

The Ugandan Asian Archive Oral History Project

An Oral History with Terence Francis

Archives and Research Collections

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Narrator: Terence Francis
Researcher: Shezan Muhammedi
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Abstract:

Terence Francis was born in Jinja, Uganda and lived in various other cities including Kampala and Entebbe until the age of ten. He then spent three years in a boarding school in India but returned to Mbarara in 1958. Terence reflected on his childhood in Uganda as a wonderful time since he was an outdoors type of person. He attended Kololo High School and eventually began working for East African Airways a few months after graduating.

After the expulsion decree was announced in August of 1972, Terence recalled how many of his close friends believed the decree only applied to those who were non-Ugandan citizens. However, all those who held Ugandan passports had their citizenship revoked leaving Terence stateless. He subsequently applied to Canada and arrived in October of 1972.

Terence resettled in Toronto with his wife and two daughters since he had sent out applications to various airline companies prior to arrival and had received an offer in Toronto. He spent several years in the airline industry climbing the corporate ladder after initially being employed as a baggage handler. In 1995 he decided to change careers and has been working as a consultant ever since.

The interview was conducted at a local coffee shop in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Shezan: “So this is an oral history being done on July third and yeah, Terence I’ll let you tell me about growing up in Uganda.”

Terence: “Well thank you for asking me to participate, this is actually the second time I’ve done it. There was someone from the UK who came here a couple of years ago and we went through the same thing with her.

I guess my recollection was... I was born in Uganda by the way, and my father and mother were born in India and I think my dad came out when he was a young man, he was part of a recruitment program in India. We come out of a part of India called Goa, therefore we have a Western name and we are Catholics by religion. And as I tell people, if it wasn’t for the Portuguese colonizing India, I’d probably be a Patel and rich. [Laughter]

So they came out to Uganda, my mother was in India for thirteen years and her parents left her there to study when they went off to Africa, so it wasn’t until thirteen years later that she reconciled with her parents. I was born in 1945 in Jinja, don’t recall the event but my early days... I remember growing up in Entebbe. My dad used to work for the public works department, so he was kind of all over Uganda and he was in Entebbe and then Kampala and Masaka, Mbarara and so on. So I remember growing up in Entebbe and then started my schooling, I think when I was seven or eight I was living with my grandparents in Kampala going to school and at about the age of ten they made this decision that I should go to India. I’m told it’s basically because I could not concentrate on studies and I was not controllable, so they figured a boarding life would be better for me.

So they shipped me off to India and I went to school in India for three years in Pandwa, the school there. And then after three years I hadn’t progressed very much so my ways had changed so my parents and Errol and Tom, they came to India in ’58, I went there in ’55 and then in ’58 I went back to Uganda with them. I continued the same thing, I still lived with my grandparents for a while... no when we went back I lived with my mom and my dad was in Mbarara at the time. So the three of us grew up being with my mom all the time. And she was a career lady, she had to work and we lived close to our grandparents so there was always some supervision for us and life continued.

My recollection is that they were happy there. All my recollections of Uganda are happy days except towards the end. It was a great place for sports, I was very sports minded and I was an outdoors type or whatever, I liked to be outdoors. Going to school was fun, I think all three of us didn’t follow the normal pattern, you go to a primary school or an elementary school until about grade eight and that was basically for the Goan families. So it was donated by one of the wealthy or affluent Goan people and so we all went there before I went to India and I have to say when we finished our grade eight we had to go to a secondary school and most of the people of Indian origin went to either a secondary school in Kololo or one in old Kampala where the teachers were mainly Asian, the students were mainly Asian. We chose to go to a predominantly African school, Kitante Hill School. So all three of us ended up going there and we did our O-levels at that school. Errol and Tom continued to study and I was just glad that school was over. But I was also... because I was in sports I used to play a lot of field hockey and a lot of cricket, a lot of soccer, any game going I was interested in.

So when I left school I went to a couple of interviews, I went to an interview at a bank and they offered me a job. So it was a small amount of money but it was a job, I was about to take that when I heard that East African Airways was looking for people, so I decided to apply for a job there. They actually offered me even less money than the bank but the guy who interviewed me... he was kind of keen that I would come to the airline cricket league and I could play. He was more focused... and I said, "Yeah, this is what I'll make at the bank." And he said, "This is all we can offer," he said, "You realize if you work for the airline you get all these free passes and you can go watch chess matches in London." Sounds great, so I went to the airline.

It just happened and it was an industry that I liked, you know after all these years I'm not really concentrating on any of these studies. There was something here that I really liked, I liked the job, I liked what was happening over there. But there was a very... people went to work. My impression of those days, still is today, people went to work and they had a job, they never pushed the system. There were lots of local people, lots of Indians working over there and they had the supervisory positions. And I enjoyed that, I played cricket for the company and I travelled a lot with the airline team. But then I realized I just wanted more so I went up to the supervisor and said, "I hear there's a proficiency test, if I take the proficiency test I can get more money and maybe I can get a better position. The money interests me, so can I take it?" He says, "Well it's very difficult because you see all those people out there, they've been here for years and haven't really taken it because if you do it's a black mark on your file, you won't lose your job. You've been here a year and you actually want to do this?" The reason that drove me to that is I had an accident and I broke my arm and I couldn't play cricket anymore so I started to think about the job. And he said, "I can put your name up, you're taking a big risk." I said, "You know what? I'll take it."

So I went and did this test and as I said, it was a job that I really, really was passionate about so I learned everything I needed to learn about that job. I took this proficiency test and I think we were assigned two hours or something and I finished in an hour. The English monitor came up to me and said, "You done?" It's only an hour and I'm done. He says, "Go over your paper." I'm seeing everybody... so I go over my paper again and then I said, "I'm done." And all my colleagues who were there much longer than me came up to me afterwards and said, "How come you finished in an hour? It's such a difficult test."

