

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: George Chann Interview Number: 145
 Chinese Name: 陳陰巖 Number of Tapes: 2
 Date of Interview: 1/9/81, 1/19/81 Length: 2 Hours & 36 Minutes
 Interviewer: Jean Wong
 Others Present: None
 Language: English
 Summarizer: Grace Fu

Contents

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary	Tape: <u>1</u> Side <u>A</u>
1	000-007	Interivew's Place (1/9/81) at George's gallery in Farmer's Market.	
	008-010	Parents came from Canton (<u>廣東</u>) Chim Shan village (<u>前山</u>).	
	011-014	Grandfather came to the US first.	
	015-019	Father was a herbalist-Chinese doctor.	
	020-021	He has two younger brothers in his family.	
	021-023	His mother stayed in China and did not come to the U.S.	
	024-025	He was born in Canton (<u>廣東</u>) in 1913.	
	026-039	He came to the US with his father at the age of 12.	
2	040-057	In 1942 he moved from Stockton to Los Angeles.	
	058-080	His two brothers stayed in China, they did not come to the US before.	
3	081-091	His father sent money back to China to support the mother and two brothers.	
	092-105	He got his masters degree (MFA) at the Otis Art Institute.	
4	106-107	He got married in Hong Kong in 1948.	
	108-111	He met his wife in Shanghai in 1947.	
	112-116	He came back to the US with his wife in 1950.	
	117-121	He has one daughter, she graduated from USC and is working in an architectural firm.	
	122-123	His wife is working in Cathay Bank in Chinatown.	
	124-132	When he went back to China he was exhibiting his paintings at the school in Canton, Shanghai and in a church in Hong Kong.	
	133-146	He thinks of himself as pretty Americanized. He chose the girl he liked to be his wife.	

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1 Side A
Tape: 1 Side B

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
5	147-151	He spoke Cantonese (廣東話) with his father.
	152-162	He speaks English at the Farmer's Market and he does not use Chinese very often.
	163-167	He was teaching Chinese in Chinese Congregational Church in Los Angeles.
	168-175	He was the first one who started to teach Chinese in Los Angeles.
	176-201	He started his painting in 1933.
6	202-207	He was interested in painting and art working and not encouraged by his parents to do that.
	208-222	His parents let him do what he wanted.
	223-229	Before his father died, he had a lot of contact with his father.
7	230-340	He is a very independent person.
	241-268	He is one of the first Chinese artists to have an exhibition in the Los Angeles County Museum.
	269-297	His paintings are different from the old type, the director of the LA County Museum was very interested in his paintings and asked him to show the paintings at the museum.
8	298-334	He started to learn western paintings in the beginning.
9	335-366	In the early years, he liked to pain poor people, old people and children.
	367-381	After he came back from China he found the art work was changed. It was modernized.
	382-424	He tried to read the books and make his paintings change from old fashioned to modern.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A

Tape 1 Side B

1	000-019	He had even been working in movie studios for three months. He didn't like it there.
	020-027	He started to open a store in the market and used to work seven hours every day on painting.
	028-036	He has been working in Farmer's Market for 30 years.
2	037-040	He doesn't think he is a businessman, but an artist.
	041-064	In 30 years he has sold only two paintings, but he does have income from selling art pieces.

