

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Bernice Sam Interview Number: 36  
 Chinese Name: 林志端 Number of Tapes: 1  
 Date of Interview: 12/14/79 Length: 42 Minutes  
 Interviewer: Stanley Lau  
 Others Present: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Language: English  
 Summarizer: Don Loo

Contents

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary	Tape: <u>1</u>	Side: <u>A</u>
1	000-011	Age 65. Born in Canton, China. Came over at age 12. Landed in San Francisco. Family stayed for 4 1/2 years. Mother had felt that the family had become too Americanized. Family returned to Hong Kong. She stayed for 2 years while the rest of the family stayed longer. Came back to join father. Finished high school and attended college.		
	012-016	Father came over in 1920-21. Graduated from Queen's college in Hong Kong. Three years of medical study in Peking Medical College.		
	017-025	Father came over as a secretary to a Chinese steamship company. He wanted to study further in America. Stayed with the steamship company until it closed, then he went into banking with Anglo-California Trust Company.		
	026-028	Left the bank in 1931. Was the head of the Chinese department at the bank and was also assistant vice president.		
	029-037	Mother went to school for 2 or 3 years. Was a very intelligent person.		
2	038-043	The family had 2 sons and 5 daughters. The interviewee was the eldest daughter. All the children were born in China except the youngest. The last daughter was given away because of the attitude that there were too many daughters in the family.		

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
2	044-056	About the time that she graduated from high school, her father was offered a better position with the Bank of China, in Hong Kong - went back to Hong Kong. Brothers and sisters remained in San Francisco.
	057-060	She visited a family friend in Reno, Nevada. She stayed with a couple and did housework and attended the university there. She majored in home economics in 1936.
	061-081	First, she stayed with the family (couple) for a couple of years. Then the man was transferred to Arizona. She did not go with them. She then stayed with the family friend's family for a while. Then she worked for a Chinese herb doctor to interpret for him for a year.
3	082-093	The herb doctor's father went back to China so he came over to take his father's place. She was paid \$70 per month, including room and board. At the end of each month excess profits were divided among the herb doctor, the herbalist, and herself. She saved a handsome sum of money in one year and then lived in the dormitory and went back to the university.
	094-100	At the university, she met Frank Sam, her future husband. He was a student in mining engineering. He was 1 1/2 to 2 years ahead of her. After graduation he went to Arizona to work as a chemical assayer in small mines for 1 1/2 to 2 years and then went back to China.
	101-124	After graduation, she went to stay with her father in Hong Kong. He was an assistant manager in the Bank of China. Then she found a job teaching in a high school in Canton, China. Frank Sam had gone back to China to work for the Chinese government as a mining engineer. After a couple of years, they got married.
4	125-130	At the end of 1940, they returned to the United States. Her husband was out of work because of the Sino-Japanese war. They went back to Hong Kong for a year, but could not find work. Finally, they returned to the United States.
	131-139	Family had 3 children - all boys. Oldest born in China and the other two in Los Angeles.
	140-142	Growing up, her family lived near Chinatown in San Francisco. The neighbors were all Orientals.

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
5	143-148	At elementary school, Commodore, all the children were Chinese. Chinese students were not allowed to venture out of Chinatown.
	149-170	At Reno, Nevada, she was the only Oriental girl on campus. There were 2 Chinese men on campus. She did not feel at ease. She won a tennis tournament but felt resentment among the other white girls.
	171-175	The herbalist's patients were all Americans.
	176-182	When she was growing up the family turned to Chinese medicine in times of illness. The first preference was for Chinese herbs.
	183-194	Her family (husband and son), after returning from China first went to San Francisco. They helped out at the fair at Golden Gate and were there for a year. Her husband used to live in Los Angeles when he was younger so they returned to Los Angeles.
6	195-200	Her family lived at Adams and Maple.
	201-216	In religion, her mother worshipped ancestors. Her husband was a convert to Christianity. She feels that there is probably a god but because of personal strength, feels that she can take care of herself.
	217-240	She was the only girl amongst her Chinese girl schoolmates who went to college. Her family practiced some of the traditional customs. She felt because of her father's education, it was natural for her to attend college.
7	241-274	It was difficult for her husband to find a job because of racial discrimination even though he was an American trained mining engineer.
8	275-325	After the youngest child was 6 years old, she went back to become a school teacher, in 1952. She went to Pepperdine College to get her teaching credentials.
9	326-364	It was very difficult for Orientals to get into the school system. She substituted for a teacher in "Polytechnic" School. They then closed the school because of the building of the freeway. She was laid-off.
	365-414	She took a teaching job at Harbour High School, an all Black junior high school. She stayed for 5 1/2 years.

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Tape: 1 Side A

Tape: 1 Side B

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
10	415-434	She speaks Chinese fluently and writes also. She feels that she is not typical Chinese or typical America. Would like to feel that she has the best of both cultures.
	435-446	The strongest impression that her mother left her was that her mother was an extremely intelligent woman and very capable in everything she did.
END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A		
1	000-006	Grandfather owned a furniture store in Hong Kong, making teakwood furnitue. He later branched into selling curios.
	007-008	Maternal grandfather worked in a lawyer's office.
	009-041	Met her husband while they were both in college. Her parents did not object to their marriage because their future son-in-law was an educated man. Two customs that they had followed was that a sign was hung in front of her father's home before her wedding. The sign said that the "bride was going home" to her husband since her father's was not considered her true home. Marriage cakes and roast pig were sent to the bride's family. Their wedding was quite Americanized - very informal, very much like today.
2	042-055	Since her mother did not understand English, they had exclusively Chinese food at home when she was growing up.
	056-057	They had American food in Hong Kong before they came to America because it was considered quite a classy thing to have.
	058-078	When she was a bride in Hong Kong she didn't have to cook because they had servants. Her family had about half Chinese and half American food.
3	079-088	Family practiced buying things for children for Christmas but did not give their children money for New Years, as is the Chinese New Year custom (in America). They did this when their family lived in Hong Kong.
	089-110	Early education: She was born in Canton. Her family lived in Hong Kong for a number of years. When she was in second grade her father sent her and her young sister to Canton to study. They went to a missionary school, "She Light." She had an elder who passed away and a much younger brother who was 2 years old, who stayed with her mother in Hong Kong at that time.

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Tape: 1 Side B

Contents (cont'd)

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
3	111-128	She didn't know any English except the alphabet when she came to America. The family came over on the "China Steamship Company." The company had three ships named "China," "Nanking," and she could not remember the third. The trip took thirty days.
4	129-135	The family stayed on Angel Island for a short time. It might have been just overnight. Because of her father, they got preferential treatment.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE B

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