

EI-908

NAME: NAI YOUNG CHANG `
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CHINA; SWITZERLAND, AND FRANCE
AGE: 6

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? SWITZERLAND: GENEVA
? FRANCE: AUTERIVE
? US: NEW YORK, NY

SIGRIST: Good Morning this is Paul Sigrist, for the National Park Service. Today is Wednesday, July 16, 1997. I am at the Ellis Island recording studio and I am here with Mr. Nai Yung Chang. Mr. Chang left China in 1937; he went to Switzerland then onto to France and eventually to the United States in 1939. And then in the late 1940's was brought out to Ellis Island to actually be officially processed as an immigrant. I also want to say that Peter Hamm is running the recording the equipment. Anyway, Mr. Chang thank you very much for coming out, can we begin by your giving me your birth date please?

CHANG: January 7, 1933.

SIGRIST: And, can you tell me where you were born please?

CHANG: Shanghai.

SIGRIST: And, do you know anything about the circumstances that surround you, that surrounded your birth?

CHANG: Well, to begin with I was the last of twelve children from my father and the last of seven from my mother, two marriages. Other than that, I don't know very much except that I was born at home rather than in a hospital.

SIGRIST: Was that unusual for that time period in Shanghai, or more typical?

CHANG: I guess for the more wealthy people, people were born in the hospitals. But, I think I came a little earlier than they expected.

SIGRIST: (Laughter). Why don't we begin by talking about your parents? What was your father's name?

CHANG: He was Ching Kiang Chang.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that please?

CHANG: C-H-I-N-G K-I-A-N-G C-H-A-N-G

SIGRIST: Tell me a little about his family background that you know of and of his growing up.

CHANG: O.K. His ancestors were merchants. They were silk merchants actually.

SIGRIST: In China?

CHANG: In the Chan Xian Province in Nanjing actually. Don't ask me to spell (both of them laughing)!

SIGRIST: I'll look it up on the map.

CHANG: Right. And, they were, they became very wealthy through I suppose trading and being quite having a good deal of business acumen. My father was I believe at one time disowned by his family because he was very unhappy with the last of the Emperors in China and joined Chang Kai-shek in the Revolution. During that time, since he was quite wealthy, he contributed to the Revolution with money, three separate times and supported the Revolution that way. In addition to that, he was very active with Chiang Kai-shek, ----- with Sun Yat-sen and then eventually with Chian Kai-shek. He, in between the time with Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek, h was the President of the Central Committee.

SIGRIST: Could you repeat that?

CHANG: He was the President of the Central Committee.

SIGRIST: Central Committee?

CHANG: Yea, right. And eventually became the Governor of the Chen Xian Province.

SIGRIST: Did your father ever speak about specific experiences that he had during that time? Like is there a story you can me that he used to tell about his experiences during the Revolution and.....

CHANG: Oh, quite honestly, he was very quiet about the whole thing. And perhaps he did speak to me about it, but I was too young to understand. I really cannot tell ya any of these experiences.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about your father's personality?

CHANG: Well, when I knew him he was already, I guess in his late fifties, he had arthritis, and was confined to a wheelchair or, sitting all the time. He was virtually blind and his hearing was bad. I used to listen to the news for him and translate it into Chinese for him, in the United States, obviously. But, I would say, that he was known as a deep thinker, and actually was in charge of reconstruction in China too. So, from all the reports that I have, he was a great man.

SIGRIST: Did you personally ever know any of his relatives, his parents or aunts, uncles?

CHANG: I don't, I was I guess five years old when I left China and while we have met some of his in-laws, parents or uncles and so forth, I don't really think that I've had some any direct grandparents or anything like that.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about his first marriage? And what you may or may not know. Hopefully what you do know, (Laughter) about that experience.

CHANG: Well, I know that he was married and he had five girls before the second marriage. They actually were educated in France. They so far as I knew, they had no particular profession except for the two youngest ones, number four and number five. Number four was an artist and number five was a fashion designer. She did live in New York and had gone back to China. Eventually, come back to New Y --- , to the United States. Now, still living in --- last known address is Elkhart, Indiana.

SIGRIST: Do you know the name of the first wife?

CHANG: I do not. I do not. But, I can find out.

SIGRIST: Tell me about your own mother. What was her name?

CHANG: Her name was Yiming; her last name was Chu C-H-U. Y-I- M-I-N-G

SIGRIST: What do you know about her family background?

CHANG: Not very much except that she was a country girl. Did not, was not a, not one of the society people at all. And my father fell in love with her and after the death of his first wife who apparently was hit on the head by a tree falling. Or something like that. And she --- he did marry her, and subsequently produced seven kids (chuckling). Ya know I have one brother and five sisters.

SIGRIST: Had she been married before?

CHANG: No.

