

Tape 1 Side A

- 1 008 Q: How old are you?
A: 80.
- 010 Q: You were born in China, is that right?
A: That's right.
- 011 Q: You were born in Hoiping, China?
A: In "Lienwei li" , Hoiping.
- 012 Q: Oh, Lienwei li. When did you come to the U.S.?
014 A: 1922.
- 017 Q: Why did you come to the U.S.?
019 A: My husband brought me over. We came together with a daughter and a son. The daughter was five and the son was eight.
- 025 Q: You also had a clan-nephew , is that correct?
A: Mmm.
- 031 Q: What did you come here for?
032 A: I came here because my man wanted to bring me here. 17 days after I got here the child was born.
- 2 039 Q: Where did you live?
040 A: In Gim Hing Lung , number 320. Because the baby was born, we were afraid that the police might come check, so we moved out of our home and stayed elsewhere for four days.
- 062 Q: Is that where you were living? That was the home of Szeto Lam , right?
063 A: Mmm, we rented a place.
- 065 Q: How was Street?
066 A: There was a church next door, they taught adults there.
- 3 068 Q: A church?
A: Mmm. The ground was mud, the street was dust and sand. I took the children out to play.
- 073 Q: OK, who else lived in that house besides yourselves?
076 A: Second Aunt Kwan Kit-fun , Second Uncle, and four kids. There was also maternal grandmother and her family. A wooden house.
- 086 Q: Did anyone live next door?
087 A: There was the church. On this side was Dolly's mother and mother-in-law, Kwan Soong-cheuk's family, Kwan Kit, etc.
- 101 Q: You spoke Cantonese at home, right?
A: Hoiping dialect.
- 105 Q: You don't speak Cantonese?
106 A: No, I only speak Hoiping Chekhom dialect.
- 107 Q: You don't speak English?
A: No, I don't.
- 4 115 Q: What kind of business was your father-in-law in?
116 A: He worked in a restaurant.
- 118 Q: And what kind of business was Kam Hing Lung in?
119 A: He had a sundries store.
Q: And you lived behind it?
- 120 A: We lived downstairs, and my father-in-law lived upstairs.
- 121 Q: Was business good at Kam Hing Lung?
A: There was some business.
- 123 Q: What sort of people came to buy the sundries?
A: Chinese and whites, both.
- 127 Q: What did they sell?

- 2
- A: They sold , salted black beans, jujubes, honeyed dates, persimmon cakes, vermicelli, canned goods, bamboo shoots, rice, lotus buds and mushrooms.
- 134 Q: Where did these products come from?
A: China.
- 136 Q: Was business at Kam Hing Lung good?
A: Not very good. Most of the goods were used by
- 140 Q: Why were used to make ladders?
- 141 A: Mmm, we made ladders so that it would be easier for young children to get up there.
- 5 143 Q: What was your husband in charge of?
A: He was the proprietor of Kam Hing Lung, he guaranteed it.
- 152 Q: What was the name of the restaurant run by your father-in-law, Kwan Soong Chin?
A: Tsui Far Low
- 153 Q: Was business there good?
A: Yes.
- 154 Q: What kind of people patronized it?
- 156 A: Mostly Chinese. There were whites too, but they were a minority. ?? 10 cents for salted fish with pork, 5 cents for a bowl of rice.
- 163 Q: Eggs were very cheap, right? Rice at 5¢ a bowl? Salted fish with pork at 10¢?
- 168 A: Mmm, they made 60 large plates of that a day.
- 174 Q: How big was the restaurant? How many tables could it hold?
- 175 A: The restaurant? It could hold thirty-odd tables.
- 176 Q: In those days, that would be considered large?
A: Mmm.
- 177 Q: Did any whites come in the evenings to eat?
A: Yes, yes. There were Mexicans and Pilipinos.
- 178 Q: Whites came to eat? How was it?
- 6 181 A: was pushed down the stairs, he bullied us Chinese.
- 182 Q: Bullied Chinese? Were there frequent fights and people eating without paying?
A: Mmm, they'd call us damn Chinks and bully us. They beat people till their heads were split open.
- 196 Q: Did whites eat without paying?
- 197 A: Some paid, some didn't, some Mexicans didn't pay, so there'd be fights and people would fall down the stairs.
- 200 Q: At that time was Tsui Far Low upstairs, on the second floor?
A: Mmm.
- 201 Q: What went on downstairs?
- 202 A: There was a goldsmith's downstairs. It was run by Wong Tsik
- 206 Q: What kind of people worked at Tsui Far Low?
- 207 A: Chinese. They were all Chinese.
- 208 Q: Were those people married?
A: They weren't married, most were single. Only the boss was married.
- 218 Q: Were most of the workers your relatives?
- 220 A: Mmm, relatives. The foreigners often bullied us and broke people's heads.
- 225 Q: Was it like this in every restaurant?
- 226 A: Every one. There were three restaurants, Man Jen Low , Lok Koon Low , and in each one people would fight after eating and not paying, and heads would be broken.
- 7 232 Q: How old were you when you got married?

