



**ESTHER DON TANG**  
1917 - 2015

Honored as a Historymaker 2003  
Tucson Businesswoman and  
Community Activist



The following is an oral history interview with Esther Don Tang (**ET**) conducted by Pam Stevenson (**PS**) for Historical League, Inc. and video-graphed by Bill Leverton on March 20, 2001 at Esther Don Tang's home in Tucson, Arizona.

*Transcripts for website edited by members of Historical League, Inc.  
Original tapes are in the collection of the Arizona Historical Society Museum Library at Papago Park, Tempe, Arizona.*

**PS:** Why don't you just give me your full name?

**ET:** My full name is Esther Don Tang. And my Chinese name is Don Chui Lon. Of course later on when I went to school we got an affidavit and changed it to the Christian name, Esther Don Tang. Well, it wasn't Tang yet until I got married. It was Esther Don.

**PS:** Okay, so Don is your maiden name?

**ET:** Yes.

**PS:** Tell me about when you were born and where you were born?

**ET:** Oh, goodness gracious, I was born 84 years ago, March 5, 1917, in Tucson, Arizona, and not in a hospital — at home.

**PS:** What was your place in the family?

**ET:** Actually, of the living siblings, I was third; but there were two in between so you might say I was the sixth in the family. But we always say I'm the third.



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**PS:** And how many brothers and sisters did you have?

**ET:** Living brothers and sisters, we only had one brother and nine sisters, counting myself as a sister.

**PS:** That was 10 children in the family.

**ET:** Ten children, right.

**PS:** That's a big family.

**ET:** Well, with nine sisters, of course, my brother always said that he was overwhelmed with women. His name is Phillip and he's still alive.

**PS:** Tell me a little bit about your parents.

**ET:** My parents? Well, my dad was in San Francisco when the railroad started to take shape and they were looking for employees. So he worked as a chef for the Southern Pacific Railroad. Finally he ended up here in Tucson and went to work for a Chinese restaurant across the street from the old train depot that we have here on Toole Avenue. And after about three years, his employer, said, "Hey, you, you'd better go back to China and get married, you know. You don't have a wife here and you're running around."

So he went back to Hong Kong. He was very dapper, of course. He wore a suit and tie and they were still matching marriages at that time. I suspect his friends and his family in China arranged that he marry an 18-year-old gal. She was from a very wealthy family. The father was a jewel smith you might say, and he had seven other wives. They – I suppose you call them concubines. But anyway, the reason they did that in China was because if you married and you had enough means to hire maids to help your wife, you married them so that they wouldn't run away or so they wouldn't steal your things and go off with your treasures. My mother was the youngest of four children. She had two brothers and one sister, and those two brothers were almost six feet tall. They would take formal pictures and she didn't even have to comb her hair. She had people to comb her hair and when we saw her as children, her hair came clear down to the back of her knees – beautiful black hair. She used to have little gold hair pins that her father had made for her: little dangling ones, with little animals or birds at the end.

But it was that sort of a wedding. It must have been a big wedding and then they thought, "Well gee, this fellow from America, (which they called Gold Mountain), must be very rich, so our daughter won't have to work." Well, little did they know that when my mother came, she had to bear children. She learned to cook. My dad was a very good chef, taught her how to cook and then had her help in the store, in the

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grocery store. Our first store was at Cuatro Esquinas, a very historic corner here in Tucson, on Convent and Simpson. So she learned to speak English and Spanish and didn't even have to go to school. Most of the customers were Mexicans who came and bought groceries; but they would not be able to pay until the weekend. Most of the employees were either railroad workers or with the University of Arizona, mind you. They'd come to the store and as I recall, not on Simpson and Convent, but when they moved to Jackson and Convent to another store. I was old enough to observe that my mother could take a lead pencil, put it in her mouth to wet it, because lead pencils didn't write very dark in those days, you know. She would take a notebook that the customer would give her. They call that a "cartera." And she would put five cents or ten cents, whatever the purchase was, and she would give the notebook back, you know. That was trust. Then at the weekend, they would bring it back, she'd tear the page out and write the numbers on a paper sack.

She knew how to add, mind you, even though she had never gone to a school when she was in China. All she learned when she was a child in China and as she grew up to be a teenager was to sew, embroidery and do the finer things. If she had to go somewhere, someone would carry her in a sedan chair. She never had to walk. But thank goodness, she missed the binding of feet. So anyway, we grew up in Tucson, all of us, the ten of us.

**PS:** Tell me about when your father came here. What year was it?

**ET:** 1908 is when he went back to China, so he must have been here about the 1900s.

**PS:** How were the Chinese people treated back then?

**ET:** Oh, well, they had a hard time. In the early 1800s when the Chinese started coming, the first Chinese were very well dressed in silk gowns and hats. They were called the celestials, you know. They were very well respected. Then when the Chinese were brought over to build the railroads and later to dig the gold and silver out of the mines, many of the people were a little jealous, because they said, "Oh, they're taking our jobs away." So in San Francisco, they had outer limits where the Chinese had to move to. And I think, in a way, it was a good thing because that's how China towns started. And the Chinese helped each other.

But what happened was that in San Francisco and that part of California they started to get jealous because the Chinese would band together — nine or ten — and then what they would do is whoever offered the least amount of interest, they would get the money and start a little grocery store or a restaurant. And you wonder well why grocery stores? Why restaurants? And of course a few laundries because they knew how to do laundry. But it's because if they couldn't sell the merchandise, they could eat. See? It's a measure of safety, I suspect.

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Then they were chased out of California. They went down to Mexico and helped build their infrastructures: bridges and canals and things like that. Then these Chinese started again; they started owning their own little businesses and so jealousy ensued and they were chased back up and they went to Arizona and New Mexico and Texas and all over. And even in Arizona, in the early days, especially Tombstone, Clifton, Prescott and Flagstaff, there was a lot of discrimination. Their businesses were burned; their houses burned and in fact one Irishman said, “For every ten Chinamen taken out of here, I’ll give you a thousand dollars.” Well, that was a lot of money in those days. But little by little the Chinese got settled and they tried to be as good citizens as possible. Whenever they were discriminated against, they didn’t riot or yell and say, “Well, you know, this is not legal or we were citizens anyway.” So Dad started his first bakery on Cuatro Esquinas. I remember him telling us that when he delivered his first loaf of bread by horse and buggy he really didn’t know how to manage the horses; so his first load turned over and bread was strewn all over the streets. Of course, the neighbors got free bread that day. But with the hard crust of the French bread, all they did was just dust it off and had a good time doing that. But discrimination did ensue. But I think that the Chinese teaching as I recall, my Dad and mother would say to all of us, “This is your home and you take care of it. But outside the community is also your home. You’re going to be working out there doing business so you, try to improve it. Just because you’re an individual, you’re not supposed to go out there and do anything you want. And don’t be cocky because everything you do reflects back on your family.” I guess maybe that’s why you don’t have too many Orientals in jail. Actually times might be changing but, in those days we were taught to really behave and make your family –

