

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Stanley K. Lau
 Chinese Name: 劉國權
 Date of Interview: 8/12/79
 Interviewer: Dora Lau
 Others Present: None
 Language: English
 Summarizer: Suellen Cheng

Interview Number: 35
 Number of Tapes: 2
 Length: 1 Hour & 30 Minutes

Contents

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary	Tape: <u>1</u> Side <u>A</u>
1	001-013	Introduction.	
	014-022	Stan Lau (SL) was born in Kobe, Japan in 1913. Came to the U.S. when he was 3 years old. At the present time SL is a senior office engineer aid at the Department of Water and Power.	
	023-032	SL spoke Sum Yup at home when he was young.	
2	033-039	Father came from Canton. Mother was born in Maco. Father's village was Chung Shan, Canton. Father's name was Lau Chew Kwong (劉兆光). Mother's maiden name was Ho Loui Ying (何蕊英).	
	040-046	Father was a minister and became a herbalist. Mother was a nurse in China. She became a housewife after coming to America.	
	047-056	Father was a minister in Kobe, Japan. In 1927 Stan Lau came with his mother and brother. Family moved to Bakersfield. In 1930 the family moved to Long Beach. They moved to Glendale in 1933.	
	057-060	Father was trained as an herbalist in Long Beach. He was an apprentice to Tom Fu Yuen.	
	061-072	Father was the minister of the Chinese Congregational Church on 9th Street. Later he went to Bakersfield and served at the Chinese Congregational Church there for three years.	
3	073-096	SL's mother tried to teach him Chinese after regular school. SL was educated in Glendale. The Lau family was the only Chinese family that lived in the south part of Glendale. SL's contact with white students enabled him to verbalize more than most Chinese in Chinatown.	

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
3	097-113	SL graduated from Glendale High School in 1938. He wanted to go to USC because of its football team. Father told him that he could not afford to send him to USC. SL then went to UCLA. A year later, SL was drafted and served in the Army. He went overseas after receiving his training. He was in England, France, and Germany and served for almost three years between 1943 and 1945.
4	114-122	Following the service, SL resumed his education at UCLA and received his BS in Chemistry and also did post graduate work in Chemistry.
	123-141	SL joined the Department of Water and Power in 1948. SL did mostly engineering type of work and programming, etc. SL often made field trips to check the equipment maintenance and installation.
5	149-151	SL's brother is an architect in San Francisco. Sister is a resident of La Mesa near San Diego. She is the only naturally born American citizen in the family.
	152-179	In most of SL's early days he spent time in the white environment. At school there were very few Orientals. It was predominantly white. The minority experienced prejudice and discrimination. They realized and knew their place and simply accepted the fact that they were not welcome and learned to be grateful for being accepted in the white community.
	180-189	SL's thinking was almost like Anglo-Saxon. When in England SL felt that his roots were more in England than in China. SL was ashamed of being Chinese at that time. SL wasn't able to become an American citizen before World War II. By serving in the army, SL later was able to become a naturalized citizen.
6	190-200	When SL was young he resented being Chinese and not being able to be accepted in the white community legally as well as socially.
	202-216	In the army, SL realized that the prejudicial attitudes were toward every body of a ethnic background as well.
	217-231	SL felt more American than Chinese. SL resented being Chinese in some ways but enjoyed some aspects of being Chinese. On weekends SL would visit friends and attend church in Chinatown. To a certain extent the children of SL's age resented SL and his brother and sister. Maybe because SL talked English without an accent and other Chinese children thought SL and his brother and sister were superior. SL didn't feel at home among Chinese kids, although he felt himself as part of the Chinese scene.

