

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Rose Nim Tom Interview Number: 146
 Chinese Name: _____ Number of Tapes: 1
 Date of Interview: 1/16/81 Length: 1 Hour & 3 Minutes
 Interviewer: Jean Wong
 Others Present: _____
 Language: English
 Summarizer: Ella Yee Quan

Contents

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
1	007-009	Rose Nim Tom's (RNT) father was born in China; mother born in Bakersfield.
	010-012	Father from a village in Canton, China; spoke Sze Yup.
	013-017	Father came to Los Angeles when he was sixteen years of age.
	018-022	Maternal grandfather took children back to China and children returned when they were teenagers.
	023-027	Maternal grandfather and RNT's father met on ship to Los Angeles. Grandfather arranged the marriage with his daughter.
	028-029	Maternal grandfather brought RNT's mother back to the United States to marry her father.
2	030-037	RNT has three brothers and one sister. Oldest brother was born in Bakersfield. During the Depression, mother was pregnant with RNT and brother was brought back to China by father. Father returned to Los Angeles to try and make a living.
	038-042	RNT was born in village in China in 1923 and returned to the United States with her mother when she was five years old.
	043-054	RNT can only remember brick steps and no plumbing in China.
	055-057	Rest of RNT's brothers and sisters were born in Los Angeles with the exception of her older brother who was born in Bakersfield.
	058-067	Father owned a grocery store on Maple and Washington Boulevard. He also owned a store in downtown Los Angeles selling American food.
3	068-069	Mother never worked at the store.
	070-071	RNT and her brothers and sisters had a choice of attending

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
3	070-071	Chinese school or helping at the store.
	072-081	Children tried both, but attended Chinese school for only about five years.
	082-088	RNT's husband completed the equivalent of high school in Chinese school, he could read Chinese newspapers.
	089-099	RNT's older brother, Harry Nim, remained in China until he was a teenager. He was educated in Chinese. Now owns a supermarket in Long Beach.
4	100-106	RNT attended 28th Street School, San Pedro Street School, John Adams Junior High School, Jefferson High School for two years, and then graduated from Polytechnic High School.
	107-114	After graduation in 1942, RNT worked at the store until her marriage in 1945.
	115-124	RNT met her husband, Woodward Tom, in Santa Barbara where both of them went for some festivity.
	125-128	David Soo Hoo, the brother of Peter Soo Hoo Sr., started the Mei-Wah Drums Corps.
	129-136	Corps composed of the Los Angeles Chinese girls who competed with other bands.
	137-142	Corps started in the late 30's.
5	143-158	RNT played snare drum -- traveled only to Santa Barbara and Long Beach. She marched in parades -- made own uniforms.
	159-165	Lorraine Yee, former Corps member, is still in Los Angeles. She is a secretary at King Junior High School, sixty years old -- has a better memory.
	166-170	RNT married in 1945. First son in 1947, second son in 1951, daughter born in 1956.
	171-173	RNT did not work until last few years of husband's life. She worked in his office.
	174-180	RNT's husband was a structural engineer. He was the first Chinese to open a consulting structural engineering office in Los Angeles.
6	181-191	RNT's family spoke Sze Yup. Father knew English. Children spoke English outside of home.
	192-204	RNT's own family spoke English. Did not send children to Chinese school.
	205-208	RNT and her husband found it more convenient to have their own family speak English.
	209-216	RNT's oldest son had wished he had learned Chinese. He drowned in Santa Barbara in 1976.
7	217-236	RNT's oldest son found prejudice in the Navy from Southerners unbearable.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
7	237-257	RNT's school had only a handful of Chinese. Friends were Caucasians because each class only had one or two Chinese. She still corresponds with Caucasian friend from third grade.
	258-272	RNT ended up living on 25th Street and San Pedro which she considers downtown Los Angeles. Other homes were mostly around the same area.
8	273-276	San Pedro Street was a dividing line. The Chinese were east of San Pedro Street. RNT lived west of San Pedro Street.
	277-287	Neighbors west of San Pedro Street in early 30's were not cordial to Chinese. Neighbors moved when the Chinese moved in.
	288-296	RNT knew she was Chinese -- never attended school socials.
	297-298	Chinese did not socialize with Caucasians, strict parents would not have allowed it.
	299-315	Socials were going out with wherever parents went. RNT read and listened to the radio or went to an occasional movie for ten cents.
9	316-333	RNT's father took the family to Chinese restaurants to eat.
	334-335	Very little free time. Sunday afternoons father took the family to the park.
	336-346	No Chinese movies or Chinese shows. Attended Chinese shows in San Francisco.
	347-351	RNT did not enjoy or understand Chinese operas. She enjoyed the Chinese movies.
	352-363	Could not have toys made from Japan -- only time RNT wished she was Japanese instead.
	364-377	Only conflict with parents was when dating husband-to-be and parents were strict about frequency of dates.
10	378-392	RNT brought up to marry Chinese only.
	393-407	Family used Chinese herbalist for minor illnesses. Also used some Western medicine.
	408-424	RNT's own family goes to a Western doctor.
	425-435	RNT's father sent money home to his parents and relatives monthly.
	436-439	RNT's three brothers still send money to relatives in China.
11	440-455	Father was a member of the Four Family Association but was not active.
	456-481	Well-known Chinese could have been Y. C. Hong, an attorney who brought over many of the Chinese.
	482-END	Prior to World War II, most Chinese had grocery stores.

