

*AN INTERVIEW WITH*  
GUE GIM WAH

**An Oral History conducted and  
edited by  
Robert D. McCracken**

Lincoln County Town History Project  
Lincoln County, Nevada

## CONTENTS

Preface.....	4
Introduction.....	6
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
Gue Gim's family backgrounds; her arrival in the United States, and the ordeal of being questioned by immigration authorities.	
CHAPTER TWO.....	7
A young Chinese girl's impression of the United States in the second decade of the 20th century; Gue Gim meets Tom Wah; some background on Tom Wah, including his education with an English-speaking family in California; Tom travels to Arizona, then moves to Ely.	
CHAPTER THREE.....	13
Tom's move to Pioche, and a description of the Chinese community there in the early 1900s; the oldest Chinese man in Pioche; a fire in Tom's boardinghouse; some background on Tom; how Tom developed his boardinghouse.	
CHAPTER FOUR.....	19
Tom is injured in an accident and is visited by a Chinese doctor, who advises him to marry; Gue Gim's father allows Tom to marry her; a discussion of Gue Gim's religious upbringing; Gue Gim and Tom's wedding; a description of Tom's boardinghouse and dining room; Gue Gim attends the Prince Mine school.	
CHAPTER FIVE.....	26
Memories of the Prince Mine school; on Gue Gim's difficult adjustment to life at the Prince Mine and a healing stay in San Francisco; thoughts on a one-room schoolhouse; a Thanksgiving pageant; on teachers at the Prince Mine school; the Prince Mine school is closed.	
CHAPTER SIX.....	33
Tom's boardinghouse burns, and Tom and Gue Gim travel to China; Gue Gim attends school in China; problems with returning to the United States at the end of their stay in China; on the difficulties of trying to bring Gue Gim's adopted son and his children to the United States.	

CHAPTER SEVEN.....	39
Gue Gim explains how she and Tom adopted a son the tale of a very ill little boy.	
CHAPTER EIGHT.....	45
Gue Gim must leave her son; her son's career in China; Gue Gim's granddaughter, Wei Ling, comes to the United States and attends college; Wei Ling meets a young man and is married in the United States; on Tom's return to the Prince Mine; Gue Gim's stay in San Francisco, and a job in a clothing factory; Gue Gim returns to the Prince to help Tom; on Tom's death; Gue Gim remains at the Prince alone; competition for the cooking responsibilities at the Prince.	
CHAPTER NINE.....	53
The people at the Prince Mine prefer Gue Gim's work; a discussion of some of the officials at the Prince Mine and at Combined Metals; increased mining activities during World War II at the Prince and Caselton mines, and the need to house and feed many more workers; on some shoddy housing construction; winning a government contract to run the boardinghouse at the Caselton Mine.	
CHAPTER TEN.....	59
On problems with hiring cooks; coping with food rationing during World War II while running a boardinghouse; Gue Gim drives her helpers to Ely; living at Prince and walking to Caselton, then a move to Caselton; closing the Caselton boardinghouse after World War II; Gue Gim's restaurant business after the 1950s; an unpleasant customer.	
CHAPTER ELEVEN.....	66
A discussion of mine safety and damage compensation before the Depression; on contrasts between the miners of Pioche and the Mormon residents of Panaca before the 1930s; a change to Mormon workers in the Pioche mines in the 1930s; remembering some Mormon peddlers; on the building of Pioche's Mormon church; further recollections of Pioche its red-light district, and its Chinese residents.	
CHAPTER TWELVE.....	75
Gue Gim suffers from some miners' anger; Gue Gim is proud to be an American citizen, and lives with honesty and dignity.	

## PREFACE

The Lincoln County Town History Project (LCTHP) engages in interviewing people who can provide firsthand descriptions of the individuals, events and places that give history its substance. The products of this research are the tapes of the interviews and their transcriptions.

In themselves, oral history interview are not history. However, they often contain valuable primary source material, as useful in the process of historiography as the written sources to which historians have customarily turned. Verifying the accuracy of all of the statements made in the course of an interview would require more time and money than the LCTHP's operating budget permits. The program can vouch that the statements were made, but it cannot attest that they are free of error. Accordingly, oral histories should be read with the same prudence that the reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information.

It is the policy of the LCTHP to produce transcripts that are as close to verbatim as possible, but some alteration of the text is generally both unavoidable and desirable. When human speech is captured in print the result can be a morass of tangled syntax, false starts, and incomplete sentences, sometimes verging on incoherency. The type font contains no symbols for the physical gestures and the diverse vocal modulations that are integral parts of communication through speech. Experience shows that totally verbatim transcripts are often largely unreadable and therefore a waste of the resources expended in their production. While keeping alterations to a minimum the LCTHP will, in preparing a text:

- a. generally delete false starts, redundancies and the uhs, ahs and other noises with which speech is often sprinkled;
- b. occasionally compress language that would be confusing to the reader in unaltered form;
- c. rarely shift a portion of a transcript to place it in its proper context;
- d. enclose in [brackets] explanatory information or words that were not uttered but have been added to render the text intelligible; and
- e. make every effort to correctly spell the names of all individuals and places, recognizing that an occasional word may be misspelled because no authoritative source

on its correct spelling was found.

## INTRODUCTION

Historians generally consider the year 1890 as the close of the American frontier. By then, most of the western United States had been settled, ranches and farms developed, communities established, and roads and railroads constructed. The mining boomtowns, based on the lure of overnight riches from newly developed lodes, and the settlement of most of the suitable farmland, were but a memory.

Although Nevada was granted statehood in 1864, examination of any map of the state from the late 1800s shows that most of it south of the 38th parallel remained largely unsettled, even unmapped. In 1890 most of southern Nevada - including Lincoln County - remained very much a frontier, and it continued to be so for at least another 20 years.

Even in the 1990s, the frontier can still be found in Lincoln County in the attitudes, values, lifestyles, and memories of area residents. The frontier-like character of the area is also visible in the relatively undisturbed quality of the natural environment, much of it essentially untouched by humans.

A survey of written sources on Lincoln County's history reveals variability from town to town: A fair amount of literature, for instance, can be found covering Pioche from its first newspaper, beginning in the fall of 1870, to the present. Newspapers from Delamar are available from 1892 to 1906 and Caliente from 1904 to 1868. In contrast, Panaca and Alamo never had newspapers of record. Throughout their histories, all Lincoln County communities received only spotty coverage in the newspapers of other communities. Most of the history of Lincoln County after 1920 is stored in the memories of individuals who are still living.

Aware of Lincoln County's close ties to our nation's frontier past and the scarcity of written sources on local history (especially after 1920), the Lincoln County Commissioners initiated the Lincoln County Town History Project (LCTHP). The LCTHP is an effort to systematically collect and preserve the history of Lincoln County Nevada. The centerpiece of the LCTHP is a set of interviews conducted with individuals who had knowledge of local history. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and then edited lightly to preserve the language and speech patterns of those interviewed. All oral history interviews have been printed on acid-free paper and bound and archived in Lincoln County libraries, Special Collections in the James R. Dickinson Library at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, and at other archival sites located throughout Nevada.

The interviews vary in length and detail, but together they form a never-before-available composite of each community's life and development. The collection of interviews for each community can be compared to a bouquet: Each flower in the bouquet is unique--some are large, others are small--yet each adds to the total image. In sum, the interviews provide a view of community and county history that reveals the flow of life and events for a part of Nevada that has heretofore been largely neglected by historians.

Collection of the oral histories has been accompanied by the assembling of a set of photographs depicting each community's history. These pictures have been obtained from participants in the oral history interviews and other present and past Lincoln County residents. Complete sets of the photographs have been archived along with the oral histories. The oral interviews and written sources served as the basis for histories of the major communities in Lincoln County. These histories have also been archived.

The LCTHP is one component of the Lincoln County program to determine the socioeconomic impact of a federal proposal to build a high-level nuclear waste repository in southern Nye County, Nevada. The repository, which would be inside Yucca Mountain, would be the nation's first, and possibly only, permanent disposal site for high-level radioactive waste. The Lincoln County Board of County Commissioners initiated the LCTHP in 1990 in order to collect information on the origin, history, traditions and quality of life of Lincoln County communities that may be impacted by the repository. If the repository is constructed, it will remain a source of interest for hundreds, possibly thousands, of years to come, and future generations will likely want to know more about the people who once resided in the area. In the event that government policy changes and a high-level nuclear waste repository is not constructed in Nevada, material compiled by the LCTHP will remain for the use and enjoyment of all.

--RDM

This is Elizabeth Nelson Patrick of Las Vegas, Nevada, interviewing Gue Gim Wah of the Prince Mine in Lincoln County, Nevada, in the living room of Betty Gemmill Frizzell at the Prince Mine site September 24 and 25, 1984.

[Note from typist: I am using the English spellings for Chinese names given by Sue Fawn Chung in "Gue Gim Wah: Pioneering Chinese American woman of Nevada," in History and Humanities edited by Francis X. Hartigan, University of Nevada Press, Reno, 1989, pp. 45-79. MSC.]

[Note from editor: Mrs. Wah's English was highly ungrammatical, and I have taken the liberty of couching her words in fairly grammatical English. JOC.]

## CHAPTER ONE

EP: Gue Gim Wah, Mrs. Frizzell and I are in the sitting room of Mrs. Betty Gemmill Frizzell, who lives at the Prince Mine site. This living room formerly was the geology room for the Prince Mine, where maps were made. Her brother, Paul Gemmill, who was a noted mining engineer, made the maps in this room. It's a beautiful room. Mrs. Frizzell has it furnished with a lot of antiques and things that are very precious to her. Mrs. Wah, what is your full name?

GW: You want to know my girl name, and my married name?

EP: That's right.

GW: My girl name is Gue Gim Der. And my married name is Mrs. Tom Wah. [People] think Wah is the last name, but it's not. My last name is Tom.

EP: The Chinese custom.

GW: Yes, Chinese is opposite, the last name is the first. Tom Wah should be Wah Tom.

BF: In Chinese she'd be Mrs. Tom, but everyone here thinks it's Mrs. Wah, because they have that reversed.

EP: What was your husband's Chinese name?

GW: Tom Chun Nui.

EP: Where were you born, Mrs. Wah?

GW: I was born in China, in a city called Lin Lun Li.

EP: What year were you born?

GW: What year? I won't tell you! Because if I tell you, then you'll know how old I am. [Laughter]

EP: All right. A lady has the right to keep that secret. [Laughter] When did you come to the United States?

GW: I forget what year.

EP: Can you tell me approximately?

BF: Well, you came when you were 8 years old, you told me.

GW: No, I came at 12 years old. I came by a boat called The China.

EP: Why did you come to the United States?

GW: Oh, my daddy wanted me to come.  
EP: Oh, did your father accompany you here?  
GW: Oh, yes, my father, Lu Jin Dai, was in San Francisco a long time.  
EP: Oh, your father was a merchant there?  
GW: Yes.  
BF: He was already a merchant there.  
EP: So he had come to the United States first and left his family in China, and then he came back and got you and you came to the United States?  
GW: Yes.  
EP: Did you have any brothers and sisters?  
GW: Oh, yes, I had lots of brothers and sisters. From my real mother, I had 2 older brothers and one younger brother and I was the only girl. My mother passed away and my daddy went home and married a young woman.  
EP: He went back to China to get a wife.  
GW: Yes, he went back to China and he married a young lady, and she had 3 boys and 2 girls. There were 3 girls, but one passed away.  
EP: Are you the last of the family? Are there any members of that second family still living?  
GW: From my mother's children, all are gone there's just me. But I have a half-brother and a half-sister.  
EP: So they're still living in San Francisco. Do you keep in touch?  
GW: Oh, yes.  
EP: Have they ever been here to Prince?  
GW: Two sisters and one brother came to the Prince.  
EP: To visit, or to work?  
GW: To visit. One sister, Gue Kay, came here and stayed with me for a couple of years. She went to school here.  
BF: And I met her when I was a little girl.  
EP: That's when you were children, then.  
GW: Yes, at that time, we were young people.  
BF: And I didn't see her sister all those years until 2 years ago in San Francisco. Gue Kay had always asked about me, and I'd ask about her. They had a big luncheon in Chinatown, and I met her and her husband and all. It was really interesting.  
GW: And one brother came there to visit me too, and the youngest sister came. The whole family came there to visit me. That sister's married now. She has the name Corrine.  
EP: When you first came to the United States, can you remember going through immigration and all? Did you have any difficulty getting into San Francisco?  
GW: Oh, yes. We came in with my father. And I remember the boat coming in. The boat came in to the harbor and some American people got in the boat. And we all had to stand up on the boat, and they called, "Where is she? Come!"

Where is she?" They had to call names, to see if everyone was there. The first call, they called me!

BF: The first one!

GW: The first one they called.

EP: For a little girl 12 years old!

