

Jesse Chong on Inheriting a Liquor Store (cont'd)

By David Arnold

The Chong reputation

John Chong was an ambitious entrepreneur and a devoted provider. Old friends, customers, and vendors still come to the little shop on the corner of Irving and Mount Pleasant to tell Jesse stories about his father. “He was a generous man and never said no to anybody,” Jesse says with notable admiration. His father was also a devoted member of Global Mission Church in Silver Spring through which he took mission trips to China, Korea, and Latin America. Jesse adds one more dimension: “And he was the life of the party, but I didn’t think he was all that funny. I thought he was very corny,” he adds with affection. One remark stands out in Jesse’s memory. He remembers his father telling him more than once, “Let’s get a bigger shop. We’ll just do this together.”

“I always had it in the back of my head that I would help him, but I never thought it would be so soon.” Moments later, Jesse identified his own place in the family shop. “I always thought of the shop as my dad’s shop. I’m just watching over it.”

We are alone in the shop and Jesse’s tone changes as he addresses another reason why he gave up his design career. “I’ve ended up becoming the expert here,” and to no one in particular, Jesse asks, “When did I become the guy that people come for advice? It does feel like I’ve come full circle from not wanting to be back here and now excited about what new products are coming in.”

A three-year trial

Upon his father’s death, his mother gave Jesse permission to sell the store. Jesse replied, “I’ll give it three years, I don’t want to regret that I didn’t try to run the shop.”

It took just that long for Jesse to rebuild the shelves, create a new interior, and take several wine certification courses. A local bartender who would stop by and talk about different liqueurs and drinks he was making at his restaurant gave him the idea to develop a special section for Italian herbal amaros and specialty liqueurs from around the world. Gavin, who worked at a popular bar called Room 11, began recommending brands to stock so Jesse’s customers could mix cocktails at home. Dozens of new customers walked in and told Jesse, “Gavin sent me.”

A new family policy

As an immigrant John Chong’s work ethic served as a model for the business but it left little time for his children. When the Chongs came to America, John was still in high school and spoke no English. He learned the language and worked at a 7-Eleven until he had the money to acquire his first store in Ivy City. From there he bought and sold several liquor stores throughout Washington D.C. until he acquired Irving Wine & Spirits from a family member in the early 1980’s.

During those years, the family lived in Silver Spring. Jesse says his father wanted the best for his children. We learned piano, swimming, and endless afterschool activities. Jesse attended Good

Counsel High School and later transferred to Churchill High School where he played football and volleyball.

“My wife, Jean, has a great career,” Jesse says. ‘And she’s very good at it.’ The couple and their two children, Jaxon and Juliet, live in Fairfax near Jean’s office. “I have morning duties with the kids,” he says, “and Jean takes them in the afternoon. We try our best to have a good work/life balance.” The store is open from 11 am to 8 pm, Monday through Saturday and closed on Sundays.

Jesse now tells distributors what kinds of spirits, wines, craft beers he wants to curate in his shop. “I wanted to create a different type of shop,” Jesse says. You can go to any corner and find a liquor store but I wanted to create a shop that feels like it was made just for you. As I get to know my customers I try to recommend things based on your personal taste and preferences.

Jesse proudly features Reboot Beverage's Mount Pleasant Whiskeys in his shop. He met Reboot owners Troy Hughes and John Loughner when they first had the idea to start a whiskey company based on an old bottle Troy found in his home. Jesse told them they were crazy but if they did make it he would keep the cost as low as possible so they could sell as much of it in the neighborhood because “Mount Pleasant loves Mount Pleasant,” he says with a grin.

Recollection Part 3: Making a Life in Mount Pleasant (cont'd)

By Bette Davis

He was away from home for three to five days at a time traveling to California, Mexico, New York, and Florida. He was out of town the day we moved into our new home, so he had to call home to get our address.

He usually took the streetcar home from Union Station but when he had a lot to carry— stalks of sugar cane, oranges, apples, and pastries—he caught a cab. When Richard Nixon ran for President, my father brought home buttons, posters, and stickers from the campaign. My father was not a member of the Republican Party.