The results came in two months later and I passed, most of them didn't and my boss calls me in and says, "I have a problem now." I said, "Why? What's the problem?" He said, "Well there are people here with longer service and if you get the salary you want it's going to be higher than them and they're going to be pissed off. And I go, "Well they had the same opportunity." What do I care, right? This is the young naïve guy, I don't understand politics and all of these things. So he said, "I'm going to send you to Nairobi and he says, "You go and see the senior people out there." No... so he said, "Okay, fine we'll raise your salary." I waited two months and the salary didn't come through and I went to talk to him and he says, "Well I don't know why it hasn't come through, I put it through." He said I wasn't to tell anyone that I got the extra money, so he said, "Why don't you go to Nairobi and go to the personnel office and talk to them."

So I walked into the personnel office and I say, "They said they talked to you about my file and I haven't got paid." And they go, "What's your name." And I say, "Terry Francis." She looks at me and she says,

“Oh yeah, well I know the problem,” she says, “We couldn’t find your file.” “Why couldn’t you find my file?” She said, “We were looking for your name and we were looking in the European section.” So you know those are the subtle things of I don’t know... discrimination of colour or whatever. We were used to going to a place and... we never thought twice about it. Washrooms were European, African or Asian and you didn’t cross over, you could cross down but you couldn’t cross up. So here it was, all of a sudden it hits me that my colour actually means something.

Anyways, we got that resolved and I continued to work in the airline. I met my wife there, she came to work for the airline. Then I sort of... I couldn’t go anywhere. By this time country had moved to an Africanization program so if there was a senior job coming up and they had an African candidate... you were dead, I mean they just weren’t progressing. So I decided I didn’t want to work for East African Airways anymore, I went and looked around and TWA which was a US company were coming into town and I talked to them. They offered me a job and I left the airline. It was a good time, I had more money than I knew what to do with. We had that same culture that we had over here with... you know when you’re growing up you live with your parents and you kept your money. In my case any savings... my mother managed my salary.

[Laughter]

So I did that for two years and then I met this girl from East African Airways and we continued our friendship and then by the age of twenty two or twenty three we got married, and life was good. We didn’t own our home, we paid... I paid. Bought a car which was on an installment plan and that itself was a challenge to do. And we continued life, we were happy, it was a nice country, we were happy to rent. I don’t think we had any investments and frankly in the long term we didn’t have any views as to where this was going, this was just an extrapolation of what your life was going to be like in forty years, right? The same lifestyle, the same ingredients and all. We had two girls, they were very young. One was born in... we were married in ’68 and one was born in ’69, the other one was born in ’71 and we continued life.

And I had travelled a lot because with TWA they would send me to Paris or sometimes we’d be off training. So they rounded me out. So I wasn’t just a ticket agent I had some management skills, I had some operations skills, all these things were provided and I had seen London, Rome, Paris, Athens, New York, Chicago and all these places and it was... I mean it opened my eyes that maybe there was something else in life than staying over here.

As those thoughts are coming into our head Idi Amin comes into power. We were Ugandan citizens, I was born... my wife’s mother was born in Uganda so she was second generation and I was first generation, our kids were born there. And it was a question of we needed more in life but we’re not sure what and I’m not sure how we achieved this. For me Idi Amin coming in was... the first effect was this guy was a buffoon and he was doing all of these things. When he came into power... which is in its own, in itself was a reflection of the lack of governance on the British side. I mean here they promoted a guy because he was a rugby player, a good old boy that they made the head of the army, he had a grade four or a grade six education at that point. Now he had all these people who had no standing in life at all, more power than they’ve ever had in their lives.

So I used to have to go to the airport and dispatch the airplane and I used to drive back three, four in the morning and never thought twice about it. All of a sudden you get concerned with the roadblocks, people pointing guns at you demanding money, sometimes they were drunk. So the lifestyle used to get restricted. We were restricted, we weren't having the fun we had for a long, long time. In hindsight, you sort of wonder how you live in that environment and didn't worry about safety, but we didn't. It wasn't until he came into power that he brought all of these things that were concerning.

You know when he first came everyone said, "Well he's coming in." He said the right things and so on and all of a sudden I think it was in August of one year, in August of '72 he stood up and said, "Well if you're Indian you have to leave the country in ninety days." A lot of our guys were saying, "Oh no he means those guys from India with Indian passports. The first thought went through my mind and the big argument I had was... our social life revolved around the club. There were guys who were die hard club guys. I mean their whole reason for working was so they could go to work, come home, have their wives feed them and then go to the club and drink for five hours. I never got into that although I probably did more than my brothers did. But it was that social life and all of a sudden there were discussions.

And I remember once I was sitting at the bar and there was a group of guys, about four or five of us who were the young guys coming up in their late teens, early twenties who were working and were making fairly good money because I was working for TWA they were paying me a very good salary for Uganda. And some guy said, "Well we don't have to worry, those other guys, they have to worry, that's who he means." And I go, "How do you walk down the street and tell the other seven million Africans that yeah you look Indian but you are a Ugandan citizen. Are they going to put a stamp on your head and say this guy is okay and say that guy is not?" I mean how the hell do you expect these people to distinguish? And he's made claims like... you know you see these people... and the Europeans were mainly expatriates who came and were probably just low level clerks in Britain but here they were big shots, right? They got housing, they got cars, they got services, they were just having a great time.

The people who were the backbone of the country were the Indians. I mean the people of Asian origin, not so much the Goans, the Goans were civil servants. If the Goans had political aspirations in East Africa, they could take over the country. They had great control over the civil service, but they had no political influence. For them to get a job, get a free house and have time to go drink and eat was about all they wanted generally. So when Amin split up and he said, "You see all these Indians here, why kick them out?" He basically said to the population, not in those words but basically that was the message. With them out you can have what you want and nobody did the math, you can't divide fifty thousand by eight million and come out with an equitable position for everybody, it just doesn't happen. But you know there was a large part of the population that felt kind of born into to that.

