

Interview with the Hook Sin Tong Charity Association

Place: Office of the Hook Sin Tong Charity Association (660 Herald Street)

Date: June 16, 2011

Interviewers: Zhongping Chen; Charles Yang

Interviewee: Henry Low (刘鸿就), treasurer of the Hook Sin Tong Charity Association

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Zhongping Chen: Let's start from your family history. Where did your family come from in China? Which county?

Henry Low: I was born in Zhongshan.

Zhongping Chen: Which town?

Henry Low: I was born in Zhongshan, Qu Chong, 1950.

Zhongping Chen: 1950.

Henry Low: In 1955, I went to another village (write a Chinese name).

Zhongping Chen: Oh, Hengmei.

Henry Low: Went there for school. When I was five, I left Qu Chong and went to another village. I remember around 1955, they promoted that the Chinese only had one mother language.

Zhongping Chen: Mandarin.

Henry Low: They encouraged us to speak Mandarin because there were too many different dialects. Zhongshan already had too many different dialects. So they had a big string to block the busy street and everybody walk by has to say something in Mandarin. In 1955, I remember that. Nowadays, whether they come from Zhongshan or wherever, they all speak Mandarin, which is good.

Zhongping Chen: But you were not the first one in your family here? Who was the first in your family here?

Henry Low: My father was here, he came here in 1920.

Zhongping Chen: What is your father's name?

Henry Low: My father's name is... Write it down?

Zhongping Chen: Yes please. Liu Dezhang (刘德章)?

Henry Low: Ya.

Zhongping Chen: So, why did he come here?

Henry Low: Because in those days in China, in Zhongshan especially, Guangdong, was very poor. Cannot make any money.

Zhongping Chen: So many people left?

Henry Low: Too many people, too poor and they have to look for work. So that's why they... the labor... the early labor was either farming, laundry or building railroads. You know, the laborers. They come here to look for work.

Zhongping Chen: Did he come because he had relatives here or...?

Henry Low: No, he came just for labor.

Zhongping Chen: Did he have local fellows? Like...?

Henry Low: That's what the society for... I guess in those days the Chinese people, especially Cantonese people, in those days the early immigrants, mainly Cantonese, right? In those days even in those small villages they don't travel around. They always stay in their own village, right? So they have their own dialect. So that's the reason when they come to Canada, one of the reasons I believe they come to Canada, and they had to set up their own association because you speak your own dialect, right? The Taishan people have their own association. The Kaiping has their own association. Zhongshan we have our own dialect. It's kind of a shame that two Chinese people meet on the street, they cannot understand each other, right? That's why they in early 50's they already encouraged everybody to speak one language, which is Mandarin. So coming here, all these different societies set up because they don't understand each other. So Zhongshan people have their Zhongshan Association, Taishan have their Taishan Association,

Lung Kong is for four large names- they want to be together so they can help each other out and united is strong, nobody pick on you. So even though the different Cantonese ethnic groups they pick on each other but if you have an association, I belong to this association, then you have more power. You know, and to look for work. That's why my father used to live here in this building too, when he was by himself.

Zhongping Chen: Just at the beginning?

Henry Low: Ya, my father came here and he already married in China, in Zhongshan.

Zhongping Chen: How old when he came here?

Henry Low: Twenty. He was already married. He came here, wife was back home and the wife died. So after I don't know how many years, he went back to China and married again, that's my mother, and then had two children, my brother and myself.

Zhongping Chen: You're older brother or younger brother?

Henry Low: I'm younger brother.

Zhongping Chen: So your father came, which year was that?

Charles Yang: 1920.

Henry Low: 1920.

Zhongping Chen: So he paid \$500 head tax?

Henry Low: \$500 head tax.

Zhongping Chen: Where did he get such money? This's a big sum of money at that time.

Henry Low: I don't know. Possibly, he could have got that money from employer or something. I don't know where that money came from actually. That's a good question.

