

Name of Interviewee: John Sie
Date of Interview: March 18th
Name of Interviewer: Bill Yeingst
Length of Interview: 72 minutes

BY: Let's see, today is March 18th, we're here in Washington, D.C., with Anna and John Sie and we're going to do a family of voices interview for the Many Voices One Nation Exhibition. Well, welcome you to the museum.

JS: Thank you.

BY: If you could tell me when and where you were born?

JS: I was born in 19... China. 1936.

BY: Okay.

JS: Is the audio okay?

BY: Yeah, it's fine. So, tell me a little bit about your family background and your childhood.

JS: Well, is a little disjointed but my father was working at the diplomatic service and that we was separated [unintelligible] I was born in 1936 I think he left Europe 1937, July was beginning of the [unintelligible] Japanese War and he went to Europe to gone support for the Chinese, from the Europeans. So my mother and my older brother who passed away, Charlie and I we left Nanjing for Shanghai before the 19 massacres, which was on December of 1937. My mother always told us, we fled before the Japanese came. Of course, later on you study history. Shanghai was already occupied by Japan in 1937. So we must have crossed the Japanese line. Into Japanese-occupied French concession of Shanghai to live with my maternal grandmother's house. So, during the Second World War, we were under Japanese occupation, and so we lived through all the cruelties during that time. And then of course the Allies won the war in 1945 and we're so liberated and then my father who was in the Vatican all during war, so we don't even know him growing up, and I don't think generically he really wanted two kids. So he was always off into some mission by himself. Then, there was civil war, and in 1949, we left on one of the last boats from Shanghai, fleeing the coming of the communist Chinese. And we fled to the last boat to Taiwan. And then a year later in 1950, my father find a job supposedly in Belgium. And he was in American, and he asked my mother and Charlie and I to come join him to go to Belgium. So we took a boat, the S.S. Lightening, 14 days and reached San Francisco and then we flew, I think for some that are on the airplane, on the TWA, the Super Constellation to LaGuardia Airport and landed in New York.

BY: I just want to pause for a minute.

JS: Sure.

BY: Go back to your memory instead of growing up in China.

JS: Okay, sure.

BY: Describe your home and your household. Do you have memories of being in a religious family or not, about food, or rituals or celebrations?

JS: Sure.

3RD: And your family situation. Your grandmother's house would be interesting.

JS: Okay, yeah well we live in our grandmother's house, which is really my mother's younger brother. In the family, my mother's maiden name was so we went to the family. We were not really welcomed there. Because we sort of intruded into their lives. We were we had our own universe, Charlie and I. Lucky we had each other but we were in China and they have servants, every middle-class had servants. So they had servants and we would live on the floor where the servants were and the servant cooked a separate meal for us, so we didn't eat at the family table at all, but my mother had to eat down there. So Charlie and I would eat and little cook food on the third floor, where the servants ate.

3RD: And your three cousins?

JS: Right, the [unintelligible] family had three cousins, so we would-

3RD: Close in age?

JS: One was three years older and the other was older than. But anyway we brought up there and we sort of were second-class citizens throughout the war. And-

BY: What would you say were the socioeconomic situation was like for your family? Were they-

JS: Well, the family was from... and they have some wealth, so we lived in a nice, nice house, okay? But I did not associate with the [unintelligible] families, but the lane we lived which is Ferguson & Road off the, I would always go to the back where the poor people were. The farmers and things so, I would hang around with the people there, and so I felt more comfortable with the common folks. That was sort of my upbringing there. I also, some reason inherited from my cousin, a monkey. So I was taking care of the monkey.

3RD: So it was a pet

JS: And the monkey was very [unintelligible] so, it was, it was funny because when my older cousin come down, the monkey would start barking at me. But when he's gone and somebody else come he will [unintelligible] So it was interesting how you could tell that the monkey knew the pecking order.

BY: I should have asked you to begin with, but what is your Chinese name?

JS: [FOREIGN] is my last name, first means grateful. [FOREIGN] means honest and [FOREIGN] means strength. So those are good words, yeah, so that's my Chinese name

But the war was over in 1945, my father didn't come back until '48 so.

3RD: And it was the first time you saw him?

JS: Yeah. So I never knew who he was or what, and so he left Rome and came to America. And stayed in America to find new gig or whatever. It was during the Civil War, so it was not. But then finally, my mother had to beg him to come home, because she was embarrassed with the [unintelligible] family. How come your husband's not here, now that the war's over? We had to also, it's interesting, also live a lie all the years we were growing up, because we were under Japanese occupation. My father was the official from the national Chinese government in the Vatican. So if they knew that, we would be toast. So my mother, Charlie and I, and everybody, they'll say, my father's in the countryside somewhere. So we had to keep that facade all during the Japanese occupation.

