?

SJ: Yeah. I was born in Pakistan, uh, in a city called Lahore, which is part of the Punjab Province. I was born in February 1967.

DW: Okay. Um...tell us a little bit about, uh, growing up in Pakistan. What was your childhood like? What was, uh—what was it like living there with your family?

SJ: Sure. So my dad worked in the government service in Pakistan, uh, and he moved around a little bit. So my childhood essentially was spent in two different cities: Islamabad, which is the capital of Pakistan, and Lahore, which is one of the larger cities. So I grew up in larger cities, larger towns, um, most of my life in fact. Uh, till I in fact came to the US. Um, from ages, you know, from the birth to four, I was in Lahore. Then I came to Islamabad for a few years. Then went back to Lahore. And then I came to Islamabad in 1976, uh, when I entered my—my middle school. And then I spent my 6th grade to 12th grade in Islamabad, uh, essentially in the same school. It was big city, growing city. Um, it was a great place to be. We had lot of fun as I—we were growing up. Um, I'm, um—I have a family of, uh, four—part of four siblings. So I have an elder sister. Then it's me. I am two and a half years younger to her. Then I have a sister who is four years younger to me, then a brother who is eleven years younger than me. So there are four of us, a very closely-knit family. Spend a lot of time together.

Uh, the culture we are from—from Pakistan—really revolves around family and extended family. So it's a big unit family structure that we spent pretty much, uh, our—our childhood around. So growing up, um, essentially I would—I would say that we had lots of cousins, from, you know, uncles and aunts, side both my mom—Mom's side and my dad's side, lots of cousins. We would get together on all holidays, all, you know, vacations, all big events, when there was a wedding, or birthdays or somebody's birth. Be—the family would always get together. And then of course I had all my, you know, classmates as well. So my school from 6th through the 12th was only male. So from 1st grade to 5th grade was coed but from 6th to 12th was male. I was

heavily involved in sports in my school. I played cricket. I played field hockey. I played table tennis, uh, and played at a pretty competitive level throughout my high school. So I spent a lot of time with my classmates, uh, at (?) the school, you know, whether we were studying together, or just having fun together, or playing sports together.

DW: Uh, what was life like at—at home? I mean, you said your dad moved around a lot. Um...what about—what about your mom? What about your siblings?

SJ: Yes. So early on, when I was—when I was a little boy, my mom stayed home with us and was raising us. But as I was growing older and my last brother was born, after that my mom started working at a school. So she became the administrator at the school, kind of ran the school. It was a very good private school. And my younger brother did—in fact went and studied there as well. Um, we were a very busy family with the—my older daughter studying, you know, ahead of me. My dad had long working hours. So the working life in Pakistan is where you work six days a week and we—we get one weekend—one-day weekend. So our dad would work a lot. He would travel a little bit with work as well. Um...life at—at home was pretty good. So, you know, you go to school in the morning, and then you would come home about 2:30, 3 o'clock. School would end. You would [cough] either, you know, study a little bit or take us a nap or maybe eat some snacks. And then in the evening, you would go in the backyard or outside your house play with your neighborhood kids. So pretty much every day, in the evening, you were out in physical activities and playing with your—with your friends.

TV at that time in Pakistan was very limited. So the TV—there was only one station and it would come on out about 4:30, 5:00, 5:30. There would be a cartoon, like *Popeye the Sailor*, *Heckle and Jeckle*, *Woody—Woody Woodpecker*, those old cartoons. We would watch the cartoon, but then there was no television program for kids. So we had nothing to watch on TV, unlike today, where you have 24 hours of kids' show—kids' channels, whether it's Disney or Nickelodeon. They didn't exist when I was growing up. So we would actually be out of the house, physically playing sports and active with our neighborhood kids and friends. And then you would come home at—at night. Um, usually the family would—would get together around the table or in our living room and we would watch some television, like a soap opera or a drama what we used to call, together as a family, uh, gathering. And then dinner would be late. The dinner would be around 9:00, 9:30 at night. And then you would stay up another hour or so and you would go to sleep. [cough]

[0:05:13]

DW: So, let's talk a bit about your education. Um...I mean we'd really love to know about your time in both schools, the coed one earlier on and then the all-male, um—

SJ: [overlapping] Sure.

DW: —middle school and high school. And then even after that, you know, what your education was like post-high school?

SJ: Sure. So education was, um, very very key. In—in Pakistan, you had two different types of schooling systems, if you will. There were one set of schools, which were a—a reflection of the

British rule in that region. And the classes were taught predominantly in English. So your math, your sciences, they were all taught in English. The second school systems were where there were more local schools where all education was in local language called Urdu. So luckily, I was in an Amer—in a British system school and all my education was in English. So I learn English since, you know, kindergarten, since nursery, since first grade. Uh, and so English was a core part of our education. Um...early on and—early on, I say early on—by 9th grade, you had to decide whether you wanted to become a pre-engineering major or a pre-medicine major. At that time, essentially those were the two majors, engineering and medicine. If you couldn't get into engineering or medicine you went into the business side. There was no IT. There was no law at that time in that school level. So getting into the 9th grade, I chose sciences as my—my curriculum. And really you had eight subjects you took. So English; Urdu, um; Pakistan studies, which was kind of the history of Pakistan; Islamic studies, which was the history of Islam; and then you had chemistry, physics, biology and Engl—and math, those eight subjects. When you went in—got into the 11th grade, then you have to even pick further did you keep *math* or did you keep biology. I was very good at math. I loved math. So I became a pre-engineering student in the 11th grade, picking math over biology. And then again in my 11th and 12th, um, you know, years, it was heavily focused on physics, math, English, Urdu, the Islamic studies, Pakistan studies, and math.

Now the system also there was not the semester system, which you find in the American school system. Essentially you study the whole year, and at the end of the year you had what was called annual exams or final exams. These final exams could be a month, month and a half long. And your *entire* year's grade was based on these exams. No matter what you did throughout the year, whether you studied, didn't study, whether you'd had good grades or not, whether you did well on initial tests or not didn't really matter. What mattered was these final exams at the end of the year. So 9th grade, 10th grade, 11th grade, 12th grade, I remember just studying, studying, studying for, you know, month, month and a half at a time. [coughs] Sorry my throat is a little bad right now. So, we would study very hard because your *entire* year's grade mattered on that one set of exams, which would be, you know, like three hour papers in each of the subjects you were taking. And that would determine how well you did. An A grade was 70 mark—de—70 marks. So, unlike the US system, A was not 90. In fact (?) it was almost impossible to get 90s. It was very very tough the grading system. And 70 would be considered A. 80 be—would be considered A⁺. And then you know you would go down to B and C. So getting an A was supposed to be fantastic. And I was fortunate enough to get all As and A⁺s in my final exams. [coughs]

