

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Keye Luke Interview Number: 25
 Chinese Name: _____ Number of Tapes: 3
 Date of Interview: 2/23/79 Length: 2 Hours & 39 Minutes
 Interviewer: Jean Wong
 Others Present: None
 Language: English
 Summarizer: Ann Lau

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| Time Segment | Counter Number | Summary | Tape: <u>1</u> Side <u>A</u> |
|--------------|--|--|------------------------------|
| 1 | 018-022 023-034 | Parents was from (<u>廣東</u>), the village of (<u>開平</u>), Village of Peaceful People. Father came in the late 1800s to San Francisco. He worked in the import-export business. Keye Luke (KL) was born on June 18, 1904, the day of the Dragon Boat Festival. In 1907 his father brought him and his mother to Seattle, Washington. | |
| 2 | 035-041 042-045 046-058 059-077 | Father brought his business to Seattle and was in business with Mark Tin Suez. Father learned English from a missionary and Sunday school. The import-export business was in inexpensive objects of art, utensils, furniture, etc. His father was in the business until 1912, when his father brought the family, three boys and one daughter, back to China. They lived in Hong Kong, Canton in fashionable apartments called The Hundred Doors (). They lived in their ancestral village for a while. KL has vivid recollections of the trip. They participated in village chores, such as bringing water from the well, helping with the rice harvest, gathering firewood, guarding the house with other men because of brigands roving around. KL remembers the fruits, mangos, lichees, dragon eyes, and the bamboo groves, from which the white herrings used to fly out from. He recalls the rides on the steamer going down to Canton, passing banana groves. He remembered the Chinese opera. | |
| 3 | 078-084 | KL was about 9 years old then. His brother was about six, sister was five, and his younger brother was in diapers crawling. | |

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| 3 | 085-091 | His father went back because of home sickness and the call of the old fatherland. He came back before the First World War. |
| | 092-102 | Went to Chinese school in Seattle, not in China. |
| 4 | 103-116 | Father stayed in the same business after his return from China. They moved around a lot. They lived in Battle Creek, Michigan, where his father was in business with his uncle. Later they moved to Chicago and his father had a business with another relative, the restaurant business. |
| | 117-122 | In 1915 or 1916 they came to Seattle and his father opened another import-export business. In the same business until he retired, although they moved to a number of locations. |
| | 123-136 | KL attended Pacific Grammar School in Seattle and then went to Franklin High School in Seattle. |
| 5 | 137-166 | In 1923 KL's father died. KL went to look for a job with the Columbia Theater in Seattle on 2nd Avenue. It was owned by Universal Studios, part of the northwest chain of theaters. KL met an advertising man, Mike Newman, who just came back from China and brought the only Chinese aviator barnstormer to the U.S. Mike was fond of things Chinese and hit it off very well with KL. Mike wanted art work done by the next of day of a circus star. KL put the thing together the next day and from then on was in the entertainment business. |
| | 167-175 | He did work for the Columbia Theater and Paramount Public Theater. |
| 6 | 176-182 | KL Came to Hollywood in 1927. He had a friend who was a writer for the Charlie Chaplin movies and so KL went to Hollywood and stayed with them. |
| | 183-185 | He found work with the Sears Roebuck. |
| | 186-192 | He went back to Seattle to work on murals for a dining room in a big department store. |
| | 193-209 | He came back to Hollywood to work for Grauman's Chinese theater while it was under the Fox Westcoast theaters in 1929, as a publicity artist. He did art work for pictures, posed stars for publicity pictures, did portraits, billboards, and programs. |
| | 210-216 | He moved on to RKO Studios because they offered more money. |

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| 7 | 217-225 | He was doing the first Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers movie "Flying Down the Reel." The producer was going to do the next picture "Hold for Shanghai" with Astaire, Rogers, and Anna May Wong. He wanted KL to play Wong's romantic lead. |
| | 226-232 | KL's friend was a syndicate writer and gave KL marvelous publicity. |
| | 233-250 | KL thinks that he was one of the first Orientals to enter the mainstream as a publicity artist. The only other person he knew of working for the studio was James Wong Howe. Anna May Wong was mainly in England and the continent after her first start. There was one or two other Orientals working as technicians. A little later, Tyrus Wong was a scenic artist. KL, James Wong Howe, and Tyrus Wong were the first three to be employed by Hollywood. |
| | 251-261 | KL knew Jimmy fairly well. They knew each other for 34 years. |
| 8 | 262-273 | He did not star in the picture with Astaire because the producer got fired. But that launched KL's career as an actor. The next movie was MGM's Greta Garbo's "The Painted Veil," with Herbert Marshall, George Brent and Warner Owen, who later was KL's father in Charlie Chan. |
| | 274-278 | Blank. |
| | 279-283 | Lee Luke is KL's father's name. His mother is Dung Shaue from the () family. |
| | 284-289 | There were five children in the family but there was a sister before KL who died of pneumonia in China. There was a sister after his younger sister Alice, but was still born. |
| | 290-302 | Mother did not work. She was from a scholar's family. Had the traditional bound feet, which is characteristic of upper classes. Her father taught classics. She was a fine scholar. He used to tell her girls were not permitted to study in those days. Mother was from Canton. |
| 9 | 303-331 | The Lukes started from a commando from the north. Their ancestor, Mine Luke, was sent to the south, he was successful in converting southerners to accept Chinese rule without force. He lived in the south and stayed. That was how the Luke clan started. Some went to Hawaii. KL has a cousin, K.J. Luke who owned a bank in Hawaii. |

