

## Interview with J. Rosenthal – Time Code taken from I Tunes player

J. does not always speak clearly – inaudible portions or unclear spelling highlighted in yellow

## Pre-Interview chat

00;00;13 -

J. Rosenthal: I had an actual document, an original document of the head tax, from one of my step-fathers <I see> and I had another document, I didn't know what it was, but something I'm sure you are familiar with I would suspect, one a Chinese person wanted to go back to the mainland, back to China, and leave Canada, the had to have a certificate which gave them a two year window. <That's right>

00;00;40 -

J. Rosenthal: I had one of those as well. <Oh really?> So the end result, and also I had in my possession several, two, three, five dollar sheets of it of bonds that they bought for Sun Guy? In support. I followed all this stuff of my mother, when she passed. And so I shared this all with Arlene and she was just absolutely thrilled and had mentioned that she had shown one in her ? book of course. I presume you have read that book. <Yes>

00;01;23 -

J. Rosenthal: And so I said "Well hey, is this any interest, any value in your circle?" She said "J. this would go to the Chinese archives that would go to the net that would be shared with anybody and everybody." I says "Fine". <Oh really> I gave them to her. <That's great> Superhero. So she's got them all and in talking to her last week, I saw her last Wednesday night, because she lectured with Leo on Chinese food, and I was interested in that.

00;02;00 -

J. Rosenthal: I mentioned to her, she wanted to know if we had connected. I said yes she's coming to me today, so she was happy about that. She had just seen you over in Vancouver. And I said fine, I will reveal to you that those documents I gave her, if she wants to see them, reveal them, that is between you two. And she has no problem with that. <Yeah that would be great>

Q: That is one of my objectives too is to put, I mean I think we are all now trying to put this material online so everybody can see it. That is the whole point.

00;02;37 -

J. Rosenthal: Well they must, one of the side things that is kind of interesting, I talk this up, this book up, I mean I've already bought several books off her, and my investment advisor, because I don't have a pension, other than what the government gives me, so I have a portfolio and I have **Ian ?**, really good, I would recommend him to anybody. So I gave him a copy, and Arlene wrote a little note in there to him.

00;03;07 -

J. Rosenthal: I have another, my optometrist is also Chinese and Gord, he's third generation, I don't know if you know him. <Gord Chong> No, Gord Ng. <No> Okay I'll give you his card. It will probably be useful to you. He is third generation.

J. Rosenthal: And so the long and the short of it is that, so I saw, I got to have a, that's my problem, which are not **?** yet, and saw Gord and showed him a book and he got right into it,

and of course he recognized people in there; pictures or whatever. And so I got him a copy. It was a lot of fun.

Interview begins (J. signs consent form)

Q: I am trying to de-stigmatize interracial relationships.

00;11;10 -

J. Rosenthal: One of the things I've passed on to a number of people, in terms of history, have you read that book, and knowing some of it myself, yet growing through it and not knowing what was going on to a great extent, A) number one, did my mother lose her citizenship when she married my stepfather? And she married him to keep me, because ? was able to take me. So she says "Chen come on, we're getting married." Grabbed him and got married.

00;11;35 -

J. Rosenthal: And therefore she could keep me. The other thing that stuns me, did she lose her citizenship on that? I mean that's just absolutely amazing. Notwithstanding the bachelor era, and everything that went on in that direction, like, holy moly! And there was other ? I'm not thinking what it is but it will come up as we discuss and that is smart, to have the recording that you can re-listen and you don't have to make notes.

00;12;05 -

J. Rosenthal: So that is fine by me. I just read this thing quickly, yeah what I was about to say, part of my ulterior motive, if nothing else, is a respect to the memory of my brother Doug. And Arlene had his name in the book which, she didn't say nothing about that until I read it, holy moly!

00;12;30 -

J. Rosenthal: And what was interesting to me in subsequent pages, I remember Doug saying he went to Banff for this conference, went here and went there, and there it is in this book, all of that stuff. And I'm like "Wow". And then something else so that that's important to me in many ways.

00;13;00 -

J. Rosenthal: Well one of the things that is part of Doug's legacy and I'm still involved with it, is that him with another ?, they were at Clifton House for boys, and Doug became a social worker. He originally was in printing. It wasn't his bag and decided to become a social worker. And he wrote a letter which I have a copy of and I gave a copy to Arlene, and I have some stuff here that you will want to photostat. You are welcome to it.

00;13;34 -

J. Rosenthal: But it started, he was instrumental in creating, he is recognized as the cofounder of Kennedy House Youth Services. Kennedy House. And it's for kids in crisis, well boys and girls, 14 to 18, and you get a complete range of the troubles that they've got. Some of, one of our kids, we just had or 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary last year and I happen to be the chairperson of that.

00;14;10 -

J. Rosenthal: So Doug got recognized as the cofounder and we've got a picture of him up, that sort of thing. We had many, many functions in the course of that year, where the kids took him out for dinner, took him to a ballgame, of course every year we have a staff appreciation, we see awards

for those, ? length of time. We just did it this year last week, as it happened, one of our staff, 25 years.

00;14;43 -

J. Rosenthal: Next year we have another one for 25 years. We have several, several ten years. Doug helped create that. And so part of this here for me is some memory for him. And the boss has come home now. (Woman enters room)

00;16;16 – 00;16;48

J. Rosenthal: I grew up at 607 Young Street, which is just above Wellesley, off Young. I remember when Arlene was doing her presentation, shown in the laundry, because it was a laundry, the iron is on the stove, and I can remember such things as that, going way back. The food I ate up until about seven years old was strictly Chinese. Very rarely did I have regular Wasp, Canadian-style food.

Q: Who are your parents, biological and those who raised you?

00;16;54 -

J. Rosenthal: My mother, essentially raised me. <Her name?> Rose. Rosenthal, my last name. Like her name. <Do you know when she was born, and where?> She was born June 6, 1917, here in Toronto. <And her background is Jewish> Jewish. <Was she born in Canada?> Yes. <And her parents, did they come from Russia?>

00;17;24 -

J. Rosenthal: All I know is they came from the Russia-Polish border. I know that her grandfather, my great grandfather was a rabbi. That is all I know. Her, my grandfather, my

mother's father, I've not heard anything positive about him, which is unfortunate, but that is the reality.

Q: How old was your mother when she died?

00;17;55 -

J. Rosenthal: She dies, I'll be able to give you that information shortly.  
<Did you get to know her?> Oh yeah.

Q: What were the conditions of her childhood?

00;18;12 -

J. Rosenthal: She grew up on Walnut Street, one of four siblings.  
<Which street?> Walnut Street. One of four siblings; was probably the black sheep of the group. Quite rebellious. There are certain things there I suppose, some of it is conjecture on my side, but it's not hard to put it together.

00;18;43 -

J. Rosenthal: She, I am aware of her having five children. Okay? I have an older brother, if you, if we walked in this room together we wouldn't know each other. We've not seen each other since we were about three, four years of age. <What happened?> I have no idea. Then I have, he is the second one, that is Teddy. Then there is Gordon, who is the oldest brother, and he died about 15 years ago.

00;19;13 -

J. Rosenthal: Just after, no, before Doug died actually. So it would have been the late '80s. Doug died at the age of 51 and he is a year younger than me, and I am 73 this July, July 20. Doug, Barb, and I, us three, know each other; grew up together. Gord was farmed out and wound up growing up in Fort Erie with a lady called Kitty...Kitty.

00;19;49 -

J. Rosenthal: And <foster parent> more or less, yeah. And it's hard to say **how far the elevator went up**. He worked with horses. He worked the track, with a groomer, with the horses, and walked the horses, and that sort of thing, so he didn't have a whole lot of education. And that's all, and I don't know a whole lot about that. Yes, I interact with him occasionally. He did come and visit us **?** and that sort of thing.

00;20;20 -

J. Rosenthal: At one point, way back, I'm about 13, give or take a year, whatever, I come downstairs from where we grew up on Irwin Avenue, which was bought in 1949, because this was after the laundry was given up at 607 Young Street, and Irwin was across the street from 607, two blocks up from Wellesley.

00;21;06 -

J. Rosenthal: Anyway, the long and the short of it, got off track there... <You moved to Irwin street in 1949> I grew up, pretty much most of the time until about seven years of age, seven and a half years of age with Rose and Chen, okay, in the laundry. My sister and brother, Doug and Barb, were farmed out. Very little of us, wasn't too much of us that grew up together.

Q: Chen was not your biological father.

