

1      From Lawrence to Cambridge – Yin

Lawrence, Kansas was definitely a small town then in 1949, but it was a bit bigger than the Barstow, CA that we stayed for my acclimating to non-wobbly life. Our residence, a single level apartment with neighbors on both sides and equally large number of neighbors above, was located at 25 Sunnyside Drive, appropriately so called because it was on the sunny, south side of the hill that supported the University of Kansas, actually on top of Mount Oread, the 1300 ft. peak that towers the rest of Lawrence (800 ft.) and the entire eastern half of the state of Kansas. (Oh, yes, Kansas is flat!) Lawrence had a Main Street, where most of the functions of community life took place. That was where Dad took us to buy our first bicycles.

They were the standard balloon tires bikes with neat horn boxes below the crossbar. This was the main source of transportation for Jen and me going to and from school through high school.

The key aspects of living in a new country and adopting some of the new ways of life include learning its language! Remember we left school in Hangzhou when I was just starting 5th grade, and Jen just 3rd grade. The only English we knew were the readers that Mom had been able to get for us. This taught us the alphabet and some common greetings. Now we met our first teacher and social coordinator, so to speak. Miss Janet Weitzel was invited to meet us during our first week in Lawrence. Auntie Janet, as we were told to call her, was a friend of Dad's during his own transition from Harvard to Lawrence. She was the key contact when our well-learned father accidentally stepped across the US-Canada border in Niagara Falls, and landed in border detention. Apparently, his passport/visa combination at that time did not allow him to go in and out of the USA. It took Miss Weitzel's call to convince the authority that Dr. Chai Yeh was really a Professor Chai Yeh enroute to the University of Kansas, when this accidental crossing took place. So, we were very glad to finally have met Ms. Aunt Janet Weitzel.

In discussions with Aunt Janet, two things were decided: First of all, Dad and Mom agreed that we two kids will not suffer the indignity of having to drop to lower classes because of our language ineptitude. We both agreed to study hard and be willing students of Aunt Janet to come up to speed ASAP. Second, we will not take on English names but will have our simple Chinese names rendered English phonetically. Those being the basic ideas, we settled in for a month-long tutorial in English. By the end of the month, March, 1949, we were ready to face the new school! We enrolled in Cordley School in the City of Lawrence. I went into 5th grade and Jen into 3rd grade. We were going to make it with grade promotion in two months!

I remember my first encounters in Cordley School very well just because it was such a novel experience. I got to test out my new language, English! Of course, I understood very little of what was said by others, including the teacher. Except, Mrs. Brown, the 5th grade teacher, was very understanding. She made me very welcome in her class and the fellow pupils soon warmed up to me. I remember two of them and correspond with them even today, after excess of 60 years. They are Kendall Wolf and Bob Lockwood. Kendall was introducing me to all aspects of school life, including bell ringing signifying the end of class and recess time when all kids go outdoors to play in organized fashion. Bob lived in our direction; often he would accompany me home so I do not get lost. Enroute, he would tell me about his family, and sometime even get a ride in his father's Studebaker.

On the playground, springtime means baseball. For kids at the age of 10, the safer game is kickball, but using all the same rules of base running. Not knowing what the game is about, when Martha Hamming, a great athlete, showed me how to kick and run the bases, I followed suit. Upon kicking, I ran to first base and then I CAUGHT THE THROWN BALL! Of course, I was out on that account, and I learned that all I had to do was to beat the ball there, not catch it. When Kendall asked what was my favorite baseball team, I was taken aback, because I had no idea. He rattled off the standard leading teams, Boston Red Sox or the New York Yankees. I took the Yankees, and that stayed with me as my favorite for all the years throughout graduate school. Mantle, Maris, Ford and Martin!

In the classroom, my parents were surprised but happy that I was keeping up with the class academically. My favorite was English spelling tests. There were workbooks to prepare with and then we would take the tests on the empty test sheet on the back of the workbook. I would always ace them because Mom always worked with me to prepare for this weekly test. On one very busy week I forgot about the spelling test upcoming. On the way to school, I schemed a way to cheat to get a good grade. I gave the teacher a lame excuse to have to go to the classroom before class to get something. When there, I traced all the spelling words on the test sheet lightly, then walked out to play until bell rang to signify beginning of class.

Once in class, as Mrs. Brown told us routinely to get out the sheet for the test, I peeled off the one I had lightly written the answers on. Without a word nor any change of her demeanor, Mrs. Brown came over my desk and removed my sheet and asked me to get a new sheet out for the test. Of course, I did badly on that test, but I was not reprimanded in front of the class, as I was in Kunming. I was very glad for that and was grateful to Mrs. Brown. I also learned to BE PREPARED, and CHEATING DOES NOT PAY!

Promoted into 6th grade was a happy occasion! Learning to play baseball, with a stick or with a bat, or just kickball, it was fun. So was playing marbles on the playground, as many boys our age were doing. We would show off the winnings in a neat little bag. There were “peewees” and “boulders,” and everything in between.

Playing marbles was a carry-over game from China, so I was pretty good at that. Playing against the best in the class was always a challenge. My nemesis was a boy named Fred Deay. He was really good in marbles shooting. To this day, he

remembers our playground encounters and finally gave me a souvenir marble in a gift box on our 55th class reunion gathering!

Rapidly Jen and I became well-liked and known in our school. We also joined the Boy Scouts of America program to get more social interactions. Bob Lockwood and his brother, Doug, were our constant partners, as were John and Tom Pritchard. Jen was in the Cub Scouts, while I was in the Boy Scouts group. Mom was a den mother for the Cubs, meaning she needed to provide refreshments for the Cubs when they met in our home. Boy scouts meant having camp outs, and planning sessions to get ready to go camping. Dads were often involved in these ventures, as were kids from other elementary schools. I remember meeting Alan Coombs in one scouting planning session. He was also a 6th grader but from Pinkney School instead of Cordley. But he was very great at planning and organizing. In one of the sessions when we were planning for a camp out, I was assigned to get the stakes for the pup tents. However, showing that I did not fully grasp the English language yet, I wrote down something like 24 steaks, not 24 stakes, and Alan caught this error by making a great joke about “now we all can eat well on this trip!”

