



**Sacramento Ethnic Communities Survey -  
Chinese Oral Histories  
1983/146**

Oral interview of  
Frank S. Fat

September 2, 1983

**Conducted by Sylvia Sun Minnick**

**Transcribed by Lee Ann McMeans**

Center for Sacramento History  
551 Sequoia Pacific Blvd  
Sacramento, CA 95811-0229  
(916) 264-7072

[cs@cityofsacramento.org](mailto:cs@cityofsacramento.org)  
[www.centerforsacramentohistory.org](http://www.centerforsacramentohistory.org)

© Center for Sacramento History, 1983

This is Sylvia Sun Minnick researcher on the Sacramento History Center Ethnic Community Survey Project. I am interviewing Mr. Frank Fat at his home in Sacramento. Today's date is September 2, 1983. During our interview, Mr. Fat will be discussing his autobiography, the restrictive housing for the Chinese in Sacramento, the development of his restaurant, his views of the family association, his view also on the Chinese' lack of political clout and process.

**Sylvia:** Where were you born and do you have any brothers and sisters?

**Mr. Fat:** I have no brothers, I have some sisters, I have two sisters, one's passed away two years ago. One is still in China.

**Sylvia:** And where were you born Mr. Fat?

**Mr. Fat:** Canton, China, 1904.

**Sylvia:** When did you come to the United States?

**Mr. Fat:** 1919.

**Sylvia:** What did you do after you came to the United States?

**Mr. Fat:** Well, first I landed in San Francisco and I was taken to Angel Island, first I came to you know –

**Sylvia:** Angel Island.

**Mr. Fat:** Angel Island for over a month, after the month then they let me come up and then in San Francisco and my paper father took me up to Sacramento. Tono Wong Mi took some of my passengers, I have a cart and he said [speaks in Chinese, counter 20] then I stayed in the Hung Kim Lun and got letters there and sleep there, under there you know, now, Peking, Chinatown now, like that you know, under the sidewalk –

**Sylvia:** In the basement?

**Mr. Fat:** In the basement.

**Sylvia:** In the cellar.

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah, yeah, Hung Kim Lun paid [hard to hear, counter 24] then I got a little spot there as a temporary stay under the sidewalk. Happen Sutter Club they hired a Chinese crew to take over the kitchen then, so it happened that Sutter Club pick us and hired a Chinese crew, they said that that crew they [hard to hear, counter 25] in Hung Kim Lon, they tried to organize, take over the kitchen, and well they figured, who would want to take the job, organize they said they still need one dishwasher and they asked my

cousin Ona Hung Kim Lum he said “if you know anybody want to be dishwasher” then my cousin pointed at me and he said “that’s the kid that came from China” and I think he said “strong enough why don’t you hire him?” Then the chef came over to me “you’d like to take a job, wash dishes?” You know I intended to come here to just you know work you know. I said “that’s fine” I said “I’ll be glad to” you know. Then I take the job.

**Sylvia:** How much did they pay you?

**Mr. Fat:** Oh \$30 a month, in those days no machinery, you wash by hand. I started work, but I mean I wanted to work, but still I just was here one within about two weeks, I don’t know any customs, what to wear, but I’m learning to work and they instruct me, how, explain to me. When the chef saw it, he said nice to me, but the second cook, I never met a man so mean in my life, the second cook, you know whole crew is they are Chinese, the kitchen, the Sutter Club used to be 4<sup>th</sup> and J, not now.

**[Counter 50]**

**Mr. Fat:** Now it’s in I Street, over the now it’s a [hard to hear, counter 52] Center at the same location, right there. The second cook also Chinese but that didn’t he was mean, he don’t explain to me how to do it, but if anything I don’t do it his way he always give me hell you know? One day at the Sutter Club they have a party and Sutter Club they have a big platter, he needed the big platter, he wanted me to find the platter and take it to him in

a hurry, I just followed his order to try to look and finally I found it and try to please him in a hurry, I was nervous and scared and I dropped it, he said “dropped the platter on the floor” they have a tile floor and broke in pieces. I tried to pick it up and clean up the floor, that’s I still have a scar here, I cut my hand. After I cut my hand I don’t can continue to work anyway see, that’s only after a few months I worked at Sutter Club for two months. Then I got, went to in debt, my hands are not well, you know, that is the only time give me the chin to somebody, the Chinese, in those days they only a few from here Sacramento, they helped build a church. One family is very nice they try to teach us some of the newcomers English, that’s why I go there at night try to learn English. That’s the only time I have a chance to learn a little English in the church.

