

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Lillian Wong
 Chinese Name: 張麗新
 Date of Interview: 9/14/83
 Interviewer: Suellen Cheng
 Others Present: None
 Language: English
 Summarizer: Suellen Cheng

Interview Number: 119
 Number of Tapes: 3
 Length: 2 Hours 6 Minutes

Contents

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary	Tape: <u>1 Side A</u>
1	001-010 011-032	Introduction Lillian Wong(LW)'s grandfather was a seasonal cook in Ventura old Chinatown. He learned carpentry in Hong Kong so he was able to help people building furniture, etc.	
2	033-050 051-071	Chinese started their own fire brigade in Ventura. LW's grandfather held the key to the fire engine's room. Grandmother passed away when LW's mother was 6. Her elder sister Emily married and came to Los Angeles. Two years later she sent her father and two brother and sister to live with her in Los Angeles. There were two families in the old Ventura Chinatown where the Chinese workers came to town for goods on weekends.	
3	072-084 085-091	Mother married in Los Angeles. LW's family lived on Hill Street where the father had a Chinese herb store. Father would take children visit their aunt in Los Angeles Chinatown by street car. Mother did not like to walk on the main street to avoid Chinese men.	
4	092-112 113-127	Mr. Seto(SooHoo) had a store on the way to LW's house which was located at the end of Apablaza Street. Man Jen Low family lived upstairs of Bao Wong Dong building. They are Hus. LW's aunt helped the the family whenever they had new baby.	
5	128-145 146-161	LW was born in a two story house with 11 rooms. Father rented the house where he had his office downstairs. LW described the house. Father's patients were all Americans. One of them was a conductor of the railroad company	

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Tape: 2
Tape: 1 Side A

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
5	162-171	introduced many clients to LW's father. Father also had an office in Chinatown where he prescribed for Chinese patients.
	172-183	Father had drug store on Hill Street store and made special pills himself.
6	184-213	Father had all kinds of equipment for preparing Chinese herbs. He would cook Chinese medicine for the patients to drink it in the store. Mother would help and interpret for LW's father.
7	214-253	Father also prepared and sent the medicine to the patients afar. Father also had special remedy for skin ailment.
	254-265	In 1920 LW's family had to move because the landlord torn down the house for building a parking lot. In the old days Americans did not want to rent to Chinese.
8	266-289	It was very difficult to find a place for the family. The family finally found a place on 126 14th Place. It was only a two bedroom house.
	290-303	Father's business mainly was with Caucasians so he needed a place outside of Chinatown. He did not want LW going to Chinatown because many Chinese men would looked at her.
	304-317	LW's aunt moved out of Chinatown because her house was getting old and LW's family had a big house enough for two families.
9	318-336	The Aunt's house had two rooms downstairs, one living room, two bedrooms, a kitchen, and a bathrooms at the end of the house.
	337-378	Seto family used to live in the adobe house near the Plaza. Whenever the mother of Seto family wanted to visit LW's aunt, LW's mother would accompany Seto family walking through Chinatown with their umbrellas to avoid from being seen by Chinese men. They loved to visit LW's aunt's house because aunt had a bath tub.
10	379-393	The mother of Seto was also Yee so they were very close to LW's mother who was Yee.
	394-408	LW's never went to Chinatown to eat when she

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Numner	Summary
10		was young. Father gave a banquet only for the men in the restaurant to celebrate the birth of his first Child, Lillian Wong. He gave banquet to the women at LW's aunt's house. It was in 1911.
	409-424	At that time, the women were protected. The SooHoo's girls only went to 8th grades because the high school was far away from Chinatown.
	425-434	All LW's brothers and sisters had college education.
11	435-469	Father was well educated and could afford to send all the children to college. In those days there were few American born Chinese girls.
	470-487	LW mentioned all the schools she went to.
	488	End of tape 1 Side A

Tape 1 Side B

1	001-011	LW went to Sentous Junior High School then to Los Angeles High School where she had to take bus to.
	012-037	LW was the only Chinese student in Grand Ave. School and felt very insecure. At the 16th Street School there were few more Chinese students. LW had very few friends in the Los Angeles High School because there were very few minority students.
2	038-053	LW had very little social life at school but was an honor students.
	054-068	LW had good neighbors and played with neighbor's daughters but did not get too close.
3	069-076	Mother spoke English with neighbors. The neighbors taught mother how to make fig jams.
	077-099	LW's family was very close to other Chinese relatives and friends so they did not have to make friends with others. But the family had good relationships with Caucasian patients whom they exchanged Christmas cards.
4	100-113	LW's still exchanged Christmas cards with some

