

Houston Asian American Archive
Chao Center for Asian Studies, Rice University

Interviewee: Beck Gee
Interviewer: Sara Davis, Taylor Ginter
Date/Time of Interview: April 12, 2017
Transcribed by: Sara Davis, Taylor Ginter
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Edited by: Sara Davis (4/17/17), Taylor Ginter (4/17/2017)

Background: Mr. Beck Gee was born in a small village in China in 1922. In 1931, when he was nine years old, he spent over three weeks on a boat from Hong Kong to Angel Island, California. After a few weeks, he moved in with his grandparents in Algiers, Louisiana before going to school in Mississippi. He did very well in school, but because of laws at the time he was not allowed to continue attending school after the age of thirteen, so he worked for seven years at a grocery store as a butcher. At the age of twenty Mr. Gee was drafted into WWII as a photographer. While stationed in England he met his would-be wife of sixty-two years. They opened up their own grocery store after moving to Houston once the war was over but sold it after nine years. Mr. Gee went back to school to study graphic design and then spent the next thirty-one years making newspaper advertisements for department stores. He retired at the age of sixty-five.

Setting: The interview took place on April 12, 2017 in the lobby of Clarewood House retirement home where Mr. Gee lives in an efficiency apartment. Partway into the interview Mr. Gee points out Dorothy and Daniel [Chow] who we met afterwards. All five of us went up to Mr. Gee's apartment to see a small part of the advertisement work he had done over the years.

Key:
BG: Beck Gee
SD: Sara Davis
TG: Taylor Ginter
—: speech cuts off; abrupt stop
...: speech trails off; pause
Italics: emphasis
(?): preceding word may not be accurate
[Brackets]: actions [laughs, sighs, etc.]

TG: Okay, we're recording now.

BG: Hello, my name is Beck Hong Gee. I am 95 years old. I live in the retirement home called Clarewood uh in Houston, Texas. Is there anything else that you want me to say?

SD: No that was good.

BG: I'm being interviewed by two students from Rice [laughter]. I'm waiting for them to tell me what else to do [laughter].

TG: Uh I think we're ready to begin.

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SD: Yeah, okay, so I'm Sara Davis.

TG: My name's Taylor Ginter.

SD: And we're here on April 12th with Mr. Beck Gee interviewing him for the Houston Asian American Archive. So to start off can you tell us a little bit about where you were born and your childhood?

BG: I was born in China uh in a small village in 1922, and at the age of nine in 1931, I came to the United States and I have been here ever sense. I made one trip back to China in 1987 after I retired. But I did not go back to my birthplace because I was afraid of getting s—sick by drinking the water. [laughter] So—[clears throat] so—so—so what else and I supposed to talk about now?

Okay let's see now, I arrived—I arrived in San Francisco uh after about twenty-three days on the ship coming from Hong Kong to San Francisco. I spent about thirty days on Angel Island alone at the age of nine until I had passed all the questioning and was allowed to come on to the mainland. And I stayed in San Francisco for a few weeks, and I ended up joining my grandparents in Algiers, Louisiana, which is across the s—uh river from New Orleans. And I start school there, and uh a couple of years later in 1954 I moved Mississippi where I—my schooling stopped because Mississippi had a law that prohibit Chinese children from going to school—to a white public school. And I work from the age of 13 until I was 20 years old, when I got drafted into World War II. And I trained for a year in the United States and I spent ten months in Ger—in England and I spent twelve months in France and about four months in Germany before I came home to be discharged. During the ten months I was in England, I met a girl who would become my wife for the next sixty-two years. Um she joined me in 1946, sometime in the summer, about June, and she came—I decided to make Houston my home, so she joined me in Houston and we—she lived here all her life until she died at the age of 79. Uh, I live in the southwest part of Houston. I think I'll stop right there since I don't know what else to say.

TG: Okay.

SD: So when you came to the United States—

BG: I'm sorry?

SD: When you came over to the United States from China, did your whole family come with you?

BG: No, I came alone. I came with my brother.

SD: Your brother?

