

STEVE, INTERVIEWED BY KEN

M	<p>So today it is December 13<sup>th</sup>, and I'm sitting across from Steve [Biano], who has graciously invited me in his very high office, overlooking the Gardener Expressway and a series of different condos. This is interview 1. We're just going to start off, and you just take the questions, they're very open-ended. Just take them wherever you want to go and I'll steer you back every once in a while. OK?</p> <p>These interviews usually start very simply. Just tell me a bit about yourself. Give a little bit of an autobiography. What are the important bullet points for both me to know and for the person who will later be transcribing this to know?</p>	0:00:00
R	Okay, born in Toronto.	0:00:44
M	Where in Toronto?	0:00:47
R	Downtown Toronto. Well, now downtown Toronto but North Toronto, off [inaudible Fletchin?] Road, here at Davis Fill [or Hill], between Davis F[H]ill & Eglinton. Not a lot of Chinese families in our area at the time.	0:00:48
M	You're 71, so that would have been in	0:01:06
R	1940	0:01:09
M	1940.	0:01:10
R	<p>Mom and Dad had a food and vegetable store and there was various other vegetable stores in the area. They didn't seem to have kids. Later on they did, but as I was growing up, there was just our family there as far as a young family is concerned. I'm one of a brood of nine kids. I'm number five, right in the middle. We did OK there. Dad's business was relatively good. I can recollect from a very young age, in my early years of three, four, five, starting to run around the store and working the store and doing things in the store as necessary. Dad would show you what that needed to be done and you just did it. You never thought of age or size or anything else.</p>	0:01:12
M	You Dad owned the home, right?	0:02:16
R	<p>It was a store, yes, an upstairs – downstairs sort of thing. It was a very good store, always very busy and what have you around there. We were a close-knit family. Brothers and sisters, we always did things together. You had to. In those days, you did stick to yourself pretty much. I had a lot of good friends in public school though.</p>	
M	Where did you go to public school, Steve?	0:02:47
R	Right in downtown Toronto there, off of Davis F[H]ill, a public school called Hodson Public School. Right through to grade 8 ended. It was a very good school in those days. A huge playing	0:02:49
R	Right in downtown Toronto there, off of Davis F[H]ill, a public school called Hodson Public School. Right through to grade 8 ended. It was a very good school in those days. A huge playing field there, about four acres. They had their ball diamonds, soccer pitch and what have you. Spent a lot of time over there. A	0:02:49

M	So you're basically saying that being athletic was sort of your passport.	0:04:00
N	Yes, it opened a lot of doors and it also evened things up a lot. The thing that bothered me most as a young kid and still bothers me today is if somebody called me a "Chink", and I would go ballistic. It was like somebody dropping a red sheet in front of me. And it wouldn't matter who.	0:04:04
M	And you'd fight?	0:04:29
N	If I escaped with two fights a day, it was a good day.	0:04:31
M	Two fights a day.	0:04:37
N	Yes. It's always somebody saying something or calling me something, or referring to something.	0:04:38
M	What do you mean referring to something.	0:04:50
N	They call you names. Go back from where you're from. You're dirty. You stink. And even adults in those days. I can remember when I was in about grade 3 or 4, and I used to run around playing ball or wherever there was a place to play ball. There would be a couple of blocks from where we were, there was a place called the Crest Theatre, which was almost next door, but it backed onto a street behind, and there was a great big parking lot, probably 50-60 yards from the building to the end of the fence, and it was a clear square. So we used to play ball in there. And this wouldn't be my family. It would be me and other white kids. We used to play a baseball game called squares, where you drew a square on the wall and that was your strike zone. It was a two-man game.	0:04:51
M	And if you missed it, the person would ...	0:05:50
N	... catch a strike and you're out. And you only had three outs. You'd wack the ball and it would go over the fence from time to time. I can remember this woman sitting on her porch, and you knew what she was doing. As soon as you'd hit the ball over the fence, she goes down the street and rolls down there. And she's running inside and she calls Mum, my Mum, or Dad, whoever answers the phone, and says "Get your goddam kids off the street there." And to my parents' credit, they never said a word. And I would just keep playing, and she would wave or go into or call the theatre if that first call didn't get any results. Eventually, it took them quite a while to do it. The owner of the theatre would come out and say "You guys aren't allowed to play ball in here." Or something. But I'd go home, or find another place to play and go home later. And not a word from Mom or Dad. They told me later, but they wouldn't censor me for any reason just, you know. Likewise, if I came home dirty, ripped and torn, they never said "Where were you?", or "What happened?". They knew what happened.	0:05:51