**PS:** – more comfortable. Did Tucson have a real China town then?

**ET:** As I recall, we had a real China town and it was situated where the Tucson Community Center is now. It took part of Broadway, Convent Street and clear down to Main Street. China town was within those parameters. I recall as a child, the Chinese people when they had a business, they always lived in the back of their business, because that cut down rent, you know, expenses. They also had their children right there in the business while they’re working and then they, of course, had the children doing a lot of things. I remember very well we would come back from school and we would fill sacks of beans and fill sacks of sugar. Those sacks of merchandise were taken to Marana and Twin Buttes to some of the mines around here because Dad started to take a vehicle to these areas to sell groceries. My mother stayed and tended the store. And I recall many times when the families couldn’t pay the bill in Marana especially, when it was cotton-picking time. I remember one family said, “Chapo, (because he was short, they called him Chapo) we can’t pay. “*No podemos pagar porque no pescamos bastante algodón.*” In other words, “We can’t pay you because we didn’t pick enough cotton” And my Dad, had such a soft heart, but a very poor businessman, and he would load them up with groceries. He said, “*No le hace,*” you know, for the

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children. And I suspect if I went and collected the money now, I'd have lots of money but I think all those people are dead and gone.

**ET:** Oh, about Chinatown. Okay, the Chinatown, as I recall, had bachelor quarters. These were Chinese men who came without their families and they lived in Chinatown. And whenever the families, different Chinese families, had a newborn or a wedding or a big birthday, (after you're sixty, you have big birthdays), they would have it in Chinatown because Chinatown had clubhouses. Tongs and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce – buildings like that. They were all side by side. And then outside of Chinatown was a covered shed with a tin roof. They had a big, big stove with cavities for Chinese woks, you know. And these bachelors would cook up these meals and, they would serve and clean up. The families would invite their friends and either have their birthday parties or their one-month-old baby parties.

**PS:** Seems like some of the Chinese families I've known, the men have married Mexican women because they came here without families.

**ET:** Well, it was because many of them came here and they kept sending money back to the extended family. And the extended families in China all said, 'Gee, you know, they must be making a lot of money; let's send our sons – let's send everybody over there.' But little did they know that they sent so much money, they never could save enough to go back to China. And many of them, who opened grocery stores or whatever, they needed a cashier. So they'd hire someone to be a cashier or to stock the shelves. And usually it was maybe a Mexican woman, you see? And, you know, what proximity does. So many of them married Mexican women and never got back to China.

**PS:** So was it sort of unusual that your father did go back and bring back a Chinese bride?

**ET:** Well, no, it wasn't too unusual because my Dad was sort of cocky, I guess. And he probably didn't have to, you know. He didn't hire a Mexican a woman because he didn't have a store at that time. He worked at a restaurant with some Chinese people.

**PS:** Did your mother ever talk about what her first impressions were when she arrived here in Arizona?

**ET:** You know, I think she was the bravest woman I've ever seen or met, because never once as we were growing up — at least not to me — did she talk about going back to see her mother and father and how she missed the easy life. Never, never. And here she was bearing children and running the store. She was really a very special person, very kind, very good. I don't remember being spanked. The only thing I remember is that when Dad was going to Marana and to the other ranches to sell groceries on weekends I would go with him and he hired a driver. He didn't drive automobiles. I would sit in the middle of the front

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seat. The truck would have a center shelf, and that center shelf ended up in a little drawer for cash. It had a little knob and I would hit that knob — I think that's why I'm so short. He sold groceries then, but times were hard sometimes, too.

But she never said she wanted to go back. And you know, during the Depression, I recall ( I was still quite young), that she had a whole box of gold jewelry. Well, her father was a jeweler and gave her all that as a dowry, I guess. Times were hard and she had to pay Swift and Company ( that's an old meat packing company) and she didn't have enough cash. So she gave the little box of jewelry — a big box I think it was — to my second sister, Mae (she's the one who married Soleng Tom) and she went down to Daniel Jewelers and pawned it. But you know, you pawned something and if times are hard you never get it back. I lament about that.

**PS:** When you were growing up, what was your home like as you remember as a child?

**ET:** I think I had more freedom than most of our brother and sisters. Since I was younger than Rose, the eldest, and Mae, I had a lot of time to play. And I was at the age where I could play out in the yard; but the store had a backyard and you'd have to go around to the backyard. In fact, if you had to go to the bathroom, you'd have to go to the yard, which also was surrounded by some apartments; about ten apartments. Residents lived there and when they wanted to go to the bathroom, they had to go to the same yard. There were two latrines: one for us because we owned the grocery store, and we could lock it with a lock; and the other was open and free for everybody. I recall if Mother had to go at night, we'd take a candle and follow her out, sat there and wait for her. That was sort of a way of life and nobody thought any different. But in that yard, I used to climb trees with some of the Mexican boys and we'd make bows and arrows. I had a lot of fun. All the streets were dirt streets and, when it rained, we'd sit there, looking for little rubies, sand rubies, and fill them in a jar. We thought that was going to make us rich. That's where I learned Spanish because I played with our neighbors. There was also a street light that I remember clearly crossing Jackson and Tomlin Street in front of our store and we'd play at night. One of the games that I recall, was I would yell or somebody else would yell, "Ron Chee Ron." I thought it was Runchy Fon. Well, later when I went back to school, I found out it was "Run Sheep Run." Maria Urquides, who was an educator here and pushed the bilingual education, she and I played together and had a good time.

**PS:** There's a picture of you, you were showing me wearing

**ET:** I thought since times were hard, any little new thing we got was really something. My sister, Louella and myself, my brother — our only brother — and a younger sister, Dorothy went across the street from our store and there was a pool hall run by some Black people. We stood under the tree with our big sombreros; we thought that was really something so we've kept that picture. It's really —

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**PS:** Where did you get the big sombrero?

**ET:** —fun. I don't recall at all. Probably my big sister, Rose, because she always catered to us. She was like a mother to us. She was very active as she was growing up here in Tucson. We have a place we call Snob Hollow on Main Street. Franklin Street goes down there and the old Manning House is in that area. And she used to be invited to some of their parties and she would dance. She never took a dancing lesson in her life; but she just loved to dance and they would invite her. Those were good old days.

**PS:** You mentioned that you learned Spanish; what languages did you speak as a child?

**ET:** Well, we learned Chinese at home and after school we had to go to Chinese school. My parents paid a little bit and we were supposed to learn Chinese. But I missed my calling because I would put the English pronunciation after the characters and when I was asked to read, I was brilliant. I read the English language and they thought, gee, you know, she's very smart. But, as a result I only can write my Chinese name and a few simple characters I can read. I went to Safford School. Well, the first school there, the elementary school, was Mansfield — they called it Mansfield, but actually it's from there you go into Safford School. Then my parents moved to Second and Main Street. My uncle had built that store for us and the thing is that I had to go to Roosevelt Elementary School, middle school you might say. Then from there we had to go to Roskrue School. And we called it, "Rascuacha." Oh, we just despised Roskrue because it was Safford School's rival in games. And, when I was in Safford School, we had an auditorium monitor, teacher, who made me a cheerleader, so I was all gung ho for Safford School. I didn't do well in Roskrue School for a while. Then after I got to know some friends, I did pretty well; then I went to Tucson High School. I'm an alumnus of Tucson High School.

