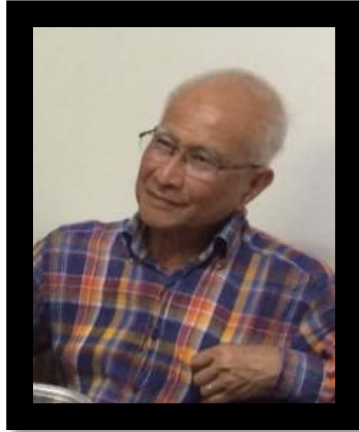


**Interview with Houw Tan at the interviewee's home at 11 Lyric Gve, Camberwell, 3  
February 2014**

**BA, Geology, Melbourne University, Colombo Plan, 1960 cohort**

(Houw's wife, Lesley, joins in later in the conversation)



Houw Tan: I was in the first group of Colombo Plan students from Indonesia. There were two planes that picked us up from Jakarta; one plane went to Sydney and the other one went to Melbourne. I was on the Melbourne plane and in Melbourne we were split up again. There were about forty on the plane and 15 to 20 went to Adelaide and the remainder stayed here.

Jemma Purdey: Was it just one chartered aircraft for only the Indonesians?

HT: Yes, for only the Indonesian students.

JP: That was it. How exciting!

HT: We landed in Darwin, in a torrential rain. We stayed there for a few hours for refuelling and then just flew over. It was during the night so we didn't see much of the country. We landed early in the morning here, at Essendon – it was still the main airport in those days – and we were met by Sam Dimmock and another person. I think his name may well have been Keith Brown ...

JP: Also from Foreign Affairs?

HT: Yes. I'm not sure of the Christian name but I'm pretty sure it was Brown. But Sam Dimmock was the main liaison officer when we arrived.

JP: For all twenty-five of you?

HT: For all the twenty-five students. So then we were allotted to various hosts. And I landed in Yarraville.

JP: By yourself? Not with another ...

HT: No, by myself. I think the idea was that we would integrate as quickly as possible into Australian society, so we were all spread around. We were all engineering and science students. I think there were only two science students left here, and the other landed somewhere in Pascoe Vale, far from me. We knew each other, we had been together in Bandung.

JP: From ITB (Institute of Technology in Bandung)?

HT: In those days it wasn't called ITB it was the faculties of Engineering, Mathematics and Natural Science, part of the University of Indonesia.

Many of the engineering students would have done almost half their course in Indonesia and they were mainly in electrical, mechanical and chemical engineering, no civil engineering. It was selected and I think the selection was made in Indonesia by the Ministry of Education. They decided what courses were needed because at that time in Indonesia many of the Dutch lecturers and professors were leaving because of the political situation. Irian Barat (West Papua) still had not been resolved so there was pressure for the Dutch to leave and many of the professors just left.

JP: Yeah, because they hadn't left in '49-'50. They were still there because that was just where they lived.

HT: Yes. Starting from about '55, as I entered university, the pressure was on. That was when Sukarno said 'Before the cock crows in 1956 Irian Barat will return to Indonesia', but it didn't happen until '63 or '64.

JP: But the Dutch were feeling uncomfortable.

HT: They were made to feel uncomfortable, especially in Jakarta, Bogor and Bandung because that's where most of the Dutch were teaching, and they left, gradually, bit by bit. I went to Australia just before the big exodus but it was already obvious.

JP: So do you think the government were aware of that and wanted to get you all overseas to finish your degrees so you could come back and be the lecturers?

HT: On paper it sounded very nice but in practice ...

There were stories of people who were ahead of me by a year. I heard they didn't get a placement. They were completely neglected and had to find their own jobs. Others were lucky because they had connections. Some of the electrical engineers, I know for sure, ended up with the national electricity company, PLN. One mechanical engineer had been a freedom fighter so he ended up with the army as a mechanical engineer. Things like that happened but there was no scheme to put us in the appropriate fields that we'd qualified in.

In my case, I was lucky, because my brother-in-law was a member of parliament and he knew most of the heads of bureaucracy. So he took me to the secretary of the Department of Mines and said 'Here you are, you've got a graduate geologist, keen to work wherever you want to place him'. So I got an introduction and I was sent to Belitung to the tin mines. That was in 1960, I graduated in '59, went back in January and was in my job in February. From what I heard, that was exceptional.

And the reason I was sent to Belitung was because the secretary of mines said 'Well, Belitung was taken over from the Dutch company and the salary system was retained so you'll be quite comfortable there and you'll get a house'. Accommodation was one of the difficulties when you worked in Indonesia.

JP: Well, Pak, can we go back, all the way back, because I'd love to hear where you came from and then we'll talk about how you came to be in Australia. So tell me where you were born and all about your family.

HT: I was born in 1935 in Tegal on the north coast of Central Java. But I was only born there; my family actually lived in Pematang. My father was just a small businessman and when

I was born he had a forestry licence to get wood from the forest and burn it to make charcoal. So he was basically a charcoal burner and seller. Before that, according to my elder sister, he had a taxi company, probably one or two cars, that served the Dutch administrators and employees who worked in the sugar and rice plantations. And then he changed over to charcoal.

He must have been doing quite well because he built a family house in Pemalang. He might have overcapitalised on that venture because that was also the time when Indonesia, or the Netherland East Indies, was starting to recover from the Great Depression. He built this house ... it must have been in the late '30s because I remember being a young boy there. I'd just gone to kindergarten so I must have been five years old and I remember my elder sister getting married, there in that house.

After my sister and brother-in-law got married in Pemalang, they moved to Semarang because my brother-in-law, Siauw Giok Tjan, was a journalist with *Mata Hari*, a Chinese–Malay newspaper. It was owned by a Chinese company but the language was Malay. There were also newspapers written in Chinese but *Mata Hari* was in Malay.

JP: But the audience was mostly Chinese?

HT: That's not quite right because in his memoirs Giok Tjan mentioned that he had many contributors from the Nationalist movement – Yamin, Sukarno, Sumitro – they all wrote and published in the Malay–Chinese newspapers including *Mata Hari*.

When I was five-and-a-half or six, and my younger sister – who's still alive – was two or three, my mother became pregnant again. But she died in childbirth, and my father died not long after that of hypertension, not more than a year after my mother died. So my elder sister, who'd just got married, looked after the four youngest members of my family.

JP: Wow. How many of you in total?

HT: Seven. My sister was the second in the family. You've got my eldest brother who was already married, and then my sister, also married, then my second brother who'd just finished his MULO, the Dutch Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs (junior high school). He was to go to the Algemene Middlebare Scholen [middle school] but because of my parents' death he never got there, and he took over my father's business.

JP: Wow. How old would he have been?

HT: 16 or 17, 18 at the most. He stayed in Pemalang and looked after the business and the four youngest went to Semarang and lived with my sister. Then the war came.

When I started school, I went to a Dutch-speaking kindergarten. In Pemalang I was sent to a Catholic kindergarten, because the sisters were quite active in Central Java, and in Semarang I continued at a Catholic kindergarten. Then I started school at the Netherlands Chinese Scholen, NCS. It was during that time that my father died, 1941 I guess, because I would have started as a six-year-old. One afternoon the servant came and fetched me from school and that evening my father was gone.

JP: He hadn't been ill?

HT: He was ill with hypertension and it must have deteriorated very quickly. In those days there was no medication. He might have had a stroke.

JP: He did difficult work as well.

HT: Well, it was hard work, and in the tropics.

JP: How old do you think he was?

HT: He was only in his early forties, 42 or 43 at the most.

JP: And your mother would have been younger than that.

HT: Younger than that, and she died in childbirth. She would have been late thirties. They probably married young.

JP: So your sister was pretty remarkable then.

HT: She was. Also her husband was willing ...

He came from Surabaya and his parents died when he was finishing his high school so he had to look after his younger brother.

JP: He came from a similar background.

HT: Yeah. But then the war came. Just before the war my brother-in-law sent the whole family back to Pemalang because he thought that would be safer. And he stayed in Semarang to continue his work with *Mata Hari*.

The Japanese came, our house in Pemalang was looted because when the Dutch capitulated people were moving away from their homes to a safe centre. In Pemalang it was the Regent's place, where there was a pendopo [pavilion] and things like that. That's where we went but our house got looted and one of the looters was killed in the house, probably by a voluntary security militia. My second brother told us that there was blood all over the floor that had to be cleaned up.

By that time my sister had had her first daughter. My niece was only five years younger than I am and two years younger than my younger sister so we were just like siblings.

From Pemalang, after the Japanese came, we went to Surabaya because the Siau family came from Surabaya and *Mata Hari* had had to close down. We stayed with a Siau uncle but we didn't stay long in Surabaya. We went to Malang. So for the rest of the Japanese occupation and the first few years of the revolution I lived in Malang.

JP: Also with extended family?

HT: Yes. Giok Tjan's younger brother, Giok Bie, got married in Malang and the two brothers had one household.

JP: Right. What did they do for money, Pak?

HT: Well, that's quite funny. Giok Tjan opened a shop and sold locally manufactured products, especially household items like soap, toothbrushes and toothpaste. And then towards the end of the Japanese occupation he sold all sorts of things – cotton for sewing, tyres for bicycles ... anything that people could manufacture to replace imported things. The tyres were made of rubber but the technology wasn't there to vulcanise the rubber and shape it into tyres with an inner tube. So it was raw rubber, set from latex with formic acid, and people shaped it into a solid tyre.

JP: Bumpy.

HT: Well, not only bumpy. The rubber stretched after a while so when you were riding the bicycle the tyre would expand and knock against the mudguard ... clunk, clunk clunk.

JP: Better than nothing. It worked for a while.

HT: The other thing that comes to mind was that lubricating oil became scarce because the Japanese needed it. And the Japanese instructed people to grow castor oil plants and school children had to crack open the husks to get the seeds. That's what we did at school.