M	Did they offer you advice or was it just a question of this is a part of your daily life?	0:07:16

N	Yes, they knew it was part of the day to day.	0:07:20
M	How did you parents come to this country?	0:07:22
N	Dad was from China.	0:07:25
M	He paid the Head Tax, then.	0:07:27
N	He was exempted.	0:07:28
M	He was exempted?	0:07:31
N	Because Dad, his father had some trading agreement with Canada and had purchased a property in the Fraser Valley somewhere. I never did get that straight. When the first war with the Japanese, my Dad was the youngest of four boys. And of course his mother was still in China, so when that was occurred, his Dad and his three older brothers returned and left Dad in charge of the property. I forget whether he was 12 or 13, a young guy, just in pre-teens or just into his teens. Then he never came back. They were all killed by the Japanese when they went back. So that's where Dad stayed. I'm not sure how that property transitioned.	0:07:32
M	Something happened.	0:08:40
N	Something happened. He survived for a few years, because he didn't meet Mom until he was 17-18-19, something in there. And he met her at an English-as-a-Second-Language in one of the Chinese churches.	0:08:41
M	In Toronto?	0:09:01
N	No, in Vancouver. Mom was a quasi teacher. I guess I should say. In those days, the entire Chinese population, whether you born there or otherwise, were segregated anyway. So that's how they met. Mom was born in Canada actually, in Nanaimo. And they got married in Vancouver. My oldest brother was born in Vancouver. Then they moved to Montreal with a bunch of other cousins and started a business there. And then Dad broke off and moved to Toronto on his own to open up a store in Toronto. That's how they got going there and that's how I ended up on Mount Pleasant Road.	0:09:02
M	And he had a brood of kids, basically.	0:09:57
N	Yes. There was only my oldest brother when he moved to Toronto and then the rest of us were born at 561. I went very fast, but they never questioned me on what I was doing, where I was going. I always showed up home, in one way, shape or other.	0:10:00
M	They never talked to you directly about the fighting, the racism or anything like that?	0:10:27
N	Mom said "People are like that." She said "You've got to protect yourself."	0:10:32
M	I guess you learned at a very young age to do that.	0:10:40
N	Yes, I was a little aggressed when I was a kid. We were a large	0:10:42
N	Yes, I was a little aggressed when I was a kid. We were a large family. A lot of times, my brothers would be with me, two or three of them. And there'd be other groups of kids roaming around and you didn't recognize them. They'd start something.	0:10:42

M	It must have helped to have three brothers, though.	0:11:09
N	Oh yeah, it didn't hurt.	0:11:13
M	What was it like to have sisters though? Did you feel protective towards them?	0:11:15
N	Oh yeah. They were going to the same school. One sister was ahead, one sister was younger than me, so it wasn't a problem then. As the years went on, it always got a little better. And again, we grew up into that school and went up right through from kindergarten on, so it seemed to get better progressively. I know when I was 2 years old, and this is the only time when my parents ever said anything, I was in grade 2, and I was going to school with a project and it was my birthday. A school bully met me at the front gate, and this is a huge schoolyard, and some kid comes up to me and says: "Hey [Jung], you're going to get yours next. It's your birthday and [Kenny Rogers] is going to give it to you.	0:11:19
M	His name was [Kenny Rogers]? Jesus Christ.	0:12:13
N	Yeah. So I said: "OK, we'll see." And I'm just a little wee piece of shit. My project rolled up under my arm that I was taking to class and I said: "Will you hold this for me." My brothers were with me, but he was the class bully.	0:12:14
M	So you were defended by yourself.	0:12:34
N	But he was two years older than me and should have been in grade 4, while I was in grade 2. So he comes up and says "You ready, [Jung]?" And I says "Yup", and I hit him, right in the face, and he went down and was crying. I said: "What the hell's wrong with you?" So that night when I got home, my brothers had already told Mom about it.	0:12:35
M	With a bit of pride, I'm guessing.	0:13:09
N	I think so. And they said: "We didn't have to help him or anything. He just flacked the kid." But that was the only time Mom or Dad knew, to my knowledge, that I had done something. Mom was the more aggressive of my parents. She was more like I was, and Dad was a little passive, a wise old sage, you know. She said: "Good for you."	0:13:10
M	It's always funny how your parents process those things. I remember actually getting into fights as a kid. My Dad had this perverse pride about it. But that's another conversation.	0:13:45
N	I guess that was instilled in me at an early age, where no one can protect you all the time. You have to do what you can do when you have to do it.	0:13:58
M	So what was it like, I mean you're giving me a great backtrack of how you grew up, but what was it like being part of a community?	0:14:12
N	A white community?	0:14:22