So things were getting bad. Things were... you'd say the wrong thing to a local guy and he'd say, "What do I care? You're going away." If you give him hard time he had a brother who knew someone who knew someone in the army and you were placed a visit by the army... and it was really, really getting bad.

So I think of all of us Errol was the only one who really said, "I don't care, I'm going to stay here." I remember him saying that, Tom was I think of the mind that he was going out, I was going out because I had a family. And then the trouble really came home when Errol I think worked for a company and the

guy he worked for was also Goan and they decided to dismiss one of their drivers who ended up going to the army and then they came to the office looking for Nick. Nick wasn't there but Errol saw the writing on the wall and basically he got the message that he was in trouble too. So he and Delphine I guess within fourteen hours went and talked to somebody at the High Commission, got their passports and they were the first ones out of there, right? They were gone.

Then it was... and then maybe the crisis had died out because a lot of people were telling Amin you can't kick out your own citizens, the guy was a buffoon. I think the commonwealth came to the rescue basically. The commonwealth countries started to send representatives to take people out. There you found out about the second level of a so called class system in the UK because if you had a British passport it didn't mean a friggin thing because it was a D passport, some Britain's were real Britain's and some... there were a lot of people holding British passports and people saying I can go to the UK and they found out they couldn't get into the UK any easier than any of us.

Other countries came up, Norway, I think Canada was probably the biggest one. My impression – I don't know whether I read it or I heard it or whatever – was the reason that the Canadians came was because there was a huge population of Ismailis and that the Aga Khan had put a word to save his own people and Trudeau... he was a friend of Trudeau and somehow Canada said, "We're going to take people." You find out later on that Canada did do that for other countries as well. I was working for TWA and we were approached by Pacific West – who I ended up working for many years later – CPA and all these guys were running charters to take refugees out. So Canada set it up and so I was more involved with Canada because I was helping government services on the ground.

I remember one of the senior admissions people over there he came in one night after we were sent the charters we had a beer and we were talking. And he was saying, "The Canadians are naïve, we had no idea when we came down here. Ottawa said to us, "We've got to bring these refugees." When we came down we didn't know that English was spoken by most of these people, we didn't know that they were well educated," they didn't know any of these things. He says, "We came down to take initially 2,000 refugees. So they put a notice in the papers to go and see the government and you go and line up to do a test." He said, "We just grabbed the first two thousand that came to the door because we knew these guys spoke English, we could understand what they said. These guys had an education with that. This is the cream of the crop." And he said, "They just kept coming."

So the first lot that went through went through because these guys... the expectation was that they wouldn't know the language and this was going to be a tough communication so you can imagine the Canadian guys over there going, "Boom, you're in." So when they hit two thousand in about two weeks and were like, what have we done? We were among the first or second batch that had gone in there and we got our papers. But in the meantime, the Uganda authorities had put us through a... you had to reconfirm our Uganda status and when we walked in there they basically took our papers, tore it up and said, "Goodbye."

So now we applied for Canada and in our case, we were accepted but we had no documents. So we had to go through a whole bunch of things to get temporary documents and to be honest with you the only way we got them was from bribing them. But we were dealing with people... my wife, she went in to get

these documents for the two of us and two kids. So she went to this place and there were line ups and line ups, we stayed there for days and she finally got an African woman over there. My wife said, "You've got to help me, I have young kids, you're a woman, you understand. Whatever you want, I'm happy to give it to you." She said, "Anything you want." She looked at my wife and she said, "I'll do it for you but I need something from you." And my wife said, "Well what do you need?" She said, "I want that flight bag you have." This is from the company I worked with, my wife was carrying a flight bag. She looked at my wife and said, "I want that." My wife said, "Okay, how many do you want." She said, "I want one." And she processed our papers. So you can see the caliber of people who had those jobs, I mean even they... they weren't looking to line their pockets, some of them were, but most of them were... a flight bag, are you kidding? How many do you want? Twenty? I have a hundred in the office.

So we got our papers and since I worked for the airline I chose not to take the charter because the Canadians I think were saying to us, "They're going to provide you all this but at some time we expect you to pay for some of the cost." So why the hell am I going to take that debt? So because I worked at the airline my counterparts at the airline got me tickets. And my wife's parents had gone to Britain a few years ago and we weren't sure where we were going to end up and whether we could afford to go see them so I said, "You know, I get all these tickets why don't we just go to the UK to see your parents and then we'll go to Canada."

So we finally got out, a couple of guys at the airline helped me a bit. And they put us on the airplane, it was actually going to I think Accra and then another guy that we knew was going to make sure that we got our flight to London. And the guys from Uganda, I remember walking on board and he says, "Goodbye, after you take off go under your seat, I've kept something for you." The guy went and actually put some cash for us. We only had about thirty bucks. And we left and went to the UK to spend a week with her parents and then decided to use the tickets we had from the UK to come into Montreal. We had tickets on Air France so we went from London to Paris to take a connection but because we were sort of staff tickets we were on standby.

So when we got to Paris we didn't get on the flight. I said, "Fine, I've got tickets going to the UK to Germany so we'll go back to London and fly Lufthansa from there. Two hours after we got to Paris we flew back to London and we tried to get through immigration and the guy said, "No, no, no, you can't come in." And we go, "Why not?" He says, "You just want to come and live in our country." I said, "Why would I do that? I left here two hours ago." He said, "No, no, no, I can't let you go." And so I started to get annoyed and he said to me, "Wait up, I'd cool down if I was you, if not I'm going to deport you back to Uganda." He took me, my wife and my kids and marched us into a cell at Heathrow airport. I know there's a cell in Heathrow airport because I was there. And you remember in those days – you won't remember this – but people trying to get to the UK would be trying to go through the airport from Pakistan, Bangladesh, they were called shuttlecocks they basically flew and the UK would deport them to another country, try again.

