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Interview with Dr. Larry Ho

January 9, 2023

Justin Murphy [00:00:02] Hi. This is Justin with History Cambridge. We're doing a project, discussing and learning about Chinese community in Cambridge. I'm here with Doctor Larry Ho. Thank you, doctor, for coming.

Larry Ho [00:00:17] Yeah. Very happy to be here.

Justin Murphy [00:00:20] Yeah. And, we're currently at your residence in Lexington. That's correct?

Larry Ho [00:00:24] Yeah.

Justin Murphy [00:00:25] I, so I wanted to ask you a little bit about how you first came to Cambridge. So could you tell us a little bit about that?

Larry Ho [00:00:34] Well, around 1949- you know, the communists took over mainland China, and my father worked for the, Kuomintang government. Of course, we had to leave. And, so, but my mother was very- had a lot of foresight and sent me away from Taiwan to Hong Kong at age 15 to study in a British school. That time Hong Kong still own- it's a British colony. So I began to show a little bit of aptitude in math and physics, and I heard about, a school called MIT in U.S. that's supposed to be very good. So on my own, I wrote a letter inquiring about it, and came- well came back big package of materials, forms, applications forms, so I filled it out. And, lo and behold, I got admitted. So then, my family said, okay, if you did this, [laughs] all of their expectations - they said, okay, you can go. So at age 16, I came here because MIT admitted me.

Justin Murphy [00:01:52] Wow. So you were 16 -

Larry Ho [00:01:54] - 16 Yeah -

Justin Murphy [00:01:54] - when you wrote a letter to MIT to apply?

Larry Ho [00:01:56] Well, I was 15. The problem is, you see - at that time, that my family's old fashioned, still used the lunar calendar. Which - and the custom is when you're born, you're one years old because you're already nine months alive. And I was born end of November in the lunar calendar. So after one month, the Chinese New Year, I became two year old, who is now only actually one month old and then went went to school at the regular age of six. Actually, I was only four years old. So that's why I'm sort of two years ahead of most people. And even during war, I didn't, miss any school. So, I went to four different elementary schools, but still managed to not get left behind. So at age 16, I got admitted to MIT and came here.

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Justin Murphy [00:02:58] So, is that- was that common at the time?

Larry Ho [00:03:01] Oh, very uncommon.

Justin Murphy [00:03:02] Very uncommon?

Larry Ho [00:03:03] I mean, everybody was so surprised that I got admitted to [softly] MIT. And things were chaotic, you know, the communists just took over the mainland and Chiang Kaishek's government moved to Taiwan, and people all had chaos.

Justin Murphy [00:03:19] Right. So you said your father, he worked for the Kuomintang?

Larry Ho [00:03:23] Yeah. So he had to leave.

Justin Murphy [00:03:24] Yeah. Who- do you remember what he did specifically for that government?

Larry Ho [00:03:28] He was in military transport, that's as far as I know.

Justin Murphy [00:03:33] Very interesting. And your mother, what did she do?

Larry Ho [00:03:37] She was a housewife.

Justin Murphy [00:03:38] Housewife. Okay. Great.

Larry Ho [00:03:39] I mean at that time it's not common for woman to work in the outside in China.

Justin Murphy [00:03:47] So when you made it to Cambridge and you started studying at MIT, where did you live?

Larry Ho [00:03:52] I lived on East Campus dorm. That's a group of, fairly old building, called East Campus dormitory. Just stayed there. In fact, I wrote the article about my first day in United States that tells you how I got adjusted, found my place at MIT.

Justin Murphy [00:04:13] Do you mind telling us a little bit more about it now?

Larry Ho [00:04:15] Oh yeah, well, I mean I, I land in L.A., there was a family friend who meet me, so that wasn't hard. But then we drove to San Francisco. They put me on a cross-country train. I was all alone. And that time, the train takes overnight, go to Chicago, and you have to change stations in Chicago. Fortunately, there were Traveler Aid Society in those stations, tell me how to do. And I got transferred and took another train to Boston and arrived here. And, on the train, I saw some ads about hotels in Boston. So I said, that's where I'll go. Well, I was so young, young-looking. Two hotels in Cambridge - I remember one is the Ambassador Hotel and

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the other is something - took a look at me. Think this is crazy, this young kid with the - they said, no room here. And I didn't know what to do. But fort- the taxi driver took pity on me and said, you know anybody at MIT? I said, well, they send me a list - name of a graduate student who is supposed to help me out when I arrive. And he lived in the dormitory. So the taxi driver helped me to find him, he happened to be home. So he directed me to East Campus dorm. And there I found my name. Already registered, so I had a room to sleep in. And that's how I get settled.

