

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

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Interviewee: DR. PAN POH-HSI  
Interviewers: ANNE CHAO  
Date/Time of Interview: November 19, 2016 at 2:00 PM  
Transcribed by: CHRIS JOHNSON  
Edited by: PRISCILLA LI (1/14/2018)  
Audio Track Time: 1:23:25

Background:

Dr. Pan Poh-Hsi was born in Shanghai, China in 1922. As a consequence of the war, Dr. Poh-Hsi moved several times in his childhood, living variously in Hangzhou, Nanjing, and several other locations. After earning his Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering from Zhejiang University, Dr. Pan Poh-Hsi studied and worked as an interpreter for the U.S. Army in China before moving to Taiwan. Dr. Poh-Hsi would then move to the United States, earning advanced degrees from Colorado School of Mines and Rice University, where he taught as a professor following his PhD. He then worked for Mobil Oil Company until his retirement in 1986.

Setting:

The interview was conducted at the home of Dr. Pan Poh-Hsi, lasting for roughly one-and -a-half hours. The interview covers Dr. Poh-Hsi's early life in China, various educational achievements, and employment in the oil and gas industry. Dr. Poh-Hsi's daughter, Wanda Pan was present for the interview and made several contributions throughout.

Interviewers:

Dr. Anne Chao graduated from Wellesley College and received her master's and doctoral degrees from Rice University, where she currently teaches as an Adjunct Lecturer in the Humanities. Many of her courses have been centered in the History Department, focusing on the field of modern Chinese history. Other courses taught by Dr. Chao have been in the field of Rice University's Program in Poverty, Justice, and Human Capabilities. Additionally, Dr. Chao is the manager of the Houston Asian American Archive.

Interview Transcript:

Key:

PP: Dr. Pan Poh-Hsi

AC: Dr. Anne Chao

WP: Wanda Pan

—: speech cuts off; abrupt stop

...: speech trails off; pause

Italics: emphasis

(?): preceding word may not be accurate

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

**AC:** Um, this is Anne Chao, I'm the manager of the Houston Asian America Archive; Today is November 14th, 19- uh 2016, and it is about, um, 2 o'clock. I'm here to interview Dr. Pan Poh-Hsi who's a geophysicist, um who originally uh, is from China, and he obtained his PhD at Rice University. Um, and he is here to be interviewed at his home. Good afternoon Dr. Pan.

**PP:** Yes.

**AC:** Thank you so much for having us and allowing us to come and talk to you about your story and about your life.

**PP:** You're welcome.

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**AC:** We're very honored. Can- perhaps we can start with your telling us a little bit about um, how you came, uh, to live in Houston?

**PP:** Oh, I went to Houston, I went to Houston, and uh, went to Rice University and, uh, stayed there for 10 years. And then worked for Mobil Oil Company about, uh, 20 years, that's, that's how I stayed here in Houston.

**AC:** Okay.

**PP:** And my daughter's here.

**AC:** Right. Um, can you tell us, then we start from the very beginning- where were you born, when were you born, and how - what schooling did you have?

**PP:** Oh, I was born in Shanghai. That was, during the warlord age. So, and then moved around, uh, from Hangzhou to Nanjing. And then finally, to Taiwan. But during that time, I was suffering a lot because I studied in the Zhejiang University. I spent about 52 days from Zhejiang to Guizhou. Finally, I got a uh Mechanical Engineering degree in 1944. But at that time, it's very hard to find a job. So, I went to become an English interpreter to aid U.S. Army. Uh fortunately, or, uh, what I should say, 1945, uh we, we, we fought Japanese and won the war. So, I went back to China, uh Shanghai. And, then, after a couple years, I went to Taiwan because I wasn't married. So, it's easy to get to Taiwan. And I went back to the U.S. to have my education.

**AC:** Thank you. It's a very interesting story. You were born in 1922?

**PP:** Yes.

**AC:** In Shanghai?

**PP:** Yes.

**AC:** And do you remember what elementary school you went to?

**PP:** I didn't go to school in Shanghai. At the elementary school, I - I was studying in Hangzhou. That's called the *Qingpu xiaoxue*. That's a, that's the only school I went. Then I went to Nanjing, and then went to, uh, Shanghai, and then I was uh- doing the, doing the high school in Quzhou, Zhejiang. And graduated from uh high school and then uh went to the Zhejiang University.

**AC:** And, why did you move from Shanghai to Nanjing, and then Zhejiang and Quzhou?

**PP:** Oh, that's because Japanese occupation. So that I went through those cities. And, uh, finally, I went to the Zhejiang University. So that I stopped, uh still uh moving around, almost uh non-stop working for, working and then moving, and finally, went up to uh Tai-Taiwan.

**AC:** So, was your father- what was your father's job?

**PP:** Uh, he used to work for the *guomin zhengfu* [Nationalist government]. But, uh, didn't do very good. Uh just, not the high, high ranking official. Just a little clerk. So, that's about it.

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**AC:** And so when you left Shanghai to go to Nanjing-

**PP:** Uh-huh. Yeah.

**AC:** Was it because your father's job? He had to move with the Guomindang government

**PP:** That's right, that's right.

**AC:** I see. And do you still remember, was it difficult to move from Shanghai to Nanjing and Nanjing to the other cities?

**PP:** Yes, uh very difficult. At that time, we almost did not have too much left moving around. And with the small, small uh jobs, not too much money. That's about how...

**AC:** Do you have other siblings? Do you have sisters and brothers?

**PP:** Yes, I do have. I have several. And some died early, and two of them went to Taiwan with me.

**AC:** I see. So when your family moved from Shanghai to Nanjing, did the whole family move together with the-

**PP:** No, no. Uh one married, two died, uh and uh we didn't move together. But, also, because the war. So, separately all were, uh self, not- [Phone rings]

**AC:** Go ahead, yeah.

**PP:** Okay.

**AC:** And uh do you remember what year you went to Nanjing?

**PP:** I think, uh I don't remember exactly. Probably 19-, uh 1930's.

**AC:** And, so-

**PP:** 1930- no. 19-... probably that time. Cannot remember.

**AC:** Were you in Nanjing during the Nanjing Massacre? *Nanjing da tusha?*

**PP:** Uh no, I, I think that time I already left, already. Yeah.

**AC:** And so, from Nanjing you went to Quzhou? Is that right?

**PP:** Nanjing- I went to Zhejiang, Huzhou and then also went to Shanghai. That time, Shanghai was occupied by Japanese. And then one of my sisters and I went across the Japanese occupation, and I, I went to Zhejiang, Quzhou, Quzhou to study high school. And that, and then I got admitted in-to the Zhejiang daxue [Zhejiang University]. And studied two years, and then went to Zunyi. That was, 52 days after two years. And then I graduated after another two day- two years. And then I went to the U.S. Army as an interpreter.