We could always tell he was home from the smell of his cigar as we entered the vestibule. My father quipped that one time when Ella Fitzgerald boarded the train with a White woman, the White conductor mistook Ms. Fitzgerald for the maid when it was the other way around. He also said Sammy Davis, Jr., and Frank Sinatra were good tippers but I'd rather not mention the names of other celebrities who were not. Regina and I had fun counting the quarters, dimes, nickels, and pennies from tips he received.

He was an ardent reader and loved to go fishing and play cards, particularly pinochle. He had faith in God and believed in what he called Divine Providence” but he did not attend church. He disliked Baptist preachers because when he was a young boy a pastor refused to give him a job reference after he performed some church chores.

Urseline Davis

It was my mother's idea to move to Park Road. My grandmother once asked my mother, “Who told you to buy this big house?” Throughout her adult life my mother did day work throughout the Washington, D.C., area and later worked as a practical nurse at the House of Mercy.

She was brave, kind, and loved children. She gave us all the foundation and encouragement to succeed at whatever we endeavored to do. If my father came home from the train at Union Station at 2 a.m. in the morning, she rose up to cook my father a good meal to eat. I believe God gave my mother an abundance of wit to carry out her own mission as a wife and friend to our father and as a mother to her seven children, to her own mother, to nieces and nephews, grandchildren and as a licensed foster mother to many babies and children.

Some of the White girls at House of Mercy who came up Park Road to go to the stores in Mount Pleasant were very fond of mother and they stopped by our house from time to time to see her and chat. When the demographics of Mount Pleasant began to change and more Black families moved into the neighborhood, I noticed the White girls no longer came up to the Mount Pleasant stores or to our house.



Bette's mother—Urseline Mosby Jackson Davis—remembered as brave, kind, and loving of children—worked near her Park Road home at the House of Mercy, now Rosemount Center, founded as a “sanctuary” for unwed mothers and their babies, according to the D.C. Historic Preservation Office. Photo: Courtesy Davis family

Her faith and trust in God were her guide and stay. She loved to go to church and became a member of the Deaconess Board and Canaan Baptist church at 16th & Newton Streets, N.W. Two of her favorite sayings were, “God is so good” and “If a little bird can do, so can I.”

She was a natural-born mother. She listened to the cares of family, neighbors, and friends and knew what to say. She had a knack for knowing what to do. If there was a problem at school, she was there to kindly address the issue; when she could, she attended many of our basketball and football games and school plays. She took us to New York City and Coney Island for summer vacations.

Brothers and sisters

The streetcar also carried us to downtown D.C. where we shopped at Woodward & Lothrop, Kanns, Lansburgh, and other stores. I rode the streetcar part of the way to school from Mount Pleasant and Lamont to 20th & P Streets and caught the D4 or D2 bus to Western Senior High School at 35th & R Streets, N.W. One time the streetcar lost power at the underground stop on P Street. I'm embarrassed to say that my brother Michael had to come get me because I didn't know what bus to take to get home.



Top left to right: Gwendolyn, Michael, Ora, and Bette. Bottom left to right: Lawrence, John, Lawrence “Happy” Davis—who holds the 1984 family reunion trophy for having the most children—and Regina. Photo: Courtesy Davis family

Two of my sisters still reside in D.C. and nearby Maryland. One sister and all of my brothers have passed. Michael was my youngest brother. Michael enjoyed working with the elderly. At an early age he was called to preach and was licensed by John Stewart United Methodist Episcopal church. He earned an associate degree from Morristown Jr. College and a B.A. degree in sociology from Wiley College in Marshall, Texas. He returned home and worked in social services for several churches: Sharpe Street Methodist church in Baltimore, Maryland, St. Lukes church in Silver Spring, Maryland, and St. Lukes United Methodist Church in N.W., Washington, D.C. Michael was a wonderful person. He died of AIDS in March of 1993.

The Accomplished Village Intern (cont'd)

"It got a lot harder from there, really," Zoe acknowledges. She and her fellow students recognized that they needed to take a hard, practical path towards their goals. "We decided to approach it step by step. We can't try to get it all implemented all at once."

This pragmatic mindset led the group to an analysis of the current state of the city's efforts to address environmental concerns in schools. "We decided we would focus mostly on green infrastructure and then couple that with climate disaster plans' aspect of it because they go hand in hand."



Village intern Zoe Fisher testifies at the budget oversight hearings.

