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John H. Fong

Rosie the Riveter
World War II Home Front Oral History Project

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Interview conducted by
Robin Li
in 2011

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John H. Fong



John H. Fong, circa 1944

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Interview 1: November 9, 2011

Begin Audiofile 1

Li: This is Robin Li. I'm speaking with Mr. John Fong in San Francisco, California, November 9, 2011, interview one, tape for the Rosie the Riveter National Home Front Oral History Project. Thank you so much for participating. I'm really looking forward to talking to you this afternoon. Just to get started, can you tell me your full name and date of birth?

1-00:00:27

Fong: John H. Fong. I was born on January 24, 1929.

Li: Were you given a Chinese name when you were born?

1-00:00:37

Fong: Actually, yeah, my birth certificate lists me as Fong Wing Tong and in parentheses John Fong.

Li: What does the H stand for?

1-00:00:50

Fong: Well, I just stuck that—well, actually it's Fong Wing Tong Cantonese style but in SzeYup style my name is Hong, so I used the H from that, just because I hate people calling me John Fong, John Fong.

Li: You don't like the way it sounds?

1-00:01:21

Fong: I sign all my writings the name is John H. Fong, just to kind of break the monotony there.

Li: Can you tell me a little bit about our family?

Fong: My father was born in China. His father died when he was fourteen. Then an uncle got him to go to Singapore where he was an apprentice in an English bakery, and he worked there until he saved enough money to go back to the village, married my mother, had a daughter and a son, and in the early twenties when all the influx of immigrants coming over during that time, and he came over here by himself, he got a job as a baker in Fosters. Fosters used to be a cafeteria chain, they had several in the city, and he worked there and then he finally got to do the hiring and firing and he got a whole Chinese crew, and he worked there for several years and then he earned enough to open his own bakery, so he was working both jobs until it got too much for him, so then he quit the Foster's job whereupon that was during the Depression, so whereupon they fired the entire Chinese crew and brought in an all white crew. That was about that time my mother and brother came over and then his bakery did even though the Depression and all that, but still the people got to have milk and got to have eggs and butter and bread. We baked

our own bread, so he did well, and he started having sons. Then he opened another restaurant on Oakland Avenue. The first one was on Stockton and Jackson Streets, and the other one was on Grant Avenue, and there was a fountain and a bakery and we made our own ice cream. We made Chinese and American pastry. Then the war came along and, of course, oh, before that in '39 and '40 they had the World's Fair on Treasure Island and he opened a restaurant at the World's Fair. That did very well, and me and my brothers, my two younger brothers, we would during the summers of both years, during the summers we'd hop on to the delivery truck that went over every morning, and we had the run of the island for the whole day and night. We just went wild over there, and we knew every nook and cranny of the place, and we'd eat our meals at the restaurant, and then at night if my father didn't drive us home, we'd take the ferry back from Mare Island to the Ferry Building. In those days the cable car ran in front of the Ferry Building, and we took the cable car home and we spent a glorious two years up there on the island.

At least in my case I was a little too young to be working in the restaurant otherwise I probably would have been pressed in there. But when the war started then we did need help in the store and I started working at the store. I worked most of my life there.

Li: What was, can you tell me a little bit more about the World's Fair, what it was like on Treasure Island?

1-00:06:16

Fong: That World's Fair was to celebrate the—it was called the Pan Pacific Exposition I think it was called, and it was supposed to celebrate the—I don't remember now the 1915 World's Fair was to celebrate the opening of Panama Canal I believe, and this the Pan Pacific Exposition was to kind of I guess celebrate more or less the end of the Depression. It was just wonderful. They had buildings, great architecture, and statues and lagoons and had all these buildings that celebrated the products of many nations and all the states in the United States.

Li: You were free to just run around and explore and—?

1-00:07:41

Fong: Yeah, yeah. That's my brothers and I spent so much time there because these places where they gave you free samples, food samples [laughter]. Kraft had an exhibition there and they gave out free cheese, and Coca Cola actually had a bottling plant, it was in the fair, and you got free Coke and then Hills Brothers gave free coffee. We didn't get the coffee because we were too young for that really, but we had plenty to eat, and in the evening we'd go back to the restaurant and have a bowl of noodles [laughter]. It was really heaven [laughter]. Then my father would, our restaurant it was right across from the Penny Arcade, and every time I heard the song Artie Shaw's Frenesi, I don't know if you're familiar with that old stuff, but every time, it was

constantly playing Frenesi, da da da da da da de de de. Then my father would give us a quarter and we'd go over there and bought a cone of french fries for ten cents, a cone of French fries. Then we'd eat those between the three of us and if there's an odd one, I'd get it because, me big brother. Then with the three nickles we each would use it at the arcade. We would change it for pennies and we'd play the pin ball machines, and the cranes, and all the things in the penny arcade there for the pennies that we got. While the restaurant was right across from the arcade, but then that was near the section where they call it, they called it the Gayway. They wouldn't do that now, but in those days they called it the Gayway, and it was a strip where they had girly shows and things like the Folies Bergere, and they had a kind of a horror thing where they had mechanical monsters, things like that, like a fair, like a county fair like all the stuff.

Li: Where was this? In the city?

1-00:10:31

Fong: No, that was at the fair.

Li: That was at the Fair. That was a Treasure Island. Did it cost money to go to these things—?

1-00:10:47

Fong: The charges was really high, they charge you seventy-five cents to get into the fair. Well, that was for adults. I don't know what the kids' charge was. Well they didn't charge us because we'd sneak by way of the delivery van every morning, so we didn't have to pay. But the funny thing also one thing what they did was our restaurant was in a section they called the Chinese Village. They had a big Chinese gate there, and it cost another fifty cents to get in there. Which I said, "geez," it already cost you seventy-five and then now fifty cents to get into the Chinese Village? They had a Chinese restaurant, and they had puppet shows, they show you how to make puppets, and gift shop and stuff like that.

Li: So your father had a restaurant in the Fair?

1-00:11:52

Fong: In the Fair, yeah.

Li: Was it difficult to get a business inside the fair? That seems like a pretty great opportunity.

1-00:12:02

Fong: Yeah, yeah. Well, they figured you have—you've got to have Chinese food. They did pretty well, twenty-five cents for a bowl of noodles? Oh, well hey. But extra fifty-cents though it's prohibitive because a lot of people don't want to, I don't want to have pay fifty-cents and then go in there and eat a Chinese meal and pay for that? You're still talking about the end of the Depression,

sure, but it's still Depression time. People are not going to have that kind of money to—so that's the way the Chinese Village, oh, I don't know. Some people to make money, fifty cents yeah, but all the other exhibits are free. All these different countries had their exhibits there. Some great stuff. It was all really very nice. The Japanese built a pagoda like thing, but the Chinese all boycotted it because we were at war with Japan, China was at war with Japan during that time. So we never went in there in loyalty to our people.