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BG: A paper brother. [SD: Okay.] You—you probably know that a lot of Chinese arrive in this country um as paper son. So I—we won't go into that because that—I uh I got all my papers corrected so I'm okay.

SD: Okay.

BG: But anyway, I've been retired for 30 years now, and uh my son—my wife and I didn't have any children, we just had an adopted son, and he died very young. So he and my wife are buried in Forest Park Westheimer. That's where I will eventually be. I'm ninety-five. So what else is there to say?

SD: So why did you come to—why did you come to America when your family stayed in China?

BG: Well uh [clears throat] conditions in China back in the thirties were not very good. We have no way of making a living. My grandparents thought it was a good idea for me to come here very young and get educated. But as it turned out I ended up in a place where I couldn't go to school. So I made my living in Houston as a commercial artist and I retired at the age of thirty-five [sic], I've been retired for 30 years. So I'm now just waiting for my time to come.

SD: So are you the oldest—

BG: Hm?

SD: Are you the oldest out of all your siblings?

BG: I'm the oldest of three sons [SD: Okay] and two daughters.

SD: Okay.

BG: Uh my family they are in Canada, I'm the only one in the United States.

SD: Okay.

TG: Did you speak English when you came over?

BG: Um, I didn't speak any English at all and it took me about a year before I can start holding a conversation. I was learning English one word at a time. And it's kinda difficult to talk to somebody one word at a time so. [laughs]

SD: Did your grandparents speak English, because they lived in California?

BG: My grand—I lived with my grandfather and grandmother, and uh he didn't speak too well and she—she hardly spoke at all. They had a hand laundry...

SD: Oaky

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BG: ...in Algiers.

SD: Mm...So you lived in California with your grandparents before you moved to Mississippi...

BG: I didn't live in California—I stayed—I spent a month on Angel Island, [**SD:** Okay] and then I spent about four, five weeks in San Francisco waiting for someone to bring me to New Orleans on a train.

SD: Oh, okay.

BG: So I live in New Orleans for a while then I live in Mississippi and after World War II I moved to Houston and I been here ever since.

SD: Okay.

BG: Actually my life is quite simple. That's about...I mean, I have nothing exciting. [laughs] My time—my time in war—my time in World War II was short—was uh uh I didn't face any—I was in the Air Corps as a photographer and I didn't see any action in actual war. I not in—I was close to the invasion when uh we invaded France, but since I was in the Air Corps I didn't have to be on the ground getting shot at. After we uh um [clears throat] took back France uh I transfer from England to France and I stay in France for twelve month. Then after Germany surrender I uh sent to Germany to do my last job before I came home. I was actually getting ready to go to Japan and they dropped the two bombs. When they dropped the bombs the war ended in Japan so I didn't uh have to go there, but I had to—I had to go to Germany. And then my last job in Germany was uh in preparation for what we expected to be another war, World War III, by Russia. But I got sent home, I got discharged, and then moved to Houston and that's where my life is right now.

SD: So you said that you weren't in school for very long, but when you were in school what do you remember about it?

BG: Uh, when I first arrived in Algiers, uh my family decided to—to put me in school even though I didn't speak any English at all. They sort of like uh uh sink or swim type of thing and uh I spent two weeks in the first grade at the age of nine, and that young teacher kept me in her class for two weeks and gave up. But the third grade teacher in same school kinda put—took pity on me and she decided that she give me her private attention. She taught the third grade. She took me into her class and gave me all of her personal attention and she guided me though that year and I managed to—to pass the third grade. In fact I—I did well enough, I learned enough English that first year, to where the school thought they could skip the fourth grade for me, put me in the fifth grade. [**SD:** Wow] But my family told me not to do that so I didn't. So I spent one year in the third grade, one year in the fourth grade, and one year in the fifth grade, and I made it sixth and seventh grade in one year. I passed the seventh grade in one month. [**SD** and **TG:** Wow!] And but then they stopped uh me from going to school because I was Chinese and so I didn't go to school anymore until uh—I work in the grocery store from the age of thirteen until I was twenty. When I turned twenty I got drafted into World War II and I spend my war time in Europe and when I came home after the war was over in 1946 uh [clears throat] I decided to

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come to Houston to live. I got married in England during the ten months I was in England and I went to the University of Houston, passed my GED, and got my permission to—to uh go for degree and I earned a Bachelor of Arts degree and I used that degree to make a living with for the next thirty-one years, and I retired at age of sixty-five, been retired for thirty years, and here's where I am today.

