

MI LEW  
and  
MARIE LEE LEW  
Second Interview

Interviewed by:  
Sam Schrager

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# I. Index

## MI LEW / MARIE LEE LEW

Mi: Moscow; b. 1905

restaurant owner.

Marie: Moscow; b. 1910

restaurant owner.

1.5 hr.

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with Sam Schrager  
Dec. 10, 1975

## II. Transcript

MI LEW/MARIE LEE LEE

This interview with Mi Lew and Marie Lee Lew took place at their home on the edge of Moscow, Idaho on December 10, 1975. Interviewer is SAM SCHRAGER.

MI LEW: --give cred<sup>it</sup> to anybody then he goes broke, he himself goes broke, <sup>you can</sup> very seldom get anything out of anybody. I read in the paper where <sup>Hay one million of dollars</sup> W. T. Grant<sup>^</sup> in the middlewest or someplace the<sup>ir</sup> creditor was supposed to collect, the store close up and nobody-- I think he's gonna have a hard time. My father-in-law had a restaurant in Ellensburg. I think all those people there, those hay<sup>boys</sup>, you know, every spring they come hay, you know, cut hay and they work maybe one month, <sup>or</sup> six weeks, you know, and then they pay. But in the meantime he closed up, he closed up and I sent a lawyer to ask for collection. I think out of four hundred dollars, I think he got eighteen dollars, altogether. And<sup>it's</sup> no use, they had to run all the way from here over to Ellensburg, and I could see it ain't no use.

MLL: Of course, at that time my father was back in China.

ML: No matter what you do you cannot get it, because it's awfully hard when--

SS: I wonder if he expected when he went back that---

MLL: You know, there's always hope, like when the fella owe you money that-- well, you know, he himself didn't go broke, it just happen that the poor time, you know, the timing was wrong. It happened to be that before they pay their yearly expenses, why, the town close up on them and they had to leave this certain particular town in Idaho. And so, he himself have to leave too, of course, you know.

ML: Well, another thing too, you know, when these older people go back to China, what little money they have, you see, they probably got in their-- they probably bought a little piece of land or bought a little bit of something-- it's hard, if they owe four, five hundred

dollars it's hard for them to raise four, five hundred dollars in American money to give it back to you. It's awfully hard to do that because, it's so long ago and the things, you know, that-- although he admit that he owe it to you, but what <sup>can</sup> he do, you know, he hasn't got anything to give to you. You certainly can't get blood out of a turnip.

SS: Was it a very long time he waited before he wound up going back home? To try and collect.

MLL: He didn't go back right away. I think he tried to make a go of it there in Wenatchee, and I think he went back after Wenatchee, because--

ML: Oh, yeah. I think it must be about fifteen or twenty years later. Because if you go back too early, because most of these people are here, <sup>still</sup> working here. Then they scatter all over United States.

SS: But many went back and retired?

ML: Yeah, some of 'em retired; some of them pass away. He probably got a few of the close relatives, that are close to him that he knows where they are and they heard <sup>about</sup> he's doing so well, then he tried to go back and collect, see if he can. And in fact, that's just a part of the trip, he want to go-- most Chinese when they get-- especially from the old country, they <sup>are</sup> like a salmon, they want to go back to their breeding grounds before they die.

MLL: And, of course, he haven't seen his family--

ML: He haven't seen the family, <sup>haven't seen the village,</sup> haven't seen anything, and so therefore he like to. He was either seventy-five or eighty years old. Seventy or eighty before he went back there. So, therefore he like to go see the old folks and see how the <sup>old</sup> village is, then he come back and die in peace.

SS: By custom-- I wonder if there is any statute of limitations, like seven years here---



- MLL: Oh, no, there's no statute of <sup>anything</sup> <sub>^</sub>. But the trouble is, everybody's hard up. They're poor people. I imagine if these people had made good, you know, in later life, they'd be glad to give it to him, whatever they owe him. Because a debt is a debt to the Chinese people.
- ML: I kind of remember that--
- ML: You remember that.
- ML: Oh yeah, I think that that's the time when China itself was in <sup>the</sup> <sub>^</sub> war between the North and the South. Chiang Kai ~~S~~hek's army and the Communists, they were having a real rough time, at that time. The war was just going back and forth all the time, that time. Everybody was scared and hanging onto what little they had. If it was peaceful-- if that fellow made it, he probably woulda got it. No doubt about that.
- MLL: That's the way the Chinese people feel. If they can do it, they will do it, even sacrificing to some point. It's not like they don't want to pay their debt, but if their children are hungry they gonna use that money first to feed their children first, you know, before they give <sup>back</sup> <sub>^</sub> to the debt, or at least a part of that debt-- use a part of that money to feed their children. Maybe not the best of things, but at least prevent them from starving to death, they will use that money, of course.
- SS: It's one thing Clara Grove told me when I talked to her is- she said that she feels in the old days a person's word <sup>stood</sup> <sub>^</sub>-- (all are talking at once).
- ML: In old days the Chinese people were that way, too. You don't have to sign. Word <sup>is</sup> <sub>^</sub> just pretty near as good as gold, see. And you don't have to sign, see. Well, as far as that's concerned-- well, I had a friend when I was just starting out, too, that was in '29-- what you call--- I went down and wanted to start, I didn't have any money either, and

I went down to talk to an old friend of mine, old gard<sup>e</sup>ner-- that was during those years, and I wanted to borrow a little bit of money to <sup>keep</sup> the restaurant going on-

MLL: That was in '31.

ML: '31. And he gave me, I would say, pretty near the last dollar; after he gave to me he only had six, seven dollars left. Although he didn't need it because his garden was producing what little he needed from day to day, see, whatever he <sup>id</sup>use from day to day. Then, of course he loaned me whatever I asked-- seven hundred dollars, he loaned it to me. And then it must be five, six years later, then I paid him back, see, I paid him back. <sup>we</sup> don't have to worry about the interest part, the interest part, th<sup>at</sup> don't count, see. If you want to give him some, okay, if you don't want to give him some, that's fine, see. The Chinese people are not-- don't say how much percent interest. That part doesn't count at all, see. So finally, I paid him back. He was getting old and he want<sup>d</sup> to retire, he want<sup>d</sup> to leave to go back to China. And I say, "Okay." And I paid him back all his money. Then, of course, after he went back to China for about six, seven years, in the village there, they had a great big typhoon, you know, these big storms. <sup>like in Florida</sup> Except in <sup>China</sup> they call it typhoon. Typhoon blew his house down. Then he wrote and asked me, see, if I could loan him a little money to build back his house. I <sup>did</sup>. At that time I was getting <sup>some</sup> on my feet, <sup>a little bit</sup> so I did, I scraped up-- I wasn't rich at that time, but nevertheless, I had a little money, so I sent him back <sup>some</sup> money to build his house back after the typhoon. And, of course, I knew very well at the time I could not ask him to pay me back because he hadn't got anything. Because he getting old and he didn't have any money to pay me back.

MLL: And he spent the money <sup>already</sup> what he brought back.