When I was finishing high school, my, uh—my father had the vision and then he felt that it was important for me to go overseas and come to the US. However, before coming to America, I did join a local university in Lahore for just a few—a few months. And, at that time, the university life wasn't very good. They had lots of strikes and, you know, lots of uh, um...lots of riots if you will. And that happened [indistinguishable 2 words] university and the university shut down. And my dad said, "You know what, Shahid? The system here is not very good. You need to go abroad." [coughs] The—living in Pakistan, I went to the American Consulate and got all the information on American universities, where to apply, where not to apply. And I applied to quite a few places. And I was lucky to get into a few of my top choices. So, I got into Texas A&M, here in Texas. I got into Cornell University in New York. I got into Georgia Tech. And living in Pakistan, I did not know which ones are better or the other. So luckily, my, uh—one of my dad's uncles used to live in Washington D.C. And he used to work for the World Bank. So

we called him. He said, “Hey, where should Shahid go?” And he said if you want to go to a small town, go to Texas A&M. If you want to go to a big city, go to Georgia Tech in Atlanta. So I picked Georgia Tech. So then I still remember the day that I—I took my first overseas flight ever and I landed in Washington D.C. That’s where my dad’s uncle used to live. They received me, his family. Uh, I came a week before classes started and so spent a weekend with them. That was the first time I saw an American football game. As you know, in—in Pakistan, you know, there’s no American football. There’s football, which we call soccer here now. So I grew up playing soccer as well. Uh, but that was the football in Pakistan. But here I—I saw the—the American football game with the Washington Redskins. And then they kinda taught me the basic rules of the game. [cough]

[0:10:47]

Then I, uh, arrived in Atlanta. And uh, one of the folks who I had just briefly met in Pakistan who was already in Atlanta studying here (?) at another university, Georgia State. He received me. He was very generous. He took me to his place the first night I arrived in Atlanta. And the second day, the dorms opened up. So then I went and I found my dorm. I was living on campus. It was called the Techwood Dorm. And it was the most truly amazing experience my first year at Georgia Tech. Um, I had friends I met my first few days on campus who I’m still friends with today 25 years—uh, 30 years later actually. And there were a couple of these boys, who were Indians, born and—and raised in India, but lived in Kuwait. They had come there. [cough] And they were also living in the same dorm. And we became really really good friends.

So I—I came to Atlanta. It was a complete culture shock. Complete change. So Pakistan: very conservative society. Um, US: you’re on your own. You’re independent. Very liberal society. Um, growing up in Pakistan, everything was taken care for you. So, we had servants. We had a cook who would cook. We had a maid who would clean the clothes. Somebody would iron your clothes, polish your shoes, make your beds. Food would be on the table for you, lunch, dinner, breakfast. You did nothing actually. Here, you’re going out doing grocery shopping yourself. You’re going out doing laundry yourself. If you don’t go to the—the cafeteria there’s no food to eat for you. [cough] So, you are pretty much on your own throughout, which was a massive culture shock and—and a big change for me.

Secondly, I would say that um, you know, what you found was that you found many other people who were similar to you, who would come to Georgia Tech, would come to Atlanta, from either outside Atlanta, other states, or outside the country. And you made—made some really really good friends. You had a common purpose. You’d come there to study. You had a common purpose of doing well so you could get jobs in America. And you found lot of common things between you and other students. So the society, the group was very welcoming, very very hospitable. But of course, you went through many experiences.

I still remember the first day when I went for some grocery shopping. So, I didn’t have a car. I was living in the dorm. But I took the, um, MARTA, which was a train in Atlanta, and I went to go to the stores. And I didn’t even think about how I—would I take all the bags with me back to my dorm. So I started shopping. I filled up my cart. I came to the checkout and suddenly I realized I had 16 bags and I had no way to take them home. I couldn’t carry them on the train. So then I had to go into a payphone and call this guy who had received me the first time that I came to Atlanta. And he came to my rescue. He came—and—and—to the grocery store and we put the groceries in his car. And, you know, we went, uh, back to the dorm. So, you know,

interesting experience. The first time I went to do laundry, I had never done laundry before. And I didn't realize that you needed quarters for the laundry machines. So I'm there, trying to figure out how to turn on the—the—the washer. And I couldn't figure it out. So then another student helped me out—you know, said, "Hey, do you have quarters?" I said, "Why do you need—do I need quarters?" And then of course I was explained how to use the—the laundry machines. So it was a—was a big change. But I think it really helped me grow into who I became later on because you have to self-rely on your own self and do things yourself. And, you know, sometimes you had struggles. Sometimes you didn't have struggles. But you learned through experiences.

[0:14:30]

DW: So what was your major at A&M? Er—I'm sorry, Georgia Tech.

SJ: [overlapping] Georgia Tech. Yeah. So my major was mechanical engineering. I did my bachelor's in mechanical engineering from Georgia Tech.

[pause]

DW: Let's see. Okay. So we'll move on. Uh, I guess in a—in a little bit different direction. We'll come back. Um, first I'd like to ask...[SJ coughs] where has...the rest of your family ended up?

SJ: Okay. So, um, let's start with my other siblings. My father and my mother stayed in Pakistan for many many years. Uh, I came here, of course, got my education, started getting a job, started working here. My dad continued to work in Pakistan for the government service. And then he retired late 1990s. And, at that time, uh, he migrated with my younger brother and younger sister to Canada. And then they moved and settled outside Toronto and Mississauga. My elder sister got married, um, several years later after I came to the US. Uh, she got married. Her husband was a doctor in the US as well. So then she actually moved to the US, uh, earlier on before my parents moved to Canada. Um, and so she lived in New Jersey, in Baltimore, in North Carolina, in... Now she lives in Houston as well actually. And then my parents, um, moved firstly—recently—earlier part of this year to Houston from Canada as well. So at the moment, um, my younger brother and younger sister live outside Toronto, Mississauga. And I have my sister, who has three daughters, who lives in Houston and, uh, my parents live in Houston.

DW: And do you um—do you have a lot of communication with your family back home? Any—any extended family or anything?

SJ: Yeah. So interesting, let me kind of share a few experiences with you. So when I first came to the US, um, you didn't have any cell phones. You didn't have any email. You didn't have any Internet. So communication back home used to be very very difficult. Um, I still remember writing letters to my parents, letters to my brothers and sisters, um, that would go to Pakistan. And it would make my day anytime I would go to the post office and I would open my—my post office box and I would find letter coming back from my family from Pakistan. It would take easily two to three weeks for the letter to get here. And you may—you probably don't even—

have never probably seen them, but there used to be something called the aerogram, which is a blue color, uh, envelope where you wrote and you folded it and you gonna (?) sealed it and you sent it. It was designed that way and you couldn't write anything more than what was in the aerogram. [coughs] So we used to use those a lot, number 1. Number 2, my parents would call me in my dorm. But even calling from Pakistan those days was not easy. So they would have to book what was called a trunk call. You call the operator saying, "We want to book a 3-minute trunk call to America at this number" and a few hours later you would get a call back from the operator saying, "Hey your call has been connected. Come on the phone." And—and then they would call me and I would talk to them.