BY: Did that influence how your family lived interculturally? Do you remember celebrate rituals and celebrations?

JS: Okay. Yeah, because if you'd grown up there you think that's the world so I don't differentiate per se, but in looking back it was not, when you said religion it's really pseudo-religions in the ancestral worship they were not devout Buddhists. But we lived on the floor where the servants were, but also where the Chinese word [FOREIGN], which is like a worship altar. There's a room that has... there's a room that has all the ancestral.

3RD: Continue.

JS: So there's a room with all the ancestral names and with the incense going. And you kneel down and you kowtow to pay respect. So that was a room was right next to where room my mother, Charlie and I lived. So there's a little transit on the top. And we were always worried about the ghost coming. From the ancestors, that's my recollection. So we lived on the third floor next to the ancestral hall. And after that is the servant's living. We grew up in that little room where we ate, and the three of us lived in, and Charlie and I ate there. It was oppressed, but we didn't feel it. That's the best way I can describe it. And we were, and I had all friends down in the alley, the poor people.

3RD: I'd like to help him with his memory a little bit.

JS: Go ahead.

BY: Sure.

3RD: Well the house that he grew up in, just to give you an idea, when we did go. When we did go to China with some of our children to see it, there were ten families living in there, just to give you the scope.

BY: It's a very sizeable home.

JS: Yeah.

BY: So let's go forward now.

JS: Okay.

BY: To 1950.

JS: Okay.

BY: The family boards the SS Lightning.

JS: Right.

BY: In 1950 and comes to the U.S. What was that journey like?

JS: Well it was interesting. We were supposedly finally to rejoin with Father again to go to Belgium. Where he supposedly had the gig. But he was in the United States already so. And so he's always a step ahead of us leaving. So my mother, Charlie, and I, because we had a friend of my cousin who was a third mate on that ship so we were able to get some special treatment into a room in the cargo ship to passage to the United States. And you know, it was, you got seasick. It wasn't as bad as the ship from Shanghai to Taiwan the year before. That was really horrible because you [unintelligible] in like six, seven people on the bunk beds and everybody throwing up. So that was pretty horrible. But that was, the cargo ship was more rough because we, 14 days. But we survived. And so we came to New York and my father lived in a pretty fancy apartment. It's called Franklin Towers, West 86th Street. 333 West 86th, and so we lived there, I think it was pretty expensive so about two months later, we arrive in April, so by June my father called us in and, Charlie and I, says, well, we have two choices, his job in Belgium is gone when we arrived because all the turmoil and he says: "We can go on to Europe where it's a lot cheaper and I have a lot of friends in Europe or we can stay in America. But if you stay in America, you have to go to a Catholic orphanage". Orphanage sounds just as bad in Chinese.

3rd: Yeah.

JS: So Charlie and I-

BY: And you were how old at that time?

JS: I was 14, Charlie was 16. So we sort of cried and talked to each other. We said [unintelligible] that ship came and all the way here was horrible and we don't want to take another ship to Europe so we said: "We'll stay in the orphanage." But the irony of, by that time, sorry back track, when my father came back in '48[19], he and my mother had another child, 12 years younger than me, Francis. So there was now Francis, Charlie, and I, the three. So when we decided to stay in the orphanage, my father, mother, and Francis moved to Queens. So they didn't go to Belgium. So they got into a, rented one floor of the house in Queens. We could have stayed in the bedroom. Two beds, but we were in the orphanage because I think my father wanted more socialize with his friends in New York City. So we were in the orphanage from 1953, 1950 to 1953, so three years. And but every, you had, it was a orphanage for orphans, for delinquents, and homeless so it was not just for orphans and it was a rough place, the Catholic orphanage. And we didn't speak any English at that time. So we were lucky we had each other. But we were bullied, you know? Fights and all that stuff. But everyone is allowed to go home three days a month. So one, two days, and the other,

ferry, take the train, and another bus to Long Island, Forest Hill, to babysit so my mother and father can socialize in New York. So, we were just babysitting every other weekend and then the rest of the time we'd stay at the orphanage.

BY: So what was your first impression of this new home in America?

