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On March 29, 2005, I had the delight and honor in talking with and interviewing a former Angel Island detainee who wishes to remain anonymous. In this translated transcription, I will refer him as Mr. X. Mr. X came to America in December 1926 as a merchant's son. At 91 years old, Mr. X is energetic, warm, and friendly. In his living room, with the presence of his daughter, Ginny, Mr. X spoke to me in Chinese of his interesting account of his journey and experiences on Angel Island.

Note: The words in parenthesis are information that I added to explain what the speakers are referring to make the interview easy to understand.

J: First, let me ask you where you were born?

X: I was born in China.

J: Where in China?

X: Kow Kong, Nam Hoi, China.

J: Kow Kong, Nam Hoi?

X: Right. Kow Kong, Nam Hoi.

J: Is it in the Guangdong Province?

X: Yes. It is in the Guangdong Province.

J: When were you born? What's your birth date?

X: I have to say it [toward the recorder]?

J: Yes (laughing).

G: You're making him nervous because of the tape.

J: Oh, really, hahaha.

(To Mr. X). Don't worry.

G: Did you ask him when he was born? (To Mr. X) Your birthday, dad.

X: December 28, 1913.

J: When you were in China, how big was your family?

X: My family is not very big.

J: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

X: I have one older brother, already passed away, (he was in) Los Angeles.

J: Do you have any other brothers and sisters?

X: Right now, no...not a big family.

J: Do you live together with your father, mother, and older brother?

X: Yes. My older brother came over here, then he passed away

J: When you were in China, what did your family do for a living?

X: I was studying (student), thirteen years old, just studying Chinese.

J: What does your father do for a living in China?

X: He was in San Francisco, did Chinese medicine.

J: Your father already came to America?

X: Yes, he was already in America. Then he brought me here.

J: When you were in China, did you go to school?

X: Yes. I studied the Chinese subjects.

J: Why did you decide to come to America?

X: Umm...Because my father brought me here.

J: I see. Your father wants you to go to China. That's it?

X: Yes...go to America.

J: Did you want to go to America though?

X: What's that?

J: Did you want to go to America?

X: Of course I did.

J: How come?

X: I came to America in 1926, and I'd wanted to study in America. After studying, I did business, then went back to China to get married.

J: I see.

X: My wife, that was how she came to America in 1941.

My children were all born in America. That's it.

J: Do you still remember how you came to America? Your first time coming to America?

X: My father brought me here. Brought me here to go to school.

J: What about buying the tickets? Didn't you have to buy ship tickets?

X: Yes. Brought the ship tickets. Came here by ships...It was President Pierce.

J: The ship's name was President Pierce?

X: Pierce. Yea.

J: I see.

X: American President Line

J: Oh...What class were you on? Like first class?...

X: First class.

J: First class seats.

X: It was "da tai," first class. Called "da tai" in Chinese.

J: Oh... da tai?

X: Da tai was first class.

J: How long did it take to go to America by ship?

X: Umm...was on the ship 23 days.

J: Wow...23 days?

X: Right. 23 days.

J: On the ship, were there a lot of people going to America too?

X: Yes

J: I see.

X: I was almost 13 years old when I came.

J: 13 years old...

X: Arrived at Angel Island...was winter time...was Christmas time.

J: Was the weather cold?

X: (On Angel Island), it was very cold. I was at "ji lou" (the wooden houses where detainees were detained) at Angel Island for about 20 days.

J: Did you go to America alone?

X: I was with my father, coming here together.

J: Oh. Your father went back to China.

X: Brought me here...yea...brought me here.

J: What about your older brother? Did your brother go to America?

X: My older brother? He was already doing business, doing (Chinese) medicine business.

J: When did your older brother come here? Did he come with your father?

X: No.

J: I see.

X: He already came. Long time ago.

J: Oh, he was already here in America.

X: Already in America.

J: Only you and your father came to America by ship. When you were on the ship, did you feel it was very crowded?

X: At “da tai” (first class) was not crowded.

J: I see. Not very crowded...Do you remember what kind of people there were on “da tai” too?

X: Ummm...every kind of people.

J: What do you mean by “every kind of people.”

X: Every kind of people...I don't remember well.

J: Mmm...like Chinese people?

X: (there were) Chinese people.

J: What about Westerners?

X: (there were) Westerners.

J: Also Westerners. What about Japanese? Do you remember?

X: Very little.

J: When you arrived at Angel Island, how did you feel? Like, when you saw Angel Island, were you excited? Happy? You could finally see America, see Angel Island.

X: At that time, there were small boats, for going to Angel Island.

J: Arrived at Angel Island, you had to get off the ship and take the boat...?

X: After arriving at America, then take the boat to go to Angel Island.

J: Oh, (the ship) did not directly go there?

X: No, to go to pier.

J: Oh, to go to pier.

X: At arrival...um...it was Dallas Steamship line...Dallas Steamship line.

J: Dallas Steamship line?

X: My ship was President Pierce Line...Pierce.

J: When you were at Angel Island, what happened next? These workers in uniforms...did they say anything to you?