Boy Scouts meant adhering to the Scouts' oath, including the one about Being Reverent. Lawrence, Kansas, is in the middle of the Bible belt. For the small town of 10,000 people, there were 27 or 28 churches of all different denominations. I remember Aunt Janet discussing the church situation with Dad and Mom when we first arrived. She said there would be pressure for us to join some church in time. Dad, recalling his own resistance to organized religion of the Christian variety from his own high school years, said he is not willing to go under pressure, and steadfastly claimed that his religion is Confucius practice. For us in the Boy Scouts, however, this became more of an issue as we progressed from one level to the next higher one. Finally, when it came to my going to attain the rank of Star Scout, I resisted the insistence that I show a record of attendance in a church and told the Board of Directors that "I cannot be reverent," and left Boy Scouts. Jen actually did go to church more regularly and became a Life Scout.

As we start to be acclimated to life in Lawrence, there were several memorable, and other, now hilarious accounts of just daily life as we grow up being teenagers of the 1950's. I will just mention three: Music, sports, and pastime pursuits.

Dad and Mom thought one of the ways for us to learn new things is total immersion. So, appreciating music is through the playing of a violin. Both Jen and I were asked to try this instrument. We started playing as sixth graders, and even performed during the summer as part of the city children orchestra in a gazebo in a park. That got my interest in continuing as we moved into junior high. Trying out for the orchestra and then challenging other classmates to move upwards in the chair designation within the orchestra section became a favored task. You learn to be better so you can beat the one in front of you (by director's point of view), and eventually, you get to play some solo segments. That is always the challenge, as well as the fear that the one behind you will challenge you. But we did persevere. In the

LHS orchestra, I made it into the middle of the first violin section. We had one girl who was soooooo..... good! Judy Gordon. There is no chance of her relinquishing First Chair. My teacher for violin was a Mr. Vladimuir Geltech, a Russian professor at KU. He gave me the fine pointers to violin playing, including vibrato, pizzicato, and staccato. He even gave me a chance to do a solo recital. I am not so sure I enjoyed that even though he complimented me on my performance. I also value the range of music that our LHS director, Mr. Workman, instilled into the orchestra. I got to appreciate both the classics like Beethoven, Mozart and Hayden; we were introduced to "contemporary" musicians the likes of Leroy Anderson and Igor Stravinsky. Later, when I got to MIT, and was required to take a humanities elective course, I took Music Appreciation, and thoroughly enjoyed it.

Sports at Lawrence not only has as its center the KU teams, but LHS also had excellent football and basketball teams. I well recall those Friday games at the Haskell stadium, cheering our LHS players onto victories. It seems that most of the touchdowns were made by running, but breaking tackles over 90 yards is fun to watch. KU's football team is another story. They always run into the headwinds of Oklahoma and/or Nebraska. So, it was hard to get a winning season. But being in Kansas means basketball was the king of sports. Even though the very first court that was used to play games was inside Hoch Auditorium, fans just loved the teams that "Phog" Allen was able to assemble in the 1950's. Coach Allen brought in people like Dean Smith, later dean of basketball at North Carolina, Clyde Lovellette, and later Wilt Chamberlain, the 7-footer from Philadelphia. University of Kansas was always near the top in college basketball rankings, close to Kentucky and Oklahoma A&M, coached by Allen's rivals, Adolph Rupp and Hank Iba, respectively. In 1956, Allen Fieldhouse was dedicated and opened for its first season.

Living on campus of the University of Kansas, and so close to the grounds of the athletic fields was a true blessing for us boys. We often would gather a group of friends for games of baseball, football, or basketball on those empty intramural fields, sometimes even playing with the University students who would stoop down to play with us for a little while, showing how great they are by comparison. One guy who did not show off was a great basketball star for the UK team: Clyde Lovellette. I remember meeting him, in awe of course because of his height and reputation, at the practice court. He was very kind to Jen and me, showing some of his moves including the famous hook shot. I believe he went on to the pros after college, joining the then Minneapolis Lakers, following the steps of George Miken, another famous 6'9" center.

Before leaving the subject of high school sports, tennis has to play a role. Because of the open space and availability of courts near our home, Jen and I both took up tennis without a coach. We would play even in poor weather, including once just before a tornado hit nearby. We were pretty serious about this sport, looking for role models in the likes of Lou Hoad, Ken Rosewell and Pancho Gonzales in Wimbledon play. When LHS began to call for a tennis team to be formed for the first time during my senior year, both Jen and I tried out for it. Now, tennis was not one

of those Major sports. So those trying out were not the usual "jocks." The team ended up with Stuart Smith, John Prichard, Alan Coombs, Bob Snodgrass, Bob Reed and Jen and myself. Notice that there were seven of us on this team, but traveling competition teams only carry six. Jen was always better than I in tennis, and he played No. 2 behind Bob Reed. Stuart, Alan and I would always be fighting for the 6th position, thus going to the away matches only some of the time. But we all got Letters at the end! An important accomplishment in high school!

Where do teen kids hang out in Lawrence after school? I remember three places. My favorite is Lone Star Lake, a distance south of the city. Since most of us have driving licenses at the age of 14, that means we can drive alone or with other kids to these lake recreational areas. A little swimming, a bit of sunning and lots of gossip are what teens do, and I guess our group of friends is no exception. Then, there is always the Dairy Queen for an ice cream. That is more time for gossip and whatnots. Lastly, I remembered that the state put in a new Highway 23 on our Iowa Street.

This instantly became the drag strip for many of our classmates, legal or not, I know not. Because we have but one car for Dad's needs, I dared not to use that and get involved in this "sport." So, I keep hearing about it from other classmates.

