

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: ** Interview Number: 11
 Chinese Name: Number of Tapes: 3
 Date of Interview: 2/14/79, 4/20/79 Length: 2 Hours & 18 Minutes
 Interviewer: Jean Wong
 Others Present:
 Language: English
 Summarizer: Suellen Cheng

Contents

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary	Tape: 1 Side A
1	001-015 016-030 031-039	Introduction. Mother was born in Nevada and father was from Canton, China at an early age. Father married and lived in San Francisco. Lived in an apartment above a gift shop, with sisters and brothers.	
2	040-047 048-065 066-094	Mother passed away. There were four in the family. ** was the fourth one. ** had two sisters and one brother. Brother went to New York for show. He liked show business and took up dancing lessons. ** and brother worked together at the age of 18 years old for a while. Then ** was working for an American old fashioned doctor in Chinatown.	
3	095-102 103-109	Learned a lot from this American doctor. Would like to learn pharmacy and also like to travel. So she joined show business with her brother. ** was born in San Francisco in 1900, brother was three years older.	
4	110-142	Quit the job at the doctor's office and went in show business. Recalled kinds of acts she did with her brother. Played a Chinese angel. ** sang the song that she sang on the stage.	
5	143-158 159-164 165-187	Brother taught her acting. Brother got more pay so he paid for the transportation and hotel. They helped each other. ** got chance to travel and enjoyed it. Now she wished that she stayed with the doctor and took the pharmacy and nursing. ** thought she didn't have talent. She came to Los Angeles and looked Tom Gubbins up. She worked for Tom Gubbins for a while.	

** Asked to remain anonymous

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
6	188-201	Brother's friend worked in show business in Los Angeles first then wrote a letter to **'s brother in New York to invite him to Los Angeles.
	202-218	** didn't think father worked in the mines. He may have been working for an American family as a school boy, cooking and cleaning for the Americans.
	219-227	After mother passed away, ** stayed with aunt in San Francisco. ** didn't know much about father's past.
7	228-249	** went to school in Chinatown where all the students were Chinese and teachers were Caucasians. The school was called Wong Ga Siu Gium (). [Commodore Stockton Elementary School]
	250-261	Cousin graduated and become the first Chinese teacher there. [Mrs. Alice Fong Yu]
	262-270	Didn't go beyond elementary school. In the old days it was lucky to get some education for a girl. Brother went to Chinese school, but the family could not afford sending girls to school.
	271-274	After graduating from grammar school went to high school for a short time.
8	275-283	Started going to work for a doctor and other different jobs like sewing in factories.
	284-304	Wages were low but one could get by. Earned about \$10 - \$15 a week. She took the medicine to the Chinese patients and explained to them the amount and method of medicine they should take.
	305-322	Before World War II, most Chinese relied on Chinese medicine. But this American doctor had an office in Chinatown. He treated **'s grandmother, aunt and cousins.
	323-331	Grandmother used both Chinese and American medicine.
9	332-357	Left San Francisco around 1921-22 and traveled with brother. First went to Chicago. In 1925 started with a big show, so played up and down the coast and then to New York, upstate New York, and then Boston and Washington, D.C.
	358-368	** stopped traveling around 1934. When sound movies came long, no more vaudeville. Brother also stopped in 1934.
	369-381	** stayed in New York with second sister and worked in their restaurant for a while as a cashier in 1936-1937.
	382-385	Shortly after ** came to Los Angeles in 1937 she got married and had a son and a daughter.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
10	386-396	Husband was a bartender at Seven Seas on Hollywood Boulevard when they met.
	397-407	Husband's wages as a bartender wasn't very much.
	408-411	** didn't work when the children were young.
	412-452	Then brother came out to Los Angeles. He and James Wong Howe founded a Chinese restaurant in North Hollywood on Ventura Blvd. and started their business. **'s husband helped as their bartender, ** their cashier. Brother was the maitre d'. James Howe at that time stilled worked in the studio.
11	453-461	** also babysat for a couple of children.
	462-488	From then on ** and her husband moved on from one restaurant to another. Then with husband ** started a drink food stand in Farmer's Market.
END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A		
1	015-039	Sold the Chinese food stand after a couple of years because it was rough to find good help and more they sold more commission was taken out--so much percentage of the business. Paying for the cooks, working for long hours.
2	040-043	Some time they got more income, sometimes a little less.
	044-052	It was rough to work outdoors in the Farmer's Market.
	053-062	Then they worked for other restaurants. Husband started as a buyer, then a cook, later was able to move up to being a supervisor in a big restaurant in Laguna Beach.
	063-087	** continued working after Farmer's Market. She worked on and off. They worked for another American restaurant across from Universal Studio. Husband helped to cook Chinese food there.
3	088-110	From then on they opened a real Chinese restaurant on Riverside Drive in Burbank. Husband managed to cook and help. ** was the cashier and answered telephones. Studio people came to eat.
4	111-117	Wages were around \$50.
	118-127	Fives years later, lost the lease. Landlord was a widow and rented the place to an automobile dealer.