GW: Yes. "Gue Gim!" I didn't know where to go, where to run! When they called you, you had to go to certain places.

EP: And you didn't know any English.

GW: No! But he called a Chinese name "Gue Gim!" But I didn't know where to go, so they all said, "Come here, come here, come this way, come this way!" So I ran that way. And second, he called my stepmother, "Der Sii! Der Ju Sii!" So my mother followed me, and I was laughing! My daddy explained there would be a long wait there. Pretty soon, they had called all the names, and some had to go to the one side. It didn't matter which ones white people, Japanese people, Chinese people they called them all. When we came, at that time not many Chinese had a family come. When there was a family, they called them. At that time they let the merchants bring their families.

BF: Otherwise a Chinese man couldn't bring his wife in.

GW: Then I went into a room, and there were a few people sitting at the one table. They called my name, "Gue Gim!" again. So I went in and sat down. But they had no Chinese to interpret, so they had my dad standing at my side. I was kind of scared.

EP: Sure.

GW: So next a gentleman asked me, "What's your name?" I said, "My name, I be Der Gue Gim." So he asked a Chinese word. He said, "You got a bok here? You got a bok?" "What? Eh? Eh? Eh?" [Laughs] My daddy said, "Yes, bok." Bok is Chinese for 'uncle'. That man talked to me in Chinese.

BF: Oh, I see; he was using a Chinese word.

EP: Oh, you had a bok here, meaning you had somebody to sponsor you.

GW: Yes. But I didn't know; I couldn't answer. So my daddy said, "You a bok \_\_\_\_\_, you a bok \_\_\_\_\_." And that man said, "Shhh." He didn't want my daddy to talk.

EP: Your father could of course speak and understand English well.

GW: Then he asked, "You have a gu in here?"

EP: What's that?

GW: Gu means an 'older brother'. So I answered, "Yes, I have a gu in here." So he said "Oh." And then he questioned my stepmother. So I was kind of scared. Pretty soon, they told my daddy we had to go to Angel Island.

BF: Oh, you were sent to Angel Island.  
 GW: Yes. Then we went to Angel Island. Oooh!  
 EP: And what was Angel Island?  
 BF: That's where they took people if they couldn't pass them right through.  
 GW: Angel Island is just offshore, and they had to get a steamboat to take people there. On Angel Island they locked you up just like a jail. You couldn't go anyplace. \_\_\_\_\_ go down there, eat, come back, and they put screens all around. But we could stay in the window watching the boats coming in and going out. We stayed there 5 days.  
 EP: Five days.  
 GW: Five days. And the questions! I was young; I didn't know how to remember. You see, I was a little girl, and did not see my uncle for a long time. He gave me my uncle's picture to look at!  
 EP: The authorities gave you your uncle's picture?  
 GW: Yes. And then they got an old picture of my father. I was not born at the time of that picture! How could I know my father before I was born?  
 BF: It didn't look like him.  
 GW: He was 20 years old. (He came to the United States very young.) And to give me that kind of picture! I looked and looked and I didn't know him!  
 EP: He wanted you to recognize them.  
 GW: Yes.  
 BF: He wanted to find out if she was who she said she was.  
 GW: And he and my older uncle's pictures looked about the same. When he came to the United States he cut off his hair. Before, they had braids. So at first I said, "I don't know if this is my uncle." But the man who interpreted was very good.  
 EP: Was he an American man or a Chinese man?  
 GW: An American. He told me, "Look, look good. Pay more attention. Look at the picture. Look." So I looked, I looked, looked at the eyes it still looked like my father. So I said, "That my father." He said, "OK."  
 EP: That must have been very, very hard. You were very frightened, weren't you?  
 GW: Yes. And then, oh, the questions . . .  
 EP: Now, the whole family had to stay at Angel Island?  
 GW: Yes, they had to question everyone the same way. My young mother wasn't married very long. She married him in Canton and I lived in the valley. My mother had passed away, and my daddy went home and married. But [that man] asked me all day about my mother having passed away. "She passed away? Where did you stay?" By that time my brother was married. I said, "Well, my sister-in-law took care of me. And so did my aunt" (my aunt means my uncle, oldest uncle, youngest uncle), "and I

would go eat with them. One day I'd go there to eat, another day they'd call me to go there to eat."

EP: Each one of them took care of you.

GW: Yes.

EP: They thought that you were trying to come into the country under false pretenses.

GW: Yes. And he even said, "How did you sit and eat?"

EP: How did you what?

GW: Sit down and eat. How was your table put? And that kind of question!

I said, "Well, our table was in the cooking place. On this side the cook and this side the table. So we sit at the table."

"How was your chair put?"

"Well, at eating time, we take the chair and go to the table. When we finish eating, we take our chair back to the sitting room." How do we sit in our chairs all that kind of questions. Oh, I was scared. One day, this went on for a couple of hours. And then the next day, the first thing, they questioned me and my mother. Then he questioned my father and my brother. My brother and my father got the same questions. But my father was here a long time, and in the houses, things change. So I was talking and they were talking, saying different things.

EP: And each one of you had a different memory or a different impression of what happened.

BF: She was in an uncle's house and then their father's, and they didn't move the chairs back to the sitting room . . .

EP: That's right.

GW: So at first they didn't think I was my father's daughter; that man was going to stop me from coming. But when all the questions were over, they called us all together to look in our faces.

BF: To see if you looked alike.

GW: He looked at me to see if I looked like my daddy. That gentleman who asked questions said, "Your daughter is pretty."

My daddy said, "Yes, my daughter is pretty." I looked like my father, and the boys were fat like him. You see, my daddy was fat, and my brothers were very fat! Especially right here! They couldn't sit down! [Laughter] But because of that, I thought maybe I would have to go back that time.

EP: Because you weren't fat enough! [Laughter]

GW: But my face looked like my daddy's face. Because of that, they told me I could go on shore.

EP: But you underwent 5 days of questioning like that at Angel Island.

GW: Well, we stayed there 5 days, and had 2 days of questions.

EP: Were there other Chinese people there that they were questioning?

GW: Oh, yes, the same questions. And coming over, they were treating people for hookworm. They were doing that not for the Chinese, but for the Indian people.

BF: The Indians got dysentery, yes.

GW: Yes. So you had to take a kind of pill to kill the worms. Some people who took the pill came out with 5-foot worms!

EP: But everybody was given those pills?

GW: Yes. They wanted to stop the people from coming. There were so many Indian people in the steamboat they had 500 or 600; so they made it so the people wouldn't come.

EP: Do you remember seeing a lot of people from India?

GW: Well, at the time there weren't many because they had tried to stop them coming from India. But they did that for the Chinese too. And ooh! I remember how hard that medicine was. And I ate it every day. And when it was mealtime, I couldn't put any more in; I would vomit it out. The boy who took care of the worm pills said, "They eat it, and that takes care of the worm. And this girl [Gue Gim] eats them all the time!"

The doctor said, "She's taking that all the time, every day?"

And that boy said, "Yes."

"Oh, stop her!" [Laughing]

The ship stopped in Honolulu a few hours and the doctor told me, "Don't eat." You see, the boat was stopped at Hong Kong for 3 days. Then they started giving out that kind of pill.

EP: You began taking that medication, and you were pretty sick, weren't you?

GW: Oooh! I'd vomit all the time! They made me vomit all the time, till the doctor told me, "Don't take it." Then on Angel Island we didn't have to take anything.

EP: That was really a terrible experience for a family, and for you as a young girl. What did you think about the United States, given that kind of treatment?

GW: Well, I didn't pay any attention. I thought, "Well, they made me kind of low, make me kind of . . ." But I think of that time when I came, and now thousands of people come, and they don't give them that kind of pill.

EP: When you lived in China, if your father was a merchant, you had a rather good life, didn't you?

GW: Yes. They were thinking, though, that I was the way wealthy people were at that time in China. But the people in the United States lived the way rich people did. Because the Chinese people's wages were so cheap, everything was so cheap. And at the time they came to the United States, there was no robbing . . .

## CHAPTER TWO

- EP: You were talking about early San Francisco.
- GW: Well, at that time in China they called the United States Gim San. Gim San means 'gold mountain'. [Note: Chung gives Gum Shan; perhaps another dialect?]
- BF: [Laughs] Gold mountain!
- GW: Yes. San means 'mountain'; gim means 'gold'. Gold mountain. To come to the United States meant to go to the gold mountain. So the people were happy to come.
- EP: Even though you had a good life in China, you still looked forward to coming to the United States.
- GW: Yes. It didn't matter how good [your life was], people said, "Ooh, you're going to the United . . ." They saw all the gold! And it was so pretty, so nice. There was no robbing, no poor people.
- EP: Were you disappointed, or were you pleased when you got to San Francisco?
- GW: I still liked it. And in China they didn't have electricity. Everything was different, so I lived in the United States and I was happy.
- EP: When you were a girl in China, did you have any formal education there? You were only 12 when you came over here.
- GW: I got to go to Chinese school.
- EP: So you could read and write Chinese?
- GW: Yes.
- EP: Was it Mandarin Chinese, or what?
- BF: Cantonese.
- EP: But when you came to the United States, you couldn't speak any English at all.
- GW: No.
- EP: It must have been very difficult. You lived, I assume, in the Chinese section in Chinatown?
- GW: Yes.
- EP: Did you go to school there?
- GW: Well, my daddy told me to go to school. But I was kind of afraid. At that time, looking at the people, and the devil look of their blue eyes, that kind of scared me. I didn't want to go to public school. But I went to Chinese school. I liked Chinese school because all the Chinese were there. When I went to the English school, I figured, "I can't talk, I can't learn," so I didn't go. But then I went to the Prince.
- EP: Well, I want to stay in San Francisco for just a bit, in your youth. Was it possible for you to live a very full life there in the Chinese community without ever learning a word of English?
- BF: Yes, didn't you have to learn English?
- GW: You didn't have to. My stepmother never knew how to speak English.
- EP: And she lived a very full life there?

GW: Yes. She lived quite long. She came from China and she never went back. Well, she went back one time, to take the children back to see their grandmother.

EP: Oh, they stayed in China for a bit, and came back. And your natural mother died in China. She never came to the United States. How did you meet your husband?

GW: Well, Tom Wah was my father's friend. All the young men at that time from one Chinese city worked together, so they knew each other from that time. They came to the United States and they met as friends all the time.

EP: So a group from a village or a town would, say, come to San Francisco and they would all sort of live together and remain together?

GW: Yes.

EP: And they'd maintain their contacts from . . .

GW: Yes. At one time, the Panama Canal opened.

EP: I believe 1914, wasn't it?

GW: When they finished the Panama Canal, they had a big fair in San Francisco.

BF: Yes, a World's Fair.

EP: Oh, the Panama Exhibition.

GW: My husband was at the Prince, and he went there to see the fair and he saw my father and stayed in my father's store and talked to him. I was in school, and I came back home. We lived in the store, upstairs. To go out, we had to go through the store. So I'd come back through the store. I didn't know anybody, but all the time I'd see people in there. I didn't know their names; I just bowed to them. They were all bowing back to me. [Laughter]

EP: It's a nice custom, isn't it?

GW: Yes. Tom would joke with my father. My father thought I was young, not ready to marry, you see. Tom called my father "Um Gin." He said, "Um Gin, I like your daughter. You think you let your daughter marry me?" So my daddy said, "Why not? Why not?"

EP: Now, he wouldn't ask you?

GW: No, he asked my father. Then another friend said, "Um Gin, he's a good man. Let your daughter marry." My father smiled. "Next time, next time." So my father thought about how my grandmother passed away, but my grandfather hadn't passed away yet. Then my father thought, "He married a young wife. He found a young wife, so my daughter can marry him; he's a good man." And soon I got married. The Chinese at that time went back to China to get a wife. They did not marry in America.

EP: It would have been very difficult for a young Chinese girl in America to get a husband then, wouldn't it?

GW: Yes. You had to marry kind of aged men because a lot of people were kind of poor when they came. The rich people didn't come. To come in, they had to have a loan and pay the banks back.