**AC:** I see. Uh so, when you move so much from place to place, how do you continue your studies?

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**PP:** That's - that's a good question. But, uh we have to force ourselves to study very hard. We didn't have electricity. So, very tough. But, uh we, we have very good spirit.

**AC:** So, do you have uh the same continuous uh curriculum? Like, if you move from Shanghai to Nanjing and Nanjing to other cities, the textbooks, are they the same? The -the courses you're taking, do you, do you still have a sequential uh learning experience?

**PP:** Oh, very, very hard to get uh textbooks. But the - we had uh some English textbooks. So that will help our English. So, but the very difficult to get all the equipment as a laboratory. Uh almost everything was difficult during World War II. So, but we went through. So, luckily, we got graduated. And then, and then finally I went back to Shanghai after almost eight years, uh went to Shanghai.

**AC:** But Shanghai was under occupation. Right?

**PP:** Right. No, that's- first time it was under occupation. Later, I went to Zhejiang University and graduated. That was, the war was over.

**AC:** Oh, I see.

**PP:** Then I went to Taiwan.

**AC:** I see. And, when you entered Zhejiang University from the high school. Was Zhejiang University campus in Hangzhou or was it in Quzhou?

**PP:** No, not yet. After, after the victory over Japan and the Zhejiang University, I went back to Hangzhou.

**AC:** Okay. And before the victory, where was the campus of Zhejiang *daxue*?

**PP:** In Huizhou, Zunyi.

**AC:** Huizhou?

**PP:** Huizhou, Zunyi.

**AC:** Zunyi?

**PP:** Yeah.

**AC:** Ah, okay. And, so, um, you mentioned that the spirit, your spirit was very high, uh even though the equipments are difficult to get, and uh very hard to get textbooks. So, are the professors, uh professors from different universities who combine together to teach?

**PP:** No. Only one university Xinan Lianda. Yeah. That's, that's the only one. Most of them just separated Zhejiang *daxue*. Only, it has his own, her own.

**AC:** Oh. But was Xinan Lianda and Zhejiang *daxue* were they in the same city?

**PP:** Uh, Xinan Lianda was in Yunnan, Kunming. Zhejiang *daxue* was in Zunyi.

**AC:** I see. And when you went to Zheda were your parents there as well, or were they in a different city?

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**PP:** No, my - my mother was with my eldest uh sister...stay in Shanghai, under Japanese occupation. We didn't correspond with each other. Because it's hard to - to send the mail over. Very difficult. So, only when the war was over, then I- I went back.

**AC:** And was your father with you, or he was a different place?

**PP:** No, no, he died.

**AC:** Oh I see. He passed away when you went to Nanjing, or?

**PP:** Right.

**AC:** I see, I'm sorry. So, after - after your father passed away, and your mother was in Shanghai, you were on your own?

**PP:** With the, with uh my sister - um with uh, yeah, with my sister. Eldest sister. And then my brother who was in the, in the Army, and went back to Shanghai. He was, he was uh given another house, and uh some, some uh salary to, to feed us.

**AC:** Um, did you run into any Japanese troops?

**PP:** Oh yes. I saw, saw the Japanese troops in my own eyes. That was in the countryside. I saw them - I saw them just kill a lot of people. Then I - I know it wasn't safe. So, I went to the city, Huzhou. And then I could see the Japanese marching on, on the street. And you have to bow at the intersection, you have to bow at them. And sometimes, the guerrilla uh fighters fought the, the Japanese, some Japanese died. Very bloody, they threw the shirt (?), in the street.

**AC:** But you were not seen by the Japanese, you saw them, but they did not see you, right? You did not get into trouble with the Japanese.

**PP:** No, at that time, I was only uh 15 or 16. But I tried not to walk in front of them. I just, just walked uh behind them. So, but I know it was very dangerous. So, definitely, it's not a place I can, could live. So, I finally just tried to, went back to see my, see my eldest sister.

**AC:** Oh. And so you mentioned 52 days of very difficult travel.

**PP:** Very difficult.

**AC:** Can you tell us more about that?

**PP:** Uh, luckily, I was uh helped by my uh brother-in-law's friend. They were, they were buddy-buddies in Germany. So, that was my brother-in-law who, who is a graduate from Tsinghua University and sent to, sent to Germany. But the, so I was lucky. He helped me a lot. His friend helped me all the way to go to the Zunyi.

**AC:** So you went from Quzhou to Zunyi. Were you in Quzhou when you started?

**PP:** That Quzhou is, "qu" [衢] is different to write. That's a near Jinhua or southwest Zhejiang.

**AC:** Yeah. And you start, did you just go by foot, how did you travel?

**PP:** Well, we have originally, we had about twenty students that went together. But the, but the, after we were robbed, robbed, we didn't have enough money. And then we just have to beg money from the, from the local, uh...local government. And then - but in Jiangxi, uh the next province of Zhejiang, uh that was the place that I stopped over to find my brother-in-law. But my brother-in-law went to, to inland. And then luckily, his friend in Germany helped me, helped me not only give me money, but also recommend me to, to go with some people, some officials to all the way to uh to all the way to Zunyi. It's a, it's not very easy. [Laughs]

**AC:** So, when you started out with twenty, twenty college- were you high school students?  
Twenty students leaving-

**PP:** Yeah.

**PP:** I was uh twenty years old.

**PP:** Two years of college.

**PP:** Zhejiang *daxue*, liang nian [two years].

**PP:** Then we moved-

**PP:** Oh, some just didn't go.

**PP:** Because they didn't have enough money, or they just didn't go to - but I couldn't go either. But I know my brother-in-law was in Jiangxi, I was looking for him. Unfortunately, I went to Jiangxi, he, he and uh my sister all left and then luckily, his friend in Germany helped me.