Siauw Giok Bie trained as a radio mechanic but there was no work, so he didn't work, his income came from playing mah jong. His wife was the money earner. She opened a beauty salon and with whatever equipment she could gather she permed hair and ...  
(laughs)

JP: Did she do that in the house?

HT: Yes, our house on the main street of Malang, it was called Kayu Tangan, and Kayu Tangan 69 used to be a beauty salon. I can't remember what it was called before the revolution because we couldn't have used an English-sounding name, it would have been either Chinese or Indonesian or Malay. But Giok Tjan's shop was called Quan quan an. That's a play on words in Hokkien. It was written with the same character 'quan' but quan can mean 'all' or 'profit'. And 'an' means 'save' or 'halal' (legitimate) so it could mean 'always save' or 'legitimate profits', or something like that.

JP: So did the business do OK?

HT: For a while.

JP: Did Siauw Giok Tjan have to go out and find suppliers?

HT: Many of his friends who were businessmen went into manufacturing so it was through that network. But in the meantime he was keeping up his writing and one of the things that he did was to translate *Red Star Over China*, by Edgar Snow, from English into Malay. And that was serialised. And he also wrote articles for a magazine, and one of his friends owned a printing press.

JP: So was the serialised translation published in little pamphlets or in the newspaper?

HT: I think it was published in a weekly magazine, which was quite daring because it was about communist China. And he gathered a group of younger friends who had just finished their secondary schooling and he influenced them politically to look more towards Indonesia. He was quite seminal during the occupation.

JP: Did you see much activity with the Japanese? Were they very present in Malang?

HT: Oh yes. The Dutch were interned. Malang had a European suburb and almost the entire suburb was fenced in and used as an internment camp. Japanese officers lived in some of the houses and one of the secondary schools was used as a military headquarters and barracks. There were other places that became offices too because you've got the military police and the army. So there was quite a presence in Malang.

On the whole they were quite well behaved. The only incident I remember was in Surabaya, actually, just after we arrived in Surabaya. In front of our house, what used to be the showgrounds had become a military barracks and there was a sentry standing guard there. When you passed the sentry you were supposed to bow. Giok Tjan went past one day and didn't bow, I don't know why, he was probably absent-minded, thinking of something else, and he was called back and slapped in the face for not bowing. That was the only public demonstration that I witnessed but it made an impression on me.

JP: And from then on it would have affected how you saw them.

HT: Yes, but apart from that, as a child in Malang I didn't see any ...

JP: Life just went on.

HT: There were stories of captured Allied soldiers being put into pig baskets and thrown overboard. How true that was ...

JP: But you heard that.

HT: Yes, there were stories.

JP: Did the Japanese come into your brother-in-law's shop or anything?

HT: There was nothing like that at all. In front of the shop there was a Japanese officers' club and attached to the club was a restaurant that sold Japanese food, dumplings and cookies and all sorts of things, and people were allowed to buy them.

JP: They were just part of the scene.

HT: Yes. Near Malang there were two sort of resorts, where you could swim, and the Japanese went there and other people too, mingling. You had to be respectful.

The funny thing was we had a dog that Giok Bie had got from one of his friends – a big Doberman bitch. She was quite neglected when we got her but we looked after her. My brother and I got very attached to her and took her out for walks, or she took us out for walks. She was uncontrollable, the two of us just hung onto the leash and she just ran.

She was chained up all the time but occasionally she escaped. And she wouldn't come back until she'd bitten somebody. Usually it wasn't serious, she just tore their clothes. Then the person would complain and we had to compensate. But one time Blackie ran loose and went close to the Japanese club and restaurant and had a go at a Japanese officer. The Japanese officer drew out his sword and wanted to ... luckily Blackie ran off.

JP: A near miss. So how did school go?

HT: School was different again. There were no Dutch schools allowed and the schools were divided into Indonesian schools and Chinese schools. I went to a Chinese school where everything was taught in Chinese. I had to learn Chinese, and it was Mandarin. At home we spoke Malay or Dutch. There were only a few Hokkienese words – names of relatives, like grandfather is 'engkong', the elder brother of your father is 'empek' and the younger brother of your father is 'enchek' ... They were the only Hokkienese words that I knew. The adults would sometime count in Hokkien but no Mandarin.

I'm not quite sure why, but in Indonesia there were several Chinese associations. They probably started some time in the early 1900s when Chinese nationalism became apparent and when the Manchu dynasty was overthrown. There were a few Chinese associations like the Chung Hua Hui. Although many people in the Chung Hua Hui were actually Dutch educated. But then there were also people who wanted to go back to Chinese culture and they would have started Mandarin schools. You've got the Chung Hua Hui, the Chung Hua Chung Hui, the Sing Ming Hui and a few others with names like that. And some of the smaller ones were probably allowed to continue during the Japanese occupation and they started these Chinese schools. We were sent to the Chinese schools.

JP: You had to go there because you were Chinese, even though your language was Malay. So how did you go at school then?



HT: It was hard at the beginning but I think I learnt fairly quickly. I had to learn new writing skills, I had learnt with a nib – up thin, down thick.

JP: So there was a lot of emphasis on calligraphy?

HT: Yes, with a brush. You were given a character to copy and originally you started off with tracing the model and then you had to do it yourself. It was quite hard but I found it fun, I enjoyed it.

JP: And did they teach mathematics and science as well.

HT: Not so much science but mathematics, for sure. I would have learnt the tables in Chinese.

JP: That's probably how you remember them.

HT: Yeah. Well, the occupation ended in '45 and things changed again. Then it was the revolution. I was still in Malang but after the massacre of Chinese in Tangerang in late '45 Giok Tjan was appointed as a government minister without a portfolio. His task was to look after the Chinese minority and to propagandise the nationalist movement. So he moved to Jogja, but the family stayed in Malang. My sister and her children – by then there were three, two girls and a boy – stayed in Malang and Giok Tjan went to Jogja.

He must have moved permanently some time in '46 because in July '47 the first war started. The Dutch called it 'politieactie', police action. The Dutch came to Malang and we had to leave the Kayu Tangan home. At first we stayed with friends in the so-called European suburb then we got a house in Jalan Dempo. My sister's fourth child was born there and not long after that my eldest brother came from Semarang and took my younger sister and me back with him. And my second eldest brother came and he took my older sister and her young children from Malang to Jogja.

JP: To reunite with their father.

HT: Yes, that's right. My second brother by that time had left Pematang and during the revolution he became a smuggler. He bought medicines and other medical things that were needed and sold them in the republican areas, then bought jewellery and other trinkets and took them back to Malang and Surabaya and sold them there. So he was quite familiar with the travel arrangements between Malang and Jogja. For a while they went by train, from Malang to Maduin, then from Maduin it was either by dokar [horse and cart] or by bicycle to Jogja. So that was quite a trek.

JP: And what about to Semarang?

HT: To Semarang was OK because Semarang was one of the first towns occupied by the Dutch, so was Surabaya, Malang was the second. So it was quite easy. We went by train from Malang to Surabaya and from Surabaya to Semarang we flew.

JP: What! Amazing.

HT: That was my first air travel. I was almost twelve. It was exciting.

JP: And your eldest brother, what did he do for money?

HT: Well he finished his HBS (senior high school) and worked as a clerk in one of the big Chinese firms and when he came to fetch us he was the manager of a rice plantation near Pekalongan on the north coast of Central Java. It didn't have a rice mill so it was just producing the rice.

JP: He was not involved with the republicans at all?

HT: No, he was very pragmatic in that sense – the Dutch were there, he had to make a living, so stiff cheese.

JP: Your brother who was smuggling, did he have a political thing, do you think, or was he just doing his work?

HT: He was just doing his work.

JP: Was there a lot of political discussion when you were growing up?

HT: Oh yes, in Malang, certainly. It was not only the Indonesian scene that was discussed, it was the worldwide situation and Giok Tjan was certainly sympathetic to the communist movement in China. He could see that Chiang Kai-shek and the nationalists were just corrupt and not willing to stand up to the Japanese whereas Mao Zedong and the communists were ...

JP: So in that context, standing up to the Japanese really resonated with what he was going through and what you were all going through.

HT: Yes.

JP: So you were able to go to secondary school in Semarang?

HT: In Semarang I went to a Dutch school run by one of the Chinese associations, a Chung Hua Hui school, and I finished my primary school there.

JP: So instruction was back in Dutch?

HT: Yeah. I maintained my Dutch by reading lots of books. In that way I was lucky because many of Giok Tjan's friends had been educated in Dutch and they had children's books so I read all the children's classics.

JP: And that was where the literature was, there was Malay literature but it wasn't established.

HT: No.

JP: So you obviously loved reading.

HT: Yes, and I read Dutch. So the transition back to Dutch was no problem. The Dutch in those days in Semarang, and probably in other parts, were changing the education system, instead of having the MULU, AMS and HBS they were going to make it a six-year middle high school, and they were starting to introduce that.

So I went to the middle high school that still had a lot of Dutch and Eurasian teachers. That was in '47-'48. Then starting from '48 when the round-table conference took place in The Hague, the Dutch started to relinquish many of their roles. So the middle school was taken over by different associations and one of the associations that took over the middle school in Semarang was the Protestant church. So then I went to a Christian middle school.

JP: You stayed where you were and all these things changed around you. Wow you had to be very adaptable.

HT: And then the transfer of sovereignty took place, in December '49. Giok Tjan and his family moved from Jogja to Jakarta. Giok Tjan wasn't a minister in Jogja for very long, after about a year the Dutch had the second 'police action' and he was interned. But his role as a member of the Central Indonesian National Committee continued and in '49





when the Republic of the United States of Indonesia, RIS, was formed he became a member of the RIS parliament and moved to Jakarta. That was early in 1950.

So I moved back to my elder sister's after I finished my SMP. The Dutch high school system had become SMP and SMA, junior and senior high school, one of the many changes that took place, so I finished SMP.