A: Sixteen. I got engaged when I was nine.

237 Q: Were you arranged by a matchmaker?

238 A: Yes, by two matchmakers.

240 Q: When you got engaged, was your husband in China?

241 A: He came to our house to marry me, but my father refused.

243 Q: At what age did he plan on getting married?

244 A: Tenthish, twelve, thirteen, I can't remember.

249 Q: What did your father and mother do in China?

A: My father had a sundries store.

257 Q: How did your father get to know your father-in-law?

A: They were introduced by a matchmaker.

260 Q: Did you have to throw a banquet when you got married?

A: Yes, we had to give a banquet and put up three sheds (?)

262 Q: Then a lot of people were invited?

263 A: The entire village, and also people from the next village.

268 Q: How old were you when you were engaged?

A: Nine.

269 Q: What about your husband?

A: My husband was three years older than me, he was twelve.

271 Q: How old was he when he came to the U.S.?

A: Sixteen.

273 Q: And how old was he when he went back to China?

A: Twenty.

278 Q: On what day did you get married?

A: Twelfth month, twenty-first day, and on the twenty-second we worshipped the ancestors.

282 Q: After you got married, when did your husband return to the U.S.?

284 A: He left before our eldest daughter was a month old. When she was 18 days old, our eldest daughter went back with her father.

295 Q: When you got married, was your father-in-law home?

296 A: He was. They came back together, and then they all returned to the U.S. together.

303 Q: Your husband returned to the U.S. after you got married. When did he come back again?

304 A: He came back four years later and took us to the U.S.

307 Q: Oh, four years? Your eldest daughter was four years old then?

308 A: Mmm, he came back for the Chinese New Year. Our eldest daughter was almost five years old.

310 Q: And then he brought you to the U.S.? That was in 1922?

311 A: Mmm.

313 Q: So when you came to the U.S., your husband came with you?

314 A: Yes.

319 Q: How long did you live ?

A: Overnight. One night. The baby was born as soon as we went on board.

322 Q: How long had you been on the ship before the baby was born?

A: 17 days. ??

336 Q: How many women were there in Chinatown at that time?

A: Nine women, eleven, two came later.

340 Q: Where did the Chinese live?

341 A: All Chinese lived in Chinatown.

345 Q: Did you have your own house?

346 A: No.

Q: Then where did you live?

