

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Lily Lum Chan Interview Number: 48
 Chinese Name: 陳林維文 Number of Tapes: 3
 Date of Interview: 11/4/78 Length: 1 Hour & 36 Minutes
 Interviewer: June Mei
 Others Present: None
 Language: English
 Summarizer: Elaine Loo

Contents

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary	Tape: <u>1</u> Side <u>A</u>
1	002-027 028-040	Introduction. Father was born in America. Grandparents were from China. They came as merchants. Father was a merchant in Yukai and San Francisco for the major part of his life. Grandparents came to American by boat. For a long time they lived up north near the gold mining area.	
2	041-050	Later grandparents moved to San Francisco where her father was born. He was an only son of four daughters (one perished early). Father took two years of Chinese language and went to religious class in San Francisco and in the Salvation Army. There he learned English. He was very able and industrious. He became a very prominent leader, especially with the Chinese American Citizens Alliance (CACA) and the <u>Chinese Times</u> , which he founded with some friends.	
	051-056	Mother was born in San Jose. She died at the age of 45. She was a very good mother. She gave birth to seven children. Lily Lum Chan (LLC) is the third child. Emma, an attorney in San Francisco, is number five. All of the children tried to do their best to follow the footsteps of their father.	
	057-064	LLC's father's whole life and philosophy was to relieve Chinese of being embarrassed. He started when he was 18 learning English and still wore a queue, which one wore until he was married and then cut off. He said "Chinese are being belittled and embarrassed, what can we do?"	
	065-074	LLC's mother was Presbyterian and very religious. Father was not so technical about which church to join but he had a strong Chinese philosophy of life (Confucianism and Buddhism)As children, they went to	

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
2	065-074	numerous churches: morning, Episcopalian; afternoon, Presbyterian; and evening, Congregation. LLC and her sister were in the choir. The environment they grew up in was more advanced and modern than most Chinese.
3	075-083	Father realized the possible negative influence of Chinatown. So he bought a home in the Mission District on a small hill. They lived there all through the week. At the end of the day, they went to Chinese Language School at the Morning Veil, the first coed Chinese language school. It was a more enlightened school because of the interdenominational leaders.
	084-090	LLC's girlhood was very rich. She sympathized with other girls who were not so fortunate, e.g. girls who had to live on the second floor of a store with conservative parents.
	091-092	LLC's dad encouraged his children to do something for the community. He thought that you must give something back to society what you gained.
	093-098	They went to Chinatown school for a few years. Parents went back to China and took the last four children along. LLC wouldn't finish school. The older and second sister, Allison stayed.
	099-113	Father tried to build something for the CACA (around 1917 to 1918). It took a month by steamship. While mother visited and saw the sights, father planned things for CACA.
4	114-124	LLC was serious and went to a smaller school and learned Chinese for 20 more months. Her parents were in Canton for two years. LLC observed horrible economic problems from her beautiful building where LLC's family had two stories for themselves. Father had an upstairs for business and the family lived in the penthouse.
	125-134	The coolies, etc. left an impression on LLC that those more fortunate should help others. LLC got very good tutoring for two years. They also tutored her brothers. After two years the family went home. LLC was 11 or 13 years old.
	135-145	In San Francisco they were supported to get a flat on 914 Clay since her father was very modern. Later they went to a hotel. Then they bought a home in the Mission District on 29th and Mission at Peters Avenue opposite a hospital.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
5	146-151	They were Americanized. At one faith during the day, then off to Chinese school in the evening. LLC was a monitor.
	152-159	Went to a girls high school which was one of the higher standard schools for girls. Chinese not supposed to go to Caucasian schools; Chinese were supposed to go to Oriental-Chinese School on Washington Street opposite the Mei-Yee-Mei Church.
	160-161	Father was disgusted. They were American citizens that had Chinese skin but were paying just as much in taxes.
	162-176	Took the children to 4th Street and Santa Clara and lined them up. Talked to Miss Watson who said that the law said no non-Caucasian children were allowed. Practically railroaded the kids into school. The Chinese kids all had excellent grades. The principal was so happy and so sorry that she said they weren't allowed to enter. The Lum children went on for 4-8 years depending on when they were transferred.
	177-179	LLC went to a girls high school and her sister went to Lowell High School. LLC went to the University of California and majored in education administration and minored in economics.
180-184	Mother had a heart ailment. Today they would consider it minor. Those days required much rest and quiet. LLC decided to finish in three years and help her father with the expenses for her mother's doctor's care.	
6	185-194	In August 1929, before LLC finished 3½ years of college, her mother died. This shocked LLC. Mother wanted to give a big party for all her children who went to school. In those days the children didn't have big parties, only elders.
	195-201	Mother wanted to have a party at a Mandarin nightclub for LLC, her brother and sister. Mother didn't live to do it. LLC mentions this because many people not so fortunate as she and lacking spiritual blessings from the family. Hence, LLC is very tolerant of hardships and people's negative life.
	202-222	LLC got a job teaching Chinese at the Interdenomination Chinese People for Chinese Language Schools run by 4-5 denominations of Chinese Protestants. Opposite them were Catholics, which had enough to run its own. Protestants had to consolidate. LLC taught until she married. She taught 18 hours a day, including Saturdays.