M	But also part of that Chinese community. You lived outside of Chinatown, right? What was your relationship to Chinatown?	0:14:23

N	Every Sunday or Saturday, depending on how late we were open, Saturday night, usually we'd close at 6 o'clock, so that's a relatively early weekend closing, and so depending on how Mom and Dad were that week, we'd either go down to Chinatown for dinner, or	0:14:28
M	Do you remember which restaurant?	0:14:53
N	Yeah, we went to Golden Dragon.	0:14:54
M	This is in old Chinatown. Dundas &	0:14:56
N	<p>Yup, also the old Nanking, the old, old Nanking, not the one that was torn down or put up behind the old, or the new, City Hall, the Nanking before that was on the other side of City Hall. We used to go there, we'd go to the Golden Dragon, and then [inaudible, Chinese] opened, we'd go there after a bit. But that's where, well most of the Chinese restaurants were family-friendly, that was probably the only area that could take nine kids at a time.</p> <p>And there was always hangers-on, like some of Dad's village people were coming, or a couple of people working in the store. If we were going down to Chinatown on Saturday night, we'd take them along. And likewise on Sunday if we were going to a brunch type of setup, we'd usually end up with an aunt or uncle and their kids, or somebody else as well. And we'd see them down in Chinatown. So that was our exposure there.</p> <p>Dad would leave us after lunch, and he would go do his MJ game down at [Sik bak fam?]. I can remember that old Foster place. We'd drop him off there, my oldest brother would drop him off there. He would stay. That was the only break he ever got all week. He'd spend a few hours there, and then he'd come home anywhere 9 and midnight on a Sunday night. We would know whether he had won or lost by the smell coming up the stairs. If he won, he'd be bringing home chow mein. So we'd all jump out of bed and go eat.</p>	0:15:02
M	How many bedrooms did you have? I'm beginning to break down the fact that you were nine kids.	0:17:16
N	We were living above the store, maximum 1100 square feet. The largest room was across the back of the house, and we had two bunk beds in there. The girls' bedroom was off to the side, and there was room for three of them in there. The last two came later, so it wasn't a problem. Mom and Dad were at the front of the building. And in between was just a kitchen and a washroom, so most of our time we spent outside or downstairs in the store. We did a lot of stuff in the store. They put a kitchen downstairs at the back of the store as well so that made it a little easier, because it was tough stuffing everyone in the kitchen. Around 1954 or so, a cousin came over from China and he	0:17:22
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M	Chinese and white?	0:19:46
N	Chinese. All Chinese. Recent immigrants, friends, family. We wouldn't have our dinner until - we had the late dinner.	0:19:47
M	Entertaining people basically.	0:19:59
N	They'd come in, had their first turkey dinner lots of them, wondering why you had a tree in the house. Yeah, we'd have turkey. Mom would make turkey and roast beef. Two big turkeys and roast beef.	0:20:01
M	It seems that you had a very happy home life. Was it weird to contrast that with what you saw outside? You've spoken to some degree about what you saw in the suburbs. What was it like when you were downtown?	0:20:19
N	It was another world.	0:20:40
M	Like Chinatown specifically?	0:20:43
N	Chinatown specifically. The attitude, the way people talked to the waiters, like the non-Chinese could speak to waiters. Very condescending. I can remember going, some nights, my Dad would say I'm not going to play late tonight so can you pick me up at 7 o'clock or 8'clock. So my brother would go pick him up and I'd tag along, and we'd go into the old tong. They would have 30 guys living in the building.	0:20:45
M	Like in a bunk bed?	0:21:24
N	It was just like a dormitory, but a very poor dormitory. They'd have a general room like this where they'd play MJ, a kitchen off it, a communal kitchen where the guys all cooked for each other or for themselves. If you went into the bedroom, it was this size; it would have at least six beds in here.	0:21:26
M	How would you even...	0:21:56
N	Beds are 2 feet wide.	0:21:59
M	This room is about 10 feet by 5 feet.	0:22:02
N	10 by 8, and the beds were only 2 feet wide, and raised, probably the top of the bed was above the railing, so storage underneath would be for a suitcase. That's when I started to realize how tough it was for those poor buggers. I know they were sending money home, and their life possessions was the suitcase and box they had under their bed, that's it. I don't want to jump too far ahead, if you have any more questions here, but as I got older, I was driving, and Dad would get a call, at dinnertime or later. It would say so and so collapsed on [Elizabeth], and he had Dad's number, so Dad was to go down. And sometimes we got there fast and the ambulance was still there working on him or pick them up, but the first thing I noticed was that his pockets were always turned out. So they had stolen whatever he had, all right. They would say they were just doing it to get the number to call Dad, but there was no	0:22:07