**Sylvia:** This was a church you learned English at night. What church was this?

**Mr. Fat:** Well I don’t know what the name of the church is, it’s just across the street from the across the street from before the Courthouse, it’s like 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> and I, that was a long time ago.

**Sylvia:** The Chinese went there, all the Chinese?

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah, Yeah, two families. Yeah that was the first time I studied on English, but then in the next summer, 1920, then the summer [hard to hear, counter 75] comes, the Cortland Diary, the Chinese farmer, you know, they raise fruit, I followed some students, some Chinese students in Sacramento they go to the church too, they all go down there

for picking fruit. They asked me if I wanted to go and “I yeah, I do.” Then I go there and I am picking fruit. Then in the fruit season I didn’t make enough money and another cousin asked me to go to Akron, Ohio, and I followed him and I go, he wanted me to work in there as a laundry. Then after I get there in Akron, Ohio, you know, I saw the laundry, these are small places, dirty, all the dirty clothes, I said keep that, I don’t think I can work in a laundry and I didn’t work there. I didn’t work in Akron. But after Akron, then I went to Cleveland. I got a job in Cleveland for a year working in a Chinese kitchen. Then from Cleveland to Youngstown –

**Sylvia:** Ohio?

**Mr. Fat:** Ohio, and also worked for there a few months, that’s in 1921. That period they still have little the small Depression, right after the First World War Youngstown is a steel town. I worked in a Chinese restaurant and they can go good, you know, they are busy and then after Youngstown, then I left, I go to Detroit. In Detroit then I got a job I go to some Chinese restaurant and look for the job and I got a job as a bus boy. That’s my turning point, when I got the bus boy, I always have a cart and you know, not messy. In all the Chinese restaurants, all those waiters they all liked me.

**[Counter 100]**

**Mr. Fat:** They beginning they think I’m a pretty good boy, you know, they are beginning to teach me, they said “well, we’ll teach you how to wait on tables.” I said

“fine, that’s give me a chance, you know, how to speak too, they were helping me by come outside compatriot [hard to hear, counter 104]

**Sylvia:** So that was a chance for you to speak English?

**Mr. Fat:** Yes, and learn too. From there then I first begin just wait on the waiters, they trained me after rush hours, teach me how to table, train me. Then they got a new restaurant open, you know they hire more waiters, they ask me to go and I go with them. They said [hard to hear, counter 110] I said “How can I be write on paper?”, but “we help you” they all liked me, they helped me. Then we go to another Chinese restaurant, you know, big, high class restaurant, they have a big band and besides they hire a girl, and American girls to help waiter, and American Caucasian as manager. They have a big band, you know, and this is the first time I ever start waiting table in a first class, in a first class place.

**Sylvia:** This is 1921?

**Mr. Fat:** Yes, 1921.

**Sylvia:** You were 17 years old?

**Mr. Fat:** Yes, 1921, yes, I was 17 in 1921. 1921 or 1922 they vary. You know first I waited on tables and they really not like other Chinese, really they train you on how to

serve American help waitress and wait everyday, we just go back to work we are supposed to work with them, but still not inspect, they really taught us how to serve. But after two months they say to the Chinese, they say to the Chinese that they still are not good enough. They fire all of the Chinese.

**Sylvia:** They fired all of the Chinese?

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah, they think they are still not good enough. Then they changed to Colored people, Colored waiters, see? Then those days I got no more friend, you know, no more friend and then some of my friend they recommend me to Glen Roberts at another job in Glen Roberts –

**Sylvia:** In Michigan?

**Mr. Fat:** Michigan. I worked there for a year, then I, some friend of mine up no more friend and some friend in Chicago, you know, they know me they ask me to come out to Chicago. I go work in Chicago, I don't know how long. Then I decided to go home and go visiting. I have grandparents, and I said "I want to go home after four years", I worked, "Well I want to go home" you know, visiting. But my grandparents in China, they know I am coming home and I didn't expect to go home to get married, but they already arranged me to marry her, they already you know arrange, see?