Once in a while, you know, I would—was it—would call them from a payphone myself also, but it used to be extremely expensive. Extremely expensive. So communication was very difficult early on. But now, as we fast forward, now you have cell phones. You have Skype. You have Viber. You have WhatsApp. You have Snapchat. You have all kinds of ways to stay communicated even stay in touch with family back, uh, in—in Pakistan. Uh, and even here, my brother and sister live in Toronto, and we Facetime regularly. We Skype regularly. We're on the cell phone regularly, emails, chats. It's very easy to keep communication. But in those days, when I first came here, we stayed in touch with each other, but it was not very frequently. I would go back to Pakistan during summer vacations because I would miss home, miss my family. So usually summer vacation's from June to, you know, August or so I would go and spend some time with my family and then come back for the next year.

DW: So um...I guess the—the other part of this question in terms of your family and your heritage is—and this is a very broad question—what does it mean to *you* to be Pakistani?

SJ: Sure.

DW: And—and what does your heritage, and your family, and your background mean to you?

SJ: Sure. Um...at my core, I'm still a Pakistani. I've been living in America, um, almost 30 years now. Um, but my core is still Pakistani. And what that means really is there are some cultural values that you really keep, uh, close to yourself and close to your heart. So respect is a huge value that we—we have learned throughout our—our history in life. And, you know, you respect your elders. You respect your family members. You respect your friends. You respect your teachers. You respect people you work with. There's a level of respect you give to them. Um, you are always there as a helping hand to anybody who needs any help from you. You are there. You're close to them. Whatever you do, you don't think about yourself first. You think about others as well. And your actions [cough]—your actions impact a lot of people around you. So you think about them as well. Family values, a close-knit family is a very powerful part of our culture. You know, you—you live in not just your own immediate brothers and sisters but you live part of an extended family. So whether your grandparents, or your uncles and aunts, or your cousins, they're all part of the same fabric. It's a very close-knit family. Um, religion plays a part as well. So I'm a Muslim. I'm a born Muslim. Uh, I've practiced Islam all my life. That means I fast during the month of Ramadan. I say my prayers daily. Um, you know, you give charity. I've gone to Saudi Arabia to perform both the Hajj, which is required, and Umra as well. So I'm—I—growing up in Pakistan, you know, I practiced my—my religion. And that is part of my culture as well.

[0:20:32]

Whereas, you know, there are some values you gain from the culture, some values you gain from the religion. And that is part of my upbringing and part of who I am and I mean I (?) call myself Pakistani. Um, I would consider myself a—what I'll call a moderate Muslim. So I'm not an extreme element on either right or the left. Um, but I'm a—I'm a strong practicing Muslim, a moderate Muslim. I also believe that the religion is something that's between *me* and the God. Yes, you have all these scholars, all the ulamas, all the people around you who try to, you know, pass some judgment on you. I believe that in the end that God will judge me on my actions. And hopefully my good deeds will be more than my bad deeds and—and that was what's gonna take me to heaven. But I do believe in the religion. And I do believe um, that it's a core part of who I am.

[pause]

DW: So [clears throat] I guess, um, we're talking about your story, your life. So we'll just keep going chronologically. What did you do after Georgia Tech?

SJ: Great. So I—as I mentioned, I, uh, got my bachelor's in mechanical engineering. And at that time graduating from the college was easy, was not too hard. But getting a job was very difficult, very hard. Why? [clears throat] I was on a student visa. And there were many many companies in the US who would not hire you because you were on (?) student visa. You had to find a company who would get you, what was called a work visa or an H1 visa and then was, uh (?), willing to sponsor you for a green card as well. And my dream was to get the green card and— and live in America. So, first thing is that I knew that when I was studying, I had to be really really good and get really really great grades. Because if I didn't have the best grades, then the companies would not hire me. So I was very focused in my education. I had a blast. I had great time. I was socially very active at Georgia Tech. Um, but I knew that my first priority was my studies. And I graduated with a 3.9 GPA. So I had in my four years only three, I think, three Bs and rest all were As. And I really really focused on the studies.

Now the—the—the thing that I found really amazing about me was that this was happening while I became involved in some of the associations in—in—in Georgia Tech. There was an association called Pakistani Student Association. I became the president of that. And then not just that, we created actually what was called the Atlanta Pakistani Student Association. I was—it was a combination of multiple universities in Atlanta: Oglethorpe, Agnes Scott College, Georgia State, Southern Tech and others. We all came together as universities and created a broader association. And I was the president of that organization for two years as well. So, being a president, we became *very* active socially. Whether we were conducting music shows, or dances, or cultural events, or internationals days, or just singing competitions. We were active and active. But that made me very happy. And that gave more inspiration to do—to work even harder. So I had fantastic grades, but at the same time I had a lot of fun with the whole Pakistani Student Association Atlanta, made some great great friends through that whole experience as well. When I graduated, um, I was fortunate that I found a couple of companies who were willing to hire me [cough] and offered me to get me a work visa. And I joined a company by the name of Eveready Battery Company. So I'm so—sure you have seen the Energizer bunny that

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keeps going and going and going and going. So Energizer was our product. So Energizer was the alkaline battery that Eveready Battery Company produced. And I—my first job was with them in their um... manufacturing plant in Asheboro, North Carolina. So I moved all of a sudden from a big city Atlanta to a very small town Asheboro, North Carolina, population of barely 15,000 people. And of course I was young, I was single. It was a very boring time in Asheboro, North Carolina.

[0:24:42]

DW: That's where I'm from.

SJ: Are you from Asheboro, North Carolina? So at that time the zoo wasn't there that (?) farm [indistinguishable] was built after the—after the—the—after I left actually. But the good thing is there were several of us guys who were all working together at Eveready. Uh, and we all decided that we should live in Greensboro, North Carolina, not in Asheboro 'cause Asheboro was too small. So then I got an apartment in—in Greensboro, North Carolina. And I would then commute back and forth with these couple—three, four other guys, you know, come to—come to the—the, uh, factory. And the experience was fantastic. I found that I was a young guy who was willing to learn, who was willing to see what others were doing, who was humble enough to say “I don't know everything. Yes, I'm an engineer, but I don't know how machines work.” So I really got a lot of, uh, help from the other people who worked in the manufacturing plant, people who had been working in the same place for 20, 30 years, elderly people who had tremendous expertise. [coughs] They took me under their wing. And they taught me a—a lot about manufacturing. Yes, I had a mechanical engineering degree, but I had never applied that. And my job at Eveready was to a) improve the quality of the batteries we were producing, b) to increase the throughput and the efficiency of the machines. So how many batteries you could produce from a machine and my—my job was to improve the efficiency of those machines. And thirdly, we were adding more machines to the shop floor and I did that with all the people I worked with.