JS: It's mixed, it was, in China you always thought America was the roads were paved with gold. I mean, that was the impression. Of course we didn't see gold... That was, but we just was marveled by the tall buildings in New York City. And we were excited to come to a new place and, but then the orphanage we right away we went to. The Riverside Drive was pretty nice, where we'd stay. But the orphanage was pretty rough, particularly we didn't speak any English. But there was some unintended positive consequences because during the war years, as was, I was a very bad student in China. So I got left, the war delayed it one year, and then my grade was so poor that I got left back one year.

3RD: The rebellion.

JS: So I was two years behind. So came to the orphanage and the orphanage was sending us out to outside schools. After some trade school at the orphanage to see if we can start academic courses. So I went to Totten Ville High School in Staten Island and the principal interviewed us and trying to figure out what grade to put me in and I couldn't communicate, but I finally figured out she was saying you want to go into sophomore year or. But I really should have gone to eighth grade because in China is six years grammar school, three junior high, three senior high. So I was going to seventh, going to the eighth grade but she somehow figured so I jumped two years to sophomore.

3RD: Always been lucky.

BY: So how did you learn English?

JS: Well, through just immersion but It was interesting because I jumped two grades but because my uncle told me something which was horrible, but it really helped me when I was coming to America, he said two things, one is that, now remember, "You should not lose face to the Sie family" you know because that's the most important thing. He said, second thing, "All Americans are dumb." So that's what he, you know one of those prejudicial views. So when I was jumped two grades, I didn't know I jumped two grades. But all I know is they were all dummies. So therefore, I couldn't lose face, so therefore I took my dictionary, Chinese and English dictionary, and really studied hard not to fail at that thinking. But I said, I should do well because they are dummies. So in sophomore year I got C plus, and junior year was B plus, and then I was near the top of the class when I graduated in the last year and I got the scholarship to Manhattan College so the rest was sort of fun.

BY: So what was your new neighborhood like? Where did you hang out? Who were your friends?

JS: Well, it was the orphanage. So it was...

3RD: You were a waiter.

JS: That was later, but you're talking about the first three years? The first three-year was really in the orphanage and weekend babysit.

3RD: And study.

JS: So it was uneventful, but I was quite influenced by the nuns and the fathers at the orphanage because they were religious and they gave their life to service to take care of all these orphans and so that was a positive influence on me and the other, and that was actually amplified to what my mother has instilled in them. My mother was a scholar and she would always tell you all the great stories about succeeding and folklores about all these famous statesman that they came from a poor family, but they study hard and eventually rose to the top, so there was all kinds of folklore that all Chinese know. So my mother would imbue us with all these values of studying hard, so that prepared us. And then the orphanage really helps so those were the two most influential. My mother's ammunition that we got to do good, forget the fact you don't have father and then at the orphanage, you see all the nuns and the priests that devoted their lives so it was helpful.

BY: As a child did you ever think you would come to the US?

JS: No, no, you just flow with the events and yeah, but all you knew [unintelligible] rich and everything, that's what you have the impression, yeah.

BY: So how did your life develop after the orphanage and high school?

JS: Okay, it was pretty uneventful from there. I got a full scholarship at the Manhattan College, which is a Christian Brothers Catholic school in Riverdale and in the Bronx. And before I graduated in '53, which was from St. Peter's High School in Georgetown. My father then left again, went to Taiwan, to look for gig. So my mother and Francis was by themselves, so when we went to... backtrack, they lived in Queens, so we weekend babysit and so, when my father went back to Taiwan, we brought my mother and Francis to the Bronx. We found the rent control apartment, New York is rent control apartment for \$50 a month, so we lived in the Bronx and commuted to Manhattan and the weekends we worked as waiters in Chinese restaurants to keep the thing going, to keep supporting my mother because we had scholarships and then in 1955, that my father was in Taiwan got a gig to the Vatican again so he came to the United State to pick up my mother and Francis to go to Rome.

BY: Was he in the diplomatic corps?

JS: He was in the National China Diplomatic Corp, so he went, picked up. After that we, Charlie and I, went to Manhattan College in the boarding for the last two years of our school. Yeah, so we were pretty much Americanized by then.

BY: And so, then you found your way in to electrical engineering?