**Sylvia:** Oh I see.



**Mr. Fat:** See? After I get to China then I get married.

**Sylvia:** You went home to an arranged marriage?

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah, yeah, see. They already arranged it before I get home. [laughs]

**Sylvia:** Is your wife Sam Yup also? I mean –

**Mr. Fat:** Lo [speaks in Chinese] They we get married, I get home, and in two months I get married, I am 20 year old, she is only 16. [laughs] But we get married, then we have a first child –

**Sylvia:** In China?

**Mr. Fat:** China, Wing that is my oldest son, you know that he's a [hard to hear, counter 149] and when he is about a few months old, I came back, I left them, left him, left the mother in China. I married in 1924. I stay over two years and I came back in 1926. I left them behind and then I came back, I went back to Chicago.

**[Counter 150]**

**Sylvia:** Oh you went back to Chicago?

**Mr. Fat:** I went back to Chicago, worked in Chicago, you know, between 26 until 1930, the Depression. Then I come out, my cousin [hard to hear, counter 158] from basement, moved up, upstairs –

**Sylvia:** In Sacramento.

**Mr. Fat:** Sacramento. From basement moved up to Third and I up there. Put the new building. They ask me to come out to manage it. Then I come out to manage it. I manager from 1930 until 1939, those days, you know, still tough times. But anyway, but give me an [hard to hear, counter 164] I besides, I manage the place, I saw sometime I write on paper too. And all those days I really, I met lots of nice people, even in those days I met lots of politicians, not many Chinese restaurants then. So they all come down to Hong Kim Lum. See that's why I met my first governor, Jimmy Rolph, then all the politicians, most naturally introduction, I just wait on tables you know, get acquainted, you know, we became friends. Until 1939 then I open my place.

**Sylvia:** Which place is it?

**Mr. Fat:** Frank Fat's the one downtown, near the Capitol.

**Sylvia:** How did you feel, was it risky for you to start a place, where you worried, because 1939 was a very bad time.

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah, still, yes it still was, but then you know, I, Wing, you know, came over here a few years go to school then I we had a couple of more babies. We start a new family see?

**Sylvia:** After 1939, when did they come over here?

**Mr. Fat:** In 1935.

**Sylvia:** 1935.

**Mr. Fat:** Ten years.

**Sylvia:** Where did you family live here in Sacramento in 1935?

**Mr. Fat:** We usually lived in, first they come here I lived in travel hotel for two months.

**Sylvia:** Travel hotel?

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah, you know, the [hard to hear, counter 186] Ramada.

**Sylvia:** How much was it then?

**Mr. Fat:** How much a day? I forgot, not much. I lived in travel hotel for a long time, you know, when I worked in Hong Kim Lum, I lived there.

**Sylvia:** And when your family came over where –

**Mr. Fat:** Then when they here, we buy a, rent a house get a place in 6<sup>th</sup> and N, 6<sup>th</sup> and N. It used to be all the Chinese lived in that area. The town, most of the Chinese they lived in that area, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup>. You know, you can, you can almost not many, not like now, they all lived so close in that area, because they can, they can find a decent house anyway.

**Sylvia:** You couldn't find any decent house any place else but that area?

**[Counter 200]**

**Mr. Fat:** Yes, well they won't sell it to you, restricted. That's why after I lived there my I think, all we have is my second's kid, is [hard to hear, counter 202] he is born here. Then I think we had three kids, and then four kids, and then the fifth kid, they all born in Sacramento in that area, you know. I think from 6<sup>th</sup> Street, I moved to 7<sup>th</sup>, then my, then I decided to you know, buy the house, because then we can live in the place because it cost more, and we decide to look for a house, but those days, you are, it was a hard time to find a decent house. I can't find a house around Chinatown, and finally I have a good

friend, he is a Yupian, very famous doctor in town, Dr. Jung Harry, you know, he lived in big house Auburn boulevard.

**Sylvia:** Which boulevard?

**Mr. Fat:** Auburn Boulevard and Watt, I think, [hard to hear, counter 216] nice area, Auburn and Watt, that corner now they have a shopping center, the U. P. [phone rings, a lady answers it] One day I told him [hard to hear, counter 220] it is very difficult to find a decent house, then he said, “well, I’ll buy you the house” and he know, his neighbor will be open on Watt Avenue belonged to Mr. [hard to hear, counter 226] of Sacramento. They had one acre of land and a house was too big for him, well he asked me “if you are interested you and come over and take a look”. Then we come out and take a look and it’s a nice area, you know, and one acre, [hard to hear, counter 232] and we bought that house. We were the only Chinese in go out that far.

