

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Wah Lieu Interview Number: 161
 Chinese Name: 黎國權 Number of Tapes: 2
 Date of Interview: 6/17/82 Length: 1 Hour & 24 Minutes
 Interviewer: Ella Yee Quan
 Others Present: Wife, Son, Son's Wife
 Language: Cantonese
 Summarizer: Ella Yee Quan

Contents

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary	Tape: <u>1 Side A</u>
1	007-008 008-018 019-029	Wah Lieu (WL) came to the United States in September, 1909. WL was born in China. His father was born in the United States. WL's father was a vegetable peddler. He had a horse and a wagon.	
2	030-033 034-039 040-046 047-053	WL was seventeen years old when he came to the United States. He returned to China to marry at the age of twenty. WL was a cook when he first came to Los Angeles. He also worked in San Pedro and in Long Beach. After working as a cook, WL did laundry work. He also worked as a vegetable peddler. WL's father was born in San Francisco.	
3	054-073 074-078 079-088 089-094 095-097	WL used to live at Sun Wing Wah and Sek Kui Gok at Heng Ah Street. WL lived in Old Chinatown for over ten years. Chinese railroad workers were sent to work in the hottest areas. White people pulled WL's queue. WL attended three months of English classes at Methodist Church.	
4	098-116 117-125 126-132	WL trained for laundry work at a Chinese laundry for three months. WL was a peddler for a short time, then did laundry work until he retired in 1970. WL opened his laundry on Prospect Avenue in the Hollywood area.	

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
5	133-144	WL knew enough English to tell his customers what day their laundry would be ready. All his customers were Caucasians.
	145-150	There were a lot of Jewish people. Jewish children would chant "Chinese Chink" outside his laundry.
	151-164	There was a woman at a barber shop on Hollywood Boulevard and Prospect Avenue who falsely accused WL of saying some bad things to her.
6	165-185	WL opened his own laundry in 1933.
	186-196	WL rarely visited Chinatown because he worked every day, even on Sundays.
	197-210	WL used to live at the Lung Kong Association in Old Chinatown.
7	211-254	WL's father got WL in the CACA when he was thirty years old. WL's friend, Lai Yep, paid \$80 in dues for WL. The \$80 was returned to him.
	255-263	Most of the first Chinese immigrants that came to Los Angeles did laundry work or were vegetable peddlers.
	264-270	WL has returned to Toishan three or four times since he first came here.
	271-273	His last trip was in 1949 to bring some grandchildren over to the United States.
8	274-291	WL still wants to return to China to visit, not to live.
	292-297	According to WL's wife, overseas Chinese of all ages are now welcomed in China.
	298-302	WL was born in 1890 and came to the United States in 1907 when he was seventeen years old.
9	303-340	WL entered the United States at San Francisco and then came directly to Los Angeles.
	341-347	WL never went to Angel Island.
	348-357	WL never lived in San Francisco.
	358-380	In the early days, WL lived in the laundries he worked at.
10	381-401	He worked in about 36 different laundries altogether.
	402-421	WL was a cook for twenty to thirty years before he moved to the laundry business.
	422-472	WL opened his own restaurant at one time but was forced to close down. There was no refrigeration at that time so the food would spoil if it was not sold in one day. WL's restaurant did not have much business.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
11	473-494	WL worked seven days a week in his own laundry business. WL returned to China in 1929 with his father, Lieu Chee, because of the Depression.

