

Tape 1 Side A

- 1 014 Q: Kay Wong Gee, what is your name? Can you please tell me?
A: Gee Wong Howe
- 016 Q: Where do you live?
A:
Q: What number?
A: 839.
Q: Street, is that in L.A.?
A: Yes.
- 018 Q: Kay Gee, when did you come to the U.S.? How old are you this year?
A: 74.
- 020 Q: 74. What year were you born?
A: Oh, 1907.
- 021 Q: And what is your Chinese name?
A: Gee Wong Howe.
- 023 Q: Gee Wong Howe, how old were you when you came to the U.S.?
A: 32.
- 024 Q: Around 32?
A: That's about right.
- 025 Q: Which village did you live in?
A: In China, Dai Sun ..
Q: Where did you live?
A: In Sun Chuen , right?
Q: Sun Chuen?
A: It was Sun Chuen.
- 028 Q: Sun Chuen, China. When you were living in the village, did you ever go to school?
A: I went to school for a few years and studied Chinese. I studied Chinese for a few years.
- 030 Q: Then besides that, what did your father study?
A: My father went out to Sun Cheung to do business.
Q: Sun Cheung was in Toiseng , right?
A: Mmm.
- 033 Q: He was in business. Did he make a lot of money?
A: He didn't make that much. At that time, my grandfather went to the U.S., so I..
- 2 036 Q: Then your mother didn't work?
A: She worked. My mother was also very capable.
Q: What did she do?
A: She also farmed. She could plant 6 of land by herself.
- 037 Q: By herself she planted 6..
A: My mother was also very...
Q: 6 what of land?
A: 6 .
Q: What does that mean?
A: She...
- 039 Q: She planted 6 dou of land all by herself.
A: 6 dou. My grandfather bought some..
Q: He bought some property, is that it?
A: Mmm.
Q: He bought a lot of land?
A: He bought land, 13 of land.
- 043 Q: What year did you get married?

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A: Let me see. Forty this year, seventy-four... I got married when I was 19. I can't remember what year that was.

047 Q: You got married when you were 19? How did you meet your husband?
A: Someone introduced us. He came back from the U.S. When he came back, someone introduced us.

050 Q: So someone introduced him to you, and your father and mother said, "He's a good man, marry him!" Is that what happened?
A: Yes. Someone introduced him to this good girl, and he came to see me. That's how it was.

052 Q: After you got married, your husband; at that time he was still here, after you got married, where did he go?
A: He came back here for 3 years.
Q: He came back to the U.S. for 3 years?
A: After 3 years he went home to build a new house, and his son was exactly 3 years old. Then he got me over.

056 Q: When he got you over, did he come with you?
A: No, I came myself with my son, we came over by boat.

055 Q: When you came to the U.S., which city did you live in?
A: I came to

059 Q: ()? Why did you go to ()?
A: Because my husband had bought a little store there. For a little money he bought it, so we could live in the back of the store and do business, do a bit of business.

062 Q: So at that time your husband already at a store?
A: Mmm.

064 Q: So you lived in the back of the store? What kind of business did you do?
A: We were in the sundries business, we sold meat, etc.
Q: That is, a grocery store?
A: Mmm.
Q: How long did you do that?
A: We did it for over a year, over a year. Our son was 8 years old, 8 years old. was born in

3 069 Q: How many children do you have?
A: He was 5 years old.
Q: How many children do you have? One son?
A: Mmm, 4 daughters.

070 Q: So how long did you and your husband live in the U.S.?
A: For a long time, he even brought me with him when he went back.. (Q: So he went back over there?)

072 Q: How long did your husband stay in the U.S. after he came back with you?
A: He came later, with our son.

073 Q: Yes, how long after he came before he...
A: He came, 6 years ..
Q: Then your husband passed away?
A: That was.. 7 or 8 years.

076 Q: What happened to you when your husband passed away? What about the store?
A: 8 years? 5 years? 4 years? 11 months? I gradually learned to handle it by myself, I had no choice.

