

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: May Lum Interview Number: 42
 Chinese Name: _____ Number of Tapes: 1
 Date of Interview: 12/13/79 Length: 51 Minutes
 Interviewer: Suellen Cheng
 Others Present: _____
 Language: English
 Summarizer: Suellen Cheng

Contents

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary	Tape: <u>1 Side A</u>
1	003-008	Introduction	
	009-015	Mother was born in San Francisco. Father was born in China. Mother passed away 10 years ago at the age of 86.	
	016-022	There was not much women could do in the old days. Mother did a lot of sewing.	
	023-026	Mother had 5 children. She supported the whole family. She used to buy a couple of fishes for dinner for 5 cents.	
	027-035	May Lum (ML) did not know about her grandparents.	
2	036-040	ML was the youngest one in the family. Two brothers and two sisters all went to school in San Francisco.	
	041-045	ML family used to live on Pacific Street. Then after the fire they lived on Grand Avenue at the upstairs of a store.	
	046-050	ML did not know how much her mother made by sewing, but she made enough to support the family.	
	051-056	Sewing at home and at the factory was a popular job among the Chinese women.	
	057-060	Father passed away when ML was 9 years old.	
	061-065	Married women did not work outside of the home. Mother worked at home at the beginning till father passed away.	
	066-067	ML was born in San Francisco in 1903.	
	068-070	ML lived in San Francisco till 1944 when she got married and moved down to Los Angeles.	

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
3	071-082	ML and her husband were on a blind date in San Francisco. Husband went to San Francisco to visit his brother in San Francisco. Through her brother's friend's introduction. ML met her husband who were both in their 40s.
	083-092	ML went to the Oriental School, later they changed the name and never went to Chinese school. The Commodore Stockton was in Chinatown. All the students were Chinese.
	093-111	ML's first job was in a cabaret nightclub, passing out muffins to the customers during the lunch hours and in the evenings.
4	112-119	Working in a candy store on Market Street for a few years. After that ML worked for an American owned mink store.
	120-124	ML associated with American people until she married Alan (Lum).
	125-138	ML belonged to Square and Circle Club because of friend's introduction. The club used to have a meeting every month. Sometimes the club members got together to play cards. That's how ML learned to play mahjong.
	139-149	Most members were not housewives until later years.
5	150-156	The last job ML had was working at the White House (Department Store) and she did alterations for almost 20 years.
	157-163	Made three dollars a day at the beginning. When ML left the White House she made \$25 a week, which was good pay at that time.
	164-167	ML did not save too much money from her salary.
	168-178	There were not other Chinese who worked with ML at the White House. ML was treated very nicely.
	179-185	ML came to Los Angeles and worked in the Grand East Restaurant. When the restaurant moved to New Chinatown, the name was changed to New Grand East. The old restaurant located on Alameda right across the street of Union Station.
6	186-201	Grand East was upstairs and owned by her husband and 4 other owners.
	202-209	The restaurant might have started during World War II and had very good business. Customers were both Chinese and Americans. Mostly friends of ML's husband.
	210-217	There were two or three waiters. Husband was one of them. ML was the cashier.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
6	218-224	The restaurant was moved to New Chinatown around 1950 because of the building of the freeway.
	225-236	There was a liquor store next door; a bar underneath the Grand East, owned by Mexicans; another grocery store; and another smaller restaurant and meat market.
7	237-240	Most shoppers were Chinese. Most of the restaurant customers were Americans.
	241-244	New Grand East Restaurant was where the Golden Palace Restaurant is.
	245-258	The expense of a restaurant was quite high. The business was very good.
	259-262	When the restaurant moved to the New Chinatown the four owners split up. One partner stayed with Alan Lum.
	263-284	In 1965 the restaurant caught fire so they closed the restaurant. Then bought an American restaurant "Oscar," located where the Bank of America parking lot is now in Chinatown.
8	285-291	ML felt that because they didn't know how to run an American business and all the workers were unionized that they lost all their money in that American restaurant.
	292-295	ML did not associate with many American people. Too busy to associate with any people.
	296-320	Blacks came to the restaurant. They were nice people. There were also Japanese customers, mostly local.
	321-336	ML spoke Chinese at home all the time.
9	357-350	ML's family celebrates Chinese New Year. ML gave Lai Si (利是) (to relatives and children) in the celebration of New Year.
	351-366	Grandson does not speak Chinese. ML speaks mostly Chinese all the time. ML felt more Chinese.
	367-370	Most people ML associates with now felt more Chinese. Most of them are from China.
	371-377	ML usually goes to an American doctor in San Francisco.
	378-387	Mother used to prepare Chinese herb tea like Leung Cha (涼茶) and other herbs.
10	388-393	Mother liked to go to Chinese opera. ML didn't like Chinese opera but liked American movies.
	394-400	ML played mahjong.
	401-411	Mother went to Chinese opera at least twice a week and played mahjong about twice a week after the children were grown up.
	412-216	ML does not have relatives in China, so she doesn't have to write to China.

Interviewee: May Lum

Page: 4

1 Side A

Tape: 1 Side B

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
10	417-436	Husband belonged to Lum Association. He used to pay \$10 for the dues in 1950's and 1960's.
	438-455	Husband was very active in New Year's parade. When the Hop Sing Tong had the dragon out they wanted him to be there.
11	456-465	Husband also belonged to American clubs such as the Footprinters, Shriners and a lot of other clubs.
	466-475	Once in a while there was a party in the club besides the meetings. ML did not go with her husband to these functions. Some of them did not allow women (to participate).
	476-488	Alan Lum used to march in the parades.