JS: Yeah, I majored in electrical engineering at Manhattan College and then when I graduated there. I got a research fellowship at the time called Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute. Now is that some other fancy name, NYU, tandem school of Engineering, anyways, Brooklyn Poly, I was able to get a research fellowship. So in 1958, one year later, I got my master's degree in electrical engineering, electro physics. I start to work,

Radio Corporation of America. In the defense electronics division in Manhattan and It was interesting because I did not have immigration status and yeah I was working on government contracts so I was a little, they couldn't show me secret things but I was able to contribute to the technology side. So for two years I was there and I was going back for my PhD because doing that two years, I finished night time courses I finished all my course work and all my friends are from China, they were five years older than me but I spoke very good English because I was in the... So they depended on me to help them although they were all PhDs already. So all my friends were, Chinese friends, were PhDs, so that was a natural cause for me to finish that and but it was interesting that my boss at RCA his name was Sam Weisbaum, who passed away. He got... he went to NYU, he was at Dell Labs, he was electro physics but he went to NYU and got an MBA. So in 1960, he said: "Hey John, we can raise money and start our own company." Okay, [unintelligible] that's interesting and so I was on the track to just do my academic to get my PhD but he had this idea of starting a new company and I wanted to do it against the odds in the sense. That all my Chinese students in France, who working in engineering, always complained they can only be an engineer. They can never get in to manage, they can't go into supervisory position and I thought coming from China, I always thought Chinese were great businessmen went to Southeast Asia, Indonesia, Malaysia, they were all successful businessmen why can't Chinese be in the business? So when Sam suggested we should start a company, I said, I could be a manager so that attracted me to prove that Chinese could do that so Sam and I founded this company called Micro Electronics, which were very new things that combine a semi-conductor integrated circuits to microwave frequency, which is very high. So, we started a company, then Sam passed away. I became the President, so I was there from 19, we founded the company in 1960 to 1970 and in between it was acquired by a large aerospace company called Raytheon from Boston and then several years later, we were married and Raytheon [??] wanted to move MicroState to Waltham, Massachusetts and we decided not to move because we had so much connection.

3RD: [INAUDIBLE] the connection, may I?

JS: Yeah.

3RD: When you have all this wonderful success you were also married to a Chinese and had three children [unintelligible] she left you.

JS: Yeah.

BY: When did you marry? First marry?

JS: Let's see...

3RD: We've been married forever. You were 21, I think.

JS: 21, okay.

3RD: And he had three children.

JS: Three.

3RD: Some of them from Taiwan.

JS: Yeah.

3RD: And then, when I met him at Microstates, I think she left him. It was one of those where she left him and never saw the kids, then somehow I stepped in.

BY: And the two of you met here in...

[CROSSTALKS]

BY: So then you had to make a choice?

JS: Choice to move and it was silly things, we just built a dream house, quote, unquote, so we just moved in. Her family was in New Jersey so we didn't want to move, so we decided to stay and start another microstate. So for the next two years, from 70 to 72, had small group of original engineers with me to start looking for funding again to start a new business in New Jersey. At that time, the market fell out in venture capital, so there was no money for the two years that we were looking. Meanwhile, I took a side track for subsistence we figured out to make simulated diamonds.

3RD: YAG.

JS: YAG, Yttrium Aluminum Garnet and only because Raytheon was a aerospace company We did materials for lasers for defense, and one of the lasers, Yttrium Aluminum Garnet has a very close property to diamond. The hardness scale was 8.5 versus 10. So it's very hard. So at that time, there was talking about creating simulated diamonds. So we start to figure out how to cut and polish diamonds because we'd go to 47th Street, which is the diamond capital of the United States. They wouldn't tell us, anyway, how to do it. So we had to figure out from physics what the right angles for the optics. So finally, we made great job and I will go every week we take the products, maybe 20 cut, polished diamonds, and go sell to Saks 5th Avenue and then so it was called Diamondaire at Saks. Then, so we were going to take that to China, to Taiwan, I mean, to mass-produce it because we didn't, we'd made a procedure so we had a book. That was interesting. But then the market fell out because Israel, Brazil and Amsterdam, they swamped us with really poor quality YAG and then you mentioned it went to a company called Corvettes not Sacks anymore so the market collapsed so we didn't have anything. So that's when I start looking for a regular job again.

BY: So you must have had fears as well as great expectations.

JS: No, I remember I went to an unemployment office.

3RD: [CROSSTALK] we had five.

BY: So when did you meet?

3RD: 63.

JS: 63.

JS: Lucky.

3RD: I babysat for his children and he sort of fell in love with me and I was 21. I married him with a six, five, and a three year old and then I had two more. So by 24 I had five kids.

BY: In what year did you marry?

3RD: In 66. We just celebrated our 50th.

BY: Oh congratulations.

