

## PERSONAL NOTES ABOUT STUYVESANT HIGH SCHOOL by A KID FROM CHINATOWN

### Chinese Americans:

In my 1947 graduation yearbook at Stuyvesant High School, I found that there were only 5 Chinese Americans, 10 African Americans and the rest was predominately Jewish among the 592 graduating seniors. Recently there were 26,971 applicants for the freshman class of 2016. Of the 950 who were offered admission, 682 were Asians and 9 were black. How times have changed for some and not for others. There is some legislative and political activity to increase the number of African American and Hispanic American students by changing the way applicants are admitted which now is still based solely on a single test, the Specialized High School Admission Test (SHSAT). Fortunately, many parents and alumni want to retain the SHSAT but they do offer tutoring programs to those groups who do poorly in examinations. I think it was Mrs Cassidy, our teacher in the 8th grade at PS 23, who gave us some preparation for the admission test. In those days, I believe that a separate test was given for each of the three specialized schools, Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Tech and Bronx Science.

### Judge Denny Chin:

One of the most prominent Stuyvesant alumni is Judge Denny Chin of the US Court of Appeals who sits in the courthouse at 500 Pearl St (the entrance to this building is actually located on Worth St opposite Columbus Park and True Light Lutheran Church). He was in the class of 1971 and played in the varsity football team as center I think. His brothers and sons went to Stuyvesant. Please read his NY Times article, “ Me, My Grandfather and Citizenship Day”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/16/opinion/me-my-grandfather-and-citizenship-day.html>

His story should be familiar to all of us but not so much to the general public. Born in Hong Kong, Judge Chin came to the US at a young age. His grandfather entered the US by buying a piece of paper representing that he was the son of a citizen, making it possible for his family to eventually enter the US. This was all necessary because of the Chinese Exclusion Act. His grandfather's naturalization paper hangs proudly in his court office. I never met Judge Chin but I knew some of his family members including his grandfather who worked in my parents' restaurant in Chinatown when I was a rookie waiter. I remember him fondly as Cheung Baak ( 長伯 ).

### Madison Square Garden:

Attending Stuyvesant High School was academically challenging. However, one of my biggest thrills that I remember most at Stuy was when I played a NYC Parks Department Daily Mirror citywide championship game at Madison Square Garden before 15,000 fans on a Saturday afternoon in 1947 with a team of my senior classmates as told in my article in the Alumni Spectator which is attached below. Edited out because of space considerations was a photo of the Garden crowd (also attached) and the ending of the article which reads as follows:

[[Interestingly on that day at the Garden, a Stuyvesant sophomore also played but on a Bronx team that won the junior division championship. He was Jack Molinas, (class of 1949), who later

was on the varsity squad as a junior and senior. He became infamous as a banned NBA player and also as a murdered gambler.\*\*

While we did not officially represent the school, it could be said that at least on that day in 1947, a team of eight Stuyvesant seniors did win one citywide basketball championship at Madison Square Garden and a sophomore student contributed to another.

\*\*Rosen, Charley. The Wizard of Odds (p.41). New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001.

Also see Stuyvesant High School, The First Hundred Years (p.94), 2014.]]

I did not know Molinas who was a sophomore when I was a senior. Because of Stuyvesant's "split session" in which freshmen and sophomores attended classes in the afternoon with juniors and seniors in the morning, he could play in the varsity only during his last 2 years. Molinas went from Stuyvesant to Columbia and then to the NBA where he was kicked out for his betting during college even though he had been gambling all along from high school to the NBA. He became a lawyer after graduating from Brooklyn Law School in the top 10% of the class but the NBA refused to reinstate him. Later he spent 5 years in prison for fixing college games. While trading furs from Taiwan and engaging in the pornography business in LA, he was killed at the age of 43.

Looking Back:

After I graduated from PS 23, the adjustment in leaving Chinatown to attend Stuyvesant High School was relatively easy. I believe the reasons were because Stuyvesant was not that far away from Chinatown and the academic environment made us concentrate on our studies. Also, there was no bullying.

The old Stuyvesant High School was located on 15th St and 16th St between 1st and 2nd Ave. The students in the first 2 years attended classes only in the afternoon and the those in the last 2 years only in the morning. This "split session" was necessary because the school building was too small to accommodate all the students. Stuyvesant had entrances on 15th St and 16th St so the lower classmen had to wait outside on 16th St and only entered the building as the upper classmen exited out on to 15th St around 12:15 PM.

To get to school, we took the 3rd Avenue elevated train from Chatham Square to 14th St. Sometimes we would be on the same train as the girls going to the all girls Washington Irving High School so the trip then was fun. Stuyvesant was all boys at that time. There was no real cafeteria at the school but there were food carts in the streets outside- one of our favorites was knish (a Jewish potato cake). Also, we could bring a Char Siu Bao (叉燒包) from Chinatown for a snack.

That is it for now.

Submitted by Newton Chin, 2017