**AC:** So, in those days, we did not have cell phones. How did you communicate, how did you know your brother-in-law had left, and then how did you find his friend from Germany?

**PP:** There was no way- I just uh blindly, I went there. Because I said "Well, my brother-in-law's in Jiangxi, that's the only way I can go and then depend on he." But he had already left.

**AC:** So did you have an address, you know where his house was-

**PP:** No way.

**AC:** -how did you find - how did you find the friend?

**PP:** Okay, now, in that city, uh I had - I had no way to find him, but I just uh asked his friend in Germany. And uh he was a very, very high-ranking engineer. So, I asked him, he said who he was, and where he was. And then I found him.

**AC:** Wow. That's-

**PP:** All lucky.

**AC:** Exactly- you had to be very lucky to have all these connections.

**PP:** Or else, I can stay - stay in the local university. That's another one. Another one. But I'm supposed to go to Zhejiang *daxue*. Uh anyway, anyways, just pure luck. [Laughs]

**AC:** Wow. Wow, that's a really amazing story. So once you arrived in Zunyi. You were able to re-enter Zhejiang University.

**PP:** Yes.

**AC:** Uh was there tuition- did you have to pay?

**PP:** At that time, you don't need tuition.

**AC:** And then how- what about room and board- how did you eat and where did you sleep?

**PP:** Okay now, in the beginning, we had to pay a little bit. But then, later on, they just said "Loan you, loan you." So you don't have to pay. But room and board in, in Guizhou, Guizhou, they had a very big, uh not mansion, but uh two-story building. It's a big one. Which is, the owner has, has a lot of uh rice field, and uh - so that's the only one you find, of custody, local-run. See where you can have facilities to, to afford. Yeah, it's everything is very difficult.

**AC:** And, so, you finished the last two years of Zhejiang University, and then after you finished, you went back- the war was over and you went back to Shanghai, is that right?

**PP:** Yes. That's uh that's after one year, I worked for Aeronautic Research Bureau, after one year. And then I went to the interpreter school. And then, war was over.

**AC:** Uh-huh. So, uh so what was, right after graduation, what uh what institute did you work with, is it here? [Picks up paper] Uh can you say again the name of the first job you had after Zheda, what was the name of the...?

**PP:** Called the, uh Aeronautic Research Bureau.

**AC:** Okay.

**PP:** Aeronautic Research Bureau.

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**AC:** And then after one year, you went to interpreter school?

**PP:** Well yeah, yeah, after one year, went to the interpreter school, and then, worked for the U.S. Service Supply. And then the war was over. And they sent me back to the research, Aeronautic Research Bureau. [AC: I see.] But I didn't like that. Because, they're supposed to build an airplane. And the airplane won't fly. I said, "That's another airplane won't- [laughs], that's an airplane factory, I have to leave."

**AC:** Um, what did you major in at Zhejiang University, what was your major?

**PP:** Mechanical- mechanical engineering.

**AC:** And so why is that Aeronautical Institute, why can they not build an airplane that can fly?

**PP:** Because, first, materials, they don't have materials. Second, uh just techniques, was just not good-

**AC:** Was this a government institution-

**PP:** Yes.

**AC:** Or was this a private institution?

**PP:** No, no.

**AC:** It was a government institution. And then what was the translation school like? Was it taught by foreign instructors?

**PP:** U.S. Army. U.S. Army.

**AC:** Oh, okay.

**PP:** And they taught us etiquette, etiquette.

**AC:** Etiquette.

**PP:** Yeah, and, sing all the songs "Bola bola! Bola-bola!" [Laughs] And all this, and, lots of fun. And, taught all the, "It's along way to Tipperary!" All the - lots of-

**AC:** That sounds good but, but-

**PP:** Very happy days.

**AC:** But, you already had training in English, right you did not learn English at the translation school-you already knew English, and you were just further trained at the institute-

**PP:** Yeah.

**AC:** And when did you first learn English?

**PP:** Oh, that's in high school.

**AC:** Okay, okay.



**PP:** But that's a requirement. [**AC:** Yes.] Also, the English, the American English is different from British English.

**AC:** Yes.

**PP:** They, some of them, uh...the American English is hard to understand then.

**AC:** Yes.

**PP:** Now, it's different British is- oh... [Laughs]. British English is different... And...

**AC:** Um so, after translation school you worked for the U.S. Army for a few months?

**PP:** Eh for a few months.

**AC:** And what did you do there?

**PP:** And then, then the war was over, and the - the GIs uh tried to sell all those things, whatever they want to sell. A blanket everything was a dollar a piece. That's okay. So, so then I went back to the, to the Aeronautic Research School and then they sent me to, to the Airplane Manufacturing School. Factory-. Airplane Manufacturing- factory. [laughs]

**AC:** And that was still in Zunyi?

**PP:** Yeah.

**AC:** And that was still there.

**PP:** And after - after that, I didn't like I said, I didn't like that the airplanes they build, they couldn't fly. So I - I just left, and went to another factory. And then went back to Shanghai.

**AC:** I see. So, when you were working with the U.S. Army, uh what did you do after translation school?

**PP:** Nothing. That's uh - they have, what's called service supply. So, materials, in and out, and distributing the - all the supplies, that's all.

**AC:** I see.

**PP:** Then the machine (?).

**AC:** Then, so, you were there when the war was over.

**PP:** Uh-huh.

**AC:** And was there any celebration on the day that everyone learned the war was over?

**PP:** Oh, yeah. Celebration. But, most of GIs are so happy. But uh, to me, I think differently. I thought, I thought I should do more work to fight Japanese, but the Japanese are gone.

**AC:** So how did you first hear about the war being over?

**PP:** I didn't even hear. Because uh, because, there wasn't anybody telling you, I- I think uh it's miscommunication. So, but I know something happened. So, kind of a naïve, innocent, at that time. But anyway, after a year - after a day or two I found out.