SIGRIST: So, it was his second marriage, her first marriage.

CHANG: Right.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about her personality.

CHANG: Well, she --- before we came to the United States was very quiet and was the wife of my father and did not have very much voice. But, since she came over here, she took over the family affairs, since he -- he was really incapable of doing that. She arranged for all her kids to go through school. All of us went through college and was really quite capable and clever in doing all this. We had limited resources and she was able to get some scholarships and so forth. At that time, I think she just kind of blossomed into a very capable young lady.

SIGRIST: Tell me what your mother enjoyed doing for her own pleasure.

CHANG: Both my father and mother were Buddhists and they were very devout and I guess for her own pleasure it was really family more than anything else. She did attend the Temple and go to Buddhists meetings, and so forth, read the Sutra. And led kind of a well, a religious life you know in terms of Buddhism.

SIGRIST: What about your father? Was there something that you remember that he would do that -- for his own personal pleasure --- something that he enjoyed?

CHANG: I really don't remember anything, except that he was just taken care of. He was, we had a person who assisted him when he had to be moved from place to place. And, he seemed to really enjoy ---- the only thing I remember him enjoying was to listen in to the news and him being kept up with current events.

SIGRIST: Of course his being so politically motivated for so much of his life.

CHANG: Right.

SIGRIST: Do you know the year he was born?

CHANG: I have to look that up.

SIGRIST: O.K. Let's just take a minute.

CHANG: This was his hundredth anniversary issue here.

SIGRIST: Is there a year?

CHANG: Yeah, 1976, therefore he was born in 1876.

SIGRIST: 1876.

CHANG: Yeah.

SIGRIST: He was, he was certainly on in years by the time you were born.

CHANG: Yes.

SIGRIST: Yeah, interesting. How much younger was your mother?

CHANG: I think let's see, she died when she was ninety, in 1987. So, no I'm sorry, that can't be right, she was much younger than my father. So, I'll figure it out.

SIGRIST: Well, if she were 90 in 1987, she would have been born presumably in 1897, right?

CHANG: Yeah, I think she was born just about the turn of the century, actually.

SIGRIST: So that would still make her twenty years younger than Dad.

CHANG: Yeah, Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you personally have any recollections of Shanghais? And you said you were about five when you left, five years old. What, what personal memories do you have? Or early, early memories, what are your first memories?

CHANG: O.K. This is very strange that I cannot distinguish with what I remember and what I have seen in home movies. I do remember some fairly traumatic things. For example, when we were on our way emigrating from China to France, I remember staying somewhere in Canton or Hong Kong either one of the places and there was bombing from the Japanese. And the people were dying and I do remember seeing the truck with bodies going by, which I cannot get out of my head. That's about really the personal memory that I am sure of that I saw, that there was no movie about. My brother who is ten years older than me was taking a lot of home movies, and while there were very few of China, there were many of European places and the United States. We did stay I believe in Hong Kong on the other side from on the Island which around Repauls [ph] Bay. That's from second hand knowledge. I can't remember exactly. I think it was a lovely beach area.

SIGRIST: What about where you actually lived in Shanghais, do you have any recollections of the actual structure that you lived in or if it were an apartment, a detail about the interior of that apartment?

CHANG: It was a private house and we ---we --- in fact, I went back to China eventually and looked for it and could not find it. I have no clear recollection of what the interior of the house was like. I do remember that there was kind of an alleyway that led to the front door. We spent a lot of our time in Hang Chow, which is; well, I guess, like a suburb. No, it's actually a city, but it's not far from Shanghais

SIGRIST: Can you spell that please?

CHANG: H-A-N-G C-H-O-W.

SIGRIST Thank you.

CHANG (chuckles) and we had a country home up there. My father had purchased this because it was suspected my brother had tuberculosis, which turned out not to be the case. And it was kind of a country place that we went to. I remember that much better than I do about Shanghai.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about being at the country house?

CHANG: O.K. There were two buildings. There was a large building and a small building connected with an alleyway. When you went through the front gate there were a huge number of stairs; probably not as many as I remember, but it looked like a very high place that we went to. There were green lawns and trees and a well-kept garden. We had a gatehouse where a gatekeeper kept that. We were not very often in the large house, but we were in the small house quite often. I believe we actually lived there with a governess and a, and the ---- I can still see the living room kind of.

SIGRIST: I can see you seeing it.

CHANG: Yeah. (Both laughing)

SIGRIST: It's obviously flashing right through your eyes.

CHANG: Right.

SIGRIST: What do you see when you see that living room? What are the details of that room that stick out in your mind?

CHANG: Well, I -- I remember that there was a sofa and there were -- there were, quite large windows on it. The out-looked [sic] on a veranda where there were large urns there. I remember the sofa well because I urinated on it one time (laughing) and was chastised. I think I must have been around three or four years old, whenever that was.

