

# **AN INTERVIEW WITH MEI YANG**

An Oral History Conducted by Jourdin Wilson

---

Reflections: The Las Vegas Asian American and Pacific Islander  
Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV  
University Libraries  
University of Nevada Las Vegas

©Reflections: The Las Vegas Asian American and Pacific Islander  
Oral History Project

University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2020

Produced by: The Oral History Research Center at UNLV – University Libraries  
Director: Claytee D. White  
Project Manager: Stefani Evans  
Transcriber: Kristin Hicks  
Editors and Project Assistants: Vanessa Concepcion, Kristel Peralta, Jerwin Tiu, Cecilia  
Winchell, Ayrton Yamaguchi

The recorded interview and transcript have been made possible through the generosity of a grant from the City of Las Vegas Commission for the Las Vegas Centennial and funding from private individuals and foundations. The Oral History Research Center enables students and staff to work together with community members to generate this selection of first-person narratives. The participants in this project thank University of Nevada Las Vegas for the support given that allowed an idea the opportunity to flourish.

The transcript received minimal editing that includes the elimination of fragments, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. In several cases photographic sources accompany the individual interviews with permission of the narrator.

The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of Reflections: The Las Vegas Asian American and Pacific Islanders Oral History Project.

Claytee D. White  
Director, Oral History Research Center  
University Libraries  
University of Nevada Las Vegas

## PREFACE

“That’s why people like to talk in Chinese when Chinese people are together, because some words are hard to express in another language, but in Chinese we can find the right word to do it.”

Growing up in Shanxi Province, in southwestern China, in the 1970s and 1980s, Mei Yang was raised by parents with a love for cooking. She was raised speaking the Sichuan dialect and began learning English in middle school. After completing her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Chinese universities, she earned her Ph.D. in Computer Science at the University of Texas at Dallas. In 2004, she came to UNLV as an assistant professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering; in 2016, she became a full professor and is currently a graduate coordinator. Here, she discusses attending university in China at the end of the Cold War, raising daughters in the U.S. while in a long-distance marriage, and what it means to be a woman in a STEM field. She reflects on the model minority myth and her daughters; on Chinese festivals and the COVID-19 pandemic, and on the Las Vegas Chinese community, its children's music ensembles, and director Li Linhong.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Interview with Mei Yang  
November 10, 2021  
in Las Vegas, Nevada  
Conducted by Jourdin Wilson

Preface.....iv

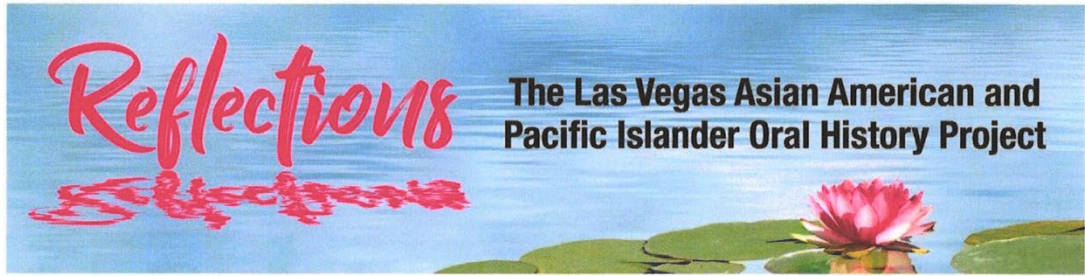
Yang begins by discussing what it was like growing up in Sichuan Province, China, then later moving to Shanxi. She remembers fond memories of her grandparents, especially her grandfather, then talks about her higher education, including what she studied, why, and how she did. Recounting some Sichuan specialties, Yang also does a broader comparison of food all across China.....1-7

Moving to the United States in 1999, Yang first landed in Dallas, Texas, to study for her PhD at the University of Texas at Dallas. She recounts the long plane ride, what the hardest things to leave behind were, and how she would stay in touch with family members. Especially remembering her dad, Yang talks about the food he cooked and the wood crafting work he did. She then discusses how she ended up in Las Vegas, Nevada, and dives into where she first lived, the most difficult things about the early days, and who was helpful to her. She compares Las Vegas to the other places she has lived, including China.....8-15

Yang traces her job history at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and all the roles she has taken up within electrical and computer engineering department. She emphasizes the importance of her work over her family and how that has affected her marriage as well as her daughters. She also discusses the neighborhoods she has lived in and a home robbery she experienced. Next, Yang lists some festivals and traditions that she still celebrates and what she does for them.....16-24

Before she left China, Yang talks about some of her proudest accomplishments and happiest memories. She also recalls the music ensemble that her daughters joined, the drawback of Las Vegas summers, her lifestyle, and local politics. After moving to the US, Yang remembers some of the culture shock she experienced and how prepared she felt for her PhD program. She mentions what things she wants other people to know about Chinese culture and the foods and crafts that remind her of home. Continuing on with her life in Las Vegas, she discusses what she likes about her job, what she does around the city, and how she feels about gambling.....25-34

Lastly, Yang dives into topics surrounding the model minority myth and how her daughters seem to be affected by it. She also mentions never experiencing any overt discrimination, but perhaps slight microaggressions. Lastly, she dives into the issue of COVID rhetoric, what the growing AAPI population means to her, and what it has been like living through historical time periods from the end of the Cold War to 9/11.....4-42



**Use Agreement**

Name of Narrator: Mei Yang

Name of Interviewer: Jourdin Wilson

We, the above named, give to the Oral History Research Center of UNLV, the recorded interview(s) initiated on Nov. 10, 2021 as an unrestricted gift, to be used for such scholarly and educational purposes as shall be determined, and transfer to the University of Nevada Las Vegas, legal title and all literary property rights including copyright. This gift does not preclude the right of the interviewer, as a representative of UNLV, to use the recordings and related materials for scholarly pursuits. There will be no compensation for any interviews.

I understand that my interview will be made available to researchers and may be quoted from, published, distributed, placed on the Internet or broadcast in any medium that the Oral History Research Center and UNLV Libraries deem appropriate including future forms of electronic and digital media.

[Signature] 11/10/2021  
Signature of Narrator Date

Jourdin Wilson 11/10/2021  
Signature of Interviewer Date

**UNLV** | UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Box 457010, 4505 S. Maryland Pkwy, Las Vegas, NV 89154-7010  
Phone: (702) 895-2222 Email: [oralhistory@unlv.edu](mailto:oralhistory@unlv.edu) [www.library.unlv.edu/reflections](http://www.library.unlv.edu/reflections)

**This is an interview for the Las Vegas Asian American and Pacific Islander Oral History Project for the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021, interviewing Dr. Mei Yang, professor at UNLV.**

**Please spell your first and last name.**

My first name is Mei, M-E-I. My last name is Yang, Y-A-N-G.

**And will be interviewed by Jourdin Wilson. First name J-O-U-R-D-I-N. Wilson, W-I-L-S-O-N.**

**Please talk about your family and your childhood.**

I was born in Sichuan Province in China. I have my parents and my brother in my family. I grew up in Sichuan up to about five years, and then because my dad is in the military, they relocate to Shanxi Province, and then my whole family moved there. At Shanxi, I spent my elementary school and junior high and high school there. That's after eighteen years, I don't need to talk about it, right? That's that until I was seventeen years old, and then I went to college actually back in Sichuan in Chengdu. It's actually the University of Science and Technology of China.

**Can you talk about some of your friends that you made there during your childhood?**

Yes. At my elementary school, actually we had some friends, actually playdates. One of the classmates, she still has contact with me because she married actually another friend, so they are both my friends. Also, in my middle school, actually I liked the middle school environment pretty well, and we had some classmates there and friends there. A couple of them, actually I still have contact with. Also, in high school, I do have my best friend and, also, the other girl who was actually...it's kind of like a coincidence. It's not like it was planned that we go to the same high school because I entered the high school first, and then she joined later. Then I realized, oh,

she is one of my old classmates. We are still very good friends right now, yes, who date back to the middle school time.

### **How about family trips?**

During childhood at that time, yes, we didn't have much money at that time. We don't have much trip except going back to we call it probably hometown, hometown in Sichuan. I think at that time, my grandpa and grandma, they were both alive. They came to visit us probably once a couple of years. We have both grandparents on my mother's side and my father's side, and then they switched, took turns, probably one parents came in this year, and then the other grandparents came the other year. Then I think I remember we probably went back to our hometown. It was probably only once or twice before I went to college. After I went to college, I went back by myself once.

