

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Lilly (Mu) Lee, Stanton Mu,

Interview Number: 164

George Mu, Jane Mu

Number of Tapes: 3

Chinese Name: 苗氏兄弟兄妹

Length: 2 Hours & 27 Minutes

Date of Interview: 8/14/82

Interviewer: S. Cheng & M. Kwok

Others Present: None

Language: English

Summarizer: Suellen Cheng

Contents

| Time Segment | Counter Number | Summary | Tape: <u>1</u> Side <u>A</u> |
|--------------|----------------|--|------------------------------|
| 1 | 003-021 | Stanton Mu started recalling the Chinatown in the Produce Market area. | |
| | 022-034 | George Mu stated that Mu Sun (苗品三) had three brothers and one sister. Mu Sun was the only one (in the family) to migrate to Hawaii at the age of 19. | |
| 2 | 035-067 | After the Hawaii Chinatown fire, Mu Sun moved to San Francisco. He worked in Gee Wo Hong (芝和堂) in Hawaii, and Jaip Wo Hong (濟和堂) in San Francisco. After the 1906 earthquake he moved to Los Angeles. | |
| 3 | 068-083 | Mu Sun learned the herb trade in Hawaii with his cousin. Jaip Wo Hong was on the 600 block of Grant Avenue. Most of his customers were Chinese. | |
| | 084-095 | Mu Sun learned English in Los Angeles. He could understand English but didn't speak much. Not much association with Caucasians. | |
| | 096-112 | There were three herb stores on Marchessault, Wing On Hong (永安堂) was right next to Mu Sun's herb store, Dun Sow Hong (贊壽堂), Tai Wo Hong (太和堂) was across the street. There was Gee Ning Hong (芝寧堂) on Los Angeles Street. There were a total of 6 herb shops in Old Chinatown. | |
| 4 | 113-130 | Dr. Staffield was originally an M.D. He joined the police force and patrolled Chinatown. He got acquainted with Mu Sun. | |
| | 131-153 | Chung Wah Wei Kung (Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, CCBA) supposed to be an mediator. Mu Sun was one of the directors and often acted as an arbitrator. He even went to San Francisco and New York to arbitrate. | |

Contents (cont'd)

| Time Segment | Counter Number | Summary |
|--------------|----------------|--|
| 5 | 154-163 | Stanford Mu indicated that today's CCBA is still trying to solve community problems. |
| | 164-176 | Mu Sun was the director of the CCBA for over 30 years and was president for many terms. |
| | 177-195 | Mu Sun was a member of Gee Gong Hong (義公堂), which was located on Apablaza Street. The Chinese Mason and American Mason are almost identical. |
| 6 | 196-205 | Mu Sun was very popular in Chinatown. He helped Chinese people in the community. |
| | 206-218 | Mu Sun went out and solicited donations to build Chinese school on Los Angeles Street in Old Chinatown in 1936. |
| | 219-235 | The original Chinese school was at the end of Marchussault Street. When they started building the Union Depot, the Chinese school was moved to Los Angeles Street. |
| 7 | 236-240 | The Chinese started moving to Crocker Street and 20th Street areas after they started building the Union Depot. |
| | 241-255 | They didn't tear down Chinatown all at once, so the Chinese had a chance to move out. It was very difficult to find a place to move to. |
| | 256-263 | Mr. Herbert Lapham, a land agent for the Santa Fe Railway found the site for New Chinatown. |
| | 264-281 | Mu Sun worked for Dun Sow Hong. Later on the owners went back to China and Mu Sun bought the business. |
| 8 | 282-293 | Mu Sun went back to get married. He came back to the U.S. as a son of a merchant. |
| | 294-350 | George Mu talked about his acquaintance with Swan Yee. Swan Yee hitchhiked with his Caucasian friends all the way from Midland, Pennsylvania to Los Angeles. Tom Gubbins took Swan Yee in and provided him room and board. Swan Yee then worked in the store. George Mu took Swan Yee to school. |
| 9 | 351-363 | Mu Sun often recommended people to Tom Gubbins whenever he needed people to work in the movies. |
| | 364-407 | George Mu tried to identify a picture of Marchussault Street where Dun Sow Hong was located. Dun Sow Hong was downstairs. |
| 10 | 408-439 | No, there was no tunnel in Chinatown. Some houses on Ferguson Alley were several steps below the street level. There were gambling houses. |

