Name of Interviewee: Dennis Wu
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Name of Interviewer: Bill Yeingst
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BY: Today is November 18th. We are conducting an oral history with Dennis Wu at the Recology, headquarters at 50 California Street in San Francisco, California. Welcome Dennis.

DW: Thank you.

BY: Thank you for doing this. Would you begin by telling us a little bit about your family background? your childhood? Where you were born? Your hometown, what it was like living there?

DW: So I was born in the Philippines in Manila; shortly after the Second World War started. My mother used to say that her friends would say: "Of all the times to be pregnant, why did you pick this time?" As if she had some idea that the Japanese were going to be attacking Pearl Harbor. My father, went to the Philippines, went to Manila when he was about ten years old, from the southern part of China. His father and my grand-uncle had gone to the Philippines earlier to find their fortune, so to speak. And they're already days a lot of Chinese men left their villages and went through various places in Southeast Asia or as we know, in America they came here to build the railroads. So my ancestors went to Manila and my father joined them when he was ten years old, left his mother. He lived in the dormitory, and he's early job was basically being the server bus boy for the many Chinese men who worked in the grocery store where my father and grand-uncle started. My grandfather... My father got his education in the Philippines, did very well. And I guess, when I look back at it, my grandparents were very enlightened. In that, they encourage him and sent them to America at about eighteen years old to come here for college. He was the first member of our larger family to leave the Philippines, leave Manila, to come, as they would say: "All the way here to America". He applied in the selected who and choice of going to Harvard, Chicago or Stanford and chose to go to Chicago because he was very conscious about the cost of his education and Harvard and Stanford required that you'd to have two years to get a master's degree and I get fascinating with thinking about sometimes that here it was an eighteen years old and my grandparents had already decided that his education was not to be completed, until he had a Master's degree and at Chicago he could get a degree in one year. And it probably was fate because he's going to Chicago. Is where he met my mother. My grandfather, on my mother's side, had a Chinese restaurant in Chicago and what I understand it was the favorite hangout for the Chinese students and in those days there were mostly men boys. And there were three women, three girls in my mother's family, four I guess actually. One passed away, but… So it was clearly very quickly a very favorite place for young Chinese man and students to go there and I heard that at one point, my mother who probably, I'm guessing was about seventeen, eighteen years old and dad met her, was dating three guys at the same time and grandpa had to say her: "Mey, don't you think three is a bit much for some of the young as you are. So you have to pick one" And so fortunately, my father was the one who was selected, and eventually they talked about to getting married. And mother would say that about time grandma would finally said to her: "May, do you realize how far away the Philippines is? And I mean never see you again. Mom said: "Now you tell me this? When it's too late".

So anyway they got married father went back to the Philippines. And he had great dreams of doing various things and unfortunately he developed a coma and so many years after he graduated it really wasn't able to fulfill his… what he thought was his calling and to show his grandparents that the sacrifices they made were worth it. And in any case, eventually, they were able to find a way to manage the coma. And he went back to Manila and that's where we were when the working. And my father was managing one of the stores in the suburbs. And during the war, we had a lot of American customers, American and British customers, who in turn by the Japanese University of Santo Tomas were actually my father was working to get his Ph.D. Sadly, he actually had done all the work got this piece is written only thing that was missing was orals and very sadly that he had various copies of various people and in every, every copy was destroyed. He put the unfortunate did not give my mother a copy she mind him all the people you see to give me a copy. So he never got Ph.D. but University of Santo Tomas will I guess forever be part of our heritage because the American civilians and British civilians were interned there. Imprisoned if you will. With everybody that the Japanese were at war with no state they could not in turn the Chinese because there are so many of us. That was probably a good thing because my parents were able to my father was able to help a lot of these customers of the store. And I think I'm burnt some, I remember of the lessons about doing what's right. That would tell the story about how when he bought medicine and food for the internees. For a time, so they would ask some KC. Why is it that… Whatever you get for us is one-third the price of what everyone else charge us? My dad would say: "I don't know why". This is what I paid for it. And when you know when I learned that growing up. I learned very quickly that you don't take advantage of people in the time of it. Mother sold all or jewelry, even a wedding ring. In order to get the money to help these folks. And it was all in trust that America would come back and save those folks that they would in turn him pay us back. So at the end of the war, the six army sent a special group to free the scent of the [unintelligible] camp. Because they have been informed that the Japanese had mind. Be [unintelligible] school. The buildings. And that when the U.S. Army arrived but they were going to blow it up and kill the people. So, [unintelligible] or send enough special ranger group I guess. And they freed the prisoners. And my dad didn't go there first two days everybody was afraid. He finally showed up at the camp. And the internists were standing there waiting for him. Assumes they saw him they kept waving the same K.C., K.C. the where you've been? And they said that we have a job for you. They were so weak. We could not feed themselves. In spite of the fact that the Army bought food and they were looking for somebody to manage the kitchen to bring and help. And he with them and they recommended. So he started a camp, run in the lot of old employees from people he trusted to cook and take care of the internal needs, while them were preparing to return to America. Another interesting, you know, story that I learned from. The camp commander Captain told them Alexander told him, "K.C., you know, we cannot allow the laborers, the helpers to eat this food." And my father said, "Would you rather work out something like a Russian or would you want them to be tasting the food more often?" You have to remember that these folks were also sparring and hungry through the war. So they worked out an arrangement for they could eat what they needed. And the extent that there were some leftovers they could take it home to their family because but my father said, you know, this is the only reason why they're here to work. After the war, my father started a postal distribution business. And we had no money. We lived in the one bedroom house, one unit, had a brother.