**Sylvia:** What year was this?

**Mr. Fat:** 1940 something. Yeah, before the war, before the war, I am the only Chinese who live out that far, it was eight miles from town. No freeway, we had to drive through North Sacramento to get in town. But, you know, I’ve been through those experiences you know, for Chinese it was a hard time, in those days a lot of Chinese they also intend to build houses and look for a nice house, but they were in the same situation, you know. It was difficulty. But too bad I got an idea, but too bad I didn’t think about myself, but I

think about the community. During the wartime there was land out here, you know, wide open, land was still very cheap. I got an idea you know, we buy a big tract and we subdivide it ourselves, and make a nice area for Chinese. My idea, I like to buy it we subdivide it we build nice houses, make everything you know, showcase, I like to build better, better than in, you know, I like to make it showplace.

**[Counter 250]**

**Sylvia:** Make a showplace.

**Mr. Fat:** Showplace. I know the reason, that's why I know the reason why the Caucasians before they don't like the Chinese, restricted because in the early days the Chinese came over here and they never intended to stay, they never improve themselves, they never come out and social, that's why my idea just to try to build something nice to change the feeling, the impression,

**Sylvia:** Of the Caucasians?

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Of the Chinese?

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah, that was my idea. Then I have two tracts, I put the option, I tie it up, one tract is 26 acres in the north area, \$1000 an acre, and one 17 acre right in town near the Freeport Boulevard. You know, now it is right near the town in that area. Then I threw a party at the El Rancho. El Rancho used to be one of the most popular places. I threw a couple parties and invite all the Chinese. I know they intend to look for a house, and I present my idea. I said I got two tracts tied up in options, I know you people intend to look for houses, or build houses. I know how difficult, because I through it, you know,

**Sylvia:** What year was this?

**Mr. Fat:** It was still in the wartime. I forgot what year. Then I put up a party and invite all the people, I give them my idea, I said “listen, I am willing to put up some money, let’s organize a non-profit organization.” We bought those tracts, we sub-divided the land, then I put in a party and called a meeting, you know, I, you know and tell my idea. I said “let’s organize a non-profit incorporation, I am willing to put up some money, I asked them to put up some money too”. So we buy it and we develop it, I said “well at the development, we have church, we have schools, we have swimming pool, everything to make a complete, make a nice Chinese place.”

**[Counter 300]**

**Sylvia:** Sub-division.

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah, that's my whole idea. But those days out here, you know the people among Chinese they didn't know much about my character yet. You know, I don't blame them, you know, because of the old day Chinese, everything they start, everything, nothing ever went to success. They sometimes, they take the money and you know, they don't think my idea [hard to hear, counter 314]. They didn't know me enough, they think I just you know might be something I [hard to hear, counter 316] for yourself, see? But actually I just thought of it for them, for the Chinese Community, see, I already got a house, but I through that experience, you know, and I tried to do something to improve the Chinese and to change the White people –

**Sylvia:** Image.

**Mr. Fat:** Image and how they look on Chinese see? Then nobody, you know, they didn't change the whole [hard to hear, counter 228] and nobody come up. Then I was so disgusted and I give up the idea, I lost, you know, a few hundred dollars.

**Sylvia:** For the option?

**Mr. Fat:** For the option, see. But I tell you, a few years later, this is about three years later, somebody bought that property and developed it and they came back to me “we knew you were interested before” I said “well we'll sell you a little corner, just a little corner, I still have a little store there, little corner, \$10,000.” I could have bought the whole 26 acres for \$26,000! I don't feel too bad, though, at least my intention –



**Sylvia:** Was good.

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah, I look back, yeah some of the old people they still know that, you know, but anyway then thing didn't go through, but now I'm glad they changed. In those days, one they don't like to get together, [hard to hear, counter 349].

**[Counter 350]**

**Mr. Fat:** My idea, but in those days, you can't go anyplace.

**[Tape one, Side one ends]**

**[Counter 354]**

**[Tape one, Side two begins]**

**Mr. Fat:** The idea he don't like to stay in one area, he like to mix go in, and only in those days you can't own or mix in, you can buy direct.