### **Tell us about your grandparents.**

On my father's side, and he has actually a big family. They have actually a lot of relatives actually in a pretty close area. My dad has one brother, younger brother, and, also, one younger sister. My grandpa, at that time, he's working. In China at that time, there is very much difference between the people who are working, say, peasants and, also, the ones who actually are paid by the government. My grandpa was lucky at that time he was already paid by the government. It's kind of a shop, some kind of entity, and then he was like the director there or something like that. Even though his salary was low compared to right now, much lower, at that time it's still a big income to the whole family, so he is the one that is actually earning money. My grandma is a peasant, so she is doing all the crops, planted all the crops, and, also, some vegetables to sell. It was like that. The whole family lived together. My dad, my uncle, and then my aunt, they all actually lived together.



**Tell us some stories your grandparents told you about their lives.**

My grandpa he is kind of gentleman style, and he is very serious. When he talks, you just feel, okay, we have to listen. All the people have to be quiet and listen to him. Of course, he is the one earning money, so of course, that's the authority that has to be there. But he is also very interesting when he talks. He is talking very slow, but you can hear what he is talking about is something you have to believe. It's that kind of feeling. He once was talking about a story. It was back sometime ago. Actually, at that time in China, we don't have our own bathroom in our house. It is all shared, a shared bathroom. Also, the shower, of course, is shared. Then he was talking about there was one shower room, but at that time it's not really good construction, so the shower room has a small window, and that window is closed during the wintertime to keep it warm. Then because the water is so hot and a lot of steam inside the shower room, it is less air in there. He was talking about people were taking a shower there, and then after some time, they feel hard to breathe, so hard, and then he was talking in a very funny voice, and I still remember that. Actually, it's in Sichuan dialect in the way he talks. [Speaking Sichuan dialect] It means you have no air. People were feeling so hard to breathe, and they will probably die from that because it's so much less air in there. That's this thing I remember pretty clearly.

**What type of dialect do you speak?**

Actually, right now, I am speaking Mandarin most of the time, but I also speak Sichuan dialect with my parents.

**Are there any other stories from your grandparents?**

My grandpa, his personality, he is very sincere and, also, he is generous. He was respected by all the people in his working place. But my grandma is a different type. My grandma likes to work. She cannot stay there and do nothing. She always finds something to do. At their old house, my

grandma is the one actually cooking most of the time and served my grandpa. She sometimes complains and says, "Okay, this old guy doesn't do anything." She just says, "Okay, you do this," and then you just say something. But he didn't do real work, so my grandma would complain. My grandpa seldom gets angry. You can see that his face is probably not that shiny or that pleasant anymore, but he doesn't really talk that much about this kind of thing. I like his style. When he says something, yes, everybody will listen to him, and if he doesn't say, then you can feel what probably he is not happy with that, but he won't really talk back and forth, this kind of thing. I like that.

### **Can you talk about your higher education?**

My higher education, I got my bachelor's degree and, also, master's degree from the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China. That was back in 1992 I entered the college. Actually, I am the lucky one who already knew what I wanted to do when I was in high school. I remember I wrote an essay because we were assigned to write an essay about what you plan on doing in the future, and I wrote that I wanted to be a computer scientist. I don't know where I got that idea because we already started to take one programming course back in high school. That is what opened my eyes. Actually, those are Apple computers, Apple machine. That's actually very old style, the bulky monitor, and then you have that terminal. It's called terminal. You type something, and then you wait for some time, and it's actually sent back to the memory machine and then displayed on the monitor, all green screen. It's green. By that time, we can do a little bit of games, some kind of a text-based game or something. It was very interesting, and I just liked it, and that's what motivated me to study computer.

That's been my college, so my major is, at that time, called computer information or computer technology, something like that. We have two tracks, the software orientated more than

hardware orientated. I think I'm on the hardware and application oriented. We learn actually many different courses. Of course, the first course that we learn is typing. We still have that typewriter, the old one, the mechanical one. Yes, we learned that. It was very fun. Then later, we started to learn programming languages. The first language we learned is actually Pascal. Actually, back in high school, we learned a little bit of BASIC, then Pascal. Even at that time, there is no teaching on C yet, but later I learned by myself. The teachers back in my college, they were really nice. I think I really enjoyed the time when I was in college.

Actually, right now, in many Chinese universities, they have this kind of system, like if you have a good GPA, then you actually will be recommended into the graduate program. You don't need to take the entrance test. I was recommended to entering the master's program, and I followed my advisor who is in the networking area, and then I focused on the research. I started doing research on the networking area. The system at that time, the topic came from the projects my advisor is doing, and that project was a collaborative with a company, and then we have to go to the company to do the work, probably the second year. We have actually a two-and-a-half-year system for the master's program. I probably spent about a year, most time, with the company. I actually go to them every day. But it's actually very interesting. Most of the time, we're working there by ourselves. I have a lab mate, and she is also working there. Many times, I stayed there in later hours, and sometimes I was working by myself in the lab and, also, in the building because sometimes I also go there during the weekends.

**How do you identify ethnically?**

I think I'm probably Chinese and Asian type, I think.

**Is there any specific—I'm sorry if this is redundant—specific regions that you identify with?**

Yes. I think probably I'm still, we say, southwest side of China. China is so big, and we kind of partitioned the whole country, like northern and southern. The southern is kind of below Yangtze River. That river cuts the country into half. Then the southwest part is Sichuan and then close to Tibet. Included in Sichuan are also other two provinces, Guizhou and, also, Yunnan. We have some similar habits, living style because of the weather there. The weather there is pretty humid. Not that humid, actually, probably summertime is humid, but in the wintertime it's cold and a little bit humid. It actually still feels so cold, actually. I still remember how cold it was.

**Can you describe some of the habits from the region you're from compared to other regions?**

Yes. I think Sichuan, you probably see a lot of the restaurants here, Chinese restaurants, Sichuan cuisine. It's actually the specific cuisine developed there, and people like to eat hot, spicy food. Actually, the chili is grown there. It's specifically hot compared to other places. I think because of the soil there, something. Then they make the chili sauce very spicy and, also, the aroma makes you feel very pleasant. It's different from Mexican and other chili sources. The taste is so delicious. Actually, even my family, we already moved out from Sichuan for many years, but we still keep that habit. We still make the chili sauce ourselves.

Also, another food is called sausage. It's actually specially made during the months before the Spring Festival, probably the winter months, and so it's cold, and you have to preserve the meat and some vegetables. The meat was actually put into this sack. You put the meat into it. Of course, the meat will be marinated with different sauces including the chili, and then there is another special pepper, also. It tastes very good. Some people put peanuts and some of those nuts into it. It can also add more flavor. It was so good because the meat itself...the pig is grown there, and because they eat the vegetables and eat those plants or some other stuff there, they

give off that special aroma in their meat. Then when you put it into making this sausage, it's just very, very flavorful. Yes, it is a special flavor.

**Have you tried foods from different regions in China?**

Yes.

**How different is it?**

Yes, even though I didn't really visit many provinces, but I went to Shanxi where I grew up. That place is northern side of China, and the people there like to eat noodles. A lot of those food are made by flour. They don't eat much chili, but they eat vinegar because I think the water there is hard. It's like the water here. Actually, the water here is also very hard. They need soft stuff to digest the food, so vinegar. That place is very famous for vinegar. They make also very good vinegar. They put the vinegar in the noodle and, also, different dishes, they also put vinegar. At that place, you eat that and you feel it's actually very harmonic because it's very natural. You will feel you'd like to add some vinegar to your food. At my hometown, it's different. You don't feel that you want to add more vinegar to your dishes. It's different. I think it's because the places are different, and people's eating habits are different, and also, the water you're drinking out of this whole system is different.

I also went to Shanghai, the east part of China, because my husband's hometown is on the east part of China. His family eats the Shanghai kind of style food. They actually eat no chili at all. Vinegar is less to eating. They actually like bamboo, little bamboo, and they eat a lot of bamboo, actually. Also, they preserve the bamboo by adding salt to it and making it dried out, and then they can eat it the whole year, yes, a lot of them. Also, the fish and shrimp, they are actually grown in a river, not in a sea because the sea, that's different type of fish and different type of shrimp, and the taste is wholly different. They like the river one better.