So when you went to this lounge area they had for immigration they were full. And we were sitting in a cell. We missed a mealtime so our kids were hungry and they said, "Well it's too bad, you've got to wait five hours before you get a meal." We still didn't know what our fate was. Our daughter started crying and one of the guards there brought his lunch and took out an apple and gave the girls an apple so that

kept them. They came in about five hours later and deported us with an armed guard back to France. We got to France and we couldn't fly the next flight until the next day so we slept at the airport, the kids were crying because they were hungry and we were giving them feeding bottles with water and giving it to them. The next day we went up to the flight and the girl who was handling the flight looked at us and said, "You guys are still here?" Well yeah, we couldn't get any seats. She said "Today is full, but I tell you what, you guys are getting on this plane. I don't care, I will get you on this flight." That was someone we'd never met in our lives and right enough, she put us on the flight and we landed in Montreal.

Went to the immigration in Montreal and when I had done my interview in Uganda the guy said to me, "Where do you want to go in Canada?" I'd been to the US before but not to Canada. The only thing I remember seeing was a trailer or a video on TV about the Calgary stampede. So I said, "Yeah, Calgary." So I ended up in Montreal and he said, "You're going to Calgary." And Errol was already in Montreal, my mom wasn't there yet, she was still in Uganda with Tom. And we had a cousin in Montreal so I called him and he said, "Listen, you know I'm happy for you guys to come out of there but you're in the system, don't get out of the system. While you're in the system they'll look after you until you get settled, if you come out of the system you're on your own." And he says, "Not that I don't want you at my house but I think it's the right thing for you to do." So I talked to this guy and I said, "Well I don't really want to go to Calgary." So he said, "Well we're not sending people to Toronto." And I said, "Well as a matter of fact... because I had sent some resumes out before I left and one of the airlines based out of Winnipeg had sent me a note saying, "We'll be hiring in Toronto and we'd be interested in talking to you." So I took that thing out and showed it to the immigration guy and he agreed to send us into Toronto.

So that night they took us into Toronto, it was night and the kids were restless and the Manpower person in Toronto met us and put us in a cab and sent us to a hotel downtown. We got into the hotel that was a fleabag, an old hotel. I think they closed up about a month after we stayed there. I think they rented rooms by the hour... yeah it was terrible. Bed bugs, the whole thing. So the next morning I walked into the Manpower office on Dundas and I said to the guy, "I know we are sort of refugees and I don't expect much but I don't think I can stay in that hotel, I have two young kids and this thing is dirty and filthy and all these things happened... I just can't stay there." He said, "There's a problem. First of all you don't have any furniture so I can put you in a furnished apartment but most of them will not take you. Secondly, if I put you in an unfurnished you're not going to have any furniture." So what other alternatives? He said, "There's a church... a Baptist church in Willowdale, Ontario who have agreed to take on a hundred Uganda families." And he says, "I see you're Catholic, does that offend you? Can I send you to the church?" Fine, so he put us in a cab and we headed off to this church in Willowdale and we met with the pastor and he came out to talk to us and he said, "Welcome, we hope we can make life easier for you. You have been assigned to stay with Dr. Harrison's family who live up in Thornhill. He will come to pick you up in an hour and we'll go from there."

Dr. Harrison and his wife Eunice came, they picked us up and took us to their house in Thornhill. They took us to the basement and it was all done up and he said, "Listen, you are here as our guests. This house is your house, this is where you can sleep, you can go anywhere in the house you want and what we have is yours." So we stayed there. It was pretty tough because we'd never been in this situation and

never met these people before. They were just unbelievably wonderful people and we'd have dinner with them in the evenings and they were religious, they'd read from the Bible and all that. I had gone to a Jesuit school in India and I had religion up to here, still do. So we'd sit down at dinner and we'd talk. I said to him, "You know I got in contact with this airline about a job and they asked me to come for an interview but it's at Toronto airport which was a long ways away from where we were and so I was wondering how I could get there." And he said, "Don't worry about it, what time is your interview?"

So they phoned around to find someone who could take us out there. I went into the interview with this guy and he looked at my resume and said, "You know, we have a job for a person loading bags onto an airplane but that's the only job we have," he says, "You're overqualified for it and you don't have any Canadian experience." I said, "I'm confused. I thought I had just come to a democracy after living in a third world country. I thought the system of democracy worked, you tell me what you have and I'll tell you what I want. Don't say you can't give me a job because you don't think I'll take it, ask me first. Secondly, I told you I landed here four days ago and you're looking for Canadian experience so I'm under the belief that it's something I can get in four days? I don't have it now but I will have it in four days, whatever it is you want." It was just the way he was acting, and then he said, "Okay I can offer you a job as a baggage agent with the airline, it pays four hundred dollars a month," or something. And I said, "I'll take it." He said, "Okay I'll send you the letter." I said, "You know what? I need to go home with the letter because I have a family who is stressed out and I have to go home with good news. You've given me good news, but I need a letter because we come from a country where if you don't have it in writing it doesn't mean anything." So he said, "Well my secretary is out." I just had this feeling that if I walked away this thing wasn't going to happen.

