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Interview with Jamie Shih About Her Ethnic Background (FA 601)

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Shih: I have it, there.

Adler: Okay. Something wasn't plugged in. Okay, if you could state for the tape your name and age and address.

Shih: My name is Jamie L. Shih and address is 3390...

Adler: Occupation.

Shih: Well, I'm an old hand...

Adler: Food?

Shih: Food and homemaker.

Adler: Okay.

Shih: Or we can say a domestic engineer [laughter- Adler] and a part-time student at UK.

Adler: Okay. And what are you... what classes are you taking?

Shih: I hope I will be a communication major.

Adler: What kind of communication do you want to go into?

Shih: Well, any kind, it's just communication.

Adler: I mean, radio or television, print?

Shih: I don't know about television but I'm interested in radio ever since, you know, I'm a young girl. But ...

Adler: It's never too late to start. And when is your birthday?

Shih: It is March 4th. [machine makes a strange noise and audio goes off or skips briefly, either she didn't tell what year or it skipped it]

Adler: And what is your country of origin? Where were you born?

Shih: I was born in mainland China?

Adler: Where? [audio makes that noise again and skips some words]

Shih: A very beautiful place.

Adler: What was it, tell me about what it was like growing up there.

Shih: Well, I really, you know, I had a very few years to spend in my hometown, actually, because I was born there but since I was five years old, that was 19... [sound again and audio skips]

Adler: She was pregnant.

Shih: Yes, yes.

Adler: So, she couldn't leave then.

Shih: She couldn't leave with all the property and my grandfather, my grandmother, at that time, really my father thought, it just, you know, really try to go... [audio skips] ... coming into country, you are not welcome if you belong to another party.

Adler: [audio sound again] And you were really too young to leave without your mother who couldn't leave.

Shih: No, actually I was growing up in Taiwan, yeah I spend... [audio skips again]

Adler: Is your family able to get back together again?

Shih: Oh, yeah, there was finally, [sound and skips again]... we feel safe and we can go back to it. I have all the pictures, I'll show you.

Adler: Oh, good, good.

Shih: Because I think it is really important to let my children... [sound and skip]

Adler: So, did your father raise you or did you have other relatives in Taiwan?

Shih: My father later got married and so, I have a step-mother. I have two half-brothers and one half-sister. [sound again and skip]

Adler: Where in Taiwan did you live?

Shih: Taijume [?, counter 36, sounds like this], it is central Taiwan. Taijume in the central part.

Adler: And is it a big city?

Shih: Yes, yes. It is a harbor.

Adler: What was it like growing up there? What was your house like? Did you have a house or an apartment?

Shih: Bamboo, okay? It, the roof is made of bamboo, the clay wall, of course, because my father joined the army. [audio skips] All the government can build is like a temporary cottage, with no privacy at all. You can tell basically very simple. But that was my best year because all the kids, you know, everywhere, it's just like a big, huge family. We'd go anywhere, we're barefooted, you know. Well, normally, we wear something but since the Taiwanese people, that was really early, like 1950's, early, early 50's, and you know, people, they're poor and they, normally [?], they think even shoes are a luxury, you know, commodity.

Adler: Uh-huh, and if the climate allows it, why not?

Shih: Yeah, allows, yeah, that's why. All the clay, the dirt, not like right now...beautiful. I feel sorry for my children because they grew up in such a protected and controlled environment, really, I think, it's too bad. They'll never get this kind of... [audio makes sound and skips]

Adler: Where did you go to school then?

Shih: Oh, I went to, ah, okay, first I went to the elementary school [skips]... actually pick up their Taiwanese dialect at school like that because we mingled with the Taiwanese students.

Adler: And you were still young, too.

Shih: I was still young, that's where the trick. Now, you can tell. My English, I will, you know, struggle, almost for thirty years but still getting nowhere. So, I was, I went... [sound and skip] and when I graduated from, finished my ninth grade, I went to, ah, [skips] like a national _____ [?, counter 63] center.

Adler: Is that like a high school?

Shih: Yeah, high school, vocational type of training. And I was... [skips] A year before I graduated I met my husband. [skips] Where in a ward, I guess, in hospital.

Adler: You didn't have an arranged marriage or anything like that.

Shih: Oh, no, no, no. We met at, you know, hospital. [sound and skip]

Adler: But when you were growing up and there were all those kids, what kind of games did you play?

Shih: Oh, goodness, wow, I'm good at it. Well, of course, if I use Chinese it will be much more easier, but just basically, you know, everything, everything we can get hands on. Okay. We don't have a lot of money to buy, you know, toys, so called toy like the modern children, you know, of America or western country. Even in Taiwan, they're rich and can get all kinds of, but we were, we were create, creativity, use our imagination. For instance, we played this fruit seed, we used the inside, the fruit seed, oh, you can play all kinds of games. [sound again]

Adler: What, what did you do with them? What kinds of games did you play? Did they have names?

Shih: Oh... yeah, they have names but usually just you play along with other kids. A whole bunch of kids would watch and then the two players, you know, they...

Adler: Sort of like marbles, use them like marbles.

Shih: Like marbles, you spread them on the floor, okay. And then, you choose whatever the two you think it is nearest, here and here, and then you make line. And then you [sound of hand hitting hand]

Adler: You hit them.

Shih: You hit then the other one pick up. Whoever one that wins the game, you know, pick up the most. And then those that stand, how do you say those tiny little sand bags.

Adler: Like a potpourri?

Shih: Yeah, something like that, I think I can find it in here. [she walks away from microphone] Something like this. You made with beans or sand.

Adler: Oh, like a bean bag.

Shih: Bean bag or something, you know, you play, you play, I mean you do whatever.

Adler: Juggle them.

Shih: Yeah, juggle them around and then, okay, as Chinese, we use those chicken feathers... [sound and skips] and with paper and then you tie them up with a coin [?] and then you use the scissors, or you don't have scissors, you just tear the paper down... [sound and skips] and then, you know, you kick, kick, like this.

Adler: Oh!

Shih: And you make all kinds of them, you know, just creatively. And then you tie the, how do you say, the rubber band?

Adler: Uh-hmm.

Shih: Oh, you play, I mean, all kinds.

Adler: So, what do you do with rubber bands?

Shih: Rubber bands, you tie them up.

Adler: Make them real long.

Shih: Make them real long, yeah, real long, like rope, tie them. You just jump or at first they were low or then, you know, higher and higher. And then because of the rubber band you can use your feet or something, you know, grab one side and then twist it, you know, make all kinds of, almost like acrobatic type, you know. But we have no idea, just have play, just have fun.

Adler: Sure.

Shih: Yeah, and I remember every day to go to school is an adventure because with all the wildflowers. This is really the true story I always tell my children, you know, how I was growing up in Taiwan that was because I had the environment and the freedom, you know, not so many cars. You know, I can remember run like a wild animal, almost like that. And then you pick up those flowers and you tasted it, you know, uhhh, sometimes they were sweet and sometimes they were, you know, bitter, but everyday, you know, just put your bag, that's all and

after you finished your homework, oh, you ran here and there and almost like, I think it's like twenty minute walk, quite a distance. But everybody...

Adler: Uh-hmm, it took you two hours. [laughing]

Shih: Oh, yeah, that was really, all those memories never fade. They stay with you forever. At that time you don't have any, you don't have nothing really, I mean materially, nothing.

Adler: But nobody else did, so you didn't care so much.

Shih: No. But it was a rich, rich, rich, powerful, powerful experience, that you would never forget.

Adler: Well, what was it like in school? What was the school like that you went to?

Shih: Ah, school, you mean, elementary school?

Adler: Yeah. [sound of machine cutting out again, skips words]

Shih: ...as a Chinese student, you know, we obeyed teacher. We looked at a teacher almost like a saint, you know, Confucius, just, just we worship our teacher. No doubt, absolute obedience, almost like that. Well, that's the way, that's the norm when I grew up. You have to, you know, [machine sound again, and skips] ...a class an average of sixty students, you know, side by side, sometimes a girl and a boy.

Adler: Like on a bench or something.

Shih: Yeah, a bench, wooden like, you just tuck your bookcase or something and then sometimes we mark a line, a clear line on the table. Yeah, we sit side by side, one boy and one girl. Sometimes all girls and all boys, something like that but you never tried to...

Adler: Everybody had their own space.

Shih: Oh, yes, yes, yes. And if you do something, I mean you didn't make a good grade or something, the teacher would just, oh, [sound and skip]... I mean really severe.

Adler: What would they do?

Shih: Oh, they, they used this little tiny, ah, it depends on how old you are, I guess. The lower grade, I mean, first grader through third maybe, you know, be gentle, use little tiny twig or something.

Adler: On the bare hand, on the palm

Shih: Yeah, of course, the teacher always, we were, oh, okay, she got handed. I mean that's the way because as you know,... [machine sound and skip] ...by the family pursue... [skip] ...academically, they actually, the Chinese, even in China we have castes. Not as obvious as

India. We've got [sound and skip] ... eight or though they use this learned knowledge or skill. They'll, it will be a ladder, help you climb the political career, maybe latter you will become something. That's why all the parents, they, they said, okay the best thing to do is to study and make good grades, be a good student.

Adler: Tell me about your wedding then when you got married, what was that like?

Shih: Oh, okay. The wedding, I was, you know, I think, my husband and I we are, we know each other until around four years later since we met. [sound and skip] Four years later...

Adler: Were you engaged all that time?

Shih: Yes. Oh, I'm a very old fashion girl. Well, I guess that's because parts of the social norm... [skips] ...even though we already knew each other for four years but before you know, one day my husband, I remember this, this is how I told my children. Did Dad ever propose to you? I said, yeah, in a way. I said, oh, he said, let's go to your home and tell your father, that, you know, we're going to get married. That's all he said. [laughter] Really nothing like the movie, you know, stereotype, romantic, you know, one leg and knee go down or something, like Rhet Butler proposed to Scarlet O'Hara. Nothing like that. But once we decided we wanted to get married and my husband... [sound and skip] ... he has to ask another person, the person that he will represent, the whole family, a courtesy call. [skips] Then propose to the Lee family's daughter and then ...

Adler: Who did they have for the middle man? Is it a relative or somebody outside the family?

Shih: Yeah, they have to, usually the middle man, well, in ancient time there is a [skips] ... you should say.

Adler: But that would be an arranged marriage.

Shih: Yeah, that was ancient time. You know, the formality is still there. The parents in their heart, if they want to marry their daughter to someone else, they still... because see, my father is eighty years old now. Well, they grew up in this culture, agriculture society from China and then moved to Taiwan. [skip] The kind of formality, especially, I married to a Taiwanese. You know all the, the Chinese, they were ...[skips] ... I mean timid. A lot of people from mainland China they married a Taiwanese girl. But, well, at my time, I mean it's already, I mean everybody mingled. They married, but still it's a little bit minority. You know, a girl from mainland China married to a boy born in Taiwan.