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| 9 | 332-345 346-349 350-353 | Family spoke Cantonese. KL is now learning Mandarin. Was married since 1942. His wife passed away last month. He has two children by his wife's former marriage. KL has great-great grandchildren. |
| 10 | 354-361 362-379 380-399 400-430 | KL's wife was French and Irish. She read up on Chinese culture, ate Chinese food and knew how to use chopsticks. His step daughter has two daughters, one daughter is the youngest member at Ohio State, professor of English. The other daughter is married. His step son has a daughter who is a successful commercial artist and has a son in the state department. He hopes that his great grand children will do as well. His wife's name was Ethel. Did not work but years ago was a fine accountant. Still holds the world's record in manual computing machine. When she was in Hollywood, she did story analyses, synopses and recommendations for the stars. After their marriage, she did not work. Mother came up with Chinese herbs called Woo Yee Char (武夷茶) when the children had colds. It used to be very effective. KL did not fight against taking it. |

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A

Tape 1 Side B

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| 1&2 | 015-017 | Children went along with taking the herbs and did not fight it. KL thinks undoubtedly that the herbs did not hurt. |
| | 018-021 | KL's family did not use it. |
| | 022-027 | KL used some Chinese herbs in cooking but not too much. He just used peanut oil, green onions, soy sauce and black bean paste. |
| | 028-064 | He went to Chinese school in Seattle in the evenings after American school from six to nine in the evening. Went for six years. He learned to write pretty well. He was fair in calligraphy, in fact he excelled in calligraphy. Though Chinese was a secondary language and English was more important since he was in the United States. Parents did not force KL to go to school, he did it as a matter of course. He had a |

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| 1&2 | 028-064 | teacher from China. Most of KL's friends went to Chinese school. KL stopped when he got to high school because it demanded more of his time. His brothers and sisters, Gene, Dorothy and Edwin all attended Chinese school. Alice was on the invalid side therefore did not get around as much. |
| 3 | 065-086 | Brother, Gene finished high school in Seattle and then went to work at a drug store. He became a buyer. He then went to Berkeley to become a dentist. He passed highest in his class in enamel work and third highest in the class. He came down to California and opened an office. He moved to Long Beach and stayed there permanently. He had a lot of business. He passed on from a heart attack. When he was in Los Angeles he worked for the county clinic. He became one of the best golfers in the Oriental community. He was in tournaments. |
| | 087-092 | KL's sister, Dorothy, worked for a big department store in Seattle. She became a buyer in cosmetics. After she got married, she went to San Francisco to work for the Revlon Company and had many successful years. She has given that up now. |
| | 093-102 | Edwin finished at the University of Washington School of Journal and came down here. KL got him a job with the <u>Hollywood Reporter</u> . He started from the ground up as a printers "devil." Through the years, after 20-25 years, he was in charge of the shop. He went into social service work and retired a few years ago or so after becoming a district supervisor. He is still in Los Angeles. |
| 4 | 103-104 | Dorothy is in San Francisco. Alice is married and lives in San Mateo. Her husband is in the restaurant business. She isn't well and hasn't been well all of her life. |
| | 105-108 | So all of the kids that were able sort of made it. |
| | 109-127 | It seems to be a common procedure in those days. They come to the mountain of gold (金山), make their fortune, go back to their homeland and live out their old days in peace and contentment. Many never made it. Some did go back. Believe 'a great percentage never did. They came and got their roots sunk in. To a degree that was what happened to KL's father. Also around 1912, the revolution was on and conditions were not settled. KL's father died around 47. |

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| 4 | 128-132 | When KL's mother and he were in China, his father sent them money. In 1907 he brought them over. Maybe sent money to other relatives after that. |
| 5 | 133-139 | His father corresponded with the family back home. His father passed away when KL was 19. KL regrets not knowing his father better. KL was busy with school and his friends. They got together during dinner time, and at the store. The children were born here and grew up here so it was not easy to pack up and go. |
| | 140-176 | After his father passed away, KL became the head of the household. The elders got together to talk about what to do with the family. Keye and Eugene, the older boys would stay here and work. The mother and the two girls and youngest boy went back to the ancestral village. Keye and Eugene sent money back to support them, the classical pattern. In one of the key decisions of KL's life which fortunately turned out beautifully, KL said no, no one is going back. The kids had saved some money in the savings account and just bought a new home. This was a big morale builder and the kids were born here and friends were here, schooling etc. The elders bowed to KL's decision and judgement. Everyone went to work. KL sent his brother to college and sent home money. Gene went to work and helped out. Dorothy went to work and helped out. Edwin eventually went to work and helped out. |
| 6 | 177-180 | KL did not send money back to China. |
| | 181-184 | Mother did not work. KL etc. all did the cooking, washing, ironing. Mother just sat and was the boss. |
| | 185-195 | They played ball, baseball, and soccer in grammar school. He was on the basketball team and went to the district playgrounds. They went swimming at the YMCA. |
| | 196-210 | KL studied Chinese art and philosophy on his own. He went to the University of Washington as an architecture student. His father said painters starve and why not turn his artistic talent towards something practical like architecture. When KL's father died, KL dropped out and went to Columbia Theater. KL studied Chinese art and philosophy through the year. His own drawings had a definite Chinese traditional quality to it. |