Justin Murphy [00:05:56] It's very lucky that you ran into a -

Larry Ho [00:05:58] - Yes, I was lucky yeah -

Justin Murphy [00:05:59] - a very knowledgeable taxi driver.

Larry Ho [00:06:01] Yeah, well, a very kind taxi driver, who took me all around the - because I was - the first day. It's different your first day in United States alone, didn't know what to do.

Justin Murphy [00:06:12] So, do you know where that East Cambridge dorm is nowadays or where it was?

Larry Ho [00:06:19] Yeah, it's still there.

Justin Murphy [00:06:19] It's still there?

Larry Ho [00:06:20] It's still there, it's still called East Campus dorm. And- but when I got there, they just name it East Campus Dormitory.

Justin Murphy [00:06:27] Ok.

Larry Ho [00:06:28] There's a group of buildings, which have names now. I believe, I lived in a, in a house that's called Runkle Dormitory.

Justin Murphy [00:06:40] Sorry. So, Run- Runkle?

Larry Ho [00:06:42] Runkle. R-U-N-K-L-E.

Justin Murphy [00:06:45] Okay, thanks. So, when you first arrived, what was student life for you like at MIT?

Larry Ho [00:06:57] What do you mean by student-?

Justin Murphy [00:06:59] So what kind of activities did you do, or-?

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Larry Ho [00:07:01] I was alone with, really nobody, and, so I just study hard and, try to adjust. And, that- nine months of British boarding school was very good because of, my English improved. So I was able to follow the class and, you know, I was fairly good in math and science. So I did well in classes. Then, later on turns out there was a Chinese student organization. It's a- actually a Chinese fraternity called FF. An international organization, it's still going on strong, worldwide. They have, chapters and everything. And they recruited me in 1951, after a year, to join the fraternity. And that helped me a lot because they're the older so-called fraternity brothers helped me a lot. They already, used to American life and they can speak Chinese to me, so forth, so I got a lot of help from them.

Justin Murphy [00:08:13] That's great. So how many, members in the MIT chapter were there in the fraternity?

Larry Ho [00:08:21] Oh, I think, it varies. Never more than 20 people.

Justin Murphy [00:08:27] Okay.

Larry Ho [00:08:29] In the MIT chapter. Now, worldwide, there's probably over 1000 people, living members. I mean, yeah, it's over a hundred year old, this fraternity.

Justin Murphy [00:08:40] Wow. And so, besides the fraternity, how many Chinese students were there at MIT at that time?

Larry Ho [00:08:46] Not that many at that time, but now of course there's a hi- Probably a high percentage, maybe 10%. At Harvard I know, it's, the Asian community is over 20% in population. So it's, very different.

Justin Murphy [00:09:01] Yeah.

Larry Ho [00:09:01] Now.

Justin Murphy [00:09:02] So it was a very close knit community at that time?

Larry Ho [00:09:04] Yeah, yes, among the few people I know.

Justin Murphy [00:09:07] Were there any, members of the fraternity that stood out to you, that you remember or had memorable experiences with?

Larry Ho [00:09:16] Well, one of the most famous member that, I feel, is the architect I.M. Pei, who designed the National Gallery and many famous buildings all over the world.

Justin Murphy [00:09:28] Wow.

Larry Ho [00:09:28] Well, he's one of the members.

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Justin Murphy [00:09:31] So was he, a member while you were there?

Larry Ho [00:09:34] No, he was, I think, at least ten years older. So he was already working, at the, I don't know whether he had his own firm at that time or not, but, he was already working. But I did sort of know about him and have met him.

Justin Murphy [00:09:52] So this fraternity FF, did you have, like, older members? Would they come back and, interact with you all in any way?