My eldest brother was also affected by the changes. He stopped working for the rice plantation near Pekalongan and decided to start his own dairy business. Actually, he started it while he was still a manager with the rice plantation. He bought a few Friesian calves and raised them there in Mliwis, near Pekalongan. Then he rented a place in Semarang, a run-down place, and built a few stables to put his cows in.

JP: Wow. In urban Semarang.

HT: Yes, it was on the outskirts but in urban Semarang. There were a few dairies in Semarang, small dairy farms. A Eurasian family owned one of the more famous ones and the daughters were teachers at my high school.

My brother started off with not more than six cows, six milkers, and he employed someone to milk them by hand. There was no pasteurisation so the milk was straight from the cow. It got mixed into a big urn and my brother would skim the cream off and make butter out of it then bottle the milk. And I had to help distribute the milk.

JP: You had a milk run. Great!

HT: Most of the customers were friends of ours.

JP: He only had six cows so he didn't want to get too big.

HT: Well it got bigger and bigger. He started with six cows but by the time I left Semarang he probably had about twenty cows.

JP: Did you enjoy that?

HT: Yes, it was fun.

JP: Did you have a break between middle and senior high school?

HT: No, no. The milking was early so before school I did my milk round, then I went to school. School finished at one o'clock or half past one and that's it. I didn't have much to do with looking after the cows, it was all done by staff, I was just distribution. I would have a gunny sack with compartments for the bottles and I'd put that on my bicycle and ride around. One of the customers was the former regent of Pemalang. Usually the regent was someone of nobility so we had good customers.

JP: At school, Pak, what were you interested in? What were your passions?

HT: I wasn't especially interested in anything. English was certainly one of my best subjects – I got full marks in my SMP exam. History was another one that I liked very much, History and Geography. Mathematics, so-so. I wasn't passionate about anything. I probably did well in English because I liked reading and I started reading English books right from the beginning.

JP: Where did you find the English books?

HT: My next brother, four years older than I, would borrow books from friends. In those days Pearl Buck's books about China were very popular – *The Good Earth*. And there was a

library with Dutch and English books, so I borrowed Sherlock Holmes books from the library.

JP: Had your parents spoken English?

HT: No, no. My father could write, he spoke Malay, he read the newspaper but no Chinese newspapers. My eldest brother would have finished senior high school and learnt English, German and French as well as Dutch, but how well he did, I don't know.

Giok Tjan could certainly read French; he read quite a few French papers and journals, like *Le Monde*. He was an autodidact. He was very good at citizens' law, for instance, because he was one of the major critics of the Indonesian policy towards minorities. He tried to make it as simple as possible for the *peranakan* (Indonesian-born) Chinese to become Indonesian citizens whereas the government, especially the Partai Nasional Indonesia, wanted to restrict the number of Chinese that could become Indonesian citizens. And he was instrumental in getting the agreement from the communist Chinese government to relinquish the *jus sanguinis*, birthright. That was his doing. He read quite a bit about international law and much of that was in Dutch or French, and he was self-taught.

JP: Your environment when you were growing up was quite learned. It was an intellectual environment, as well as having family that ran these businesses and could keep you all financially.

HT: That's right. In some way they were all go-getters. My brothers took any opportunity, sometimes they were at the fringe of legality.

JP: That showed a lot of ingenuity and entrepreneurialism. And you would have absorbed all that.

HT: Well, probably I absorbed it.

So I did my SMA years in Jakarta, living with my elder sister and the Siau family again. The funny thing there was that I wanted to get into an SMA Negeri (state senior high school) but I was rejected.

JP: Did they make you do a test?

HT: No. They just saw my name.

But I had a friend who was in SMA Kanisius and he said 'Why don't you come to Kanisius'.

JP: Yeah, you'd had a Catholic education before.

HT: So I went to Kanisius. In Jalan Menteng. It was a Jesuit school with mostly Dutch priests. There were a few lay teachers but not many.

JP: Was instruction in Dutch? Malay?

HT: No! It was in Indonesian. At that time it had to be Indonesian. Malay had become Indonesian – Bahasa Indonesia.

JP: So how did the Dutch priests manage?

HT: Quite well. They all learned Indonesian and they were really remarkable because the mathematics teacher, he taught everything in Indonesian. The headmaster's name was Krekelberg and he translated it into gunung jangkrik (cricket mountain). In Dutch krekel

means cricket and berg is mountain, so Pater Krekelberg became Pater Gunung Jangrik – so it went on.

JP: He changed his name. Amazing. But when you were just conversing with them, was that in Dutch?

HT: Often Dutch, yes. It was casual.

Kanisius had a very good library, both in Dutch and in English. And probably in German but they were not there. As a student I certainly had access to Dutch and English books from Kanisius. And at that time the Dutch still had a cultural centre too, so they still had a library, but not for long. I think it closed down in '53 before I finished my SMA.

JP: So it was a good choice in the end.

HT: It was in the end. Kanisius became one of the outstanding schools in Indonesia.

So after I graduated I had to decide what to do. At that time I was very involved in scouting, I liked outdoor life and camping. So I thought I'd do something that had quite a large component of outdoor activity and I thought geology would be good. So I decided to do geology.

I applied to get into FIPIA (Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences) and I was accepted there. I graduated in May or June '54, the academic year started in August so by August I was in Bandung. I was boarding in a guesthouse.

In those days there were student associations, a remnant of the Dutch association and also the Catholic students association, the Protestant students association and the Chinese students association. So I became a member of the Chinese students association.

JP: Did you have friends in that association?

HT: I had friends in the other associations. I chose that one because it was Chinese.

Many of those associations required an induction or orientation process. You were treated as an undeveloped human being and you had to earn your marks to be a fully fledged student. I had my hair shorn but on the whole it wasn't too bad.

JP: Were there many women around, Pak?

HT: Oh yeah. Yes, because FIPIA had the pharmacy college and many of the girls went to pharmacy. Whereas in Bogor, where the agricultural college was, there were no women. And in Jakarta where you've got the law, medicine and literature faculties, well, there were more women there.

JP: Did you mix with the other associations?

HT: That was more in the classroom because in first year, like in Chemistry, we would do that subject together with other faculties, other schools, like Pharmacy, Chemical Engineering. So we got to know quite a lot of people, we didn't become good friends with them but ...

JP: You might work in a group.

HT: Yes. And the tutors or demonstrators were often from other groups.

JP: And, as you said, there were still Dutch lecturers there.

HT: Yes, at that time the Professor of Geology was still Dutch, Professor Klompé, and the Professor of Mineralogy was also Dutch, Akkersdijk. The lecturer in Palaeontology was an Austrian and there was a Canadian who came just a few months before I left.

JP: Were there any Indonesians?

HT: There were no Indonesian lecturers yet but there were a few senior students who became demonstrators and assistants with the professors. So our prac work, for instance, that was all supervised by the senior students and that was the system. The lectures were given by the Dutch, the prac work was often supervised by the senior students.

JP: Did you feel like you were getting a good education there?

HT: Yes, I thought I was.

JP: It was still an elite, premier ...

HT: Yes, and it was supposed to be a five-year course, Geology. And other courses were five years.

But then one day I saw an advertisement in the newspaper, from the Department of Education, asking for students that would be interested to go on a scholarship to Australia.

JP: Did it say to go to Australia?

HT: Yep. It was a condition of the scholarship that you had to have at least one year of university before you could go to Australia.

JP: And that would be you.

HT: Yeah. I'd almost finished first year although not quite. The only exam I had done was Zoology and I passed that. I still had to pass Physics, Chemistry, Mineralogy and Geology to finish my first year. So I applied.

JP: You saw this ad but what made you think that sounds like a great idea?

HT: I could see that the professors were already starting to leave.

JP: You felt like the situation was going to deteriorate where you were.

HT: I wasn't thinking along those lines, more that it would be a bit difficult to continue in Indonesia along the highest standard. So I applied, and after a few interviews and psychological tests I was accepted.

JP: And these interviews were all conducted by the Indonesian Department of Education?

HT: Yes, they were.

JP: And the ad had said the types of courses you'd be studying in Australia?

HT: Yes, science and engineering. And science had to be ... I don't think there were any for physics and chemistry but certainly for geology there was.

JP: Oh, no wonder it jumped off the page for you.

HT: Yes, and Engineering, as I said before, it was mechanical, electrical and chemical, no civil engineering.



JP: Very specific. Yeah. So you passed your psychological tests.

HT: Yes. 200 students were selected. We had a reception with President Sukarno at the Istana Merdeka. He made a speech and mingled around; he shook hands with every student.

JP: And did he say something like 'Make me proud, make Indonesia proud'?

HT: Yes. He said, 'You are going on an important mission. Make your country proud, be good students and come back to serve your country'.

JP: Did he say anything about Australia that you remember?

HT: No!

JP: The main thing he said was 'come back'.

HT: Yes, with any skills that Indonesia needs.

That was probably in July or August '55 and by October we knew that we were leaving.

JP: Did you have a reception at the Australian Embassy?

HT: No, nothing like that.

JP: Had you met an Australian before that?

HT: No.

JP: So you had your flight but you hadn't met an Australian yet.

HT: No. The first Australian I met was the stewardess on the flight. That was probably a Qantas flight.

JP: That was amazing that you hadn't had any preliminary meetings, any training.

HT: No, nothing like that.

JP: So before you left, you knew you were coming to Melbourne?

HT: No we didn't. We were just subdivided into these two groups. And there were two planes.

JP: Get on that one, get on that one. And you didn't know where you were going.

HT: No. (*laughs*)

JP: Did your family see you off?

HT: Oh, they sent me to Kemayoran (the airport), it was still Kemayoran in those days, and we flew off early in the morning, because we landed in Darwin about four o'clock in the afternoon. It was raining and we got dinner, a salad. A bit of a shock, you know. I think it was a tuna salad, or something like that. I was still hungry, I had to ask for a second helping.