00;21;56 -

J. Rosenthal: Right. I have no idea who my biological father is. <In those days it's not something people really talked about> No definitely not. It was an issue back there. <Did you

even dare ask?> Well actually I had one experience where I come downstairs to the kitchen, my mother barks at me, she says “J., J.my, here is your father.” Oh, looking at this man.

00;22;23 -

J. Rosenthal: Nick, who is my father. Alright, he’s Italian. So we looked at each other; talked one or two sentences. And that is about it. That is the only memory I’ve got although at that time I had the belief was my father. I’m 50 years of age at this point, I’m in the Wellesley Hospital to have an angiogram on my heart, and my brother Gord was already in the hospital at that point with some heart problems.

00;22;55 -

J. Rosenthal: That is the one that lived in Fort Erie. Doug, at that time already had a serious heart attack. And in any event he was, part of Doug’s history, he had a very, very bad heart. He, the operation on him way back when he was in his 30s, mid 30s, was state-of-the-art, and they put a valve up to his heart, kept it going for 11 days, but finally they had to take it out.

00;23;53 -

J. Rosenthal: So the long and the short of this that I get a phone call from Doug, I’m in the hospital, and he says “Mom’s all upset, mom’s all upset. She doesn’t know I phoned because she really doesn’t know who your father is. And that, when I’m 50 years of age. And I do have that attitude. What can I say or do about it? Hey, that’s life.

00;24;22 -

J. Rosenthal: **Ria** and I have made a good life together. We're 53 years, plus, married. A lot of people didn't give us a year and we're still having a good time together. So many, that's part of my background to that. And so as I said, Chen was Doug's *brother*. That's the one my mother married originally. Chen Ng.

00;25;20 -

J. Rosenthal: Yeah Chen Ng is Doug's father. <He was born a year after you, so you knew Chen as your father> He is the only one I have, I would say, have an identity as my father.

Q: How long was he in your life for?

00;25;43 -

J. Rosenthal: He died in the early '50s. <Did your parents remain together?> Yeah. <He was partner number five> No he was the first official partner.

Q: Explain why she needed to marry him to keep her children.

00;26;13 -

J. Rosenthal: Well I don't know a whole lot about it quite honestly, I just know that as I understand it, as I understand it, she, Gord had already gone to Kitty, so Kitty was looking after Gord, and how that came about I really don't know. Then she had Ted and I gather the Children's Aid took Ted off her. That's the brother, if he walked in this room, he is a year or so older than me, we wouldn't know each other. I just haven' got a clue.

Q: Do you know if it was because she was poor, or did she have a drinking problem, or do you know the circumstances?

00;27;05 -

J. Rosenthal: Not really, not really. I think she was very promiscuous in a very wide scale, to what level, to what extent, conjecture.

00;28;14 -

J. Rosenthal: So yeah, there is a little bit of confusion there. But I think it's logical to think that my mother was very, very promiscuous to say the least. She was very comfortable in the darker side of life.

Q: What do you mean by the darker side?

00;28;37 -

J. Rosenthal: Prostitutes used to live in our house. I can tell you stories of things that, yeah, these are some of the confidential aspects of...I mean she grew up in the war. From what I understand, in terms of the Jewish side of her, they burned the candles because she didn't follow the law, for Jewish law.

00;29;05 -

J. Rosenthal: And that, but interestingly enough her sister remained friends with her. Now, whether or not there was a tougher time back during the war years I don't know.

00;29;24 -

Ria: Just going back to the history of the Jews in the ward, I don't know if you, you must be familiar with that, in Toronto. <Which war> Ward. I mean that's where the

poverty of the people who left Europe in the 1895 and then on it was tough times, and you name it, so Jews left and everybody left, and they tried to find a better life in Canada.

00;29;51 -

Ria: And that is where **bubba Yester** and Max came and lived in the ward, in squalor, and that's, you look at the pictures, and that's what it was. Some people survived, Rose didn't and it was her personality that went the other way and she was a tough woman, and maybe you had to be tough to be in there. But anyway her two brothers and the sister, they were fine. They were not like that. But she was and that's the way life is. So just, that's what the humble beginnings were for Bubba Yester and Max. And they were, and they lived with the Chinese, same area.

Q: Well, they were in that early time. They were neighbors. If you look at photographs of stores you've got Jews and Chinese right side by side.

00;30;43 -

Ria: And that is the way... <And Italians too> Yeah I guess.

00;30;47 -

J. Rosenthal: Because the Jewish and the Chinese probably were the ones most ostracized by society. <Yes and the Blacks, who were on the fringe of that neighborhood>

Q: I am interested in prostitution because you always look at the Chinese bachelors as if they were single, but there was a lot of white women, marrying, dating, and

prostitution. So that is the element I'm trying to better understand. One of the people I interviewed talked about how there was one particular alley where the Black women, the hookers, you would find them, in one, and from sex workers, we know that people come to kind of own, "This is my corner" and it becomes very segregated in that way, and the lines are drawn.

00;31;47 -

J. Rosenthal:

I heard stories of that as I grew up. "I kicked her off my corner."

Ria:

Talking about a corner, I have school friends, and we, years and years until everybody has retired and moved away, we would get together once a month and have lunch, dinner together someplace, and go to a theatre and a movie, so we decided to go to Carleton and Jervis, or where, this one particular corner, it was music and a lovely restaurant, and I think Oscar Peterson used to play there.

00;32;22 -

Ria:

So it was a lovely, nice, nice, that one. So we just, anyway we decided that we would meet over there so somebody said "Let's meet at the streetcar corner" instead of saying let's meet in the restaurant. So I got there I think earlier, nobody else was there, and I was standing there and this woman comes, starts screaming at me, and said "Get lost! This is my corner!" And I thought "Oh okay". So I went into the restaurant and later the others arrived, I said "Never, never tell me to wait in any corner, we will meet right inside." Yes that is quite true and that area was like that.

00;33;07 -

J. Rosenthal: I remember, there was in terms of what I grew up through, and actually Ria had a hint of but not much, thank goodness, in fact I made a point, as we got...

00;33;35 -

J. Rosenthal: There was Bocci and they had the nicknames, <the women> yeah, Horse Face Betty, Bocci, the Big Job, the names that come that I can quickly remember. I have a feeling, a suspicion, that Kitty **Culverhouse**, where my oldest brother grew up, came from that group. And then there was Kitty Fong who lived up in Kirkland Lake, who often came down to Toronto.

00;34;15 -

J. Rosenthal: And then interacted with my mother. <She was probably from Toronto> Oh yeah that is what I'm saying, also came from that group, therefore my mother had to have been part of that group. And that is something I don't say too often, not even to Ria. <Birds of a feather stick together>

00;34;39 -

J. Rosenthal: And there were people that lived in our house, I'll give you on story, I can give two or three, because this kind of all relates to it, since you say that you are interested in the part of the underworld life, as well. Yeah my mother was very, very comfortable with that aspect. Chen was quite sick and we had this doctor up on St. Clair Avenue, near Oakwood, that, or Christy, maybe it was Christy, but in any event, I was sent up there to get medication; Dr. Lind.

00;35;16 -

J. Rosenthal: Now Arlene didn't seem to know that particular name. She said it was another name. But I noticed Dr. Lind. And he was white but he knew how to speak Chinese. So he probably served over there whenever; maybe knew that doctor, the Chinese, the one out of...Bracebridge. <Oh Dr. Norman Bethune>

00;35;41 -

J. Rosenthal: Yeah he probably knew him for all I knew. Anyway, I'm sent up there to get medication. I'm coming home now, and I don't expect you to know Irwin Avenue or where that is, or Gloucester Street, well there's lights there at Gloucester and Young. On this side of Gloucester is Irwin Avenue.

00;36;06 -

J. Rosenthal: The next street over is Inkerman, then there is Bay Street. So I walk around Inkerman onto Irwin Avenue, because we lived in number eight, and the house is surrounded by cops. Police cars, I mean, it is thick. <How old were you then?> Thirteen. About thirteen. Roughly. So I walk to my house because I've got this medication for my father, and I look in the police car and there is this guy handcuffed.

00;36;40 -

J. Rosenthal: One of our tenants, Red Dunlop. Well Red Dunlop doesn't mean anything to you. His father was a referee for the wrestlers and he is handcuffed. And I want to walk up the street, the police stop me, "Who do you think you are, were do you think you are going?" "Hey I live here." Turns out, with tat particular man that was handcuffed,

this guy Dunlop, they were looking for, he was an armed robber, and his gig was, if you remember way back, I'm not sure what your age is but I suspect around 40, so you may not remember, used to have kiosks for the movie houses out in front of the theatre.