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Tape: 1 Side B

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
2	065-071	Some of his paintings are exhibited in many galleries.
3	072-076 077-091 092-131	He did not encourage his daughter to be a painter. He thought it is hard to be an artist unless one has talent and loves art. He thought artists are individuals, he always wants to be himself.
4	132-142	Artist should be outstanding with other artists.
5	143-154 155-188	The Chinese painter is using the mind and the western painter is using the eyes to create the painting. His favorite Chinese painter is Shih Tao (石涛), who tried to put the Chinese tradition in painting in his individual way.
6&7	189-206 207-218 219-289	He taught painting at San Francisco Art Institute and in many different schools. He likes teaching art. He also learns from his students through teaching. GC belonged to the Chinese Congregational Church but he didn't sell his paintings to the Chinese there. He is modest that's why they don't know about his work.
8	290-314 315-338	GC likes Chinese philosophy, culture, way of living, family, ceremonies. But dealt mostly with Americans because of his business. Chinese marriage way, the parents had responsibility to know how to choose mates for their children.
9	339-357 358-390	GC doesn't know anybody else, except the people who visited him in the shop. He is an individualist. GC's store was divided in two parts. One part is his studio where he enjoys his painting and reading. The other part is the store for his living. Life without a living you starve to death. So you need both. GC spent two thirds of his time in his studio.
10	391-397 398-407 408-412	It is not important to GC whether he will lose his customers if he is in his studio. If the customers need him they will call him. GC is in the Market from 9 am to 6:30 pm Monday through Saturday. He used to have a girl help him but she quit. If GC does not paint he felt he has reached his day.

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1 Side B

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Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
10	413-423	GC used to paint on Sundays too. Due to his age he gives himself some rest.
	424-472	In the old marriage way, Chinese parents choose mates for their children. GC thought it was good because youngsters do not know what is good and what is bad. Parents know the mates side. After they got married, they tried to learn to love. Women stayed home and took care of the children and home. Men went out and made a living to support the family. They all had their own duties.
11	473-485	Their marriage will be ever lasting. How long does the modern way of marriage last? Five years is too long. Three years is about right. Wife and husband are too independent.
	486-490	GC chose his own wife. Parents chose a wife for him too.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE B

Tape 2 Side A

1	001-008	Introduction.
	009-027	GC does not miss China since he has been living in America almost all his life. Before he went to China he did not know much about China, but in 1947 he stayed in China for three years he learned the Chinese and loved the life in China.
	028-037	GC planned to make a trip to China and would like to stay there long enough to teach painting.
2	038-042	Doesn't want to go back to retire because his family is here.
	043-045	GC stayed in Hong Kong for one year.
	046-053	The Farmer's Market business is very international. GC got the Chinese art pieces locally, some were sent from China.
	054-064	Customers are international.
	065-069	Wife is more active than GC. Associated with Chinese in church.
3	070-078	there are two hundred shops and fifty restaurants in the Farmer's Market.
	079-087	By law, GC considers himself as an American, a good citizen. As a race, GC is one hundred percent Chinese, his paintings, thinking are Chinese.

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2 Side A

Tape: 2 Side B

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
7	253-261	GC doesn't use Chinese herbs. Wife occasionally cooks Chinese food.
	262-278	GC doesn't have any hobbies except doing Tai Chi (Chinese shadow boxing).
8	279-287	Once in a while GC likes to watch Chinese movies, which remind him of China.
	288-296	Painting is GC's recreation.
	297-320	Never gets tired of painting. He may not be rich but never regretted being a painter.
	321-334	Father was quite well to do. Due to the Communist take over, GC lost contact with his family in China, so he did not support his family in China.
9&10	335-341	In the early days, GC sent letters with money to his parents in China not to support them, just sending some money.
	342-349	GC doesn't belong to any Chinese organizations except for the Chinese church.
	350-363	GC knows a lot of friends in Chinatown. He doesn't have a chance to go down there though. Some of his friends and GC have nothing in common, so GC seldom visits them.
	364-377	GC's friends mostly are lawyers, doctors, bankers, and some merchants.
	378-453	GC knows artist Tyrus Wong, Dr. Kong and some important officials, rich artists and poor friends whom he is more close to. He doesn't want to mention the names of his friends who have important positions in office or in the community.
11	454-470	Only one or two Chinese studies in the Otis Art Institute.
	471-491	In the city, 90% of the Chinese were in laundries, chop suey places, or cooking for American families. Mostly non-white collar jobs.