SIGRIST: There are always reasons why we remember things (both laughing together).

CHANG: I do have a sister who is only eleven month older than I am and we were always together and playing together. The rest of them were kind of remote to me until later on in life.

SIGRIST: You mentioned that you had a governess, what, do you have any recollections of your interaction with a governess or perhaps a story about something that happened in connection with the governess?

CHANG: She was both a governess and kind of our teacher too. She taught us some things. I guess, obviously, too young to be a real schooling. But she came with us to the United States.

SIGRIST: What was her name?

CHANG: Well, let's see if I can do this, her last name was Chen. Her first name was Ye Chang. I cannot spell that at all.

SIGRIST: Chin, you said, was the last name?

CHANG: Chen C-H-E-N, Chen.

SIGRIST: Chen.

CHANG: Right. And, she ----- after we came to the United States, was married and had two children herself, and now she also has passed on. What do I remember? Well, I remember her playing chess with me, O.K. And ---her --I have very fond recollections I kind of cared for her a great deal.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what she looked like? Can you describe what she looked like?

CHANG: To me at that time, she was tall. Probably my height, which is 5'8 for Chinese I guess that's kind of tall. And -- she was a very educated person, and spoke very well both in English and in Chinese.

SIGRIST: Do you know how she learned English? Or where she learned English?

CHANG: I haven't the foggiest idea, really. But she seemed, she may have even picked up since she arrived in the United States. I don't remember her speaking French though, which was a language I learned before I learned English.

SIGRIST: Tell any other recollections you have of the country house. Maybe something that happened there when you were quite young.

CHANG: Not much, I do remember some things. We had a lawn and I remember bushels of cut grass that were there --- which my sister and I played in all the time. There was a stone fence or was it cement? I am not quite sure, I think it's cement. And there were I, probably getting it mixed up with other places also. But it --- it seemed like that was a very large yard with some trees but a very clean cut lawn, stairs... the lawn --- that's about it.

SIGRIST: You remember quite a bit actually about that. (Laughing)

CHANG: That's not too much (laughing).

SIGRIST: You mentioned the carnage brought on by the Japanese invasion. Do you have any other recollections at that time prior to leaving China of any kind of interaction or any kind of influence on your family due to the Japanese invasion?

CHANG: Very little. I remember that during the time when there were bombings we were all sent down to the basement and my father said, that we should be quiet, while there. I don't know why we should be quiet, but we -- he did ask us to be th ---quiet. We were all very frightened. Did not know where or whether a bomb would drop on our house or not. I don't think it was our house, it was probably rented or what ever it was at that time. I have no recollection how we had that place. But I do remember that we were in the basement during the bombing. That's about it.

SIGRIST: Before we get you on your way out of China, you mentioned your parents were both Buddhists,

CHANG: Yes.

SIGRIST: As a small child, what do you remember of religious practices or what you were taught in terms of religion.

CHANG: Well, I think the Buddhist religion is very non-evangelical in terms of who they would recruit to be Buddhist. And therefore I wasn't really told that I must be a Buddhist when I grow up. They did tell me that --- that it was a very nice way to live and it would have to be good people. He, my father was very adamant that we should not even kill mosquitoes. It, ---- you just didn't kill anything. They died, they died, but they ---- you didn't kill them. He was a vegetarian and so was my mother. I think my mother became a vegetarian after ---- in fact, I know that, after they were married. My mother and he had a pact where, if he would give up smoking, she would give up eating meat. And that happened and they were vegetarians and non-smokers since that time.

SIGRIST: Do you remember there being religious artifacts in the house at all or... ?

CHANG: Yes. There were always prayer beads you know that they repeated ---- the name of Buddha, which is Amita [ph]. And it, in each case, they would count one bead every time they repeated the name, and through the whole chain, I don't know exactly how many there are, but there are certain multiples that these prayer beads are. Each time, sometimes the long ones were three times the short ones.

SIGRIST: I guess my final question for you, before you we get you out of China; do you have any recollections of food or stories associated with food when you were quite young, but do you remember a specific meal for some reason or maybe getting food or a favorite food?

CHANG: I don't really remember. I remember one occasion that I was given a pat of butter with some sugar on it. I don't why I remember that. I haven't recalled that for ages and ages. But it was something that I liked very much and butter was not something that I had before.

SIGRIST: Tell me why your father chose, I assume it was your father who made the decision to leave China, was it your father? Is that a correct assumption? That he chose to leave?

Chang: That's a correct assum-----

SIGRIST: Tell me why he made the decision at the time that he did.