**AC:** I see.

**PP:** They sent me back to the factory.

**AC:** And then how did you go back to Shanghai from Zunyi?

**PP:** Oh, because the Aeronautic Research Bureau had the trucks. So, they - they just uh took me to Chongqing [Chungking], to Chongqing. Then, they have their trucks to send me back to the factories.

**AC:** To Shanghai?

**PP:** Not- not, not that. I worked for the - for the Aeronautic Research factory. Yeah. After another two years, working for hand generating, hand generators, another company, another company, for two years. Then I started going - thinking about going to Shanghai.

**AC:** So, you were in Chongqing for two years after the war.

**PP:** Yeah, Chongqing.

**AC:** And was that also with the government? Were those companies also with the government?

**PP:** So, that's also for the government.

**AC:** And so, when you finally went back to Shanghai, did you get in touch with your mother?

**PP:** Oh yeah.

**AC:** Yeah.

**PP:** That was a uh very, very different, different story, uh because I talked to my boss, I said, "Is it, my, my sister, my mother, and then, the godmother, they are all women in Shanghai." I needed somebody to take care of them. [laughs] Uh so, finally, the boss said, "Okay." At that time, so many people want to go back to Shanghai." Uh so they wouldn't let you leave. So I told him, I showed a picture to him, and he said "Okay, okay, they're gonna let you go." [Laughs] You have to sneak away. [**PP and AC:** [laughs]] And another story- I had...

**AC:** So, uh once you got back to Shanghai-

**PP:** Yeah.

**AC:** And you found your mom and your sister-

**PP:** Yeah.

**AC:** Were they still in the same house that you left?

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**PP:** No, because my brother was in the, in the military. So, over uh over s- victory over Japan, he also got the house, I mean distributed by the military. That's the reason he had the house. So, so they stayed there. Otherwise, we didn't have anything. So, so that's, so lucky. That's a lucky, everything. And then, and then my brother looked at the newspaper found the- I couldn't find the job, seven, eight jobs, couldn't have one fit my category. So, my brothers found the newspaper, said uh- "Chinese Petroleum Corporation they're looking for some engineers." I went there, and the boss, the boss asked me uh to write some English. Uh also, he also speak in English with me. And because I had an interpretation, an interpreter's experience. So, "No problem, I will accept." And then later on, that was in, after I went back to China in the 80's. The boss was, was - the Communists said, "You are a Guomindang. You are a Guomindang." So, the boss, they wouldn't let the boss to see me.

**AC:** Wow.

**PP:** They say- but, my boss, that older boss was not a - not a Com- a Guomindang. Because his wife was a Communist.

**AC:** Oh.

**PP:** So they suspend him as a Guomindang. So they wouldn't let him because I went back from China to U.S. [laughs]

**AC:** This was 1980's?

**PP:** 80's. Yeah 1980's.

**AC:** So, you never saw your old boss?

**PP:** No.

**AC:** You could not see him. [**PP:** [Laughs]] So once you - then you got hired by the petro- China Petroleum Companies. Zhongguo Shiyou Gongs, right?

**PP:** Yeah.

**AC:** So you were in Shanghai; [**PP:** Yeah.] how many years did you work in Shanghai with the oil company?

**PP:** Uh, when I went back to Shanghai?

**AC:** Yeah.

**PP:** Only one year.

**AC:** Okay.

**PP:** Because, at that time, the Communists already coming from North, North of the Yangtze River. So I was really lucky. So, they sent me to Taiwan. Now without going to Taiwan, these people are all stated in Mainland China.

**AC:** And what year did you go to Taiwan, 1947? Or '48?

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**PP:** '48.

**AC:** '48.

**PP:** End of '48.

**AC:** Okay. And, so, your mother and your sister and your brother-in-law, were they all-

**PP:** Only Mother.

**AC:** Your mother came with you.

**PP:** Only Mother. Yeah. My sister and my brother went the other way, they went their way. But my mother and I went to Taiwan.

**AC:** I see.

**PP:** Yeah.

**AC:** And uh, once you're in Taiwan, you really couldn't go back.

**PP:** No. No way. Until, until 1980, I really had a business trip to, to Europe. I know my brother, that, that brother-in-law that went to Germany. He was a professor- taught, taught uh taught the engineering. And uh and he, he went to Jiaotong *daxue* to teach.

**AC:** Yes.

**PP:** And, and what happened, and I stopped over Paris. I wrote the postcard to him. Because it's a uh - it's uh Jiaotong *daxue* better, better than some government office - Guomindang, whatever. So - because they wouldn't- my brother-in-law wouldn't take - wouldn't read that postcard. So he give the postcard to my sister. So finally, they knew I was in the United States. By that time the war wasn't over yet. Wasn't.

**AC:** Your brother-in-law could not read the post card and had to give it to his sister, why is that?

**PP:** He was afraid of reading.

**AC:** Even though it came from France, it didn't come from anywhere else.

**PP:** Because I didn't know him- I didn't know. That's the reason I sent it to the educational institution instead of some home. My, my brother-in-law was in trouble. Or - sometime, I think, in trouble. And they jailed him, and then released him. It's very, very problem - much problem. And he was supposed to go to Taiwan. But even the Leftists, the underground communists, they - they - so he said, he was a called *qianjin* [avant-garde], so he didn't go to Taiwan. So they all regret.

**AC:** Yeah.

**PP:** Many of them regret, went to Taiwan, and then went back to *dalu* [mainland].

**AC:** So, um when you and your mother stayed in Taiwan, were you able to maintain contact with your sister or brother-in-law?

**PP:** No.

**AC:** No?

**PP:** No, no way.

**AC:** So how did you find his address when you went to Paris in 1980's?

**PP:** I just said "Shanghai, Jiaotong *daxue*."

**AC:** Just like that?

**PP:** Professor.

**AC:** Okay but how did you know he was a professor at Jiaotong *daxue*?

**PP:** He'd been teaching all the time. And they changed the college- the university's name, also. But they were switching, finally from Jiaotong *daxue* to Huadong Shuili.