Among other things, this meant that the students needed to become familiar with the city's Master Facilities Plan, which is reviewed every five to ten years. This focus resulted in their advocacy for replacing the HVAC systems, which in many schools are antiquated, inefficiently running "way too hot or way too cold." They needed to understand why filters in water fountains never seemed to be changed and what that said about the city's attention to environmental hazards. And they pushed for what they feel to be a common-sense pairing of the Department of Energy and Environment's "Riversmart" program with the ongoing modernization of city public schools.

For Zoe and her fellow students, the height of their accomplishments so far has been their April 5 testimony at the D.C. Council's budget hearing for the Department of General Services, chaired by Council Member Janeese Lewis-George. In the hearing, Zoe distilled the demands outlined in the Green New Deal for Schools: "The resolution demands that all school facilities and amenities run on 100 percent renewable energy, be climate resilient, and ensure safe, non-toxic learning environments. Furthermore, climate disaster plans must be put in place to ensure the safety of students, teachers, and other DCPS faculty members when a climate event strikes." How did the

hearing go? “We felt like we got a great response from her,” Zoe says of the Council Member. “She was asking a lot more questions” than the group had fielded following testimony in other hearings. The key now, says Zoe, is to make sure Council Member Lewis-George follows up on the concrete requests made during the hearing. This is a lesson she and her fellow students have taken from their conversations with experienced advocates, a valuable part of their learning process.

Many have suggested that through her advocacy for the Green New Deal for Schools Zoe has found her path in life, but she expects her search to continue. “I’m not sure that politics is what I want to get into,” she says. “I know this is going to be very helpful with ... just being a citizen of the world and understanding how these things work.”

“But my mind is open to doing other things and to finding ways to use this knowledge to help me in whatever career I end up in.”

However, in her work with the Village’s Climate Crisis Action Group, Zoe is using her newfound knowledge already, helping to focus the agenda and determine ways to add Villagers’ voices to the chorus demanding changes in the way we care for our planet. Zoe is employing her newly acquired skills and providing a great example for the Action Group’s seasoned advocates. We are fortunate she is sharing the struggle with us.

The Chilean Coup & Mount Pleasant: Memories (cont'd)

Those of us living this reality soon realized that staying in Chile would likely cause more harm than good, so each of us independently decided to move to the U.S., and we all concluded that we would be able to do more to stop the vast amount of U.S. military and economic aid flowing to the coup government in Washington than anywhere else.

As we gathered at what was then called the Loop (now Marx Café), we took stock of our situation. We all needed a place to live and Mount Pleasant—diverse, inexpensive and centrally located—seemed the perfect place to set up shop. We pooled our resources and moved into a huge house on Lamont Street. Yes, I guess you could call it a commune because we shared all expenses, but most of all, we were determined to do everything possible to be in solidarity with the Chilean people and stop U.S. support for General Pinochet.



From Left: Joe Eldridge, Trish Ahern, Pat Ahern, and friend

Thus Mount Pleasant became the epicenter for Chile solidarity in Washington. We arranged for speakers, concerts, and cultural events at our home or, more often, at All Soul's Church Unitarian. Chilean folk groups that had been touring found their way to us, and we sponsored concerts for the renowned Chilean groups Inti-Illimani and Quilapayun and a speaking engagement for the widow of the real troubadour of Chile, Victor Jara.

Over the ensuing months we were able to halt U.S. military assistance to Chile and give shelter to victims of Chilean repression. It is a part of the neighborhood's history that merits being told and retold to new generations of residents.

In addition to this "Chile community" our Catholic friends opened up the Tabor (hospitality) House on Monroe Street, N.W. Founders Father Peter Hinde (Carmelite), sister Betty Campbell (Sister of Mercy), and Tadeo (aka Spike) Zywicki welcomed all visitors and I stayed there for several days after returning from Chile. They eventually moved the Tabor House to El Paso, Texas.

by Carlos (Caco) Salazar

I am Caco Salazar, the author of the mural at 18th Street and Columbia Road, N.W., painted in 1977. I've been asked if my work has any implications in the arts of the time, now that we commemorate the bloody coup that took place the 11th of September 1973. To some degree "yes," because I was a young university student at a time of an emerging progressive movement

in democracy which regards the arts as a means for changing the welfare of the working class. This meant a more open mind and committed education, exposing the nature of historical injustice and inequality. I was unaware of politics and critical thinking until I researched the education philosophy of Paulo Freire and others who were published in the 60s. Changes started to take place in this generation of dreamers.