CHANG: Well, I think it would be fairly manifest that war was beginning over in China. He was already quite old and quite incapacitated in terms of being able to move around. He had business interests in Europe and he had friends in both Geneva and in Paris. And I guess he also had an antique business that he had. He did not have, he set people up in the antique businesses. They were in France in Paris.

SIGRIST: Was he already in a wheel chair when you were still in China?

CHANG: Ah, yes.

SIGRIST: He was.

CHANG: Right

SIGRIST: Can you just be a little more specific about the business interests that you mentioned? Do you know what they were specifically or how he got involved in these European businesses?

CHANG: Yeah, I think he had two young people who he was very fond of, two ---two peo --- two men. And they were kind of followers of my father and he decided that, I don't know whether it was he or them, who decided that they wanted to start antique places of Chinese artifacts. Obviously he set them up with parts of his collection and they became quite successful in what they did.

SIGRIST: What did your father collect?

CHANG: Some religious artifacts, I mean, Buddhas and so forth, and urns, and all kinds of reli ---- things that he collected; including perhaps, fine calligraphy, and paintings.

SIGRIST: That is very interesting. What do you remember about leaving Shanghai? If you have any recollections of doing that, what you had to do prior to leaving?

CHANG: I don't really have any recollection of what, not really. I know that we came by boat over to Hong Kong. But, I don't really remember prior to that.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about the journey, you know, going from place to place. Ultimately you'll go to Switzerland probably.

CHANG: Right. I think the only recollections I have are subsequent to leaving Hong Kong and this was on a steamship. I believe the name was Aramis, like the third musketeer.

SIGRIST: That was to Hong Kong, the ship to Hong Kong?

CHANG: From Hong Kong to Marseille.

SIGRIST: Oh, from Hong Kong to Marseille.

CHANG: I remember it as a very long voyage. I do remember seeing people in the Red Sea who would dive for coins that were tossed off the boat. I heard stories about them, that they had some time been bitten by sharks there. Which didn't mean a heck of a lot to me I didn't even know what a shark was at that time. And I do remember going through the Suez Canal, I remember what it kind of looked like.

SIGRIST: How long was the family in Hong Kong prior to leaving?

CHANG: Couldn't have been very long, maybe a couple of month at the very most.

SIGRIST: And, what was the intended, ultimate destination?

CHANG: I think, I think Geneva, where some of my siblings were already studying. But, again, when we were in Switzerland and then eventually in France; the war was breaking out in Europe, too. This was 1938, '39, something like that, and that's exactly when, where ---- when was it that Hitler's putsch around that time anyway? So, we, again we were fleeing the war --with my father.

SIGRIST: How long was the voyage from Hong Kong to Marseilles?

CHANG: In terms of days and weeks or months?

SIGRIST: Yeah, however long it took?

CHANG: I don't know.

SIGRIST: You mentioned ----of course, a small child can have an entirely different perception of this kind of a trip than an adult would. Do you know how your parents felt about leaving their home?

CHANG: Oh, they were very, very sad about that. I mean that ---it was ---they realized that it would be for a long period of time. There was expectation that when the war was over, that they would go back. And, consequently, we never did get citizenship, wherever we were, until it was perfectly clear that we would never be going back.

SIGRIST: So they're really not looking at this as a permanent move, they're just trying to get you all out of there until things get better.

CHANG: [superposed] That is exactly correct.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what your family took with them when they left Shanghai? Specifically, specific objects, do you recall?

CHANG: I wasn't aware of exactly what they were taking. There were a few steamer trunks; what was in them I had no idea. Obviously, some clothing and, probably, some possessions.

SIGRIST: Was there something that you took as a small child that you remember a toy or something?

CHANG: No I really can't remember that I did.

SIGRIST: O.K. So, you're on the ship; it's going to Marseilles, you remember the divers diving for coins. What else sticks out in your mind about that trip?

CHANG: Well, sea- sickness obviously! (Laughing) I was quite sick. So were my brothers and sisters; my brother and sisters, yeah. In fact, my mother was quite seasick. I don't think my father was for some reason.

SIGRIST: Do you have any recollections of the layout of the boat or where slept or where you went to take meals, any of that?

CHANG: I do remember that it was very nice. I think we were going in what would be known as first-class cabins. So, there was no difficulty and it certainly was not steerage class, so we were in ---in very fine quarters. Size of the boat, I don't know.

SIGRIST: When the ship landed in Marseilles, then what happened?

CHANG: Well, my guess is that we took a train to Geneva from Marseille, but I really don't recall that.

SIGRIST: I'm sorry. I was distracted.

CHANG: O.K.

SIGRIST: All right, we are going to pause just for a moment and we'll get you back on your trip...

CHANG: O.K.

END SIDE A. BEGIN SIDE B

SIGRIST: O.K. we are beginning side two of tapes one. All right, you have arrived in Marseille, and you think you took a train to Geneva.