ML: And, therefore, he said-- although he told one of his relatives or

something, he said, if I went back to the village and asked him for it, he would be glad to sign over his house <sup>or anything</sup> and give it to me for that debt, you see. And he said he'd be glad to do that. But, 'course, I never expect that of him, because I feel that I owe him some too, because when I started I didn't have anything. I feel the same way toward him too, because when he <sup>was</sup> down I <sup>like to</sup> help him out, too. That's how Chinese people-- we can borrow money if <sup>somebody</sup> as a general rule, <sup>quite simple,</sup> if a friend, you can borrow money <sup>we are in a type that way.</sup> because we borrow from one another. We're something like the Jewish people-- <sup>if</sup> If a person has money, you don't have to sign-- you don't have to go and have a notary public sign and all this other stuff to get your money. You <sup>just</sup> go ahead and ask your friend and <sup>this</sup> friend will loan it to you. He will loan it to you, and he <sup>honors</sup> expects you to pay it back.

MLL: 'Course, you have to know <sup>who</sup> the friend is. He can't be a gambler or something.

ML: Yeah, yeah. You have to know. You gotta use your judgement. But a good friend, you don't have to sign anything, <sup>you don't have to do anything,</sup> they'll pay you back.

SS: Could that debt be passed on to his son?

ML: Yeah, he can.

SS: But you didn't want it to, or ask for that?

ML: No. I knew his son wouldn't have it either because he was in a hard time. And I feel that, you know, that the good Lord had been kind to me, so why would I press something that way. See? I feel that way. We don't need it.

MLL: He gave us when we were in need, so we help<sup>ed</sup> him out when he was in need. We knew that he wouldn't have any chance of repaying us back, because he was old, you, <sup>then see</sup> and he had used up whatever he had saved, and he could not go back to work, because he was too old to work.

SS: I supposed he wouldn't have asked you either unless he really needed it.

ML: Yeah, that's right.

MLL: And he'd have to need it for something that's important, you know, before he'd ask.

ML: And then I had another friend that was in need, but I knew better, see. Because, I didn't send it to him, because I knew better. The friend was a very old friend of mine, too, <sup>he was a</sup> very good friend of mine, and the Communists got a hold of him, it was a little bit later, the Communists <sup>all the</sup> got a hold of him and trying to get friends to squeeze money out-- for them to give it to him, see, and I knew that. And so I did not, although he wrote and asked me, <sup>but</sup> I did not send him any, because I feel <sup>that</sup> it would not do him any good, because, in other words, using friendship to give it to <sup>him</sup>, see. Because I knew that later years, I heard about that. That was very much so. That was true.

SS: So he was pressured.

ML: Yeah, he was pressured by the Communists. And no matter who it is trying to get some money out of <sup>the</sup> friends, <sup>abroad</sup> see, for the Communist people.

SS: If he was an old friend, he might have felt himself in a pretty hard position to have to ask you.

ML: Yeah, but <sup>the</sup> the Communists pressured him to do that. They probably censored him before it come out to me. So he could not express his thoughts to me about that, see. But I knew about it, I knew he was being pressured because the Communists had taken over at that time. And I knew that-- they pressured my mother too. I didn't send her anything either. They pressured my mother and beat her up and all that other stuff. I still didn't send her any.

MLL: She was in her seventies, too.

ML: Yeah.

MLL: Even then she sold a piece of property about <sup>ten or</sup> fifteen years before-

ML: the Communists came.

MLL: And they say they want that money. She say, well, she's been using <sup>that</sup> ~~that~~, you know, to live on, how could she? They don't care, "Better get it from some place." So when she didn't have any money to give it to them, <sup>why then</sup> they beat her up. She lost a few front teeth and everything.

SS: Terrible.

MLL: But that is <sup>even</sup> just a small case, you know, many, many of our friends <sup>their</sup> ~~family~~ even got killed, you know. Their fathers and mothers and husbands and wives there, they get killed.

SS: Why? Because they didn't give up what they had?

ML: No. No.

SS: They were on the wrong side?

ML: <sup>Yeah</sup> That's about it. This is at the beginning, where one <sup>would and</sup> go tell the other- ~~that~~ if you had an enemy, see, now, you go ahead and complain to the Civil Court of the Communist Party. <sup>Because the other party is ahead now, see.</sup> So, you make stories about it- just like my mother, see, they make stories that my mother had a piece of property. In fact, that farmer used to farm our land, and she said <sup>we oppress them, we had to take the food out,</sup> they give us too much rent, and all that, so she made a complaint because he didn't like my mother, so therefore, she made a complaint and therefore the court--at that time, you see, everybody <sup>was</sup> on the other side- so that's what happened. Right now, at the present time it's not that way, <sup>anymore,</sup> they check things out now. The older generation has passed on now. So the newer generation, there isn't any <sup>trouble</sup> anymore.

MLL: And it's <sup>been</sup> twenty-five years, too. The Communists started in '49-- 1950, '60, '70--so that's twenty-five years ago.

SS: Do you think the old people had a harder time adjusting to the change?

ML: Yeah.

MLL: Of course, the older people had a harder time.

ML: Yes. Because the older people, especially the influential <sup>older</sup> people-- see most of the older people what they get after are the wealthy people. See, the wealthy old <sup>er</sup> people they hate to give it up. I say right along that Communism is, in other words, is getting it at the top and moving it back down to the bottom and lifting the bottom up a little bit. You know, the bottom people up a little bit, that's why China, without Communism she could not be where she is today, because there are too many poor people. There's nobody in between, see, they <sup>are</sup> either too rich or too poor. The in between are very, very few, see.

SS: Did you say before that that's what you saw when you went over there and thinking about staying. <sup>7</sup>

ML: Yeah. No, when I was over there thinking about staying, <sup>at that time</sup> I knew the war was coming. I could feel it in the air that Japan was about ready to attack Manchuria.

ML: '32. 1932.

ML: Because the Chinese government, every so often they put a pamphlet out, and they say, "In case a airplane flies over you do this, an airplane flies over, and you do that." And they tell you how to get out to the bomb shelter and stuff that way. Although, they haven't got a bombshelter, but they tell you to get into buildings.

SS: The people thought this was coming?

ML: Yeah. Yeah, they can feel it. I can feel it in the air, but the poor people can't. In the first place the poor people can't read, you see. And they got nothing to lose. That's all they got is just every day go out and work and maybe get enough to eat and maybe not. So, they have to work no matter what happen. But I felt it in the air, espec-

ially when I come back from the United States. I went back to China and I can feel that in the air, that the war is coming. Japan, you know, is getting ready to move into Manchuria. And I can feel it. Of course, like I say, I only had one year to stay, if I stayed another six months or so I couldn't come back. So I had to do one way or the other. Make up my mind right away quick. So I decided to come back.

SS: Well, when you were there in '29, is this the way it was?

MLL: Up until 1949, up until the Communists come in.

ML: It (was) terrible. That's why I can see where the Communists right at the present time, have a great change from what it was. I was out in 1930, made the same trip in 1930 from Canton to Hong Kong. And I made it in 1972, the same trip from Canton to Hong Kong. There's lots of difference. At that time <sup>it was</sup>, really, people were so poor and everybody's begging on the streets in Canton, it was really filthy and it really is awfully bad. But then in 1972 I see everything-- it's not decorated up, like the West <sup>here</sup> ~~is~~, but nevertheless, the people are-- they got a shelter, they got a meal coming. Maybe they haven't got any steak, but nevertheless they got something to fill their stomach. That's what you notice now. <sup>The</sup> People seem to be, like I say, they are quite content, they would like to have more, but when everybody's the same <sup>anymore - than they do</sup> they don't see any difference. So they're content. Really, they are. They feel that they're doing it for the country and everybody's in the same-- they feel good about that. Where before, like I say, the beggars on the street-- you die on there and the rich come along and they kick you. Instead of trying to help you out, they kick you. Because you're worse than an animal. So it has improved quite a lot.