**Sylvia:** You can buy what?

**Mr. Fat:** You can buy the house direct.

**Sylvia:** Directly.

**Mr. Fat:** You have to use your friend, White people.

**Sylvia:** So most of the Chinese used other people to buy their houses?

**Mr. Fat:** Buy the house, buy the house, it's you know, by not Chinese, by not you Chinese –

**Sylvia:** Yeah, White.

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah. To buy the house they trade most of it.

**Sylvia:** Are these mostly in the south area?

**Mr. Fat:** No, no, all over –

**Sylvia:** All over Sacramento.

**Mr. Fat:** See, but, you know then I don't know what year and they changed it, civil rights, after civil rights.

**Sylvia:** After the Civil Rights Movement?

**Mr. Fat:** Movement, see. Then they all say that the Chinese can go anyplace, here. That's why they are all split. I'm the only Chinese who moved out that far, that's why I live in the north area because Auburn Boulevard since then I'm the only Chinese there. But most of the Chinese lived down south. Not many in the north area, few, yeah, few. They just back then, I thought those days, also during the wartime I tell you another [tape stops and starts again with Mr. Fat already speaking, counter 373] I know the reason I know always try to improve the Chinese image.

**Sylvia:** The Chinese image. And another –

**Mr. Fat:** And I'll tell you another thing. During the wartime, I never been to Lake Tahoe, I've been invited to by a Caucasian friend he said "let's go up to the Lake." He said "well bring your family up here, you know, spend a few days, I'll make the, I have a cabin, I'll make a reservation in the cabin for your family to come up for a few days and stay with us." I said "fine" then all the kids, you know, my all the four or five of them, they were four or five years old, they never been to the lake, I've never been to the lake. This was in the wartime, so I said "fine, I've never been in the lake" and we all got so thrilled, we drove up there then we moved in the cabin, the next morning, the manager at that –

**Sylvia:** The resort?

**Mr. Fat:** The resort, they come and knock at the door, first he apologizes because, you know, maybe it's true, you know, he said he's new, he was just hired new, [hard to hear, counter 386] manager, he said he don't know what the regulation, he don't know the regulation, he don't know the rules, he said "I'm sorry to tell you, that area is restricted – no Chinese". Through the wartime, and we pack up our luggage and just get out and come home. But, I, then I, my mind is determined, I'd like, someday I'd like to come back to the lake. The next year I have a chance, somebody asked me to partner with them and open a restaurant and we bought a piece of property –

**Sylvia:** In Lake Tahoe?

**Mr. Fat:** The north end of the lake, in Lake Tahoe.

**Sylvia:** In the north end of Lake Tahoe.

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah, near CalNeva, do you know where the CalNeva is? I said fine, you know, I am one of the five, the most are Caucasian, four Caucasian, I am the only Chinese, they asked me to be a partner. You know, we bought the piece of property to have a restaurant, they have a gambling casino too, but we don't know how the casino, the casino [hard to hear, counter 398] I only run the restaurant. Just to give me a chance to go up there and I'm determined I want to go up there, normally I wouldn't but even if it wasn't a success or not, but I just determined I was going to go up there.

**[Counter 400]**

**Mr. Fat:** I know in those days very hard for me during the wartime, Wing was already in the service. [hard to hear, counter 404], it was difficult during the wartime because how to get help, how to get supplies, you know, I have to get everything for the restaurant, you know, you have to, I have to sometimes look for supply and look for help, you know, I know how the co-op felt. Beside the highway, in those days mostly not the freeway like now, just only a two way highway, one lane and one between two places. Sometime I close here and I go up there at night.

**Sylvia:** To Lake Tahoe?

**Mr. Fat:** To Lake Tahoe, the reason I just determined when I go up there, sold me because I sold them on the Chinese. The outfit owned it for three years, but that three years not make much money but anyway, give me satisfaction about the chance to met people. I either go up Highway 50 and come back Highway 80, or go up Highway 80 and come around the other side. Every chance I got I would go in town, I stopped either at a restaurant or a bar, one of the places where people are. I always introduce myself, always be a gentleman and spend a few dollars, you know, not I'm not \$20 sure or something like that, but always, you know, always introduce me and I tell them I'm Chinese and I'm so and so, but after three years, I tell, I made lots of friends.

**Sylvia:** They were used to seeing a Chinese up there then?

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah, yeah.