Adler: Which group was considered the minority?

Shih: The minority, well, that, if the girl from mainland China married to a Taiwanese boy that's a minority. The majority Taiwanese girl, they like to marry, people from mainland China.

Adler: Now, why was that?

Shih: Oh, because, I don't know, something like, you know, more prestige, maybe, and they will have a better life, you know, much easier life. Or just envy, out of envy or something because at that time, life is very, you know, it's harsh. But turned out, my husband's family is a very well-to-do family, their family has three doctors. And from my father-in-law on, you know, his brother, his younger brother, is a OB-GYN doctor.

Adler: Was that the exception more than the reality?

Shih: Usually, even though we are all Chinese, I'm a northerner, my husband's family comes from southern. Okay, Canton, where along the seacoast... [skips] that's why all the, you know, the Cantonese, they have [skips] ... that pattern still before we're getting married because even though we are all Chinese, there is a difference. Just like right now the Chinese from mainland China and then the Chinese... [skips] and then the Chinese living in the United States for quite some time, we still, we have difference. Even the language, we know, we know each other. Even the language, the terms are still different. You can tell right away, I mean, you know, he's from there.

Adler: Because they are speaking a newer Chinese or something.

Shih: Yeah, newer or older or local, you know, depends on their, on where their raising is. So, if I mean, we know you speak fluently Taiwanese, everything, but you know do you know if you will get along with your in-laws, your, your, your... [skips] Well, yeah, at that time I was, yeah, a little bit worried and then I asked... [skips] ... you know, we live in Taiwan. We're just like the Taiwanese. We're all Chinese. And besides, you are married to your husband, not to his family. You know, these family, later, I mean the most important person to you is your husband. The in-laws...

Adler: But traditionally would you have gone and lived with your husband's family then?

Shih: Usually.

Adler: And so, maybe that is why that is more of a concern.

Shih: Uh-hmm, usually, like that because, you know... [skips] if you are lucky you have five generations under one roof, you know. That's a thousand years of history in China. And besides... [skips]

Adler: And your father obviously approved.

Shih: Approved, yeah. [skips] So, yeah, on the calendar. Both my father-in-law and mother-in-law, they all... [skips] ... each day is a good day for engage... [skips] what is your zodiac sign? I mean, is it good. Oh, my father looking for, oh, wow, because I am a monkey, year of monkey... [skips] ... that's the best match. Yeah, a good match.

Adler: So, you were compatible. That was lucky. What would have happened if you hadn't of been?

Shih: Hadn't been, if we had been strong willed or were strong headed and just had to get married, maybe my father still, you know, would let me get married, or something.

Adler: But wouldn't have felt as good about it.

Shih: No, wouldn't feel as all the way. [skips] No roadblocks, whatsoever, it will be a good marriage all the way. [skips] Every parent, I guess, no matter where you are.

Adler: Is there a special person that they would consult about that, about your horoscope?

Shih: Yeah, a lot of the people, we call funchey [?], maybe you heard of funchey.

Adler: Is it spellable in English?

Shih: I'm not sure about the spelling. Funchey means really, I mean people can tell from where you live or where your hus... [skips] surrounding the house. And there is a good or if it is bad then people just, you know, almost like a fortune teller. But they just know, or maybe they have more geological ... [skips] Oh, they are very big business, big, big business. Even now a lot of the rich Taiwanese merchants they come overseas, no matter to Canada or United State, no matter where, before they are buying a building or a house, or they are buying a lot to build factory, something like that, this the funchey is the first person they will consult. They buy ticket, they let them fly to here and you know, first, I mean they check out, the location to see if it is good for their business. Yeah. If it turns out that it is a good one or something wrong, they...[skips]

Adler: Do you know people here who have done that?

Shih: People still do this. We, we...

Adler: Did you do this?

Shih: We read the newspaper [?] or something like that. For instance, this house, when I purchased this, well, I liked the number. 3390, well, 3 times 3 is 9. Chinese people like six. Six

is good, okay. Six means _____ [Neo ?, counter 283] Neo is the tone. _____
[Jeo ?] means, nine means Jeo. Jeo means forever, eternity.

Adler: I have a good address then 330.

Shih: Oh, yeah, you know.

Adler: That's why my kids don't want us to sell the house. [laughing]

Shih: For some people, like 9864, from the higher number to the down number, some people may... [skips] ... but it all depends. It's not that strong anymore but some people when they are conscious of it or something, whatever triggered them to think about this. Yeah.

Adler: Now, is there anybody here that does that?

Shih: No, not really, not really. Yeah, I have a phone number that I don't think is a very good phone number, you know, or the number... [skips] It is in our sub-conscious, I guess. Once in a while...

Adler: But there is not anybody here that could guide you, you have to just learn this growing up.

Shih: Yeah, I mean we were growing up in that environment. Whenever you had any doubt you burn an incense... [skips] communicate with one god, [skips]... people do not know that... [skips] if they ever have any doubt they always go to the temple.

Adler: What did you, did you teach your children about that?

Shih: Oh, yes, yes, we have to. This is really the most difficult part. It's a real challenge. With my husband here, it is kind of, we're established. It's not quite... [skips] you almost have to pull your root, really. It will be a, I mean radical, a change completely. [skips] ... have to live or die. You can not make it. [skips] ... with the limited opportunity because we have... [skips] ... anybody wants to go to school you have the opportunity. Maybe different university, you know, but you still have the chance. But the entire way if you can not make it in on the SAT or college entrance, you are dead, you're dead meat if you can not make it. Not very many young people wanted to try year after year, there is some people trying us, it is a tremendous burden... [skips] almost day one, you had to put your children in a good, private kindergarten or preschool just in order to climb the, you know, hopefully, some day he or she will squeeze into a college. You know, we did this for our children. My daughter went to the most prestige, most expensive, private preschool, kindergarten, maybe.

Adler: To get her on the right track.

Shih: Oh, even my son, we know, because he is two years and eight months younger than my daughter, even by that time we already knew, we are going to the new world, you know. But since, my husband said, if we are not on the air, nothing will, you can not say for sure we are leaving this country. So, we'll still try our very best and spend, I don't know, five thousand dollars just for one semester to just get our son in a very good private preschool.

Adler: Now, was it like that when you growing up? Was it that competitive?

Shih: Not as, not as competitive as when my children's time. But I don't have, we don't have money, I do it on my own. I do pretty good at school usually. Not at the top of class. [skips] ... usually a class of like sixty people... [skips]

Adler: Where were your children born? Well, what was your wedding, let's start before children, what was your wedding like?

Shih: Oh, the wedding. Okay. First the middle man, because he is not a match-maker but he is...

Adler: So, it was a man.

Shih: Yeah, usually, if your son or daughter is getting married... [skips] usually a middle man because he is not a match-maker. He's just someone they know and that they... [skips] ... you want to choose someone and he is a good person. You want to ask someone like this you respect to go to in-laws [?, skips, unsure of words] ... and choose what day will be good for you and he will look at his calendar as well, double check. And they both agree, oh, yeah... [skips] ... a real dark pink, you know, color... [skips] you print something like that and then the family out... [skips] days before. The male's family... I'm talking my own experience in my husband's family. [skips] See, this is a Taiwanese... [skips] hand you box, something... [skips]

Adler: What was in it?

Shih: Oh, they made with, I don't know, all kinds of things, like sometimes like pie [skips] ...

Adler: So, meat pies and things of that...

Shih: Yeah, different food, the majority was food but with a Taiwanese flavor. They want to put pork in it. [skips] ... my family, we really don't care much about that but we have to respect, it is a Taiwanese custom and we are suppose to receive this whenever a friend gets an invitation or a neighbor or good friend. Something like making an announcement that my daughter is going to get married soon. This is her, you know, engagement. It is to let people know.

Adler: So, the pies are to give people who come to visit.

Shih: Come to visit or people got invitation, they mail some money here or something, yeah. And then the female side of the father, we don't have a dowry to give our daughter, usually ancient times you had... [skips] ... a case or something, something like that or a cosmetic, you know. I think my father purchased a wardrobe or a quilt, cotton quilt, quilted this much thick.

Adler: A couple inches thick.

Shih: Yeah, couple of inches thick. They have to go to this special shop just where people make this. They use an ancient cotton, a machine and whenever they push this the cotton will fluff, be fluffy, fluffy. [skips] ... like this shape, of course, they mix, not all cotton, sometimes they use those... [skips]. Remember the people are hanging up the ...

Adler: Corn?

Shih: Yeah, not corn, other kind.

Adler: Flax.

Shih: Some other kind, something like this, look at the picture here. Something like, something that is tied... they mix everything there, the majority was cotton.

Adler: Like cattails or something.

Shih: Yeah, people make broom, they decorate those brooms with flowers and then ribbons and then they hang them on their door. The witch [?], remember riding with the long broom. Something like that so he has ordered four of them.

Adler: Now, what are the quilts used for, are they bed coverings?

Shih: No, just like, you know, ...

Adler: Blankets?

Shih: Blankets, yeah, to keep you warm.

Adler: Do they have patterns on them or anything?

Shih: Oh, yeah, yeah, the cotton has nothing, once the cotton is done they all just put like, I don't know, string, tiny little string piece of cotton, almost like an oval shape. A rectangle shape and then they have to go to the stores and get white clothes and on top of the white clothes they buy something silk. [skips] Any, anything good, or a fire bird to make this top and then they cover this white clothes with the silk cover on top, you know, they sew them, yeah. Well, the Chinese way they sew this together because it is not permanent. Once in awhile you, you untie

them, you just cut off all the sutures, you know, and the stitches or something and then you can wash them.

Adler: Oh, okay.

Shih: And then the Chinese, maybe you already saw the Japanese, the Chinese with good weather... [silk] ... under the sun, let...

Adler: Let it air out.

Shih: Yeah, let it air out. We do.

Adler: What was your wedding like?

Shih: The wedding? Oh, okay. Uhhh, we have, I wed, ... [skips] The wedding was held in Taipei and my fa... [skips] ... three days later we have to go back to ... [skips] my family's side.

Adler: And then when, when you, how did you end up deciding to come to Kentucky?

Shih: That was, really that was, the first stop is not Kentucky. When we first came to United States, my... [skips] ... this is the first stop. Right before he finish, he is board eligible, he took the test and was offered a job...

Adler: And how old were your children when you came to the United States?