JS: Anyway so, it was a tough time, I think, those two years and then at that time, I happened to read a book by telecommunications and another one by Ralph Smith called the Wired Nation and then there was this research report called Broadband from the Office of Telecommunications Policy, under Clay Whitehead at that time and it talked about this great new society by cable television and it was way ahead of its time and was fascinating, you could shop at home, teach at home, telemedicine. So it interested me and of course I didn't have any job. And I was in aerospace, so one of my friends at AT&T said if you want a cable then you should go see this guy, John Malone who was head of a company called Gerald Electronics in Philadelphia. So, I didn't know anything about John, so I for the introduction, I went to Philadelphia to see John Malone and he hired me and so the rest is history after that. So it was 72 we moved to Philadelphia.

3RD: Five years.

JS: Then six months later John left Gerald after I joined he went to run TCI, Telecommunications Inc. So, I stay at Gerald, I was head of the Gerald's cable television division and when I started to create this actual system, two way system, reading those stories and was trying to launch a two way interactive system first in Columbus, Ohio to do two way Time Warner's system, but that didn't work. So...

3RD: There you went to Showtime.

JS: So around that time, there was only one pay TV service, HBO then a company called Viacom, they had just passed away. Rob says: "We should be able to do pay TV better than HBO" so he hired two people from ABC to run, of course, Showtime and but it was cassettes, bicycle cassettes, was HBO was on satellite already. So they knew about me who, technology guru. So they interviewed me to figure out how to go on satellite, and during the interview, which eventually wound up to say, why don't you come and run our technology and marketing and sales? So in 1977 I went to Showtime and came to work in New York City and put Showtime on satellite to compete with HBO. And figured out different marketing strategies to survive. It was tough. But made it through. So I went to Showtime, I was the Senior Vice President of marketing, sales, and technology. Then, in 1984 our largest customer was TCI, where John Malone was the head and during one of the industry meetings he said, John, why don't you come to Denver and make some real money? And so I loved the idea, so I took a 50% pay cut and went to Colorado.

JS: Yeah, but so then I negotiated some sort of a shadow equity deal so if I'm successful, then I'll get money but, you know, so even with a 50% cut, there was something to look forward to.

3RD: Piece of the pie. That's what he said.

JS: Piece of the pie.

3RD: Piece of the pie.

JS: So I helped TCI, I was in charge of technology, public policy, and marketing and the public policy I'd never done before because I was only in technology and so it was at the time, the first day I joined TCI John says, well, you've got to go to Pittsburgh for a franchise transfer. So I went to Pittsburgh and I think I spent almost a year, nine months, back and forth to get the transfer. And at that time franchising was very political TCI had the suburbs, very low-tech. And Warner had this very high-tech that didn't work. The city of Pittsburgh. So when I go there and TCI had a horrible reputation as poor service, no service trucks like now and so the City Council would attack me saying, why is TCI taking over this Cadillac of Pittsburgh with two way interactive, which didn't work. So I had to go defend TCI in the political arena. It was interesting. But I went, I took a strategy of confrontation so I went on to all of the broadcast networks, interview about the franchise, and finally Time Warner called, Denver says, the city councilor called and said: "We'll give the franchise to you, just have John shut up." Because I raised, because TCI said, don't talk to the press because then you'll be killed. But I went just the opposite and it worked, and Then we took, we also negotiated [CROSSTALK] the Washington D.C. Franchise and so the rest of us, it was interesting.

BY: So tell me about the sort of shift to digital.

JS: Okay

BY: And what happened in 1991 with Starz.

JS: Okay, yeah, digital. In the late 80's, you're too young to remember, everything was Japan, and the cars were much better, reliable and TV was all Japan's. So Japan has spent several billion dollars over a ten year period, from the 70s to 80s, to develop the next television standard because Japan was ahead of everything except after the Second World War they had to take MacArthur's United States TV standard, the NTSC standard. So they say, we can do ten times better than that. So Japan came in with their new world standard, high-definition, they call a high vision and more specifically called MUSE, M-U-S-E. They came in 1988 and demonstrated to the FCC. wow, picture perfect. Then they went to Congress. Wow and then they funded all the major research labs in America including MIT, various labs, Ohio and so the country was going to decide on a new standard, and it was everybody and it was on the cover of Time, Newsweek. MUSE is coming. Now I came, as you know from aerospace, so I went to and cable television was considered schlock, low tech. But I said: "In the defense we did a lot of digital television for tactical imaging purposes." I wrote a paper defending that we say for America to be the leader in the next century, we have the advanced technology, advanced television must be digital standard, not analog. I was laughed out