- Zhongping Chen: Ya, \$500 at that time was a lot of money.
- Henry Low: How he came up with that \$500, we never asked. So when I in 1959 after I moved to Hengmei...
- Charles Yang: You went there in 1955, right?
- Henry Low: 1955, I studied there for just a few years and then I soon applied for immigration to Canada.
- Zhongping Chen: Which year was that?
- Henry Low: 1950s... maybe 57, 58. I don't know.
- Zhongping Chen: But at that time it was still possible for you to apply for emigration?
- Henry Low: Ya, that's right because my father was already here.
- Zhongping Chen: But it's China, at that time they totally controlled people.
- Henry Low: We are very fortunate. We applied for the exit permit to leave China. We were very lucky. I think sometime like half a year or so, we got the OK to leave China. So in 1959, we went to Macau.
- Zhongping Chen: To Macau and then came to Canada?
- Henry Low: I was in Macau from 1959 to 1965.
- Zhongping Chen: Oh, you were still in Macau?
- Henry Low: Ya, because my father told me: "Don't come here yet".
- Zhongping Chen: Why?
- Henry Low: Study Chinese.
- Zhongping Chen: Oh, that's a good idea.

- Henry Low: He tells me to stay in Macau, told me and my brother and my mother to stay in Macau and study Chinese. So we had grade seven.
- Zhongping Chen: So you stayed there and studied Chinese.
- Henry Low: Studied to grade seven before we came to Victoria. 1965 we came here.
- Zhongping Chen: So, when your father came, what was his job here?
- Henry Low: He was working for the Lee green house.
- Zhongping Chen: Jack Lee's?
- Henry Low: His father's greenhouse.
- Zhongping Chen: Oh, greenhouse. Just worked there like a farmer?
- Henry Low: Ya, he was a supervisor.
- Zhongping Chen: Oh, ok.
- Henry Low: You know the green house?
- Zhongping Chen: Ya, I knew, for growing vegetables.
- Henry Low: Next to UVic.
- Zhongping Chen: Ya, I think Jack told me.
- Henry Low: Fleet Street.
- Zhongping Chen: Which street?
- Henry Low: Ok, my father came here and then he was working for the Lee's greenhouse, and it's owned by Jack Lee's family, Jack Lee's father. You want me to write the Chinese name?
- Zhongping Chen: Yes please. Li Huaqian. Ya, that's Jack Lee's father.

- Henry Low: So he worked there as a supervisor, and that greenhouse is very close to UVic, Fleet and Shelbourne... McKenzie sorry. Fleet Street just before Gordon Head Road.
- Zhongping Chen: So your father never changed to other jobs?
- Henry Low: Always in the greenhouse. Always worked in the greenhouse. So 1959--
- Zhongping Chen: When did you come here?
- Henry Low: In 1965. I came here from Macau and then we had to start ESL because when I was in Macau I went to Chinese school, not English school, so we don't know any English. So when we came here, because my father told us to learn Chinese, not English.
- Zhongping Chen: So when you came, what kind of job did you do here?
- Henry Low: What kind of job? Ok, when we came here in 1965 I was studying from ESL, start from ESL.
- Zhongping Chen: Here in school?
- Henry Low: In George Jay. George Jay Elementary.
- Zhongping Chen: Oh, they had ESL?
- Henry Low: George Jay Elementary School they have ESL. A lot of the students are from Hong Kong, China... not very much from China, but Hong Kong, Macau and Europeans, Hungarians, Greeks, Indian – East Indian. All those were in ESL, from Europe and Southeast Asia. So we study ESL and then we get placement, go into elementary like grade seven. I went as grade 12 and that's it.
- Zhongping Chen: So in Macau, which grade did you reach? High school or...?
- Henry Low: In Macau? Grade seven in Catholic school. A very famous Catholic school, Yuet Wah (Yuehua) College. Studied until grade seven.

Zhongping Chen: Here, after you finished your language training in ESL, what kind of job did you do here?

Henry Low: When we were going to school in those days, we worked part time mainly in restaurants. I was, like first job, I used to work at Fan Tan Alley, that Fan Tan Café. I used to peel potato there, in Fan Tan Alley. That was my first job. Dish washing, peel potato and make mash potatoes. My second job is the Beachcomber Polynesian Restaurant, Broughton Street. So all restaurant related.

Zhongping Chen: So finally did you change your job?

Henry Low: And then in 1978, I owned my own restaurant. So, you know in 1978, my brother and myself bought the Mandarin Place on Cedar Hill Cross Road, Wenhua Jiujia (文华酒家).

Zhongping Chen: How long did you work...

Henry Low: Own the restaurant? 1978 to 2006.

Zhongping Chen: 2006. You worked for long time. So do you have any social activities?

Henry Low: All kind of activities.

Zhongping Chen: What kind of activities?

Henry Low: I'm into music, opera. Chinese opera, basketball, soccer, all kind of sports, badminton.