Interviewee: Mu Family

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1 Side A

Tape: 1 Side B

Contents (cont'd)

| Time Segment | Counter Number | Summary |
|--------------|----------------|--|
| 10 | 440-457 | There were no Caucasian customers in Chinatown herb stores. There were Chinese herb stores catering to Caucasian customers outside of Chinatown. The herbs came directly from China. |
| 11 | 458-476 | The only time Mu Sun went back to China was the time he went back to get married. |
| | 477-480 | Mu Sun didn't go out of Chinatown due to his language problems. |

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A

Tape 1 Side B

| | | |
|---|---------|---|
| 1 | 004-007 | Some people left Chinatown, some didn't. It all depended on the individual. |
| | 008-021 | Mu Sun knew Sun Yat-sen a long time ago. In fact, Sun Yat-sen was in the Chinatown Masonic Lodge. Sun Yat-sen came from Hawaii and visited San Francisco but came to Los Angeles to hide. |
| | 022-028 | Mr. Wong was a friend of Sun Yat-sen and went back to China. Mr. Wong did not like to live in China and returned. |
| | 029-034 | Lily Mu pointed out that the family had a plaque given them by a general from China in 1934. |
| 2 | 035-046 | George and his mother came to China around 1923. |
| | 047-051 | Mother was the oldest one in a family of ten. |
| | 052-063 | For all the old people, they definitely wanted to go back to China. Father's hope was that China would get strong again so that he could go back. |
| | 064-067 | Mother missed China and went back to visit the old country. |
| 3 | 068-080 | Stanford was the youngest in the family. When he was growing up, he went down to Chinatown and slept in the store. The family lived at 1019 Crocker Street. |
| | 081-106 | Before that the family lived across the street of the herb store. There were two bedrooms upstairs. One had to pass through the alley in between the buildings and go up the stairways. |
| 4 | 107-133 | Stanton went to Chinatown Macy School. The Mu brothers remember the games the Chinese children played in the old Chinatown and in the horse barn. |

Contents (cont'd)

| Time Segment | Counter Number | Summary |
|--------------|--------------------|---|
| 4 | 134-144 | Stanford remembers the food that Chinese restaurants catered and brought into the store with a tray. |
| 5 | 145-166 | There were several Chinese restaurants in the Old Chinatown. Some restaurants would deliver food on big trays. |
| | 167-186 | Chinese New Year was the only holiday they had a grand celebration. The Chinese maintained the customs and gave Lai See (利是). |
| 6 | 187-220 | Father was always nice and gave people credit. Father didn't have much money to purchase a store in New Chinatown. Swan Yee knew Tom Gubbins who was looking for a star to play "Too Hard to Handle." Lilly was selected to act in the movie. That got enough money for the family to start the store in New Chinatown. |
| | 221-245 | Stanford recalls the original stores of the New Chinatown: Yee Huen Guey, Tofu store, Lem's Coffee, Man Jen Low and SooHoo store next door. Dun Sow Hong was the last one to move in. |
| 7 | 246-250 251-274 | The family was poor and didn't have a car until later. Stanton played number 5 son in the Charlie Chan movies. Swan was the person who told the Mu family about the acting opportunities. |
| 8 | 275-289 | Stanford started learning English after the family moved to 10th Street in 1934 due to the raze of old Chinatown. |
| | 290-309 310-329 | The family moved to a non-Chinese neighborhood. Dun Sow Hong was a very old store. It started before 1900. |
| 9 | 330-387 | Stanford didn't feel discrimination per se. The Mu family was the first Chinese family to move to the 10th Street neighborhood. In 1945 or 1946 when the family bought a house on Kensington Avenue, the owner was reluctant to sell. |
| 10 | 388-403 | Stanton stated that Chinese businesses like Man Jen Low was a big restaurant and was able to support the whole family. Dun Sow Hong was a small store and could not support the whole family, so the family members grew outwardly. |

Interviewee: Mu Family

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1 Side B

Tape: 2 Side A

Contents (cont'd)

| Time Segment | Counter Number | Summary |
|--------------|----------------|--|
| 10 | 404-431 | The family pushed all the children into higher education. Stanley went to Trade Technical School. From there he went into the service. After that he came back as a technicians and attended UCLA night school for six years and became an engineer. Stanton went directly from high school to UCLA and got a BA and an MBA from Berkeley. |
| | 432-444 | Before the war, Chinese could not get a job that they were trained for. But they still went for it. |
| 11 | 445-486 | Stanford stated that in the 1940s, it seemed that the jobs were more open to engineers. At the time everybody worked while going to school. There wasn't much counseling from the school as to what subjects to take. Stanley was a radio technician in the camp during the war and had the highest IQ in the whole camp. |