**AC:** Yeah.

**PP:** Huadong *xueyuan*. Actually, not the same university. I just write Jiaotong *daxue*, more professor.

**AC:** Were you just guessing, you were just guessing he might be at Jiaotong? Because you don't know, how did you know he was even in Shanghai, or teaching? Did you have some communication with him?

**PP:** Yeah I - I. You are right. I think, one of the universities uh - he must be there. That's a Shuili, Shuili Xueyuan. So, he wouldn't let- write a letter back to me. So he gave it to my sister. My sister found out my, my address. So I was surprised. [laughs]

**AC:** So, did you eventually meet?

**PP:** Yeah. Oh yeah. [Coughs] Meet all, all of them. And my brother-in-law, and my sister-

**AC:** When did you meet- when, what year did you meet?

**PP:** Oh that's 1979 or '80.

**AC:** '80. After you wrote the letter.

**PP:** Yeah.

**AC:** After you wrote the letter. And did you meet in, in China, or you went back to China?

**PP:** I went back to China, meet them, and then many of them came back, came here. My - my nephew is a U.S. citizen. [Laughs] Jiashu. [coughs]

**AC:** Yeah. So, back to Taiwan, after you and your mother arrived in Taiwan, 1948. And you were still employed by the Zhongguo Shiyong Gongsi, Zhongyou. Um then how did you, what happened - can you elaborate a little more about your life in Taiwan?

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**PP:** Oh, I was uh I was doing the office work.

**AC:** Uh-huh.

**PP:** But- [glassware is moved] thank you, thank you. Doing office work. Finally, [coughs] I started working as a seismic crew. Working in the field, uh all those canes, sugar canes, it's hard work, you're sweating. You know, it's in Taiwan, very hot. And uh I, I thought I, I wasn't going, going to that kind of life, just terrible. Uh so, six, seven hours in the field. I thought that I would quit. But finally, this is the best job I had. And I had to, I switched it to geophysics.

**AC:** Yeah.

**PP:** Okay. And I started - started learning geophysics. [Thanks his daughter Wanda for bringing him a drink]. Actually, started in geophysics and uh [coughs] finally they sent me to the States for - for, for one year of training. And then, went to Colorado School of Mines and then Rice. That's all I have is today.

**AC:** Oh, and what year - what year did you go- you went to Colorado School of the Mines. And do you remember what year that was?

**PP:** That's, uh, uh first was '57 for - for one, one semester. And then I came back after two years- '60. '60, I came back and uh for two years, I got my Master's degree.

**AC:** Oh, so at this Colorado School of the Mines.

**PP:** Colorado School of the Mines. And then, they hired me at the Mobil, and then after a couple years, I said, "I need more." So I went to Rice to have my PhD.

**AC:** How did you decide on Rice University?

**PP:** Oh, how did I decide Rice University? Because uh reputation, first. Second, it was a uh- they did not have a exploration (?) in geophysics. And uh I - I started doing some work having the, having the Dr. DeBremaecker.

**WP:** DeBremaecker.

**AC:** Who is it?

**WP:** Dr. Jean-Claude DeBremaecker.

**AC:** DeBremaecker, okay.

**PP:** So, I felt, it's a good school, and then, good reputation. So, after I finished that, I'm almost 40 years old. I said- so, I - that's at least two good schools, reputation schools, I got a better job, and then after I worked so hard, and, I my, my PhD thesis is to use a seismic refraction, seismic method to find oil.

**AC:** I see.

**PP:** And then they found a lot of oil. That's the reason, because I didn't know that Shell Oil- uh Vice President came to Mobil, saying, "How come you have such a success?" He said because this person's thesis helped them to find a lot of gas, oil in offshore Louisiana, so I was very happy.

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**AC:** Wow, that's amazing. Is your dissertation still available at Rice? Because, you know Rice PhD dissertations are usually kept in the Rice library. Did you ever look for it?

**PP:** They should, they have uh supposed to have it.

**AC:** Okay.

**PP:** I - I keep my own.

**AC:** Okay.

**PP:** It's, uh- that's, that's something I really feel proud of.

**AC:** Yeah.

**WP:** They called it "Bright Spot Technology". Er yeah.

**AC:** Bright Spot Technology, that's created by your dad.

**WP:** That's what they eventually called it; he did not call it that. But that's what the oil companies started calling it when they began using it pretty much using it wholesale. It was a very, very successful method.

**AC:** Wow. Um, so when you went to study the first time with the Colorado School of the Mines, did you have to quit, resign from China Petroleum?

**PP:** No.

**AC:** They sent you.

**PP:** They sent me.

**AC:** Okay.

**PP:** But the second time, I resigned.

**AC:** Oh, you resigned to get Masters. And for those two years you were not employed, you were just a student?

**PP:** No, no I got a fellowship.

**AC:** Oh, a fellowship. And then, from there, you went directly to Rice? Or where you employed by Mobil Oil for a while between the School of the Mines and Rice?

**PP:** Yeah.

**AC:** You worked for Mobil Oil before you went back to Rice University.

**PP:** Yes.

**AC:** Okay.

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**WP:** For three years.

**AC:** PhD for three years, because you already have your Master's.

**WP:** Well no, he was-

**AC:** Working-

**WP:** Between, between Masters and PhD, he was working for Mobil for three years.

**AC:** I see.

**WP:** In Midland, McCamey, and then Houston.

**AC:** Midland, Mc-

**WP:** McCamey.

**AC:** McCamey, and then Houston.

**PP:** We all went.

**AC:** So how - so when - how did you meet your wife and when did you get married?

**PP:** Oh, that was a lucky story. Well my wife was younger, much younger than I was. When I was in Taipei and uh she - there was a party. A party, Zhejiang University, an alumni party. And uh, we were dancing around, we were with somebody else, and then she came here, she said, oh, I think I asked her, "Could we dance?" Okay so, we start dancing. And she asked me, "Could I have a summer job?" She said, could I have a summer job in Miaoli, it's another town.