BF: In fact, by the time they paid off the loan they . . .  
EP: . . . they were older. And Mr. Tom Wah was older, wasn't he?  
GW: Yes. He was much older than I.  
EP: About how old was he?  
GW: If he was alive, he'd be 110 years old now.  
EP: So he was born in about 1871.  
BF: You know, Gue Gim, I think Mrs. Patrick might be interested in having you tell about when Tom . . . Tom had first worked on the railroad, hadn't he, as a crewman?  
GW: Yes, and then he did something in Pioche. When the mine first opened, my husband came there to work for the cook.  
EP: I did want to ask some questions about Tom. (I'm going to call him Tom.) Tom came to this country about what year?  
GW: I can't remember. He was here for a long time before the first Panama Exhibition. When he first came to the United States, he worked the ground to dig sage and the other things that grow here.  
EP: Did he come in as a laborer, to do hard manual labor?  
GW: Yes, he did hard work. He lived for a long time in Marysville, California. He was born in the United States, but his father and mother died.  
EP: Tom was born in the United States?  
GW: Yes. Near Marysville. He lived there as a boy, but his father died first, and then his mother, when he was a little boy. He had an uncle here and he took him back to China. The uncle also took the father and mother's bones back to China where they were born, to bury them. But that boat was not a good boat, and it sank! Luckily his uncle and auntie and he . . .  
EP: Were saved in a lifeboat?  
GW: Yes, they saved his life. He stayed in China till he was 21 years old and then he came back to the United States.  
BF: That's interesting. I knew he was born in this country, because Tom had told us he'd been born here in California when they did not require a birth certificate. And years later this caused him some problems when he went back again.  
EP: Why were his parents in the United States?  
GW: I don't know, but they married here.  
BF: There were lots of Chinese that came to work on the railroad.  
GW: He didn't tell me because he was too small, so he didn't know.  
EP: Well, so Tom came back to the United States when he was 21.  
GW: Yes.  
EP: That would have been about 1892 then, if we established that he was born in 1871. Where did he go the first time?  
GW: His uncle tried to bring him back to the United States.  
EP: Oh, did his uncle return to the United States after taking him back to China?

GW: Yes, but his auntie stayed in China; she didn't want to come back.

EP: The aunt stayed in China and her husband came to the United States?

GW: Yes. He went back and forth quite a few times.

EP: Oh really! And they stayed married to each other.

GW: Yes, they stayed married. They say in that time everybody worked in the fields and dug the sage and dug the roads.

EP: Later, was he working on the railroad or as a cook on the railroad?

GW: He was a cook for when they made the railroad.

EP: I'd like to go back just for a minute to this uncle. That family history kind of interests me. He left his wife in China, and he visited her from time to time. Do you know if he took another wife at all here in the United States, or did he live alone?

GW: He lived alone.

EP: All right, Tom's uncle got him back into the United States. Was it difficult for him to get back?

GW: No, at that time they came very easily.

BF: Particularly if they were single men.

GW: They didn't have any questions [to answer] or anything. Tom told me when he came in first, he was kind of alone, and he tried to cook for a family, and he stayed with the family. [Laughs] And the family had to teach him how to cook!

EP: Was it a Chinese family?

GW: No, an American family. I think they came from England a very nice family, a very nice lady. He didn't know how to speak English, and she bought a book, and every night after he finished his work, she'd teach him how to talk and how to read.

EP: Was he just a baby when he left the United States?

GW: Yes.

EP: Oh, so he didn't learn English. (I wondered if he had learned English as a child.)

GW: No, he was just a baby, 2 or 3 years old.

EP: It's hard for a person to learn another language when they're adult. Did he work in San Francisco for this family?

GW: Not San Francisco in Marysville.

EP: All right. He went right back to where he was born. Was his uncle in Marysville?

GW: Yes. But his uncle went back to die in China. You see, long ago the people who came to the United States, when they wanted to die, went back to where they were born.

EP: What kind of business was he in in Marysville?

GW: I don't know. I think he grew vegetables, sold them, that kind of . . .

EP: I see. I didn't know whether he was a merchant like your father.

GW: He wasn't a merchant; he just worked.  
EP: Where did Tom go from Marysville? Didn't he go to Arizona?  
GW: Yes. I think he went to a copper mine.  
EP: Near what city in Arizona?  
GW: Oh, he talked all the time about Yuma, and Phoenix, and Tucson. In Arizona, he had a Chinese restaurant. And on the Fourth of July they [had a fire] and the fire truck was putting out the roof.  
BF: That must have been awful.  
GW: Yes. The restaurant burned up. One Chinese man said he was going to build a new brick building to make a restaurant. So he gave his money to that man. But that man was not very good, not honest. They [formed a] partnership, but the man said, "I don't have money." So Tom had to pay, and that man was the boss. But that fellow was crooked. He stole everything Tom put in the restaurant.  
EP: Where did he have this restaurant in Arizona?  
GW: I think in Yuma. A hot place.  
EP: Oh, that's Yuma, all right. [Laughter]  
GW: Then he heard news about Goldfield.  
EP: That would be the early 1900s. What did he do about that?  
GW: He came through on the train. But the train didn't come through from Salt Lake to Los Angeles. On the train, I think, a conductor told him, "Chinese, you going to Goldfield? Goldfield won't let the Chinese get out in the city." So he said he couldn't go to Goldfield, so he went on to Ely. And Ely at that time had good mining, and he opened a restaurant there.  
EP: In Ely.  
GW: Yes. All the time he had good luck he met good American people. But then in Ely they boycotted the Chinese!  
EP: They boycotted the Chinese?  
GW: Yes, there was no business. [Laughs] Nobody went to the Chinese restaurant to eat. Just one man went and ate there all the time.  
EP: That was an American man?  
GW: Yes, an American man. And then Tom came to Pioche.  
EP: Before we go to Pioche, how long did Tom stay in Ely?  
GW: I think not very long.  
EP: Well, if nobody would come to his restaurant he couldn't stay very long.  
GW: There was just the one good man. He learned how to use chopsticks and everything.  
BF: Cooking for one man! [Laughter]  
EP: Well, he must have been open then for just a short time. Were there many Chinese in Ely at that time?  
GW: He never said how many. They boycotted them, so there were no Chinese people.  
EP: There must have been a number of them, then, because you don't boycott just one man.

BF: One of the restaurants maybe wanted to boycott him.  
EP: He must have been a very good cook. So he came down to Pioche.  
GW: Yes.  
EP: About what time was that, do you know?  
GW: I don't know. It was a long time ago. He told me he had a good friend when he got here, and there was a lot of ground where he could build a restaurant.

### CHAPTER THREE

- EP: Mrs. Wah, we were talking about Tom having some property here. He had come down from Ely to Pioche, and he had some property here that he told you about.
- BF: In fact, Tom came here when the Prince Mine first started, didn't he?
- GW: Yes.
- EP: And when was that?
- BF: The Prince opened about 1906, didn't it?
- EP: If he had gone to Goldfield, the railroad came to Goldfield in 1905. So he must have come sometime after that.
- BF: Well, the mine was getting going, and when he came to Pioche, he came right to the Prince.
- GW: No, not right away. When he came into Pioche, he was cooking for the railroad down below at Caliente.
- EP: Oh, he cooked at Caliente for the railroad? Did he have a restaurant there, or did he work for the railroad?
- GW: He worked for the railroad.
- BF: They were putting the train through, you see.
- GW: There were a lot of people [working] at that time. Caliente was hot. And he had to boil the potatoes, and then chop them up, and then cook them, and it was too hot in the daytime. At that time, there were no iceboxes. At nighttime, he'd put things up on the roof to keep them from spoiling. Then in the morning he'd go to use it for breakfast. He said, "Man! People die that way." I think he worked for them till the railroad finished going way down to Las Vegas. Then he came back to Pioche.
- BF: This was when they were building through Rainbow Canyon, probably.
- EP: Did he travel with the work gangs and cook along the way?
- BF: Or did he stay in Caliente?
- GW: He had a little place in Caliente.
- BF: Maybe the railroad had a little place there. You see, that was the most important stop between Los Angeles and Salt Lake.
- GW: He stayed there a long time there were a lot of people. Then the railroad finished and he came back to Pioche. And not very long after that, they started the Prince. Some gentlemen came from Salt Lake, and some of them talked with Tom. Tom asked the man who was going to open mining in Prince, "You need a cook?" He said, "Oh yes, we need a cook. Not right now; maybe in 10 months or so." So he went back to Pioche, and then he came here to cook at the Prince.
- EP: What did he do in Pioche in the meantime?
- GW: In the meantime, he did all kinds of jobs.
- EP: Sort of handyman, doing anything that came along?
- GW: Yes. He'd do what people needed. He could do everything.

BF: But there were lots of Chinese there then . . .  
GW: Yes, at that time they had lots of Chinese there.  
EP: About how large was the Chinese community in Pioche?  
GW: Quite a few, at that time. They still had a Chinatown.  
EP: Were there 100, 200, 300?  
GW: Well, at one time they had 300, but when he came he didn't tell me exactly how many there were. He said half the Chinatown was there.  
EP: And where was the Chinese community located?  
GW: Down below the theater.  
BF: That's where their laundry was, and all that.  
EP: What's the name of that street?  
BF: I don't know the streets. I know only the courthouse street. That's the one that goes straight by Thompson's and down to the new courthouse.  
GW: I think it's now called Main Street.  
EP: There was a Chinese temple there, wasn't there a joss house?  
GW: Yes.  
EP: Approximately where was it located? Do you know?  
GW: If I was in the town, I could tell you, because they told me which section it was in. When the last old Chinese man died in Pioche, they shipped him back to China.  
EP: The last Chinese man?  
GW: Yes. Yee Wing. He lived in the [joss house].  
EP: Were there any Chinese women in the community at that time?  
GW: No.  
BF: Men were not allowed to bring their families.  
GW: At that time, all the Chinese left their families in China.  
EP: And Yee Wing was the last Chinese man to live in this community?  
GW: Yes.  
EP: And his body was shipped back to China?  
GW: The father was shipped back; the son is buried in Pioche. The son was the last one.  
EP: Oh, I see. In the Pioche cemetery.  
GW: You see, the old man took care of the idol, and then he died, and the youngest son took care of it till he died.  
BF: And he was buried in the cemetery. And that's when they tore down Chinatown, I guess.  
GW: Yes.  
BF: They sold the things out of the temple.  
EP: Who was the son?  
GW: Yee Wing.  
BF: I ought to look in the cemetery. You'll have to take me over to find which cemetery it's in, Gue Gim.  
EP: A long time ago I visited a section that was pointed out to me as the old Chinese section of the cemetery here in Pioche. The people might be temporarily buried there until their bones could be sent back to China. There's a section up there, and I photographed it a long time ago.

BF: I'll have to go. Is it the old cemetery?  
EP: I don't know.  
GW: It's the public one.  
BF: There's a Catholic cemetery, and Mormon, and army, and a lot of different cemeteries.  
EP: There is a section up there that was the Chinese section. The joss house, the Chinese temple, was here. What kind of a temple was that? Was it Confucian, or Buddhist?  
GW: Buddhist.  
EP: Do you know when the joss house was taken down?  
GW: I don't know when they did take it down. They said that Yee Wing passed away and then Charlie Thompson took it down. And later, I heard they sold off everything down there.  
EP: We talked about Charlie Thompson in our preliminary conversation, and Mrs. Frizell said that he was sort of "Mr. Pioche." He was a very important person here in town. And you say that after Yee Wing died, he bought up the joss house and sold off the idols and everything that was in the joss house?  
GW: Yes.  
EP: Have you any idea what year that was?  
GW: I don't know, but I was here. Because Yee Wing was sick, so I went over there to see how he was and say hello to him. After he passed away, I think there were still 2 or 3 Chinese people in Pioche. Betty, did you know Tom Lim? Maybe you never saw him. He was from Ely and he worked for me. But after Wing passed away, they went in and looked at the idol. They had a lot of things in the basement too. They still had a lot of Chinese money down in the basement. They took them out and one of Jing Sing, that was stolen, was over 300 years old. Somebody bought it for me, and I kept it. Some people got into my house, and took my nice things away.  
BF: They took all of her artifacts, all her nice old Chinese things. But that was given to you by this last Chinese, by Mr. Yee Wing?  
GW: Yes.  
EP: Now this Mr. Tom Lim from Ely he came down here?  
GW: Yes.  
BF: He worked at the Prince.  
GW: He came from Ely during the Depression. The laundry and restaurant were closed down; all the mining was closed down in Ely. So he moved to Pioche the Number One was open. And at that time Wing had a restaurant and hired Tom Lim to cook for him in that restaurant. After Yee Wing died, he didn't need him so he came over to the Prince.  
BF: Then he was here after Monkey Wrench and Tom Yung, during the Depression. I don't think I did meet him.  
GW: No. He came in during the Depression and worked for me. Later, I didn't have a job for him, but I asked [somebody

else] and they got a job for him. He was working in the Number One. Every day he walked over there to work.

EP: Who was Monkey Wrench?

BF: He was one of the Chinese who worked for Tom Wah in the cookhouse.

EP: All right. But Yee Wing was the last Chinese man to live in Pioche? And all of those things that were sold out [of the joss house] and the things that had been given to you were stolen by somebody . . .

BF: But this was much later. It was not over about 10 or 15 years ago that your things were stolen, wasn't it?

GW: No, it was more than that. My house was robbed 3 times.

EP: How sad. I know this seems like going around Robin's barn, but I did want to establish something about your husband and his position here in Pioche. So he was cooking for the mine, then, and he worked here from the beginning . . .

