

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Frank Chee Interview Number: 105
 Chinese Name: 朱冠英 Number of Tapes: 2
 Date of Interview: 5/28/80 Length: 42 Minutes
 Interviewer: Bernice Sam
 Others Present: None
 Language: English
 Summarizer: Elaine Loo

Contents

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary	Tape: <u>1</u> Side <u>A</u>
1	004-016	Introduction.	
	017-020	Name is Kwan Ying Chee, or in English, Frank Chee.	
	021-022	Parents are from Toishan.	
	023-026	Father was a herb doctor before coming to the U.S. Later he was a grocer. Mother was a housewife.	
	027-031	Father came in 1925. Frank came five years later in 1930.	
	032-036	Father left China because of job security.	
2	037-039	Family was fairly well off in China. They were middle class.	
	040-044	Grandfather was fairly well-to-do in the village.	
	045-049	Frank was 17 years old when he came to America. Frank Chee (FC) has two brothers, and two sisters. FC is the second child.	
	050-053	Mother came a year ahead of FC with FC's younger brother.	
	054-057	Mother was trained to be a midwife in Canton.	
	058-063	FC went to school in his village. Later he went to "Pui-jing" school in Canton.	
	064-066	FC left "Pui-jing" school in junior high.	
	067-070	FC was born in 1913 in Canton, Toishan County. Now he is 67 years old.	
3	071-072	FC lived in the U.S. since 1930. He misses his village very much.	
	073-078	FC went back to the village two years ago. First he visited when he was fifty. Knew people not by races but by names.	
	079-083	He had two uncles and one grandmother remaining in the village.	
	084-090	Visit from FC was a surprise. His step-grandmother was very happy to see him.	
	091-093	FC also saw all the offspring of his uncles.	

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
3	094-097	FC only had 1½ hours to see all of his relatives--a short time since his trip was not planned.
	098-099	Few changes in village from the time FC left.
	100-114	Grandmother live in the same house. Uncles were farming.
4	115-120	When FC first came to America, went to Central Junior High School. Stayed in Americanization class for two years until graduation.
	121-125	After that FC went to Fairfax High and worked for a fruit stand nearby.
	126-128	After graduation from Fairfax, FC went to Salinas and worked as a meatcutter.
	129-133	Never saw an Oriental teacher in junior high or high school.
	134-136	The students were nice to FC but sometimes made fun of him being a Chinese. Sometimes they called FC "Ching-Chong Chinaman."
	137-143	FC didn't like it but didn't protest. He was timid then. Considered it too trivial report to teachers.
5	144-145	It didn't go on for a long time, only once in a long while.
	146-149	It didn't bother FC too much. He thought people were acting crazy.
	150-151	Teachers were nice to FC in junior high school. He was picked as basketball captain.
	152-154	At Fairfax, FC mostly studied.
	155-156	After Fairfax, FC worked for a while. Then returned to the city and worked in a grocery.
	157-161	Went to night school at Trade Tech.
	162-164	Learned things which could be helpful to China in the future, e.g. electronics or mechanical things.
	165-170	Didn't finish the course because there were few openings to Chinese then.
	171-173	While in night school, FC worked in a grocery store and meatcutting.
	174-177	FC cut meat at the Newport Meat Market. Worked there for a year. The remaining time was spent in the grocery store.
178-182	Then when the grocery store was for sale, FC bought it. Doesn't remember the year.	
6	183-188	Made about \$150.00 with two meals furnished.
	189-191	Chinese worked about 10 hours a day. Mexicans went by the union hour like whites, who worked eight hours.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
6	192-194	The Chinese were working two hours extra after the grocery store closed.
	195-198	Years were approximately from 1936 to 1940.
	199-205	FC wanted to buy a grocery store because it was better to work for oneself than for somebody else. FC was about 30 years old. Store was located on 1630 N. Main Street.
	206-208	Customers were mostly Mexicans and colored.
	209-212	Owned store about six years.
	213-223	Had to sell grocery store when drafted into armed forces (beginning of World War II).
7	224-230	Made about \$10,000 or less a year (net) at grocery store.
	231-237	Store required 3-4 people (including FC) to run.
	238-339	Was in service 3 years and 4 months.
	240-242	Was in Air Force and army.
	243-246	Later was sent to a free technical trading school to learn armament and gun turns and threatful gunnery.
	247-253	FC went overseas to China, Burma and India area. Was there 2 years.
	254-261	Was on ground crew so never saw much action.
	262-263	Was not too ostracized from army people despite his being Chinese.
	264-281	Because one GI in training called him "Chinaman," FC tied him off in barracks. After that, the GI never bothered FC.
	8	282-285
286-296		Was happy war ended because FC felt he was fighting for a nation who wanted no part of him. Didn't feel close to U.S.
297-313		Prior to induction day FC had trouble getting assistance because he was Chinese, e.g. jobs.
314-334		Applied to many jobs but was often told job already filled. This was pre-war days.
9	335-339	After returning home from armed forces, returned to grocery business but grew tired of the canned foods (business).
	340-346	Wanted to switch to electrical trades, but was told membership was closed.
	347-355	Only remaining choice was civil servant work, e.g. the Department of Water and Power.
	356-369	Went into electrical trade for DWP, 19 years. FC started with DWP in 1955 until retirement.

