

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Paul Tom
 Chinese Name: 譚保和
 Date of Interview: 4/28/80, 5/21/80
 Interviewer: Bernice Sam
 Others Present: None
 Language: English
 Summarizer: Stella Ling

Interview Number: 101
 Number of Tapes: 2
 Length: 1 Hour & 51 Minutes

Contents

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary	Tape: <u>1</u> Side <u>A</u>
1	004-016 017-020 021-025 026-043	Introduction. Paul Tom (PT) lives at 1658 West Hymamate Street in Los Angeles, California 90047. PT's Chinese name is Tom Bow Wa (譚保和). PT's parents are from Canton, China. PT's father is Sam Yup and his mother is Sze Yup. PT's father was an herbalist while he was in China. PT's father came to the U.S. by himself in 1900. He was not married at that time.	
2	044-046 047-049 050-053 054-057 058-066 067-071	PT's father went to Chicago when he arrived. He was the manager of King Joy Low () in Chicago. He left Chicago in 1910. PT was born in Chicago on June 7, 1908. PT's grandfather was responsible for bringing PT's mother to the U.S. PT does not know when this occurred. PT had four brothers and four sisters. PT is the oldest child. PT was two years old when his family moved to Oakland. His family lived in Oakland for a couple of years and then they moved to San Francisco. At that time, PT's father was an herbalist. His name is Tom J. Chong.	
3	072-077 078-089	PT's family spoke Sam Yup at home. They also spoke Sze Yup since his mother was Sze Yup. PT would also speak in English to his parents. PT's mother was able to learn English. PT went to 16th Street Elementary School here in Los Angeles. PT's family transferred to Los Angeles in 1917. PT attended Cent Junior High School and Los Angeles High School. PT then went to USC for college. He studied pharmacy and graduated in 1933.	

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
3	090-096	All of PT's elementary school teachers were Caucasians. He was treated well at school. All of his classmates were Caucasian.
	097-105	PT did not encounter any difficulties because he was Chinese while he was in junior high school. Although all the students and teachers were Caucasian in his high school, PT was still treated well. There were no Black teachers at Los Angeles High School at that time. PT graduated from high school in the winter of 1928.
4	106-115	PT did not join too many activities at school. His father was strict and they had to go home right after school. PT was on the track team in school -- he was a high vault jumper.
	116-118	PT's father was an herbalist when he first came to Los Angeles.
	119-130	At first they lived at 1358 Marigold Street. It was not close to Chinatown. It was located across the street from California Hospital. They lived at that house until 1922. Then they moved to West 37th Street in Los Angeles. That is where PT attended a few years of high school and college.
	131-143	PT was interested in medicine when he was in high school. PT's father wanted him to go to medical school. It was Depression time and there was not enough money to put him through medical school. Pharmacy was the next best thing. PT likes pharmacy.
5	144-151	After graduation from pharmacy school, he got together with some Chinese doctors and opened the first Chinese drug store in Old Chinatown. PT worked there for four years. PT was attending school at the time -- he was an apprentice.
	152-159	At that time, one had to have a year of apprenticeship before being an assistant pharmacist. Then there would be another year before taking the State Board for a California State Pharmacy license. That was in 1933.
	160-167	That Chinese drug store no longer exists. It was torn down when the Union Station was built. The drug store was located at the corner of Los Angeles Street where the Plaza Park is now.
	168-170	Most of the people involved in that drug store have passed away now.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
5	171-178	PT associates with a mixture of Chinese and non-Chinese people. He knows a few Black people. He does not associate with any Chinese because there were not any around him at the time.
	179-191	PT feels half Chinese and half America. PT feels proud to be a Chinese. PT's parents were more Chinese. PT never disagreed with his parents about Chinese customs. PT's father was very strict, whatever he said was what was to be.
6	192-200	While attending junior high school, PT would go to Chinese school in Chinatown for four hours after regular school. He kept that up until he went to high school when he did not have any time to attend Chinese. Then they had a special tutor for one year.
	201-211	PT never resented studying Chinese. He wished that he had continued studying Chinese.
	212-227	At home when someone was sick, PT's father would fix Chinese herbs for them. PT no longer uses Chinese medicine. They used to cook with Chinese herbs as well. PT liked it at the time but no longer takes it anymore.
7	228-232	PT has never been married. He used to live with both his sister and brother -- now he just lives with his brother.
	233-262	For recreation, PT likes to go fishing. About four or five years ago, he used to go fishing every day down at Redondo Beach. He does not go fishing too often anymore. He is interested in photography now. He considered himself an advanced amateur. PT still drives. PT used to play mahjong but does not play anymore. He watches television when there is a good show on. PT likes all kinds of sports.
	263-276	PT has all kinds of gadgets for his photography hobby. He could afford it because he was given five thousand dollars for a bodily injury when his foot was broken. Then he could buy at least \$1500 of camera equipment.
8	277-290	When the weather is damp, the bone of the bad leg will ache. The accident occurred on January 2, 1977.
	291-306	PT does not have any relatives in China. PT's grandfather was the only relative he had in China. PT's grandfather died when he was around 90 years old. He was one of the pioneers of Milwaukee but later returned to China.