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M	[He] was basically depending on the ethnic economy.	0:23:57
N	Yeah. Dad would have this safe, and there would be all these names on these slots and envelopes in them.	0:24:03
M	What was that like for you? You're 71, and I'm listening to you speak, and it's still – pardon my language – but it's still fucking you up a little.	0:24:15
N	Well, it bothered me.	0:24:26
M	Just seeing the reaction in you now, to see those working conditions. And we've just scratched the surface of them.	0:24:27
N	<p>I would say it was often. We always had these guys, specially those who were working for Dad. And those who worked for Dad for years would still come back. And they were really nice old guys cause they had no kids. They were here alone. They couldn't bring their wives then, or what you. So it was tough. And you should see that on them.</p> <p>This cousin of ours who moved in with us, his grandfather was in Canada, so they hadn't seen each other for years. He's the oldest of his son's sons, so of course he tries to exert control over him, and it's pretty tough when [inaudible] an older guy. So he looked more to my Dad for guidance than he would his grandfather. But his grandfather was a tough old guy, always gave him what for. As soon as he finished school, he moved away to Montreal. He was sure good. In fact, his mother died a couple of weeks ago, and he was back in Toronto. Hadn't seen him for a few years.</p> <p>You could see how tough it was. You knew that these guys didn't make a lot of money, and whatever money they had, they were sending most of it home, still, in whatever way they could. And you wonder, what did they get out of life. In comparison, we were living like kings. We had a TV set, watched a hockey game, do thing and go places. They were tied down back in Toronto with nowhere to go except back and forth to work. When they go back to their building, their home, I guess. That all they had. When they died, they still did the old-fashioned thing. Dad would arrange to have their bones or bodies sent back, whether they still had anyone back there to send things to; in most cases they did. Most of the guys I knew back then in my Dad's years and with me growing up, most of the were single, old guys who were tied down to the system, that they couldn't do much about bringing family. It was a new life for them but...</p>	0:24:38
M	It wasn't much of a life.	0:27:40
N	I wondered if it was an improvement over what they did. The ones who did open up a bit, and they worked on the railway, they were cooks, and stuck in the middle of Saskatoon. They had little stories to tell.	0:27:41
M	What do you mean, little stories, that they didn't have much to say or that they didn't want to say much?	0:28:00

N	They probably didn't want to say much. But they seemed for their position in life, they were surprisingly content like when they were talking, they were very friendly, they were laughing and telling things.	0:28:06
M	In Cantonese or in English?	0:28:26
N	<p>Half and half. That old grandfather I was telling you about, he knew more about me than most of them. He would teach me how to hold my fists, and he says: "Learn Kung Foo." To protect yourself at all times, the guys got a weapon. He was very close to us, and would be there for most Saturday night dinners, if dinner was at home. It was good to see that part of history. It taught us a little bit about where Dad came from too.</p> <p>Dad didn't like to talk a lot about his time in China. Other than that, he wasn't bad. But he never wanted to. He said: "I came here to have a better life for my kids." They all said that, but Dad really meant it. So he wasn't too worried. He seemed to go with the flow.</p> <p>I knew the people who were calling Dad to bitch about us, playing in the neighbourhood. They were the same people who would come around to the store and say: "Could you give a donation to their church. Manor Road Church needs whatever." And Dad would do it. He'd give them something. And I asked him once: "Dad, you know who that guy is." He says: "I know. But we have to live in the community, and it's no big deal. We can do this." But I said: "Dad, isn't that sort of a two-faced way of putting things, when he's supposed to represent the church, and he's yelling at us when he's not in the church?" So he says: "Yeah, but that's the way it is."</p>	0:28:28
M	Do you think that's translated into your life?	0:30:37
N	I wasn't a religious person. You learn to evaluate people very well. It's really helped me in my business, because I deal with claimants who are lying and cheating, screwing everybody. That was probably the best lesson I ever had, how people can say one thing and do another. And do it with a straight face.	0:30:42
M	I want to shift gears a bit. You've spoken quite eloquently and articulately about the conditions that you saw in terms of the men living in Chinatown. Does that translate into your own life at all, not necessarily the discrimination that affected them, but in my particular school of training, the biggest lesson that I've taken from years of graduate school is that language matters so much, and the way you describe people and make sense of their lives. A strategy that I use to speak to people about these conversations and relate them to my life is to say that all of the racism that experienced has survived and affects my life. We begin to have a conversation how some Chinese men or women,	0:31:28