Zhongping Chen: You play with what kind of people? Just Chinese guys?

Henry Low: Chinese. We've been... Like basketball, we have played once a week every Thursday for the last 30 some odd years. And funny thing, before it's all Cantonese people, we used to call ourselves "Over 30s", our age. But now we all 60s. But now, before it's all Cantonese speaking, nowadays we have six members who are from Mainland China.

- Zhongping Chen: But still all the members are Chinese?
- Henry Low: All Chinese and six of them speak Mandarin.
- Zhongping Chen: So this is like a group?
- Henry Low: Ya, a group.
- Zhongping Chen: In total, how many players...?
- Henry Low: About twenty.
- Zhongping Chen: You play regularly... how often?
- Henry Low: Every Thursday for the last thirty years, two hours. Tonight, we play tonight too. But there's funny thing, nowadays the immigration pattern changed. Now there's a lot of immigration. Now it's not family reunited immigration, now it's all professionals, investors coming to Canada.
- Zhongping Chen: Where is that? Where is the place you play?
- Henry Low: Play? We always rented an elementary school.
- Zhongping Chen: Which one?
- Henry Low: Several different ones. But the last twenty years has been in Cloverdale. Cloverdale elementary school.
- Charles Yang: That's the one by Thrifty Foods.
- Henry Low: Cloverdale, Thrifty's ya.
- Zhongping Chen: Do you have an organization?
- Henry Low: I am the guy that's arranging, always look after the rental.
- Zhongping Chen: It's kind of informal organization.
- Henry Low: I'm more like the guy that runs the basketball team.

- Zhongping Chen: No name of the organization?
- Henry Low: We call ourselves the “Victoria Tiger”.
- Zhongping Chen: So do you have competition with other groups?
- Henry Low: We used to have competition with St. Michael University School and then some Pilipino players and some Caucasians, you know, white players. But the white players are too big, too tall. So we cannot play with them.
- Zhongping Chen: So we can probably talk about your association.
- Henry Low: Ya, association. What was I going to say? It was formed in 1902.
- Zhongping Chen: 1902, ya it was established in 1902 by Li--
- Henry Low: Li Jinzhou.
- Zhongping Chen: Ya, Li Jinzhou. So it was first established for all the people from Zhongshan county?
- Henry Low: Strictly for Zhongshan county. So, eleven Chinese merchants, Zhongshan merchants, got together and say that we need to form a Zhongshan association. So in 1902 they had a fund raising throughout the province of BC.
- Zhongping Chen: In the whole BC?
- Henry Low: Ya, BC. For all the Chinese because once the Chinese people arrive in Victoria they spread out to other places to look for work. Some could end up in the United States, some Parkerville or somewhere with the railroad or whatever, interior BC. So this group of eleven Chinese, Zhongshan merchants, got together and form, like have a fund raising throughout the province of BC for the Chinese natives to form this association. So they got enough money to buy this piece of land in 1902 and built a couple of wooden house.

- Zhongping Chen: Oh, not this building?
- Henry Low: Not this building. Wooden house and used it as a meeting hall. In 1913, then they build this building.
- Zhongping Chen: Oh, this building was here in 1913.
- Henry Low: This building was built and finished in 1913.
- Zhongping Chen: Including...?
- Henry Low: Including this. Ya, ok. In those days, I don't know how many years it took them to finish this building after they built this wooden house, less than ten years maybe, and they tear down this wooden house and built this building.
- Zhongping Chen: Originally a wooden house was here.
- Henry Low: Originally a wooden house. I think it cost \$3,000. I got a piece of paper here.
- Zhongping Chen: You mean the wooden house cost \$3,000?
- Henry Low: No, the land. The land only cost \$3,500. For this piece of land and so they built this wooden house and then years later they tear it down and built this building. I don't know how many years they took to build this building but it was finished in 1913.
- Zhongping Chen: Oh that's the year...
- Henry Low: The year it was finished.
- Zhongping Chen: Ya, that's 1913.
- Henry Low: And then that's why some pictures are donations when we have the grand opening of this building. The pictures are donated from various organizations.