X: Nothing was said. Then go to Angel Island...go to “ji lou.”

J: Where did you go?

X: Was detained on Angel Island. 20 days.

J: Did they do a body check-up on you?

X: Umm...no...can't remember...no recalling of the event.

J: No recalling of the event?

X: No recalling of the event.

J: But...these Angel Island workers brought you to the “ji lou” (wooden buildings).

X: There were top and bottom floors, two floors. There was first floor and second floor.

J: Which floor were you detained in? Which floor did they bring you to?

X: Which floor?

J: You said the wooden building had two floors?

X: Right, two floors.

J: Which floor did they bring you to?

X: Right...there was second floor, third floor.

J: Oh, second floor, third floor. The wooden building had three floors?

X: Uhh...that...all the wooden buildings were something similar, just went up like that—first floor, second floor—that was it.

J: Oh, so the wooden building has two floors?

X: There's a top and bottom floor, that was it.

J: Do you remember which floor you stayed in?

X: I don't remember.

J: Oh, you don't remember.

Since you were on Angel Island for awhile, was your father with you the whole time?

X: No.

J: No?

X: I went myself.

J: Where was your father?

X: My father was onshore, in San Francisco, (at his) store.

J: Really?

X: My father was at his store. I was by myself.

J: Since you were by yourself, were you scared?

X: Scared or not, (it) doesn't matter. I was only thirteen years old. Thirteen years old, scared or not, still has to go (through Angel Island).

J: When you went into the wooden house, was it crowded? Were there a lot of people with you?

X: Yea, there were many people.

J: Many people.

X: Right, there were about one or two hundred people. There were two floors. There were three levels of bunk beds, bottom level, middle level, third level. Very high.

J: Which level of bunk bed did you sleep in?

X: I slept at the bottom one.

J: I see. The bottom one.

X: I was only a kid, thirteen years old, can't climb that high.

J: I see. Did you talk to or hold a conversation with these people?

X: Mmmm....[pause]

J: Did you meet any people or make friends?

X: Made some friends, but I can't recall so much.

J: I see. Can't recall so much. Then you were by yourself in the wooden house, how did you spend the time there?

X: Spend the time? Nothing much. I was detained, talked to people. That was it. There were children, adults, and good people.

J: When did you arrived at Angel Island?

X: 1926.

J: 1926. Oh, okay.

X: It was December. I remember. I spent Christmas time on Angel Island.

J: On the island, did the staff people celebrate the holiday with you?

X paused.

J: Were there any presents?

X: Yes.

J: Yes?

X: There was a....I still remember there was a....that Christian Presbyterian Church...her last name was Moore.

J: Oh!

X: Moore...Ms. Moore.

J: Ms. Moore...Did she come to see you and others?

X: She, very happy, Christmas time...She celebrated with some party.

J: I see. How did she celebrate?

X chuckled and paused.

J: Haha..passed out presents?

X: Pass out presents. That was it, yea.

J: Did you receive any presents then?

X: Mmmm...I can't remember that much...[chuckles] it has been 70 something years...hard to remember.

J: Hahah...but were you happy?

X: Happy but can't say it was happy, right? There were a lot of people who were detained on Angel Island for a long time.

J: That's right.

X: Detained on Angel Island for a very long time...there were some who were detained for months...to appeal in courts...because their interrogations were different...that is some people were not honest.

J: Mmm..

X: It was my father who brought me here. Some people were paper sons

J: Yes. Paper sons. You weren't a paper son though?

X: No.

J: Do you remember if there was a Self-governing Organization?

X: What is it?

J: Self-governing Organization., where it was established by a group of males.

X: It was a club, right?

J: Yes, similar to a club...do you remember?

X: I don't remember this.

J: Oh, don't remember.

X: We, children, didn't get to participate. Only adults participated. There were some very old, some years of age.

J: Oh...then there was a "club"?

X: Yes, there was.

J: Then did you see there was entertainment sometimes, provided by the organization? Were there games, songs to sing, performances?

X: Oh, there were songs, musical performance...there were...Chinese music...instruments, there were some Chinese violins, etc. They have a lot of time. Some people carved poems on the wall.

J: Oh.

X: They were very hardworking and detailed (in carving poems on the walls)...there were people who were in the wooden building for some years, two, three years. There were people who had been here for a long time, appealing in the courts for many times but they weren't allowed to go, that was it.

J: I see.

X: Then a while after, they were deported...had to go back, go back to Hong Kong, that was it.

J: I see.

X: Yes, that was how it was. It was very sad...those paper sons...but that was how it was.

J: Yea.

X: There were some people who were pitiful. Looking at these poems, the wall...it was written in black ink...it was unbelievable, yea, (the walls) were full of poems...[sigh]

J: Did you see anyone carved poems on the wall?

X: Yea...write...no, not write, but carved. It was wooden buildings, these wooden boards...On Angel Island, it was wooden building.

J: Right.

X: Have you been to Angel Island?

J: Yes, I have.

X: Yea [chuckles].

J: I saw that poems were still there on the walls.

