SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHIMESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Allen Mock
Chinese Name: 算福捷
Date of Interview: 12/13/80
Interviewer: Jean Wong
Other Present: None
Language: English

Summarizer: Charles Wong

Interview Number: 140
Number of Tapes: 3
Length: 3 Hours

Contents

Time Counter Segment Number 1 001-033

Summary Introduction Tape 1 Side A

Grandfather first arrived in 19th Century. Had business as middleman sub-contractor for rail-road by hiring laborers. Eventually returned to China and married. Father was born in Yin Ding Village and left at age 18. It is traditional that sons do not come over to U.S. until they have finish standard education.

Yin Ping, a rice growing village, is about 100 miles toward interior of China from Canton. Father was educated at University (maybe Canton) in Herb Science for 4 years. He came over as storekeepers' son. After 2-3 years, he returned to China for matched marriage. Wife returned to U.S. with father as merchant's wife.

Mother's name is Mock, Han Shee. Father's is Mock, Shung Gee. Up to late 40's, Americans unawared and often mistaken Chinese way of putting surname first. Father is Mr. Mock and not Mr. Gee.

Allen was born in Los Angeles in 1929. The limit of Los Angeles was 50th and Central Ave. included mostly Caucasians and Jewish merchants.

Father had herb store in Old Chinatown: 524 N. Los Angeles Street; on corner of Los Angeles Street Sunset. The storied building also served as a family residence, "Mock Family Home." On July 4th, also sold firecrackers from China. Also entertained out-of-town Mocks visiting Los Angeles.

2 034-068

Father also had a house in Calexico; 1/2 block from Mexicali because of Exclusion Laws. Therefore had Calexico home to assist Mocks. Vancouver or Tiajuana was the first port of entry before sneaking over to U.S. In fact, Mexicali had 10,000

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Time Segment 2	Counter Number	Summary Chinese in the 1920's and 30's.
3	069-089	Other Chinese married locals, stayed, and assimilated. At one time, Mexicali had no Mexican schools, only Chinese schools. Also Chinese cementary which is still there and Chinese temple. "All the Mexican people had to learn Chinese in order to do business in Mexicali." There are now many leaders in Mexico who are from these mix marriages.
	090-110	Father had a farm in 29th by Alameda and Compton. During Depression ran a grocery store in Boye Heights at Olympic and Soto. At that time, mostly Whites and Jewish people. After WWII, Jews migrated to Westside or Fairfax area. During War period, ran a restaurant on Sunset near Echo Park. Unsure of name, perhaps "China Cafe" because that name was so common then.
4	111-135	Mock family house: It was the responsibility of eldest Mock in a community to maintain a "communication center," an open house available to all Mocks (local and transient). It function as a center for Mocks Aid. Its members provided all sorts of information, assistance, "know-how" even lawyers, loans, etc. For example, a new arrived may received credit from other Mocks (grocery store, restaurant, butcher shop) as he started his business.
		The reliance upon kinships meant one was honor bound to help. "After all, there would be no assistance forthcoming from Caucasians and even a Lee or a Wong wouldn't help a Mock.
		Every major center had a Mock Family House; e.g. San Francisco, Sacramento.
5	136–163	If there are not enough Mocks in one city; they would organized with another clan whose population was low, e.g. there 's the 4 family Names in Los Angeles.
	164–172	Chinese economic war: regulation, e.g. restaurant business. "In the old days, if you were a Mock, you had to buy from a Mock (in) no uncertain terms; even if the Mock charge you 5 cents more."