**PS:** So when you started school as a little girl, did you already speak English, or what did you speak?

**ET:** A little bit of English with a lot of Spanish, and, of course, Chinese because, you know, we spoke Chinese to my mom and my dad.

**PS:** Was that hard at first?

**ET:** No, well, I think this is why I keep saying that if only we would allow children to learn languages, foreign languages, when they're little, even in school, they would pick it up so much easier; and they would have more fun than to learn to conjugate and all that kind of stuff.

**PS:** So you picked up English pretty quickly?

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**ET:** Oh, yes. When my eldest sister Rose first took me to school, I didn't want to go back because I had an ugly little old lady for a teacher and said she was a witch. So Rose would bribe me with Cracker Jacks and bananas so that I'd go to school. They thought that I couldn't speak because I was Oriental-Chinese and didn't know too much of the English language. They put me in 1-C — in those days they had 1-C and 1-A. So when they found out that I could speak rather good English they put me in 1-A. But in 1-C I had a little old lady for a teacher and I cried and wouldn't go to school.

**PS:** You were talking a little bit about your home—the latrines in the back and—

**ET:** Uh-huh.

**PS:** Did you have electricity in that early life?

**ET:** Let's see; yes, we had electricity. But we didn't have bathtubs. I remember having to bathe in a number 3 aluminum tub. And I remember Mother and my eldest two sisters washing clothes. They would go out to the yard and build a fire, put the big tub on, boil water and that's how they washed. But, you know, I don't know why I never had to wash clothes or cook or wash dishes. I guess I just had two sisters who did all the work and I ran around.

**PS:** What were some of the things that you liked to do as a girl?

**ET:** Well, I liked to play marbles, and we liked to sit in front of the radio and listen to that. We used to try to kill rabbits. I did what little boys did; I was a tomboy.

**PS:** What were the summers like here?

**ET:** They were hot. Some of our neighbors' flooring was just dirt — dirt floors. They would hose the floor down and hose the outside walls to keep cool. And I recall we would use a clay *olla*, — you know the clay pots. We would dampen a burlap sack and hang it outside. That really cooled it and the flavor of the water was very good. My sister, Louella, who was younger than I, and sometimes my brother, Phillip, we would go out to the irrigation ditches. Dad would take some of his friends and they would fish there. And the way they fished was that he would take an old screen door and then his friends would be at the other end of the irrigation ditch and they'd hold a big net and dredge the river and catch fish. The fish were about six or seven inches long and we'd have fish for dinner. Or, he would find holes along the sides of the irrigation ditch — in those days it was not paved — and he would bring out water turtles, take the water turtles home and in a big tub, they'd put water. That's the way they cleansed the turtles for maybe a week, then we'd

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have turtle soup or whatever.

But we didn't have the pleasure of going to any of the swimming pools. There were two swimming pools in those days when I was growing up. One was Wetmore swimming pool; and the other was Mission swimming pool. We were restricted: the Chinese couldn't go to those pools. Sometimes we asked later why and they said, "Oh because the Chinese always brought soap with them." And maybe that was a joke, but that was one of the things that we felt, you know, discrimination. If they went to the theaters, the adults, they were told to sit up in the balcony. They couldn't sit on the lower floor. But we didn't make anything of it. We didn't, you know, go and holler and boycott or anything; we just took it. You bow, you learn to bow your head and do what, you know —

**PS:** Did they have the same restrictions for the Mexicans at that time?

**ET:** No. No, they didn't because most of the population here were Mexicans and, they didn't have that kind of restriction. I know because I know when we were going to school and they had a party at Wetmore pool all the Mexican children went. And I went and I guess I passed as a little Mexican girl — I got to swim there.

**PS:** Speak Spanish.

**ET:** Yes, and speak Spanish. Well, then in later years, Pam, when I was, I guess in the '40s I joined the YMCA, Young Women's Christian Association. And I started a Chung Mae Club, which was for young Chinese girls. Then I brought in the older Chinese women to wrap bandages — it was during the War years, and so that's how I got started in community work.

**PS:** Let's go back — you started to tell me that you went to high school. Where did you go to high school?

**ET:** Oh, good old Tucson High School. Badger Foundation and all those places now that I am part of. I went to high school. I was very active in the Cactus Chronicle, which was the school paper. And one of the teachers that I revered and I still remember was Alice Vail. She was my English teacher and she was little tough lady. But she taught us English so well that even after I went to San Antonio after graduation for two and a half years, then came back and took my English test to go into the university, I knew my English. She taught me well. I was in the marching squad. I remember Catherine Young was one of my favorite gym teachers, you might say. We used to play basketball together. She was about six feet tall and I could almost run under her legs. Then every Sunday we had a club where we'd go horseback riding. And, so I went horseback riding and that was one of the real enjoyable things that we did.

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In the meantime, my father had a small ranch out a little ways from Marana. It's where the airport is now. He raised pigs and chickens and he furnished Soleng Tom's store with chickens — fresh chickens. And I remember my sister and mother scalding the chicken in hot water and then taking the feathers off. That was sort of a way of life. And come Christmas or Thanksgiving, my mother would be roasting turkeys to give to the doctors like Dr. Sechrist and all those people and Joe Judge, the lawyer. And that's what the Chinese used to do. If you're a friend of theirs you're a friend forever; and they just were very generous. Don Hummel was one of our mayors — old mayors.

**PS:** You say you didn't have to do some chores but did you help out with the business?

**ET:** Yes, I would come and help dust the shelves and things like that. But what I meant was I didn't have to wash dishes or cook or clean the kitchen. I'd do the other kinds of chores.

**PS:** Were you paid for that, or?

**ET:** Paid? Hey, you think we were spoiled kids like today's children? No. We weren't paid. We were lucky we got dessert. No, no, we never got paid.

But I did during my university years. I did go to work. I worked for Joe Tang, who was one of the merchants who opened a big, big store. You might say bigger than the usual store. I worked as a cashier and I helped him keep some of his books so I could go to school. And the reason I could keep his books was because I went to San Antonio, Texas, after my sister had written a letter saying she was expecting a baby, and could I come and help at one of the stores. She had three grocery stores and one store was just a mile or so from Fort Sam Houston, the big Army post. I worked there and while I worked there, they sent me to Lamson's Business College. I learned a little adding and subtracting. So I did that through university, where I majored in foods and nutrition and sociology. I thought when I got through I was going to go back to China and clean it up. I never got there.

**PS:** Back in high school you said you worked on the newspaper.

**ET:** *Cactus Chronicle.*

**PS:** What were your favorite subjects? Did you have any thoughts then about what you were going to do when you grew up?

**ET:** Hmmm no, not everything was a favorite to me. I loved to study and I liked to compete. It wasn't until after I came back to from San Antonio, Texas that I decided that I'd better( since I'm always in the midst

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of food) take foods & nutrition and sociology because I was thinking maybe I'd go back to China, and clean things up there.