Shih: My daughter was six years old. My son was ... [skips] Oh, my daughter is March 28th and she'll be twenty-five years... [skips]... she'll understand the whole meaning. You'll be quarter century old. [laughing] My son will be twenty-two. So, it's a long way, yeah.

Adler: So, you have the two children.

Shih: That's all. Yeah. I have the two children. Live here and make it, and hopefully someday our children, you know, grow up and make, you know, fulfill their American dream of whatever they are pursuing. So, we have to, you know, do our very best to help them succeed. Not to, you know... [skips, laughter]

Adler: Do your children remember what it was like in Taiwan?

Shih: My daughter probably remembers a little bit more. She went to elementary school for a month. She grew up from preschool and kindergarten. That's why we try so hard to keep... [skips] at least halfway or just go out all the way.

Adler: Well, that's what I was wondering, how do you, what do you do to, uhhh, have them appreciate and remember their heritage? And what have you had to drop or change? What things are important?

Shih: The traditions, tradition, just traditions. Yes, whatever I learned whenever my husband and I, both our moral standards, you know, are brought up, you know, the value from both families and we try to pass on to our children. And we tell the stories... [skips]... the storyteller. And I just, you know, use my... [skips] ... basically I tell them the truth. But, I ...[skips] that way you make up something, I try to tell them... [skips] into the lunar calendar. Not all of them... just try our very best to make it. So, it is a big deal. I keep all the traditions from Chinese New Year.

Adler: Well, just stopped.

Shih: That's okay. Don't worry.

Adler: I'm not sure where it stopped. So, you keep the Chinese New Year.

Shih: Yeah, the food. I make dumplings. I put money in them. In northern China, people ancient time... [skips] they make a dumpling like shape, make gold [?] into dumpling shape.

Adler: [sound of microphone being moved around] The plug isn't working right.

Shih: Underneath or something.

Adler: Well, we just won't use the microphone. There's one on the tape microphone. There's a microphone on the tape recorder that works fine. That will pick it up. I'll have to get that microphone fixed. Something keeps stopping. Maybe it wasn't the microphone. The first time this has happened. Do you have ... I'll just run it on the batteries and see how long... I'll leave it like that. If it stops again, we'll just run it on the batteries and see how long the batteries will hold out. I don't know if... [moving things around in background] What unreliable equipment we have here. [long pause, sounds of things being moved around] I'm real sorry this is not.

Shih: That's fine.

Adler: If it will stay on with the battery on, then we'll be okay. [long pause] It seems to be working. Okay. We'll check completely where we were. Your wedding, the pies. [can not hear Shih's response]

Shih: .. in the male family and the female family, all the guests, the relatives, the friends and only after this, that means the marriage is done. Yeah, so, after that, right now, I was married in 1968, November 2nd, so, it's really over twenty-six years, I guess, twenty-seven, yeah. But sometime we are happy, I guess the union is going on, going strong. And now my daughter is twenty-five years old and my son is twenty-two and they both pursue their academic career after they graduate from college.

Adler: Uh-hmm, now were you, how do you feel about who they should or should not marry? Is that important to you?

Shih: I was telling my children along the way, I said that mom really does not have any limit put on you. The only people that I will not be very happy if you get involved would be Japanese. I said the reason is because the painful history. The Japanese invade China and they killed so many Chinese so brutally, I mean they were persecuted. I mean like ruthless. They just think the Chinese such nice people, they were an easy target. The westerners talk about Hitler, the brutality, you know, the lab, you know they have all the people marked.

Adler: Tattooed.

Shih: Tattooed, something like that. I tell you, the Japanese did the same thing in mainland China, in northeast, northern tip part of China. The Mancho [?] War where they have this big, big lab, they use the Chinese people, they did all kinds of, you know, experimental medical, experimental, that's why when we were a young student from school, teacher told us all the lessons from history and everything. I remember vividly when I was in junior high, in the middle of a history class [raises voice loud with emotion] "I'm going to join the army. I'm going to kill the Japanese", you know and those feelings, the emotions, you know. So, it's deeply rooted. In my hometown and my, you know, my older, I don't know, my cousin or something, they said, because while the Japanese occupied our home town, everybody can learn Japanese but out of patriotism they vowed they would never learn Japanese, never speak their language or something.

In a way, I'm hypocrisy because we're in America, everything, look at the TV, look at the tape recorder, look at a car, you know, I mean, everything, we use Japanese production. And, but, you know, it's just this history that long painful history that made me, I said, I told my children, I would appreciate it if you stay away from Japanese. Other than that, mom will say nothing. [laughs] Yeah, so, I don't know. Maybe their future... My daughter has a boyfriend right now, you know. He's, I, I don't know about his background but my friends say maybe he's Polish or Jewish decent, you know. His last name is _____ [?]. Yeah, I say, well, no matter what, he's American, as long as they like each other. Right now he's studying at John Hopkins doing his Ph.D. program. My daughter met him at Berkley in California. But right now my daughter is studying law at UC Dallas.

Adler: That's a long way apart.

Shih: Yeah, a long way, back and forth for both of them. For my son, I don't know, right now he's studying his _____ [?] at Paris, France. He just left Paris. Right now he is in Greece. He is going to stay there until this weekend.

Adler: I remember you had gone to see him.

Shih: Yeah, my goodness, I went to see him. We had a wonderful time. Nine days. Jammed packed, day and night. They had enough of their parents. My husband said this is the best part.

Adler: The pay-off.

Shih: Yeah, the pay-off. [laughter] After so many years the reunion, too bad, we have to make an effort to get together. Really, that's a price to pay. I'm broke, but, you know, what can I do. I remember I'm still playing his _____ song because Christmas Eve my son brought this...
[end of side one, tape one]

[side two, tape one]

Shih: If it is brand new, and it will be a once in a lifetime's chance.

Adler: So, you went through the tunnel.

Shih: Oh, I went through the tunnel channel!

Adler: What was it like?

Shih: I mean, it's just, they call the Bullet [?], the train. It's just like, okay, you sit on a train and everything is new and there's air, spacious, very sparkling. And I remember the coffee. Just one cup of coffee cost two dollars, fifty cents. I have to, I said just for the memory, I just bought one coffee, a little tiny coffee. But it was worthwhile. So, we got on in Paris. They deposited you into Waterloo Station, almost in the heart of London. You don't have to get a taxi, you know, from _____ [?], or Paris, you know. You saved those times.

Adler: That's great. That's really convenient.

Shih: Yeah, very convenient. All you have to do is come up in the subway, you come up into heart of London. You know, we were sightseeing, it's really, really nice. So, we did that.

Adler: That was a busy nine days for you.

Shih: Oh! Busy, talk about busy. Yeah, that was wonderful. But you have to take whenever the opportunity opens up, you know, because our children, it just happened our son, you know, studied there. We have to.

Adler: Sure, take advantage of it.

Shih: Take advantage of everything.

Adler: Let me ask, you mentioned the Chinese New Year was important. What other, uhmm, holidays are there that are important for your family?

Shih: Okay, the Chinese New Year is the most important of the year. And then, you know, the rice, let me see, we call the Rice Cake Festival, Dragon Boat Festival. The Dragon Boat Festival is in the summer, almost after you celebrate the Dragon Boat Festival the summer begins. Each time I tell what happened, why we celebrate this Dragon Boat Festival. They commemorate a famous poet. Yeah, he wrote this poem because at that ancient time, you know, this, you know, I mean, it's absolutely obedient from the king down, you know. Nobody asks him or something, doubts any policy, whatsoever. But as a patriot poet, you know, he wrote the, the Chinese, they keep everything inward. They're not outgoing, they, you know, I mean talk, talk out, they, no. They just keep... Or if they write a poem or write articles, they use flowers, weather, grass, or something to symbolize those people, personify those people they wanted to criticize or make their point or something like that, you know. It's more abstract, not concrete and direct. Something, outspoken, like "I hate you" or "you're wrong, this welfare reform is wrong", something, "Boo, boo!" You want to boo, no, not like this, that's way, he, so, he had to die. But he just tied a big stalk [?] and he threw himself into a big river...

Adler: Now, why did he have to die?

Shih: Because he wrote this poem, you know, criticize government. That he think that corruption and you know and some of the system is just not good to the people, something like that. I mean...

Adler: Was it too direct?

Shih: Oh, yeah, well, ...

Adler: Or did everybody know what it meant?

Shih: Yeah, everybody knew, but no one has the courage really, I mean to speak out or write something. And he already made his mind up, you know, that time he wrote this, he know, he's going to die to pay for this. But he's willing because he thinks this is the right thing to do. You know, we have this thousand years of moral traditions, you know, and the scholars, they just rather die than flexibility, to have them bend a rule or something. Really, we have quite a lot of people like that. We just worship those heroes. And so, we say, people love him to death because he tied a big stalk, heavy and jumped into the river, he died. People said, we don't want all the fist to eat his flesh, his body, so, people wrap up with sweet rice, or sticky kind of rice.

Maybe they put meat in it or something, bean paste or something, whatever the flavor is, they wrap this with, how do you say, lotus leaf or big bamboo leaves, you know they wrap them together. We have those available and the Chinese use bamboo for thousands of years, we are just a master over this art. So, they threw those into the river. Hopefully the fish will eat this instead of the poet. So, people row their boat or their ship, try to find his body. That's when the Dragon Boat Festival because later on they become, these people, you know, they make this dragon, you know, with a long dragon head, you know, painted everywhere, and then they beat the drum or something.

Adler: To scare away the fish?

Shih: Yeah, to scare away the fish. Then it becomes a dragon boat competition, each year doing this. And it happened by the time summertime. So, after we celebrated this, we say, "okay, summer is here."

Adler: Uh-hmm, now, how do you celebrate that here? Do you have competition and boat races?

Shih: First year... No. Well, not, I don't know, in United States if we still have this, you know, boat competition; but in China, ahhh!, go there, you know, you really wanted to look at this festival. Go there, you know, a lot of places have this competition. People dress up and they beat the drum and something like that and they eat all kinds of, we call it rice cake. Yeah, it's really something.

Adler: So, what do you do here to celebrate it?

Shih: Ah, here, I remember the first year here, I said, "Gee, how come nobody celebrated this?" Because I was fresh, still fresh from Taiwan. So, I almost, you know, practiced almost every ritual according to my lunar calendar. That was the first year when I was here, you know. Ah, I made, I don't know, I made like thirty or more than thirty, at least thirty-something... I got up so early and I started to make the rice cakes and things and after it's done I cooked and I drove the car to the friends, I gave two here and here two and then I wondered why they forgot all this about. I mean, how come? How could they? You know, now, I'm not doing this anymore. It has become more Americanized. But, you know, it's just like that.

Adler: So, what do you do now?