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1 Side A
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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary	
8	307-319	In 1928 he was a member of the Native Sons of the Golden State Association or Ton YuenHue (同源會). PT is not a member of any other associations in Chinatown.	
	320-322		
	323-342		To be a member of the Native Sons Association, PT had to pay three dollars a year in dues at that time. The organization was mainly involved in civic duties. they would have dances, raise funds, etc.
9	343-364	PT thinks that Peter SooHoo and Y.C. Hong were prominent Chinese people in the Los Angeles community. Peter SooHoo was involved in many activities. He formed a Chinese band, a Chinese orchestra, and was involved in many civic duties. He also was one of the founders of New Chinatown.	
	365-374		Y.C. Hong helped a lot of Chinese with immigration problems.
	375-384		During the second World War, PT was in Los Angeles. PT was drafted but rejected. He was classified as Class B because of his leg muscle.
10	385-407	During the war years, he worked in El Segundo at the Douglas Factory. He helped with the experimentation of new planes. He stayed there for two years until he found a job working for VOIT Corporation. He worked in the research department. The company was involved in tire and sporting goods manufacture.	
	408-421		PT worked there from May, 1944 until 1960. In 1960, the company moved to Santa Ana. They wanted PT to continue on with the company but it was too far for PT to travel.
	422-441		PT then worked in the research lab for another company. He worked until 1967 when he became disabled and could no longer work.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A

Tape 1 Side B

1	016-023	PT retired in 1967. PT has just been taking it easy ever since he retired.
	024-035	Before the second World War, most of the Chinese were involved in the restaurant business. It was difficult at that ti for even a college-educated Chinese to get a job. PT was not discouraged at that time, he was mad.