M	I want to shift gears a bit. You've spoken quite eloquently and articulately about the conditions that you saw in terms of the men living in Chinatown. Does that translate into your own life at all, not necessarily the discrimination that affected them, but in my particular school of training, the biggest lesson that I've	0:31:28



	<p>I put it into categories too. I can remember I was at floor hockey tournament in Jarvis Collegiate when I was 14 or so. We had a good gym facility in [Hodson] so we did all sorts of sports. There was some yelling from the other side when we were playing. I was the top scorer for our team for the particular event. I remember coming out. Coach had to drive us here in those days because he wouldn't want to do to Jarvis Collegiate at night without another [dog?] with you. The other team was coming out of the gym and they said: "Do you know how many goal that fucking Chink scored?" I didn't know whether that was another type of respect combined with racism or whatever, because I know I could kick their ass. That's one thing I liked about sports that probably got me into it. I had a little bit of skill, but it was a chance to legally get even. Like you could ram guys into the boards. I found that satisfying, probably more than the winning or losing. If I see that guy again, he's going to know that it was me who put his face in the boards, and maybe he'll treat me a little different, just out of respect because he knows what I can do. Maybe it's a little sick, I don't know.</p>	0:33:20
M	<p>I don't think it's easy. When you get to the point of analyzing, it's not a question of sick or not, it's a question of, it makes big sense.</p>	0:35:08
N	<p>I know that going to public school, I know that it was probably one of the most enjoyable parts of my life. Because probably after grade 5, I guess, things seemed to be changing. I didn't get a challenge every day. Only from new kids coming into the school. Toronto was an upwardly mobile area. It was a middle-class area there, so people would come in and then go on. Now it's upper class in that area, but in those days, it was lower middle class, and they would move in for a couple of years and then move to the suburbs. I wouldn't get a challenge until there was a couple of new kids in. And again, I'm the only non-white in the school, so it usually happened within the first week. It got gradually better. And then the other kids, I had a lot of good friends, super guys I still see once in a while, run into them. And they were very loyal back then too, and they would recommend to people, "Don't even try. You're going to get thrashed." So that was good, it eliminated a lot of stuff.</p> <p>Our whole family went to Hodson, the first seven of us. My older brother was the brightest of the brood. We all had to meet his standard as we went through the school. The teachers said that [inaudible] had all A's that year, so we all had to meet that. And we all did very well there. I give the teachers there a lot of credit too, because they were in those days, the teachers stayed in the same school for their whole career, it seems. These guys saw a</p>	0:35:20
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M	Did the community provide a safe haven in that respect? You'd spoken about it to some degree with your Dad. I'm realizing this now that as much as there are very distinct and different Chinese communities today. There was that Chinese community in North Toronto and then there was that Chinese community in Chinatown. Was there interaction between the two of them?	0:39:06
N	Yeah, like I said, we'd be down there at least once a week, walking the streets. We'd spend time down in Chinatown. A lot of times, we'd park and we'd eat, and then walk Dad over to where he was going for the rest of the day. So we'd see a lot of people down there, and run into other families. There wasn't a lot of, in those days, there was some shops in Chinatown, but there weren't a lot of young kids. When I became a teenager, that's when the kids started to arrive in downtown Chinatown. Their parents would have a store there and there would young kids and I met a lot of them. They all went through the same thing. I don't know if the neighbourhood was protective or not.	0:39:12
M	This is your neighbourhood or Chinatown?	0:40:20
N	Say go back to my neighbourhood. Dad bought a new car in 1954, a big Chrysler four-door, a flagship in those days. It was the first car Dad had here, and we loved it because we were always driving around in the truck. And I remember the looks that we got, oh my God. You could feel it. Envy. Jealousy.	0:40:23
M	Something the classic cars do.	0:41:04
N	Powder blue. So this is [inaudible].	0:41:07
M	That's a standout. And a bunch of Chinese people?	0:41:15
N	Yeah, we had all the windows open. We had some customers, some good people too. There always is. For every bad, there's a couple of goodies out there. By and large, the neighbourhood was probably better than average. I can't say they were all racist. There was that degree of racist, more than there is today, maybe. Today, ...	0:41:22