X: Yea...on the walls...it was very sad [sigh]...spent a lot of money coming here, but couldn't go on board, then was deported, it was a very sad thing.

J: Yes, it was. So did you read these poems on the walls?

X: Yes, but couldn't remember, couldn't remember.

J: Couldn't remember....

X: But a child [referring to himself] couldn't recognize.

J: So did you carve a poem on the wall yourself? [laughs]

X: [chuckles]...thirteen years old, too young, you know. I didn't know how to write [poems].

J: That's true.

X: It was like that. A thirteen year old who had not finish his studies. Couldn't write. But there were many things one couldn't imagine it would happen. There were people who were sad and pitiful [sigh]....You haven't experienced before, have you?

J: No.

X: What level were you when you came here?

J: What level?

X: Education level.

J: Oh, I came from Hong Kong when I was eight years old.

X: Eight years old? Oh?

J: Yes.

X: What about your relatives, how did they come here?

J: I came here with my parents.

X: I see.

J: Yea.

X: The how long have you been here?

J: About 12 years.

X: I see. [chuckles] I've been year for seventy something years.

J: Time flies...hahaha...when you were on Angel Island, do you remember the meals that you had?

X: Ate what meals? There were meals that were uh...ate about the same food all the time.

J: Like what?

X: Ate cooked vegetables, soup...

J: Was the food good?

X: It was okay at the time, bearable. Couldn't think what kind of taste it had.

J: I see. When it was meal time, how did you eat? Did the males and females eat together? Or did they eat separately?

X: Males and females ate separately.

J: How?

X: We, a group of males, ate together, very seldom saw the females. At that time, there was one place (to eat).

J: Then the place that the males and females lived and ate was different?

X: It was different, different wooden buildings.

J: I see, different buildings.

X: Yea...some people...some staff...guarding.

J: I see. Did you know whether the males eat first or the females eat first?

X: Uh...[pause] I can't remember that clearly who ate first...[chuckle]

J: I see, it was at different places, at different times eating the meals.

X: Right...different places, different cafeteria...different...a group of people went downstairs

to eat, then another group came back up.

J: What do you think of the staff people? Were they nice? Did they treat you nicely? Were they mean?

X: No, they weren't mean (to me). Everyone was very warm and nice.

J: Everyone was warm and nice?

X: Everyone was very...well...there were people who stayed (at Angel Island) for a long time, there were some who didn't stay for very long. Often, a group came in, another group went out. That was it. Didn't pay too much attention.

J: Didn't pay too much attention.

X: Yes.

J: I see. These (Angel Island) staff were very nice and warm.

X: Very, very nice.

J: There were...

X: These "old" foreigners were like that. Once you entered (Angel Island), they gave you some number, some numbers already, depending on the number of the ship you arrived on. That was it...some number...number 2, number 16, that was how they called you, by your number.

J: Oh....

X: If you needed to go down for interrogation, you need to go to the office for interrogation.

J: They let you go to the office for interrogation?

X: No...they called out your number: "who, some number" then you go to office for interrogation...that was it.

J: Oh.

X: Ask you for interview, in English.

J: Oh...You mean when you gave your interrogation?

X: Yes...there was an "old" foreigner who called you.

J: "Old" foreigner?

X: Yes, these Westerners.

J: Oh...Westerners.

X: That was how you were called (for the interrogation). If there were people who sent you food to eat, they called you. Like, called you by your number: number 2, number 16, some number...(it was) good...there were food to eat, things sent to you...that was it.

J: Oh, so they did not call you by names...

X: They did not call your names...they used numbers.

J: Use numbers...So when did they assign you to numbers?

X: Uh...these ship tickets.

J: Oh. The tickets.

X: There were numbers on the ships tickets.

J: Which was?

X: Which was the number of the ship you arrived on.

J: Oh. That was how they called you by number.

So did your father in America send you any food to eat?

X: Yes...sometimes...sent me things to eat. Sent...to the ship room...there were food to eat, (called you by) some number, there were people who came up and (called your) number.

J: Then they gave it to you.

X: Let you get it.

J: Oh.

X: Every week, they also let you go to the dock one or two times...to the place where the luggage was.

J: Uh huh.

X: They let you get it one or two times.

J: So it was every week they let you go down (to the dock for the luggage)?

X: Yea, yea. Let you go down.

J: To get your luggage.

X: The person who called your number...your number...then you go get (your luggage).

J: I see. They would let you get some luggage.

X: Yea...because there were some clothes you could not bring it up. Could only get useful clothing. Had to go down and get it.

J: I see. Did the staff bring you outside to play sometime?

X: I did not play.

J: I mean. You always had to be detained inside the wooden building, but did they sometimes bring you outside to play ball?

X: (They did) bring us to the yard...there was a yard.

J: Do you remember how long awhile they let you go out and play? Go out to play in the yard?

X: Depends. No exact time.

J: Depends.

X: There was a time.

J: So when you were interrogated, they called out your number?

X: Right, they called me by my number.

J: When you were being interrogated, were you afraid, facing a group of people?

X: Afraid or not...That moment after leaving the President line, my father went to San Francisco shore. It was only me going to Angel Island, left on the boat going to Angel Island. At that moment, my heard was soured.