079 Q: Why didn't you have any choice?

- A: I had no choice. I was hurting, so I closed the store and lived elsewhere for 4 months before coming back, but if I closed the store we had nothing to eat!
- 082 Q: Then after 4 months, where did you go?
- A: I came back. I came back and later I hired someone to take care of the store.
- 084 Q: After you came back, you hired someone to look after the store, then you rented the store out to someone?
- A: Yes, several streets over. I spent over ten dollars and rented a place there to live.
- 088 Q: Then how much rent did you charge? For your store?
- A: Sometimes I rented it for \$35 or \$40.
- 090 Q: Then do you still have that store there?
- A: No. Now the children are all grown up, they've all gone away, so I sold it.
- Q: Then after you sold it, you...
- A: The building was worth \$3,000 or \$5,000. Still, I sold it.
- 094 Q: Then did you go out and get a job to support your children?
- A: Yes, I went around with the _____ to shine shoes.
- Q: _____, how much per box?
- A: 7 _____ per box.
- 097 Q: 7 _____ per box, and how many boxes did you do per day?
- A: I did a hundred boxes a day.
- Q: A hundred boxes?
- A: I suffered so much, the foreman told me not to do so many. I said I had heavy responsibilities, I had to make enough for us to eat.
- 100 Q: So you went to shine shoes...
- A: As the children grew up, they looked for work, and so I...
- 102 Q: When there were no more shoes to shine, what did you do?
- A: Then I took care of the children, cooked, took them to school.
- 104 Q: If there were no more shoes to shine, how could you stay at home to look after several kids? Did you do anything besides shine shoes?
- A: I also went to my niece at _____ and worked for several months, _____, ten (_____).
- 108 Q: You went to your niece at _____ to tie onions and scallions? Ten _____ a bunch.
- A: Ten _____ a bunch.
- Q: How much could you make each day doing that?
- A: Oh, sometimes I could make as much as around \$3, maybe \$1-2.
- Q: That would be enough to meet your needs _____. Things were cheap, and \$3+ was a lot of money. Was that enough for you to get by on?
- A: Mmm. Then the children started working, and they told me to stop, so I went back home.
- 114 Q: Then what else did you do?
- A: My son was working, and my daughters also were looking for jobs.
- 115 Q: Did you do any other kinds of work?
- A: No. Sometimes (_____) to Uncle Wong's, I go over there very early to help someone look after several young children.
- 119 Q: So you also looked after children for people?
- A: Mmm, I only did that for a few weeks, twenty-odd thirty dollars. I did it for several weeks and then she increased the pay, saying that I was very good at it and so forth, but later I stopped doing it.

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She paid me over ten dollars and I worked for 5 months. After a time it was too hard and I stopped doing it.

126 Q: Besides taking care of children at home for other people, what other work did do you for them?

A: I didn't do anything else.

127 Q: Then you haven't worked in several decades?

A: I garden a bit at home and grow some vegetables, which I sell to restaurants.

130 Q: You used to grow vegetable in the back of the house?

A: Mmm.

Q: You sold them to restaurants?

A: I don't work anymore, I let my children work and I just cook at home and so on.

132 Q: Then when did you move out to L.A. to live?

A: In the year (), (Q: 7 years) I moved here and lived with () on () Street. I depended on my granddaughter, lived there for 4 years. Then I wanted to come out and join the old people, so I left. She said if you want to go, go, it's up to you.

138 Q: Then do you feel it was better to move out to L.A.?

A: It was a bit better, I had company, old people had company, and Tong Gow Yu brought me there. I went and did a bit of, and then I went to select bricks.

Q: Pick bricks? How many bricks ?

A: One a day, one a day.

145 Q: And then you later went to work in a kitchen?

A: I got two or three dollars. It made it easier to make ends meet.

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147 Q: You're 74 years old now. How many years have you stopped working?

A: I haven't worked in a long time.

149 Q: Then how do you pass the time of day now?

A: I make here at the Old Folks Club and sell them. Auntie Gee give me about fifty tickets and I go sell them for a dollar a ticket. I ask, "What do you do with this?" "We take it to the bank." I've been doing this for about two years now.