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| 7 | 211-220 | His parents did not send KL to art school. In Seattle, KL went to art school, was a member of the Seattle art club with his own money selling papers. He got some very good instruction. When working for Fox, he would spend some time studying at the Art Institute. He belonged to the California art club and exhibited his drawings around. |
| | 221-233 | He did not live in Seattle Chinatown. Many Chinese families did not live in Chinatown, although many did. It wasn't like a ghetto where every Chinese was in there. |
| | 234-242 | He associated with Chinese and non-Chinese. His friends were mixed, Chinese, Japanese, Pilipinos, Caucasians. He was in a very natural and easy community where everybody got along. |

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE B

Tape 2 Side A

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| 1 | 000-015 016-022 | Blank. KL got started in the movie industry originally as a publicity artist. KL started to draw newspaper art work for Carl Lampley up in Seattle, then he came down to Hollywood and became affiliated with Graman's Chinese Theater. Because of the idea of being a Chinese Theater, they thought they should have a Chinese artist. While KL was at Fox, he was doing all of the advertising art work on the Charlie Chan pictures, which Fox was making in 1929 and 1930 and 1931. |
| | 023-035 | KL left Fox theaters and went to RKO Studios. KL arranged with RKO to work in their studio in New York and study at night at the Art Students Leagues. It was a dream that he never got to do because in the mean time, they made an actor out of him. |
| 2 | 036-045 | At RKO, He was very happy doing newspaper advertising art work and never thought of being an actor. Lou Bark, was the producer of "Flying Down the Rio," in which Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire were teamed up for the first time. They came to KL since he had done a lot of art work on the picture. The producer said "I'm going to make a show next one with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers with a Chinese background and I'm going |

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| 2 | 036-045 | to call it "Hold for Shanghai." I'm going to use Anna May Wong and I want you to play her love interest. KL protested, "Lou, I'm an artist, not an actor." "You always said you know the business inside out, I just put you in a couple of short comedies here and give you a little experience and we'll go from there." So KL said, "Alright, alright." |
| | 046-052 | KL's publicity friends around the studio and newspapers started to publicize this in their column saying a Chinese artist, Keye Luke is now going to become an actor. KL received a lot of publicity about it. In a sense he was pushed into it. There was nothing he could do to stop it. |
| | 053-057 | They were not looking for a Chinese actor, in this case, there was a specific need, not a general need. |
| | 058-077 | Received all this publicity from his friends. One day he got a call from his former advertising boss at Fox. KL took his portfolio and went out there. He said what are you doing with that thing; KL said "I thought you wanted to see some sketches. He said no, here's the script, "The Painted Veil" with Greta Garbo, and see how you like that part of the young Chinese assistant, the Marshall. KL said, I like it. He took me down to the casting department; I knew everyone in the casting department and they knew me. He went inside and in a big circus barker's voice (he used to be a barker for Ringling Brothers), "Gentlemen, of China's 400 million, I give us China's greatest actor." Then he left by another door, then silence. I poked my head inside and looked around and they laughed. They thought it was a big gag. They said we'll go along with the gag if the test is good, you'll get the part. I said OK. I made the test and it was okay. I was fully launched as an actor. |
| 3 | 078-108 | One thing led to another, the man who succeeded Frank Wickbuck, the person who introduced me in the circus style, was Gave York, at Fox. Gave called me up, "Now that you are turning into a Cantonese ham, let me see if I can do something about it." I went to Fox Hill in Beverly Hills. He took me to the casting director and the the casting director said "Oh, if you've only come yesterday, I would have a fat part for you as a Japanese spy who was going to blow up the Panama Canal but I have cast that with Leslie Fantin." However he said to go down to Western Avenue. Fox had two lots, the Beverly Hills Section and one down at Sunset and |

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| 3 | 078-108 | Western, the original Fox lot. We went down to Sunset and Western, where I met Tim Ryan, the casting director. He said, "It just happens that we are going to introduce the number one son in the Charlie Chan pictures." He said you look just perfect for the part. He called Philip MacDonald. I already knew Philip MacDonald because I had done the art work on his picture while I was at RKO. Philip came on the phone and said, who was it and I said "Keye Luke." He said, "Well, I'm glad we have you in toll for this, I'll write you a fat part in it." So he did. After the preview, the producer walked up to me and said, "How would you like to go on contract for the Charlie Chan series?" I was on contract to one of the biggest money making series in the history of Hollywood. This was way back in 1935 so I was launched in my motion picture career. |
| 4 | 109-117 | I left Fox after Von Owen died. I freelanced for about five years. I did a lot of things, good pictures, ordinary pictures, big parts, little parts. I also did a lot of series, serials out at Universal, like "Secret Agent X9," "Lost City of the Jungle," "Terry and the Pirates," "Green Hornet," and "The Green Hornet Strikes Again." |
| | 118-132 | I got a contract again with MGM studios. This was how it came about. The War on on then, Lou Aires, who was doing Dr. Kildaire was going into the army, so I thought they would need a replacement or change in the format and use me as a Chinese American intern, a good touch because China and the U.S. are allies. So I went to the studio, talked to my friend, publicity man Franz Locan, he thought it was a good idea and went to talk to producer Cary Wilson. He was a fine producer and good showman. He said it was a good idea and he still had a little story to do with Lou Aire and said to call him in a month. |
| 5 | 133-146 | I called him in about a month. He said, "We got an outline, we'll write a script; we'll introduce some young bloock, Dick Kline, Van Johnson, Marilyn Maxwell and you int his series." I said, "that's good, takes the four of us to replace Lou." The first one was called, I think, "Three Men and Wife." It was a big big hit, a big success. I had a very fine part in it. Afterwards, I went into a contract with MGM. That was the secret dream of all actors to be at MGM, where there are more stars there than there are in the |