J: I see.

X: At first, leaving my loved one...thirteen years old at that time, matured enough to know...going to school to study...matured.

J: Right.

X: It was very sad, you know.

J: Yes, it was...When you were interrogated, do you remember what kinds of questions did they ask you?

X: Asked which village...my house was faced at what direction...similar questions.

J: Were there any more?

X: Also asked how many relatives/family members I lived with. That was it. After they asked me, they asked my father. Saw if both interviews matching or not. Which answers matched, and which did not. They used these as evidence deciding both of us are real or not (in father and son relationship). The (relationship) was real, you were not a paper son but one own's relative.

J: Did you need a coaching paper to study these questions? Like the picture of your house, study which direction your house faced?

X: Yes. This village faced which direction, how many houses there were, how big the district...

J: Did you have to remember the answers? Did you have to study it?

X: I studied it, but I couldn't remember much about it. In terms of the interrogation, (they matched) mine to what my father said.

J: But did they ask you very detailed questions?

X: Yes, it was very detailed.

J: Right, very detailed. When you were in the interrogation room, how many people were

there to ask you?

X: There was an inspector, an interpreter. After I said something, (the interpreter) translated back to the (inspector). There was also a witness.

J: A witness?

X: Yes, a witness. He was an “old foreigner” immigration witness listening to what I said, were I being truthful or not.

J: I see.

X: If you were being truthful, you were lucky and were released. If you were not so lucky, you were detained. That was it.

J: I see. They interrogated you for how long?

X: I was detained for twenty days.

J: I mean, how long did they interrogate you?

X: Interrogated me?

J: Yes, for the interrogation.

X: Oh.....not for very long...maybe one to two hours.

J: I see. Did they interrogate you for many days?

X: Uh...

J: I mean, they interrogated you first time, or more than one time?

X: They asked me one time. If the answer was correct, matched that of my father's, there was nothing incorrect, then they release you, let you go.

J: I see.

X: If they wouldn't release you, they denied you. Being denied meant they didn't agree, they wouldn't release you...[sigh...chuckle]

J: The questions they asked you, were they easy to answer?

X: It wasn't anything...just very simple.

J: Very simple?

X: It was about my father-son relationship, matched or not. That was it.

J: Besides these questions, what else did they ask you?

X: What's that?

J: When they interrogated you, did they ask you anything else? Like, besides asking which direction your house face, which family members you lived with...were there any other questions?

X: [pause] Not many questions.

J: Not many questions?

X chuckles

J: How long do you think the interrogation last?

X: How long?

J: Yes. How long did it take them to ask you questions during the interrogation? Were the questions repetitive?

X: They asked me one question, I gave them answer.

J: I see. Did they ask any repetitive questions?

X pauses.

J: Did they ask you many times?

X: There were much repetitiveness...[pause]...if they did not believe you in the interrogation, they asked you again.

J: I see.

X: [pause] It was very simple.

J: Okay.

X: However, they detained you at the wooden house for days, right. There were some who

stayed longer than I did. Some stayed for few months, one to two years to appeal to the court (because) they didn't accept being denied entry.

J: I see. So you heard about other people's stories?

X: What's that?

J: So you heard stories about other people on Angel Island?

X: Yes. It was...many...[mumbles]...very sad.

J: Very sad, yes...So when you were being interrogated, did they ask you questions everyday? Was it like....?

X: [interrupts] No. They asked once, then asked again. Asked you again...asked you a second time...that was it...asked you two times.

J: What about you?

X: What's that?

J: What about you? Did they asked you a few times when you were being interrogated?

X: They asked me?

J: Right.

X: When they asked me, there wasn't any repetition. They believed what I said. I really said the truth, the real situation.

J: So your interrogation had no problems.

X: Had no problems.

J: I see. So after interrogation, did they release you immediately?

X: Right. If they agreed, that was it. They believed you and released you.

J: Then on the day you were done with the interrogation, they released you on the same day?

X: Released me, then I packed [chuckles].

J: Were you happy?

X: What's that?

J: When you were released, were you happy?

X: Happy or not, it was the same [chuckles].

J: But you got to see your father again, didn't have to stay on Angel Island anymore.

X: [sigh] That's true...

J: Do you remember seeing people on strike when you were on Angel Island?

X: What's that?

J: Strike. Like when people were unsatisfied with their condition, they put on strikes there. Did you see any young people strike, said anything against the staff? Did anything like that happen?

X: No, no such things happened.

J: No such things.

X: Everyone was good, taking care of himself.

J: So no one put on strikes or anything like that.

X: So there were some people, who played music, playing the Chinese instrument, some sang songs, wrote things. People were just like that ...[mumble].

J: So the day you left Angel Island, done with your interrogation, they released you.

X: Yes.

J: Then you take the ship to San Francisco?

X: Right. Had to take the...[mumble]...go (to San Francisco), there were relatives who waited for me...[pause]...I still remember my older brother...at that time...there were not a lot of people had cars. There was a Buick...very big Buick [chuckles] my first time riding in a car.