Larry Ho [00:10:00] Well, yes. I got a lot of help from older members. Then later on I, I, in fact, become the national chairman one year, elected, I become very active. And I knew a lot of younger members whom I mentored. And, so it's still ongoing. I mean, it's an active organization.

Justin Murphy [00:10:20] I see.

Larry Ho [00:10:21] Worldwide, there's chapters all over the world.

Justin Murphy [00:10:24] Wow. So, talking more about daily life at that time when you were studying at MIT, where would you go to eat? You know -

Larry Ho [00:10:35] Well, MIT does have a cafeteria called Walker Memorial. I think it still exists, where students can just go to the cafeteria. You could buy meals here. And in Kendall Square, which is very different now, than in 1950. Another couple of diners, the old fashioned type. In fact the one diner, looked like, you know, typical railroad tracks. Cars. Looked like a railroad car. And these are diners back in '50, I eat there. That's what I remember.

Justin Murphy [00:11:09] Do you recall the name of that diner, by chance?

Larry Ho [00:11:11] No, that I don't remember. One is a- it's a, it's just a dump, in Kendall Square. That's not going to exist anymore, they all torn down buildings for high rise buildings.

Justin Murphy [00:11:25] The food at the cafeteria on campus, at Walker Memorial -.

Larry Ho [00:11:29] Yeah.

Justin Murphy [00:11:29] Was that food good there or?

Larry Ho [00:11:31] It's typical dormitory food, so forth. But. So. Yeah. Nourishing, not bad. But, certainly nothing to rave about. And occasionally there - I learn about Boston Chinatown. So a few of us would go down to Chinatown, have a chinese meal at that time.

Justin Murphy [00:11:52] I see, was that pretty popular? Did you go with-?

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Larry Ho [00:11:54] Oh, among the Chinese students, yeah, popular because we all grew up with Chinese food. So, every now and then you- that's where you find familiar food. Comfort food.

Justin Murphy [00:12:06] Yeah. Did were there any restaurants in particular? In Chinatown?

Larry Ho [00:12:10] The two restaurants I know, both have disappeared. Yeah, there were the two that frequently the students frequent because they're inexpensive, cheap. But, I don't think they exist anymore.

Justin Murphy [00:12:23] Do you recall the names, by chance?

Larry Ho [00:12:26] One is called, Number 20. Because that's the, house number, on Tyler Street. Another was, I, I don't remember the name anymore. But those are the two I remember because they're expensive and -

Justin Murphy [00:12:45] Yeah, easy to get to and inexpensive.

Larry Ho [00:12:47] Yeah, yeah.

Justin Murphy [00:12:50] So you studied at MIT?

Larry Ho [00:12:54] Yeah.

Justin Murphy [00:12:54] And you said that was, what years, around?

Larry Ho [00:12:58] 19- well, 19- I applied to MIT in- for mechanical engineering, because I was able to repair a clock myself, you know? So people said, oh that's mechanical engineering, that's what you should study. Somehow the admission officer made a mistake and said you are admitted to electrical engineering department. But actually that didn't make any difference because first year studying at MIT is the same for everybody, no matter what you major. But since I was admitted double E, I got invited to, you know, talks, seminars and activities. Oh, nobody there to advise me so, okay, I stayed in the double E department. Well, that was it and it didn't really make any difference over the rest of my life.

Justin Murphy [00:13:46] So you were interested in mechanical engineering, but they actually ended up putting you in electrical engineering?

Larry Ho [00:13:51] Yes.

Justin Murphy [00:13:51] Wow

Larry Ho [00:13:52] And the first year is the same -

Justin Murphy [00:13:55] Right.

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Larry Ho [00:13:55] - for everybody, no matter what your major is. So that's - I think it's still that true - that's true at MIT. So I've got a useful department that sounds pretty good. And, just stayed. You have no one here to advise me, quite a recent study, so forth, and- but hindsight, doesn't really make much difference.

Justin Murphy [00:14:17] So after you graduated from MIT -

Larry Ho [00:14:19] Yeah.

Justin Murphy [00:14:19] -for your undergraduate -

Larry Ho [00:14:20] Yeah.

Justin Murphy [00:14:22] Where did you end up going?

