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María de los Angeles Skatzes

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Chinese in El Paso
Oral History Project

Maria de los Angeles Mar Skatzes
By Anna L. Fahy

November 24, 1998

Note: The introduction has been re-recorded up to meter reading 8, because the tape skipped in several places deleting the date and identity of the interviewee.

Meter
Reading

[Tape 1, Side A]

- 0 ALF: It is 10:00 a.m., on Tuesday, November 24, 1998. My name is Anna Fahy, and I am here at The University of Texas at El Paso's Library with Maria de los Angeles Mar Skatzes, to begin a series of interviews about herself and her family's heritage in El Paso, Texas. The focus of this morning's interview will be the family background.
- 9 ALF: Mae, when we visited last year, you gave me a lot of information on your father's background. Your father played an important role in this community

both within and outside the Chinese community. At that time you gave me information, that I want to mention, to make sure that I have clear. He was the youngest of ten children.

14 MMS: Yes.

14 ALF: Okay, and he was born in San Francisco, in 1888.

15 MMS: Yes.

16 ALF: Okay, you said that his parents returned to China when he was two, in 1890, and that in 1906, when he was eighteen he returned to San Francisco for an education. He stayed there until 1906, but soon after the earthquake he left.

19 MMS: No. He stayed until 1908. That is when he came here.

21 ALF: So he stayed until 1908 and then he came to El Paso. If I remember right it was to stay with another cousin.

22 MMS: Right.

23 ALF: And he was staying with a cousin in San Francisco, also?

23 MMS: Right.

- 24 ALF: Did your father ever talk about his parents or his youth in China?
- 25 MMS: Oh yes. He had a pretty happy childhood. He went to a rural school, but at the age of eight he was then taken into a school in Canton. Then later he attended the University, and graduated, approximately 1905, at which time he decided to come here. I mean, he decided to come back to the United States.
- 37 ALF: Do you know the name of the village or the province from where his family home was?
- 39 MMS: Yes. It's Mar Village, located approximately twelve miles south of Canton, China.
- 42 ALF: That's the city?
- 43 MMS: Yes.
- 44 ALF: What was his full name? Your father's name.
- 45 MMS: Mar Sum. Which would be M-a-r, Mar, S-u-m, Sum.
- 47 ALF: That's his full name?
- 47 MMS: Right.
- 48 ALF: What about his parents and grandparents?
- 49 MMS: His parents were wealthy merchants.
- 52 ALF: What kind of merchants were they?

53 MMS: As far as I understood they dealt in imports. As merchants they were also land owners, which is how the Mar Village came to be. Their parents were also wealthy. The Mar Village consisted of the big house, plus in the courtyard they had houses for the aunts and uncle. Then over time it became a small village, because they had shops, they had dentists, they had herbal, a store that dealt in herbal medicine. They cared for these people, because the people that lived there worked for my grandparents. He provided them housing, food, and education. There was a school that he had for the children. He provided a tutor. That was my grandfather.

76 ALF: Do you know what his full name was?

77 MMS: No.

77 ALF: Do you know any of it, other than Mar?

78 MMS: I do not.

79 ALF: You had said when I first spoke with you that when he [her father] re-entered the U.S., that he came in through Angel Island. Did he ever speak of that experience?

82 MMS: No. It was very simple for them to check on his date-of-birth, and when he left the country with his parents and that he was returning to this country, alone. He didn't have any problems. Most of the affluent citizens in that day were accorded a lot of respect. And, because he came from the class that he did, he was not treated like immigrants were classically treated here [U.S.]. The ones who came with no money, etc. He was affluent. He had money, and therefore his entrance was not at all horrifying, instead he was welcomed.

101 ALF: That's great. A lot of people had a lot of difficulty. But like you say, if they came in and were from a peasant background, those were the people that more problems.

103 MMS: Yes. If they had no money, the United States was concerned that they would let in immigrants that they would windup having to support or feed them until they could get jobs or whatever. So being of a different class, it was different.

109 ALF: I want to backtrack just half a second and ask you if he ever talked about why his parents went back to China?

111 MMS: Oh yes. They were only here on business.

112 ALF: Oh, okay.

113 MMS: They never meant to settle here.

114 ALF: So it was a business trip? So of the ten, he was the only one born in the United States?

116 MMS: Yes. And the imports that my grandparents were doing. They had a lot of U.S. contacts and business was rising. So he decided to come, or my grandparents decided, that he should come and he would be a liaison in their business between the U.S. and China.