J: I see... he drove a car to pick you up?

X: Right, right...came to pier 5, I can still remember.

J: Pier 5.
X: Pier 5.
J: So it was your older brother who picked you up?
X: Yes, my older brother picked me up.
J: What about your father?
X: What's that?
J: What about your father?
X: My father? He had to be at the store. Used a car to pick me up, my first time in a car [chuckle]
J: Hahaha...you must've been very happy.
X: The year of 1926...wow...that time...year 1927...end of the year 1926.
J: You went onshore to San Francisco in 1927.
X: Yea, on shore.
J: And you were detained on Angel Island for 20 days.
X: Right, 20 days.
J: I see.
X: You were detained...Where were you born?
J: Huh?
X: You were born here? The place...
J: I was born in Hong Kong.
X: In Hong Kong.
J: Right.
X: Then you immigrated to here?
J: Yes.
X: With your parents?
J: Huh?
X: You came here with your parents?
J: Yes.
X: With your parents?
J: Right...I wasn't separated from them...[laughs]
X: Yes...you're lucky.
J: True.
X: Didn't have to go to Angel Island [chuckle]
J: [laughs]...Yes.
X: My wife...I brought my wife to America...41...1941...she was pregnant with our second daughter...[chuckle]
J: Oh?
X: That was Irene...in the stomach; she was born here [in America].
J: I see.
X: Yea...born in July.
J: I see.
X: We arrived in June, and she was born in July. She had not gotten up [the whole trip]...had been seasick...my wife.
J: Oh. So you and your wife came here again by boat?
X: Right...came here by boat, first-class.
J: I see.
X: (My wife) hadn't come out (of the ship)...[mumble]
J: Very miserable.
X: Yes, very miserable, 20 days...very troublesome to be seasick. Irene was like that at that

time.

J: So your father had a store that sold Chinese medicine?

X: Right. Chinese medicine

J: Was it in Chinatown?

X: Right...it was on Grant Avenue, 1012

J: I see.

X: 1012...right now it's Citibank

J: Oh I see. It's Citibank now.

X: Yea...constructed through a few stores

J: I see...So when you were released from Angel Island, went to San Francisco, what did you do?

X: I went to school.

J: You went to school. Which school did you go to?

X: I went to Public of Stockton...there were no class (available) at that time. So I studied for two years ungraded.

J: How come?

X: Too young. I didn't know anything.

J: Oh.

X: Didn't know anything, "yes" or "no" I didn't even know how to say it.

J: I see.

X: It was very pitiful. It's pitiful when you don't know anything...[sigh]...then I studied for four years.

J: Oh. So you studied for four years?

X: Yeah, yeah. Came here in the 1920s...studied for four years...[mumble].

J: I see. After your studies, did you go work?

X: Didn't go work. After I finished my studies, I went back to China with my father to get marry.

J: Oh...So you were 17 years old?

X: About 17 or 18 years old when I got married.

J: And you went back to China.

X: Right, went back to China to get married, got married very young.

J: Then....

X: There were few people at 19 years old who didn't get married by then.

J: I see. In that generation, people got married very young.

X: In that generation was 20 years old...My wife was about 18 or 19 years old, people called her "old girl."

J laughs.

X: [chuckles]..."Old girl"...See, here is different, people have different knowledge...[mumbles]...that was it.

J: So you went back to China to get married.

X: Right.

J: Then you came back by ship, did you have to go through Angel Island again?

X: What's that?

J: Did you have to go through Angel Island again?

X: [coughs]...went for two days.

J: I see, for 2 days.

X: went there for 2 days.

J: You were on Angel Island for 2 days.

X: No luck...it wasn't anything much. Two days time, why? Because they (the immigration

staff) wanted to check, check to see if my father was in a business, was he really in business? We (came through) by the piece of paper that said we did merchant business. If my father wasn't in business, then I couldn't go back (to America).

J: I see.

X: They had to certify International trade import and export, to see...[mumble]

J: I see. So you came back with your wife, both of you were detained on Angel Island for 2 days?

X: Came back here, detained for two days.

J: I see. So were you and your wife separated then?

X: No. My wife wasn't on Angel Island...she was...

G: Silver Avenue.

J: Huh?

G: Silver Avenue.

J: Oh.

X: Veteran's Hall...this immigration...

J: Then when was the second time that you came to America?

X: The second time I came back?

J: Mm hmm...

X: Uh...[pause]...when I came back again, it was '41.

G: 1941.

X: '41.

J: Oh...so then you had to go to Silver Avenue, and you didn't have to pass through Angel Island?

X: No. Didn't go to Angel Island.

J: Oh.

X: My wife didn't have to go to Angel Island.

J: Then you were on Silver Avenue with your wife for two days.

X: Right...Had to sleep there for one or two days. My wife was pregnant, the baby was born, my second daughter.

J: It must've been a painful experience (for her).

X: Right...it was painful...(she was) seasick, got seasick like crazy [sigh]. That's why coming to San Francisco was not very easy [sigh].

J: Right. It was very hard for people to immigrant to here back then.