**PS:** So after that did you go to the U of A?

**ET:** Yes, I went to the university and, those were wonderful years, but hard years. I had to work and go to school. I couldn't get a doctorate because then I got married. Before I got married, I met Dave and we ran around for four or five years before we married. And the way I married was that my sister Mae was working for Soleng Tom. They were married and they had a store on Sixth Avenue. When I was coming back from San Antonio, my sister Mae said to Dave, "You know my sister's coming home. Why don't you go and meet her at the train?" We traveled by train in those days. I know it was in October because he brought a pumpkin, and on the pumpkin he carved, a poem that said, "Welcome home," and all that kind of stuff that young boys do. And that's how I met him.

But in San Antonio, I learned a great deal in that it was during the War years. The Chinese would have parties and fund raisers for China and war bonds. And so my brother-in-law said, "Well, Esther, can you help us with one of these functions?" Well, you know, I was only about 18 years old and, and we had all these prestigious people from all over Texas come. He had a large farm and the San Antonio River ran through it. And I helped him raise funds like that. There was one occasion where there was a merchant who owned a chain of stores, and his name I recall was Mr. Baker. He was envious of the Chinese grocery stores because they opened early, closed late and opened all day Saturdays. Of course there's a law in San Antonio that you don't open businesses on Sunday. I guess, what is it — the Blue Law? Well, anyway, he was so envious of the Chinese that he had some legislator write a bill, so that the Chinese would not be able to buy land or rent places for businesses; and they couldn't own any kind of property. So my sister Rose, who was very active all the time, got some friends together who were a couple of lawyer friends' wives. I did the preface to that book and then I wrote an article. A person, who worked for us, by the name of Frank Fong, also wrote an article. We outlined the kinds of trade we did. When I said "we," I meant what China did with Texas and how much cotton China bought from Texas; how much citrus fruit; how much oil. The legislators looked at that and they were amazed. They'd lose a lot of trade from China if they had evacuated the Chinese from San Antonio. But the ugly thing of that, if it had passed, would mean that all the Chinese would be rendered domestic help or whatever. And then if it passed in one state, it would go to from state to state. You probably wouldn't be sitting here looking at me, Pam.

**PS:** Tell me about — you say you met your husband at the train station — you'd never met before?

**ET:** No, never met him before. He worked with my sister and so I started school again. Then later, he opened a store and I worked for him and we got married.

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**PS:** When did you get married?

**ET:** In 1942, June, 14. I still remember.

**PS:** It's an important date.

**ET:** Before we got married, and people laugh about this, we bought a little house on Copper and Campbell. And we didn't live in it; we were paying for it for when we did get married. People said "Aha, you had a house before you were married." That was a good location because then our children went to Salpointe. They went to Saints Peter and Paul Elementary School and then to Salpointe High School. We had four children but we have only three now because Pattie has passed away. But it was very convenient; and after school they'd come back to the store. And actually you might say we kept all our children with us even during working hours.

And then when we sold D&B Market, which was on Campbell — you know where the theater is on Campbell? Well, there's a bicycle shop and that's where our store was located. Then we bought a store in South Tucson on Fourth and 29<sup>th</sup>. Dan Eckstrom, the other day during the Concerned Media banquet for South Tucson, stated they had achieved all the things that they had dreamed of. They had a hard time starting South Tucson. In fact, Tucson didn't even want South Tucson to incorporate. Then Dan Eckstrom, who is now one of the Board of Supervisors, stood up there and pointed to me and said, "Esther Tang and her husband had a store on Fourth & 29<sup>th</sup> of South Tucson, and she still owes back taxes." So that's the way it goes.

**PS:** Tell me about your wedding. Where were you married?

**ET:** We were married at Saints Peter & Paul Church. Our store was not too many blocks from Saints Peter & Paul Church. Dave came from Cincinnati and his sister was a Catholic; so he went to a Catholic school when he came from China. The principal took a liking to him because he was sort of an artist even though he couldn't express himself too well in English. He would draw pictures of the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph and whatever. The principal would take him into the office and teach him rather leaving him in the first or second grade because he was 11 or 12 years old then. When we were getting married, I became a Catholic, although I had other sisters who were already Catholic. The reason it was so simple and easy for us was Bishop Green, who was then Father Green, would come over to the store to buy a few things, cigars and things like that. And so he said, "Come on Esther, you're going to marry Dave; you've got to take lessons." So, we got married at Saints Peter & Paul.

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**PS:** And that's when you became Catholic?

**ET:** Well, I had to become Catholic before I could get married. I said, "Well, that's all right."

**PS:** Was it a big wedding?

**ET:** Well, quite big, maybe 250-300 people and we had the reception right there. We invited our customers and we invited the sales people. I think in those days whenever you had a business, you became friends with people you did business with socially, rather than nowadays. Today if you come in the store and if you're short a penny, you can't take a loaf of bread out. But in those days if you were short a dollar, well, go ahead, take it home. I remember one morning, it was about seven o'clock, we got a phone call and a customer said, "Esther, you know, we forgot to buy matches and, we don't have any matches." So, Dave delivered a box of matches: a five-cent box of matches to the customer. But those were nice days.

**PS:** Tell me about your husband and your stores — once you married him they were your stores, too, right?

**ET:** Yes.

**PS:** Tell me about how they grew.

**ET:** It's not a matter of growing, because when we first opened D&B Market, it was Dave with a relative of his. Dave started with \$765 that he borrowed from one of his uncles in Phoenix. Actually, Dave originally worked in Phoenix because all the Tangs lived there, you know. The Ongs and Tangs are the same. It means the same; it's just a different dialect. He borrowed that money and that's why it's D&B Market — Dave and Bob Market. I worked there as a cashier and did all these sundry things. We've had some good, good employees. One employee, his name is Rodney Quiróz; he's in Washington in the Pentagon, now. In fact, I met his cousin just the other day at the Border Patrol Diversity Council. I was there and there was an officer by the name of Quiróz. He said, "Hey, in your grocery store, one of my cousins worked there." He told me that Rodney was still in the Pentagon. But we had a lot of fun doing stuff.

But the thing is we had a kitchen in the back and we cooked our meals in the back when the store was still open. Of course on Sundays, we always had breakfast and our lunch and then all the families ended up at my mother's house. That's a tradition that I've kept also. Every Sunday unless we're not here, be it Saturday; then the whole family comes to dinner. While the children were at school, we were close enough to go after them after school and they'd come back to the store and help. They would eat there, so actually

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we kept our children very close to us all the time. They didn't have time to run around the streets or throw darts at other things.

**PS:** You didn't live in the back of the store anymore?

**ET:** No, no, we never did live in back of the store. It was the old time families, you know, like my mother and my uncles.

**PS:** How many stores did you have?

**ET:** We had the D & B, and then we had Dave's One Stop on 29<sup>th</sup>. We had built a drug store there also. We also built some stores on Campbell. We kept one of those as a liquor store and Dave worked there until he retired about four or five years ago. Now we rent them out.