Growing up as teens also means at least some movements toward wanting to spend some time with a member of the opposite sex. The school facilitates this by having sock hops after football games as well as some dedicated Saturdays for dances at the school gym. I recall one pre-dance anxiety that involved both Jen and me (Yin). My name is reintroduced here for a purpose. After so many years, like five, I thought all the Lawrence kids know who is who between Jen and me. Here was the situation, as much as I can remember: I recall thinking about a girl named Susie Smith, and had casual talks with her in the hallways. I was hoping that something might click and she would ask me to the "woman pay all" dance. So, I am waiting on our home phone for a call. Well, the phone rings at home, and I answered. A girl named Smith asked if I, (I thought), would go to the WPA dance. I quickly said "yes." That was about a week before the dance. I kept running into her in the hallways, and she never mentioned this upcoming dance to me. So, I get anxious. In the meantime, another girl, Marilyn Smith, is getting anxious because Jen, whom she was hoping to go to the WPA dance with, has not indicated that he knew anything about

it. She and Jen were in orchestra together, so it became awkward for Marilyn. I finally asked Jen if he knew a girl with last name of Smith. When I put 'two and two' together, literally, I solved the puzzle. The girl who called was Marilyn, not Sue. She asked for Jen, but it sounded like Yen, and I answered. Jen did not wish to go with Marilyn to the dance, and Sue never had the inclination to ask me for this dance. So, in the end, all was for naught. Anxieties of the teenager!

Lawrence, Kansas is geographically located in about the middle of the continental USA. It is not a place that many international students would come for their higher education. In this town, from 1949 to early 1950's, Dad was the only Chinese Professor. Of course, he took on the responsibility of being the unofficial adviser to all the graduate and undergraduate students of Chinese descent. He would hold

Chinese Student Association meetings in our home, followed by dinner and party. I recall this being lively affair because from amongst the 20 something students, some had come from Hong Kong, some from Taiwan, and others from the Chinese mainland. In the early 1950's, there were lots of tensions between the groups. Dad was able to defuse this tension by discussing only educational and cultural things at home and the meetings. He imposed the rule that politics and religions were off limits in discussions. In this way, the group held together, and attracted new student members over the years, for social activities only.

One thing about living with Dad and Mom was their love of travel. I guess having crossed the world more than once, traveling in the USA became "simple." We did a lot of summer season travel. Several times it is because Dad obtained summer research stipends to be elsewhere, like Westinghouse Research at Pittsburgh, PA or Bell Telephone Laboratory at Murray Hills, NJ. We also visited parks, including Ozarks State Park in Missouri, Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado, Yellowstone, and Grand Canyon. That is about six summers in my 7 summers at Kansas! We learned much about the beautiful landscape of the US. Being immersed in the cities such as Pittsburgh and Chatham, NJ, we saw much of the lives of families in those regions. I will never forget the house we rented in Pittsburgh. The owner lived in part of that house. He was an ex-major league baseball player who became a successful physician. He had so many colorful stories from either side, sports or medicine. Jen and I particularly enjoyed his description of TV wrestling matches: All fakes!

Imagine being the only one of your own ethnicity in a city of 13,000 for so many years! Jen and I were the only Asian students in the entire Lawrence public school system over all those years from 1949 – 1956. When we start to be a little nostalgic for the old country, we would travel 28 miles to Topeka, and meet another Chinese family, the Chengs. Our meeting of Dr. Cheng and his family was also by coincidence. Dad and Mom had taken us for a visit to Topeka on a hot summer day. This is the capital of the state of Kansas. I prided myself in knowing all the state capitals for the entire USA, so seeing one is definitely a treat. Walking on the street near the capital, we accidentally crossed-path with another seemingly Chinese family, with many kids. Striking up a conversation, indeed they were the only Chinese family in Topeka! Dr. Cheng was a Psychiatrist in the famous Menninger Clinic in Topeka. He and his wife have five children living with them, and one in college. They invited us to their home, and we instantly became friends. Often, we would travel back and forth for visits. At that time, we were totally unaware that Dr. Cheng and Liz's mother Dr. Tang, were classmates at PUMC in the 1920's.

One other Chinese we met over the years in Kansas was the only Chinese faculty member on the campus of the Kansas State College, in Manhattan, KS. This is a town 80 miles away from Lawrence, but business between KU and KSC led to Dad's meeting Dr. Wei Ling, a biochemist. They had one little



girl then, Lily, and we too became good family friends. We even took a vacation with them driving two cars in caravan fashion to the Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado one year. One other place we drove to was Pike's Peak, at 14,100 ft. This was taxing on our Chevrolet sedan, not accustomed to steep hills and gravel road. But we did conquer Pike's Peak before it became fashionable to do so!

On the way back to Lawrence, I was able to convince Dad to let me try my hand at driving. For Kansas in those days, driving was a necessity for many kids as young as 14 years old. I actually learned to drive at 13 and half, getting my license at the age of 14. Not that we had a car I can drive, just having a license was a claim to be the "right kind of kids." On this occasion, driving on the famous US Highway 40, a two-lane highway, I thought about passing a car in front, and made the move to go into the opposite lane. Just then, a fierce horn sounded behind me and scared me back into our lane. Apparently, I forgot to look in my rearview mirror before trying to pass the car in front of me. I had only looked for the opposite side clearance. This was a lesson well learned, and I never ever get into the passing lane without triple checking my rear-view mirror and blind spots!

My fascination with cars had been there since the days in China! Dad would bring out magazines with pictures of fancy-looking cars and I would admire them and fancy myself driving in one of those convertibles! In Lawrence, all the high school kids are driving, as I have just mentioned. But not all were designing cars. Somehow, we got a notice of competition from the General Motors Corporation's Fisher Body Division, encouraging boys in the junior and high school age to design and build model cars for their Fisher Body Craftsman's Guild annual competition. This is a nation-wide competition where winners of regions were invited to GM headquarters in Detroit, MI for a celebration and award presentation. Jen and I were thinking this may be a great hobby to get into. We got started in model car design and building.

Initially, we tried one year using papier mache as the basis. Mother had this idea that it is simple to paste paper together one layer at a time until they form a solid body. We can then mold them and scalp them to shape our designs, and finally lacquer paint them. The idea was good, and the first year, I succeeded in making a competitive model. This was submitted as my entry, but it only received a "State" award. State winners do not get to go to Detroit! This inspired Jen and me to compete harder. To get serious, we had to work with Balsa wood, a light weight wood very easy to carve and shape. Both Jen and I had our designs and made our models from the designs. He, being two years younger, entered in the Junior competition, but I was now thrust into the Senior competition. Well, Jen got a Regional Award, for the Region that covered Kansas, Colorado and Utah. Jen was presented with a round trip ticket to travel to Detroit, MI by the Santa Fe Chief, taking their Pullman berth so he can sleep well enroute. Jen then described his meeting other kids who were winners from other Regions, and the banquets they shared with the President of General Motors Corp. They toured the GM Technical Center, where real design and engineering were done. With all that thrill, I made up my mind the next year I will try harder to win the Senior Regional award with a new design and model.

