

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Ann Chinn Interview Number: 5
 Chinese Name: _____ Number of Tapes: 2
 Date of Interviews: 10/26/79 Length: 2 Hours
 Interviewers: Suellen Cheng
 Other Present: None
 Language: English
 Summarizer: Helen Morrison

Contents

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary	Tape 1 Side A
1	001-016	Blank	
	017-022	Chinese name	
	023-025	Ann . Chinn's (AC) parents came from China in the 19th Century. Father worked as a foreman in a mining project in Alameda County. Several children were born there.	
2	034-037	Went to San Francisco and lived there till 1906 earthquake.	
	038--039	AC was born in 1901 in Tesla.	
	040-044	Parents never talked much about China.	
	045-052	Later they moved to Dinuba. It was a horse and buggy days.	
	053-055	Father worked in a mercury mine.	
	056-059	Before going to school children all spoke Chinese at home.	
	060-066	Family was the only Chinese family in Dinuba where many Germen stayed.	
3	067-073	Father opened a grocery store and restaurant. The aliens did not own land at that time.	
	074-085	Father's grocery store sold Chinese goods. Father also had boarding house which housing many Chinese bachelors. There was a hired cook and maid.	
	086-096	AC started school in Dinuba where there was no other Chinese.	
	097-102	AC learned to speak Chinese fluently only after she got married and moved to San Francisco.	
4	103-109	The grocery store had some ginger, rice and some basic Chinese goods.	
	110-122	Father passed away when children were very young. Mother worked very hard to support the family. She took in laundry and raised vegetables and chickens for sale in Dinuba.	
	123-134	AC remembered seeing a gambling house in the town.	
	135-142	Only Chinese men gambled. There was always a	

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
4		lookout man for the gambling house.
5	143-147	AC graduated from high school in Dinuba and got married in 1919.
	148-159	At school, AC and siblings were not well liked. Chinese students were by themselves.
	160-172	AC got in the basketball team but couldn't get in social talk. AC had some bad experiences at school.
	173-182	AC's family got along fine with a couple of German families.
6	183-197	Mother taught Chinese to children. She was self-taught. Mother hide away from children when she sang. She was very shy.
	198-209	AC had an American church style wedding. Some of the brothers and sisters had wedding in the court house.
	210-233	AC's elder sister had a Chinese wedding. She was carried on the matchmaker's back to the bridal wagon. It was before the earthquake. The crying and singing were held during the ceremony.
7	234--239	There was dawry for daughters.
	240-246	One son was born in San Francisco. Other children were born in Stockton.
	247-260	AC lived on Clay and Kearny Streets. Husband manufactured trunks.
	261-275	Chinese did not think Chinese businessman was as good as American bussinessman. Husband moved to Stockton and selling watches and had a pawn shop. They sold the same watches as American merchants would sell, but the Chinese thought American merchants' merchandise was better.
8	276-281	Husband sold trunks to both Chinese and non-Chinese.
	282-284	Most Chinese were in grocery, laundry, and meat and fish markets.
	285-292	Chinese women were shelling shrimps and sewing buttons.
	293-298	AC has three children.
	299-335	There were Chinese women brought to U.S. for prostitution. They were housed away from residential area in Chinatown.
9	336-344	The gambling houses in San Francisco were all

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
9	345-364	closed to public. Husband was born in China and came to U.S. with his parents when he was 8 years old. Parents had a potato farm. Husband grew up in Stockton and San Francisco. He learned the watch repairing business.
	365-387	AC met her husband in church. Shortly after WWI, he closed up the pawn shop due to lack of business.
	388-396	Husband came to San Francisco and worked in the Jackson Cafe as a cashier in Chinatown.
10	397-413	AC lived in San Francisco when young. Later came back to San Francisco after getting married and lived on Pacific Street.
	414-443	The rent for a whole flat was \$89 a month. There were about 5 to 6 families lived in one floor and shared a community kitchen.
	444-457	Some Chinese girls worked in the Chinatown telephone exchange.
11	458-477	AC worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad.
	478	End of Tape 1 Side A