SS: Who had the power in the '20's when you were there?

ML: ~~Ching~~ Kai ~~Shek~~, was part of it, at that time they had war amongst--

the what you call it, Cheng (?) and General ? , and all those guys they're having fighting over the territory, all over China at that time. The British support one army and the Germans support another army, and you know, they fighting among themselves like they do in Israel now. One side the Russian and one side -- the other one on the other side.

MLL: <sup>Chinese</sup>  
^ War Lords.

ML: Call them War Lords.

MLL: All fighting for themselves.

ML: Some foreign country support you and then you go ahead and conquer somebody else. That's the way they are.

SS: How much of the people were rich? Would it be just a tiny fraction?

ML: I would say about three or four percent is about all. But the rich are wealthy; the rich are real wealthy. They are so rich that they control everything. In Hong Kong now the same way. Hong Kong now, the wealthy Chinese are so rich there, that really you don't know how much money they got. You can't tell.

MLL: Their taxes are low, too. They only tax--

ML: \$12,500.

MLL: No matter how much you make.

ML: No matter how much you make.

MLL: <sup>That's</sup>  
^ the highest--

ML: Twelve and a half percent. So if you want to get ahead, you got to Hong Kong and build a business. And if you make a million dollars you only pay twelve thousand five hundred dollars.

SS: Was the wealth inherited? Is that how--?

MLL: Yes, inherited, passed on from one generation to the other.

ML: Well some of it--



SS: Was it certain families that were wealthy?

MLL: Of course-- it's the family that were wealthy.

ML: The old Chinese tradition, you know, if you have <sup>an</sup> education, you know the Chinese people used to have -- instead of an examination, the Chinese in the old time-- the people that write the best poetry are the head of the government. The person that make something that produce the most wheat or produce the most rice or something, or what'd you call it-- to feed the people: No. But the people that write the best poetry. They have it every year-- no, maybe every five or ten years, I forget now, the government, the king, queen-- the dowager now, but the king-- every so many years that you write a poetry-- if you write the most beautiful poetry, they give you a governor of the one section <sup>of the thing that you rule.</sup> Because you are an educated man-- what'd you call it-- therefore you would rule that territory. Then the one that writes the best poetry, therefore he wants his uncle, his nephew <sup>on</sup> down the line to, connection with him because the Chinese book says-- if any one of your relatives receives the king's signature-- what'd you call it-- poetry, the whole family would get the benefit. That's the old Chinese tradition.

SS: Was this still going on-- <sup>the '20's</sup> the '20's

ML: Oh, yes, still going on. The War Lord, you support the War Lord. The War Lord got all his relatives down the line to run the whole thing.

MLL: He be mayor and councilman and all that, you see. Of course, they made rules to <sup>benefit</sup> themselves at the people's expense.

SS: That's what we call patronage. You give out the jobs.

ML: Well, what they do here.

SS: Well, pretty hard to do it to your own relatives. Usually keep your

own relatives out, and maybe put in your friends.

MLL: Well, the Chinese people is relatives, you know.

ML: The Chinese people-- they're family group, you know.

MLL: If you're a real true friend you really got a friend. They consider you almost like <sup>a</sup>brother, you know, a relative. *If you're a true...*

SS: When you were there in the '20's were you looking it over to see if you could be an engineer there?

ML: Yeah. I graduated, <sup>there</sup> I just went back there to just look over to see, to see if I can get a job and see how things are. Of course, I came over in '06, you see, ---

SS: I am curious about when you were there, where did you go to look for a job? Who did you ask?

ML: In China when you look for a job, you have to know somebody. You have to know-- connections, see. You can get any job, if you do, you'll *probably* land up hauling dirt, you know, bamboo pole with two baskets on it. With a degree you do that, see.

SS: You know it's not altogether different in this country now. It doesn't look like it,--

ML: That's why congress<sup>is</sup> now blaming the Lockheed people for giving some little money to the people, ~~to~~ sign the contract, you know, give 'em the what'd you call that. They do that in Washington D.C. all the time. Your congressman go ahead buy you a cup of coffee, pat you on the back, says that<sup>is</sup> for a bargain, that's all it is. Where you're dealing with millions<sup>of</sup> dollars over there, maybe two, three millions or half a million, maybe half a billion dollars, why naturally you give a half a million or something. <sup>to somebody</sup> I think maybe, Lockheed's alright. Naturally they're doing it there all the time.

MLL: That's part of their business.

- ML: Well, people doing that all <sup>the</sup> time here.
- MLL: They're doing it right here in Moscow.
- ML: That's human instinct. I don't blame them for that, 'cause if you was out there in the street, I don't know you, I wouldn't stand out there and talk to you. Therefore, you come and visit a little bit when you come in, then, like I say, pretty soon if I want something off of you then <sup>you go ahead, treat</sup> ~~me~~ a cup of coffee, <sup>we say good friends,</sup> and then pretty soon we know each other, then we could deal. The same thing over there, except there's a bigger volume, that's all. But here we are jumping that we shouldn't do this and we shouldn't do that. They themselves <sup>are</sup> that way.
- SS: Who did you go to to try to get a job?
- ML: First, in order to get a job you have to stay there for a little while. Then pretty soon you have to know some friends. The Chinese are very good. Supposing my wife's friend now, that knows your relative, <sup>over there</sup> then the relative goes to the other one, and say a good word for you, and then they'll go ahead and then, okay, we'll try and see. And maybe he will come back,-- a certain commission will go back to the-- off of your wages, go back to the other guy, too. You don't know that. If you don't know that, see, you're fine, because you don't feel guilty. But if you feel that you're supposed to make five hundred dollars, you got a hundred dollars go back to the other one, then you feel bad, because if he told you <sup>you</sup> got only four hundred dollars, he'd be okay, see. That's psychological. <sup>The same thing,</sup> It does work that way. The Chinese people do do that, see. <sup>You can barter. Make your commission on it that way.</sup>
- SS: Well, was there any particular official that had to approve you for you to get a job?
- ML: Oh, yeah. You, in the first place-- I was going to get onto the bridge

across the <sup>Pearl</sup> River for a while, I was going to get in there and get a job there. And in order to do that, you do have to get with some relation with an engineering job and he gets you to the other guy. If you don't know the head man you have to get to the lower ones, and gradually go in that way. It's not easy. If you're relative to one, you don't need to know anything, you <sup>can</sup> get to the top, you can get in there to the head man. I guess that's the same way all over.

MLL: If you're a relative you can hire an engineer, he could do your work while you get five hundred dollar maybe you give the engineer three hundred dollars, and you keep the two hundred dollars. <sup>5</sup> If you have a few engineers under you, you have enough wages, you know, to support yourself.

SS: Without working too much!

ML: Everything in the world's that way.

SS: Was it a hard decision for you to make? To decide to come back here instead of staying there?

ML: Yeahhh-- it wasn't too hard. Because, in the first place I hated to see people so poverty, so poor, you know. I hate to see that because I always have kind of a little softhearted for people that are really poor, that are trying to do something for themselves, but yet they can't help themselves. I do have a little softness <sup>toward</sup> that way, but I do hate people to come and chisel me. I used to run the restaurant there and some people they used to <sup>be</sup> come in the restaurant and ask for food lots of times, every day in-- <sup>'29, '30</sup> every day, one or two persons come in and ask for food. And a lot of 'em would say they work for a little bit, but then a lot of 'em don't want to work. Just want a handout. And it used to be it get me so mad sometimes, you know, --- (End of Side A) --- work then give 'em something to eat, see. There are a lot of 'em

that'll do that, and there are a lot of 'em that won't do that.