In that following year, our home competition was fierce. Jen now has to move into the Senior bracket as well, so we are direct competitors. The short story is: I Won! I too, was presented with the round-trip ticket to Detroit. All the Regional winners

were paired for hotel accommodations. My roommate was Charles Garbarini from California! At the Tech Center tour, Charley and I discussed about our futures. I saw myself not so much as a designer, but

an engineer. Charley, on the other hand, really thought designer was his calling. Indeed, he won one of the National Awards with his design. Last I heard from Charles, he was headed to a GM Design School. I brought home my Regional trophy to be placed next to Jen's from the year previous, at our home trophy center. We were notable stars at LHS because the local newspaper also wrote up our stories.

Lawrence was more than just fun and games. Lawrence High School was also an academically focused high school, being associated with the University of Kansas in location. Academic competition was keen from the beginning of junior high, at 7th grade. Many of my competitors for academic honors were also my good friends: Raymond Pippert, Alan Coombs, Raymond Nichols, John Sommerville, Harold Roberman, Alan Robb, Stuart Smith and Bob Bee. We always had friendly teasings about test outcomes. Almost all of these guys, and 10 others, became professors in their professions. Stuart was the exception, becoming an MD, not Ph.D., and Alan Robb went on the West Point to be an officer in the US Army. I have not mentioned the really top girls in our academic group. That is my personal shortcoming in that I did not know them too well. The top names were Sandra Harding, Marsha Lou Henry, Janet Jackson and Jean Elaine Johnson. One coveted scholarship for students to enter the University of Kansas was the Summerfield Scholars program. I believe several of my friends became Summerfield Scholars in 1956. With Dad's influence, I was slanting towards a science or engineering career, and did not seek the Summerfield Scholar status. English was still my weak subject. I ended up heading to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where MIT is.

College preparation is always a part of high school life. I remember even in 9th grade, there was the need to take the PSAT exam because the advisors in Junior High had put my name up for an attempt for the first (or second) year of the National Merit award competition. Needless to say, I came up very short due to my lack of English command. But that was just the beginning. As sophomores, we had to sign up for the regular SAT exams that will be given during the junior year. That was some set of exams! Even in those days, I recall that the morning was a set of two general exams: math and verbal. In the afternoon, we had something like three subject exams, including one in English composition. The best way to deal with this tense moment was to take each section and then try to forget it as soon as possible, in order to focus on the next! As it turns out, of course, my strength was in math and science, but very weak in English. This is consistent with the Summerfield Scholar competition, where I also scored poorly in English. However, Dad and Mom had me apply to Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a school they both knew from their early Cambridge days. After an interview with an alumnus of MIT, I was actually accepted to enter MIT as a member of the class of 1960. Between the choices of U Kansas (without Summerfield), or Michigan (where Dad has decided to move to for bettering his career), or MIT, I chose the expensive and highly competitive MIT. Dad and Mom were very proud. I was timidly anxious. From

Kansas to MIT??? Am I crazy??? Anyway, I enclose a photo of my LHS graduation day, with friends.



Figure 1 - Our little scholar group from LHS 1956: From left to right: Alan Robb, Raymond Pippert, Raymond Nichols, John Pritchard, Alan Coombs and Yin.

Figure 2 – Our family in 1956. Both Jen and I were wearing our FBCG jackets and lapel pins.

Indeed 1956 was a transition year. Dad was courted by the offer from the University of Michigan's Willow Run Research Laboratory to join them in the area of electronics engineering. There was also a possibility that he could join the Department of Electrical and Electronics Engineering on the Ann Arbor campus in the foreseeable future. He decided to make that move. Coupled by my own college decision, we are making some significant changes in our lives.

Little did we know that leaving the comforts of Kansas also meant getting involved with the real USA, even in a city as cosmopolitan as Ann Arbor, Michigan. While in Lawrence, we were basically a novelty to the entire community, and our own success rendered that novel experience a pleasant one to us and, I think a positive one for Lawrence. Once we moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan, things were totally different. We first rented a house for the summer while Dad and Mom started looking for a house to purchase, to call it their own! Since I was not yet heading to MIT, I was home with the family.

Our house searching trips with the realty people invariably took us to the “dumps” of the city, where neighborhoods were decimating and homes deteriorating. We then asked to see new homes under construction in a new neighborhood in Ann Arbor. This was done with some reluctance by the realty. When we liked a design and asked to purchase the model design, we got a call from the construction firm. They came to our rental home and gave us the simple ins and outs of reality: Chinese are not welcome in any new neighborhood for fear that once a Chinese family is in a new development, the price of real estate will drop. Furthermore, if we insist on purchasing that model design in that location we liked, that house will have to be the very last home built in that development. This way, the development and construction company will not be short changed due to any anticipated lowering of real estate value when we finally get to move in. This was a major shock to Dad and Mom, and it prompted our neighbor, Mr. Wendell Hulcher, to come in our support. How-



ever, business was business, and they would not budge. We told them to “go to hell,” and with the help of friends like Mr. Hulcher, found a nice homestead at 1821 Alhambra Drive. This was to be the home for my parents from 1956 to 1996! My parents discussed this level of racial discrimination with their friends, and found out that even Nobel laureate C.N. Yang had been subjected to this type of discrimination.

Besides the indignities of the real estate transaction, I had my personal encounters with racism in Ann Arbor, also in the summer of 1956. As a pretty well-adjusted teenager with college in the future, I decided that I would look for a job on my own for the summer. I poured over the want ads section of the local paper. I found two openings in succession: First, it was the soda fountain person in a “drug store.” I called and inquired about the position. They spoke to me and asked if I’d be willing to go down for an interview. Eager to please, I immediately rode my bike to their place of commerce. Entering, I was met by an older lady who inquired about why I was in their store. I said I was the person who called about the job available. She immediately said, “The job is taken!” So that was it, I beat a hasty retreat. Giving her the benefit of the doubt that I may actually have been beaten out for longer distance of travel, patiently I searched for opening again. The next opening for a high school graduate was a hotel bellhop position. Again, I called and was asked to come in for an interview. As I entered this stately Ann Arbor hotel, and before I had a chance to tell them about my background, they told me there was a mistake, and the position is not open. Well, twice in this city, and coupled with the admitted bigoted viewpoint of the developer/construction firm, I knew immediately that racism is definitely present in this so-called cosmopolitan city of Ann Arbor, a bastion of US liberalism! From that point on, I became very cautious in my own association with others in a land that I thought I had happily adopted.