**PS:** So you still own some of the stores?

**ET:** Yeah. Well, that's a way of making a living, you see, to have some sort of income.

**PS:** But you don't work there anymore?

**ET:** No, no, no. I spend a lot of time doing community work just for the fun of it.

**PS:** Tell me about your children. How many children did you have?

**ET:** We had four children. Patty was the eldest. She finished the University of Arizona and they didn't have a fashion design school, so we sent her to New York to Wood Tobe-Coburn. And when she graduated from Wood Tobe-Coburn, mind you, they wouldn't invite the parents to go to graduation; but they would have these big firms like Macy's and Saks Fifth Avenue to the graduation and they would sit between the graduates. Patty had three options: Macys', Saks Fifth Avenue and Gimbels. The reason she chose Macy's was because they had an executive training program that she wanted; so she stayed there for about five years, then came back and she married Paul Crowley.

And our second daughter is Diane. She's married to Simone, a Portuguese who was born in Portugal, and she is a schoolteacher. She taught at one of the schools in District One and now she teaches over at St. Andrews School.

Davie is a photographer and all sorts of things. He went to the university and then from there he went to

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Brooks Photography School, one of the supposedly famous schools in photography. And he learned underwater photography and all that. And now, he's one of the directors at Pima Community College. He's been there for maybe 17, 18 years. He could retire now but he's still holding the fort. He is very active also in community affairs as was Patty, as you might have recalled.

Then we have Liz, the baby. And she is a, oh, I don't know — she works out of her house now. She moved from her office. She does designing and advertising and all that type of thing.

But all the kids are very active.

**PS:** You can start maybe to tell me about how you first got involved with the community. Was that in high school?

**ET:** Well, in high school, I belonged to some of the clubs there. But not too many, because in high school when they had parties, you know, I never went because I didn't have someone to invite me. And when my classmates had parties at their houses, I was never asked to go. Although we were very good friends in school, I was invited to one party and that was a birthday party. Her name was Olive Strong and she lived catty-cornered to Safford School. I remember they gave us chewing gum. We chewed gum and then they gave us a little piece of cardboard and we were supposed to make an animal out of it. So I won a prize. I made a little bunny rabbit out of my chewing gum. Proms and stuff in school, I didn't really go to any of those.

**PS:** Was that because you were Chinese or?

**ET:** Well, I was never, I didn't have a date. I was never asked.

**PS:** Were there a lot of Chinese people then in school?

**ET:** No, not really. Not in those days. But it, it didn't bother me, because I had a lot of other things to do.

**PS:** Sounds like you got involved in some —

**ET:** Oh. Well, you asked me a question and I really didn't answer you. Then I got involved with the YWCA and I got on their board. I started the Chung Mae, Chinese girls' club. And during the war I brought in the Chinese women to activate a club that wrapped bandages for the soldiers and all that; and got some of them active in that. And then from there I got into many other organizations. It's better for you to read them— there's just too many.

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Right now I try not to get too active; but one of the main ones is the Humanities Council at the University of Arizona. Annette Kolodny, when she was dean, I received the honorary doctorate from Humanities. I am also currently on the University Children's Youth and Family Council. That's in the Agricultural College from which I graduated. They asked me what I was doing in Humanities, so the past couple of years, they pulled me over and I'm still active in both of those.

I'm very active in the Pima Council on Aging. And, in fact, I'm just an honorary member there. I had been their president for four years. I said it was time for me to step down. And they said, "No, you just stay as a member." And, there are three diversity councils that I belong to. One is the Peter Likens University Diversity Council. And another one is the National Guard Diversity Council. And, one other in the community —

**PS:** When you were running your businesses, were you involved then in the Chamber of Commerce and things like that?

**ET:** Well, when I was running the store, I could take off if I had to. I used to write my speeches on a paper sack or on a piece of butcher paper. And, you know, I still did my work.

**PS:** What kind of speeches were you making then?

**ET:** Oh, whatever speeches they asked me to do. If it was a YW, you know, we, talked about involving girls in all these things that a Christian person should do. I happened to be the chairman of the Youth Council at the YWCA When the YMCA cut us off from their camp. We used to rent from them as the YWCA for girls camping. Then when their influx of boys made it too difficult for them to give us any more time and space, we went looking for a girls' camp. As a result, we ended up with a beautiful campsite up here on the Northeast called Rancho de los Cerros. Since I was chairman of the teenage group, I hired Kathy Davis, who just passed away not too long ago. And she did a tremendous job. When we got there, there were just chicken coops and one main building. In order to get to the camp, you'd have to go through a gorge which was filled with water during the rainy season. Kathy Davis did a good job. She was involved with the Kiwanis Club; her husband was a Kiwanis. They turned the chicken coops to livable cabins and built a bridge over the gorge. So, I got busy there.

**PS:** How long ago was that?

**ET:** I draw a blank because I guess, it's just natural that they asked me to make a speech and I did a speech and I've forgotten.

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**PS:** When I asked you when you got started, you can't even think of when you first got started.

**ET:** Well, I guess in the forties, you know, after I got married.

**PS:** How did you find time when you were running a business to get involved?

**ET:** Well, Dave, of course, was there and then we hired people. I'd take a break and go. I was President of the Saints Peter & Paul School for the mothers; and did a lot of things there and made a lot of speeches. When the children went to Salpointe High School, I was president there for eight years. They wouldn't let me resign. They renovated one of the shower rooms into an office for the mothers' club because they were so active. I'd keep office there. We did a lot of things in those eight years. We would have a celebration for Christmas and we would name one Christmas in the North Pole or Christmas in China, or Christmas in Italy. Each of them had a different theme which was very interesting for the children. The mothers would work all year long making novel gifts and food also. When we had the Christmas in China, Ettore DeConcini, the uncle of Senator Dennis DeConcini, would bring his crew – he had a construction company – he'd bring the whole crew weekends and rebuild that hall. It was a nice area and he'd, make a Chinese Teahouse besides the other shelving. Every year he'd do that for us. Of course, the poor man is now dead and gone, but I appreciate what he did.

**PS:** How did you first get involved in politics? You've been pretty politically involved too, haven't you?

**ET:** How did I get involved with politics? Well, we knew the DeConcinis, you know. DeConcini sort of got me involved; and then of course, Dennis ran for the Senate and other official business. In fact, I've had parties here for Dennis during his campaign for Senate; and for Governor Babbitt, when he was running for President. We did have a big fund raiser here in this house for Governor Babbitt. During that time he went to New York for some sort of a television program, which was sort of unusual you know, for an Arizona official. They kept calling back to say, "Esther, we can't get back; we're snowed in. We're snowed in; we don't know whether we'll get back." So finally Hattie, Babbitt's wife, came instead. When you do a party like that, there is security. They came and looked all over the house and the balcony. It was really something unusual. So we had this party for Babbitt, and we had drawings and all that. The first drawing was a Chinese jacket. And guess who won it? Hattie Babbitt won. People thought it was a set up, you know.

When Jim McNulty ran for office, I had something for him. And so that's how I get involved in politics. It's friendship, you know. You say well, if you're running, I'll do a fund raiser for you. And then from one thing to another, the others come to you and say, "Well, Esther will you help me?" And I'm happy to help.

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**PS:** Did you get involved early, like in the forties and fifties?