**When did you decide to move to the United States?**

That was actually after I got my master's degree. I was probably influenced by one of my college teachers. At that time, she was in the U.S. already. I was actually teaching his son in math, like tutoring. His son at that time was in middle school, and I was in college. She gave me some advice. She said, "Okay, probably if you want to study computer science, you probably want to go to a graduate program in the U.S." That's when I started to prepare for applying for the PhD in U.S. universities, and luckily, I think I got two offers at that time. Then I decided to go to the University of Texas at Dallas.

**What year was that?**

That's 1999.

**How was the traveling experience?**

Actually, I took some flights back in China in between those different cities before, but this international flight is a very, very long time. Actually, my first flight was transit to Tokyo, yes, Tokyo Narita. We stopped there and then changed to my other flight and then to Dallas. That's a direct flight. That's probably ten or twelve hours, I guess. It was so long. I felt like my leg was swollen. I had to walk to relax myself. It was so much different from my past trips. Also, when I first landed to Dallas, it was in the summer, I think it's August. It was so humid and hot, and then I was feeling, okay, is this Mars? I thought I was on a different planet. It is so much different than back in China. Yes, that is my first feeling.

Academic sister, she was actually two years ahead of me. We actually had the same master advisor, so we call it academic sister. She was in Dallas already, and so she picked me up. Actually, I lived in her apartment for one night before I went to my university.

**Did you go anywhere specific first? Was there anything you really wanted to see in Dallas when you first got there?**

Actually, I don't remember why I picked UT Dallas. I think at that time, yes, their computer science program was growing at that time, I could tell. Because I took the GRE test and, also, TOEFL, and both scores were not that high. I got a medium range or a little bit above medium range. I was not that confident to apply to all those good schools even though I was sitting a little bit above that range, so I think I can actually give it a try. The other university I got an offer was University of Florida. But Dallas gave me a full scholarship, and the other was three-quarter. I was thinking, okay, I probably should go to this full one.

**What was the hardest thing about leaving China?**

I had just gotten married before I left China for my PhD study, so it was probably one and a half months I got married. I don't know if my husband is really happy with that. I had a little concern, but I talked to him. I said, "Maybe I just get my PhD degree, and maybe I will still go back to China to work." He was supportive, actually. I tried three times to get my visa. The first two times were rejected. For some reason, I was so nervous because the visa officer actually talked to me in English. At that time, I was so nervous that I cannot even hear clearly what he is saying. The first time I remember he was asking me, "What is a protocol?" He had another question, "What is a particle?" I didn't hear that "particle" clearly. I was nervous I even asked him to pardon me and to say it again. I sounded like a printer or something, blah, blah, something like that. Then, of course, that's not good. I remember the second try, and that was the first try.

The third time I got my visa. At that time, I told my husband, "If I don't get a visa on the third time, I will just give up and stay there and work." I was in a company, actually, before I

came to U.S. I had been working in a company for three months. Before I got visa, I won't tell to quit from the company. I said, "If I don't get a visa, I will just stay here to continue my work."

**What was it like leaving your other family members behind?**

Actually, my parents are pretty supportive. That may be because my dad is actually relocating to different places. He actually relocated to the northeast part of China before. But my family only went to Shanxi, but then later they have to relocate to the east and north part again, but he said, "Okay, no, we're not moving," so we stayed there, and he retired at that time. Probably because of this background, he relocated and, also, we relocated from different places. They also told me and my brother, "You guys should go out to see different worlds. It's actually always good if you see different worlds." That's the encouragement from my childhood. My parents were encouraging us.

Then I went to Chengdu for my college. Actually, there is still about a one-day shuttle in between my hometown to Chengdu. Actually, it's a long distance. We went back once. It's not in the same city. Then after I graduated for my master's degree, my husband is in Shanghai, so then I moved from southwest to the east. I still had that dream to come to U.S. to study.

My parents always supported me, and my brother, also, he was supportive. He also even sent me off when I left China. He actually went to Shanghai and then sent me off to the flight at that time.

**How do you stay in touch with distant family members?**

Back in 1999, we were actually very limited. At that time, we already have the Internet, but it's not possible to do a web chat or a video. The Internet doesn't have that technology yet. But we do have emails and, also, we write letters. I wrote letters, actually, to my parents. Also, we made



phone calls. Yes, we'd do phone calls probably once a month or something like that. With my husband, of course, probably more frequently. That's how we stay in touch.

**Were there ever issues with letters getting lost in the mail?**

It probably once or twice, not that often, actually. It's hard to get someone, say, from the same place and then take some stuff to visit you. It's very, very impossible because it's so far distance. My mother actually visited me. That was the year 2000 because I had Irene. My daughter was born in 2001. I think my mother came in 2001, actually, right after I gave birth to my first daughter. Then my husband was with me in the year 2000. He was on an F-2 visa. He came to stay with me. That's how half of my family are together.

Then I went back to China right after one semester after coming to U.S. because my husband's family—after we got our marriage certificate, and we didn't get no ceremony yet. Then his family is still expecting we have a ceremony. Then I went back to have a ceremony, actually in winter break.

**What year was that for the ceremony?**

The ceremony was at the end of 1999.

**What are yours and your family's fondest memories of home?**

You mean the funnest?

**Fondest, memories you hold closest to you.**

It should be something like an object or something? It has to be tangible, or it could be...?

**It could be an experience.**

I think probably there are good memories on the food, yes, because my parents are really good at making food. They are very good. They are also creative in making food. When I was in middle school and high school, because in the morning we would have to get so early to ride to the

school, my dad created a lot of these different dishes for us in the morning. At that time, we don't have that much milk to drink. We actually had eggs. He will make that kind of soup with eggs in it. Also, he made some steamed buns and, of course, different fillings into it. Even though at that time we actually had very less money, but he and my mom tried to make a nutritious food for me and my brother. I was...I shouldn't say tall, but I was actually middle to high in terms of my height. My dad would always say, "You're growing," during those several years, especially middle school. He said, "You've got to eat enough food and enough nutrition, absorb enough nutrition so you can grow taller." That's what always he is saying. Yes, we kind of followed his words. Of course, the food is delicious, too, so we don't really hate the food. He always tried all different ways to make the food tasteful. That's what I think is the most memorable, and I can still make some of the food they did back at that time when my mother and father were raising me. They would also make their own style of food in their own way. Those things are hard to find on the outside. You cannot buy it from anywhere.

**Any other memories you'd like to bring up?**

Other things, yes, my dad is very good at crafting. He made a lot of wood pieces. He made a lot of wood crafting. I guess I inherited some of his skills, and that's also memorable. He actually deliberately trained us to do this. Sometimes when he made the food, he asked us to watch and then practice. When he would do some wood crafting work, he would ask us to also watch. In some way, we inherited from him.

**Why did you and your family move to Las Vegas?**

I got my PhD degree back in 2003. At first, I actually found a job in Georgia, and I went to Georgia and worked at Columbus State University for one year. That school is kind of like a teaching school, so they have the bachelor and master's degree, but they don't have a PhD

degree. I was still really interested in doing research, and so I was also looking for some jobs which can actually support my research. At that time, UNLV has an opening, and I applied, and luckily, I got the offer and moved here.

**What were your first memories of Las Vegas?**

When I first landed here, I saw those buildings, the hotels on the Strip, and it was kind of exciting because when I was back in Georgia, Georgia is more flat style, and you don't really see those kinds of tall buildings in Georgia. I had a good feeling of, okay, it's the style I like. Also, here it has a pretty good Chinatown that I can get groceries and all kinds of food where it's probably hard to find in Georgia because back there I had—there was a Korean shop, Korean grocery store, but there is no Chinese grocery store. We had to go to Atlanta. It's a ninety-mile drive. It was too far. It was better to find a place which has a Chinatown.

**Where did you live when you first arrived in Las Vegas?**

I lived in apartments close to UNLV, which was called Tamarus. Yes, Tamarus is down the street. I thought I could probably walk sometimes, but I never actually walked to UNLV. It's at the cross street of Maryland. I still drove. That apartment, the good thing is it has a window at the kitchen area, so I liked that. I'm particular like that. I like a window in the kitchen so I can see the light from outside, and then when I cook some stuff, it's more pleasant.