Forgetting about summer jobs, I focused on getting ready for MIT. At the end of summer, Dad and I boarded the train and departed for Cambridge, Massachusetts. He would describe to me the Cambridge he knew from the early days of his Harvard days in the 1930’s. As soon as we got to South Station, Boston, he was very much at ease. I was quickly introduced to several of his contemporaries, Professors CC Lin and LJ Zhu at MIT, and Professor Chang from Northeastern, as well as Dr. Shen, of Boston. It seems that they were nearly classmates in those roaring 1930’s as a group of Chinese students together. Dad also introduced me to Professor Chiu Kai-ming, the Director of the Harvard Yenching Chinese library collection.

Dad also told me a couple of interesting stories about his 1947 visit to Harvard, when he was on sabbatical leave from Tsinghua University. In one story, he said things are changing in the electronics field very rapidly. He had a chance to visit a

Mr. Wang, who has decided to form a computer word processing company, Wang Labs., the world’s first word processing device using digital processing of word entries. That is definitely the beginning of a new way in typing of manuscripts! The second story is just as interesting for future graduate students like myself. Dad had decided to audit a class at Harvard given by Professor Julian Schwinger, the famous Nobel Prize physicist on the topic of Quantum Electrodynamics. The classroom was very empty. Outside of himself as an auditor, there were two others foreign scholars auditing and one student. When Professor Schwinger asked the lone student where he was from, he mentioned that he was a fellowship exchange student from Europe. So here in Professor’s QED class, there were no American-born students at all!

Definitely computers were coming of age! With the introduction of transistors over electron tubes, the electronics industry is changing very rapidly. One early company to embrace computer technology was

Bendix Aviation in Ann Arbor. Mother, who for the years in Lawrence, Kansas, was a housewife and a den mother, decided that she would get back into the swing of mathematics, this time as a computer programmer. She learned COBAL and FORTRAN computer languages and worked for Bendix. Later she became a programmer for the School of Public Health of the University of Michigan until her retirement.

In the meantime, once given the opportunity, Dad did move onto campus of Ann Arbor and became a full Professor in the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, shortening his daily commute from 50 miles to 5 miles. Dad's field was definitely changing rapidly as semiconductor physics was implemented in the construction of transistors and diodes, which revolutionized the electronics industry, foretelling the upcoming era of integrated circuits and the real computer technology.

Before we get too far ahead in our story, we need to see about the scenario that finally led to the meeting between Liz and Yin in Boston/Cambridge.

## 2. Growing up in Boston – Liz

Liz arrived in Boston with her Mother, Dr. Tang, and took up residence at 35 Temple Street, in the Boston Back Bay area. Liz was a bit more ahead of me in her education level upon arrival to the USA. She was already in junior high school in her Hong Kong True Light School. But again, her English was a weak point, and when she was sent directly into her level of class in this Boston junior high school, the school counselor was less than sympathetic. She immediately branded Liz as a “trainable mentally retarded” individual, who should be able to at least handle her own activities of daily living. That information was not well received in the Tang household. Fortunately, Dr. Tang's social worker friend, Ms. Poole, came in for the rescue. Sizing up the thoughtlessness and cruelty of this letter from Liz's high school, Ms. Poole stated that basically, Liz should not go back to that school again.



Figure 3 – Circa 1953 School girl Liz in Boston.

She called the school and told them of their total lack of sensitivity toward immigrant children. She and Dr. Tang together demanded that all records of Liz's being in that school be expunged. In the meantime, they enrolled Liz into a School for Immigrants to learn basic English and to handle her introduction to the life and culture in the Boston, Massachusetts area of the USA. It was immediately seen that in the flowering center of American freedom and culture, Boston, MA, but public education administration was so backward as to be degrading to anything associated with the principles of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. This was already 1953!

In the fall of 1953, Liz had all but caught up with the common English usage of a 9th grader. Because Dr. Tang was going to be working fulltime in Massachusetts General Hospital and studying fulltime for her medical exams, Liz was placed in a boarding school.

St. Anne's School in Arlington Heights, an outskirt community of Boston, will then become home for Liz for the next four years. St. Anne's is a private Christian school with strong affiliation to the high



Figure 4 - The St. Anne's Class of 1956.

Episcopal faith, which is very much like the Anglican Church of England. This church sponsored school is headed by a Reverend Mother, and the classes are conducted by Sisters of this Order. Needless to say, the operations of this school are very strict and religious. Daily events include prayers at meals, before classes, etc., etc., etc.... Since the classes are all taught by Sisters of the Order, focus of the education was very strict and disciplined. The only TV show they were allowed to view, on Saturday evenings, is the Lawrence Welk Show. Liz, having been all over the world, was very hard to discipline, and as a result, she continued to receive detentions. That is, when other children were

allowed to go home on weekends and holidays, often Liz was kept at school for disciplinary reasons.

Contrarily, Liz kind of liked the weekends alone in the school with just the Sisters.

She learned to cook, sew and clean probably better than any home environment where distractions are abundant. Because of Dr. Tang's own time constraints, Liz hardly went home on holidays either. At holiday seasons, Liz would see all her classmates move from school to home environment and later, back again. She would remain in the school, being accompanied by some of the Sisters. She continued to be content to learn from them various tasks including cooking in the School and Convent kitchen, helping with the washing and cleaning of the rooms, and gardening in their yard. Most of all, she enjoyed the sole viewing of the prized television sets, even though it is just Lawrence Welk.

Liz's roommate, Priscilla Guild, was her steady company throughout the four years at this school. It was a bit strange, though, that throughout the years as roommates, Priscilla never invited Liz to her home. Liz suspected that again, there may be some prejudice by her more prudish parents. Priscilla and Liz continued to maintain contact through Christmas card exchanges over the years to this day. She was asked to be the God-Mother for our older daughter, Debbie, in 1963.