Tape 1 Side B

1	001-016	Blank
	017-037	AC worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad. AC was one of the only two Chinese workers during the War time. She was shoved around from job to job. She was even a messenger once.
2	038-052	AC worked there for 8 years. AC quit the job without retirement pension. AC got less than one dollar an hour.
	053-058	After that AC took children in at home and took care of children. She also worked in the grocery store.
	059-062	AC was always working.
3	063-076	During the World War II, husband was semi-retired and the family needed some financial help. Husband supported his brother who just came from China. AC and daughter worked and supported the family.

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Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
3	077-081	AC seldom wrote letters and seldom visited her silblings because they didn't have money to travel around.
	082-101	During the WWII, AC worked for her sister Elaine Chow, for seven years in Los Angeles between 12th and Olympic Blvd. Business was alright.
4	102-113	AC came to Los Angeles with her daughter. Sons were in service.
	114-127	At that time daughter was about 25 years old. She helped a lady shipping goods. She lived with her daughter.
	128-135	Daughter worked in the wholesale produce market.
	136-138	AC didn't live close to Chinatown and didn't have much time visiting Los Angeles Chinatown.
	139-142	AC also worked in the produce market after the War.
5	143-178	AC worked in the war industry during the WWII. Both daughter and AC worked in the same shipyard factory. AC explained the working condition.
6	179-191	AC and daughter supported themselves while husband sent money back to China to support his brothers.
	192-216	AC's brother-in-laws left for China to live. The life was much easier in China. Husband wanted to return to China, but because he came in with a false paper and was afraid that he won't be able to return to U.S. AC didn't want to go back to China where she didn't know anyone.
	217-220	Didn't visit Chinatown Los Angeles as often.
	221-228	AC worked for a Chinese owned produce market. Many Mexican workers there too.
7	229-235	AC started working from six o'clock in the morning and got off around noon.
	236-239	The farmers brought the produce to the market.
	240-249	Some Chinese farmers brought in Chinese vegetables.
	250-264	AC worked 8 hours in the factory. It was hard work and didn't have to go to Chinatown.
	265-272	AC's landlord was a Frenchman.
8	273-278	AC was proud of being a Chinese.
	279-287	Mother was a good baker and baked bread and cakes.
	288	End of Tape 1 Side B

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
1	001-020	Blank
	021-027	AC ate Chinese food at home. Mother was the only one wore Chinese clothes. Later she wore American.
	028-031	Mother didn't have to say anything to them when she want them leave the room whenever there was a visitor. She just gave them a look.
2	032-036	AC didn't feel any difference being a Chinese.
	037-050	All AC's children went to Chinese school in Stockton. They didn't read and write but could speak Chinese. Grandchildren could only understand Chinese but didn't speak any word.
	051-064	AC's mother always gave them some Chinese herbs, so they never got sick.
3	065-068	Never ate food with herbs in it.
	069-073	Seldom went to movies. Didn't go to Chinese opera because she wouldn't understand it anyway.
	074-085	AC played mahjong once and lost money. After that she never played the game.
	086-092	AC didn't care for movies.
	093-107	Didn't celebrate Chinese holidays because she did not know the customs. Mother used to make special food for Chinese New Year.
4	108-113	AC lived on Clay Street in San Francisco Chinatown, but never participated any activities.
	114-118	Children were in the drum corps in Stockton.
	119-138	Husband belonged to Chinn Family Association. He gave donation to the Association annually. AC never went to Chung Wah(CCBA).
5	139-150	AC gave party when her children were born. It was a buffet party.
	151-155	AC went to church. She had her wedding at a hotel.
	156-163	Mother never worships ancestor. She burned paper money when father passed away.
	164-172	AC didn't send money back to China. She didn't have any relatives in China.
	173-178	Jewish people are the same as Chinese people in doing business.
6	179-190	In the old days, matchmaking in marriage was popular. Sister got married through matchmaking.
	191-195	All AC's children went to public school.
	196-201	Some Chinese did send children to Chinese school,