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
6	223-229	Had to deal with delinquent children and those who didn't want to be in school.
7	230-235	After graduation, LLC went to I.Magnins as an assistant buyer. Mother died and LLC was very sick. LLC didn't want to go on because her mother wasn't there to see her.
	236-241	Also did post-graduate research on languages. LLC is self-learned and independent. Knows how to work in a library and interview people. LLC was often around highly educated people and learns from them.
	242-251	Went to Peking with husband and brushed up on her Chinese. Learned colloquial Chinese from her sister-in-law.
	252-259	Husband taught at Harvard of China: Peking National. There LLC met Dr. Hu-she-ji and many scholars. Good experience for higher cultures and manners of Peking.
	260-268	Peking very dusty from Gobi desert. Windows must be dust proof. Building had patio in middle with living room, guest room and kitchen help area, etc. LLC had a beautiful life there for five years.
	269-278	Arthur Lum, LLC's brother, went there (Yin Ching) too. Was a previous tennis champion. Very dusty area.
8	279-286	Peking is the cultural center for Chinese heritage. People are very obedient (used to emperors) unlike Hong Kong, a metropolitan area. They are always challenging host or business of family.
	287-299	Beautiful life. Had 3-7 servants. Two daughters born in Peking. Older one now a doctor in Boston (Betty). Dora now an investment counselor in Encino. Family not too big. LLC also has five grandchildren.
	300-310	LLC has had a challenging and eventful life.
	311-318	LLC was in Peking from 1933-37. Uncertain about the war. Though there would be an incident and talked through but Japanese were strong. Only refugees were to return to America.
	319-322	LLC was in Shanghai for months and money was running short. Went to Canton where her sister was but not safe. Then went to Hong Kong.
	323-355	Loo-Loo (Anna May Wong's sister) took LLC in. Lived there a quarter of a year. In 1937 arrived in San Francisco for Christmas. Daughter just turned three years old.
9	356-372	Had first class cabin.

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Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
9	373-383	Pomona hired LLC's husband as a part time lecturer. Specialty was political science, law and government.
10	384-402	LLC formed the first strong Chinese women's club to do things for the community and people in China in distress. Later also for the American government.
	404-424	CCBA was also trying to raise money.
	425-447	Chinese were about 5000 in population. Most immigrants are Sze Yup (Toisan).
11	448-469	Most worked in laundries, mines and gambling. Gambling mostly for miners. Mahjong is like Chinese poker.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A