BY: We just pass for a second. Referred to your father is K.C. Can you tell me your parents' names?

DW: My father's name is actually Kan Chin Wu. And my mother's name was Mey Moy And his friends because he would write the initial K.C. After a while his friends would call him K.C. and became known as K.C. and a lot of people ended up thinking that it's an Irish name. You know C A S E Y. And the interesting part about that is that when I have an eleven year-old boy son. And he was born and my wife and I were going through possible names. My wife wanted a name that starts with a D... So went through a whole lot of the different names and my mother was sitting there. And she said: "What's wrong with Dennis?" I thought you know that the not want to name and the boys after him because he felt that it may be hard for us to either live up to him, his reputation or felt that, you know, you have the burden of being a junior. So I said OK you know if mom wants Dennis, Susan wants D. Susan is my wife. What about we name in Dennis Casey. And we take care of my dad because he didn't want a junior. So that's what, you know what transpired as to how my son got mean to be Dennis Casey. But in any case that started the whole sale distribution business program that there was going to be a lot of food that need to be imported into Philippines because of place was devastated. And when you got a call from one of the internees actually a brit, and he had the franchise to bring in Scotch and liquor from Europe. And he said, "K.C. I want to bring a truck and I just got a load of scotch." And my dad said: "I don't have any money. I can't pay you for it" And said: K.C. did I ask you to bring money? I just want you to bring your truck down. Take the stuff. And after you sell it, you can pay me back." And I think that that was the result of my father's honesty. And what he did. And shortly after that a lot of his friends that were in the camp were lobbied for us to come to America. They felt that anybody was an American, he was. And you know, my earliest recollection I guess, as a three year old, 1945 was the American tanks coming in to Manila. And I've been asked about when did I feel like I was an American? And I guess I always felt like I was American and I growing up. I ended up to went to the American school in the Philippines I went to Christian Brothers School. From Brothers in Philadelphia. And those many as you all know the Philippines was part of America for a long time and having the earliest memory of tanks coming in with American flag. And being Chinese, after, after the war and child being in the civil war. The Philippines getting their independence and of the very early child not really feeling of need or Chinese or Filipino even I was born there. I probably felt more American than anything else. And we were lucky that we were able to come here. I was very lucky when I was ten years old in 1952.

BY: Sorry, what year were you were you born?

DW: I was born in 1942, in January. Maybe about six weeks, I guess, after Pearl Harbor. Those were hard times. I heard stories about my mother because food was short. My mother were out the milk. My father went out there and had to beg family and friends for milk for me. And I remember hearing a story about how he would look at this warehouse that belonged to the family and could see stacks of milk up there, but the warehouse was confiscated by the Japanese. And here is that he couldn't even take care of his own son. But, in any case, because of what he did and in those days, he was a Chinese Exclusion Act were initially before the war, no Chinese could come to America and because of China of being an ally of the United States. America was very generous allowing 100, 100 a year only Chinese to immigrate. And so there was no chance that

most people would ever be able to immigrate. And so friends tried to get a private bill through Congress based in my father's contributions. So we were here in 1952. Here's a ten-year-old. And I couldn't be happier. I was home. Unfortunately, we waited and waited for a congressional investigator come by and they didn't. And so we after almost a year here, we went back to the Philippines

BY: Where did you go initially?

DW: We came here to San Francisco and we lived in Berkley. We actually bought a home in Berkley. That's the first home that our family owned because in the Philippines you're not allowed to own property. So we bought a home and interesting enough, we spent, I remember, all morning looking around Berkley, but we could not pass. There was a main street there called Sacramento. And the cousin who took us around said we can't cross Sacramento because they won't sell to you.