I was there for two years. Um, and I had the first, I would say, the setback in my life. At that time as I mentioned that, uh, Eveready had sponsored me for—or were going to sponsor me for a green card. They had got me an H1-B visa. Almost two years into that process, they came back one day and said, “Shahid, you know, it's you and three other people they've decided not to sponsor y'all any more. Because our attorneys are telling us that for sponsorship we have to prove to the Department of Labor that we can't find anybody else with this skill set. But our attorneys are telling us that, 'Hey, all you have is people with bachelors' in engineering. You can find many of them, and this sponsorship will not go through.' So we cannot sponsor you any more, but we like your work. We would like you to go and work for us in Singapore.”

So, that was the first big shock to me because my whole dream of becoming an American, of living in America, becoming a citizen, getting a green card. Suddenly I saw that completely getting messed up. It was—it was disappearing. So at that time I told them, “Fine. I'm okay. I will go to Singapore.” And the technology used in manufacturing in Singapore was a different technology than in Asheboro, North Carolina. So then they transferred me, uh, from Asheboro, North Carolina to Fremont, Ohio, which is another small town. You know 5,000 people, between Cleveland and—and, uh, uh, and Toledo. So I moved there. Now at that time, I had a choice to make. Either I would—I would, you know, take the job offer and move to Singapore with Eveready or do something different. And I'm the type of person who tries to

control—take control of his own destiny. I said at that time, “I’m not leaving US.” I said, “I need to stay here.” And the only way for me to stay there was to go back to college. And that’s when I applied to graduate school. And I would say that’s probably the best thing that could ever—ever happen to me. Because if Eveready had um, not told me that they were not gonna sponsor me, my plan was to do a part-time MBA either at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill or at Duke University. I would have never thought that I would be going for an M.B.A. and master’s in engineering at Stanford University, which is a phenomenal school. This setback, this jolt (?) of Eveready saying, “Hey, we’re not gonna sponsor you” became the trigger for the best move ever in my life.

So my third year with Eveready I—I applied to Stanford and, you know, I—and a few other schools. And I was really fortunate to get into Stanford, their double master’s program. And that paved the way for my life. Now, in this meantime when I was in Fremont, Ohio, December 1992, I also got married. So newly married, left my job in June and, you know, took some time off in summer and now, me and my wife—no kids at that time—young couple, we moved to California and moved to Stanford. The two years at—at Stanford were among the best years of my life. *Phenomenal, phenomenal* learning experience. I was among the best and the brightest of student body I’ve ever come across, people from all different fields, whether they were investment bankers, consultants, engineers, accountants, um... We had musicians. We had swimmers in our class. We had priests in our class. You were part of the group that was the best in whichever field they were in, and you learn from them. Also, the whole, um, structure of studies at Stanford was not that you studied from the book or you studied in this classroom. It was your entire experience of case studies, of projects. You interface with the teachers who brought their day-to-day research into the classroom. You had students where you would debate case studies, and you get different viewpoints on a similar situation, similar problem because different people have different approaches and different viewpoints.

[0:29:59]

So it was a—it was a phenomenal learning experience. And, you know, my wife was with me. We lived on Stanford campus. So it was really beautiful, really really nice. Um, and again the two of the best years of my life at Stanford. When I was, uh, in my first year, I got exposed to management consulting. And interestingly, uh, even when I was an undergrad at Georgia Tech, I had never heard of management consulting. I did not know what that field was. But then I—I got exposed to it. I went to many uh, company events, uh, their, uh, their, um, um...brainstorming sessions, introductory sessions, welcome sessions. And I learned about what management consulting was. And it really was where these consultants get hired by companies to help them solve some problems, or create some vision, or create some strategy, or do some benchmarking: the business problems that they have to solve. So I said, “Why not try it out, and give it a shot, uh, during my first and second year of my M.B.A.?”

So as a summer internship, I joined a company by the name of A.T. Kearney. Uh, they’re one of the leading management consulting firms. Um, their office was in Chicago. So summer of 1994, we moved—me and my wife moved to Chicago. And Chicago was absolutely beautiful. Downtown Chicago is where we lived, uh, near Lakeshore Drive and the weather was beautiful. It was perfect. There’s no better place to be in the summer than downtown Chicago. And we loved it. From a work perspective also, it was fantastic. I loved the work that I that I—did. I worked at an electric utility Commonwealth Edison. And the A.T. Kearney project was around

procurement and strategic sourcing. That was the first time *ever* I got exposed to strategic sourcing. And I led a project. And in those three months I had a great time. So when I went back to Stanford for my second year, A.T. Kearney had given me a—a job offer already. And I knew I wanted to do consulting and I liked A.T. Kearney.

Now another important thing for—for you all to—to know is that, um, when I decided to go to Stanford, I didn't have a lot of money. Very expensive two years' education. But I believed that God, you know, if you really want try hard and you really work hard and have, you know, really focus on something, God has a way to make it happen. So when I got into Stanford, um, I actually got a full-year's tuition scholarship from the College of Engineering part of the master's program. And when I joined A.T. Kearney or accepted my second—my offer with them after my second year, um, when I—when I graduated I accepted to join them—they gave you a signing bonus which covered your tuition for the second year. So luckily for me, my both years' tuition got paid by the scholarship and by A.T. Kearney. Because I went back on an F-1 visa. So leaving Eveready Battery Company where I was on a (?) work visa, I went back on the—a student visa.

And, you know, as a student visa, you cannot get financial aid. You [indistinguishable several words] scholarships. So my dad helped me a lot. He gave—gave—gave me money again. I maxed all of my credit cards because we still of course had room and board expenses of living and eating and all that stuff. So luckily for me, my both years' tuition got covered by A.T. Kearney and by the scholarship from Stanford Engineering School. But I still had to cover all the other costs. So when I graduated, my credit cards were maxed. That was the only way for me to get some money, some loans. And luckily with A.T. Kearney when I joined them, it was under (?) one year I was able to pay off all my loans. So I—I find myself, uh, that I'm really really lucky and fortunate that I got the scholarships and, uh, bonuses that one year out of my master's and M.B.A. from Stanford, I was debt-free, which is very remarkable. Lot of people now go to colleges and they have, you know, huge amounts of loans. Then they come years and years to pay off those loans, whether it's you know law school, or M.B.A. school, or master's, or even medic—cal colleges.