Tape 2 Side A

1	003-017	Introduction.
	018-026	Storefronts for laundries were no problem as long as one paid money. Chinese are not so bad like other nationalities who try to gyp the rentals. They feel if they have a place to do business, like they try to cut the rent.
	027-029	Usually people who send out laundry are upper middle class. They talk nicely to them. Laundry is considered "see-mun" work--not to much hassle.
	030-033	Not "see-mun" work would be farming, groceries, hauling, etc.
2	034-038	Uneducated and those unfamiliar with western language preferred laundry work.
	039-047	Restaurants also have small space, usually 5-10 tables and a counter. "No matter what" attitude. A father would learn how to cook while the wife waited on tables. Children came after school to clean up. Maybe a Mexican was hired to do the dishes.
	048-055	This format is applicable to all restaurants--in or out of Chinatown.
	056-057	Restaurants flourished. Didn't make a lot of money but they were frugal and used lots of common sense.
	058-059	They could have six children but today most can only have one without crying about it.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
2	060-068	Fishing and canneries usually up Oregon way. "Ukai" is an area. The cannery guys manage the big canneries--they're like the mover or foreman. They're honest and hardworking and in control of the Chinese laborers.
	069-073	Are wealthier because they're better paid.
3	074-082	There was no such thing as employment agencies. Work came from introductions or word-of-mouth.
	083-086	Not much fishing down in Southern California.
	087-093	Chinese fished on their own and would secretly sell to the restaurants.
	094-096	Some "FOB" (recent immigrants from China) with few English skills would probably do housework.
	097-100	Jobs would come from newspapers or from recommendations from someone else.
	101-111	Chinese people would have to learn cooking, e.g. bacon and eggs. The hardest would be to learn to bake muffins.
4	112-113	Once a Chinese learned his boss didn't let him go.
	114-120	Employment agencies were are maybe one in Los Angeles. There were no Chinese papers then, only during the past ten years.
	121-129	Chinese are very clannish. Usually preferred to hire people from the same area in China, e.g. Sun Wei, Kwong Jow, etc.
	130-131	Sze Yup people usually go into the restaurant business.
	132-133	Huen san people in dried goods.
	134-136	Chortling....
	137-140	Sze Yup people will do whatever work that is available. That is because they are more simple minded. They are warm and since they're from the same village, a bit naive (not exposed to city life).
	141-142	Huen san people are a little ahead of other villages.
	143-149	Sam Yup are very intelligent, very selective. Usually in cleaner type merchandising. Sold cigars, etc. for two generations, stationery stores. Tidier businesses. No perishibility. Some go into some groceries.
	5	150-158
159-161		Not a lot of non-whites, non-Chinese patronized Chinese restaurants.
162-167		In the latter part of 1938 big changes occurred. Much confusion between the Japanese in China during the war that people didn't know which side to rally for.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
5	168-175	Hence, Chinese Culture Society formed. Monthly meeting on Chinese culture with dinner, \$1.50.
	176-182	Beginning of Chinese people attracting white people into their territory and patronize Chinese e.g. buy gifts, patronize merchants after a meal in Chinatown, etc.
	183-186	Latter part of 1938 before new life movement was organized.
6	187-192	They came and came and soon Chinatown was flooded by Americans.
	193-199	In Chinatown some liked to sit around with old friends and play poker or mahjong. They don't dance or play golf so can't blame them.
	200-203	Some joined American _____ and played golf.
	204-206	Some liked to go fishing like all the rest of the Americans.
	207-209	Restaurant and laundry workers would go out for a drink. Maybe see a few girl shows or go to a mahjong session and play a few rounds.
	210-215	Or they would go to one of the worker's apartments and enjoy themselves. Strengthened their ties that way.
	216-217	LLC didn't know of any regular official gambling dens--not officially anyway.
	218-222	However, there were some all year round.
	223-227	Even wives and women have fun playing mahjong through the night.
7	228-231	Not all played for money. Some put money in a jackpot and went dancing or took everyone to dinner.
	232-238	Mahjong was not necessarily gambling but is playing games.
	239-243	Today's generation often does more cultural things, e.g. Shubert theater, operas, shows.
	244-259	Not as many oepras in Los Angeles from China as up north.
	260-264	In the early days, the Chinese didn't have much time to go to Chinese movies and no proximity.
	265-267	Chinese used to walk around Chinatown wearing pantaloons.
	268-271	Chinese din't go beyond Kearny Street, Powell Street in San Francisco.
	272-285	In Los Angeles, Chinese seldome went beyond Ord Sunset or Soleno.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
8	286-287	More than 50% of the Chinese have families. Chinese are family oriented.
	288-301	By the age of 20 or 30, men usually went back to China to find wives. It was hard to cope with native-born. Moreover, find someone from the same village, share the same language, traditions.
	302-315	LLC's husband did doctorate at Stanford. His brother, Dr. S.Y. Chan is at Chicago University, just got his Ph.D. and recommended that Stanley (LLC's husband) check out San Francisco.
	316-328	LLC's husband went to UC for summer school. He met LLC when he was looking for queue.
9	329-332	He was made dean of Chinese language school. Both taught there. Were co-workers for a few years.
	333-336	Later LLC's mother died. LLC wanted to bring brother to China.
	337-357	LLC's husband went to visit LLC's mother. LLC and he became good friends.
	358-366	LLC decided that if he went back to China to teach, she would too. So they got married. Both went to Peking as did LLC's brother.
	367-382	LLC would make salad and french potatoes at parties in Peking. Was very popular. Was good public relations for international relations.
10	383-386	Parents didn't play much of a role in the marriage.
	387-395	LLC was married in July, 1933. Her case was not typical for Chinese.
	396-405	LLC had many girlfriends whose families were very dogmatic e.g. restricted number of hours on a date, needed chaperones.
	406-419	Early turn of 20th century arranged marriages still popular. Sometimes they turned out very good.
	420-433	If parents decided to return to China to retire, would like to bring children to China for a few years and enter them in Chinese school. And in a couple of years they came here. But this is before they have a chance to have their own mind.
	434-444	Many students brought back to China. Those wealthier placed in city schools like Ling Nam or Nan Mo. Ling Nam more exclusive.
445-451	Would come back less snobbish and know more about things Chinese and more filial.	

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Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
11	452-456	Usually like to have sons first. If had a boy and girl would bring both.
	457-467	Some families, e.g. under financial stress, would be stingy about educating a girl, since she would marry and leave the family.
	468-474	Desires among Chinese were to send children back to China and instill them with Chinese culture so they'd have a more balanced life. That's a normal thing. Done by the Dutch, Germans, Scotch, etc.

