

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: David Y. Lee Interview Number: 131
 Chinese Name: 李恩忠 Number of Tapes: 2
 Date of Interview: 9/29/80 Length: 1 Hour & 6 Minutes
 Interviewer: Bernice Sam
 Others Present: None
 Language: English
 Summarizer: Stella Ling

Contents

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary	Tape: <u>1</u> Side <u>A</u>
1	001-007	Introduction.	
	008-012	Dr. David Y. Lee (DYL) lives at 1223B South Almansor Street, in Alhambra.	
	013-015	DYL was born in San Francisco on August 30, 1914. He is 67 years old.	
	016-021	DYL's father is S.P. Lee or Lee Sow Pan. DYL's mother calls herself Lee Wong See.	
	022-025	DYL's parents were from Kwangtun in South China. DYL's father came to the United States when he was 21. He did not get married until five or six years later which was when DYL's mother came over.	
	026-031	DYL's native village is in Toishan -- it is Chop Suey Han or Red River Stream. It is Sze Yup.	
	032-033	DYL went to the village one summer when he was studying in China.	
2	034-039	DYL's father and all the Chinese that came to the United States at that time found that times in Canton were hard. There were a lot of famines and floods.	
	040-049	DYL's father was a farmer in China. He had a fourth or fifth grade education in the village. When he was 18 or 19 years old, he went to Hong Kong as a carpenter apprentice. He was very poor. He only had a few dollars when he arrived in San Francisco.	
	050-056	DYL's father came to the United States in 1900. When he first came, he worked in a laundry for a while and then he washed dishes for a while. He was also a waiter and houseboy.	
	057-058	DYL's father had six boys and four girls.	
	059-067	After living in San Francisco for three or four years, DYL's father attended English classes at a mission in San Francisco. He found that many Chinese herb doctors did not speak English and needed interpreters. Thus he worked as an interpreter and then opened his own herb store to treat American patients.	

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
3	068-072	DYL's father opened his own store around 1910. DYL is one of the children in the middle.
	073-075	DYL's father came to Los Angeles around 1927.
	076-081	While at home, DYL's family spoke Sze Yup. DYL's mother did not want to learn English and so the children were forced to speak in the native tongue.
	082-088	DYL's father spoke to the children mostly in English. DYL's family was in San Francisco for eight or nine years. They lived at 672 South Broadway. It is a motel now. It was the same place as the herb store.
	089-092	DYL was too young to help his father out at the herb store. DYL's father did everything himself. He provided for his family fairly well.
	093-099	DYL's father came to Los Angeles after World War I. DYL was about six years old at that time. DYL's family moved to Long Beach which is where DYL grew up.
	100-111	DYL attended Bernett School in Long Beach. He finished up at the Long Beach Poly Technic High School. After that, - went to Lingnam University in Canton in 1933 to 1937. The school is also called the Canton Christian University. There were special classes for the students that did not speak Chinese.
4	112-116	DYL learned some Chinese while in China. Before that, they had a Chinese tutor in Long Beach.
	117-120	DYL returned to the United States in 1939 when the Japanese started invading Canton.
	121-130	DYL enjoyed his years at Canton. He liked being away from home and meeting new people. DYL also worked on improving his Sze Yup. Most of the classes were taught in English in the section of the school especially for overseas Chinese.
	131-140	DYL did not feel sorry for leaving the school. He rented an apartment in Canton and studied Chinese herbs. DYL went to Chinese pharmacy classes every day. He was able to finish up the two-year course.
	141-150	DYL then returned to the United States and began his pre-med studies. He attended medical school at University of California at Irvine but it was under a different name at that time. DYL graduated from college in 1942.
5	151-159	DYL was practicing as a physician during the war years. Most doctors were drafted but - was not an M.D. at that time. He was a D.O.
	160-163	DYL was practicing at 47th and Figueroa Street.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
5	164-171 172-185	DYL became an M.D. about fifteen years ago. DYL has been a doctor for 38 years. In the beginning, most of his patients were Caucasians but now most of his patients are Black Americans. DYL has been working in the same neighborhood for 38 years. DYL has one or two Chinese patients.
6	186-188 189-192 193-205 206-223 224-232	Right now, most of DYL's friends are non-Chinese. DYL feels more Chinese than American. DYL was an herbalist for a few years after medical school. He found that there was not much demand for Chinese herbs at that time so - started practicing Western medicine. This was from 1942 to 1950. Chinese herbs help the natural processes of the body but are incapable of curing cancer or venereal diseases. Chinese herbs help the healing process. western medicine attack specific bacteria. DYL has never felt sorry for being Chinese. DYL has never argued with his family about his Chinese identity. DYL respected his parents.
7	233-236 237-240 241-249 250-252 253-261 262-268 269-275	When DYL was young, their family would use Chinese medicine when someone was sick. If the Chinese medicine did not work, they would call in an American doctor. DYL occasionally uses Chinese remedies for colds and flus. DYL does not cook with Chinese herbs. DYL is divorced and is living by himself. When DYL was young, his family ate Chinese food. DYL attends hostess ballrooms for recreation. DYL goes to see Chinese movies occasionally. DYL has four children -- two boys and two girls. They were from his first wife. They were married in Salinas, California. She was Chinese. DYL's oldest daughter is married. The other children are still going to school and living at home.
8	276-285 285-294 295-303	DYL goes to Chinatown about three or four times a week. He goes to eat and attends a Chinese movie on occasion, he learns Mandarin that way. DYL goes to the Sing Lee Theater on Spring Street. There are three theaters in Chinatown. There are two theaters in Alhambra that DYL can go to -- they are within walking distance from his house. DYL usually goes to the Wang Kwo restaurant to eat because he usually goes there late.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
8	304-322	DYL has no connections with the Chinatown associations. He does not know many people in Chinatown. DYL used to be active in the CACA but that was a long time ago. After his divorce, he lost touch with the CACA because the members are all married.
	323-337	Before the second World War, most of the Chinese were in the restaurants, laundries, retail stores, and gift shop businesses. There were professional Chinese after the second World War.
9	338-344	DYL does not know what the average income before World War II was. He was just growing up at that time.
	345-352	There were about 30 or 40 herbalists in California when DYL's father was practicing Chinese medicine. There are about 30 herbalists today.
	353-359	When the Chinese first arrived, they liked to live together but after a few years, they liked to move further out from Chinatown. People in Chinatown lived there because of the lack of transportation.
	360-376	When the Chinese saved their money, some of them gambled it. Nowadays, people no longer send money back to China.
	377-396	DYL knows Judge Delbert Wong who is involved in politics. DYL does not know anyone involved in Chinese politics. Judge Wong is an American born Chinese who became very active in politics when he was appointed.
10	397-409	There is less hostility against the Chinese in the outskirts. the less Chinese there are in the town the less prejudice. There is no prejudice in places like West Covina and San Bernardino.
	410-422	When DYL was growing up, the Chinese were not allowed to go swimming at the swimming pools. DYL would go swimming in the ocean.
	423-425	DYL does not see any hostility today.
	426-437	The Chinese and the Jewish are very similar. They like to save money and buy real estate. The mothers want their sons to be doctors and lawyers. They want their children to have a good education. Jewish mothers and Chinese mothers are alike and have the same values.
	438-450	DYL thinks that the Jewish have gone further in business than the Chinese probably because they have been in the United States longer. The inability to distinguish a Jewish from a non-Jewish is also an advantage.
11	451-459	DYL met his first wife in Salinas.