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Tape: 1 Side A

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
7	232-254	During the weekdays, SL's feelings were that he wanted to be American. It seemed that it was something SL could not achieve, meaning equality. Because he couldn't go through the door of the white world, there was more of a desire for him to break it.
	255-272	SL's parents at one time wanted to send him and his brother back to China for an education. They didn't like the idea and thought that it was unthinkable.
	273-282	SL thought his family was different from most of the Chinese because of their education and their business contacts with white people. He thought the family was more Americanized.
8	283-314	Even though SL's mother was a nurse and trained in western ways, she mainly used Chinese medicine first. Father would brew some Chinese herbs or solutions. Although the family used some western medicine such as aspirin and cough medicine, mostly they would use Chinese medicine.
	315-339	In the summer time, SL enjoyed going to the library and did a lot of reading. So far as sports go, SL's father was a tennis player and did play with SL.
9	340-391	For recreation, the family would play mahjong, Chinese dominoe games and other Chinese games. The family did things together and did a lot of walking. SL did enjoy USC football, basketball and enjoyed the World Series baseball games.
10	392-410	When in Long Beach, SL took violin lessons. Mother often watched him practice for hours. Afterwards he quit.
	411-425	Only in the army that SL began to appreciate the violin more and he played the fiddle with an army friend from Tennessee.
	426-433	Brother did learn to play the trumpet. He was taught by Peter Soo Hoo, Sr. Sister played the piano.
11	434-485	When SL was young, his mother used to take him to see Chinese traveling stage shows. SL was fascinated by the beautiful costumes and acting but never could understand the stories.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A

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Tape: 1 Side B

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary	<u>Tape 1 Side B</u>
1	001-010 011-021 022-045	Blank. When SL was young, the family used to go to the movies ever Saturday. They watched different series: Fu Manchu, etc. It was like ten cents per movie. SL saw some of the movies with Chinese characters in it like Charlie Chan movies. He accepted the way the Chinese were portrayed. That was the way he was educated. SL did not feel that being a Chinese one should be ashamed of. Entertainment isn't a real world. SL just went and enjoyed the movies.	
2	046-076	SL's family didn't belong to any associations. Later, after World War II, his father became active in the Lung Kong Tin Yee Family Association. Laus were church goers and didn't belong to the tong or associations. On many occasions, the family was concerned about that their father might be the target of the tongs. The tongs were not an open scene at the time. People knew the Laus were Christians. The Christians somehow had a unique place in Chinatown.	
3	077-105	Father quit the ministry in Long Beach during the Depression. Though he could make more money in business. That was a tough time. SL remembers that the family just had plain rice with little food. After the Japanese invaded China, the herb supplies stopped coming. It was hard on father's business. Father managed to make a comfortable life for the family. Family bought the first TV set around World War II.	
4	106-131 132-150	Even though father was an herbalist, he still was involved in the church. The family came to Los Angeles and first went to the Congregational church, then to the Methodist church. During World War II, they went back to the Presbyterian church. SL and brother were baptized in the Congregational Church in Glendale. Parents were far seeing, especially stressing the importance of education for their children. People related to prominent people to the well-to-do families. The most prominent person was Y.C. Hong, as well known Chinese attorney. SL used to ride the car with Mr. Hong.	

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1 Side B

Tape: 2 Side A

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
5	151-173	Mr. and Mrs. Leong Jeong were restaurant owners.. Mr. Leong was well respected by the members of the Chinese American Citizens Alliance which composed the people with American citizenship. Thomas Wong and his wife Maye Wong. They were in the produce business. General Lee's family was well-known.
	174-180	The traditional restaurants, laundry, curio shops, grocery stores and produce markets were the usual businesses for Chinese.
6	181-198	So far as the professions, Chinese chemists, pharmacists, insurance agents, dentists, lawyers were very few. It was very tough at that time for a Chinese to break into a white professional world.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE B