- Charles Yang: Are all the pictures on the wall just donated?
- Henry Low: It's donation for the grand opening. Some are from the Lung Kong Association. Some are from the Vancouver association.
- Zhongping Chen: So this association served people not only in Victoria but also...
- Henry Low: Only the Zhongshan people.
- Zhongping Chen: Only Zhongshan people, but not only in Victoria but also in Vancouver, BC, in all of Canada.
- Henry Low: You know all the early immigrants. They come here. They have to come here first, Victoria. You know about the "Piglet House", the little building?
- Zhongping Chen: Which one?
- Henry Low: In Dallas Road. There used to have a building. Dr. Lai has some information.
- Zhongping Chen: That house for medical examination of immigrants?
- Henry Low: That building they put all the immigrants, quarantine those people. They arrive from China. They also come to Victoria first. That's why in the early days, Victoria has a bigger Chinatown. Bigger than, well before, Vancouver. That's why Chinatown in Victoria is the oldest, I think one of the oldest in North America because all the Chinese people come here. Immigrants come here. They arrive in Victoria first. And then they quarantine them in that building and then if they find their relative or whatever then they allow to leave, come out of that building. So when this building was built, all the immigrants... the Zhongshan natives, they come here. The immigrants come here. They check into this building. And then maybe this is also a place for them to write home and say "Oh I already arrive in Victoria and now I'm living temporarily in Hook Sin Tong."
- Zhongping Chen: Like your father.

Henry Low: Ya, my father. My father was living here for longest time till 1965 then we, when we came to Victoria, then we rented a house.

Zhongping Chen: Oh, before you came here--

Henry Low: He's still living here, I think he still lived here.

Zhongping Chen: How many years did he live here?

Henry Low: I don't know exactly how many years. Maybe he lived elsewhere too, but he did live in this building before.

Zhongping Chen: How many people could live here at that time?

Henry Low: I have no record of it. Nobody can remember how many people live here. There used to be a quite few Chinatown buildings, those associations, tenement buildings. Tenement buildings, all single males arrive from China looking for work. So this was used as a tenement building. At one time, there were so many, so crowded, I think the police raided some of the buildings in Chinatown because for the cubic feet bylaw you're not allowed to have so many people live... you know, for sanitary. You're not allowed to have so many people living in one room. But those guys, all singles guys, so they all stayed in one room and then they try to crack down on that because it's unsanitary to live in one room, so many single male live in one room. This building used to be a tenement building for those immigrants.

Charles Yang: Do you still have the rooms?

Henry Low: No, we tear it down. At one time in the late 60s and early 70s this building was almost condemned by the City of Victoria because it was like sinking about 4 inches.

Zhongping Chen: The whole building?

Henry Low: Sinking about 4 inches. So that's when we had the Baizihui (Hundred People Party), Baizihui in the old days... you know what that is?

Zhongping Chen: How did that work? Actually I read that in the book.

Henry Low: Baizihui is all people they borrow [lend] the money to the Tong(Association), borrow money to buy how many shares. So all those names, they tell them how many shares they buy. I think I bought one share or two shares, something like that. My brother bought two shares. To raise the money, to raise the building.

Zhongping Chen: It's like stock?

Henry Low: You buy, later on pay back.

Zhongping Chen: But actually...

Henry Low: Almost like personal loan to the association.

Zhongping Chen: Is it cheap? Like how many dollars a share?

Henry Low: \$100.

Zhongping Chen: \$100 a share?

Henry Low: It says here how many shares... later on we, on the way out, we can read the different organizations or different names, how many shares they bought, purchased.

Zhongping Chen: It's 1971?

Henry Low: 1972 or something like that. The building is kind of dilapidated, right? The City said you do something about it or it'll be confiscated. So then they raised the money and rebuilt the building. In early 90's, late 80's we had a major renovation.

Charles Yang: Ya, 1978.

- Henry Low: Ya, there's another renovation in the early 90's. For major renovations like painting, wood floor and everything. I think we borrowed \$250,000 or something or like that.
- Zhongping Chen: Is this association the oldest association... oldest association for Zhongshan people in Canada?
- Henry Low: Could be, that's why we're called the headquarters.
- Zhongping Chen: Headquarters, right.
- Henry Low: A lot of... there's about eight locations in Victoria that are also headquarters because in the past they first came here then to other places.
- Zhongping Chen: So does this association have a branch like in Vancouver? In other...?
- Henry Low: Used to.
- Zhongping Chen: How many cities have Hook Sin Tong.
- Henry Low: How many cities? Just Victoria and Vancouver.
- Zhongping Chen: Why are there no others? Because Zhongshan people also in Toronto or other cities. Why did they not establish an organization?
- Henry Low: Maybe financially, you have to buy a building, right? We have... Right now we are doing some major renovation again. This time we raise money, we finance through the bank. We're going to do seismic upgrading because we want to do... change eight residential units, four up here, four down second floor.
- Zhongping Chen: You have rental units outside of this building?
- Henry Low: Ya, right now it's just a huge place like 1,200 square feet, one or two people living there. But we want a smaller suite so that we have maybe total eight residential units and a couple offices and then a few commercial units on the ground floor. So we are going through a major renovation of