Li: Did your parents participate in the war effort, to support China? Did they do the boycotts and fundraisers to send money to China?

1-00:13:53

Fong: The—?

Li: Did your parents participate in the boycotts or fundraisers to support China during the war?

1-00:14:01

Fong: Well, they went down to the docks one time because they were loading scrap metal. They were selling scrap metal to Japan. The Chinese community went down there to demonstrate to try to get them not to sale and all that. So of course a lot of scrap metal came back as bombs. So yeah the family did—my mother and father a couple of times went down there to demonstrate. Oh, there was a group of Chinatown people were caught in that.

Li: Did they keep in touch with family in China?

1-00:14:55

Fong: Well, what?

Li: Did they keep in touch with family in China during the thirties?

1-00:15:00

Fong: My father had a sister—like I said his father died when he was fourteen. His mother died in the middle thirties I'd say. About thirty-five thirty-six—because I came down to the store one morning and on the cash register, where the keys are on the cash register, there was a telegram there. I read it and it said, "Send money for mother's funeral." That was it. So that was the middle thirties, and then my father had one sister that he left there and she emigrated, she married somebody from Canada, so she emigrated oh I guess in the fifties. She emigrated in the fifties, went to Canada, and I never got to meet her.

My mother's father died when she was already grown. My mother's mother I didn't even know she existed until 1954 when I told my mother I said, "I want to get married this year." And she said, "No, why don't you wait?" "Wait for what?" She said "I have to go to Hong Kong." I said. "Hong Kong you can go home any time." She says, "No, your grandmother has cancer." I said, "What grandmother?" I didn't know she existed. The family didn't know anything.

“Grandmother has cancer, and they’re releasing her from the village to go to Hong Kong for treatment, so I have to go there before she dies.” She says, “You wait for your wedding until I get back.” I says, “Well, of course, okay.” So when then she came back again, “How is she?” “Well, she’s okay.” She lived another what fifteen years after that. She came over with my uncle. I had an uncle, my mother has a brother living in Hong Kong and he has a family, so my grandmother came over with them. The whole family emigrated here in the fifties, and then she died. She didn’t die until with was 93, cancer or no. So that’s the extent of the immediate family, small considering, like you say, it’s a small family by any standard.

Li: Were your parents very political?

1-00:18:09

Fong: Political?

Li: In terms of Chinese domestic politics, nationalist or anti-nationalist, or—?

1-00:18:21

Fong: Nieces and nephews?

Li: No, like did your parents support—?

1-00:18:24

Fong: Were they political?

Li: Like Chiang Kai-Shek, did they support Mao, do you remember them talking about politics much when you were young, before—in the thirties and forties?

1-00:18:37

Fong: You mean talk about—?

Li: The Chinese Civil War?

1-00:18:46

Fong: My father was Kuomintang. Yeah, he was kind of a joiner. My mother, not so. She took care of the store, and the boat and her sons. That’s enough of a job for anybody. But my father was, he was a joiner. He joined the Kuomintang, but he wasn’t really—being a businessman you join all these organizations strictly for business sake. Later on he joined the Optimists, and he was president of our family association. He was president three terms. Then he was also president of the Chinese American Citizens Alliance. Then he belonged to a couple of Tongs [laughter]. But it’s not really politics, but it’s just joining. Well—he didn’t really join it for the social things, just for the sake it helps your business to be part of all these things.

Li: Do you remember—because you know for a lot of Americans they think of the war years starting in 1941, but it did it seem like the war years started earlier in Chinatown because of the Japanese invasion.

1-00:20:29

Fong:

Well—the war actually did Chinatown a big favor, I mean it really did. People in Chinatown were making \$30 a month—top dollar. But when the war started the shipyards were hiring, defense plants were hiring, they take anybody and everybody, and all of a sudden people had money and disposable income. They had money coming out of—a good example, our store like I said had a fountain and we offered a banana split for twenty-five cents. Nobody ever ordered it because twenty-five cents is a lot of money for a banana split. But when the war started, we only had like a couple of dishes, never used them, they were always been sitting there all dusted up. But when the war started, boy we had to order a couple of dozen more of those banana split dishes because everybody wanted—. Then they had money to buy those things.

Li:

Wow.

1-00:21:53

Fong:

So it helped Chinatown a great deal as far as economically—and of course my father had two locations before the war started. But after the war began he opened up two or three more places. Same kind of operation, lunch counters, little short order cooks and stuff like that. Of course, everywhere there were booming businesses. Then of course after the war, one by one they closed up because the bubbles finally burst.

Li:

Did you know a lot of people who went to work in the shipyards or factories?

1-00:23:06

Fong:

Any of us?

Li:

Yeah, did you know a lot of people who went to work in the shipyards or in the defense plants from Chinatown?

1-00:23:12

Fong:

Oh, oh, yeah because a lot of the customers would come in and they want to buy something for lunch and take with them—the shipyards were running twenty-four hours.

So some people would come in and buy stuff for their dinners or to take with them to work. Oh yeah, they got all those—then, of course, pastries and what have you. There was this one fellow who was a—he was a regular customer, but he was a big strapping guy. For Chinese he was pretty tall, and one of the early body builders, and had muscles and everything. He wore his hardhat all the time, and he'd come into the store wearing this T-shirt; there was a rip down the front to expose his manly chest. [laughs] Then he carried his lunch bucket, lunch thing, under his arm. He'd come in smiling. But of course he was deferred from the draft because he was working in the necessary industry.

So, yeah, there were a lot of those guys, some of the younger guys that worked in the shipyards, and they did well. My brother was of draft age, but

my mother insisted on him—he got this job over in Marin County in a dairy farm, and he went over there to work. So he got deferred for about a year, I guess. But during that time all his friends had already either enlisted or drafted. So he said he couldn't take it anymore, so he allowed himself to be drafted. So he went to—that's what a lot of people did to either dodge the draft or to defer themselves for a while. But as the war went on, sooner or later they would get drafted.

Li: Where did your brother serve?

1-00:26:17

Fong: Well, he went to basic training at Fort Ord. Then after that he was sent for special training at Fort Knox, Kentucky. And he sent home this picture, you know, how when you see those class pictures in school where you get this long photograph with everybody in it? Well, he sent home one picture from Fort Knox, and there had to be at least two thousand guys in that picture, and he was the only Asian.