So I walked outside of his office which was in the old terminal one in Toronto and I walked... there was a corridor and I walked down and there was an office and there was a receptionist typing away. So I walked into the office and I said, "You don't know me and I don't know you but I'm just going to ask you something. To give you a little background I just landed here as a refugee and I have a wife and two kids at home and we are trying to find our way. The first thing is to get a job, I got a job offer but they are not in a position to type a letter and give it to me and I need to get that letter for the comfort of... so we can at least fulfill at least one of the things that we need to do." And she said, "You've got the letterhead?" I said, "No." She said, "Go get me the letterhead," I went back and got the letterhead and gave it to her. And the guy drafted the letter and she typed it, she just typed it. She gave it to me and I went back and he signed the letter, so I had my first job. And the Canadian family was so ecstatic we had a celebration, "Terry got a job!" All this kind of stuff.

He used to go around the hospital and tell all the doctors what we... I needed to get an apartment because I needed to be closer to work. We went and found a place that we wanted to live and they asked me for first months and last month's rent. I said, "I don't have that kind of money." And they said, "Sorry we can't rent it to you." At the end of the night I was a little bit preoccupied and he said, "What's wrong?" I told him and he says, "Don't worry, I'll give you the money." I said, "Well it's not right, you've done enough for us." During the week we were getting twenty six dollars as a family and I'd say to him, "Here's the twenty six dollars, I know it doesn't cover what you do but..." He says, "No, you just keep it." So I said I guess if that's what I have to do.

But I went back to Manpower in Willowdale and got an interview and went up to the person and said, "This is my case. I have a job and I am a refugee, I have a job but it doesn't start for two weeks and I have to get an apartment. I've been asked for first and last month's rent and I just don't have the money, what do I do?" I don't know whether I hit the right people or not but she went back and talked to people, came back and said, "We'll write you the money and you have to sign up for it and it will be repaid." And I said, "Fine."

So they gave me a check and I went and got the apartment and I told Don Harrison, "Now I've got to figure out how to furnish this place." And he said, "Don't worry about that." So he went to the hospital and told all these doctors what was happening. We stayed there for about ten days and then we moved to the apartment. And anyways while we were with them I was helping the church. Because they had a hundred families so I'd go around with the church truck and pick up furniture that was being donated and then I'd have to go and deliver it to other people.

So I was at the church all the time and I got to know the pastor and a few of the parishioners. So when we moved into the apartment the church threw in their basement... they gave us some old stuff they had. Dr. Harrison went and talked to the doctors in his office... so when we moved to the apartment they'd be knocking at all times of night a doctor would show up with a table and chairs, some of them with a mattress. So that's how we furnished our place. They came at all times of night. And all we had to say with Dr. Harrison... I remember when we moved into the apartment one night he phoned up to find out how we were doing and we said, "Well one of the girls seems to have a fever and so on." Two hours later a knock on the door and he's over there with a whole box of medicine. They were just tremendous people. They took my wife shopping and the wife said to my wife, "I'm going to take you shopping so you know how the grocery system works." So they went and she picked up all the stuff.

When they took us to our apartment they took all the stuff up there and plus the pastor of the church when I was leaving I went there to say, "Listen I am moving away but I'm going to keep in touch, I just wanted to thank you." He said, "I'm glad you came because I have this for you." So I open it up and there's an envelope with eighty dollars in it which in '72 was a lot of money, right? And I said to him, "What is this." He says, "This has been given to you by someone and they want you to have it." I said, "I just can't take it, who's given it to me?" And he says, "I can't tell you," and I said, "Well then I'm not going to take it." And he said, "Well okay, it was Mr. Harrison, but don't you tell him that I told you." But this is the kind of people they were. At Christmastime they'd take the kids over and buy toys for them, they looked after us all those early days we were there all the time. We never felt alone. Because we didn't know where everybody was, and they became my family. They still are very close friends with us. His wife has since died but he comes into Vancouver every year and we get together. It was just tremendous.

And then I started to work. I stayed on Dixon road and I had to take a bus to the airport, in those days there wasn't security so you could actually walk on the tarmac right to the airplane. Nowadays it's not the way you do that. And I'd take a couple of busses... I'm telling you it was friggin cold for November."

Shezan: "Because you were working outside too, yeah."

Terence: "And I'd never seen cold like that in my life so I decided to walk to the local bank and I said I'd like a loan, the loan officer said, "Okay, how much do you make?" I told him. "How long have you had your job?" "Well actually I haven't started yet... I'm going to be starting." He said, "I can't help you. You've got to have this that and the other." So I saw the manager's office over there and I walked in there and I said, "I don't have an appointment, but can I talk to you?" She said, "Sure, sit down." And I said, "I came here for a loan and I've been told I can't have a loan." He asked me the same questions and said, "We can't give you a loan." And I said, "You know what? This is my resume. I happened to have a life before I came to this country, this is what I've done. So I'll tell you what, before you say no to me, you read this. And if after you read this you still don't want to give me the loan then I know you've done it knowing what you need to know, and that's all I'm going to say. You call me, this is my number."

So we were sitting outside and we went to get groceries, twenty six dollars a week doesn't buy very much but in those days it bought enough. So we would eat parts of a chicken that we don't eat anymore. [Laughter] We could stretch out a chicken for lots of days. Thank god for curries and chapattis and rice. So those were really tough days... and so anyways I gave it to her. So we went grocery shopping and walked back to the apartment, I opened the door and the phone rang and it was Mrs. Conway, she says, "Come and get your money." Just like that. So I went and bought a car and everyone was saying, "You're a refugee and you bought a car?" I just needed something because going to work at all these odd hours, busses didn't run. And you know I didn't look after cars, never did then and don't today. So I usually buy them new and run them to the ground and then go buy another new one. And so I bought a car.