**What were the most difficult things about the early days in Las Vegas?**

Because my husband at that time went back to China after Irene, my elder one, was one year old, and then after that I was basically staying here by myself. After I moved to Las Vegas, my husband was still in China. Irene was in China, too. I was by myself again here. I was thinking, how can we get together? This job meant I would be staying for long; I wasn't thinking about changing to another place, so I was thinking about that. Then my husband and Irene visited me

during their winter break because that's close to the Spring Festival, that time. At that time, I already started looking for houses. We already actually have our one house we were pretty seriously thinking about buying it, and I thought to bring Irene here. But then I guess my husband was not that sure yet. He is thinking that he is not sure if he will move here or not. We had some discussion and, also, some hesitation. He had some hesitation. It was unclear family future, actually, at that time. That probably is the hardest thing, I think.

**Who was helpful in those first years when you were meeting new people?**

Yes, I had my colleague, Dr. Jiang. He is associate professor now. He was actually helping me, introducing me to the department. When I first came here, I didn't know which apartment is good or not. I lived in one friend's house. She is still my friend. The apartment. There is a couple over there, they actually were very helpful. Also, some of the students of Dr. Jiang at that time are also pretty helpful.

**What was Las Vegas like compared to other U.S. cities you lived in?**

At that time, I probably visited Atlanta, and then I had a conference somewhere, Phoenix, I guess. I went to a couple of cities and then San Francisco, also. Compared to those cities, I think Las Vegas was not too big. It's actually medium-sized, but you can find almost everything here. Living is very convenient. You don't need to drive too much to go anywhere. The people here are also friendly. They're friendly, and they're also open-minded. They could accept the immigrants and people from different places.

**What were these cities like compared to the cities you had visited in China?**

The cities in China are more...because their style is different. In China, actually every city has public transportation, so it's actually very convenient to take the bus or take a shuttle or either a train service. Those things are very common in China. Here in Las Vegas, of course, we have

some public transportation, but it's very limited, so you have to drive. Also, on the other side, the Chinese cities, residential is more condensed, so you have a very high tower, buildings. Those community services are all surrounding, and sometimes you can walk to go to a restaurant or grocery shopping or something or not a far distance. That's also pretty different and very convenient.

First, the weather is so much different. In China, I think the weather—where I lived the most time, in Shanghai, and then my husband is in Hangzhou, so those places are all very humid especially in the summertime, and in the wintertime it's cold. It's wet and cold, so it's totally different. I like the weather here better because you don't feel that it's so chilly during the wintertime, especially.

**Can you explain what your family is like now in Las Vegas?**

Yes. My family right now, my older one, Irene, she is starting college. She actually transferred to Michigan this fall. My younger daughter is in middle school right now. Actually, my husband is still in China. We are a long-distance commute. He has his work in China, and his parents are in China. That's the situation. We're probably used to it right now. Myself and my husband are similar in terms of this. We would like to work a lot of time. We actually are working—as my daughter said, we put work at a higher priority than family. It's probably true. Yes, it is true in terms of that. We don't really say we had to stick together, that kind of stuff. We're okay that we're not here, but, of course, we still support each other, and we actually have this video conversation and have the family video session kind of thing every week. Yes, we are still close to each other, but we're not living together.

**Have any other relatives moved to the United States?**

No.

**Can you describe all the jobs you've had in Las Vegas?**

When I moved here, I was in the electrical and computer engineering department as an assistant professor. Then I got promoted to associate professor and then to full professor. The full professor was actually in 2016. That was about five years ago. I guess I was smooth during this process. Of course, I worked very hard to get what I expected to achieve. It's probably some kind of balance on the life side and the work side. That's why probably my daughters are complaining sometimes. They say, "Okay, you even work at home. You have a lot of things to do."

Sometimes I didn't really satisfy their needs, but I try to balance on the two sides.

I would say I have ambition or something because right now I'm in the department as a graduate coordinator, so it's actually a lot more work compared to before, administration kind of work. I need to meet more students, actually. I need to actually talk to students and publicize our graduate program. We do this review of the graduate applications and, also, I collaborate with California State University. We try to actually recruit students from their side. Actually, yesterday we just finished two meetings for their students to come and publicize our graduate program. Actually, it's more responsibility than before apart from my own research and my teaching job. This is additional work.

I enjoy it because myself, I like the faculty job. When I was actually looking for a job—before I got my PhD, when I started looking for jobs, I only tried the university jobs. I didn't even think about the industry jobs. I think I just like it. I enjoy teaching classes. Also, I like the winter break, summer break, and flexibility. Also, right now, I am doing some work on engaging secondary level students. That's a part of the grant I got from NSF, especially the female students to our engineering program because our engineering program only had 18 percent female students, and that's way below the percentage of the female students at the university.

There is actually more than 50 percent of female students, but our college only had 18 percent. We're trying to bring more female students.

**For clarification, what years were you an assistant professor?**

That's 2004 I started, and then I got my associate professor in 2010, and then full professor in 2016.

**I'm sorry, what was the last term?**

The 2016, full professor.

**Thank you. Where in Las Vegas have you lived?**

I lived in this apartment close to the university. I lived there for one and a half years, and then I bought a house in Henderson. Actually, when I bought my first house, I was thinking, okay, I can bring my elder daughter here, and she needed to go to elementary school and middle school and high school, and so I searched all these school zones. I picked that location because I was thinking, okay, these schools are good. That was my plan. But it then turned out that it didn't work that well. I brought my elder one actually before her first grade. It was actually still kindergarten. She was even before kindergarten, preschool. My dad visited me, and then he brought my daughter here because after I got my house, I thought I should move them here. Then my elder one, she attended preschool close to the airport. There is one called Horizon or something. They are still there, actually. That one is still there. She was there for three months, and then we got the summer break, I took her back to China again. Because I'm by myself here, my husband is still working in China, I didn't feel safety. Sometimes I just feel like, okay, what if I just like to pick up my daughter, and I'm stuck somewhere and I couldn't go, who will replace me? I don't have a backup. I was so nervous on that. I told my husband, "It's very hard to work out this way, just by myself."

Also, my job duty at that time, I need to—you know the tenure system. The university runs this tenure system. Before we get tenure, we're under pressure. We have to work hard, and we have to get more research done, publications, and write more grant proposals to get more funding. That kind of pressure is so heavy, and I have to spend a lot of time on work. I kind of feel it's probably not a good idea for myself to take care of my daughter, and also, at the same time, I had to work for tenure.

Then I discussed with my husband that it may be better to let my elder one stay in China four more years. Actually, in China, it's pretty convenient. She attended kindergarten. Kindergarten is so close. Her grandparents can just walk her there. I think it's about ten minutes' walking distance, very convenient. Also, they covered everything. They provide lunch. It's actually not much cost. It's very cheap. Actually, the environment and everything is very friendly and, also, very convenient compared to by myself here. I would struggle sometimes, like if I'm late, I was in a rush to pick her up. I think that's why we made that change there.

After I got my tenure, then I felt more job security, and so I thought, okay, maybe it's time to bring my elder one here. I actually already had my second one, my younger one, who was born in 2009. She was also in China, raised by her grandparents, my husband's parents, because in China we have that tradition; the grandparents will take care of the grandchildren. They will actually live together. They watch the toddlers and the babies for them before they start kindergarten. In China, the preschool started at three years old, even two years old. Sometimes they have a babysitter place. It's actually a government-established one, and some are private ones. Yes, they're pretty good, actually, the environment. The kids were pretty safe, and they had all the food and nutrition. That whole system is more supportive for the younger



kids. That's why I also sent my younger one back to China, and I visit them at winter break and then summer break, also, those breaks.

**The tradition is always with the husband or the son's parents?**

Yes. The dad's side parents, yes, they probably, most likely, are commonly the one who takes the role. But in my family case, my parents actually watched my elder one for several years, actually, before she moved to Hangzhou. Some family, actually the mom's side parents, they actually discuss and then negotiate. They say, "Okay, whoever has more time and it's more convenient." Like that.

**In the neighborhoods that you lived in, were there other people who are also Chinese?**

Yes. I bought the second house back in 2014. It is actually more south of the 215. That area is Green Valley Ranch area. Yes, there is many Chinese neighbors. On my same street, I have two families that are Chinese.

**When you first moved here, were there Chinese people?**

Probably in the apartment, no, not that I know. Because we have the colleagues, some of the colleagues actually joined UNLV the same year as me, and so I know some of them.

**How have these neighborhoods changed over time?**

You know that downturn, the house bubble thing? It started from 2008, I think, or something like that.