**AC:** Miaoli.

**PP:** Miaoli, you know. So I said, yeah, sure. So I talked to my boss uh, "Could she have a job, a summer job?" And that's how we got together. [Laughs]

**AC:** Was she a student, or was she- did she just graduate from school that she was looking for a job?

**PP:** She was going to uh - to college, yeah. So, a little money helped. [laughs]

**AC:** And then how long after you met her that you got married?

**PP:** Uh, met her, end of the year, we were engaged, then, I think another year. One year or two years, maybe.

**AC:** And, um, and you remember what year that was that you married?

**PP:** Yeah, I think it's one year, probably.

**WP:** 1955.

**PP:** One year or two.



**WP:** You got married in 1955, October.

**PP:** Yeah.

**PP:** 19- 1955.

**PP:** It's just two.

**PP:** You have that picture?

**PP:** [Pointing to photo] Right here. No, yeah.

**AC:** [To WP] So you have a little brother? [To PP] You have a daughter and a son.

**PP:** Yeah.

**AC:** Oh, what a beautiful picture. Very good picture. And, um, so they all came with you to - when you-

**PP:** No.

**PP:** I went to study after Colorado School of Mines, the Master's degree. And uh Mobil wants me, badly, they said. So, I told the seismic partnership was, I said, if you want me, bring my family over-bring my family over. So he said, "Oh, no problem." So then talked to the immigration officer, and most people came to the States, studying, uh spent about three, four, five years. Even seven years. And then, I- I spent only about two years, then they came.

**AC:** Wow. So, so uh so they came over with permanent residency or citizenship?

**PP:** Yes-

**AC:** And you also have your-

**PP:** They applied.

**AC:** Oh I see. And so Mobil gave you a working visa, or helped you apply for permanent residency, or?

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**PP:** Mobil just helped me to - to get all them over.

**AC:** And you said Mobil said they badly wanted you. Even as you were finishing the Master's at the Colorado School of Mines. How did they know about your work?

**PP:** Oh no, uh that was not my PhD.

**AC:** Oh, it was after your PhD?

**PP:** Yeah. Master's degree is another shock. I had... Denver never had an earthquake in 50 years. And, suddenly, Denver had an earthquake. And then, that was a subject, topic I wrote my Master's degree. And then the TV station wanted me to answer what it is, this, uh- and then uh the school got the uh about the 300- 300,000, - uh the money.

**AC:** A grant.

**PP:** A grant, yeah. So, and the head of the department was so happy, he invited my family to have dinner.

**PP:** Not this, uh- I, I have a fellowship to begin with.

**PP:** But the grant was after the research job.

**PP:** Yeah, yeah. That's right.

**PP:** Yeah, yeah.

**PP:** Well, I finished my- oh. The time I want to go to Rice and uh, Mobil said, "Oh, if you, if you don't come back, we don't know if you will still have a job." I said, "I don't care." So, so after that, they want me right away. [AC Laughs] Yeah.

**WP:** And they moved to Dallas. Dallas

**PP:** So finally I have all the contributions, so that's the reason I was promoted. Promoted to [inaudible] manager. Nobody, not many Chinese can be, can be manager.

**AC:** So when you first entered Mobil Oil after your PhD, do you remember the title of your position?

**PP:** Oh, just Geophysicist.

**AC:** I see. And then after how many years were you promoted to become manager?

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**PP:** I think, uh, it was let me see, I went back '69... and then...

**WP:** You were in Dallas, his first job out of Rice was in Dallas.

**AC:** Dallas.

**PP:** Yeah. So, plus...

**AC:** Maybe a few years after, maybe four or five- two, three years after you entered Mobil Oil, you were promoted to manager, or?

**PP:** Uh yeah, I think it's four or five years. I stayed in that job for four years.

**WP:** He moved back to Houston in 1975. And, and you were here in Houston for two years, and then back to Dallas. So I think that was when, that was when they found your contribution and then they moved you back to Dallas as manager. So that was probably, what, '77, or seventy..

**AC:** I think here it says you obtained your PhD in 1969. Right?

**PP:** Yeah, 1969.

**AC:** And then you went to, went back to Mobil Oil. And then you - and then 1982, you became the manager.

**PP:** Yeah.

**AC:** 1982. Okay, okay. So, what - as you mentioned, there were very few Chinese, or Asians in the oil company like this. What was the working environment like, did you encounter discrimination?

**PP:** [Laughs] Yeah, one of my bosses said "Huh? Huh?" Yeah. I think, uh, without the PhD, without the contribution, probably, I wouldn't have gotten that job. Because, before then, Black, Hispanic, Jews, big oil companies won't hire. And the promotion's not, not... That is very lucky.

**AC:** Lucky... But, so, every day when you went to work, did you even think about how difficult it is to be working in a white environment?

**PP:** Well, I think, uh, I have some mentors. They know that, I know a Jewish guy, oh, it's the kind of the stinging, or uh kind of sarcastically this or that. And then another boss just said, "This guy, watch this guy." Because, because he said- he didn't know who's my mentor. So, I, I encountered this environment no problem. But, uh-

**AC:** And who were, how did you find the mentors, or they found you, right? Did you even know you had a mentor, or?

**PP:** Well, many ways that I think uh they kind of like me. [laughs] I was a very nice, uh, never argue with them.

**AC:** So, did you- when you entered Mobil Oil, did you know your mentors?

**PP:** No.

**AC:** No.

**PP:** Well, there was one. The one who hired me in the- in Louisiana on the party, on the seismic party, to begin with. And the, I don't know, certainly all of them not all like me. [Laughs]

**AC:** So, based on your method written in your dissertation, Mobil Oil was able to um extricate more oil than other companies. Did they give you a royalty or did you...

**PP:** No, no.

**AC:** Because your-

**PP:** Yeah, I tried to apply the patent, but it was turned down, because it's public- published.

**AC:** Oh, because your dissertation was published.

**PP:** Yeah.

**AC:** And at that point-

**PP:** But it's all open to the public. That's, the library, whoever can borrow the dissertation.

**AC:** And what was the decision to publish the dissertation. Was that just an automatic process?

**PP:** No, I - I had to write the uh short, short uh dissertation, not the whole book. So, the uh to publish, it, yeah.

**AC:** And who asked you to publish, Mobil Oil, or Rice?

**PP:** No, just by myself, and then the professor.

**AC:** Okay. And so you publish in the professional journal. Or where did you publish?

**PP:** Yes, yes.

**AC:** Okay, okay. And was that a good decision, did you regret publishing it, otherwise you could have applied for a patent and maybe obtain some royalty?

