

GEN 210 VALUING CHILDHOOD
Talking Tales Oral History Project
“Hong Kong Childhood”

Date of interview : 24 March 2000

Location of interview : Lingnan University Library at Conference room

Interviewer : So Suk Yin

Interviewee : Wong Chi Keung

Content of Interview:

Yin: Today is 24 March 2000. My name is So Suk Yin. I'm pleased to invite my best friends “Mr. Wong Chi Keung” to have an interview relating to his childhood life. Hi! Thank you for coming!

Keung: You are welcome.

Yin: First of all, I want to ask you some personal information. Where and when were you born?

Keung: I was born on 27 August 1976 in China.

Yin: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

Keung: I have one younger brother.

Yin: Who lived in the household apart from you?

Keung: In my childhood life, I mainly lived with my mother. Before I was 4 years old, I lived in a big house with my father, mother and brother. Afterwards, my father decided to emigrate to Hong Kong. Then my parents arranged my brothers living with my grandfather and grandmother. Therefore, only my mother and I lived in alone.

Yin: What was your father's and your mother's occupation in China?

Keung: Because of no opening trade policy and any economic development in China, my parents mainly farming to maintain their daily life.

Yin: When did you come to Hong Kong?

Keung: Er ... I moved to Hong Kong in 1985.

Yin: Why did you want to move in Hong Kong?

Keung: Actually, my grandfather, who was a party member of Taiwan, needed to escape to Indonesia. He thought that my father couldn't maintain the daily life in farming. Thus, my father decided to move to Hong Kong in 1980. Afterwards, my father applied my mother and I moving to Hong Kong.

Yin: How about the life of your brother. Why did your parents choose you early come to Hong Kong?

Keung: In China, there were an emigration policy that allows only one child can come to Hong Kong with his parents. Originally, my father suggested that my brother apply to Hong Kong first because I had a communication problem with my family member and thus they dislike me, except my mother. But my mother was insistently opposed in their suggestion. In addition, my brother and I go to take a photograph. I'm very lucky. Since the photograph of my brother could not be printed, then my brother could not apply to Hong Kong.

Yin: What level did you attend in China?

Keung: Umthere had not kindergarten in China. I studied from primary one to primary three in school until I come to Hong Kong.

Yin: What subjects did you learn? Did you have good academic results?

Keung: I studied only two subjects in China – Chinese and Mathematics. It has a difference from Hong Kong such as no English subject studied in China. Umthe academic results were not so good, especially Chinese.

Yin: Did you have any physical punishment by teacher?

Keung: Absolutely. If I haven't finished my homework, then my teacher was likely to put off trouser and beat on the buttock.

Yin: Whom did you play with? What games did you play as a child?

Keung: In China, I liked to play with the same age group of neighbor's kids, for example catching insect and playing marble.

Yin: How were household works divided?

Keung: Actually, mother did almost all-household works. Owing to burning firewood at home, I didn't need to cook and wash clothes. Occasionally, I fed the chicken and duck.

Yin: What sort of things were you punished for?

Keung: I remember that I smoke on the bed but I was very careless which I burn the furniture. Fortunately, I haven't caused a fire. As a result, my mother had beaten on me.

Yin: Did you think deviate from the home?

Keung: In fact, I made a wrong thing at that event. Moreover, I didn't know where I could go. Thus, I didn't have an idea to leave out my family.

Yin: Did you have any interesting things to share with me?

Keung: During the age of four, I always lived on the floor in summer. One day, my brother took a spittoon walked around in home and then the urine threw it out to my body. There was a bit of a smell in my body. Afterwards, I took a shower immediately.

Yin: Looking back are there any events in your childhood which stick in your mind?

Keung: In my childhood, I go to play with my best friends. I forgot what reasons they would fight together. I only remember that I was suddenly taken a small knife from pocket and then stab with a knife to my friend's face. Unfortunately, my best friends had a scar on his face. Therefore, my mother took a physical punishment for me. After this event happened, I felt unhappy, to regret and be conscience-stricken to his friends.

Yin: Have you a contact before?

Keung: I didn't contact him when I moved to Hong Kong because I don't like to go back to my native place. If I see him again, I would apologize for him in the future.

