

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Beulah Quo Interview Number: 27
 Chinese Name: 鄧 鄧 如 喬 Number of Tapes: 2
 Date of Interview: 5/29/79, 8/14/79 Length: 1 Hour & 27 Minutes
 Interviewer: Jean Wong
 Others Present: _____
 Language: English
 Summarizer: Suellen Cheng

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary	Tape: <u>1</u>	Side: <u>A</u>
1	000-007	Parents came from China. Father from Hui Ping, mother from Sun Ning.		
	008-015	Father came when he was 16 to Canada. First with a grocery store, then went inland from Vancouver to study tailoring from a Japanese tailor and became a very good tailor.		
	016-018	Father went back and forth from China and married mother when he was 18 but did not bring her over to Canada until they were in their 30's.		
	019-021	Beulah Quo (BQ) was born in Stockton when her parents were in their 40's.		
	022-025	There were relatives who brought BQ's father to Vancouver. BQ's paternal grandfather was an immigrant who went to Silver City, New Mexico. Father and grandfather never met in this country.		
	026-028	Grandfather sent money home to send BQ's father over with relatives.		
	029-031	Grandfather owned a restaurant as well as did some mining in New Mexico.		
	032-045	Parents lived in Vancouver for a while. Came over to Vancouver in 1918. Then went to Seattle because BQ's mother's brother had settled in Seattle.		
2	046-056	Father was second generation. Grandfather came to U.S. never settled down. He was poisoned by some country farmer and died. Grandmother never came to U.S.		

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
2	057-062	Mother's six brothers of seven came to this country. One died in China. They settled along the coast: Seattle, Stockton, Fresno.
	063-065	All of them were gamblers and very lucrative as the owner of the gambling houses.
	066-069	Parents settled in Seattle for a while. Father was in the tailor business. Later mother's brother and parents came to Stockton to settle. BQ was born and raised in Stockton.
3	070-073	BQ was born in 1923. Parents were in their 40's.
	074-078	Went to school in Stockton till Junior College. Then went to Berkeley for last two years. Then, in 1947, BQ went to the University of Chicago for graduate work in sociology and had a Masters degree.
	079-082	BQ went to Hazelton Grammar School and then to Stockton High School. Then to Stockton Junior College, the University of California at Berkeley, and then the University of Chicago.
	083-110	In Berkeley BQ majored in Social Welfare. Did her Masters thesis on the occupational status of Chinese Americans, 1920-1940. It's one of the earliest studies on the occupation and career of Chinese Americans. It was published in the <u>American Journal of Sociology</u> .
4	111-120	BQ lived with a sociologist Rose Hum Lee, who was one of the earliest Chinese women sociologists and who wrote a book on Chinese in America. She is also the first Chinese American woman who headed the department of sociology in college.
	121-132	From Chicago in 1947 BQ went to China to teach sociology at the Gin Ling College in Nanking. Husband had just finished his doctorate in Personnel and Guidance at the University of Columbia Teachers College. Both of them were interested in going back to China to help reconstruct China. Husband (Edwin Kwoh) was asked to be the Dean of Business Administration at Gin Ling University. BQ was asked to work with the Dean's office as a Director of Extracurricular Activity.
	133-145	It was just the time the Communist Movement began to become very active. BQ had to learn Mandarine very fast. Many Communist professional students were there to win the students over to Communism.

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
5	146-159	BQ and her husband left China in the spring of 1949 and escaped from Nanking through Shanghai and came back to Oakland.
	160-170	In Oakland BQ worked as a social welfare worker for one year. Husband got a job and later worked for an import and export firm for about 11 years. After that he began his own import export firm. BQ moved to Los Angeles in 1950.
	171-173	Husband's business is Royal Trend.
	174-182	In 1947 BQ was very active in student movement and met her husband in a student conference in New Hampshire. Got married in Stockton at the College of Pacific.
6	183-201	The Christian Student Movements in the 40's and 50's were very strong. On the east coast, it was more of the student movement, partially social get togethers and also popular topics such as anti-Japanese movement, integration, interracial marriage, family relationships were discussed in the conferences.
	202-206	There were young people not only from churches but also from all the universities.
	207-212	BQ has one daughter and one son. Son went to UCLA for 7 years and is an attorney now. Stewart Kwoh is very active. He grew up during the Vietnam War era. He was a student activist.
	213-218	Daughter got MSW from UCLA. She came one generation after the Vietnam War. So she is not active in movements.
	219-222	BQ spoke Chinese solely at home with her parents, who could not speak English. BQ learned Sze Yup language.
	223-242	Father at his 50's decided to study with a Chinese famous herbalist in Oakland and became very well known in his last 40 years. He was very determined and owned his own stores in Stockton, Visalia, and San Francisco. When his predecessor died, father carried on the store in Oakland.
7	243-245	Mother was a seasonal cannery worker on and off.
	246-255	Father spoke broken English. Most of his patients were English speaking people. Somehow he communicated enough to have a business -- both in tailoring and herb business.
	256-282	BQ was sent to Chinese school when she was young. Chinese school was play time. It was after regular school. BQ got through 5th grade in Chinese school. BQ enjoyed it. But the kids hated it. After the regular school the kids were restless so there was always discipline problems.