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Tape: 1 Side A

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
5	164-172	"The way it is right now with the Lee Association grocery stores; Kwong Duk Lung is another one; and Yee Sing Chung."
	173–180	Present day operations of family house is funded by contributions of prosperous individuals. For example, Yee Association would ask him for a dona- tion of several hundreds or several thousand to pay rent, utilities, etc.
6	181-215	In the old days, 1. a family house function for protection; and 2. buried and billed medical bills. "Chinatown had its own police and protection system."
	216–220	No so much "dues" as what you could contribute. "You were honored to contribute at Chinese New Year."
7	221–240	Also, Chinese Chamber of commerce had something at Chinese New Year time. Lion Dance in front of your store, and expect you to donate money. "Everybody watches. You cannot hide because people know how well you are doing."
	241-260	Some functions of Chinese Chamber of Commerce: Chinese school; entertain personages; spokesman, e.g. police in old days used to give everyone a hard time. CCC hired lawyer to "fight it out."
	261-280	Chinese customs: paying up debts before New Year from businesses. Businesses are often granted credit till New Year because creditor knows buyers will attempt to pay all by then.
8	281-300	Mother died when Allen was 2 years old. Two sisters are still in China (PRC and Hong Kong). They didn't come because sisters had servants in Yin Pin Village; and largest farm in village.
	301-350	Allen's brother came at 12 years old, and then mother.
9	351–379	Description of sojourning life between husband and wife and children.
	380–385	But Sisters (because they were from rich family) became second class citizens after 1949, and they

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Tape: 1 Side A & B

Time Segment 9	Counter Number	Summary could not leave China. Present method of communication: letter to Hong Kong then "walked into and out of PRC.
10	386-400	Allen still send money to family in PRC.
	401–475	Allen never has gone back. One reason is that he was in Korean War and his name is on a list. Sisters maybe subject to retaliation. He didn't want to jeopardize their life as well as his nieces and nephews'.
T two	476–497	Older sister or brother are still not allowed to leave PRC. They were held up as "last of aristor-cratic group."
	498	End of Tape 1 Side A
		Tape 1 Side B
<u>+</u>	001-015	Send "tea Money" today because sister says "there are no wants. "The letter is walked over to Hong Kong, so Allen knows it's real." Nephew attempted escape (by water) but was captured. In Chinatown you had to speak Chinese. In Chinese school Allen learned Sam-Yup. In home, Allen spoke Yin Pin. Pronounced differently: "all in a down tone," whereas in Sam-Yup: "all in an up tone."
	016-033	In Chinatown, everybody had to speak Chinese or they wouldn't speak to you. Speaking English was defined as non-courteous, "smart ass, punk." In order to get around, then, you had no choice, but to speak Chinese.
2	034-045	Allen attended 10 years of Chinese school until he was 15 years old. School was from 3 PM to 6PM. One hour Chinese reading and one hour Chinese writing and culture.
	046-074	It was located next to fire station on Aliso Street. Over 100 students: some from mixed couples. Chinese norm: if any part of you is Chinese you're accepted as Chinese.
3	075–100	Cost of school: one dollar per month for Monday to Saturday. Saturday was test day. Cost goes to teacher salary.

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Time	Counter	
Segment 3	Number	Summary Allen left Chinese school during high school because his involvement in American school's activities and not enough time to travel from one school to the other.
	130-143	Allen's personal evaluation of Chinese school's experience: developed discipline, math skills, learned multiplying tables before entry to American elementary school. "It didn't hurt to go to Chinese school."
5	144-151	Attended Macy School, Castelar School, Central Junior High (Now the Board of Education), and Poly Technic High School at 20th and Grand Ave. Before attended Lincoln High School and U.S.C.
	152–162	Studied structural engineering (1936 graduated) Name: Mock Fuk Sing, also George Tong. Tong surname was explained: brother born in China. "Father never explained to me." Secured paper for son as George Tong.
6	162–195	Brother designed Wing for Douglas Aircraft during World War II. FBI investigated his life and eventually accredited his background. He was the 1st Chinese licensed structural engineer in California.
	196-220	Grandfather as a recruiter in railroad construction. His name was Mock Chuck. He recruited Ying Ping people to work in railroad. Paid one dollar per day. Also, he owned a grocery store and would ship dried Chinese groceries on train to Chinese workmen working on route.
7	221–248	The Chinese worked as far as Idaho, Oregon, Texas, from Los Angeles.
	249-284	Where has family lived in Los Angeles?
8	285–305	Born at 50th and Central in house. Rest of time from about age 4 to 19 lived in old Chinatown (1933-1948).
	306–324	Moved to China City from Union Station Chinatown. A part of population moved to 10th and San Pedro.