As we well know, Dr. Tang cannot be kept back in anything, including getting the US medical practicing license for the State of Massachusetts in the area of psychiatry, a totally new field for her. She basically gave up her career trained as an OB-GYN doctor to become a psychiatrist. She first went to Medfield State Hospital, but a colleague, Dr. Lindberg asked her to join her in the Worcester Mental Hospital, and live on the campus of the hospital grounds, she took up the offer. Liz's rare trips home now is from Arlington Heights to Worcester, MA instead of just going to Back Bay. A couple of years later, an opening was there at the New Hampshire State Hospital (for the mentally disturbed), Concord, NH, and she moved to Concord. For nearly 20 years, Dr. Tang excelled in this art of psychiatric analysis. I would swear that both myself and my brother Jen had been the subject of her psycho-analysis over the years. Principally, a psychiatrist asks a lot of questions in rapid fashion, eliciting quick response without the client's knowing that these responses are already out of your mouth. She then draws some conclusion based on the obtained data and forms an opinion about the client. How I hated to be psychoanalyzed in

particular for ulterior motives of my words or actions. It seems that only Liz knew how to interact with her Mother. She would say things absolutely direct and truthful, so there was effectively no way that her words can be interpreted any other way except the way and manner it was spoken initially. This approach also led Liz to have many direct confrontations with her Mother. It was a difficult time for Liz, alone in the new country, new school, dealing with new language and new culture.

The School at Arlington Heights became her safe haven, and many of the Sisters became her confidants as well as friends.

### 3. The first year at college (for both of us)

June of 1956 is very significant for Liz. She is graduating from St. Anne's High School and going into the world! Dr. Tang had really wanted her to follow her footsteps and become a physician. Liz, on the other hand, decided that she wanted to serve people in a more frontline fashion. She decided to become a nurse instead. To show how quickly she acquired the knowledge to study this area, the famous Peter Bent Brigham Hospital School of Nursing accepted her application for admission into their class, starting in September, 1956. This is a school that is connected with Harvard Medical School and Boston University. The program Liz was in was an intensive three full years of nursing theory and practice. Year one was mostly

theory, most of the classes were taken at Boston University. Job shadowing in the PBBH starts in the second semester and once into the first summer, the students were on the floor learning nursing practice. Besides taking the least desirable shifts, called the "old maid" shift (PM) or "grave yard" shift (Night), the students had to learn to pay their respects to MDs at all levels, including Harvard interns. The life of the student nurse centered around taking classes during the morning, working either PM or NOC shifts, and cycle again. While working, the student supervisor was there monitoring the moves and functions all the time. It was a very tough life extending for a very long time-frame of three years. Besides PBBH, there were associated hospitals for specialty practice: Children's Hospital, Boston Lying-In Hospital for women's needs in OB-Gyn, and Boston Psycho for mental health training. While at PBBH, medical and surgical wards are most often staffed by these student nurses. But students also learn to be Operating Room nurses and Emergency Room nurses. What was Florence Nightingale thinking when she wanted to be a nurse!

My first year at MIT was no less daunting. On the first day of orientation, the Dean of Student Affairs got up and spoke of the difficulty of MIT. He said, "Look to your left and then look to your right. By the time four years have come around, one of you three will not be here to graduate!" What an introduction! Our entering class of 900 strong was divided into some 33 sections each of about 30 students. The sections were sorted according to the fields of study we had professed we would like to pursue. So immediately, there were many sections for electrical engineering, chemical engineering, and chemistry; very few opted for the fields of economics and humanities (humanities at MIT???) My chosen entry field was physics. Along with mathematics, we had about a rather average number of sections, like 5. These were relatively popular fields of studies at "the Tech."

Physics was not my real choice at the beginning. While in high school, I was at once impressed by the intriguing possibility that nuclear energy can be used for peaceful purposes and wanted to enter into nuclear engineering. But that being a graduate program only because all nuclear engineers must know nuclear physics and materials science, physics was essentially a pre-requisite. Once plugged into Physics, or Course VIII, at MIT, all the major courses start with the number 8. We got courses such as 8.01, 8.02,



etc., and move on higher in the 8 series in upper levels. Course VIII was known to be a hard program to pursue. Physics seeks analytical approaches to problems, governed by the various laws of nature. One had to be able to think broadly, and apply even more broadly. There was never a single equation to solve a particular problem. In that sense, the field was more challenging than traditional engineering fields. And more students leave this field in the four years than other fields.

Beyond the regimented pursuit of knowledge, the obvious but considered intangibles include the student's background. Many of our classmates have entered MIT coming from heavy duty "prep schools," or specialty schools in New York, like the Bronx Science High. They obviously had an instant advantage over the ones

coming from, say Kansas, where our public school's physics teacher doubled as book-keeping teacher. Indeed, the initial round of quizzes attests to that background differential. Speaking only for myself, at the midpoint of the first semester, a review of my course grades showed that I had 3 D's and one F mark. In discussing this level of ineptitude with my assigned advisor, I challenged myself to make an impression by semester's end.

In those days, fall semester runs from September through January, and the spring semester runs from February to June. Finals come right after everyone returns from the Christmas Holidays recess. You can imagine what all of us students are doing during the holiday break! Riding on the long train ride to and from Ann Arbor during that 1956 holiday break, while wanting to cry "Give up," it was almost a comic relief to hear so many others on this train complaining about their classes, be they at Harvard, Smith, Holyoke, or U of Mass. Misery loves company, and I guess most of us slogged on. I was able to gather a respectable 2.7 GPA that first semester. No, we did not have grade point inflation those days, and 2.71/5.00 means basically just a C+ average. That is sufficient to continue and push toward bigger and better days. (I recall 3.5 means Dean's list).

Guess what movie I saw during this turbulent year? A movie about Van Gogh's turbulent life called "Lust for Life." Regardless of the ending of Van Gogh, his pursuit for what inspired him was admirable, and my classmate who went to see this with me commented similarly. We shall persevere!