BF: Well, I've been writing a history of the Prince, and I know that the railroad was done in about 1910 or 1912. (The mine had its own railroad.) So from things that had happened before that, he came to work here in about 1909, and he was here then. He would have been here maybe about 1907 or 1908.

GW: The mine didn't open until the First World War. Now I don't know what year he took me to China.

BF: You went about 1932 . . .

GW: He passed away in '33. I came here in 1916.

BF: She came to Pioche, yes. She was married in 1916.

GW: And in '33 he passed away. First there was the Depression, then Roosevelt.

BF: Roosevelt was elected in '32.

GW: And I was about 29 when I went to China.

BF: Yes, when this mine was closed.

EP: Is that why the trip was made back to China?

BF: Well, they'd had a big fire here.

GW: Do you remember what year the big fire was that burned the house?

BF: Well, if you went back to China . . . I used to come up here summers in the years after I lived here. And the big boardinghouse that Tom ran up here, with many young Chinese working for him, was burned down one summer when the mine was closed down. In the fall, my brother was doing assay next door, and the mine was not running. But suddenly there was this fire. He ran up there, and there were just 2 or 3 people in camp, and the thing just went.

EP: How did it . . .?

BF: It was soaked with cooking fat and grease off the chimney and all, and that must have caught fire in there.

EP: And it was hot.

BF: And it was hot in the summer, and as I understood it, Tom had his money there. He didn't have it in a bank. Is that right? He had most of his money there. Now maybe this is

a story that's not true, but this is what I always heard he had to go back to China because he'd been investing some money in China. So when this happened, and everything was gone, he went back to see what he could recoup there. And that would have been about 1927, I think, because it was about the second summer after I started coming back.

GW: Yes, 1927. I came back in 1929.

EP: You were in China 2 years, then.

GW: Not quite 2 years. We left for 2 years, and then my son came over. And that year Tom was in the Prince, because Mr. Godby helped me to come back to the United States. Mr. Godby wrote a letter that told how long Tom was in the Prince. He said he was in the Prince for 15 or 20 years.

BF: So subtract 15 or 20 years from 1929 and he came in the early days. Anyway, Gue Gim, tell Mrs. Patrick about where the boardinghouse was, and how it was moved, and how Tom was injured, and all that. He was working here, and they had built the big boardinghouse. You see, when they ran this mine in the old days with 3 shifts, there were about 125 men working here. There were many more buildings than there are now. Some of them lived in cabins and bunkhouses, but his boardinghouse, where they ate, was over the railroad tracks in an area where there are now 2 enormous glory holes. (They mined up close to the surface of the earth, and then these things caved in.) And Mr. Godby, who was running this mine (according to his story to me and you stop me if I'm wrong), spoke to Tom one day and said, "Tom, I think you better move the boardinghouse, because this may cave in." Now you tell the story about how he moved.

GW: OK, but I want to finish telling about my husband. He came to the United States at a hard time and he worked hard to get rich. He came to the Prince and still worked hard, real hard. When he first came over, he did not have the boardinghouse; he cooked for some other man. That man was the owner's brother. And it was a little place; it wasn't developed. So he cooked for him until the First World War. Then they began to mine black ore. It was real black! People went down in the mine to work, and they just looked like big knobs, all black. And then they made a restaurant. But when he first came in, he worked in the mine. [The man in Yuma] stole his money, and he had to get more money if he was going to open again. Then he made the restaurant bigger. Then in the First World War, they needed lots of [ore]. And they were making money and they got the ore from way down deep. And the boardinghouse was up top, but down below, they were mined out. The boss from the main Salt Lake office, Morley Godby, came out. He said, "Tom, down below, the ore is empty. Maybe some day lots of people will be in here to eat, and it will be heavy and sink down, and all the people will be killed. Tom,

move the boardinghouse." So in a little while they moved to the hill.

EP: They moved the building?

GW: Yes, they moved the building.

BF: How did they move it, Gue Gim?

GW: Well, Tom had all his tables, all the big machines to grind the meat, and the meat . . . he put everything in a wagon.

But they moved the house by putting timbers under it, and then using horses to pull it. They'd get the men to pull them 1 or 2 feet, and then they'd take the other log and put it over there. It was hard to move. But he moved the tables, and meat grinders, and meat and a lot of things on that wagon. And the ground was not level. The whole wagon was full . . .

## CHAPTER FOUR

- EP: So Tom was moving this wagon up a hill, loaded with the meat block and the meat grinder and the tables and chairs and what happened?
- GW: The horse pulled the wagon, and the wagon got way low down. Tom stood on the back of the wagon to hold it. But that thing knocked him down.
- EP: Did the wagon go over him?
- GW: Yes. It was a good thing it didn't land on his belly, but the things all piled up on his legs. The whole thing was painful, and he couldn't walk miles from up here to down there. So he thought he broke some bones. At that time he had no telephone; they had a telegram. Tom right away telegraphed to his friend in San Francisco who had a Chinese drugstore. Tom wanted an "outside doctor," you see. He needed an outside doctor to put the bone back together. The man who got the telegram went to telephone my daddy. My daddy said, "Well, I don't know. I know the drug store of Ong Ting Shew. He's an herb doctor but he might know some bone doctor." And he found one, Chan Ting How, and he came over to Pioche.
- BF: He came on the train?
- GW: Yes. He brought all the things to fix a broken bone.
- EP: Had Tom broken some bones?
- GW: No, but he thought he broke a bone. The doctor looked Tom over and said, "Good thing your bone is not broken, but you mashed up your muscle." It was very painful, and he gave Tom some herbs the kind of herb you have to fry; it's all powder. He stayed for 4 days, and then Tom was getting better so he went back [to San Francisco].
- BF: Wasn't he the one who told Tom, "Why don't you have a wife, or somebody to take care of you?"
- GW: Yes.
- BF: And wasn't he the one who went back to San Francisco and talked to your father, or talked to somebody . . .
- GW: Yes, he talked to Ong Ting Shew, and Ong Ting Shew talked to my father.
- BF: Oh, he was the one in between.
- GW: Yes, he was the one who told the doctor to come. The doctor was Chan Ting How. The doctor is the one who said . . . you see, at that time, Tom had to be on his feet all the time. So the doctor said, "You've got a business here and you're just alone. Why don't you marry?" And Tom said, "Oh, I don't know . . ."
- The doctor had 2 wives. He said, "I have 2 wives. I have one in Portland, one in Oakland." In Portland he had a wife and a home, and in Oakland he had a wife and a home.
- EP: [Laughs] He was telling Tom how great it was. He had 2 wives and here, "Poor Tom, you don't even have one."
- GW: Yes. "You don't have any!" He said, "Why don't you

marry?"

He said, "Oh, I'm old; I don't want to be married."

He said, "You got a business in here. I bet you [could get married] right away."

Tom was still [undecided] till he went to see the fair [in San Francisco]. Then he saw me walk through . . .

EP: Dr. Chan had put the idea in his head.

GW: Yes, he gave him the idea. Then he asked my daddy, and my daddy was thinking that Tom was kind of old, but he [my daddy] had married a young girl, and his father had married a young girl also. When his mother passed away, his father [married again]. So that's how I got married.

BF: So he thought it was good to have a young wife. "It worked for Grandpa and it worked for me . . ."

GW: But Dr. Chan gave him the idea to marry.

EP: Well, maybe it was a good thing that wagon ran over Tom. That's a good story. Tell me, why did Tom send to San Francisco for a doctor? Was there no doctor here who would take care of him? Or did he not want an American doctor?

GW: I don't know. He knew the Chinese doctors were very good for you when you broke a bone or something.

EP: When he asked your father for your hand, how long did it take your father to make up his mind?

GW: Not very long.

EP: Did your father talk to you about it first? Did he ask you what you thought about it?

GW: Well, he talked. But at that time, [if a girl] wasn't married, we felt ashamed the girls wouldn't listen to what they said.

EP: Did you want to get married?

GW: No, I didn't want to. I obeyed my father, so I had to do what he said.

BF: Particularly, she didn't want to marry an older man.

EP: Did you know a young man that you might have been interested in at that time?

GW: No, I was not interested in anybody.

BF: She was so young herself . . .

EP: She was 16, yes. I was just trying to see if there were alternatives, or whether it was just Tom's age, and yours too. When were you married?

GW: Well, then he found something to engage me with. He sent me a bowl of \_\_\_\_\_. He wanted to take me to the Prince at that time, but my mother was carrying a baby, and she didn't want me to marry before the baby was born. So we had to wait for a few months I think from October till January 1916.

EP: When you were in China you were a Christian, right?

GW: Yes. But my mother was not a Christian.

BF: Her father was.

GW: Yes, my father was a Christian for a long time.

EP: How did your father become a Christian?

GW: I don't know. My father never told me how he came to go to Los Angeles. He went to school in Los Angeles [when he] helped a lady. He was a Christian for a long time.

EP: Oh, I didn't know whether he was Christian because of missionaries who came to China, or whether he was christianized in the United States. So he probably became a Christian in the United States.

GW: Yes, in Los Angeles. And they had a Chinese man who was a Christian. He was a bishop in the United States, I think in Los Angeles. He went back to China, and he was a missionary there. And my father knew him in the United States.

EP: Were your brothers and sisters Christian?

GW: Yes.

EP: And your mother?

GW: My stepmother; but my real mother was not a Christian.

EP: Did you sometimes, when you were a child, go to the temple with your mother?

GW: Yes.

EP: Did that cause some confusion in your mind?

GW: At that time I didn't know if I was a Christian or not. I wasn't thinking about that.

EP: Well, your father was often in the United States, and your mother was taking care of you.

GW: Yes, yes. But when my father went back and saw my mother doing it, he didn't care.

BF: Would her religion have been Buddhism or Confucianism?

GW: Confucianism.

EP: What kind of a Christian were you?

GW: In the water, they dunked you! [Laughter]

EP: Baptist then.

BF: Well, now she's Episcopalian.

EP: How old were you when you were baptized?

GW: I was 4 or 5 years old.

EP: Oh, in China. Were you baptized in a stream?

GW: In a canal.

EP: Were you married in San Francisco?

GW: Yes.

EP: What kind of a ceremony?

GW: Chinese.

EP: In your mother's home?

GW: From my mother's home. Tom stayed in a hotel, and he took me to the hotel. Then BOOM! They set off firecrackers. It scared me to death.

EP: Tell me what the ceremony was like.

GW: Well, Tom was there, in the inside. He was standing there looking, and when he saw me he went into a room. I had a couple of ladies with me, and they handed me the fan. Then Tom sat down. There were lots of men sitting around in the room watching. I had to use the fan 3 times.

EP: You mean you fanned yourself 3 times?

GW: Yes, to bow to Tom. And a lady had a tray, with 3 little cups, all filled with [rice brandy]. So I bowed 3 times and handed the little whiskey cups to Tom, and Tom drank them.

EP: Did you have a particular kind of dress on a Chinese dress?

GW: Oh, yes.

BF: She came here with the most beautiful Chinese clothes you ever saw in your life, wonderful Chinese brocades. They were all burned up, of course.

GW: I had a long skirt.

EP: Was Tom in Chinese costume, too?

GW: Yes. You see, in the Chinese ceremony, at your mother's house they have to comb your hair with a different kind of comb. And [afterwards] they throw popcorn. Here they use rice, but they take the rice and pop it up, and then they throw it in your hair.

EP: So Tom is sitting in the room, and they have given you this lovely fan, and then you walk over to him and fan him 3 times, and then give him 3 cups of [rice brandy]. And he drank that down, and then what happened?

GW: That's all.

BF: Did you have a party?

EP: Was there music, or anything like that?

GW: Well, no, no music just firecrackers. [Laughter]

EP: Was your mother at the ceremony? Were there women at the ceremony?

GW: No, they all stayed home; they didn't go to the men's place.

BF: You left your mother and the women, and you went over to the men's side, where you got married.

GW: Yes. The mother lets the daughter go out. As soon as you walk out, they close the door. Then we got in an automobile, and went to where Tom was.

EP: Were you alone?

GW: We had 2 ladies who went with us to Tom's side. There were lots of women there.

EP: Was this Tom's hotel, where he was staying?

GW: Yes.

EP: And who were the other women?

GW: Well, Tom's friends.

EP: Why could they be there, but your mother and your family couldn't?

GW: They were raised that way.

BF: That's the rule. She's leaving her family . . .

GW: You see, when I marry, I belong with Tom. I don't belong with my mother any more. So they have to stay in their own house; [the bride] goes to the man's house, but they have 2 ladies go with you.

EP: Were they relatives, or just friends of yours?

GW: No, they do that kind of work all the time.