126 ALF: That makes a lot of sense. When he came here and attended school, do you know which school he attended?

128 MMS: No, because from what I can understand he spent a couple of years in San Francisco even after the quake, going to school and learning English, learning the language.

- 134 ALF: Do you know if that was in Chinatown, or outside of Chinatown?
- 135 MMS: Probably inside of Chinatown.
- 136 ALF: When he decided to leave San Francisco and come to El Paso, did he talk about his trip, or if there were any experiences or how he traveled?
- 139 MMS: No. He ^{came} can out here by train. By this time my father had decided, and he had informed his parents, that he wanted to strike out on his own. He wanted to start his own business, and the cousin that he got in contact with invited him to come out here. Because he thought this was a very good area. And, its close proximity to Mexico was also a plus. Other parts of the United States were all right, but this area my father saw as an area that had many possibilities, because at the time, even at the turn-of-the-century, they had already passed the Asian Exclusion Act. The United States did not have a favorable racial outlook. Traditionally, they had treated other minorities very badly. As a consequence, most Chinese planned very carefully where they were

going to live, and where they could meet up against the least resistance. They did not like discrimination, but they could understand it. It was something they understood.

167 ALF: That's interesting. I was going to ask you if he ever talked about what the population was like in El Paso when he arrived? The census figures show that El Paso's Chinese population from 1900 to 1910 was at its low. It was roughly two hundred to two hundred-twenty people. Did he ever talk about it. I mean, he entered at a very opportune time.

175 MMS: Yes, especially as far as establishing a Chinese restaurant was concerned it was a very good time.

179 ALF: What was the name of the first restaurant?

181 MMS: It was on Oregon. I cannot, Chinatown? No.

183 ALF: I have some information. Let's see, do you know what year that would have been, 1908 or 1909?

185 MMS: It could have been 1909 or 1910.

186 ALF: Let's see here.

187 MMS: Do you have a list there?

- 189 ALF: If he was listed in the City Directory [El Paso]. This is from the 1910 City Directory [El Paso]. [I handed Mae lists of Chinese owned restaurants in 1910 and 1915 in El Paso, which she is looking over.] This is 1915.
- 193 MMS: Do you have the list of Chinese restaurants that were up at the time?
- 195 ALF: Yes. This is 1910 and 1915. Is this him? No, well. Name spellings may have been reported inaccurately.
- 198 MMS: This is my father.
- 199 ALF: That was the Pan-American. That's at 104 S. El Paso. It may be that it was there earlier, but I went through at five year intervals, and that's 1915. Also, I notice in records that property shifted between business owners.
- 205 MMS: Yes.
- 207 ALF: Someone would sell their interest to someone else, or take on new partner. [Mae is studying the City Directory restaurant lists for 1910.] I can look at the records around 1910 and 1911 and see if I can see when it first appeared. It may have been

there and it just didn't show up in the City Directory until then.

214 MMS: [Mae is studying the City Directory restaurant lists for 1915.] This was my father's partner.

217 ALF: Ah Bing?

217 MMS: Yes.

218 ALF: That was Ah Bing, and he had the Elite Restaurant, at 306 S. El Paso [1910 El Paso City Directory.]

220 MMS: Yes.

222 ALF: Were they partners in another restaurant?

223 MMS: Yes.

225 ALF: With that information I can also look at the records and see.

227 MMS: So you don't have a record of the Pan-American?

229 ALF: Not in 1910. Well, with that information I can look at some other records and see if we can spot it in different documents. Okay. Let's see. Something that I thought was real interesting when we visited, was that you said in 1915, that you father also consulted with the architect who designed Old Main, which is the original building on campus.

