

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Ella Chung Interview Number: 124
 Chinese Name: 伍鑽石 Number of Tapes: 1
 Date of Interview: 8/16/80 Length: 1 Hour & 3 Minutes
 Interviewer: Beverly Chan
 Others Present: _____
 Language: English
 Summarizer: Rodney H. Chow

Contents

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary	Tape No.	Side
			<u>1</u>	<u>A</u>
1	001-006	My mother was born in the United States. My father was born in Canton, China. He came when he was twelve years old. His father had come previously to earn money for his family and had gone to San Antonio, Texas. He had a grocery business, American grocery.		
	007-021	I was born in San Antonio, Texas in 1920. I first came to California when I was only one month old. I came to Los Angeles to live in 1939. I went to school in San Antonio.		
	022-026	My name is Eng Jeng Sae. The village in China was Toisan. My father spoke Toisan. My mother spoke Sum Yup. So I spoke mostly Sum Yup. I have a brother and a sister.		
2	027-040	We spoke mostly English while growing up. I lived in San Francisco until I was six, then we moved back to San Antonio and lived in an all white area, so we spoke mostly English. I went to high school in Houston. I went to Rice University but dropped out after one year because we had problems in our family.		
	041-053	My mother is Mabel. She was the oldest child of Walter Yu Sum who was the founder of the Chinese Times. I am his first grandchild. My father always was in the grocery business. My mother was always interested in show business. I graduated from Reagan High School in 1937. I went one term after that, I went to business school to learn a commerce course.		
	054-064	My mother divorced my father so we came together with my mother to Los Angeles. Actually I lived with my aunt.		
	065-067			
3	068-071	I lived in Los Angeles in 1936 for one year. I did work in Dollar Stores through my aunt who knew Joe Shoong.		

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
3	068-071	It was on 5th and Broadway. That is where I met my husband. He was one of the managers.
	072-083	The clerks were Mexicans, Caucasians (in the Dollar Stores). These stores were owned by one man. I lived with my Aunt Lily, Mrs. Stanley Chan. She is a community worker [volunteer work].
	084-096	We always went to Chinatown to visit and eat. The Dollar Stores are still in existence. Their stores are located in lower income areas. I think it is the only Chinese owned chain store.
4	097-114	In 1940 I went to San Francisco to live with my other aunt. I helped her in her drug store. In 1942 I came back to Los Angeles and met Fred again, then continued our friendship and got married.
	115-124	Fred was in the Army. He was waiting for his letter from Uncle Sam. He was drafted then we got married because we thought that he was going overseass. But he did not have to go but was discharged. He had a problem with his foot. He was older than 30.
	125-135	I did not knowany of my family in China. It seems that all of the Eng family had come to America. My mother's side, my grandfather, was born in America.
	136-142	In San Antonio we had gone to Chinese school when there was a teacher so I had some Chinese education but not consistently. The parents always tried to give the Chinese education to the children and tried to keep up the Chinese school. But in small towns where the business is all over town [thus their homes] the children would come from long distances and this made for a very long day [of schooling]. It becomes a difficulty.
5	143-156	When I was in Los Angeles they had a rice bowl to raise money for the war cause in China.
	157-163	In 1943 in the Hollywood Bowl there was a fund raising effort for China [Madame Chiang attended].
	164-170	Fred was stationed in Paso Robles.
	171-175	All my friends who got the letters, they all willingly went and did whatever they had to do [military service].
6	176-185	All my life, I never had racial prejudice because we were considered white. Because the prejudice was against the colored. There was some prejudice against us but I never felt it because we had our own social functions, they had their [white] functions and we were not allowed in their's. I didn't feel any real prejudice because I did not get
	186-194	