DW: Who's the they? Well the realtors would not sell to you. So mom was very frustrated with the places that we looked at and said, "No, nothing was right. Nothing was right." And he finally said, "Well, Mey there is a house up on a hill that I can show you that I think is what you're looking for, but you have to promise me first that you will not fall in love with a house because you cannot have that house." So, mom agreed. They opened the door, and she fell in love with the house. And of course, we were told, and he said, "I told you, you cannot buy the house. They will not sell it to you." The realtors well, we must be lucky and, I think must be, because of a good deed my father did, that the house is owned by the Methodist Church. And they were selling it. It was the home of the minister. And a few months before we came, my dad, we're members of the Methodist Church in the Philippines, and my dad was a deacon. We met the bishop from San Francisco. So we went and called him, bishop and said, "I want to buy his house." And says: "K.C, you have to understand. The Rotifers won't sell it to you". Well my dad being educated in Chicago and said, "Well, it's very, very simple. You just take the house back, and you sell it to me. Because after all, you were in the Philippines not so long ago in Manila preaching brotherhood, and how we're all equal in the eyes of God." So that's what happened, the church took the property back. They sold the house to us, and interestingly enough, as the word got out that a Chinese family was going to be buying the house, one of our future neighbors circulated a petition among the neighbors in that area there, against our buying the house. Because, after all, we all know that Chinese moving in would decrease the value of the house. And the transaction went through and we started fixing the house because it was actually in pretty bad condition. The yard needed fixed and cleaned. This gentleman, who's a lawyer, came up to my dad one day. And I guess he learned that my dad was a mason, and actually a higher-ranking mason than he was. So they did their secret handshake. And, as fate would have it, his wife and my mother became probably best friends in the short period of time that we lived there.

BY: So you were ten years old at the time.

DW: I was ten years old when all that happened.

BY: And how did you get here?

DW: Well we came here by ship, in those days.

BY: Do you remember the name of the ship?

DW: Oh, I think it was either President Wilson or President Cleveland.

BY: Okay.

DW: I get confused because when I came back in '58, it was the other ship.

BY: And did you have brothers and sisters?

DW: I have a brother, I have a sister, and we all came the same time. And actually, my brother was here a year ahead of time because my parents came the year before, to look at, transact some business for the import back to the Philippines, to Manila. And they left him at boarding school, here in America, so it was a big reunion. And I remember the plane was late, that we were at the San Francisco airport, and my father who had quit smoking, got nervous and bought a pack of cigarette and started smoking and when my brother came off the plane the first thing he said to Dad was, "Dad, I thought you quit smoking." So my Dad took the cigarette and the pack of cigarettes and threw it away and that was the last time I ever saw him smoke.

BY: So how long did you live in that house?

DW: Well, we lived in that house, actually, only a few months and we went back to the Philippines and we rented a house out. And, it wasn't very long after we got back to the Philippines that the very neighbors who were part of this petition against our buying a house sent us a letter collectively, practically begging us to come back and take the house back cause we had rented out to a faculty member at UC Berkley and I guess the family was not taking very good care of the place. So, so much for a Chinese that would bring the property value down and not take care of the place compared to a Caucasian. So we, my father's friends, who he had helped out persevere it and were determined that one way or the other, they were going to bring us to America because I knew that my mother had left her heart in America, and she wanted to come back. And after we went back to Manila, my father tried all kinds of different ways to convince her that maybe we could make a home there. And had friends that were willing to buy land for us where we could build in one of the new major developments. My mother wouldn't even go out and look at it. Coz I'm going home to America. So, in 1958, about that time, the immigration law changed, and they gave preferences to people that have technical skills that would help America. And so these friends, who were watching out for us, my father was among the very first group that came in and was hired by an American company, and we emigrated in September of 1958. And I finished high school at Berkeley.

BY: Did you move back to the same house?

DW: We moved back to the same house. We actually went an apartment that we actually, sadly… we sadly… we're going to codify the place in San Francisco because there was an article in Reader's Digest about that time that talked about Washington High School in San Francisco being the top school, one of the top schools in the country. And they had a soccer team and I was a soccer player on the high school varsity teams. Basically, as a

freshman, I was coming over as a sophomore and. You talk about in early days the discrimination against Chinese. We ran into it again. We could not get anybody to rent an apartment to us because we were Chinese. There was one situation where the realtor suggested my mom, "why don't you go and ring the bell" and she did and this apartment complex and the lady on the other end said, "Yes, dearie, can I help you?" And my mother said, "We're here to look at your vacant apartment." My mother speaks without an accent. She grew up in Chicago as a child. So she had a mid-western accent. So she buzzed the door. We walked in. She came down, halfway down the stairs, saw that we were Chinese and immediately said, "oh, I'm so sorry. The apartment has been rented." So after being slapped a few times, we came to the realization, we've talked about it once before. We might as well go back to Berkeley and forget about Washington High, which was for my benefit. And even though there's a large Chinese population in San Francisco at that time, they were basically living in Chinatown. And that's not where we wanted to live. So we moved back to Berkeley, got a little apartment and eventually moved back into our own home.