And then things started to change, work was challenging and I used to work outside and they had an office inside. So when the flights would go and it was cold, I'd go and sit inside and I'd see these young kids working away and they had no clue. Training wasn't good and they didn't really know what they were doing. So I'd sit over there and I'd help them out. I would go over to them and say, "What can I do?" So in the end a whole bunch of them would come to me and say, "What do we do with this?" I guess the manager noticed that and he came over to me and he said, "I see you coming and helping these people out, do you want a job inside?" I said, "What do you think?" So he said, "Okay, you come inside. You've got to pass a couple of exams." So fine, I did that and he says, "Okay you can work inside." That's when I found out about this great thing in Canada that we never had in Uganda, it's called overtime. In Africa forget it, who pays you overtime? So I realized that... and they really needed me because I was fulfilling something that they didn't have the manager and the boss noticed that things were getting... and I was right in the middle of it.

So I used to go to work at five in the morning and my shift would be over at one and then I'd stay on and work the second shift. So I'd work two shifts, I'd work at five in the morning and come home at ten at night and I did this for months. The money was there, I was getting some cash. And then one day... we bought an old TV and we're sitting at home and one day I happened to look at the TV and I said, "Holy crap" I think this was the time that the Americans were moving... or something major happened. Maybe it was Nixon going to trial... and I had missed all that. And I realized that I was working so much I wasn't really using my head anymore, it just became a routine kind of thing. I went back to work and I said to my boss, "How can I move up?" And he said, "Well, I don't know." And then he said, "There's a vacancy

in Thunder Bay, Ontario as a manager, would you be interested in that?" I said, "Sure, I'll go and try it." So I flew to Thunder Bay on my own time and visited the airport, saw a few of the travel agents and came back and I said to him, "Yeah, I'll go up there."

So he said, "Well this is a little difficult because our president is from Thunder Bay and no one gets a job up there unless you talk to him." I went to talk to him, he says, "I hear you want to go to Thunder Bay." He says, "Have you been to Thunder Bay?" I said, "Once." He says, "Do you know there are not many coloured people in Thunder Bay?" "So?" He says, "You may have a tough time in the community. I said, "You know I've never really had a problem, I've lived in a country where the population was predominantly black and the bosses were white, I've learned to adjust. I just go through life with the basic philosophy you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. I'll try it." And I said, "But this is all I am promising to do." And he says, "Okay." And I said, "But there are some conditions," I said, "I don't want to be stuck in Thunder Bay all my life. So this is what I can deliver, I can deliver that in two years. If I don't deliver that in two years you can fire me, but you have to bring me back to Toronto because I don't want to stay in Thunder Bay, so you're going to pay my way back. Alternatively if I do deliver in two years I expect to be moved back to Toronto. So one way or another I'm not going to be there for the rest of my life." He said, "Okay, but I'm going to be keeping an eye on you."

So I went up there, we went into this small community. If you sent me to Thunder Bay today I'd just shake my head but in those days... this is what we need to do. You know live in this place, freeze our butts off, and the paper mill smelled through the whole town, it smelled like rotten eggs all day. But that's what we needed to do. We never thought twice about it. When you don't have a choice you just do what you need to do. So we went up there, I was there for a year and then he called me back and he said, "You know what? I want you back in Toronto now, I'm not going to wait for the two years." He says, "You've delivered ninety eight percent of what you said, I want you to move back to Toronto and you need to do the job over there." So I moved back to Toronto.

This is a great country, some of the people I met along the way, my old bosses were tremendous in helping us in the early days socially and in the job. I did well, I mean for a guy who started there... and then the company was bought by PWA [Pacific Western Airlines] from Calgary, I resigned from the company because I didn't want to move to Winnipeg. The president of the company came to me and he said, "I'd really like you to stay with the company." By that time I had taken over the director position in Ontario for Trans Air, it was a Manitoba based company, they were bought by PWA. And in those days Air Canada used to be the regulator, it wasn't the government. Air Canada said what the competition could and could not do. And because they had bought Trans Air they needed to fly through Saskatchewan to link up the network. So Air Canada forced them to give up Ontario. Basically I was out of a job.

So they offered me a job in Winnipeg and I said I didn't want to go. The president came to talk to me and said, "I can't take you to Calgary yet, I can promise you that's where you are going to end up, but go to Winnipeg." I said, "I really don't want to Winnipeg." I'd been there... I used to travel and I just don't like the city. And he said, "You know, try it and see what happens." So I tried it for two months and I quit. He called me at home and said, "I thought we had a deal, you were going to try it for longer." I said, "Well, I finally woke up one day and decided that this doesn't fit." He goes, "What do you mean?" I said,

“I came to this country as an immigrant, not as an exile and I’m not living in Manitoba, period.” I left the company for a year and kept in touch with all the guys. Went to work for a company out of Montreal called Nordair. I would never, ever work for a Quebec company again. Period. The culture is bad, the management style is bad, I mean I just... I used to see the way they treat people... anyways I was there for a year and I was unhappy. PWA had kept in touch with me and they called me one day and said, “Well, are you ready to come back?” I said yes. So I moved to Calgary a year later. So I moved back as the director of sales...”

Shezan: “So this would take us to the 1980’s now?”

Terence: “This would take us to... about ’78. Yeah about ’77, ’78. And so I moved to Calgary in ’78 as the director of sales for the company and things worked out well in Calgary. I liked the city, I still do love the city. It’s a friendly city, the winters are too damn long and that’s the only reason I’m not living there. But everyone in Calgary is from somewhere else, people are friendly. This place is very reserved. I guess in ’84, ’85 I moved up to the vice president job, then I moved up to the senior vice president job and I was part of the group that bought CP to form Canadian and I was in the number three spot in Canadian as we hit the rocks trying to expand to fight this big government animal. We were just caught highly leveraged and I had a contract and I exercised it in ’95 and left the company to become a consultant. That’s what I do, I don’t work a lot today. I just work... if I like a project I take it, if I don’t, I don’t. But Canada’s been good. I don’t know if that’s what you wanted but that’s basically it.”

Shezan: “So you have two daughters right? How was raising them through all of the moves.”

