

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Fred Chung Interview Number: 123  
 Chinese Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Tapes: 1  
 Date of Interview: 8/4/80 Length: 1 Hour & 3 Minutes  
 Interviewer: Beverly Chan  
 Others Present: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Language: English  
 Summarizer: Ella Yee Quan

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary	Tape: <u>1</u>	Side: <u>A</u>
1	001-010	Parents are from Canton. Father from Hoi Ping, Sah Gong. Mother from Fut Sahn.		
	011-013	Father in fishing industry, salmon canneries. He was the contractor for fishing canneries in Oregon Territories.		
	014-016	Father arrived in San Francisco, then went to Oregon.		
	017-022	Father came to the United States when he was twelve years old, about 1880's.		
	023-030	Most Chinese in Oregon area worked in canneries. Father worked up to foreman, then subcontractor hiring workers.		
2	031-041	Father married in San Francisco in 1907, after the San Francisco earthquake. It was a matched marriage. Father was about 40, mother about 18.		
	042-048	Fred Chung (FC) was born in Astoria, Oregon, in 1909. The population of Astoria was 10,000. Astoria is on the Columbia River in northern Oregon, about one hundred miles from Portland.		
	049-059	FC spoke Sze Yup at home. Learned English at six years of age.		
3	060-067	Many Chinese in Astoria -- only during canning season. Then over half of the Chinese returned to their homes in Portland and other cities. Small population of Chinese -- 30 to 40 year round residences.		
	068-073	Father was a houseboy for an American family working for the Standard Oil Company in between fish cannery seasons.		
	074-078	FC named Fred Hiram after these people.		
	079-083	FC left Oregon permanently in 1935.		
	084-085	Bonneville Dam was built and the Depression drove many Chinese out of work in Oregon.		

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
3	086-091	FC went to work for the National Dollar Store. Transferred in 1935 to San Diego until 1939.
	092-099	FC had eleven brothers and sisters. Only six living -- all born in Oregon.
4	100-110	National Dollar Store owned by Joe Shoong who started store in Oakland. Still has 40 to 50 stores in California and other states.
	111-114	1939, FC transferred to Fifth and Broadway store in downtown Los Angeles.
	115-120	1941, FC left Dollar Store and had his own grocery and liquor store for one and a half years until World War II started.
	121-130	FC got drafted. Draft took up to fifty year olds but had to let most over 35 out because of age. Kept some Chinese in over 35 years of age because they were good cooks.
	131-134	FC was in the Army in 1942.
	135-136	After the Army, FC worked for the North American assembling ariplanes.
5	137-156	Released from the Army early because of injury in training camp.
	157-175	With GI bill, FC returned to school to become a chiropractor.
	176-180	Most Chinese chiropractors were herbalists first.
6	181-186	FC graduated from chiropractor school in 1949.
	187-194	FC lived in a no bedroom apartment on Vernon Avenue and Figueroa Street.
	195-197	FC married on a three day pass from the Army. He and his wife met in Dollar Store where she worked temporarily.
	198-204	FC's wife was originally from Texas.
	205-210	FC graduated from high school.
	211-219	Chiropractor school <u>is</u> a college.
	220-225	FC started practice <u>in</u> 1949.
7	226-234	FC worked for Dollar Store on Saturdays while attending school.
	235-242	FC liked the weather in Los Angeles; missed scenery in Oregon.
	243-256	FC associated with Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos in canneries. Spoke all languages.
	257-266	Had American friends, too. Chinese not welcomed in many places in Oregon.
8	267-284	FC remembered ice cream store in Portland where FC and his friends were refused service. Found no prejudice in Los Angeles.
	285-294	Most of FC's friends in Los Angeles were Occidentals and Orientals. He felt comfortable with everyone.

## Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
8	295-309	FC had little association with Mexicans except at the National Dollar Store.
	310-319	FC was the advertising manager at the San Diego store.
	320-322	FC felt more Chinese than American.
9	323-337	Did not like being refused service but never felt sorry about being a Chinese.
	338-347	Considered himself an American. He enjoys all privileges and resented American inequality of people treating others as not equal.
	348-350	Never disagreed with family about being Chinese.
	351-353	Attended Chinese class of 20 to 30 for a short time. Classes did not last long because of the lack of students.
	354-373	Picked Chinese up with co-workers. Mother was not literate in Chinese. Father was self-taught and literate but was busy and away from home working.
	374-381	Family used American medicine three-fourths of the time.
10	382-397	Enjoyed "medicinal" Chinese foods.
	398-404	Played baseball, basketball, swimming.
	405-406	No Chinese movies in Astoria.
	407-419	No mahjong playing by family members.
	420-433	FC lived in China 1939-1940. At the beginning of the Depression, family accompanied father back to China and met some relatives.
	434-443	FC joined the Lung Kong Four Family Association, Hoi Ping Association, Chinese American Citizens Alliance, since early 1950's, and the American Legion.
11	444-449	FC was the Commissioner for Boy Scouts, P.T.A. in the 50's when children were small.
	450-460	FC joined Lung Kong in Portland; rejoined here in Los Angeles in early 50's and has been active for the last 25 years.
	461-END	Dues for Lung Kong is \$4.00 a year. Donations, parties, etc., cost more money.
END OF SIDE A		

TAPE 1 SIDE B

1	001-009	Most National Dollar Store customers in 1939 were Caucasians. Dollar Store more like a clothing store.
	010-017	In the beginning, Dollar Store sold nothing higher than one dollar. Now everything costs more. Similar to Newberry's.