Self photo of artist and muralist Carlos (Caco) Salazar.



Mural created by Coco Salazar in 1977 at the corner of 18th and Columbia Road, N.W., now the side of the Kogibow Bakery building. Photo: Rick Reinhard.

I wasn't a socialist or a communist but felt it was time to rethink a world with more opportunities for the outcast. So yes, that opened a part of me, to use my art to create a new society. This utopic stand in life led me to an open search for meaning in art, and when I moved to the United States in 1974, I was inspired by the civil rights movement—Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, and the blues.

So when living in D.C. I did not declare myself as someone just passing by. I was here to give and to receive, I decided to be one of the rest, and I had much more to learn. I applied for a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and received one. I did not pretend to paint a master mural painting. Within a little time and with no sophisticated materials, I invited friends and people walking by to participate in an art celebration. Musicians and children were welcome. I had my truth but did not impose it; no pamphleteer discussion was on my mind. I was tactful not to address the sad and dark days of the coup. On the contrary this would be a shining hope for community efforts in a very rich area of multicultural identity. Salvador Allende died trying in his way to give a better life for everyone and left us thinking what went wrong. But true ideals do not die and his rightful intentions will find us living a life that cares for mother earth and its children, art education for all, and freedom. But never totalitarian dominion...

by Carlos Arrien

My name is Carlos Arrien. I can add to this story about Mount Pleasant and the Chilean coup. For a time I lived in a collective house on Lamont Street diagonal from the house described by Joe Eldridge.



Musician and activist Carlos Arrien on Lamont Plaza. Photo: Rick Reinhard.

In the summer of 1975, I was invited to D.C. with my newly formed Andean music group for the closing of the summer youth art works program held by a group of Latino artists. Pancho Otero was the leader of this group and soon after they founded Centro de Arte. Among the founders were artists Carlos (Caco) Salazar and Felipe Martinez. Caco and Pancho shared a group house with the Colombian theater director who started the theater program at Centro de Arte. This house was also shared by Caco's brother Nato and Suann Hecht. Suann was the organizer behind takeover of [Stone Soup](#), the food coop that became another anchor for the emerging community of young progressives. The presence of the Chileans and Nicaraguans who were students in Chile during the coup also made solidarity with Chile a main focus for this community.

WAVE President Mary Jo Deery Looks at Current Village Trends (cont'd)

"We're agnostic as to Village model. We try to have programming that can support Villages of all sizes and shapes. And in that vein, we did set up a mentoring program," says Deering. "Most of the organization's programs, but not all, are aimed toward management issues." Over the course of the pandemic the organization held Zoom programs; last fall WAVE worked with the Village to Village Network--a national organization of Villages--on a joint conference addressing topics such as Blue Zone insights, measuring the impact of Villages, sponsorship fundraising, Village collaborations, expanding diversity, digital presence, leadership transitions, growing volunteers, and helping frail members--all topics that will resound with active member of our Village. This year's conference is set for October 15 at the Silver Spring Civic Center.

Deering sees hub and spoke Villages as a coming trend. That is, a central administrative hub--a separate 501(c)3--would serve several neighborhood Villages, eliminating the need to duplicate administrative functions and costs. According to Deering, public policy and large philanthropy and health entities are looking to Villages and other community based programs as extensions of their own responsibilities and are supporting a variety of models for this purpose. WAVE has received funding from the Maryland Department of Aging (MDOA) to expand and enhance programs and services for volunteer-based community organizations that help older adults remain in their communities in Maryland. WAVE will also assist MDOA in establishing an advisory council for that effort.

Documentation on the scope and characteristics of Village work and impact will be extremely important nationwide, according to Deering, and will require more consistent reporting of Village activities. Experts see value in reducing hospital readmissions, for example, or facilitating transportation. Also, Deering mentioned successful pilot projects of hospital-level care delivered in the home, as reported recently by Harvard Researchers. Another reflection of the attention to home-based services is the Johns Hopkins' community nursing pilot program.

Along with a host of resources for local Villages, WAVE offers two awards--the Founder's Award and the Finishing Strong award. The first honors innovative Village programs and services for their communities; the second encourages discussion of end of life issues. To learn more about the awards and WAVE visit website as linked in the sidebar