Terence: “I guess it’s been... the moves have been tough on them in the sense that I don’t think they were able to establish long term friendships, my daughter still has good friends in Calgary. So that was a little bit destabilizing. You know this is the first time I’ve been a parent [laughter] so I’m learning it along the way. I regret having to put them through the changes but they were... they’re still great daughters. My eldest girl is the vice principal of a school, she went into education. My youngest daughter has got a PhD in psychology and works on the HR side of business school. So both of them are doing okay, they’re not married, they’re still single. And they don’t really know anything about Uganda. They knew... they remember the early days when we were in Toronto and Calgary and so on.”

Shezan: “So you guys ended up in Vancouver at what point in time?”

Terence: “Well when we bought CP... I think we bought them in ’87 or ’88 and then the board asked me to come here to start the process of the merger. I was... and I didn’t want to move out of Calgary because eventually I felt that we would go back into Calgary, at least my job would end up back there, they said in about four years. So just about the time that Charlene was entering into university and Lisa was just finishing high school. So we said, “Okay we’ll move here, it will give us a chance to live on the coast and we’ll buy a house that when we move back the girls can use. And we moved here and I was only here two years and they said, “We need you back in Calgary.” So the girls were here and Meryl liked Vancouver, she preferred to stay here. So between... I went back to Calgary in ’90, came here in ’87 and went back in ’89 or ’90 and then I commuted until I took my retirement package in ’95.

After that the company sent me to Harvard in 1990 so I did the advanced management program at Harvard sometime in the early '90s. I enjoyed every moment I had in the airline except the last year because at that time we had to seek some investments to bail us out and we had American companies... the Americans came and there were too many strings, and I don't work well at the end of a string. So I always said to myself that I would do what I do as long as I was happy doing it, I refuse to do things that I'm not happy with. It was at that time that I would get up in the mornings and I would say to myself, "I don't feel like going to work." And that's when I went and I said, "You know what? I have a contract and I'd like to exercise it and just go." So we negotiated an exit and I exited in '95."

Shezan: "So in '95 you came back to Vancouver full time?"

Terence: "Yeah I was here in '95 and I did consulting work, I spent maybe a year in Ottawa, I was the interim Chief Executive of the Canadian Tourism Commission for some time. That's another place I wouldn't work is the government, the thinking is totally different you know. I was actually part of the process in getting it to be a crown corporation and set up a department. Basically it's a political... it's still a political animal. I've sat in hearings at the House of Commons, I remember sitting in the chair and all these guys from the parties asking a question. You'd answer something here, and he'd ask you something here. I mean they never connected the answers and the questions never connected. This went on for two hours and we walked out of there and he says to me, "What do you think?" I said, "I don't know." He said, "I think it went rather well." I said, "Are you kidding me? There's such a disconnect between the questions and the answers, I don't understand." And this was – the cabinet minister who had been with the Trudeau government for many years. He said "Terry, you don't understand," he says, "In politics, they've got questions to ask and I've got answers to give and you don't necessarily coincide with each other but the record shows." [Laughter]

Shezan: "So where would have been your favourite Canadian city? Calgary?"

Terence: "I would say Calgary, I love Calgary. Good outdoors, easy commute. I mean nowadays it's a little more crowded, it has its cycles. I mean every seven years somebody comes and kicks Calgary in the ass, whether it was a national energy policy or the oil prices or something. But it's a friendly town, it's close to Banff. I really like Calgary, I'd go there if the winters weren't so long. Summers... you can get snow squalls in August you know, so it's very unpredictable."

Shezan: "I'm going for the first time after this, July fifteenth I head out to Calgary to interview more refugees for two weeks. So I'm looking forward to it now."

Terence: "It's a very nice city. Business wise it's a great city... now with the NDP [New Democratic Party] I don't know what's going to happen. It's a bit of a redneck city as well and outside the big urban centres you know. I have a winter place in Arizona so I know all about hicks, we don't stray too far away."

Shezan: "Then I guess my last question would be, how would you identify yourself? Would you say you're Canadian Ugandan, Goan Canadian..."

Terence: "I generally say to people I am a Canadian of Indian origin. Half of them don't know what Goan is, I'm not sure that it's relevant anymore, you are of Indian origin. So that's how I describe myself, Canadian of Indian origin."

Shezan: "But no Uganda?"

Terence: "No. No... you know one of the decisions I made early – and I know a few of us made it, I think my brothers did and a few other people, and have done well because of the decision – when I came out of Uganda I shut the door and I had no interest in the country. People would say to me, "Well you can go get your money, get your policy." That door is shut. It really was a great life, I enjoyed it. In hindsight it was a fairytale, I mean the life we had there... there's no way that we could ever touch it again. The weather, the atmosphere, I mean we just had a fairytale life in Uganda. But that door is shut and I have no interest. I had a subcommittee and you know the International Air Transport Association in Geneva... so I was on one of their subcommittees and they had the AGM in Nairobi in I think the early '90s or late '90s. So I went down and my wife said she wanted to go and my eldest daughter said that he would like to go too. So I said fine, we all went down and when we got there Charlene said, "You know we're so close to Uganda, I want to see where I was born." I said, "I really don't want to go there." She said, "Well if you don't want to go, I'm going." "Well you're not going on your own."

So we flew into Uganda... it's a beautiful country but it doesn't... I just found it crowded. I found... I wish I hadn't gone, I'd rather remember it the way I did. I remember meeting an African friend who had been... he introduced me to his son and he said to his son, "Ask Mr. Francis" so I was describing to him the Uganda I knew in those days and that kind of thing. And the son says to me, "You know I'm glad you came and you are telling me this because my father used to tell me this and I thought he was dreaming." And that is the problem with the world today you know and I digress but when I listen to politics and all these guys, all these talking heads on CNN... the fact of the matter is as in the people of Uganda and as in the people of Palestine and all these things, the population has either grown up or was born in the last thirty years and what they see around them they see as being normal, right?