EP: Oh, so they're hired.  
GW: Yes, they're hired.  
EP: And they took you, then, to Tom's place, and that's where the firecrackers went off and frightened you.  
GW: Yes.  
BF: Did you stay there, or did you get on the train pretty quickly?  
GW: We stayed about 3 days. On the third day, I had to go back to my mother's house. Then on the fourth day we left.  
BF: So you saw your family before you left.  
GW: Yes on the third day you go back to your mother's house to see her.  
BF: When I first knew Gue Gim, she invited my mother and me to go up to the old boardinghouse. Their quarters were down some steps and then through a hallway in the back, where they had beautiful rooms, a sitting room and a bedroom. And she had these trunks that she'd brought. This would have been 1922, but she had come here in 1916. She opened the trunks and showed us beautiful Chinese clothes that she'd brought here when she was married. She didn't have American clothes when she came to Prince; she just had Chinese clothes. It was later, when she went to school, that she got American clothes. And then much later, when the boardinghouse burned down, she lost all those things.  
EP: Did Tom own the boardinghouse, or did the mine own the boardinghouse?  
GW: It belonged to the mining company.  
EP: How big was the boardinghouse?  
BF: They served about 125 men, but that was all the different shifts, you see. There was a big, big room where all these men sat at many, many, many tables. They always took their showers over there at the mine, so they didn't come in with the black stuff on them.  
EP: So they were clean and fresh.  
BF: They were clean when they came in. But it was still the room for the men. And it had big swinging doors that went into the kitchen. On one side of the kitchen there was a smaller dining room for people like the engineers. My father took us up there for breakfast the first morning I came to camp, and it was called the Blue Room.  
EP: You had a dining room and then you had a mess hall.  
BF: Yes. And there were one or two big tables, and it was set up pretty much like a regular boardinghouse. You had a can of milk . . . and oh, the breakfasts! Steaks, and pancakes, and bacon, and ham, and coffee, and milk, and everything under the sun. Really, everything. Because for the men, they had to put everything on the table. They didn't know what people would want to eat, so they just took their pick.  
But that morning we went up there (it was in March of 1922), we were sitting down, and Tom came in, and my father

introduced my mother and the family. And then he went out and he called Gue Gim in, and we met her.

EP: And you worked for Tom.

BF: No, she didn't work there. She was his wife, and she was going to school. He had young Chinese working for him. She did not work in the boardinghouse. They had their own quarters back behind, and I think you cooked Chinese food for Tom, didn't you?

GW: No, he cooked for me.

BF: I remember when you took us back, we went down some steps, and there was a little stove that didn't have anything to do with the big kitchen, with the big range and all of that. And they had a cellar and all that. He'd buy a half a beef, or a whole beef, [and store it] in the cellar. And they made their own bread. They had big kegs of lard sitting all around on the floor. That was used for all the frying and baking and making doughnuts. Bread was baked in great big pans.

EP: You're showing me an expanse of about 3 feet.

BF: How many of those big pans of bread did he put in the oven at once?

GW: Five on this side, 5 on the other side 10.

BF: Anyway, this was all the food for the men. But you'd be in the kitchen, and there were the young Chinese working there, and this was where we knew one called Left-Handed Monkey Wrench. That wasn't his Chinese name, but the men around here called him that. And Yung Tom, or Tom Yung I forget which.

GW: Tom Yung.

BF: Those were the only 2 I remember. But they'd be sitting in there, if it was not a mealtime for the men, and they'd be eating rice and Chinese food with chopsticks. I used to go up there to get bread, or whatever my mother wanted me to go get, and I'd think, wouldn't it be wonderful to eat some of that Chinese food. It looked so good. But at that time they weren't serving any. Gue Gim is the only one who serves Chinese food now. Because always this was cooking for Americans, with steak dinners and so forth.

EP: The young Chinese, though, prepared Chinese . . .

BF: They preferred their kind, you know. And they had their sauces and all the things that they eat. I remember their going back to their quarters, where you'd go down these steps, and past the little place where they had a little stove, which I understood was where they'd cook their own food. And then you went down into these other quarters. I remember one thing that was very interesting. You had a kind of a small bed where I guess Tom took his naps sometimes in the afternoon.

GW: Yes.

BF: And he had this little pillow made of wood. Have you ever seen one of those little pillows?

EP: I've read about them.

BF: It's polished wood, and it's curved down for your head. It's just the right shape and size, polished black ebony or something like that. Did you sleep on a wooden pillow, Gue Gim?

GW: Yes. Now they're all gone. But some people in San Francisco still use them. They like them; they fit your neck, you know.

EP: Was the furniture in your home Chinese or American?

GW: My house was always American.

EP: But you wore Chinese dress.

GW: Yes, till I went to school. Then I wore American clothes.

EP: Tom wanted you to go to school. Did you want to go to school?

GW: Yes, I liked it.

EP: You were a young woman of 16. Was it difficult for you to start over in an American school with younger children?

GW: Well, at first I thought about that, but after I went to school, the teacher was so good to me. I didn't read the stories, so I didn't understand their meanings. I had to look in the dictionary. So the teacher made all the children act the stories to let me understand them. Like, they read the "Three Bears," how they ate the porridge. The first one was too hot, the second was too cold, and the third was the right bowl. And she ate it and then lay down in the bed. The teacher made the children act it out, and that kind of let me understand. So I was happy. One reason I went to school is that when I came to Prince, I never went outside. I didn't understand English, so I stayed in . . .

CHAPTER FIVE

- EP: Yesterday, Mrs. Wah, we were talking about your school experience. You came here to the Prince as a young Chinese girl who did not speak English. So you went to the Prince school to learn English, and it seemed to be a pleasant experience. Can you remember who the school teacher was?
- GW: The first teacher was named Mrs. Wood. She was nice.
- EP: Did she help you a lot?
- GW: Yes. There was just one teacher for the first to the eighth grade and I was in the first grade. But the teacher, Mrs. Wood, was special. When the children would go out for recess, she came to me and got the book, and she'd say, "What that mean?, What that mean?," and point to the word for me.
- EP: You couldn't read English, either, could you?
- GW: No, I couldn't read at all. I had to read what she told me, and learn how to write A, B, C, and that kind of thing. And I had to write numbers for the counting. She said I did very well.
- When I went to Prince School, I was still scared. When I came to the Prince, I stayed home all the time because in San Francisco you never hear the lightning, but in the Prince you can see the lightning; all the time it scared me! So I said to Tom, "Take me to San Francisco to the doctor." I went back and it was 9 months before I came back to Prince.
- EP: How long were you here the first time before you went back to San Francisco?
- GW: Oh, 3 or 4 years. When I was in San Francisco I hired a college lady to come and teach me English. I learned lots from her. Before I came back in the Prince, my doctor would say, "Hello, Mrs. Wah."  
I'd say, "Hello Doctor." (I could say "doctor.")  
"How are you?"  
"Very well."  
So he'd say, "Oh, your English is very good!" And then he wrote a letter when I came back to the Prince. He sent the letter straight to Salt Lake, to Morley Godby.
- BF: He was running the Prince then.
- GW: The doctor told him, "You tell Mr. Tom to have Mrs. Wah go to the school [so it won't be] too lonesome for her."
- BF: You see she hadn't gone to school before, in the first 3 years.
- GW: I stayed in the home all the time. So Mr. Godby came to talk to Tom because they were afraid Tom wouldn't let me go school.
- EP: Oh, Tom didn't want you to go to school?
- GW: No, they thought maybe I would be ashamed with the little kids and I wouldn't like it. So he told Tom, "Tom, let Mrs. Wah go to the school."

Tom thought, [since Mr. Godby] is the biggest man [around], if I go to school nobody will laugh. He was afraid of people laughing. You see, in America if people would go with the little kids, that made people laugh. So then Morley Godby went to the kids' teacher and said, "I'd like Mrs. Wah to come down here school," and asked if it was all right with her. And she was happy about it. So Mr. Godby brought the teacher to my house to see me. Tom told me, "They want you go to school." And that teacher came . . .

EP: Mr. Godby came down here, then, to see Tom about this.

BF: Well, he was back and forth. He lived up there.

GW: So the way Mr. Godby told it, nobody would laugh at me, you see. The teacher came and said, "Will you come tomorrow?" I said, "Yes." But then the next day I was scared and I still wouldn't go.

The teacher came to see me, but I wouldn't go. She came back again just to take me. She said, "Are you scared, you won't go?"

Tom told me, "You should go. Yesterday you should have gone you go today." So the teacher brought me and we went in together. I saw a bunch of kids and I sat down and I was so quiet! So still! So ashamed of myself!  
[Chuckles]

EP: You were very shy.

GW: Yes, very shy. And I looked at the teacher telling all the kids to get out their slates. And then she came to sit at my desk, and she gave me some book with pictures. First she gave me a pencil and said, "That's a pencil, that's a book."

So I followed. I said, "Pencil."

And she said, "Book."

I said, "Book." And that way I learned.

EP: When you told me that you stayed at home all the time, I took that to mean that you didn't mix with people and that you talked with Tom.

BF: No, she didn't even go outside, and it made her sick after 3 years. Tom took her to the doctor in San Francisco, because she was not well from just being indoors no exercise, no sunshine, she was afraid of the thunder and lightning . . . I didn't know you'd had some tutoring in San Francisco, with a college girl. That got her started, so she could say, "I'm well, thank you," and all those things.

EP: It made a difference, didn't it?

GW: Yes. Then I liked it, so every year I kept going. Some teachers were good . . .

BF: Some teachers are good, some not, you know? I went down to Caliente last night, Gue Gim, because they were giving a movie about one-room schoolhouses. I didn't ask you I should have but we were late in getting home, and I

didn't speak up.

But this one-room schoolhouse experience was different for me. You know, everybody has a different experience. The thing that I think that helped Gue Gim, and helped me, coming from a city school, was not just the individual attention. We had good and bad teachers. We had some miserable teachers here. It was the freedom from this great big red tape kind of thing. I went back into that when I went back to school in Pasadena. A small school I don't think it has to be as small as ours or as small as a one-room schoolhouse . . . I'm sorry this school's gone. Gue Gim was very much a part of it. She had this long black hair, which I think she did up in a bun. When Thanksgiving came, the second year I was here I was here the end of the third grade and she was in fourth, and then she'd be in fifth grade the teacher was a Mrs. Frazier. Remember Mrs. Frazier?

GW: Yes.

EP: Was that Maude Frazier?

BF: It could have been. Well, this was an awful long time ago, in the '20s.

EP: Maude Frazier was the [area] school superintendent in the '30s and '40s.

BF: I think her name was Maude! It's the funniest thing when you said that; it just sounded right. But she was a woman in her 40s then, and would she have become a superintendent of schools the following year? She came, I think, from California.

Anyway, she had us put on a Thanksgiving pageant about the pilgrims landing and so forth. And Gue Gim played the part of Pocahontas. She recited the poem of "Hiawatha," and she wore her hair in big, thick, dark, black braids, and I remember my mother dyed some material with coffee grounds, to make them the color of buckskin. She had a dress with a fringe and all. We all had a part to play. I'll never forget Gue Gim reciting "Hiawatha." It was really lovely.

EP: And that was about when?

BF: About 1924.

EP: Can you still remember the poem?

GW: Yes, I remember.

EP: Can you recite it now?

GW: [Laughs] That year we grew pumpkins that big.

BF: Oh, where'd they come from?

GW: My garden. Tom gave them [to the school]. They put them up on the shelves, and down below they had some corn stalks, like Thanksgiving Day long ago.

BF: Oh, it was a nice program.

EP: Somebody came out and said something in Indian. "Ee wy ee. Owl!" He said 'owl'. I forget what the Indians called the owl.

EP: Was Tom in it too?  
BF: No, no.  
GW: No, they wouldn't go to see it.  
BF: I don't think he ever came down to see it. I think some of the miners [from the boardinghouse] came, didn't they? Whoever wanted to come to these school pageants and Christmas plays and things would come.  
EP: How many children were in the school about that time, do you remember?  
BF: When I first came, the school had dwindled. You could get a teacher with 5 students and you could maintain it with 3. When I came with my brother in April, near the end of the school year here (it usually goes till June in Pasadena) the teacher said she would continue an extra month because we'd missed a little school. So she continued it on into June that year. But they were very glad to see the 2 of us, because the school was down to just 2 students they'd just lost one.  
EP: And what year was that?  
BF: That would have been '23, I think. So I had 2 months of third grade, and then I went into fourth. Gue Gim would have been in fifth. She'd started in the first grade.  
GW: Well, I started in the first, then the next year I went to the second. But then one teacher gave me numbers and I came to multiply so quickly that the teacher let me go right up in the fourth grade.  
EP: You skipped what grade?  
GW: I didn't skip a whole year. I started in the second grade, then in a few months I went up to the third.  
EP: Right, because you were an adult and you could learn faster, and you were motivated to learn; you wanted to.  
GW: Yes.  
BF: It was only the language that was holding her back, so she didn't need the same . . .  
GW: Well, I had a couple of teachers who were not very good.  
BF: Do you remember any of the other teachers from before I was there?  
GW: One, Jensen/Johnson. I went to school every day, but she wouldn't teach me for 3 weeks at a time.  
BF: She was married to one of the miners here, but she had teacher's credentials. They lived in a little house right over here. And since she was here, and knew . . . it was difficult getting teachers they never had the same teacher twice. You didn't have the same teacher 2 years, did you? Mrs. Wood didn't stay 2 years, did she?  
GW: No, she didn't stay.  
BF: It was difficult here for a teacher. They gave them a house, and they were paid \$125 a month, and that was a good salary then. They had no telephone to pay, and none of them had cars. But they were pretty isolated out here at the mine. Now there were ladies and people here my

mother always was very good friends with the electrician's wife, and the foreman's wife, and so forth but it wasn't like being in a town, or being able to get to town. It was hard for the teachers to go shopping. I think one of them used to go over to town with us. My mother would go over about once a month to buy some yardage or something. But it was difficult to get teachers.