153 Q: You made there?

A: Here I do whatever they ask me to. I'm very happy with the two of them. I also help the Old Folks Club sell meals, and when something comes up I go with Auntie Wong Chung. It's very nice. Then what do I do? After eating at the Old Folks Club, I come up here. After a Chinese meal. I tell Auntie Gee, I'd like to fund-raise for a dollar a ticket and go to a restaurant. She said, "Even if our Old Folks Club invited, it'd be so big. The one outside, now the government has money, many come and get the big one (???) , so now we can't leave." (Laughter)

164 Q: What else do you do now? .

A: Nothing, I don't do anything. I cook.

Q: Now you just eat?

A: Mmm.

Q: Then you.....

A: I come down here to Hong Kong Low and sit a while, and then I go home. Then I rest a while.

167 Q: Why do you come here every day to eat?

A: I come every day.

168 Q: You come every day to eat at Hong Kong Low, don't you?

A: I bought a long-term ticket!

- 170 Q: A long-term ticket. What do you do about lunch?
- A: For lunch I fix something to eat at home, I cook whatever.
- 172 Q: You live in a room now? There's no place for you to...
- A: It's a cheap room, I'm living there temporarily. I hope I'll be lucky enough to get into the housing for the elderly.
- 175 Q: Would you like to have a garden in the place where you live, so that you could grow vegetables? You wouldn't? Then what would you do? Come here all day?
- A: How many old ladies live there? Sixty-five.. ✓
- 178 Q: How many old ladies live there?
- A: Lan, old Auntie Wong was there last night, that makes three; there's old man sim (?) that couple, and Old Lady Cheung, there!
- 181 Q: How many people are there in the house?
- A: Five rooms, with one person in each room. That couple also has one room. I carry my own two buckets of water myself..
- 183 Q: Where do you go to fetch the water?
- A: Next door to the Mexican at the end, in number 9.
- Q: What do you do with the water?
- A: I fetch it for cooking. I cook with an electric cooker.
- 6 187 Q: Then where do you wash your dishes and vegetables?
- A: There's a sink in Room #9.
- Q: There's only one sink?
- A: Mmm. One sink, it's for common use. There's a men's room and a women's room.
- 191 Q: Then can't you just wash vegetables there without fetching water? You can just wash them there, you don't have to carry water!
- A: I also carry some back. It's good to walk over there. It's only nine rooms, very close by.
- 194 Q: You use an electric rice cooker, right?
- A: Mmm, here I use an electric cooker.
- 195 Q: Is it easy to use an electric cooker?
- A: Yes. Mrs. Wong has a bit , a set of .
The old building, in the future when they finish building the housing for the elderly, everything will be uniform, and the old building will be torn down.
- 200 Q: You know everyone here, don't you?
- A: There aren't any anymore. It's hard to find a room! It's nice if the landlord trusts me. If you believe in Christ then in the future you should find someone who believes in Christ to live with you, that would be nice. Auntie Wong, I gave it to her and she took the room, with her . The two of them are in Rooms 6 and 7, and they are Buddhists. I'm the only one who believes in Christ.
- Q: Any religion is all right, isn't it?
- A: Yes, seek truth from the facts, everyone has their own preference (rest indistinct).
- 211 Q: What time do you go to sleep at night?
- A: Sometimes I sing some psalms. On Sundays, after going to church I come back and memorize these, what we sang on page 9 and so on. I sing them again, and sometimes...
- Q: You sing by yourself?
- A: Yes, and I practise them. The teacher said, you have to practise when you go home, and learn them well.
- 217 Q: Do you go out at night?

A: No.

Q: Why don't you go out at night?

A: How would I dare go out so late at night, right? Sometimes my daughter invites me over for some reason, like she invited me for dinner tomorrow.

Q: That's nice.

A: My birthday is on this January 28.

Q: January 28, isn't that past?

A: Last year I ate , and this year I'll eat . It's like that every year.

225 Q: You have enough money now? Rent is \$60 a month.

A: I have enough. When I sold that store, my children listened to me and sold it for \$18,000. They didn't want any of it, and even give me some money from time to time.

228 Q: Do you sometimes get from the government...

A: No, I haven't gotten it yet. There's still a hundred-odd dollars that I haven't gotten yet. They give (?) me \$50 a month, and I get \$2 () from the bank. 48 years () now. I got it last night. They invited me to dinner, and I had a lucky packet. My grand...