00;37;27 -

J. Rosenthal:

Remember the Uptown used to have one, Shays had one. That is where they sold the tickets. Yeah, he'd go with a gun and steal. Okay? So this policeman, now, is walking on College Street going to the Carleton Odeon Theatre with his girlfriend, he is off-duty. He sees this wanted suspect and follows him to my mother's house. They found guns, ammunition, in the ? of his room. That is just one story. Another story I can give you... <So he was a roomer there?> Yeah.

Q:

Your mom rented out rooms.

00;38;49 -

J. Rosenthal:

She had a boarding house, okay, and a lot of her tenants were the type who had a hard time getting ? work. Horse Face Betty or whatever. <Mostly women or men?> A combination. And what year, whatever.

Q:

Did the women do business in the house?

00;39;12 -

J. Rosenthal:

No. <No men coming in and out for sex> A good example of that...there was this one very, very beautiful young lady, 18, about 18 years, obviously a street worker, and I was about, I didn't know Ria at the time, I was about 15 I'd say, roughly, and she took a liking to me, and said to

my mother, not realizing that I was her son, of her intent, okay? And my mother “You touch him and I’ll break your neck, that is my son.”

00;39;49 -

J. Rosenthal:

She protected us. That was the one thing I can’t emphasize enough, is that as we grew up, yes there was these elements in our life but we were never allowed to partake in their actions. Whatever. And if she didn’t like some of the friends that we had she put her foot down. And that was the end of that. As Ria said a few moments ago, a strong woman, extremely. You didn’t mess around with her.

Q:

I would imagine that the roomers knew they had to behave a particular way.

00;40;27 -

J. Rosenthal:

There was rules. There was rules. <Not a lot of partying> Not really. No, not a whole lot. In the latter years, a little bit later on, yes, the Prince Edward Island boys wound up living with us and they drank a heck of a lot. They were serious, serious drinkers. In fact all the, about 30 young guys came up from PEI.

Q:

This was in the ‘40s or ‘50s?

00;41;03 -

J. Rosenthal:

This would have been the ‘50s. They would come up and they worked the docks. And they made tremendous money. They made \$400, \$500, \$600 a week. Overtime. Friday night they’d come home, they’d hit the bars. Come Monday morning, “Rosy, do you have money?” For TTC

fare. She had to lend them money so they could go to work.

00;41;40 -

J. Rosenthal: It was spent. But Friday night she got paid. No if, ands, or butts. Right? So anyway, of about 30 of those guys I'd say a good 60% of them, certainly 50%, by the time they were 30, the alcohol ? <Wow> I love alcohol. There is lots of it behind you. You rarely see me get drunk.

00;42;46 -

J. Rosenthal: We've learned, I'm not that close, by and large, to the Jewish side of my family. There are one or two cousins, yes, periodically we get together. I follow no religion whatever. I have no problem with your religion, go ahead with joy, just don't lay it onto me. Okay?

00;43;09 -

J. Rosenthal: I have a bit of a problem with some of the hardliners who insist that their religion is the only way to be. I don't buy that and I refuse for someone to try to lay that onto me.

Q: Did you mother or father have any ritualistic practices?

00;43;50 -

J. Rosenthal: As I grew up and particularly like, when I was boarded out in Hamilton for 17 months with my brother and sister, with the Mahar family, and I was in that town from about seven and a half to nine years of age.

Q: What happened there?

00;44;10 -

J. Rosenthal: I think he lost the laundry, the location. We had to be put somewhere; no place to live. So and she knew that family

because my sister and brother had been there previously, up in Penatang. And I was down there in Hamilton and that is not a happy time in my life for a whole lot of reasons. Anyway, it's behind me. Then we came to Toronto in 1949, 1950. That's when ?

Q: Did you stepfather go back into the laundry business?

00;44;57 -

J. Rosenthal: Well they bought Irwin Avenue, that location with the intent of reopening the laundry. He couldn't get the bylaw. <It was a matter of the city of Toronto refusing the application>

Q: So then what did he do?

00;45;14 -

J. Rosenthal: He worked for other laundries until he had his heart attack and then he didn't long after that. <Working in a laundry must be hard> Well, that was their work. <But hard to support a family> I guess that is one reason why she boarded in the house. It's hard to answer that, that sector.

00;45;50 -

J. Rosenthal: We didn't go, if we needed something, we got it. There was no extravagance, no question about that but we didn't go without. <Was Chen home much?> He worked in two laundries that I recall. One on Spadina Avenue, just south of College, on the east side, which is really a small part of Chinatown now, and the other one, where we are now, Davisville, over to Young Street, a half a block up on the west side of Young.

00;46;42 -

J. Rosenthal: And the ? there, I laugh, I remember that place, and I mean, I forget what it is now, but I remember that from working there. My other stepfather, Lew Doe, he was said to be my sister's father, and we assume that. We don't know any different. He was a chef.

Q: So your mother married him after Chen died?

00;47;16 -

J. Rosenthal: After Chen died she married Lew Doe. <When did Chen die?> <Ria: Chen died in '54, the same year as my father> <Ria: Lew Doe, Chinese put, yeah so Doe was his first name and Lew was the last name>

Q: So he comes in to your life.

00;47;50 -

J. Rosenthal: He's always been there. <Small community> I think part of it, I really don't, I remember my mother saying, Chen said something along the lines, "Make sure you marry Lew Doe after". So what that translates into, then again, we're looking at, as you're investigating, or studying, the bachelor era, there had to be a certain amount of flexibility.

00;48;31 -

J. Rosenthal: Acceptance. So whatever, whatever. I don't know. I was too young to understand and know a lot of that sort of stuff, yet I was a rascal in my own way. I know that. But by the same token as I said, she was very strong, and if, we did not get over involved in areas where she did not want us to be.

00;49;00 -

J. Rosenthal: And I am forever thankful for that. I know that, and I've said this to my sister, and her six kids that she's got, over the years I've been very, very clear, when you look at, in spite of the difficulties that she's had with her life, and she ended up getting pregnant at 15 by one of the Prince Edward Island boys, and marrying him, and by the time she was 23, six kids and not a happy lady in many ways in today's life.

00;49;39 -

Ria: No, well, it's no surprise.

00;49;45 -

J. Rosenthal: Anyway the long and the short of it, all her kids are doing well. Nobody spent time in jail. Nobody's had those kind of problems. And I attribute a lot of that to my mother. <Her guidance and her structure> Right.

Q: Yet you say she herself was quite wild.

00;50;10 -

J. Rosenthal: I'll give you another story. Again, it's about that same time period of the Dunlop years, she was bootlegging, okay, and in the living room, I pointed out to you, was the gay sector, which I was never ever allowed to go in there, understandably. Finally after some period of activity, not that long, truthfully, we get busted. In pour the police, and ? being taken from the paddy wagon.

00;50;55 -

J. Rosenthal: My mother comes to me downstairs before the cops get her, and all the cash which she's got she stuffs in my back pocket. Okay? And now I'm being questioned. And I should have known then I'd grow to be a salesman, ha ha. Anyway I'm playing dumb and don't know, and nice to the detective, "I wish you'd believe me", I remember saying that.

00;51;29 -

J. Rosenthal: Nothing happened. I don't think my mother could get charged because they couldn't find the money to prove that. It was in my back pocket. <So they did take her away> Oh yeah.

Q: That must have been terrifying as a child.

00;51;49 -

J. Rosenthal: I don't recall that feeling. <Ria: I think because J. and the kids were, other than Barbara maybe, you were free to be outside and you were not looked at, held by the hand, and go to school, and this, the life was totally different. So no, J. was just, they would just carry on. That was part of life. Yeah, daily life, daily life. Like, not normal but daily living>

00;52;18 -

J. Rosenthal: I am given to understand that when Dunlop was living in the house his buddies were, some of the guys he hung with the ? and I believe there was one time they were all outside in the car, ? come out.

Q: They weren't part of the gay group.

00;52;43 -

J. Rosenthal: Oh hell no. Heck no. <But gay men hung out in your mom's house> Well, I guess from the point of view, only when she was bootlegging. I mean, she didn't care about that. I mean, she told us some stories that I'm just not going to pass on because they are super gross and she says "No J., you're not going in there. You're not going to see that stuff."