Li: Really?

1-00:26:58

Fong: Yes, he was the only Asian there. So after that he came home on furlough and before he went overseas, and that was the only time I saw my mother cry was when he left, and they sent him over to France. He was part of the famous, they call the Red Ball Express, where they had all these truckers trying to catch up with Patton's Third Army. The Third Army moved so fast, the tanks, the trucks and all that, the tanks moved so fast that their supplies could not keep up with them. So they had all these trucks forever on the road, and they called them the Red Ball Express. So my brother was part of that. He drove a half track, which is a half truck, half tank. They would drive by night just following the red light of the vehicle in front of them. Then one night they were ambushed by a machine gun. The officer and the sergeant were wounded, and he took over the machine gun. These things carried machine guns in the front, and he said he just blazed away. He didn't know where he was, he said he was so scared he was just shooting at anything, and the next day they found some Germans' machine guns nests had all been killed. So for that he won the Bronze Star. After that he, that was pretty much near the end of the war, and after the war he spent some time over in Germany as part of the occupation forces, and he stayed with some German families. They had a piano, he learned to play the piano—and then he came home about the middle of 1946. After a while he went to work for the Post Office, and he worked until he retired at the Post Office. Oh, he married before he left the service. They had a son and a daughter, and now they have what—I don't know; I forget how many grandchildren they have now.

Li: Did he talk about what it was like to be one of the few Asians in the—was he in the Army; is that what he was in?

1-00:30:17

Fong: In the Army you mean?

Li: Yeah.

1-00:30:20

Fong: No, not really. If it weren't for that citation the Army sent us, we wouldn't have known what happened, that he won the medal. But no, he number one, he's a very quiet guy. You ask him a question, and maybe ten minutes later he'll answer, maybe not. He's very quiet, although it's not that he's mute or anything like that, but it's just that he doesn't really have much to say. And when he does say, sometimes he's pretty humorous when he does say something. He's one of those kind of guys, that's all it is. But he's very, he was very athletic. He was a single-digit golfer, and he was one of the better bowlers, his average in the eighties, one hundred eighties. He was quite an athlete.

Li: Did he remember there being any racism in the military when he was in service, anti-Chinese feeling from any of the other soldiers or the military?

1-00:31:56

Fong: Well, like I said, he never said anything. But I'm, well, if you're the only Asian in the company of two or three thousand men, I imagine he was treated like a mascot as opposed to discriminating against him because they feel him as a threat. And he was a little guy. He was only about five feet, three inches tall. You talk American, and I'm sure everybody treated him like a little buddy. But when you get to know him, he's very likeable. I don't imagine he had any problems. Of course when he got to Germany, at first the Germans thought he was Japanese. They thought all Asians were Japanese, so—

Li: So they thought he was an ally?

1-00:33:08

Fong: Yeah. But he never, like I said, he never—and we didn't ask him or bother him with all that stuff. When he was about fifteen or sixteen he was playing hooky a lot. He and his bunch of friends were all play hooky, and they weren't very much into school and all that. So suddenly he was sent to this military academy over in El Cerrito. It's run by this reverend, and he took in boys, like a reform school.

They had reform schools, and they had guys who were parents would pay to have them take their sons. [laughs] But it was a very nice outfit. They wore these West Point-type uniforms, and they had drum corps, and they had a football team, and my brother was one of the players on the football team. When he dressed up in his uniform and he played the drums. Oh, even though he's a little guy he kept quite a figure. Years and years later when we got together one year in one of our New Year family get togethers—and at that time all the kids were married and all that sort of thing—and so I asked him, I

said, “You know, Tom, you went to Chung Mei Home,”—this was called Chung Mei Home—I said, “You went to Chung Mei Home, right?” He said, “Yeah.” I said, “How come you got there?” And he said, “Your father told me Chung Mei Home or jail.” [laughs] I said, “You weren’t that bad, sure you—well now, I know he played hooky, but I don’t know what else you may have,” But I said, “You mean he would have sent you to jail?” Well, he could have arranged it, so—that was funny when he said that.

Li: Where did you go to school?

1-00:35:52

Fong: I started school at four and a half, and spoke no Chinese.

Li: No Chinese?

1-00:36:02

Fong: No Chinese, oh, no. Me and my brothers, we didn’t have a radio or anything to learn from. There was no contact with any Caucasians really—oh, we did in one bakery, they’d come in now and then, mostly our clientele was 99.9 percent Chinese.

Li: So you only spoke Cantonese? You didn’t speak any English?

1-00:36:34

Fong: Yeah, Cantonese, yeah. Sze Yup. You know what Sze Yup sounds like?

Li: Yeah.

1-00:36:40

Fong: Yeah, well we spoke Sze Yup. So I went to Kindergarten at the Commodore Stockton and—well, it was okay. I was a pretty good apt student as most of the kids. When most of the kids come in not speaking English, you’re veritable territory. You absorb like a sponge. And so I went to Commodore there for about five years, and then they determined that I had vision problems because I was holding a book up to my face. So they sent me to the nurse, and then the nurse got me to go to an ophthalmologist. Then they shipped out of Commodore to Jean Parker, which is could be to close by; we’re talking—Jean Parker is over here, Commodore’s over here. So it wasn’t that much of a move.

But Jean Parker had a—they called it a sight-saving class where all the kids—there were maybe a dozen kids that either wore thick glasses or they had vision problems. One Italian kid, he didn’t wear any glasses. I says, “Why is he here?” It seemed he can look at you this way. He can’t see anything in front of him, but he can see this way. Okay, well, they sent him to that class—I guess—well now I’m sure it’s correctible, but in those days—and the class consisted well they had books in large print and they taught you to use a large

print typewriter. So all the kids—well great because I'm only ten years old—I'm learning to type.

So I was there for the rest of the fifth and sixth grade, and then I went to Francisco where also had a sight saving class. That's when I spent the war years—some of the war years at Francisco. It's the same, the kids graduate from Jean Parker—they graduate over to Francisco—they were worried about me because I was so skinny that they gave me free breakfasts at Francisco. I was eligible for free breakfasts, and then later on I had free lunch, but I had to earn it by washing pots and pans in the cafeteria kitchen. That was—during that time also the kitchen was operated by these Merchant Marine trainees. They're training cooks to be on the Merchant Marine ships that supplied all the war things, war material. So I had to wash the pots and pans and then I'd go out to the cafeteria for my free lunch. The only left then was about hot dogs and beans. That kind of made me—that's why I didn't like beans much after that. But it was great during that time because for the school dances we had the Coast Guard bands come over. Navy and Army bands, they'd come over and play for our school dances. That was great. In junior high you've got live bands? [laughs] Then during our gym classes we had to run—all the boys had to run obstacle courses and climb ropes and march—learn to march. The school had a playground about two blocks away from the school, so we had to learn to march to the playground and do our thing there, and then march back to the gym and that sort of thing.