There was a wonderful woman who was the superintendent of schools. My mother just loved her. She'd come up here from Las Vegas, driving on these very, very rough roads.

EP: That was Maude Frazier.

BF: Well, then the other teacher I'm thinking about wasn't Frazier. Who was the teacher, Gue Gim, with an "F," who did the pageant? Maybe it was something else that began with "F." But Maude Frazier would she have been in the '20s and '30s? She was an adventuresome person. She had her own car, and she'd change her tires and change her spark plugs. That's why the name's so familiar. Well, my mother was really entranced with her. She checked all these little rural schoolhouses. She'd take back a list of needed supplies, and they'd come in then.

You know, this schoolhouse had a set of the most magnificent maps. They were all relief maps, big ones, in wooden oak frames. Do you remember those maps?

GW: Yes.

BF: They had a little lean-to room next to the schoolhouse where [they kept] the wooden frame that these things would slip into. There was the world, the state of Nevada Nevada and California probably together and different states, and then all of the United States, and then South America. The teacher would bring one out, and it would be on the wall when it was being studied in geography, and then she'd flick another one out. I often wondered whatever happened to those school supplies. They were really quite high-class things.

EP: You wouldn't expect to find them in a one-room school on a mine site.

BF: And Nevada, at the time . . . Las Vegas was a little bitty community. Pioche was much bigger. Lincoln County included Clark County [until 1909] and there were so few people in the state. I remember when I left here and went back to Pasadena, there were 73,000 people in Pasadena, and there were 73,000 people in the state of Nevada. And Pasadena was a fairly small town. Where they got the money to [furnish the schools] I don't know, but they were very good in Nevada. They provided anything anybody needed, really. You had good supplies. You could get anything you wanted. And they provided a teacher for 5 students. I've often wondered whatever happened to the wonderful old supplies. Did they burn them up, did they throw them away?

EP: Did you tell me that the school burned?

BF: No, the school did not burn. Gue Gim and Tom moved into it when their place burned. When they started this Caselton business, there was an engineer by the name of L. G. Thomas who was running it. His wife was very interested, and she had children, and she didn't like the idea of a one-room schoolhouse. She did not think there was enough advantage to having a little bitty school. So she got on the school board, and moved to disband the school on this side of the mountain to make it necessary for children to go to Pioche, where there were more children. She thought it was important for her children to be where there were a lot more kids, so they disbanded the school here. Actually, you held school at your place.

GW: Yes.

BF: Right where she has a boardinghouse up there, there's a room where those children went after . . . Well, first this Mrs. Thomas decided to get rid of the Prince school, and combine it with that. But there were still not enough children, so they'd bus them around the hill. I think that was a shame, but I guess that's progress. But I've often wondered whatever happened to the fine old oak desks and the old fine things that they don't use anymore.

EP: I know that in Las Vegas, any of the equipment that is considered obsolete is auctioned off, every year old books and that sort of thing. At that time they were not auctioned, but they probably were cannibalized and taken to another school system. And of course the general feeling in the past has been that something new is better.

BF: Well, it was for a long time, unfortunately. I think today, if that were happening, somebody would see the importance of keeping those things.

GW: At this time, the Prince was not open.

BF: I know that's true, Gue Gim, but the point is there was a school district that was authorized here. Whether it was open or not, there was a school district.

GW: Mrs. Jim Coffey had a daughter, and Mrs. Thomas had a boy, both in the first grade. So they couldn't get a teacher. Mrs. Jim Coffey had to take her daughter to Pioche, and Mrs. Thomas had to take her son to Pioche.

BF: But later, when you had enough children, they did have the school here for a number of years. Because my niece Janet went here.

GW: Yes. Then later, I think Pioche wanted . . . you see, before, there was one school, with eight grades, the first to the eighth grade. Then they put the first, second and third grades in the kitchen building. They didn't have it here; they moved all the books away at that time.

BF: Do you know how many students there were the first day you went to school?

GW: Quite a lot. During the war the families filled up the houses in here. I forget how many kids were here, [but the

desks] were all full. I think they had 18.

BF: Oh, that many of them.

GW: Yes.

EP: That's quite a lot for a one-room school.

GW: Yes, quite a lot.

BF: When I came here, as I said, it had gotten down to Gue Gim and Gue Kay, her half sister, who was here from San Francisco at the time. (She was not here the next year.) I don't know who else was in the school right then, finishing off that year.

GW: Well, you see, at the time you came in, the Prince began to go down and the families moved away. There were no children, just the men, and then my sister. My sister had to go to school, so they kept the school open one more month. They didn't count me because I was an adult. They just counted Gue Kay. Not very long after, a boy came in, I think from Mexico, so that made 2. Then they held it one month more, till you came in.

BF: That's right; they held the school until we got here, because we were on our way. Then the following year there was a mining family here with Jessie and Willie Grey. And then Angelina Cerise. (I don't know whether she was that year or the following year.)

GW: The next year, I think.

BF: Angelina's mother was Mrs. Messeloyd, and Messeloyd owned what's now the Overland Hotel [in Pioche]. It was an old hotel. I don't know whether that's been rebuilt or not. He was an Italian bootlegger and his wife had these 2 little girls who'd been born in Italy, Angelina and Sandrina. Sandrina had been born with some problems she had no bones in her ankles, so she was a cripple. And she'd come to school my brother Jack would carry her in. She didn't weigh anything. Angelina is dead now; I kept in touch with her through Lina Dalmovar. But that was the next year, and Jessie was still here. So we had Jessie and Angelina and Sandrina when she could come, and my brother Jack and myself and Gue Gim. That made 6, that one year.

GW: Yes.

EP: The mine was in decline by that time?

BF: Well, the mine was in decline when we came. They had sunk the vertical shaft, and had run into big horrible problems in the water down in there. They put in pumps that were not adequate to handle it and everything, and my father had come up here and taken a lease on another mine adjacent, the Virginia Lee Mine. During that year, while he was operating that mine, Mr. Godby and his outfit turned it over to my father and his partner. That was in 1924. The mine then was running, but for some reason they had more single miners; they didn't have many families. The electrical engineer was here and he had a little boy, but he wasn't old enough to come to school.

## CHAPTER SIX

- EP: Mrs. Wah, did you stay at school all day?  
GW: Yes from 9:00 till 4:00, I think. Then we went home.  
EP: That's a long day. Did you bring lunch?  
GW: No. At lunchtime everybody went home to eat lunch.  
EP: Did you graduate from the Prince school? Did you go through the eighth grade?  
GW: Almost! [I was there] till Tom had to go [to China], so I had to go with him.  
BF: And by the time she got back there was no school here.  
EP: So you just lacked about a week of finishing, because you had to go back to China with Tom.  
GW: Yes, not quite a month.  
EP: But you had learned everything.  
GW: I learned a lot.  
BF: There was much talk then in the way of geography and history. This must have been true all over America there was a big emphasis on the great American dream; patriotism and citizenship were being taught, I guess everywhere. I remember it particularly here.  
EP: What was the occasion for Tom to go back to China?  
GW: The boardinghouse burned down.  
EP: We talked about this before we began taping, I believe that when the house burned, there was some of Tom's money that was burned.  
GW: Yes. It made him broke.  
EP: And did he, in addition to having money here, have money or possessions in China?  
GW: Well, in China, like in Hong Kong, he had a lot of stock. He had some streetcar stock and some stock in a big drugstore. You see, Tom worked hard his whole life, and he had a lot of friends. Some friends in San Francisco went back to Hong Kong and opened some kind of store or some kind of bank or something. They asked Tom to put some money in. And the stock certificates all burned. He asked people for help, but nobody knew how to help him. So Tom had to go back to some people [in China] to get the certificates back. He had to go back to the general office, you could say. He had to go to the bank. And I think for the streetcar stock he had to talk to a lawyer in Hong Kong. And his friends had to stand up for him as witnesses. And his father had a lot of rice fields. So he wanted to take me back so that I would know about these business things.  
EP: Oh, was Tom's father still living?  
GW: No, he passed away a long time [before], but he had somebody taking care of [the rice fields].  
EP: Was that in Hong Kong or in some other place in China?  
GW: The land was not in Hong Kong, but most of the business was in Hong Kong.

EP: Can you remember the name of the area where Tom came from?  
GW: I didn't go there very often. He took me through; it was the Hoiping District.  
EP: Were you impressed with the rice fields that Tom had?  
GW: Yes.  
EP: Do you still have possession of that land?  
GW: No, the Communists took them all.  
EP: Did you visit your family, your aunts and cousins, in your town?  
GW: Yes, I went to visit. At that time my mother went back to Hong Kong, too. She stayed in Chek Kom. I went to see her and all my half-sisters.  
EP: Were there any changes in your home town since you had been there?  
GW: Oh, I think it changed very little. When I went back I went to school right away.  
EP: Oh, you did, when you went back to China?  
GW: Yes, and Tom went to do his business. I went to the school in Sing Chiang. I went there to learn to be a Chinese teacher.  
EP: We would call that in English going to a normal school a teacher training school.  
GW: Yes, teacher training.  
EP: Did you think perhaps of staying in China?  
GW: No, we had to come back.  
EP: So you went to school to occupy your time.  
GW: Yes.  
EP: And then by 1929 Tom had straightened up his business as much as he could, and you were coming back to the United States.  
GW: Yes.  
EP: Was there any difficulty doing that?  
GW: We had one problem.  
EP: What was the problem?  
GW: Well, Tom had a certificate that he should go back in one year. But he couldn't finish his business, so he had to stay over one more year. He went to the American consul in Hong Kong and changed [the certificate] to go to one more year. And the Hong Kong consul was kind of funny. He let my husband change but he don't let me change! So we wrote to my daddy he was still in San Francisco. My daddy went to see a lawyer and the lawyer right away sent [a letter] to Hong Kong or Canton. It said something like I was married in San Francisco, why can't I come back with my husband? So finally the Hong Kong consul let me. He said, "When you go back, you might [be treated] just like new people first coming to the United States." The second time I came, they questioned me for 3 hours, and they questioned my husband.  
EP: And Tom had been born in Marysville, California.  
GW: Yes. Well, outside Marysville. It was the kind of farm

where they raised chickens and pigs and sold them to the Chinese stores.

EP: So you had to go all through that questioning again. What kind of questions did they ask you?

GW: I forget. [Laughs]

EP: Were you as frightened as you were . . .

GW: Some questions, you never think about. [Laughter] They questioned me first, and then my husband. They questioned why we didn't come right back, why we had to stay.

BF: Gue Gim, [you've had trouble trying to bring your son and grandchildren into this country]. And the whole story goes back to that trip to Hong Kong.

GW: I don't want to talk about that because nobody can help me.

EP: Why are you afraid of talking about it? It might help you.

GW: Nobody can help me.

BF: It seems that way. It's been so difficult for Chinese to come into this country. For years I was so angered by Gue Gim's situation. Two or 3 years ago I went with her to San Francisco, where she had an appointment with an immigration lawyer (who is not Chinese, he's American, but he deals strictly in Chinatown). After talking to him, I understand why the problem has been so deep in her case. Her son's in Hong Kong.

EP: This is an adopted son, right?

BF: And trying to get out of Hong Kong, so he can come to America, is the most difficult thing in the world. He could be in any country in the world and it would be easier than Hong Kong. It's a British colony, and Chinese enter in a British colony, and there are just a very few people who are allowed out to come to this country every year. It's a huge city. The chances of your being one of those allowed to come are very slim. The only way her granddaughter was able to come was through the help of very good friends, a mining engineer by the name of Sam Lawrence, who had to become very tough and force the issue. As a lot of people know, the way that some Chinese are able to do it is by passing money under the table, in an illegal way.

EP: And Hong Kong is an international port, so many people would use that as an entree to the United States.

BF: That's right. Gue Gim is a good citizen; she doesn't bribe people. You have people coming in all the time who bribe the right people. That's a pretty shocking thing, but it's true. You get your family in if you pass money to the right people. In any case she thinks, I believe, that the more publicity about it, the less it would help. But I have felt for a long time, strictly on the case of her son and trying to get some more of her family here, that the way to do it is to have the story of Gue Gim Wah as a background to that.