**The recession?**

Yes, recession, yes, the bubble thing broke. That was actually 2008 until 2012, several, three or four years, I think, period. Yes, at that time, I was in my first house. I was living there. Then I started seeing a lot of houses selling, those flags in the neighborhood. At that time, I was paying my mortgage. The good part is that I have this secure job, and so I didn't worry about paying my

mortgage even though that house price is dropping so much. I thought, I can still keep my house, and probably later on they will come back. But I saw my neighbors returning.

Of course, because I'm by myself, most time, I didn't really know much of the neighbors. I think I remember one neighbor on the east side. That one was rented to other people, and that family lived there for a long time, many years there. They had a lot of friends and, also, family members, a lot, so they had a lot of cars parking in the front yard, and sometimes they parked on my lot. Most of the time, I'm by myself, and I only have one car, and so I really didn't care about those things. Sometimes they actually say hi to me. Probably that's the only neighbor that we interact. Then the other neighbor was on my west side, and he bought the house at some time, and then they sold it, I think maybe because of the downturn. The price dropped so much that then he didn't think it's worth to spend money on it, and so he left. Then that house was rented out.

I started thinking maybe I should move because the neighborhood is changing. Many houses were actually bought by some investor for an investment house. Some are rented most of the time, and then those residents are changing, and so I don't feel that safe there. I forgot to tell you about this one, this story. It was once my house was robbed. At that time, I already had my elder one, and that was 2012 she came to U.S. and moved back to U.S. The robbery happened in 2013. It's actually some fault on me because I sometimes like to open the window a little bit just to keep some fresh air. It's a Chinese habit. I open the window, and sometimes I open the window, too, facing my backyard, and sometimes I open my bedroom window, which is actually facing the front yard. Actually, before that happened, I never thought about it's not safe to do that. I don't have a security system, even. There was one day, and I still have that open, very small crack opening on my bedroom window facing the front yard. Then when I came back after

I picked up my elder one, I saw that window was open so big. I was shocked and thought probably something happened. I just rushed into my garage, and then I just saw that my TV was gone. I have a laptop at home, and it was gone. My daughter has a flute, and it was gone. I was searching around to see if any other things were lost. At that time, I didn't have any experience about this kind of thing, and so I rushed to all rooms, the closets, to check if anything was lost. Then I called the police.

The police came, and he told me, "Okay, next time don't move to search in different places. You just stay outside in case some of the guys were still actually hiding somewhere. It's dangerous." I said, "Okay." I learned this.

Actually, it turned out to be someone—I had my contractor who was actually fixing the roof for me, and he had a very long ladder, that kind of shifting ladder, in my backyard, and that one was staying there for a long time. Actually, he delayed and delayed taking that one away. My estimate, I was trying to figure out what was going on because it must be someone who already knows that I like to open a window, and they are observing us. I analyzed it. I think most likely it's my neighbor. Probably, most likely, it's the male neighbor who has so many friends, so many cars, because they have so many different friends, I don't know who. Then I watched them observe us, have this kind of habit, and so they know what time I went to work and what time I came back. Then when I was gone, they moved the ladder. Actually, the policeman checked my backyard and saw that the ladder was in a different place. Because they moved the ladder on the front yard, and then they just leaned the ladder towards my bedroom window. My bedroom window is on the second floor. The ladder helped them. Yes, they got up there and robbed my house.

But I didn't feel scared. That was the first time. Of course, I feel so frustrated from the loss of stuff and my computer and my camera, actually. I had a camera before. I lost a lot of stuff. But I am also glad we were not in the house when they did this in case we had to confront those people doing the robbery. That's the thing I think it's a good sign because my daughter and me are still safe.

Then the police were actually distributing notices to all the neighbors, but they didn't give me any update later, like what's going on? In my analysis, I think it's most likely this neighbor or neighbor's friends or something.

Then after that I was thinking I should probably move; I should move to a different place, probably say I was even motivated. I had just started to look at houses before that, but that incident made me determined. I determined in my mind that I have to move.

**That's when you moved in 2014, and you said you have more Chinese neighbors now?**

Yes, we have a Chinese neighbor and, also, that area, I'd say, I feel safer even though it still has no community gate; it's open. But I feel more safer in that area. Also, my neighbors are relatively stable. My neighbor on the one side, a couple, they actually lived there...probably the house they bought at the start time, and they've lived there so long. Then my other neighbor, they probably moved to somewhere, and they started to rent that house out. Right now, my other side neighbor is changing, but this side is stable. Then the front neighbor across the street, they're actually sort of stable.

**What traditions and festivals are important to your family?**

I think Spring Festival is definitely the most important one and, also, there is one called Red Lantern Festival that's actually a half-month later than the Spring Festival. There is also what we call the Dragon Boat Festival. That's in the start of the summer. It's kind of start of summer,

close to June because that's our lunar calendar. Each year it's a different date. It's around early June or middle of June, something like that. Then the mid-autumn festival, we call it the Mooncake Festival, that's around September or October.

**How did your celebrations and festivals change after you moved to Las Vegas?**

Actually, the Spring Festival was the most important one. As a tradition, we gathered together, the whole family. Actually, for my case, because my parents are living actually close to my brother, so they're in the south part of China, southern China, and my husband's side is on the east side, so we are not in the same region. Then we never get a chance for the two sides together. I now stay more time with my husband's family now. Actually, I went back to China to spend the Spring Festival with him in 2011. When I had my first sabbatical leave, I went back there. The tradition in China, you actually have several days you will celebrate, at least five days. They have at least a five-day break, something like that. Then they will have meeting family and visiting relatives and all sorts of food made for the Spring Festival. It was still there.

When I stayed here by myself and I sometimes visit my Chinese friends, yes, they have some party probably the day before the Spring Festival. That day is like New Year's Eve, Chinese New Year's Eve. We'll mostly gather on that day. That's the Spring Festival. Actually, in Chinatown, they have some kind of celebration of that during that period, between the Spring Festival and the Red Lantern Festival.

Personally, I like the mid-autumn festival a lot because I think that's a beautiful season. It's a very beautiful season. Also especially, the eat mooncakes. I like to make the mooncakes myself. Of course, we can buy it from the store. Actually, Costco sells the mooncakes. It was on the shelf yesterday, I saw. It's not like saying that you cannot buy it, you cannot get it from here, it's just a way to say you're satisfied. I am satisfied with the making process. It does take a lot of

time. You have to prepare the syrup because that syrup is actually specially made, and you have to make that syrup first, and then, also, the filling. There are different fillings, like red bean filling and, also, the chestnuts. It's a very delicious filling. Also, there is this date. The dates in China, you peel off the skin, and the date meat you put in there and actually make the filling. There are actually all different types of filling. They are all sweet. They are sweet, but not as sweet as compared to American food. Then you need to mix that syrup with the flour. It's like you do the bread. You have to let it rest for a while, and then it should be very soft when you actually touch it. It's very soft. It's a very special way you actually wrap the filling into it. I saw one cartoon, a short clip, mooncake kind of thing, they showed the process, but I don't like that one because I don't think they actually know how to do that because that one, it's like they are making a steam bun kind of style. Actually, the cake skin should be very thin. It's very thin. You don't actually press it and then put the filling. Actually, the skin is very soft, and you just use your palm to press a little bit, and then put the filling, and then you start to actually close it. It's not like you make a dumpling; you actually roll that skin and then put a filling, and then you just wrap it. That's a totally different skill. I thought they should do our way who really made this cake before they made that cartoon.

Anyway, making mooncakes and the cake-making process, you have the family gather together. The family gets together and does this food together. Food connects everyone. I guess that's the meaning of that and, also, that's why I like that because my daughter helps me do this, and it's like a past tradition to the next generation. Also, they can understand what the meaning is of the tradition of the mooncake being round. When the moon is a full moon, that's a full-moon day. Chinese people like the round shape. It stands for people being together, and you get everything smooth. That's what round means, and that's why we like the round shape.

**What are some of the most significant events in the history of your family?**

Before I left China, the significant one would be when I actually got admitted to college because it's a big thing at that time because at that time there's not a high percentage of people that went to college. Then if you got admitted, that's a pretty good achievement. My brother was admitted actually in the medical field, so he was in the university in the medical field. Of course, that is definitely a job that everybody was so happy. When I was admitted in this university, my family was so happy. That's the big events.

Next probably is when I was married. Actually, when I was married, I had the ceremony held in my family first, with my parents first. Then I came to U.S., and I went back to get my other ceremony at my husband's home. My parents' side, of course, they saw that I was married and, also, I got my admission to the PhD program, both things together, and they were actually pretty happy for me.