Yin: How do you describe your living environment in China?

Keung: In China, I was quite rich and with a big house. We didn't cause anxiety to their lives. When my grandfather stayed in Indonesia, he still gave a lump sum to support our family. Afterwards, my father, who moved to Hong Kong, still paid a lump sum for the family's expenditure. Furthermore, my mother continued a farm work and then sold out for exchange in the market. Therefore, we had sufficient money to support whole family life.

Yin: Would you adapt the environment when you just arrived in Hong Kong?

Keung: Er I was completely not adapted the Hong Kong environment. In China, the environment was so quiet and comfortable for me. But, in Hong Kong, I lived in a room near the major road. Every night I heard the noise of car. As a result, I didn't get much sleep. In addition, I think that the air of Hong Kong is so poor. I m suffered a serious breath problem. I m absolutely not suitable in Hong Kong environment.

Yin: Is there any great difference in living environment of Hong Kong?

Keung: Since Hong Kong have a reputation for oriental pearl and shopping paradise, I could taste different types of delicious foods in Hong Kong. However, the accommodation in Hong Kong was not good. In Hong Kong, my parents and I only lived in below one hundred square feet's room which including bed, television set and refrigerator etc.

Yin: Have you faced any difficulties for finding a primary school in Hong Kong?

Keung: My parents said that it was very difficult to find a school for me. Maybe I'm a new emigrant to Hong Kong. Moreover, I haven't entered to a kindergarten in China and thus I only studied in a primary school until the age of seven. But my age of studying primary school in China is higher than in Hong Kong. Thus, most of the school didn't receive over the age's students. Finally, I remember that my parents were hardly found a school that is willing to receive me.

Yin: Which school did you go to?

Keung: I go to "Sun Wui Ku-Cheng Native's Association Tat Sin Primary School" in 1980. But this primary school has just removed.

Yin: What level did you attend in Hong Kong school?

Keung: AhI attend in primary two at that time.

Yin: Have you any discrimination in school?

Keung: Other students have not discriminated against the new emigrant and they were absolutely accepted. Moreover, I usually used the Mandarin to communicate and play with other two new emigrants in school and thus I have less contact with other classmate.

Yin: Is there any great changes in your primary school between China and Hong Kong?

Keung: Actually, I found that the school life in China was not tight because only two subjects studied. Each class interval had a ten to fifteen minutes left. However, in Hong Kong, I felt very hard and tight because many subjects were studied, for example Chinese, English, Mathematics, Science and Art etc. Also, I only had a few minutes break in the school. Therefore, I felt very tired in Hong Kong school life.

Yin: Can you remember any of the teachers or your friends who stick in your mind?

Keung: I deeply remember that Miss Kwong Lai Ping, who is my class mistress, taught my English class in primary four. Since I haven't spoken fluent Cantonese and English, he found difficulties in school life. Therefore, the academic results are not satisfactory, especially English. I got 6 out of 100 marks. Until primary four, I had a teacher – Miss Kwong who taught me wholeheartedly. Then I had an improvement on the subjects. So I shows many thanks to Miss Kwong. In addition, I had two primary classmates as my best friends until now. Originally, they were the new emigrants in China. Thus, we could communicate and co-ordinate each other. Besides, the class mistress called us “Triple Wong” because the first name of my best friends and I were “Wong”. It's a deeply impression for me during primary school life.

Yin: Whom did you play with when you moved to Hong Kong?

Keung: Actually, my parents did not have time to take care of me due to work. So I always stayed alone at home to do homework. Since the discipline is strictly executed in my family, my parents didn't allow me to go out. In my childhood life, my father also controlled and punished me. As a result, I didn't contact or play with other child when I come to Hong Kong.

Yin: How were household tasks divided in Hong Kong?

Keung: Since my parents didn't have time to do household tasks due to work, I'm responsible for washing clothes and sweeping the floor etc.

Yin: Did you have to care for my brother?

Keung: Um.....No, I didn't have to care for my brother. When my brother moved to Hong Kong in 1990, I studied in secondary school. Moreover, my brother is a twelve years old and therefore I didn't need to take care of him.