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1 Side A

Tape: 1 Side B

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
11	460-479	DYL knows of some Chinese men that returned to China to get married. DYL did not have time to go to China to get married.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A

Tape 1 Side B

1	003-007	The American born Chinese did not prefer sons over daughters as much as the China born Chinese. DYL did not prefer to have sons.
	008-013	DYL tried to teach his children some Chinese but they did not learn very much. DYL did not send them to Chinese school. His children were not interested in going.
	014-016	DYL thinks interracial marriages are all right. DYL's wife is Latin American -- she speaks Spanish.
	017-020	DYL's daughter is married to an American born Chinese. DYL imagines that there will be more interracial marriages in the future.
	021-030	By marrying a non-Chinese, DYL found out about a different culture. He did not have any racial difficulties although the two of them encountered personal differences. DYL had known his wife for three months -- she was one of the dance hostesses at the ballroom dance DYL went to.
	031-035	DYL was married to her for about a year. They separated because she was never home. DYL does not regret marrying outside of his race.
2	036-042	DYL does not know of any Chinese parents. Most fathers will send their children to Chinese school.
	043-047	DYL may return to China for a visit. He would not like to live in China because his family is all in the United States.
	048-058	DYL thinks it is funny that the Chinese are so sensitive about the portrayal of Chinese on the screen. It is simply entertainment for the Americans but the Chinese are oversensitive about those things. These portrayals do not make DYL angry -- he is amused that the Chinese are so sensitive about those things.
	059-069	DYL has known people who are embarrassed to be Chinese. when asked, a lot of people do not want to admit that they are Chinese.
3	070-073	The Chinese consider doctors, lawyers, and engineers to have ideal occupations.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
3	074-078	DYL's sons are students. DYL's daughter is working to be a dietician. DYL's son wants to be a dentist.
	079-092	DYL's best years were when he was attending college in China. He was away from home for the first time. DYL's father would send him a check for tuition as well as pocket money. DYL spent about 30 Cantonese dollars a month.
	093-095	DYL does not remember any years of hardship.
	096-100	DYL has many good memories. DYL is in good health.
	101-102	DYL has good relationships with Caucasians. Most of his patients are non-Orientals.
	103-105	DYL has two offices -- one in West Covina and one in Los Angeles.
4	106-110	DYL does not live with his children. They are 18 to 28 years old.
	111-113	Before World War II, DYL got along with the Japanese that he saw but he did not know very many of them.
	114-119	After the second World War, he got along much better with the Japanese. There was no resentment against them for occupying China since they were already out of China.
	120-140	There are a lot of doctors in DYL's which may be why he chose to be one too. There are about 120 Chinese doctors in Los Angeles today. DYL belongs to a Chinese Physician Association of Southern California and there are about 120 members. This does not include dentists.
	141-149	DYL would recommend those that have the time and money to go into the medical profession. It costs \$10,000 a year to send a child to medical school. The parents must spend \$40,000 to put their children through medical school.
5	150-156	Going to medical school was cheaper in DYL's days. This was 37 or 38 years ago.
	157-164	DYL's father passed away about fifteen years ago. DYL's mother passed away about ten years ago. DYL's father was about 83 or 84 years old when he passed away. DYL's mother was about 80.
	165-178	DYL's family sold their home. DYL's sister sold it to a religious organization.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE B