Li: But they were getting you ready for—?

1-00:42:19

Fong: Yeah, get your cannon fodder. [laughs] But we were in junior high; how old were we? Thirteen years old—get you ready if the war lasted any longer. But it was also a great time because we had the paper drives, the tin drives, the glass drives. We collected—even rags—we have to collect rags, and all that sort of thing. All for the war. Oh, we started selling—they called them war—first they called them defense stamps, and it costs ten cents a stamp and then you paste them in a book. Then when it got up to \$18.75 or something, you turn it in—you get a twenty-five dollar war bond. So they try to get all the kids to come in with their dimes every week. But of course a lot of the kids couldn't afford it—their parents weren't making that kind of money. Although like I say it was war time and they were given more money, maybe they did better in that sort of thing—war bonds.

Li: Can you tell me about the rice bowl parties?

1-00:43:49

Fong: The what?

Li: The bowl of rice parties, or the rice bowl parties?

1-00:43:56

Fong: Oh, yeah. That was part of the war relief for—China War Relief they called it. But they also called it the Rice Bowl Festival too. They're trying to raise money for China. I was in the Boy Scouts during that time.

Li: What years was this?

1-00:44:26

Fong: This would be—well, I was twelve years old. 1942 I guess. Yeah, forty-two—no it was about forty-one. Anyway—that was when I was in the Boy Scouts and we would go out in parades—we'd do crowd control and crowd management. You'd send a kid out there with a long staff and you're supposed to hold all the crowds back [laughs] that sort of thing. Except one time we had a parade, part of the rice parade. They built these out of wood and cloth—they built these receptacles in the shape of a rice bowl. I guess they called it like a regular—it's supposed to look like a rice bowl on a platform with wheels. Our troop had to—we were assigned four scouts to each rice bowl, and we pushed that thing from City Hall on Van Ness to Market, and down Market to Grant and then up Grant until we all the way to Broadway.

Li: That's steep—

1-00:46:06

Fong: People were supposed to throw money into these bowls.

Li: Yeah.

1-00:46:13

Fong: And we pushed—there were coins hitting me on the head—try to pick it up off the street. Market Street is so wide and you had to have your bowl closer to the curb and all that. It wasn't hard to do because the bowls were easy to push and all and there were four of us to push it. But I don't think they raised much money. I look in there and hardly see anything down there. But the thing that I thought was really bad was they had this huge Chinese flag, really huge. It's like from sidewalk—from curb to curb was that wide.

Li: Wow.

1-00:47:12

Fong: And twice as long. It had all these women, matrons and some—not that many young ladies, but mostly matrons, carrying this flag. They walked the same route we did with the rice bowls.

Li: Yeah.

1-00:47:34

Fong: And when they got to Grant—and they were wearing their cheongsams—I'm sure they didn't wear heels or anything, but anyway, they had their nice clothes on and they had the jewelry on. They were carrying this, lugging this

flag. When they got to Grant Avenue they had to roll up part of it because it wouldn't fit up Grant Avenue. By the time they got up to Chinatown they were exhausted, oh man, I really felt sorry for them. Oh God, how could they—but some of them toughed it out. I said holy—I said to myself—boy you got to hand it to these ladies man. Woo, that was something else.

Li: Wow.

1-00:48:29

Fong: It was such a big flag—and you don't see that much money in there. Maybe when they get it all together there's quite a bit, but it was such a large area—it's hard to imagine how much money there was in there. Then I don't know if they raised all that much. There's always this talk about the Chinese Sixth Company. They always say, "Well, they probably get all the money and keep it themselves." There's always that negativity. Most of the people in Chinatown always figure the Sixth Company always—you know the nickname for the Chinese Sixth Company is, well, in Chinese it's called *dao tong*, which stand for rice barrels. That's only good for is to eat rice, so—[laughs]. Well, I must say, there was a lot of feeling to help China because when Madame Chiang came over we were—our troop was sent to Civic Auditorium to do our guard duty or whatever—ushering or whatever you call that. I was by the entrance when Madame Chiang came in, and she's wearing her signature powder blue *chiangsom* with the matching shoes. She just walked in just a few feet away from me. I said, "Wow." I was impressed. She's a beautiful woman—she was a beautiful woman—and she spoke better English than anybody I knew. Of course, she went to school back East and Bryn Mawr or whatever it was?

Li: Yes, Sweetbriar?

1-00:50:56

Fong: Oh you know something about her?

Li: Yeah, I read a little bit.

1-00:51:01

Fong: But she got on that stage, and she said, "We are the bulwark of democracy in the Far East. Give us the tools to fight the Japanese." Oh man, the crowd went wild.

Li: Were there a lot of people there to hear her speak?

1-00:51:26

Fong: Oh, the place was *jammed*! I would say most of Chinatown was there that night. Oh, yeah, the place was *jammed*. Well, of course, this is Madame Chiang Kai-Shek. People here, at that time, were still great loyalty to the mother country—most of all from there. Of course, most of the Chinese here were from Southern China where the Japanese were very much in evidence. A

lot of—some atrocities and all that. You hear all kinds of stories. And some are true, maybe some are not so true. Some was propaganda. Oh we hated Japanese here, they worked us whipped us to a frenzy.

Li: Did you know any Japanese people growing up?

1-00:52:45

Fong: No. Never, oh I wouldn't, we wouldn't—well, no, because in the schools there were none. Commodore Stockton was 100 percent Chinese. Jean Parker had some Italians. Then Francisco had half Chinese and half Italians. Before the war there was, on Grant Avenue from California Street to Bush—what is that about two or three blocks. They were almost all 100 per cent Japanese-owned businesses and—gift shops and what have you. If we walked by at all we just paid no attention, won't even acknowledge, won't pay any attention to them whatever because—but when the war started, and they relocated the Japanese, every one of those shops was vacated. They were closed. And then the Chinese were, “Woo, great, look at that.” We were all jumping, and it became instantly all Chinese owned. [laughs] That was the one thing that we people here were glad about the Japanese because they got rid of them and then they could take over and do their thing with the—

Li: There was no grief over the relocation of the Japanese from the Chinatown perspective?