CHANG: I guess that's what must have happened.

SIGRIST: Where does your memory kick in? To this, in this, leg of the trip?

CHANG: It really doesn't, I really don't know what happened during even the years in France; a year in France, a year in - in Switzerland.

SIGRIST: You were in Switzerland first?

CHANG: Yes, were in Switzerland first.

SIGRIST: In Switzerland first, in Geneva?

CHANG: In Geneva. Well, if you want any kind of recollections; I remember my oldest sister, of the seven of us, had baked a cake for us and we, none of us, could eat it because it was so hard. So that's...--- [Laughs].

SIGRIST: I love recollections like that! (Both laughing)

CHANG: We fed it too the birds! So ---- (still laughing) but that's all I can remember really. I don't remember the place we stayed at;

whether it was one place, or more than one place. But, after Geneva, when we went to France --- it was a town named Auterive. [Ph] --- and we did live in a house, and I do remember the backyard; which had high grass. My two sisters, the one who was very close in age to me and the one who was two years older than she is, went to the backyard. And we were playing with snakes in there until my mother caught us doing it and they said, "Never, never touch those things they may be poisonous." So, that's about it.

SIGRIST: Do --- so Geneva is, really, pretty foggy. You just don't remember a whole lot about it?

CHANG: Not very much no.

SIGRIST: Do you have any recollections of your parents in Geneva at all?

CHANG: I - I really don't clearly remember. I do see a little snow there, so it must have been in the wintertime. I think, I think ---- I - .I really can't remember what they did back at that time.

SIGRIST: What about schooling for you?

CHANG: None.

SIGRIST: None. The governess was with you, correct.

CHANG: She gave us little lessons, taught us this and that. We did learn a little French. And, you know how kids are. They do pick up languages. But, I have forgotten most of it by now. (Both chuckling)

SIGRIST: I should have, when we were still in China, I should have asked you if there was a something that you remembered in Chinese ----- something that you learned as a child; a prayer, or a poem or a song, that you can still recite.

CHANG: I - I --I do speak Chinese fairly fluently.

SIGRIST: Was there something that you learned as a child?

CHANG: It must be from being a child that I learned Chinese.

SIGRIST: But I mean is there a poem or a song or a prayer or something that's in Chinese that you could recite for me on tape?

CHANG: I don't really know any. (Laughing)

SIGRIST: OK, (laughing) something that the Governess taught you --- Chinese nursery rhymes?

CHANG: I am sure she did, and it's all gone.

SIGRIST: O.K. All right, so the family went to a small town in France. Can you say the name again please?

CHANG: Autrive

SIGRIST: Can you spell that please?

CHANG: I am not sure I can, but I will try.

SIGRIST: Or tell me where it is.

CHANG: It is outside of Paris, a short distance. You, probably, can find it on the map.

SIGRIST: O.K.

CHANG: Or, maybe it doesn't exist now. I don't know.

SIGRIST: Yeah, that's true. Well tell me, you started talking about the tall grass and the snakes, and what else do you remember about being in France? You were there for a year.

CHANG: Yeah...

SIGRIST: Geneva for a year... France for a year ...

CHANG: I don't know if it was exactly a year or something less or more. But, I'm not very clear about the memories at all --- of Europe at that time. What can I remember?

SIGRIST: Do you remember ---- you know, as you say, this is a difficult period for Europe. Do you remember feeling any of that tension in your own family or maybe your father or your mother's opinion as to what was happening around them at that time or what might be happening in the near future?

CHANG: I am sure it was my father who was most concerned about this. He probably was still making all the decisions about what we were going to do. He had a secretary who he, I guess, confided in what he's thinking about and obviously my mother also, but not to the kids. They were not very happy at the time. I know that. Can't even put my finger on exactly why I know that. But, I have no recollections of the words they said or, other than ---. We -- I guess it was kind of good that we were re-united with the rest of our siblings when we were in Switzerland and then we went to France with all of the family.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of that? --- Of seeing your older brothers and sisters for the, maybe not for the first time, but certainly for the first time in some time?

CHANG: Yea, they left about somewhere between six month and a year before we did, so it was not a long parting. I actually don't remember it. I don't remember how ----I am sure I asked, "Where are they?" Or, whatever. But I just don't remember what they were like. And also, they did seem a little unfamiliar to me I think when we went there. Yea.

SIGRIST: What is the age span, if you are the youngest, how many years older was the oldest?

CHANG: Of the seven of us, who were, my oldest sister is eleven years older than me. And my brother is ten years older and the others were all in between until my two youngest, one's older than me.

SIGRIST: You mentioned a little bit ago about the fact that whatever your parents might be thinking, this was not necessarily conveyed to the children. That leads me to ask, do you remember certain rules, that you were taught as a child in terms of certain social behavior and rules that had to be followed in your family in your household? What were children expected to do, what where they not expected to do, that sort of thing.