EP: Her contribution.

BF: Her contribution to Nevada, and the fact that she has struggled through these years. She's got her American citizenship. She's paid her taxes. And yet it almost looks like she's been discriminated against.

EP: I agree with you.

BF: It was very hard to get the granddaughter Wei Ling here.

EP: So your granddaughter was able to come here.

GW: Yes, to come to school. Arthur brought her here.

BF: She came to school only. At first they weren't going to let her do that, because Gue Gim had been sending her to a Catholic school in Hong Kong so she could learn some English before coming. She went in to see the immigration people and they speak with a British accent; she couldn't quite understand. So they said, "Well, your English isn't good enough to go to America." And that's perfectly ridiculous. The superintendent of the school here said, "We'd welcome a Chinese student. We don't care whether she speaks anything."  
But that man said, "Your English isn't good enough. Wait, maybe someday you can go to college in America." So she was put off. And then, when it was all cleared, he still held up and wouldn't do it. Sam went to bat with someone in Washington and they got the thing cleared. When Gue Gim and Wei Ling and I walked into the office of a lawyer in San Francisco, he looked at Wei Ling and he said, "I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that when you got into this country it was because somebody pulled some strings. You can't do it through ordinary legal channels."  
Now Gue Gim wants to have another granddaughter, or preferably a grandson, who could really help her. She needs somebody to drive a car and help get groceries, be a bus boy, and help her to fix the roof. And yet it seems it's absolutely impossible.

EP: And you have appealed to your senator and your representative?

BF: A bill was presented in the United States Senate in Washington, a personal bill for Gue Gim Wah. Now that's no mean trick, to get a personal bill before the Senate of the United States, on her behalf. And this was Senator Bible from Nevada. And it was passed to bring her family here her son and his wife and family. And it was defeated in the House. The bill passed the Senate and was defeated in the House.  
The House Judiciary Committee is made of a lot of people, and they all have to pass [such a bill]. I was told by my brother, who's an attorney, that at the time the House Judiciary Committee [was headed by] a Democrat who invariably voted against things like this, because it meant that he could get more of the types of things he wanted through. The only way to get something through was to appeal to every member of that committee, and if every

member took it upon themselves to say, "Yes, this is a worthy cause," then it could be presented to him and he might let it through. Well, it was defeated in the House when it went out, and Gue Gim wasn't even notified.

EP: Well, that's too bad.

BF: Then Gene Waite, who used to be my son-in-law, and is a lawyer, went to Hong Kong, and he wrote to the senator who had this bill passed. Back came a letter, and I have a copy of it, saying, "You know, I presented this bill once, and it was defeated, and we're not very eager to present bills that get defeated." Then Jack, my brother, who is authorized to practice before the Supreme Court, said we should try to get the name of every member on that committee and write them a personal letter, appeal to them, stressing the unfairness of what had been done.

EP: That is so strange, because I know that numerous personal bills have been introduced and have been passed. There's an interesting one going on right now. During World War II, American soldiers in China befriended a young Chinese boy, and he lived around the camp, he learned English, and the GIs always promised they'd take him to America. Well, of course, when the war was over they couldn't take him, but they'd promised him that they would.

BF: Was any effort made to do it?

EP: Yes, but remember when the Chinese Communists took over; they weren't about to export any of their young men. But a couple of the GIs kept up a correspondence. This man, when he grew up, always dreamed of coming to the United States.

So he wrote to one of these GIs and asked him if he could sponsor him. And this little town, I believe it's in Arkansas, is trying to get him. They're going to ask for a personal bill. And one of the men who is a successful farmer is renovating a house, and that sort of thing.

BF: Is he in Hong Kong, by any chance?

EP: No, it's mainland China. And they're trying to bring the whole family here. So it might be worthwhile looking into again.

BF: Well, it's different now that China is opened up again. Gue Gim has a nephew in what she calls the "Big Land," China, who wasn't able to write her all those years. Now he's very anxious to come here. It might be much easier to get someone, but not from Hong Kong. The whole point is the Hong Kong thing is very, very difficult, because it's Hong Kong, and because so many people are trying to get out of there, and there is a quota put on the number it was something like 300 people. When you have pressure, and money passed under the table, and all the various things that other people are doing, she just didn't have a chance.

She did get this one girl here for school. It might be she could get another one.

There's a grandson who's old enough now to be a real help.

Gene, my son-in-law, when he was working on it, found that if somebody came here who could do a job in this country that somebody else can't do, then that gives them a certain [advantage]. The older grandson had gone to a cook's school. Gue Gim had furnished the tuition for him, and he studied cooking.

EP: So you've sent money back home, then.

GW: Yes, all the time.

BF: And the law was that they had to advertise all over the state of Nevada, and I think in San Francisco too, to see if there was a Chinese cook who could cook Cantonese cooking who could come here. You had to interview whoever might come, and if nobody else could do it . . . Well, that would be something the grandson could do. He was interviewed, and the problem was that although he'd been cooking in a restaurant and he had studied Chinese cooking and could answer all the questions, the very day that he was called in he had gotten a job in a filling station. He knew that one of the requirements that she put down was that the person be able to drive, to help her when she was cooking and needed somebody to go for groceries. He thought he'd better know something about a car, so he quit his job in the restaurant and went to work in the filling station. When they asked him what he was doing, they said, "Are you a cook?"

He said, "Yes, I've studied cooking."

"Are you working in a restaurant now?"

He said, "No, I'm working in a filling . . ." They didn't even give him a chance to say why he was working in this filling station. That's the quick way they just quiz you and you're out and it's the next one in, and that was the end of that.

GW: At first I asked Senator Bible to help me, but when it went to the Congress, nothing happened. Who was the senator before him?

EP: Oh, the name escapes me. Did he try to help you?

GW: No, he didn't try. If he tried, my son would be here.

BF: He made no effort.

GW: He sent me back. I tried to call him to help me and he said I wasn't a famous lady. He sent the letter back.

BF: She was not important enough.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

- EP: We were talking about the difficulty that you've had getting your son and your grandchildren into the United States, and you haven't been successful, except that your granddaughter was able to have come to attend college. However, we haven't established how you came to adopt your son. What is his name?
- GW: Tom Kong Sing [Chung's spelling; k is unaspirated; sounds to me like Tom Gong Sing]. When my husband and I went to China, and I went to Sing Chiang, I needed to carry water into the house. They didn't have well water you just had to carry water.
- BF: Did you rent a house?
- GW: Yes. The house belonged to a friend of mine from San Francisco. My friend lived in Hong Kong, and that house was empty. When I went back to Hong Kong, she told me to go live in her house [in Sing Chiang].
- BF: Isn't Sing Chiang near Hong Kong across the water someplace?
- GW: Yes. I went to the house, and first I needed water to wash and to clean, so Tom went to talk to one of his friends. (The friend lived in Hong Kong; he had a store there.) My husband asked if he knew someone who could get water for me. My friend's brother said, "Well, I know one." So Tom went to call on that man to [ask him] to haul the water for me.
- EP: Did they carry the water in a barrel, or something like that?
- GW: Yes, 2 pails.
- BF: They hang them on a board across their shoulders.
- GW: That man said he couldn't come, that he was sick, and he said that his wife was sick too. So his mother came and she carried a little boy [strapped on her back]. She came to my house and said, "You need water?" I said, "Yes." So she put the little boy down in a chair. The grandma said, "I go to carry the water. You sit in here, be good boy. Don't cry." The little boy couldn't open his eyes. He sat and cried, "Nn nn nn."
- EP: He was whimpering, rather.
- GW: [Then he opened his eyes and] looked at me: "Eeeeeee." [Imitates crying] I looked at him and he looked very sick. So the grandmother went to get water. She got one pan to carry the water, and she went to fill it 2 or 3 times. Finally Tom came home. I told him, "Tom, you look at that boy. It looks like he's a very sick boy!" So Tom looked at him he took his hand and touched his pulse. And he was looking at his finger, I think on the left side. You see, they can see a line [in the finger of a] sick person.

If it comes clear up to here, it will pass to the next side, and if it does, the person will die.

EP: So Tom looked at his finger.

GW: Yes.

EP: And he saw this vein on his index finger . . .

EP: He saw that the vein was blue, and from that he could see that he was sick.

GW: Yes, he could tell [things by the] kind of color, and that line was way up in there!

EP: The longer that it extended in the finger, the sicker the boy was; Tom could tell this?

GW: Yes.

EP: And he could tell that the child was going to die.

GW: Yes. He felt the pulse too. And he had a strong fever! So he said, "Oh, that boy shouldn't come out here! That boy has a strong fever. He's going to die in one week." I told Tom, "You can help him; you can do a little something," because Tom was a Chinese doctor. When he was young, he learned medicine in China. He said, "Well, I'll try. But I don't . . . ." The grandmother came back and I said, "That boy is so sick. He should be home." She said, "Well, the father and mother are both sick now, and the other children are all too small, so I have to bring him when I come here to get the water for you." My husband said to her, "If you don't take care of that boy, that boy won't last one week. You've got to take care of him." She said, "Oh! We are poor, with a big family, and the father just sells things in the street, so there is no money." He said, "Well, I can make the script so you could go to the drugstore to buy a few things and something for the boy to eat. You don't mind?" Oh, she was happy! She said, "Oh! We are happy. And you are the kindest one!" I said, "Tom, when you go to buy it, give it to her and take it home to show her how to boil it." So Tom went to the drugstore to buy an herb, and gave it to her, and showed her, "He's really small, he can't eat a lot. You take one bowl of water, boil it in a little cup, and give it to him to drink. Have him drink it, and tomorrow you bring him back to me and let me see him. He has a strong fever. When he drinks that herb, it will make the fever go down." She took him home and he drank it. Tom felt him and the fever didn't rise; it just came down a little. And he looked and that thing was coming down, not going up.

EP: The vein on his finger . . .

GW: So he got some more medicine, and he paid the money for it because they were poor there was no money to pay for it. She told me they had a big family I don't know how many boys and girls there were in the family. So she took the herb and took it home to boil, and he drank that, and Tom told her, "Next day you come back." So she came back, and Tom looked at the boy. The fever began going down. Tom told me, "I think the fever is coming down. Maybe if he eats more, it will clear up. So Tom told the grandmother, "Don't give him cool things to eat."

EP: Not to give him anything cool to eat?

GW: Nothing spoiled nothing uncooked. You see, they were poor, and they would eat anything!

BF: Things would spoil easily.

EP: How old was this child at the time?

GW: A little over 2 years old. They call it 3 years, and for Americans that would be 2 years. The third day the grandmother came back and she wanted to give the child to me.

EP: What did you think about that?

GW: Oh, at first I thought no! [Laughs, almost crying] He was a very sick boy.

BF: He wasn't very pretty, either.

GW: She said, "The mother wants you to take the child. We want to give the child to you."  
I said, "Oh, no, no."

EP: And he was probably a very sickly looking little boy.

GW: Yes, very sick.

BF: And she said he was very dirty, with not very clean clothes.

GW: Oh, he was dirty! His belly was that big! And skinny little legs and little, tiny hands. Oh! I looked and I said, "Oh, no no." [Laughter] But then Tom came back. He touched, he hit, he pulled, he was looking here, and he was much better. He said, "The fever has come down."

EP: And he looked at the vein; you're pointing to your finger now.

GW: Yes. The first day he came, I gave him a cookie. He said, "Eeeeeeee." [softly] I gave him some fruit, but he, "Eeeeeeee." [softly] He didn't want anything. But on the third day he looked a little better. So she wanted to give him to me and I didn't want him. But she left the baby and then was gone!

EP: Oh, the grandmother left the child.