Shih: Well, I just commemorate it as maybe just tell a story to my children while they're still at home, you know. Right now, they're out usually, yeah, it's gone. But sometimes we, the

Chinese Student Association, sometimes we get together. For three times in the year, okay, one is Chinese New Year, one is this Dragon Boat Festival and when we get together, people still making this. They'll round it up, some wives, you know, and make this and then we can buy it maybe one dollar each or free for membership or something. It's good, it's good. Another is the Nam [?] Moon Festival. You know, Mid-Autumn Festival, we call mid-autumn is like when the season, the moon shining.

Adler: The harvest moon?

Shih: Yeah, the harvest moon, yeah, that was the three times we will get together maybe at _____ [?, counter 108] for Chinese Association. So, that's when we make the moon cake. The moon cake, yeah, the moon cake, I have to tell my children in ancient time because the barbarians invaded China and you know, we have to fight but they were too strong to, I mean we can not, we just can not fight openly, so, they go underground. They, they communicated with this moon cake because if they ate this moon cake they put letters or messages in it and they delivered this moon cake as like a custom festival type; so, the barbarians were not doubt, in doubt about anything. You know, the Chinese people they used this once they tear out, they open out, they cut out, but they got the message. So, one day they got all together to use their hoes, you know, their _____ [?, shin?, counter 120] hoes, or something, I mean they tried to get rid of the barbarians, something like that. So, with this kind of each festivity along the way, I'll try my very best, to the best of my knowledge to tell my children about this. I am happy they both speak fluently Chinese. Not every Chinese student ...

Adler: How did you manage that?

Shih: That's why my husband and I are English getting nowhere. We speak strictly Chinese at home. Even though they speak English, they listen and the sister and the brother, they'll speak English. But I always repeat Chinese right after their English. Mom just nags, nags, nags and then all the way. But you know, at that time they say, "Why do we have to go to Chinese school? Every Sunday afternoon." I was the first Chinese school principal in Lexington because we have to, you know, make out something from nothing. And they are not happy, every Sunday, they were suppose to go out with your friends or something but they have to go to spend the two hours at the Chinese school. And before that they have homework. Oh, to finish, oh, they not happy, not willing to do that. All those years of struggling and I teach them to write Chinese letters, you know, once a month or so, you know write to my father, real simple one, but

just, you know, the repetition, the reinforcement, make them remember, the greeting words, few greeting words or something like that. And now, they really appreciated it.

Later my daughter went to Washington University. She took up this Chinese lesson there for two years. And this summer, you know, right before we go back to China my daughter studied Chinese. I think she studied twenty hours, Monday through Friday, four hours a day. That's, ah, she volunteered, not because I forced her to do those. The more she knows, understand the culture, she goes back to China, she realizes that she is pitiful about her Chinese knowledge about the culture, although her mom told her everything she know, you know. So, they realize, and so is my son. My son went to China, I mean, this summer, mainland China because we, we went back to China to see my mother and after my daughter and I left, we stay there for three weeks, around three weeks. My son stayed there in a university which is a sister-ship along with the University of Minnesota, they have a very good program there. He stayed there three months almost, studied Chinese. He even get to play Chinese _____ [?, counter 159, sounds like opra] or something like that.

Adler: So, now they appreciate it.

Shih: Now, they appreciate. Now, all the nagging, the thing paid off, I realize. So, whenever I say, when they open, when people from other parts of the country, say, "Hey, George, how can you speak so good Chinese?" "My mom taught me." Now, they realize something like that.

Adler: Good for you.

Shih: So, I mean we make effort, we try. Just like you leave your husband and you move to Taiwan, you wanted to keep your American tradition, keep your English. So, you might speak English at home most of the time. And then meanwhile they pick up their Chinese or Taiwanese, you know. And whenever your festivity or festival or big holiday, you wanted to make sure your children know, today is which day. Yeah, in America we would be doing this now, having a parade or something. But because this is not the culture, where the culture is, so, you, the parent has to try twice as harder and tell your, your children, you know, that every spring because we have so many famous poets. They wrote about spring, you know, every spring when the first time I heard the bird singing, I always, you know, say the rhyme, the poem. Repetition, repetition. Now, they can pick up, they remember that, they rhyme, that those words rhyme, you know. [snaps fingers] So, mother is really the first teacher of everything, you know. Yeah. Has a very long, how do you say, tradition, I guess. And we have this, we worship our ancestors, you

know. The Chinese I call the passport to eternity. This is called the passport to eternity because, you know, for instance, I married to the Shih family but my family's name is Lee.

Adler: Is that Lee?

Shih: Yeah, Lee. When I passed out, pass over or whatever, you know, pass away, the, you know, my husband pass away, suppose in tradition, he put this our name, the Shih here, the Lee here in the little boxes there and they put on top, they don't want to because this is a two-story and we don't want to put the thing here. If here if somebody were atop of this, were to stand over, so, we'll try to put a higher place somewhere in the house and, you know, write this name and the minor, the descendent later whenever they remember their deceased parents birthday or something or at least once a year, twice a year, like a memorial day in these days. Actually, see, my husband is going back to Taiwan. You see his luggage today. I already do. The 26th, he's leaving. He's going to accompany my mother-in-law back to Taiwan for this memorial day in Taiwan. So, they'll, they'll clean up the tomb, you know, pull the weeds out, they'll clean up and then maybe just bring some cooked food, or some food, something ancient there and go to the tomb and just, you know, say something or the whole family get together to memorialize this deceased person, something like that. So, once a year, okay, my husband tries his very best, whenever he has time or break, you know, he'll make the time, effort to go back. So, that's why he's leaving because it happened around April 3rd, you know, something like that.

We keep our ancestor, the Shih family's ancestor name there. So, once a year, or twice a year, you know, we have to do something, like Chinese New Year I cook all the good food, first, before we eat or drink we put upstairs, let, you know, they're not going to eat, just let the spiritual, you know...

Adler: Right.

Shih: At first my husband used to say, ancient incense and I say, "No, not in this kind of house" because a lot they use this kind of house and will have the mark, you know.

Adler: The smoke.

Shih: Or smoke, right, and later my husband bought this electric thing, the electric bulb. Once you plug in, you know, the red bulb go on, you know, just to symbolize all because of this, you have this from your heart, you know. You think you did this. So, once you are in this, it is almost like a passport to eternity because the generations handed down, go down, go down. We

always remember, oh, that was my great, great, great, great grandfather, you know, who came to Taiwan, or something like that. You pass on those traditions.

So, I did, I did my money dumpling in Paris. Every year we make this dumpling. The Shih family, it's famous. Ask all the friends here, they know. They're crazy about it. The children, crazy about me because you see, I make this money dumpling. I have to soak like a quarter or a dime or a nickel... we always ten times return. If you eat a quarter you get two to keep. If you eat a dime, you know one dollar or something like that. Ten times. So, this year because I went to Paris, I always do it during Chinese New Year. But after the children went to college the reality would not allow us to, you know, do this during Chinese New Year. No school has a holiday unless Chinese school right. So, we do it every time when Christmas time because they come home. And the day before they leave we make this dumpling, just let them eat. And then when the Chinese New Year comes if they call, "Mom, _____ [Chinese words, counter 247] congratulations, Happy New Year", something like that, we always follow, mail this red envelope to them, you know. We have to, that's the only way to...

Adler: Reinforce.

Shih: Reinforce this belief, you know. So, I went to Paris, and so, I had to do something. So, in the night, my flight, I think it's like 9:45 or something. I got up at 4 a.m., I clean up my son's little refrigerator, just a half-size refrigerator. All the food, I chopped it up in tiny little bits. You know, in this tiny little kitchen. You know, all for the American boy [?, unsure of words here, counter 257]. I chopped it all and then I made this dumpling.

Adler: Are they with rice or what kind of dumpling is it?

Shih: No, no, I brought some like, you know, all purpose flour [laughter] to Paris. My, my son says, "Mom, this is Paris. We have everything." I said, "No, no, no, son. Because this is easier for me. If I want to use it, you don't have to go out to get some." One five pound of flour you can make, I think I made three pans of dumpling there. I teach them while I'm making, let them watch. I mix the water, you know, with flour. Then I used a stick, a rolling stick to make the dough. So, I clean up, chop up everything and doing all the work and then about this time I don't have nickels or dimes. So, I sneak into this, the whole family jamming into this house, a room is something like this, maybe not as wide. A little bigger, like this. But my son has a table desk there, a bookcase and then the family has a full-size mattress and my son has a full-size bed.

My husband shared with my son. My daughter and I, you know, we sleep downstairs because we can not afford to go to a hotel.

Adler: It's expensive in Paris.

Shih: Oh, my son checked out a two star hotel, oh, goodness, two hundred and fifty or something, per night. He said, "Forget about it, my mother does not have those money after he's going to spend the money here, you know." So, it was no way, we jammed it there. We pay about \$900.00 per month for his rent, so, why not, I'm not going to spend one penny more. So, I sneaked in and pick all the francs and that was there. So, I made three dishes, two with money and another one without money. But I have to put them together, nobody knows which one.

Adler: So, you don't know which ones have the money.

Shih: Yeah, you can not cheat, you know, because each year my son, he's not cheat, he's just a boy, big boy, he eats fast.

Adler: He gets a lot of money.

Shih: He, he's great. He wants to get money, right. So, my daughter, "Mom, that's not fair. George, he eats like a pig." Or something, I mean, the girls always eat slower than he does. So, she can not compete with a boy.

Adler: So, did you have to count them out so everybody would have a fair chance?

Shih: Yeah, I mixed together just three dishes but I knew who has money and another one has not. But I make, I try to make everyone into the same shape, so, to fool them, you couldn't tell which one has money. I'm took ten of them, total ten of money, big ones, little ones. This always piles up, you know, in his bookcase. So, I don't know which is which, I just had two there. First, I had to soak it in the dish water, dishwasher.

Adler: Clean them.

Shih: Clean them and then use boiling water like that, you know and then put them in. And George eat, one a penny, one a nickel or something. Oh, he eats a lot. And then he says, "How many is there?" I said, "Ten." He already ate like six or seven but they are all very, tiny little, small, like a penny or something. You eat a ten, a dime, nothing. I said, how many is there? Two left. My daughter, "Two left!!" Oh, my daughter, finally, my daughter eats a big one and it's like a quarter or something. She just eat one and he eat like five or six of them but it turned out my daughter gets more. And then the last one, everybody is so intense, you know, finally my husband got this one, one dollar, a big, big one. George says, "Mom, that's not fair. We should,

you should have give money according to the bath [?, back, counter 318] like fourteen cents, or ten cents or something like that.” So, see, even overseas you still have to try. See, this way I feel like the Chinese New Year or the family reunion completed, you know, even in Paris. After the real Chinese New Year arrives, my son says, Mom, I went to Paris to the Chinese New Year celebration and I brought this roller, to make dumpling rolls, they’re joined to make dumplings with, see, we really appreciate it. Okay, they’re picking up, at least, somewhat, you know. I’m not guarantee that what maybe later their children, but for my children, I try my very best. I tried.