So—so then I graduated in 1995 from Stanford with double master's. And then I joined A.T. Kearney full time. And we moved to Chicago. Uh, at this time, still it was just me and my wife. She was, uh, I would say the biggest support I've ever had because at Stanford, I was very, very busy. It's not just that I was doing one M.B.A. I was doing double master's, in the same two year time frame. So it's not that I took three years for the double master's. It was the same two-year period that you did your M.B.A. as well as your master's in engineering. Um, and so she was very patient with me. She supported me throughout my—my, uh, two years at Stanford. And then of course we moved to Chicago.

Moving to Chicago was great. It was a great city. Um, but we of course learned that consulting wasn't as easy as I thought in the summertime. In summertime, my project was locally in Chicago. So I saw my wife every evening, even though it was late night. But, my first project when I joined A.T. Kearney full-time was not in Chicago. It was in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania with a steel company. And now I was gone five days a week. So with consulting, you travel a lot. I used to fly out Monday morning, come back Friday evening, and my wife used to be all alone in Chicago. Moved to a new city, a new place, we had a nice apartment, but, you know, she was all by herself. So it was tough. It was tough from a family perspective. But to me, I had to—and we had to make that sacrifice because A.T. Kearney was gonna sponsor me for a green card. Again, a lot of companies would not hire you F-1 visa. A.T. Kearney got me the H-1, uh, the work visa, and then they started with the sponsorship process.

So I stayed with A.T. Kearney, uh, for four years, um, and during this time I got my green card with A.T. Kearney. They work (?) in fantastic (?) firm. This is where the next 20 years of my life were being defined for me. So currently, and for the last 20 years, I've been doing work in procurement supply chain management. And A.T. Kearney is the reason for that. That's where I got started into strategic sourcing, procurement transformation, supply chain management projects. And that's continued for me in the last 20 years. So really A.T. Kearney was the foundation of who I am today and—and how I've grown into the career that I—I have grown into.

But I realized at A.T. Kearney [cough] that it was tough to balance your, you know, family life. As I mentioned, uh, I have two daughters now, and both were born when I was traveling with A.T. Kearney. And I still remember I was doing a project, uh, in Detroit with General Motors. And I would be gone again Monday. I would be—come back on Friday. And it was a Saturday, I was back home, and my younger daughter was one year old. And we lived in a townhome at that time. So we were playing around and I wanted—I had to go to the garage to get something from the garage, and she came running, grabbed my legs, and started crying. I said, “Honey, what's wrong?” And she said—and I still remember today—she said “You are going again.” I said, “Oh my god! This one year old kid knows that my dad is not home during the week.” I said, “I need to change something.” So that started my whole move to decide to leave A.T. Kearney.

By then luckily I had gotten my green card. But, it was time for me to start, you know, talking to other people to get another job. It was gonna be easier as well. So, that was basically how I got started in thinking about a post-Kearney career. The A.T. Kearney alumni network is a really powerful network and my next job that I got was because of A.T. Kearney. So one of my friends—his name is Mark Jason—he had moved to a company called Fort James. Fort James essentially makes, um, paper products. So Quilted Northern bathroom tissue, Dixie paper plates and cups, uh, Brawny paper towels, those are all the big, uh, products that, uh, that Fort James, uh, you know, made in those days. So he was working for them. And I had lunch with him, and I said, “Hey, you know what? I have couple of daughters who are born now. And I have my green card. You know, I need to do something different.” And he said, “Hey, we're looking for some people in procurement. Why don't you come and talk to our management?” And he got me introduced to the management, and then they offered me a job.

Now leaving con—management consulting, there was an odd view that people had which was: you're doing great work; you're getting paid really well for that, if you go back to the corporate world, the work will not be exciting, and you're not gonna get paid—paid a whole lot. Those were completely proven wrong when I went to Fort James. I found—I found that even on the corporate side, you had some brilliant people, smart people doing phenomenal work. And they paid equally well. So, luckily for me, I got a great job, you know, at Fort James. I was part of their corporate strategy group focused on manufacturing outsourcing. So we were finding suppliers who could take all—some of the operations that we had which were not very good inside the company, and we outsource them to—to these suppliers.

I was there for 18 months and, as luck would be, I still remember I was driving to work on a Monday morning and on the news, on NPR, it said, “Hey, the maker of Angel Soft has acquired Quilted Northern.” I said “Oh, that's our company!” So it was a company in Atlanta, Georgia Pacific who used to make Angel Soft, uh, toilet paper. They acquired Fort James. And that was then the second shock of my life. “Oh my god! My job is going away. I have two little kids. What are—what's gonna happen now?” And I still remember my parents calling me really

really worried. “Oh my god! Shahid, your family, little kids. What’s gonna happen now?” I said, “Don’t worry, Mom and Dad. Things will work out.” And they actually worked out better than I could have (?) imagined. And—and that was an experience that, you know, very few people go through, but when you go through them, you learn, you know, the good and the bad of it. Yes, you were gonna get laid off because your job was moving to Atlanta. Um, Georgia Pacific did offer me a job to move to Atlanta, but I liked Chicago. We were living there.

But luckily for me, the dot-com was booming. And this is now late 1990s, early 2000s. So at that time, dot-com was booming and I went to an A.T. Kearney alumni event and I met there, uh, another old friend of mine from A.T. Kearney days who used to be my mentee. I used to be his mentor. And he had joined this company called Transora. Transora was essentially a B-to-B e-commerce play back in the dot-com boom era. It was created by the consumer goods industry, so Procter & Gamble, Sara Lee, Kraft Foods, Coke, Pepsi, Unilever, they all came together, said, “Hey, what if we combined our—our buying power in the market? Can we reduce the cost of procurement?” And they created us. And I talked to the management and they offered me the job.

[0:40:21]

Now the great thing is, I of course left Fort James, but when we got acquired, they gave you a severance package. And this was, you know, quite a few thousands of dollars of package, lump sum. And that was a blessing, actually, because I used that to make a down payment to buy a house. So where you were worried that, “Hey, you’re losing your job.” It actually was a gift to you because you took that money and you put it in a house. And you were able to buy a house, which you were not able to buy before. And you also [strange garbling noise] had a job with Transora. So you were employed. You had a job. As well as, you know, you were able to buy a house. So life now is moving along pretty well. Um, I stayed with Transora for about, uh, 3 years. And at that time I realized that, uh, the dot-com boom was great, but the concept that we were building with the Transora, uh, were too early for its time, and it was not gonna take off. And I was not gonna become a—a millionaire, you know, at a young age because of the dot-com boom.

