

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Chung Moy Louie  
 Chinese Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of Interview: 5/17/79, 5/21/79  
 Interviewer: Jean Wong  
 Others Present: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Language: English  
 Summarizer: Suellen Cheng

Interview Number: 23  
 Number of Tapes: 2  
 Length: 1 Hour & 42 Minutes

Contents

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary	Tape No.	Side
			<u>1</u>	<u>A</u>
1	000-004	Father came from Sun Hui (新會), China. Mother never came to America.		
	005-010	Father came to San Francisco by sailing boat. It took father six months to get to the United States.		
	011-014	Father worked in the farm in Santa Barbara and Los Angeles.		
	015-019	In 1920's most of the farming in Southern California was by Louie family and few Wongs and Chens.		
	020-024	Father grew cauliflower, onion, carrots, cabbabe.		
	024-025	All the Louie's came as farmers -- poor people. The rich people didn't want to be farmers.		
2	026-041	Father went back to China in 1900 and sent Chung Moy Louie's (CML) brother to the United States.		
	042-046	CML was born in 1906 in Sun Hui and came to Los Angeles when he was sixteen years old. Since then CML never left Los Angeles.		
	047-050	CML first went to 9th Street Elementary School, opportunity class, after working in the morning.		
	051-056	Went to Lafayette High School for a year.		
	057-058	In the morning he worked in the wholesale market on 9th and San Julian Streets.		
	059-064	In 1922 there were Japanese farmers as well as Chinese farmers. Chinese farmers were small farmers that dealt with twenty acres or 50 to 60 acres at the most while the Japanese farmers dealt with big farms.		
3	065-068	When the Chinese made enough money they returned to China, so called Lok Yip Gui Gun (落葉歸根) which means they want to die where they were born.		

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
3	069-071	Japanese stayed in America, so their farms grew bigger and bigger.
	072-080	CML farmed in Baldwin Hill with a cousin in 1920's.
	081-091	Chinese did not want to stay in the United States. The landlord offered to sell the Louie family farmland for \$30 an acre, the Louie family rejected the offer and replied: "You keep your land, I keep my \$30. I take my \$30 home to buy an acre of good land. I can pass my life easy."
	092-096	Japanese farmlands got bigger while Chinese farms got smaller.
4	097-108	After 1930, the machinery took over. Chinese gradually withdrew from farming.
	108-109	Chinese used to be vegetable peddlers with horse wagon.
	110-112	The rich people didn't go to the market, they bought vegetables from the peddler.
	113-117	CML sold produce to the peddlers and the small market.
	118-119	Pickwick was the first chain store, then Ralph's and Safeway. Safeway bought Pickwick out and became bigger and bigger.
	120-127	CML thought he made more than other people. In 1922, \$50 to \$60 was the average income. Even the bank manager was making \$85 a month.
	128-137	CML worked hard with his uncle and reached out the wholesaler.
5	138-145	He made about \$225 a month.
	146-148	CML lived good and wore good clothes.
	149-152	Sent \$200 to \$300 a year to his family in China.
	153-161	The chief inspector of the immigration office was making \$110 a month at that time.
	162-168	Louie Produce Company was the only company that was making good money. CML's brother and uncle made \$300 a month.
	169-174	Dan Louie Jr. is the sole owner now of the Louie Produce.
	175-181	In the old days, one who worked in the farm got \$35 to \$40 a month. The ones who knew how to drive the horse to cultivate in the farm got \$40 to \$45 a month. Market salesmen got \$18 to \$20 a week.
6	182-191	With the income they were able to pay the rent, to raise two children and own a car, and still had money left.
	192-193	CML lived around the market area.
	194-202	People purchased the produce with \$20, \$10 and \$5 gold pieces before 1924.

## Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
6	203-215	CML went back to China in 1922. In 1925, he went back and got married but did not bring the wife over. The marriage was arranged through the parents.
	216-226	CML went back to China again in 1930, 1936, 1947, 1966 and 1975 to visit the family.
7	227-240	CML's first wife passed away during the war [World War II]. He remarried in 1947.
	241-245	CML has two sons, one graduated from Ching Wah (清華) University, and is working in the import and export company for the government. The son is not a Communist, therefore didn't get a higher position.
	246-268	The second son came to the United States in 1952 and worked in the restaurant.
	269-273	The older son is 52 years old.
8	274-281	CML's family was treated not too bad in China. His grandson was allowed to attend the University.
	282-291	CML's wife is an accountant for the United Poultry Company for almost ten years.
	292-299	CML's wife was born in Bakersfield.
	300-306	CML quit school and went back to get married in China. CML also had to support the family, therefore discontinued the education.
	307-317	Before CML was married, he lived around the market. In 1946 CML moved to Adams and Harvard, later in 1957 he moved to Crenshaw area.
9	318-343	His daughter graduated from USC in education, but couldn't find a job, so worked in the Continental Airlines.
	344-367	CML spoke Chinese in the market all the time in the older days.
	368-380	Many languages were used in the produce market including Filipino, Chinese, etc.
10	381-383	CML spoke Chinese with his wife and daughter.
	384-390	CML did not send his daughter to Chinese school because there was not much chance to learn. Daughter did not know much Chinese.
	391-406	CML did not have a chance to learn more Chinese after arriving in the United States because he had to work.
	407-414	CML's nephew, Elwood Louie, is a municipal judge. Elwood Louie graduated from UCLA and was a CPA. Later Elwood Louie went to night school to learn commerce law and became a lawyer.

END OF SIDE A

## Contents (cont'd)

Tape: 1 Side B

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
1	000-003	Now the Louie family has about 300 cousins. Before 1920 there were about 700 cousins. There were only five which had families, the rest of them were single. They were either farmers or vegetable peddlers.
	004-012	In the old days, there were mama and papa little stores. Later, whenever there was a big chain store opened, 25 to 30 small stores closed down.
	013-017	Besides Chinese peddlers, there were Greek and Jewish peddlers, and others.
	018-026	In 1926 the new law prohibited the horse on the street in
	027-032	downtown. Louie Produce Company purchases produce from other farmers. Today, Dan Louie Jr. has his own vegetable farm, Chinese vegetables and Chinese grapefruit (沙甜柚).
2	033-046	In 1922, CML's uncle, Louie Chen, brother Louie Jin, CML, Dan Louie, all had shares in the Louie Produce Company.
	047-053	CML did not put in money in the market, but his uncle gave him 25% of the profits.
	054-057	The Louie Produce was founded in 1908.
	058-065	CML's cousin, Louie Quan, and another person founded the City Market.
3	066-069	CML was the president of the Louie Family Association for fifteen years, and the president of Kong Chow (崗州) Association for two years.
	070-076	Kong Chow Association has members from 新會 and 鶴山 districts.
	077-078	In the old days, Kong Chow Association included five different companies: Hui Sun (台山), Yen Ping (燕平), Hok Sun (鶴山), Sun Hui (新會), and Hui Ping (開平). Hui Sun, Hui Ping, and Yen Ping withdrew, only two companies left.
	079-087	Kong Chow is the oldest Chinese organization in the United States. Founded ten years before the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (中華會館).
	088-094	Kong Chow Family Association provided a place for the Chinese newcomers from the same village and same district, and took care of these people until they found a job. It was a very important organization for the single Chinese newcomers in the early days.
4	095-110	The dues were very little for the family association. The members did not pay until he get a job. The dues were \$1 to \$2 a year.
	111-118	CML was the president of the Louie Family Association since 1960.