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
1	001-003	Introduction.
	004-009	Aside from dancing, DYL is interested in studying Spanish and Mandarin. DYL walks and jogs about half a mile every day.
	010-013	DYL returned to China two times. the first time to study. The second time was three years ago -- DYL spend a month in Hong Kong.
	014-019	DYL would like to go back to Mainland China if he had a chance to.
	020-024	DYL makes about \$3000 a month plus another \$1000 a month from his investments.
	025-028	Some doctors make more than DYL. DYL does not especially care to make anymore money. DYL has two offices -- one in Los Angeles and one in West Covina.
2	029-044	DYL sees his family once a week. He gives them allowances. DYL still supports one child -- it was part of the terms of the divorce. One of DYL's children is mentally disturbed so they consider him a child even if he is 24 years old. He went to college for one year but then he dropped out. He worked for a while, but he stopped.
	045-048	DYL tries to get his son to go to psychotherapy. He is still going.
	049-060	DYL's family lives in South Pasadena. DYL goes dancing with his son every Friday. He does not know how to make friends because he is emotionally disturbed.
3	061-074	DYL would like to try to keep working and then save up enough so that he can retire whenever he wants to. DYL is also working to support his ex-wife. DYL's present wife is Spanish -- they are not divorced, they are just separated. DYL partially supports her.
	075-083	DYL does not play mahjong. He likes to go dancing and watch movies. DYL goes dancing five nights a week. DYL likes to slow dance and do the fox trot. He likes to go disco dancing once in a while. Dancing gives DYL a lot of exercise.
	084-088	DYL sold his office recently and is now renting it. He also rents the office in West Covina.
	089-096	DYL sees about 40 patients a day. DYL has more patients in Covina.
	097-115	DYL does not have any debts. He does not have any Medicare or Medicaid patients. People on Medicare are not motivated to lose weight and keep visiting the doctor frequently.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
4	116-132	All of DYL's patients come in order to lose weight. The treatment lasts for three months. DYL charges \$15 for the first visit and \$7 for each subsequent visit. they come once a week for three months. DYL's prices are very reasonable.
	133-136	DYL does not consider himself extremely successful in his practice but he is successful in helping his patients lose weight.
	137-162	DYL started helping people lose weight about 20 years ago. He is successful about 60 or 70 percent of the time. Losing weight is not like curing typhoid fever or venereal disease. It is more like changing the living habits of the patients. It depends on the will power of the patients. the doctor simply gives guidance. It is like trying to make people stop drinking or smoking. The patient just help himself or herself.
5	163-175	DYL first finds out the history and the eating habits of his patients. DYL gives his patient medications and injections as well as works on improving their diet.
	176-193	DYL does not treat people with diabetes or high blood pressure. He also does not treat alcoholics or those that are on some type of drugs. It is also impossible to help those working on rotating shifts because they cannot come in regularly for treatment.
6	194-206	Only some of DYL's patients are happy about losing weight. Some are happy because the appetite pills are also stimulants. Some people come in simply to get the uppers. The government is of course against this.
	207-225	DYL has been checked on by the government. The doctors cannot prescribe too much drugs. The government has many agents that pretend to be patients. It is trying to regulate the doctors' prescribing habits.
	226-256	tries to make a living. right now, DYL must give up his license in order to get the pills. He may have to relay on the diet plan alone in the future.

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE A

END OF INTERVIEW

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