JP: And knife and fork.

HT: Knives and forks.

In the evening we continued the journey. As I said, we arrived in Melbourne early in the morning, perhaps eight or nine o'clock, and that's when we were met by Sam Dimmock. And that was probably mid-November.

JP: So the weather was OK, it wasn't too cold?

HT: Well, it was pretty cold for us.

JP: What were you wearing, Pak?

HT: I had a jacket that I'd bought in Bandung.

JP: So you knew you should have a jacket?

HT: Yes, I knew enough about the geography from physical geography lessons in Indonesia. I was aware that Australia has seasons and that the further south you went the more pronounced the seasons got.

JP: But it was something you worked out, it wasn't something they told you. And in Bandung you could get warm clothes.

HT: Yes. Once we were allotted to our different lodgings, we were collected again and assembled. We travelled by taxi – I don't know how many taxis Sam Dimmock must have chartered. He took us on our first shopping expedition. We went to Fletcher Jones.

JP: Nice!

HT: We were given money. Our allowance was about £17 per fortnight. And we were given cash.

JP: Was there a clothing allowance as well?

HT: No, that was it. Board was £4/10 per week, in my case. So that was nearly £9 for board and I had roughly £8 left to play around with. We were told to buy Fletcher Jones trousers but in those days they only cost about £4. And I bought a coat, not at Fletcher Jones, because in those days Fletcher Jones sold only pants, nothing else.

We were told the story of Fletcher Jones, that it was a cooperative in Warrnambool and Jones was the head, and how Jones and the workers owned the whole shop and workshop. That was explained to us.

So we were told we could shop wherever we liked and there were two shops: London Stores, on the corner of Elizabeth and Burke, and Henry Bucks. Henry Bucks was too expensive for us but London Stores was more affordable.

JP: So you were told to get clothing. What else did they give you? Any lessons in anything else?

HT: No, but then we were invited to attend the races, one of the races after the Melbourne Cup. And again we went by taxi. We were picked up and taken to Flemington and told about the betting system ...

JP: Hilarious! So this was your introduction to Australian culture – racing and gambling. Was it a good day?

HT: It was. It didn't rain and I enjoyed it.

JP: The fact your English skills were so advanced must have helped.



HT: It was fairly good. We arrived in November and for the rest of the year and until the beginning of the university year we were sent to the Royal Melbourne College, it wasn't RMIT yet, to do an intensive course in English and also follow a few lectures in Physics, given in English. Everyone. To get us used to it.

And the English teachers were two ladies – Mrs Green and Mrs Rothfield. Mrs Rothfield, especially, was very interested in the Indonesian students and she invited us to her home and asked us to cook Indonesian dishes. So she was a really ...

JP: ... important person at that early introductory stage.

So by now, Pak, you knew you were going to go to Melbourne University?

HT: Yes, yes. Everyone went to Melbourne University to begin with.

JP: And there were about 25.

HT: 25 all told. Most in Engineering, a few in Architecture; there were only two in Geology.

JP: So how was it when you started? Did you feel like you'd been prepared, given enough time?

HT: I think so. When I started, I didn't have any difficulties in following the lectures.

JP: You were going in at first year, even though you'd already done a year?

HT: First year Geology. There were lots of students because Arts students also had to do science. Big, big lectures. And Professor Hills was a very good lecturer. Much of it I had already learned and in some areas in much greater detail. Like vulcanology we did two or three months in Indonesia, over here it was only one lecture.

JP: It was a bit more relevant there. Different emphasis. What was emphasised more here then?

HT: The first year was very general, nothing in great depth at all. It was only in the second year when things started to become more detailed. That was when petrology, petrogeny, petrography became important. That's probably where the course here was more advanced because we examined rock slides under the microscope right from the beginning, in second year, whereas in Indonesia you would have started that probably in the third year.

JP: Because you didn't have the same facilities?

HT: Probably, but also because the emphasis was slightly different. I don't think Professor Klompé was a petrologist by training, his was more field geology, mapping and that sort of thing. A lot depends on the lecturers and the ruling professor and their interests.

JP: How did you get along with your fellow students?

HT: Quite well. We were accepted. And we had excursions, some of them overnight, in second year. We went to Castlemaine and Maldon, so we stayed overnight there, and another excursion to Ballarat and that area. And we had another excursion to the volcanic fields. As I remember it that one wasn't overnight but the Castlemaine one was.

JP: So you got to do your outdoors stuff.

HT: Yes, but I didn't camp, it was pretty cold. Some of the Australian students camped.

JP: So that meant you got to see quite a bit of the countryside.

HT: Not a lot, but bits and pieces.

JP: And what about when you weren't studying, did you do anything?

HT: Well, when I first arrived, during the Christmas holidays of '55, I asked Sam Dimmock whether I could go fruit picking and he sent me to Mildura to pick grapes.

JP: Wow, hard work, in the sun. Were you on your own?

HT: On my own. And I went by train. Sam must have been a member of the Rotary Club. The Rotary Club was another organisation that was organising all sorts of things for us. So I stayed in a hotel ... I'm pretty sure it was at reduced cost because I calculated that I wouldn't have made a profit from my picking if not for the cheap accommodation.

JP: Yes, a hotel's quite posh compared to staying in the pickers huts in the orchards.

HT: Even in the pickers huts, if I had to buy my own food and everything it came to quite a bit. And I wasn't a fast picker.

JP: How long did you do that?

HT: Oh, about three weeks, it was only a short season and I had to go back for the introductory lectures.

JP: So just over Christmas and New Year. You didn't regret it?

HT: No, I enjoyed it.

JP: What motivated you to want to do that.

HT: Well, just to get out and do something different, something physical. And in Mildura I met a mining engineering student who is now the husband of one of Lesley's school friends.

JP: Oh, right! Great. Is that how you met Lesley, through him?

HT: No, that was different.

JP: But he was able to talk to you about university life, so it was a good connection.

HT: Yes, I had a good introduction to university life.

JP: Were you still living with the Hunts?

HT: Yes, I lived with the Hunts until the end of first year. I became friends with the Hoveys who lived next door. Jack Hovey was a wharfie and his wife, Jean, was very nice. They had a few sons, and a daughter.

Mr Hunt was a minister in Yarraville but then he decided to become a school chaplain and that involved him moving from Yarraville to Ivanhoe. I'm not sure exactly which school it was, one of the big schools. So he moved to Ivanhoe and that's when we parted ways but I kept in touch with the Hoveys for quite a few years.

Then I got another landlady in Preston.

JP: Quite a different side of town.

HT: Also a different family. The husband was a technician with the PTT, Post, Telegraph and Telephone office. I can't remember his name now ... George something. Things were

quite different because I called him George, not Mister So-and-so. And my room was just a fibro bungalow, pretty cold in winter.

JP: Did they have children?

HT: They had two young children, a boy and a girl. Still in primary school.

JP: Were you a bit more independent because you were out the back there?

HT: Not only that but also the lectures started to be more involved and took me the whole day, so I often didn't get home until dinner time. There were a few times when I had to have tea in the caff. Not that often ...

JP: But it was all very amicable and comfortable there. And you ate meals with them.

HT: Yes, very comfortable. Breakfast would be in the kitchen but dinner was more formal and substantial.

JP: What did they feed you and what had the Hunts fed you?

HT: The Hunts tried to cook rice a few times but not that often. The Friday roast was certainly always on the table and with the Hunts it was beef but with George and his wife – I can see her in front of me but I can't remember her name – it was more lamb.

JP: So it was meat and vegetables most of the week. And did you just adapt to that.

HT: Yeah. Oh yes.

JP: As long as there was enough.

HT: Yes. Whenever we wanted to have rice, a group of us would go either to a Chinese café or a Greek café. The Greeks also have rice dishes.

JP: So there were enough of you at university to do that, get together and go up to Chinatown or ...

HT: Yes, Chinatown or Lonsdale Street. I think Stalactites, that Greek café, was already there.

JP: And you had a little bit of money for spending.

HT: Oh, yeah. More than enough. I think it was quite a generous allowance.

JP: Was it £17 a fortnight for the whole time?

HT: Yes. I had enough money to save and buy a second-hand motorbike towards the end of '56. It was a small two-stroke Francis-Barnett bike. I paid £45 for it. Other students bought more expensive bikes. There was one student from Bali, Gede, he bought a bigger bike and after the Olympics he and I and an Indian student, Raj, decided to go on our motorbikes to Perth.

Looking back that was a bit foolhardy. It was a long way and we didn't know much about the road conditions. Anyway, we took off after the Olympics, so November or early December '56, and the three of us went from Melbourne towards the west. Just before Horsham Raj's bike broke down. So we had to stay in Horsham and the mechanic said it was bad news – a cracked cylinder. We didn't have the money to fix it. We were living on our fortnightly payments, you see. So after four days in Horsham we decided to abandon the bike and I took Raj on the back of my bike.

So we chugged along, tuk-tuk, tuk-tuk, and landed in Adelaide. And there we were welcomed by Colin Hunt, the second son of Mr Hunt, and we stayed with him and his wife, Audrey. In those days they didn't have any children.

We stayed there for two nights, I think, and Raj was clever enough to find a bus, an empty bus that was going from Adelaide to Perth, and the driver was happy to have the company. So he took off. We arranged the address where we'd meet – the house of a lady who Gede knew in Perth who'd agreed to let us stay with her. Gede was a physical education teacher and he'd been to Perth with another lot of students before he was sent to Melbourne. So he gave Raj the address and we set off to Perth on our bikes.

JP: Across the Nullarbor.

HT: Across the Nullarbor. Well it was fine to Port Augusta because the road was still bitumen. But west of Port Augusta it was a gibber road – all corrugated and covered in these flat cobbles, you know.

Anyway we chugged along and camped every night near a waterhole. Filled our water bags. We had a supply of baked beans ...