TG: Why did you work in a grocery store?

BG: I grew up in a grocery store, that's the only thing I know. I learn how to—I learn how to be a butcher.

TG: A butcher?

BG: To this day I can take a half of a pig or half of a cow and cut it all up into steaks and roasts. [laughter]

SD: Where there many other Chinese grocery stores at the time?

BG: Uh in Mississippi there were two grocery stores, there's a little—two Chinese grocery stores. Uh it's a small town, that at the time it officially had 3,600 people. But Mississippi had a law that did not permit Chinese children—to go to school. So I was not able to go to school uh after I turned thirteen years old. So I—so I had to pass the GED in order to go college.

SD: So in the store did you sell mostly American food, 'cause you were selling to American...

BG: No, our customers were mostly Black people, in Mississippi.

SD: Okay.

BG: Yeah I think most of the Chinese stores in Mississippi, they cater to black customers.

SD: Okay. Were there any black students in your school that also faced the same kinds of discrimination?

BG: Uh, I—I don't know if Chinese students were allowed to go to black schools. But no—no Chinese families sent their children to black schools because black school were so um inferior that um it—it was not worth going to. [**SD:** Okay] Well this is being said, I'm gonna get in trouble for saying this. [laughs] But this is the way I feel about it. Is there anything else you ask me? [says hi to friend walking by]

SD: Um, so when you were growing up in Mississippi were most of your friends other Chinese kids or were they bla...?

BG: I was the only one in my town.

SD: Oh the only one.

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BG: Later on there were more but after I left to go to World War II there were other children.

SD: Okay.

BG: But not long after the war was over uh the segregation was become illegal until—uh black and whites are both—I mean blacks and Chinese were allowed to go to school. [gesturing to man walking by] That's the minister.

TG: Mm.

SD: Um...so after you came back from the war you said you were self-employed doing illustration...

BG: I had—The first nine years after I came home from the war in Houston I had a grocery store.

SD: Oh you opened one in Houston?

BG: I operated my own grocery store before I went got my degree, [**SD:** Okay] and then I sold—I sold my store and went to work, [**SD:** Okay] and my wife does—she decided to go to works also, so we both work.

SD: Okay, so what neighborhood in Houston did you open your grocery store in?

BG: I'm sorry?

SD: What neighborhood in Houston did you open up your grocery store in?

BG: I bought a grocery store.

SD: Oh you bought one.

BG: Yeah.

SD: Oh so what neighborhood was it in?

BG: I'm sorry?

SD: What neighborhood was it in?

BG: It's in the Heights, Houston Heights.

SD: The Heights, okay. So who were your main clients there?

BG: Uh, it was a white area.

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SD: A white area, okay. So then after you got your GE—or after you went to college...

BG: Got my degree. I went to work for—my first job was at Sakowitz, it's stated in my papers.

SD: Okay, and...

BG: What- what I did would be used as advertising in Houston in the local newspaper. [**SD:** Okay] Every—um several time each week, my work would be shown in the ads for um Sakowitz at the time and later as I became better know and my work became more acceptable, I was working for several other stores besides—I was working at a store but I was doing work at home for the other store, I was freelancing. And I did that for thirty-one years before I retired.

TG: Was that mostly department stores, or what type of stores?

BG: They're all department stores. What we—what we did would be used as ads in the newspapers. My work was printed in newspapers, everything I did was printed in newspapers.

SD: How did you first become interested in illustration and graphic design?