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
6	202-208	but some didn't care to do so. It was cheaper to live in China. Many Chinese return to China to live.
	209-222	Chinese parents all hoped that children would not follow their hard labor job.
	223-226	Chinese were not able to get any job in the early days.
7	227-230	Children did not get to go to college too much, because the War broke up.
	231-239	During the Depression AC's husband lost their potato farm and business.
	240-254	Chinese women did cut potatoes before planting them.
	255-261	All the workers belonged to the union and got pretty good pay.
	262-271	AC worked in the cannery for curiosity for one summer.
	272-274	Very small percentage of Chinese worked in the cannery in Stockton. There were not many Chinese.
8	275-300	AC got only 2 cents a tray of twelve cans. Some time they worked in the evening. The cannery workers worked really fast and made good money.
	301-304	The workers had children. They hired children taker to take care of two or three children.
	305-320	AC looked after friends' children and got a couple dollars a day for each child. Women made good money in the cannery.
9	321-329	AC worked in the cannery in 1914. There was no union. She got low pay.
	330-334	AC stopped working after the children were born. She started working again when the children graduated from grammar school.
	335-369	AC worked a little before getting married. Mother took care of them, they didn't have to work. Mother raised chicken, rabbit, and vegetables to support 10 children.
10	370-415	Mother went to Bakersfield and opened an egg farm in 1919. She sold the eggs to everyone. The farm was operated by mother and two brothers. The egg company's name was Valley Egg Company. It was now run by AC's nephews.
	416-430	They hired not only Chinese to work in the farm.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
10	431-444	Mother was a really good businesswoman.
11	445-458 459-462 463-473	Later they had more land and also raised cotton. Mother passed away about thirty years ago. They used to buy eggs from other farms.
	474	End of Tape 2 Side A
Tape 2 Side B		
1	001-013 014-016 017-023 024-034	Blank They bought the little chicks from other farms. Mother bought a lot of farm land before she passed away. The farms did not turn into egg farm until mother passed away. They used to take Greyhound bus to visit Bakersfield.
2	035-057 058-068	AC never sewed button holes. Her friends worked in the sewing factory. The working condition was bad in the early days. It was a long hour job. They brought children to the factory and tied them to the machine, so they would not run away. They could not afford babysitter. Husband thought that children came first, so AC did not work.
3	069-090 091-106	San Francisco Chinatown was so different than the small town where AC came from. The food was cheap. 50 cents for a cream roll, 15 cents a loaf of bread, 15 cents a quart of milk, and 30 cents to buy food for a meal. But the wage was low. AC used to call the restaurant downstairs, and they delivered the whole meal for 35 cents. Most of the customers in the restaurants were Chinese.
4	107-114 115-118 119-122 123-131 132-142	There were many curious stores in Chinatown. Chinatown was always crowded. Chinese wore American clothes in Chinatown. Never went to family association activities. On and off AC would go to church where both Cantonese and English were used. There were all small stores in Los Angeles Chinatown. Some businessmen's families lived in Chinatown.
5	143-156	AC went to Chinatown for shopping.

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
5	143-156	There was no laundry in Old Chinatown. There were small restaurants.
	157-167	AC visited Chinatown alone. Her daughter had different working hours.
	168-186	The fish sold in Chinatown was fresh.
6	187-229	AC talked about her experience during the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and in the camp.
7	230-236	AC's family lived on Washington Street before the earthquake.
	237-258	Father died and family moved to Dinuba. Mother bought four houses. They lived in one and rented others to the gamblers.
	259-269	Their house got burned down, family moved to another house. Mother managed very well.
8	270-280	Father was a foreman and never talked much about China. He passed away when AC was very young.
	281	End of Tape 2 Side B End of Interview

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