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE B

Tape 2 Side A

| | | |
|---|-------------------------------|---|
| 1 | 001-007 008-018 019-058 | Introduction. Stanford played football at school and liked challenging things. Peter SooHoo was very athletic. Stanford was athletic too and was one of the first Chinese in Belmont High School to play football and track. At first, the coach had doubts when he heard that Stanford wanted to play on the team. |
| 2 | 059-070 | After they moved out from Chinatown, Stanford did not have much chance to associate with Chinese friends. Chinese friends always were proud of Stanford's achievements. |
| 3 | 071-076 077-107 | Most Chinese stressed the importance of education. Peter SooHoo Sr. started boy scout troop 718 next to the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association. Hiram Kwan, Baldwin Tom, Peter SooHoo and others were members. They had a Chinese scout master. |
| | 108-116 | Stanton was working at the store and didn't have time to participate in the boy scouts. |
| | 116-120 | The boy scout troop did not continue. |

Contents (cont'd)

| Time Segment | Counter Number | Summary |
|--------------|----------------|--|
| 4 | 121-135 | There was a tremendous drum and bugle corps. Stanford was an assistant director. |
| | 136-140 | The Mu brothers and sisters were very involved in the community activities. It could be all from their father who was always helping the Chinese community. |
| | 141-152 | Stanley was a colonel in the ROTC at Belmont High School. |
| 5 | 153-179 | Stanton was involved in the Council of Oriental Association. With three other associates, in the late 1960s, Stanton helped to promote the word Asian instead of Oriental. |
| | 180-209 | Stanton was instrumental for the enlargemtn of the Castelar School's property. Stanton also suggested that the school new building have an Oriental motif. |
| 6 | 210-248 | Stanton was also instrumental to start a Chinese Adult Education Program. The first Chinese adult school started at the Chinese American Citizens Alliance. At first there were 72 students in the early 1960s. From there, the school moved to Castelar School, from there they moved to Evan Adult School. |
| 7 | 249-272 | Stanton suggested that Chinese language classes be offered at the Belmont High School. He also developed an Asian American Studies class at Belmont in the end of the 1960s. |
| | 273-289 | Stanton entered a Valley high school in 1958. Later he taught in an east side school teaching Mexican children. Later he moved to Belmont and sponsored a Chinese Student Club for ten years. |
| 8 | 290-297 | Swan Yee and George Mu were the first to organize the first Chinese Student Club at Belmont in the 1930s. |
| | 298-319 | Stanton remembered that there was a big fight between Mexican and Chinese students in Macy School. |
| | 320-328 | Children from Chinatown mostly went to Central High School. |
| 9 | 329-339 | The family moved from Crocker Street to College Street. The children went to Castelar School and then to Central High School. |
| | 340-354 | The students all had to climb 114 steps to school. The principal would invite the Chinese general consulate to school on Chinese night. |
| | 355-369 | Stanford felt that the Chinese and Mexicans got along very well in the school. |

Interviewee: Mu Family

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2 Side A

Tape: 2 Side B

Contents (cont'd)

| Time Segment | Counter Number | Summary |
|--------------|----------------|--|
| 9 | 370-386 | Stanton remembers that the Chinese students were harrassed by other students at Macy School. |
| 10 | 387-399 | Stanton remembers Mrs. Leong teaching Chinese in Chinatown. |
| | 400-411 | Parents did not have much education, therefore could only stress the importance of education but did not direct them to what subjects to take. |
| | 412-452 | Stanford was encouraged by George Mu to go to college and to take up a technical field. The guidance was from George. |
| 11 | 453-472 | Everyone in the family had to work in the store. Stnaford worked in the restaurant at the age of 12 as a dishwasher first. |

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE A

Tape 2 Side B

| | | |
|---|---------|---|
| 1 | 005-019 | The family members were business minded which came from their father. |
| | 020-033 | Children were directed to attend Chinese school. Attending Chinese school took Stanford away from a lot of sports activities. They first attended Chung Wah Chinese School, then went to the Crocker Street Chinese School. Mr. K.F. Tom was the Chinese teacher. |
| 2 | 034-054 | The Chinese school was sponsored by the Catholic Church. One half of the students became Catholic. Father Coweig was in charge of the school. Lilly became Catholic there. |
| | 055-062 | There were about eighty to one hundred students at the Crocker Street Chinese School. |
| | 063-073 | Stanford and Stanton recalled the life at Crocker Street. |
| 3 | 074-086 | Went to movies at Main and Third Streets. It cost five cents. The Crocker Street children would walk to the theater together. |
| | 087-094 | Father told Stanton that some American restaurants would not let Chinese in. Some swimming pools didn't allow Chinese in the 1940s. |
| | 095-102 | After World War II, Chinese got more acceptance. But during World War II, Chinese wore buttons indicating that they were Chinese. |

