

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Ida Fong Interview Number: 113
 Chinese Name: 鄺梁順愛 Number of Tapes: 2
 Date of Interview: 6/28/80, 7/5/80 Length: 1 Hour
 Interviewer: Beverly Chan
 Other Present: None
 Language: English
 Summarizer: Suellen Cheng

Contents

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary	Tape 1 Side A
1	001-007	Introduction	
	008-022	Parents from Chungshan, Canton, China. Father ran a gift shop in San Francisco. He was a leader of Kuomintang and was in charge of newspaper, <u>Young China</u> .	
	023-036	Mother passed away 22 years ago. Ida Fong was born in San Francisco in 1912. Ida had one big sister. Spoke Cantonese at home.	
2	037-050	Ida went to Commodore Stockton School in San Francisco Chinatown. She came to Los Angeles in 1935.	
	051-085	After father passed away, sister asked Ida and husband to come to Los Angeles. They opened a gift shop in Los Angeles Chinatown. It was just a little booth on Gin Ling Way. Peter SooHoo Sr. encouraged Ida to open a booth. Ida invested fifty dollars for the booth. Mrs. General Lee, Mrs. Quon, and Dick Wong all helped her to start the business. Dick Wong charged Ida twenty five cents a day for using the electricity.	
3	086-105	There was a carnival in Chinatown at the time when the Chinatown just opened. Ida used the wood used in carnival to build her booth. Three years later Ida got the store space.	
4	106-112	Mr. Chew Yuen rented the store for Ida and husband.	
	113-138	Mr. and Mrs. Chew Yuen gave Ida and husband chance to run the store. Lum Suey Jong rented the store to them. Ida gave back the store on Sun Mun Way to Mr. Chew Yuen twenty years ago and moved to the present location on Gin Ling Way.	
	139-148	Sister used to own a shop on Broadway downtown around 1935.	
5	149-169	Ida came to Los Angeles and helped her sister first. Her husband started the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. His name was Fong Chin Kim. Chin is paper name. So Ida's legal name was Ida Leong Chin. Husband passed away in 1955.	

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
5	170-179	Ida went to Chinese school in San Francisco for five years. Most of Ida's friends were Chinese friends from Chinatown.
6	180-200	Ida associated very few Caucasian friends. The Los Angeles New Chinatown was built in 1937. Ida's husband organized the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in the 1940's.
	201-221	Ida felt she was one hundred percent Chinese. Ida and parents used Chinese herbs. Now, Ida still used Chinese herbs for cold.
	222-229	Ida did not have time to play mahjong. Spent all her time working in Chinatown. Came to work from noon to 1:00 a.m. did not have time to do anything. Now Ida took sometime to go to Methodist Church. She used to go to Presbyterian Church.
7	230-239	Sometimes she went to Music Center to listen the music. In the past, Ida and husband did not have time. All the Chinese worked hard.
	240-257	Ida was proud to be Chinese. Ida sometimes wrote to her relatives in China. Now Ida still sent money back to China to her husband's relatives.
	258-274	Ida joined Fong Family Association. Every year they gave twenty dollars to the organization.
8	275-284	Dr. Kwon and brother were active in the Association and taught English in the association.
	285-297	Husband was a president of Chinese Chamber of Commerce for many times.
	298-311	The Fong Family Association was just a place for people to rest. They also raised fund for scholarship. The association has been in existence for a long time.
	312-321	The four family association and Lee Family Association are well-organized groups in Chinatown.
	322-342	Peter SooHoo Sr., the Quon family of Grand Star Restaurant, and some merchants are the prominent persons in Los Angeles Chinatown.
9	343-350	Right now, Jack Lee is doing very well. Before World War II, Chester Quon was pretty well known.
	351-370	Chinese were mostly in restaurant business. There were only one or two lawyers. Chinese couldn't find job as easily as others. It is better now. That's why they did not even go to college before World War II.

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
9	371-381 382-393	There were very few MD around. They did Chinese business. The average income among Chinese before World War II was between \$60 to \$200.
10	394-413 414-438 439-461	The food was cheap. They spent \$75 for food. The rent was about \$35 to \$50. Ida paid five thousand for her house. Ida lived close to Chinatown. She walked to work. Peter SooHoo Sr. thought the site of Chinatown was the best place for Chinese. It used to be Italian settlement. The Little Joe Restaurant was in town for a long time.
11	462-480 481	Ida bought her house around 1939. There were around one thousand Chinese in the neighborhood. End of tape 1 side A.
Tape: <u>1 Side B</u>		
1	001-008 009-030 031-037	The old Chinatown was located south of Olvera Street. The new Chinatown was design by Mayer Architect. Ida bought store from the owner of Grandview Garden Restaurant. Chinese put their savings in banks for interests.
2	038-062 063-067	Chinese didn't involved in politics. Father was involved in Kuomintang. Father's name was with the 72 Martyrs Monument in Canton, China, as an oversea Chinese contributing to the 1911 Revolution. Ida had no time to participate in politics.
3	068-079 080-088 089-097 098-102 103-116	Maybe David Chow was interested in American politics. But before World War II, Chinese did not get involved in politics at all. Ida never experienced any discrimination. Chinese have done better than other people. Many Chinese started running banks. Before World War II, Chinese were mainly engaged in restaurant, laundry, gift shop, and produce businesses. There was maybe one Chinese social worker in town. There were one or two Chinese accountants and insurance salesmen in town.
4	117-144	There was a Sun Wah Florist (Cathay Florist). The only funeral parlor in Chinatown was run by Italian. There was a Chinese Cemetary. Parents were buried in Rosedale.

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Tape: 1 Side B

2 Side A

Contents (cont'd)

Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
5	145-159	Chinese used American funeral service procedure. Now, some Chinese use monks in the funeral for service.
	160	End of tape 1 side B.
Tape: <u>2 Side A</u>		
1	001-013	Introduction.
	014-030	Jewish people made Chinese Jewish by doing business with Chinese. Ida had good business in general. Ida purchased certain merchandise from Jewish importers.
	031-043	Chinese men went back to China to marry. The girls from China loved to come to U.S. American born girls did not have to go back to China to get married.
2	044-054	Not only Chinese but also American people loved to have son. To have a son first means that a woman has done her duty.
	055-063	In the early days, people did not look up the interracial marriage. Now the attitudes have changed.
	064-071	Ida thought it was important to send children to Chinese school. But the children did not think so.
	072-080	It is easier to go back to China now. Before World War II, not so many people went back to China because the financial difficulty.
3	081-095	Some Chinese went back to China for education. It was a good thing to do. They had to have money and to have children who were willing to go. It took about five hundred dollars to go back to China for education before World War II.
	096-098	Chinese are very proud of being Chinese.
	099-114	Some Chinese worked for the Department of Water and Power. They considered it was a good job. Some Chinese worked in the Immigration Office. Working as lawyer, doctor and for government were considered good jobs.
4	115-123	Ida didn't plan for the children's career. That way she won't get disappointed. Her son studied business administration and took up father's business.
	124	End of tape 2 side A. End of interview.

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