**PP:** I don't know, yeah. [Laughs] You get billions, and then.. [AC: [Laughs]]

**WP:** When you work for a large oil company, you don't get royalties. It's, it's-

**AC:** Oh, okay, it's their property, intellectual property.

**WP:** Right. When you work for independent companies, independent oil companies, whenever they drill a well, you get, what they call, some, some order. My husband gets them-division order. And that says you own a part of the, um, the well, or at least you get royalties off of the production.

**AC:** I see.

**WP:** But, Exxon Mobil, Shell, Chevron they never gave royalties, yeah. Just promotions.

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**AC:** Promotions, right.

**PP:** I, [coughs] I have a fellowship at Rice, so I said, "I have to teach at least a year or two uh to return the favor." So I said, "I have the, this 1976, I have..." [Shows document] I have this copy- I have my-

**AC:** Oh, wow you were teaching at Rice.

**PP:** Yeah.

**AC:** Oh wonderful.

**PP:** At that time she was there.

**AC:** You were at Rice?

**WP:** Mm-hm.

**AC:** Oh my goodness, that's great.

**PP:** Oh, yeah, she was there.

**AC:** Yeah, we would love to have any- if you have to Xerox some of this stuff for our archive, that would be great.

**WP:** Sure.

**AC:** So then, when did you move to Houston from Dallas?

**PP:** That was 16 years ago.

**PP:** Already-

**PP:** Retired.

**PP:** Uh, that was in, let me see. Uh, does it have a- [looks at document]

**PP:** I retired in '86. I was 80, 84 then.

**WP:** No, 64.

**AC:** 64, yeah. So you retired from Dallas, your job?

**PP:** Yeah.

**PP:** My wife who stayed working for Mobil Oil.

**PP:** So, after she retired, then we moved here.

**PP:** 2000. We moved here in 2000.

**PP:** Yes. Yeah. The weather's, uh, alright, fine. We like it.

**AC:** Do you keep up with your colleagues from the past? Do you see them, or communicate with them?

**PP:** Not too many now. Some of them just go away. [Laughs]

**AC:** And then, um, I suppose- so when you came to the United States, was your mother uh - did she, had she passed away?

**PP:** Oh, yeah.

**PP:** No, I was here already.

**PP:** '88 or,

**PP:** I don't know how many years-

**WP:** '79, I was going to go see her in, I think it was February and she passed away at the end of, oh, no I think it was '78 when she passed away.

**AC:** And what about relatives on mainland. Do you still have relatives in China?

**PP:** No, the distant relatives.

**PP:** Nephews already, were.

**AC:** How many times did you go back to China after-

**PP:** Oh used to go back about many times. Not anymore. I think I've been back almost, I don't know, a dozen times. But not anymore. The travel, it's very - very tiresome.

**AC:** But, you, I mean- looking back over your career, you had a very successful career.

**PP:** Thank you.

**AC:** Did you ever, uh, go to Taiwan or China to lecture and give talks?

**PP:** Yeah, I used to go but, not anymore. Not much stamina. [Laughs]

**AC:** And when you went to China, did you lecture in China, or did you lecture in Taiwan?

**PP:** Uh, I think of course China is better, because uh now the atmosphere in Taiwan is terrible.

**AC:** Oh.

**PP:** When my wife and I went back to Taiwan once, I don't remember, 10 years ago, uh, somebody just one kind of cheat the taxi driver - taxi driver just kind of a, "You are not a Taiwanese, so..." Just kind of a, I don't know. Didn't, uh, didn't uh respect us.

**AC:** But you find China is slightly better in that regard.

**PP:** Yeah, much better.

**AC:** Okay. Um, so, do you have any religion, do you join churches, or um?

**PP:** No, we don't have any religion. I think that's probably because my mother's the Buddhist. And, uh, after I learned that Sun Yat-sen does not believe any. [laughs] So, we just follow him. So, I said, as long as you have a nice heart, and uh you believe that everything's nice, religion is the same as uh as - but I should believe. Yeah, so. Of course, every religion is very nice, otherwise, it won't last that long. I, so I won't criticize anything. [laughs] Just, yeah. That's my philosophy.

**AC:** So, I see you have beautiful uh calligraphy, and then you have composed poems on your own. Is that a hobby? Is this what you do in your free time?

**PP:** Yeah.

**AC:** Oh how - do you like to write, and do you like to write poetry, or essays?

**PP:** Uh I, I wish I could. Not anymore, because uh, uh it's a little bit different to move, I notice my calligraphy's not as good as it used to be. Yeah. And, I, like, well I don't know.

**WP:** But you were also a good artist. You said there was one point where, between jobs, when you would, uh, sketch some drawings and you were selling those in China between, between the time when, after you were an interpreter and the war was over, you were working-

**PP:** Oh, oh yeah.

**WP:** -for somebody.

**PP:** Yeah, that was in the factory, uh building - they're building the piston of the car. And then they - they tried to, the boss tried to demonstrate how this piston's rings built, was built. And uh, I just had this big, big kind of a cartoon, like, it's a cartoon. How- worker doing the li- the job and file everything. I just did a painting for them.

**AC:** Wow.

**PP:** And the boss was very happy. Not-

**WP:** Didn't you sell some paintings too, at one point? Didn't you sell some of your drawings? [In Chinese: ni mai le jige tu? Tamen shi bu shi...?]

**PP:** Mei you mai [Did not sell].

**WP:** Mei you mai [Did not sell]. Oh, okay.

**PP:** These, I draw a cartoon-

**AC:** Yeah.

**PP:** -this is better than that one.

**AC:** Oh, yes it's a poem, it's the same poem, right?

**PP:** This is my poem.

**AC:** Uh-huh.

**PP:** My, my cartoon.

**AC:** And you were visiting Sydney Opera House. That's wonderful! And when was this published? This is-

**PP:** This is just, alumni-

**AC:** Alumni? Zheda. So your relationship with Zhejiang *daxue* is a lifetime relationship, right?

**PP:** Yeah.

**AC:** Even after, during the war, even though the school moved, but you were always uh with the school, and after you graduated, you still um kept in touch with the alumni association.