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
8	283-310	BQ's maternal grandfather had all the sons open gambling houses. They were very well-to-do. BQ's uncles built a Chinese school in honor of her grandparents. BQ went to that private Chinese school. The school was operated for about 10 years. The school has an auditorium and basement with toys.
	311-318	There were about 20 cousins spending time in the school.
	319-325	There was one cousin who lived in the northern part of the city and was the flashy cousin. One uncle was a gambler who built a brick house in the northern side of the city. The cousin was from this family.
9	327-340	Somehow the school closed when BQ was in junior high school. BQ stopped from going to Chinese school in the first year of junior high school.
	341-346	Parents wanted BQ to go to Chinese school. BQ went along with the neighbor whose father drove them to the school in a truck.
	347-352	BQ loved studying and was always an A student and a Phi Beta Kappa at school.
	353-383	BQ came to Los Angeles in 1950 and got acquainted with people in the movie industry. BQ wasn't interested until "Love is a Many Splendor Thing" was made. BQ was asked by Bessie Loo to be the tutor for Jennifer Jones. BQ met the director Henry King. She got the part to play Jennifer Jones' auntie. That started BQ all the character roles in the movies.
10	384-410	Prior to that, BQ had done one other role.

END OF SIDE 1

2	039-052	BQ got a feature role in her first acting job. BQ had done a lot of public speaking before so she thought nothing of acting.
	053-058	After the first experience BQ took acting lessons at Desilu Playhouse for about 4 years, got more interested in movies.
	059-070	BQ felt that the media was a platform in which she could do more for Chinese Americans and for Asian Americans. TV offered a great possibility for not only entertainment but for education for a better image of Asian Americans. That challenge kept BQ in acting as well as producing.

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
3	071-073 074-080	BQ produced shows for Channel 13 and Channel 4. Channel 13, with a Chinese attorney David Woo's idea, established a public affairs show. In doing so Channel 13 was able to renew their license for doing something relating to minorities.
	081-097	Channel started off the show in doing segments of the Black community, the Chicano community and the Asian American community. BQ worked on the show with the East West Players. Later she was invited to be a moderator for the show. David Woo helped produce the show. A year later BQ took over producing and moderating the show. It was the first show ever done for Asian Americans in the Southland. BQ was the first Asian American moderator in 1969.
	098-102 103-117	BQ stayed with Channel 13 until 1973. Went to work for Channel 4 in 1973 and helped to develop an Asian American show till 1975. Frank Kwan later took BQ's place.
4	118-131	BQ also produced several specials among which was the documentary on James Wong Howe and won an Emmy for it. BQ was the first Asian woman to win an Emmy.
	132-133	James Wong Howe died in 1976. The show was produced in 1974.
	134-137	BQ was acting all the time while producing. BQ has been acting for 25 years.
	138-155	When BQ started acting in 1954, James Hong was another actor who played the nephew of Jennifer Jones in BQ's first movie. Subsequently they did a lot of works including stage work together.
5	156-170	BQ and James Hong were doing the Susie Wong show and felt very dissatisfied with the stereotyped roles and decided to do some decent work for the Asian Americans.
	171-181	James Hong decided to do Rashomon which is a classic Japanese show, with all Asian cast. Mako came in to do the bandit role. He was dissatisfied also, so he wanted to develop a workshop. So they started the East West Players group. They developed a workshop. The East West Players Production Company came into being in 1965.
	182-191	BQ helped to write a proposal for a \$38,000 grant from the Ford Foundation. BQ's church lent the fellowship

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
5	182-191	hall for their rehearsal. Later they stayed there for 4 1/2 years. From there they went on to Santa Monica Boulevard.
6	192-198	BQ stayed with the East West Players for 16 years. She was the president for 8 years and now is a board member.
	199-211	They just developed two foreign language plays, one in Japanese and the other in Chinese. They played in different Chinatown organizations.
	212-216	East West Players is a 99 seat house. Actors and actresses were never paid unless they were touring.
	217-220	BQ does mainly TV and film work, not much stage work.
	221-248	BQ played Empress Dowager in Steve Allen's portrayal in Meeting of Minds, also played the mother in How the West Was Won, the story of a Chinese family who came to this country. She also did some other interesting roles in the past few years.
7	249-267	Father lived till he was 88 1/2 years old. Mother lived till she was 76. Mother was very free with BQ and allowed BQ to do anything she wanted to do.
	268-272	In the early days men would say to BQ's father, "It was foolish to send your daughter to college. What do you want to send your daughter to college for. Marry her off."
	273-293	Father believed in education. He scraped up money for BQ to go to college and didn't want her to work. He wanted her to concentrate on studying. He was very proud of BQ when she graduated with honors.
8	294-310	Parents did not object to BQ's acting career. They enjoyed watching her in the films.
	311-318	If BQ had started out being an actress maybe it would have been a different thing to her parents. At least her education did satisfy them. And they took it as not so much a serious career since BQ was already married. To them it was a side job for BQ.
	319-330	BQ did not think acting as getting in the way of her family life since she did not work frequently. Husband is a traditional husband who likes his meals on time. She is a day person and on time person so she gave up acting on stage at night time.