7 234 Q: Then you're very sharp. At your age, you're supporting yourself?

A: Several good children, they take care of you . They ask me to dinner at my son-in-law's house, and before finishing I (indistinct).

238 Q: You're very frugal, supporting yourself like this. You must be over 70 years old this year? That's very nice.

A: Ah Chiu was only 45!

240 Q: How come he passed away so young, only 45? Why?

A: He overworked himself at his business.

Q: What happened? Did he get sick?

A: Thw whites were so good to us! My son had , and several large companies had . This (?8) boy was so lucky, when he graduated from high school he got a scholarship to work and go to school. After he finished 4 years of college, he spent 4 years in the Navy.

246 Q: Why did Uncle Chiu die so young? Had he gotten sick?

A: Oh, the old in those days entered his body.....(indistinct), and he didn't go wash it off! He didn't wash out his intestines! That's how it happened! It was so unfortunate.

Q: He (indistinct), was that an illness?

✓ A: That's being short-lived! This small town had few Chinese in it, and with so few Chinese, nobody could look after you.

255 Q: Which church do you go to now?

A: There's a new one, and also an old one.

256 Q: Is one of them called the Baptist Church?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Do you go with...

A: Yip Sing Cheong's I go with Auntie Gee. The Christian Church, I go with Auntie Wong to the Christian Church every day at 9 o'clock, and I come back around 12:30 or so.

261 Q: You have a son and three daughters. What does your son do?

A: My son teaches!

Q: Teaches? Does he teach in a junior ?

A: My son teaches.

Q: That's nice. One daughter is

A: "Baby," the second one, is a at

Q: Oh, she's a ? What about the other one?

A: Their own one won't work (?) (indistinct), it's here.

268 Q: What about the second daughter?

A: teaches. Anna works in the Water Dept.

Q: Oh, she works in the Water Dept. here?

A: I haven't given any to Anna, I don't care what she does.

Q: Then you're very good. How old is Anna?

A: Anna's 30.

Q: She's 30?

A: I don't care what she does.

273 Q: That's nice. Your children are so good, they come often to visit you.

A: They're all well-behaved and they have good jobs. That brings me good fortune. The worst thing is if they don't work, then even supporting you in your old age becomes a problem. (Laughter) So, I'm bringing myself some good fortune.

Q: That's why I say you're doing very well.

A: Several times a day, that's pretty good. 's son came here again. I said I've been eating MSG at Hong Kong Low for 7-8 years now. You cook up a few vegetables at home, my eldest daughter will eat here with me. My third sister's bought 3 houses. Her husband runs a nightclub in

284 Q: They don't use MSG in Hong Kong Low, do they?

A: We asked her not to.

Q: No, she didn't use any.

A: Don't use any, just cook a few vegetables and that'll be fine. There's no MSG now.

Q: None.

A: And the food has improved.

288 Q: Yes, and you're in good health?

A: Yes, but they keep the window open. Once I came to eat at Hong Kong Low, I don't remember if it was on a Wednesday or a Thursday. I came up for a while, and it was cold. I didn't come over to eat for three weeks. My daughter did this and that and bought me this and that and wouldn't let me go out. My eldest daughter does that seldom. The youngest daughter teaches music. I adopted her. She's the best one.

Q: Is she your own?

A: Mmm.

300 Q: You adopted her?

A: So altogether that makes 4 daughters. I pretend I'm eating at her home. (Laughter)

Q: That's nice.

A: for a year. Sometimes I take the bus to my son-in-law's apartment. On Saturdays, after lunch, there are dozens of markets there

Q: Where is her apartment?

A: M.J. for a long time. Now there's less business. The eldest daughter sometimes does some.....

310 Q: Was your eldest daughter born here or in China?

A: In China.