Q: Were they having sex?

00;53;13 -

J. Rosenthal: Oh I think they were enjoying certain sexual whatever, not, not the full activity, but whatever. <Ria: They were probably, if I may say, probably getting together, because in those days, up until now gays were not accepted, and maybe that was the only place that they could hang out and not be...>

Q: Well there were, this is the '50s, there were, there actually was a bar right near King Edward Hotel called Letros and then there were a couple, which is a kind of high class piano bar, and then there were a couple other more sketchy bars that gay men hung out at. But it's interesting to me, because I also, one of my interests is the Continental Hotel, and that is right on the corner of Elizabeth and Dundas, and it was a hangout for hookers and lesbians. So, in the '50s. And that, actually that is how I came to this project, because I was studying that place and interviewing people and they were talking

about how when the bar closed they would go to the Chinese restaurants. <Describe exactly where that location is>

00:54:26 -

Q: Well actually I have, I have, these are really interesting...let me see which map it's on. Okay. So if you look at this map, that's Dundas there and that's Elizabeth there, and if you look here it says Continental Hotel. And I think Doc Yip was right there... <Doc Yip> ...was right across the street.

00:55:08 -

J. Rosenthal: I'm thinking, why I'm asking, is here is the restaurant, right about here. <Sai Woo> No this was downstairs where you walked in, it was a very casual, not a, nothing like Sai Woo, nothing like Nan King, okay, it was down to earth. Okay? No, it was five, or six, or seven stores south of Dundas Street. And I mean, that was the hangout.

Q: That was the hangout for the hookers.

00:55:48 -

J. Rosenthal: I know that my mother took me there a whole lot of times.

00:56:00 -

J. Rosenthal: I remember going in there many, many times. <By the Greyhound bus station?> No the Greyhound bus station...yeah but the greyhound thing was north of Dundas. One block north. <Ria: Has it always been there from the '50s?> <On this side> So we're talking Elizabeth

Street and the Li Chi Gardens was two or three doors south of Dundas, upstairs, right? <Yes>

00;56;37 -

J. Rosenthal: I'm saying go further south, another three or four doors, or five doors, because you had the Chinese grocery store, just under Li Chi gardens. They were very close to Li Chi Gardens. You and I used to go nearby. Yeah, towards City Hall. Arlene remembered. She knew the name of that store.

00;57;02 -

J. Rosenthal: And further down was the restaurant and we went there a lot. <What was it like?> Well, a little, probably from the corner of my condo here to this wall, in depth, and probably from this wall to that wall in width, and kind of a bar along here, and booths, sit down booths on that side. <A typical diner>

00;57;36 -

J. Rosenthal: Of that day, yeah. <vinyl seats> Yeah, they were, a wall here, and seat, table, seat, a wall, and maybe five or six of that nature on the one side. And I remember going in there lots and lots of times and that is where you'd see them hang out. At least that was my mother's hangout with whoever her friends were of the day.

Q: Describe the women.

00;58;09 -

J. Rosenthal: I was pretty young. <What comes to mind> Well, I was kind of told to shut up and stay in the corner. <Ria: I remember when I was in my early 20s> Yeah but not this

situation. <Ria: yeah but like Kitty and those people>  
Yeah that's a different, yeah I know what you're saying.

00;58;38 -

J. Rosenthal: I don't have a whole, they were just part of the life of that era, of that time frame, and mom would go in there and have a coffee or whatever with them, and shoot the bull, okay I was going to say another word, but, it would be very, very comfortable, people she knew, and I sat there quiet. I wasn't allowed. I remember going to another location on that same side, closer to the Li Chi upstairs, and they had a pool room up there.

00;59;11 -

J. Rosenthal: I wanted to play pool. I was not allowed to because if I scratched or damaged the felt that was a very expensive deal. And I remember that. But in terms of the people themselves, no I don't have any specific recall on names or even with the people themselves. But again, I was seven years old, or eight years old, six years old, whatever I was at that time.

Q: Do you remember seeing, some of the women in the lesbian crowd were very butchy, very masculine-looking, do you remember seeing those women?

00;59;49 -

J. Rosenthal: No, no. I don't think I was too familiar with that, too much of that, quite frankly. The women I remember were the ones that lived in our house. Again, Betty, she was a little bit on the heavy side, short, I guess she wasn't the prettiest, hence they called her Horse-Face, but she was

very good-looking. <Ria: She had been married with her Chinese person, she had been married before>

01;00;15 -

J. Rosenthal: Okay, you remember her. <Ria: Yeah I remember her. So she was not a lesbian. None of those close friends of your mother's, Kitty Fung and Betty, and whoever, they were not> No my mother was very much against that. The one that did become a lesbian on the end was the, she lives close to Gerrard Street and she had a girl, a daughter, that they hoped would connect with Doug, my brother, but it never happened. <What was her name?>

01;00;54 -

J. Rosenthal: I'm trying to remember her name. Thin lady, on the thin side. She became lesbian. And I know my mother was not happy about that. <A friend of your mom's?> Yeah. The ones that Ria reflected on, this Kitty Fung, she was much older, her good friend was Vicky Duff. <Who is that?>

01;01;29 -

J. Rosenthal: You're not familiar with the Leafs. <No> Duff was one of the top hockey players when they won the Stanley Cup. And I remember going with Kitty Fung down to Jarvis street to a hotel where Kitty, or Vicky Duff was staying, as he was visiting Toronto, to play against, I don't know if he was a Leaf at that time; couldn't have been. And going in there and meeting Vicky Duff with Kitty and then whatever.

Q: Is Kitty a sex trade worker?

01;02;04 -

J. Rosenthal: I think she was at one time. Way back, we're talking, my mother is in her 50s or 60s at this point, I mean, she died just a few days of her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday <wow> and so she died, mom died, what, in '92? '96, no... <Ria: She was born 1917 and my mother was born in 1915> So it was '96, '97 when my mother died.

01;02;42 -

J. Rosenthal: Yeah I was still working and I remember because Erikson sent flowers for me. But in any event, so the age is what I'm trying to establish there. These were older people, Kitty Fung, Kitty Coulterhouse. So, if they were sex trade workers when they were in their 20s that's when they were friends with my mother or whatever. Okay?

01;03;13 -

J. Rosenthal: I remember one comment that gave me a strong clue in terms of my mother's activity and I don't know if anyone has ever heard me say this, it is stuff for her own ears, there was a time way back when the massage parlors had come out strong, and the sex trade workers were taking advantage of that and men go in there and get a massage, but a little other activity, blowjob in particular, and **my mother** made some comment "What a gig!"

01;03;45 -

J. Rosenthal: There was like a jealousy in her tone, like "What an opportunity to make some money. <Right> That is what I read into it and I don't think I'm wrong. Again, something I had started to say two or three times, when Ria and I got

married and she lived a year, mother gave us a year's free room and board, and it was nice. <Good start>

01;04;27 -

J. Rosenthal:

As my daughter grew up, in her teens I kept them away from that house. Yes we'd visit at Christmas, yes we'd visit occasionally, but I didn't allow for ? They weren't terribly aware that I was doing that but I made a point of that. <Your mother still had guests you were uncomfortable with> My mother was ?

Q:

How so?

01;04;56 -

J. Rosenthal:

In that she didn't know when to keep her mouth shut. She didn't know when to...Ria I could use your help, because Ria knows this very, very well. She'd be an embarrassment because she loved pot, she'd swear like a trooper, and she'd say certain things that you don't need to say. Yeah she wasn't proud of her past, she made that quite clear on occasion but couldn't get past it.

01;05;28 -

J. Rosenthal:

And there was a time when she moved down to Florida and there was a man of interest...at this point all her husbands were dead, and her sister came down to Florida, and she's interacting with her male interest with her, but her comment was "How could I allow myself to get close with my past?" And yet if she was invited to a family function, and Ria can fill in some of this, she mouthed off and would have a foul mouth so seriously bad that she embarrassed the family so much they didn't dare invite her back again.

01;06;09 -

Ria: Yeah which was really tragic because I think in the heart of hearts, I mean family is family. It doesn't matter what life has brought you and so on, and I'm sure that they loved her, and in her own way, although bubba Yester and they, they totally disowned her, because those days you did not marry out of the...let me finish...you did not marry out of your faith.

01;06;35 -

Ria: It was written in black, with black and white in stone, and so when, the life that she led, they simply just let her go and they wrote her off. Now, this, her siblings, they were also siblings, they care for her, and Rose was kind. Uncle Louie lived in her house. She took care of him and was kind to him, and...