M	It's different now. Still there.	0:42:06
N	Oh man, is it ever. Still there, but done in a different way.	0:42:07
M	And done in a different way. Thank you MacLeans Magazine. Every year, there's a new racist, like a new car.	0:42:12
N	Sure there is. The neighbourhood was good to a point. I did get into a couple of fights over "Ah yeah, your family's doing fine. They got a store." Then I'd get into it: "Yeah, but your drunken dad doesn't have to support your family."	0:42:21
M	They would say that to you?	0:42:39
N	Yeah, you've got a store, so look how good you guys are. I said: "So why won't your dad get a job or something?" Like you'd know their dad's not doing anything, or he's a drunk. And that lead from one thing to another.	0:42:41
N	Yeah, you've got a store, so look how good you guys are. I said: "So why won't your dad get a job or something?" Like you'd know their dad's not doing anything, or he's a drunk. And that lead from one thing to another. There was a lot of jealousy that way. and not that we had	0:42:41

M	This was a bunch of Chinese kids just playing baseball.	0:44:47
N	No, not too many Chinese kids.	0:44:51
M	So actually, there was some interaction.	0:44:52
N	Oh yeah. All my sports growing up in North Toronto were all with white kids. There was no Chinese here to play, except my brothers. I used to play on three different teams at a time one summer.	0:44:54
M	Is that what you used to do for fun, basically? Sports, work in the store, go to school.	0:45:11
N	Yes.	0:45:15
M	Was that weird?	0:45:18
N	No, I thought it was great.	0:45:19
M	Clearly, it's been a crucial part of your life, probably affected you in many different ways. Being the one Chinese kid. You were constantly the one Chinese kid. It's interesting in having this interview. I almost wish there was a video recording. And I relate to you, because this is resonating with me on some level. When you speak of certain topics, there is definitely a deeply sentimental moment in how you speak about them in how you speak about them. You get visibly moved when talking about the old Chinese men, and yet there is this very severe athleticism there. I can relate to that because you need to do that to survive. What was that like to continually operate between that world and the different world that you had to do. Say, thinking when you saw the tongs, and when you simply just had fun.	0:45:21
N	Yeah, those tongs bothered me a lot when I saw them those guys had to work so hard to live the way they lived, just to survive. And then their end came in such an inglorious way, dying on the street. There was no safety net in those days.	0:46:32
M	Dying in the street, literally?	0:46:54
N	Like they'd be walking down Chinatown and suddenly have a heart attack or something.	0:46:55
M	That actually happened?	0:47:00
N	Yeah. Some of the calls we had.	0:47:01
M	And your Dad would have to deal with it.	0:47:05
N	Yeah. And where to send them. So that part was a little difficult. As I got to be an older teenager, 17-18, you knew you had to be a little different to succeed.	0:47:06
M	What does that mean, exactly?	0:47:34
N	Dad would say: "If you're doing something, and they guy beside you is a white kid, you're going to have to be twice as good as him to get the same results." And Dad said that a lot of times, even when I started working. I remember him saying: "That's very good what you did, because I know what you probably had to go through." So he knew the problems we had growing up.	0:47:38
N	Dad would say: "If you're doing something, and they guy beside you is a white kid, you're going to have to be twice as good as him to get the same results." And Dad said that a lot of times, even when I started working. I remember him saying: "That's very good what you did, because I know what you probably had	0:47:38

M	So you didn't even go to university. You went straight from high school. What was your high school again?	0:48:57
N	Northern. And one of the problems once I met my first wife, when in grade 12, and up until then I was doing fine. But her family was really screwed. Her mother beat the shit out of her. She had nine kids, and she beat the shit out of all of them. And the father was much older. He had got her and brought her over as a bride, you know, one of those set-ups. There was a lot of abuse all around. That's all she knew. She came over as a thirteen years old, who worked as a housemaid until he bought her. She was 14 or 15 or something. And she proceeds to have nine kids. When they were growing up into their old teens. He's an old man, well into his eighties when I met my wife. But she was the first Chinese girl that I thought was half-decent, that I thought I could relate to. And you had asked me about dating. I can remember one of my best friends at the time, I thought he was my best friend. I had gone to his cottage for the weekend, and we had gone golfing. He taught me how to golf. We were coming home, either the second or third time, and he had a sister who was a year or so younger, and I don't know why he said it, but he said: "My sister really likes you." So I'm 16, 17 at this time. And discovering women, girls. "She really likes you. And you know, if you weren't Chinese." Fuck, I never went out with him again.	0:49:01
