

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Hung-Yam Lew Interview Number: 93  
 Chinese Name: 黎鴻炎 Number of Tapes: 1  
 Date of Interview: 3/28/83 Length: 45 Minutes  
 Interviewer: Bernice Sam  
 Others Present: None  
 Language: English  
 Summarizer: Suellen Cheng

Contents

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary	Tape: <u>1</u> Side <u>A</u>
1	001-015	Introduction.	
	016-023	Hung-Yam Lew's (HYL) father came from Toishan, China.	
	024-027	HYL was born in Toishan, China and came to America at the age of 16 with his father. Father had a laundry business.	
	028-030	HYL went to Chinese school in China. He also learned a few words of English.	
	031-041	HYL is the only child in the family. He had a private English tutor for a couple of years when he first arrived in America. Then he went to the 32nd Street School.	
2	042-058	HYL got a part time job and went to an adult school for two years. HYL worked in a Chinese laundry. He worked in many laundries from 1933 to 1941.	
	059-069	HYL is single. He worked in the laundry houses in the American neighborhood. Usually there were 6 to 7 people who worked in the laundry.	
3	070-078	HYL got six dollars a week when he worked at a school job. Later he earned eight dollars a week for a six days full time job in a laundry business.	
	079-094	Later HYL opened his own laundry on Normal near Vermont Avenue. He sold the laundry four months later, because he did not like to be alone.	
	095-101	HYL went to work for other laundries again.	
	102-109	HYL went back to China in July 1947 and came back to America in October 1948. He got married in China.	
4	110-114	Mother died during the Second World War in China.	
	115-121	HYL supported his wife until 1962 when their marriage ended.	
	122-126	HYL associated with all kinds of people when working. Now he associates mostly with Chinese.	

## Contents (cont'd)

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
4	127-129	HYL felt more Chinese.
	130-144	HYL started another laundry in 1937 and worked until 1941. During the war, he went to a defense school to learn to be a welder. He was drafted and worked for the California Ship Building Company for two years. He then went to San Francisco to work in the shipyards. Later he worked for the United Engineering Company until the end of the war.
5	145-151	he got laid off due to the termination of the defense contract. A lot of people were out of a job.
	152-157	HYL worked ten hours a day seven days a week at the United Engineering Company in San Francisco.
	158-169	Some Americans got along very well with HYL, but some did not.
	170-181	HYL was unemployed for a couple of months. He came back to Los Angeles to learn drafting.
	182-189	HYL went back to China in 1947.
6	190-197	HYL visited his step-mother and grandmother in the village.
	198-229	He went to drafting school during the day, and to law school at night. While he was in China, people tried to teach him about Communism. He got married and forgot about politics.
7	230-236	HYL was born in 1914.
	237-274	After coming back from China he worked all odd jobs. Later he went to work for the U.S. Merchant Marines for six months. Then he went back to the shipyards in San Francisco. He worked as a merchant marine again. In 1951 he returned to Los Angeles and worked for Douglas Aircraft for three and a half years. He was laid off along with 2000 other workers.
	275-287	He had to live on unemployment insurance. He learned how to be a dry cleaner and got low wages. Then he worked for the Chrysler Corporation as an auto assembler in 1957.
8&9	228-308	He worked for the Chrysler Corporation for three and a half years and then got laid off. He worked for another aircraft company for a year and a half.
	309-322	He opened another laundry in Los Angeles. He had too much business and not enough help, therefore he sold the laundry again.

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1 Side A

Tape: 1 Side B

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
8&9	323-389	He lived on unemployment insurance on and off and worked for different jobs in San Francisco in a steel company and navy yard.
10	390-408	HYL returned to Los Angeles and worked for a Long Beach shipyard as a welder until 1977 when he retired.
	409-423	HYL enjoyed working different jobs.
	424-438	HYL enjoyed his retirement.
	439-461	He just worked whatever assignments he got.
11	462-485	HYL and his father all sent money back to HYL's mother in China. When his father lost money in gambling he got mad at everybody. That was why HYL stayed away from his father. Father passed away in 1975.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A

Tape 1 Side B

1	001-003	Father passed away at the age of 84.
	004-021	HYL received \$481 from retirement insurance and \$198 from social security.
	022-033	HYL is in good health. Sometimes he uses Chinese herbs in cooking.
2	034-045	HYL listens to Chinese music and disco music. He watches TV every day, mostly news and Chinese programs.
	046-052	HYL did not write to China because he did not have the address of people living there.
	053-058	HYL belongs to the Lung Kong Tin Yee Association. The membership fee is five dollars a year now.
	059-068	The old people just sit and talk every day.
3	069-078	Most of the Lews in Los Angeles worked in the laundry business.
	079-089	Most of the Chinese worked in the laundry business, restaurant, and grocery businesses. The American born Chinese mostly worked for the government.
	090-097	Chinese used to get nine dollars a week in the early days plus room and board.
	098-110	Before World War II, Chinese women were not allowed in to America. There were more men in Chinatown.
4	111-116	Some Chinese gambled their money away, some Chinese used the money to buy rice fields in China. Later the Chinese Communists took away everything.

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Contents (cont'd)

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
4	117-136 137-147	HYL met Wah Kuo Fong in Los Angeles Chinatown. HYL worked in the laundry during the Depression. A lot of people were out of jobs.
5	148-170	HYL was the first Chinese in the 32nd Street School. He did not see the segregation. The bad white students were bad to everyone, even to the white students.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE B

END OF INTERVIEW

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