putting more rental income, hopefully in the future we have more rental income. And also we can take advantage of the ten years tax holiday. Because they have a policy that if you create any of the old building in the Chinatown area, in this downtown area, the old building, second and third storey not being occupied, they encourage the property owner to fix it up and put residential units in it. If you put residential units and create more low income housing, the city can give you like ten years tax holiday. You don't have to pay property tax for ten years. If you create from nothing, like second floor empty, third floor empty, if you create rental units for low income housing then you can enjoy ten years tax holiday because major expense for the association is the tax, property tax.

Zhongping Chen: So right now, how many members in your association?

Henry Low: That's very hard to say how many members. Current members that come to meetings every month is about, I would say, sixty.

Zhongping Chen: Regular...

Henry Low: Regularly come up here for meeting every month.

Zhongping Chen: But for total number you have no idea?

Henry Low: Some old ones, some past away, some die, some move to elsewhere so we have no record. They're still member of Zhongshan Hook Sin Tong, but they no longer come here. They could be pass away or sick or too old to come out or go elsewhere in BC or went back to China, who knows.

Zhongping Chen: So in order to join this association do they need to pay a membership fee?

Henry Low: In the old days it was like \$3 or something like that. Lifetime.

Zhongping Chen: Lifetime?

Henry Low: Lifetime. But now I think we, like six years ago, changed to a \$50 and just lifetime. One time \$50 and then you can be a member of the Hook Sin

Tong. If you are a Zhongshan native and have two recommendations from two members that recommend him to join, and after everything is checked and there's no problem then you can join.

Zhongping Chen: So it is strict.

Henry Low: But one funny thing is, I think in the very near future that's going to happen to us is a Zhongshan native can only speak Mandarin. You will see that in the future because all the people from northern China going to southern Guangdong province.

Zhongping Chen: So they could not come from Zhongshan. They are from northern China.

Henry Low: Ya, but if they were born in Zhongshan?

Zhongping Chen: Even if born in Zhongshan, they could not speak Cantonese.

Henry Low: Cannot speak... well they will speak Mandarin. I mean right now even some of the members from Zhongshan they speak very little Zhongshan but Mandarin.

Zhongping Chen: Like local born?

Henry Low: Almost like local born here speak lots of English and very small amount of Chinese.

Zhongping Chen: Oh, by the way, Zhongshan has many dialects.

Henry Low: Many dialects, ya. One dialect that we have is... I don't know if you know about this Chinese association, a Zhongshan Association (write on paper).

Zhongping Chen: Longdu (隆都)?

Henry Low: Longzhen (隆镇).

Zhongping Chen: You call it Longdu, I think.

- Henry Low: Longdu. They speak a different dialect which I don't understand.
- Zhongping Chen: So that's why they form another association.
- Henry Low: Ya, and then we only separate by the river. Our dialect and the Longdu dialect totally different, just by one river. That's why 1955 they wanted to encourage everybody to speak Mandarin.
- Zhongping Chen: Do Longdu people have association here?
- Henry Low: Not here.
- Zhongping Chen: In Vancouver probably?
- Henry Low: Ya, Vancouver. There're around two more I think, I don't know.
- Zhongping Chen: In this association, most members, do you have like a major lineage, like major surnames?
- Henry Low: Surname? All different surnames.
- Zhongping Chen: But Liu like your surname is the largest?
- Henry Low: I also don't know which surname is the largest in Zhongshan.
- Zhongping Chen: But in this association, which lineage would be largest?
- Henry Low: Everybody's different because in Zhongshan they go to a lot of places. Some are from Tan... Hoi... South America.
- Zhongping Chen: So what kind of activities do you have for members?
- Henry Low: Right now the activities are just meeting every month except the third week of... third Sunday of every month and except July and August has no meetings.
- Zhongping Chen: Summer vacation.
- Henry Low: Summer vacation and other activities are picnic...