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| 5 | 133-146 | heavens. You felt you were a cut above if you were at MGM. I did several gothic epic pictures, as well as Andy Hardy pictures etc. |
| | 147-154 | I want to make a digression here--I also did the "Good Earth" when I was on contract to Fox for the Charlie Chan pictures. They loaned me out to play the eldest son in the "Good Earth," the one who comes back from college and saves the crops. That was a big role and I'm very happy that I was in it because it was one of the best pictures that was produced here in Hollywood. It was a classic. |
| | 155-175 | The war ended. Before they released all the contract people, because I had a different idea of administration running the studio, they allowed me to go off on a Bond Tour to raise victory bonds. Mr. Sidney, the head of all talent at MGM said I'm going to get together an all Chinese band, you'll be the leader and some pop songs. They couldn't get enough Chinese musicians, most of the kids were in the army or ship yards, some defense industry. So they said "You go out by yourself do a solo." He said "Don't worry, if we had gotten a band together you would have to study baton beating, keeping time with the orchestra, our music man, you'll take singing lessons." |
| 6 | 176-181 | They had a teacher for everything out there. If we were working on a picture, we'd be in class somewhere. I was in drama class, tap dancing, also in physical training, punch the bag, pull weights to keep in trim. |
| | 182-200 | I went out by myself. I did a Charlie Chan murder mystery skit in which I impersonated all the different voices of the detective and I had Peter Lorry as the killer. The idea was that written the story myself since they never allowed to solve the case pictures, I'm going to solve the case and nobody's going to stop me; of course I feel on my face again. The big laugh. I sang some song, ballads like "Night and Day," Old Man River." I concluded the song group with old Chinese lullabies started with a fancy Chinese introduction and went to Irish Lullabies. They lived it. When the bond drive was on, I also did the Gettysburg Address, lights, violin. After the victory bond drive was over, I kept on going but cut out the Gettysburg address. I did that from 1945 to 1950. |

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| 6 | 201-209 | I toured all over the country. I was in the south. I was in New England, the midwest. I played all the theater chains. The Fox Theaters, Paramount Theaters, RKO theaters, United Artists, etc. I came back to Hollywood to do pictures whenever they needed me. |
| | 210-225 | In 1950, the tour came to an end. The movie fans were devoted. I also played some night clubs but not as good as theaters because I did not have night club materials, material spiced with blue. I played in American Legion Conventions, Knights of Columbus conventions, very successful at those. |
| 7 | 226-248 | As a by-product and side benefits of these tours, I managed to attend all the big art museums as an extension of my interest in art. New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Washington DC, Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago, St. Louis, Minneapolis, great museums and I was interested in these collections of Chinese Arts and fortunate to see many examples of Chinese art, paintings, bronzes, jades, ceramics, etc. I was also lucky to play these big cities several times. I had a chance to see the museums great master pieces many times. Couldn't have done it if I had to pay for it myself. |
| | 249-254 | Came back here in 1950. Sad that my theaters I had played had boarded up because of television. A lot became bowling allies, some converted to suprtter markets. It was really heart wrenching. |
| 8 | 255-265 | I came back and got into one of the very first line television shows called "Mysteries of Chinatown," ABC network. It became very popular. About mysteries in Chinatown, a mysterious young lady, very good looking heroine and I was her brother. Together we combatted all the evils that tried to take over Chinatown or caused trouble in Chinatown. It was very popular. |
| | 266-273 | I gradually started to do more and more TV work. Gloria played the heroine. She was not Chinese, but looked Eurasian. Her name in the show was Ah-Toy. |
| | 274-284 | We were pioneers; all the techniques were not perfected yet all sorts of things happened. Actors would get on the wrong sets. Propers were not there when needed, guns went off at the wrong time. Actors forgot their dialogue and froze before the camera. It was fun. |

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| 8 | 285-297 | I got into a series called "The Adventures of China Smith." That was with Dan Dwyer, I was sort of his buddy. Together, we would roam all over and always win over the villains. We were the good guys. Several episodes in San Francisco Chinatown and here. I did that for a year. |
| | 298-310 | After that I did many television shows, some of the original "Gun Smokes," the original half hour shows "Target," "Corrupters," "Follow the Sun," "Trapped Down," and a lot of guest shots on the show with Jimmy Durante, Bob Hope, Jerry Lewis, etc. I was kept very busy, hoping for something nice and big to come along. |
| 9 | 311-324 | In 1954 I went to Hawaii for the first time to do a picture with Wendal Correy and Evelyn Key. In those days, Waikiki Beach had no high rises and fancy hotels, the Royal Hawaiian was queen of all she surveyed. Did some scenes in the Royal Hawaiian and one the beach next to the Hotel. |
| | 325-343 | I got a chance to do a picture in England, over here it was called "Battle Hell," in England it was called "The Emitus Incident." The Emilus was a fire fighters of English freighters the communists seized in Shanghai or someplace and held and won't let them go. But they broke out one night and sailed down the river with everybody shooting at them. Made it to the open sea and got back to Hong Kong. Akim Tomaroff and I were the two communists who held the ship prisoners and dictated terms. It was a fantastic trip to England. |
| | 344-377 | In 1958 got a call from Gene Kelly,. I had known Gene from MGM. He said, I want you to read a play, "The Flower Drum Song." I said "Yes, delighted." So I went to his house and read the part of Sammy Fong, the night club owner in the play. Gene said he'll go back to New York and put this before Oscar and Dick Rogers Hammerstein and I'll hear from him. But I didn't hear from him. I got a call from Gene and he said "The reason I didn't call is because we had a switch in plans, now I want you to try out for the role of the father. There are several guys who can play the night club owner but we have been having an awful time trying to find a guy who can play the father. I want to keep it all Chinese, all Oriental cast if possible." Dick said where are you going to get an Oriental who is old enough and act well enough to play it. |