JP: Did you have an idea of how long it was going to take you?

HT: Well we were planning for about ten days altogether from Melbourne to Perth but we already behind schedule.

JP: Very much. With four days in Horsham ...

HT: Anyway, we kept going and in Eucla Gede's bike broke down. There was nowhere for it to be fixed.

JP: Left on the side of the road! And his was the more expensive bike.

HT: Yes! Yes, his was bigger and more expensive. So I took Gede on my small bike. We chugged along. I think it took us four or five days from Eucla to reach Perth. It was certainly two days from Eucla to Coolgardie. From Coolgardie it wasn't too bad because the roads were a lot better.

JP: But you couldn't go too fast. And you didn't want to break down so you had to be careful. Did you have enough water and food?

HT: Yes. We bought these canvas water bags. I had two of them so that was about eight litres. And roughly every hundred miles there was a water tower. In those days they hadn't been vandalised yet, you could still rely on them for water.

There were plenty of cars that had broken down, broken axles ...

JP: So there were quite a lot of people along the way?

HT: Not a lot, but some. It would be rare that we didn't meet a driver or get overtaken by a car at some time during the day.

JP: And what about wildlife when you were out camping.

HT: I didn't see much. Certainly kangaroos, otherwise pretty quiet. The occasional lizard, but not frill-necked, mostly blue tongues or stumpy tails.

JP: As a geologist, the desert must have been pretty amazing.

HT: It was amazing, it certainly was. Especially near Eucla, all the dune fields were really something to see. Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie were interesting because of the gold mines but we didn't see much of it because we were just haring past.

So we arrived in Perth and stayed a bit more than a week. I had time to go on my motorbike, on my own, up north and then a bit south to Geraldton. One night I slept on the beach and in the morning I was woken up by a warden saying 'You're camping illegally here. Get out!'

But in the end we had to get back. I sold my bike and got about £20 for it. It didn't have any brakes. I had to sell it at a loss.

JP: Not too bad considering how far it had gone.

HT: No. So we had to find the cheapest way to get back. With the money from my bike and whatever we had from our allowances we had enough to catch the Westralian boat from Fremantle to Melbourne as deck passengers. That meant we didn't have a cabin but at night we could sleep on the benches of the dining room

JP: How many nights?

HT: Not that many nights. Perth to Adelaide was two nights I think and Adelaide to Melbourne one night.

JP: Not too bad. And fun, probably.

HT: Yes, fun. None of us got seasick.

JP: I love that you got there but hadn't worked out how you would get back yet.

HT: We got back safely and in time for my second year at uni.

JP: What about the Olympics?

HT: I didn't have enough money to go to much. We could order tickets through Foreign Affairs. Sam Dimmock had left by then. He went to Indonesia as Cultural Attaché. But there was a lady, Emily someone, who was looking after us and she could arrange tickets but we had to pay, of course. So I only watched three events. One was athletics, at the MCG, where I saw Zatopek run. One was the soccer match between Indonesia and Russia.

JP: Did Indonesia win?

HT: No. We lost four-one in the end after an extension of play.

JP: What happened, a penalty shoot-out?

HT: No, the Russians changed their strategy and shot the goals from the penalty area and Indonesia was beaten that way.

And I think I might have been to the closing ceremony. I'm not sure if that was combined with Zatopek in the marathon but I remember seeing Zatopek running on the last day.

JP: I understand there were groups that were meeting up with the Indonesian team in Melbourne.

HT: Yes, there were a few events like that but I had only gone to the soccer game.

JP: Was that exciting?

HT: Yes. And talking to some of the players was quite good.

JP: Did you get to meet them?

HT: Yes, we got to meet them. Some of them had injuries from being kicked on the shin by the ...

JP: Dirty playing.

HT: Yes, it was dirty play, but I'm sure some of the Indonesians were also ...

JP: I hope so. Wow, so what a great first year then. How did you tackle your second year? A little bit more getting down to work because in the first year you didn't have to study too hard.

HT: Second year was hard work because I did a double major. In the first year I did Geology, Chemistry, Botany and Zoology. And after that I decided to do a double major so I did Geology and Zoology.

My very vague sort of thinking was that I'd probably end up as a paleontologist, in academia. But then towards the end of my second year I thought it wouldn't be bad to get some experience as a geologist so I applied to work as a student geologist in Mary Kathleen, the uranium mine.

JP: Wow. Where's that?

HT: In Queensland, near Mount Isa. And I was accepted. So I passed my second year exams, had a wild celebration with a few Australian friends.

JP: What does wild celebration mean?

HT: We had lots of beer and one of the students bought crème de menthe, a whole bottle, and we drank the lot. I certainly had a headache on the plane going from Melbourne to Brisbane and Brisbane to Mt Isa. I think I got picked up at Mt Isa. It was summer and hot.

The geologist there was Frank Hughes and my task – it was an open cut mine – was to take a Geiger counter and go over the rocks, go over the ore and mark where the richest parts were so the miners could mix the ore in such a way that it would be suitable for the treatment plant. It was all acid leaching and other stuff.

Anyway, I did that, and also had to extend the survey a little bit outside the open pit to see if the ore continued. It was all done by Geiger counter and a bit of drilling. I had to log the rocks, but it wasn't that difficult because I could see the rocks from the mine cuts and in the drill course I tried to match what I knew and what I'd seen from previous reports. I enjoyed it.

JP: And the mine life?

HT: Mine life was very good. That was when I first came across the class division – staff and non-staff. Mine labourers were non-staff but as a student I was considered to be staff. There were separate dining rooms but probably the same food.

For entertainment there was a free open-air theatre and Frank Hughes and his family invited me to have dinner with them quite often. Frank had a young family so I got on well and babysat the children a few times. It was quite a good environment to be in.



JP: Were you there a few months?

HT: I was there the whole summer holidays, including Christmas. It was the rainy season and the beer delivery was delayed because of the rains, the truck got stranded so there was no beer. And Frank shot a few bush turkeys for Christmas dinner.

JP: And did it make you think mining was more interesting than you thought.

HT: No, I took it in my stride – you learn these things.

I decided to go home by train – Cloncurry to Townsville then Townsville to Brisbane by train. But it was a very slow train. I think it took me four days to reach Brisbane from Cloncurry. By that time I was sick of the train.

In Brisbane I went to a hotel for the night. And when I went down for breakfast in my shirt they said they wouldn't serve me unless I had a coat and tie. I didn't have one, but the waiter lent me a tie and coat, way too big, so I could eat breakfast. And I took a flight back to Melbourne.

JP: At university, did you join any clubs or sporting groups or anything like that?

HT: No, the only club I joined was the soccer club. I played soccer for the university soccer club. And I went for intervarsity matches to Adelaide and met some of the Indonesian students there. Kartomi was one of them, he was playing soccer. And I must have met Margaret, his wife, there as well. I also went to Brisbane. In my third year I still played but didn't go to any intervarsity matches.

In my third year I did Zoology 3 and we had an excursion to Shoreham to do field work, looking in rock pools. That's where I met Lesley. She was a year or two ahead of me and she was demonstrating at Shoreham. So that's where we met.

JP: She was also studying Zoology.

HT: Yes, she was. At that time she had finished her undergraduate years and she was doing Genetics as her master's. She had already started her master's when we met in Shoreham.

JP: Lovely!

HT: I finished my third year and got second-class honours. And I went to Professor Hills and asked if I could do one year extra, an honours year, to learn more about sediments. In Indonesia there's not many igneous rocks apart from the volcanics, and I didn't know anything about sediments.

He said since I'd passed with second-class honours, I could do honours and that Dr Singleton would be my supervisor. Dr Singleton was a paleontologist but he had quite a good general knowledge of Victoria and the sediments here. But there were no more lectures, so I had to learn everything by myself, more or less. I was given a list of books, articles and journals to read.

JP: And what, you had to write a thesis?

HT: Yes, I was independent. I was given the task to look at the sediments of Lakes Entrance. Before that there were a few oil companies who had drilled for oil at Lakes Entrance but they didn't find much. So I had to study those sediments.

JP: Was it interesting enough?

HT: Yes, it was. I had to learn the technique for making thin sections of very soft sedimentary rocks, which was entirely new for me. So I learned the technique and there were a few post-grad students in other fields. One, Jim Bowler, was a specialist in physiography. He was the one who found Aboriginal artefacts in Lake Mungo and he got involved with the anthropologists. So it was quite an interesting field.

JP: And when you were thinking all this through had you been in touch with your university in Indonesia to talk about possibilities?

HT: No, no contact at all with Indonesia.

JP: Not at all? To look at job prospects afterwards?

HT: All I'd heard was that the Dutch professors had left and the senior students had taken over the School of Geology. And another graduate of Klompé became the director of the Geological Survey in Indonesia. That I knew.

JP: But you weren't keeping in contact directly. What about with your family?

HT: Oh, I wrote letters.

JP: You hadn't been back though.

HT: No. I didn't go back at all. I could have because I was offered a trip home after the second year but I didn't take the opportunity, I went to Mary Kathleen instead. And at the end of my third year I started honours early so there was no time. I just kept on going. But in the time that I was away, my sister had two more children.

JP: How many did she have altogether?

HT: Seven, the same as my mother. So she had another boy, Tiong Djin ...

JP: Yeah? I didn't know he had so many siblings.

HT: ... and another girl Lee Ming, who now lives in Brisbane.

JP: So you hadn't met those younger children.

HT: No.

At lunchtimes during my honours year I had lunch with Lesley and another post-grad student, Mani, and his wife. He was Indian-Fijian and his wife was from New Zealand, the daughter of Professor Cotton, the famous Cotton of New Zealand who wrote *Geomorphology of New Zealand*. That book may well have been the model for Professor Hills to write the *The Physiography of Victoria: An introduction to geomorphology* because there are some strong similarities.

JP: So you were these two mixed cultural couples.