- Zhongping Chen: Every month or?
- Henry Low: Every year summer time. Picnic and then we have Spring Feast.
- Zhongping Chen: It's got all the members?
- Henry Low: Ya, and then a Winter dinner (做冬) around Christmas time.
- Zhongping Chen: So do you have activities every week or something?
- Henry Low: No, we don't have any other activities. We have the ... then we have tours that go to Vancouver, tour to some American city, things like that.
- Zhongping Chen: So that's sponsored by...
- Henry Low: Sponsored by the association but they're not very often.
- Zhongping Chen: I just wondered why people today still join this association. Like in the past, it was understandable, people need to get together, help each other. But today anti-Chinese discrimination is not that serious.
- Henry Low: Well, it's more like nowadays just a place to associate.
- Zhongping Chen: But you do not associate very often. Just once a week... once a month.
- Henry Low: Ya. I must say that a lot of them like the idea. Sometime we have banquets now and then that we all get together, things like that. I guess Cantonese people love eating. Then they belong to such an association, they always have different banquets. Like the Lung Kong Association they have four last names right? So if on Liu Bei's birthday they have a dinner.
- Zhongping Chen: Liu, Guan, Zhang, Zhao...
- Henry Low: The four surnames. Right now there's no other activities. It's just banquets.
- Zhongping Chen: Also, you had scholarship before.
- Henry Low: Ya, we have scholarship.

- Zhongping Chen: For students from Zhongshan.
- Henry Low: We encourage the Zhongshan native to go to university here. Like we encourage them... I think our categories are graduates from grade 12 going to UVic. We encourage them to go to UVic, first year and then also first year to second year. But right now because we going through a major, major renovation so we are stopping the scholarship for the time being.
- Zhongping Chen: Before, how many students would get scholarship?
- Henry Low: We only did it for maybe three years. Alan Lowe's son was the first year, the recipient for the scholarship. It was a couple thousand dollars. And then we had the lawyer's son also won the scholarship [for] one year and then I think there's one more person, a member's daughter also won the scholarship. So we only did it for three years. So now we just want to concentrate on bringing in more income to the building. Fix it up and bring more steady income, otherwise the property tax is too high.
- Zhongping Chen: So I guess you and Alan Lowe also join Lung Kong Association because you are one of the Lius.
- Henry Low: That's right, I'm also the Lung Kung member.
- Zhongping Chen: What's relationship between this one and Lung Kong... Does these two associations have formal relationship or can you just join?
- Henry Low: Some of the associations in Victoria they only associate with each other through celebrations. Like for Lung Kong celebration of the four large names, in April sometime they have a celebration then they invite different societies to come and join their... to celebrate their anniversary. Like April, Lung Kong they will invite Hook Sin Tong, other societies. If the Freemasons invite us, other societies to help celebrate their anniversary, [we go there]. So that's the activity among the Chinese Communities, different organizations invite each other. Like the Chinese Friendship

Association, there's a national day like October 1st. They will invite all the twenty-nine members of the Chinese Community to come celebrate, help celebrate the national day, October 1st. The Chinese National League, they also invite the different associations. The CCBA invite different association for their picnic, for... you know.

Zhongping Chen: So this association is associated with CCBA?

Henry Low: We are one member. See, CCBA is formed by twenty-nine societies in Victoria. Now the Victoria, there is maybe two, three or more categories of associations. The first kind, common kind is called county association. Zhong Shan Hook Sin Tong is a county association. We are from the Zhongshan county, right? Kai Ping is another county association. Pan Yu is maybe another county association. But clan association, a clan association is Lung Kong. Lee's is clan association. Wong's is clan association. Lung Kong is a clan association based on four large names. And in some of the associations that no longer exist in Victoria, sometimes they have three large names. In Huang Gang Xia Tong, there's three large names. Those are clan associations. And then we have fraternal organizations like the Freemasons. And then we have other Hong Kong Business Association; we have martial art association - Wong Sheung; we have music association; we have Hong Kong Businessman Association, that kind of thing. We have Chinatown Lioness; we have Chinatown Lion's Club. Those are all members of the CCBA, Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association. It's an umbrella organization for the twenty-nine associations.

Zhongping Chen: What is exact relationship between this association and CCBA? Like do they have monthly meeting? You send representatives...