END OF SIDE A

1	005-010	ML thought most of the Chinese men worked in the restaurants and most of the women worked in the home.
	011-017	ML's sister was a telephone operator in the Chinatown telephone exchange. They spoke mostly Chinese. Oldest sister spoke some English, the second sister did not speak English.
	018-020	Sisters started working probably in their late teens. ML started working when she was 15.
	021-025	The average income of Chinese family was very little. But the Chinese managed to support the family. Things were cheap then.
2	026-036	Chinese all like to live close to each other. ML's family lived in one room in a tenement. There were about 10 families living on one floor and sharing a community kitchen. No bathtub but two toilets to one floor.
	037-041	Most people sent the money they saved to China. Only a few were able to make enough money for saving.
	042-052	Most of the restaurant help were here alone and had to send money back to their wives. When they were off duty they stayed in the restaurant and played mahjong and black-jack.
	053-056	ML did not have enough money to put in the bank.
	057-062	ML did not know anybody who was involved in politics. ML didn't think Chinese liked to get involved.
	063-069	Husband had family in China. He came to San Francisco when he was 17 years old.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
3	070-078 079-083 084-086 087-098 099-108	ML did not remember when her husband came to Los Angeles. Alan Lum's two brothers came to Los Angeles before Alan did. They had a restaurant in Central Market and served both Chinese and American foods. During the war everybody made money. ML was working during the depression. Worked in the telephone company for a short while. Did not like the job that much. Chinese men met their wives mostly through matchmakers (媒人婆). One sister got married through a matchmaker, but not the other brother and sister.
4	109-114 115-119 120-126 127-131 132-135 136-146	When a daughter got married, mother usually prepared the clothings, a comforter, and jewelry for the daughter. Sister got married in the Chinese style. ML remembered worshipping (拜神) in the wedding and the sister dressed all in red. Mother did worship the ancestors and also gods. In the old days most Chinese went back to China to get married. Now some of the American born Chinese go back to get married too. ML did not care whether she had a son or daughter as long as the children were healthy. The older folks did not like interracial marriages because the ideas are different so the marriage does not last too long. ML did not care whether one was interracially married or not.
5	147-150 151-156 157-160 161-163 164-172 173-187	ML thinks it is important to have children study Chinese language. ML thinks most people from China would like to go back to China. Husband did want to go back to see his mother. All of Alan Lum's brothers brought their wives to the U.S. and stayed here. ML did not know anyone who sent their children for an education. ML has not been to the movies for 10 years. There were not many movies made about Chinese. The way the Chinese were portrayed in the movies did not make any difference to ML. ML would like to see her children to have an education in order to get better jobs. ML considered to have titles like an executive was a better job. ML's daughter was an executive. Son also has a title too.

Interviewee: May Lum

Page: 6

Tape: 1 Side B

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
6	188-195	Husband wanted the children to take his business over but the children did not want to.

END OF TAPE 1

- Arranged marriages, 1B:3
- Blacks, 1A:8
- Celebrations and holidays, 1A:9,
10
- China
marriages in, 1B:4
money sent to, 1B:2
returns to, 1B:5
- Chinese language
importance of, 1B:5
- Chinese New Year, 1A:9,10
- Chinese schools, 1A:3
- Depression (economic 1929-1939),
1B:3
- Education
attitude toward, 1B:5
- Ethnic identity
Chinese vs. American, 1A:9
- Families and family life
and death of father, 1A:2
language spoken in, 1A:8; 1B:1
members remaining in China, 1B:2
- Family associations
dues of, 1A:10
- Footprinters, 1A:11
- Friendships
with other ethnic groups, 1A:4
- Golden Palace Restaurant, 1A:7
- Grand East Restaurant
1A:5-7
See also Restaurants
- Housing patterns
Chinese American clustering, 1B:2
and multifamily households, 1B:2
- Incomes
average of, 1B:1
compared to expenses, 1B:1
- Interracial marriages, 1B:4
- Japanese Americans, 1A:8
- Labor unions, 1A:8
- Lum, Alan, 1A:3,4,6,10,11;
1B:2,3,5,6
- Lum, May
birth of, 1A:2
courtship and marriage of, 1A:
2,3
children of, 1B:5
employment of, 1A:3-4,5; 1B:3
ethnic identity of, 1A:9
father of, 1A:1,2
friendships of, 1A:4
husband of
See Lum, Alan
language spoken by, 1A:8
mother of, 1A:1,2,10; 1B:4
move to Los Angeles by, 1A:2
organizations involved in,
1A:4
residences of, 1A:2
restaurant of
See Grand East Restaurant
siblings of, 1A:1,2; 1B:1
Lum Association, 1A:10
- Mahjong, 1A:4,10; 1B:2
- Marriages
ceremonies for, 1B:4
in China, 1B:4
mate selection patterns in, 1B:3
- Medical practices
Chinese vs. Western, 1A:9
- Money
sent to China, 1B:2
- Movie industry
stereotypes in, 1B:5
- New Grand East Restaurant, 1A:7
See also Grand East Restaurant
- Occupation patterns
and ideal job, 1B:5
parental influence upon, 1B:6
typical jobs, 1B:1
among women, 1A:1,2; 1B:1
- Opera, Chinese, 1A:10
- Politics, 1B:2

Restaurants

customers of, 1A:6,7,8
family involvement in, 1A:6;
1B:6
food served in, 1B:3
location of, 1A:5,6
partnerships in, 1A:6
profitability of, 1A:7
as typical business, 1B:1
unionization of, 1A:8
workers in, 1A:6; 1B:2
Religious affiliations, 1B:4

San Francisco fire, 1A:2
Sewing, 1A:1,2,4
Shriners, 1A:1
Sojourning, 1B:5
Square and Cricle Club, 1A:4
Stereotypes, 1B:5

White House Department Store, 1A:5

Women

occupation patterns among, 1A:1,2;
1B:1