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348 A: I was at Kam Hing Lung.
349 Q: How much was the rent?
A: Forty dollars.
350 Q: Forty dollars for the store?
351 A: The store was another thirty. Including the house it was seventy dollars.
354 Q: How many rooms were there?
355 A: There was one large room upstairs and two rooms downstairs.
364 Q: Was it hard to rent a house?
365 A: Yes.
366 Q: What kinds of problems did you have?
368 A: Chinese don't like to live in white neighborhoods.
372 Q: Most of you didn't live in houses, did you?
A: In stores, all the buildings in Chinatown were stores.
374 Q: Were there any houses?
A: There were a few, four.
382 Q: What were the houses in Chinatown like?
A: They were wooden, only one storey. The stores were two stories.
389 Q: What kinds of businesses were there in Chinatown?
A: They sold soda, candies, Chinese sewing notions, etc.
10 391 Q: Were there any laundries?
A: No.
394 Q: Oh, no laundries. Were there restaurants?
395 A: Yes, there were those three.
396 Q: Were there sundries stores?
A: There was one sundries store in , and one sold rice gruel
400 Q: Were there gambling parlors?
A: Yes.
404 Q: How many were there?
A: There was "Cheung Kee , "Shun On , " and "Fung Ngyu
" .
414 Q: What kind of people went to the gambling parlors?
416 A: Chinese. There were also the , and the Japanese.
418 Q: So Chinese, Japanese and Pilipinos went to gamble?
419 A: Mmm.
420 Q: Was business good?
A: They had no business.
Q: No business? Didn't the gambling parlors do good business?
421 A: Very little. Those made a lot of money.
424 Q: Oh, there were ?
A: Mmm, the did good business every day; the gambling parlors only did good business at Chinese New Year's.
431 Q: What did the Chinese women do?
432 A: They sorted walnuts, spinach, tomatoes and strawberries.
439 Q: Did they go to the market to sort them?
A: Mmm, but they walnuts were sent to their homes for sorting.
441 Q: How many dollars for sorting 100 lbs.?
442 A: 6¢ per lb. They were divided into seven grades.
450 Q: How much did they pay you for 100 lbs.?
A: \$2-plus.
11 455 Q: Did you ever do that?
A: Yes.
458 Q: Did you do it for a long time?
A: Six or seven years.

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- 461 Q: How did you find time to do that?
A: I carried the children on my back while I did it.
- 463 Q: How many children did you have?
A: Nine.
- 474 Q: What did the single Chinese men do?
A: Helped the whites to sweep, do laundry, wash floors, etc.
- 485 Q: How many children do you have?
A: Nine.

(End of Side A)

Side B

- 002 Q: When your children were born, did you have "one-month" banquets?
A: The first one was in Tsui Far Low. We had them for both our sons.
- 005 Q: Was that also in Tsui Far Low?
A: It was at home. About 11 tables.
- 011 Q: Did you worship the gods at home?
A: Yes.
- 012 Q: Did your kids go to church?
A: They used to go. Now I don't know.
- 013 Q: I'm asking about the past. Did they use to go to church?
A: Yes.
- 015 Q: Did you join any associations?
A: We joined the CACA.
- 017 Q: Was there a Lung Kong Association at that time?
A: Yes.
Q: Did you also join the Lung Kong Association?
A: Mmm.
- 018 Q: Was the Lung Kong an association of surnames?
019 A: Yes, Lau, Kwan, Cheung and Chiu.
- 020 Q: How much did each person pay each year to the association?
A: Each year? Some gave \$10, some gave \$20.
- 022 Q: What kind of activities were there?
A: A banquet at the Chinese New Year to usher in the spring, and the "opening of incense" in the ninth month.
- 026 Q: What is the "opening of the incense?"
A: Worshipping the gods, worshipping the ancestors. The birthdays of the Laus, Kwans, Cheungs and Chius.
- 030 Q: What else was there at the New Year?
A: At New Year's, people lit firecrackers and performed lion dances. Everyone killed chickens and paid New Year visits.
- 2 037 Q: Did you pay New Year's visits to every house?
A: Mmm.
Q: What did you do?
A: We gave out red packets . We gave them to their children, and they gave them to our children.
- 040 Q: Did you go to see any shows?
A: Yes.
- 042 Q: Where did you go see them?
A: At . I went with the children.
- 043 Q: Did you go frequently?
A: I went often. They performed once every two weeks.
- 046 Q: Did you go see American movies?
A: Yes. Sometimes.
- 048 Q: Did the kids go too?
A: The kids went too.
- 050 Q: Did you have more Chinese friends or American friends?
A: Chinese.
Q: Did you have any American friends?
A: None.
- 052 Q: Were there any blacks around at that time?
A: Yes.
Q: Did you have any black friends?
A: One of our relatives married a black woman.