01;07;02 -

J. Rosenthal: Well part of what I called you over for Ria was a lot of times, remember we talked about this just recently, <Ria: Oh about her behavior, yes. So you know, they would invite her to the Passover and thing and Rose just didn't have clue enough here, one screw was missing, I'm sorry to say it, she didn't keep her mouth shut, and just sit there and enjoy their company, and what the meal was for. So they simply, Gurdy said to me "I'm sorry I just can't invite her any more. I don't want to be embarrassed when we have relatives, we have other family here, and they really don't like that kind of life. That was the end of that. And then when, what is it, Cheryl, who is a dentist today, she got married, Rose was not invited there>

01;07;49 -

J. Rosenthal: On the contrary I was there with her. <Ria: Oh were you with Rose, Excuse me. Sorry. She was not invited to the shower because it's not, it's not like if you go to a wedding there are certain things that happen and there is a program, it's loose and easy free if you go to somebody's shower, whether it's bridal or...you get to talk to everybody and they just didn't want to do that. So she was excluded. And she never did find out that Cheryl, it was a bridal shower for Cheryl because of all those reasons>

01;08;21 -

J. Rosenthal: She just didn't understand that okay, so she had had shall we say a colourful past, she would just mouth off, tell stories that, some of the stories were worse than what I just mentioned, that ? cares. <Ria: She didn't have social graces, that is to put it very mildly>

01;08;49 -

J. Rosenthal: And then her attitude was "I don't care, take me the way I am." Okay, the end result was that as a result like, one of the things I found out, in the last number of years, one of our cousins, my cousin Sid and I are very good friends, we're fishing buddies and whatever, he's the grandson of my mother's sister. And his sister is my dentist. <Cheryl> Cheryl.

01;09;27 -

J. Rosenthal: On that side of the family they always got together for annual picnic in the summertime. Us kids, us three on my mother's side were never invited. I didn't even know it existed until some few years ago. And that is part of the

price. And how could they invite, because they just, Rose didn't understand that, yeah okay you had a past, but now you are in your 60s or 70s, who the hay cares?

01;10;02 -

J. Rosenthal:

That is history. Look at the job you've done with your kids. I mean, the stuff I could show you, we'll show you with Douglas, tremendous stuff to be proud of. Ria and I have made a pretty good life; a lot to be proud of there. Well, who cares in the end? Look what the accomplishments are. Rose didn't understand that. And that was part of the problem and she'd mouth off and lose the, lose the support.

01;10;32 -

J. Rosenthal:

So that was part of that. So I don't know if these stories help you or not, I have no idea. <But it's part of, yeah who this person was, and it explains her life history and how she came to have the life she had> I mean we had another horrible thing that was part of that day, and I don't have the paper any more, I don't know what happened, newspaper clippings, I don't know what we did with them.

01;11;00 -

J. Rosenthal:

But way back you may recall, when did you leave Toronto <2001> You'll know the story, way back, remember where this one young kid, 12, 13, or 14, shoeshine boy, <Yeah Emmanuel Jacques> okay fine, one of the offenders lived in our house. <One of the offenders lived in your house>

01;11;37 -

J. Rosenthal: And my mother got called to court and said her piece and this is, it's in this article, and I'd love to get it out of The Star, <I can look it up> and she said what she thought about the whole situation. They didn't know Saul was doing this or whatever. Doug, at the time, being a social worker, being who he was, was trying to help Saul out to give him some guidance.

01;12;06 -

J. Rosenthal: And what a lot of people don't know is that shoeshine boy was actually hooking. <Ria: That's what, anyway, just my humble opinion was I believe he was an innocent child out there that was, and the element that was surrounding that poor little thing then...> There lies the major difference between my wife and I. Because I hear it right from those involved. He was hooking.

Q: It's true but don't you have to ask yourself what are the circumstances that lead someone so young that that is their only choice or the best choice for survival?

01;12;51 -

J. Rosenthal: One of the things Doug tried to do, he'd walk down south of Wellesley Street, this is before his heart attack, and then sometime afterwards, well and he'd try and pick up the kids that were hustling in that area, because that was one block south of Wellesley, usually on the Bay Street area, somewhere around there, and the young boys were there selling, what do you call it, trade workers? <Sex trade workers, yeah>

01;13;19 -

J. Rosenthal: And Doug would try and talk them out of it, straighten them out. It was just something that was important to him. I understand that Doug himself was gay as it turned out, okay? And there is some stuff here that is quite interesting in that direction in terms of the social work. But many, the long and the short of it is, the judge compliments my mother on her straightforwardness and I just wish I had that article because it's interesting.

01;13;51 -

J. Rosenthal: But again it helps explain the type of female she was. She's very <She shot from the hip, as they say> she said what she thought without thinking. When she passed I had to look after it because I was the executor and I picked out her gravestone, in fact I just saw it a couple of weeks ago, I visit periodically, and a truly unique woman. And she was.

01;15;04 -

J. Rosenthal: Yeah there was a lot of things there. Some of the stuff that I touched on, on the laundry side, I remember one chap, who was one of the laundry workers, his name was Frank. He was a tall...tall man, he was also, the Casino Theatre down in downtown Toronto, the Chinese Operas and whatever, he participated. He was an actor and I remember going many times and seeing that.

01;15;38 -

J. Rosenthal: And a lot of those productions, I often remember the Chinese coming up from the laundry. And I guess, I must have come with Sai Woo because I heard Arlene say her

family was the first to start to give me some tradition, with their restaurant, because they used to bring up, what I remember, they call **humba**, that is that round, white bun with meat inside. I used to love that black bean.

01;16;16 -

J. Rosenthal: I remember they used to bring that to me, bring it up to the house a whole lot. And I remember them having a Chinese newspaper and trying to teach me, like, I could say (Chinese) okay, I can speak up to ten in Chinese, yet if I repeat some of the Chinese words that I know I'm corrected because I don't know the pronunciation correctly. <Ria: There are different dialects>

01;16;42 -

J. Rosenthal: Or I had one experience where I'm now working as a salesperson and representing **Audio Watts**, I had this one account who was Chinese and I'm trying to be proud and say a couple of words in Chinese, he says "J.my do you want me to say what that means?" "Okay" and when he told me I don't say it... <Ria: Yeah it was awful> Oh, horrible! Little did I...my mother used to say it happily. <Like it was a swear word?> <Ria: Oh jst horrible, disgusting> Let's just say you don't want to hear it.

Q: But your mother would say it as an expression, like damn you, or damn it, kind of thing?

01;17;22 -

J. Rosenthal: Yeah, she didn't care. She didn't understand what it meant. I don't think she knew. And holy moly, I tell you, not even in the English language do we have that term. I remember the water pipe, they would smoke from a

water pipe. The very first thing Arlene reacted when I told her was, "Was it opium?" No.

01;17;48 -

J. Rosenthal: I have never ever experienced this, have any knowledge of smoking opium. <What did they use the water pipe for?> Regular tobacco. I remember trying it. <Ria: They do it in Turkey, and they put tobacco, whatever they do. They smoked the same thing, yeah>

01;18;10 -

J. Rosenthal: I remember one time being sent to buy spirits but the Chinese would tell me (Chinese) that was their term for spirits. Okay? And I'd go up the street to the printer's shop and they didn't know what the hay I was talking about. I finally had to point, "That" which was spirits. I remember that as an experience. Very common, the delivery of big bottles of Javex coming in the door of the laundry for washing purposes.

01;18;47 -

J. Rosenthal: And I think one of the saddest things I could say is that there was an opportunity to learn how to speak Chinese, <For you> for me, and Yiddish in terms of my mother. They fought not to learn English. And I don't mind telling you that there has been many a time over the years, particularly in my sales career, had I had the ability to speak those two languages, wow! Just wow!

01;19;22 -

J. Rosenthal: But that is the reality and that's that. And as a result, where my wife speaks Finnish, I've gone to Finnish school to try and learn how to speak Finnish, I have great difficulty in learning how to speak languages. And I

contend it is because I got it hammered into my head as a kid English only. And so there is a... <Psychological barrier>

01;19;44 -

J. Rosenthal: Yeah, our son-in-law speaks six languages. He can pick up a language like that and he's also pretty musical, whatever. So that is some of the stuff I remember in the laundry. I mean I remember ironing, the switchover from the wood-fire heated irons to electric irons, I remember that, them doing that. The turn of the whole ? my mother wasn't happy.