Yin: Looking back are there any unforgettable events in your childhood in Hong Kong?

Keung: Until now, I deeply remember that my parents take a serious punishment to me 3 or 4 days per week. It makes me unhappy afterwards.

Yin: Did you think deviate from home?

Keung: ErI wanted to deviate from home because I would like to freedom. When my father came back to home, he would express his unhappy feeling to his family. Then he must let off his angry on his child. But I didn' t want to kill myself.

Yin: Did you hate your father?

Keung: Now, I don' t hate my father very much. But I never talk with my father at home. Umhe sometimes want to know what happens for my school life.

Yin: How did your parents see your future?

Keung: They put much pressure on me about my future. They hope that I could get good academic results and study in university.

Yin: What did you want to do?

Keung: In my childhood life, I wish to become a pilot because I would like to fly anywhere free and far away to my father.

Yin: Did you have special hobbies?

Keung: In some period, I' m interested in collecting the stamp and reading books.

Yin: Which books would you like to read?

Keung: I would like to read some comic books called “三國演義”.

Yin: As a child, which TV program did you like?

Keung: I would like to watch cartoon film such as “Doraemon”, “Doctor IQ Plum”, “足球小將” etc.

Yin: Can you remember what news happened in your childhood?

Keung: I remember that “六四事件” happened in Beijing, dated 4 June 1989. The event appeared due to dissatisfaction with the Chinese Policy by the university students. In this event, it caused many people death. This was a global event that shocked all people at that time. Moreover, my uncle, who was one of the university students, participated in the demonstration against the Chinese Government. We worried about his safety in Beijing. Therefore, I can't forget this event.

Yin: How about change to the memory of secondary school? Which secondary school did you go to?

Keung: I entered in “TWGHs Mrs Wu York Yu Memorial College” until Form 7 because the location of my secondary school is close to my home. Moreover, my teacher – Miss Kwong recommended this secondary school to me. Finally, I felt happy and satisfactory to enter in this school.

Yin: During your study period, what were your favorite subjects? Why?

Keung: From Form 1 to Form 3, I would like to study Chinese History. I'm Chinese. I think that this is so important for me to understand more about our history. Besides, the teacher taught the topic more active and vivid. Thus, I would develop an interest in history.

Yin: What academic results did you get? Did you have a pressure in school?

Keung: In secondary school, the academic results are so good. I could get eleven ranking out of forty people in class. Actually, I haven't studied under pressure due to do a less homework in school. If I really have a pressure, most of them are coming from my parents.

Yin: Can you remember any your love story in secondary life?

Keung: I had a girl classmate who was my Form 1 friend. I had a feeling on that girl but I did not say to her. Afterwards, she changed to other school in Form 2. Then, I don't meet her again.

Yin: How did you feel in your childhood?

Keung: In my childhood, I can divide into two parts – the life of China and Hong Kong. In China, I felt very happy and freedom because I could go anywhere to play with my friends. I usually caught insect and played marbles with them. In Hong Kong, my childhood life would be changed. I had a consistent and standardize living in my childhood. In the morning, I go to school. Everyday I stayed alone at home. Moreover, my father prohibited me to watch TV and play with friends. Thus, I felt very lonely as a child.

Yin: How do you describe the relationship with your parents?

Keung: Erthe relationship with my mother is very good because I had a long time to live with my mother alone in China. However, the relationship with my father is very poor. Every time I didn't know what reasons he would punish to me.

Yin: Do you think your childhood life has affected your adult life?

Keung: As a child, I'm an active and outgoing boy. I like to play with friends. But I'm changed a lot when I grow up. In fact, my father develops my personality on me. Now I feel very lonely. I'm also passive to make friends and cannot directly express my feeling or opinion to others. This is a great influence on me.

Yin: This is a final question! Do you think your childhood life has affected your generation life?

Keung: I believe that I will not apply my childhood life to my generation. I think that the physical punishment is not a good method for teaching the child. If I have a child, I would concern their feeling and communicate more with them.

Yin: That is the end of the interview. Once again thanks for Mr. Wong Chi Keung cooperation! Bye!

Keung: Bye!