**Were there any significant events in your community?**

My current community?

**Both past and current.**

My elder one and the younger one, they both actually joined the Li Linhong Chinese Music Ensemble, and they actually had a performance twice a year. That's a pretty big event, I think, for us. They actually spent a lot of time practicing the music. Also, they gathered together to actually shoot some videos on that. On the performance day, they actually had to be there pretty early and, also, the parents. They needed help out there. We actually have a big family there because, also, we brought our own food. Every parent made their own food, and then we share the food together. It's kind of like a festival for us after the performance. Actually, their ensemble was interviewed by one guy on, I think, PBS. There was PBS, and I think he was—I'm

so bad at remembering people's names, sorry. He was actually from Tanzania, that guy, and he is actually our artist and also the chef. Then he visited our ensemble and had an interview. There was actually one TV show on this ensemble and, also, Chinese food, our own food displayed there, and then he tried out different foods and shared his own thoughts on that. That's also a pretty big one.

**What are the greatest differences that you find between Las Vegas and other places you've lived?**

We had this one before, right? The other question is similar to this? Las Vegas is a very diverse place, and different school groups, they live in town. You can find Chinatown, Koreatown, Indiantown. Different groups can actually find their own food in the grocery store and in the community services. I think that's very, very unique about Las Vegas. Also, this city is actually very famous and determined, of course, so it's actually convenient in terms of transportation because a lot of U.S. cities have direct flights here, and you can go fly to any of those cities on a direct flight. That's very, very convenient to go anywhere.

**Were there any differences that really stood out maybe in a negative way?**

In Las Vegas?

**Las Vegas or other places that you've lived in compared to Las Vegas.**

I think Las Vegas' only drawback is probably the weather in the summertime. It's so dry and so hot. I'm actually okay with that because compared to humid, I like it dry. You actually don't feel that much hot, actually, because of the less humidity. Another thing I think is the environment is probably a like a desert landscape, and so you don't really see much of the green stuff. The plants are...I plant some at my house, and it's hard to grow something. You have to give so



much water. Also, the soil itself is not fertilized, and so you have to put a lot of fertilizer, and then it's not easy to do that part.

**Do you see a big difference in lifestyle in different cities compared to Las Vegas?**

Yes and no. I think in the U.S., most places are all based on having your own car, so you have to drive. I think that's probably similar to everywhere except New York or Boston or somewhere. Most places you have to have a car. I think probably the food side, Vegas is very, very good in terms that you can find almost all kinds of food. Also, it's less cost. I don't need to spend much money, and you can get many authentic foods.

**Were there any differences you noticed in politics or how people were politically?**

Yes. I think it's good in terms of that at Las Vegas. I think people are more open-minded compared to other places where people are more conservative. Here, I think people are more open-minded. I don't know what percentage of people are really getting to the votes, but I feel like at least the people I know, like my daughter, yes, she is actively voting. Also, her friends are actually voting. I think that's good to see for the younger generation people. Yes, they practice, or they are actually participating in the future of the nation.

**For languages, are you able to meet people in Las Vegas that speak the same dialects as you?**

Yes. Yes, I do have some friends who actually can speak Sichuan dialect, yes.

**Are there any cultural differences that stand out to you whether it's with other Asian Americans or just compared to the U.S.? Was there maybe a big culture shock?**

I think among the Asian people, yes, there definitely was some difference. My neighbors are actually Korean, the professor. I visit their house, also. Yes, their living style is different from us. Also, I met some Indian people. My department has several professors, and I also visit their

house. I met a person face to face, and we had some virtual meetings, from Thailand. Yes, there are some differences, definitely. But I think it's easy to communicate in terms of that, and that shouldn't be a problem. Of course, American culture is actually a big difference from Asian ones. I am still learning. I'm not good at it at all. I'm still learning, especially with names. I'm still having difficulty memorizing people's names. Also, the stuff American people enjoy probably is far away from me. Americans like football particularly and, also, baseball. I think those games, they probably chat on that and, also, the TV shows they like, and I probably didn't really watch. That's kind of a big difference there. Between my colleagues, a lot of my colleagues actually grew up here, and I probably don't have much in common, topic to talk about other than our work.

**Is there anything religious or a spirituality that you follow? Is it difficult to practice here if you do that?**

Yes, I'm probably pretty simple on that. I do not believe any religion. Actually, my generation of people from China, probably most of them do not have a religion because when we were educated, it was not encouraged to have a religion in China. But I don't mind communicating with people who have religion. I think many Indian professors have their own religion, and some other people are Christian. I'm okay. Actually, I attended some of those religious activities when I first came here because they have a gathering during Thanksgiving and then they have a party thing. Yes, I went there probably a couple of times. Myself, I guess I still believe in what I used to be, so I didn't really convert myself to any of these religions.

**What should people who have never traveled outside of Las Vegas know about your country's culture and history?**

I think probably I would say Chinese people like eating. The food is very important back in China, so important. It's probably the major stuff connecting people. That's why probably other country people feel different. They spend a lot of time making food and, also, talking about food and, also, sharing the food. This is actually probably the major thing people should know about.

Also, I think Chinese people are proud of our own language. That's actually a for-sure thing because it has a long history, five thousand years. There are a lot of interesting stories, and that structure of the language comes from it, and so it's unique. That's why people like to talk in Chinese when Chinese people are together because some words are hard to express in another language, but in Chinese we can find the right word to do it. I think probably American people feel the same thing. That's their mother tongue, how to express it more appropriately rather than compared to a foreign language, that same kind of feeling. I think probably people feel a little bit awkward if I am talking with someone who is Chinese and I am speaking Chinese, but I'm hoping that people can have more tolerance on that because this is really something I feel when I talk there are some words, I can't find the right English name for it. There is the same feeling about that.

Another thing culture-wise, I think Chinese people are too friendly, so friendly, and they welcome people. They want to share food with you, and they want to provide some kind of suggestion to you or something. They're so enthusiastic sometimes that you feel a little bit, why? Probably the younger generation is not like that, but in my generation, we feel people are so...you just feel easy together, familiar with someone, and you actually like to help people. We like to help each other, and we just try to provide or offer that to people, even though probably they don't need it, but we just like to do that.

**What was it like learning English?**

Actually, we started learning English from middle school. My generation is starting from middle school. I was lucky to have one English teacher, and actually I still have contact with him. He is now a professor at Shanghai Normal University. He actually is really good at pronunciation. At that time, few English teachers can pronounce that accurately because many probably had their own dialect, so when they speak English, they have that dialect accent in there. But he is the one that you cannot tell that accent. Then I'm lucky to start learning English from him. We learned those pronunciations in a much better way compared to many of my other generation friends, so that's a good part. Also, I like English and, also, spend some time to speak. Actually, the reading part is still my weak part. I didn't really finish a whole English novel yet. I like to read some articles. I like reading articles, newspaper, and watch some of those shows. I enjoy learning and, also, it's another thing that motivated me to apply to the U.S. I think, okay, English is something I can handle. I am still learning, but at least I can try.

**By the time you applied for the PhD program, you felt really prepared?**

Actually, I took the first training courses offered back in China. It's called Beijing New East Orient School or something like that. They did do this training in English specifically. I took their lessons. Actually, that was during winter break that I went to Beijing to take the lessons. But I am still not very good at learning those vocabulary because GRE, the oral part, has a lot of those awkward vocabulary and very used ones. I'm still not good at that. Also, reading. The reading and long sentences, it's so hard to integrate. I'm still not good at that part. Actually, the process I enjoyed a lot because I met different people. We actually took the last classes from different teachers, and some of the teachers are really knowledgeable, and they actually teach a lesson in a pretty interesting way, so I liked that.

**This might be a little bit repetitive. What do you like the most about living in Las Vegas?**

Las Vegas, again, it's a very friendly place and, also, convenient. I also like the outdoor activities here. I actually go hiking pretty often with my family and friends. There is Red Rock and the Valley of Fire and Lake Mead area, so there are all those things to explore. I like that. Also, the sunshine here, I appreciate it. You go out hiking, and you enjoy the sunshine. This is a very enjoyable each time we go hiking. Also, I like to take photographs right now, so I can practice my photography skill each time when I go out.