See, because this is not the Chinese New Year. Let me show you, I keep in here, yeah. You’ll see, wow, wow, something like that. Let me show you where I keep all my goodies. At Chinese New Year I always take it out, see, my father mailed me this.

Adler: Oh, look at that!

Shih: Every year, he mailed me this for this year. Let me show you because Chinese New Year, it already passed, I always put it in here.

Adler: You decorate it under the mantel.

Shih: Decorate it, yeah, uh-huh, and this is the couplet.

Adler: What does this say?

Shih: The couplet is this one, this is called heaven. When the universe gets one year older, one year. This is a person, a man, see, a man standing. You can tell.

Adler: Oh, yeah.

Shih: The character later, if you want to learn you have to, the pictorial kind, we start from this pictograph, something like this, the emperor’s, ah, how you say that, the emperor’s scholar. He appoint a scholar to make words, he sit there day and night and watch the nature. When he looked at a garden, you know, then he makes something around a circle with a dot. And he looked at the moon, the moon sometimes is wrong but if he happened to look at the moon, something like this. Like a crescent, so make something like that. This is just thousand of years change and become this form. So, it says, when the heaven gets one year older, so are we. We are aged, we grow older along with the universe, right. This is spring. When spring filled up the universe, filled up the universe, okay, so, is the happiness filled with the family. The whole way, the family, you know, the room, something like that. So, you know, one you have to have to put on this side and one on this side.

Adler: Of the door.

Shih: And then this one, yeah, this one you have to put on top. So, you know, put on top.

Adler: And what does that one say?

Shih: It says, you know, the family are doing good things, you know. Yeah, people, they, they want to go to heaven, they always had to do some charity, good, charity, you know, good thing helping the poor or something. They will always have a lot left, left, you know, something like this, just meaning something good. Yeah, I always decorate. I always decorate. I put congratulation sign in front of my door, you know, so, whenever people pass by, some people can know Chinese. They know this custom. I mean they'll pick up this exciting or something... whenever my, my neighbor, I have a neighbor, they just left. They left to South Africa. Whenever they saw this decoration, you know, posted on the door on the garage window over there, they know the Chinese New Year is coming in because I celebrate fifteen days. Right, until the Lantern Festival. So, I always left it up for fifteen days and they know. So, they'll write me a card saying, "My dear neighbor, Chinese New Years coming. Congratulations that you have lived..." you know. [laughter] So, I post everything, you know. I have this, I have this...

Adler: Firecrackers.

Shih: Yeah, I forgot to put this in.

Adler: So, what are these over the door?

Shih: This is a ups and down, this means lucky. This is Spring. This is lucky. When you put upside down means already here.

Adler: Oh, okay.

Shih: See, this one is the Spring, upside down Spring. This is the real Spring.

Adler: I see.

Shih: This one says Spring. This is happiness and lucky. And here lucky already here, Spring already here, or something like that.

Adler: I see. Okay. And what do you have over the front door?

Shih: Front door, my son bought when he was in Taiwan. It's our last name. The Shih family. He said, "Mom, you know, what, I'm going to buy this. A lot of my friends they follow me" because my son knew a few words, Chinese words. So, they took up this popular transportation, you know, and in each state they had to, you know, the driver would say; "Okay, the _____

[?, counter 410] Hill stop”, something like that. They speak with the Chinese, right, and you have to either know the language or you have to look at which stop has the name. But he, he does not know all the words, he only knew one or two words, so, he was so tense, because after all the other people in the Minnesota, University of Minnesota, not all of them can speak good Chinese, or they know some Chinese words, that’s why they go out, they went back to learn, you know. But my son was so intense, he’s afraid maybe he got off the wrong space. [laughter] So, a lot of people bought the same thing, only with their last name, their last name.

Adler: That’s great.

Shih: So, my son said, “Mom, if you want to sell this house, tell them this is a good house, we have good funkshei. So, whenever people come here their children will make a good grade in school”, something like that. Even my son keeps up with the whole thing. That means day and night teach. He finally absorbs some of it. I am happy with that. [she walks away from the microphone, can not hear very well] I want to show you this.

Adler: Oh, okay.

Shih: When my son and my daughter go to mainland China. That’s of my daughter and my son. [can not hear from counter 439 until 463]

Adler: Sounds like that was exciting for you.

Shih: Well, yeah; I guess...

Adler: You guess. How often do you get to see her?

Shih: Oh, once every, I don’t know, around three years, two years, three years. My children first time, for instance, well, this is the way we teach our children. This is my daughter, here is Jennifer. Jenny, in two years you will be twenty-five years old, a quarter of century and we will all be celebrating your happy birthday. We feel we are getting old, you know. This is what my husband will tell her. Your father and I are very glad, very happy that although you have graduated from college that you still continue to pursue a career and everyday... she’s a swimmer, everyday swim exercise. You know, that’s good for her health. And in three years you will be graduated from law school and become a lawyer. And while at that time we will celebrate and have a big deal on your graduation or something like that. So, your birthday is March 28, my husband leaves on the 26th. You know, your birthday and your daddy will accompany your grandmother, go back to Taiwan for Memorial Day, something, we call it _____ [?, counter 498, sounds like Cheeny], it means Memorial Festival, you know,

honor deceased people. And grandmother almost eighty years old, you know, just like my father, my father's own age. So, your daddy thinks this time with grandmother is very precious because she is getting older. We will try to pass on this tradition to our children. Your father and I are very, very happy and proud of your continuing effort. So, we wish you a happy birthday.

Adler: What a nice letter.

Shih: Because I already wrote a letter to my daughter and mail her a check. You have to, you know, because she is going to spend her spring break in New York, Washington, DC. She's having an interview, volunteer interview, of course, [?, unsure of words here, counter 515] I have no idea. Over the summer, for summer internship. I read her letter because I had to catch her before Friday, but my husband waited until last night.

Adler: That's a nice letter though. That's really nice.

Shih: Yeah. Let me show you this passport to eternity.

Adler: Okay. Let me, turn off the tape.

Shih: Yeah. I hope, I hope every family is doing this, or at least they should try. This is the only way the children will remember.

Adler: Yeah, yeah.

Shih: You can tell, if my daughter does not know anything about Chinese, my husband will not have wrote her a letter like that. Yeah.

Adler: Uh-hmm. And she'll be able to read that or you said, you'll have to do a little bit of translating?

Shih: Majority, yeah, I just put the thematics, you know, the tune, the sound, and put the words, this way, beside the words, so she will pronounce that. And once she learns... the Chinese language is all about a tune.

Adler: So, once she knows how to pronounce it, she'll know what it says.

Shih: Yeah, yeah, yeah, because the same, the same, the same tune, I mean different tune can mean hundreds of words, you know. So, the words mean nothing, it's the tune makes all the difference in Chinese language. So, I will make up the tune, you know, put all the tunes in there. And sometimes the words are harder, she might not know the words, but once you spell out how it sounds, you know, she knows the meaning right away. It tried this, right now, see, my English, say, "You happy [?] now, it took me a long time to write a Chinese letter." I said,

“Yeah, your Mom, it took me a long time to write an English letter.” It’s just so hard. So, you know, I don’t know, if they’ll remember forever or not. I mean, ...

Adler: Well, when you first came here and they were young... how did you... and you said you were the first principal of the Chinese School. How did you get that started? How did you connect up with other people in the community?

Shih: Oh, okay. Lots of families together, you know, you have this like a pot-luck night, we get together once a year, besides the Chinese New Year.

Adler: But how did you meet?

Shih: Yeah, we would get together once a year, ah, once a month, okay. For instance, we have ten families, we know each other and “why don’t we form a dinner club or something”, you know. And then each family alternate, this month maybe at your home you are the host family so you provide the drinks, the rice, cook the rice or vegetables or fruit. And each family bring a dish, potluck.

Adler: Uh-hmm.

Shih: Okay. So, after we know each other we talk about, you know, mother getting together, children, children, our child, something like that, so we realize this need, you know, for Chinese education, continuing Chinese education or culture. Also, we say, okay, we need some help, you know, from like American, North American Council Section [?, counter 584], get help, like books or money, we pay for something from Taiwan, they’ll mail. So, along with a couple, they study at UK at that time to pursue their, I don’t know, masters degree for education, I guess. We realize this opportunity and we talked to the person in charge of the college of education and say if we can borrow your classroom on Sunday afternoon from around 2 to 4 p.m., this time. And they said, yes, you know. So, we’re so grateful. And now, it’s been like over eight years. It just keeps going. We have like around five classes each year, very small classes. Sometimes I have like five or six students only, some maybe ten at the most. And just that the parent,

_____ [?, words unclear, counter 605] send their children there. Only two hours is not that much. See, the children, I spend, see, I’m not working. I spend almost all my time while they’re home, you know, talk to them, teach them, perform the ritual, cook the food, right. I mean just doing the day in, day out, only after about like eight years, right, eighteen years and then, you know, they can, they can come like this. Not all mothers, some mothers they have to work. They have to work, okay. I’m not rich but, you know, we manage to have, you know, a

decent life. But, that's the way my husband and I choose. We think it's really important in order to preserve this tradition, pass on to our children. That's our, that's my choice for, you know, I stay home. I didn't go out. I only go back to school after empty nest, you know, I become, you know, I realize I need to learn a lot of ... yeah.

Adler: Uh-hmm. Now, what in terms of your heritage and your husband's heritage, now that your kids are gone, what do you do? Do you still do the same things as when your kids were here?

Shih: Oh, well... yes, yes, yes. For instance, even my children not home by the time it is Chinese New Year we are still, we are nostalgia. I play Chinese music, Chinese tape, okay. And I decorate my house. Once I step out, I'm American because I have to. I am American, okay. I step out the door. But once I'm inside this little place of my own, you know, I listen to the Chinese music. I talk to my friend in Chinese. And I call overseas, maybe Taiwan talk to my Dad or call back to mainland China, okay. And then I cook some traditional food for my husband. Once he is off work and the two of us are together, the two of us drink a little wine and listen to... You have to make out the most from life. You know, I mean, he feel, oh, yeah, it feels like a Chinese New Year, you know. And then look at all the surroundings, the decorations. Why not? Why not?

Adler: Uh-hmm.