BY: So, what was this community like for you as a young man? You mentioned soccer, were you able to play soccer in the…

DW: No, unfortunately soccer was not a big thing in Berkeley, and there's no soccer team. I was in a junior varsity basketball team, I was too short to play basketball in America. I was on a varsity volleyball team, but volleyball was not an in thing at that time in high school. So the best that I did was being basically, well, the water boy, I guess, you can call it for the basketball team. I did have a PE teacher that tried to convince me to be a gymnast, but I guess I wasn't gutsy enough to you know to do that. There were parts of that that I was just a bit frightened by, so I was not able to do much sports in high school here as compared when I was in Manila. I was in this American school of course it was a much smaller school. The whole schoolroom there was like 350 students from kindergarten to 12th grade, and my graduating class at Berkeley high was over 500 students. So the one thing that I was able to continue though was to excel in the scholastic part, academic part and I was so far ahead in math that as a high junior they started a program at Berkeley with the University of California, of sending students, certain students to take calculus courses. This was about the sputnik era and we were very into doing everything we can to promote science and engineering. And math and the others were high seniors and I was a height junior, so I did that for a year and a half. I think the net result of all that was that because our home in Berkeley was two and a half blocks away from UC Berkeley. I got brainwashed, I guess, early. Why would you even think about going back East, Mike? I had aunts who would try to get me to go back East, Chicago. I have one aunt who even drove me when I visited after I came in 58 after Christmas to Boston and saying that surely you would consider MIT or Harvard. And I got my, I experienced what I called dirty snow, and when I flew back here, it was sunny California. Flowers were blooming on the Berkeley campus and I said, "Why in the world would I want to be back east?" I remember visiting back here in Chicago and they had these dead ivy vines and with brown leaves hanging on and it was really ugly. It's kind of like; I don't think I want to be here. So I went to Berkeley and when I look back at it, I guess I must have been nuts. I only applied to one university. And that was Berkeley. I think it was like my grandparents telling my dad you going to go to America. And I guess I was told that you're going to go to Berkeley, and I just applied to Berkeley and sheer confidence that I'm going to get into Berkeley.

BY: I want to pause just for a minute and have you reflect on, a little more on your home life, when you came. Your you were certainly you said that you thought of yourself as American from a very early age how are these different markers of your diverse cultural heritage exhibited in the home either through food or religion, music or clothing, language. What language was spoken?

DW: We spoke a mixture of languages at home. My grandmother lived with us and she could only speak village Cantonese. Cantonese is a city dialect. So I just speak Chinese with her. We had servants… we had as many as, we had a driver, we had a lady that was basically the head maid, if you will, and she did the cooking and we had someone to clean and we had a gardener. I learned how to speak Tagalog and the Philippine native language. I went to an English school, Christian Brothers school, or required came them and slayed on. When I came back later, at the American school because it was preordained that I was going to come to America for college. They made a decision that I was not going to go to a Chinese bilingual school, where you studied Chinese mostly and then you learned English. That I was going to learn English. So I could speak English actually without an accent. Not much of an accent. The employees in the store spoke Chinese. So I grew up in a multi, I guess, lingual environment. It was not uncommon for my dad to say something to me in Chinese and for me to respond in English. For us, to use words that best describe what we're trying to say because different languages have different words that sometimes are more descriptive. Sadly, after coming over here, I lost my Tagalog, but with my company now that I have, I have Filipinos working with me, so I understand Tagalog. I can go to the Philippines and I can understand sort of what's being said, but I'm not comfortable speaking it. My Chinese, Cantonese is not very good anymore, because when we came we made the choice of living in Berkeley away from Chinatown. There were not very many Chinese at that time. In Berkeley, so my Cantonese got rusty and even though my wife is Mandarin speaking, I never really picked up Mandarin because when our son was born, we thought we were really smart, so you must speak nothing but Mandarin with him. My mother and the rest of us spoke English. When our nanny helped us out and she spoke Cantonese and the poor kid was so confused by the time he was three years old he couldn't speak. And in fact, we were told that he was autistic. So we stopped speaking. Don't confusing him and just spoke nothing but English and pretty soon, we had trouble keeping him quiet. He could talk. And he talked. But I think probably for me in some ways I consider myself a real international person. The school I went to an American school. Originally it was only for Americans and children of diplomats and Americans in those days, because we had a lot of Military folks there and embassy folks there. Later on there was a lot of the government people left, they opened it up to other people in the community but we continued to have people that lived in different places in the world and come from different backgrounds and so eventually they called it the American school and they did change the name to the international school. And so I was exposed to many different perspectives and learned very, very early that you need to have an open mind. And probably that came we were early in the Suez War. I had a classmate that had spent time with his father, his family in Egypt, and another that had spent time in Israel and as a 15 year-old, 14 year-old, it was fascinating, listening to very different point of views, even at that age. And you learn very, very quickly that there may be a different perspective in what appears to be the same thing or is the same. And later on, I remember, when I was going to Berkeley and having lunch with a friend of mine who was a classmate. We talked about our classmates and she says Dennis and she lives here across the bay at Piedmont, says we're really international people and we

have different perspective of the world and we're probably more open minded about things. And that's what I learned when I went to Berkeley, that Berkeley is if I walked away with anything from Berkeley is having an open mind and being allowed to listen to different point of views. The students fought very, very hard to allow communist speakers on campus. Fought very hard to allow people who have different beliefs.