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| 10 | 378-389 | Dick said to get a Caucasian and make him up. They were mentioning Eddie G. Robinson, who had played a Chinese part, Burgess Meredith, who had played a Japanese part, David Wayne, who had played an Oriental part and Wombert Palmillie. |
| | 390-393 | So Gene said to get a young actor and make him up. So Gene called him. |
| | 394-418 | Gene said to go to MGM and have Bill Tunnel (one of the great make up men) and make KL up. Have him make several make ups. It turned out he made five separate make ups, anywhere from latex rubber on the cheeks to wrinkle up my skin up to elaborate beards to mustahces and hair do and bald head with rubber scalp caps, with glasses, without glasses. After each make up, Bill would take photographs from each angle. That lasted a week. When he finished, he had a stack of photographs about six inches high. |
| | 419-430 | When it was the last make up, Bill said this is the one he likes the best because of his previous experience. He said don't take it off just drive out to Gene in Beverly Hills and surprise him. KL said "Driving through Beverly Hills in this? They'll throw me in jail and throw the key away." Bill said, "No if they do just tell them what you're doing." I said, "OK, If I get into trouble, you'll have to get me out." I drove to Gene's house without any incident. |

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE A

Tape 2 Side B

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| 1 | 000-013 | Blank. |
| | 014-021 | I drove to Gene's house and his secretary came. Gene came and saw me and said "That's great, that's the one. Tell you what I'm going to do. Next week I'm going back to see Dick and Oscar. I'll take all these pictures back, especially this last one, then you'll hear from me." |
| | 022-036 | So, I'm in the line at the motor vehicle department getting a license renewed and had been there an hour or more. In those days at the small office off Hollywood Boulevard, you queue all around the block and I worked myself all the way up to the second from the window. This lady attendant said, "Are you Keye Luke, there's a call for you. Your wife just called and says to call |

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| 1 | 022-036 | Rogers and Hammerstein in New York right away." So I went across the street and called and Gene came on and said, "Get the hell back here right away. Today if you can. They are nuts about these photographs. They like that make up." I was all excited. I went back and the lady was very kind, made an exception and I got my license. |
| 2&3 | 037-051 | Back I went that night to New York. I got there in the morning at Mr. Roger's office around 10:00 o'clock. He's there with both sleeves rolled up, ready to go. All these pictures there with different plots he liked. He had the best make 8- artist from CBS, Cricket McKeown (about 4'6" tall, a marvelous make up artist). So Dick said, "I got a story to tell you. Last night my wife and I were sitting in front of the television, on came Mickey Spilane, Mike Hammer series with Darrell McGavin, the lead and on you came, you were Anna May Wong's henchman. The two of two. So Dorothy said to me "He Dick, there's the man who should play the father in "Flower Drum Song." I looked at her and said "Yes, Honey, he's on the plane coming back right now." |
| | 052-095 | We made one half of the face and the next morning made the whole face. It took 2½ hours. Everytime an actor gets a great part there's always a story connected to it. It's always interesting and unique. We were all made up and ready to audition. He had hired a theater and one gas light over the stage. Oscar and Joe Fields co-producers Rogers and the casting people and Gene all out there. I came on and said to myself, what am I going to do? I said just pretend that you are now playing the palace. I played the palace in New York that historical theater, a great experience, did 7 or 8 shows a day. I said pretend you are at the palace, you are all in costume and all in character, come right out in character. So I came right out in character. At the time, they wanted English with a little pidgin, a little Chinese accent. I said how am I going to break the ice with these people. So I said, "must make small speech before audition. Privileged and honred to make audition for such distinguished, eminent and honorable gentlemen of musical theater and very rich too." They laughed. so we went into the thing, after the song, Gene said, "Do you want to hear another song?" Dick said, "No you don't have to sing another song. Everything I want is there." I said "Ah, my god." |

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| Time Segment | Counter Number | Summary |
|--------------|----------------|--|
| 2&3 | 052-095 | Afterwards I said, "Most gratified and appreciated. Now please can I change oriental into street clothes and go to Yankee Stadium and see Yankee play baseball?" So they said, "Get out of here!" |
| | 096-105 | Working for Rogers and Hammerstein, you are working for the best. For me, it was a liberal education. They never let a single detail get by, it had to be right, they were down there from 8 in the morning till 11 at night. 10 o'clock they gave notes, corrections, they never missed a thing. The discipline, the pride working for Rogers and Hammerstein, a wonderful group of people. |
| 4 | 106-118 | We had a trial opening in the Boston Shubert Theater. After Pat Suzuki sang I enjoyed being a girl, the house collapsed. I said, well I think we're in. After the thin was over, Oscar and Dick went around congratulating everybody "Children you were marvelous." Oscar came into our dressing room, Jaunita Hall, Ed Kenny were there, Oscar put his arm around Juanita and said "Darling we got another one for you. You know, you never know that you've got a hit until you got a hit. We've been at it for a long time and we don't know. You know how I've worked hard and put everything we have into it but until that first audience tells you, you don't know. Now we got a hit. |
| | 119-125 | We came into New York with one million 100 thousand dollars advanced sales. So, I knew we would sit there for a while. I never missed a show. I never took a vacation. I was in every performance from the very first to the very last. We ended in Cleveland in 1961 in October. I went back to TV pictures. |
| | 126-130 | I got lucky. I did the series with Yul Brenner, Samantha Egger, "Anna and the King" for 20th Century Fox TV series. Then I did the voice of Charlie Chan for Hanna-Barbera's animated cartoon. |
| | 131-144 | I did Kung Fu which ran for three years. That was the finest part I was given to do. The part of the old Chinese monk and wise man, sage, Master Po, blind, but he saw with the inner eye. I was given all these marvelous things from the ancient Chinese philosophies to say. You had to do them justice because they were the actual words of the old sages and they had a message for the people today. We knew we had a good action picture but we didn't know if they liked the philosophy. In Hollywood, the old saying is "if you want to send a message, use Western Union." |