4. We finally met

Besides classes at the Tech, there were some social activities. It is not like a regular state university campus where organized sports were the king. At the Tech, we had a group of Chinese/Chinese American students that helped to recruit similarly lodged students from Harvard, Radcliffe, Wellesley, Boston University, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, and Boston College and called this Greater Boston Area Chinese Student Organization. We organized for various sporting activities and planned for one major dance function at the MIT Walker Hall auditorium. This was to take place in May of 1957, to celebrate the end of this school year for all.

On weekends, besides studying and studying, I was invited out to eat at the homes of the various acquaintances through my parents' previous Cambridge stays. One favorite place I go to is the home of Professor Chiu Kai-Ming, the Harvard Chinese Library's librarian. The real reason for my going to their house on weekends is for some nice dinner with their four children, three young ladies, all still in high school, and one boy whom I call "little brother." Instead of going there alone, often I would ask for permission to take my two friends from MIT, George Koo and Bill Shih, with me for these dinners. They are both from Seattle, Washington, and have lived most of their life in the USA, like me. It was

natural for us three to ask them if they would like to join us at this dance in May. It became clear that the youngest daughter will

not be able to come to the dance, but the other sisters mentioned possibly getting someone else to come along to make it a threesome.

You see, Liz was the other girl that Druang-I and Shuang-I had in mind. How did this happen? Liz's mother was in Cambridge for her MPH training in 1942-3. Professor Chiu was even then, the most well-known Chinese Professor at Harvard. It was natural that they meet during her year, and indeed that was the case. Professor Chiu and Mrs. Chiu have been links for many Chinese scholars in the Harvard and Radcliffe area. Dad and Mom were here in the mid-thirties, and of course Professor Chiu and Mrs. Chiu were there then as well, but without kids. Since Druang-I and Shuang-I both often had Liz over to the Chiu house, this was not a big stretch to invite Liz to join them for this dance party.

Liz, however, was very hesitant because she would be coming off one of her rare day shift in training and will be in her uniform. How can someone go to a dance in a nursing uniform? Unheard of! Besides, Liz had had previous discussions with Chuang-I regarding "the three MIT guys." She thought that at least one of them, is supposed to be Druang-I's chosen friend, and she thought joining in this would be an intrusion. "Not the case!" said Druang-I. Furthermore "You are about the size of my mother, I am sure she can loan you a dress and shoes to wear for this dance!"

Assured of these, Liz agreed to this party. The three of them, Druang-I, Shuang-I and Liz were driven to the dance at MIT by Professor Chiu. Bill, George and I were part of the 'home welcoming delegation', and greeted everyone, including them, as they entered and sat down at a table. Liz became engaged in talks with several other students that she had known from previous occasions. I was just wandering the floor, not really engaged in much conversation, since I am always tongue-tied anyway.

Even before we met, Liz and I share one very common trait: WE do not enjoy dances. Or rather, I should say I am a total klutz when it comes to conversations or dancing on the floor. Liz, on the other hand, is a super extrovert, to the degree that the dance floor is superfluous since she finds ways to engage people in conversations and laughter without the need of the dance floor. That may have been the key to our meeting the very first time.

At last, I sat down on the table next to the three girls. Liz is a natural in getting people to start conversing and getting me to say much is a true talent. A while later, I felt sufficiently at ease with Liz to ask her to dance, which I did not know how, but anyway we danced. Fortunately, she did not criticize my dancing, and I began to feel more comfortable with her. Because she is such an extrovert, I was afraid as soon as the dance is over and she moves toward another guy, her focus will be away, and I will not be able to get her back. So, I asked her to continue with both conversation and another dance. Soon, I was actually having fun on the floor. But too soon later, Professor Chiu came (at 10 PM, you see, Druang-I and Shuang-I were still high school students, and they needed to go home.) I bravely assured him that I can take

Liz back to her dorm, (not really knowing where it is!) and Professor Chiu agreed. As soon as they left, Liz had a new request: Her feet are killing her with those heels from Mrs. Chiu! So even more 'bravely', I said we can take the MTA to the Chiu's house and get her own shoes. With that, we set off to the subway station.

Harvard Square was about ½ hour trip including walking to the station and to their house. After getting her own shoes, non-heels but still party type, we went back to the dance for a while. When the dance was completed, and the music of “Good Night Irene” was played, we had the next order of business: to find her dorm at PBBH. Liz led the way, now past midnight, and gradually, going through Copley Square change station, we got onto the Huntington Avenue trolley and rode it to Longwood Avenue. The dorm is right at that corner. And for the first time in my life, I took a girl back to her dorm, not a house. It was rather strange because she had to sign in to affirm her arrival to “home.” When all that is done, and I was getting gitty because of all this new experience, I asked if I might be able to see her another day. When Liz said “yes,” I was ecstatic as I departed the PBBH dorm area.

Of course, I knew not where this Huntington and Longwood corner is relative to my dorm on East Campus. I just tried to retrace my steps. Getting to the trolley stop was easy. Getting onto the trolley was impossible! They do not run trolley after 12:30 AM on now what is Sunday morning! Fortunately, a night bus came along at about 1:30 AM and took me to their central station, which was Haymarket Square! From there, I had to find another bus to get me to the MTA station, because those do stay open at night. So needless to say, my good feelings were all but driven out by the anxiety of not knowing how to get home. Fortunately, I did arrive at my own dorm and plopped onto my bed. At least Sunday was there for resting from this night’s adventure! That was May 4, 1957.

The night before was such a unique experience and it left me with such an indescribable feeling that I sought out my best friend at MIT for advice. That is Michael Pilla, a brilliant student from Trenton, NJ! During the freshman year together, we had a few classes together, but mostly, it was after class getting together for meals and just talk. Mike is also an extrovert, and he is great at getting shy people like me to talk and open up a little. Besides the usual jokes about teachers and girls, he was a very ambitious guy with clever approaches to doing things. He had a girlfriend at home in Trenton, NJ so he was not really seeking other girl friends at this time. When I told him of my night out with Liz, his advice is to call her up for a date! Precisely what I had in mind, as well. I got up my nerves and called to arrange for a date with Liz, just the two of us.