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Tape: 1 Side B
2 Side A

Time	Counter	
Segment 8	Number	Summary Family housing located from 10th to 20th Streets. Presbyterian Church located there. Other part of population moved to China City and new Chinatown.
. 9	324-360	New Chinatown "is product of American guys" who brought property and built shops and sold for \$50,000 to Chinese merchants. Idea was to duplicate San Francisco Chinatown—"Grand Avenue Chinatown." Did not materialized. Original Chinatown: Li-Po, Rice Bowl, Fountain, Golden Pagoda.
10	361–430	Allen moved to New Chinatown, then away for two years, then USC for school. Only shop keepers, merchants lived closed to Chinatown. Area populated by Mexicans. Other Chinese moved away.
	431-435	Do Chinese like to live by other Chinese? Yes, language. It's a safety factor. Ethnic services such as doctor and dentist, etc.
11	436-483	Everything in Chinatown cost more: housing, food, etc. "Unfair" in Chinatown: you pay more and get lesss.
	483	End of Tape 1 Side B
		. Tape 2 Side A
1	001-031	Allen's schooldays: only activities were basket-ball and pingpong. Did not engage in competition outside Chinatown. Older kids did compete with Caucasians. And usually won. Also in academic competition. Chinese girls were superior to boys.
2	032-048	Allen studied architecture at USC during night for 3 years thru Korean GI Bill and father's inheritance. Worked during the day.
	049-074	1930's Chinese couldn't find a job outside Chinatown, e.g. Walter Lee graduated as Engineer, but ended up as restauranteur.
3	075-085	What areas closed to Chinese? Medicine, engineer was very difficult.

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Tape: 2 Side A

Time	Counter	
Segment 3	Number	Summary Allen's older brother graduated in 1936, and his Dean Dr. Fox wrote letters and called major compa- nies on his behalf. But still, brother was denied. For 2 to 3 years couldn't find work and then took Civil Service exame. Passed but his Caucasian peers didn't accept Japanese and Chinese as engi- neering checkers. They sat around for 6 months, until Caucasians complain they were getting same pay for doing nothing. They "proved themselves."
4	086–130	Chinese was taught "not to push", now barriers broken.
	131-150	Only one Chinese in law field. Only one dentist in Chinatown (Ed Lee's father). A lot of educated Chinese couldn't break in for 6-7 years, they then quit and returned back to Chinatown, e.g. Grand-view Garden proprietors were classmates of Allen's brother in engineering.
5	151-186	1930's and 1940's generation open doors. We had to prove everything. It was more difficult on West Coast than East Coast. Orientals great in Art and Design.
6 & 7	187-227	First Chinese architects: Eugene Choy and Gilbert Leong.
	227–260	Gilbert Leong's mother formed the Chinese Methodist Church. She started first Chinese school. The requirement for attending Chinese school was attendance at that church. Allen went to 3 Churches and 3 Chinese schools.
8 & 9	261–373	Parents did not attend christian church. Allen does not go to Church now.
10	374–483	Conversation about religion in general. Conversation about Chinese in business. Next generation of emerging sharp. Chinese in business and industry must try and enter whiteman's world.
	484	End of Tape 2 Side A

Page: 8 Tape: 2 Side B

Time	Counter	
Segment 1	Number 001-026	Summary Chinese accent: In the old days detrimental with Chinese accent, white wouldn't hire you. "Would not let you talk to clients." In Chinatown, you put on a "Chinese accent. American people come to be entertained, expect Chinese accent. Many there- fore "put on" accent to please customers. Whites were not welcomed in Chinatown stores served Chi- nese. Restaurants were bread and butter trade with Chinese. Every family had their own restaurants to go and got discounts. The restaurants for tourist trade was very gracious.
2	027-055	Curios stores were very nice. All Chinese speaking stores such as herbs stores did not have time for Whites. They "didn't have to bend over backwards to serve (Whites)."
	056-068	First "all American Chinese restaurant" in Los Angeles in New Chinatown was Walter Lee's General Lee's with Decor, napkins, bar, excellent service, mandarin jackets, etc.
3	069–119	Awarded honors. Customers all Caucasians and Japanese went to General Lee's in the 50's and 60's. It picked up outside market with elegant.
. 4	120–148	Allen was first oriental architect to be licensed in Idaho in 1972.
5 & 6	149-218	In the early days, what did you consider your self-identity? Chinese. General discussion of breaking into outside employment.
7	219–269	Black architects today are not hired for private contracts. Will hire oriental before Brown and Blackgeneral discussion on the subject.
8	270–324	Information and rumors spread very quickly in Chinatown. For example, one time his father bought a car in Calixico. Before he arrived back in Chinatown two days later, Allen already knew it was Chevey, 4-doors, and green.
9	325–353	When Allen was young, he associated only with Chinese . School was his only outside (ethnic group) contact.
	354-360	However, father encouraged him to be American.