BY: When did you go to Berkeley?

DW: I went to Berkeley in 1960 and I was there and I was actually outside them, Stout Hall I think in 65. When the free speech movement started, that really carried across America and it was a fascinating experience. I mean, I did not subscribe to the violence that happened after that or the takeover of hall. But interestingly enough in the beginning, student groups from the left to the right united because they felt that we needed to have freedom of speech on the campus. We needed to be allowed to listen to different point of views. But the most interesting thing about that experience that I walked away from was that the Vietnam War was happening. And the very same people who were fighting for the rights to listen to communist speakers picketed and were destructive when the Prime Minister's wife, the Premier's wife of Vietnam came and spoke and she'd filled up this basketball arena and they disrupted her speech because they didn't want her to have the freedom to speak up. And that was a lesson that I walked away with. That people will fight for her rights, but it's only their rights that they're fighting for. And really not understanding that everyone if you're in favor of freedom of speech and the rights of all Americans, it needs to be for everybody. And so, that has had a big, big impact on my life. After I graduated, I eventually-

BY: What did you study at Berkeley?

DW: I start out in Engineering. And I started out in Engineering and that was one of those things that did not work out well. I did very well in math. I did very well in my courses at school. I had to work really hard to get a B in Physics. And Physics actually was my father's Waterloo in high school. He was thinking about being an Engineer. And his professors or his advisors told him given the fact that he struggled with Physics perhaps, he should think about something else. And that's when he decided to major in Economics. Perhaps, it was a mistake for him to tell me that. He came home one day when I was in high school and said I was having lunch with my friends. And they decided that I should go to Berkeley and get an Industrial Engineering degree. And then I should go to Stanford and get an MBA. So that was the plan for me. So I went into Industrial Engineering. I struggled with Physics in high school. And I should've realized that there was a sign there. But I think in hindsight, that was probably a good thing. By the end of the first year, I was on probation. I got my grades back up in the summer. By the end of the second year, I'd flunked out. And cal grades on a curve, but any course that had Physics in it. I really struggled to even get a D, as in Dennis. I could open a Physics book and I'd fall asleep. So I went to junior college, got my grades back up, and I remember applying to business school. And they made me run through a battery of tests, and the dean said to me when he interviewed me. He says, "I don't understand how you could have flunked out." I said, "It's very simple. It's called Psychics." And the proof of that is I was able to get really good grades. From less than a 2.0 GPA, I was able to get to the Berkley MBA program, applying again to only one graduate school. I was going to, my mom had asked me, "Well, what are you going to do when you graduate?" And I said: "Well, as the plan, I was thinking about going into Stanford". Says: "Well, if

you really want go to Stanford, I guess, we'll pull the money together. But don't you think it's a long drive from Berkley to Stanford every day and back?" Meaning, that I was living in a house by myself, taking care of the house because they'd gone back and forth". Closing up the business and that I was going to continue living in a house. So I quickly decided that, nah, I don't think that's going to work. So I applied to Berkeley and got my MBA from Berkeley. After I graduated, well, I fell into something that seemed natural. I was good at math. I did really well in accounting. And I didn't realize that even at the age of ten, I was influenced by a gentleman named Washington Caesar in the Philippines. He's American Chinese. He was here during the war and the U.S. Government gathered up all the foreign students of allies, and put them to work to keep them out of trouble. And Wash, as a result of that, has an American citizen having started an accounting firm in the Philippines. And so I think I was somehow influenced by all of that and I graduated. And I was going to spend my two years and get my CPA certificate. And I already had decided I was going to leave public accounting. And I didn't want to be an accountant, an auditor. And I was going to do something else. I was going to go into business. And 37 years later, I wasn't ready to retire. I found out it was very fascinating. It wasn't at all what I thought it was. You had to work with different people. The best part about it is that the company was very, very good. The firm was very good at supporting me and being involved in the community. I developed a passion.

BY: Which company, which company?