**ET:** Around the fifties, right.

**PS:** What kind of political things got you so interested that you wanted to get involved?

**ET:** Well, you know, like our parents always said, “You’re responsible for what happens outside too.” And so when I was in San Antonio, I got involved politically, during the fund raisers for the Chinese who were in war. Politically the legislatures in Texas were trying to eliminate that bill – throw it out. And so, you know, you just —it’s a way of life.

**PS:** Have the issues changed over the years though?

**ET:** Well, what kind of issues are you talking about?

**PS:** Well what kind of things in the fifties — what were the politics then?

**ET:** Well, in the fifties, it was discrimination and things like that. But we as a group did it in such a way that we tried to improve our ways. Some of the older Chinese, of course, had classes and came to organizations such as the YWCA. They tried to assimilate and become more known; so that as time grew, many of the people recognized that the Chinese were good business people. So, friendships were made. But then as the children grew up they became professional, you see. And as professionals now, they joined the Rotarians and the other clubs. There’s so many professional clubs now. They are sought out because they’re very generous and give a lot of time.

So we’re part of the scene, pretty much. There are unknown jealousies still in some of the people’s minds, you know, business people; but with the new ways of communications, many of the Orientals, the Chinese, are very good, in these things, in the scientific things.

**PS:** Well tell me about, when Bill Clinton came to town.

**ET:** Oh, Billy Boy? Well, everybody knew he was coming into town. Since that’s a rare occasion for a President to come to Tucson, we thought, gee, what a great thing to have him visit us. The day before he came, about three or four o’clock, I told Connie, “Let’s go and find out what kind of messages I have at the office.” So you know, you dial and you get a message. The message was, “Esther would you please write a three-minute welcome speech for President Clinton?” And I said, “Oh, somebody’s pulling my leg, you

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know.” But the next message on the machine was, “Please fax your messages, your words of welcome to Washington, D.C.,” and they gave me a fax number. And I said, “Uh-oh. I guess the Secret Service wanted to know what I was going to say.”

Then that evening I got a phone call, “Come to the Tucson Community Center; we want to talk to you.” So I went over and what they were trying to do was to see if I could reach above the podium; because President Clinton goes with his podium. Or rather the podium goes with him. And they never move the microphone heads or anything. It just stays in place. So when I stood in front of the podium, I couldn’t even see over it. And the Secret Service said to the carpenter, “Well you better build her a two step stool.” So they built a two-step stool and I came home that night and wrote some things and faxed it to them.

So, I really didn’t stay on my speech because when I was speaking, I said, “Oh, I’d like my family to stand up,” and when they stood up the Secret Service almost died. But, he was a very congenial person. He was so friendly you felt that he was just an ordinary friend. He said, “You know, if you like, Esther, have your family go back stage and we’ll take pictures.” And so we took pictures. But he was very kind and almost anybody could approach him and speak to him.

**PS:** You have a picture there with Hillary, too. Was she with him this time or was that another —

**ET:** No. Hillary came to Tucson before President what’s his name?

**PS:** Clinton?

**ET:** President Clinton. I was going to call him Billy. She was here talking to people and I was asked to meet her and she wanted a picture taken so I had a picture. When the President came to Tucson, I was asked to welcome him so the Mayor said hello and all that — and when it came for the official welcome, I got up on the step stool and I was as tall as he was. And, I said, “Buenos días, Presidente,” and I spoke a welcome in Spanish. Then I spoke in Chinese to him, and I translated the two languages. Then when I said, “Welcome Mr. President,” and blah-blah-blah, I said, “Now I don’t have to translate that, do I?” He sort of scratched his head. But then when he got up to speak, he told the crowd that he wanted to take me back to Washington. He was very kind.

**PS:** Have you met other presidents?

**ET:** Not in Tucson, no. I’ve met other presidents. Just going to Washington, D.C. to go to Congress and to take a look like everybody else and you meet other presidents.

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**PS:** Which ones have you met?

**ET:** Oh, let's see, which ones have I met? I didn't meet Reagan.

**PS:** The wrong party?

**ET:** The wrong party, yeah. I met Kennedy. Not too many presidents, but officials.

**PS:** How did you meet Kennedy?

**ET:** Well, we were taken there on a convention, the College Convention. We went through Congress and then he came out to greet us. But there are so many things that have happened greeting and meeting people that you sort of forget. Then it doesn't become that important after a while.

**PS:** But a President's a little special.

**ET:** Yeah.

**PS:** Let's see, tell me a little about your basic philosophy of running a business.

**ET:** Well, my basic philosophy of running a business: The first thing is to be honest, not only to your recipient, your customer, but to yourself. And that's one thing that I always feel is the most important, even in teaching children or meeting members of certain organizations. Be honest and the thing is, not only be honest, but be kind to them and respect them. If you don't respect people, they're not going to respect you either. And you have to remember that everyone wants to be on the top of the mountain. So you have to give them that chance and try to help them.

**PS:** Talking about your employees?

**ET:** Employees and friends and organization members. You treat them with respect.

**PS:** When you started your businesses with your husband, were there many women in business then? Have you seen more women get into business?

**ET:** As far as women in business, all Chinese businesses had women--their wife, their wives and their daughter's family. And that's how I believe they succeeded; because otherwise, they wouldn't be all working — they all worked as able, paying out wages, like you have to now.

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**PS:** How have you seen Tucson change over your lifetime?

**ET:** Oh, my goodness. When we were children, most of the streets were unpaved, dusty and when some of the customers came into town to buy groceries, and, I say come into town, it was because many of them were Indians from San Xavier Mission and from the Yaqui Village down here on the West side. They would come in with horse and wagon. I remember one of our friends also stocked bales of hay. And they'd come to buy hay for their cattle or horses. We used to try to climb in back of the wagon just to get a free ride. That's how tomboyish we were then.

But for many years when we were going to high school up to Alvernon it was all dusty roads. It's grown and spread out so that Tucson itself — the center of Tucson — has sort of gone down. Businesses didn't stay there and the streets are narrow and not enough parking. Actually Tucson, you might say, is all spread out. You have shopping centers here and there and everywhere, and it's not like it used to be.

But now, they have a committee that is trying to bring some of the glory back. Rio Nuevo is planned down in the older part of the city. I don't know whether it'll come as they visualize it or not. It does cost a lot of money and you have to be able to have something that will bring the customers, the tourists down there. One of the things that they want to do is to put in a big ocean aquarium.

My son happens to be on the committee and he's opposing it because he says some of the cities which have that type of an attraction are losing money. The city has to sustain it, you know, and they're going broke. So the idea is why come to Tucson or Arizona to see an aquarium. We have Biosphere II here, not too far, which is run by Columbia University; and they have an aquarium, and tourists could go there. But I think that more and more people are flocking to Tucson because you see weather conditions are changing in our country. You see more hurricanes and floods: now that you see it on television, it's even closer to people's minds so we're having an influx of population.

**PS:** How have your stores changed from the early days when you started the Lucky Wishbone and what it's like today?

**ET:** Well, they really haven't changed, you know. We're doing the same old thing. I think the barber cuts the hair the same way, maybe a little shorter, but I couldn't go in there and get credit. No, not at Lucky Wishbone fried chicken. But at our grocery stores, which we don't have any more, we gave credit. The Chinese stores that are still in town, they still give credit. If you go to any of these shopping centers or big super markets, if you're short a penny, they won't give you a loaf of bread. Before it was sort of friendship, if you're my customer, you're my friend. And I would trust you with a dollar, a couple of dollars worth of

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groceries if you were short.