M	I have a couple of friends like that.	0:51:06
N	I mean, what a stupid thing to say.	0:51:07
M	But he probably didn't even understand what he was saying, right?	0:51:12
N	He's never apologized for saying it. It's funny because I ran into him. He ended up being superintendent of public schools here in Toronto. We talked about old times. So my current wife, she's an unbelievable woman, she invites this guy to my 60 <sup>th</sup> birthday party. I don't know how she got in touch with him. It's a big deal, a great party with 100 people. It was really neat. Joseph was there. I saw him for a few times, touched base again. I gave him an opening. I asked him about his sister: "How's she doing these days?" He said: "Aw shit, she's been married twice and divorced, and all sorts of troubles. I said: "Yeah, I always liked her. Nice lady."	0:51:14
M	I realize that with a lot of these incidents, people usually don't remember what they say.	0:52:41
N	Oh yeah. You remember them. They affect you in some way.	0:52:46
M	I was told when I was 18-17, and this was after – this is a complete aside from the actual interview – it was one of those all-night parties when you're a teenager. This girl, for no reason,	0:52:51
M	I was told when I was 18-17, and this was after – this is a complete aside from the actual interview – it was one of those all-night parties when you're a teenager. This girl, for no reason, we were just talking about who people were attracted to, and this is a pretty white [or wild] girl who's continuously popped	0:52:51

N	I used to envy kids with blond hair until I was about 14.	0:53:48
M	And that's still happening. I think I want to wrap up this interview by asking one last question to sort of Segway into the next one. Then after this I will send you the interview questions that I was supposed to send you before. It's just a questionnaire, basically. You go through the different questions, and it helps you think through a lot of the stuff that we talked about today. I think given how we spoke before the interview, I know a bit about your life. I know you're married to a white woman now, and you were married to a Chinese woman before. What was your thinking about romance or sexuality? Was it influenced by what you saw in Chinatown, was it influenced by [inaudible] "Chink" [inaudible]?	0:53:52
N	It probably was. When I was in high school, there was then a few Chinese families moving in North Toronto. There was a few Chinese girls in our school, but in that era, but most of the Chinese kids went to Jarvis Collegiate, which was the big school for Chinese back in those days.	0:54:54
M	Was there a particular reason for that?	0:55:18
N	Just district of residence, that's all. So there was not many our way. So I never got a chance to meet many Chinese girls in my early teens. There was a few at Northern. I can remember talking to them, but no magic light going off. At this stage, your feet are in two camps. The old banana explanation.	0:55:20
M	Did you even use that term back in the day? Yellow on the outside, white...	0:56:00
N	Oh yeah, it was no different. And it was hard no to, because you were brought up in that society. You go back to your family, your everyday life is meeting non-Chinese. Everybody around you, a lot of good friends in both schools. Did it affect me that way? I did like a lot of the non-Chinese girls. They were sort of an outsider, to get into their social ring. I didn't drink, for one thing. And not for any reason other than I didn't like it, the taste of it.	0:56:02
M	Do you drink now?	0:56:57
N	No. Half my brothers do, and my sisters, but it just never appealed to me.	0:57:00
M	Did your Dad drinking affect you in that respect?	0:57:14
N	No, Dad didn't drink. He had a bottle of - what was it called - "Old Stepfather", an old guy on the bottle. He would have a beer Friday night dinner, when Mom would usually cook deep-fried chicken, and Dad loved a beer with that. But other than that, he'd have a sip of whisky - Old Stepfather - on special occasions. But Dad would never drink. Mom would have a sip of his beer, and that would be the extent of her drinking, and Dad would	0:57:17
N	No, Dad didn't drink. He had a bottle of - what was it called - "Old Stepfather", an old guy on the bottle. He would have a beer Friday night dinner, when Mom would usually cook deep-fried chicken, and Dad loved a beer with that. But other than that, he'd have a sip of whisky - Old Stepfather - on special occasions.	0:57:17

M	It's the whitest thing in the world to do, really.	0:58:20
N	We never had a cottage. I never saw a large body of water, like Lake Ontario, until I was 15. We stayed in inner city all the time. When we were in high school, we had a swimming pool, and I was terrified of it. That's the one thing I've never been able to do, is become a good swimmer. I went out on some boys and girls going out to things.	0:58:25
M	Group dates.	0:58:59