01;20;15 -

J. Rosenthal: In terms of something I would do, I can remember one time clearly, we had, when the customers came in, they would come into, the counter area would be this wall, maybe to the cupboard there, squared, okay, and there was a counter, and then of course the door to the iron or whatever. And I was a bad boy this one time and I had it hung up like this...<Ria: You probably really deserved it>

01;20;49 -

J. Rosenthal: Well I probably did. I'm not going to say I didn't. I don't know what I did but that's the, like I say, she was a strong woman. She wanted things done and she didn't like, she kept the straight and narrow. Can't complain about that. I'm trying to remember for you other..Chen was probably, like I said before, the only one I can, I never, really think of as really the father image, and I remember one time sitting on his knee or whatever, something of that nature.

01;21;23 -

J. Rosenthal: But really and truly that was a problem for me as I matured, to get past that, but I think I got there for a variety of reasons, I did some other work on my head or whatever, and I thank this little rascal over here a lot.

Q: How old were you when the two of you met?

01;21;44 -

Ria: I was probably 16 and a half or so, not quite 17. <How did you meet?> Through friends in Central Tech. <You both went to Central Tech> MY girlfriend went there. She was in the art program. <And you went there?>

01;21;56 -

J. Rosenthal: I went to Central Tech and she went to Central Commerce. And one thing led to another and we're still together.

Q: Did you have an identity crisis ever?

01;22;29 -

J. Rosenthal: It was more of the Jewish thing than it was a Chinese thing. I was lucky, in the context of my sister and brother, I'm totally white. They were not. They look Chinese. (Crosstalk) And so I got past that okay, I mean not a big deal. If I open my mouth, like I said before, at one time I used to quickly reveal "Yeah my mother had five husbands or blah blah", no, I don't do that anymore.

01;23;02 -

J. Rosenthal: I learned after awhile not to do that. And even Ria says "J.my don't say that." If there was any sort of any difficulty, and I cannot honestly say crisis, it was the Jewish part. I mean I remember going to Philips Canada

and I worked for a distributor called ? for nine years and I knew the Philips distributor, and I knew their products inside out. <Ria: Like Philips shavers>

01;23;34 -

J. Rosenthal:

I mean, I was the branch manager, when I had left that company, and I was also a buyer for that branch, which was really a re-buyer, because I was the inventory control, the major decisions were made at head office in London. <Ria: Just to give you a little background, David Peterson was our former premier of Ontario, it was his father's company that J. worked for. Nice people>

01;24;01 -

J. Rosenthal:

So now I am looking for a job. I left that company to go work somewhere else and it didn't work out, and I go to Philips, and this did not happen once. On two different occasions, about nine months apart, and the HR guy was going through what I whatever, "Oh, do you have to take any special time off for holidays?"

01;24;27 -

J. Rosenthal:

I didn't get the job. They wouldn't hire Jews. And I don't even follow the religion. <Ria: They looked at your name, Eaton's the same thing> Eaton's was similar at that time. Well actually, no Eaton's did hire me <Ria: Oh that's right, yeah> on our first year of marriage. And they kept me after Christmas. They hired me at Christmas and they kept me because I was married. Because we were going to have a child and that is why we got married.

01;25;01 -

J. Rosenthal: So in terms of an identity crisis I don't think I had that. If I had anything it was, sometimes I had difficulty dealing with certain situations, maybe because of the coarseness, how I grew up, and I didn't recognize that A) there is a certain mannerism or certain manners you should apply or live by, and I wasn't all that familiar, so yeah, there was a man I talked to for, on occasions, and that helped me a whole heck of a lot.

01;25;35 -

J. Rosenthal: And probably in terms of that question, a book I read, probably, <Ria: What was the name of it?> okay, I'll get to it, now you made me lose...I'm Okay, You're Okay.  
Ria: That was the name of the book>

Q: I've heard of it but I don't think I've read it.

01;25;59 -

J. Rosenthal: Well that, for me, I'm in my late 20s at this time, and I'm 73 in July, so how long ago is that? But that was, a lot of psychological, psychology students are told to read that book, okay? It did me a hay of a lot of good. Also Fountainhead by Ayn Rand, and there was another book, a couple of books she read, that she wrote rather helped me a whole lot. <Atlas Shrugged> Atlas Shrugged, yeah.

01;26;34 -

J. Rosenthal: And that was thanks to J., this chiropractor who I talked to a lot. <Ria: And he was your mentor> Yeah he was my mentor. And it helped me a tremendous amount. But my identity crisis of anything was not the Chinese part, or the Jewish side, but it was more really in the terms of having grown up in the environment I just described, you're a

female, it wouldn't bother you to ? quarter or do something crude, okay, and I was horrible for that.

01;27;10 -

J. Rosenthal:

And even to this day, some of our friends at that timeframe, the old group as we call them, in fact I talked with two of them this morning, that go back 40 or 50 years, it's hard for them to look at me today as I am versus the way I was. There is, there is a residual factor there. But I've also had many say "Boy J.my you've done well." So and I think that kind of answers your question.

Q:

I'm just imagining you at school, and who is your social circle in high school? Who were you playing with on the street as a child?

01;28;12 -

J. Rosenthal:

Whoever was on the street to play with. <Who was in your neighborhood?> John Trubeck, who was Yugoslavian, the Ashidas, which were Japanese... <Ria: Mrs. Coots?> I didn't play with Mrs. Coots. <Ria: No but she had children> No I'm thinking of, I'm trying to remember their names, the Irish family. They were the ?

Q:

So it was a very multiracial, this is Irwin we're talking about?

01;28;48 -

J. Rosenthal:

More Irwin, more Irwin Avenue. I never grew up on Walnut Street. My mother did. Then of course, in Hamilton, there was the Mahar's, which was a French oriented family. And again it's kind of multicultural.

Q: Central tech was mixed too.

01;29;08 -

J. Rosenthal: Oh yeah, I mean, I had a Black buddy. And racial aspects for me...when I look at you, the person, it's not the face, the colour, and all that, it's what's between here. I'm looking at how that person's mind is. And that's what I relate to and so that's what made me probably successful in my selling career.

01;29;37 -

J. Rosenthal: I mean, I had a lot of bad experiences, I don't like the word bad, they were growing experiences. In my first years of selling I had a lot of different jobs. And then I hooked into Audiovox and by golly, did I do well. That was my calling. I was 20 years with the company, became a vice-president, assistant vice-president. And I made some very seriously good money, in the heyday of car audio. <Ria: And the Audiovox was a known product>

01;30;07 -

J. Rosenthal: Oh, yeah, that was a great gig. But I worked. I mean, I was not afraid of a day's work. No question about that. Going on a little further here, so yeah, did learn, the other ? or Jew or Chinese, but so be it. We talked about Elizabeth Avenue, or Elizabeth Street. I told you about that restaurant, and that was the hangout and I was taken there a whole lot and also the pool hall.

01;30;43 -

J. Rosenthal: And another thing I remember very, very much, and I have told this story a lot of late, because in, as you well

know, Arlene points it out in her book, in those years back in the '30s, the '20s and '30s, the early '40s even, mid '40s, the Chinese would not go to a bank and borrow money. And I can remember going into this room and on that table were these piles and piles of money.

01;31;11 -

J. Rosenthal: 10s and 20s and 50s, and I remember being that high, stacks of money. <Where was this?> Somewhere. I don't remember where. <Ria: Chinatown> Chinatown.

Q; Where was the money from?

01;31;29 -

J. Rosenthal: I am certain it had to have been with Chen. It could not have been with my mother. <Maybe he was repaying loans or something> Yeah. We spoke of my mother. One thing my mother was also very good at was telling stories, with great points of view. I have to say I think some of it was fabricated, I just don't know, but one of the stories she frequently said was that Chen had six laundries, but he was such a gambler that he wound up with none.

01;32;03 -

J. Rosenthal: ? there once, one laundry and maybe that is how he lost the last laundry, I don't know. But I know that I heard many times he had six laundries and in gambling he lost five. <Ria: Well he did have two, the one on Spadina because of lots of letters, were there letters that went there?> Yeah which we gave to Arlene. We gave a whole bunch of stuff to Arlene.

01;32;28 -

J. Rosenthal: And like I said, she's, I know you speak to her. <Yes Arlene has been a tremendous help to me> Well I mean, I don't know how long you are in Toronto. So whatever I've shared with you, she knows, you are welcome to it, because that is no problem for me.