HT: Yes, and we played bridge and other card games. Mani is very sharp-eyed and he could sometimes see the reflection of the cards in my glasses!

Mani did entomology and specialised in mosquitoes. And although there were no malaria mosquitoes in Victoria he certainly worked out the lifecycle.

JP: How interesting. So you were quite a foursome.

HT: We were and we sometimes helped Mani to collect his mosquitoes so we had a few expeditions.

JP: Were you still living in Preston?

HT: No, at that time I'd moved from Preston to North Melbourne, in Manningham Rd, with a widow.

JP: Was this always organised by ...

HT: Yep, the housing officer at Melbourne Uni. By that time I was already making use of university housing rather than having it organised by the liaison officer at the Foreign Affairs So I got that through them.

There was also a Malaysian student doing finals in Mechanical Engineering boarding at that house. It was walking distance to Melbourne University so it was good for me. Whereas from Preston I had to walk and catch the tram.

JP: Perfect. Much better. And where did Lesley live.

HT: She lived here. But in those days she had a room in Parkville. And Mani and Deirdre were also living in Parkville. So it was pretty cosy.

JP: Did you do any Indonesian-themed activities? I know there were music groups and that kind of thing.

HT: No, I didn't do any of those. International House was established. My fellow student in Geology went into the house, but I didn't. Another Mining Engineering student also went into International House.

JP: So you knew what was going on.

HT: There was one performance of Indonesian dancing or music somewhere in Melbourne and I got tickets for that so I took Lesley and a visiting professor.

JP: Was there a consulate?

HT: No, no consulate but there was a military attaché here and there was a trade attaché. In the early years it was Jismun. He also got married to an Australian. And after him it was Mr Song who became the trade attaché. The military attaché ... the one that I knew best was Basuki Rachmat and he became one of the ministers in Suharto's government.

JP: So you did get to know these people?

HT: Oh yes, because there was a tennis court at the military attaché's home, it must have been somewhere around Kooyong. I played tennis so sometimes joined in.

JP: As an Indonesian you were welcome.

HT: Yes. The phys ed students were all there too, you see, so Gede was often there. Although he went home, I think he went home when I was doing my third year, so two years earlier than I did. Many of the students had to repeat subjects ...

JP: So they were there a bit longer. And then they could do that practical year.

HT: Not many took use of that because the contract with the Indonesian government was n plus three years, n being the number of years you studied here. So by the time I finished I had seven years owing to the Indonesian government. So many just went straight home after to get it over with. And some who married Australian girls didn't go back at all. There were a few. Dinni Daud was one ...

JP: Mustapha Subarudin never went back. I've only spoken to Mustapha and can't quite remember the details of his case but, again, he didn't know how he was going to get a job.

HT: That was the main thing. And another thing that might have influenced people was the politics of Sukarno in those days. It was becoming more strident and, you could say, super nationalistic because when there were those outer island rebellions, Sumatra and Menado, and before that the Darul Islam ...

JP: Yeah, it wasn't entirely stable. And the economy, they hadn't quite hit all the petroleum money.

HT: The economy was certainly in decline. When I was in Belitung, part of my salary was paid in kind. I got rice, cooking oil, soap and, once a year, material. Usually drill.

JP: What percentage of your salary was in kind.

HT: Well, the money part of my salary ran out after two weeks so we had to sell the excess rice. The two of us couldn't eat all the rice that was supplied to us, so we sold that.

JP: Let's go back to ... You finished your fourth year in '59 ...

HT: I went back in '60, so between February 1960 and December 1963, I was in Belitung at the tin mine. And the chief geologist then was Dr Osberger who I knew as the lecturer in paleontology in Bandung. But Osberger was not a mining geologist. Before me there was an Indonesian exploration engineer from Bandung but I don't know what his skills were as a mineralogist. When I came to Belitung, all the technical reports finished when the Dutch geologists left. The Dutch geologists maintained records of the geology they could see of the open cut mines, and that completely finished when they left in '57.

In '57 Belitung was taken over, and it was given to the military. The tin mine was called Perusahaan Negara Tambang Timah Belitung (State Tin Mine Company of Billiton), and the CEO was a general, stationed in Jakarta. And whether it was by design or accident, I don't really know, but he was Sundanese and many of the engineers in Belitung were also Sundanese or married to Sundanese. Osberger was the only different one, because of his geological background. I was there so I did a few reports on open cut mines and I could see that Osberger didn't really ...

JP: ... know what he was dealing with.

HT: He made life a bit difficult for me. But, never mind. At that time I invited Lesley to come over to Belitung, to see what life was like.

JP: So you had gone on your own in January 1960 and pretty much gone straight up to the mine after the introductions and got the job.

HT: Yep. And by July I wrote to Lesley asking if she'd like to come and see.

JP: Is that what you'd arranged before you left?

HT: No. Before I left the arrangement was that I could only marry her if I got a job.

JP: Get a job. Doesn't matter where.

HT: And I remember Lesley sending me a Valentine card in February 1960.

JP: Very romantic!

HT: Then she came, and by that time I had a house and a job. After she went home she wrote and said if I was serious I better write to her parents. So I wrote to her parents and they gave their blessing, their approval, and we got married in December 1960, in Jakarta. I didn't have the money to come back here.

JP: So Lesley came for a short visit then went back home and organised ...

HT: Yeah. The wedding was to take place on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December but I couldn't get on a flight to Jakarta because, at that time, there was an emergency situation. The military had the priority, so every time I went to the airport I was bumped.

JP: How many flights, was it one flight a day? How long was it, three days, one week?

HT: There was only one flight a day. And three times Lesley went to the airport to meet me but I didn't get off the plane.

JP: Could you telegram?

HT: No, no telegram. But after a couple of days I telephoned.

JP: I can't believe they weren't listening when you said you were getting married.

HT: Anyway, I arrived on 21<sup>st</sup> December, in the afternoon so too late for the wedding.

JP: Goodness. What did you do?

HT: My sister had arranged the wedding reception for the evening so we did that, and we had the wedding at the registry office on the next day, the 22<sup>nd</sup>. And then we had a church wedding on the Saturday in the Gereja Jago, as we call it, the Protestant church near Lapangan Lawang.

Lesley was lucky, in a sense, because she knew Jean Tahir, an Australian lady who was married to the CEO of Caltex, and Jean had Lesley to stay the night before our wedding.

After three years in the tin mine I thought I needed a change so I went to Jakarta and tried to get a job with the oil companies. And in those days there were two Indonesian oil companies, one was called Pertamina and the other one was called Permina, and I applied to both of them. Permina was run by the military and General Ibnu Sutowo was the head of the company.

The head of Caltex was Jean's husband, Julius Tahir, an Ambonese. He had been with the KNIL, Netherlands, East Indies Army, and he was sent to Australia during the evacuation of the East Indies Government. That's where he met his wife and got married. He had been dropped in the Moluccas behind Japanese lines and after the war he got a medal from the United States government and he became a minister in the so-called East Indonesian State created by the Dutch.

JP: So he was in that camp.

HT: Yes, but he became good friends with Ibnu Sutowo and when he learned that I was applying to Permina for a job he told me if I went to Permina that he'd try to have me seconded to Caltex as a trainee.

By that time we had a daughter, Eleanor, born in Belitung, Lesley was expecting our second child and I was in the process of transferring from Belitung to one of the oil companies. Andrew was born on 11 April 1964 and Lesley, Eleanor and Andrew, only a few days old, flew to Melbourne. That was around the start of the Ganyang Malaysia campaign (Indonesia–Malaysia Confrontation), the British Embassy in Jakarta had been

burned, and when Lesley landed here with two young children a journalist asked her if she was escaping.

JP: Just coincidence.

HT: Purely coincidence. And I went from Jakarta to Pankalan Berandan in North Sumatra to be a geologist with Pertamina. And one of the geologists there was the brother of an Architecture student I met here.

JP: Oh. Who was that?

HT: Pane.

JP: Oh, I met Pane! He was in Melbourne just before Christmas and I got to meet him.

HT: Well, his younger brother was the geologist in Pankalan Berandan. We got talking and I asked him what his work was. And he said, 'What are you doing here? There's no work for geologists!' All the work was done by the Japanese. They had their own geologists and their own drillers.

The Japanese company was called Nosodeco, North Sumatran Oil and something Development Company, and they didn't want Indonesian geologists so I stayed there for three months doing nothing. There weren't even geological reports I could read. The one job that we could do was supervise the transfer of a drilling rig – not even the drilling, just the transfer of the rig.

So I decided to give that away and I went back to Jakarta and talked to Julius Tahir and he pulled a few strings and it was agreed that I'd be seconded to Caltex. So Lesley had to go back to Australia again until I got a house.

JP: You didn't know where you would be?

HT: I knew I'd be in central Sumatra but there was no house for me until everything was arranged. So I went to Rumbai, near Pekanbaru, where Caltex had its Sumatra headquarters, and after a few months I got a house, so Lesley could come with Eleanor and Andrew.

There were three other Indonesian geologists there. One was a Minangkabau, Bachtul Chatab, and he was married to Nita who is a daughter of Yamin. The other two: one was a fellow student of mine in Bandung, the other was a bit younger, also a graduate from Bandung, but then he was sent by Caltex to do some more training in the United States at the Texas Agricultural College.

JP: Quite a team.

HT: Yes, Later there was also a paleontologist from Bandung, Purnomo. There was quite a good Indonesian presence and I think that was because the Caltex concessions included employing national staff.

JP: Were there Americans there as well?

HT: Yes, all the chiefs of operations were Americans with Indonesian assistants, there were drilling engineers and then in the geology section there was us. So that was from 1964 until 1967.

JP: What was life like?



HT: It was luxurious compared to Belitung because even though, as national staff, we were paid in money and in kind we were also given ten US dollars a month to order things that we needed from overseas, usually Singapore. Things like powdered milk, for instance, for the children, because there was no milk in Rumbai.