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE A

Tape 2 Side B

1	002-007	In the early days the average income for Chinese farmers was about two dollars or one dollar a day. In the chop suey places, Chinese might have two or three hundred dollars, which was considered a good income.
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Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
3	088-101	GC felt very proud to be a Chinese because China has the longest culture in the world and is a beautiful country.
	102-105	GC thinks that he has to be loyal to America because he is a citizen and is making a living here.
4	106-126	Father was an old scholar and old fashioned but he knew the modern ways. GC never disagreed with his father. America is the most progressive country.
	127-129	Father was very strick outwardly but very understanding inwardly.
	130-140	GC left his father because he did not agree with the old way of living.
	141-165	Chinese in the old days had hard times in America. Ten or twenty people lived in one house. As a youngster you don't want to live the way they live. They worked 24 hours a day in the laundries or restaurants. You couldn't rent a house, go to a restaurant, go to an American barber shop.
5	166-174	It didn't matter how hard the father and grandfather had to work they sent their children to shcool. Now most Chinese have a university degree. Chinese youngsters learn from the hardships of the old days. GC decided to get out of the old Chinese way of life.
	175-185	Chinese people should make themselves outstanding. Nobody knew Chinese art so GC exhibited his works and made himself known.
6	186-194	Now a days, more Chinese become lawyers and doctors. Chinese should show their talents and show what they can do.
	195-200	Now, Chinese and Jewish have more college graduates than the other races. Because Chinese have had hard experiences.
	201-215	GC felt that Chinese should live the American way.
	216-238	Father gave him some Chinese herbs. Chinese herbs are good but American doctors are more scientific. GC goes to an American doctor.
7	239-243	GC lived among the white Americans and has a very modern house.
	244-252	GC eats American food every body and seldom eats Chinese food because American food is more agreeable to his stomach.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
1	008-022	GC was an artists and did not have any income at all. Earned fifty dollars a month teaching at schools in the 1930s. Sometimes he had to work at school to save a dime or fifteen cents for a sandwich.
	023-031	GC never knew how to make money, but knows how to control his money. GC always able to save money to go back to China.
2	032-064	Does not drink or smoke. GC always had enough money and has a nice home. He has two or three cars, but is not rich.
	065-069	GC's house is very modern.
3	070-086	While he taught Chinese in the Chinese Congregational Church, he lived in the church. Later he rented an apartment in the Black section for two reasons: first he wanted to save money, secondly, GC liked to be surrounded by very few people that he could paint.
	087-104	After the war, Chinese like GC were very Americanized. He knew about banking, social life with girls, and associated with American friends.
4	105-131	The principal of the school told GC not to study art because studying art could not make a good living and thought GC had no talent. After one of his paintings was exhibited, his teachers began to realize his talent and gave him a studio to paint and gave him a little space in a little shop to carry some Chinese bracelets and earrings in the school. So GC did not have trouble to live at that time.
	132-146	The Depression did not affect Chinese as much because Chinese were always poor anyway.
5	147-164	Chinese did not want to get money from the government when they were poor. They had a hard backbone.
	165-181	In general Chinese were discriminated against in housing. So Chinese sent children to school to be somebody.
	182-212	Sometimes you went to high class theatre in Stockton, you were seated in one corner. Psychologically, GC felt Chinese were discriminated against but in reality he did not encounter any discrimination.
6	213-220	GC's great grandfather and grandfather told him the discrimination was very bad in his time.

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2 Side B

Tape: 3 Side A

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
6	221-246	In GC's time there was no discrimination. He had a scholarship to go through school and represented the school showing his works outside.

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE B

Tape 3 Side A

1	002-008 009-015 016-029 030-037	Introduction. Grandfather took GC's father to the US. Later father went back to China and brought GC to Stockton. GC left Stockton for San Mateo to an Chinese orphanage founded by Ms. Emma A. Jones, a missionary. GC was the older boy in the home so he helped in the orphanage taking care of the children, teaching them Chinese.
2	038-044 045-052 053-073	Wife's name is Yvonne Chann who worked in Cathay Bank. GC was an assistant teacher in 1940 at Otis Art Institute. GC worked for the U.S. Army Special Services Division to paint paintings (portraits of Presidents and military leaders) for the army. He won the Service Honor award.
3	074-080 081-099 100-111	Father died in the U.S. six years ago. GC first lived in the Chinese Congregational Church, then moved to Vermont and 8th. After that he went to China. Then lived in West Hollywood. Later he moved to his present house. George Channis his professional name. He is also known as "Share Leung Yip" a name give him by his father and was used when he was entering this country.
4	112-120 121-130 131-135 136-152	A couple of thousand is the highest price he was paid for his paintings. After World War II he stopped communicating with his mother and brothers. Mother and brothers were pretty well-to-do. Mother passed away. He did not send money to support them. Chinese liked to live together or nearby each other. when they first came they could not understand American customs, habits, so naturally they got together with their own race.