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE A

Tape 3 Side A

1	004-019	Introduction.
	020-027	Had 50-50 playmates racially, i.e. Chinese and Caucasian.
	028-044	Was active in school. Used to talk in front of crowds.
2	045-054	Most children who grew up with LLC were all Chinese-speaking. Their English was usually a bit more accented than children in Los Angeles. Los Angeles children are much better when it comes to speaking English.
	055-060	Studied Latin and Spanish as a child. Japanese was hardest since it has no rationale.
	061-068	LLC is language-minded. That's why she's an interpreter. Sam Yup kids usually mix with their own. There is more Sam Yup spoken in San Francisco. In Los Angeles there's more Sze Yup spoken.
3	069-083	Chinese population in Los Angeles is scattered while in San Francisco the population is centralized, e.g. YMCA, St. Mary's School, etc.
	084-087	Depending on the education of the parents, i.e. if are educated, they don't care if Sam Yup children marry Sam Yup.
	088-090	Sze Yup mother would probably prefer her children to marry Sze Yup.
	091-094	Prior to World War II, it was unheard of for Chinese to marry outside of Chinese American community.
	095-104	Chinese parents frowned on interracial parents because they didn't know the language. The moment they understand the language, they didn't feel the gap.

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
4	105-114	There is definitely more emphasis on the importance of the son. But still acceptance of interracial marriages depends on education of parents.
	115-119	There few marriages with non-whites. Not that popular. Sometimes happened with Mexican boys.
	120-126	There were Japanese interracial marriages too. Any anger was primarily during World War II. Many attitudes changed because of travel.
	127-134	If child wants to marry outside his race, parents have to tolerate it. Even Europeans have the tendency to prefer their own race.
	135-137	Parents might want children to be good teachers, merchants. Usually a cultural education more important than money.
	138-144	A villager might emphasize money (more than education).
5	145-149	A storekeeper might prefer his son to work for the government for example since its a better job and permanent. They want a better life for their children.
	150-164	If oldest son might have to take over if father's duties and help other brothers.
	165-168	In olden times not all go to church. Those exposed to Christianity get more advanced, broadminded and modern and farsighted.
	169-176	Some Chinese cannot "come out" at all--are too instilled with philosophy of Confucian as children.
	177-183	Basically the Chinese are very Conficianistic.
6	184-192	Most of villagers practice "sun-gee-pai" ancestral worship.
	193-202	As a court interpreter, LLC often saw immigration problems 2-3 decades ago. The grill the Chinese went through was horrible.
	203-212	The questions asked the Chinese were severe as if destined for the electric chair. LLC was moved by the sufferings and humiliations of the Chinese people.
	213-214	Chinese were being stepped all over.
	215-231	LLC helped a family get naturalized through translating in Sze Yup to them. She was successful. Soon after was flooded with calls from other Chinese with similar problems.
7	232-237	Later other problems included modernized people with marital problems.
	238-239	People might buy businesses, sign any old papers, get into a jam. Didn't know the language.

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
7	240-245	There were also delinquent boys. Parents didn't speak English.
	246-253	There were business corporation problems. Maritime ships entered the U.S. and made violations, unknown to the captain who is foreign.
	254-266	Problems were severe, e.g. millions of dollars are chiseled by some of these Jewish people who take you to a party and ask you to sign a contract you don't know about.
	267-273	Not a pleasant job. Heavy, heavy. Fortunately, LLC was doing this type of work before.
8	274-285	Mandarin, several dialects and accents of Cantonese needed.
	286-293	Enjoys her work because she feels is alleviating their Chinese people's problems. Most Chinese people, if they are cultural, Mandarin, or not, are very appreciative of her help.
	294-306	Never accepts anything; just enjoys her work and does it for the sake of it. Has her parents blood in her.
	307-324	LLC relates a San Diego case where a doctor and a dentist killed their wife (of the doctor).
	325-332	Some Chinese girls are being raped.
9	333-354	A girl was punished by mother-in-law, who wanted control of bankbook...eventually murdered...dumped in toilet by the family.
	355-361	Re: settling out of court. There are two types of Chinese: (1) Uneducated people who can't read English and have been here but not exposed to western ways of life. (2) Modern educated kind would seek out a trade to settle the problem.
	362-371	The first type would seek out a confidant to try to talk peace to the other clan. Perhaps invite them to tea.
	372-381	In olden days, the two conflicting parties must be brought to the family association. Then go to the neutral one; a townhouse like.
10	382-399	This CCBA would make a decision. If they weren't happy with the decision, a gang killing could occur. This is how the tong war began.
	400-424	The "tong fights" is actually an organization of clan district boys.

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
10	425-444	There are advantages to settling peacefully through the association or CCBA as compared to going to an American court.

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