**PS:** Do stores still operate like that?

**ET:** Well, no, we don't operate stores ourselves now. We rent them out. But, whenever the customers used to pay up their bill, we would give them a bag of candy or a bag of fruit — free. So, these free things that they give nowadays are nothing new. We gave it without coupons and, it was called *pilón*. And you talk to some of the Mexican young folks now and say, “Do you know what *pilón* is?” They don't know what *pilón* is. They've never encountered it.

**PS:** What does it mean?

**ET:** It's — *pilón* — is free. Something like a gift for you. But it's only the older people who knew what *pilón* was.

**PS:** So Lucky Wishbone is not a grocery store?

**ET:** No, it's a fried chicken establishment that we rent out. You know, all these stores are now our rentals. We don't run them. We just rent them out.

**PS:** Dave's Liquor is —

**ET:** Dave's Liquor, yeah. Dave retired —

**PS:** —But it's still a liquor store?

**ET:** It's still a liquor store.

**PS:** What are the other stores that you still have?

**ET:** Oh, well there's a communications store, you know, these phones. There's a barber shop.

**PS:** What's the barber shop called?

**ET:** I don't know what it's called. I don't take care of — Dave, my son goes and collects rent. There's a folk music shop. They sell all sorts of musical instruments, new and old.



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**PS:** You've gotten away from the grocery business?

**ET:** Yes; it's a hard business. We are sort of retired now. We just collect the rent.

**PS:** See I worked after I got married. The YWCA asked if I would be their president. Bishop Greene a good friend of ours, by then became Bishop. He said—well, he was still Father Greene — he said, “Esther, don't take that position. We're going to open something down at Pio Decimo,” which was a kindergarten then or a sort of a daycare place where some of the White sisters worked. He said, “Why don't you go there and be the administrator.” So for 25 years, I was at Pio Decimo Neighborhood Center. The kind of program that I developed there was to bring after school children who did not have a place to go. Their folks were either out on the streets or working and they'd go home and have nothing to do. Or they couldn't even get in. So we enlisted volunteers from the university and I negotiated with some of the professors (in those days, they were negotiable). We gave the university students one-third of their grade if they came to volunteer and we would supervise them. So in that way, they not only got credit but they did a good job because they knew that they were being monitored. They helped the children learn to read. Some of them were nine or ten years old and still couldn't read and they were going to school. Some had homework. Then we started to create basketball and baseball teams. And they'd go all over and play. It created an atmosphere where the children felt that they belonged somewhere.

**PS:** What was your role? —

**ET:** I was the administrator.

**PS:** That was a paying job?

**ET:** Yes, that was a paid job from the Diocese, big deal. Don't quote me. But, we had the sisters of Carondelet who volunteered. They would come and work with us. We would have weekend cooking classes for adults. In fact, it turned into a family type of organization because we taught the women how to cook. It was during the time when they were receiving surplus foods from the government. And some of those women didn't know how to use those foods. Connie, who was one of our volunteers, taught them how to utilize the foods. In fact, she taught them how to cook rice eleven ways, as I recall. And we had people who taught them how to sew. You'd be surprised; some of the Mexican women didn't know how to sew. They learned to crochet and make those patch quilts. We also enlisted the Knights of Columbus men to come and teach some of the migrants the Constitution so that could pass their citizenship test.

We kept the children out of the streets. Some of them would say, “So-and-so, you know, over there at the

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La Reforma Apartments sells drugs, you know.” And they’d tell on them instead of being a part of it.

**PS:** That must have been a pretty big part of your life then.

**ET:** Oh, yes. It was a good experience, not only for myself but it is still in operation. And it’s gotten involved with South Tucson and other communities. And it does a good job. I keep saying that our city should have city parks in each community and then have a neighborhood center; because the parents can go there and entertain or have parties if their houses are not big enough. Also, they can be closer to their children. I think if the city or the county would create these neighborhood centers, it would be a very good thing for the children and their families. They would be able to get together and know each other instead of having them running out in the street or feeling that nobody loves them, nobody is their friend. This way, when you have a neighborhood center, you can have leaders who bring the children together and they belong. They feel they belong to something instead of what we hear about a shooting because this boy or this girl didn’t have any friends. Or, the friends were calling him names so he goes and shoots somebody and kills somebody. We need a lot of that because in some of the families, their father and mother are working and the children have no place to go; so they join gangs to belong to something.

**PS:** Do you have advice for young people today that are just starting out their careers and their lives?

**ET:** Well, I think that when you start school, of course, you have no idea of what it’s all about. And, I would advise them to be able to visit certain kinds of businesses and not because your father or mother says, “Go into this profession — be a doctor, be a lawyer because that’s where you make a lot of money.” I think that a person should never do any kind of work unless they’re happy in it. That’s the only way you’re going to succeed; because if you’re unhappy in what you’re doing, you’re not going to do a very good job of it. Not only that, you go home to your family and you’re, well — excuse my word — but you’d be bitching about this and that. You’re not happy. So I say never do anything unless you enjoy it and then you grow with it.

**PS:** How do you see the outlook for the future? Do you see people getting involved like you did in their communities?

Well, that’s hard to say. They’re not going to get involved if they’re going to sit in front of a computer all day. That’s one of the things that I worry about. Even children now are sitting in front of computers and television, and they’re not moving out and learning about their community. They’re not gathering in groups like I used to have them at the community centers. And, I don’t know, I might be all wrong but you have these children — even two, three years old — they’re glued to the television; they’re glued to computers and some of them are wizards in computer. But then where is the human relationship, you see?

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They don't even have relationships with their parents and their siblings because they are so engrossed in what they're doing. And what is happening also is that they're seeing all these things that they can buy or exchange; and some of them are going to really get hurt. I don't know what the government can do about putting up laws and regulations. I think it's almost impossible

**PS:** Yeah.

**ET:** But it comes back to the parents. I don't care what they say about having certain programs for wayward youth or whatever; it starts when the child is an infant. The parents have to give them that nurturing love and caring so that when a child goes out, they say, "I can't do that; Mom will not like it." Or, "Dad, you know will be angry." They have to have a relationship and be answerable to someone. They like that. They want that. But if nobody cares what they do; why, why should they care, you know.

**PS:** Didn't used to be that way.

**ET:** No, didn't used to be that way.

**PS:** You mentioned this house that one of the DeConcini's —

**ET:** Yes, Ettore DeConcini.

**PS:** When was this house built? Tell me a little about it.

**ET:** This house? Well, you know, when I was going to school, people would say, "Where do you think you're going to live, when you're older?" And I said, "You know, I've always wanted to live on top of a hill." So when we were looking for a place to move, we found this two-acre parcel. All the subdivision used to belong to the Grunewald family. Abby Grunewald owns the jewelry shop. And then later on I believe they sold part of it to the Mitchell family. But we bought these two acres and Ettore DeConcini, who had been working with me at Salpointe High School doing many things, (the DeConcini family and we have known each other a long time) says, "Yeah, I'll build you this house." So he was very careful with every little thing and it's a very solid house. I don't see any cracks in it yet.