Interviewee: **

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Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
4	128-145	Husband went to Laguna Beach and worked as a supervisor in a big restaurant.
	146-160	Son is an accountant, worked for Los Angeles County. Daughter graduated from Long Beach and got married. After they left home, they were all on their own.
5	161-170	** didn't speak Chinese with her children. They lived in the Valley where there were not many Chinese. Children mingled with American children. Children understood a few Chinese words.
	171-183	Husband was from China when he was young. His uncle brought him over. He went to school and worked for Americans as hotel help and mingled with Americans.
6	184-189	Husband was Americanized.
	190-207	After he stopped working in show business, brother came to Los Angeles, rented an apartment in Hollywood. A mutual friend who knew her, her brother and her husband introduced them. That's how ** met her husband.
	208-224	Brother never married. Older sister had three girls and two boys. She passed away four years ago. Another sister is still living in San Francisco. All of her children are married.
	225-232	** didn't go to Chinese school. Learned a few Chinese words herself.
7	233-245	Father went back to China and remarried, then brought second wife to San Francisco.
	246-251	Spoke Chinese at home.
END OF TAPE 1 SIDE B		
1	003-014	Introduction.
	015-034	Brother went in restaurant business with James Wong Howe in 1940. He was friendly. At the time he was working for Warner Brothers. A lot of customers were from the studio.
2	035-045	James Wong Howe spoke Chinese. After working at the studio he would come to the restaurant for a meal and talked with friends from the studio. Betty Davis and a lot of famous people came to the restaurant.
	046-057	Brother took sick and was in the hospital. Several months later he wanted to go back to show business. Finally he passed away.

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
2	058-078	Husband and ** still worked for James Howe for a while. At the time Farmer's Market just opened. They left James Howe and opened the first Chinese food stand. James Howe struggled with the restaurant business and finally closed the restaurant.
3	079-093	** and her husband stayed in the Farmer's Market for a short while. It was hard at the beginning. It was a long hours job. Husband got sick. They sold the food stand. After that, they went in one restaurant after another and lived in the Valley.
	094-109	Later went to another restaurant business with a friend on Riverside Drive. They worked hard and kids went to school there for quite a few years. Due to some disagreement they branched out to Long Beach and opened a Polynesian restaurant.
4	111-119	Children went to school there and finished college education at Long Beach City College.
	120-135	Son moved to a fraternity house, later everybody got married, he moved to another apartment and stayed there. Son worked for an accounting firm. Now he visits ** every chance he gets and weekends.
	136-145	Husband was a member of the Low Quon Chung Chew (Four Families Association). ** went to Association functions whenever she could. But they didn't have much time off in the restaurant business.
5	146-158	Husband paid dues to the family association but ** didn't remember how much he paid. ** didn't join her own family association.
	159-172	There was special music, entertainment and big banquets held by the family association. Family association also helped members as a benevolent organization.
	173-190	** travelled with her brother in the East Coast and didn't have much association with Chinese in Los Angeles until her brother came to Los Angeles. ²
6	191-219	After getting married, ** and her husband lived in Hollywood for a while and moved to west Los Angeles. Later moved to Palm Springs where their son was born. Weather wasn't as good, so they moved back to Hollywood.
	220-258	Moved to Palm Springs, then moved to San Francisco in 1939 and worked in San Francisco where her sister lived.