Contents (cont'd)

| Time Segment | Counter Number | Summary |
|--------------|----------------|--|
| 3 | 103-126 | Stanford remembers General Tai Tim Kai's visit to Los Angeles and the fundraising. It was the unification of the Chinese community. |
| 4 | 127-147 | Mu Sun supported the idea of building the New Chinatown but was not very active except to move to New Chinatown. |
| 5 | 148-159 | There was frictions between Chinese in terms of where to move to, China City or New Chinatown. |
| | 160-171 | There was resistance among Chinese when the New Chinatown was razed. |
| | 172-182 | The horse stable area was a playground. |
| | 183-193 | There were some basketball games between Crocker Street and Twenty-first Street Chinese children. After the Mus moved to New Chinatown there were games between the Twenty-first Street and the NewChinatown teams. |
| 6 | 194-217 | All the Chinese children worked whatever jobs they could get, mostly restaurant work. Customers were local Americans. |
| | 218-229 | Yee Hong Guey Restaurant had its kitchen right near the entrance. That way people could see the cooking. |
| 7 | 230-255 | Yee Hong Guey had about six woks, four cooks working at the restaurant. |
| | 256-262 | Stanford got 25¢ an hour wage working at the restaurant. Later he made 35¢. |
| | 263-271 | Stanford remembers that he could spend 5¢ for a movie and another few cents for a rootbeer and hot dog. |
| | 272-276 | Lily sold gardenias on the street in Chinatown. |
| | 277-314 | Jane worked in the Yee Sing Chong grocery store. Mr. Lee, the owner, worked for Chiang Kai-shek. The store did a lot of restaurant business. He and the other person worked in the meat department. He had about 3 to four people working in the grocery department and one cashier. In those days, it was considered the only grocery store in New Chinatown. |
| 8 | 315-367 | Mr. Lee had wealth so he always made all kinds of derogative remarks. Mr. Lee gave everybody a nickname and always treated people one level below him. Since he was the only grocer in the area, he had a good position. Wing Chong Lung was the other store down in the Produce Market area where Chinese went shopping. |

Contents (cont'd)

| Time Segment | Counter Number | Summary |
|--------------|----------------|---|
| 9 | 368-381 | Jack Lee used to be an employee of the Yee Sing Chong. After World War II, Jack Lee bought the business from him. |
| | 382-404 | Yee Sing Chong used to across the street of Tuey Far Low in Old Chinatown. |
| 10 | 405-418 | Stanton remembered a Chinese man called "peanut," probably because he always was selling peanuts and candies. |
| | 419-445 | Stanton remembers his mother as a strong person. Mother was the oldest one in her family. She married Mu Sun through an arrangement and when she was 18 or 19 years when Mu Sun was in his 40s. |
| 11 | 446-477 | Mother used to be very money conscious and saved every penny and managed very well. |
| | 478-483 | Mother provided the atmosphere that the children could study. |

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE B

Tape 3 Side A

| | | |
|---|---------|---|
| 1 | 001-005 | Introduction. |
| | 006-021 | Mother prepared Chinese food most of the time. She spent a lot of time with the family at home. One of her good friends was Rodney Chow's mother. Basically she stayed at home. |
| | 022-025 | Mother did learn a little bit of English to get her American citizenship. |
| | 026-036 | The family couldn't purchase a house so a Caucasian friend purchased the house first, then transferred the title to the Mu family. |
| 2 | 037-044 | Stanton talked about a case that Chinese were discriminated by a Chinese landlord. |
| | 045-047 | Mother got her citizenship in the 1960s. |
| | 048-069 | Mother used to work at home picking off the tops of strawberries for the market people down on 9th Street. She got 5¢ a box. |
| 3 | 070-077 | Jane's mother shelled walnuts for the produce market people. |
| | 078-084 | The whole family worked together. Children got up about four o'clock in the morning and worked about three to four hours before going to school. |

Interviewee: Mu Family

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Contents (cont'd)

| Time Segment | Counter Number | Summary |
|--------------|----------------|--|
| 3 | 085-109 | The Mu children used to deliver brewed herbs to the clients. The older children helped make the pills. |
| 4 | 110-121 | Family used herbs for illnesses as well as for preventing from getting sick. |
| | 122-126 | Blank. |
| | 127-136 | The Chinese medicine had a lot of value. |

END OF TAPE 3 SIDE A

END OF INTERVIEW

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MU FAMILY

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