

NPS-93

JUNG SIM SHIN

BIRTH DATE: UNKNOWN

INTERVIEW DATE: APRIL 17, 1975

RUNNING TIME:

INTERVIEWER: MARGO NASH

RECORDING ENGINEER: UNKNOWN

INTERVIEW LOCATION: UNKNOWN

TRANSCRIPT ORIGINALLY PREPARED BY: CHARLENE KEYLOR, 1/1979

TRANSCRIPT RECONCEIVED BY: CHICK LEMONICK, 6/1996

KOREA, 1974

AGE 32

PASSAGE TO THE U.S. BY AIRPLANE

NASH: Today is April 17, 1975. I am speaking with Miss Jung Sim Shin who comes from Korea, and who came to the United States in June, 1974 at the age thirty-two. Where were you born?

SHIN: I was born in Chongju City in Korea.

NASH: Tell me something about it.

SHIN: Chongju City is famous history. It was (?) City in old time of Korea.

NASH: Tell ne something about your family? What did your father do?

SHIN: When I was young my father died so I don't know about him. I heard he was a businessman. He was a businessman.

NASH: Well, who raised your family?

SHIN: My mother, and she is a teacher. Yes, and two sisters and two brothers.

NASH: Well, then you must remember the Korean War. How did that affect your lives, the Korean War?

SHIN: Yes, but, you know, I was nineteen years old at that time so--I don't remember because I leave

the .

NASH: (?)

SHIN: Yes, no fighting.

NASH: Well, you left that city and where did you grow up?

SHIN: Yes, I grew up at Suwon City, a small city. I attended there high school and the university. And I lived--twenty-eight years old--and then I moved to Seoul, the capital.

NASH: Was that very different from living in the other parts of korea, was Seoul very different from the other places you lived before?

SHIN: Suwon City is calm and a small city, but Seoul is very crowded and there are so many people.

NASH: Did you like it?

SHIN: Not so much. I like suburban life.

BASH: Well, how did it happen that you decided to come to the United States?

SHIN: My husband ask me if I would like to go to America, but I disagreed with him.

NASH: Why?

SHIN: Because we settle down in Korea. He and me and he was a teacher, too, toy know. I was a teacher about nine years. I taught home economics at middle high school. And he was a teacher too, so I didn't want to come here.

NASH: Well, what made him want to go?

SHIN: Because he wants to (?), and to see more interesting things. I think so, but I was worried about the new life, but finally I followed him.

NASH: So how did make arrangements? Did he have a job waiting for him before he came? Did he know where he would work before he came? Did he have a job before he came? Did he know

where he would go to work?

SHIN: Here? No.

NASH: Well, how did your family feel when they knew that you were going?

SHIN: My family doesn't like to go to America, but my husband--

NASH: Well, tell me, did you take many things with you when you came? Did you take many things?

SHIN: No.

NASH: Did you come--did you think you would stay when you came? Did you think you would be staying for a long time here?

SHIN: Yes. I think maybe after five years I go back to Korea, and then maybe after one year I (?) here.  
It;s my (?)

NASH: (?)

SHIN: Yes.

NASH: Well, when you came here you came to the airport in New York City, is that right?

SHIN: Yes.

NASH: Were there immigration inspectors? Did they ask you questions when you came to the airport or did you just come in?

SHIN: I arrive at LaGuardia Airport at twelve o'clock, yes at night.

NASH: Were there officials of the government who asked you questions? In other words, did you, you came with a visa? You had to have a visa, right?

SHIN: Yes.

NASH: And you just got off the plane and that was it. No one asked you any questions?

SHIN: At the airport someone asked me, but, you know. No, no, I came here with many babies in the (?) Association.

NASH: Adoption?

SHIN: Yes, adoption.

NASH: You were bringing Korean children here with you? Oh, I see.

SHIN: So they helped me so we can get in easily.

NASH: What were your first impressions when you came here?

SHIN: America is a big country, and a wealthy country. When I walk on (?) it was dirty. I thought the streets of Seoul, it was not dirty like this. I was disappointed a little bit, but now--

NASH: You adjusted?

SHIN: Yes.

NASH: You adjusted. Well, where did you first live when you came here?

SHIN: Sixty-nine West seventy-second Street.

NASH: You lived in Queens.

SHIN: No, Manhattan, West side.

NASH: Oh, you lived in a hotel on the--

SHIN: No, no. My nephew's home. I stayed at my nephew's home. He lived here about seven years.

So, I stayed there about one week and then I moved to my apartment.

NASH: So, it was easy for you to find an apartment?

SHIN: Not easy, you know. I work to find my apartment all day long, but it took about a week.

NASH: You did that all by yourself and you couldn't speak English that well? It must have been hard because you couldn't speak English too well at that time.

