



Name: Franklin Quan

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Conducted by: Dr. Jacqueline Peterson-Loomis and Harlan Luck

(EXCERPT)

I was born during the depression. At the age of 4 I attended kindergarten located on the corner of Fourth and Couch. I also attended the CCBA Chinese School at the age of 5. When I went to American school, Couch School, in 1940, I didn't know ABC's. I didn't know any English at all. I only just spoke Chinese because that's what I grew up learning. Everytime I sat in class, I cried with my cousins.

After grammar school, I attended Benson High School, and after that, four years after high school, I went to Portland State for four years. Eventually during that time, I also worked my whole life at the noodle factory. I helped my dad deliver noodles to the different restaurants in town and we had to climb some of the stairs at the restaurants like Hoisan Low, the Westlake Inn, and Hung Far Low. There was a Rice Bowl in downtown Portland on Third and Stark. There was a Chinese Golden Pheasant restaurant up by the Blue Mouse Theater. My dad was one of the few original Chinese that had automobiles, the old cars you crank up and start the engine. We delivered noodles and I always rode in there. When they couldn't find parking spots downtown or anyplace else, I had to carry the boxes of noodles to the restaurant, back to the kitchen - also restaurants in St. Johns and Gresham and Eastside, and all Chinatown when they ordered the supplies.

The name of the noodle factory was Portland Chinese Noodle Factory. It started in the 1920s on Second and Flanders. The original owners - I didn't know their names. They sold it, or asked my dad to take over the business, and so that's what we did until 1940. That was from 1920s to 1949 or 1950 when we sold the business to Mah Ying, which is Ruth Mar's husband. That's Mary Leong's sister. Meantime, my dad was successful and opened a restaurant on Columbia Boulevard that's between Union Avenue and the Humane Society - about 112th. The name of that restaurant was Ding Ho Restaurant.

I always had to work through life, and there was no sports or recreation. But during my younger days when I was growing up I remember Bruce Wong and Gifford and Clifford and Harlan and Bob, and playing football and going up to Northwest Park Blocks to play on the slides and the bars. There was a little wading pool right at Burnside in the park. That was our entertainment when we were kids. As we grew older we made slingshots and our hunting experience was going under the Steel Bridge and the Burnside Bridge to shoot pigeons. We got caught a couple times and the police confiscated our slingshots because they thought we were harming and

shooting at other people. Also during that time I had to attend Chinese school in the evening after the regular grammar school. I went to Chinese school until high school, but I forgot all that stuff by now. We also had entertainment. When the Chinese Presbyterian Church opened on Third and Couch in the middle block on Third Avenue, I sang in the choir. Steven Lee, the minister, had property and built a park-like garden and they had some recreation activities there. That's right next to Hung Far Low and where the new Tuck Lung building is at now.

There wasn't much social life during high school because I had to work at the restaurant or else work at the noodle factory during that time. I learned how to cook and wait on tables and wash dishes, peel and clean the vegetables - learned the whole trade. Eventually, when I was still in high school, my fourth uncle, Bertha's father, was a baker at the hotel and I went down there at one o'clock, two o'clock - took the bus downtown and tried to learn the baking trade. By 7 o'clock, when the regular crew came to work, he would shoo me off and made me go home so he wouldn't get caught. Sometime later I also worked at the Benson Hotel during the college years in the kitchen, starting at the pantry and working as a cook at the London Grill because I had some knowledge working in the kitchen at our own restaurant.

There's many things I learned at the hotel and in the restaurant trade cooking. Social life - I didn't have that much time for that at all. I was always working, inborn with it maybe growing up.

Housing Discrimination and WWII Activism

I didn't feel any discrimination until my dad tried to buy a house on the Eastside during the war and after the war. In 1948 or '49, he was unable to and so there was other Caucasian people that tried to help assist my father to buy a home. He said no, he didn't want to fight the issue, but I also recall that when I was kid, I was real young, they had - China was in conflict with the Japanese and they had marches down there on First by the Steel Bridge and my dad was transporting the people because he was requested to assist in helping gather the group of Chinese to hold picket signs and protest against the war in China against Japan, or Japan against China during that time.