END OF SIDE A

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
1	001-019 020-029	Wages were not high but people existed. RNT was not paid for helping at the store but received an allowance.
2	030-045 046-052 053-058 059-064	RNT heard of anti-Chinese sentiments prior to World War II, but felt no personal hostilities. Father had others buy his property for him. Family lived comfortably, father saved in a bank, he did not gamble. RNT felt people did not have too much excess money to save with low wages and sending money back to China.
3	065-071 072-078 079-094 095-100	RNT knew of two Chinese working in a bank. Father had a hard time during the Depression. He took his pregnant wife and son back to China. Father returned to the United States right away. Father cooked for railroads when he first arrived and again during the Depression. Chinese have done much better. There are more successful Chinese.
4	101-119 120-137 138-142	RNT's husband could not find work prior to World War II. His engineering class at UCLA enlisted in the Navy's special class. The entire class accepted except for a Japanese and RNT's husband. RNT's husband attended UCLA, then got an engineering degree at USC in 1954. Got license before getting degree. After World War II, husband worked for some big engineering and architectural firms.
5	143-150 151-154 155-167 168-178	Worked for business that went bankrupt -- husband was disappointed and did not want to work for anyone else. Husband opened his own firm in the 50's. RNT heard the Chinese being compared to the Jews in intelligence, shrewdness, business, aggressiveness. Remember saying: "You are worse than a Chinese Jew." American born Chinese tended to marry American born Chinese. Backgrounds were the same and they attended the same schools.
6	179-185 186-198 199-206	Father might have matched RNT with a "good house" (where parents are well off), but she met someone on her own. Father objected. RNT's husband's parents had died. His oldest brother took the role of the father because of the age difference. RNT's generation did not take into consideration a Chinese dialect difference as a criteria in a mate.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
6	207-212	American born usually wanted the first born to be a son.
7	213-234 235-251	Interracial marriages were taboo. RNT's father did not plan to return to China to stay. His life revolved around his family here.
8	252-291 292-310 311-317	Portrayals of Chinese in movies did not bother RNT or her oldest son. Earlier Chinese did not protest because of defeatist attitude. Father did not believe in college education for girls. Believed in business for boys and the girl's place was in homes only. RNT's three brothers have grocery stores. Her sister worked for a short time while her husband finished medical school.
9	318-329 330-346 347-357 358-362 363-373	RNT and her husband wanted their own children to follow her husband's profession since he had his own business. The children tried, but did not like it. RNT's daughter became an engineer. Her oldest son had gone into business. Second son went back to college recently for a Child Development degree. RNT's two sons sold old jeans in Isla Vista until the older son drowned. Second son married and has two children. Helped in co-op nursery and loved it. Second son is now attending extension courses for child development classes.
10	374-383 384-405 406-END	RNT's parents were not religious. Her father was a Catholic in China. RNT attended Sunday School near house before she was old enough to help at the store. She attended church after marriage and is now baptized. Her daughter is also baptized. Her oldest son was religious.

END OF TAPE 1

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