Shih: It is part of our heritage. We're glad, you know, that Kentucky is our home, Lexington, old Kentucky home, we call it. But I have to, I still have another culture. I can not just... for some people say, "No, no, no, once we go to the United States, we, we can not speak Chinese." I say, "Well, there's no harm." I mean, if you help your children learn the other language, that's the whole reason my son, he did this program. He got this electric engineering masters degree from French because he took a few years with French Telecommunications Institution, part of the requirements, to learn three languages. And French, he studied the language from junior high, okay. What do you think, if he do not speak Chinese? [raises voice loud in excitement] Although Chinese is not marked by the three languages to begin with. You can never tell whether you help your children or not, I mean, there must be some time, there must be in his mind, that he says, "Oh, gee, I'm glad that my mom taught me over the years" or something, at least to try very best, right? And then he has the opportunity. You never know when the opportunity will open up. I told my husband, I told my children, I said, it is a very competitive

society. If you wanted to, someday you wanted to get ahead, or something, you know, you can not just say, "Well, I'm American. I got an A. You're a Chinese American. You got an A. Maybe I will get a job. Maybe because I don't speak Chinese, now, the company want to open up a branch, a branch company in China, because you speak Chinese and because this is a new age, because you understand this in this extra age, will help you get there." I always tell them, you have to study hard, I always say. Mom and Dad will try our very best to provide all the opportunity as long as you want, we try our very best. We're living below poverty level, that's fine. You know, we don't have to spend a lot of money...

[end of side two, tape one]

[side one, tape two]

Shih: I always remind this to my son and to my daughter. Even now they still need our help. You think they have graduated and they're not. There is still a long way to go.

Adler: Yeah, I still go to my parents for help sometimes.

Shih: See, I mean, you know, I told my husband we had six years to go because one, this December he's finished he'll be coming to _____ [?, Durham] writing his thesis and by next May, hopefully, he'll get a masters degree both, from French and Duke. And then he got them to defer school, he asked the school defer, postpone two years and this year he has to write a progress report to Duke that will postpone another year. Hopefully, next fall he'll be going to _____ [?, counter 9] school. I have a long way to go. Very hard, harsh, harsh situation I had, I tell you. But that's life. What can you, we're only hope, okay, they both graduate from professional job, making it on their own, hopefully, become a good citizen. That's the whole purpose, uh-hmm, yeah. I said, I'll go back to school because I want to become a better mom, a better spouse maybe, a citizen in the community, something like that. Yeah, we, we, each one have to chip in their fair share, yeah, contribute something. Although I'm very limited, that's my contribute. [laughing] I told my husband, you know this is my contribution, you know, to our children, everything.

Adler: I think you've made more than just to your children though.

Shih: I don't know.

Adler: Starting the Sunday school.

Shih: But it was not myself. It's everybody else's effort.

Adler: Right, right. But it's all of you together. The chemistry that held you together.

Shih: Yeah, well, somebody has to be courageous enough to at least, charge, a head start, something, you know. And ask for all the money we can get and personally I have to set an example. I cook tea or something and bring to the, to there, you know. I tell the story, write newsletter to the family. And I don't know if the recent principal will do this or not. It may be better ways but you know, I ask the good student, I say "You get to pour the tea to the teacher." Say "Teacher, this is your tea." In a way, teach them respect of teacher. "You get to erase the blackboard", you know, something like that.

Adler: Uh-hmm, but you didn't switch their hands. [laughing]

Shih: No, no, hopefully, you know, hopefully, though the tradition continues. A little bit will help. So, I've come a long way. But it is the stubborn, the pursuit of this kind of stubborn, never, you know, give up. That's why, you know, we have this extra, tiny bit edge, maybe, hopefully someday will all help them. I don't know. Maybe they will go, oh, see, the Chinese, they, over thousands of years, you know, they were so poor, you know, that's why all the Chinese restaurants go so good because you know, if you don't have food to eat... you know, whenever Chinese meet each other the first is, "have you eaten, yet?", you know. I mean that's how the character, there is a conversation or something. Later they become gourmet because for thousands of years, they're from the starving, wherever the natural disaster coming or something. There's got to be some compensation or something. Now, we're grateful for our ancestors because they cook good food. At least some Chinese overseas, you know, before they get their feet or something, they can at least work at a Chinese restaurant or open up some restaurant just to make a living or you know.

Adler: And how did you learn to cook?

Shih: Ah, well, you have to. Before I got married the one thing I know maybe just some scramble egg, you know. But you know, with tears, I always tell my daughter, I said with tears when I had to cook. I never do this because I was like wild child. Have a happy time after school. You throw off the bookcase or something away, you don't know until tomorrow morning and then go out and prepare food, you know. You fight and you play all the games. Think of that, it is good time because I don't have a mother. My, my stepmother once they have their children, you know, she will not have time to supervise me. So, I'm really, I'm the one, wild. But I got all the freedom and appreciate. Right now it's lucky. You know, my children never get that chance. I'm overprotective. Oh, don't do that, don't do that. Watch their head all

the time. We eat, we sucked this wild flower honey or something everyday. They never had this chance and then but it's different times. Yeah.

Adler: Uh-hmm. But how did you learn to cook then if you could only cook scrambled eggs?

Shih: Well, I mean, one by one, little by little. Sometimes I watched my mother-in-law cook a few dishes. The northerner always eat flour, plain dough. The southerner, my husband eats rice. Can not eat without rice. That's their, you know, their food crop, their everything. They always eat dishes with rice. So, I watched my mother-in-law cook something and I pick out something and then we, we'll go out to eat. You know, my father is a gourmet and I'll pick up something from there. Just before I got married, my father used one month to teach me how to make dumplings. Because I do not make dumplings. I couldn't care anything about a house chore, "No, that's women's stuff. I never do this." I'm just, you know, do whatever I want. And, you know, he said, "well, you have to learn this. You're going to get married and if your mother-in-law or something asks you to make dumplings, and you don't know how to make a loose paste or something." He spend one month teaching me. That's when I go back to China and tell my sister, my brother-in-law and my mom, tell them, you know, the joke, that laugh, because this is their second nature. Just like a Mongolian, before they walk they ride on a horse, right? It's just, just their culture, their everyday life. And I told them, I say, I learned this in making dumplings in one month, my father teach me how to make them from dough from something else. Now, I'm teaching my children with very limited knowledge.

Adler: Well, at some point they'll come back and really want to know how to do it.

Shih: Yeah, well, it is, there are so many ways to do it. You can steam them, you can boil them, you can have like a pot-sticker kind of, put in a little bit of oil with the water, cover it, brown the bottom and then everything cook. You mix with hot water or you just mix flour with cold water or you if you want to puff up you put yeast or something. Like steam bread, you just put some meat or vegetables in it. So, everything. Twenty-seven years, that's a long time to learn how to cook.

Adler: So, did you use cookbooks, too?

Shih: Yeah, sometimes. You know, right now because we try to cook low salt and low sodium, low...

Adler: Low everything.

Shih: Yeah, that's why when my father come here, last year before George's graduation. George said, "Grandfather, you have to come to my graduation. I'm the youngest of the family. You have to come." So, my father, almost eighty years old and he comes here, you know. And I cook here. He said, "I will die. Those foods." [?, unsure of words, counter 99] When he went back to China with me, I took my two children, he told them about everything here. No oil, no salt, no whatever, just, oooh! No taste whatsoever. [says in excited voice] So, everybody know how I cook here. He said, "I will die if I stay there for long enough", you know. "Nothing to eat almost". Not because there's nothing to eat, it's just not tasteful.

Adler: He wasn't used to it.

Shih: Yeah, he wasn't used to it. Oh, ay-yi-yi. At least I shared this with him.

Adler: Is your father still a gourmet cook?

Shih: Yeah, he likes to eat good food. He just celebrated his eightieth birthday. Actually, he's seventy-nine but in Chinese, that's not like celebrating 79. The 80th, that's a good, you know, longevity symbol. So, he celebrated like he was eighty years old.

Adler: So, will he have two eightieth birthdays then? Or what do... do you loose a year along the way somewhere along there?

Shih: Well, maybe, I'm going to go back as a surprise. I haven't told my dad yet. [says this in almost a whisper] I'm going to go back to celebrate his real eightieth birthday. But I told my husband, I said, "You go back and celebrate your mom's eightieth birthday." Although her birthday is not in April yet, in April, no. But I said, since you will be joining with your brother and another sister as well. One in Florida, I mean two, two in United States, one in Kentucky, one in Florida. And the one from Kentucky will bring the mom back. My mother-in-law lives in Los Angeles. They have a house there. But my father-in-law passed away. She lives there. But I said there will be a majority in Taiwan. So, you better find time to celebrate your mother's eighty years old, since, my dad already celebrated his birthday. [laughter] We had to remember, it's very hard, we have to remember the lunar calendar time, you know. Because they are according to the lunar calendar. So, that is his birthday, you have to make sure. There's is twelve hour different, or thirty hours different. I always write a big note, post it, "Remember, call Dad" and what time and then they'll be happy. He'll say, "Oh, you remember my birthday this year." Sometime I forgot, you know. Sometimes I forgot. And I happened just to call and my dad would say, "Oh, I was waiting for your phone call." I said, "Why?" He said, "Because

today is Father's Day." August the 8th. August, we call it, _____ [?, sounds like Bah, counter 137]. Okay, eight means bah, bah means daddy, okay. So, not like June the what?, the 19th or 17th, whatever for Father's Day, you know. I have to remember those _____ [counter 140, can not understand words here.] You know, it's not easy. But I tell my children that if see, I'm somebody else's daughter. See, I have to be a daughter sometimes. Okay, today, I'm your mom, but I have to be somebody else's daughter. So, I have to remember my dad's birthday and my mom's birthday and remember to write to them or talk them to or be nice to them, something sweet, talk to them. Just like you did. See, this is just growing up, this is the life cycle. Passed from generation to generation.

I say that when you have your children then I'll be the best grandmother on earth. I will spoil them. I said, I will go to your home and say, "Uh-ha!, your daddy used to be like that! or tell them whatever you did when you were young. They say, "Mom, we are not going to send our children to you." [laughter - Adler] You know, "We're not going to let our children pick up the things you taught us, no way!" But I told my husband, I said, they will. Yeah, I'll teach them. When they step into my house, I'll speak Chinese to them, hope, hopefully, they'll pick up. I don't know. I can only try my very best, you know, for my children. Another generation down we leave them that. You know, there is a Chinese newspaper, the Redwood, okay. The redwood, they grew up as a big, tall, straight tree but because it is in California environment, you know. Some people try to bring this tiny little seed of the redwood to other place and try to grow them and they were, they can never grow up like a big pole tree there. I told my children and my daughter the other day, said, we're just like that. You know because we are uprooted from where our environment is, out of our own choice, you know, and hopefully make it, you know, here. But we're just like the redwood seed, you know, no matter how hard we try, we can never be the original redwood, you know, redwood because they have the right environment, right climate, everything, you know and they stood there tall, like big trees. Eventually, we're lost. I mean just like in other sea, a little bubble disappears. So, I guess everywhere people like that. Sometimes, sometimes, you think about those. I don't know, I'm sad or awe. [laughing]

Adler: Do you ever want to go back to China or Taiwan to live?