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
4	114-123 124-	descendants of father's patients and kept in contact with them. Some of the patients taught mother crocheting. The Friendships Club in Los Angeles High School was created to enhance the understanding of other nations' culture.
5	142-159 160-193	LW belonged to Chinese Student Club at USC, and did not socialize very much with American students. The class was large. The Chinese Student Club held dances but LW's father did not like her to go. The Tom Leong family often hosted the dances. LW did not participate in dances because she knew that her father did not like it. Taft Leong went to USC the same time as LW. LW named several Chinese American students in USC.
6	194-209 210-223	Some Chinese students were from Honolulu, some from China. LW belonged to the California Scholarship Federation so she did not have to take exams to enter USC.
7	224-245 246-274	LW chose to go to USC because it was closer to her home and also because the school was better known. LW was majored in Sociology, and wanted to be a social worker. Other Chinese American students had different majors. One of her classmates, Lei Kit King is now the vice-mayor of Beijing.
8	275-286 287-297 298-313 314-326	LW's father always talked about preserving old Chinese culture so LW got along well with students from China. Mother was very Chinese. She wouldn't think that she is an American despite the fact that she did not know any Chinese word. She wore Chinese dress all the time. Mother was very quiet person but was cautious about not letting LW become too Americanized. LW only associated very few non-Chinese students at USC.
9	327-382	LW would like to work as a social worker. The other thing LW would like to do was to teach English in China. Her father always talked about going back to China.

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
10	383-413	Mother did go back to China in 1928 with LW's father, sister, and brothers. They stayed in China for 10 months. It was a hard for LW's mother. The second time mother went back to China (Hong Kong) was in 1975.
	414-434	The first trip to China for LW's mother was rather frighten.
	435-448	LW helped a little bit of housework on weekends. Parents always wanted them to have good education.
	449-473	LW has two sisters, one brother and two step brothers.
	474-486	LW made dresses and cut hairs for sisters. Father liked cooking and mother would help him.
	487	End of Tape 1 Side B.

Tape 2 side A

1	001-011	Introduction
	012-019	One sister of LW's graduated from USC Music School. The youngest sister graduated from Sociology Department, USC, and worked in the USC International Relation Library for 12 years. Her name is Marie Louie.
	020-021	Marion married a doctor from China.
	022-031	It was unusual to see a Chinese American women to go to college in the early days.
	032-034	LW got married the month after she graduated and went to China. She did not have much contact with old schoolmates.
2	035-042	LW invited Taft Leong, Holly Lee, and the Lem family to her 50th Anniversary. The Lem family used to own Lem's Cafe on First Street.
	043-052	Edna, Ethel and Helen were Lem sisters. Edna and Ethel went to Music School at USC.
	053-067	LW's sister graduated from Music School and did have a few students. Most Chinese did not necessary hire a Chinese music teacher neither did American families.
3	068-087	Husband came from China and spent three years at Redland and two years in Cal Tech. LW told how she met her husband at Cal Tech.
	088-089	After they got married they went to China.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
3	090-107	According to Immigration Laws, LW lost her citizenship in 1938. The same thing happened to her sister.
4	108-121	When LW got married, parents were sad. Brother Arthur was in China at the time. Only two younger sisters stayed with parents at home. LW used to help father purchasing furniture. LW was reluctant to leave her parents but she had no choice.
	122-142	Father liked LW's husband because he had a great future not like other American Chinese boys who after graduated from school often could not find a job. There was not much job opening for Chinese in the U.S.
5	143-155	LW taught English part time at high school in Canton. She also tutored some students at home.
	156-160	The transition made easier for LW because she lived in a community where most of the residents were Chinese Americans.
	161-173	The community had a Baptist Church, Baptist High School, Baptist Girl's School and Boy's School, a Bible School for Women and Theological School. Many Chinese Americans went back there to live.
	174-180	The houses were very nice and were built by oversea's Chinese.
6	181-201	Father did not belong to any church but allowed children to attend churches. Husband's family is a fourth generation Baptist family.
	202-226	Mother used to go to Sunday school. Mrs. Findlay helped Chinese women and taught Chinese women English. Mother learned English from Mrs. Findlay.
7	227-251	LW interacted mostly with the teachers from her school in China. Her friends were mostly graduated from USC and lived in the same community in China. She associated with also family's friends and relatives.
	252-259	LW missed home very much. The mail did take a long time to arrive.
	260-263	LW had American breakfast and rice for lunch and dinner.