Larry Ho [00:14:22] I was nineteen, but then, you see that time, the - resea- research and development for scientific things got going in U.S. There was this famous paper written by this famous scientist called Vannevar Bush. MIT guy. Called "Endless Frontier", talking about expansion. And the National Science Foundation was established, so forth. So, MIT began to expand and Lincoln Lab, you may have heard of. Well, students worked lab at MIT, but they began to receive lots of money and worked with high researchers. And so I applied and got a research assist- assistantship to finish my Masters and I was totally on my own now. I mean, I'm independent, financially supported. So that's how I finished my M.S. study. I rushed through the MIT undergrad in three years because I needed money, I didn't have. So then I, got my masters, then went out to work in Detroit for three years.

Justin Murphy [00:15:42] What kind of work did you do in Detroit?

Larry Ho [00:15:44] Research. There's a company called Bendix. You may have heard. You wouldn't have - Bendix used to work - washing machines. Very famous, Bendix washers, very famous. But they decided go into high tech, their research lab. So I was hired, and I worked there for three years. Learned a lot. And, before I came back to school.

Justin Murphy [00:16:08] And, when you came back to school, you went to Harvard, right?

Larry Ho [00:16:12] Yeah.

Justin Murphy [00:16:13] What made you decide to go to Harvard?

Larry Ho [00:16:15] Well, involuntary, because my first choice of course was MIT. Now, this is hearsay. I have on indirect evidence of proof. So, at MIT that time, somebody made a rule that only four students of Chinese ethnicity can be in the department, graduate school. I was the fifth or fifth, sixth to apply. So they never send the application form and, just refused to respond to me. So, basically didn't want to deal with me. Because I guess if they let me apply, I had very

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good MIT record, this- then they have to explain why they denied me. So guess they never responded. And, so my second choice was Harvard, which turned out to be blessing in disguise.

Justin Murphy [00:17:11] And why do you say that?

Larry Ho [00:17:12] Because that time when I came back to Harvard in 1958. Sputnik went up. The U.S. was in a big space race with Russia that time. And, I came back and Har- MIT was actually behind this, control theory profession. They were doing the old-fashioned things. And if I stayed there, I would keep on doing that. Harvard had no money and was able to- so I was able to explore things on my own and become one of the founders of the new theory of control, which made the moon landing possible and all kinds of things. Now it's a very mature field, but I was lucky to be at right time at Harvard. Nobody is in this field. I was able to explore things on my own and, became literally one of the founders of that new discipline.

Justin Murphy [00:18:15] So you were kind of there at the right time and helped, develop control theory?

Larry Ho [00:18:20] Yeah. Yeah, yes, yes, I, I mean, without being, blowing my own horn, I was one of the founders in this theory, so everybody knows me in my profession.

Justin Murphy [00:18:33] That's fascinating.

Larry Ho [00:18:34] Yeah.

Justin Murphy [00:18:36] So I also want to ask you, when when, did you meet your wife? I know this is-

Larry Ho [00:18:45] Oh, that's after I returned to school at Harvard. I saved the money. So through the summer, I went back to Detroit to my old place of employment to earn some more, better money. And our family- my wife's family also worked for the Chiang Kai-Shek government. So they sort of know each other. So she was studying at a school in Connecticut and she also needed money through the summer she was working. And - working in New York. My mother at that time was staying in New York, so she came to visit with another girl the family knew. And I happened to be on my way back to Detroit to get my summer job. That's how we met.

Justin Murphy [00:19:34] So you made a stop in Connecticut along the way?

Larry Ho [00:19:36] No, in New York City.

Justin Murphy [00:19:37] Oh, in New York.

Larry Ho [00:19:37] She came to visit my mother, and I, I was on my way to Detroit, also visiting my mother. So we met - that's the first time.

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Justin Murphy [00:19:49] Yeah. Do you have any memorable experiences from that time?

Larry Ho [00:19:52] Well, then I knew, found out, I was attracted to her. Then I found out she went to school in Connecticut, so when I came back to school at MIT- at Harvard. Yeah, before I start, communicating and dating her and that's how.

Justin Murphy [00:20:08] What year did you all end up marrying?

Larry Ho [00:20:12] '59.

Justin Murphy [00:20:13] Yeah, and then did she move with you to Cambridge?