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Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
7	259-279	In 1940 brother started the restaurant together with James Wong Howe. At the beginning it was just a take out place. Later it turned into a big restaurant with 40-50 people.
8	280-308	Brother wrote to ** and husband in San Francisco and asked their help. They lived near the restaurant. Children were just across the street. The neighbor had three children so ** also babysat for them.
	309-324	Brother passed away, everything was different. They decided went on their own in the Farmer's Market.
9	325-331	Didn't know the business well enough. Paid more than they took in.
	332-344	Before the war, Chinese in San Francisco got the jobs like cleaning boys and not the kind of big jobs.
	345-354	Now, Chinese have more education and can get better jobs.
	355-383	Brother was acting as a servant, cook, waiter, spoke pidgin English. People made fun of Chinese broken English.
10	384-402	Keye Luke also had some good parts, Benson Fong had some good parts, Victor Sun Yung never had good big parts. Once you played one part you stuck with the part.
	403-418	Brother had to make a living by working in show business so he could not protest against the way Chinese were portrayed.
	419-481	After she came from New York, ** went to Tom Gubbins to get some extra parts. ** had no experiences. Tom Gubbins took her to the studio. The studio people were all looking for a Anna May Wong type of Oriental girl. ** went into show business because of her brother.

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE A

1	010-020	After traveling with her brother, ** found herself learning and started liking show business.
	021-038	Mother passed away when ** was young. Brother just loved to be on the stage. Brother was going to take care of **. ** didn't know she was going to be on stage.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
2	039-048	It was a big deal that sister went from San Francisco to San Diego. The farthest place they went in the early days was from San Francisco to Oakland.
	049-060	Parents would have thought it was okay for **'s brother to go on the stage, but it would have been a wrong thing for **.
	061-076	There were two traveling groups putting on big shows. One started from Los Angeles then Sacramento, Stockton, San Francisco. The other one started from San Francisco, Fresno, Stockton, and Oregon. Traveled with two big cars.
3	077-090	When traveling and working for the show, ** didn't get too much pay, but still was able to save some money. ** paid for her own hotel shared with other girls. Boys and girls went to a Chinese restaurant and paid 75 cents and ate all they wanted.
	091-100	Every town they went to, first thing they looked for was a Chinese restaurant, even a chop suey restaurant.
	101-112	At the beginning they hardly had any salary. Company for their traveling, living quarters and costumes. Later they got a little more pay.
4	113-116	Didn't know what other people were making.
	117-123	Later on when the show got more money for the whole troop, everybody got a little more money.
	124-146	After traveling so much, it sort of broadens a person's mind. ** didn't want to live crowded together in Chinatown.
5	147-163	The ones who haven't been away would not know the difference, so they stayed with Chinese as a habit. Husband went down to Chinatown visiting friends but did not stay in Chinatown.
	164-181	Some Chinese would move to wherever Chinese moved to. The ones who have been out much would not know the difference of place outside of Chinatown.
	182-196	Husband lived outside of Chinatown, but not necessary working with Chinese people. In the Chinese restaurant business naturally you worked with Chinese cooks and help from Chinatown.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
1	003-027 028-041	Introduction. Chinese who lived in Chinatown eat at home and do not have cars.
2	042-048 049-067	Chinese saved their money at home and didn't trust the bank. People went to Chinatown gambling houses. when they won they sent some money back to China. Mostly men gambled but not women. Some women did gamble. Some families would have conflicts over the gambling. Men were the bosses in the family.