01;33;05 -

J. Rosenthal: One of the things, when you look at what you've got there that map...okay...here is Elizabeth Street. This is Dundas, Queen, oh, here is City Hall. It would have been here, on this corner down here, okay, there was a little jewelry shop, owned by Dick and Dave Low, and they were god friends of my mother, and they wound up ultimately going up on Spadina Avenue, north of the work yards and opened up a tuck shop, and they did extremely well there.

01;33;56 -

J. Rosenthal: Because they found a, what do call it, a niche, where that business is much desired, and did well. They were, their parents were missionaries in China. Now, why they came over and how they came over I don't know those answers. They are both long gone. I know Doug worked for them a long time and did well there.

01;35;22 -

J. Rosenthal: Chen had a tremendous temper and when he lost it, I'll tell you he lost it. And I can remember one time, I don't know what the story was, but what caused it, but we were having dinner, and he had a bowl of rice, and Chinese will often have sauces to mix in with your rice. Well, he threw his bowl, and I can remember the spots of rice on the wall for years as a result.

01;35;53 -

J. Rosenthal: He had come over here to be a doctor but because of his temper he lost that opportunity. <What happened?> No. I just don't know. All I know is that he was going to be a doctor. I guess he'd lose his temper a lot of times and get himself...the Chinese were not well received, it had to be tough in the '20s and '30s at that time, for him.

Q: Do you know if he was from ? province?

01;36;24 -

J. Rosenthal: He had to be. He was from the Hong Kong area. I don't know if it was Hong Kong itself or ?, I don't know. The information, I didn't, one thing I didn't do with Arlene, and maybe, I'm thinking back, I'm kind of sorry I didn't, I didn't make photostats of stuff I gave her. Just for like, now it would have been neat and I could have answered that question.

01;36;57 -

J. Rosenthal: He was quite a gambler. I told you about that. He had ? working at Spadina and College, I told you about that, and I also told you he was more or less my father. Oh one thing I'd like to tell you, in terms of his medical prowess, I, one night I cut my leg, on the right side here, I still have a pretty major scar, and that was at six, seven years of age, I remember it clearly, about how it happened or whatever. But he packed it full of herbs and whatever, okay, and my mother was out I guess, whatever.

01;37;39 -

J. Rosenthal: And when she came home I remember being on the bed, my leg perched up on a pillow, and I got taken to the hospital. The story, as I understand it from mother, is that the doctors wanted to know what this stuff was that he used because it saved my leg. I don't know how. That is what I was told.

01;38;03 -

J. Rosenthal: And I already told you about, my mother often mentioned the fact that she grabbed Chen in marriage so that she would not lose her kids.

Q: What do you know about that?

01;38;17 -

J. Rosenthal: That's all I know. I mean obviously there was a relationship at the time, clearly, there had to have been, we just don't...

Q: Do you know how she felt about getting married or when they married?

01;38;31 -

J. Rosenthal: Well it had to be the early '40s. I was born in July '39. So it was about 1940. Now, I may, I've got to, I'm going to speed through this, and then I can probably back up some of the facts.

Q: Was Children's Aid threatening to remove the children?

01;38;56 -

J. Rosenthal: As I understand it, that is exactly the situation. <She had already lost a child> As I see it, yes. <Once they have their eyes on you they usually don't take them off> Oh yeah she spent some time in the Mercer. <Oh she did, for...?> (inaudible) <Right> Okay but I now realize, having read Arlene's book, maybe because she married.

Q: So she spent time in the Mercer after she was married?  
01;39;24 -

J. Rosenthal: I don't know. I don't know when. I just know she often told us how to make our beds properly. That's where we learned how to do it.

Q: Chinese girls/women were thrown in jail for having sex outside of marriage in the past.  
01;40;15 -

J. Rosenthal: I remember as a kid I was very good friends with this German family, which my mother wasn't too happy about, because it was just after the war, and they lived on Gimlet Avenue, just north of St. Clair, and there was a home there for girls who were pregnant out of wedlock. <Bellwood> It might have been called that. And I remember walking that way 1000 times.

01;41;11 -

J. Rosenthal: There was this guy Lou Doe, but I think it's Lew, he was a chef, he worked at Thornhill Golf and Country, and then he wound up working for the Anglican old age home, not far from where the ? Clinic is, across the street, on College Street, I can't remember the name of it right now,

and I remember as a result Sister Doratheia and Sister Mable, and Doratheia became our daughter's god-mom, but for security reasons that he could keep his job, we all got converted to Anglicans.

01;42;09 -

J. Rosenthal:

You know the Church of the Redeemer, at Young and Avenue Road, there is a church there on the northeast corner, opposite the hotel, alright, we got married there. I went there as a kid, confirmed and baptized there, Anglican. I was telling you earlier I've been to the Catholic church, United church, Anglican church, quite a wide variety of Christian churches. I went to a whole lot of them.

01;42;40 -

J. Rosenthal:

Of course I've been to Jewish synagogues for various functions. But at the time my mother passed and I'm supposed to say the Jewish prayer, even the rabbi was surprised, he looked at me because I didn't know what the hell to say. I was following what he was telling me.

<Ria: St. John's Convalescent Hospital>

01;44;00 -

J. Rosenthal:

Thank you, it was St. John's old age home. <Ria: On Brunswick Avenue> Thank you, that's why I asked the question. <Ria: And the reason she took you to Anglican church, because it was good for Lew Doe's resume to have the children baptized in the Anglican faith. That is the reason why>

01;44;27 -

J. Rosenthal: Yeah, that's, following Chen's death she married Lew Doe and then after Lew Doe died she married Angus Murphy, and she died as Mrs. Murphy. <You don't think she loved Chen or Lew?> There had to be some affection but to what degree, what it meant, whatever I don't know what to tell you. I'm a weird story. I wrote it all down, and I was a little bit nervous, I wasn't sure how this was going to turn out because I mean, this is not something I am going to tell everybody anyway. How can I?

Q: It's amazing how unusual people's lives are. But people had to hide it because it was, people were very judgmental and prejudiced.

01;45;22 -

J. Rosenthal: Well it still happens today. Right now it is the Muslims everybody hates. There was us three kids: Doug, Barb, and me, and we were farmed out, Doug and Barb were farmed out to a family in midland, Penatang, and I was more six or seven, yeah which I've already told you. When I was about nine, then when I was about nine years old, we were all farmed out to the same family in Hamilton.

01;45;51 -

J. Rosenthal: Then about 1949 we all lived at 8 Irwin Avenue. Chen, and I've told you all this, Chen intended to re-open the laundry, was located at that location, but he couldn't get the city permission. And probably too, being Chinese, and the attitude of the day, they didn't want to, the laundries were too competitive to the white-owned monopolies. There is that issue.

01;46;18 -

J. Rosenthal: And of course it is in the book, which I didn't know at the time. I remember one time with this lady I call Horse-Face Betty, she had a friend who obviously she messed around with, who had a pig farm, a Chinese guy out in Cookstown, Cooksville, and I remember staying there for a couple of days; going around with him, in this truck, going to all the restaurants and dumping all the unused food, and he'd take it back to the farm, put it in the boiler, and cook it all up, and feed it to the pigs. I don't think today they'd allow for that. I doubt it very much. But I can tell you back in the '50s I saw it happen.

Q: It is recycling.

01;47;30 -

J. Rosenthal: Yeah, the food was properly cooked and not for ten or fifteen minutes, it was cooked for hours upon hours upon hours and then they fed it to the animals.

Q; So Horse-face Betty was, used to visit this man who had the farm.

01;47;47 -

J. Rosenthal: Yeah and then they took me there one time and that was fascinating, a good experience really. <Were they lovers?> I suspect. Were they lovers or just time for one? <Like an arrangement, works for everybody> I'm a firm believer that we all need our vittles. I use the word vittles and I think that's...

01;48;16 -

J. Rosenthal: Here is an interesting thing, I will tell you, we had this man called Hun, and he lived with us for many, many, many years, and the interesting thing about Hun, for about 15-20 years I'd say, certainly 15 years, he stayed in bed. He got up to go to the washroom, when it was time to eat he got up to eat, go back to bed.

01;48;46 -

J. Rosenthal: That's the way it was. I mean I shared a bedroom with him. <Was he depressed?> I don't know what the answer is. I don't know why. <Who took care of him?> My mother obviously was the caregiver, okay, just why and how that arrangement, to this day I am befuddled.