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Time	Countor	
Segment 10	Counter Number 361-414	Summary Father attempted to be naturalized citizen for 30 years unsuccessfully until he was in his 50's. Father subsidized Mr. Reynolds through immigratio school who later assisted father and relatives in naturalization papers.
•	415-454	For his generation, Allen's father was considered "not normal" or atypical in his very open attitud toward American society and people.
11	455–473	During Depression, he subsidized 2 Caucasians in a gold mine venture in Death Valley. The two Caucasians dug for gold and father transported the food to them. He received 50% of earnings. The ragold was taken to Jing Hing Jewelry store in Chinatown to be melted, assessed and sold.
	483	End of Tape 2 Side B
		Tape 3 Side A
1	001-010	Antother venture was with a couple of Caucasians to drill for oil off Long Beach for 1 year. Did not hit oil, only saltwater. Father always had Caucasians to the house.
	011-042	Father set up banquets for friends and relatives. He employed special banquet chefs for 2-3 days. Once a gambler friend won a lot of money and desired to have a continuous banquet for 3 days. In Chinese custom (superstition) gambler had to give 10% of winnings to relatives and friends in forms of gifts. The first evening was for his mos personal friends and relatives. The second for middle friends and third evening for casual friends. They had 3 separate cuisines for the 3 days. Allen would go to exotic banquets (e.g. rattlesnake meat) his father set up once a month.
2	043-053	Recreationwise, Chinese didn't go on much. Chinese New Year devoted to banquet and special dishes, tangerins, either burning incense, paper money, and other traditional practices. (e.g. cleaning up house before New Year.)

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Time Segment 3	Counter Number 054-080	Summary Adult friends would come over and play mahjong and eat "Siu-Yeh" (snack) at home or a Chinatown restaurant that was open 24 hours. The radio was the only source of American entertainment. In fact Chinese in Chinatown never read the English news- papers (e.g. Los Angeles Times) because doing so was labelled as "snobbery." Chinatown peer group pressure involved ethnocentricism. Mostly, Allen often had to sneak "around corner" (out of sight) to read "funnies" and English paper.
	081-087	Adults never promoted sports to their children. Spare time was supposed to be devoted to study. In the 1930's, there were no events as dancing in Chinatown. This did not change until the 1950's.
	088-094	Sometimes, Allen would attend a Chinese opera (Cantonese) with his father.
	095–108	Besides American school there was Chinese school. In this latter case, Allen's father never push for excellent grades, only that Allen have a basic Chinese background, i.e. ability to speak and read Chinese. The school was to provide a "Chinese environment till it sinks in."
4	109–140	Organized sports among boys and girls: first Chinese Boy Scouts was organized in 1940's. Stanford Mu and Allen's brother were the members. First Chinese Tennis Club was organized in 1930's and 1940's. Among them were Walter Lee and Betty Tong. Mei Wah Girls' Drum Corp was another one.
	141-148	Basketball team (Doc Wong and brother) had 4 six foot Chinese players. They would be invited to play other Chinese community teams from Mexicali to Calixico to Vancouver. They always won because of their height advantage.
5	149-156	Allen's age group (40's and 50's) joined basket- ball team from Chinatown Catholic Church. The Father formed various sport teams and social dance events.
	157–173	There were 4-5 Chinese basketball teams at the time including City Market area's Presbyterian Church.

