

Valuing childhood

By

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Translation

C – Chan Lung Kui, Danny (interviewer)

W – Mr. Wong (interviewee)

C: Today is 7th of March of 2000, the time now is 5 o'clock at the afternoon, the interview is hold at Mr. Wong's apartment.

C: When and where were you born?

W: I was birth at 10th of August of 1918 and place was in Guang Dong Po On Province.

C: What were your parent's occupations when you are birth?

W: My father was being a doctor and die when he was twenty-nine years old, I just seven years old when my father die. My mother was the daughter of a successful candidate in the imperial examination at the provincial level. The reason that I can have a successful career is all depends on my mother. I study up to primary five and have promoted to study at secondary at secondary school, due to my father's dead, my family cannot afford to pay my school fees, so I just force to quit the school after I have studied primary five. I only sixteen years old that time, so my uncle organized me to teach in a village school, I have fifteen to seventeen students providing sixty dollars and two hundred and fifty kilograms of rice. Because my father have already die, I have been arranged to teach at home the following year, this let me have the opportunity to earn money for my family. As my mother knows many books, study a lot but even do not know how to write a word, because the women before cannot learn how to write, afraid that it will affect their future marriage. Before sixteen years old, I have read many Chinese famous novels, such as 'Pilgrimage to the West', 'The story of Three Kingdom'...etc. The reason that I can teach nowadays, all rely on my mother who taught me and also my self-cleverness, if you teach me some important concepts or ideas, I will very easy to memorize and understand all immediately, so as the book my mother taught me.

C: How many family members living together with you?

W: My father was died when I seven years old, I lived with my mother, my grandmother and one elder sister.

C: Can you memorize the living condition when living in Guang Dong?

W: My living condition should be better than Hong Kong at that time, we have a very

big house in the village, there have not any housing problem, but the living standard is very tough with no money to spend.

C: But why your family has money to build the house?

W: Everybody in the village will have a house even for the poor people, because their ancestors left it. My grandfather was an officer, which work for the government and have money for our family, my father study medical and wanted to become a doctor, he was very clever and this has been heredity to me and also my son. Unfortunately, my father suffered from lung disease which cannot be cure at that time, so he died when he was twenty-nine years old, I was only seven years old and my sister was ten years old at that time.

C: What were your major activities in childhood?

W: There were special activities in the village, my major activity was swimming, also studying and then play with other kids. After playing, normally just back home to have lunch or dinner. There was two different centuries for my childhood and today's, our village was very old and out-dated. Before the anti-war with Japan, China was similar to Africa countries, no culture at all; education is the most modern thing. Many of our family members were being educated, my grandfather, my father and me. I have not received any education after my father die, so only playing with my neighborhood. There was nothing special about my childhood, everybody was a good guy without any bad people, there were only poor people, and we can open the door to sleep at night, no theft at all. However, many of the people were poor, only one or two family was rich, due to the large income gap at that time, being a reason of capitalism at this century. At my free time, I will help my mother to do some household work, and my hobbies were only playing with the kite and top.

C: What make you favor on these two hobbies?

W: Simply because no choice for me, there have not any radio and movie at that time, some of our senior people will take drugs. Due to the simple living environment, most of the teenager will get marriage when they were under eighteen years old; those have no

money will wait until twenty something to get marriage. Without any entertainment, our family will chat with each other in the garden after finished our dinner, the life was so boring, but still very enjoy at that time, I also has visited Hong Kong once when my sister get marriage.

C: What was your impression to Hong Kong comparatively to the village life?

W: The economic status was not too good at that time, I can feel that Hong Kong people even living worsen than our citizen in the village, people in village are not busy, they only need to farm and chat with each other. But Hong Kong people are much busier, this make me do not feel any interest to live in Hong Kong. Therefore, I join the army force for the anti-war when I was seventeen years old. First, I feel passion about my own country, wanted to defense it against Japan army. Second, I wanted to find a way for my future, because only soldier can go around the world to enlarge my eyesight. Finally, just because I have no money to travel around.

C: Who give you great impression in your childhood?

W: My mother gave me great impression, because all the words I know was taught by her, I only studied up to primary five and has qualified for studying at secondary school, but no money for the school fees. The school fees was only fifteen dollars pre year and my salary for teaching a year just only get twenty or thirty something, so you can compare it, fifteen dollars was great amount for our family.

C: Which event gives you great impression in your childhood?

W: Probably was the dead of my father, but the impression was very vague for me now, the other things were too simple and normal, and I only need to study and eat.

C: What was your happiest memory in your childhood?

W: The most happily thing was that I do not have any painful at all. But the feeling to become a teacher was very complicated, not happy and also not too painful. Due to my cleverness, I can memorize all the things I have read before; I can teach people that all I have was quite happy.

C: Do you think sexual discrimination existed at your family?

W: Normally have sexual discrimination in village, but this problem was not too serious at our family, my sister just cannot receive any education. It do not have any depression on women at that time in our village, they have many freedom to do their own things, only need to help family to do household task, men also will not beat women normally.

C: In 1925, what is the society react to Mr. Sun Yat Sen's dead?

W: I really do not know it at that time, there was no newspaper, radio station and press at all in our village, no news about his dead, I just knew that news after two to three years. I started to study when I was seven years old; the school has something like assembly every week, to talk about Mr. Sun's history to us. Then, I started to worship him due to his personal story, the story about his revolution, and also the principle of his life. The reason that we cannot get the news immediately because all the people who are working in Hong Kong, probably do not know a words, so they do not have any special attention about this news, no one will talk about this in the village. *(1...) see notes*

C: Do you think the lifestyle of children today is different from your childhood?

W: There have a lot of different between two groups, these really cannot be compare. Children nowadays like living in heaven while like living in hell at my childhood, but I never think of this difference at that time. If compare with our frame of mind, I can feel that people before have little things to concern with, we are less complicated than today's children are, we have a simple mind and have less worries.

C: Looking back, do you have anything you wanted to do but have not done it?

W: I wanted to receive more education and become a doctor, this mostly affected by my father. But that thought have changed with the passing of time. I like to become a soldier because I feel passion my own country.

C: Do you have something you feel pity in your childhood?

W: I feel pity that I cannot further study in secondary school and also no money to

support me to study, It seems wasting my cleverness and eagerness to learn.

C: Who affected you most in your childhood?

W: I think is my mother, as she teach me many thins, she teach me all things she know as affected me most, I think nowadays is very difficult to find a mother like her.

C: Thank you Mr. Wong being interview by me today, now is 5:50. This is the end of the interview.

Notes:

(1...) Mr. Wong talks about the war in China with the Japanese.