

Transcript Interview
(2nd Interview)

Interviewer: Vivian Chow
Interviewee: Shui Chow
Interview: Oral
Date: April 1, 2015
Time: 2 pm
Place: Rosemead, California

Interviewer: Grandma, I would like to ask you some questions about the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution since you lived through those times.
Shui Chow: Sure, what would you like to know?

Interviewer: How old are you and how did the Great Leap Forward affect you and your family?
Shui Chow: In 1958, I was only eleven years old. I do not remember much; however, the only thing I remember was the crazy amount of yelling in the streets. They were yelling slogans in support of the Great Leap Forward. They yelled out, 'Dare to think, dare to act.' Additionally, I later heard from my parents that millions of people died from hunger mainly on the county side. It did not really affect us because we lived in the city.

Interviewer: I see. What about the Cultural Revolution?
Shui Chow: It was very frightening. Anyone could be attacked at any moment by the Red Guards. It was a worrisome time where if you were not communist to the point where the government likes it, you were not safe. Essentially, no one was safe.

Interviewer: What did you experience during this time and how old were you?
Shui Chow: In 1966, I was nineteen years old and had only been married a few years when Chairman Mao started the Cultural Revolution with his Red Guards. Everywhere, students were shouting for revolution. For a period of two years, these dangerous Red Guards terrorized the entire place. They destroyed temples, churches, schools, and any signs of foreign influences. They also beat you up if they thought that you were not communist.

Interviewer: Grandma, what does your family do for a living?
Shui Chow: My husband and I were farmers, working for the government. We did not get paid by cash; however, we got rewarded with points. At the end of the month, the government would use the point system to add up the points we had and they would award us with grains according to our points.

Interviewer: What is the point system, Grandma?
Shui Chow: The system of agriculture incentives in China was based on a work-point system. The workplace would give you points for showing up and working. If you did not go to work, even if it was due to illness or pregnancy, you would not be awarded work-points. Each family had to meet a quota to receive grain and award some

money for incentives. Each job was worth a certain amount of points, and at the end of the month, the points were added up. If there were more points in total, the family would receive grains and award some cash. If a family did not meet the quota, they would deduct their grains and they would not have enough food to eat for the coming month.

Interviewer: Wow, that was so cruel. How did your family fare with these work-point systems?

Shui Chow: Well, in the beginning, we were doing fine. When I got pregnant, things started to get worse. Since I did not go to work, I would not awarded work-points. Soon, we fell behind on the monthly quotas. Fortunately, we were only able to survive because we got some remittances from your great-grandmother who was living in America.

Interviewer: How did you feel living through the ruling of Mao Zedong?

Shui Chow: Oh, let me tell you. The times of Mao Zedong was hard; those times were the toughest for the Chinese people. Our family struggled in many difficult situations, such as the famines and revolutions that occurred throughout China. It was a very chaotic time for us.

Interviewer: Did it get better or worse after Mao died in 1976?

Shui Chow: Of course, after Mao died, it was getting much better. Everything changed after Deng Xiaoping became leader. Because of Deng Xiaoping, we left China in 1979 and reunited with my husband's mother who lived in the United States of America. We also heard that in the 1980's, China let its citizens sell their own crops and build their own businesses. There was no more poorness and starvation since Deng came to power.

Interviewer: Grandma, thank you again for conducting this interview with me.

Shui Chow: You are welcome, Vivian.