Shih: Yeah, yeah, I told my husband that because I think my husband has _____ [?, can not understand words here, counter 178] fifteen years before he retires. And I said, well, we will have to think about this that we're getting older, you know, the winter, the weather, you

know, everything else, we might want to go back to Taiwan or go back to China. China is out of my question [?] right now. I really think that China will still have a good, I don't know, twenty years, thirty years to catch up. I mean, democrat, democracy; okay, democratic society because I can not tolerate those political systems. The whole reason we came to the United States from Taiwan because we don't like the system there, as well. Now, it's different. It's much better. The _____ [?, sounds like Chan Chi Chec, counter 190] dynasty, they're all gone almost. I mean, they were, the people were elected through a democratic process. So, it's much, much better. If I were to choose to go back I would rather go back to Taiwan because that's where the place I grew up. I know the people. I know the place, I know the language, everything, you know.

Adler: Do you think that you've changed so much that you wouldn't really be comfortable there? Or has it changed so much that it's become more westernized that you would feel comfortable?

Shih: I might not feel comfortable about the living situation there. All the rich people, they live in ... because they are so limited with land, they just go up and up in and, you know, like apartment building like that. High building, but not like, you know, like this is almost like a luxury because it is spacious. This is number one on earth. No other country has this living standard. I mean everyone if they can afford it can have a house like that. But I may not be comfortable to begin with but once I'm used to it, I realize, you know, that that's my choice. I want to go back before I die or something, you know. The tree leaves are falling always to the where, to where they grow up, to the root. So, the more you want to change, really, in the end maybe you go back to the beginning. You know, the same thing, you go back and you change, maybe when you are young you move to far away from your parents, either corner of the world but eventually...

Adler: You want to go home.

Shih: Yeah, you want to go home. You want to settle back. I, I mean we're talking about his sometimes with my husband, sometimes. I say, if you go back to Taiwan you might want to look at the housing market or something, or the possibility, even if not a practice medicine, he has the license there. He can still open, you know, clinic or something, if he want. So, of course, the houses are expensive there. People with houses because there are so many, so little land. So, everything is very expensive.

Adler: Would your kids ever want to go there and settle?

Shih: I don't know. See, funny, George has interviewed, I think he went back to Paris, ah, three weeks ago because ATT is going to, not ATT, French Communication, it's opened up a branch or something in Beijing or something. They need people who speak fluent language, ah, fluent in Chinese. And he just left Paris and went to _____ [?] to pursue another study but he went back to three days, they paid his airfare and everything. I said, "How was your interview?" He said, "Not bad but I haven't got any answer yet. Maybe take some time." So, there expansion. I don't know, maybe, he want to some day. But, you know, I guess, there are more American they we are. They grew up. Their peers, you know, their teenager, I mean, it's different, so. Yeah...

Adler: Let me ask one, I think, final question. How did you get to be such a storyteller? Did your parents tell you stories when you were growing up?

Shih: Me, I don't know. I find out this from UK, okay. Because UK, with this Kentucky, KERA, you know, Kentucky Education Reform Act, right, KERA, and each student choose this theater 101, introduction to theater. We have this psychologist to come here and each student took some kind of analysis or test. I was a diverger. A diverger says, you know, they have a simulator, diverger or something, a diverger is very rich in creativity, imagination or something but a good listener. They love lectures, listen to people, listen to lectures or something and they are good, good potential at theater, art. I said a comedian, a stand up comedian or something, you know, one man show, one woman show, something like that. [laughing] And you know, I was, I have to tell you the truth, it was second grade. I always, I was always selected by the teacher as the class representative. I go out and compete in lecture. I always won trophy. So, I was naturally, you know, these things, I guess, with my imagination. I'm a dreamer, a procrastinator, the world's biggest procrastinator, yeah. Yeah, I thought, well, someday, I said, well, gee, nursing is not the right profession for me. I realized that, you know. Once I got married, I quit. I never go back to work. And I told my children, I said, gee, I hope someday I'll become a teacher because I think a teacher should be a good actress, you know. They have to act out, if they teach something. Like, I have a professor of history, when he talk about Lincoln, he dresses up like Lincoln. Why not?!! Why not?

Adler: Yeah, Mark...?

Shih: I can't remember his last name. I respected that, you know. For some teachers in other school, they dress up. Sometime like a clown, sometime what? This is very important if you want to teach, you know, I mean, you, you, you, this is something help, a tool, help you along the way. It will reinforce this imagine, image or something, impression. And the repetition comes, because the repet..., repetition, you know, one year after another, whenever spring come, when I mention, you know, Jenny, I just heard the birds sing, "Oh, Mom, yeah. I know." Then she will recite the poem.

Adler: The poem.

Shih: Yeah.

Adler: How does the poem go? Can you do it in Chinese?

Shih: The poem says, [Says a line in Chinese] In Spring, you sleep, you never know, you never know when to wake up because it is a good time to sleep. You always want to sleep during the spring. [Says a line in Chinese] But before you wake up, you already heard her, the birds singing everywhere. Okay. Because of spring, during the night it always rain, black clouds of the time, in spring it's raining, you know. Because of rain flowers blooming, you know. And after the rain, [says line in Chinese], you never know, the next day when you go out, you always saw those flower petals down because the rain. When you heard birds singing, the raining and you never want to wake up but then flowers everywhere, you know it is spring here. So, you recite those things to them. First, you tell stories and then when spring here, naturally they heard the birds singing, right. They saw the flower blooming and then you talk to them, you know, like that. I told my son, I said, see, this poem says, a mother sew her son's clothes because her son is going away, you know, to a far place. Sometimes I have to, you know, "Mom, a button's missing." Sometimes I have to do that, you know. I say, "See, you are going away to Paris." When he was small I told him about the poem with a story tell him and then gradually he learned the meaning, you know. I said, "See, George, you are going away to Paris and your mom, now, is sewing a button on your, you know raincoat, or something, your overcoat. And the mother tries to sew so hard, one stitch after another stitch, and hopefully, she has sewed her love into your overcoat because through this button, hopefully, for you wearing it, you know, you fill warm, you know, in winter cold. You know you are out in winter, you put on this coat and you button the button or you, if you have this thought, oh, gee, this button, I remember my mom sewed this one on the coat. And my mom said the poem said the mother kept sewing stitch after

stitch and so diligently, you know, like, by twilight or candlelight or something, you know, try to sew. She is just not sewing the button. She is sewing her love, her expectations, her, you know, everything into this little button! Hopefully, her son will wear this and will last for a long time or something, because in ancient time people had to sew clothes, sew shoes, everything, you know, without modern tool to help, you know. I just, because you see, the only possible way, you see, you raise your children in this environment, so, everyday, almost every minute, every occasion you come up with an idea or something and you're willing to teach them, you know, and then make up, well, not make up. It's actually a poem and then make up the story and you become a _____ [?] a little bit more adjective or something, make it sound interesting, attractive. But that's the way, we, my children learn. I really don't know. I haven't got an evaluation sheet yet, but, I will be hopefully, over the years, you know, I keep watching, the more they appreciate it, if they learned, if they remember it, they pass on, you know. That's the best... My husband and I we can do so far, you know. I told my father, that's when my father realized, I said, I really appreciate, he used to mail me this every year, you know. But now he's getting old. Sometimes he can't remember to mail it but I keep them, you know, year after year I keep them. So, my son when my son goes back to China, when he saw those decorations, they're not surprised because they are used to this. Their mom raised them...

Adler: Uh-hmm, they know what it's for.

Shih: Yeah. Maybe, the scale it's different, maybe, hopefully, pretty soon, pretty, he say, "George, how did you learn this? And did your mom a good teacher?" "Hmmm, I think she okay." Well, maybe in a long way, you know, they'll appreciate it, they'll say something like that.

Adler: Do you do any paper cutting or anything like that?

Shih: Oh, yeah.

Adler: Newspaper.

Shih: Oh, yeah, I always cut. See, my husband, this is my seat, my husband likes this. I don't like, I always cut out.

Adler: Oh, articles and things.

Shih: And sometimes, I have to read this, you know, read this to my... see, the universe climate changes. So, is Taiwan's temperatures. See, I'm worried about environmental things, you know.

And something like that. We have the Chinese newspaper and keep up with your language, otherwise...

Adler: You would lose it, too.

Shih: Yeah. My husband, he, he find a word from dictionary, really, really, you know, we forgot. "Gee, how did we? Is this right?" Because we forgot. The reading, we no longer use it or we occasionally write a letter or something.

Adler: Do you find that the language has changed since you left?

Shih: Oh, yeah, you know, all the language changes. Even English. So, over the years, you know, I mean different age group use different language. Even though I, my children, for my children, for my children I speak, let's say, ninety percent of the Mandarin, the Taiwanese or the Chinese people use, I saw ninety percent is because different age has different language, we can not, some teenage group, the language that they spoke, I don't know, you know, have no. But my children, they pretty much, hopefully, seventy-five to eighty percent, know that much, if they acquired that much.

Adler: That's pretty good.

Shih: Pretty good, darn good, darn good. I am proud to say that. Yeah, not so many students like that at their age. But, no one, over the years, the language always changes. I go back to mainland China, my brother, my own brothers and sisters, they talk different. You can't compare with it. But in general, Mandarin, still, is the language. The greatest of Mandarin is because the language conquered China, really, oh, I mean, the character conquered China. I mean we have three hundred different dialects. Wherever you go into this village or this other or there is a mountain or something, a river to cross, ...

Adler: Different.

Shih: You're lost, yeah, it's different. I mean even now we are just a tribe of people, you know. Some people live in this group and they like to dress like this, this style, maybe they eat different food.

Adler: Yeah. Speaking of food where do you get your groceries from?

Shih: Well, if I want a special exotic Chinese food or something, I go to two places, one on Southland Drive, there's a Vietnamese grocery store, and Seoul Supermarket, there's a Seoul Supermarket on New Circle Road. Sometimes my husband like if he goes to L.A. and he'll get some groceries...

Adler: Make a shopping list for him.