MLL: We always feed the ones that ask for work, "I like to do some work to get a meal." But there a lot of people said, "Can you give me a meal, can you feed me?" Well, those, we don't fool around with, because there's enough of the kind that do want a little work; at least he<sup>is</sup> willing to work, you know, if there's any work or not to be done after he eats, that's another thing.

SS: A lot of these people that were pretty much begging for food, were they just coming-- passing through?

ML: Yeah, there a lot of them just <sup>passing</sup> passing through, yeah.

MLL: Not so many--

SS: At that time there were a lot of people that were uprooted.

MLL: Yeah, in 1931.

SS: Like they lost their farms.

MLL: Yeah, and at that time there were a lot of bread lines in Spokane.  <sup>Soup lines.</sup>

ML: Yeah, but I remember one or two incidents that really are very good.

We had a little boy here, that one times, he comes in -- he wasn't I imagine fifteen or sixteen year old kid-- he want<sup>ed</sup> to work. I say, "Would you want a little work?" He said, "Yes," he wanted to work.

My goodness, I give him some potatoes, old-time we haven't got potatoes <sup>let him a little bucket of</sup> like we do now----so I give him a little bucket and <sup>peel</sup> peel potatoes.

I feel that wouldn't take too much effort, if he was hungry he was willing to peel the potatoes, because it wasn't that much effort to do.

If I go and tell him chop wood or dig ditch then he<sup>d</sup> be so hungry he couldn't do it. But this kid was really a very nice kid. After he peeled the potatoes he wanted to do something else, so I fed him, after he <sup>peeled</sup> peeled the potatoes I fed him. Then he asked me if there was any other work to be done. And he did, he did all the work I ~~want~~ wanted him

to do. Then, he didn't ask for pay, but I paid him for the work, for the work, see, I knew it was more than his food was, and I paid him for the work and he was happy and so was I. There are very few. But there's a lot of 'em that you feed 'em-- just as soon as you feed 'em they'll peel maybe a quarter of a bucket, and then pretty soon, you don't look, they go out through the back door and you don't see 'em at all. You don't see 'em at all. They leave the potato, and leave it there and beat it. You know, the world's funny that way.

SS: Did that kid stay at all?

ML: No. He was going through, too. He was going through. Although, we did have one kid that was real good though. Went to the University of Idaho. I had very good luck. I had two, three boys that really are very good boys. We used to consider work one hour for a meal, in the old-times, one hour for the meal. And we consider always that. And these boys here at that time-- I know one boy his fingers cut off-- I forgot what his name is now--<sup>Cliff</sup>and he come in after work and I said, "Sure, I give you some work." And he was so good. He worked pretty near a week, ten days before I knew that he didn't have a place to stay. He worked at the restaurant; <sup>he eats</sup> the three meals <sup>there</sup>. He worked at the nighttime when we close up, then he goes down to the railroad track in the boxcar and sleep in the boxcar until the next day, then come back. I didn't know that, until one day I say, "Where<sup>do</sup> you sleep?" And he say, "Out there on the railroad track." And he was such a good boy, and so I said we had a room down in the basement and I said, "Why don't you go ahead and I'll buy some lumber and you build yourself a little room down in the basement?" So he did. He was a very <sup>MLL. He even finished school.</sup> happy boy. And he finished that little room, and got a nice little room downstairs by himself, and he stud<sup>ied</sup> down there and went to school.

And he finished one year, but the second year he didn't come back.

But he was really a nice boy.

MLL: Yeah, we had many, many students, <sup>waitress</sup> you know, girls that go to the University and finished school that way. And we married off a lot of 'em, you know. A lot of fun.

SS: Married 'em off?

ML: They ~~just~~ work for us, and their boyfriend come in.

MLL: They probably meet somebody either come in to eat, you know <sup>ML: They ask us for our advice.</sup> And they would become friends, and they'd finish school and then they'd get married. And, well, they stay with us until after they get married-  
<sup>or</sup> until after they finish school. And so, we married ten or fifteen off in our time, see. We had the restaurant since '31, you see. So we had it over ~~forty~~ years. And during that time there's a lot of things going on.

ML: There's a lot of nice people.

MLL: I saw in the paper one of our waitress that used to work for us-- her husband just passed away, and he's sixty-five years old now. And they went together when she was working with us, and he was one of the Frasier boys here in Moscow. His mother's still living here, Agnes Frasier. And his father used to be a tinsmith here until he passed away, and his brother, Bill Frasier was a coach in Gonzaga in Spokane, and he himself was with Washington Water Power and also for the city. And so you see, -- it was in the '20's and he was in his '20's when he got married to our little girl-- I mean our little waitress. And you know, you keep track of 'em that way and--

ML: They come back and see us.

MLL: Oh, yeah, they come back to Moscow, when we used to have the restaurant, they'd come back and eat with us, at least to say hello. And then one

of the girls that owned the trailer court out here on College Street there, well, she met her husband-- she was a divorced woman for years and years, and then her husband,-- the man that came in he ~~he~~ steel. He's a very expert, fifty or sixty dollars a day, you know. He's still working and they own this trailer court and also the one at South Washington there, that trailer court. And he was eating at our place, she was a waitress there, you know, and they met. And I think he was forty years old, that's the first time he <sup>ever</sup> married, you know. They had a few outs, and she come and cried on my shoulder. Somebody <sup>was</sup> telling her that he was running around with other girl, and all that you know. I said, "Don't listen to a third party telling you. Maybe that girl wanted him herself." I say, "If you want to be sure, ask him yourself, he'll tell you the truth." Anyway, they been married for over twenty years now, and having a good life <sup>living</sup> up there on Moscow Mountain.

SS: You are talking about these young people coming to you for advice-- I'm a little curious about that, in the '30's, or back in those days,-- Were the problems that kids were having, or the kinds of things they asked you for advice for, do you think they'd be the same as they'd be today? Or do you think they'd be different? What would be the kinds of things that kids would need advice about?

MLL" Well, you know, jealousy of their boyfriend running around with other girls, oh, you know, things like that. But in those days we don't have any drugs, and this smoking and all this stuff that's going on nowadays. I don't think I could cope with anything going on now. I'm just over that period and not know enough to say, what to advise them about now. <sup>Just</sup> old-fashioned ideas and ideals that I have, if they ask me, I tell 'em what I think of it. Like another hen.

SS: It seems like you must have been good people to work for. You had



that kind of feeling for the people who worked for you.

MLL: Oh, yes, we do.

ML: We, ourselves, we don't drink and we don't smoke. We want our youngsters to be the same thing. And we believe in education.

MLL: What is good for themselves, you know. We don't try to squeeze the last ounce of energy out of them or anything like that, you know. We try to do the best we can for them and they try to do the best for us, too. A lot of them <sup>are</sup> grandmothers nowadays. Vivian Larson over here, she has four, five grandchildren.

ML: She used to work too. She worked hard.

MLL: We used to open until two o'clock in the morning. And six o'clock in the morning, from one morning til two o'clock ~~the~~ next morning-- that many hours. We had to have two shifts. Well, how many hours is that? Almost twenty-four hours-- just four hours leeway there, see. From two to four. Well, they didn't have too much, the family, you know. And she used to work until two o'clock in the morning and then she would walk home, and of course, in those days the girls don't have a car, you know, <sup>not</sup> like nowadays. She didn't even have a bicycle. And she lived way up there on Morton Street. That's way up-

ML: Past Green Street there. That trailer court up there. At that time there was nobody out there.