X: Right now is different, don't have to pass through Angel Island. Could go onshore (to San Francisco) once arrived.

J: So after you and your wife were released (from Silver Avenue), what jobs did you do? What did you do for a living?

X: That time, I was selling Chinese medicine.

J: Oh. Helping your father with his business?

X: Yea...My father's business, I have to learn how to do business.

J: I see. So after four years of education, you went back to China to get married, and then came back to America and did business.

X: Right...yes...that was it...[sigh]. It was very pitiful.

J: I see.

X: What was your surname? I forgot to ask you.

J: My surname is Ho.

X: Ho...Oh...the character with the "person" radical.

J: Right.

X: I see. How come you're so good with Chinese, know so much English and Chinese.

J: Oh...I speak better English, my Chinese isn't that good.
X: Which university are you in, in China?
J: Oh...I came here from Hong Kong when I was eight years old.
X: Oh. From Hong Kong when you were eight.
J: Then I went to elementary school and high school here.
X: When you were here, which county did you leave in?
J: In San Francisco.
X: San Francisco.
J: Right.
X: When you were eight years old, what year did you come here?
J: 1990s.
X: Ninety...
J: Yea.
X: Then you were very young when you come here?
J: Very young?
X: Eight years old.
J: Yea, eight years old, then went on to elementary school.
X: elementary school.
J: I thought it was difficult too.
X: I was at school for two years ungraded...very little English. Went back to China when I was 20 years old. I didn't even finish high school.
J: Then what grade did you go up to?
X: Went up to eighth grade...my English was not enough...couldn't use much.
J: Still good, you have been here for so many years.
X: Aiya, I don't think so [chuckle]...Every one of my children studied in universities.
J: When you studied here, were you taught in Chinese or English or both?
X: It was both.
J: In Chinatown?
X: Nan Qiao school...on Sacramento Street. What about you?
J: I was taught in English...(the elementary school I went to) was around Geneva Avenue.
X: What's that?
J: Geneva Avenue, near the Mission district.
G: Near Cow Palace.
X: Cow Palace over there.
J: Yea. It was in English, no Chinese lessons, but there were Chinese people in my elementary school.
X: No Chinese lessons.
J: None.
X: But you are so smart, you know so much Chinese.
J: Oh [laughs]...I usually talk to my parents in Chinese.
G laughs.
X: Wow...that's so smart.
G laughs.
X: What is your English name?
J: Jasmin
X: What's that?
J: Jasmin
X: Jasmin.
J: Right, like jasmine the flower.

G: Like jasmine tea

J: Right [chuckle]

X: Jasmine is like the “so hane” flower

J: Uh...it’s “mo li” flower.

X: Oh...“mo li” flower [chuckle]...not “so hane” flower...jasmine tea...jasmine is “mo li” flower [chuckle]...nice name

J: Thank you...hahaha

X sighs

J: So the first time you came here, you were 13 years old on Angel Island, did you understand why you were detained on Angel Island at that time?

X: [pause]...understand it or not didn’t matter...in the wooden buildings...they just wanted to make sure that you have a real father and son relationship, and not paper sons. There were many paper sons...different names.

J: Yes

X: You’re so smart, didn’t take Chinese lessons but you speak so much Chinese.

J: It’s okay.

X: Did you go back to Hong Kong for schooling?

J: I haven’t gone back to Hong Kong for school, I’ve always been here for school.

X: Oh...study in school...[sigh] you talked to your parents (in Chinese).

J: Right. I’ve always talked to them in Chinese

X: [sigh], that’s how it is, I see...then what county are you from?

J: What do you mean?

X: In China, which county? In the Canton Province, which county?

J: Oh, My father’s village is Shun De

X: Oh, Shun De, one of the three...

J: [laughs] what do you mean?

X: Nam Hoi, Poon Yu, Shun De

J: Oh, you mean the three counties in the Canton Province?

X: Right. Canton Nam Hoi, Shun De, Poon Yu, the three counties.

J: Which of the three counties is your village located in?

X: What’s that?

J: One of the three counties.

X: In the three counties, Nam Hoi.

J: Oh. Nam Hoi.

X: Nam Hoi, Kow Kong.

J: Oh, Kow Kong

X: they (his children) went back to visit.

J: Did you go too?

X: I did, went back [chuckle]

J: Wow

X: Went back twice...also went to Beijing.

J: Wow. So everything has changed, hasn’t it?

X: Everything’s changed. Have you gone back to China?

J: I haven’t gone back to my father’s village, but I’ve been to China before

X sighs

J: Right. I haven’t gone back to my father’s village.

X: You’re from Shun De, Shun De is very good too...Shun De Hen On Tong (Shun De Association in Chinatown, San Francisco).

