

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Bill Young Interview Number: 155  
 Chinese Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Tapes: 1  
 Date of Interview: 10/16/81 Length: 48 Minutes  
 Interviewer: Emma Louie  
 Others Present: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Language: English-- Sze Yup  
 Summarizer: Munson Kwok

Contents

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary	Tape: <u>1 Side A</u>
1	001-002	Introduction	
	002-003	Bill Young (BY) was born on 212 Ferguson Alley in Los Angeles Chinatown.	
	004-008	There were four families in the neighborhood in 1910: two Wong families, the Fongs around the corner, and the Youngs.	
		BY was born on August 4, 1910.	
	009-014	BY had four brothers and two sisters.	
	015-017	BY's parents were born in China, in the Kwantung province.	
	017-023	They were from Hoi Ping and Chekong.	
	024-027	BY grew up in Ferguson Alley. He started working by the time he was thirteen years old. There was no playing. Jobs were hard to come by. "Every chance you get, grab for a job."	
	028-029	BY's father was a herbalist on Woo Hong Street, right on the Plaza. His store was located near Ferguson Alley (in Old Chinatown) -- on the corner. The store was below street level and living quarters for the family was in back. There were bachelors' rooms upstairs.	
2	030-036	It was rather a common arrangement in those days.	
	037-038	San Doi: farmers or domestics. There was one toilet for the whole floor and one kitchen. They bathed in their own rooms.	
		They used gaslight. Electricity came in the late 1920's.	
	039-050	Bath houses were available. There was one on Plaza (El Pueblo) runned by a Japanese family. There was a barber shop in front.	
	051-054	BY described both the bath houses and how his family bathed.	

## Contents (cont'd)

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
2	055-060	BY's father was trained in China to become a herbalist. Mai Mo Gui (medicine?). He taught Kung Fu also, "Hurt you and then heal you." BY's father came to the United States in 1900. He arrived in Portland and then went to San Francisco during the 1906 Earthquake.
3	061-073 074-080 081-084 085-086 087-093 094-098 099-100	He met BY's mother in San Francisco. Father only worked in the drug store, mother did not. Had another partnership on Apablasa Street. Both stores got drugs (herbs) from China. One drug store was on Marchessault Street. Father was also herb doctor. The whole family attended grammar school. BY described the birth procedures in his family.
4	101-109 110-113 114-119 120-123 124-125 126-130 131-133 134-135 136-138	They got their American names from doctors. BY's parents did not speak English. BY's parents named their children the Chinese generation with the name "Wing" for boys, and "Yoke" for girls. BY discussed the education of the children. BY left home at the age of fifteen for Salinas. He worked as a trucker. He drove a truck in the produce market (in Los Angeles at first). BY's father has a grocery store now. BY discussed the produce market jobs. He mentioned the wages they earned. BY attended Chinese school but not frequently. His teacher was Leung Cheung Shun, Gilbert Leung's mother.
5	139-144 145-160 161-168 169-176 176-177 178-181	While still in Salinas, he then worked for a packing house. It was called the Thomas Gee Chung Company which was owned by the SooHoo family. They were lettuce packers. That was in 1927. Japanese farmers sold the produce to the packing house. BY worked as a driver until 1936. He drove for various companies, including a Japanese firm. He also worked in the Imperial Valley. There were very few Asian drivers. BY observed only one Chinese trucking firm in Bakersfield. BY recalls truck on the San Francisco Bay ferries. BY notes that there were many Japanese trucking firms, but very few Japanese drivers. BY hauled dynamite to Boulder Dam for Robert Wong.
6	182-190 191-196	BY was a seaman in 1932 for the Grace Line. BY discussed prejudice on the job. (TAPE BREAK)