MLL: We didn't have any car either. And, of course Mi works in the morning and I work at night and I don't drive, and I couldn't even drive her anyway, even if we do have a car. And she would take some dog bones.

ML: A policeman <sup>would</sup> take her home.

MLL: Well once in a while if a policeman happened to be around there, you know, not very often do they do that. And then she always had two big dogs, and they come half way down town to meet her, and that kind

of give her company. But she worked hard and she got through the University there. And sometime, once in a while, we want to make a trip to Spokane, we say, "You stay here until we come back." She stay here even though she have to stay twenty-four hours, she stay there until we come back.

SS: She was working both shifts?

MLL: No, just after school.

SS: But she was going to school at the same time?

MLL: She going to school at the same time, but during the summer, you see she has all day to work, so the more hours she work, the more money she gets. They work by the hours. Most of the waitresses work by the hour. They still do. Their board and their hours, and their time.

SS: Would you---? You mentioned to me a little bit how your folks came down from Spokane. How that happened. The story of how they wound up getting the place.

MLL: Well, see, like I said. My father used to be a herb doctor in Spokane. Well, after he lost his first son that was born--see, there are three of us girls born already, see, and when the first boy came that's the fourth child came and after-- I think he died when he was nine months old, of spinal meningitis, which was bad at that time and there was no cure for it. Why, he<sup>was</sup> just kind of giving up, you know, the medicine part of it. He say, "Well, I don't feel like being here anymore. I want to move." So, we all packed up and getting ready to move to New York, maybe going into something else. Anyway, he want<sup>ed</sup> to move away from Spokane. But he had heard about this Palouse country and had never been up this way. So he thought well, -- oh, on one of the days when he had quite a bit of time he would take my mother and the youngest girl-- my sister and I are the older ones-- we stayed

home. Anyway the three of them came around this part of the country and they stopped in Moscow and my little sister wanted some cookies. So they went into Huff's Cafe and had some coffee and buy some cookies for the little girl. And before they left the restaurant, they bought the restaurant from Mr. and Mrs. Huff. Just that fast you know, because, at that time, Mr. Huff probably-- I think he had just finished law school, and he was going into practice and he want<sup>ed</sup> to get out of the restaurant business, he and Mrs. Huff were running the restaurant. And so, that's how come our family got into Moscow then. So, within a very short time instead of moving to New York or someplace else, we moved to Moscow, and have been here ever since then, 1926.

SS: Was your father an impulsive man? To walk into a place and just buy it stright out, like that?

MLL: He evidently was at that point, because actually he had no job in New York<sup>at the time</sup>, and he was going to New York and look for a job, or to look into something. He evidently had a certain amount saved up, you know, otherwise he couldn't move the whole family.

ML: He sold the drugstore.

MLL: He already sold the drugstore. He already sold the herbstore in Spokane.

ML: So he had a little money. So he doesn't know what-- he hadn't made up his mind where to go. He kind of like this Northwest.

MLL: This Palouse country. All the wheat and the hills and out in the open and opportunity too for us three girls<sup>with</sup>, the university here and school. Although at that time I was only sixteen, so I started with the high school here, the Moscow High School.

SS: Was it because his son, his baby died that he wanted to move away?

MLL: Yeah, yeah. He wanted to change. He wanted a change. He feel that-- well, he was a herb doctor, <sup>he</sup> couldn't do anything for his son, and the

son have to die, you know, he couldn't help his son, you know, in any way whatsoever.

SS: But that wasn't his fault.

MLL: <sup>it wasn't his fault,</sup> No, he got spinal meningitis.

SS: He still felt badly.

MLL: Of course, he felt badly on account of that was his first son, too. And the babe was only nine months old at that time.

SS: You said to me that as an herb doctor, it was mostly the Americans that he--

ML: That he had as patients, the American people. Yes. You know, the herb doctor, they used the heartbeat, you know, on the wrist. That's how they-- I just saw <sup>him</sup> do the practicing-- that's how they can tell what the patient need, what kind of herb the patient need, by feeling the pulse that's on the wrist. They don't check, as far as I know-- that's the way they do it.

ML: They usually make you open-- see your tongue.

MLL: They look at ~~your~~ eyes, you know. Like now, they say a doctor can look at your hand, too. Your hand shows if you have any disease or anything like that. Of course, the eye shows a lot. A lot of disease and stuff. Same thing like, well on account of I'm diabetic, <sup>I know that</sup> they can see that quite a bit in my eyes.

SS: You said that the Chinese community was small in Spokane at that time.

MLL: Yes, it was quite small.

SS: About how big do you think it was?

MLL: I sure don't remember. Some where around three hundred.

ML: <sup>I don't think it was that many.</sup> There wasn't too many gardeners there.

- MLL: No, Hardly any gardeners, most of 'em, restaurant. And maybe one or two hand laundry.
- ML: Yeah, most of the Chinese was in Walla Walla at that time. <sup>they go in</sup> Truck farming. Most of the Spokane people are-- I would say maybe a hundred to a hundred and fifty at the most.
- MLL: Well, quite a few families though.
- ML: Just a few families after that. There wasn't too many families, either. Right now there isn't too many families. Now a couple families in there.
- MLL: Yea.
- SS: And <sup>was</sup> everybody right in one block?
- MLL: No, not everybody lived there, no. There is Chinese Alley there. They have, one, two, three, I think three stores. Wongs have one, Ames have one and <sup>he</sup> Lees have one, I know. And I don't remember too many others now, but, some of the families lived upstairs of these stores. But most of the-- I would say quite a few of the restaurant people would have homes someplace else, and just the store people would, they would own the store <sup>s</sup> below and work in the stores and they would be selling Chinese foods; just mostly Chinese groceries to the Chinese community.
- SS: Was your father's store right in there with the others?
- MLL: <sup>No</sup> My father's store was on Wall Street. It's in the American community on Wall Street, quite close to the Crescent, it's between Riverside and Sprague.
- SS: Do you remember Spokane when you first got there? You were about ten?
- MLL: Oh, yes, oh, yes. ~~In 1920,~~
- SS: Did you live in that area by the store?
- MLL: Yes. Well, at first we live right by the-- oh, on Washington-- yes-- later on we live right above the-- would have one side of building, it was a second story building-- on the second floor is where my father

have his herb business. And on one side we have living facilities there, and on the other side is offices, so we just live right there and he would cook, or steep the Chinese medicine in our kitchen. <sup>they</sup> Used to use the <sup>glass</sup> bottles. Sell the different bottles. And oh, his patient would come in about once a week or once every two weeks, depending on whether they live in Spokane or whether they live outside of Spokane and its harder to get in. And these are more or less like tonic, you know, rather than vitamins. And it takes longer to go through the-- you take it internally as a drink, and of course, it takes quite a while before it gets into the bloodstream. It's not like the vitamins today that the capsule breaks and then it just go right into the bloodstream.

SS: Did he have a steady clientele, a person would come back and see him time after time?

MLL: Yes, uh-huh. <sup>like</sup> I say, he usually keep them well. Of course, they usually have some kind of sickness, you know, before they start seeing him.

SS: Did he treat women as well as men?

MLL: Mostly men though. In those days, you know, the women are less inclined to see Chinese doctors than the men, but there are some women, <sup>but I say</sup> very few. Just like in today's politics there are still few women in politics.