**Sylvia:** Whereas before they weren't used to seeing Chinese around?

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah. But that three years were very satisfactory, you know, make lots of friends, after three years, no matter where I go they accept me. And besides, south end of the lake you see nobody, south is not very winter proof, all of the business is at the north end of the Lake. CalNeva used to be a top place, Harvey goes, I know Harvey you know, that's why he always eat at my place, but now I hate to go up to the Lake any more, I don't want to go to Lake because all of my old friends are gone, except Harvey. You know, Harvey met me up there, he's just a little, at the beginning he is just a little shy. That's why I know all the history of the Lake, and across street, he's lucky, because across the street used to be two clubs, one was a country club they called it a State Club, one was the [hard to hear, counter 434] club, made the Harrah, now the Harrah Club. Bill Harrah from Reno go to Lake Tahoe, so now there are two clubs, he remodeled, make nice places and put on a show, he put three buses, all in California, in Sacramento, Stockton, Oakland, San Francisco, and all those three buses they take the people up there free! That's why the south end of the Lake, then Harvey grows, just across the street, he got everyday all overflowed, get bigger, bigger, bigger, you know, then I know how he started, I know Bill Harrah too, but all gone, except Harvey's still alive, yeah. [he laughs]

**Sylvia:** I want to ask you about the Gold Tong, are you active?

**Mr. Fat:** No.

**Sylvia:** What about your family association?

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah I go, but I'm not very active because my ideas are a little different than these people. I am always like that, even now, I like always, someday we have to you know, all those they, more ideas, [hard to hear, counter 448] yeah we'd like to get some Chinese to know about it, but you have to let the younger people, you know we can expect you know, now, even I belong to all these organizations, my idea, bring some young people, let them run it.

**[Counter 450]**

**Sylvia:** Let them run it.

**Mr. Fat:** Let them do it their own way. Then we stand by the side and advise them. But they [he laughs] they never can do. I don't know, same thing that the Chinese [hard to hear, counter 455] the Benevolent Association Chung Wah same idea. They, they not, I am not there, I very seldom go to meetings now.

**Sylvia:** Do you go to Chung Yee?

**Mr. Fat:** Huh?

**Sylvia:** Do you go to the Chung Yee?

**Mr. Fat:** Oh yeah, I go to the Chinese New Year's Party.

**Sylvia:** At the Association?

**Mr. Fat:** Yes, I go, I go to every one of them. But my idea is that sooner or later turn it over to them, I think the young men make a better idea. They can do a better job.

**Sylvia:** What about your children, do they, are they still, are they interested in the Association?

**Mr. Fat:** They can't commune, how they are interested.

**Sylvia:** Oh they can not communicate?

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah, how are, how can you expect, you know, that's why I left, let them do what they want, let them, I, you can expect, now the younger generation still do the way like the old Chinese because they, some of them they can speak, they can write, they can



read, how can you expect to do the Chinese way? Even the [hard to hear, counter 469] they don't understand what they are talking about. They not, youth generation is different in San Francisco, Chinese, even here before, if for the Chinese we stay –

**Sylvia:** Together?

**Mr. Fat:** Together, in certain areas, they all speak Chinese, same thing in San Francisco. Like you, the older the native born Chinese, they all speak Chinese. But now, they are all spread out. Even, I talked, my grandchildren goes to school for a couple of hours, okay,

**Sylvia:** You mean Chinese school?

**Mr. Fat:** Chinese school. They came back, they, all the neighbors they all speak English, they forgot how to, two or three years and they learned nothing. They forgot. How can you expect, see that's my idea, let them do, let them do the way here, but they still some history, tell them about the history. Do the way, use it, change it to English. But you can't expect all those younger generation to still, they don't know how to write, they don't know to read, they don't know how to speak. I think they can do a better job, but those old men, they should have [hard to hear, counter 484], but the that's my theory is to turn it over to the younger people. But they don't agree with me. You know, the younger people they have golf club. The young people they

**Sylvia:** Are you a member of the Capital Lion's Club?

**Mr. Fat:** Oh yeah, I'm a charter member, from when it began.

**Sylvia:** When did it begin?

**Mr. Fat:** We have the 25 year anniversary not very long ago.

**Sylvia:** Could you tell me how it became, how it began?

**Mr. Fat:** Well, we think, we should, some Chinese, you know, get the letters for service club to take care of Chinese. Yeah we do, all those Moon Festivals we put it on, you know, for the Chinese. All the young people I think they are more, they can do a better job, even the Drum Corp, they are raising lot's of money. The old people were, they just, I don't agree with them. They just, they like the main, don't think that the young people can do the job, if it was turned over to them. That's why I never go to Chung Wah meetings.