Contents (cont'd)

| Time Segment | Counter Number | Summary |
|--------------|----------------|--|
| 5 | 145-153 | They loved the messages. The times were favorable. There was the revolution with the Vietnam War and the young generation to stress peace, non-violence and that was the central theme of the show, non-violence. The triumph of patience, forbearance over violence and aggressiveness. That was a meorable series. |
| | 154-162 | David Carradine was the star of the show. The first time I met him on the set, I said to him, "David, I don't know if this means so much to you or not but it is interesting to me. I knew your father before you were born, we were on contract together out at Fox, doing the Charlie Chan pictures and John was doing other things. I had the pleasure of working with your father through the years and knowing him all this time and now I'm working with his son." |
| | 163-168 | David was a very fine performer. On the set, you couldn't fault him, just a pleasure to work with him. |
| | 169-174 | That was 1975 when it ended since it was time to do other things. I have been into movies, been to Harlmen and Hong Kong. Just finished a picture with George Burnes, "Just You and Me Kid." It will be out this June. |
| 6 | 175-203 | I also did an interesting segment of "How the West was Won" with James Arnez. The episode is called "China Girl" and will be aired this April. Like a Chinese Roots, it concerns the adventures of a Chinese family, who came over during the gold strike in California and hired themselves out as laborers and workers. Fortunately we were wrorking for a good boss, Jim Arnez, the McGian family. It tells the individual reactions, the father, the wife, the son, the daughter to the new environment. They spent about \$100,000 on the set of the dock in Macan where we embarked to come over here. By repainting and changing a few things they converted the dock in San Francisco where we landed. The ship, you can actually walk on it, very practical, we got the main mast from the ship in "Mutiny on the Bounty" and used that. People from all over came to visit the set. There wasn't a big set like that for a while for television. John Metheny, our producer, is a very fine and discerning producer and an excellent writer as well as director. He was an actor at one time. He was a very sensitive producer. He tried to give the show as much authenticity and honesty as possible. I think it will show, people will recognize that when they see it. |

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2 Side B

Tape: 3 Side A

Contents (cont'd)

| Time Segment | Counter Number | Summary |
|--------------|----------------|---|
| 6 | 204-221 | I did a very interesting episode with Steve Allen in "Meeting of the Minds" for public television, in which I played the part of Sun Yat-sen, the founder of the Chinese Republic and on the same panel were Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Mickiola Markivaley and Aristotle and Sun Yet-sen, as the four panel members. It was a very interesting show. The hardest work I put in for a very long, long time. The dialogue was like a book, you had to memorize it. To help out, they had teleprompters. Unfortunately, without my glasses I can't read the teleprompters, so I had to memorize every word, but I got through it and I saw part of it the other day. I was very gratified considering how difficult it was and how little time we had to prepare for it. I thought it was excellent. That will be out in May to kick off the new season. |
| 7 | 222-250 | All this time I was working, it took a year to do 85 episode of the cartoon "Battle of the Planet." It played all over, very popular space war type. I'm the villain in it. Every episode, I got the good guys on the run but they catch up with me. |

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE B

Tape 3 Side A

| | | |
|---|---------|--|
| 1 | 015-013 | It seems I was always type cast as a good guy and only 2 or 3 Oriental parts as nasty since 1934 to 1935. Not a good image for an Oriental. One was a communist officer. I played for Columbia in charge of concentration camps and treated the prisoners rather roughly, then I played a Japanese spy in a picture called "Across the Pacific" with Humphrey Bogart and can't remember the other. All the other parts I was either a businessman, diplomat, doctor, or just an average Joe, good guy. |
| 2 | 036-043 | During the war, when I was at Metro, many studios wanted me to be loaned out to play villain roles, Japanese villains especially. The studio didn't let me out, they said they have him for a specific purpose for Guy Lespie pictures and won't let him ruin the image. |

Contents (cont'd)

| Time Segment | Counter Number | Summary |
|--------------|----------------|---|
| 2 | 044-054 | In general, from the early days, they have these cliches of Chinese being objects of mystery, evil and shadowy and hatchets flying around. That lasted only for a certain point, suddenly it began to shift. The image of the Chinese, Orientals improved and became better. The writers were writing better characters, the producers didn't want to use the old stereotypes. They told me they didn't want old cardboard characters. They wanted characters as real human beings. |
| | 055-070 | One of the first break thoughts came with the Charlie Chan pictures. For the first time, an Oriental was the hero. Chan was absolutely unbeatable, nobody outfoxed him. He always solved the case. He did so with tremendous dignity, courage and graciousness and wisdom. He let drop all the proverbs. The public was delighted with the character and it became one of the biggest money making, longest running series of all times in Hollywood. As I stepped into the series as a completely Americanized Chinese boy, it was a delightful contrast. I was full of energy and always jumping to conclusions and father's always holding me down. I came in with a clue and he said, "So sorry, number 1 son like last rose of summer, too late. Case solved." It was a delightful contrast. |
| 3 | 071-077 | Today, like roots, they tried to make an honest portrayal of the Chinese as they lived over here and the vicissitude they had to go through. Historically, now with the U.S. and China rapport, there will be even greater improvement over the types of characters the Oriental will be playing from now on. |
| | 078-092 | Chinese groups, individuals have had protests, sometimes very vocal and the studios listened and lended an attentive ear, but then things are slow to change and until some impetous comes along which forces a quick change or modification, you're not going to have it. Now with the new Chinese-U.S. rapport, the writers are writing different things. They see the Chinese under a different light. The characters are going to be more true to life and the situations are going to be more realistic. I think we won't be dealt with great parts over night, but a fine part, or an occasional great one will come along, much more possible now than 15 or 20 years ago. I'm very optimistic. |