- 238 MMS: Yes. [Light laugh.]
- 239 ALF: You talked about how the use of the word
"Butanese" as an architectural style began about
thirty years ago. What can you tell me about
that? [Light laughter by both of us.]
- 242 MMS: I plead innocent.
- 243 ALF: Okay, okay. [More laughing.]
- 243 MMS: I do not. I know that my father helped, and that
the architect already had it in the plans to
design the architecture in Asia design.
- 251 ALF: So perhaps what your father did is then helped
build on that.
- 252 MMS: Yes, because the architect was at the time
fascinated with Asian architecture. And, whoever
picked up on the plans from him was evidently able
to carry his, their idea of Asian architecture the
way they saw it then. I was very taken by how as
you're going on the freeway East, you will see the
distinct design that you can see on the Imperial
Palace in Peking.
- 270 ALF: Well, then it is very reminiscent of that?
- 272 MMS: Oh yes.

274 ALF: Because I know that after we talked I thought about it. I've always been fascinated with it, so you can. You can see characteristics. Also, I guess some of the Buddhist temples that are in some of the mountain areas, that it is very reminiscent of them.

279 MMS: Yes, well, they also are Asia architecture. [Light laughing by both of us.]

280 ALF: Well, I just thought that that was very interesting and I thought that it was really interesting too, that your father had been part of that planning, since we are sitting here at UTEP. Okay. Something else that you mentioned about your father was his having been General Pershing's personal cook, and also that he was the most decorated Chinese of World War I, and that he returned to El Paso in 1918. Can you tell me a little bit more about some of those experiences? Did he talk about those much?

290 MMS: General Pershing was a friend of my dad's before the war. And what my dad said about the war was that he described the battle field in Verdun and

the Battle of Verdun. He described the cold, and them having to stack bodies four bodies high in order to build some kind of barricade, to keep warm. He would describe how he would make meals out in the battle field much like the Chinese did in the battle field. He cooked a lot of their meals in big woks in the field. He didn't like to speak a lot about the war, because he was a man who didn't care for violence and killing. That was about all he would tell us about.

323 ALF: Well, that's certainly understandable. Talking about those memories, it certainly doesn't sound like it was real pleasant. When he returned to El Paso then, he was still a single man, or had he married yet?

328 MMS: No, he wasn't married yet. He came home to his sweetheart, Maria, and they married shortly after the war, 1918 or 1919.

335 ALF: So he did not marry a Chinese lady?

336 MMS: No.

337 ALF: He didn't go back to China?

- 337 MMS: No. There were no Asian women. A very few. I mean the ones that were here were already married and with children, or grandmothers. Older women that weren't marriageable age, so a lot of Chinese at that time, the ones that were working on the railroad and stuff, married Hispanic or other races.
- 348 ALF: Do you know what her full name was?
- 350 MMS: No. I was trying to think. I don't remember her last name. I wish I did, but I don't believe I've ever know it.
- 355 ALF: Were they married in El Paso?
- 356 MMS: Yes.
- 357 ALF: Okay, so that would be in the records.
- 357 MMS: Right.
- 359 ALF: How many children did they have?
- 360 MMS: They had nine children, and my father adopted one.
- 364 ALF: So there were ten total?
- 365 MMS: Yes.
- 366 ALF: When we first spoke, you told me how your father's first wife took the children to China for their

education, where she died during childbirth in 1938.

369 MMS: Right. My father went on that trip with them. After they arrived, my father received a cable that the restaurant had been robbed, burglarized, and he needed to come home, so he flew back. Maria and the children stayed there [Mar Village, China], because the children were going to be in school there. And soon after, they discovered that she was pregnant with my brother Jimmy.

387 ALF: And that's how, that's where things, all the bad things started? He wasn't there then when she died in childbirth? He was stuck there?

391 MMS: Right. Because in April of 1938 is when he decided to take her and the children over to China to go to school. My brother Jimmy was born in 1939, and Maria died during childbirth.

400 ALF: Did the children know and speak Spanish and Chinese?

401 MMS: They spoke Spanish and English, and they had attended Chinese school, language school, here on Oregon. There was a Chinese language school for

the children, for everybody, one, I think it was on 200 S. Oregon. They attended classes there everyday after school, for an hour.

416 ALF: Just briefly, to recap, you had said that, that is when things really went bad for the following ten years. She [Maria] died in childbirth, and you said I guess this is when the Communists are coming in and they went to the village.

426 MMS: No, not the Communists.

427 ALF: Who was it?

428 MMS: The Japanese.

429 ALF: The Japanese. Okay, I've got my wrong time frame here. And this is where the aunts and uncles were all, well, what happened to them?