SHIN: No, you know, at that time I couldn't speak, just yes or no, and I was afraid to speak with Americans. I was nervous.

NASH: You were what?

SHIN: Nervous.

NASH: Oh, nervous.

SHIN: Yes, nervous. So, I couldn't speak English well, but I know, you know, I started English about seven years ago, so I can read and write, but speaking it is more difficult.

NASH: On your own, you found your apartment even though you couldn't speak English. You found it by yourself. You did it. That's amazing, isn't it? You had no children?

SHIN: No, I don't have any children. Just my husband and me.

NASH: So, do you work now?

SHIN: No, you know, I came here to work as a dietician at the hospital because I thought a dietician is more promotional up here.

NASH: You would get a better promotion with it? Did you say promotion?

SHIN: Promising.

NASH: Promising, yes.

SHIN: But, I tried to get a job as a dietician, but everybody everywhere required some experience, but in New York, so I didn't have any experience here. So, I tried, I tried to get a job many times, but I couldn't find.

NASH: It's a hard time too to find--

SHIN: So, now I want to work in diet aide or diet training. I can't catch--

NASH: You can't find it. And your husband, was it easy for him to find work?

SHIN: Yes. I think he was lucky, you know. He found his job very easily. He is working at the (?) Company now.

NASH: Well, how did you find people treated you, you know, as a person from another country, as a person from Asia?

SHIN: I think Americans do not like Asians. I think so. Only curiosity. You know, when I work on the streets or the park some fellow followed me, but ask something, but they don't like me. Just curiosity, I think.

NASH: Why would you think that? You just don't think people are warm to you or--

SHIN: People do not warm, don't want to.

NASH: They may not be warm to a lot of people, New York is a cold place. Well, what was the hardest thing for you to get adjusted to? What was really different for you than from Korea?

SHIN: Language, I think, is speaking. Yes, speaking English is the most difficult for me.

NASH: Are there any customs, people's customs here that seem very strange to you?

SHIN: No, it is not strange for me because I started--I saw the magazines and read the newspapers.

NASH: Was there anything that you especially liked that you found different ways of doing things that, I don't know, American food or American things that you enjoyed that were new to you? Did you feel different as a woman, were you treated differently as a woman here than you might have been treated in Korea?

SHIN: Yes, I found it, you know, in Korea and most woman is lower than man, you know. I hate that, I hated that.

NASH: You hated it there when you were there.

SHIN: Yes, but here everything is free, but it is for all responsibility, I know that.

NASH: Tell me something about how you felt in Korea, you know, your role as a woman. What were the situations that made you the most angry in Korea, about, you know, being a woman, being treated--

SHIN: Yes, well, I know that the wife has to follow her husband in career even though it is wrong way. And they don't have any freedom.

NASH: To do the things that they might like to do. Do many women work in Seoul?

SHIN: Yes, many women work. The Korean men don't respect the women.

NASH: As an adult, respect her as an adult person?

SHIN: Yes.

NASH: Have you--has your relationship with your husband changed since you came to America?

SHIN: (?) He majored in English Literature in Korea and if he does that I can't endure, but he never does that.

NASH: Well, I suppose you must know a lot off people who are Korean in New York City. Yes, there are many.

SHIN: Yes, sure. I think twenty thousand people in New York.

NASH: And how do the people you know feel about life here in New York?

SHIN: Korean? Yes, you know, the Korean they are working hard, very hard, I think. They have to do that because they don't speak English well and they are not up to customs here. They are working hard, but most Koreans came here about three years, they leave, they live well here.

NASH: They live well. Well, I notice there are a lot of Korean grocery stores and it must have surprised you how easy it was to buy Korean food in New York City.

SHIN: There are many Korean grocery stores and small stationary and a fish store. But, it is not easy. I think to live in New York is very difficult for Korean people, but they can adjust.

NASH: They can adjust.

SHIN: They can, yes.

NASH: It is very easy or it isn't very easy?

SHIN: It isn't very easy.

NASH: But they do adjust. Well, is there anything you would like to say about the, anything else about the experience of being from another country and settling in a new country? Is there anything you would like to say about being Asian, you know, in a non-Asian country or about being an immigrant in a new country, anything else?

SHIN: I think there are many chances here. I wish I can get a chance for me here, but it is difficult to live here, you know, but I think it is good to come here.

NASH: Why?

SHIN: Because I can develop and improve myself more than in Korea.

NASH: Why?

SHIN: Oh, it is just a thought. In my opinion there are many chances here, so I tried and I work hard.

NASH: Could you sort of give me an example of one thing you had to, I guess the English is an example, one thing you had to work hard at to adjust to and develop yourself? Is there something, you know, you could show me how you did that?

SHIN: Yes, but it is because (?).

NASH: Okay, well, thank you. Is there anything else that you would like to say?

SHIN: That's all.

NASH: Okay, thank you.