1-00:54:32

Fong: Oh, no, no. Even before the war started in 1937, when the Japanese invaded China, even before then, there was no social contact in any form. Well, of course, the feeling against the Japanese even went way beyond the twentieth century really. They've always hated the Japanese, so we had absolutely nothing to do with them.

Li: Yeah, I'm going to just switch tapes.

Begin Audiofile 2

Li: This is Robin Li speaking with John H. Fong in San Francisco, California, November 9, 2011, Interview 1, Tape 2, for Rosie the Riveter. I wanted to ask you about Pearl Harbor. Do you remember where you were when you heard about it?

2-00:00:24

Fong: It was late Sunday afternoon and I had been playing with the kids on our block. We had quite a bit of a gang of kids that lived on our block. So I was headed home—back to the store because we ate dinner at 5:00 o'clock—so I was headed back to the store. I walked in, and my mother was standing there talking to a man, probably a customer or something, and she was very serious

conversation, I thought she looked—kind of apprehensive. “I wonder what they’re talking about,” I said. So then I noticed there was a newspaper, *The Chronicle* was over on a stool, and it had the biggest headlines I’d ever seen—W A R. I said, “Holy smokes.” I said, “Wow.” When you’re that young and you see something like that you say, “Hey, that’s kind of neat.” Well, you don’t say, “it’s kind of neat,” but I said, “Hey, how about that?” What do we know about war? You hear stories, you hear this and that. Death and destruction—living here at that time has no meaning to you. You don’t know that—because then I realized that my mother looked worried because Tommy was draft age. So she was concerned. So I picked up the paper and I started reading. Of course, I probably said the same thing every American said in this country, “Where the hell is Pearl Harbor?” [laughs]

So, yeah that—then after that things happened—things got really active in Chinatown, lots of things going on—lining up for ration cards, ration books. You know when you’re a child in the family, you have to go get your own. You have to be there when you fill out the application and they issue you the ration books. So we got all the kids together and go get our ration books. Other than that there wasn’t anything I really had to do, but pretty much—

Li: Did you have air raid drills? Do you remember were there any air raid drills in Chinatown or blackouts?

2-00:03:25

Fong: Yeah, there was. The first blackout came, I think it came quite a few months later really, but it was the first time anybody’s ever seen the whole city completely dark. Once it was a little bit scary because it was not however norm, but then it was kind of, “Hey, this is kind of neat, too.” The whole city dark. I spent hours just looking out the window at the darkness I guess. A friend of mine, one of the fellow scouts during one of the raids, he told me to come to his place and we’d play some cards. So we’re sitting there playing cards and an air raid warden came by and yelled, “Hey you, put out that light!” The friends that—they had black out curtains, but it didn’t cover everything, so a little light got out. So we took a blanket and we had a little table lamp on the table playing cards. We took a blanket and covered us, table and all—playing cards under the blanket. Then my friends said he passed some gas, and I said, “Thanks Francis.” [laughs] Anyway—

Li: So were the air raids, they weren’t scary then?

2-00:05:22

Fong: Well, not to me really, I didn’t think so. Like I said, “What’s to be afraid of? Because we didn’t hear any bombs landing or anything like that, so there wasn’t anything to be, as far as I was concerned, there really wasn’t anything to be scared of. We had to—the schools gave us a form to take home, and it asked the parents, “During an air raid, do you want your child to stay in school, or do you want him to go home immediately?” My mother said,

“Okay, why don’t you just go home?” I said, “Okay.” She signed that one. The first time we had an air raid during the day I was in gym class. So we all got out of the gym, lined up in the sidewalk in front of the school like a fire drill, and you’re not supposed to do anything until you hear the second alarm. So we stood there for a while and then the second alarm came, and the kids that were supposed to go back to school, they went back inside. And I was one of the ones to go home, so I started running home. Then I realized that the girls in the gym class had to run home. I don’t know if you’ve ever seen the gym uniforms of the girls in those days—

Li: No.

2-00:07:20

Fong: —the little short bloomers and bare-legged and all that. So the girls had to run home, so we were all running along the streets that we normally take to go to and from school, and here these poor girls were running bare-legged and their faces were red. [laughs] I felt sorry for them because they’re all so—well, being Chinese and all that to—they’re more timid anyway. But all these girls are running with red faces. [laughter] I said, “All right,” I felt sorry for them [laughter] so when I got home Mother said, “What did you do with your clothes?” I says, “Well, you told me you had to come home.” The next day I had a hard time finding clothes to wear to go to school because all my clothes was in the locker, in the gym. But that was the only time we had an air raid during daylight hours.

Li: How often would you have air raids?

2-00:08:31

Fong: I imagine—I imagine we didn’t have no more than six altogether I would say. Maybe they had some that were—maybe the guys were reaching for the button and push it or something like that, but no, it never really got to the point where there was any really real danger. Because I just watched that program on Channel 9 [PBS] last night when he talked to Japanese that built this submarine that carried airplanes? And they were thinking of bombing American cities? I says, “Oh, wow, that would have been something.” But well the air raids were never really—I’m sure some people really got scared and what have you. But now I can’t speak for other kids, but as for my part, I thought it was kind of—I don’t want to use the word “fun” because you think, “What are you, nuts or something?”

Li: Was it exciting?

2-00:09:41

Fong: Yeah, it was more exciting than it was scary, I would say. Yeah.

Li: So what was your home life like during the war? What was home life like? You said your father’s businesses were growing during the war time. Was your mother working?

2-00:10:00

Fong:

Well, she was taking care of the store. Like I said we had the bakery, and part of it was the groceries, and she took care of the register and sold things. We didn't have anybody out front except her. She was the only one in the store that was selling. My father was in the back doing the baking, although he did have a helper. Then during the war we hired a cook to do the dish washing and to cook the evening meal. Of course, at the evening meal you'd have the family, and the workers and what have you. But it works out nice. I don't think there was any change in our home life that was different, even after Tom got drafted and left. Before that he wasn't home much. I hardly ever saw him, although in our bedroom my younger brother and I slept on the sofa, one of those open—

Li:

Yeah, pull-out—

2-00:11:34

Fong:

—make a bed, yeah, and he had a cot next to the bed. The only time I ever saw him he was asleep. I never saw him during the day. He didn't come home for meals most of the time. So as far as he was concerned, he was never home much, so I never did see him much. That's the only change, and then when they went to Chung Mei Home he was gone all that time until he finished high school there. Then they went to dairy farm to dodge the draft. Then he was drafted, and he was gone for two years. The only time I saw him was when he came back, and then soon after that he got married. I really didn't have much to do with him. He was so much—he was seven years older than me.