BG: Uh as far back as I can remember. The first time I picked up a pencil I started drawing. It became—I thought that if I was going to work for a living what would I want to do? I said, well I think I'd be nice to do something you enjoy doing and get paid for it [laughs]. I—I felt like that's what I did.

SD: But you taught yourself graphic design, right?

BG: Well uh I seem to have a natural feel for drawing and I liked it, [**SD:** Mmhmm] it was not work for me. That's what I said, if I'm gonna work for a living, that would be a nice way to earn a living. I did that for thirty-one years.

TG: Do you still draw?

BG: Not since I retired. I did—I did try watercolor painting for a while but uh I don't have room now. I live in a small apartment here. And I don't—I feel like at my age I don't have to feel guilty about being lazy. [laughter]

SD: Can you tell us a little bit more about how you met your wife?

BG: I met my wife about—I arrive in England in November of 1943, and on New Year's Day I was stationed in Manchester, England. And on New Year's Day, another Chinese soldier and I decided that New Year's Day would be a good day to try and find a good Chinese restaurant and have a good meal. So Liverpool was one hours bus ride away, so he and I got on a bus and went to Liverpool and we asked the bus driver to drop us off as close to Chinatown as possible, and he dropped us right in Chinatown. We went to—the first restaurant it was crowded, it didn't have room for us, went to another restaurant same thing, one New Year's Day everybody was eating out, it was crowded, we walked out. Went to a third restaurant, packed, we start walking and the

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waiter came running after us, said “we got two people leaving!” So we went back and sat at a little table for two and it so happened that I sat facing a large round table with six or seven people and when I look up there was a young girl, woman, we were staring at each other and as I was eating and she was eating we looked up, we keep stare at each other. So finally she went to the front door for something so I told my friend, I said, “I’ll be right back.” [laughter] So I walk over to the front door and introduce myself. And got out my little black book. [laughter] Anyway I ask her if we could get—get to know each other, or whatever I said, I don’t know what I said. Anyway she said you comeback and meet my mother and see what she said. That was her mother at the table. So she said to her mother, uh and actually asked me what my name was, and I couldn’t tell her my real name because we had been advised not to get involved with the local people, so I didn’t know what to do, so I said well just call me Johnny—Johnny Doughboy.

BG: And she said (?) came up with a name because I didn’t think anything was going to come of this. [**TG** laughs] And so anyway, her mother was uh a little bit indignant that I would cause her daughter to—but then she softened, she said, “You can go home meet her father and then ask him.” [**SD** and **TG** laugh] And so I said, “Well, I’ve got nothing to lose!” So okay so I told—I told my friend I said, “I’ll see you back at camp.” [**SD** laughs] So I followed them home, I met the father and by that time, oh uh the time had passed it was evening time, dinner time, they were having dinner so they invited me to stay for dinner [**SD** and **TG** chuckle]. And after that it was—uh the busses stopped running because it was blackout time, war time, the busses quit running when they had their lights because nobody—no cars could run their lights so I had to—ended up spending the night at the English uh Red Cross type of, you know it’s for soldiers. So I spent the night there. In the meantime my pass is—I-I was able—my pass is only good til midnight and I was spending the night out so I spent the night there and the next morning I found my way back to their house and um I—asked if I could come back again. So I keep going back and uh July, that summer, she and I got married. We were supposed to get married the same week as D-Day but I didn’t know that D-Day was gonna happen on June the sixth. We were scheduled to get married on June the tenth cause nobody was able to leave the base because uh we were invading France so we postponed our wedding to July the twenty-ninth so we got married and we met—we got married and we stayed married until she died at age seventy-nine. We were married for sixty-two years [**SD**: Wow.]. We didn’t—we never had any children but we really wanted to adopt a son.

SD: So she’s English then?

BG: Hmm?

SD: She’s English? Your wife?

BG: Mmhmm. Her mother was English and her father was Chinese.

SD: Okay. So after you got married did you celebrate a lot of Chinese holidays?