DW: I was with, originally what they called Haskins and Sells which became Deloitte and Touche. Eventually, and from, there was a merger between Deloitte, Haskins, and Sells and Touche Ross, and became known as Deloitte and Touche. From the seventh and eighth largest accounting firms in those days, the eight firms, it is today the largest professional service in the world. So, but when I came one of the things I promised myself was that I was going to get back. I saw what the good things that my father did. How that benefited us, in I being able to immigrate and come to America. And I promised myself that I was going to get back. So I got very involved in the community. I got involved in Commonwealth Club in California, which is over. I think 113, 14 years now. I became the first minority president of the Club. I joined the San Francisco Ballet. I was interested in the arts because as much as I loved football, I think of football kind of like the natural succession from gladiators fighting each other. In some respects, I can see that in American football. And I thought there's a need for us to preserve art, the music and dance. And I found in ballet, this beauty of music and dance. And I felt that when I learned how little the dancers were making, I felt like I should use my skill sets and help raise money, help promote the art. And so I got on the ballet board. Within eight months after I joined, I got my arm twisted into becoming development chair. So that was a very interesting experience, raising money. And I get involved in a number of other organizations. The Chamber of Commerce. All the things I got involved with had something to do with protecting or preserving freedom, promoting a dialogue, promoting better understanding. I'm very involved today in the committed 100 that was created right about the time of Tiananmen when the media was looking for the Jessie Jackson of the Chinese American Community. And there's no such person. So some well-known people I'm Pei Yoyo Ma, the former chancellor Tien of Burpee. Who passed away unfortunately, Came up with the idea of creating this organization of bringing in Chinese, Americans of Chinese heritage, who are renowned in their respective field and that collectively, if we could bring our resume together, that we

could have access to leadership, that we could do some good and promoting better understanding between United States and China, and to also promote equal opportunities for Chinese-Americans. So, that has become an important part of what I am about today. I feel very passionately about trying to figure out my time, so that I can start an initiative of working with young Chinese students to get back rightly, wrongly, sadly. Wonderful Chinese students, Asian students, are taking up a significant percentage of college students in the top universities in the country. So and so that Harvard is basically putting a quota in and there's a lawsuit about that. And because there's a shortage of Latinos and African Americans that apply, forget about it just being enrolled, they're just applying. And I feel very strongly that the reason why is. A lot of these young African-American Latino kids also don't do well in the lower grades, and because of that, they drop out. I didn't get married until I was almost 58, and I have an 11-year-old son, and I've learned a lot watching him go through preschool. Now he's in sixth grade. And even though, as I mentioned earlier, that he's autistic, he's doing very well academically, and so much so that last year, in the parent teacher meeting, he was fortunate that he had the teacher that he had in the fourth grade. And she asked us in the 5th grade, because she was teaching this dual class, whether we would mind having Dennis tutor some kindergarten kids because he's so far ahead of his classmates. And, that really you know caused me to start thinking about what I long believe that, with the Chinese kids doing so well academically, then perhaps we can get them to give back. And today, I get the major university. You need to have community service. And then perhaps, we can persuade them to start an initiative to tutor younger kids and probably younger I'm talking about kindergarten, pre-k, and start working with those kids to develop a love and thirst for knowledge. And that if we can do that, in the years to come, we will be able to increase the number of Latinos and African American kids that will apply to college and do well. We have a major boom going on in San Francisco today in technology. And when you look at the percentages again, Latinos and African Americans are down to about 5% of the employee base. And we had a lot of controversy going on about increasing the quotas for H-1B visas. And so, rather than our thinking about importing more people to come in to drive our technology industries, perhaps we should grow them, and so that's one of the things that I'm thinking about at the young age of 73.

BY: You've talked a lot about education and I think from your early years, this was always something that was being very important and central in your life and in your father's life and others. You also talked about your sort of civic engagement and community building and giving back interestingly in the arts. Was that a part of your life growing up? Was there…?

DW: No.

BY: …an interest in the arts?

DW: We were too poor. My father worked six and a half days a week. As a youngster, when he started a supermarket, I think I was about eight years old. My weekends were spent in a store. Initially going around with a broom and a dustpan sweeping up cigarette butts.

In those days, people smoked all over. I moved up to being a bagger, bagging things up, to taking things out to the car. When I went back to the Philippines when I was 12, 11

years old initially, they discovered that I was able to make Christmas baskets. So as soon as school was out, I was in the store from early in the morning until late at night. I had free reign of the store to go pick up whatever I want to put in the baskets. People like ham, they like liquor and so I learned how to make colorful baskets, but we didn't have the time. And usually on Sundays my father was so tired that he would sleep Sunday afternoon. Later on, when I was old enough [unintelligible] allow me to go off on my own. I'd go off to the movies, especially during the summer time. But the earliest thing that I remember, you know, performing art, was I think in the early days, maybe the seventh or eighth grade, going to see an opera. I think it was in the Philippines. And that was it.

BY: Was your family religious?

DW: No, well my mother went to Sunday school, but we were not religious, and that's an interesting story.

BY: Was she a Christian or…?