**Sylvia:** You mean Chung Wah people?

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah, they just like the name, you know. They said they represent all Chinese.

**Sylvia:** They say they represent all Chinese?

**Mr. Fat:** [laughs] How can they represent all Chinese? But I always, I feel, I get, I got an idea, but I am handicapped, I can't do it myself. See, I can little speak, but I can read a little bit, but you know, like here read paper, I can follow, I know what the meaning is. Sometime I take it down,

**Sylvia:** Do you mean in Chinese or English?

**Mr. Fat:** English.

**Sylvia:** In English.

**Mr. Fat:** Yes, because I don't know how to –

**Sylvia:** Write?

**Mr. Fat:** Spelling, write, you know, like some, hear, I know what that means. [hard to hear, counter 514] but sometimes they take it down, every, all individual like. They've still got my, they, we are all supposed to organize one –

**Sylvia:** One what?

**Mr. Fat:** For the young people. I try to organize, get the young men together in Sacramento. I also put up a party for them, and invite them to attend. I think that they

still have some bylaws and everything, but they never put in writing, never elect officers yet. I try to organize Sacramento Business Men and Professional Men's Association.

**Sylvia:** Chinese?

**Mr. Fat:** Chinese.

**Sylvia:** A Chinese Business and Professional Men's Organization.

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah, see. Get them together. I have all of these ideas if you are an individual you can only do so much. Only if you, you've got to have an organization for political, for anything. You can get in a deal, you know, when you only make a better deal if you have together. Yeah, you ask him, I think Tommy Chan, you know that ran for City Council? I think he got my, he got all the bylaws and everything. He said he could start it again. Now, that was a few years ago. I called the meeting to young men. I invite them to come to my restaurant. I tell my idea. Oh they think it is a good idea, they, but Leroy Fong the, you know, the attorney? The draw it up but, yeah –

**Sylvia:** But they didn't, maybe, not follow through?

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah, not follow through. I always try to help the young people, get them started. I know what we did, see, I've been long enough here, even the Capitol here, that only Sacramento, we got more lobby than the Legislature.

**Sylvia:** You have more lobbying than the Legislatures?

**Mr. Fat:** Yes, see, everybody, you have to, you know, after they look for you, you've got to, somebody's got to help organize. To express your concern, you, otherwise you are an individual.

**Sylvia:** What about your children? Are they into a lot of Chinese organizations or American organizations?

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah, Kenny he's, he is a dentist. I think not last year, I think last year he just finished I think, he been elected, he was still active, he's still active in the Dental Association. He's an elected President, I think last year, or the year before, something. That term just finished. Six counties, they elected him. You know, he is active, see. Always a few, I like to, young people get involved come out.

**Sylvia:** Come out and get involved?

**Mr. Fat:** Mix it, yeah.

**Sylvia:** In the White society?

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah, yeah. It is the only way unless you know the Chinese before, they always stay back. They are never involved, see? How can you know, I'm the only one that belonged to the Restaurant Association from the very beginning. See, that's [hard to hear, counter 559] even the law, every Capitol, they have so many laws. You know, everything you're with, you have to watch it, your own interests. If you know, like some Chinese, they pay monthly in fact, you know. You have to, sometime's if you have a benefit you have to do something, you know, yeah, but. Like immigration, they always are a few you know, the Immigration Law, always the Chinese, they always get burned before they tried to do something. Then it's too late!

**Sylvia:** Too late?

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah, then it's too late, you always every, that's what the Japanese did, they have a lobby that they, every year they have a, when Congress is in session they are there to watch it.

**Sylvia:** You are saying that the Japanese have a lobby in Congress and watch the bills?

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah, yeah.

**Sylvia:** But the Chinese don't have a lobby and they wait too long, --

**Mr. Fat:** They don't --

**Sylvia:** And they wait until they get burned before they do anything.

**Mr. Fat:** Yes, yeah, before they look for something, then it's too late. Yeah. The only way, I know the position and the you know I even not in school, even the Legislature, the only way after it became a law, you try to repeal it, hard to do, very difficult.

**Sylvia:** Repeal the law?

**Mr. Fat:** The only way is to kill it before they cast it.

**Sylvia:** You seem to know the legislative system very well. Have you tried to influence the Chinese community here regarding it?