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Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
7	264-282	Mother-in-law was educated and taught kindergarten. Father-in-law was an Western doctor and believed in Western medicine while LW was brought up with Chinese medicine.
8	283-306	The family in Los Angeles always celebrated holidays with special foods. Lots of celebration went on during the Christmas.
	307-324	LW did tutoring in Canton. Later she moved to Kwangsei Province with her husband.
9	325-359	During the Sino-Japanese War, the family moved to Hong Kong. Husband worked on the railway in Yuinan. LW left her daughter with mother-in-law in Hong Kong and went to Yuinan to meet her husband. Husband was on a surveying team for improving Burma Highway.
	360-379	LW stayed with an American lady whose husband also worked in Burma Highway project.
10	380-409	LW's son was born in Yuinan. In 1941, Hong Kong was occupied by Japanese, so the family moved to Macao.
	410-419	LW taught in Kunmin and met her daughter who was brought by husband's family to Kunmin from Hong Kong.
	420-482	Husband worked in Queilin with American Army and Air Force during the Sino-Japanese War. The family moved all the time with husband's job.
	483	End of Tape 2 Side A

Tape 2 Side B

1	006-014	Coming back from Los Angeles after 15 years, LW was shocked by the changes. She stayed in Los Angeles for two years with her son from 1948 to 1950.
	015-033	LW had no common interests as her friends any more, but was very happy to be with the family. LW did not want to live off her parents, she found a job in a sewing factory.
2	034-041	Husband started a new business in Hong Kong. It was a hard start again. He built a house

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
2	042-059	LW earned 80 cents an hour and twenty seven dollars a week working in the sewing factory. Her friends introduced her to the job.
	060-064	Daughter stayed with her husband.
3	065-077	LW taught English in a school in Hong Kong. It was a part time job. She taught for seven years. Then worked in her husband's office.
	078-086	Husband became president of the Baptist World Alliance. They travelled to more than 60 countries.
	087-100	Husband is a civil engineer and had his own office. The Baptist World Alliance had over 100 affiliations.
4	101-105	LW was the treasurer of the Asian Baptist Women Union for three terms and took care of the book for 15 years.
	106-139	LW explained the organization of the Baptist Asian Union. She travelled to the meeting in different countries. LW did all the bookkeeping and a lot of correspondence.
5	140-155	LW and husband both are deacons in the church and involved in mainly church activities.
	156-166	The second time LW visited America was 10 years after her first return. Then she revisited five years later, and did the same two years after that.
	167-175	Everytime she returned to Los Angeles she had less shock than previous trip.
	176-186	In 1965, husband first came back to America after 32 years. He received an honorary doctorate in Human Letters from the University of Redland the same time his son received his BS from the same school.
6	187-201	In 1965 LW travelled all over in the United States with her husband for the first time. It was the first time she ever been outside of California. LW went to Panama World Fair in San Francisco in 1915.
	202-211	LW would bring her parents to San Fernando every week when she was young.
	212-223	They used to take four five hours to San Diego.

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
7	224-238	LW's cousin married to the owner of New China Cafe on Fifth Street in San Diego. They would drive the Model T to the beach for picnics.
	239-247	Every year mother would take children to San Diego to visit their aunt for several weeks.
	248-257	Aunt would also bring cousins to visit LW's family.
	258-294	Brother (Sam Chang) came to America on an official visit to all police stations. Father bought a farm so brother decided to stay in Los Angeles to help her father farming. The first farm was in Studio City. The second farm was in Sepulveda. His wife came ten years later and helped in the farm. She sorted asparagus. They sold the asparagus to San Pedro Street produce market.
8	295-311	Father would go to San Fernando to help brother trim the roses. Before they went to visit brother they would go to Chinatown to get some cooked food and had dinner at brother's place.
	312-323	LW did not help in the farm. LW's younger brother liked to help in the farm. LW sometime would bring books there to study.
9	324-339	Father was very happy that LW got high grades at school. LW was good in Spanish and took 5 years of Spanish courses.
	340-354	Father encouraged her to take Spanish and said it would be more useful in Southern California. Maybe someday they would open a grocery store in Mexican towns.
	355-377	LW did use Spanish in speeches while she travelled to South America.
10	378-399	When brother graduated from high school, father decided to open an office (herbalist's) in Ventura. Brother (Arthur) would stay in the office before he went to China for college education. The business was not too good. After brother left for China, father decided to close up.
	400-421	There was no other Chinese doctor in Ventura at that time. The family visited Ventura occasionally.

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
10	422-432	LW helped father making sign for the store: Chinese Herb Company, Y.H. Chung.
	433-453	The family occasionally visited Ventura and mother would tell them the story of the past.
11	454-473	LW visited the Chinatown site last year.
	474-485	Mother did not have a camera until very late. They always had the photos taken by photographers.
	486	End of Tape 2 Side B

Tape 3 Side A

1	006-027	Mother sew for the children. Aunt Emily was 10 years older than mother. Mother helped father in the herb store.
	028-033	Mother was very humble person. Father would do all the social talking with visitors. She served tea and helped.
2	034-053	Mother even went to Immigration Office to interpret for the officers. Sometimes she would accompany relatives to hospital and translated for doctors.
	054-056	Mother's name is Nellie Yee Chung. Brother in San Fernando is Sam Chang.
	057	End of interview.

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