DW: No. I couldn't say that she was either because, but I did go to a Christian Brother school. It was a Catholic school. And I excelled in my courses in school, and in Catholic schools, religion was a course. And so I was scoring 98, 99, 100 and they decided at some point that, I think it was kind of the equivalent of fourth grade, that they wanted me to take some additional courses along with some other kids. I think, basically, learn to be an altar boy. And I went home and told my parents. And my father's attorney had just lost a son few weeks earlier to the Jesuits. Came home and told the parents that he was going to go to seminary. And of course, you know he was going to give up all his earthly goods. And so my brother had a learning disability so they were really looking to me. And my mother said that there was no way that she was losing her son to the Christian brothers. So the next day, the driver picked us up at the school and we went straight to the office. They didn't tell us why at the store. They said, "well, your parents wanted me to drive you guys instead of home to the store." We picked them up and we went to the Methodist church. And we got baptized that… they immediately… There was a minister, had been going to the store, and he had defended my dad. And he was never critical, such as the fact that we were open on Sunday, or I never really tried to lecture my dad about going to church, or anything else. So we got baptized, and the day after, I was instructed to take my baptism certificate back to the school, and say, "Can't touch me, I'm a Methodist." And so, Dad eventually, and again that's in faith, Dad got involved. Became a deacon. He was an usher on Sunday. He went to church on Sunday. He loved work, went to church, collect the money, the money passed the trays around. And I think if not for that, we wouldn't have had our home in Berkley, which we still have today.

BY: You mentioned the initial discrimination. As a young man, how did you fit in? How did you find your place in this new culture, this new community?

DW: It was interesting. I never really felt that among my classmates. Well, I did face that a bit in the Philippines American School. When I was a sophomore, I became Class President a couple of times. My classmates were very adamant they wanted me to be

President. Earlier my mother wouldn't allow me to run, and so finally I didn't ask her and I just came home and said, "Mom, I got elected as President." And she would always say, "Well, why would they want you to be President, you know. Who are you? There are all these other kids, Caucasian kids, American kids." I was encouraged to run for school Vice President and the initial feeling was that it was going to be a landslide, and someone else went and ran against me. And I think that's probably the really second time that I felt… the only time I really felt an issue in school. Because the word could get out, why should they be electing the Chinese to be Vice President? But when I came here, to San Francisco for Doctor Berkley, I didn't really feel that, and I didn't really feel that at Berkley. There were not that many of us. I guess we were not a threat. Because I did well in school, I think that kids would ask me for help.

BY: You said that you felt you were American.

DW: Well, I always felt I was American. I lived in an American environment. We sort of lived; I mean, in some ways, I think of our living in an American outpost someplace. My friends go to kids up, I played around during the summer when I was able to get away with it, were squatter kids, Filipino kids. But my school friends were American kids generally or some other foreign kids. And because… you know, our whole environment was American. I always felt like I was American. I knew I wasn't American, but I felt like I was an American.

BY: Do you think your through to, it's for holiday celebrations and food and…

DW: Well, no because, well, Thanksgiving… because we had a supermarket that catered to the expats, Thanksgiving time we had to find turkey. Christmas time, this Christmas, we decorated the store. We were one of the rarely people that did that. And Filipinos is a very festive people anyway, they love Christmas. So we decorated the store, every year. We had a decorator come in. We had gift baskets. We had shopping bags filled with groceries and bonuses for the employees on Christmas Eve. All the employees would stay and be given their shopping bags to take home. We celebrated Easter, I remember. My mother had created this household department that started, took up about a quarter of the store. She had this idea one year, we bought an incubating machine and we just timed perfectly that the chicks would be hatching, and kids would come in and we sold little chicks for them. I mean, today you wouldn't dream of doing that, how could you do this? So we help them celebrate Easter. We celebrated. In the beginning, the Philippines got their independence on July 4th. Later on, they decided that they really had gotten their independence much earlier, so they changed the date. But we were America, I mean, I don't know. I've never lived in Puerto Rico, but probably the way it would have been in Guam or in Puerto Rico.

BY: And do they carry over to your home in Berkeley?

DW: Yeah. I mean, the first time that we ever had Christmas was when we were here in '52, '53. I mean, I figured out a long time ago there was no Santa Claus because I discovered the presents hidden in my parents' closet. And we had a Christmas tree, but we celebrated Christmas. I'm not a big turkey eater, so I actually in recent years have tried to find ways to avoid Thanksgiving because I didn't want to be eating turkey. I have brother-in-law who likes to get the biggest turkey you possibly can, and when I was

living in Denver close to them, I mean, we would be eating turkey for a week, that was how…

BY: Were there Chinese or Filipino traditions that were maintained in your home?

DW: Chinese traditions, somewhat. Chinese New Year, that's important. It's important to my father, so we celebrate Western New Year and Chinese New Year. I mean, there's… some of that is going away because I'm not a real traditionalist, the same way. But we didn't celebrate Filipino because some of the major Filipino holidays were similar to American holidays.

BY: Mm-hm.

DW: So there was nothing really, at least for us, that was really different. But I learned to eat Filipino food and love Filipino food. Because, I would sometimes eat early before my father and mother got home because I had homework to do, so I'd eat in the kitchen with the people that worked in the house. And they would eat typical Filipino food. And so, even now, periodically, we'd go to Filipino restaurants. We ate Chinese food. I'm telling you my mother taught the cook how to make Chinese food and then when we came to America, my mother was very traditional. We would always have soup and at least three different dishes.