**PP:** In [coughs] northern America, especially United States, we - we keep the alumni with the correspondence.

**AC:** Uh-huh.

**PP:** Just tell people what-



**WP:** They also have reunions.

**PP:** Every year.

**WP:** And they used to go to the reunions, every once in a while, I mean, not all of them obviously. There was one in Hershey, Pennsylvania that we went to. They were sending me to Cornell, and dropping me off. And on the way, they went to - we all went to Hershey Pennsylvania. For the Zheda reunion.

**PP:** So they just uh, some people wrote - wrote these stories. This is what I - I draw, the-

**AC:** Oh, the Japanese War, right? Wow. *Lianbei*...

**PP:** Burma, it's jungle.

**AC:** Oh, I see.

**PP:** This, one of them [inaudible] were alumni.

**AC:** Really? Oh, he was a Zheda student?

**PP:** They - they I think that, in Burma, in Burma one of the alumni, they - they killed a lot of Japanese and got their seal. And they had that seal, had a seal printed on the letter send it back to the, to the Zhejiang *daxue*. So that's really, I kind of-

**AC:** You drew - you drew based on what you think happened. Right? Wow.

**PP:** [inaudible]

**AC:** So you mentioned that you wished the war was not over so soon because you wanted to fight the Japanese.

**PP:** That's right.

**AC:** Were you able to- were, did you have, did you go to the front to fight- or you were preparing to go? You never saw war activities, right?

**PP:** I wish I could, but uh but uh that's not possible, because everybody's just dispersed. Just dispersed, everybody's happy.

**AC:** Mm.

**PP:** Also getting some- many victory bonus. [sighs]

**AC:** How do you think of Japanese people today? After seeing them kill people in China, how do you think of them, or how do you feel about the whole situation.

**PP:** I think, in my story, I talk about when we left Quzhou to Shanghai. There was a -there was a boat of Japanese came. They did a lot of uh bad things. And one of the sergeants said that those are robbers. So, there are some good Japanese. Yeah. But, most of them just followed the emperor's orders. I think that most of Japanese are okay, but the rightist is terrible. I still don't believe, don't trust them. I still do not

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trust them. Once, they are going to- because, atomic bomb too, if they could. So, I don't trust them, Japanese. Like the tiger, tiger or lion, they look very nice, but once you let them eat - eat meat, they will, they will do everything.

**AC:** Have you ever visited Japan?

**PP:** Yes.

**AC:** You have.

**PP:** Yeah. Just, went through- went through in the air- airport. In the Tokyo, when- not a - not a visit as a tourist, not...

**AC:** You mentioned that some of your colleagues went to Taiwan and went back to China.

**PP:** Yeah.

**AC:** And regretted that.

**PP:** Mm-hmm.

**AC:** Uh was there a conscious decision on your part not to go back, or is it because of your job, you stayed in Taiwan, and you did not want to go back to mainland China during those years?

**PP:** You see, my - my wife's classmate, her father supposed to, already went to Taiwan. And then, went back to mainland China. So, many of them did. It's- they all regret. They all regret that they went back. So, it's- I don't know what made them to go back. Uh.

**AC:** So you did- you never wanted to go back. Once you got to Taiwan, you decided not to go back?

**PP:** Oh, no. I - I. Definitely I won't. Even now I wouldn't want to go back. It's a, not that system. It's a system we can't live in. I still feel that this is so freedom, it's just different, different world.

**AC:** So, when you were- when war was over and you went back to Shanghai, and the Communists were coming down from the north. Did you already know that they were people you cannot trust? Because there are a lot of Chinese intellectuals who trusted Mao Zedong more than they trusted Chiang Kai-shek. Um did you already know something about the Communists, that you did not trust them, that you'd rather go to Chiang Kai-shek's side? Or how did you decide?

**PP:** Well, frankly, I didn't even know. [Laughs] I just followed my luck- go where I can go. I couldn't even go back, I, I- if I went back, I didn't have anything.

**AC:** Oh, you didn't have a job if you went back.

**PP:** No job, and no nothing. But go back, went back to Taiwan, either the - the bright side, the- so, there's no choice. If I had a choice to just like many people, they said, "Oh, I'd go back." That's a very, very bad choice. You know, that time there's a uh Mama's high school, high school friends, or, she said- she went to Taiwan, and then went back to *dalü* [mailand].

**WP:** China.

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**PP:** It's a bad choice.

**AC:** Wow.

**PP:** Many, my brother-in-law also, he, they're supposed to hire him when we went to Germany, they hired him as the head of the civil engineering department, but he refused. So, so then that sister died because my brother-in-law was jailed. So, my, my that sister died. It's just a terrible story. Because he was jailed, and then she suddenly had a stroke.

**AC:** Wow. So, in looking back, you had such a colorful life. And incredible with going through the history, the very difficult history of China.

**PP:** Yeah, yeah.

**AC:** Can you maybe tell us maybe one story when you're- a happy story, like something in your life that happened that you're very happy about?

**PP:** Yeah, it is a happy story. I don't regret. [Laughs] Now it's uh just try to be happy, no other choice.

**AC:** Um, what would you consider your greatest accomplishment in your life?

**PP:** My...I think that – I think I, I...I think one thing is that I contributed to the world, and something like uh this finding oil. Yeah. Other things is just uh, support my lucky life. Yeah. I can't - I just can't believe how come uh everything's helping me. Yeah, this is, this is just - can't believe many things. Yeah.  
[Laughs]

**AC:** That's right. Well, thank you! I think we have a very comprehensive uh interview of you. We could continue if you think of other stories you would like to tell me, let me know- we can conduct a second interview, but I think I have a lot of information already. Uh thank you so much for allowing us to talk to you.

**PP:** You're welcome. Thank you too, thank you.

**AC:** And to share your story. It's a remarkable story! So thank you very much

**PP:** Thank you.

**WP:** Uh I think uh I don't know if uh if my dad would feel like going into it - but um he-

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