CHANG: I don't think it was very different from what we would expect our children to do. Behave properly while guests were around, in fact generally that would be the case. Not to argue a heck of a lot. Certainly not to have physical fights which occasionally happened (laughing).

SIGRIST: Not to play with snakes.

CHANG: Right. (Both laughing) Yes.

SIGRIST: O.K. Well, tell me then how you got out of France and what that procedure was.

CHANG: Once again, its... let's see, I have to go back a little bit to China to give you an idea of something about this. My father and two of his friends were kind of advisors to the government. One's name was Li and the other's name was Wu.

SIGRIST: L-I?

CHANG: L-I. Yea.

SIGRIST: And Wu is W-U? That's enough?

CHANG: Yeah, all right. And Dr. Li was in France with us. He was quite a traveler and is knowledgeable in various parts, including America. And he kind of help us arrange things in terms of going from one place to another.

SIGRIST: Would you clarify? They were consultants to the Chinese Government.

CHANG: That's correct, right. They were the three old men advisors and so he had helped us make arrangements to come to the United States. I think he preceded us, to the United States on as well. He met us at the boat and arranged for housing for us and so forth. So, there was a very smooth transition from leaving France to the United States. Now, if you ask me what port we left from, I don't remember.

SIGRIST: What did you know of the United States?

CHANG: Nothing! Nothing!

SIGRIST: Did you have any mental image of what this place was before you got here?

CHANG: Well, you have to realize I was just about seven (7) years old or six (6) or seven somewhere around there, since I was born in '33 and arrived here in 1939. I have --- I had not even a curiosity. We were just going with the family to the next place. I don't think I could tell you a ---- I mean, I, if seeing the Statue of Liberty was something that struck me a great deal, I don't remember it. It's certainly an impressive structure. I am sure that Emma Lazarus's poem was recited to me several times. But I just don't know.

SIGRIST: What do you remember of the trip to the United States? You said you weren't sure of the port you left from in France. Do you remember the name of the ship that you took?

CHANG: Yeah, I think it was the Manhattan.

SIGRIST: Came on the Manhattan, and..

CHANG: Is that --- that name you are familiar with?

SIGRIST: I believe there was a ship, I don't know the ships in the thirty's (30's) as well as the earlier ones, (both laughing) but

CHANG [interposed] Right.

SIGRIST what --- do you have recollections of that voyage across the Atlantic?

CHANG: I think that we spent a great deal of times in our bunks being seasick.

SIGRIST: That's right (both laughing). You probably didn't want to get on the ship.

CHANG: No, (both continuing to laugh) we weren't at all excited about it. Yeah. Ok, I do remember when we arrived here on the west side docks. That we were met and we were driven to a house in Riverdale where we stayed for many years before we moved somewhere else.

SIGRIST: This had all been set up prior to your arrival?

CHANG: Prior to our -----.

SIGRIST: By Dr. Li.?

CHANG: That's correct.

SIGRIST: What are your first memories of America?

CHANG: The buildings here, the skyscrapers, certainly impressed me. I think that --- really felt it was a well-mechanized country where cars were moving very swiftly and that people seemed generally quite friendly. My first recollections of school, where, I think I went into second grade when I first came in ----were that the kids were very much like everybody you know. The only trouble I had was languages. I understood what was being said. There was a summer between the time I went; arrived here and we were tutored by in English. And so, when we went to school again, being a kid we learned English very quickly. I understood what was being said to me but I may not have responded in English. I mean it might have been in French or in Chinese or a mixture of all three, which is what was spoken at home.

SIGRIST: You mentioned a tutor. This is a tutor other than your Governess.

CHANG: Other than our Governess, yes.

SIGRIST: Can you describe a little bit for me the house that had been established for you?

CHANG: Yea, it was on Waldo Avenue. It had a white cement a, well, fence I guess, solid cementings, maybe about four or five feet tall. Four feet tall, I don't know, something like that. And it had kind of steps going down. It was a large area which all of my family and some of my cousins lived in together. It's quite a large house. It had steps and a, I suppose it was a rock garden, but it seemed to be an un-kept area. There was a pool with gold fish in it, behind it, and those recollections are quite clear. There was a sunken living room, obviously a lot of bedrooms, I don't know how many, but a lot.

SIGRIST: How many of the siblings came with you from France to the United States? Did all of them come?

CHANG: All seven of them

SIGRIST: All seven of them.

CHANG: Yeah right.

SIGRIST: And were all seven going to be living in this house, also?