Time	Counter	
Segment 5	Number 174-183	Summary Most Chinese attended either Poly Technic High School on 20th and San Pedro or Belmont High School near Chinatown.
6	184–203	During 1930's Chinese males only married Chinese girls. No interracial marriage. Many had to get bride from China. WWII prevented this practice, so many Chinese men delayed till after War. Also, Korean War took many male casualties.
	204-231	Out-marriage started in 50's to Japanese.
7	232–271	Calvin Sam, left Los Angeles in 40's and moved to San Francisco, opened first cowboy shirt factory and was very successful. Clients included movie stars, e.g. Tom Mix, Hopalong Cassidy, and others.
8 & 9	272–304	Marriage taboo: within own district dialect if possible, e.g. Sam Yup vs. Sze Yup. Class distinction or rank perception. Allen remembers father saying that a business family should not marry a farming family.
10	305-434	Fatherly advice about friendship: never abandon a friend because it takes much time and development of reciprocal trust. Even if that person becomes a theif or goes to jail; don't let community friend opinion dictate who your true friends will be
	435443	Allen's father died when Allen was 18 years old. Some of best family friends were Japanese, even during W.W.II. Tien Gee's wife was Japanese and during the camp internment round-up, government couldn't find her due to Chinese collusion.
	444	End of Tape 3 Side A
		Tape 3 Side B
1	001-021	A Cousin married a Black girl during W.W.II., and while they were house guests, the family "never heard the end of it from friends" since such an out-marriage was taboo. Allen's father, however, defended the relatives.
	022-032	In the 30's, arranged marriage common with aunts and uncles acting as go betweens.

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Time Segment 2	Counter Number 033-057	Summary In 1946, father arranged a marriage between a Tiajuana (Mexican Citizenship) Chinese male, age 25 from a wealthy business family, to a Chinese female from a wealthy farming family. They were married 4 months after meeting in U.S.A. Their children were all born in U.S.A. to ensure U.S. citizenship and safeguard family future.
	05869	Even into the 50's, parents would be especially proud if daughter-in-law came from China. She would be the "real thing," more traditional. Also, the mother had more to say about the match than father.
3	070-081	Even now, however, Black out-marriage is a definate taboo. After Korean War, any marriage to another Oriental was O.K., as were Caucasians.
	082-096	Allen's friend's daughter married a Negro and the "parents went crazy." Also, the relatives stopped inviting them to family events and affairs: they were written-off, kicked out of family affairs. (Including their parents.)
	097-101	It still happens now. While Mexicans maybe tolerated, Negros are not.
4	102-132	American-born Chinese prefer male children in order to carry on family name.
	133-146	Had friend with 6 daughters and one son and still trying for more sons.
5	147-151	Father used herbal medicine such as Fu Cha for colds. And operated a store as an herbalist. Chinatown herbalist were harassed and arrested for practicing medicine (and still are) for claiming to diseases such as diabetes. Allen's father had diabetes for 10 years and while going to an American doctor, he still employed herbal medicine and ate according to Chinese rules. Always violating American doctor's diet instructions. According to Allen, it was the Chinese medicine that cured his father's diabetes.
	152–187	Now, Allen only uses ready-made packages such as the vegetarian "gai" mixture because he doesn't remember herbal details.

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Time Segment 6	Counter Number 188-204	Summary Also, Allen sees only American doctor for illness now. Allen's family continue writing (once or twice a year) to relatives in China: photos, correspondence, and general up-dating.
·	205–216	Remembering families during his growing up years in Chinatown. Raymond Gee's father was vice president of Bank of America; Gilbert and Florence Leong of F. Suie On; Ester Lee's father of Hop Sing Tong.
7	217-259	Allen's father was once president of either Hop Sing Tong or Bing Kong Tong which controlled (still very strong) gambling in Chinatown.
8-10	260–472	Ming Chung Fong's father owned F. Suie On. Fred Wong is an attorney; Raymond Gee, an architect; Peter Gee, owns grocery store; Frank Quon, Grand Star Restaurant; Albert and Henry Wong, poultry store; Gilbert Leong's mother, Methodist church; Dr. Ed and Henry Lee, dentists; Dong family, grocery store in China City; Keye Luke, Benson Fong
		In Allen's peer group, there were 20-25 kids going to school.
		Best house in Chinatown was "Sui Jan" where every-body went. Operated by Gil, Harry, Sister, and mother. Last name not identified.
	473	End of Tape 3 Side B End of Interview

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