BG: After about two months after we got married my uh squadron got sent to France from England but what I—during the twelve months I was stationed in France I-I managed to fly back to England about nine times. We had a courier plane going from my base to London every day so

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my officers were kind enough, knowing that I had a wife in England, they would send me to London, on any kind of excuse. So during that time I was in France and manage to get back to England nine different times. And then I would get on a train in London go up to Liverpool, so uh 215 miles. So I—we got to see each other and then after I got home from—after the war is over I got discharged in January and she arrived there in June the same year so. This is the only home that she'd ever known. Houston.

TG: What was her name?

BG: Joyce. J-O-Y-C-E.

TG: Joyce?

BG: Mmhmm. Lemme see if I can find a picture. [**BG** pulling out wallet] {pictures in interview supplementary materials} That's my wife and son. {See "Wallet photos 3"}

TG: Oh, wow.

BG: And this is not too long before he died.

SD: Mmm.

BG: And this is my—this is when we were in England. This is me in uniform. {See "Wallet photos 2"}

TG: Wow.

BG: This is when we first got married {left hand picture} and this is her in Houston {right hand picture}.

SD: Wow, that's great.

BG: This was taken in England {left hand picture}.

TG: Why is she dressed up in this picture?

BG: Hmm?

TG: Why is she dressed up?

BG: We were going to a banquet.

TG: A banquet?

BG: Mmhmm. There was a—we were going to the Shamrock hotel. You ever heard of the Shamrock? It's torn down now.

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TG: No.

BG: It's down on the end of South Main. And this was taken in England when I was in uniform. That's—that's what she looked like when we first got married. [**SD** and **TG** laugh] [**BG** laughs] I was twenty-two, she was seventeen.

SD and **TG:** Wow. [**TG** laughs]

SD: That's amazing. [pause] So...when you first moved to Houston what was the Asian-American—

BG: I'm sorry?

SD: When you first came to Houston, was there a big Chinese population?

BG: Uh [clears throat] uh...there weren't a whole lot of Chinese people. There were a lot of Gee's here.

SD: A lot of Gee's?

BG: Yeah. In fact, one of the reasons I came to Houston, because—because uh because uh there was a lot of Gee's here.

SD: Mmm. How have you seen the Asian population in Houston change over time?

BG: Yes. Well, cause the uh the population increased a big deal with the Vietnamese people coming in. So, but all—then again when I came to Houston after war, I think we only had about 400,000 people now we've got four million.

SD: Wow.

BG: We're number four in the ci—in the whole country now.

SD and **TG:** Mmhmm.

BG: Yup.

TG: When you came to Houston did you face any discrimination here?

BG: I'm sorry?

TG: Did you face any discrimination when you came to Houston?

BG: [clears throat] Not too obvious. Not—not like in Mississippi. You know, the peop—the people themselves in Mississippi were not bad. It's just the laws. But I think it has to do with uh

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Chinese people. I—I think it was the same, man that has children with a black woman and he wanted to send his children to a white school um and so that sorta—he threatened something of a lawsuit maybe. I don't know. So anyway, there's something to do with—from my opinion the people of Mississippi uh my contacts with them had always been pleasant. It was not their fault that the laws were that way. So I don't uh I feel like I—uh I don't know what my life would have been like if I had gotten a regular education. I don't—I don't think I would have been an artist. Cause I know that being an artist is not that easy to make a living. I—I might have been some kind of engineer or something if I had managed to get the skills. But I took art because it was an easy—it was an easy degree. [laughs] Especially for someone who likes to draw.

TG: Mmhmm.

SD: Uh did you and your wife try to raise your son with Asian traditions and cultures?

BG: I'm sorry I didn't—I'm not understanding.

SD: When you and your wife had your son—or adopted your son—

BG: Yeah? He came from Kowloon.

SD: Oh okay.

BG: Mmhmm.

SD: Did you both try to raise him with Asian cultures and Asian traditions?

BG: Talk a little slower.

SD: Oh sorry. Did you and your wife raise your son with Asian values or traditions?

BG: Uh, some.

SD: Some?

