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Title: Paul Satoh Interview
Narrator: Paul Satoh
Interviewer: Naoko Wake
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[Mr. Satoh's son Gordon Satoh was present at the interview, and when he speaks, he is denoted as GS]

<Begin Segment 1>

NW: So, whenever I uh, talk with people, I first ask questions about their childhood. I'd like to know when you were born and where you're from, but also something about your parents—your mother, your father, what they did, what you remember about them. Uh, so let's start with those things.

PS: You know, probably not relevant. I was uh, born in Osaka, 1936. November sixth. And um . . . my parents . . . I'm their only child, so I was highly spoiled, but uh . . . um, my father was a chemical engineer. And um, so . . . the—their—Chemical . . . companies my father used to work was the first company that made sulfuric acid with the capability [?] method. Before the 1930s, most of the sulfuric acid was made in a lead chamber method. Lead chamber method actually had a lot of contamination with the lead in the sulfuric acid and also not only that but the concentration doesn't go more than thirty percent. But if you use vanadium oxide method, they can actually have about 98 percent pure sulfuric acid. And sulfuric acid is very important for um . . . they—all sorts of chemical reactions. Uh, if you—somebody take organic chemistry, sulfuric acid is all over, because it makes an ester [?] or to make the dehydration of the reaction so that many of the organic synthesis requires a high quality of the sulfuric acid. That was the most important at that time, and my father's company had a contract. For the collaboration of the contract was a German company which I don't remember. But for that reason I was brought up in pretty much a chemical environment. When I was about five, two people talking about the catalysis and vanadium oxide—the black powder. And, eh . . . that I think it is very interesting because that probably triggered me to be a chemist. And the vanadium oxide is nothing really new to me when I was about six or seven years old. And I used to have a German scientist—the German engineer used to come. And um . . .

NW: So you mean at your home, you would have a chance to sort of interact with them?

PS: Oh yes. They liked Japanese business. Not only the factory, you know, the company-based. But they—we had this personal uh, you know, visits and things like that. And uh, I remember that the—when I was a kid I wanted to become a Navy man. So they have a—small Navy uniforms and uh . . . and then, one of the . . . one time in Osaka they have German kids actually visiting so we had the exchange in the park—something like this. But, um, I remember that, you know, most of the time people—German engineer come—they bring those German candies. So I was really well-endowed with the German candies.

NW: Do you have a—do you have any recollection of flavors? Or, what candy they might have been?

PS: Well, it was a little bit too harsh for me, but they have a strawberry flavor, and sometimes an orange flavor and they have a beautiful gold and silver wrappings, so . . . And my mother used to put that one at the entrance to our house, you know, kind of the *gankan*. And so my friends usually come and grab a couple of these so I was very popular among them. [Laughing]

NW: [Laughing] It must have been a rare commodity among kids at that time.

PS: Well, because the—in Osaka in those days, uh. . . that's a kind of interesting place. At the Yodogawa um . . . the Meiji, across the Yodogawa dempo-chō. Uh, that it was pretty much the factory workers in the areas. There's no big houses, but my father became, I think a department chief of the old—the unit. So the company for some security reason, they used to come and pick up my father every morning. And um. . . so that was kind of fun.

NW: Was he around. . . at home, to interact with children? I mean, are you the . . .

PS: Uh. . . not really, because he had a more often. . . you know, when he was on the uh—in the factory floors—it's not—he used to come home pretty much, you know, regularly. But then when he was promoted, I think, his lifestyle changed quite a bit. He um. . . had more parties with the business dinners and things like that. So, my mother and I were the only ones usually here, so I have more influence by my mother than my father, but, professionally it's a little bit different. Professionally, I have enough the saltine [?] inside. The chemical word. Like the containers they use—they can't have huge bottles of the sulfuric acid. So what they do—the container has—the tank, huge tank, that has windows, but the steel was made of silicone—the silicone iron. The mixture between silicone and iron—the alloy type of this—that type of container can hold very strong acid. That type of things I had known and uh . . . from the early days, my father was very strict to me uh, to draw the mechanical drawings. So, I had to make a kind of perfect drawing of the compressor. And that was before, you know, the—I was about five or six years old.

NW: Very young.

PS: I remember crying, you know, several times because I couldn't make a perfect drawing. But uh. . . that's what I remember in Osaka. And Osaka. . .

NW: Right.

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