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
9	331-341	BQ went back and taught in the junior college in Los Angeles for a couple of years. She was also an administrator in a nursery school for a couple of years.
	342-353	BQ is enjoying producing and likes to do a documentary.
	354-360	BQ is the co-chair of the Asian American Heritage Week Committee.
	361-376	Knows James Wong Howe and wife Sanora very well.
END OF TAPE 1		
1	015-018	Introduction
	019-027	BQ did not think the student can learn that much from the traditional method of teaching Chinese language.
	028-035	BQ started the classic Chinese and memorized the Chinese characters.
2	036-039	Some of the children went to Chinese school to play. It was not a good learning process.
	040-049	BQ children learned very little Chinese. Son went to Hong Kong after he graduated from UCLA to learn Chinese for six months. Daughter took Chinese for 4 years in college.
	050-074	The first time public affairs shows mentioned Asian Americans was about 1968 and 1969. Very often than not the Asian Americans in the film were the creation of the imagination.
3	075-092	BQ had better roles in the past two years, but again, there were not Asian American roles. BQ couldn't think of any Asian American topics done except in the film which BQ produced.
	093-108	Chinese and Japanese Americans have been here for 5 and 6 generations. If they (Caucasians) can deal with that then they can deal with the real Asian Americans and not the Asian Asians.
4	109-115	In China Girl, in How the West Was Won, they dealt with the Chinese American new immigrant situation. But that was the beginning of dealing with the Asian American subject.
	116-129	In 1969 and 1970, no one can really accept and came up with the script dealing with an Asian American subject on film or on TV. Only two subjects BQ could think of was that dealing with the Asian Americans, one was Farewell to Manzanar and the other one dealing with a true Japanese

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
4	116-129	family in America.
	130-153	BQ felt that we need good Asian American writers to write such topics. The general public needs to know there are Asian born Asian and Asian immigrants who have been here for six generations. The Asian Americans are as American as apple pie.
5	154-172	The diversity of Asian cultural backgrounds should be an interesting topic for the public.
	173-185	The Asian American topic can be something that other people can relate to. For example, an Asian family's experience during the Depression.
6	186-191	The career choice of TV, movie and media is open to Asian Americans. But there is very limited opportunity.
	192-206	The reason is that Asians consist only 1% of the population. Unless something exciting, people are not interested in Asians in films.
	207-222	If you are a good technician you will be hired to work backstage no matter what color you are. It is less sensitive about the colors behind the screen or in the film making process.
	223-237	BQ thinks she is treated differently because she is an Asian American.
7	238-254	There are not many roles. BQ wished that she could be working all year. She works only whenever there is a need for an Asian character. Although BQ does not rely on the job for a living, there is always a desire for creating on her part.
	255-282	Parents did not have any objection to BQ's decision on going into the performing arts. In the traditional Chinese family, the parents do not want the children going into art. BQ is sure that if she started out as an actress as a teenager, her parents would have disapproved. Because there is no status to acting in the Chinese mind.
8	283-293	Being accepted as a professional actress may have taken some time by friends. It may be considered a difficulty to BQ.
	294-310	Building a status as an actress is difficult. There are so few roles that you don't get the chance to build up a career.

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2 Side A

Tape: 2 Side B

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
8	311-336	BQ felt she is accepted as an equal peer because of the quality of her acting. BQ did not think she made her way in terms of being successful or unsuccessful. She made her way in terms of growth. She felt she created and grew artistically.
10	410-447	In BQ's social life, most friends are people who went to school together. She gained friendship from all walks of life: research, social agency, arts.
11	448-473	BQ kept in touch with Chinatown people and activities. In Stockton, she was connected to the Chinese Center, in where a lot of social activities took place.
END OF SIDE 2		
1	014-023	BQ worked for the YWCA in San Francisco Chinatown and was a social worker in Oakland. When BQ moved down to Los Angeles she was totally updated on Chinatown even though she did not live in Chinatown.
	024-028	BQ felt more Chinese than American.
	029-032	Because BQ is a second generation and an oldest child in the family, she had to deal with the first generation. There was no special effort to keep up ties with Chinese.
	033-046	Working in TV and movie requires some aggressiveness.
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