BY: Are there times where you really feel Chinese or Filipino?

DW: Well, yeah, when I'm eating Filipino food or Chinese food and good memories come back. I mean Chinese are pretty, good cuisine. When I think of my favorite foods, it's Italian food, French food, probably a little less of that today because it's rich, but Chinese food and I've learned to appreciate the many different flavors of China that those different regions have different foods. Well, some spicier than others. I guess, I think that I appreciate my heritage. When Chinese people do really astonishing things, whether they win a Nobel Prize, or they create something great. there is a dancer that is into ballet in Tianjin that is a beautiful ballerina. She came from China and was discovered when she was 18 years old. And when I see her dance I'm very, very proud of being Chinese, the Chinese heritage, but in all other respects, I'm an American. If, God forbid, that China and America ever go to war, there's no question that I'm an American.

BY: What does it mean to be American?

DW: For me it's the equal opportunities, at least, that's what we fight for and I think generally we do, the equal opportunities for people to excel, to get an education. In a lot of countries, it doesn't matter how smart you are, how hard you work, you just cannot become successful if you don't come from the right families. And when you think about the people in Silicon Valley and the entrepreneurship and the creations and creativity, the benefits of the world is coming out of America. And it's coming from America because of the freedom and encouragement for people to be what they can be. I mean, here at Berkeley, one of the things I love about being involved, when you look at the art

that's created by artists, the fact that we would invest in allowing artists to create what they want to create. In a lot of countries, you can't do that. You can't speak your mind. You don't dare to disagree. And there's no other place in the world that people are able to do that.

BY: I want to ask you to reflect a little bit about your life and think about what you're most proud of, and what's been the most challenging.

DW: I don't know that there's anything that I guess I'm most proud of. I think it's, what's been great is that…I have not allowed myself to be proud of my accomplishments in the past. I have a mother that, "it was never good enough." So it was hard to be proud. She was very, very quick in reminding me that as smart as I think I am, there are smarter people. And I can remember coming home with five A's and one B plus and she says to me, "What's wrong with that B plus?" So I think it's only recent that I guess I've allowed myself to be proud of what I've been able to give back, what people tell me, the effect and influence I've had on their lives that they know that I'm out there trying to do good, trying to help them.

BY: What advice do you offer to young people when you meet with them?

DW: It really depends. I do tell them that it's okay to fail. What's important is whether or not you can pick yourself up. I think when I look back, and maybe one of the things I'm proud of is the fact that I flunked out of Berkley, but I was able to get myself back in there within a few months. And I not only graduated, but I got into the MBA program, and only applied to one school. And when I look at what I've been able to accomplish since then, I think that had I not failed, because I had never failed before that, that I probably would not be the person I am today. It's okay to fail. What's important is what you do about it. And I also encouraged young people to really look at what they are passionate about, that they have to have passion.

BY: Your current work is very future-focused. Well, I mean, it's present but it's also focused on the future of the world and the United States here of Recology. Can you talk just very briefly about that?

DW: I learned a long time ago, you can't do anything about the past. You can't change it. I tell my 11-year-old when he talks about a time machine, I say, "Dennis, it's impossible." The only thing we can do anything about is the present and the future. And I feel very, very blessed and lucky to be here at Recology. I never expected to be named chairman. I think that we created the mess that we have created, we human beings. And only we can fix it, but I've seen some but messes the negative bad things. I mean there are a lot of things that we need to change, the environment. I'm very, very proud of what the Recology is doing in trying to protect the environment, trying to reduce carbon. And the fact that we have created a whole new group of middle class people from part of the company's one hundred percent on by employees. And so that's for me it's exciting. I am sometimes. I don't something I worry about but greed that's about in Wall Street. I think that some of the corporate executives are grossly overpaid money that they could never spend in their lifetimes. I think it's wonderful that you know that people like Bill Gates of started encouraging the big this billionaire club to give back and lot of good has come out of that. But there's still a lot of people were making a lot of money that I think

could probably be better distributed. More people got of a better life. And I'm hoping that than this great country ours that you know, good will come to our senses about them and. And that's one thing I love about this company is that. So nice up in the money doesn't go to anybody else but the employee. And people marvel at how wonderful the people aren't employees are. I say what you have to understand that every one of our truck drivers. Is when he's on business? He's an owner. And the best part about it is they live in this community. And whatever they earn, and whatever they have they put it back in this community and as a multiplier effect. Whereas if your part about a public company. The money is taken. And it goes the Wall Street and certain people get richer and richer and richer. With money that just sitting there and not doing any good any. Money only has value the able to do something with it and hopefully do something good with.

BY: I think we covered a lot. Is something else you'd like to add?

DW: No, I talked too much.

BY: Well thank you very much.

DW: Well I hope you get what you need.

[END OF AUDIO]