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
2	036-042	Since PT could not find a job, he worked for his father for a few years. PT helped his father write Chinese prescriptions.
	043-048	PT gave up trying to find work as a pharmacist and found work working for VOIT in the research lab. They did a lot of research work in chemical analysis.
	049-060	PT got his job by recommendation from the company his brother was working for. PT worked at VOIT for sixteen years.
	061-071	The average wage during the pre-war period was around \$1.20 an hour. People had enough money to buy food since food prices were so low at that time compared to now.
3	072-082	At that time the Chinese lived close to each other. A lot of them came from China and wanted to be close to their own race. A lot of them could not speak or understand English.
	083-093	At that time, the Chinese would use their money to buy houses and to invest in stocks.
	094-100	Some people would send money back to China in order to bring their wives over to the U.S.
	101-121	The Chinese in Los Angeles were affected by the Depression. The Chinese could not find jobs. They did not have much money to spend. The Chinese took care of themselves in Chinatown through organizations that would feed the people.
4	122-130	There was hostility towards the Chinese during the early years. The hostility disappeared after World War II.
	131-134	The Chinese have been able to advance more now since about twenty years ago.
	135-140	PT has never compared the Chinese with the Jewish people.
	141-155	PT's father met PT's mother through PT's grandfather in Milwaukee. PT's grandfather owned a restaurant at that time. PT's grandfather brought PT's mother to the U.S. in order for her to marry PT's father.
5	156-159	When PT was young, he wanted to go back to China in order to get married but he never had the opportunity.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
5	160-170	Many Chinese men returned to China to get married because they felt that China born Chinese were better than American born Chinese. They felt that China born wives were better at cooking, housework and taking care of children.
	171-190	PT knew a few men that married China born Chinese from the village. Some of these marriages did not work out because the wives got married just so they could come to the U.S. After they arrived, they would get divorced and go marry someone else.
6	191-194	The American born Chinese do not necessarily prefer having sons rather than daughters.
	195-216	Interracial marriages are more common now than years ago. PT's niece is married to an American who is a major in the Air Force. They have been married for ten years now. They have two boys. They have been getting along fine. He will be retiring in September and be moving out here. He worked for twenty years for the Army. He has a pretty good pension after working twenty years.
	217-226	Many parents did feel that it was important for their children to attend Chinese school. Nowadays, they do not even think about attending Chinese school. They do not think like they used to.
	227-237	A lot of PT's friends would like to go to China for a visit. But none of them would like to return to China to live, probably because they are accustomed to life in the U.S.
7	238-241	American born Chinese would probably like to go to China to visit only.
	242-261	When PT sees false portrayals of Chinese in the movies, he does not like the implication that all Chinese are a certain way. PT never protested about these movies portrayals.
	262-266	PT has never heard anyone say that they were embarrassed to be Chinese. Most Chinese are pretty proud to be Chinese.
	267-293	Most Chinese consider medicine to be an "ideal" occupation. There are still a lot of Chinese that graduate as pharmacists and engineers. They now hire a lot of Chinese engineers. PT's nephew is an engineer.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
1	004-013	Introduction.
	014-021	PT's nephew graduated as a civil engineer. He now works as a supervisor for Hughes. This was not possible for Chinese thirty years ago.
	022-032	"Ideal" occupations for the younger generation would include medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, and engineering. Professional jobs are more in demand.
	033-042	PT's grandfather came to the United States with his family. PT's grandfather returned to China when he was around ninety years old.
2	043-072	PT's father arrived in the U.S. in the 1900s. He went to Chicago and met PT's mother through PT's grandfather. PT's grandfather was in the restaurant business in Milwaukee. When PT went to graduate school in Milwaukee for one year in 1921, the restaurant was still in existence. PT's uncles took care of the restaurant.
3	073-082	When PT's father arrived in the U.S. he was in his twenties. When he went to Chicago, he became the manager of King Joy Low. PT's father stopped practicing as an herbalist when he arrived at Oakland.
	083-085	All of PT's father's herb formulas are probably stacked away somewhere. PT no longer uses them.
	086-105	PT does not know how much money his father made as an herbalist. One of PT's father's patients was James Wong Howe, a well known cameraman. Another patient was a producer of many comedies (PT does not remember his name) who told the people at the studio to see PT's father. Most of PT's father's patients were Chinese. PT's father was a well known herbalist in Los Angeles.
4	106-111	PT's father's name is Tom Gai Chong. Tom Fu Yuen is PT's father's uncle or something.
	112-116	PT's father was an herbalist in Los Angeles for 45 years -- he practiced until he passed away in 1959.
	117-120	At that time, PT's family did not live in the back of the herb store. The store was located at Lankin Hill.
	121-128	PT used to help his father at the herb store for four years.
	129-136	PT's father spoke very good English. PT did not have to help his father interpret. PT's mother frequently went to the store to help out. She would cook for him. Everyone worked at the store together.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
4	137-146	PT's father used to have an office in Long Beach about three or four years. He would go to his office in Long Beach about twice a week.
5	147-156	PT's father died at the age of eighty. PT's mother died in 1949, she was around 56 years old at the time.
	157-158	After PT's mother died, PT's sisters and the rest of the children would take care of his father.
	159-163	PT did not know Chinese well enough to continue in the herb business.
	164-170	PT no longer uses his father's formulas because his brothers and sisters began to use western medicine and stopped believing in Chinese herbs.
	171-191	PT's sister married Peter SooHoo's brother, David, the policeman. PT's sister is Maye Wong's sister-in-law. They live next to each other.
6	192-216	In 1921, PT's grandfather took PT back to Milwaukee for one year. PT's grandfather was in the Los Angeles area in the 1940s. He then returned to China. He died in China. PT's family did not object of their grandfather returning to China at such a late age. He had a lot of property in China at that time. PT's grandfather returned to China in the 1950s.
	217-230	The Panama Exposition Fair took place in 1915. PT attended the fair with his parents.
7	231-239	PT came to Los Angeles in 1916.
	240-241	PT was in San Francisco until 1916, during the first World War.
	242-264	In 1918, there was a big parade in Los Angeles in celebration of the ending of World War I. PT was young at that time but they were very happy at that time. There were a lot of people making a lot of noise in celebration.
	265-306	In 1936 PT worked for the picture the "Good Earth" for one year. He then got a contract working for the movie "The General Died at Dawn" with Gary Cooper. He worked on that contract for six weeks and received \$65 a week. At that time that was a whole lot of money. There were one hundred people interviewed for twelve positions to be Akim Tamiroff's body guards.