Contents (cont'd)

| Time Segment | Counter Number | Summary |
|--------------|----------------|--|
| 3 | 093-109 | There were only a handful of Chinese actors and actresses before the war. There was Richrd Loo, myself, Victor Sen Young, Benson Fong, actually Chinese actors. Fellow Orientals Philip Ong, who wsa Korean, Gerald Shimada, Japanese, Nancy Kwan, rated as a star, she was a Chinese, and in the old days, Anna May Wong. Then two or three others maybe who had any statue at all here in Hollywood. But since the war this new generation came along and different attitudes towards Orientals in motion pictures we have now almost a plentiful supply of acting talent both actresses and actors and in a wider age bracket than we used to have. |
| 4 | 110-131 | KL thinks Orientals are treated fairly and equally. We all belong to the Screen Actors Guild. The guild, I think is the greatest union in the world. The guild came way back in the 1930s. We don't have too many Pilipinos though. Three or four good Koreans. The Oriental talent pool is much larger than it was. Also an excellent Japanese actor, Jimmy Shigeta, very good, played my son or nephew. |
| | 132-139 | KL doesn't think there is a new attitude about acting rather that with new generations, there is more of them and more of them pick this profession. |
| 5 | 140-146 | KL's family was very proud of him. Mother was very proud of me. Sister used to be embarrassed because whenever they had a new Chan picture, naturally my mother had to go and see it. The family would go and then it was all my sister could do to keep my mother quiet. She would turn to the person next to her and say "That's my son." |
| | 147-151 | When my sister came down for the first time when I was with Chan, the studio wanted to put her on a contract because she was very attractive. She still is, but I said no, one actor in the family is enough. You go back to your job and be happy. Stay out of his crazy business. |
| | 152-170 | I never gave up art. I don't produce as much as I used to. Now I've been given a new impetus because of the new archeological excavations in China today. All the discoveries of new treasures in the old tombs. I am fascinated by it. I saw the exhibits here and in San Francisco. I still give impromptu lectures on Chinese art and philosophy. I used to lecture in clubs, museums, etc. |

Contents (cont'd)

| Time Segment | Counter Number | Summary |
|--------------|----------------|--|
| 6 | 171-181 | Most of KL's friends and associations are non-Chinese. Always have his own family and Chinese friends. Gilbert Leong, Tyrus Wong, strictly are an art group. We're about the same age. |
| | 182-195 | Goes to Chinatown all the time. Used to go down to see Gilbert's wife Florence's father (F.C. Yung), who is a pioneer dealer of objects of art, Chinese art. Gilbert studied at (Shunart) I studied there and Tyrus studied there, down the Westlake area. Never left contacts with Chinese. |
| | 196-204 | Never was involved in any organizations, Chinese or American. Belonged to the Guild because he is an actor. Years before, used to belong to the California art club. |
| | 205-210 | Don't know who the prominent Chinese families are. Knows Gilbert, the Leong family, the See-Ons, the two families. |
| 7 | 211-227 | Lived in Hollywood and still lives in the Hollywood area. Not interested in living among Chinese. He feels himself as a loner, interests not a popular interest. |
| | 228-240 | Guild has regulations and working conditions set up. All apply to Chinese. Do not know of any discriminations. Believes if there is any, they would be corrected because the Guild gets after them or the Chinese group themselves. |
| | 241-291 | He does not know the average salary of a Chinese actor because KL never worked for scale. KL always had a deal above the scale. He thinks that \$250 or \$280 for a speaking part. If you have leverage, you can bargain. If you work longer, e.g. four weeks instead of a week, a person may get \$3500 a week instead of \$5000 a week. Big stars, if they get participation, they may work for a nominal salary and get 5% or 10% or any percentage of the gross or net. If he puts money into the picture, he becomes part owner. Profit wise he gets some of the profits. Lie Bill Ho, he worked for nominal salary, as I understood but took a percentage of the picture "The Bridge over the River Kwai," that made millions. |
| 8 | 292-318 | I don't support the family. Mother passed on already. I used to support the family when father died when I was 19. The kids were great. As soon as they were able, they pitched in and went to work. We put every- |