431 MMS: They were executed by the Japanese. At the time, in 1938 and 1939, rumors had already come to my aunts and uncles that were living in the Mar Village. And, as most of the upper classes stayed, they felt that there was nothing to worry about. That the Chinese regular army, that they were trained and that they had weapons, and they just felt that there was no threat from the

Japanese. That they didn't have to worry. When the Japanese marched, well, in 1939 Shanghai was bombed, and they marched through the Mar Village between the last part of 1938, early part of January. They marched through the Village. My uncles and my aunts were executed, and the village was burnt to the ground. My brothers and sisters were not executed, because one of the servant had brought their passports. A servant brought out their [end of Tape A, side two missed the last part of this sentence show here] passports showing that they were U.S. citizens, so they were spared.

[Tape 1, Side B]

- 473 MMS: My brothers and sisters were then taken by the Japanese and put into what they called an internment camp. And they were in this prison camp for four years, which is a major part of World War II.
- 479 ALF: Now you had said that it took your father a lot of effort, a great deal of effort, and it was what, about 1948 when they returned?

- 481 MMS: Yes. They returned. The Red Cross managed to locate them after the war, but they had to be hospitalized for a year or more before they were well enough to come home.
- 486 ALF: Where were they hospitalized, what city?
- 487 MMS: In Hong Kong.
- 487 ALF: In Hong Kong, okay.
- 488 MMS: My father, in the meantime, married my mother in 1943.
- 491 ALF: What's your mother's full name?
- 492 MMS: Manuela Hernández Mar. It is no coincidence that my mother and Maria, his first wife, look almost exactly alike. If you would look at a picture of Maria with my dad, and then look at a picture of my mother with my dad, they look like the same person, but they're not.
- 501 ALF: Amazing. You mentioned that there is an age difference between your mother and your father.
- 502 MMS: Oh yes. My mother, when she married my father was twenty-one, and my father was fifty-six.
- 505 ALF: Did any of your family ever go back to China after 1948?

- 506 MMS: My little sister went to China two years ago. And, she went to the site of the Mar Village. It was never rebuilt. So far as I know, she is the only member of the family that's gone back.
- 512 ALF: Do you know how long the Mar Village existed. I mean, we know what happened, that it didn't rebuild from, but do you know how far back in the family, how many years it had existed?
- 515 MMS: My father told me it was two hundred years.
- 515 ALF: Two hundred years, that's pretty impressive.
- 516 MMS: Yes.
- 517 ALF: Okay. Do you know how your parents met?
- 518 MMS: Yes. My father was a restaurant owner and my mother went to work for him as a waitress. [Light laugh.]
- 520 ALF: Was she born and raised in El Paso?
- 521 MMS: Yes. Well, she was born in Iris, Oklahoma.
- 522 ALF: Where?
- 523 MMS: Iris, Oklahoma.
- 523 ALF: Iris.
- 524 MMS: Well, my grandmother was Cherokee. My grandfather was "That wild Apache." [Light laughing.]

527 ALF: Is that how he was referred to?

528 MMS: Yes. And my mother, came here when she was eight, her father left her in the care of his sister who lived here, and he died about eight months after he brought her here to live. She was forever know as "That Indian," as far as the other children were concerned. She was "The Indian." I guess that you can really tell because my mother is of two worlds, Hispanic and Native American. She was telling me, that of course, her childhood was a nightmare because after her parents died during the depression she was put in one home to another, and also being of the heritage that she was, she never really felt that she belonged anywhere. But my dad just took it all into stride as if this is the natural thing to be. [Laughing.]

547 ALF: Well, I guess a lot of El Paso historically, people of all different ethnic backgrounds have been here, have come here, have met, have worked hard, and have had successful lives and that's a little bit of the nature of the region.

- 551 MMS: Yes, that is one of the things that my father was constantly talking about, that he loved about this areas was that he said that El Paso is international. That nowhere else in the world could you have such diverse cultures and people living all together, and there was very little, in comparison to other parts of the country, there was very little racial discrimination. Except, I've really got to admit, except for the white people, and they discriminated against everybody all the time. [Laughing.] But that was normal.
- 561 ALF: That was their nature. Okay. Did your mother help run the business.
- 563 MMS: Oh yes. My brothers and sisters, when they home in 1948, they all helped out in the restaurant too, except, that they didn't like the restaurant business and they wanted to strike out on their own. My father could very well understand how they felt.
- 569 ALF: Because he had done the same thing.
- 570 MMS: Oh yes.
- 570 ALF: So how many brothers and sisters do you have?