And I was very fortunate—and again A.T. Kearney came into the play—where one of my friends from A.T. Kearney did a project with this real estate company where they recommended to them a new strategy to elevate the procurement function. And as part of that recommendation strategy was to create a new position for vice president of procurement. And he came to me and said, “Shahid, we have this client. Would you be interested?” And I’m a big believer that opportunities knock on your door. You got to make sure your antennas are up. You got to make sure you recognize them, and you see them, and you grab them. But, all around us there are opportunities. I’m a very very very optimistic person. Even when something is going terribly bad, I find something positive that comes out of it. And my experience has taught that to me again and again. So, in this case, this opportunity came by at Equity Office Properties. I interviewed with them. I offered—they offered me the job, and I accepted that. Now, at a very young age, and I’m talking in 2004...um—I was only...37—um, I was a vice president of procurement at the largest office company—office building company in the US. We owned over 650 buildings *all* across the US from New York, Boston, Atlanta, Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Houston, Austin. Big cities. We owned skyscrapers and several [indistinguishable several words] office campuses.

So at a really young age, I had risen very high. I was very fortunate, very lucky. And I do believe there's a God up there who looks after you. And he did. And I had a fantastic time with them. Um, I was there for 3 years. I did some phenomenal work for them [cough]. And really learned tremendous amount, learned a lot about the US, uh, company politics, learned about how to navigate, how to influence people, how to work with people. Really helped me build tremendous amount of leadership skills. I already by now knew procurement supply chain management. I knew strategic sourcing. I was growing in my leadership and my leadership style. Uh, and really helped me grow. And then again, as I said, God looks after you. Um, back in 2006, there was a company by the name of Blackstone Group, a—one of the largest private equity firms. They came in and they acquired Equity Office Properties. So whereas you thought your career was gonna go on for many years here, again three years later, you got acquired. And Equity Office basically became private, and Blackstone Group started flipping the properties for them. And that essentially meant the job was gonna go away again. And that is again when you start thinking about, okay what's gonna happen next? And luckily, a few different executive search firms contacted me and they got me introduced to BP in Houston. BP oil and gas. And I got the offer to come and join BP in the procurement group. And it was a phenomenal move for me.

Leaving Chicago, um, essentially, I wanted, you know, three things. I wanted a big city, 'cause I've lived in small towns and I realized that I'm a big city person, not a small town person. I wanted a big city. Secondly, I wanted ethnic diversity because culturally, my values are very important to me. I wanted to be in a place where I could impart the same cultural values on my kids as well. And living in a big diverse city would help you do that where you had the Pakistani food, restaurants, mosques, people who you could—you could socialize with, you know, all the foods are available to you, grocery stores, you know, your clothing stores. And Houston offers you all those. The third criteria was to move to a warmer place. So we decided to leave Chicago and move to Houston 7 years ago.

So, phenomenal journey throughout the whole time, but there were these triggers in your life where things happen which were not in your control. And one of the big strong values and beliefs I have is that you should not worry about things that are not in your control. That'll happen to you throughout your life. Things that you cannot influence. Could I stop Georgia Pacific from acquiring Fort James? No. Could I stop Blackstone Group acquiring Equity Office? No. But those—I—those became bigger opportunities for me. And sometimes you think back and say, "You know, if that had not happened, I may not be sitting here today." So all these, uh, events happened, and they put me in a much bigger and stronger place than I could ever imagine to be.

[0:45:40]

[pause]

CZ: I wonder what made you so eager to stay in the States when you kind of finish your college education? Because, as an international student myself, I, like...I'm not sure if I want to stay here or go back—

SJ: [overlapping] Yes.

CZ: —to my hometown—

SJ: [overlapping] Yes.

CZ:—to have my future life there.

SJ: [overlapping] Yes.

CZ: I wonder, like, um, have you ever thought about going back to Pakistan and live there?

SJ: Yeah, great question. Great question. So I would say there are multiple reasons. First reason was, if you look back in my home country, Pakistan, things have not been very good in that part of the world. Uh, and not good, not just recently, but over the last 20 years. If you look at the history, things have gotten worse and worse and worse and worse. Whether it's your...um, your work life, whether it's security, whether it's terrorism, whether it's just economic, you know, underdevelopment, things are not very good. They're at high risk. So I several times thought about, "Should I go back to Pakistan?" But the fact—my dad worked in the government service, he kept guiding me. I tell you (?) I still remember when I first came to Georgia Tech, my dad said, "Shahid, your roots are in Pakistan. Gonna (?) come back here. Your family is here. Your extended family is here. You're gonna come back here." A few years later as the country was declining, my dad said, "Shahid, think about getting a job in America. Get some experience there." And when I started working here, he said, "Shahid, don't come back right now. Things are getting pretty—pretty worse." Now that is not true for the entire world. Some countries I would put in—into that bucket. China, of course, is not—not in that bucket. So I felt that I didn't have much opportunities also, in Pakistan. For you in China, there could be phenomenal opportunities. I was in Shanghai last week and I saw things growing massively, unbelievably, just beautifully. So you have to take that into account.

But the second thing that kept me in the US and I still believe even today—today: US is the land of opportunity. If you work hard and you apply yourself, you can be anybody you want to be in this country. And I can't say that for the whole world. In other parts, many places, it's who you know, who you influence, who you give money, who do you, you know, who you—uh, who is corrupted. Those things matter more than your hard work and effort. I would not be sitting in this position today if, you know, I hadn't worked hard and there was, you know, God looking after me and there was good luck there as well. But only in America I could succeed so fast. And I'm—I'm just one of millions of people living in the country who come from abroad who've had a phenomenally successful life and career. So, to me, this is the land of opportunity. And when I started working here, I realized that my hard work really pays off.

So it is a combination of security and opportunities back home or, you know, living in the US. Now, I have thought about [cough] would I like to go work abroad overseas for a few years, and then come back. I would love to do that. The world is a massive place. Uh, we travel a lot. You know, my daughters are now 18 and 17. The, uh, older one is a freshman at UT Austin. And the younger one is in 11th grade. So in another two years she'll be going to the university also. And over the years we have taken them to many, many parts of the world from the US and then Mexico and Hawaii from this side to all the way to England, to—to France, to, um, uh...Greece, to, uh, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Abu Dhabi. Uh, we've taken them to a large part—part of the world that they've seen. There's a lot to learn from the world. There's lot to see. So down the

road, you know, if I got the opportunity to maybe go abroad and live abroad for a few years, and work there, and then come back to the US, I would love to do that.

[0:49:36]

[pause]

DW: So...now, as an adult, married man, living in Houston, what is life like outside of work? Outside of BP.

