Introduction to Oral History

Thank you for coming today and participating in this Oral History.
This is an interview with _____ by _____ and _____ for the Chinese American Oral History Project, in collaboration with the Chinese Community Oral History Project and Asian/Asian American Studies at California State LA.
The date is _____, the time is _____. The interview is being conducted at _____.

Introduction and Family Background:

1. Please tell me your full name. The year you were born and the places where you grew up.
2. What is your ethnic background?
3. Please tell me the names of your parents.
4. What are the names of your brothers and sisters if you had any?
    a. What was the birth order of you and your brothers/sisters?
    b. What was your relationship like with your brothers/sisters?
5. What language did your family speak at home?
6. Do you still speak any other language(s)?
7. Who lived in your household as a child?
8. When and how did your family immigrate to the United States?
9. What was your family life like?
10. What was your relationship like with your parents?
11. What did your parents do for a living?
12. Did you and your family own or rent your home?
    a. Can you describe this home?
    b. What kind of furnishings did you have? Or appliances? Special Decorations?
    c. What were the things that your family would do on this land? Did you grow any of your own food?
13. Can you describe the community and the people you grew up around?
14. How did your family participate in community gatherings?
15. How important was your faith to you and your community? Did you attend church or the temple?
16. Did your family have any favorite places they liked to visit?

a. For example, if you didn't grow up in Chinatown, did you visit there often?
b. Did you folks ever leave the community where you grew up?
c. Were there any restrictions on the kinds of places that you could visit?

17. What were the important things that your family saved for? How long did it take for your family to achieve their goal?
18. Which holidays did your family celebrate, and how did you celebrate them?
    a. Did your family celebrate traditional Chinese holidays?
    b. Did your parents celebrate American holidays?
    c. What was the most memorable holiday that you remember? Why was it so memorable?
19. What customs or traditions were important to your family?
20. Do you remember your grandparents, and what was the most interesting thing your grandparent told you?
21. Do you know anything about your grandparents or great grandparents originally came from? What village were they originally from?
    a. Have you ever been there?
    b. What did you see there?
    c. Were there any similarities or differences from lifestyles over there to your own lifestyle here?
22. Do you have any items or mementos that were left behind by your ancestors? If so, how did you obtain them?
23. Do you plan on passing these items down to your children?

Childhood:

1. Can you describe your daily life as a child?
2. What were some of your responsibilities as a child?
    a. Did you have chores? What were they?
3. What expectations did your family have of you growing up?
    a. Do you think these expectations were the same for you or your brothers/sisters?
    b. Were you closer with one sister or brother? What was that relationship like?

4. Did you notice any differences in the way that you were treated and how your sisters/brothers were treated? If so, how?
5. Were you closer with you mother/father? What was that relationship like?
6. If you misbehaved how would your parents discipline you? What about your sisters/brothers?
7. Where did you go to elementary school?
8. Did you attend Chinese school when you were younger? Where?
    a. What was Chinese school like in comparison to the American school?
9. Did you have a lot of friends?
    a. Were they mostly boys or girls? What were their backgrounds? Were many of your friends Chinese?
    b. And, what kinds of things did you and your friends do for fun?
10. As a child, what were some of your favorite activities (games, hobbies, entertainment, etc.)? What kind of toys did you have, if any?
11. What was your most memorable activity with your family?
    a. What was one memorable activity you did with your friends?
12. What was your favorite food as a child?
13. Did your family have special foods that were cooked?
    a. Did you eat any traditional foods like herbal soups?
    b. Or use special ingredients?
14. When you or your family got sick, did you visit the doctor or did your family use herbal medicine?

Teenage Years:

1. Did you attend a separate middle school/junior high?
    a. Who were your friends in middle school or junior high.
    b. What were they like?
2. Where did you attend high school?
3. Were you allowed to socialize with other kids your age after school?
4. If you went to any events at school such as games or dances, can you tell me about your favorite experience?
5. Did you participate in any sports or social clubs in high school?