CHANG: We did, we did live in this house for well, since my brother was ten years older than I was, he went to high school immediately and was soon graduated and went off to college. My sister, who is a year older than him, the same thing but different colleges obviously. She was a nurse. He became an engineer. Actually, was designing guidance systems for space travel during his adult life. He is now retired, living in New Mexico. My sister, my older sister married a Doctor they live in Greenwich, Connecticut. Do you want me to through the litany of my (both laughing)?

SIGRIST: Well, maybe a little later in the interview we can talk a little about that? It's interesting..

CHANG: Right.

SIGRIST: you know, to see what happened to the children in the United States. I am interested in what happens specifically to your parents once

they got to the United States. Can you talk about their adaptation or lack of adaptation to this new country?

CHANG: They had some difficulty with the language to begin with. My father spoke a little English before. My mother learned English better than my father who was already quite old. She was able to run the family in the sense of ---- with special regard to finding a place for the children. And subsequent to staying at that house that we first arrived at, which we stayed for maybe six months or so, we went to an apartment, actually, two apartments to house us. And there was, we seven children. We had my father's secretary, our Governess, and --

SIGRIST: Was it a male Secretary?

CHANG: Male secretary, yup. And we had brought one maid with us, too. I can't say we were living in discomfort. We were in good shape.

SIGRIST: And in a large group.

CHANG: Yea right.

SIGRIST: Talk some more about your mother because she sort of, she sort of becomes the interesting character, once you get to America.

CHANG: Yes.

SIGRIST: First of all, how did she go about learning English? You mentioned that the children were tutored, but how did she go about learning English?

CHANG: I don't know! She, she, after a short time started speaking English. Maybe she picked it up, maybe she had some kind of formal training, but she was a very clever person. And she became really the strength in the United States that we relied on, to make us, to allow us, to grow up in a normal way.

SIGRIST: Did she work once you got to the United States?

CHANG: Not earning money. We had some cash reserves I have no idea how much. They did talk about finances being difficult. But I think... I think at one time there was an amount of money sent from China to my father or my mother and we were able to subsist on that. In terms of being financially difficult, she certainly tried to find scholarships for us. And I think I remember her telling me that it was very difficult because she had interviewed several private schools for us. The first, the grade school that I went to was the Ethical Culture School; in Fieldston, specifically, which was in Riverdale area.

SIGRIST: Fieldstone?

CHANG: Fieldston.

SIGRIST: Fieldston?

CHANG: Yea, and she had had interviews and had spoken to people over there and tried to get some kind of monetary assistance for us going there and said that she was quite upset because they said that, "we don't give scholarships because you have more children." Said, "we don't do it cheaper by the dozen." So, I think she didn't get some scholarships, but I don't think we were financially that badly off.

SIGRIST: Were there ways that your family, your mother specifically tried to Americanize either, you know, clothing and food of course come immediately to mind, but there may be other ways too.

CHANG: I don't recall. But I know that pretty much had orange juice and eggs for breakfast (chuckling), so I think we Americanized in food very quickly. I think that she certainly was not unfamiliar with shopping. So, she went -- took us to clothing stores and so forth to buy cloths. I do remember that.

SIGRIST: Was there something about this country that your mother particularly liked? Something that she just thought was so wonderful?

CHANG: I don't know, I think I was not privy to her feelings at that time.

SIGRIST: Did you experience any kind of prejudice because you were Asian when you were in school?

CHANG: I would say, that was minimal, yes there was some. But, it was very minimal, and I guess I'm a fairly easygoing person and I don't really take umbrage too easily. (Chuckling) I remember that they asked me things in French that I understood and other people did not. Chinese was a language that was not, they were not curious about. Well, I don't know if they were curious or not, they just didn't speak it and didn't study it. French was something that we did study in grade school.

SIGRIST: And what was the language that you spoke at home?

CHANG: Oh, it was a mixture. I mean --- obviously, at the beginning mostly Chinese; in fact, of course, when I was very little, all Chinese. We went to France and Geneva. We were speaking French and Chinese. And then when we came to the United States we spoke Chinese, French and English. Perhaps, less French than either Chinese or English; but then fairly equal and words just came, whatever struck us as the one that's familiar.

SIGRIST: So several years later, as you told me before when we started the interview your family was then requested, I guess, to come to here, to Ellis Island for a sort of formal processing.

CHANG: Uhum.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me what you remember about before you came? You know, why you had to come out and what you remember about that experience.

CHANG: I think that I mentioned that we were, we had diplomatic passport, my father did. And that lasted for quite some time. He had been retired and I guess he was kind of a emeritus political advisor, so the diplomatic passport continued for a time. He did not take any active part in the government's foreign policy at all and was not in the --- well, I guess the U.N. didn't exist at that time ---- so, not in the consulate, not in any of that official point of view. But, at one point it was felt that we were not going to return to China and therefore we thought, and I don't think we were forced to by any means, that we should become citizens. And I think we consulted a lawyer, and asked them what the process -- and we went through that process. Again, I think we became citizens in the mid to late forties really. We did leave New York Harbor to go to Ellis Island to sit and wait our turn and I remember that there was a room full of people and we took a step forward and became American citizens. It was a lot of formality for obviously before that.