SJ: Yeah. So, um...life is what you make of it. If you are the type and you want to just sit in your room and be on the computer and watch TV, you can do that. Or if you want to be socially active, uh, you can do that. I'm the type who wants to be with people, who wants to give back, who wants to help others. My whole career—or my last 20 years since I came to the US—I felt that...I didn't have a mentor or a coach or a guiding light. I tried everything though error. I tried. It worked. I tried. It didn't work. That was how I—I spent my last 20 years. My mom and dad had taught me all the values, but they had not lived in the US themselves. My dad had come to the US to go to college for a couple of years, but they had not lived here. So they couldn't guide me in the career aspect either.

But I believe that I have now gone through that experience and the younger generation who is here now, I can teach them. I can coach them. I can guide them. So they don't have to go through the same challenges that I went through when I went through my colleges or my jobs. So, what I do is I—I'm very heavily involved in, um, several non-profit organizations. There's an organization called OPEN Houston. It stands for Organization of Pakistani Entrepreneurs of North America. It has chapters in multiple cities in the US and overseas. I'm on their board. I'm also a charter member of another organization called TiE, TiE Houston. It stands for The Indus Entrepreneurs. They are heavily focused on entrepreneurship. So people who have ideas and others who have money, they bring them together and basically they're—they're—they're all about entrepreneurship [cough]. They're very big in Silicon Valley in San Francisco, but pretty active here as well. So I'm on board with them as well.

I'm also on the board of the Asian Chamber of Commerce. Uh, and the focus of Asian Chamber of Commerce is to really heavily engage Asian businesses and Asian nations and Asian public to help foster business and relationship and activity. So I'm on their board also. So with these 3 boards and 3—3 organizations, I'm pretty actively involved in the community teaching people, you know, uh impart—impair—imparting knowledge on them, coaching them, guiding them. So that's one part of me. Of course, work is another part of me that we talked about already. I'll come back to work at BP in a minute to describe what I've been doing at BP 'cause I haven't talked about that yet.

But on the personal side, um...both me and my wife, we are very active socially. So, you know, every week, every weekend, there is some dinner party, some lunch party, some activity where us and our friends are getting together. You know we just, uh—for example, had a dinner at our house just this last Satur—Sunday—uh, Saturday, and the Sunday before also. We love to enjoy—you know, have friends together. Uh, whether you go out to see movies, whether you go out to see dramas or plays or sports events or you just get together for, you know, lot of uh, uh, you know, just chit-chatting. We do that as well. So we have a large network of friends, uh, both Pakistanis and Indians, and Americans as well, um, and other nationalities, who we mingle

around with and meet with, um, to stay, you know, socially busy with them. So that's a big aspect.

Now, the latest chapter in our life is our daughter at UT Austin. So she started in September—August—September this, uh, this year. And so we've gone to Austin several times to see her. Of course she comes back to Houston several times as well because there's a bus that runs between UT Austin and Houston. She's coming tonight because of Thanksgiving. So luckily we're able to see her quite a bit. So that's a new chapter for us. Also, we're spending a lot of time with our younger daughter who's a junior in high school to help her, shape us (?) to what does she want to do? She start (?) to figure out what does she want to study? Where is she gonna apply for university? And we have to help kind of shape her, figure out exactly what she wants to do as well. So those kind of keep me pretty busy in my personal life. [clears throat] At BP, I'm [clears throat] excuse me, at BP, my, uh, role is I'm—I'm vice president in our procurement supply chain management group.

So if you think about BP, what do we do? We find oil and gas in the ground, and then we drill holes and wells to bring their oil and gas to the surface, and then we distribute it to the refineries then. And the pipelines. So I'm part of an upstream group very responsible for lot of the procurement, the bidding, the contracting, managing supplies, finding the right safe suppliers and cost-competitive suppliers who work for us in the fields around the drilling and around the completion of wells. You might have heard of shale plays. We are pretty active in the shale plays. You might have heard of hydraulic fracking. It's a new technology that you're able to go into the shale plays and break very hard rock and get gas and oil to flow. So these suppliers that bring us these technology to us, I'm heavily involved in that space. So a lot of contracting, a lot of bidding, a lot of running of the warehouses, making sure we have the right suppliers who are working for us and make sure we have the right materials and equipment with us as well.

So in the end you—what you—you find out—find out is that you could be as quiet or boring as you want to be, or you can be as active as you want to be, and both me and my wife, we are the active type. We just don't sit idle. We find things to do. And there's plenty of things you can get involved in, whether you want to give back to the community or just have fun out there.

[0:55:21]

CZ: Could you tell us a little bit about your wife? Like where she's from and—

SJ: [overlapping] Yes.

CZ: —yeah.

SJ: Yeah, great, great question. So, uh, my wife, her name is Sahar Javed. Uh, she was born in Pakistan as well. And she grew up overseas most of her life. So, while I grew up in Pakistan, she was overseas. Her dad used to work for another oil and gas company, Schlumberger, and they traveled. So she lived in Iran, in Dubai, in Philippines, in Bangkok, um, you know, all over the place. Uh, Aberdeen, Holland. So different cities. And, um, they used to come to Pakistan every summer as we were growing up. Her parents and my parents were friends. So we saw each other not ev—almost every summer. And we were kids. So we would play around. But as time grew, uh, you know, I started liking her, and she started liking me. But in our culture, there's no dating.

So we never went out on a date. In fact, the first time I ever took her out on a date for dinner was when we got engaged. Till then, we had never gone out alone. Not even once. But we kind of liked each other. So then I came to the US and she was living in Holland. That was a very difficult time because my phone bills became very very high. I would call her. There was no Internet. There was no Skype. There was no chatting. So no free calling that we have now. So I used to call her from the US, from Georgia Tech. And our bills used to be very high. And then we got engaged when I was a senior—uh, no, I'm sorry—I was a junior in college, and she was a senior in high school. So she's four years younger than me.

Um, and—and even for that to happen though, my father flew from Pakistan to Holland to propose. So I didn't propose to her. My father went, which is—which is customary for Pakistan [cough] that your parents play a big part in your marriage. So it was—I won't say it was an arranged marriage because we knew each other. We kind of liked each other. But still we had to go through the customary motions of, you know, arranging the marriage. So my father flew to Holland. Of course, her father knew my—my father was coming. 'Cause the worst thing would have happened is my father shows up and her dad says, "No!" So we had kind of done all our homework and gotten everybody in line. So he went there. They (?) proposed, and then we got engaged. Uh, our engagement was back in Pakistan. So I—I flew back to Pakistan. We got engaged. We had a long extended engagement because I was still studying, and she was studying. And then we were engaged for four years. And then we got married. And this is when I was living in Fremont, Ohio. And, you know, she was still living in Holland, but our wedding took place in Pakistan. And the wedding, typical in Pakistan, could be four, five days affair. And you have different rituals, different things you do on different nights. And we—we followed the same traditional Pakistani wedding. We have friends who came from all over the world to attend the wedding, and—and family and friends. And we had the wedding there, and then she came back with me to the US.