END OF SIDE A

TAPE 1 SIDE B

1	013-015	WL' father never returned to the United States because of old age. WL came back by himself.
	016-030	WL returned to the United States around 1931 and worked in a laundry for \$7 per week.
2	031-036	WL received no salary for working in his first cooking jobs. He just got room and board.
	037-045	WL earned \$15 a week as the first hand in the laundry business.
	046-053	He was 22 years old when he was earning \$15 per week.
	054-060	WL did any part of the laundry work that needed to be done -- including washing, ironing, and sorting the clothes.
3	061-072	When WL first came to Los Angeles the brick streets would be very noisy when it rained hard.
	073-084	WL guessed that there were about eight thousand Chinese when he first arrived in Los Angeles in 1907.
	085-093	There were still Chinese railroad workers in the country at that time. The Chinese would be asked to build the railroads at the most difficult places. They would suck on "song moy" [salted plums] while they were working on the railroads.
	094-101	The Chinese voyaged to the United States on rafts. They would use rain water to wash their faces and to drink.
4	102-111	WL's father was a vegetable peddler.
	112-132	WL's father returned to China when he was twelve years old to visit.
5	133-147	Father returned again when he was 19 or 20 years old to get married.
	148-159	WL worked in both Long Beach and in San Pedro. There were some Chinese in Long Beach but not many in San Pedro.
	160-173	WL returned to the restaurant business after World War I.
	174-176	WL's two older brothers fought in World War I.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
6	177-189	WL's oldest brother lived to almost one hundred years of age.
	190-197	WL did not fight during World War I because he was hard of hearing. He was classified F-5 because of a tumor in his ear.
	198-208	WL had four sons and no daughters. Two of his sons have died.
	209-220	WL's second son lives nearby. His youngest son lives in Monterey Park.
7	221-233	Oldest son had his own paper products business on 7th Avenue in Los Angeles.
	234-244	Second son is in the restaurant business.
	245-248	All WL's sons were born in China.
	249-255	WL returned to the United States after he married. His sons came later.
	256-263	WL bought his present house in 1958. He previously lived on Fountain Avenue in a house which he bought in 1947.
264-273	The Fountain Avenue house was bought under WL's second son's and daughter-in-law's names.	
8	274-275	They had no problem buying the Fountain Avenue property because WL's son was a Veteran and a citizen of the United States.
	276-294	Buying Hillhurst property in 1950 presented problems because the owners would not sell to Chinese.
	295-303	A CACA attorney bought the Hillhurst property for them and then turned the deed over to WL.
9	304-335	After they bought the property, their neighbors tried to petition WL's family off the property.
	336-343	WL had a confrontation with a Caucasian on a street car around 1934. The Caucasian did not want WL to sit in the front of the bus.
	344-374	Chinese were forced to sit in the back of the street car at that time.
10	375-387	WL retired from the laundry business at the age of 70.
	388-406	The owner who WL leased his laundry from kept increasing the rent each year. In addition, there was a lack of business in the laundry so WL closed the store.
	407-415	The owner who was Jewish wanted WL to reimburse him for an old and tattered sheet that was torn in the wash. He wanted \$12 in 1958 for the sheet.

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
10	416-427	WL's wife came in 1958. She worked at the laundry until it closed in 1970. She sewed after the laundry closed.
11	428-453	Wife first did her sewing at home. Later she sewed at the factory.
	454-455	WL claims he knows some Kung Fu and used to fight with the Caucasians.
	456-460	Wife believes that it is WL's large size that has kept Caucasians from hitting him.
	461-473	WL and WL's father are both very tall.
	474-END	WL's sons used to help at the laundry until they got married and moved away from home.
END OF TAPE 1		

TAPE 2 SIDE A

1	002-011 012-023	Lung Kong and the CACA both helped the Chinese. Chinese immigrants used to have to take blood tests to prove that they were the true children of the parents that sent for them.
2	024-034 035-061	CACA used to help with federal laws. Lung Kong helped with city matters. Both fingernails and feces were examined by law to prevent immigrants from bringing contagious diseases into the United States.
3	062-083	The CACA helped immigrants with merchant son papers to enter the United States without any problems.
4	084-108 109-118 119-122 123-129 130-131	WL's grandfather worked on the railroads around the San Francisco area when he came. His son, WL's father, was born in the United States. WL returned to China in 1911 at the age of 22 to marry. After his oldest son was born, WL returned to the United States alone. WL's first wife never came to the United States. WL went back to China again around 1920.
5	132-143 144-156 157-171	WL's second son was born in 1921. WL's oldest son was born in 1912. WL's third son, Wing, was born in 1933.

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Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
5	172-173	Third son came to the United States in 1941.
6	174-189	Third son came on the last ship as World War II began.
	190-191	WL's first wife died in 1931.
	192-195	WL's youngest son was born to WL's second wife.
	196-END	WL went back to China in 1949 alone for about seven months.

END OF TAPE 2

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