**Mr. Fat:** They don't understand.

**Sylvia:** They don't want to, or they don't understand?

**Mr. Fat:** They don't understand. They go on, they don't understand, and they don't want to, you know, that's a, yeah, that's the trouble, and I'm the only one that belongs to the Restaurant Association. I know, that everybody is cost more fees, and the Chinese they don't understand that. Every law, in fact, they've got in fact two. But sometimes

you live in this society, you have the duty, you have the, do you see it? Otherwise people won't respect you. You are always, you are still, "what do you sell, we'll do it for you."

**Sylvia:** What you are saying is that the Chinese just do it for themselves instead of actually coming out doing for others?

**Mr. Fat:** Yes. They the old people, they don't. Well I don't know they maybe don't know how?

**Sylvia:** In your business you seem to deal more with the White society?

**Mr. Fat:** Oh yeah.

**Sylvia:** But in your social life do you deal with a more Chinese or more White society, in your social life?

**Mr. Fat:** Both. I can mix it.

**Sylvia:** What about your children?

**Mr. Fat:** Children, yeah, they still have a little Chinese too, but most I think that they oh Caucasian. Yeah. Because they can't speak Chinese, except Wing, my oldest boy.



**Sylvia:** Wing is the only one that can speak Chinese?

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah. And my daughter, my oldest daughter. The rest of them, they understand a little bit, but they can't speak. Tommy, he's a tax attorney.

**Sylvia:** An attorney?

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah, [hard to hear, counter 618] he learned the family business. He is a tax attorney, he is out there now and then. He's a tax attorney.

**Sylvia:** Do you see down the road of your grandchildren, do think they will be more Chinese or they will be more and more White?

**Mr. Fat:** I think that's why I send my two grandchildren to China, to the mainland. One just is on the way back, to go back to school.

**Sylvia:** Do you mean your grandchild is in China now going to school?

**Mr. Fat:** He left soon, I think he is on the way back now. He can commune –

**Sylvia:** Communicate?

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah, that's the generation gap. I was always tell the old Chinese here too. You have to let them try to do it the way they want. You know, we can, we not stay here all the time, we going to, you know, our oldest generation, see and, but I send my grandchildren to back to China Mainland for a few months, you know to see. And also I want them to go back to my relatives.

**Sylvia:** Oh.

**Mr. Fat:** That's why, I like to have them see where I come from.

**Sylvia:** You want your children to go back to your village and see where you came from?

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah, what your root come from.

**Sylvia:** Now have you gone back to China yourself?

**Mr. Fat:** Oh yeah. I have been back four times. My sister is still there.

**Sylvia:** Has it changed very much?

**Mr. Fat:** Yeah. Not the construction, now beginning. They changed it, I think the first time since Nixon opened it. I went back in 73. In those days, not much had changed.

But I mean, for the country it changed, but I mean construction and building not much had changed. I can compare in the old days and now, see I've been back four times already. But the last time, you know, lot's of new construction, lot's of things changed. The first time, in those days they were still under the cultural revolution. People were scared, they don't talk, but now they are more freely, they are more helping. Also they, I can see the whole country change. See the most impressive for me, is this: the young, the kids. In my old days, I can see the old days easy, see the kids, they starved, people they starved to death. Now you don't see any people starve to death. The kids are healthy. They all got a chance to go to school. In my old day, if they are a poor family they have got no chance to go to school, yeah.

**Sylvia:** Mr. Fat, you came over here as a young man, and you returned to China to get married and you came back, eventually having more children in the United States –

**Mr. Fat:** Yes.

**Sylvia:** So you have lived in the United States 61 years, you have also gone back to China to see the differences and the changes in your village –

**Mr. Fat:** Yes.

**Sylvia:** Now you started several businesses in Sacramento and they were all successful, and you've even tried to think in terms of helping your own Chinese countrymen here in Sacramento.

**Mr. Fat:** Yes.

**Sylvia:** As far as housing while it was a problem and concern?

**Mr. Fat:** Yes.

**Sylvia:** Okay, now that you are semi-retired and at your age, do you feel that you are more Chinese in thinking, or more American in thinking?

**Mr. Fat:** Well, both, it depends on what, you know. I can you know, both.

**[Tape one, Side two ends]**

**[Interview over]**

**[Counter 705]**