J: Right. It’s Shun De Hen On Tong

X: [chuckle] it's on Jackson Street
J: Right
X: You know so much Cantonese....surprised
J laughs
X: Have you studied Cantonese?
J: No
G: She's good huh? She has a big vocabulary
X: Oh, she's brilliant
J: Thank you...well
X: She's not good, she's brilliant
J: Oh no
X: She's exceptional
J: No...
X: Yea...
J: You're too kind
X: [chuckle] Not to kind...So you're in university?
J: Yes...Right now I'm studying in an university, learning Mandarin
X: Learning mandarin?
J: Right, learning Mandarin
X: Oh, learning Mandarin, then you can go to China
J: Right
X: (China's) very big place
J: Yes
X: Your last name is Ho...(written in) the "person" radical
J: Yes
X: Very smart
J: I'm okay
X: Know so much Cantonese
J: I've talked to my parents in Cantonese
X: Parents? Your parents can teach you so much things?
J: [laughs] Yes, I've watched television too
X: Watched television?
J: The Cantonese news on Channel 26.
G chuckles
X: Cantonese news...I still don't believe you haven't studied Cantonese...unbelievable
J: [laughs] I had some Cantonese education in Hong Kong
X: But I don't believe
J: When I was in Hong Kong, I had some Cantonese education in elementary school
X: What's that?
J: When I was in Hong Kong, I had some Cantonese education in elementary school
X: In elementary school, but you were so young when you came to America, you could still remember what you learned in elementary school?
J: [laughs] but then I've practiced my Cantonese with my parents since then
X: Very high level (in Cantonese)
J: It's okay
X: Yes... really...where do you live?
J: Where do I live?
X: Yes
J: In the Sunset District

X: Oh, right now in the Sunset District
J: Right
X: Sunset, it's the same as you (referring to his daughter, Ginny), isn't it?
G: Yea...I'm on 22nd Avenue and Vicente Street
J: Oh, I'm on 38th Avenue and Rivera Street
G: Ha...very close
J: Yes...very close
G: We're neighbors almost
X: Yea? She's at Vicente
J: I live near Rivera Street
X: What's that?
J: It's near Taraval Street
X: Oh, Taraval
J: It's close by
X: Taraval, it's very close
J: So have you visited Angel Island again?
X: Mmm...
J: Right now Angel Island is almost like a visitor's center
X: Really?
J: Yes
X: I went back once, I remember. That time, when the monument was put up, I went back once.
J: How long ago was that?
X: Very long ago, isn't it (talking to Ginny)...setting up the...
G: The thing...the plaque...there's a monument there.
J: Yes...there is
G: Whenever year that was, we were there
J: Oh
G: I don't remember the exact year
J: Oh, I don't remember either...wow...When you went back then, how did you feel? Any memories?
X: Yes, going up and down the stairs, going to the cafeteria...down the stairs...[sigh]
J: Did you remember which area you slept in?
X chuckles
G: I think you pointed at it or something, Dad.
X: What's that?
G: You pointed at the bunk bed or something, you know, the sleeping area...you pointed at the bunk bed
X: Yea...bunk bed...remember that I slept in the lowest bunk...very long time ago...[sigh]...91 years old...I'm very old.
J: Wow. 91 years old? You don't seem like it, I thought...
X: Don't seem like it? [chuckle] my birthday at the end of last year, turned 91 years old
J: Wow...you still look very healthy
X: Aiya...It's not much, Miss
J chuckles
X: Couldn't say so
J: Still look healthy
X: Ai...it turns out that we are from one of the 3 counties in the Canton Province
J: What's that?

X: Nam Hoi, Poon Yu, Shun De, the three counties
J: Right
X: Kow Kong, Nam Hoi has an association, on Washington Street
J: Oh, there's an association
X: Right, the Kow Kong Association
J: So are you a member?
X: What's that?
J: Are you a member of the Kow Kong Association on Washington Street?
X: Right, it's 156 Washington Street
J: Oh...
X: When I first came to America, the Association was establishing, fifty something years...we established the Kow Kong Association
J: Oh, the year you arrived?
X: No...I've been here for a long time
J: Oh. So when the Association began?
X: It's already been established
J: What year did it began then?
X: Eh...[pause]...19 something...it's been 50 something years now
J: Oh, 50 something years
X: 50 something years
J: Oh...so it was established in nineteen sixty something?
X: No...It was established in nineteen fifty something. We came here in 1948, 1949....[mumble].
J: Then have you been involved in the activities at the Association?
X: Yea...I'm quite old
J: So you are not involved?
X: My memory is not good, not energetic enough, that's it
J: No, you look very energetic
X: [sigh], Ai...to do a little thing, very clumsy, it's like that
J: Still healthy though. There are many elderly in their nineties, not as healthy
X: Old and dumb
J: Some elderly is like that, but you're not
X: What's your Chinese name?
J: Mmm?
X: What's your Chinese name, Miss Ho?
J: Oh...Ho Chui Ying
X: Ho...what?
J: Ho Chui Ying, Chui like the "jade"
X: Oh...Ho Chui...
J: Ying...
X: Which Ying?
J: eh?
X: Ying
J: The one with the "fire" radicals...then...
X: Oh...Ying
G: Can you write it?
J: Yes
G: Write on the paper
J: It's this "Ying"

[pause...paper shuffling]

X: Why...and you haven't studied Cantonese...very unbelievable...really [chuckle]

J: [laughs] It's okay

X: Ho...