Tape 2 Side A

1	001-012	Introduction.
	013-023	There were jobs that all Chinese were in and there were jobs that all non-Chinese were in.
	024-030	Getting into the white work force was very tough. To find a profession with white employers was difficult.
	031-041	The National Dollar Store was the only Chinese owned store. It was on Broadway and hired Chinese. SL worked there for Christmas vacation. He earned \$20 a week.
2	042-044	It wasn't until World War II that the Chinese began to move into the non-traditional Chinese jobs.
	045-055	Father, being a herbalist, produced over an average income. The family had a comfortable living. SL couldn't tell what other people's incomes were.
	056-079	Chinese stayed close to the group that they knew. Chinatown and Adams Boulevard and 22nd Street were the Chinese communities. Between 9th and 20th Streets there was a mini-Chinatown with Chinese restaurants and grocery stores. Chinese didn't move out of the areas before World War II because Chinese were not allowed to buy homes in the white areas. Chinese didn't want to move to an area unless they could be accepted in the area.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
3	080-091	Later, the only people who lived in the Chinatown area were the ones who had businesses in Chinatown.
	092-117	Mother and SL tried to save money. Father had little money saved. The Depression had an influence on some Chinese thinking on savings.
4	118-135	Father sent money back to relatives in China occasionally. There was always correspondence sent back to China. SL did try to write to his mother's brother.
	136-147	The family didn't have anything to do with politics. The family was more concerned with the daily living and non-political activities.
5	148-163	Most of the time family didn't send money back to China regularly. Although SL had relatives abroad, he still felt closer to the immediate family in America.
	164-188	Everyone was affected by the Depression. Father borrowed money to buy rice. Father never complained. The family did worry about it. Later things were getting better. Father's business became better. He wasn't a businessman in nature but he did all right:
6	189-246	SL enrolled in dance class in Glendale high school. He was the only Chinese in the class. A couple of days after the class, the instructor came to the house and told his father that some parents of the girls in the class objected for SL to be in the class. The instructor was willing to give SL private lessons. SL was hurt a little but it didn't bother him a great deal. It was the resentment in the white community and not really hostility.
7	247-265	In 1956, when SL and his wife tried to buy a home in the Sunnyhill area, they realized that there was still bias towards Chinese. It wasn't open hostility but just prejudice.
	266-275	The discrimination became less due to the younger generation in the world with all racial backgrounds becoming more acceptable.
8	276-300	For those Chinese who were able to break away and become professional people, they have done better than the other Chinese. Today's Chinese have done better than yesterday's Chinese.

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2 Side A

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Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
8	301-324	Chinese men met girls at churches, school clubs, and student associations. Not so many American born Chinese thought of going back to China.
	325-327	None of SL's close friends went back to China to get married.
9	328-408	Parents liked to have a grandson. They never said it loud. Father was more progressive and became more Americanized. Father accepted America ideas more than mother did. Mother used Chinese discipline. Very few times that father punished them physically. He was very modern and welcomed new ideas. Father never wanted to have their children support them when he got old. Father enjoyed being his own person even when he got older.
10	409-434	In the early days, there was a Chinese woman who married a Japanese man. No one wanted to associate with her.
	435-450	There were Chinese schools sponsored by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association and churches.

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE A

Tape 2 Side B

1	001-012	Blank.
	013-023	SL believed that Chinese parents thought it was important to have a Chinese education.
	024-027	SL wanted to learn the Chinese language but to memorize things seemed so foreign to him. SL simply was just not too interested in learning it.
	028-045	In the beginning, parents liked to go back to China but they never stressed to the children that they wanted to go. As time went on, parents had no desire to go back to China but to stay in America. America was home to them.
2	046-055	Only those who could afford it did go back to China for an education.
	056-078	SL looked at the Chinese roles in the movies from the white perspective. SL looked at the movies as entertainment. He knew that there were bad Chinese guys around. It didn't upset SL if someone showed a bad guy in the movies. It upset SL when he was called a "Chink" in school. SL didn't look at movies as the real world.

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Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
3	079-084	SL was not embarrassed by watching those movies. Some of his friends looked at it as having an opportunity to work in the movies.
	085-101	Chinese parents wanted their children to be better and to have a better opportunity. Chinese stressed the importance of education.
4	102-133	It wasn't until recently that SL realized that he wasn't really America or white because he wasn't raised in a white family. But he was near white in his thinking, in his education and social contacts. But yet he wasn't Chinese. He couldn't read or write Chinese. SL loved Chinese food and customs. He felt that he will be lost if he goes back to China. Maybe in the future the younger generation will be looked at as all white.
	134-140	When SL first applied for a job at the Mobil Company as a chemist, they turned him down. They simply said that they hired a Chinese guy before and it didn't work out. SL still remembers it today and hopes that type of feeling or thinking has passed.

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE B

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