So she is very well educated. Um, she went to pretty much the American schools wherever they lived, whether it was American school in Philippines, or American school in Jakarta, or American school in Aberdeen, or American school in the Hague in Holland. She—she actually was studied—studied more in the American system than even I did. [pause] And she comes from a family of four. So, two sisters and two brothers, like I have. You know, we are two brothers and two sisters. They also had, uh—they have two brothers and two sisters. She's number two. I'm number two in our family as well.

[pause]

DW: All right, so we'll start wrapping up. But...um, the Houston Asian American Archive really focuses on careers and jobs and labor, which you've told us an extensive amount. It's amazing. [cough] Excuse me. What we would really love to know is what your hopes and your dreams are for the future. Moving forward in your career.

SJ: Sure. So as I mentioned earlier, I feel, uh, very fortunate, very lucky that, uh, God has given me these opportunities at a very young age. I'm not close to retirement at all. Right? I'm still in my 40s. I still have another, uh, 10, 15, 20 years of work in front of me. So I keep thinking about what legacy do I want to leave behind. As I look back and I look at the companies who I worked for: they got acquired; they moved on. Those companies don't even exist anymore. So what's my imprint on those companies? None. The companies are no longer there. So I'm working for BP,

having a great time, but I'm thinking about the future where—where can I last—leave a lasting impression? So that's something in my mind right now. You know, should I make a transition? Um, should I join a company where I could have a bigger impact on the company? And I—I like procurement supply chain management, and I think my career will take and stay in the same space as procurement supply chain. However, I would love to run a busi—love to run a business. So if I moved out of BP, I would go in a space where I could see a very clear path for me to get into a position where I could be a president of a company or a business or CEO of a company or a business.

[1:00:36]

I also have a couple of start-up ideas. That, hey, I could maybe create a couple of start-ups of my own, and develop them into bigger lasting (?) companies. In all of this, I think back as to the people who work with me, people who work for me. How am I impacting them? How am I improving them? And, if I can leave behind a few very strong leaders who learn something from me, I would say my job is done. From my own career perspective, that's my lasting impression. What is the impression on the companies and the companies that stay behind, uh, where people remember those companies because of me? I want to do that, but I also wanna leave back some big leaders, some big people who have done phenomenally in their careers, and I could be a part of their development, their growth.

Thirdly, I would say is, you know, my wife is also very career focused. She's an executive director for non-profit organization, and part of my goal is to help her grow into her own career. She—she sacrificed her whole career because of us. When we got married, you know, she had study to do—studies to do. But we didn't have enough money for both of us to study. I was studying at Stanford, extremely expensive. So she put her studies on hold. We moved to Chicago. Then she started to go back to school. And then, guess what? We had a couple of kids. She—she couldn't finish her studies. And then it—it took us another 10 years to finish her bachelor's completely because of all the things that had—that were happening in our life. So she's given a lot to the family, a lot to me, and [cough] I really want to support her in her own career goals. So she can achieve all the great things she always wanted to achieve.

And then I would say my daughters. My goal—number one goal right now is help them in whatever capacity I can as a father. Guide them. Coach them. Get them to develop their own careers. Get them married. Have, you know, great grandkids and—and help those grow. But a big focus of both me and my wife are our daughters, how to influence them, how to coach them, how to guide them [cough] into having their own life for the future. 'Cause in the end, you know, we'll go away. And they'll be left behind. And that's where my legacy will remain, with my children and then, you know, hopefully then my grandchildren after that. So that's kind of what I'm thinking about over the next, you know, 10, 20 years in terms of career.

We love Houston. Houston is a great place. Um, we find that the people in Houston are phenomenal. Um, I had heard of Southern hospitality before, but I experienced it in Houston. We moved to our neighborhood—we live in Memorial, uh, in the—in the City Centre area, close to City Centre area. And, uh, I still remember, you know, our luggage was being taken off the truck, [cough] the moving van, and this lady, who was one of our neighbors, came, rang the bell, and introduced herself, and said, "Welcome to the neighborhood. Um, I know you right now are getting all this stuff moved. I'm sure you'll get hungry. Here are some numbers to call Pizza Hut and other places so they can deliver food for you." They were just phenomenal, these—these

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neighbors. I still remember that evening, our bell rang, and two little kids—little girls showed up on our deck (?) with some brownies and some cupcakes. And they said—we opened the door and they said, “We heard you have a daughter in fifth grade. We are also in fifth grade. We are neighbors. Can we meet her?” And this was Southern hospitality at its best. So we—we like living in Houston. It is the number one diverse city. In fact, one of the professors at Rice University has done some research and kind of shared that, that this is *the* number one diverse city in—in all of US now. And we love living here. The weather is fantastic. Don’t have to deal with all the snow. Um, I remember when we first moved here somebody said, “Shahid. Yes, it may be humid here, but you don’t have to shovel humidity.” So we—I was tired of shoveling snow in Chicago, lived there for 12 years. So in the humid weather, you can be in shorts and t-shirt, jump in a pool, be in an A/C. But you don’t have to shovel humidity. So we love Houston, um, hope to be here for many more years.

[1:04:36]

DW: Awesome. Last question. Uh, and this was Connie’s question that we ended with in our last interview and I loved it. Um, these interviews will be stored and archived in the Houston Asian American Archive, and, you know, they’ll be there for years to come and—and students or members of the community, anybody can come back and—and listen to these and access them. If you had anything to offer to anybody down the line that might listen to your interview, any kind of advice? Or just anything to say for anybody down the line? What would you have to say?

SJ: Be ambitious. Sky is the limit. Don’t undersell yourself. Don’t be—don’t be short. You can achieve anything in your life that you want to. You have to put in effort. You have to work hard. You have to have an element of luck. You have to have an element of faith. But it’s in your own destiny. You control your destiny. You can dream big. That’s my big message to the generations to come. You can dream b—dream big. Second thing I would say is: help each other. I can name so many people who have influenced me in my life in many ways, whether they were my bosses, whether family members, whether they were my, you know, my cousins or others. They’ve influenced me. And I believe that we live in a world where, as an individual, you don’t achieve a whole lot. But as a collective group, you achieve tremendous amount. So work with people. Love people. Help each other out. And if you genuinely truly do that, people will help you out in every form and fashion as well. Dream big. Work with people. Help each other out. And you can achieve anything in your life.

DW: Awesome. Thank you so much.

SJ: You’re welcome.

DW: We appreciate your time.

SJ: Yeah. It’s an honor to be interviewed today.

[1:06:40]

End interview.