- 571 MMS: My oldest brother I lost to cancer, in 1973. And, I lost another brother, my little brother, in 1995. So now, there are nine girls and five brothers.
- 572 ALF: Is this combined or just your siblings?
- 578 MMS: Combined.
- 578 ALF: Combined. That's a large family.
- 579 MMS: Yes!
- 580 ALF: What was it like growing in that household?
[Laughing.]
- 580 MMS: It was great. We had our times, because my dad's health started to decline. I think it was a lot from the pressure and the strain of not knowing, especially during war time, of him having government contracts to fill food orders for the Army. Plus, not knowing where my brothers and sisters were. Not knowing if they were all right, or if they were dead. It was terrible. That strain alone I think contributed to his health, because after it was all over with and the kids were finally home, then that's when my father, his health started to decline.

- 596 ALF: Like he held together through when he needed to be there and it took its toll.
- 597 MMS: Right.
- 597 ALF: That's certainly understandable.
- 598 MMS: I've always thought it was the most natural thing in the world. I kind of laugh now, because other people are always telling me, well, your family's different. Well yeah, we're different.
[Laughing.]
- 603 ALF: Well, every family is unique, but with your cultural blend it is really interesting. Okay. When you were kids, what did you do for entertainment?
- 607 MMS: Oh, I think we did the normal childhood things. We caught grasshoppers, we flew kites, we skated in front of traffic. [Laughing.] Rode our bikes like kamikazes. It was a different time then, I think. Because living downtown behind the restaurant was an experience that I will never forget, because then, I had never known downtown to be dangerous. Not like what it is today, because back in those days nobody ever locked

their doors, and nobody ever bothered you, except for the occasional drunk who was sitting on the sidewalk singing. There was no sense of danger or something terrible happening to you.

623 ALF: Now which restaurant was this?

624 MMS: The Chung King Cafe. It was at 318 S. Mesa. My father also had the Louis Cafe which came into being after the Pan-American, but the Louis Cafe was on St. Louis Street.

628 ALF: I think he also owned the International.

628 MMS: Yes.

629 ALF: Yes, the International, because I remember seeing that. I have that written down. That was 208 to 210 S. El Paso, and that shows up in 1920, and I thing that shows up for a number of years. Now, what years was if for the Chung King?

634 MMS: 1947 to 1953.

636 ALF: And the Louis Cafe was after the Pan-American?

637 MMS: No, the Louis Cafe was at the same time. At the same time that he had the International, he also had the Louis Cafe, which was on St. Louis. But

they changed the name. I think its Main, or something.

640 ALF: Yes, its Main Street, now.

641 MMS: The Louis Cafe is the one that he had throughout.

644 ALF: So he had that continuous, but you lived behind the Chung King?

646 MMS: Yes, because he had a restaurant for white people, and a restaurant for everybody else. [Laughing.]

647 ALF: Okay, which one was which?

649 MMS: When we had the Chung King, people would still come and stand in the back of the restaurant in the afternoons, if they were hungry, and my dad would bring them into the restaurant and he would feel them. My grandfather, who was an adopted grandfather on my mother's side, he would have them come in and eat too, in one of the back booths. I didn't know that at the time there was an unspoken regulation that Hispanic, Chinese, whoever, they didn't care if they came in and ate, but it wasn't good for business. I just thought it was because they were related to us, and we weren't supposed to eat out there in front. When

it came to racial discrimination I was in for an eye-full, when I got older. I was attending Jefferson Junior High, when I got older. This was in 1955 or 1957. We had a black girl come to school with us. That was the first time, and of course she was my friend because I immediately liked the idea, because I thought it was cool. Evelyn Washington. But anyway, my father promoted a real positive outlook. To see all people, not to discriminate, but to see them in a logical perspective. He always encouraged us to learn, to observe, but to make up your own mind as to what is right and what is wrong.