6. Did you have any challenges at school? If so, how did you overcome them?
7. Can you describe the expectations that your parents set for you when it came to education?
8. How would you describe yourself as a teenager?
9. Can you describe how your family spent time together when you were a teenager?
10. Can you share some of the most important house rules you were expected to follow as a teenager?
11. At what what age did you begin to date? At what age were you allowed to date?
12. Los Angeles is such a diverse city with many ethnicities and racial groups. Can you describe your parents' attitudes to dating outside your race?
13. As a teenager, who were your influences (inspired you)? Why?
14. What were your plans after high school?

Adulthood:

1. Did you attend college or trade school after high school?
2. Can you describe what college life was like (may not be applicable)
    a. What kind of friends did you have in college?
3. Can you describe what you did for a living?
    a. What jobs did you have, and which were your favorites?
    b. How old were you when you started working
4. What challenges, if any, did you face when looking for jobs?
5. What was your experience like working as _____?
    a. What were some of your challenges?
    b. What were the things you were most proud of?
6. How have the practices in your profession differ now from when you first started in your profession?
7. When you started dating, were there qualities you were looking for in a wife/husband?
    a. Can you tell us more about your wife/husband?
8. Did you purchase the house you live in?
    a. Can you describe your experiences?
9. In which ways did your values vary from the values that your parents had?

10. Do you have any children? Can you tell us their name(s)?
    a. Describe what family life was like for you.
11. What values and traditions did you find most important to pass on to your children?
    a. What are some of the traditional Chinese holidays you celebrate?
    b. What are some of the American holidays you celebrate?
12. What did you enjoy about your holidays with your family that was different from your childhood?
13. If you went on any vacations once you became an adult, what were they like? Did you go by yourself or with your family?
14. How does your parenting style differ from that of your parents?
15. Do your children know about their ancestors? What did you tell them? How do they react?
16. How was your experience as a parent before your children became adults?
    a. Did they live a different life than you did as a child?
17. Can you describe the person who became your lifelong friend? Where did you meet them, and what established the bond between you?

Present:

1. How has Southern California changed for you from the time you were growing up?
2. Can you describe your friends and the people you spend time with now?
    a. What kind of activities like sports do you enjoy with your friends?
3. Were you involved with your community? And are you still currently involved?
4. Do you identify with any formal religion/belief system now? If so, which one(s)?[
5. Do you have any concerns about today's society? If so, what are they? (Provide example or define what society means)
6. What is important for others to know and understand about your background or culture?
7. How has your background or culture influenced who you are today?
8. What experiences have helped shape your attitude, beliefs, and views about your family or people of your heritage?
9. Do you remember any natural disaster happening in your area?

    a. Where were you and what were you doing during the Whittier Earthquake in 1987?
10. Do you remember the Watts Riots in 1965?
    a. Where were you and what were you doing during the Watts Riots in 1965?
    b. What was that experience like for you?
11. Do you remember the LA Riots/ Uprising in 1992?
    a. Where were you and what were you doing during the LA Riots in 1992?
    b. What was that experience like for you?
12. How did relationships between different ethnic groups change in Los Angeles? Can you provide me with an example of how these changes affected you
13. Los Angeles County is diverse. What is your favorite place in it, and why?
14. Where are some of the places you have traveled? Can you describe what they were like?
15. Of the many things that you did, what are you most proud of?
16. If there was one thing you could do over, what would it be? Can you give me an example?
17. If there was one thing about your life that defines it, what is it, and why?
18. How do you want to be remembered?
19. Share with us what we did not ask about or you wish to tell us more now or at another interview.

END: Thank you for participating in the oral history of the Chinese American Oral History Project in collaboration with the Chinese Community Oral History Project and Asian/Asian American Studies Department at Cal State LA. If we wanted to follow up more questions, would you mind if we contact you again?