**Is there anything in the entertainment industry in Las Vegas that you like?**

Actually, I seldom go to the hotel places, but I probably once a year or sometime like that. But since the pandemic, I didn't go to any of those places. But it's a good part when I have relatives or friends visiting. You can take them to those places. Some of those concerts, some of those famous singers, they have those shows, and some people actually fly for that. Two years ago, my college classmates, they flew from Toronto to here to actually attend a show. It's a very famous Chinese singer. I said, "Okay, that's good." We are just lucky here. We don't need to fly anywhere else, and we can watch it here.

**Family events?**

Like hiking? That's what we always enjoy. Also, the Chinese Music Ensemble, yes, we did those together. After the pandemic, probably that will change because it's changed a lot of things. Yes, we actually had some parties before during the festival, but now because of the pandemic, we don't have that gathering anymore.

**Your favorite part about your job in Las Vegas?**

I think the faculty job here is pretty enjoyable. Now I can engage more in secondary education, so that's something else that I like to get involved. I think a lot of things can be improved, and so that's what we are working on.

**How do you feel about the activity of gambling in Las Vegas and the gaming industry?**

I think that's kind of like a feature of our city, and I think it's actually a major economic source for the city, also. For this place, because it's actually sitting in a desert, it's kind of hard to develop some other major industry. But this one is where it started, so I support that as an economic major source. Also, it promotes some other development at the same time, like our determined engineering. Actually, it's one of the programs in our college now actually because of this gambling thing and, also, this convention business and showbusiness here. It's a growing program now.

**What foods remind you of your ancestors? Can you get these foods or ingredients to make them in Las Vegas? It could be your parents or grandparents or beyond that.**

A particular one I'm thinking of, we call it rice, sticky rice ball. Actually, we made it during the Red Lantern Festival. You put some filling into it. You can put the sesame paste or red bean paste. It's a little bit of sweet. Put a little bit of oil into it. You make that sticky rice skin, and then put that filling into it, and then you can either boil it or actually fry it. The taste is really good. I think in some Chinese restaurants you can ask for that sticky rice, the balls. They actually have the sesame outside, and inside is the red bean paste. That one I enjoy eating, and I like that.

Also, because sticky rice is a unique food we eat in China, particularly the southern part of China, we like that sticky rice thing because it probably dated back to an older time when we have a scarcity of food. But the sticky rice can easily get full, and you don't feel that hungry anymore. You eat a couple of the balls, and you would feel, okay, I'm not that hungry. Actually, it doesn't cost that much. It is a very cheap food. That's one thing.

My mother even made the rice flour, sticky rice flour by herself. She had the stone grinder to rotate. There are two pieces, an upper part and bottom part that stays there. The upper

part can rotate. You soak the rice, and then you fill it into the hole, and then you will grind it and see the liquid, the ground rice with water mixed together. You actually put it in a bag across the back, and they will hang it there to get the water to drain out. Then you have this little bit of damp flour. You can use it directly to make the skin. You don't need to add any water. In the store you will see dried flour, sticky rice flour or sweet rice flour. Those are dry and you have to mix with water to make that skin. My mother actually got just the damp flour. It's all ready to make the skin. That one tastes different from the dried one. There is a lot of food that they just make the material by themselves, so that's very special.

**What home-crafted items remind you of your ancestors or older relatives? Can you buy or make them here?**

Actually, some of the paintings in China. I never try to make it, but there are a lot of places that sell the stuff. We call it Chinese Opera. It's actually old-style opera. They sing and dance and paint their faces in this different style to actually reflect the character's features. For some characters, they are very brave, and they are a general in the battlefield, and they are actual powerful men. They will paint them a red color. Red color stands for the power in China. They are also decorated with some lines. You probably saw it on YouTube or somewhere. It's called Lianpu. It's face-covering thing. Then in my house, probably you've noticed beside my dining table, they're on that wall. I have these decorations, and they're in the middle. There is actually a face covering, like a model of that. It's a very small, tiny one. It can also reflect the different caricatures.

Some people are wearing a yellow color, and yellow color stands for mischievous, we call it. There is actually a lot of plots and is not the good side. A person who actually arranges a lot of things and probably tried to do some bad things; that kind of person wears yellow. Then

there are whites, and whites are always on the negative side. Yellow, sometimes it's not too bad, but they have some scheme to apply to some other people, not good scheme. There are different characters.

That is actually very interesting. I never tried to make it by myself. I think it would be very unique stuff, and I think the kids can play with doing this kind of painting.

**Do any of your relatives craft these items?**

Not that I know. My family doesn't have the talent in arts. They have their talents in food, that's for sure, not talent in art. I've watched some videos. They actually describe and demonstrate some of those crafting. The jianzhi, you have the piece of paper, and then you cut different patterns on it. That is also a very unique one. I did some when I was young, a kid. We have an art class, and the teacher will teach us. It's called paper cutting. Actually, at my house, in the kitchen I have the closet door, and I have some red-colored patterns for each year. This year is ox year. Then they will have the style, ox shape, on that cut, and then you can put it on the window or decorate on the door to showcase this is an ox year.

**How has the model minority myth affected you?**

What's that mean?

**It's this idea that there are certain Asian Americans that are really successful because they are just really smart and hardworking naturally. A lot of the times, Chinese people do fit into that stereotype, but a lot of them also don't. There are other Asian Americans that don't fit into it, but because of racism in the United States, sometimes people look at an Asian American and just assume that they fit into this minority based off of how they look.**

I guess, yes. I think it doesn't really affect me that much, but it probably affects my daughters because my older one questioned me once. She asked me, "Why you expect me to actually



succeed or be on the top in the class?” Something like that. Actually, I didn’t really talk to them about it, but they feel I have that expectation. This is probably what they hear and what they see when I’m talking with my other friends. They feel that expectation. I didn’t really say something like that. But I do say, “Whatever you do, try your best.” That’s what I tell them. They feel the pressure from the Chinese society and community because our friends, we use WeChat, social media, and we have the group chat, and sometimes my daughters will see what we are chatting about and what information we’re sharing there. There is some group that I say, “How do you get to the good universities?” Those kinds of groups. There are a couple of those sites. I, myself, am not that active in those kinds of groups, but sometimes I get some information from there, and probably I will share it with my family or with my other friends. It’s just for that. I never am active on those things.

I think the stereotype does exist, and so I think the younger generation, I would say, they are affected by this much more than us because we are only growing from that environment. At my age, of course, my parents would have had that expectation that I need to work hard to be successful. Actually, in China, that’s a little bit of a beneficial thing is for females. I am the daughter, and I have a brother, but my parents never say, “Okay, you should actually work less than your brother.” They expect the same thing from both of us.

Also, in China, the female people are actually respected. Their position in society is pretty high. A lot of the women go out to work. Work percentage of women is probably higher than the U.S., much higher. If we study STEM, those majors, we are treated pretty well. In China, STEM is something called privilege. If you actually study a STEM major, then you are guaranteed to find a good job or something like that. When I was in middle school and high

school, we were educated on that. But now, of course, it's more diverse, the area of people that are focused on.

For my generation, the parents that come here, they probably influence their kids to be a STEM major; it's the future for you. Then you should actually focus on this, be a standout in this rather than competing in another field. Because of the language, of course, that's the first thing that we are at a disadvantage because it's a barrier for Chinese people or Asian people. Okay, you probably inherited from us that you can do good in STEM. That's also a stereotype, I think.

I don't want to say this directly to my daughters, but it's hard to deny it because from their performance at the school, like Irene, like my major, she was trying computer science, and from the start she was thinking that's not what she wants, but then she changed it because she is still good at it. She is good at learning math and all those programming stuff better than what she actually planned for. She was actually thinking of something, not exactly science side, but she wanted to do something, and then she felt it was more difficult for her. She was frustrated a little bit, but this side she is more good at it, and then she can change her selection. I guess that's something they had to face because of this...I don't know if it's a gene, something related. My family case, myself and my husband are in this field, so we are trained to think in this logical way. My daughters often say we are kind of like a machine. We are thinking in a machine way, not from a human feeling kind of way. That's probably true. But I am trying to actually enrich myself, not only everything thinking one, two, three. We have to also have more of an abstract feeling or something. I have also adapted myself a little bit because there is definitely more influence for the next generation. What would I do? And it's never that inference even though I didn't imply to do that.