BG: He graduated from UH with a bus—business degree so. We got him when he was about a year and a half old [SD: Okay.]. And he died at—a month before his twenty-eighth birthday. He—uh the picture you saw? That was a year or two before he died. He finished college. He—had a good job and uh...he got sick.

[long pause]

SD: What year did the rest of your family leave China?

BG: What year what?

SD: What year did the rest of your family leave China?

BG: I don't have any idea.

SD: Oh you don't know? Okay. Do you still keep in contact with your younger siblings?

BG: It's what?

SD: Do you still keep in contact with your younger siblings?

BG: Eh—do I keep contact with my relatives?

SD: Your—your siblings, yeah.

BG: Uh right now I'm keeping contact through email.

SD: Okay.

BG: And I also see some of them on Facebook.

SD: Mmhmm.

BG: I don't- I don't write much anymore [laughs].

TG: What was the hardest part of assimilating to American culture?

BG: What is the hardest part of...?

TG: Assimilating to American culture?

BG: Um...you know I don't remember that I had any kind of a difficulty other than the bigotry I faced. Um my life in America has been mostly pleasant. And I truly feel that if I had not come to America I would not be living today. Long—longevity in China at the time I was born uh was—I believe was below fifty for men. So, today uh in America, what, we're—men are eighty-four, average? And I think even in China it's above—it's not as good as ours but it's better than it was back then in the 1930's. [clears throat] Back in those days uh China was—had no industry and there was very few jobs and my father had to leave the country to find work and uh the people that were doing well in our villages were um living in America and Canada. My blood relatives are in Vancouver, Edmonton, Canada. My—my sisters and brother—my two sisters have passed on but my two brothers are still alive in Canada.

SD: Um...what school did you go to for college?

BG: For what?

SD: College?

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BG: [clears throat] My degree came from a private school.

SD: A private school?

BG: And I went to the university for one of the four years.

SD: Okay.

BG: It was a four-year degree. Three years in a private school, one year from the University of Houston.

SD: Okay.

BG: I didn't get my degree from the Univers—because they only offer a Bachelor of Fine Arts. I didn't want a Bachelor of Fine Arts. I got a—it's a B.A.A. a Bachelor of *Applied* Arts.

SD: Okay.

BG: That's a commercial art. [**SD:** Mmm.] And the reason I—I went for a degree is that if I wanted to teach I had to have a degree.

SD: Ohh...okay.

BG: But I never taught but uh, you know. The G.I. Bill paid for everything.

SD: So while you were getting your degree were you also working at the same time?

BG: Yes. I had—um we were running a grocery store [**SD:** Running the store.] And I—when I was in school my wife was taking care of the store.

SD: Okay.

BG: We uh we ran the store for nine years before we sold it to someone else. We decided that uh since we didn't have any children, a grocery store was too confining. Long hours and no vacation [**SD:** Right.] so that's why we decided to go to work. And that's when I said, "If I'm going to work I want to do something I enjoy doin'" so I guess I did okay. And [clears throat] it didn't pay too well but I had all the money I w—need anyway, so.

TG: What did your wife do after you sold—

BG: She took a beauty course and became a beautician because she—had an aunt in England who owned a beauty shop and she thought it was so nice to see her aunt uh— uh make women beautiful. [laughs]

TG: Can you talk about the uh Gee Family Association?

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BG: I used to be part- more involved than I am now. Uh I'm not as active uh because of my age. So I attend the banquets and things like that but uh [clears throat] I'm not as active in anything because uh like I said I'm being very lazy these days.

TG: What do you enjoy doing these days?

BG: Eating.

TG: Eating? [laughs] Chinese food? Or?

BG: That's why I live so close to Chinatown. [**SD** and **TG** laugh] [gesturing to someone walking by] That's one of my cousins.

SD: One of your cousins?

BG: She's married to a Gee.

SD: Oh okay.

BG: She lives here. That's my friend Dorothy and Daniel {see pictures}. They come—they were supposed to come here to help to do this.

SD: Oh really?

BG: But they were a little late. [**SD** laughs] They're both retir—she's a school teacher, [**SD:** Oh okay] retired. Are we finished? Pretty much.