The only time we spent any time together was when he was working the dairy farm. He came home and picked me and my youngest—by that time we had a younger brother—I had a younger brother who is six years younger than me. But when he was born my mother was already in her forties, and so they boarded him out for about five years until he started school, then he came back to live with us. But my brother came over and picked me and my brother Leslie up, and we got some blankets and some cooking equipment. We went camping at Camp Taylor over there in Marin County, fairly close to the dairy farm. My brother would get up really early in the morning, like 3:00 in the morning, go milk the cows, come back, cook breakfast for us, and then he'd leave in the late morning or do the milking again, and came back and cook us lunch, and then went back again. So he would go back there at least two or three times a day there to milk the cows. But then he'd be back to cook meals. We spent a week like that over there. That was the only time we really—well got to know him—well not know him because he didn't reveal anything about him, but at least we spent time together. That was about the only time we had anything to do with him. My two brothers that were younger than me, they didn't even have that experience. So they didn't know him all that well.

Li:

Do you remember the end of the war? What did the end of the war mean for you and your family?

2-00:14:45

Fong:

End of the war, 1945, summer 1945. My brother, the one next to me, he and I were in a YMCA Boys Summer Camp up in the Sierras in a little town called Pine Crest. It was near a lake up there, Pitch Strawberry. It was a boys' camp, YMCA Christian camp, that sort of thing. So we were there, and this one afternoon we marched—the camp was about a quarter mile from the lake so we marched over to the lake and did our thing there that afternoon. Then before we went back to camp we dropped by the general store. We walked in the general store there and a group of people standing in front of a radio, and there were noises coming out of the radio like cheering. I thought it maybe it was a football game or something. There were a lot of people cheering or making noise. So I was at the back of the crowd and there was a young lady standing there. I said, "Miss, what's going on?" Just without even looking at me she said very matter of factly, "The war is over." My reaction was, "Oh." Then I listened a little more, and I heard this announcer saying, "Way we are in San Francisco and on the street the crowds are going crazy, they're going wild, and the war is over blah, blah, blah." So I turned around and told some of the campers that had come in and said, "Hey, the war is over." A couple of them are said, "Hey man, we're just celebrating. Ah, I wish I was home, I wish I was home."

So that night at the campfire, we were all sitting around the campfire, and our town crier announced, "It seems that some of us made the comment that they wished they were home to help celebrate the end of the war. They'd rather be there than with us. So how shall we punish these traitors?" [laughs] So the whole crowd went, "Walk the plank, walk the plank." So there were about four of them. Fully clothed, they had to walk to the end of the diving board at the pool, and they had to stand at the end, and then they were doused with a hose, they were doused with some water, and then they had to jump off. All four of them had to do that.

Li:

So when did you get back to Chinatown?

2-00:18:24

Fong:

Well, that was pretty much near the end of our stay at camp, so by the time we got back there wasn't any visible evidence that anything had happened. [laughs] There was no—well, maybe right afterward there might have been confetti and stuff like that, or a lot of stuff thrown on the streets. But then we got home and—you would never know something as momentous as that has happened. The Chinese go, "Oh, well, the war is over, okay." Of course, the people who had family in the service, naturally—my mother was thrilled, of course.

I mean he was going to come home safe and sound, so she was relieved. Like I said, the only time I saw her cry was when he left for the service, and the only other time I saw her cry was the day he came home. So that was, "Eh, that's kind of neat." Then from then on, prosperity, people—well, I don't

know if you've heard of how a lot of Chinese girls from Chinatown couldn't get any work other than being housemaids—

Li: Yes.

2-00:20:02

Fong: —or work in laundries and stuff like that. Well, children of parents who owned businesses like restaurants, and laundries, and groceries or what have you—they all had to work there free of charge. I mean no pay! Then, of course, you can't wait until you get to high school because then you can claim that you have too much homework; you couldn't work anymore. That wasn't really true; I mean, you can always do something. But anyway, they said, "Can't wait until we get to high school." Then a lot of the girls—after the war they found out how good some of these Chinese girls worked at jobs, and so there was a big exodus out of Chinatown for them to get jobs downtown and what have you and so—

Li: What kind of jobs were they getting?

2-00:21:26

Fong: Well, probably started off as file clerks. I'm sure, file clerks—not secretaries because Chinese girls didn't take the—well, they may have taken typing, but they didn't take the shorthand courses, stuff like that, so they probably didn't get jobs as secretaries. Unless maybe after the war some of them would take up some of those courses later on. But then when the computer revolution came and there was card punching—was it called card punching?

Li: Yeah, the old computers that were, yeah.

2-00:22:21

Fong: Yeah, card punching, then they got into that and they could—as a matter of fact, my wife took a course at Hastings, and before she even graduated they offered her a job as a card puncher. So of course that was great. Like I said, "Now they never made so much money in their lives."

Li: This was after the war.

2-00:22:46

Fong: Yeah, it was after the war, though. Then the boys—there weren't as many Chinese boys in the service by percentage as compared to the white population because most of the boys were children of immigrants that have come here in the early twenties and mid-twenties, and by the time they grew up draft age some of them really didn't have the English skills at all. Not only that, there weren't that many boys of that age. So there weren't that many that were in the service and as a consequence there weren't that many casualties, too. So that was a blessing. Of course, when the Korean War came that was another story. Even though it was five years down the road, there were more Chinese kids drafted, and there were more casualties.

Li: So how did Chinatown change? You said a lot of women, young girls, left Chinatown to go work downtown. Did Chinatown itself change in the late forties and nineteen fifties? Did Chinatown change very much?

2-00:24:52

Fong: More restaurants started up after the war, of course. There are more people—a lot of the servicemen came back and brought war brides. So there was an influx of people and businesses right after the war here, too. In my brother's case he got automatic citizenship because he was in the service. But he didn't make use of the GI Bill to go back to college—he didn't go to college. I think he was just a little lazy—oh, he did go to war, and you know to come back to school—for him anyway. He didn't see that he wanted to go. So he got an easy job in the Post Office, and give him time to play golf, and go bowling, and that sort of thing. As far as that's concerned, for him.

Li: Was there more tourism after the war? Were there more non-Chinese in Chinatown? Tourists and visitors, do you remember?

1-00:26:24

Fong: Visitors?