689 ALF: That's a pretty good philosophy. In other words, don't just automatically accept what someone else says.

691 MMS: Yes, definitely.

692 ALF: Well, I remember also when we talked before, that you had mentioned that you taught Sunday School, I think you said at the Baptist Church?

694 MMS: Yes, Grand Avenue. Which is the Chinese Baptist Church now. When I was three, it was the Chinese

Baptist Mission, then. The missionaries at the time were Miss Nina Gillespie and Mary Ethridge. The two missionaries.

702 ALF: What was Mary's name?

703 MMS: Ethridge. Her brother is a doctor who is in practice here, or he's got to be retired by now. But anyway, the Chinese Baptist Mission was started in 1949, I believe. No, it had to have started before that because I was going to nursery school there when I was three. I was born in 1943, so it had to be earlier than that. The church grew over the years, it grew right along with us. The Chinese colony at that time was much larger than it is now. It gradually declined, but at that time we did have a sizable Chinese population living here.

722 ALF: Do you remember about how large it was?

723 MMS: It had to be two to three hundred families at the time, when I was growing up.

726 ALF: I forgot to ask when you were born?

728 MMS: I was born in 1943. One of the things that I would like to say is that over time the Chinese

population assimilated into the population. But one of the biggest reasons for the decline was, and it has to do with discrimination, because it is my belief that after everything was settled and everyone was happy in the late 1940s, early 1950s, McCarthy came in, and everybody was accusing everybody of being a Communist. And I think in a way, that set a wave of shock through most of the Chinese population here, because they felt that it was just a matter of time before they would come after them. By this time Mao and his bandits and peasants had taken over China. They had burnt all the libraries, they executed scholars, teachers, anyone with an education. Anyone that would seriously oppose them. Can you imagine what would happen to this country if every piece of history, of books, science, were taken and destroyed? This is what this man did.

761 ALF: It's mind boggling.

762 MMS: Yes. And, the Chinese that were already living here in the United States had been watching with horror, because everything that they had known,

everything that was home was no longer, it didn't even exist. Mao closed China, so there was no possibility that they could ever go back home. That is when they decided that they would split off and go to other parts, Houston, San Francisco, New York, some place that had a larger population than what we had here. There is too, an underlying cause. I think that many people don't recognize the China culture. The aristocratic system that was in place for centuries, when Mao took over, was destroyed. He had people arrested. He had children put into state ^{run} schools and were not allowed to go home. They were supposed to re-hab the little ones from the time they were five years they were forced into mandatory schooling. The aristocratic way was dealing with honor, with principles, of family, values, morality, what's right and what's wrong, all of this was through Mao got twisted into something that they didn't even recognize anymore. Because the kids were taught in Mao's terms, that there existed nothing except the state, and that they

must live every aspect of their lives according to Mao. Particularly, when it came to morality, what's right and what's wrong. They just glossed over it. They glossed over so many things. The Chinese population that is known today is a big brother society.

[Tape 2, Side A.]

- 0 ALF: Mae, I remember that you had said that when your father passed away, what the newspaper headlines were, and that one of them was "Tong Leader Passes." He was a Masonic.
- 4 MMS: So he was active then in the Chinese Mason, which was also one of the tongs.
- 6 MMS: Yes.
- 7 ALF: So, was he a tong leader or just high active?
- 7 MMS: No. My father was the tong leader. One of the things that the Chinese colony had always prided itself on was to always behave in a way that was expected of them. They not only had to be average, they had to be better than average. They were representatives of who they were: Chinese. It was very important for them to obey the laws,

and to do what was right. My dad organized the tong, because it served as a police force if you will, among the Chinese. In other words, if they needed someone to help them, whatever they needed, or if they or were being bullied by other people, they went quickly. Their purpose was to defend and protect the people of the Chinese colony. And, on occasion, the surrounding Hispanic community.

23 ALF: This is largely Second Ward?

23 MMS: Yes.

24 ALF: Because I know there was another tong just down the block.

25 MMS: There was?

25 ALF: Yes.

26 MMS: I don't know. [Laughing.] Who had that one?
[Laughing.]

27 ALF: I think that was. I have their name somewhere. But that would be a point that we can pick up in a future interview, and I can pull together some information, and we can look it at see what you

remember, and see if we can formulate a picture because it is fascinating.

31 MMS: Yes.

31 ALF: It is a very important part of the community. I haven't asked you yet when you married, or how many children you have.