Henry Low: Each of twenty-nine organizations, you're supposed to send three members to the meeting. Every year you have to renew the membership

with the three members you send, representatives. So that's how the CCBA's formed. Hook Sin Tong is a member, Hook Sin Tong representatives sent to CCBA is director, representative or director of the... There may be eighty, ninety directors from thirty different organizations.

Zhongping Chen: Only in the CCBA?

Henry Low: That's how the ninety members, not members, ninety representative or directors form in the CCBA meeting. And then the society itself is the member.

Zhongping Chen: Do they have elections...?

Henry Low: They have elections. Election for president, vice president, treasurer.

Zhongping Chen: Every year?

Henry Low: Every year... every two years.

Zhongping Chen: Every two years.

Henry Low: And some of the members, some of the staff. Staff is when you're elected to be a president of the CCBA, you are a staff. When you are the treasurer of CCBA, you are staff. So those staffs are, some of the posts have to be... you only, can be four years then you have to change. Like the treasurer and the president only have two [terms]... you can repeat one more term, each two years.

Zhongping Chen: Oh, only two years?

Henry Low: And then you have to have election again.

Zhongping Chen: So, we can probably move our topic to Chinatown. So where are you living? Are you living outside or inside Chinatown? Which part of the city?

Henry Low: I live in Saanich.

- Zhongping Chen: East Saanich?
- Henry Low: Broadmead, I mean Cordova Bay area. Cordova Bay, Sunnymead.
- Zhongping Chen: So did you ever live in Chinatown before?
- Henry Low: No.
- Zhongping Chen: Your father lived here.
- Henry Low: Ya, when I came here in 1965, lived close to Chinatown. By the arena, by the Save-on-Food Memorial. I used to live there and later on, we moved out further. When I first came to Victoria there were still a lot of Chinese people live in Victoria... live in the Chinatown area. And then later on gradually move out to other part... Saanich is a very popular area for the Chinese people because it is close to all levels of school. That's why even newcomers from Mainland China, they like the Saanich area because they're close to school, close to UVic. Gordon Head.
- Zhongping Chen: Right now, how often do you come to Chinatown? Like everyday?
- Henry Low: I come here everyday. Sometimes twice a day.
- Zhongping Chen: For what?
- Henry Low: You know, society stuff. I look after rent, collecting rent for this building. I collect rent and also member of CCBA, music club, Lung Kong. So I always have something to do in Chinatown.
- Zhongping Chen: Mainly for different association activities?
- Henry Low: Ya, and also sometimes my wife works down at Gorge Street so I have to come down and pick her up everyday from work.
- Zhongping Chen: So do you still do shopping here?
- Henry Low: I still shop here. Quite often I shop here.

- Zhongping Chen: Right now they actually have the Fairway outside the Chinatown.
- Henry Low: I shop at Fairway and I shop at Chinatown as well. Some of the thing you can't get in Fairway, I will try to get down in Chinatown. Like vegetable, they have very reasonable pricing in Chinatown.
- Zhongping Chen: So you came in 1965. So compare Chinatown at that time and today, can you see any major changes in Chinatown.
- Henry Low: Major changes? when I first came here in 1965, it's still very mainstream, the Caucasians still very prejudice against the visible minority, like the Chinese people. I remember when we were first going to school in the ESL in George Jay, we have fighting all the time.
- Zhongping Chen: Oh really?
- Henry Low: In those early days, we have, you know... they still prejudice against the visible minority like Asian. But gradually changed.
- Zhongping Chen: When do you think the change became clear?
- Henry Low: Also, another funny thing is about the, in the early 60's, early 70's some of the white people they go to night clubs. After night club they always feel hungry, they want to come down to eat in Chinatown and because they open late. So they, after they drink, they want some snack they go to Chinatown, sometime they don't pay the bill or run and have fights all the time, quite often. But nowadays it's very seldom. You don't see them anymore. That's the change I see.
- Zhongping Chen: When did the change happen...?
- Henry Low: I would say from the 80s on.
- Zhongping Chen: From 80... early 80s on.

Henry Low: Ya, from 80's on very seldom now you see prejudice against Chinese. Around the 80s on, you very seldom have the... You still see now and then but not very often, not very common. But it's only in Vancouver, you see sometimes they still write racial slur against Asian, right? In some of the mall, and one time they even call Vancouver Hongcouver, Hong Kong and Vancouver. Those are the prejudice. And also the monster house: you buy the property, tear it down and build a big house, by all Asian owner. They, the white people don't like that idea so that's like a form of prejudice.