Larry Ho [00:20:16] Yeah, she actually was going to - going to graduate school at Boston College. But then we got married. She didn't go and became a-, raised a family with me. In fact, that's how I was a graduate student at Harvard. So she started working to help support the family, like that.

Justin Murphy [00:20:35] Well, so what was she studying at the time?

Larry Ho [00:20:40] Biology.

Justin Murphy [00:20:40] Biology?

Larry Ho [00:20:41] Yeah.

Justin Murphy [00:20:43] Alright. And so, while you were doing pursuing your PhD at Harvard -

Larry Ho [00:20:48] And she worked at Harvard Medical School. And, until I graduated, and I got my PhD.

Justin Murphy [00:20:55] So what was that like with you studying your PhD, and you starting the family together?

Larry Ho [00:21:02] Oh. Very good. I mean, I know, because every day you see your life improving. And she's a very smart woman. Two years ago, the town- We lived in Lexington for over half a century. I mean, in fact, we're still in Lexington now, but we lived in our home. Yeah. And Lexington, decide- decided to honor women who lived in Lexington, who contributed to Lexington, in past 300 years. They named 42 women, and my wife is one of them. And so she got honored with a big, banner in the town. So she did a lot. I mean, in Lexington, I'm better known as Sophia Ho's husband [laughs] than an MIT professor.

Justin Murphy [00:21:53] Well, we may have to interview her as well.

Larry Ho [00:21:55] Yes, yes you-

Justin Murphy [00:21:56] It sounds, It sounds awesome.

Larry Ho [00:21:57] You could, she has a lot more interesting stories to tell, I think.

Justin Murphy [00:22:05] So while you were in Cambridge, did you and your family ever celebrate any, like, Chinese holidays?

Larry Ho [00:22:11] No. No, no. I mean, I was basically alone. I had some- well, this Chinese fraternity has a chapter here, so I got to know some older brothers very well. And they helped me, but. And as- I was aware of you know Chinese New Year, so forth. But there's no time to celebrate. So-

Justin Murphy [00:22:31] Why is that?

Larry Ho [00:22:34] It didn't, occurred to me that, you need to celebrate Chinese New Year. In America, there's a Western calendar - Christmas, holidays, so forth, everything. And in fact Chinese New Year usually one of the regular weekdays. If you work, you work and, you, you know - and if you go to Chinatown, probably there was. But I didn't know anybody there, so-

Justin Murphy [00:23:01] So not really, within your family or within Cambridge, there wasn't too much activities-

Larry Ho [00:23:07] Not that I'm aware of.

Justin Murphy [00:23:08] Okay.

Larry Ho [00:23:10] There is one Chinese restaurant in all of Cambridge which later evolved into the current restaurant called Mary Chung, near Central Square. But it has different name then, earlier.

Justin Murphy [00:23:27] And would that restaurant put on any events, or?

Larry Ho [00:23:31] Not that I am aware of. But basically because I didn't pay attention to, I mean, I basically living American life. So this.

Justin Murphy [00:23:40] Yeah. Do you know if it was like a gathering space for the Chinese community at the time?

Larry Ho [00:23:44] I'm sure in Chinatown there is. And but I'm not involved.

Justin Murphy [00:23:57] Okay. So throughout your your education, were there any memorable classmates or professors that you had and you'd like to share stories about?

Larry Ho [00:24:06] Well, one story kind of funny and understandable given the time. At Harvard very few junior faculty are promoted to permanent faculty, get tenure. At least 40-some years I was there, about one in four get promoted. And when you're promoted from within, you

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get a call from the Dean of Arts and Science, who is sort of second in command after the President to come in, congratulate you, pat you on the shoulder, welcome you. So I got this call, and of course I reported to the Dean's office and he - oh very young-

Navigation App [00:24:49] Head Southeast toward brook-

Larry Ho [00:24:50] And, and also young looking. And at that time there's very few Chinese faculty at Harvard, and most of teaching Chinese history or literature, so forth. In science I was maybe the only, first one. So he took one look at me, I went in. He said, oh, what can I do for the Chinese student club? He thought I was a student come to see him. I was kind of embarrassed to explain, that I- you called me to meet you. Then, once he realized this is this, he got very embarrassed. But that was a kind of easily showed the times. But he just wasn't used to thinking a Chinese-American, get the, receive tenure in Harvard, which is a big thing.