SS: There's a friend of mine in Portland when I went to school there, and he was out visiting at Thanksgiving time and we were talking and I mentioned that I'd been talking to you folks and he said to me that he knew one old man in Portland who he really liked, a neighbor of his, and this fellow was an herb doctor, and he is now in his eighties. And he and my friend get together and he said he retired about five

or six years ago, and he didn't want any more patients at all. But this one guy, he said, insists on coming back, and I guess he says, he says he gives him five hundred dollars twice a year. "Comes and gives it to me, and I just can't turn him away. Just insists that I see him because I saw him for all those years, and he thinks I took good care of him. But I don't want to see him, I'm <sup>re</sup>tired."

MLL: Yeah. Well, we know a girl's father <sup>was an herb doctor</sup> in Portland, and both he and his wife were-- ?

ML: Got a beautiful home, sitting on the hill there.

MLL: Got an elevator.

ML: Yeah, got an elevator on the hill. Elevator go down from-- start from the car and go up to the second, third floor.

SS: He still lives there?

ML: He live there, but his wife passed away.

SS: Is he old?

ML: Yeah, he's old.

SS: Sounds like it could be the same man.

ML: Yeah. He had a real good practice.

SS: Because my friend told me, he thinks he was a leader.

ML: Yeah, he is a leader. The only thing is that the leader part is bad part, I feel this way-- I'm no authority at all, but he had one daughter.

MLL: Well, other children, too.

ML: He had one <sup>daughter</sup>, that's all he had. But since his mother passed away his father want somebody to take care of him.. They got <sup>a</sup> beautiful home. They got everything. He married a friend of ours also.

MLL: Well, in fact, we know the husband, the young husband better than the girl. We just knew the girl through the husband. The husband's family

used to be from Spokane, that's how come -- this boy and I were kids together in Spokane.

ML: And I feel that, they're divorced.

MLL: They broke up their home.

ML: And, I feel that the father want somebody to take care of him and therefore, that left the husband now, what you call it? 'Course, the husband had a couple <sup>daughters</sup> -- look after him, because he situated in Eugene and he situated in Portland, you see. It could be that way. The daughter, they were very close. <sup>The daughter and the father were real close.</sup>

MLL: And they were married for over twenty <sup>two</sup> years. Because, I think they had two girls and a boy, and all of 'em graduated from the university already before they were divorced. They hadn't been divorced very long, we saw him about two years ago. And that's the first time we knew that they were divorced, and he told us that she went back home to take care of her father since her mother passed away. I imagine, you know-- of course, there must have been something between the two otherwise she would not left him for the father, no matter how much she loved the father or how much the father was going to give to her. Now, that's my attitude.

SS: That's a reasonable attitude. Something has gone wrong.

MLL: If the couple have enough between the two of them, a daughter is not going to go to the father and leave the husband after twenty-two years-- after over twenty years, anyway.

SS: I'm curious about how you were raised being a girl instead of a boy, the difference in the attitude that parents had towards--

MLL: I was more fortunate because my father was a Christian, and he believes that girls are almost as good as a boy. But after having three girls, you know, he would like to have a boy, too, you see. And then he



having a boy, and he dying, and lost a boy, why it make him a little bit bitter, you know, probably. But he still feel that <sup>us</sup> <sub>^</sub> girls should be educated. And so we have always been a Christian family and we go to Sunday School and Church, and we have been going to school all the time. He believes in educating girls just as much.

SS: What would be the differences if <sup>he</sup> <sub>^</sub> had not been Christian?

MLL: Well, I think-- I would say being a Christian has broadened his mind a little bit more. But, of course, Mi's father -- well he was a Christian, too-- wasn't he?

ML: Yeah.

MLL: Was he baptised in the Church, and all that?

ML: Yeah.

MLL: Well, he believes in Christianity, anyway; <sup>at least his</sup> father believes in Christianity, and he has brought <sup>or</sup> <sub>^</sub> Mi and his sister and they had gone to school-- his sister had gone through school, too, you know. And so, I don't know, I think it depends on the individual. But, I think being a Christian has a-- more Western ideas. And I think our Western ideas, - <sup>European people</sup> you know, I mean the United States and Europe, you know <sub>^</sub> they believe in educating their daughters, too, as well as their sons. But you remember in the old days-- if there is a choice, if money is short, the boy ~~get~~ to go to school first, you must remember that.

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(End of Side B)

SS: Have enough money for both her and her brother.

ML: Uh-huh.

SS: So the brother came along there and she worked.

MLL: Uh-huh.

SS: But in the old country, the traditional way of authority in the family and raising kids like that. I take-- ~~the~~ woman was more subservient.

MLL: U-huh.

ML: That's true. That's quite true, and a lot of people in the United States are the same way, you know. They feel that a woman do not have to be educated as much as a husband, 'cause he's the one that's supposed to bring in the living. And, therefore, when they educate a girl, after all, a girl belongs to ~~the~~ <sup>boy's side, the other family.</sup> And so they feel that. A lot of people feel that way. Unless<sup>^</sup> you believe in education, then you feel that way. A majority of the people if they<sup>^</sup> are on the verge of sacrificing something to let a girl educate, they<sup>^</sup> really not sacrificing to let the boy get the education, unless the boy can't do it himself, then they educate the girl. This equality business, I don't know whether it's so good or not! We can't all be chiefs, somebody got to be an Indian! (Laughter)

SS: Yeah, but maybe it shouldn't depend on whether you're a woman or a man, you know, whether you're gonna be a chief or---

ML: I believe that married people they should be a functioning together-- but somebody should have something to say about it, rather than they say, "How come you got the say, I haven't got the say?" That isn't right either. Because when you have two equality-- "How come you do it and I don't do it?" you're conflicting one another right there. I believe if a leader is good, we should respect the leader, instead of try to tear him down that, "I can do the same thing!" See. I believe in that. You can't be-- everybody be the head, somebody got to do the other part, you know. As long as it's fair and honest. It's better that way than everybody trying to be-- want to be the headman and nobody want to do anything else. Then you just sit there and fight one another. Don't you think it should be? That way.

I think the Communists right now in China, they feel that everybody should do something to benefit everybody rather than just do something for ourselves, and just push ourselves ahead and just let the rest of them go. I don't think that's very good either.

MLL: That's one thing about the Communists today in China that is, they go for the country first and then themselves next. Well, you know that is a long ways from the way we were brought up, you know. Always we first, and then the family and then the community and then the country, as you get out farther. Well, there are good things in their idea, too. Everybody have to do something for the country. Well, like you say, for their way of thinking, I myself, can't <sup>conceive</sup> it quite that far yet. I don't think I could ever turn to say the country first, and myself next. I guess I'm just a little bit too individualized, I was brought up <sup>differently</sup>. But they are changing though. I mean, they're really feeling that way when you talk to them, that's the way they feel; for the country first. And they really have their heart on it, too, you know. They don't just say it; they do it. Country first.

SS: Do you think within the family though that the way the work was divided up-- was it fairly divided? You know, this is something that young people ask a lot nowadays; whether the man and wife share responsibilities. For example, I've known it with a lot of Swedish families. The women were expected to do an awful lot of that heavy work. It's surprising, and all the milking of cows, Swedish men didn't like to milk cows, as a rule. And, of course, all the housework and all that, all the cooking and all the things the women always did. Was it that way in your family, too? Were the women expected to do all the cooking and all the different kind of work?