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
6	186-194	too involved with them. The only time I felt prejudice was when I came to Los Angeles to look for a job. But I did find a job with Sears and Roebuck in the office, 1942 in Los Angeles at the Olympic Store.
	195-210	I did not like it too much and later went to work with a Chinese Insurance Salesman.
	211-216	I got between \$20 to \$25 a week working at Sears. It was an average pay.
	217-219	When I work for National Dollar Stores I got \$10 per week. Department stores of those kind always paid lower.
7	220-229	The insurance company paid \$100 a month. My rent was \$25 a month. One bedroom apartment. It those days, there were very little income taxes.
	230-240	I shared the apartment with my girlfriend so my rent was \$12.50 a month.
	241-242	I bought a used stove for \$12.50 I bought a kitchen table and four chairs for \$15.
	243-246	I shared the apartment with my future sister-in-law.
	247-248	I lived on Figueroa and Vernon. It was a Caucasian neighborhood at that time.
	249-255	I had no problem renting then. We lived in a lower rental area. However if we wanted to live in a higher rental area, we might have had some trouble.
	256-260	In Silverlake area those days the real estate salesman would not show us the house. Although there were some people [Chinese] here, they had to buy from individuals. Bread was 15¢ a loaf.
8	261-278	I worked for Louie On -- insurance agency, for quite a few years. I had a daughter stop work then went back to work for him. Then I had my second child and then never worked there again. Stopped working.
	279-290	I got married in a American ceremony in Yuma on my husband's three day pass [military service] by a justice in Arizona. They had a little party at my mother's restaurant in Los Angeles.
	291-298	My mother had a little chop suey house on Western Avenue.
	299-300	Most Chinese women clerked in stores -- Dollar Stores, bakeries. Most of my friends were working girls. Worked for grocery stores, Chinatown, Dollar Store.
	301-320	At that time our goals were not so defined as today so at that time we thought we would meet our Prince Charming and get married.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
9	321-330	My aunt came to San Antonio and convinced my mother to let her take my sister with her to San Francisco to have a Chinese education. So she ended up with a college education. When I went to San Francisco to live with my aunt, I had to go to work. I did not want to impose on her.
	331-354	Most Chinese did not really have a profession in the 1940's.
	355-363	I did not know of any career-oriented Chinese women except for Grace Chow who sold insurance.
10	364-386	I admired Anna May Wong because of her beauty. But I did think the part she portrayed was not too good for Chinese. The parts were about Tongs, but movies are really fantasies, not the reality. And they made the reality more sinister, more glamorous.
	387-419	The war made the women go out to work.
	420-428	My friends all worked while they were married. We had no ambition to go to China. When my husband was discharged, he went to work in a defense plant.
11	429-451	He later went to school (while we were raising a family) to study chiropractics. He went to school while we were raising a family and working.
	452-458	We never thought about living in Chinatown. We always, even my father always, lived in a white neighborhood.
	459-480	Louie On was on 9th and San Pedro. The people at 9th and San Pedro were mostly Toishan. When I came from Texas, I did not know Chinese too well but learned to speak better from talking to the Chinese.
END OF SIDE A		

TAPE 1 SIDE B

1	001-017	Louie F. On's customers were 100% Chinese -- store owners, home owners, workers. People looked up to Louie On. He had friends.
	018-028	I had my business as bookkeeping. Louie On recommended me to do the bookkeeping.
2	029-037	Louie On catered to anyone.
	038-040	That time everyone knew each other.
	041-044	Louie On working hours were 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and half a day on Saturdays.
	045-054	I was mostly working in the office. He was mostly in the field.
	055-063	Minderhout had a lot of Chinese business. He specialized in the market. He loaned money to Chinese and helped.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
2	055-063	He sold insurance long before Louie On. He was a big competitor to Louie On.
3	064-070	I did not know of a Chinese doctor at that time. I went to an American doctor.
	071-083	I did raise my children expressly like Dr. Spock said. I think we were very modern in the way we raised our children.
	084-086	I did not rely on Chinese methods for cures. We were very Americanized. I think I am more American. However, some people think we were traditional, because we were members of Lung Gong. I was the first president of the women's auxiliary. We were the only American born members and others could not believe we were not China born.
4	087-114	By that time, all of my girlfriends married whom ever they chose although there were some who had gone back to Hong Kong to get their wives. Sometimes if they were China born they did not assimilate here and it is difficult for them to find a mate here.
	115-130	Fred and I did not mind whether we had a boy or girl. My daughter was born in 1946, and my son was born in 1947. We were married in 1943. It was for economic reasons that we decided on two children.
	131-140	All my friends had small families. Most had two or three children.
5	141-160	My sister married a more affluent boy. Since he was from a more traditional family, they had a large family -- five kids.
	161-168	There were some instances of interracial marriage. In Texas it was frowned upon to have an interracial marriage.
	169-182	My Chinese clients are very against interracial marriages however my friends were more broad minded about it.
6	183-187	Birth control was a concept used. I did not learn it in school. Birth control was practiced although knowledge of it was not available until after school years.
	188-206	I think abortion would have been used but I do not really know.
	207-215	As Americanized as we were, Fred did make the pickled pigs feet with ginger (traditional Chinese dinner for after child birth). We celebrated Chinese New Years at Lung Gong.
7	216-231	Fred and I were very active in CACA. Fred was the president and I was the president of the auxiliary.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
7	232-246 247-253 254-273	When I worked I had a baby sitter for my children. Fred helps around the house so I do not feel he is a true Chinese tradition. I read books on how to raise children. I am a self-taught person. After we were married we both had to work in order to make it.
8	274-278 279-301 302-310 311-312 313-322	During 1942 to 1946, when I worked at the Dollar Store, I made many friends and socialized together. We were all working people. We were really not poor, not rich, but comfortable. In the 1940's the office job was the nicest job for a woman. Otherwise we had to clerk in a store. The ambition for the men was to own their own store. Then my ambition for our children was for them to go to college. I had hoped the children would be doctors, scientists, all the high professions. Business, yes, but not the hard working business of the old timers.
9	323-343 344-384	In Texas my grandfather had four grocery stores but the life style was not what I call desirable. They had the money but my grandfather did not live well. They said he was rich but did not have a good life style. Fred's spending pattern and life style, being married to me, is a little different from his family.
10	385-395 396-431 432-444	My father was different. He lived away from where ever his family was. He always lived very well. My grandfather called him a spend thrift but not really, he lived in a nice home and once a week went out to dinner and went to the movies. He lived like all other Americans. My father never hit us when we were children but he was very domineering. In those days divorces were very rare. My mother felt the stigma more -- she was divorced. I was 19 then and old enough to know. I do not send our children to Chinese school.
11	445-474	I think Chinese do very well. All of my clients are all Chinese. They are poor but they have their business. But they do not have a formal education. They struggle and save and send their children to school.