JP: It was a very difficult time in Indonesia. But you were a little bit immune from it.

HT: Yeah. Again, the money was spent in a couple of weeks but at that time the inflation rate was very bad. In Belitung it had already been bad, we bought a bike in the first year that Lesley was there, I think it cost 500 rupiah. The next year we bought the lock for the bike and it cost more than 500 rupiah. That was the rate of inflation. It was about 30 or 40 percent a year. In Sumatra it was worse. By the end of '67 my salary ran up to about 250 000 rupiah and that was spent in two weeks.

JP: So even though you were earning more, inflation had gone up so you never got ahead.

HT: No. We didn't go anywhere. In Belitung we went to Bandung once for a holiday because the company had a holiday house in Bandung, but in Rumbai, we didn't go anywhere because Caltex didn't have anything like that. So if you wanted to go on holidays you had to arrange it yourself and with two young children we didn't feel like traveling in Indonesia.

JP: That was an incredible time of political change in Indonesia as well, wasn't it?

HT: It was. The main event that brought the biggest changes was, of course, the coup of '65 while we were in Rumbai. We heard about it on the radio one morning and later we heard the second broadcast of the Dewan Revolusi. That was when we heard that my brother-in-law, Giok Tjan, was also a member of the Dewan Revolusi. And not long after that we heard that he was jailed, taken into custody by Suharto.

And then we read in the newspapers about the mass murders, Central Java, Bali, some in North Sumatra. That was also the time when the leaders of the trade unions were rounded up. They were rounded up by the police with the help of the militia – the Hansip, Pertahanan sipil (civil defence). Caltex had a Hansip and every staff member had to train. I took part but the night they were rounding up the trade unionists I was in the field so I didn't have to participate.

JP: Did you know the trade unionists?

HT: I only knew them by name. The division between staff and non-staff was just too great. In Caltex you had three divisions, staff, semi-staff and non-staff.

JP: Who were the semi-staff?

HT: The semi-staff were the non-graduates doing technical work like accountants, mechanics ...

JP: So they had a trade qualification but not university degrees. The unions were only semi-staff and non-staff.

So you returned from the field and this had happened.

HT: Yes.

Around that time we got a new geologist, an American, who was to head the field mapping section. We went into the field with him and the area that we were investigating was some distance away from Rumbai and we had to go by boat.

Caltex had a landing craft to go up the river to the concession area, so we did that and for the last stretch we had to go by small skiffs with an outboard motor because the river became too shallow for the landing craft. We had to push the boat through sandbanks at times to a small village called Dalu Dalu.

At Dalu Dalu there was a military man in charge, the place was under him, and when we were ready to go home he asked for a lift down the river in the boat. And the American geologist said, 'No, you're not entitled to'. And the military man said, 'OK. If I can't go, no-one can go'. So all the boats were stranded there.

We decided to get back to Rumbai by the land route, which was longer, and we had to walk from Dalu Dalu to the next village before we could get a bus or rent a truck. That took us about a day to walk, and we camped. We must have stayed a day or two before we could get a truck to Rumbai. We arrived back in Rumbai early in the morning, about three or four o'clock.

JP: With no boat. Amazing! You couldn't negotiate with this military guy.

HT: The American didn't want to negotiate.

JP: Why did you only stay until '67? What changed?

HT: By that time I was selected by Caltex to go overseas for a training trip to London but I could already see that my future in Indonesia would be rather precarious. My brother-in-law was in jail. What was I to do after ...

JP: Had you been in touch with the family? You weren't just relying on the radio.

HT: Oh, yes. I was in touch. And the minister that had signed that I was a public servant, Chaerul Saleh, was also in jail. And he died there. So there were those ...

JP: And it had been seven years as well.

HT: Seven years, and I couldn't see myself working continuously with Caltex, so what was I to do?

JP: Was there an option of them sending you to work overseas?

HT: No, that wasn't an option. Possibly I would be sent overseas for a year or 18 months but then I would have to go back. So I told my chief geologist that my future wasn't that certain or bright here, and that even if I was sent overseas I probably wouldn't come back.

JP: Oh, you were very honest.

HT: I said, if I could arrange it, I would do some post-graduate work in Australia. I made some tentative enquiries to the University of New England because I wanted to go back to Australia. And that was when things sort of gelled for me.

My passport had run out and when I applied for a new passport I was asked for evidence that I was an Indonesian citizen. The old passport? No.

JP: It wasn't evidence, even though it said you were born here etc.

HT: No, it wasn't enough evidence. The evidence they wanted was that document that Chaerul Saleh had signed, the document saying that I was a public servant starting from the date when I arrived back from Australia.

JP: Oh, because you had to be a citizen to be a public servant.

HT: And he was the minister, but he was in jail. So it took me a few trips to Jakarta, and I went to the Department of Mines and Department of Immigration. I don't know what document it was eventually but I got a certificate in lieu of a passport. Just a scrap of paper ...

JP: Yeah, saying that you were a citizen of Indonesia.

HT: No.

JP: What did it say?

HT: It said I could go out of the country for one trip only – berlaku satu perjalanan.

JP: So when was this?

HT: That was the end of '67, probably November. And we left Sumatra mid-December, went to Jakarta and stayed with my sister for a while and had the chance to visit my brother-in-law in jail for the last time. Then we got onto a flight from Jakarta to Perth, Perth to Sydney (we had to stay overnight in Sydney) and Sydney to Melbourne. We arrived here just before Christmas on 22<sup>nd</sup> or 23<sup>rd</sup> of December.

JP: With that little slip of paper.

HT: With that little slip of paper. We had three children by that time. Fiona was born in '66. She was 18 months, just a toddler when we arrived here.

JP: What age were the kids? What passports did they have?

HT: Just on that scrap of paper. No passports either.

JP: What happened at customs here?

HT: They just accepted it.

JP: Amazing! And was it a relief?

HT: It was a great relief, but we didn't know we were going right until the moment we got onto the plane.

JP: You thought someone might stop you?

HT: Yep. And Lesley's parents were living in this house so we stayed here for a while. I enquired at the University of New England and Monash, but they didn't want me as a master's student so I had to look for work. At that time there was an exploration boom going on here in Australia so geologists were leaving the State Department to go and survey. I knew the chief geologist, the director of the Geological Survey, from my university days because he was a post-graduate student when I was there. So I went to see if he had a job for me, and when I said I could work as a sedimentologist he said if I wanted a job I could start on Monday. So that's how I got into the Geological Survey. And once I got that I immediately applied for naturalisation.

JP: Immediately? Without looking back, without thinking about how you would lose your Indonesian ...

They didn't want you?

HT: They didn't want me. And, I think Australia didn't recognise dual citizenship. When I applied for nationalisation I think I had to renounce the Indonesian citizenship.

JP: Even though there was no official recognition that you were Indonesian. Sad.

HT: But before I left Indonesia Tiong Ho, my nephew, Tiong Djin's next brother, had already finished his SMA but could not go to any university or continue his studies because of his father being in jail. He was family of a political prisoner, tapol. So we had already agreed that he could come over here.

We arrived in December of '67, and Ho arrived in June or July '68. He had to repeat his final year of high school so we sent him to Kingswood College and then he went to RMIT to do mechanical engineering. Then after that he did his PhD in die casting and worked for the CSIRO for some years. He developed a computer program for die casting that was quite well accepted in the industry. Then he left CSIRO and I think he was allowed to take the program that he'd developed with him.

JP: So did you sponsor him to live here?

HT: He lived with us.

JP: Did he come here on a student visa?

HT: Yes. His mother must have arranged money from somewhere to send him over but apart from that he lived with us, the RMIT university fees weren't too much so we were able to cover that. His mother sent money every now and then.

JP: Did he become naturalised too, after a while?

HT: Yes. And he married a Malaysian girl. They've got two sons, both doctors now. One lives in Hobart and one in Shepparton. They're both married.

JP: When did Djin come?

HT: Djin came about four years after Ho and stayed with us. Ho had finished and was already working with CSIRO as an engineer.

Lesley Tan: Djin getting here was so ... we didn't know whether he'd be allowed to go. The plane was supposed to arrive in the morning but it didn't get here until five in the evening, Christmas day. We spent the whole day wondering whether he was going to come or not. The plane was delayed but was he on it? Was it delayed because of him?

HT: Djin was more politically aware and active so he knew of Herb Feith. He contacted Herb and Herb came to visit us a few times with his son Rob, and Rob and Eleanor became friendly. They had their first child, Kate, then they got married and had Nikolas. Then they separated and Eleanor got another partner, Ian, and Rob got another partner, Lesley.

JP: So you hadn't met Herb before? Was it through Djin?

HT: I met Herb when the Australian-Indonesian Association was formed. That was in my last year. His parents were very active.

JP: That's right, his Dad was treasurer. So you'd crossed paths.

LT: We did actually meet Herb and Betty when Eleanor and Rob were toddlers. In '64.

HT: And I met Herb and Betty and Dave in Jakarta on one of my visits there in '67.

JP: Yeah. They were living there in '67. But it was kind of Djin that ...

HT: It was Djin's political awareness. That was the time we started Indonesian News Service.

JP: Yeah.

HT: It started off with Herb and some of his students coming together and we subscribed to Indonesian newspapers, cut out news items and passed them on. That's how it started. But then it fell apart when Herb was again accepted in Indonesia and he was allowed to go back.

JP: Right, because he wasn't around to keep it tightly organised.

HT: And people were also starting to make their own careers.

JP: I wonder too if the urgency of what people were engaged in kind of just died down slightly.

HT: I think once people realised Suharto was there for the long haul I think people accepted that.

JP: Yeah, it was hard to keep up the fight knowing that.

HT: Yes. The trauma of the mass murders was sort of healed or covered over in a way.

JP: And what about your sister, Siauwi Giok Tjan's wife?

