

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Clara Wong Interview Number: 98  
 Chinese Name: 黃翠玉 Number of Tapes: 2  
 Date of Interview: 4/28/80 Length: 1 Hour & 15 Minutes  
 Interviewer: Beverly Chan  
 Others Present: None  
 Language: English  
 Summarizer: Suellen Cheng

Contents

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary	Tape: <u>1</u> Side <u>A</u>
1	001-006	Introduction.	
	007-016	Parents are from Canton, China. Father was from Toishan.	
	017-021	Clara Wong's (CW) Chinese name is ( <u>黃翠玉</u> ).	
	022-033	Father came over in 1923 in his late teens. He was born in 1903. He came to the U.S. for a better life.	
2	034-040	Father worked in a herb shop in a small town in China.	
	041-054	Father's grandfather was in the U.S. during the gold rush. CW's great grandfather did not work in the mine, but as a scholar and wrote letters for other people.	
	055-057	CW was born in Los Angeles in 1933.	
	058-071	Father was always working in the produce market at City Market on San Pedro. It was a wholesale produce market. He always left the house early in the morning and worked sixteen hours a day. CW didn't see her father very much, he was either at work or sleeping.	
3	072-073	When CW was in her teens, she used to help her father with the bookkeeping at home.	
	074-077	There are seven brothers and sisters in the family. CW is the oldest.	
	078-086	Mother raised all the children. After all of the children were grown, she helped her husband in the market.	
	087-099	CW grew up in the 22nd Street area. The family rented a house. Father and his cousin were partners. His cousin owned two houses, so CW's family rented one from him.	
	100-116	Father's produce market's name was Chuck Produce. Father's cousin was in the business first. Father joined him in the business as a partner after working for several years.	

## Contents (cont'd)

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
4	117-133	CW didn't know any English before she went to school. She always thought that she was shy and didn't say much at school.
	134-157	CW was the only Chinese in her junior high school. She noticed a lot of black students but not many Caucasians around the neighborhood.
5	158-185	CW's family was considered poor but never was deprived. The family had a refrigerator and radio. Before 1936, they had an ice box.
	186-197	Mother always seeked the opportunity to speak English. There were church ladies who always came to the house and taught mother how to speak English
6	198-205	Father went to English class for a year and a half. Then he had to start working.
	206-230	Most of her father's clients were restaurant owners out in the West Los Angeles and Hollywood areas.
7	231-235	Father retired in 1965.
	236-257	CW always attended the neighborhood school. One school she went to were predominantly black. She went to San Pedro Street School and Lafayette High School. There were few Chinese in each class.
	258-267	CW did't think she didn't get along with her classmates.
	268-276	CW had a tutor teaching her Chinese at home for a year. Later CW went to Chinese school when she was in junior high school.
8	277-289	There were about five of them who studied Chinese at home with the tutor.
	290-309	CW went to Chinese school on Adams Boulevard, sponsored by the Chinese Presbyterian Church. The school's hours were 4:30 to 6:30 pm every day. they went to school to have fun and play with friends.
	310-317	The pastor of the church taught the class. There were nine grades.
	318-351	It was very common to go to Chinese school in the early days. CW and her brothers did not have any objection to going to Chinese school. It was like three or four dollars a month.
9	352-364	There was a girl scout troop in the church after 1945.
	365-379	CW belonged to the church. Her main activities were at the Chinese school and the church.

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1 Side A

Tape: 1 Side B

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
9	380-389	CW didn't have many non-Chinese friends at school. She spoke English with her Chinese friends.
10	390-398	CW spoke Chinese with her parents.
	399-406	CW felt more Chinese.
	407-425	CW's family used a lot of Chinese herbal medicine, and used to visit Chinese herb doctors.
	426-445	The family had an American family doctor. All the brothers and sisters were born at home except for the youngest sister who was born in the hospital.
11	446-451	Husband was born in 1930 in the hospital.
	450-464	Mother didn't have much recreational activities.
	465-481	Now parents have more time for recreation. In the early days, father worked all the time, even on Sundays.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A