## Contents (cont'd)

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
4	119-125	CML's wife is a member of CACA Women auxiliary and was the president of the group for one year.
	126-132	CML went to Hong Kong for the Louie Clan Association and was the honorable Chairman in 1975..
	133-140	CML was a member of the Board of Directors of the Chinese Consolidate Benevolent Association in 1965.
5	141-147	Wong family is the biggest family in Los Angeles. Long Kong four families is the second biggest.
	148-154	Sixty years ago, Yee family was the most powerful family.
	155-166	The last Tong war was about 1922 to 1923.
	167-172	Gambling was always the cause of tong wars.
	173-177	In the old days, most of the Chinese were single men and had no place to go. Therefore they gambled a lot. After 1931, before the War, there was no more gambling.
6	178-190	Most Chinese played lottery (白鴿票).
	191-197	About 25 to 30% of the Chinese gambled away their money. The others saved money and send it back to China.
	198-202	In the old days, some Chinese did not speak English, so they did not trust the bank. They kept the money at home or in a friend's safe.
	203-209	CML put his money in the bank, because he went to school and knew English.
	210-222	During the Depression [in the 1930's], everybody had a hard time. Chinese were used to it, therefore could get by easier.
7	223-234	Chinese could take care of themselves pretty well. Even though they didn't make much money, they did not spend much money.
	235-241	CML did not get his automobile until 1940, because he did not need it. He worked and lived near the market. He used the street cars.
	242-251	Before the second World War, the average income for a person was \$100. The average saving could be 20 to 25% of the income.
	252-262	\$15 to \$20 for renting a house before World War II.
	263-268	In 1939 the houses in Leimert Park cost only \$7,000 to \$8,000.

END OF TAPE 1

## Contents (cont'd)

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
1	000-005	In the old days, most Chinese including CML used Chinese herbs for colds.
	006-017	To visit a Chinese doctor cost \$1.00 and 75 cents for the herbs.
	018-019	Starting from 1934, CML used American doctors and American medicine because of the lack of good Chinese doctors, although the Chinese herbs were good.
	020-031	Wife and children use American doctors.
2	032-034	Wife was born in the United States, so does not use Chinese herbs for cooking. But a lot of old ladies use Chinese herbs for cooking to build a person up.
	035-041	In the old days, cod liver oil (魚肝油) was widely used.
	042-046	CML associated with Japanese, American, European, in the market area.
	047-052	Socially, CML associated with all Chinese and speaks Sze Yup (四邑) with his Chinese friends.
	053-055	CML does everything the American way now. But before World War II, CML felt more Chinese.
	056-060	CML felt that if one stays in Chinatown, then he will do things the Chinese way.
	061-064	CML still observes some Chinese customs, such as "ask the bride to pour the tea" (斟茶) in the Chinese wedding banquets, etc.
3	065-071	CML does feel embarrassed for being Chinese.
	072-079	CML's parents always hoped the children would make enough money and return to China. The Chinese call it Lok Yip Gui Gun (落葉歸根) which means "when the tree leaves drop, they go back to their roots."
	080-085	CML doesn't think of returning to China anymore.
	086-090	During the years from 1925 to 1930, CML worked from 8:00 p.m. until the noon of the next day, or eighteen hours a day.
	091-098	CML did not have much time to think of entertainment.
	099-100	In 1937, the market started the Union and the working hours became shorter. CML, being a boss, still worked 12 hours a day. If the other workers worked over eight hours, CML had to pay them overtime.
4	101-104	Last 16 and 17 years, CML started working five days a week.
	105-107	When CML had extra time, he visited friends and participated in family association activities.
	108-113	During the war, CML used to go to the movies, but not anymore.
	114-121	CML used to like football. From 1950 to 1965, CML and his wife always purchased season tickets.