**Have you ever experienced racially discriminatory practices against yourself or other Asian Americans?**

At work, I would say very few, I think. I cannot really pinpoint something right now. But maybe some students may have something against me because I'm Asian and I'm a woman. They are not too sure how to talk to me, and I guess we need to work more on that. I'm here for almost seventeen years, but I didn't see many students come to see me and say they want to do a research project with me for undergraduate students. Graduate students, I have enough students. But for undergraduate students, yes, they probably have a distance from me even though I taught them courses. I go from lower levels, a hundred, two hundred, four hundred are the levels I teach. They have that distance. Also, because of my accent, they probably have a hard time understanding me sometimes. I don't know how you feel. I can notice that as an issue. I am try to improve myself on the accent thing. Because I'm in this graduate college where I have to talk to students more, I'm trying to learn how to talk to people. This is not like you just know it without training. I still need to be trained on this because I talk too fast. I notice that problem. I just saw the video saying, "You talk too fast, and then you don't have that authority." You have to stop yourself to get people's attention. That's something I'm learning. I guess that's some issues of myself, and I need to improve and, also, because of my background, some of the students think... That's maybe a little bit of discrimination, I think. But I think if I can reach out to students more, I think should be getting better.

**There was never any name calling or anything like that?**

No, not that I know. They probably tried to call my first name. They may ask me how to pronounce it. I am okay if they start with Me or May [pronouncing Mei]. Either way is fine

because I think in English it would be pronounced as Me. I saw another girl in the summer. She had the same first name, and she is actually American. I don't know why she has this name, also.

**Was there any racial discrimination that you've heard other Asian Americans facing?**

Yes, I guess so with my daughters. My younger one was in school, and she told me, because of COVID, I guess, some kids were saying, "This is actually the China virus," or something. That may be influenced by their parents or the media, of course, with Trump. He started with this name. That has definitely influenced the kids.

**Have you seen any other changes in racial discrimination against Asian Americans since the pandemic?**

I think we probably saw it on the TV and media. But in Las Vegas, because we are such an open society, I actually didn't hear any specific case among the people I know.

**How did you feel when high-ranking U.S. officials called COVID-19 the "Wuhan virus," the "China virus," or the "Kung flu?"**

That's a bad example, yes. I want to say this is not only because of discrimination, but also I think that showed that this high-level administrator that doesn't have knowledge about how the virus was generated. Of course, I think on the political side, they're probably trying to play some game to stimulate people's bad feeling about China or some other purpose. But again, I think this shouldn't be a common practice. This should be definitely avoided.

**In what ways does, or does not, the Black Lives Matter movement affect Asian or Pacific Islander Americans?**

In Las Vegas, there was some type of protest, actually, back in last year. Yes, it does affect. I heard some of the Chinese people that actually owned a restaurant, and they were scared to serve some of the protestors. They intimidated them. They eat there, and then they don't pay. Those

owners are kind of scared about that situation. It's kind of going to the other extreme. Colored people should be respected. They should be out for equal opportunity or something like that. I think that should be actually something we seek to solve. But they shouldn't go to the other extreme just because of your color, you should take that advantage, or you have this superiority than other ethnic groups. That shouldn't be. I think we shouldn't let it go to the other extreme.

**Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are the fastest-growing population group in Southern Nevada. What does that mean to you?**

It's good that we have a bigger community. Also, of course, this will bring a lot of opportunities in terms of the local economy and, also, collaborating with other groups. Asians are the fastest-developing region, so there are a lot of products and technology things that they are actually developing, which actually can be adopted here. Of course, before, back twenty years ago or something, mostly people adopt to the U.S. products or U.S. technology, but now things are actually changing. China and Korea and, also, Singapore and India, they're all developing fast. I think this should bring more opportunities for the local economy, that's for sure. Also, more and more people are actually traveling between the U.S. and Asia, and this will also bring a lot of the revenue to the airline and, also, to the tourist industry. I think definitely it's a good thing for Las Vegas.

**I would like to backtrack a little bit because I forgot to ask these follow-up questions before. Did you notice a difference living in the United States before 9/11 versus after 9/11?**

Before 9/11, it was only two years I lived in the U.S., and then we encountered 9/11. I didn't feel that much probably because I don't know any people serving in the military here, so I didn't really notice that much. I think probably from the long-term, yes, the U.S. actually spent a lot of money and, also, I would say capacity or energy in that war against bin Laden. That was the first

thing, and then later they got involved in Afghanistan. I think that's a mistake. That was a big mistake for U.S. being involved in the war in Afghanistan. They invest a lot of money, and a lot of soldiers died there, and then a lot of families suffered from that. Actually, it didn't really help the Afghanistan people to establish their own government. I am probably naïve to say this, but that's my thinking. If that money was used to invest in the U.S. businesses or infrastructure, I think the U.S. would be in a better position in the global competition of things.

**How did you feel as a young mother after 9/11?**

That's right after our elder one was born. We were watching the TV. I still remember that moment. My mom was here already. Mom was helping me to take care of my baby. They saw the TV where that tower was crashed. That was definitely a big shock. We didn't actually believe that it was happening. Even in a week or so, we still were not sure what is going on. I didn't think about it at that time, but I think that definitely will change something in the future of the U.S. because Bush announced that he will hunt down those enemies who actually initiated that terrorist attack, so I think that will change the history after he actually made that announcement.

**To backtrack a little bit more, you said that you started university in 1992?**

Yes.

**That was a few years after the Cold War, and I was just wondering if you felt a difference while going to school during the Cold War and then the end of it?**

Because we are a small entity, we didn't really feel it that much. I guess it's probably starting at that time. I guess China actually started to increase enrollments of college students. They started getting more college students, I think. Of course, at that time, yes, 1992, China started the "open the gate" kind of policy. That was actually initiated by Deng Xiaoping. He is the former chairman of the Chinese government, and he initiated that. That is definitely a great step. It's a

great step to connecting China with the whole world. They started accepting investments from other countries, and then opened some of the cities as front lines. Yes, the developments just grow so quickly. Yes, 1992 is the starting year. After ten years, Shanghai has a new area called Pudong. It is brand-new and modernized the city in Shanghai and, also, many other cities. I think China is taking big advantage of that policy since 1992 until...I would say before COVID-19. China is definitely taking advantage of that policy, and so it keeps growing so quick, so fast. But I think right now the current government has more conservative thoughts, and so they're more closing the mind, I would say. If we had a lot of loose policies which are not, I think it's not the right direction. It also hurt us, too. Yes, it hurt us, actually. Then I would say 1992 is definitely the start of the good time at that time. Of course, for our students, we felt the difference there. Actually, the university is more open because they have different activities. We actually danced when we were in college, and we had this dance party every week. You see it as very different environments compared to probably before China opened the door. We took advantage from that.

**Why do you think it's valuable for the university to collect interviews like yours?**

I think it's good to learn from different people, their cultural background and, also, what things they value the most and, also, to understand, for example, the stereotype thing. Stereotype is mostly because of the misunderstanding or a lack of understanding. You don't know about that, and you just imagine that. I think this kind of interview will definitely be helpful for people understanding more from their cultural background, not only just from their academic background. These are the kinds of things we don't really share with our colleagues. Very few chances we share with our colleagues. I think this is definitely helpful to build our community feeling in the university so that we know. Probably later I find some other people, and, okay,

they are actually also interested in food, and we can actually feel connected to each other. I actually do have a Chinese professor, some association or some chatting group, but still, because of the pandemic, we don't have time to really meet each other. After the pandemic, it's definitely not good in terms of that. But I would expect that this will become kind of regular, and you can talk to more people, and then they can share information. Because of the U.S. country environment, people value their privacy more than the common things. Before I talk to any American friends, I have to send a text message or something in advance. I have to make an appointment or something like that. I cannot just bump into you and then just talk. We have to have those things. Even my daughter, her friend, she has an American friend, and they're pretty well. But before we arrange any of those playdates, we have to give two weeks' notice, and that makes things a little bit less convenient. Sometimes you're instantaneous and you think, okay, we should go hike together, and then we just arrange it in a few days. It's hard to get those friends involved.

**Is there anything else you'd like to add?**

I guess I talk too much, and sometimes I get off topic. I didn't realize I am still—even though my words are not that abundant, I still try to express. As my daughter said, I'm high GHT or something. In psychology, they classify people in different categories, and I'm a person that is more an “art word” people. I want to express. Hopefully, it's not too much for you to list them because I've got a lot of different things mixed together.

I think this is a good activity, and definitely I enjoyed it. I will share some pictures with you. Yes, that's good.

**Thank you.**

**[End of recorded interview]**