SIGRIST: So it actually wasn't a processing that you went through here, it was actually becoming a citizen.

CHANG: Right.

SIGRIST: And you think that that happened when? I know this is vague, but...

CHANG: O.K. OK. (Laughing) Let's see, if took a guess I would say, around 1947.

SIGRIST: [Laughs] That's right you said you were in high school.

CHANG: Yeah.

SIGRIST: At that time.

CHANG: Does that sound right? From '33 to '47 would become fourteen, umm probably, maybe it was '48 or '49 possibly. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did your whole family come out here to do that?

CHANG: Yes!

SIGRIST: Dad, too?

CHANG: Yes,

SIGRIST: Dad's incapacitated at this point.

CHANG: Yes, yes. Yes, yes! I am sure that he was taken in a wheel chair. Yeah with us all.

SIGRIST: Does anything stick out in your mind about coming across New York harbor in this large family group, and what you might have seen on the boat coming out here or anything like that?

CHANG: I guess at that point I felt very much Americanized, in fact I hardly knew I wasn't a citizen. We were treated very much like everyone else, outside of being immigrated. And I think we were ---- taking a ferry boat was not a very difficult thing for me to do, I think we had been on boats before and for the few minutes that it took, I certainly did not get sea sick (chuckling) this time.

SIGRIST: So how long did the whole process take?

CHANG: I think the better part of a day.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you all did when you left here? Or did you do that ...

CHANG: I think there was a celebration of some kind. I think we had dinner somewhere and we were all kind of glad that we were Americans at that time. It was a change for us, I believe. I mean, nothing physical, nothing different that we did, but we were Americans now.

SIGRIST: Do you remember having to study or prepare for this?

CHANG: Yeah, we did. We did study something. But you know at that time I did have --- I had had American history in some way. And my father being politically interested made us kind of politically interested. In fact, maybe I told you already that I read the newspapers to him and listened to radio programs and translated it for him. His English was not very fluent so I spoke to him in Chinese as much I could.

SIGRIST: Well, in our last few minutes I would like you to talk a little about your own professional path.

CHANG: O.K. Well, subsequent from being in the service, which I went into in 1955, after I graduated from college.

SIGRIST: In what branch?

CHANG: The Army, I was drafted. In fact what I did was volunteer for draft so that I could get it over with as quickly as possible. It was prior to the six-month deal that they had, it was a two-year stint. And I really was quite envious of the people who came in for six months and got out very quickly, which happened after I was inducted. After I left the army, I got a job in an advertising studio. I was always interested in art and therefore I was in their art department and went from one advertising studio to another. The first one was Richard Demma & Company; the second was the Bridges Company, spent quite a few years doing that.

SIGRIST: Doing what kind of work for the advertising companies?

CHANG: I was doing mechanicals and I was also a liaison between their clients and the acquiring jobs for them. During the time that I was in the second agency, I went to Cooper Union and stayed there for four years doing painting. But that was night. During the day I was still doing that. One of my teachers in Cooper Union was working for Harry Abrams as well; and stayed vice president there and hired me to be his assistant in the art department. He was their art director. Subsequently, I started

in the publishing area. We -- I spent many years at Abrams. I could look it up to find out exactly how many, but I succeeded my teacher as Vice President and Art Director at Abrams. Then after some time being vice president, I decided with a publisher at that time, Andy Stewart, and another Vice President, Lena Tabori, who is now my partner in Stewart, Tabori and Chang. we started a firm. Andy Stewart stayed there for quite a few years and he has left the firm now and just Lena and I are there. In fact I left the firm for a while doing strictly freelance work, which was quite lucrative.

SIGRIST: I should also spell. We have a minute left. Stewart is S-T-E-W-A-R-T?

CHANG: That's correct.

SIGRIST: Tabori is, T-A-B-O-R-I?

CHANG: Perfect.

SIGRIST: And of course, Chang, C-H-A-N-G.

CHANG: Right.

SIGRIST: So how long has that gone on. When did you form the partnership in?

CHANG: I think probably around, ten to thirteen years, something like that.

SIGRIST: Well, we're out of time

CHANG: O.K.

SIGRIST: But I want to thank you very much. This has been a most interesting immigration history and it was a pleasure to interview you.

CHANG: Yes.

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Nai Chang on Wednesday, July 16, 1997 at the Ellis Island recording studio with Peter Hamm in attendance. Thank you, sir.

CHANG: Right.... (Fading out), thank you.

EI-908/CHANG