01;49;23 -

J. Rosenthal: But here was a man, in his senior years, and he lived quite a long time, and Ria remembers him, and he stayed in bed, and ? thinking, and I know some people would challenge my mother and say "Why is he doing this?" And the answer she'd come up with "He ran around and he lived long enough and he did what he wanted to do, he did whatever it was, and when the time comes to rest I'll rest." Whether that is a fabrication or what I don't know, but for at least 15 years.

Q: They didn't have any relatives coming to visit him?

01;50;14 -

J. Rosenthal: Who knows? When I told that to Arlene she made the comment, "Yes that was not uncommon because nobody looked after the seniors in that timeframe. <He was lucky he had a place to stay> Yeah whatever the scene was

between he and my mother and Chen and Lew Doe that is the way it was. Fascinating.

01;50;40 -

J. Rosenthal: And I think that, I told you, my mother cared for, well I'll just say, what I say about Rose, my mother, although a dumb, dumb woman, which she was, from the ward, she was a mother bear. <You said that> She cared for her kids as best she could and provided as best she could, and was stern, and stern with who she'd interact with.

01;51;12 -

J. Rosenthal: So I was going to say this is for you. Now there is some other stuff I want to share with you here, and this is more Doug, my brother. And I can photostat any of this stuff that you want. I've got a copy machine over there. So basically what I have here to start off with, Doug, as I mentioned earlier, was very unhappy, probably I mentioned that part.

01;51;46 -

J. Rosenthal: But he was a very unhappy man in terms, you say identity crisis, you asked me about that. I think he had a serious one. Chinese and Jewish, Jewish don't accept you period, okay, I know that. I had that in my own family. It was **an old former** Jewish law, that I've had on one occasion particularly rubbed in my nose that "Look you're not even Jewish."

01;52;19 -

J. Rosenthal: I have forgotten who told me that but I don't, I don't **?** what is the point? Obviously the bastard and that is that. And there are some members of my family that hey, when there's a Barmitzvah, or a wedding, or Ria and I

are, well, never my sister, we just sat, but that is the way it is.

01;52;45 -

J. Rosenthal: Doug was very active, very much a social worker and there's parts where as Arlene, I mentioned how I met Arlene, in fact I mentioned, "You know Doug Chen?" "Yeah social worker" and then she found that we are half brothers. And I don't like using the word half brothers but I have to because it is accurate.

01;53;14 -

J. Rosenthal: When we got together, now here we're talking now, as a result, Doug was a social worker, and he carried in that direction for very much. In the earlier years he trained and worked as a printer, didn't like it, and there is a letter, I think I've got it, I'll show you shortly, and if you want a copy of it you are welcome to it, so part of what I've got here is just some copies I will share with you, where he got special awards.

Q: You think Doug had an identity crisis?

01;53;52 -

J. Rosenthal: Yeah, at the end of the day the Chinese really didn't accept him. He didn't speak Chinese. <Because he was half white> That's right and how they, probably one of the real, real reasons was he didn't speak the language. Having read Arlene's book, that was a very real fundamental thing that the senior Chinese insisted their kids do. Go to Chinese school and learn the language.

Q: Having interviewed a lot of people your age, exactly in your age group, a lot of them that I've interviewed are mixed race or born in Canada and they don't speak Chinese. They are very Chinese-looking and they don't speak a word of Chinese, and it's, it's interesting because they actually, when, after '47 when they allowed families to start coming over from China and the Chinese-speaking children came over, the Canadian Chinese kids discriminated against the Chinese-speaking kids because they didn't want to have anything to do with them, because you're from China. So it's very complicated. So it surprises me, when I meet someone like yourself, because so many of the, there were so many kids like you who grew up in a half Chinese, half white household, don't speak any Chinese, all of them forced to go to Chinese school, didn't really learn anything, didn't retain anything, they know a few phrases, and that is it, they can order in a restaurant and that's it, and yet they felt like they were the only one. But there were so many. That's what I'm finding. There were so many. And they all went to **Hester Howe** school.

01;55;44 -

J. Rosenthal: We saw my aunt when...no, no it was a baby party, recently a month and a half ago, my aunt Hilda, we, who is my mother's sister-in-law, okay, and Hilda is about 87, 88 and she is starting to lose it now, "Did you go to Hester Howe School?" "Oh yeah" Because a lot of the Jewish did too. <Yeah well they lived in the neighborhood, that was the neighborhood school>

Q; So there's a lot of people your generation with that experience.

01;56;21 -

Ria: When Lew Doe passed away J. and I had no idea exactly, we knew where he, we went to the graveyard I think, and I knew that it was Prospect Cemetery, you know the one on...<Pine Hills> or Pine Hills. <Are you talking about Chen and Lew Doe's fake gravesite?> Yes sorry. <Pine Hills> Pine Hills.

01;57;00 -

Ria: We wanted to visit the gravesite and we couldn't remember exactly where it was because I don't think we had been there because we had lived up north for ten years, so it wasn't a place that we would go and J. always goes to visit his mother, and any other members of the family. So J. and I, last summer, was it last summer, we went to the cemetery office, they told us the number and it was way, way on the other.. <We found it> We found it.

01;57;26 -

Ria: It is all in Chinese. The whole thing is in Chinese. <The headstone> No, no headstone. No headstone, it is on the ground, and it was covered with, anyway, finally we found it. We thought we could see some, it was all in Chinese. <My intention was to clean it up> We wanted to have it cleaned up, yeah. <Because we did that with her father's> Yeah so we thought "Well we'll go and see." And I thought "Oh how sad to be forgotten." This man, who looked after a family and I bet you we are the only ones who have ever gone there to have a look, because

it was all grown over. And when...<And e had it cleaned up> So it was cleaned up but we couldn't, we would never have known that that was his little spot, because everything, the whole business, so I think it was the Chinese Memorial Association who arranged for that text and the plaque because nothing was in English. And we just, that's the way it is. Anyway.

01;58;25 -

J. Rosenthal:

What also interested us, where we felt bad, when we moved here, of course Mount Pleasant Cemetery is just a block down the street, so we would go for walks there, not that we'd do that much. She is in better shape than I am. I am in terrible shape, and I used to be a member of the fitness, for 25 years I worked out. But then when I got my bone marrow disease I was so tired. Anyhow, we go over there and there are some phenomenal monuments to the Chinese.

01;58;56 -

J. Rosenthal:

You have not done that yet? <I should> If you can, I recommend you that because it is part of what you're doing. And Arlene said "Yeah a lot of the Chinese seniors who passed did not want to leave their money to the kids, and they took the money for monuments. I was stunned by that. And that is something I think, if you can remember, check that out. That was absolutely, wow!

01;59;28 -

Ria: There is another cemetery too, just going up on Bayview, it could be highway 7, I really can't remember the location. It is a well known cemetery on the eastside and when you go in and you see the Chinese monuments and the flower arrangements, there are 100s and they are absolutely gorgeous. And then you go in the rest of the cemetery but it is very evident that first of all they have the money. If they didn't have it they couldn't put it up, and everybody, I don't quite believe that, maybe olden times, I think in today, if they have the money they'll put the nice stone there and then the nice arrangement and that's what they have done.

02;00;07 -

Ria: Usually Christian things they are like this, Jewish things are like that, but these are just huge big things, and we have some of them here in the cemetery.

Q: This award if for Doug's social work?

02;00;57 -

J. Rosenthal: Yeah, part of it is social work, but here...this...we'll photo stuff.

Q: So he was out as a gay man.

02;01;50 -

J. Rosenthal: Out of the closet? <Yeah> Yeah, oh in the end yeah. <In the '70s but this is '79> In the end, that is one of the reasons he had to go to Kennedy House, he got an apartment in Kennedy House. <Oh that's terrible>

02;02;33 -

J. Rosenthal: Well, his good friend, and I have no idea where he's at now, Carson, is one of the original organizers or chairpersons of the gay committee, not the gay committee, the AIDS Committee.

Looking at photos – much is inaudible – little conversational content

Q: Your mom tried to provide a stable environment for you.

02;19;56 -

J. Rosenthal: No question, but there was enough strength or inner whatever, that yeah, it comes out, and that is why at the end of the day, I revealed a lot of stuff, hey if it led that to some people, <There would be a lot of judgment> some of the comments, not comments, we get together here in the senior's home and (crosstalk) I'll reveal some of the stuff we just talked about. I am really quite careful. It's gotten to the point now where it's ? because at the end of the day it's just ?

THE END OF J. ROSENTHAL INTERVIEW