3	068-103	** felt there was some discrimination in the old days. Laundrymen, Chinamen were nothing to some white Americans. ** and her brother went touring in a little town before they performed. They were stopped in the theatre where they would perform a week after. ** heard that Chinese men were not allowed to sit downstairs in one of the San Francisco theatres.
4	104-117 118-158	More educated Chinese tried to make themselves presentable in the outside world and dress better to go to the show. Then it made different for the other Chinese. ** went down to Savannah, Georgia, visiting a girl friend by train from Chicago. When passing the Mason-Dixon line ** was asked to sit in the black section of the train. But later on the conductor let her sit in the white section because she was not black.
5	159-185	Girlfriend's parents came from China and didn't speak a word of English. They opened a laundry there and made some money. Later bought some property and three laundries. They hired some negro women who did ironing. Son went to Georgia Tech. Daughters stayed home and helped mother in the grocery store. They lived upstairs of the grocery store. They hired negro men who worked for them and sold to the negro.
6	186-208 209-222 223-236	Everything was so different in georgia. **'s girl friend cooked and baked at home and thought ** was more sophisticated being living in the city. Everytime ** went to a town, they would visit temples, churches and go sightseeing. In Los Angeles, ** mostly visited friends and had dinner with them.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
7	237-245	** and her girl friends used to go to the YWCA in San Francisco where there was music and dancing.
	246-274	When ** was in San Francisco there was the Chinese opera. **'s grandmother loved to see opera and movies. It cost only 5 cents to see a movie. When they came home they ordered won ton for 10 or 15 cents for a midnight meal.
8	275-821	** felt more Chinese. When she traveled to New York she associated more with Americans.
	282-310	** had a cousin who went into the restaurant business in New York. Cousin's wife was well educated in Chinese. Cousin went back to Chinatown marry her. In those days, Chinese could not bring their wives over. So ** and cousin saved money to send for her. When she first arrived in San Francisco, ** got acquainted with her.
	311-326	First time ** went to Chicago with her brother, she didn't stay with her brother for too long. She took sick and came back to San Francisco. One of her sisters wanted to go to New York, so ** went with her and stayed with her cousin and his wife.
9.	327-340	Brother still traveled by himself. Then came to Hollywood and sent for ** to come to Los Angeles. After the show as over, ** came back up to Los Angeles and met her husband.
	341-350	Some Chinese men could not find a suitable wife, they would go back to China to get married. At the time even you are an American citizen, you couldn't bring your wife over.
	351-395	A Chinese lawyer Y.C. Hong was a schoolmate of **'s brother. He worked in Immigration law. Later the Native Sons started an organization. Mr. Hong went to Washington to fight the law which was against the Chinese citizens to bring their wives from China.
10	396-439	** met Mr. and Mrs. Hong in new York and had dinner together. ** accompanied Mrs. Hong shop in in New York.
	440-461	Mr. Hong won the case and became famous. They had two sons. One was married and the other was still single.

Interviewee: **

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Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
1	013-036	Mr. Hong won the case and became famous. Wife helped him as a secretary. Two sons, one is a lawyer. ** didn't drive but still contacted with Mrs. Hong.
2	037-047	** did not have a preference of having a son than daughter.
	048-071	Before the war, people looked down on people who had interracial marriages. ** knew a couple of them and said it was hard for the couple. **'s niece's daughter married a Caucasian, whose folks were in SEattle. She had a laboratory job while her husband worked as a pharmacist. Now it is more common (to have interracial marriages), we don't even think of it.
3	072-078	In the old days, family would send the boys to Chinese school. But it is too expensive to send a girl to Chinese school. After all, girls would be married off.
	079-085	Did not send children to Chinese school, because they lived in the Valley where there hardly were any Chinese.

END OF TAPE 3 SIDE B

END OF INTERVIEW