Justin Murphy [00:25:38] So. Right. So this was after your PhD at Harvard?

Larry Ho [00:25:40] After my PhD I stayed on at Harvard.

Justin Murphy [00:25:43] Yeah. And how long did you- were you a professor?

Larry Ho [00:25:45] At that time, you see, you have four years to prove yourself. So it was 1965. I got my PhD in '61, 65. I received tenure and then got called in to meet him.

Justin Murphy [00:26:01] Okay. Wow, so that was in 1965?

Larry Ho [00:26:03] Yes, yes.

Justin Murphy [00:26:04] And then, you you were a professor for a very long time, correct?

Larry Ho [00:26:09] 46 years.

Justin Murphy [00:26:10] 46 years, wow.

Larry Ho [00:26:11] Until I, I officially completed my- well I'm no longer paid by Harvard in 2007. But I became a re-, a research professor, retired, not teaching, in 2001. But stayed on for six more years to finish my research contract and so forth.

Justin Murphy [00:26:32] I see. And so what, subjects were you teaching or research-.

Larry Ho [00:26:35] Applied mathematics.

Justin Murphy [00:26:47] Okay. And I think you may have, mentioned to me at one point, you also had a colleague by the name of Morris Chang?

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Larry Ho [00:26:56] Oh, that's when MIT, I was a student. He was one year ahead of me. And so I got to- because we take a course together. He got- I got to know him. He's Chinese, and I can't - later on, I lost track because which- we're in different disc- disciplines. We just happened to take a course together, but because he's Chinese, I know him. And later I read from Wikipedia that he went to Texas Instrument and did well, but didn't get promoted, because of the bam- so called "bamboo ceiling". He wasn't - didn't get CEO job, but did very well. And also, on the Wikipedia, they [unclear dialogue] something I didn't realize. He failed the doctor exam twice at MIT and had to leave. But then, of course, he worked with Texas Instruments and they sent him to Stanford. He got his PhD in Stanford. And when he didn't get a top job in Texas Instruments, he went out formed his own company and became a billionaire, so. The Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, TSMC, which now, nowadays controls 90% of the advanced integrated circuit production in the world.

Justin Murphy [00:28:21] Wow, yeah, that's a very major company.

Larry Ho [00:28:22] Yeah.

Justin Murphy [00:28:24] And you referred to the, the "bamboo ceiling." Would you mind telling me what was?

Larry Ho [00:28:28] Like, "glass ceiling" for women, so forth. Just as because of your race or ethnicity, you're prevented to get a top job. You can look, but you can't get there.

Justin Murphy [00:28:41] Yeah.

Larry Ho [00:28:41] And this happened to women and, know, African Americans, all kinds of, racial issues. So the "bamboo ceiling" is a little bit for Chinese. As "glass ceiling" for women or blacks.

Justin Murphy [00:28:59] And it sounds like something you may have considered when, or encountered, when you were trying to apply for a PhD at MIT a little bit.

Larry Ho [00:29:08] Well, at MIT, I think it- that this is a hearsay, I cannot direct prove. That time the EE Department, Electrical Engineering, had some kind of rules that you can only allow 4 Chinese in the graduate school. Now it disappeared after this unnamed professor left and it disappeared. Now there's, what - well I think Asians are way overrepresented in EE department. But even the department head was Asian. At one point, I don't think he is still anymore, but-

Justin Murphy [00:30:02] So would you mind telling me a little bit more about being a professor at Harvard? What were some of the highlights of your tenure there?

Larry Ho [00:30:13] Well, I obviously liked it, so I stayed on. It was the only job I had in my life, until I retired. And Harvard very good. I mean, pays well. Very generous on pensions. That's

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why I afford this, kind of retirement. And really give people lot of freedom. Particularly young faculty members, so forth. So, I think it's no accident they are rated number one in the world. The the process of - so, judging people and nurturing people. So it's really - I mean, I've, I feel there's many other schools failing and so forth. I think Harvard has a well deserved reputation being number one in the world.

Justin Murphy [00:31:11] So you mentioned while you were at MIT, you got, involved in, a Chinese fraternity, and you also are part of a Chinese student association.