the standard, there were 13 submissions all analog and Japan was the head of that and on the last day, General Instrument, which was a Jerrold company, TCI was the largest customer, TCI was the largest cable operator. So I had some influence on Jerrold. General Instruments put in a all digital [unintelligible] standard, the only one and the rest is history. So that was probably my biggest contribution. Single handedly turned America into a digital standard because if you know, it takes six megahertz of spectrum for each channel and there was only enough for all the stations to duplicate for transition. But if you use another analog, even when digital comes years later, there's no more spectrum. So it was a very seminal strategic thing, and I was going to Congress and FCC every day, every week to push for it, and finally General Instrument came through and the rest is history. So that was an interesting time. What was the next?

BY: You founded your own company again, right?

JS: Yeah.

[CROSSTALK]

JS: That was by accident, yeah. So I was at, so I was working at TCI, I was in charge of programming. So, one of the things we did quite successfully was a channel called American Movie Classics, AMC, which was started by a guy named Chuck Dolan from Cablevision in Long Island and he came to us and said: "I want to start this movie channel called American Movie Classics." Which takes old movies from the 30s, 40s and 50s and creates a mini-pay service. No commercials. So, TCI went in 50/50 with Chuck Dolan to launch AMC and was wildly successful and so when I was in programming, we're the largest customers to HBO. So, I ask HBO whether they could create the next three decades. 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s. Sort of logical without much thinking. AMC's been super successful. ShowTime, HBO, you're in the movie business. So why don't you create it just one step below you. Of course, we're the largest customers. So Tony Cox was at the time saying: "Wow, can we go back to look at it and come back to you?" So a couple months later he came back, said we did all the extensive research, library, we know everything. It would not work at the price that they would charge. So that sort of a got my dander's up. So, I went to my boss, John Malone. I said, I think that's a very important segment that we need to fill but I couldn't get HBO to do it and I think we could do it. He said, no we don't want to get into programming. I said: "I used to be there, we can do it." So I said: "Give me \$5 million and I'll do the thing, and that's how we started Encore at first." And then in 1991 and then 1994 we started the direct competition. Encore was just 60, 70s, and 80s and then we started a first run with Starz to compete directly with HBO. So the rest is history, yeah.

BY: So, where did the inspiration for this incredible entrepreneurial spirit come from?

JS: I don't know. I think its inner things that you want to move ahead. Particularly when people say you can't do it. That sort of gets my dander's competitive men to say, let me prove you wrong, maybe it's that kind of a inner quality that I think I'm very good in conceptualizing and seeing the possibilities of whatever things I was doing. Whether it was simulated diamond or paid TV service or two-way interactive system I think I can learn it and then expand on it. So that was sort of always the challenge. And I did not go seek it, but it just came, and when you seize the opportunity, I guess I have a little motto called the four C's. The first C is curiosity that means just be curious whatever it

and then you're trying to connect the dots and then the third C is comprehension and once you connect the dots then you try and understand what is the cause and effect, what can it do? and then move you into a direction and then you become sort of the 4th C of concentration and then just narrowed down so that this is what I follow.

BY: In your business world, do you think as a Chinese person or do you think more as an American?

JS: Now see, you ask that question in the thing, and unfortunately I won't satisfy this one nation because probably because I see the world through my eyes, and in my eyes I see you guys. I don't see myself and since I don't associate with Chinese communities except Chinese food so therefore to me I'm much more integrated as an American than sort of ethnic Chinese. I don't know if it makes sense, so really unfortunately I love my heritage and I'm grateful and I speak the language but my thought process, my everyday thinking, is really American because through my mind's eyes I don't, it's probably because the environment.

BY: Mm-hm.

3RD: I think I always look at the person and want to know where they come from. So when I speak to John, I always say, remember the gentleman who is German and Irish. So when it came to the nationality, once he said this to me, and he said: "I never think of myself as John Sie the Chinese person, but John Sie the man." I thought that was a wonderful answer.

JS: Well-

3RD: But he's very Americanized.

BY: Mm-hm.

JS: But I'm proud of my heritage, but only on the intellectual basis but not as part of my psychic.

BY: I just want to talk briefly about your sort of traditions in your home. You...the two of you have at least a bicultural if not a triculture or multicultural...

JS: I think...

BY: Home... and could you talk about how you, talk about your traditions. How do you stay connected to traditions whether Italian or Chinese? Do you say you speak Chinese?