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
6	197-200	BY discussed the prejudice in the restaurants in Imperial Valley.
	201-216	In the Valley, one notable firm was the Louie Produce.
	217-224	Chinese vegetables were only locally grown.
7	225-232	After World War II, Chinese vegetables were then grown in the Imperial Valley.
	233-236	BY returned to Los Angeles in 1938 or thereabouts.
	237-240	BY got into the Central Meat Market, wholesale meats, on 10th and San Pedro Street. It was a non-Chinese trade. BY was in a partnership.
	241-249	BY learned about meats in the family grocery store.
	250-264	BY discussed brothers' and sisters' educations.
	265-272	BY discussed Chinese involved in wholesale meats. They were predominantly Kao Kong (九江) people. But to BY it did not really matter.
8	273-286	Father knew Sun Yat Sen. BY initially reticent, but then he told a story about his father's relation, and difficulties, with Sun Yat Sen. Father was active in Chee Kung Tong. Sun Yat Sen was suppose to help build Chee Kung Tong in China financed by monies from the United States. But Sun Yat Sen started his own organization (Kuomingtang). BY recommended George Jung for more information on this topic.
	287-311	Letters from Sun Yat Sen were not kept by the family.
	312-318	BY did not know much about the details of the organization.
	319-322	Sun Yat Sen visited their family's house.
9	323-331	BY further discussed the Chee Kong Tong. It was located on Apablasa Street.
	332-351	BY's father was also the president of Hop Sing Tong. He helped to found Hong Sing Tong here.
	352-358	BY did not know much about the community himself. He "rode motorcycles everywhere."
	359-367	Father did not have a family or district association to belong to.
	368-378	Religion was not practiced in their family.
10	379-384	Across the street from their house was a temple, a "mew" (廟). It was called the Kong Chow (廟州廟) Temple. BY felt that the Kong Chow Temple was a curiosity.
	385-405	Kong Chow moved.

## Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
10	406-421	BY described the process of vacating Ferguson Alley. BY's family was the last to move. They bought a house on Solano Street for their parents but they never moved into it. They rented it to their brother-in-law instead.
	422-438	Father died at the age of 98 or 99. Others say he was five years older than that. He died in 1947.
11	439-448	BY saw some old paper of father's arrival to the country. "Steam and sail."
	449-464	BY notes that the Chinese then were called "Mongolians."
END OF SIDE A		
<u>TAPE 1 SIDE B</u>		
1	001-006	BY was a member of the Low Wah Club -- a basketball team.
	007-011	BY described the Low Wah Club and some of its activities.
	012-024	Some of the Low Wah kids did not go places. BY was an early member and took the kids around.
	025-030	BY recalls the Old Chinatown Playground down around Juan Street. BY went around with older kids, Chinese & Japanese.
2	031-036	BY's parents never felt prejudice about that, even in World War II.
	037-038	They had dances with both Chinese and Japanese together.
	038-039	Even after the War there would be a mixed Asian group.
	040-041	About 200 people would attend these dances that the club sponsored. Low Wah and Mei Wah combined their efforts for these events.
	041-042	BY's wife was the captain of the Mei Wah Club which was a girls basketball team.
	043-045	The Celestial Club held dances. They specialized in self defense and boxing.
	046-052	BY's father wanted to teach his children self defense, but they did not want to learn.
	053-056	BY learned in school -- fists, later used gloves.
	057-062	BY was on motorcycles in the 1920's.
	063-065	BY showed the interviewer pictures of cars, boys, houses.
3	066-073	BY further described the motorcycles on the pictures. He singled out a picture of Harley Davidson. BY fooled around with cars. That was on Los Angeles Street.
	074-085	There were motorcycle clubs at that time.
	086-095	BY talked about the meat business before World War II. The store was located on 43rd and Central Street.

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
3	095-096	BY joined the merchant marines during World War II. He returned to the meat business after World War II with different partners.
	097-100	BY gave the names of his pre-War partners.
4	101-106	BY sold out the Central Meat Market last year to New General.
	107-108	BY talked about his wife. She came from the Low family which is native to Los Angeles. She was a schoolmate of BY's sister. BY's wife went to junior college.
	109-113	BY has one daughter. BY discussed his daughter and her family.
	114-122	(BY shows pictures of his twelve year old grandson getting a basketball award from John Wooden, ex-coach for UCLA, and the BYU coach).  BY talks about his grandson's athletic abilities. (TAPE BREAK)
5	123-133	BY lent pictures to Emma Louie, the interviewer.
	134-145	Thank you.

END OF TAPE 1  
END OF INTERVIEW

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