Another weekend meeting was set up, when it was possible, given Liz’s scheduling of night shifts. On that appointed day, I had things all figured out: We would have dinner at Chinatown, and then take in a movie before taking her home. The one thing I had forgot was unforgivable: My mind was not super clear as to what she looked like exactly!!! My excuse: the other night at the dance the lights were dim, and I was somewhat out of my own elements. But never mind, I figured that in this

nursing school dorm, there can’t be too many Chinese girls. I went in and asked for Liz, by name: Betty Tang. Just then, a little Asian girl came into the waiting area, and I immediately took her to be Liz, and said something obviously silly. She immediately took note and said, “Oh, I am Ginger! I think you want to see Betty!” That really floored me and knocked my confidence to zero! Fortunately, Liz had been talking about me to a number of her close friends as well, and they came out, sequentially, to assure me that Liz is coming, but just give her a moment to be ready. So, I met at least Millie and Terry, two of her best friends in that class. At last, Liz came down, and I scolded myself for not being able to tell the difference between her and Ginger, a girl from Hawaii. The rest of this date was uneventful, but very pleasant. We had dinner at Chinatown as I planned and took in a movie, which I totally forgot what was the title or what it was about. I was really totally involved with just trying to know Liz. When I finally got her back to the dorms, I decided that I should see if I might kiss her before leaving. When she did not

resist, and just as I kissed her lips, a stern voice sounded. It was her Housemother! In those days, girls had to be super protected. Housemother was the way all girls' dorms were set up. After this embarrassment, I took leave. Finding my way back was easier second time around!

I was surprised to get a call from Liz the following week, asking if I might be able to attend her Capping Ceremony. What is this Capping Ceremony? It signifies the end of a successful Year One of the nurse' training. They will be given the PBBH caps to wear for the next two years as school nurses from this famous hospital. Of course, I agreed to go. At this ceremony, besides my presence, Liz's mother, Dr. Tang, will also be there! I had my first meeting of Dr. Tang after the ceremony. I sort of guessed who amongst the audience was she, and I was right. Dr. Tang was very immaculately dressed, with horn-rim glasses, and very serious. She sat alone during the ceremony. Afterwards, Liz introduced me to her mother, who extended her hands out via stiff arms, again very formal. Since this was her day with her mother, who had come from Concord, NH to attend this ceremony, I quickly begged off using my final exam preparations as an excuse.

After this event, indeed I had to prepare for my finals. But something was happening in our relationship. She went home with her mother for a weekend, and when I picked her up at North Station, she was very quiet and alone in her thoughts. I was concerned that this is not like the bubbly girl I knew and did not know what happened. She did not tell me. My attention was then pulled away from thinking about Liz to one of trying to do well on my exams, which did indeed turn out pretty satisfactorily.

After finals, I was getting set to go home to Ann Arbor for the summer. I was going to try to find a job this summer, and given last year's travesty, I was not too hopeful. In departing, which I knew was going to be hard, I did see Liz one more time. We agreed that we might see fit to write each other. And that was that as my train pulled out from South Station with Liz waving from the platform.

Freshman year completed, and I did not flunk out! That was accomplishment in itself. Added to that, I even have the name of a girl with whom I will correspond during the long summer. When I got home, I was a pretty satisfied guy. My search for summer jobs was also successful! The job was to be a furnace cleaning sales order person. Another guy and I had been hired to go to homes in the entire Ann Arbor area to see if we can sell the homeowner an order to have our company's truck with a big vacuum come to clean their furnace. In their training session, they gave us the trick: The approach is to find families where only housewives are present with small kids. Then, do a quick vacuum using our portable vacuum cleaner, on the most missed area by most households: behind curtains, inside the heating vents. Then show these "dirt" to the housewife and ask if she wants her child to breathe in such environment. Then go for the "kill" by selling our cleaning orders. This tactic certainly is not illegal, but to me and my partner, it was somewhat taking advantage of the situation. We thought that ethically, this is not right. So not whole-heartedly doing this job, we went off together to the park and played cards before submitting our respective resignations. So, ended my first job. Without additional plans for the summer, I decided to take some summer session classes from the U of Michigan program. That proved to be a useful thing for the following year at MIT. Advanced preparations on Fourier analysis was a good plan for my Sophomore year at the Tech.

Letters from Liz and to Liz started to come and go, and we became fast friends through these communications. It seemed that she understood my position on the quitting of the job and agreed that going to summer session was a good idea. I had a supporter aside from my parents! I also gave her encouragement for continuing her endless rounds of training sessions and shifts. She described many of her pa-



tients, including Judy Garland and the author Arthur Miller.

As the summer went along, we had become closer to each other through the letters. In one letter, Liz wrote the words of an entire song, "Unchained Melody," which described the degree of anguish when two lovers were apart for a length of time.

This song became one of "our songs."

September, 1957 came, and I rode the train to Boston myself this time. As a sophomore at MIT, I thought things were going to be great. Seeing Liz again was definitely my main goal, and I was glad she was willing to see me upon my settling back in the dorms. Having single rooms in the dorms of East Campus definitely had its advantages when it comes to a bit of privacy and even intimacy. Our meetings became more regular, and we just enjoyed each other's company. We even, horrors, tried to be cool by smoking some Kool cigarettes. That did not work well, as we both disliked the smoke and definitely hated the taste of tobacco. After a few puffs, that was the end of our smoking habit, Kool or not!

On October 4, I took a trip to see Liz at her mother's home in Concord, NH. Liz had warned me that they live inside a hospital, but nothing prepared me to see all the mentally deficient people all around



Figure 5 - Yin visited Liz in Concord, NH. 1957

this hospital. And Dr. Tang was the house physician who cares for each and every one of them. I began to have less fear of her, and more admiration of her abilities. She also turned out to be a very prolific cook, doing in particular Thai dishes like the Siamese Chicken, which smelled and tasted very fragrant. Doing all her cooking for me in her own apartment was definitely something extravagant. Normally, they go to the staff's dining room for meals. At some of those meals, I was surprised that Dr. Tang was also an extremely witty and quick individual when it comes to jokes and laughter. This made me much more at ease than the time in Boston. Liz and I followed dinner by another movie. This time it was "An Affair to Remember." The story and music were both so appropriate, and we de-

ecided that this too will be our song, when we are together! Starting that evening, we told each other that we love each other, and will be "steadies" from that day forward!