JS: Well actually it's interesting. One of our daughters, number four. Sure. Michelle, Michelle [CROSSTALK] Michelle is the sinophile. So she went to Tufts University, but the junior year she went to Peking University. So she was in China for 11 years, and she...

3RD: She worked for CCTV.

JS: Worked for...

3RD: It's Chinese.'

JS: Well, worked for our company exporting to CCTV. So she established the first programming relationship with China central television. So she actually is much more China oriented, and her husband who's British lived in China for 14 years. So one of our child is much more close with China than I am. I really...

3RD: Well she visited all the relatives. She brought China back to the siblings and us.

JS: To us. So we went back to China because of her.

3RD: We visited every time she had a contract, we went back to China. So it was her. I don't think we would have gone if Michelle.

JS: Yeah, so.

3RD: But I want to answer. The kids were raised Catholic, he was Catholic, he became a Catholic so we were not strict Catholics.

JS: Not practicing.

3RD: You know, Baptism, Communion, Confirmation, and a light basis. I still have relatives in Italy so I also have to walk the line so my parents didn't speak English so they were exposed to the Italian family every Sunday. The Italian family played a tremendous part. Although it was difficult to both sides in this marriage, the Italian family embraced the so the kids were really raised more from the Italian side. So they were raised Catholic and then as they grew up on their own, and they really made their decisions, there's only one that sort of remained and the rest are just more.

JS: Secular.

3RD: Yes they're great people.

BY: In terms of celebrating holidays are there do you celebrate Chinese holidays?

JS: Chinese New Year we always have a feast.

3RD: Every year. Chinese New Year was a big thing for us.

JS: Yeah, but that's more for social.

3RD: We have 100 people, we do the whole thing.

JS: Yes.

3RD: So the Italian. The fish, the night before Christmas.

JS: So we follow the bi-cultural traditions.

3RD: And all the children can cook. He's a terrific cook. He cooked Chinese and Italian, knew all the recipes and things from our family already so.

BY: Have these traditions changed since you came the United States? Have your own way

JS: Wow it's, I would say it's just a continuation, but since I came here as 14, really don't that much for deep thought. Much more to know about China from American as an American. But because of my heritage, we celebrated the Chinese New Years and things of that nature. The Harvest Moon festivals and things like that. Unfortunately, not very Chinese.

3RD: Chinese. Very Italian. So Christmas is still with the grandparents and they have a very strong feelings towards the grandparents. Italian food. Traditions were kept from Southern Italy, because I'm from the south. As they grew older and they all left of course we don't do the big fish dinners ever if we're together so. But they keep it. They call us up and they want to know our special dish. They're always sharing.

BY: Were there times when you felt that your family really hadn't tried to fit in or that you stood out or that you?

JS: Again, I never felt prejudiced per se and I think it's all part of my own positive attitude. So, sometime you see shadows when there is nothing there. But if I felt that I was unjustly treated or something, I speak up. I'm very direct whenever I see something is wrong that is racial or anything else. So I'm pretty forthright in that but I think a lot depends on your own self-worth that throughout all my career I never felt I didn't do right or I lost this because of my ethnicity. I only look at what did I do wrong factually. I'm sorry it was never a part of my inner self to look at it as a problem. In fact I got to say the reverse is true. Reverse is true that you take advantage sometime, not too much advantage that they all think Chinese are smart right? So when people look at me in Chinese, you're smart. So I just haha. So in a way I'm the reverse. I take advantage of people's misconception that Chinese are smarter than others.

BY: So what does it mean to be American?

JS: It's to be American is really a very, American is just the greatest country in the world. We travel, we go to different places. America allows individual, the so called capitalist system that individually if you work hard, you overcome difficulties, you succeed and you get this I mean, it truly exists, the American dream.

3RD: [unintelligible] the American dream?

JS: I'm the example of American dream. So every time I talk to people, they got discouraged all that. So I think America's the greatest country in the world that you can find overall. It's a [unintelligible] in the ultimate, they may be on the fringe of families and inheritance and things like that but by and large it's your contribution, what you do with your life and I feel very lucky by accident came to this country and so America is [unintelligible]. It's the greatest.

BY: What's been the most challenging for you?

JS: I don't know. I really don't look at adversity, I guess, because it's just, that's the road you're on, you saw me go on. So, I don't think...

3RD: There's no negatives with John. He's pretty much the most positive that was the attraction. The most positive man I've ever met and the glass is always half full.