And everyone is pursuing this dream... I mean these guys know nothing else. They've grown up with that, why would they actually think this thing can get any better? And that's what I saw in Uganda, I saw the people who were born in that era and lived through that era, they're going, "What's wrong with this? This is the way it is. And that's the way it is for a lot of people in Kenya, a lot of Indians who are going to Kenya say, "We've got a lovely country." They don't know any different, as I said to you at the start safety was never an issue when I was in Uganda. It was a big issue when I went back. You know things that I would accept when I was there I found very difficult. I feel very uncomfortable in Kenya, walking around seeing armed guards everywhere you know... it's concerning."

Shezan: "It's good that you've mentioned that because I have been debating when I finish the thesis project whether to take my mom back because she has never been back to Uganda and I really want to go because I've been doing so much research about it."

Terence: "Take her. You know some of them come back and say, "Oh everything's fine, it's so beautiful." I know a lot of people who have moved back and they go into business and say, "Oh, it's great, it's like

the old days.” But it must have changed a lot since I went there in ’89 or ’90 because I looked at it and said, “Wow.” I draw some parallels like going to parts of India you know... in India the thing that you don’t have, they have modern buildings but they have no maintenance so in five years they all look old. That’s what I started to see happening in Uganda. I mean basically these buildings that we knew when we were there, some of them were there but they’re not maintained and therefore... and you see a lot of these in these countries... the maintenance is not there. I don’t know if it’s rent control or whatever else but you can’t change the buildings and you can’t change the tenants so they say, “Why would we put money into it?”

So I was sad from that part. I mean I love the people of the country and all that but I don’t have any affiliation with Uganda anymore. People talk about it but I guess I shut that door all the way and I just don’t want to go there.”

Shezan: “Yeah that’s totally fair. Well, awesome those are all of my questions. Is there anything that you wanted to add?”

Terence: “No, not really.”

Shezan: “Awesome, well thank you so much for your time, I really appreciate it. Those are good stories.”

Terence: “Well the only thing I’ll say is that this is an unbelievable country. I think most immigrants... I think the Canadian government does a disservice to itself by not talking to immigrants when they come in and start to explain the philosophy behind our systems and the way this country works. So much of this country is based on the honour system. And there is nothing that turns me off more than immigrants who come in here and say, “Ah well I brought this through customs and I brought that through customs, and I snuck this...” And I keep saying, “You idiot. This thing is based on the honour system, you’re supposed to act with honour. You keep breaking the rules and you know what? Twenty years from now this country will be like the ones we left.” There will be all kinds of regulations.

You see it every day. I mean yeah, if you want to beat the system in this country it’s easy as hell. It wasn’t built that way, it was built on the honour system and I think we need to preserve that in this country because I think this is its strength, you don’t want to be overly burdened with regulations and you don’t want people checking your back every time you go through customs. And it’s going to happen, you know. I’ve talked to refugees in the past and I said to them, “We have an honour system, you have an obligation to maintain it. And that’s why this country is great, it gives you opportunity. You can talk about colour... but I have chosen to say it’s because of the unknown.”

When I first came into this country I remember going to a doctor’s office and the receptionist saying, “What’s your name?” And I go, “Terry Francis.” “How do you spell that?” “T-E-R-Y” “Your last name?” “Francis.” “How do you spell that?” “F-R-A...” You know they were so... they wanted a Sri Lankan name or something, I kind of look like that so they thought he must have a complicated name. So there was a lot of fear of the unknown. When we first came here I used to travel all across Canada and because I did business travel I’d be in business class or first class. I couldn’t tell you the number of times people would come up to me and say, “You can’t hang your bag here, you have to put it in the back.” And I go, “But I

am sitting here.” “Oh, you are?” You know... it took a long time. That doesn’t happen anymore. I remember the thing you had to carry on an airplane was a bottle of tobacco because you couldn’t eat the bland food. Now you’re going and there’s butter chicken on the menu! You know things have changed and people are not as intimidated of the unknown as they used to. I mean I still get it, “What’s your name?” “Francis.” “No, what’s your last name.” “That’s my last name.” “No, no, really what’s your last name?”

We’ve grown in the country and the country has grown with us and yeah there’s always going to be somebody out there that feels that way, that’s just the way it is. I don’t sit up at night worrying about it. But we were lucky, we came to this country because... whatever the reasons the Canadians gave. I mean I think in the end they ended up taking eight to ten thousand of refugees, it was a huge number. I always remember the guy saying, “We took two thousand, that was the cream of the crop and they kept coming.” [Laughter]

Shezan: “Yeah I was looking through the archival documents and when they decided to come into Kampala they said, “We’re going to take two thousand under the impression that over the last two years we’ve had a sixty percent acceptance rate. So we’ll take something like twelve hundred, they’ll pass the immigration system and then we’ll take eight hundred as bona fide refugees of good will.” But they’re like, “Everyone is amazing, so what do we do now? We filled this up in two weeks...”

Terence: “I remember they were there, because we had set up and they were going to shut down and go away. But nope, they just kept coming.”

Shezan: “Yeah they were very impressed. They had done some background research but I don’t think anyone on the ground knew the kind of quality of people that they were going to get. They had no idea, none.”

Terence: “They had... I know because those guys who used to come in to do the maintenance on the airplanes and all that so I talked to them every now and then and they go, “You speak good English.” “No kidding, so do you.” [Laughter] Yeah, thank god. People say sometimes, “Canadians are naïve,” thank god because if they were all smart we would have had a hell of a time getting into this country.”

Shezan: “[Laughter] That’s true.”

Terence: “Good.”

Shezan: “Thank you so much.”

[End of transcript].