Tape 1 Side B

1	001-002	Blank.
	003-011	Father used to take the family out on Sundays in the car.
	012-023	Father never took a vacation. There were only two times when her father took the family to San Francisco. Once to the World Fair in 1939 and 1935 to see CW's grandfather.
	024-029	CW's family had three bedrooms. One time CW's two uncles were living with them.
	030-035	Father used to send money back to China.
2	036-037	Most of mother's relatives are in the U.S. now.
	038-043	Father joined the family association in the later days, after he retired.
	044-048	Father may belong to the market group.
	049-071	CW visited the market before CW described the set up of produce market. The market could fit a big truck in the market.
3	072-094	CW and her family never experienced obvious discrimination. Maybe once while the schoolmates called her "Chink." She never got disturbed too much.
	095-098	CW didn't know who would be the prominent persons in Chinatown.

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1 Side B

Tape: 2 Side A

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
3	099-120	When she was young, CW wished to be a teacher, bookkeeper, etc. CW always had a good time with friends and never talked much about jobs or careers.
4	121-131	A lot of Chinese were in the laundry business or the herb business.
	132-147	Chinese mostly lived near other Chinese. CW's family lived around 22nd Street for convenience.
5	148-165	CW heard some people talk about gambling but as a child one wasn't supposed to ask about gambling.
	166-175	CW didn't know of anyone who was involved in politics.
	176-181	Some of CW's relatives would take her to the movies when she was little.
	182-197	CW didn't go to Chinese movies. Being the oldest in the family, CW played a lot by herself. Her uncle used to teach her Chinese games but she never enjoyed them. CW and her brothers used to play baseball on the street.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE B

Tape 2 Side A

1	001-004	Introduction.
	005-012	CW played baseball with her Chinese friends. There were no non-Chinese around. When they played they spoke Chinese.
	013-025	CW remembers that Chinese passed around red eggs for the celebration of new babies.
	026-040	Mother did not learn a lot of things until the children grew up. She cooked Chinese food and rice three meals a day. The family never ate out.
2	041-049	CW remembers that her mother cooked spaghetti for the first time when CW was in junior high school.
	050-069	CW vaguely remembers that her father took her to the cemetery on Ching Ming (清明). CW didn't remember much of the funerals she attended.
3	070-081	CW never went to any Chinese type of wedding. There were some Chinese who had weddings at churches and then poured tea at home.

## Contents (cont'd)

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
3	082-103	At home CW's family was very Chinese. CW's uncle used to tell her Chinese stories. Mother often mentioned her life in China and footbinding. Mother was born in 1912. She was the only one who didn't have her feet bound.
4	104-115	Mother's father was here in America and returned to China from time to time. But CW's mother's mother never came to the U.S.
	116-129	There was a real appreciation of Chinese in CW's parents. They often talked about going back to China, but they didn't go until last year.
	130-149	Someone gave a box camera to CW's brother. There was one period when CW's father got interested in movies. He rented a camera and took pictures for a very short period.
5	150-159	CW thinks it is important to have a Chinese education.
	160-176	CW heard of some ladies who liked to be matchmakers but never knew of anyone who got married through one.
	177-179	CW had two brothers and three sisters.
	180-208	CW heard of people talking about interracial marriages rather negatively. There were very few interracial marriages.
6	209-216	CW thinks that people find interracial marriages more acceptable now.
	217-229	Parents never mentioned what was their preference for China born or American born in-laws. CW had both China born and American born friends.
7	230-238	CW thinks Chinese have done better than other people.
	239-252	When CW's parents wanted to purchase a house around the USC area in the 1950s, they had little difficulty. Later whites moved out and more minorities moved in.
	253-259	CW stayed home until she got married.
	260-280	The City Market is still in existence. When her father was there, there were predominantly Chinese owners in the produce market.
8	281-291	During World War II, there were some benefit occasions that all the Chinese would dress in Chinese clothing.
	292-304	CW remembers that she was in the parade for the China Relief event and the family members were involved in the activities.

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Contents (cont'd)

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
8	305-316	CW participated in the activities when Madame Chiang Kai-shek visited Los Angeles.
	317-326	One time CW went with other Chinese to the harbor to boycott Japanese goods.
9	327-334	CW's family didn't have a telephone until she was ten.
	335-363	CW felt that she was Chinese and was brought up in a Chinese way.

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE A

END OF INTERVIEW

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