

Mr Thurai Singam a/l Vellasamy

(1954)

Accession number: S15001

Track Number: S15001_0001, S15001_0002, S15001_0003, S15001_0004, S15001_0005,
S15001_0006, S15001_0007, S15001_0008, S15001_0009

Duration: 04:48:17

Language/Dialect: Tamil

Track: S15001_0001	Time frame: 00:00:00 - 00:10:00
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Born in 1954 at 7 King Street. Family background. His father became the chief tenant at 7 King Street in 1947. Described his father's background. Went to Hutchings School, then to Scotland Secondary School. Described showing interest in handwork since young. Described his option of job and how he eventually ended up becoming a carpenter. Described offering himself to work for a Chinese carpenter, letting him to evaluate him for a week before taking him in.</p>	
Track: S15001_0001	Time frame: 00:10:00 - 00:20:08
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Described beginning to be looked up when he was able to translate a white man customer's request into a design while his boss could not. Being assigned with the materials checking job after about ten years working with the Chinese carpenter. Described the location of the furniture shop that he worked with. Why he chose this shop while there were other furniture shops on the same street. Opened his own shop when his boss shifted the shop to Johor. Maintained a working relationship with his ex-boss after leaving the place.</p>	
Track: S15001_0001	Time frame: 00:20:08 - 00:31:03
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Mentioned receiving work assignment for more than 10 shops in Komtar. Described giving idea to his boss on how to make some furniture better and earned more money, then got some money back in return. How he communicated with the Chinese. His advantages as compared to them. His annual bonus. Described getting paid differently compared to other Chinese carpenters. Why did he not argue about his salary. What did he learn from working in the shop. Mentioned given good treatment by the boss. Described a Chinese who taught him a lot. Described the daily routine. How he picked up carpentry.</p>	

Track: S15001_0002	Time frame: 00:00:00 - 00:10:08
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Described how he picked up carpentry. Described making a drawer for a Chinese customer and proved his talent although he was racially discriminated. Mentioned a doctor customer. Explained how he picked up carpentry gradually. His advantages in helping him to master the skill fast. Mentioned it was important for a carpenter to measure accurately.</p>	
Track: S15001_0002	Time frame: 00:10:08 - 00:20:08
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Mentioned his boss took accuracy of the measurement seriously. Described willing to do anything assigned to him and that was how he learnt everything. Mentioned some of the skills that he was not able to learn. Mentioned making secret door in a cabinet. Time taken to learn the skills required for carpentry job. Described making secret door in a cabinet for a Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) customer and the customer was not able to find it after 10 days, until he showed him.</p>	
Track: S15001_0002	Time frame: 00:20:08 - 00:31:03
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Awarded money by the surprised RAAF customer. Then he was given money and some machines by his boss to open a shop when his boss moved to Johor. Mentioned it was all the skills he learnt that he was able to earn more. Stressed on the importance to master not only woodwork but other skills required in this field. Mentioned there were only three colours available for wood colouring in the past, and one had to know how to mix them to create other shades. The usual customers when he was working for his boss. Type of work that would be assigned to him. His best-selling work. Described some customers would show cuttings from magazines to request for certain design of the furniture. Tools used.</p>	
Track: S15001_0003	Time frame: 00:00:00 - 00:10:08
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Described the importance of keeping the tools neatly. The most important tools for a carpenter. Compared tools used in the past and in the present days. Described some carpentry rules set by his boss. Described ritual performed when doing woodwork. Mentioned his boss would check their tools to make sure they were sharp at all times. The most important tool for a carpenter.</p>	

Track: S15001_0003	Time frame: 00:10:08 - 00:20:08
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Mentioned that carpenters did not share certain tools. Where he bought the tools. Type of plywood available today. Described types of gums. Mentioned that machine could do work faster.</p>	
Track: S15001_0003	Time frame: 00:20:08 - 00:31:03
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Elaborated on types of woods and their differences. Described considerations made in deciding wood material used and time required to produce a wood work. Described gum used. Mentioned the use of machine in colour mixing nowadays. Compared good and low quality nails.</p>	
Track: S15001_0004	Time frame: 00:00:00 - 00:10:01
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Religious practice that he used to perform when he was working. Explained work procedure. Described the importance of mastering the measurement skill. Differences between teak wood from Burma and from Thailand. Described explaining the reason to the customers if they gave a higher quotation than others. How he learnt to identify wood quality.</p>	
Track: S15001_0004	Time frame: 00:10:01 - 00:20:08
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Mentioned taking a bath before working on altar making, if he had been to places that was considered impure. Felt relieved only when the goods were delivered safely and the customers were satisfied. Described how he would try to make his work perfect even though he could not earn that much as the satisfied customers would bring more customers in return. His motto. Described making a door for his boss's office, ended up getting mass order from Singapore and made his boss rich. Mentioned the shop that he worked at had made him who he was today. Mentioned prayers performed by his boss.</p>	
Track: S15001_0004	Time frame: 00:20:08 - 00:37:38
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Described prayers performed by him. Deities worshipping performed by the Chinese in the shop. His diet practice. Work principles that he learnt from his boss and his father. Shared carving tips. Described carving procedures. Solution when there was a defect. How he learnt carving. Characteristics that one should have to do carving. The deciding factors for lifelike dragon carving. Common carved pieces that were requested by the Indians and Chinese, and why. Felt happy for being able to know friends from all trades through carpentry.</p>	