MLL: No, not in our family so much. Well, for one thing, you know, we

live in a different community, although we being Chinese, but we were becoming very fast Americanized. We live like the other people do. We go to church and see what the church people do, and we go to school and see what the other families do. And so, as far as my family is concerned we have been very much go along with what's going on in other families. We take after the other families pretty much so.

SS: Taking after American rather than Chinese families?

MLL: Yes. I think we do because we live <sup>among</sup> more with the American side of it than we do with the Chinese people.

SS: In Spokane, was it that way?

MLL: In Spokane, yes.

SS: When did your father become a Christian? Do you remember?

MLL: Oh, he became Christian after he got over here the first time. I would say-- I was born in 1910-- somewhere around 1906, the first time he was over here. He was connected with the church in Spokane, the <sup>Central</sup> Christian Church in Spokane. And, I imagine he being a young man he go to the church and some of the older ladies from the church or family ladies, they take him under their wing, you know more or less. Like Mi, he <sup>was</sup> the same thing, only he started when he was younger. He started when he <sup>was</sup> six, seven years old in Walla Walla. The church women, you know the ones that have families, probably take him under wing, when he didn't know English they were teaching ~~the~~ maybe one hour after school, whatever, you know, at the church. I know it <sup>was</sup> during the time when he was in Spokane the first time. When he first come over that he become connected with the church people. So, of course, you know when we come over we would go right in with the Central Christian Church in Spokane. And then when we moved from that church in Spokane, we move over here to Moscow, why, we started in

with the Christian Church on Third Street here, that is, my family, the Lee family, and then later on when we were going to high school and college, we met most of our own friends were going to the Methodist Church, so we kind of switched to the Methodist Church. And that's how come we're <sup>with</sup> the Methodist Church now.

SS: What was it like when you first came to Spokane and you were already ten, so you pretty much had grown up in China when you came over here. What was it like to make the adjustment to a brand new country?

MLL: It wasn't so bad. The language was the hardest part of the adjustment. Learning <sup>the</sup> English was the hardest part. Of course, my father knows quite a bit of English by that time. And then we have one of the church lady come and teach us in the evening after school, teach us some English, too, you know. Simple English books. And <sup>then</sup> in the meantime, I was going to grade school, too. I started with the first grade-- I <sup>was</sup> <sup>so</sup> I was lot bigger than these first graders, you know. I always have to have the biggest desk in the classroom and all that, but it seemed to be quite a while before I get the hang of the English. But once I get started, it was very easy. Probably, I imagine about oh, six months at the most, then I was quite fluent and understanding English. I can go to a store and buy whatever I want by myself, and before that time I have to have somebody else go with me or I have to do some pointing. So, it was very easy though for children to learn the English. A lot easier than my mother <sup>now</sup> who was quite a bit older. She still doesn't speak much English yet, even after being over here for so long, already, it was hard for her to learn because in the first place she didn't need it. Anytime she want to buy something she either had one of us go with her to buy <sup>x</sup> or we buy it for her. So consequently, if a person doesn't need it, they don't need to learn, and so it's

slower to learn. And, of course, when they're older it's harder to learn too.

SS: And I've heard the same thing exactly from homesteading families from Norway and Sweden. The mother, being at home, didn't have the opportunity to hear a lot of English spoken, and talking to people from your own country, you talk the native language, why, you don't need it. What about other Chinese kids, did you spend much time with them?

MLL: Not any more than with American kids, because there weren't too many Chinese <sup>people</sup>. In the whole grade school I would say there were--- Well, there were three families with children, the Engs and the Wongs and us. So there weren't too many -- more American kids than Chinese kids, that I played with. And not living down in the Chinese area you know, I had a lot less chance to play with the Chinese children than I did with the American people.

SS: That must have had the effect of your learning the new ways quicker.

MLL: Yes.

SS: Did you have that happen to you when you were in Walla Walla? The church---

ML: <sup>That was later.</sup> I was over when I was six so I was in the grade school. I just started from the first, you know. I didn't know very much. I had a friend that I could play around with and pretty soon I pick it up easy.

MLL: American friend.

ML: American friend, see. Then, of course, the American friend was a-- before my father brought me over, my father used to know their family pretty well. So, I go and-- and those family got a son just about my age, six year old, we're both about the same age. So I go up their place and stay. I stay up there lots a times for a week, you know before I come home. And so just naturally I just grew up <sup>amongst</sup>

them, see. And his mother was so good to me. As two little kids we used to take bath together, bathtub, you know, one in one end and one in the other and his mother used to wash us, you know. We just grew up together.

MLL: At that time there wasn't very many Chinese kids, either.

ML: No. I was the first one.

MLL: You were the first one.

ML: And a year later, I think, there was another one, Lee, Leland Lee came, and that's all. And for a long time there was just the two of us, then in about four or five years later, then there's about twenty-five or thirty of them came, all at once.

SS: Wonder why all of a sudden.

ML: Because the law got more lenient. At that time the law was very strict. And in the meantime-- during that time <sup>there was</sup> the war going on at that time, 1918, right around there. During the wartime, then nobody come. And after the war, then the <sup>people</sup> started to come again.

MLL: Because there were no ships on the Pacific Ocean in the first place, during the First World War, because all the ships were over there in the Atlantic. Either shipping ammunition or soldiers or whatever. I suppose maybe that's the reason why--

ML: Anyway the law was a little bit more lenient and the people will come because-- like I say, there was a war going on at that time. 1914 and 1918, there was four or five years in there there was a war going on all that time.

SS: Even though the kids came, the mothers didn't.

ML: No, they didn't allow the mothers come at that time, <sup>yet</sup> no. The mothers won't come til way after, quite a bit after that. Of course, the Chinese government won't let 'em come either, as far as that's concern-

cerned.

SS: Did you say you scrapped with the Italian kids a lot?

ML: Oh, we used to fight with some of 'em; not too often, but we do once in a while. Some of the Italian kids get cocky, probably. And the Russian kids, <sup>usually</sup> there used to be what they called the Russian town down there, down in Walla Walla, that district there. They're big husky, they're rough, you know, the Russians are.

MLL: Did the old Russians come from Russia?

ML: Yeah <sup>all</sup> from Russia.

MLL: Well, what kind of work did they do there?

ML: They do <sup>odd</sup> labor, farm work and things that way, you know, in Walla Walla.

SS: Did you kids become pretty much like a gang?

ML: No. No. Because, you see, ~~the Chinatown~~ is a certain district. They go to that one school. All the kids in that district from Fifth Street on up, they gotta go that one school. So all the Chinese group goes to that one school, because they live in that district. There is no gang at all.

MLL: You mean most of the Chinese--

ML: Live in that building.-

MLL: Live on that one block.

ML: Yeah. Chinatown.

MLL: Because-- and so <sup>naturally</sup> --

ML: The kids all go to one school. Baker School.

MLL: And they don't have any homes outside of one block. This block has four stories, something like that. Three or four stories.

ML: Two story. Got about twelve stores in it. They all live in apartments upstairs. So they all go to school in that one section. As a



general rule, when these kids pick on them, then the older ones-- there are some of us are older, some of the Chinese boys come over when they're older, so they usually, if they pick on the little kids then the older ones will help the little ones out.

SS: Stuck together?

ML: Yeah, Little bit moreso. Little bit more than the <sup>others</sup> would. We do it here. One time--

MLL: When my father was a little boy, when he was scrapping with another kid, another kid picked on him, see, then my nephew, who is a little bit older, naturally he's gonna protect my brother. And then in this book it says a lot about the Ki e Yip Tong. Ki e Yip is not a tong, it is a district.