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Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
5	153-161	Chinese in Los Angeles live scattered.
	162-188	Yes, there were Chinese Associations, Nationalist Party were involved in politics in China. Father was a member of the Nationalist Party. A distant uncle worked for Dr. Sun Yat-sen and was a member of the Chinese senate.
6	189-199	Father was active in the party in the U.S. Before the Chinese Revolution (1911) he helped to establish the party.
	200-218	Chinese never had good positions in this country in the old days because they didn't know the language. They all worked by themselves.
	219-239	Chinese people had their own quality of life, own culture and behaved themselves pretty well. Compared to other minorities, Chinese did better in a way. But on the other hand, the tong wars, they were not doing well.
7	240-247	When GC docked, the tong, associations, gambling houses all weakened.
	248-269	Jewish and Chinese are industrious, family oriented. They are alike. Chinese are more generous.
	270-279	Chinese have a good business mind but not as keen as Jewish.
8	280-292	Chinese men married in China and left the family in China.
	293-312	In America, American born tend to marry American born Chinese, but it depends on each individual. When Chinese married in China, they prefer marrying people from the same village or district. But for Chinese here in America, it doesn't matter.
	313-326	American born Chinese are Americanized. It did not make any difference to them to have a son or daughter. GC didn't mind to have only a daughter.
	327-364	Chinese think traditionally and will not like interracial marriages. GC's daughter married a white American. He loved them just the same. If his daughter had asked him, he would have preferred that she marry a Chinese.
9	365-371	It was a mistake not to send his daughter to Chinese school. She did not want to go and they lived far away from Chinatown.
	372-386	GC thinks it is very important to learn Chinese so do other Chinese parents.

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3 Side A

Tape: 3 Side B

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
10	387-405	GC had over a hundred Chinese students when he taught Chinese. It cost only a couple of dollars a month to go to Chinese school.
	406-419	GC taught himself Chinese. He taught both Chinese and Sunday school in church.
	420-441	Every Chinese in the old days wanted to die in China. Chinese philosophy Lok Yip Guey Gun (落葉歸根) is that you go back where came from.
	442-455	Usually almost 100% of the Chinese who were born in China returned to China before World War II.
11	456-472	GC thought of going back to China, but not to return to China to retire. Although he was born in China he has become quite Americanized.
	473-489	American movies mostly have a bad influences.

END OF TAPE 3 SIDE A

Tape 3 Side B

1	004-010	GC's paintings became part of the permanent collection in many galleries in San Francisco, Palm Spring and other cities museums.
	011-027	GC has won many awards and prizes.
	028-046	GC held exhibits in Kansas, New York, Shanghai, Canton and mostly in California.
2	047-059	GC graduated with honors from Otis Art Institute in 1938. Had a full-time scholarship from 1934 to 1938. He also served as a teaching assistant in drawing.
	060-064	In 1948, GC taught in Ling Nan University, Canton for six months.
	065-067	Taught drawing and painting at the San Francisco School of Fine Arts from 1951 to 1952.
3	068-070	After 1952, he started the art gallery in Farmer's Market.
	071-088	GC was the first Chinese artist to have a one man exhibit in Los Angeles' County Museum.
	089-096	His work was also exhibited in Governor Brown's office in 1975.
	097-125	GC has exhibited his work in the museum that's the highest honor. He would like to exhibit at UCLA or other schools that's all.

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Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
4	126-136	Wife is in the different line of life. They get along fine.

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