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1 Side A

Tape: 2 Side A

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
9	370-373	FC felt upon arrival to America that his only nationality to which he belonged was Chinese.
	374-382	Feels more Chinese. Many outside places make him feel uneasy.
10	383-386	Lived in U.S. for 50 years.
	387-390	Most of FC's friends are Chinese, a few whites.
	391-393	Never for a second did FC feel sorry for being Chinese.
	394-403	Would not trade Chinese heritage for \$1 million.
	404-408	God blessed the Chinese race, that's why there are so many.
	409-412	Never disagreed with family about Chinese culture.
	413-417	Never went to Chinese school because he was fluent and literate enough.
	418-428	FC's family used both Chinese and western medicine depending on which was most appropriate for illnesses.
	429-433	Family used herbs for cooking such as dong-gui, gay-chi, duck soup, etc.
	434-440	Doesn't play mahjong. It is time wasting.
441-444	Enjoys tennis, swimming, gardening.	
445-450	Does not watch much ballgames. Enjoys a movie once in a while.	

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A

Tape 2 Side A

1	004-017	Introduction.
	018-021	FC's wife spoke Chinese once in a while His children don't speak Chinese. They will find out that disadvantage in the future.
	022-024	Grandson knows very little Chinese.
	025-029	Doesn't see a future in returning to China in making living.
	030-032	Even if FC could return to China without financial worry, it would be difficult for him to return since his family is in U.S. FC would not enjoy the living conditions in China.
2	033-036	None of FC's friends have returned to China to stay for good.
	037-045	Chinese portrayed in movies are downgraded, e.g. laundryman, gambler.
	046-047	His protest alone against such portrayals in movies couldn't do much.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
2	084-050	Knew of people embarrassed to be Chinese.
	051-054	Relates story of Miss Hong Kong apologizing and denying her Chinese identity.
	055-058	Are Chinese criminals or no good? Why be sorry to be Chinese?
	059-064	Chinese like prestigious high paying jobs such as doctors or lawyers, engineer, dentist. The profession should be self-fulfilling and rewarding for the individual as well as for their children too.
	065-074	Chinese parents should not tell their children what job or profession to take.
3	075-081	Children may later regret following their parents' choice.
	082-084	Children may perform better if allowed to choose their own studies.
	085-087	Never heard of a "gee-yuk wui" in China.
	088-091	FC was married in Los Angeles.
	092-094	FC's mother was very educated person. But was a housewife when she came to America.
	095-103	FC's father tried to be a herb doctor and worked for S.P. Lee for a few years. After that, he changed to be a grocer.
4	104-109	FC's mother taught Chinese to beginners. Probably at church.
	110-113	Doesn't know why she stopped.
	114-118	Both of FC's parents were very educated in China. But FC's father didn't have much chance to make use of his knowledge. Not too many Chinese had such chances in pre-war days.
	119-122	One of FC's brothers is a TV repairman. Another is retired from the Long Beach government. He was a draftsman from Long Beach Municipal.
	123-128	FC's older sister is a married housewife. His younger sister works in the Post Office by the airport.

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE A

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