Li: Yeah, more by tourists, and more tourism, and restaurants and shops aimed at—

2-00:26:21

Fong: Well, yeah, because of a lot of servicemen would pass through here on their way to the Far East. Some of them come back with wives and families because they liked what they saw when they came by here. Although during the war some of the servicemen had bad experience here because they would try to pick up Chinese girls. We had some gangs of young thugs around here during that time, and some of the servicemen got pretty badly beat up. Didn't kill anyone, but they messed some of them up pretty bad. So for those it was a bad experience, but for most of them they came through here, and they liked what they saw, and a lot of them decided to move out here. I guess that probably would help the touring. Yeah, that's probably one main reason that touring took off like it did.

Li: Just before the war there weren't a lot of tourists coming to Chinatown were there?

2-00:28:07

Fong: Not really. I mean there wasn't a—

Li: There were some, I guess.

2-00:28:13

Fong: Yeah, it wasn't a destination like it is—afterwards when they say, "Oh, you got to see the Golden Gate Bridge; you got to go to Chinatown." But, no, the people who came to Chinatown before, during and after the war are people—

some of the Caucasians who live here. They like Chinese food, they come into Chinatown for food. They want some Chinese furniture, they know where to get it, and that sort of thing. They like to—if they like Chinese stuff, then they come here. But there's no—they didn't promote Chinatown like it did afterwards. Oh, and then we had some night clubs.

Li: I was going to ask you about that. I remember there was like the Chinese Frank Sinatra, and the Chinese Myrna Loy, and— [laughter]

2-00:29:11

Fong: I know what you mean.

Li: They would advertise them as that. The Chinese Sophie Tucker, and—

2-00:29:20

Fong: Everybody was a Chinese—when I used to sing at home and then my brother says, “Why don't you shut up, what are you trying to be a—?” Well, in my case it was Bing Crosby because that was before Frank Sinatra came along. So Bing Crosby was the guy. So the night clubs did well during the war actually because the servicemen would want to see some Chinese gals, chorus girls and what have you. “Oooh, so exotic!” Especially if you're from Iowa, right?

One of my best buddies who lived around the corner from me during that time, his father was a bartender at the Forbidden City, and I used to go with him to, ostensibly to visit his father. [laughs] But I would—from the bar there's a couple of windows in the wall there looking out into the dining room and the dance floor, so while my buddy was talking to this father I'd wander over to the window and take in the view.

Li: What was the Forbidden City like? Can you describe what that club was like? Describe the Forbidden City? What was the decoration like inside? Was it big, was it small—?

2-00:31:09

Fong: I would say it wasn't big; it wasn't small. They had a bar near the front—different entrance—they had a bar which was pretty good size. They had a bar, and then they had a few tables. Then the dining room—oh, I imagine they could seat a couple of hundred. But it had a smallish dance floor, and the girls came out and danced {inaudible} between the aisles. And they had a small four-piece band, and they had a master of ceremonies. They had a dance team, that sort of thing. They didn't have a comedian. The master of ceremonies, I guess, he didn't really tell jokes or anything like that. He just introduced the different acts. But it did quite well because it's the first time most of you got to see Chinese—although the core wasn't really—I guess maybe called them pseudo-Oriental. Maybe they had a couple lanterns hanging there and all that, and the girls' costumes weren't especially Oriental. As long as they were almost skimpy, who cares?

Li: What were the customers like?

2-00:33:16

Fong: The customers?

Li: Yeah, what were they like? Were there some Chinese customers, some—?

2-00:33:26

Fong: No, not really. Not even half and half. It was, I would say maybe 90 percent Caucasian. Of course, there was mostly service people. But normally people before the war, after the war, it was pretty much 90 percent Caucasian.

Li: What did the community think of the Forbidden City? Did people in the neighborhood disapprove of it, or was it just a successful business?

2-00:34:21

Fong: I don't think there was none of this "tsk tsk," none of that. How many go around prancing around like that or—things like, "Oh, how shameful," or anything like that. Like I said, my friend Bobby, his father was a bartender there. His mother was one of the girls in the chorus! So I got to know them pretty well because I hang around with their son and I go up to their apartment, which is only around the corner. I get to know them. His father was kind of dapper. He wore a fedora, and he's always dressed in a sport coat or a suit. His mother is kind of—she wasn't particularly pretty, but she was attractive. She dressed nicely. A very nice looking couple. For everybody else in Chinatown, they go "Wooo!" They probably considered them jet setters. Well, the owner of Forbidden City, Charlie Low, he owned the night club and he had a home in the Oakland hills. He had a pool, and he had stables. He had polo ponies.

Li: Really?

2-00:36:25

Fong: Yeah, so he would have the girls, the ladies in the chorus, come over now and then, have a picnic barbecue and really reality-show type things—

Li: So business was good.

2-00:36:43

Fong: Oh, well, yes. Oh, yes. Anytime you sold liquor and Chinese food—well, I never tasted the food there, but I can't imagine that it was anything but ordinary. You could have that in any restaurant in Chinatown, same food. Well, they're not there to sell food. Sell liquor, and there's a floor show. Then the other night clubs, the Club Shanghai on Grant, that did fairly well, Although they didn't last as long. Then later they opened the Lion's Den also on Grant. Then you go down—the Kuo Wah Restaurant was upstairs, and you go downstairs to the Lion's Den and they had a night club there. That went on for a while, but it wasn't really—not like the Forbidden City was.

Later on, during the what, sixties, in Lost Alley they had that Rickshaw. The Rickshaw, a bar and anybody who's anybody would go there as far as Chinatown's concerned. Then they opened one across the way from that one called Mr. Lucky. They tried to take the business away from Rickshaw, but it really didn't work. Then, of course, the street bars did well on Grant Avenue. There was one—on each block actually there was a street bar. They all had their regulars. So the bars did well, except until what—maybe ten years ago people stopped going to bars really. It's not the destination any more. During my time the gang, or the group, would end up in bars after dances, and there used to be a lot more dances.

Li: Yeah. Did you do Arthur Murray dancing when you were younger? I know he was popular. His classes were popular.

2-00:39:48

Fong: They didn't have one in Chinatown. They didn't have any—

Li: —classes?

2-00:40:00

Fong: Yeah, not in Chinatown. If you want to take dancing lessons, you go downtown somewhere. To Arthur Murray or any of the other—

Li: Yeah.

2-00:40:14

Fong: In this outside here, where the garage is, it used to be—before converting into a garage it used to be a store front. It was rented out to an accountant who used it as his office. But he subleased it to Louise Andre, who is a long time Chinatown—she ran a dancing school in Chinatown for many, many years. She would teach, all girls or course, to dance. So they used it as a dance studio for a while.

Li: Oh, wow.