SD: Let's see...

TG: Um do you identify as more Asian or more American?

BG: I think in English.

TG: You think in English?

BG: Whatever I'm thinking I'm still doing (?). I speak English better than Chinese.

TG: Hm.

SD: Okay.

BG: You know I didn't start speaking English 'til I was ten years old. But I think I taught my—during the years when I—from thirteen you know to twenty when I wasn't going to school I was doing a lot of reading. So I think how I talk and how I write uh is because of what I was reading. I think I wrote the way that—magazines and books—I- I write the letters the way I learned from reading books and magazines.

TG: In English?

BG: In E—yeah I don't read Chinese.

TG: Okay. [laughs]

BG: I went- I went to school two years in China but uh I've forgotten everything. I can't write my own name anymore. [laughs]

TG: So you don't speak Chinese with anyone now?

BG: I do with uh my fr—my cousin over there 'cause she doesn't speak English too well.

TG: Oh okay.

BG: W—and the Chinese people I come in contact with, if they're not fluent in English I speak to them in Can—in Taishan. But the ones that speak English well, we speak English. I prefer that. I can express myself better in—in English than in Chinese. You know my Chinese was uh when I was a child you know I did—I didn't- I didn't go to school long enough to know any of the big words and I don't have anybody to practice with now. Plus I never need to learn Chinese because my wife didn't speak Chinese.

SD: Oh she didn't?

BG: Her father was Chinese but she said the only Chinese words she learned were the bad words. [SD and TG laugh]

TG: Um so when you were active with the Gee Family Association, what were you doing?

BG: I was president one year of the Association. I [clears throat] I donated money and set up a scholarship in a scholarship fund. In the name of my wife, me, my son.

TG: What was your son's name?

BG: Stephen. S-T-E-P-H-E-N. Stephen Albert Gee. He and my wife were buried in Forest Park Westheimer.

TG: Um so why did your family uh start the Gee Family Association.

BG: Oh no I don't know anything about that.

TG: You don't? Okay. [laughs]

BG: That's way before my time, even.

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TG: Oh okay. [**BG** and **TG** laugh]

SD: Besides the Gee Family Association, what other things were you involved with?

BG: The American Citizens Al—Chinese American Citizens Alliance called the CACA.

SD: Okay.

BG: And also there's a organization the city calls Chinese Professional Club, CPC. I'm a chartered member of that. We started at the University of Houston.

SD: Okay.

BG: But I'm no longer a member. I'm a past president of that too. But uh—that organization went through three different name changes. It was called the CIA to begin with. It was the Chinese Intercollegiate Association. In was only for students. And then became the—after we decided CIA was conflicting with another CIA, so we changed to the CUC, Chinese University Club. But then after four years all those members graduated, they couldn't be members anymore. [**TG** laughs] So we changed the name again to Chinese Professional Club so everybody could stay in. And that's what— and that was what it's known and it's been—uh we started out in 1952 or something like that and I'm- I'm still the char—I'm one of the few members uh still alive— charter members. Not many of us, now I'm ninety-five so. Since like World War II not many left over from World War II. [long pause]

SD: Any other questions?

TG: Um...so your family doesn't still own any—

BG: I'm sorry?

TG: Does your family still own any supermarkets?

BG: No.

TG: No?

BG: I don't have any property at all. I have a trust for everything.

TG: Is there anything else you want to talk about?

BG: I can't think of anything.

TG: Okay.

SD: Well thank you so much for talking to us!

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BG: I'm sorry?

SD: Thank you so much for talking with us.

BG: Oh I—it's good for me to kind of—at my age I live in the past [laughs] so, so what I'm doing kind of refreshes my memory somewhat. Maybe- maybe it helps make my—keep my memory alive. [**TG** laughs]

SD: Definitely.

BG: [laughs] I feel lucky. So many people at my age are um—can't remember things like as much as I can remember.

TG: Yeah. [pause] Alright, thank you!

SD: Thank you.

BG: Okay.

[recorder shuts off, interview ends]