ML: It is a district.

MLL: I know, it is a district. But they call it in this book-- they got a few things that are not quite correct. Ki e Yip is a district is Cantonese.

ML: County.

MLL: Most of them are-- the Idaho Chinese--are from Ki e Yip, and also older ones that come to San Francisco, Seattle, Portland and Vancouver, B.C.. This whole district is-

SS: All Ki e Yip?

MLL: Yes. Ki e Yip is not a **tong**. A tong is- Hip Sen or Hop Sen is a tong, and they really kill one another, they murder one another when something goes wrong.

ML: That's a social tong.

MLL: They <sup>are</sup> not social tong, they kill each other, too, when they have to.

ML: Oh, yeah, but they're considered social tong.

SS: What is a tong?

ML: It's a club. Just like the Elks. Just like the Elks now, and the Eagles, except now the Elks and the Eagles-- except in the olden-times they get into trouble, one of the Eagle go and shoot the Elk, see. Something like that, see.

SS: You have to be the same family to belong to the same tong?

ML: No.

SS: Cuts across--

ML: No. No family tong. Club, you know.

SS: How long a tradition is there behind the tongs? It is a <sup>very</sup> old custom?

MLL: Well, they only have the tong over here in the United States.

ML: Yeah, yeah, in the United States. Because there are many American lawyers, you know, that--- <sup>work</sup> with these, and they get into these-- just like into a gangster outfit. They want to run certain things. Something underhanded. And since the American lawyer <sup>'s</sup> making so much money off of it, then so they don't care <sup>so long as</sup> the Chinese shoot Shinese, it doesn't make any difference, see. Doesn't <sup>bother</sup> them any, so go ahead and shoot Chinese. But the lawyer get 'em out of it, see. But since 1928 or something around there, the American passed a law, I think it is,-- I forgot what it is-- that anybody that murders one another-- from one tong to the other- they ~~send~~ the headman back. Instead of the guy, like I said, the hatchetman- they <sup>re gonna</sup> send the headman back. After that, no more tong. The headman don't want to go back, so after that, there <sup>'s</sup> no more tong.

SS: What was the reason for forming the tongs, in the first place?

ML: <sup>L</sup> social gathering I suppose.

SS: How does that escalate into killing?

ML: Because there ~~de's~~ gambling with it. They start gambling-- just like Al Capone in those days, you have drinking and you have gambling and <sup>they have</sup> what do you call it? They have a tong, getting all the members to-

gether, you know, then they have gambling. Then probably some of these guys here-- some of the rich guys go there and gamble--and so the other guys come over and trying to get some of the rich guys-- gamblers to go over to their side. And since the Chinese kill the Chinese the law doesn't bother-- just let 'em do it. And the American lawyers get 'em out, because there's nothing to it.

MLL: <sup>They're getting</sup>  
~~---~~ money--  
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ML: They get money. Until they pass that law that they sent the headman back, then after that they quit. Didn't do it no more.

MLL: The hatchetman is the one that go out doing the killing. They usually throw a hatchet.

SS: Nowadays they call it the hitman.

ML: They call it the hatchetman in China.

SS: How much<sup>of</sup> the men, say--in Walla Walla, how many of them would have belonged to tongs? Would most of them belonged to one tong or another?

ML: I think in Walla Walla that most of 'em, just one tong. One tong. Spokane though, I think<sup>of</sup> one tong, too. I think . Spokane got Hop Sing. Walla Walla, I think      tong, is all. But when they have a war, you see. When      Sing and Hop Sing have a war, you see, then Spokane send a hatchetman go down to Walla Walla and kill somebody down there  
~~and the other one sends someone, kill someone up there,~~  
 -----  
 that's the way it is. Mostly the tong  
 are usually the people that are-- don't want to be a gangster<sup>kinda</sup> type,  
 that's all-- Unless you're awfully wealthy, they'll force you -- try  
 to force you into the thing. <sup>And if you're poor they don't want you in there anyway.</sup> But unless you make some money, pay them  
 due, and what you call it-- they call it<sup>give you</sup> protection. Oh, it's just  
 a racket, that's all it is, really.

SS: It sounds like something that happened with a different form with a lot of groups when they came over here.

ML: To protect themselves. They do that to protect themselves. But now

they got another Chinese--what do you call it-- a tong where the four families joined together. That's a good one. Back in China, those where the four families get together--

MLL: Four small families.

ML: Yeah, four small families get together to protect each other, <sup>they</sup> ~~A~~ help each other out. Those the ones don't fight. They don't fight at all. More or less just to help--

MLL: That's not the case-- policemen (?)

MLL: That's entirely different, see. But these tongs here, what they call-- more or less, kind of like a gangster.

SS: Did those tongs in China, are they like what you were telling me when I was here before, that they're like the families, like the Lew family?

ML? Yeah, yeah. When the three kingdoms-- Yeah.

SS: That would be called a tong, too, but it's a different kind.

ML: Yeah. Yeah.

SS: Were these tongs here in the United States, did they have a lot of-- like clubs do-- did they have certain rituals and social--

ML: <sup>v</sup> ~~k~~ They have their conventions--

ML: Yeah, they have their conventions. Those regular family tongs there, like I told you, the family ones, they don't fight, you know, they help one another. And, you know, they kind of, in case you get in a little trouble with the police or something like that, you know, a little minor trouble, they'll help you out. If somebody pick on you or something, they help you out that way. And, of course, each one member of <sup>the</sup> ~~A~~ family supposed to go when you visit, then you supposed to pay 'em a little dues, see. To kind of maintain the building. Although they do have done it themselves, they do maintain the building. Everybody in the family supposed to donate a little bit to help

them maintain the building.

MLL: Maintain the maintenance of the---

ML: And the older people, when you get old, you can live there. Just like a lodge. Just like a lodge, <sup>you pay your dues</sup> then when you get old you can stay there. They got little room for you, got a little kitchen for you to cook, and you can stay there, if you want to.

SS: This in America, too?

ML: Yes. This in America. Those the ones you don't hear. These are the ones, they don't make headlines, but then they don't shoot one another, they don't kill. They don't make headlines. The ones that stay home you help one another.

SS: You know in the book, the tong disputes that she mentions sounded like they really were dividing the communities pretty badly. There was a lot of fear.

ML: When you fight there is a lot of fear.

MLL: They all close up their businesses. They shut up and everybody stay indoors, because if you're out on the street-- even if you, yourself, have nothing to do with the thing, if you belong to the tong, they kill you anyway. I mean, because you belong to the tong, they just want to get rid of you.

SS: I wonder how they even know?

ML: Oh, they know, they know.

MLL: They know the member<sup>2</sup> The small fry they don't pay any attention to. It's the big fry<sup>1</sup> that--you get your name mentioned, they know you. Small fry can't do anything anyway, you know. If he hasn't any money and no power, what can he do? He can't do too much.

SS: What made you decide to come to Pullman? Had you just graduated from high school at the time?

MLL: Yeah. Then I come to Pullman because <sup>Pullman is</sup> the cheapest one for me to go. (Laughter) The University of Washington and that-- it was the cheapest one for me to go. And the closest <sup>to</sup> home, see? You know, at that time money was hard to get, and going to school was quite expensive. And that's how, and it <sup>was</sup> a little bit closer.

SS: Were you a pretty good student?

ML: Oh, I was a little bit above C, a B, or something around there.

SS: C and B.

ML: I'm not an excellent student, but I was a what do you call it? That's all.

END OF TAPE #2048-B 0635

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