N	<p>Group dates. And they were fun, but nothing ever became of them. I got a call one day, I guess I was 17-18, still in high school, from a friend of my Mom's, saying the Chinese United Church – it's not there now, it's where the [inaudible] Hotel now is – and they want to start a young people's group to get all the Toronto Chinese teenagers together because there was no such thing out there. And they said: "Would you like to go?" And I said: "That might be fun." [Doug Yip], he was doing much about what you're doing now, but he lost his eyesight. Anyways, he said he would with me, so we went there. And jeez, there is some good-looking Chinese girls out there. Pretty group, I guess. It started out with 20 or 30 of us. With my penchant for organizing things, I tried to make it grow. I was the quasi leader of it.</p> <p>We started having events, and we put on a couple of dances. All of a sudden, we were getting 100 kids every Friday night or Saturday. It was fantastic. We starting meeting all these kids. This went on for... and we were having good events. We would have a sporting event, a picnic, have races and stuff. We went to events in and around Toronto. We did go to one of the lakes, and that was when I realized how big the water is! I think we went out to [inaudible]. Had our licenses, we'd pile a bunch of people in our cars and drove up there, and it was pretty neat. This went on for about a year. There was a Christmas event, and various other events. And there was always somebody there from the church, church elders if you will. It wasn't that we were doing anything wrong or anything like that. After about a year and a half, somebody said to someone that they thought it was getting out of hand. So I said: We'll disband it. I won't go anymore. I have all my numbers of the friends. I guess they thought we were becoming too assimilated or something.</p> <p>I got a lot a lot of these kids from downtown Chinatown whose parents had the stores there. And it was great that I had met a lot of those kids, and they were the same as me. They were going through all the same stuff. We would get together and throw a football around. We did that even after we broke down. We still getting together and playing various things. That part was really good and I don't regret that. And I met my wife there,</p>	0:59:00
N	Group dates. And they were fun, but nothing ever became of them. I got a call one day, I guess I was 17-18, still in high school, from a friend of my Mom's, saying the Chinese United Church – it's not there now, it's where the [inaudible] Hotel now is – and they want to start a young people's group to get all the Toronto	0:59:00

M	[Forty?] years later	1:05:55
N	Here I am. I was lucky, too. Dad would always say, nobody's going to hire you if you don't have a university degree. I said OK Dad, but I've got to move in this direction for a while anyway.	1:05:56
M	Did you ever go back?	1:06:14
N	No.	1:06:16
M	That's amazing, and you're a V.P.	1:06:17
N	I've taken a lot of courses.	1:06:20
M	Effectively, they've been paying you to go to school.	1:06:23
N	<p>It's a not bad way. I've had a good life. No bitches from me on my life in general. But after this good, I went to a company called State Farm Insurance, a big U.S. company. Their interview process was unreal. I interviewed on and off for over a month. But I had three years' experience by then. I went through the interview process, and the first thing they did was send me down to the States, to one of their training schools. It was six weeks at the time. I'd never gone out of Ontario. So I'm going down there. It was amazing – six weeks of cramming, they just bash you with everything they want you to know. It's what they want you to know, not what you know. But it was great, I got all the basics in training, and I did very well.</p> <p>As my Dad would tell everybody: "Steve was the first Chinese person hired by State Farm. He was the first superintendent." I got that after 4-5 years, I was promoted to superintendent, it was their top job then, similar to a claims manager, almost a V.P. job in those days. They actually quoted that in their – they wouldn't do that today, it would be politically incorrect. You wouldn't brag about something like that. It said I was the first one of Chinese descent to reach this position.</p> <p>They were worldwide, well, not worldwide, but through North America, in Hawaii, and all through California, San Francisco, so they had quite a few Chinese people working for them. They taught me a lot and I really enjoyed my time there. It was again a stepping stone to do other things. At the time, they were the only company to do intensive training, so when I left there, I was able to translate that into saying I could bring the company into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, update all your systems.</p>	1:06:25
M	And now you're here.	1:08:50
N	Here, I'm on the down slope but it's a lot of fun here too.	1:08:52
M	Well, you've been doing it long enough where I think it a good time to slow down. When you told me you were still working at 71, Steve.	1:08:56
N	I tell people that when you get a divorce, it's a new career, a new life.	1:09:02
M	Let's save that for interview 2.	1:09:12
N	You have to work.	1:09:14
M	I'm going to stop this.	1:09:15

N	All right. That's Good	1:09:16
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