## Contents (cont'd)

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
5	122-144	CML used to play mahjong (麻將) but does not play any more. He likes to play Chinese music.
	145-148	CML joined the Louie Family Association, the Long Kong Association, Chung Wah -- CCBA (中華), as well as CACA.
	149-158	CML's wife followed CML to the associations' activities and was the chairwoman of the women's auxiliary. She was honored by the mayor as the Woman of the Month in 1976 for her contributions to the community.
6	159-191	CML's wife used to work for different chain stores.
	192-200	Most Chinese engaged in laundry, restaurant, produce business, in Southern California.
	201-210	In Southern California, Chinese were specialized in vegetable farming, marketing.
	211-219	Chinese liked to live in Chinatown, but the younger generation knows more English so they moved away from Chinatown.
	220-226	Chinese always lived close together before World War II. The older people did not know much English so they did not like to leave Chinatown.
7	227-242	In the old days you don't find Chinese engineers, lawyers, and doctors. Now you can find many of them in any field.
	243-254	Chinese moved to Silverlake not only because it was close to Chinatown, but also because Chinese were discriminated against in housing.
	255-260	In 1953, CML couldn't buy a house in Leimert Park because the Orientals were excluded from the area.
8	261-295	In 1957 nobody in Monterey Park wanted to sell the property to the Orientals. Since there was nobody buying property in Monterey Park, they had to sell the property to Chinese.
	296-302	Two bedrooms, one and a half baths, and a den, at that time was selling for \$17,000 -- now costs about \$150,000.
	303-311	CML lived in Adam and Harvard in 1946, the sheriff handed him a letter and tried to evict him and claimed the area was for Caucasians only.
9	312-340	During Sun Yat-Sen's revolution, there were Chinese supporting him.
	341-348	Not too many Chinese got involved in politics because the Chinese did not have many chances.
	349-360	Chinese were discriminated against in looking for jobs. Nowadays there is discrimination against Chinese still, but it is much better than it was in the early days.
10	361-394	Even in Shanghai, China, there were signs in the park saying "Chinese and dogs are not allowed."

END OF SIDE A

## Contents (cont'd)

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
1	000-005	Chinese have done better than before because the Chinese have more chances.
	006-016	In the produce market everybody was equal
	017-021	CML thought one can not compare Jewish people with Chinese people. Jewish people worked hard and continued building up. Chinese returned to China once they made some money. Chinese did not continue building up.
2	022-034	Most Chinese went back to China to get married before 1935.
	035-044	Most Chinese men preferred to marry Chinese born girls rather than American born Chinese who were too Americanized.
	045-051	In the 1920's there were few Chinese men married to Caucasian girls.
	052-054	Most Chinese thought intermarriage was exceptional. Those who married non-Chinese girls usually did not stay with Chinese that much.
3	055-072	Nowadays, there are still few people that prefer son over daughter.
	073-076	American born Chinese did not mind to have daughters rather than sons, but the people from China did prefer to have sons. Chinese felt that the son is yours forever while the daughter eventually goes to other people after they get married.
	077-082	Personally CML did not mind to have son or daughter.
	083-087	A lot of people would like to send their children to Chinese school but couldn't because they were too far away from Chinatown.
	088-091	CML's daughter didn't go to Chinese school because of the distance from Chinatown. Later his daughter did attend some Chinese courses in California State University.
	092-103	In the old days, more than 50% of the Chinese returned to China. Because of the Communist, Chinese did not return to China.
4	104-121	CML felt that Formosa [Taiwan] sooner or later will be taken by the Communists and hoped that the Communist will do good things for the people to make the country stronger. CML felt that if China gets stronger, there will not be so many Chinese coming and staying here.
5	122-173	Although Communist China is behind the times, if they work harder they will be strong again.
	174-179	CML felt that if the Communists work hard, probably thirty years later there will be a lot of people going back to China.



## Contents (cont'd)

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
6	180-185	CML's wife did not go to Chinese school but speaks Chinese.
	186-191	Besides the Chinese children from San Francisco Chinatown, Bakersfield Chinese children were the only ones who spoke Chinese. The Chinese children from the other cities did not speak Chinese at all.
	192-196	The living standard in China was so low that not many American born Chinese would like to return to China and live there.
	197-204	Few American born Chinese actually went back to China to get married.
	205-220	CML seldom watch movies, even Chinese movies.
7	221-229	CML thought the Chinese movies were not well made.
	230-246	Chinese did not have much choice in selecting jobs.
	246-247	If the Chinese had a choice, they would have chosen to go into business.
	248-265	Chinese sent the children to school and hoped they could get good jobs eventually.

END OF TAPE 2

NOTE: Starting from Counter Number 248 the voice that appears on the tape is not related to this Oral History Project, please ignore it.

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