- Q: In China. When you came...
- A: He was in the army and wanted to go back to get married. At that time I thought, that Auntie Gee had opened up a restaurant here, let's see if there were any people in the army? Just then her father told me, "Marriages are fixed by destiny. My second son on July 10." That's what he told me. I bought a box of candy to and took a look. "My family is so good, the children are so obedient, and they are have such accomplishments." That's how it was fixed.
- Q: That's nice.
- A: It was arranged, but he also had a son who hadn't (?married). The world was very difficult. He came in 1936, and I in 1937. You don't know how slow things were. We were only making a little more than ten dollars from our business. I learned a few words of Spanish, so I hired two Mexican women and I slowly taught them.... (Sighs) I endured a lot of hardships then, but no longer. Now I shudder at the sight of work.
- 329 Q: You don't have to endure any hardships now!
- A: Yes, I just eat.
- 330 Q: Now you're still in good health, you should get something to eat.
- A: I exercise regularly, I like very much to exercise.
- 9 332 Q: That's it, go exercise a bit. What kinds of Western dishes do you like? Chinese dishes? Do you like to eat everything?
- A: I eat everything, that's it. Let me go buy a couple of bowls of taro cake.
- 338 Q: I'll be finished with our talk in a moment. What else would you like to tell me? How many grandchildren do you have?
- A: My son was in the military for four years, where he met Brother Wong Ming Sam and introduced him. He also knows a few words of Chinese. He came when he was only three. He knows a few words of Chinese. He's good at accounts and everything, in . After graduation he became the , and a Mexican was the second-ranking one, the president. That's like what we call the "chairman" in Chinese.
- 349 Q: I was asking about how many grandchildren you have.
- A: Sons?
- Q: Sons, how many grandchildren?
- A: There are twin boys, 17 years old, working in the company. 19 years old. My daughter-in-law didn't want any more, she wanted a daughter, but they had another boy. 8 years old.
- Q: So that makes 3 children?
- 355 A: My eldest daughter's son got married. They have 2 sons and a daughter. There's also the youngest daughter. She's in college and working in a bank. As for Baby, she has a daughter and son. () wants two daughters but she doesn't.
- 362 Q: That makes 10 altogether. You've raised 10 grandchildren?
- A: That's not enough. Get married. I don't care what she does.
- Q: A total of 10 grandchildren.
- A: Many are like that.
- 364 Q: She gets married, let her...
- A: She also bought herself a house.
- Q: That's very good.
- A: Yes. Now I have no cares and worries. I go to church all day, I'm very happy. They feed me all day.

371 Q: You go to church, and you read?
 A: I have no worries about anything, I don't. I just sing, I take a religious book, read it and digest the whole thing. When I'm tired I sleep, and if I get hungry I fix something to eat.

375 Q: What is your favorite food?
 A: I eat everything, I eat some of everything.
 Q: That's good.
 A: There's food right outside the door! Sometimes I buy it here, and if it doesn't taste good, I eat next door.
 Q: What do you eat next door? Is that Tin Seung Tin?
 A: Some rice dishes.
 Q: At Tin Seung Tin?
 A: Tin Seung Tin?
 Q: Have you ever eaten at Tin Seung Tin?
 A: Yes, I have.
 Q: Did you like it?
 A: I just had a couple of fried bean-curd cakes, several dimes each.
 Q: Where is your favorite eating place?

10 390 A: It makes no difference where I eat. Auntie Lai Ming took me to a restaurant, we looked around and bought something to eat. I have time, and she's also . She didn't come last night.
 Q: Kay Gee, what else would you like to tell us?
 A: There isn't much more to say. Now I go to the Old Folks Club, and . In 1977 Uncle Lai Ming asked me how old I was. I said I couldn't remember. I was born in 1907, is that 70 or 71?

403 Q: You're 74, 74 years old this year.
 A: So he dragged me over to receive an award. He introduced me, my background, just like that. There was a dinner and I received this prize, what is it called?
 Q: It's called an "award."
 A: What?
 Q: You received the award.
 A: Received the award?
 Q: "Received," you got it; a prize, "award."
 A: "Receive," I used to...
 Q: Kay Gee, if there isn't much more you'd like to say, then we'll end here, OK?
 A: Fine.
 Q: Then thank you.
 A: I'm going to eat at my daughter's tomorrow.
 Q: I see, that's nice. Thank you!

(End)