Contents (cont'd)

| Time Segment | Counter Number | Summary |
|--------------|----------------|--|
| 8 | 292-318 | thing into a common pool. We paid for the house, sent my brother to the university. My sister became an expert as a buyer for cosmetics, brother became a buyer for a drug store chain and became a dentist. Brother who came down with him became a printer for the <u>Hollywood Register</u> for 20 years and then went to social work and has just retired. Sister gave up the Revlon work and married a businessman with an automobile dealership. Everybody's done well with the help of each other. |
| 9 | 319-339 | Didn't know if the Chinese were affected by the Depression. He thinks Chinese are more thrifty and industrious. They have built a sense of survival. The movie industries thrived. |
| | 340-354 | Used to help a lot of Chinese. Gave suggestions etc. He would have done that for any fellow actor, Chinese or not. |
| 10 | 355-369 | Before the war, there were enough Chinese males and females. Didn't think there was a need for Chinese to go back to China for a wife. |
| | 370-413 | Did not feel discrimination before the war but did not feel that there was any extreme visible warm feelings either. After China became allies, Roosevelt said "Heretofore we have not permitted Orientals to be naturalized (he was thinking about the Chinese). Let us now just wipe that thing off the books and redress an old error we have committed and now Orientals can become naturalized citizens." I was the only child in the family born in China therefore I was not a citizen. When Roosevelt made that announcement, I went down and signed up. I would have been the first Chinese to be naturalized had I not been in the picture with Wally Beery and I had to work on the day I was to appear in court and a Chinese doctor from New York became number one. Walter Winchell carried it in his broadcast. "Keye Luke, Charlie Chan number 1 son just missed being number 1 Chinese naturalized U.S. citizen." |
| 11 | 414-425 | Before the war, in California, Orientals and Caucasians could not inter-marry but since the war all that was put aside. In my family, my brother Edwin, has two daughters and a son. His son, Allen is married to a German Canadian girl. He is teaching in Vancouver, she is going to teach when she gets her degree in German. |

Contents (cont'd)

| Time Segment | Counter Number | Summary |
|--------------|----------------|---|
| 1 | 001-013 | Blank. |
| | 014-020 | His oldest daughter married a Japanese. His youngest daughter married a Caucasian, a brilliant electronics wizard, inventions. |
| | 021-023 | Before the war there were a few interracial marriages, even Black and White marriages. It was unheard of at one time. |
| | 024-032 | I married a French-Irish wife. My brother Gene's son married a Japanese and their daughter married a Japanese. |
| 2 | 033-042 | American born Chinese may put importance on having a son but as a matter of principle, they don't care but may rather have a boy. In the old days, it was imperative that you have a son. Better have a son to carry on the family name and put the incense on the alter after you are gone. I think in America it has been broken down. |
| | 043-053 | For KL's generation, most feel that it would have been good for their children to study Chinese but feel they are busy and pre-occupied with things in this environment. I say to my nephew in Vancouver, "You are teaching Spanish and taught English, why in the hell don't you learn Mandarin." He said he'll get around to it some day. |
| | 054-061 | Before the war, many Chinese hoped to return to China but not now. It was purely a sentimental thing. |
| | 062-086 | In the old days, a lot, a large percentage went back to live, that was the prevailing pattern. They came to make money, save it and went back. Of course, now, Chinese Americans know nothing about China, the old homeland. With my generation it is only a sentimental thing. People are rooted here. Tyrus Wong went back and met his sister there in the village. I don't think anyone wants to pack up and stay there. |
| 3 | 087-106 | Since this is the mountain of gold, think many used a paper name to get in but now with the liberalized quotas, don't need paper names any more. Think it was a thriving business (paper names) in the old days, his father's days. Just could be over half that have paper names but I don't know. |

Contents (cont'd)

| Time Segment | Counter Number | Summary |
|--------------|----------------|---|
| 4 | 107-121 | Have to remember the people who came for labor in railroads, mines and agriculture came for bona fide means. Think that when the exclusion laws were in effect that is when falsification papers were most flourishing. Don't think it exists to any degree now. |
| | 122-147 | I was always aware of China's cultural achievements. I knew enough of history, Western and Chinese, to have a sense of perspective. As I said in the "Meeting of the Minds," I was chiding friends, "China with a long history of scholarship, poetry, arts, philosophy, administration, and so forth and you country barely 200 years of history and yet you insisted on treating us as though we were barbarians." Study of art also gave me certain things to hold by. I never had that feeling of being culturally deprived or culturally inferior or second rate because my skin was different. The only time when I felt a little bit saddened because my skin was different was when I couldn't get certain jobs I wanted. I got out of high school one summer and wanted to make some money delivering telegrams for Western Union. Since I was Chinese, I couldn't get the job. As far as any personal manifestation of racism directed against me, I never had. |
| 5 | 148-151 | When I was in school, I was generally the guy with the best grades. I was good enough athletically so no one could push me around physically. I was lucky that way. |
| | 152-163 | I have heard that Chinese are compared to Jews. I have heard that both have a strong family system. They both have long viable histories. They both have a practical sense in dealing with life. Heard both Jews and Chinese made that comparison. |
| | 164-191 | From what KL sees and the population of his time and now, in consideration of the number of Chinese after schooling then and now. The atmosphere now is more favorable. Doors are open. The determining factor is that the Chinese that move into the mainstream are there because of their intrinsic ability and also because of the opportunities are here now. Think that the Chinese and Japanese have advanced more percentage wise than other Oriental groups. |
| 6 | 192-207 | Now, the Koreans are burgeoning, but I think they came under favorable conditions and they had help from their government. I think it is alright. |
| | 208-220 | Before the war, Chinese were mostly in services, labors, restaurants, laundries, but then their children have gone into the mainstream by way of the different professions. |

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| Time Segment | Counter Number | Summary |
|-----------------|-------------------|--|
| 7 | 221-250 | Western Union told him they couldn't use him because he was Chinese. KL did not protest. He resented it but he did not let it bother him. The next time he started out he had his art work and it was instantaneously accepted. That was back in the 1920s. I was about 17 or 18. At that time it was pretty difficult for Chinese to get a job. |

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