2-00:41:02

Fong: But I don't know if any of the—I can't say for sure if any of the girls ever got to be professionals or anything like that.

Li: I want to ask you because you mentioned that your high school was about half Italian and half Chinese? I want to ask what was the relationship like between North Beach and Chinatown, between the Italians and Chinese. Was there a lot of friendships across—between Italians and Chinese or—?

2-00:41:36

Fong: It's not a matter of prejudice. It's just young guys—you're Chinese, I'm Italian. I don't like you; you don't like me. That's all. Just short of riots. [laughs] Really, it's not like saying, "you chinks," or "you dagos," or anything. Oh, maybe they call each other that, but that wasn't such a big

insult, calling a guy dago or chink. I never considered that—you have to realize I've always been chicken. I don't get involved in fights or—you argue with me, I turn around and walk. I'm not getting in—I've only had two or three fights in my whole life. So that's not my thing. So when tension at Francisco got to a point where during gym class one day, guys would come in and they say, "Hey, after school, the playground, northeast playground, be there." I said, "Oh oh, so right away I just said I am not going to—" So on the way from school we had to pass by the playground to get our usual route home. So walk by the playground, and there were hundreds of kids, half Italian, half Chinese, and one on each side of the playground. I go, "Wow, this is going to be something." Then as I walked by I looked over there, and there were a few kids that had—I guess they had emissaries meet in the middle, I don't know what they—they're already deciding the ground rules, I guess. But I said, "I'm going to keep walking. I'm not going to get involved." If anybody called to me I'm going to pretend not to hear. So by the time I got to the edge of the playground there I heard police sirens, and I said, "Oh, thank goodness they're going to break it up." Which they did, thankfully, because I think it could have been ugly.

Li: Yeah. Did that happen often, or was that the only time you remember a big standoff like that between—?

2-00:44:25

Fong: Well, I've been witness to a couple of incidents where there was some—oh, a little bit of altercation inside the locker room of the gym there. Some guys would scuffle, then I'd see them jumping from lockers—you know the rows of lockers—?

Li: Yeah.

2-00:44:51

Fong: One row to another, and there'd be some scuffling here and there. But I never really saw anything that was a knock out drag out fight. But there was some things going up, a little pushing here and there. A little calling of names and stuff like that. But when you can stick your head in the sand without actually doing it. [laughs]

Li: So during the war was there any anti-Italian sentiment, I mean since we were fighting the Italians, like a—

2-00:45:27

Fong: Oh, you mean because the Italians were—

Li: —were Fascists, like was there—?

2-00:45:34

Fong: Yeah, they were part of the Axis?

Li: Yeah.

2-00:45:35

Fong: No, that didn't come into it. No, I don't think we considered them enemy of America. They're Italian kids, just like us Chinese kids.

Li: Right.

2-00:45:58

Fong: There wasn't anything national—no nationality involved. You know Chinatown it's always been—Broadway was the dividing line—

Li: Yes.

2-00:46:13

Fong: During school hours, there's no problem. There's free passage because from Chinatown all the kids would walk through Stockton Street, all of them, would walk through Stockton Street until they get to Columbus. Then they turn until they hit Powell, and then they go straight down to Powell to school. This about ten blocks, and all the kids did that. Nobody took the streetcar to school. You got free passage during the day, but once evening or weekend, Broadway Street is a boundary. You don't go across that by yourself. You take the consequences if anything happens. I'm not saying there were kids on the other side waiting for—

Li: But it was a marker that you knew when you crossed that line you were out of your neighborhood.

2-00:47:22

Fong: Right. You don't go out of your neighborhood alone, that's all there is to it. The Italians, too, were the same way. They don't come over to the Chinatown side. They know that, too.

Li: When did that change, or did that change?

2-00:47:38

Fong: When?

Li: When did that change, or did that ever change?

2-00:47:46

Fong: When?

Li: Yeah, when did it change?

2-00:47:49

Fong: Did it change?

Li: Yeah.

2-00:47:51

Fong: Hmm. Well, I went to Francisco my first two years—in 1940-41 I think I was there—forty-two. Then I got sick with TB—

Li: Oh.

2-00:48:11

Fong: —and then I was sent away to a sanatorium in Belmont, California. I was gone for almost a year, and when I got so called “cured” I came home and went back to start in ninth grade because I hadn’t finished ninth grade. It was during that time I guess maybe some of the hot heads had been graduated. There wasn’t the same tension, I know that for sure. There weren’t any problems between the two races. Then after that I went to finish ninth grade, I went to high school at Poly. I spent my sophomore year there, and my health broke down again and I was gone back to the sanatorium for the next several years. So by the time I got out of the sanatorium I was almost twenty years old.

Li: What was the sanatorium like?

2-00:49:41

Fong: It’s a TB sanatorium.

Li: So was it like a boarding school or—?

2-00:49:51

Fong: Well, TB sanatoriums are—they build them—well not in the cities. They like to build them out where there is—you know the suburbs somewhere. All it is is bungalows and cabins where there are no windows. They’re all screens, so—you’re supposed to get as much fresh air as you can when you’re trying to cure TB. That was the cure in those days, rest and fresh air. When there is summer you’ve got these screens—it gets cold in the winter and hot in the summer. It’s sort of like, well, I don’t want to say it’s sort of like a resort or anything like that, but there’s no—all you do is lie in bed and rest. That was supposed to be the, until some of the wonder drugs came, that was the cure. So I was in there for about, altogether four years.

Li: Oh, my goodness.

2-00:51:01

Fong: By the time I was so called “cured” I was almost twenty years old. I couldn’t see myself going back to school and being a junior in high school, so I says, “Oh, the heck with it.” So I rested for a while and finally I said, “Ah, I’ll go back to work with my father,” and spent the next thirty-five years there.

Li: Oh.

2-00:51:33

Fong: In my career.

Li: Wow.

2-00:51:39

Fong: Really, when I went back to Francisco in ninth grade, it's pretty much—and then later on when I had contact with some of the people that were still at Francisco, I found out that things had pretty much gotten boring. We learned how to live with each other I guess.

Li: Well, are there any other stories from that time period that you wanted to share with me?

2-00:52:13

Fong: The sanatorium?

Li: No, of the war period. Are there any stories that you would like to share that I didn't ask about.

2-00:52:27

Fong: In the war years—no, I pretty much told you all that I—

Li: Well, thank you so much. It was really fascinating talking to you today. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you for your time.

2-00:52:51

Fong: Well, I appreciate your taking the effort and the time to come here. [laughter]

Li: It was wonderful talking with you.

[End of Interview]