Zhongping Chen: So apart from that, what other changes do you see in our Chinatown? From 1960s...

Henry Low: I see, like I said the immigration pattern. I see that our generation is the family united generation: father is here, uncle is here, somebody whoever is here apply for the nephew, niece or son, daughter, wife that is in China to be reunited in Canada. Those categories may be less and less to the 80's, even the 70's and some of these may be less and less. The immigrants are from Canton, Guangdong province. More and more immigration later on may be the Hong Kong immigration because of fear in 1997. Then you have the people who immigrated from Hong Kong, fear the changing over from British to China and maybe they still fear about the, like those days in the 50's, the Communist won and Mainland China took over by Communists. They still fear the changing in the politics. So they fear the change, so that's why the immigrants are from Hong Kong. And then later on, Hong Kong immigrants found out there's no problem, even the Chinese... China took over and we still have 50 years unchanged. One country, two systems. So a lot of them find it very difficult to make a living here starting from the bottom again. So they went back to Hong Kong and now you see, in those days the Japanese is very strong economically. So you see hotel with Japanese sign. And later on Japan is

in economic meltdown, and now you see less and less, and now we being taken over by Korean now, Korean pattern.

Zhongping Chen: In Chinatown?

Henry Low: Some Korean influence but they have their own little area, Korean town. But you see the immigration change pattern now, Hong Kong and then later on Korean, now it's Mainland Chinese. East Indian also is very strong too. But now you see more Mainland Chinese people, professional, wealthy. They want to have their kids out here, maybe education system better here in North America than back home, maybe.

Zhongping Chen: How did that affect our Chinatown? For example, when do you think in Chinatown you have to speak Mandarin? Before you could probably speak Cantonese, everybody would understand. But when do you think actually it became necessary you have to talk with people in Mandarin?

Henry Low: I would say ten years.

Zhongping Chen: Like ten years earlier?

Henry Low: Ten years earlier, Mandarin speaking was not popular. Now, you see the Golden City restaurant, you see the Fisgard Market, they hire Mandarin speaking. Even our soccer team, six members are from Mainland China, right? We even have to speak Mandarin to them.

Zhongping Chen: So the Mainland Chinese came in recent ten years.

Henry Low: And then let's not forget Taiwanese immigration too. Taiwanese also, but they mainly stay in the Vancouver area. But a few here, that's before the Mainland Chinese. I would say before the Korean is the Taiwanese immigration.

Zhongping Chen: I think I still have a bunch of questions. Do you still go back to China often? How often do you go back to China?

Henry Low: Myself? I like to go back but you know financially it's not... But last time I really enjoyed it when we had two families went back in 2006/2007.

Zhongping Chen: Usually how often--

Henry Low: My family, five of us and then my brother-in-law's family, four of them. So we have nine people who went back to China.

Zhongping Chen: Which year? 2006?

Henry Low: 2006 and 2007. December 20 we arrive at Beijing. 2007 January something we come back to Canada. So the rest of the time we stayed in Shenzhen, China and...

Zhongping Chen: It was mainly sightseeing?

Henry Low: We have friends who invites us back. Said "we have rooms for you to stay and then come back and you know, have a good time". So that's why two families went back in 2000... but... We still talk about going back, you know...

Zhongping Chen: So right now, if you read the newspaper, usually you read the English newspaper or the Chinese newspaper?

Henry Low: I read both. I go to MacDonald every morning and I have both, two newspapers to read.

Zhongping Chen: What is the Chinese newspaper?

Henry Low: Xing Dao and Ming Bao...

Maybe a little bit more about this building. I wanted to say, I think in those days when we were building this building, there's no Chinese architect, no Chinese architect in those days in 1910. So that's why the building has a lot of European influence.

Zhongping Chen: So this is like Italian style.

Henry Low: Italian. That's why in those days no Chinese architect so that's why it's designed by Italian, European. That's why there's some European influence.

Zhongping Chen: Even the light is probably Italian style. It's original?

Henry Low: Ya original. That's why this building is now a heritage building and it's designed by the European architect.

Zhongping Chen: Where is this painting from?

Henry Low: This is, we have somebody from Seattle who looked at this picture and said it's a very expensive picture. She told me about it. She is studying history of the Chinatown in North America. She told me about this very expensive painting. I think it's antique. They all are donations when we first established.

Charles Yang: So basically, every painting and stuff is donated right?

Henry Low: Yes, donated either from different societies or some members.