Track: S15001_0005	Time frame: 00:00:00 - 00:10:08
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Described how he ended up opening his own carpentry shop. Described a benefactor who had trained his memory power. Described preparation made to start his business. Described how his background inspired him to become a businessman.</p>	
Track: S15001_0005	Time frame: 00:10:08 - 00:20:08
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Described maintaining his religion as a Hinduism follower. Described getting some money from his boss to start his own shop in Penang. Explained why he would get such big amount of money from his boss while other workers did not. Described his relationship with his boss. Described his passion for his work.</p>	
Track: S15001_0005	Time frame: 00:20:08 - 00:31:03
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Why was passion so important. Mentioned that his first shop was located at 7 King Street. Described how he slowly occupied the whole of the ground floor and converted it into his workshop. In 1981 his workshop was burnt down, forcing him and his family to stay with his sister, but they came back every day. Described having dispute with the house owner. Was ordered to move out from the house (7 King Street) after 60 years of staying. Moved to his neighbour's house next door and built a room for his mother with similar fashion with the previous room. Described the loss caused by the fire. Went to work in the council for a few years before resuming his carpentry work.</p>	
Track: S15001_0006	Time frame: 00:00:00 - 00:10:00
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Mentioned taking optional retirement from the council after purchasing some tools and resumed his carpentry work. Described getting 7 King Street house repair work done in 1981, but only getting the electricity in 1985 because of disturbance from the house owner. Described getting help from his Chinese carpenter friends to help with the burnt house repairing work. Mentioned place to get repair work materials. Described his feelings about the fire. Worked very hard to earn a living after the fire. Mentioned working a few jobs to help earn a higher income.</p>	

Track: S15001_0006	Time frame: 00:10:00 - 00:20:00
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Described fixing the burnt house part by part when earning was made. Safety precaution taken after the fire. Moved to 5 King Street afterwards. Described his relationship with his neighbour at 5 King Street. Became a tenant at 5 King Street when the neighbour passed away. Mentioned moving his workshop to 5 King Street in 2001. Described dispute happened between the 7 King Street house owner and his family and brought the case to the court. Why they lost the case in the end. Determined to restart his business after the incident.</p>	
Track: S15001_0006	Time frame: 00:20:00 - 00:31:03
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Described all family members worked hard after the fire to earn a living. Mentioned maintaining the same layout of 7 King Street when rebuilding the house, and replicated the same room for his mother at 5 King Street. His mother's feelings when having to leave 7 King Street. Described repairing the burnt house. The use of space at 5 King Street currently. The insects and pets prevention. Explained storage of finishing work in the house. Described keeping a low noise level in the neighbourhood.</p>	
Track: S15001_0007	Time frame: 00:00:00 - 00:10:00
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Described precaution taken to make sure all lights were put off before going to bed to prevent fire. What he learnt from the religious leaders after involving in prayer altar making. His business principles. Described his religious practice. Mentioned integrating some of the Chinese way in practicing his religious practice.</p>	
Track: S15001_0007	Time frame: 00:10:00 - 00:20:00
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Continued describing his religious practice. Described making design to suit people's needs. Described materials used in prayer altar making, and why so. How he learnt to make altars.</p>	
Track: S15001_0007	Time frame: 00:20:00 - 00:31:03
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Described designing the altar based on the statue and vice versa. Mentioned examples of animals that were associated with the deities. Mentioned minimum height of the altar. Mentioned a book he read about prayer altar making. Differences between a temple and a prayer altar.</p>	

Track: S15001_0008	Time frame: 00:00:00 - 00:10:00
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Mentioned some customers would ask for the delivery of altar on an auspicious time, some did not worry about it. Why did he begin making Kavadi. Materials used to make Kavadi. Number of people who would work on the Kavadi making. Why should Kavadi be heavy. Mentioned requirements for the Kavadi dancers. His earning and charges.</p>	
Track: S15001_0008	Time frame: 00:10:00 - 00:20:00
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Insisted to deliver only fine work. Mentioned that he was involved in a renovation project in Mariamman Temple about 20 years ago. Used renovation work in Krishnan Temple in Sungai Ara as an example to explain why he was charging higher than the others. His usual customers.</p>	
Track: S15001_0008	Time frame: 00:20:00 - 00:31:03
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>Technique used in woodwork making to prevent insect problems. Mentioned facing difficulty in getting some materials as many of the shops had closed down. How was the closing of the shops affected his business. Deciding factors of the colours used. Customers who made a strong impression on him.</p>	
Track: S15001_0009	Time frame: 00:00:00 - 00:10:00
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>His business hours. Described his daily routine. Why did he insist on opening the shop every day. Ritual performed when moving back to stay in the burnt house, when the renovation was done. Ritual performed when moving to 5 King Street. Described his feelings when being evicted from 7 King Street and had to work at only one place instead of two. His mother's feelings when they were evicted from the house.</p>	
Track: S15001_0009	Time frame: 00:10:00 - 00:20:00
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>How he managed to stay in the current house (5 King Street) without paying "coffee money". The previous and current rental of the house. The reason of continuing to stay in King Street. The reason of his liking of George Town. Mentioned pull carts could be seen in George Town in the past and how he helped his friend in pushing the carriage and got paid to buy tools.</p>	
Track: S15001_0009	Time frame: 00:20:00 - 00:33:18
<p>Synopsis:</p> <p>The changes in George Town. Money spent in repairing the house. Negotiated with the house owner about rental increment since he did all the repair work using his own money. The changes in George Town. The advantages he had for staying in George Town.</p>	