34 MMS: Oh my goodness. That is, too long. [Laughing.]

35 ALF: That's too long of a questions, so we can come back to that. But you are a student at UTEP.

36 MMS: Yes I am.

36 ALF: I can understand this, because this is where I was when I got my children raised and I was able to return to school. And if I remember correctly, you are a Psychology major.

38 MMS: Yes I am.

39 ALF: And where are you in that program?

40 MMS: Somewhere down around the bottom, still. [Laughs.]

40 ALF: Okay.

41 MMS: No. I'm just working hard. So far it has been a very wonderful experience. One of the things that going to school does to your brain, I think, is that it completely changes your way of thinking

because there are so many avenues, so many ways of thinking, of especially problem solving, and its opened up a whole lot of new vistas for me, so I've really enjoyed it.

51 ALF: That's great. Well, Mae, I would love to visit you again so we can pick up and talk about different aspects and go into more detail now that we have a background. It's been a pleasure.

54 MMS: Thank you. One of the things that I have been able to learn since I spoke to you last is the way the unofficial mayor position is filled. In those days they went by the person's education. My father was one of the very few Chinese here in town that graduated from the University in China. This, plus being from the family that he was from made him a number one candidate for unofficial mayor. And that's how they chose them. The counsel of elders that they had here: they appointed him. Its funny. there's no election. There's like the counsel of elders, they get together, they do a lot of discussing, they called

my father in and he was appointed. There are no ifs, buts, of maybes, but hey! [Laughing.]

71 ALF: We've made this decision and you are it.

72 MMS: You will. [Laughing.]

72 ALF: Well, its a fascinating process. The fact that there was a counsel of elders, and who those people were and what was the tradition.

74 MMS: Yes.

74 ALF: So that is another area that we can look at because that's a distinct part of the regional history.

75 MMS: Oh yes, its the counsel of elders who, they participated, not only that but they organized. But, that's the way it was in Chinese civilization. That's how they did things then. So, if you were an elder, you were very well respected because you were in that counsel. Not just for your education, but for your age and your experience. That was very much valued. Still is.

84 ALF: Well it is very important for El Paso, because it sets El Paso above like the mining camps and the

railroad camps. It means that there was a viable community here. It wasn't just an outpost.

87 MMS: No, it was far from it.

88 ALF: It was very well organized Chinese colony.

89 MMS: Oh yes. Oh yes. Wherever the Chinese congregated there was always organization, backbone, and who did what and why. And, the unofficial mayor was chosen by the counsel of elders, and what they did was vote among themselves who they thought could fill that position. That's the way it was. Even in Chinatown today, they're still in place. What they call, self-government. Like the Native American colony. They were of their own units, they had their own ways of establishing their pecking order, their ...

102 ALF: Their hierarchy?

102 MMS: Yes! Yes.

103 ALF: Well, we'll have to pick that up and discuss more of that.

104 MMS: That's all I can remember for now.

105 ALF: That's pretty good.

105 MMS: Laughing.

106 ALF: Thank you, Mae.

Note: Tape turned back on to capture Mae's conversation on Mao.

107 MMS: In Mao's regime, he took away the most important part of a Chinese, and that was his family, his name, his honor, his code, Mao called it Cultural Revolution. In China for centuries, there were major families, the Huangs [Wongs], the Lees, the Chews, the Mars, and I could go on-and-on, and your family name is something that nobody else had. And you had your honor, your word, rested on your name. But Mao took that away, and I don't know if it was because his band of peasants took offense, or if there was a lot of people in his regime that were just, were what you would call, Gypsies or people with no family. But the difference between the modern Chinese and the Chinese back then, is that they were not given a sense of the code of honor, of doing and being honorable, and honoring your family's name in everything that you did. As a result, a lot of

people have come in recent years, especially in the last twenty years, they have immigrated from different parts of China, through Hong Kong and other parts, are very different. They are very much different from the Chinese that live here, that have lived here for years. They're very different, because they have to be taught, all of them as to where they stand and who they are. I mean, why things were the way they were and to be proud of yourself. To be proud of who you are. You are worth everything. You as a person are worth everything, you are special. Now, that's all I have to say. [Laughter.]

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ALF: End of Interview.