Larry Ho [00:31:19] Yeah.

Justin Murphy [00:31:20] Over the years, what other, Chinese organizations have you been a part of?

Larry Ho [00:31:26] Well, after I start working, I was teaching at Harvard, so forth. In 1998, the lieutenant governor of Delaware was a Chinese. Was a student, and later got into politics, called S.B. Woo. He formed an organization called 80-20 that basically is trying to involve Asian Americans to vote as a block. So we have political power. He said if 80% of Asian Americans who live here vote in elections as a block, then we have political power. That is main idea. And I was one of the co-founders with him, because that kind of notion of this movement. And its still going on today, after 20 some years, and we had some success. I mean, you know, the Jewish Americans had this famous, political action committee called AIPAC, America Israel Political Action Committee. Unless you're in politics, you don't know, you will not heard of them. But their influence is tremendous. Everybody who runs for president have to pay homage AIPAC. Such a you- generally not known, unless you're in politics. It is funny of course I thought, that's a powerful symbol, but it's the same idea that people should get together as an Asian block. Vote as a block. Then you can have political power, so that's-.

Justin Murphy [00:33:05] I see.

Justin Murphy [00:33:09] And so the name of this Delaware governor, would you mind-

Larry Ho [00:33:11] S.B. Woo, W-O-O.

Justin Murphy [00:33:14] Okay. S.B. Woo?

Larry Ho [00:33:14] Yeah. If you Google him, I'm sure you get alot. And you could Google 80-20, which is the thing he formed. It's a movement.

Justin Murphy [00:33:26] Could you describe a little bit more about family life in Cambridge when you all did live there?

Larry Ho [00:33:35] Well, I mean, I lived there from 1950 to '55. Basically, a student at MIT. Did student work, so forth, not too heavily involved. Then, when I came back from working for three years in Detroit, got married, still as a student. However, when I started as a junior faculty at

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Harvard in 1961, we live in the Harvard housing, provided housing. We're just starting. We have no money, no net worth to speak of. And, we just, continued on as a, as a student life, but, of course, I began involved in teaching my wife, quit work and, started raising family. So, then when I received tenure in '65, we bought a house in Lexington and that, and moved in January 1966 and stayed there for over 57 years until we, I moved, we moved here.

Justin Murphy [00:34:45] So, so, when you got married to, before - when you got tenure in 1965, for that 5 or 6 year range. You said Harvard provided housing? [overlap] What was that like?

Larry Ho [00:34:58] [overlap] Yeah, well Harvard did. There's Harvard-owned housing. You still have to pay rent, so forth, but you got a first priority to rent those houses. There's a group of apartments on Fernald Drive, Robinson Street, Fernald Drive in Cambridge, near the, one of the elementary schools in Cambridge. And that's where we lived for five years until moved to Lexington.

Justin Murphy [00:35:23] Would you mind spelling? It's Fernald Drive?

Larry Ho [00:35:26] Fernald Drive, Robinson Street. That's a group house. Still there, I think, junior faculty and so forth still live there.

Justin Murphy [00:35:35] Alright, and what were those apartments like?

Larry Ho [00:35:38] They're 1 or 2 story apartment buildings. Brick, it's still there, you can see, but, nondescript. But this is within walking distance of the campus itself. That's the convenience. Because we- nobody owns two cars there. When we had a old jalopy which, we have, but there I walked to school. My wife watches- before children, she she tried to work at Harvard Medical School in Boston.

Justin Murphy [00:36:12] And so you mentioned that you moved to Lexington. In what year was that?

Larry Ho [00:36:17] 1966.

Justin Murphy [00:36:19] And why did you choose to move to Lexington?

Larry Ho [00:36:20] School.

Justin Murphy [00:36:21] School?

Larry Ho [00:36:22] That's a typical Chinese rationale, because it has the best public schools. And all three our children, went through from kindergarten all the way to high school.

Justin Murphy [00:36:34] So at that time, it was known Lexington had a better public school system?

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Larry Ho [00:36:37] Oh, yes. It was well known to the Chinese, Asian community. And that's why it grew. When we moved in, we were the 10th Asian family in Lexington. Now it's about 30% population of Lexington are Asian.

Justin Murphy [00:36:53] So you knew some family connections?