J: Chui...like the jade

X: the jade...

J: Ho Chui Ying

X: Oh, the Chui is in this radical

J: Right

X: Chui like the jade...like the Restaurant...Fei Chui Restaurant

J: [laughs] yes

X: Still unbelievable

G, J laughs

J: So do you think the next generation should learn about this part of history about Angel Island?

X: The history of Angel Island

J: Right

X: It's just history from long time ago

J: Yes, this part of history of Angel Island

X pause

J: Do you think next generation should learn about this? To know about how difficult it was for their great great grandfather and grandmother to come to America?

X: Mmm...We...My father came here in 1900...

G: Are you cold? I can shut the windows

J: Oh no...I'm okay, thanks.

X: What's that?

G: No no...I thought maybe she's cold...

J: She's afraid that I'm cold, I'm not though

X: Are you cold?

J: No...[laughs].

X: Came here in 1900

J: Mmm?

X: My father came here 1900...

J: So do you think the next generation should know about this history? When they first came here, it was very difficult.

X: That's true.

J: Right

X: The river crosses, the river enters...[chuckles]

J: What's that?

X: The river crosses, the river enters...this history is very sad

J: Right...so the next generation would be more grateful being here, knowing that coming to America hasn't been easy

X: Grateful to what? [pause]

[then to his daughter] You know Dr. Chan? He's a immigrant too

G: Um hmm.

X: He's an immigrant in Angel Island

G: Dr. Chen?

X: Dr. Chen...my...

G: The brain surgeon? No

X: Huh?
G: Which one?
X: Dr. Chen
G: Leo Chen?
X: Leo Chen...yea
G: Ooh...from Angel Island? Oh, he's
X: Yea...he's immigrant...immigrant from Shanghai...We are Cantonese, he's Shanghaiese
J: Ooh...he's your friend?
X: What's that?
G: His brain surgeon
J: Ooh...
G: He had a meningoma (spelling unsure, some kind of brain disease)
X: I don't have much brain left [mumbles]
G and J laugh
G: He's lucky
X chuckles
J: So, this Dr. Chan...he's from
G: Leo Chen
X: Leo Chen, yea
J: He went through Angel Island too?
G: Mm...no...did he go to Angel Island?
X: Yes...yea
G: Yea?
J: Do you know which year he came here?
X: [talking to his daughter], at that time, what year...the Bank of America building...he participated in it too.
G: Ooh...oh yea
X: Remember?
G: We had a...I was on the Board of the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation...
J: Oh really?
G: We had a fundraiser at the Bank of America building and he came. Dr. Chen came. He had some connection to the island. I don't...don't know what it is.
X: Yea...[mumbles]...late...or late 50s
G: Yea he...I don't know, Dad. The surgeon is that he might be in his late 50s, is it? I don't know. People were at Angel Island until what? 1940
J: 1940
G: I don't know...but he
X: That time there was the war with the Japanese...I remember that time there were some on Angel Island...detained some Germans...prisoner of war
J: Ooh...you're talking about World War II?
G: The Germans
X: Yea yea yea
J: I see...right...the Germans, there were Japanese too
X: Yes...you're young you don't remember
J laughs
X: Well
J: Basically I have everything
G: You have everything you need?
J: Yea, pretty much

X: Yea
J: Well, your experience is very interesting
X: Yea?
J: to hear your story
X: I don't know much, you know
J: No, you've been very helpful...thank you
X: [sigh] my English is not good enough, my Chinese is not good enough, almost not enough...these 20 years [mumble] 1928, long time
J: 1928?
X: 1928. Came here 1926...on Angel Island...first Christmas in this country. Yea, 1926...it's been seventy something years
J: Yes, it has been so
X: What's that?
J: It has been so
X: Right...[chuckle]...I'm an old Chinese
J: Wow....[laughs]...time flies by quickly
X: Time really goes by really quickly, really fast...very fast...you're still young
J laughs
G: What year are you in college?
J: Second year
G: Second year
J: Right
X: Second year?
J: Second year
X: Second year...in UC Davis...second year
G: Mm hmm...hard school...she's smart. It's a hard school
J: [laughs] not really
X: Oh? [chuckles]
G: So you're going back tonight...you're driving up there tonight?
J: No, my dad is driving me...
G and X: Oh...
G: Have all your things?
J: Yes
X: Are you done with school, Miss Ho?
J: Done with school?
X: Like, done with school? Already studied for 2 years
J: Oh...usually it takes 4 years to complete the college education...I'm half done with school
X: What's that?
J: I'm only half done with school...still need two more years to graduate
G: Uh huh
X: What about your parents? In San Francisco?
J: Right. They live in San Francisco
X: Oh, San Francisco
G: So when do you'll come do the other interview?
J: I'll just have to transcribe the interview, make copies of the forms and tapes...that's it. And I'll contact you for the following up interview
G: Okay
J: So...usually I come back in the weekends, so Saturdays, so the meeting might be on a Saturday.

G: Okay. There's only one Saturday we can't make it...the 9th (of April)

J: Ok...all right

End of interview....