## Contents (cont'd)

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
1	018-019	About three to five National Dollar Stores in the Los Angeles area.
	020-023	Must be Chinese to be manager.
	024-031	FC would have liked to work for an American store because of the wages, but opportunities were limited.
2	032-043	FC quit Dollar Store to open own business in 1940. Still had the store when drafted. Sold when entered Army.
	044-047	FC did not buy any houses before 1945.
	048-054	Bought first house on London Street near the beginning of Silverlake near the freeway in a mixed area of Japanese, Whites, Mexicans -- no Blacks.
	055-067	Had no problem buying this house. Had problem trying to buy house near Figueroa and Vernon and a \$17,000 house in Crenshaw area (both all-white neighborhoods) in 1948.
3	068-072	Did not protest then because of the futility of such an action.
	073-085	Bought house for \$10,000.
	086-089	\$150 to \$200 a month were the average wages.
	090-094	\$100 a month was the average wage for secretaries.
	095-102	\$35 to \$40 rent per month for no bedroom apartment. Needed larger place for two babies.
4	103-107	Used to have poker games with friends.
	108-111	FC and his wife now do more civic work.
	112-117	Lung Kong helped people with same surnames.
	118-120	Los Angeles has 27 to 28 individual family associations.
	121-132	Most Chinese planned to return to China and saved their money for that. Non-citizens could not buy property. Communists took over China and no one could return. The United States laws changed and non-citizens could buy property, especially those who served in the Armed Forces.
	133-136	Chinese ideas changed and people started to buy.
5	137-146	Most people saved money in banks. Few invested in stocks.
	147-148	Many people lived frugally, business in front and living quarters in back.
	149-162	FC could not afford more than a no bedroom apartment.
	163-172	Father sent money back to China. Also sent money to marry off nephews and nieces. Helped everyone. Did not marry until older.
	173-176	FC knew no one involved with politics prior to World War II.
6	177-195	Prominent local people include Y. C. Hong, Thomas S. Wong (known as the Lettuce King).
	196-201	FC knew Anna May Wong's family later. Sold them some real estate when he was in realty work.

## Contents (cont'd)

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
6	202-219	Saw Anna May Wong's movies. Anna May Wong played romantic roles but did not kiss anyone or marry anyone. "No Oriental can kiss a White man," law in effect at that time.
7	220-232	FC knew of few interracial marriages. Not really accepted.
	233-237	Chinese men marrying other race left state to do so. California state law forbade it.
	238-254	FC was never interested in dating White girls or other Asian girls -- very Chinese oriented.
	255-261	FC feels Chinese have done very well financially.
8	262-275	Chinese were affected by the Depression. FC came to Los Angeles in 1935 at the end of the Depression. Saw worst part in Oregon, 1929-1935.
	276-280	FC always had a job, never had to stand in bread lines. Not many other Chinese did either. Chinese tried to help each other.
	281-291	Chinese met wives in churches or at jobs. Many went back to China to marry and brought them over when they could.
	292-296	Chinese American Citizens Alliance (CACA) was formed to fight some of those anti-Chinese laws.
	297-311	FC did not feel movies of Chinese were derogatory. Felt they were disadvantageous to Chinese because American girl would have been allowed to kiss White man.
	312-322	Hays Censure did not allow studios to make pictures showing interracial relations.
9	323-331	More roles for Chinese now -- not prominent roles but more roles than before and kissing now allowed.
	332-337	No other prominent Chinese then. Victor Sen Yung and Keye Luke came later.
	338-347	Chinese considered ideal jobs as government jobs because they were white-collared and more refined. Few became doctors.
	348-358	Today everyone wants sons to be engineers.
	359-367	During the Depression, earned \$90 per month at National Dollar Store. Then increased to \$120 a month in Los Angeles. Wages included a house to live in.
	368-370	FC loves Chinese food more than any other kind.
10	371-392	FC hoped for children to attend college.
	393-399	FC wanted children to attend Chinese school but school was too far.
	400-410	Chinese parents thought it was important to get Chinese education, but it was not always feasible.

Interviewee: Fred Chung

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
10	411-430	FC knew of many people who went to China for Chinese education. Only those who had money had opportunity.
	431-434	Most educated in China returned to the United States.
11	435-459	About 95% returned to China before Communists took over.
	460-464	Father took family back to China and built a house there. Mother died there.
	465-470	Father went back several times.
	471-473	Mother took some brothers and sisters to China for education.
	474-END	Pharmacist brother in Portland, well educated in Chinese in China. Returned to the United States, now owns three drug stores.

END OF TAPE 1

END OF INTERVIEW

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