Larry Ho [00:36:56] No, no, well just because reputation.

Justin Murphy [00:36:57] Oh, by reputation.

Larry Ho [00:36:58] And the school- and our kids are five and four. So they just started school. So we said, then- we didn't look anywhere else, Lexington is the choice.

Justin Murphy [00:37:12] And so. Over the years and nowadays, how do you stay connected to Cambridge?

Larry Ho [00:37:19] Well, because I worked at Cambridge until 2007, so I commute to Cambridge, even though it's from Lexington every day. So I feel- and working at Harvard so I can't, can't help but know- learn, about Cambridge personally.

Justin Murphy [00:37:36] Do stay connected today in- with Cambridge?

Larry Ho [00:37:38] Yeah, I'm still on the big news. And I occasionally I go in for seminars and so forth just to say I'm still here.

Justin Murphy [00:37:48] And do you think Cambridge has changed a lot, from when you first moved there?

Larry Ho [00:37:53] Well yes, certainly had changed with time. Both MIT and Harvard have changed. I mean, I mentioned even about a- nobody expect a Chinese to be promoted at Harvard, so forth. But now I mean, there's, thirty Chi- Asian students way overrepresented into population average. And Chinese faculty are quite a few, at Harvard and more at MIT, so.

Justin Murphy [00:38:22] How do you think the community of Cambridge has changed as well?

Larry Ho [00:38:25] Physically changed, a lot more new building has gone up than before. And I think people's perception- Oh, Chinese restaurant, have more. So all these- yeah, yeah. I think it changed with times. People's, attitude towards foreigners and, different races and so forth. A lot more inclusive and, tolerant and so forth.

Justin Murphy [00:38:52] Do you mind, speaking a little bit more on that?

Larry Ho [00:38:56] Well, Cambridge has always been very- because of MIT, the Harvard and other things - always been very receptive to, and very diversity seeking, so forth. But I worked three years in Midwest. That's very different.

Justin Murphy [00:39:13] Yeah. How so?

Larry Ho [00:39:15] Well, what happened was I got hired by Bendix. I went there, I couldn't find a place to live because people wouldn't rent to me. And finally the company had to send a representative ahead, talk to the people, says, oh, we have this employee who needs - that's how I found a place to live.

Justin Murphy [00:39:35] So they wouldn't rent you because you were Chinese?

Larry Ho [00:39:37] Yeah, I think so. That's the reason they tell me. Oh, we don't have any place to rent, and so forth. I mean I start out on my own, I had the problems, so finally the company stepped in. Yeah, but I wouldn't have expect this to happen in Cambridge.

Justin Murphy [00:39:53] Right. In Cambridge, you didn't run into those kind of - ?

Larry Ho [00:39:54] No. No, I don't think I ever.

Justin Murphy [00:40:00] So do you have any, other connections, with Cambridge or folks who may be interested in talking to us and sharing their experiences as well?

Larry Ho [00:40:12] People who live in Cambridge. I'm trying to think. A lot of people I know, my cohort, are no longer living. I mean, you may want to talk to my wife, a bit. She is really- not so much Cambridge, but Boston area, she's very well known.

Justin Murphy [00:40:32] Yeah, definitely would be interested in talking with her. And anyone if you know any of your classmates or members of the fraternity, may have moved, [overlap] who were in Cambridge at the time?

Larry Ho [00:40:45] [overlap] Yeah, members of the fraternity, who live in Cambridge. I don't know. One, of course, living in Palo Alto. That's too far. My best friend, Chinese, passed on, so she's no longer living. There's one in [unclear dialogue]. My fraternity brother. He didn't live in Cambridge. He lived in Billerica, started his own company, and so did very successful. Now retired. But I don't think he knows that much about Cambridge.

Justin Murphy [00:41:18] I see. Well, is there any other things you'd like to add as we bring this to a close?

Larry Ho [00:41:26] I can't think of any. If you want to know more, just group up some questions, you can certainly ask me again.

Justin Murphy [00:41:32] Okay. Well, I appreciate your time. Thank you very much, Dr. Ho.

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Larry Ho [00:41:35] Very happy to.

Justin Murphy [00:41:37] Talk to you later.

Larry Ho [00:41:37] Yes.

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