END OF TAPE 1

END OF INTERVIEW

- Birth control, 1B:6
 Blacks, 1A:6

 Canton, China, 1B:1
 Celebrations and holidays, 1B:6
 Chan, Lily, 1A:2,3,9
 Chan, Stanley, 1A:3
 Chiang, Madame, 1A:5
 Children
 upbringing of, 1B:3,7
 Chinatown (Los Angeles)
 attraction of, 1A:3
 Chinese American Citizens' Alliance,
 1B:7
 Chinese New Year, 1B:6
 Chinese school, 1B:10
 in rural areas, 1A:4
Chinese Times, 1A:2
 Chow, Grace, 1A:9
 Chung, Ella
 aunts of, 1A:2,3,4,9
 birth of, 1A:1
 children of, 1A:8; 1B:4,7
 courtship and marriage of, 1A:3,4,
 8
 education of, 1A:1,2,4
 employment of, 1A:3,4,6,7,9; 1B:
 1,7-8
 ethnic identity of, 1B:3
 father of, 1A:1,2; 1B:10
 friendships of, 1B:8
 grandfather of, 1B:9,10
 husband of
 See Chung, Fred
 language spoken by, 1A:1-2,11
 mother of, 1A:1,2,4,8; 1B:10
 move to California by, 1B:1
 name of, 1A:1
 organizations involved in, 1B:3,7
 residences of, 1A:7,11
 siblings of, 1A:1; 1B:5
 Chung, Fred, 1A:3,4,5,8,10-11; 1B:
 4,6,7,9

 Discrimination
 and employment, 1A:6
 and housing, 1A:7
 Divorce, 1A:2; 1B:10

 Education, 1B:8,11
 Eng family, 1A:4
 Ethnic identity
 Chinese vs. American, 1B:3

 Family and family life
 father's role in, 1B:7
 language spoken in, 1A:1-2
 size of, 1B:4-5
 and working mothers, 1B:7
 Food, 1A:7; 1B:6

 Grocery stores, 1A:1,2; 1B:9

 Hollywood Bowl, 1A:5
 Housing patterns
 and dialect spoken, 1A:11
 and discrimination, 1A:7
 integration in, 1A:7,11
 rents paid, 1A:7
 residential areas, 1A:11

 Immigrants and immigration
 reasons for, 1B:1
 Incomes, 1A:6,7
 Insurance companies, 1A:6,7,8,9;
 1B:1-2
 Interracial marriage
 hostility toward, 1B:5

 Lung Gong, 1B:3,6

 Marriages
 ceremonies, 1A:8
 mate selection patterns in, 1A:4
 Medical practices, 1A:3
 Military service, 1A:4,5
 Movie industry
 Chinese Americans employed in, 1A:10
 stereotypes in, 1A:10

 National Dollar Store, 1A:3,6,8; 1B:8
 Newspapers, Chinese, 1A:2

 Occupation patterns
 and discrimination, 1A:6
 ideal job, 1B:8
 among women, 1A:8,9,10; 1B:8

On, Louie F., 1A:8,11; 1B:1-2

Sam Yup, 1A:1

San Antonio, Tex., 1A:1

Sears and Roebuck Company, 1A:6

Shoong, Joe, 1A:3

Sino-Japan War, 1A:5

Sum, Walter, 1A:2

Toishan, China, 1A:1

Toishan dialect, 1A:1,11

Tongs, 1A:10

Women

expectations of, 1A:8

occupation patterns among, 1A:8,9,
10; 1B:8

World War II, impact upon, 1A:10

Wong, Anna May, 1A:10