Side B

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A: None.
- 052 Q: Were there any blacks around at that time?
A: Yes.
Q: Did you have any black friends?
A: One of our relatives married a black woman.

- 056 Q: Was that black woman nice?
- A: Yes. My husband often drove the children there to play, and she cooked for them.
- 058 Q: How much did Chinese make in those days?
- A: Some made \$26, some \$20.
- 062 Q: Only \$26 a month? What did they do?
- A: They did laundry.
- Q: How much did they make each month in the restaurant?
- A: Also \$20. Dishwashers and waiters all made \$20.
- 064 Q: What about the cooks?
- A: Cooks made \$30. The ones washing glasses made \$5 a month.
- 3 069 Q: Were they full-time employees?
- A: Mmm.
- 071 Q: What year was this?
- A: 1922, 1925, 1926.
- 073 Q: It wasn't until later that wages went up?
- A: Later they increased to \$40 or \$50.
- 075 Q: How much did Chinese make in 1932?
- A: By then it was \$70, \$70 for cooks, \$40-50 for waiters.
- 079 Q: When did you go back to China?
- 080 A: In 1932.
- 083 Q: Why did you go back to China?
- A: I went back to see my mother-in-law. I brought the children to see their grandmother.
- 087 Q: How many people went back?
- A: Twelve. An uncle, my husband and I, and a nephew.
- 095 Q: How were things in the U.S. when you went back in 1932?
- A: How were things? There were no jobs.
- 098 Q: A lot of people didn't have jobs?
- A: Mmm, a lot of people didn't have jobs.
- Q: Then what did they do?
- A: A lot of people went home to farm, and came back after a few years.
- 101 Q: How long did you stay in China?
- A: I went back in 1932, and returned to the U.S. in 1939.
- Q: Why did you come back?
- A: The Japanese planes bombed Chekhom and they bombed our village. My mother-in-law told us to come back.
- 4 112 Q: What did you do in China at that time?
- 114 A: I farmed.
- Q: Did you want to do that?
- A: I dug , and dug taro roots.
- 117 Q: Did you have to do that when you went back?
- A: No. I used to do that, I had to do that before I came to the U.S.
- 118 Q: What did you do when you returned to China from the U.S.?
- A: I took care of the kids.
- 120 Q: Were they born in the village?
- A: Yes.
- 122 Q: Did you have any maids ?
- A: We had three maids.
- 125 Q: How many houses did you have?
- A: Three. One building, seven stores in Chekhom market town.
- 136 Q: When you were in the U.S., did you send money back to China?
- A: Yes, we sent money back to support my mother-in-law.
- 138 Q: How many times each year did you send it?

A: Four times.

141 Q: Did you send any money back to buy land?

A: No. We only bought it after we went back.

144 Q: You bought land after you went back to China?

A: Mmm.

5 145 Q: Did you have to bring a lot of money with you when you went back to China from the U.S.?

A: We brought a lot. 90 pieces of luggage.

152 Q: Did you bring a gifts back to China for your friends?

A: Yes.

Q: What did you give them?

A: Rice, cereals, dried shrimp, laver, money.

163 Q: What did you bring money back to China for?

A: We bought a building in Canton, four stories high.

170 Q: When did your father-in-law buy his house?

174 A: When they were tearing down Old Chinatown. After it was torn down, we had no place to live and had to buy a new place, \$2,000.

6 184 Q: When did you build ???

A: It had just been completed when World War II started.

192 Q: After World War II you went into the restaurant business?

194 A: Mmm. From World War II until now.

197 Q: During the war, did you donate any money for national salvation and for refugee relief?

A: Yes, at that time

199 Q: There was a "bowl of rice movement" at that time, right?

A: Mmm.

203 Q: How much did you give?

A: Several hundred dollars. We gave frequently.

209 Q: Chinese used to prefer sons, right?

A: Yes, everyone liked sons.

212 Q: What about your father-in-law?

A: My father-in-law was fondest of sons.

214 Q: You had seven daughters in a row, right?

A: Mmm, seven daughters.

217 Q: How was he when the first son was born?

A: He was very happy. He didn't sleep for several nights.