**PS:** Do you know what year it was built?

**ET:** Oh, we've been here, let's see, maybe about 40 years now. Forty years — and you know, they promised us that there wouldn't be any high rises in front of us or anything. Well, after we were here maybe six or seven years, they tried to put some apartments up. And then they sort of stopped because

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there were complaints. And now they've built apartments and houses all around us. We're in a middle of a big population. And of course, we have Kino School right across the street where Dennis DiConcini's family gave them a piece of property. Patty was very active there; she taught there after she came back from New York.

**PS:** This must have been outside of town when you built it.

**ET:** Oh, yes. There were no houses around us. We were sort of the only house around.

**PS:** I notice it has some sort of Oriental feel to it especially the balcony.

**ET:** Well, yes, the wrought iron and all that; even the outside. Well, you know, if you're Chinese, you want to put a little — and then we have the Chinese inscriptions up there, saying good luck and good fortune and all that kind of stuff.

But it's been a good life for all of us here in Tucson. People have been very good to us, and we've tried to make it a better community; not only here but the state and our country.

**PS:** Sounds like you've had a big part in doing that.

**ET:** Well, I wouldn't say that, but all of us in the family enjoy participating.

**PS:** Are you now sort of what you would you call it — the matriarch of your family?

**ET:** By the way, it's funny that you mention that. Yes, because Rose, our eldest is gone, and Mae Soleng, she's dead and gone; and I was the third in line. So I would say I'm the boss.

**PS:** Do you enjoy that?

**ET:** Oh, well, whether they call me boss or not, I boss. We have a very congenial family and like I said, every weekend we get together. I feel that's one of the most important things that we do. Because then the siblings and the grandchildren are all here and they get to know each other. They know what each other's doing. And if they have questions, they can communicate with each other. I know families where they never get together, maybe Christmas, if that. And some of them move away and the other one moves also and they lose contact with each other and they might meet each other in the street and not know each other. No, it's happened before where people move and the other moves and they forget to tell each other where they are before the other one moves; so they just don't find each other.

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**PS:** Is all your family still in Tucson?

**ET:** No, I call her Cupie, but her name is Mildred, she's in Chicago. And she is married to a manufacturer of Chinese food called China Maid. Let's see, she's about the only one who's out of state; the others have passed away. Her twin passed away. She was living in California.

**PS:** That's one of your —

**ET:** —my sisters.

**PS:** What about all your children and grandchildren are they all here?

**ET:** Oh, okay. My grandchildren- all my children are here. Davey's here; he's at the Pima Community College Publication Department. Cherry — I call her Cherry — that's Diane. She's here; she married a Portuguese. Davey, of course, is married. And Liz is single. They're all here. With my grandchildren, I have Casey; she's our only granddaughter. She's in Phoenix and she works for Costco, Circle K and 76 gas stations. She is a senior tax consultant. And she just had a baby; so that's our first great-grandson. They named him of all names, Jake, Jake Richards. And the last name is Treptoe. Brian Treptoe used to go to the University of Arizona. And Brian, her brother is in Los Angeles working for a computer company. In fact, he was just back here, Sunday because we had a party for his father Paul, Paul Crowley, because it was his birthday and Paul is an Irishman. So, my middle daughter is married to a Portuguese, and we have Paul who's an Irishman; and, Donna, is, isn't it funny, Polish! She's a Polack, yeah. So when we get together, you know, at dinner, we're just like United Nations. And it's good, you know, because they have different views and they talk about different projects. And I think it's healthy for the kids.

**PS:** Okay, I think that's all the questions I had.

**ET:** Did you want to know about the rest of the grandchildren? Shane Harrick, is going to the university and Wing — actually his name is David Tang the Third — is going to Pima Community College because his father works there and so the tuition is very low. And then, Cherry's two sons, (her name is Diane but we call her Cherry, because she used to look like a cherry when she was a baby) Andre and Darren, both go to Salpointe High School. Darren just last year went to Washington. He was appointed to go to Washington, D.C. We are very proud of both of them. He is an editor of one of the publications at Salpointe High School. And Andre is at Salpointe. So, I got involved with Salpointe —oh, well, I've always been involved with them. Just last week, I went to a forum at Salpointe. They asked some of the

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past mothers and past alumni to help them revisit the program and see how we could make it a better school and what the future is. So, I'm still involved. I get involved.

**PS:** Not going to change.

**ET:** Not going to change.

**PS:** Well is there anything I didn't ask you that I should have?

**ET:** Oh, you might not have asked me how old I am.

**PS:** You told me that. I didn't have to ask.

**ET:** No.

**PS:** Any big state secrets or . . .

**ET:** No, no family secrets.

**PS:** How about the history of the Chinese in Arizona? Are you kind of philosophical? Are you bitter, are you just like things happen, or?

**ET:** Well, I look back to the 1800s at the beginning when there was so much discrimination. You know the Mexicans didn't suffer that kind of discrimination because this was their country — part of their country. But, you know, as I look back and see what they have offered to this nation, even under discrimination, I'm very proud. In fact, today, right now, at the train station on Toole Ave., they're having a big celebration. They're bringing the first locomotive back to Tucson. And I was supposed to be there making a speech. I think that the Chinese contribution has been very great, whether people recognize it or not. I think that the very fact that they were quiet and just bent their heads and did the work that they were told to do, and never made a lot of noise or rioted or said discrimination; that they have really advanced. We have lawyers, doctors; all kinds of professions have been entered into by our children. And they have succeeded; and when they do business with whomever, they have become friends with their clients. Like I say, if you respect people, respect comes back. And I think that the other part of the population has realized that the Chinese people are as good as they are.

I have never felt inferior because I said, "Gee, where did the silk clothes come from?" Where did certain things originate? Paper, the compass, the gunpowder, all originated from China. And there was gap about

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two or three hundred years where there was nothing and the Europeans picked it up. The clock came from China. So, you know, I'm very proud. I don't care how much they discriminated against us; you know it doesn't bother me because they really don't know enough about us. I'm sure the Chinese discriminate against others, too.

**PS:** What do you think about all these diversity committees? Do you think that's going to make a difference?

**ET:** No, I don't think so. And I belong to three of them. The thing is that people just have to learn to respect people. Whether you're black or yellow or brown, you're a person. And look around us, you know, some of the biggest achievements and inventions are from people of different colors.

But you see, we don't teach our children that, you know. They have no place to learn it. And the schools' agendas are so different now. They don't teach that: they're trying to create a good atmosphere, diversity and all that, but I don't know. I'm not too optimistic about it.

Now diversity in the workplace, they have to adhere to that because there are laws. You have to not discriminate against women and people of color and all that. So in the workplace, you know, hopefully, those things become a reality. Hopefully the very fact that you have diverse people working together; they will learn to respect each other and realize their worth. But that's a whole world, you know, Pam. You have to like people and make them feel at home and vice versa. And they learn from each one.



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