Shih: Yes, mail it back and sometimes if he stays there and then comes back, he'll bring it back. Or sometimes we'll make a trip to Jungle Jim in Cincinnati. Jungle Jim has a big variety of oriental food that we choose. But basically we still go to Kroger or Winn Dixie and just choose whatever the food and then use the flavor, maybe Chinese flavor, use a lot of garlic, soy sauce, light soy sauce, light salt, other, I don't know, chopped green onion or ginger. Make them taste like it.

Adler: So, without having actual Chinese food, you make it taste like Chinese food.

Shih: Yes, that's the way, it's more economical. If you want to spend all your grocery bill, you know, to those specialty stores, they're expensive. You can't. Maybe during special occasion you want to do this like Chinese New Year, you have to have some traditional food with ingredients or something.

Adler: Well, I guess that's all I have, questions I have. Do you have anything else that you can think of? Anymore stores that you told your kids.

Shih: Oh, yeah, yeah, just over the years or whenever, you know. I have to tell the truth, you know, tell me, you know, like AIDS, frankly... a lot of them, I'm maybe a little bit different, I always tell my friends, you have to be honest. You can't say you just pick up your children from a trash, a trash... how do you say that?

Adler: Dumpster.

Shih: Yeah, dumpster, people say they told their children, you picked up from there. I say, "No, I can not. We have to tell our children the truth." Maybe when they are small you can not just explain vividly, detail, whatever, but you have to at least tell them the truth. Yeah, you know, you were born from mom's body, you know, something like that. Then later in high school or something you just have to admit it, "yes, we make love. I make love with Daddy." They go, "Huh?" Gee, they thought they come out of nothing, you know. I say, "Of course, we make love." I have to admit, I mean with courage. Then you have to double standard sometimes because if you are in a different environment raising your children, you have to, you know, tell them. Eventually they will find out. No use to lie to them, you know, yeah. So, I said, well, when I first met your dad the first time, we were so shy. Oh, the Chinese, I don't know. I said, your dad walked on the street, okay, he walked on the other side, I walk. They said, "You're kidding!" I said, "I'm not kidding." I said, "What would you, we're shy, just naturally shy,

before we are hand and hand together, we come a long way to just hold each other hand. We just so shy, you know, you walk on that side, I walk on here. They said, "Geez!!" or something like that. You have to because they will find out sooner or later. There's no use. It's is better to tell the truth. Truth will set you free, I guess.

Adler: Well, it's good...

Shih: I mean truth is truth.

Adler: Yeah, it's good for them to know, too. It makes everything mean more. It makes sense that that's why something happens.

Shih: Now, they realize it. No wonder my mom is a super protector. I mean just guard her children just like an old hen, like fighting like an owl or something coming, never let loose of her children. Because, you know, I didn't have a mother when I was young, so, I naturally like compensate or something. I said, "I'll never, over my dead body I'll do something, I mean harm my children or something." So, you become over-compensate, you know, your children. Not in your life, because to go back to and actually see the family and they connected it

_____ [?, counter 507] and the government to fall from Communist or something and over the years and something like that. And then they, when they age they grew a human heart. At first they monster without a human heart, never appreciate anything, you know. You just, one, one friend said, "How did you survive all those teenage harsh, harsh years?" I tell you my secret. She said, "What?" I said, "Yeah, be patient, be patient, and be patient." There's nothing but be patient. If you outlive, be patient, I mean, you will live. Just guard her children just like an old hen, like fighting like an owl or something coming, never let loose of her children. Because, you know, I didn't have a mother when I was young, so, I naturally like compensate or something. I said, "I'll never, over my dead body I'll do something, I mean harm my children or something." So, you become over-compensate, you know, your children. Not in your life, because to go back to and actually see the family and they connected it

_____ [?, counter 507] and the government to fall from Communist or something and over the years and something like that.

Adler: Yeah, that's the stage I'm at now.

Shih: Yeah, enjoy.

Adler: A sixteen year old and a twelve year old.

Shih: Enjoy that.

Adler: It's a killer.

Shih: Yeah, oh, my goodness, I tell you before long they are gone. By the time they are gone, if you didn't try your very best while they are home you will regret, really. But if you did try your very best, you will not, yeah. Definitely, enjoy them every moment you can. Never complain. [laughing]

Adler: Well, I'm good at complaining. So, are they. [laughing]

Shih: No, every mother complain. It's so hard. For us, you think, like the Japanese mom, the Korean mom, the Chinese mom, you know, Puerto Rican mom, the Mexican mom, it's twice as hard if they want to make it in this country. And they have to use the double standard or triple standard and how they survive. Each family have their own different situation. But the struggle I think is the same.

Adler: Well, is there anything else that you can think of?

Shih: Well, unless you...

Adler: Do you know any dances or anything like that? Did you teach your kids dances? And traditional dances or songs?

Shih: Oh, we, we, we sing songs. We sing songs. I have to write those little rhymes down, you know, the story, bedtime stories and you know, I play a little bit of piano, by ear only. But I, because I wanted to teach my children to sing those folk songs, you know, back when I was young. That's why I have to come up with the tunes, you know. I play when they were small. I teach them. I taught them.

Adler: Can you sing one for me?

Shih: [laughing]

Adler: It's been a while.

Shih: Yeah, I'm too old, I guess for those songs. But I still, we sing. My husband, you know, he never, you know, he will admit that his voice is not as attractive, you know, nobody will hear, but he sings. Has to, that's part of life. Now, we watch this cable. C-Span, too, has a good opera, a good, good show. You know, we appreciate it. I told my husband, I said, "Gee, when I watch this, this..." do you speak French? A little bit?

Adler: A little.

Shih: I said, "You just have to teach me." I have two, four credits in French. I thought I learned something but it turned out I tell, you, goodness, when you are in Paris, don't even think

about your four credit hours will help you go anywhere. I said, “George, you just have to tell me this.” He said, “Okay, _____ [says something in French]” That’s Swan Lake. I said, “Oh, George, I’m going to practice everyday.” I said I just have to remember. I said I never wanted to use the _____ [?, counter 596] and then George says, “Mom, I spend three weeks before in college...”

Adler: Real intensively learning.

Shih: Yes, yes, yes, yes. He said he has to sit on the line just to get his ticket for his mom, a special, special treat, you know, at Christmas Eve. I said, “Well, George, I’ll remember that.” Yeah, and let me see if I can find the...

Adler: Yeah, I had French in high school and in college and when we were in Europe one time, we’ve never really gone to France, we’ve just gone through it on the train and stuff. And my husband figured, oh, she’s had French, she’ll understand. I couldn’t understand a word of it. Because I could read it but I didn’t really learn to speak any.

Shih: It’s really, really hard. [speaks too low to hear] I said, I’ll keep it, I made everybody sign there name on the ticket. I said, I’m going to keep it as a souvenir. I said I have to because ...

Adler: What a great present.

Shih: Yeah, it is. I wanted to show you this of the _____ star [?], a picture of the _____ [? Counter 635] when we went to London. [sound of papers being shuffled through] Let me see if I have that dumpling, I don’t know if my husband. Oh, my daughter said, she mailed some priority mail on the way when we were in Europe and she took some pictures and hopefully she’ll... [long pause]

Adler: Is it cold and damp in Paris in the winter?

Shih: Oh, wow, talk about Christmas Eve, my goodness, we went to this place, Arch _____ [?, counter 664], oh, my goodness, cold as, oh!, cold as mad, I guess. Oh, very, very cold. I can’t find my dumpling stuff. My husband took some dumpling... [pause]

Adler: Do you make your own noodles?

Shih: Sometimes, but I have a noodle machine. You know you make a dough. Make a dough and then you put the dough into a machine. That means you know you have to, I’m lazy, unless, I have to go to the health specialty, you know, health shop or something, barley or wheat or

something if you want. Other than that, it's just flour, you know, just make dough and then you...

Adler: Run it through the machine.

Shih: Yeah, but sometimes I get lazy.

Adler: So, do you have if flour, if flour and things like that our more in your tradition and rice is in your husband's tradition, do you eat more of one than the other or do you have both?

Shih: Sometimes we have both.

Adler: In the same meal.

Shih: Yeah, I cook rice for my husband. If I have to eat rice every day, I'll be sick. He knows I have to have something, so, sometimes I go out and buy the frozen potsticker and I make potsticker. All you have to do is just get a, you know, _____ [?, counter 699] turkey breast, real, real, lean kind, like 2% fat only, get those turkey breast from Kroger, mix with chopped green onion, you know, a little bit of seasoning...

[end of side one, tape 2]

[side two, tape 2]

Shih: It goes kind of the same, like wonton, but you...

Adler: So, you make it like a little packet and squeeze it shut at the top or something..

Shih: Yeah, you can keep the top open, that's fine because it's a pot sticker.

Adler: Oh!

Shih: If you want to cook it, all you have to do is just get a flat, you know, skillet or something, just a little bit of oil on the bottom and then you put all the, you know, frozen, not frozen but what you made. And on the end then pour some water in, cover with lid, you know. Once they steam out, you will hear that the sounds.

Adler: The bubbling.

Shih: Not bubbling, just the sticky, the thing is almost dry, you know, and then you use this, flip over and make sure the bottom is like brown, not burned. And then, yeah, they pretty much cooked, something like that. Or you want to mix with vegetables and other, shrimp, shrimp. That's good mixed together and then they have different flavor. All depends.

Adler: Yeah, I don't know, I can't, I've been trying to cook stir-fry stuff and I just can't get it right. [laughing] I don't know why.

Shih: Not, ah, not hard. Yeah, not hard, just takes some practice. Yeah, it takes some practice. But it's, it's good for people who have open mind. You know, we are living in this big melting pot. I'm always thinking, we're all so many different cultures and we're no longer can just shut off and keep from other influences. And if you have an open mind, are willing to maybe accept, observe, you know, along the way, why not? Just the coloration, it's really something, you know. That's why the democracy works, you know. They are not just excluding, "Oh, I'm the only one. Everybody else excluded." Has to be this tolerance and open, you know, yeah. That's what makes this great nation great, I guess.

Adler: Yes. It's funny. My brother-in-law and his family live in Hawaii and there's this comedian there who has this, you know, there's all these different races there and he says, "Oh, well, the reason we all get along so well is cause, we're real nice to each other but we talk stink behind their backs." [laughter]

Shih: Yeah, [laughing] why not? Why not? I told my children, I said, someday, okay, I'm good at this one woman show and I talk about the pain for years raising my children. Everyday will be a good subject because any time a mother can always talk about her children.

Adler: Well, I can't, I can't think of anything else at this point. This has been great. You've done so many things and you are such a good talker.

Shih: Well, not really, that's really something but that's the truth, the whole thing, you know how we come along over the years and raising our children.

Adler: Okay, turn this...

[end of interview]