Q: Oh?

A: When the second was born he gave banquets for a week at

223 Q: There was also a lot of food when the second son was born?

A: There were already a hundred-odd tables for the first one, and even a few dozen more for the second one.

228 Q: How was he when the first grandson was born?

A: He was so happy his shoes came off and he couldn't sleep.

7 230 Q: Did the ones born in the U.S. eventually go back to China to get married or did they get married in the U.S.?

232 A: In the U.S. Before there were people who returned to China to get married. Now there are very few.

238 Q: Did those who went back to get married also get introduced by matchmakers?

A: Mmm.

244 Q: How much did the matchmakers charge?

A: Several dollars, two taels of silver; later it was 20, 100. I hear it's more than that now. Some people with money gave gold chains or gold bracelets to the matchmakers as souvenirs.

- 254 Q: Did some people marry foreigners?
A: Yes, but very few. Most married Chinese.
- 260 Q: Would you be happy if your children married foreigners?
261 A: No.
- 265 Q: Why?
A: It's inconvenient to talk to them, and I'm afraid they'll drift away.
- 274 Q: What happened to that Uncle Soong Sik who married a foreigner?
A: He needed her to help with the work. He already had a wife back home.
- 275 Q: Did that black woman use to work in a laundry?
A: No. She . . . Outside they washed and ironed clothes, inside they . . . They took clothes in for washing, a penny ??
- 285 Q: A penny? One penny for one pair?
A: Mmm.
- 288 Q: Did the . . . business cater to blacks?
A: There were blacks, Japanese, Filipinos, and also Chinese.
- 292 Q: Where was the store at that time?
A: In the . . . In the . . . , the police couldn't go there.
- 298 Q: What did women use to do besides bringing up the kids?
A: They sorted walnuts.
- 302 Q: What else did they do?
303 A: They sorted walnuts and made wine.
Q: Made wine to sell?
A: No. They made wine to drink when babies were born.
Q: Oh, they drank it themselves. Did they sell any?
A: Very little.
- 310 Q: How much per gallon?
A: \$6 per gallon.
- 312 Q: What kind of wine was it?
A:
- 315 Q: Did your children study any Chinese?
A: Yes, they all studied. They studied in a Chinese school.
- 323 Q: Why did you want your children to study Chinese books?
A: That way they would know Chinese.
- 328 Q: Did you use to want to go back to China?
A: Yes.
- 332 Q: Did a lot of people go back to China when you did?
A: Many. Mexico was expelling Chinese.
- 340 Q: So when you were going back to China there were a lot of people returning to China from Mexico?
A: Mmm. There were a few Chinese women from San Francisco, and a few from L.A.
- 344 Q: Did something happen to them in Mexico?
A: They were expelling Chinese, forcing them to leave. They wouldn't let Chinese live there.
- 347 Q: Would you prefer to be a Chinese or an American?
A: I've become a citizen now, so I'm an American.
- 352 Q: I mean, do you prefer being Chinese or American?
A: Chinese. My face is Chinese.
- 358 Q: You've become a citizen?
A: I've been a citizen for 24 years.
- 360 Q: What kind of work would you like your children to do?
A: I'd like them to be kind-hearted.
- 371 Q: When did you come out and help with the restaurant?

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A: I worked there as soon as it was built.

381 Q: Did you use to work before?

A: No, I never worked before the restaurant was completed.

10 395 Q: Did a lot of people come to the U.S. from Ying village in Chekhom, Hoiping?

A: Many.

Q: How many?

A: There were a hundred-odd from my village.

Q: Oh, a hundred-odd people came, so now there must be several hundred in the second generation?

401 A: Mmm.

404 Q: Why did everyone like to come to the U.S.

A: It was easier to make money here. If they didn't come, they'd have to farm back home.

413 Q: Did Americans discriminate against you Chinese?

A:

421 Q: Did Americans use to scare you Chinese?

A: Yes.

424 Q: How did they scare you?

A: They would say that Chinese were no good, that Chinese were dirty. Americans would eat without paying.

(End)