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2 Side A

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Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
8	307-345	PT worked for the "Good Earth" for one year. He was paid \$7.50 a day at that time. He also worked for a Shirley Temple film for one day. He received \$25 for a speaking part. He also worked for other movies such as "Marco Polo," a Western, a movie with Mae West, and Bing Crosby's musical "Anything Goes."
9	346-395	When working in "Marco Polo" they would get \$15 more if they rode a horse. PT made quite a bit of money while working in the movie business. In "Lost Horizon" they went to the desert for one week. They got \$10 more for being out in the desert. They received about \$25 a day -- that was in 1936. PT was in quite a few movies. It was an opportunity for money. Tom Gubbins was the agent for the Chinese in Chinatown.
10	396-427	Tom Gubbins knew PT's father and so he asked PT if he would like to make some extra money. PT was just working for his father at that time. If one would shave all his hair off, he would be guaranteed five days work a week at \$7.50 a day.
	428-442	PT was chosen for a speaking part in the "Good Earth," which brought him \$25 more. He signed a contract with Paramount at that time so he could not work for the "Good Earth."
	443-460	PT did not wish to be in the movie business all the time. After 1936, the business slacked off for Chinese roles. They were making Chinese movies from 1935 to 1937.

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE A

Tape 2 Side B

1	014-023	There was a Chinese orchestra in the movie "Ship from Shanghai." They contacted Peter Soo Hoo and they were paid \$75 a day.
	024-028	PT did not join a Union at that time. They joined the screen actors guild when they were in the "Good Earth."
	029-053	PT enjoyed his work at the research lab because he learned about chemical analysis in chemistry in college. There was about three or four of them in the lab. It was a very congenial group. If PT had a chance to continue to work, he would go back to the research lab. Chemical research involves something new each time.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
2	054-069	At one time, PT was asked to match the color of a rubber basketball. It took a week to come up with that exact color. They used to use leather for basketballs but now they use a rubber cover.
3	070-102	PT then worked for Parker Seal in Culver City for seven years. VOI Company moved from East Adams Street to Santa Ana. They blamed the chemist for making PT transfer to the other company. The company treated PT very well. There were no other Chinese working in the lab. All the workers were Caucasians.
	103-106	Parker Seal manufactures rubber rings and seals for space crafts.
4	107-127	There were about three thousand people working for VOIT at that time. There are even more people working there now.
	128-152	In 1944, PT received \$1.20 an hour for working at VOIT. After fifteen years, he received \$600 a month. Parker Seal gave him a raise and he got around \$900 a month.
5	153-187	Paul Gomez was the pharmacist at the drug store in Chinatown. He found PT through an advertisement in the newspaper. PT would go to the drug store for three or four hours after school. He got about \$35 a month. He was not licensed at that time -- he was still going to school. After one year of experience in a pharmacy, the school board would give someone an assistant's license. One would have to have another year of experience before taking the examination for a full license.
6	188-210	At that drug store, there was also a girl at the soda fountain, and a clerk. It was a small pharmacy. The pharmacist and PT got along fine. The customers were mostly Chinese and Mexicans. They sold a lot of cosmetics and drugs. There was also a soda fountain which was a regular meeting place for young kids.
	211-229	The soda fountain sold a lot of ice cream. There were also a lot of doctors involved in the pharmacy -- Dr. Chee, Dr. Samuel Eng, and Dr. Sitron.
7	230-252	The drug store was in existence for six or seven years. The store then went out of business because of the competition with the pharmacies on Main Street. PT was no longer working at the store when it closed down. He enjoyed working at the drug store.

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Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
7	253-260	The drug store was opened seven days a week from 10 am to 10 pm.
	261-272	Y.C. Hong was a member of the Native Sons of the Golden State (NSGS). He was a lawyer. His office was located in Old Chinatown on Alameda Street. He handled mostly immigration problems.
	273-282	Marhsall Field was the owner of one of the largest department stores in Chicago. He was a friend of PT's father since he used to dine at PT's father's restaurant.

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE B

END OF INTERVIEW

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