BY: So, what do you most proud of?

JS: Well, more than proud, I feel very blessed that in my waning years we have wonderful children, their family, and we have a great life. And we wanted...

3RD: Giving back to the community.

JS: We wanted to do as much as we can to improve, the ability to improve life of others and leave a positive imprint. So, we feel we're blessed, that quite a few things in Denver.

BY: Can you talk a little bit about your philanthropy?

JS: Okay.

[CROSSTALK]

JS: Well, we are the major donor of the Sie Film Center on Denver, which tried to create a physical space for Denver Film Society to create a film festival each year. Because film is where we made our money, so we want Denver to be a shining city in the national sphere so our involvement in the film center. We are very interested in working in the international relations, so in the University of Denver, there is a School of international study called Joseph Korbel School of International Studies. We were the major donors for a new building, 42,000 square feet, The Joseph Korbel School.

3RD: It's almost finished.

JS: It's almost finished, and so we want to keep the dean, who's a renowned diplomat named Christopher Hill, who's the ambassador to Iraq and the head of our five party talks and so we attracted him to be the dean of School of International Study but there's so much pull on him I want to create this 42,000 square feet building so that he can fill more program in it. So that's a big thing.

3RD: And what about the Chinese that Michelle and you started when she was working.

JS: Yes. This is with the School of Business, Michelle has... every year we do, this is the 15th year now. We call a CEMMP, which means Chinese Media Executive Management Fellowship Program. So we bring the middle level upcommers to America for 13 weeks of mini MBA learn about the media and business practice in America from the [unintelligible] School of Business and then we take them to Washington and different places to see what's going on. So this has been very beautiful program. Now its 15 years so many of the people have become vice minister and ministers now and we create, we fund the alumni society. So, now it's 115 people. So, they have their own things, so that's another thing, what else?

3RD: And in 2003 our daughter that worked in China gave birth to a child Sophia who's 12 who's born with Down Syndrome so we are changing the world because we have, if you go to the Children's Hospital we have the first section and if you have a child with Down Syndrome [unintelligible] you can walk in and we have doctors, speech therapists, everything that you could think of for a child with Down Syndrome and we have an incredible research center that we hope to eradicate.

3RD: The ill effects of these children.

JS: So, we're the founding donor of a... we call it non-profit LLC. Linden Cir Lux Institute for Down Syndrome which is the collaboration of Children's Hospital of Colorado. Children's Hospital, University of Colorado School of Medicine and then University of Colorado Boulder. The three of them become a... form the LLC for the mission to eradicate the ill effects of Down Syndrome and then we're making great progress with Nobel Laureates working on it. So that's fascinating how we have created all the way from basic research and to translational research to clinical care. So it's vertically integrated. The only institute of its kind for Down Syndrome. So we put a lot of our efforts in that.

3RD: So we're very busy.

BY: So we'll wrap this up. Do you have any advice that you would offer for Future generations, or young immigrants who come to the United States?

JS/: Well, immigrant or not, the fact is that work always the hardest you can, doesn't matter where you are, what kind of job it is, what kind of environment is, don't let it controlled you, but you do the best you can always. Always the best of your ability and also what I try to teach people is to... I don't even know if it's a right term to use both, the left side and the right side of the brain. Left side tent to be more didactic and right side is more intuitive. I don't know which one but is a lot of people thinks [unintelligible] but missing the inductive from bottoms up. So, if you can practice both sides of the brain, I think you can find a solution much quicker to exercise both sides used didactic[??] but use a femoral intuitive thinking. Because intuition is very good but then you have to tested because my engineering background of the deductive side, I think if you can develop that, that would be very good and again telling people Americans one of the absolutely is the greatest country that your future is only depends on your ability and no on the external people.

BY: What is the [unintelligible] American society in culture makes that possible?

JS: I think just like you exhibit, the inflexed of all people, so you don't have one tradition, you don't have one high rocky, you have this mixture [unintelligible] of all of that. That's what make America great.

3RD: Freedom to express yourself without going to jail or...

BY: Perfect, that's the quote I needed. Thank you.

JS: I don't know what I say.

BY: Okay. [Unintelligible] Is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't ...

JS: No. I'm just very humble that you guy chose me to talk about. What I felt you know, is just to make the life and a really... I [unintelligible] away by the scope of your work to bring Americana in this broad essence to the world, to the public and that's great.

BY: Well, thank you very much.

JS: You're welcome.

[END OF AUDIO]
[01:11:14]