I was may 6, 7, 8, 9 years old when it happened. I also recall that during the war they had war bonds, WPA, War Protection Act. They were trying to raise money for the defense with selling bonds, and they had programs at the auditorium, and I remember all these Chinese that had performed. I also had to go up there to sing on the stage when I was a kid. My dad transported us because we were one of the few Chinese that had an automobile at that time.

Eventually we finally bought a house on NE Jessop Street after we built the restaurant, to be closer, and sold the noodle factory. We lived there for quite a few years.

At that time, Chinatown and Skid Row were so close together. The bums would sleep on the storefronts like they do now and we just grew up with them. We didn't fear them and they didn't bother us. When we went to Couch School, I remember walking back and forth to school each

day from Second Avenue all the way up to 21st and Glisan. We spent time playing in the street and walking up and down and took our time. It was a 20 minute walk each way. When it rained real hard, we were able to take the bus up to 16th and Glisan and then had to walk the rest of the way up to 21st.

The famous restaurant in Chinatown was Bamboo inn and it was across the street where the House of Louie is now. And that was next to the Chinese school. There was the Ok Chun grocery store right in the middle of the block, and then there was Hoisan Low on the corner on Fourth and Everett. And the Fong Chong building, and the Republic is across the street on Fourth Avenue. Around the corner was the Wong laundry. There was some of the older buildings that was on the corner of Third and Davis - a building owned at that time by Bill Ding and Lee Hing and Freda Fong's father. I forgot his name - Patsy Fong's father. Next to that was the Chinese School, CCBA Chinese School, and the CCBA Hall. During that time in the old days, in the 1930s, 1940s, they had movies for the entertainment of the Chinese and I attended several movies in the evening with my mother. I always fell asleep, it was so late.

Celebrating Lunar New Year in Chinatown

It was lion dances and they were bringing firecrackers, and the business owner would tie the dollar bills for the celebrations and I always followed them from one storefront to the other one. It was such a big celebration with the firecrackers going on all the time.

During the New Year's, we celebrated by having a big family dinner and relatives would be invited and we would play, and each time we would get a lot of money in red bags with hung bao or lai see. My parents would also be passing out the red bags to the other kids as exchange or as a courtesy, as a custom.

Chicken was always a main course and fish and noodles for longevity. And a lot of Chinese ingredients with the herbs that were cooked in. Some beef, but mostly chicken and fish and shrimp and seafood. My mom did the majority of the cooking. My sister helped out and other relatives would bring various dishes. They always had a toast with the old Chinese wine or the whiskey called *un gau pai*. I took a couple shots of that. It was bitter and did not taste good, but I swallowed it and then I passed out. It was pretty potent stuff.

Helping with Funeral Processions in Chinatown

The funeral processions, some of the well-known Chinese would have a parade and my dad would help line up a group of musicians. I don't know who, but they marched for about four or five blocks around Chinatown for the procession. They would carry a big picture in the truck of the person that passed away. Since he spoke more English than the majority of the other Chinese, he was always consulted to interpret and do various projects for the different Chinese populations. Mostly with the CCBA, Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association. A lot of the

people were unable to compensate for their services so he always offered to help them. He was active in the Lee Association. We were originally Lees with the paper name of Quan. That was his business paper that was different from the private paper.

Leaving Chinatown

We left after we sold the noodle factory. We moved over to Northeast Portland. Occasionally, I returned. I remember that the Fong Ching building burned in 1977 and I had a picture from the Oregonian. I gave it to Keith Lee. During the wartime we had a picture that we had to carry around like identification. I forgot to bring it, but I was 7 years old at the time - had a picture of me as a student. We also had a card, a picture like a passport card. It said I'm American Chinese, with an American flag and a Chinese flag on it.