HT: Well, Tjan was released from jail in '77, still under house arrest, at first, and then city arrest. But then his friends in the Netherlands managed to get him out of Indonesia and to the Netherlands, ostensibly for medical treatment because he was in pretty poor health by the time he got out. When he got out he sat behind the typewriter and just wrote all his recollections, from childhood on, and that was what he called *Lima Jaman (Five Eras)*, his memoir, which Djin tried to republish in a condensed form.

JP: So he went to Holland

HT: He went to Holland but he didn't stay idle there either. He went on lecture tours and got invited by the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam to give a few lectures, and in Leiden. It was during one of his trips to Leiden that he collapsed and died of a massive heart attack. So he was cremated in Holland. I went there, the whole family went there.

JP: So your sister was there when he died?

HT: Yes, she went with him. And their second daughter, was also there when he died. She was a doctor, graduated from Beijing but managed to get to Holland to look after him.

The whole family went for the cremation. I went with the three youngest children from Australia; the eldest son came from Hong Kong; the eldest daughter, who is married to a Chinese, came from Beijing and the second son, a doctor, also came from Beijing.

JP: How old was Siauwi when he died?

HT: He must have been in his early sixties. I think he was born in 1914, just before the First World War started.

JP: Another trauma for the family after the trauma of his detention. Shocking.

HT: Yes. Well, three of his children, the eldest daughter, the eldest son and Djin, they are the three children who tried the hardest to keep Tjan's memory alive. Some people think that they went a bit overboard.

JP: They were children living through this incredible trauma. And especially the younger ones didn't really get to know their father in the same way as the older children had, or you had even.

Lesley Tan: Especially Djin, because he was in his early teens when it happened. They were moved out of their house, didn't have anywhere to live, couldn't go to school. Ming wasn't allowed to leave the house, all those years Tjan was in jail. Djin said it was something she looks back on. Djin was able to go on messages and things like that but not Ming.

HT: Djin went with his mother to Giok Tjan's friends.

JP: So he did all that. Massive responsibility for a young boy to know all that.

LT: They had no income, nothing.

HT: Giok Bie was also jailed, but not for long. Giok Tjan was chairman of Baperki and the Baperki was a banned organisation. Giok Bie was a member of the Baperki in East Java, one of the better known members, so he also got jailed but not for very long.

JP: It could have been anyone, they could choose to imprison anyone they wanted for some vague connection.

LT: They imprisoned Soen An (Houw's brother) for a while but probably for the bribes.

JP: So your life here? It was fortunate that Lesley had family and you were able to find a sanctuary really.

HT: Yep. I had an Australian degree ...

But others, like Giok Bie's family, they found refuge in Germany. Strangely enough it was Germany. And his wife was the one who made the money. After the beauty salon she traded in anything, she made dendeng (dried meat) and sold it, krupuk (prawn crackers), sold it and she bought and sold jewellery.

JP: How did they get to Germany?

HT: First as students. Giok Bie had four daughters and a son and they all went to Germany to study. Actually, the eldest daughter went to Brazil, she graduated as a lawyer in Indonesia then got married and went to Brazil. The second daughter married a doctor and went to Norway. The third daughter married a doctor and went to the United States. The son studied architecture in Paris but I think he graduated in Germany and married a German girl. He works for the United Nations as a heritage architect in Asia. The last we heard of him he was working somewhere in Timor.

JP: Wow, things go round and round. So the family pretty much all left.

HT: Yes, they all left. Well, my younger sister is still there but all the Siauw family left.

JP: And haven't gone back to live.

HT: No. Giok Tjan's second daughter is now retired from Holland and has gone back to Jakarta because she married a Minangkabau person.

JP: Djin goes there often... you feel like his heart's still there.

HT: And among Giok Tjan's legacies are the former students of Ureka (Universitas Respublika). That was a university started by Baperki but Tjan didn't want to give it the



name of Baperki, because originally Baperki intended to be an organisation for the advancement of Indonesian citizenship. It was not meant to be a Chinese organisation but Giok Tjan's attempts to attract non-Chinese members were not successful. There were a few Indonesian members but I think they became members more out of sympathy with Giok Tjan personally rather than sympathy with the cause.

JP: And so for you, Pak, how do you feel about Indonesia now and what's your relationship with it?

HT: I consider Indonesia to be a multi-ethnic country which is still trying to find its feet, more or less. The Javanese influence is, at present, predominant and I think it will stay predominant with the other ethnic groups just going with the flow. The Chinese problem, I think, will still last for a few generations, but not for long.

JP: No, it's already improved so much. You would be amazed.

HT: I think it will disappear but whether they will then... See, the Chinese are still considered a wealthy minority, although they are not. People forget to see the poor Chinese. And there are many of them.

JP: Like your father, he was just a small businessman.

HT: Well, some of my cousins, I wouldn't know any more. I know they just disappeared. I know that they went to live in villages, may have married Javanese women ...

JP: Changed their names ...

HT: Maybe not, it doesn't matter; the children are not brought up as Chinese any more. That's how the Chinese minority was maintained, even when a Chinese man married an Indonesian or local woman the children were given Chinese names, the ancestral table was still there. Apart from that the Chinese there have lost their culture. Like my family, we didn't speak Hokkien any more. Not like in Singapore or Malaysia.

JP: No, that's right. It's not like that at all.

HT: If anything, the Chinese problem will disappear in a similar fashion to what happened in Thailand and the Philippines.

JP: Where Chineseness just gets absorbed.

HT: Yeah. I think that's happening, it will take time, probably another 70 years.

JP: Do you go back to Indonesia often?

HT: Not that often, no. The first time we went back was in '77-'78.

JP: Under Australian passports?

HT: Yes. And then a few times after that for family events.

JP: Wow. It was a pretty hasty leaving when you first left.

LT: Not only hasty but uncertain. We got rid of everything but we didn't know whether we were going. But what can you do?

JP: Yeah, but you did, which was pretty amazing. Thank goodness.

HT: What actually gave the final stamp was the certificate. That scrap of paper really made it ...

LT: Well Ming almost came as stateless as well.

HT: Giok Tjan wanted Ming to leave before she even finished her SMA because he thought the situation in Indonesia was just not good for her. So Ming came before she finished high school and went to MLC here.

She went to a Christian school in Indonesia. My younger sister was converted to Christianity, she became a Protestant and she married a minister of the church. So my younger brother-in-law was fairly high up in the Dewan Gereja Indonesia (DGI), Council of Churches in Indonesia. Again, this is one of those tyrannies of history – Giok Tjan being an atheist and his brother-in-law being secretary of the DGI.

The DGI ran a few schools so both Djin and Ming could go to the Protestant school in Jalan Pintu Air. My younger sister was a teacher and climbed up in the hierarchy of the protestant school system. So that's how they could go to school and finish their schooling. But they couldn't go to university, no way. Not even with the influence of the DGI secretary.

LT: Anyway, Giok Tjan wanted Ming to come as soon as she possibly could.

HT: And when she got here she had to apply for citizenship as a refugee.

JP: So the MLC thing comes out of the protestant ...

LT: No. I went to MLC, my mother went to MLC, my great aunt went to MLC.

JP: The MLC mafia, they were everywhere.

LT: Well, our daughters were going to MLC so obviously Ming would go there. Our son went to Camberwell Grammar and that's where Djin went because we'd chosen these schools that we thought were good and we wanted them to go somewhere good.

JP: And it all turned out pretty well for them.

LT: It's been the best thing that has come out of the Colombo Plan, I reckon, all these good Indonesians who have come to live here. I'm personally responsible for some of them. We had two other nephews and a niece come, one stayed and the other two went back.

JP: I know! Very good, well done. And they're contributing. So you had your own little Colombo Plan going on.

LT: And the next generation. Our niece's daughters came here.

HT: But they came under their own steam.

LT: But I think they came to Australia because there's already a connection here.

JP: I love hearing about how these things happen. 'I saw an ad in the paper ...' The beginning of so many great stories.

LT: Did Houw tell you about when he was a runner at the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung?

JP: Oh, did you do that too? Tell me.

HT: The first Afro-Asian Conference was in Bandung when I was there and Reuters had a temporary office there with two reporters. And they wanted someone that would take the messages from the reporters to the telegraph office and make sure that the messages were sent.

JP: How did you get the job? Did they advertise and you just applied.

HT: Yes. I had to go to the main conference in the Hotel Homan and wait for the reporters, I think they were English, to write their dispatches.

Then I took the dispatches from the hotel to the telegraph office, paid for the telegram and made sure they got sent off, got the receipt and went back again.

JP: So you'd already put in your application to go to Australia.

HT: Yes, I think I might even have had the acceptance and reception with Sukarno.

JP: You know Herb was there, working for the Ministry of Information putting out their bulletins.

HT: I didn't meet him there.

JP: Do you know this guy, his name was Suparman, he came out with the first planeload, with your lot, and he was also doing a job of some kind at Bandung.

HT: Yes, I know him.

JP: And Suparman was declared the 1000<sup>th</sup> Colombo Plan student to come to Australia so he did big media tours, there's a lot about him in the archives. He came on the first plane and went to Sydney. There were so many in that '55 group.

HT: 200 there were.

JP: They'd been sending 10 or 20 or so and then suddenly 200. There's a lot of historians looking at this now and some say it was a coincidence but other say it wasn't a coincidence that the 200 came at a time when the Australian government was trying to get leverage over the Indonesian government over some trade negotiations.

HT: Well Casey was the Foreign Minister in those days and Lady Casey had a few receptions for Colombo Plan students and we went to some of them here in Melbourne.

LT: They were all very nice and we kept in touch with some of them for quite a while, with Mrs Rothfield, the Hunts and the Hoveys.

HT: The Hunts had a house down here near the railway line in Hartwell but Mrs Hunt said Mr Hunt couldn't stand the noise of the trains and so they moved.

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