GW: Yes, because the father and mother wanted to give him to me. It didn't matter whether I wanted him [laughing] or not. I didn't want him because he made me feel bad. Tom came and touched his pulse and looked at the baby and he said, "Maybe if he eats a little more medicine, he might

get well. You might adopt him."  
I said, "That sick of a boy?" [Laughter] He wanted me to take him. I said, "No." [Laughs]

EP: Tom had more enthusiasm than you did, didn't he?  
GW: Yes. [Laughs]  
BF: Gue Gim had lost a baby, too.  
EP: Oh, had you.  
GW: Yes.  
BF: She had a miscarriage and it was painful.  
GW: Tom said, "You might try for a few days and see how you like it." So the baby was there and that night he turned over in his sleep and cried and yelled. I think he felt pain. He cried for the next few days.  
EP: Poor child. Here you were, strange people.  
GW: Yes. Then Tom went to see the father and mother. He said they had a lot of children. He got a sack of rice and some dried fish and gave them to them. He said, "You don't want your son back?"  
They said, "No, look at how many sons I have here. Would I miss one?"  
EP: Oh, isn't that sad.  
GW: And this family came to a different district. In that district they were fighting and the people all ran away.  
BF: They were refugees from the war.  
GW: They said to Tom, "I want to give him to you for you to raise. You can raise that boy as your son."  
Tom said, "I might take him and raise him, and he might live and he might not. If I raise him, and he's a nice-looking nice boy, you'll want him back."  
The father said, "Oh, no, no. He's going to live, he's going to be good, and he's going to grow up. He's a smart boy. If you want him you can raise him and he'll have a good home. I want him to get well. If I raise him, I think he's going to die, because I don't have the money to take care of him." So he wrote up [a contract] in the way a Chinese would. It said, "I give my fifth son to Mr. Tom Fook-Wah." You see, my husband's full name was Tom Fook-Wah. "First, I asked all my relatives my daughter and everyone. They don't want him, so I give the boy to Tom Fook-Wah to raise." I saw a few words [of that document] and I remember what they said. Finally Tom gave them some money and some food. They had said they would move if they got some money. They were trying to move back to their old valley. And I don't know where they went; nobody knows.  
EP: So the family moved away, and you never did know them again?  
GW: Right.  
BF: The whole problem was that there was a law, that if you adopted a Chinese person in China you had to live there

with that person was it 18 months?

GW: Two years.

EP: You had to be with the person for 2 years before you could bring them to America. This was to prevent people adopting [Chinese for laborers], because you could adopt any age person. Tom and Gue Gim weren't able to stay that long. They had to come back because of this problem about getting into this country again. So they had to leave the child with . . . you left him with your family, didn't you?

GW: Yes.

BF: Her relatives in China raised him and educated him.

GW: We sent them money to take care of him and then he went to school. But I raised him [for a little while], and in 3 months he got well. First the fever came down. Then his belly . . . inside there was something so he couldn't digest his food. It made the belly so big in that poor little thing! [So he was always hungry.] So Tom thought that he [laughs] had a lot of worms inside.

EP: Yes, parasites, right.

GW: So he got something to clean out the worms. You ought to see it you'd be scared! A big ugly worm came out, and it was still moving! Oh!

BF: Oh, dear!

BF: I guess you gave him a bath, too, and got him some clean clothes?

GW: Yes. In those days I didn't know how to sew but I told Tom to go to buy some clothing for him to wear. He got him some clothing but he was still sick. I washed him and he cried, "Mama, do not wash!"

EP: He probably had never had a bath before.

GW: Oh, it was a lot of work to raise that boy! At first he cried all the time, [even at] midnight! Oh, he was sick. And he had a fever. Then pretty soon he had bowel movements. Oh, it was a lot of work to raise him. [Laughter] In a little while, he was entirely changed.

EP: Oh, sure, and you came to love him quickly, didn't you?

GW: Yes, and I gave him some good food to eat. You see, in that big family they had no good food they ate everything! The mother sometimes went to help people wash clothing, and the father went to carry water for the store, and there was nobody to take care of the children.

EP: You said the mother went to wash?

GW: In China they didn't have washing machines. They had to go to the canal to wash the clothing, and [she'd earn a] couple of nickels or dimes; they weren't paid much.

EP: What did you think when Tom came home with this piece of paper and said, "Well, they gave me the child."

GW: I didn't know what to say. I didn't want to argue with Tom, and I didn't want to make it so I wouldn't get any

children. I needed one [laughs] but I didn't need a sick one. Tom said, "Well, we'll try to get him well." He showed me the paper, and said he wanted to give that boy to me.

I said, "What do you think? What are you going to do?"

EP: As you looked heavenward. [Laughs]

GW: I looked at a few words of the paper. Maybe a month or two later, I looked [at the whole document]. But I said, "Well, we'll see in a few days if his fever comes down or not. If it is going up again, and he's too sick, it doesn't matter what he signed, we'll give him back to him." Tom said, "If you give him back to him, he'll die. And he doesn't have the money to buy the things to bury that boy." I said, "Well, you give him back. You can give [the father] a few dollars so he can bury him." Tom didn't say anything. He just put that paper on the door. But every day we gave him good food, and in about a week . . .

CHAPTER EIGHT

- EP: Well, you left the child with your family, and you had to come on to the United States. Did you anticipate bringing him back here at a later time?
- GW: I thought I could, but I tried, and I couldn't. He was a very cute boy! I've got a picture of him standing by my side.
- BF: She got the picture before she left.
- EP: Do you still have that picture?
- GW: Yes. He was very cute. [When we had to] come back to the United States, I told him, and he thought and he said, "Mama, you go, you buy the pip-pip, come back for me? Buy the toot-toot, come back to me?" You see, his father took him to see the boats coming in "Pip-pip, toot-toot." So he was talking about that kind of boat. He wanted that kind of boat. [Laughs]
- EP: Have you seen him? Have you gone back to China since you came back in 1929?
- GW: No. After we were back a few years, Tom passed away. So I didn't have the money to go till 1971, over 40 years later.
- BF: She went that long time.
- GW: When I went back, he grabbed me, and he cried.
- EP: Oh, how sad.
- GW: He said, "Oh, Mama! Why did you leave me so long?" I said, "I couldn't help it. I wanted to go back with your father and straighten things up, and we'd come back and I would figure out how I could take you to the United States. It's not my fault."
- EP: You were able to educate him, then. What does he do now?
- GW: He lives in Kowloon and usually he does construction building houses and that kind of work. And now he's the sheriff.
- EP: He's the sheriff?
- GW: Yes. He watches some kind of government place at night.
- EP: Oh, sort of a security guard.
- GW: Yes, that kind of job.
- EP: How many children does he have?
- GW: He has 2 boys and 2 girls now.
- EP: And you met your one granddaughter who came here to the United States to go to school.
- GW: Yes.
- BF: She'd already met them all, and then the eldest granddaughter came here.
- EP: Where did she go to school?
- GW: Well, now she's in college in San Francisco.
- GW: She going to graduate October 7.
- BF: She was doing drafting in college. She went to high school here in Lincoln County for 3 years, and then went to

Westminster College in Salt Lake. That summer she had met a young Chinese. They were married the day after Christmas in our little church down in Pioche.

EP: When was that?

BF: That would have been Christmas before last the day after Christmas, 1979.

EP: Well, how interesting. Was he a Chinese-American boy?

GW: Yes.

BF: Well, he came from China, but he was a citizen. Gue Gim went to see San Francisco with me. We went to a family wedding of mine my niece's daughter down on the Peninsula. We had some errands in Chinatown and she took us to lunch, and I met Gue Kay, who'd been here in school, whom I'd known for just a few months. And they took us all to lunch. Afterward we were walking back to the hotel, and Gue Gim asked us if we'd stop in a little jewelry store she wanted us to meet some friends there.

And that was the day that Wei Ling met this person she's now married to. He's a young Chinese who graduated from Berkeley in computer sciences, but he's helping his family, who have a jewelry store. He makes a lot of gold jewelry. That fall, Wei Ling had graduated and she went up to Salt Lake. She was rather frightened at the size of the University of Utah; said it was confusing. So she attended Westminster College. She was tested along with all of the foreign students coming in there were a whole bunch of them and she made the highest grades of any of the foreign students that came in.

EP: Aren't you proud of her?

GW: Yes.

BF: She didn't go there very long because Stan wanted to get married, and they had this lovely wedding here. Then she didn't go back to school immediately, but then she signed up to take \_\_\_\_\_ school.

EP: How nice. What is her last name now?

GW: Wei Ling Chow. I went to San Francisco with Betty, and my sister-in-law knows Stanley Chow's parents. So my sister-in-law introduced me to Stanley. She said Stanley was a good boy he graduated and he doesn't smoke or gamble or drink. So I let Wei Ling [meet him]. The first time they met they were both smiling; they didn't say anything. We went back to the hotel, and Stan was on the phone and he wanted Wei Ling. He wanted her to go out for the evening.

He asked if she could go for a ride. She said, "Just wait a minute. I'll ask my grandma."

He said, "Your grandma?" Stanley want to take me too.

I said, "Whoa, I'm not going."

She said, "If you won't go, I don't go." So she said to him, "No, not tonight, we're going to sleep."

So he said, "Well, maybe tomorrow in the daytime. Your grandmother can go; we'll go together."

The next day there was a call, and we went to eat lunch. Stan called his sister Jean. She came on Saturday and he drove. When we came back, they went to eat again. The next day, he asked Wei Ling to go again. She said, "Grandmama, will you go?"

I said, "Well, do you want to go?"

She said, "Yes."

I said, "OK, we'll go."

BF: They had a Fourth of July celebration, as I recall.

GW: Yes, we went out to the Fourth of July celebration. The next day in the evening when he got home from work, he phoned Wei Ling to go out.

EP: He was smitten, wasn't he?

BF: This was an arranged thing, though.

EP: Isn't it interesting that it was sort of the same thing that happened to you, in a way. A friend introduced . . .

BF: Families decided that these 2 young people should get together.

GW: Yes. When he phoned in the evening I said, "Well, I don't want to go." I tried to let them go together maybe they'd get closer, you know. [Laughter] I said, "No, I'm going to sleep now, I'll be in bed. You can go." So she said, "My grandmother won't go. And I don't know whether to go or not." Stanley said, "Well, if your grandma won't go, you and I can go. We'll take a ride to see the ocean." I said, "You go. You can go." She said, "OK, I'll go."

EP: That was the beginning of the romance, then. Let's go back we've gotten a little ahead of ourselves in the future here. Let's go back to 1929, when you came back to the United States. Did you come right back here to the Prince Mine?

GW: Yes, we came back.

EP: Was there a new boardinghouse?

GW: At that time Tom still had one man helping there, called Monkey Wrench. He was a very close friend. Tom had known him a long, long time. He came to the United States and his father had no money to bring the son over. Tom helped the father bring Monkey Wrench over, so he called Tom "Uncle," but he was a close friend. When we went to Hong Kong that time, he took care of the place. After 2 years we came back to San Francisco. He right away phoned Tom to come back to the Prince. And Tom came to the Prince, so Monkey Wrench went back to China.

EP: Oh, he did!

GW: Yes, he did.

EP: Did Monkey Wrench stay in China, then?  
GW: Well, he came back, but he never came here again.  
EP: What was Monkey Wrench's real name?  
GW: Liu Nin.  
EP: So you came back, Monkey Wrench left, and there was another boardinghouse.  
BF: Well, what they did, there was a store here, run by a store over in town. They had built one right by the railroad where they could unload supplies. They sold tobacco and hard hats and carbide lamps and overalls and whatever was needed to the miners. Because none of the miners had cars to go to town, or anything of that sort. When the boardinghouse burned down, Tom and Gue Gim stayed in the schoolhouse, and then fixed up that store, and I guess Tom bought the store.  
GW: Well, Tom came back to the Prince and I was still in San Francisco. I went to a sewing factory and sewed overalls and that kind of thing. I was not back yet.  
BF: Oh, I didn't know that.  
GW: Yes, I sewed overalls.  
BF: You sewed them? Aren't you glad! She had learned to sew here on her little sewing machine.  
GW: Yes, and then Tom came back here before I did. There was no house here. He was going to fix the house, and then I would come back. But when Tom came back, Monkey Wrench left. So Tom went to buy Hodges and Cook (this was before the store).  
BF: Hodges and Cook was a store in Pioche, and Hodges and Cook built the one here to serve the mine. And they sold it. They weren't using it any longer, so they sold it to Tom Wah.  
GW: They used it for quite a long time, till the mining shut down. So Tom went to them and talked to their son. You see, the father had built it. He talked to the son, and the son right away wanted to sell to Tom. Tom said, "How much?"  
"Oh, if you want it, I'll sell it to you \$400." So Tom bought it for \$400.  
BF: So they converted that to a boardinghouse.  
EP: You converted it then, and you continued serving the men at the mine. When did you come back to Prince then?  
GW: Tom came back in just a few months. You see, Prince was not open, but the Caselton was going to start to open. Half a dozen people ate there every day. They stayed in the bunkhouse too.  
BF: They stayed in the bunkhouse here at Prince.  
GW: So Tom needed the house to cook in. So Monkey Wrench went, and Tom right away telegraphed to me and told me to come back right away. He said, "I need you, you have come right

back!" When I got the telegram I came back.  
I had been renting an apartment in San Francisco. The apartment was just one bed, a little kitchen, and the toilet [was down the hall] on the same floor. It was only \$7. I liked it, and I went to work, sewing. I worked 2 months.

EP: Was that a Levi factory?

GW: I've forgotten. I walked . . . on this side was Washington Street, and on this side was Cray Street. And down below Canada Street . . . it was on that side of Canada Street 2 blocks.

EP: Did you say that you sewed overalls?

GW: Yes, I sewed overalls.

BF: Men's overalls?

GW: Men's overalls and children's overalls. At that time the children wore red. At first I went to learn, and they didn't care how slow you did it. But I sewed for one week, and I began to go faster. And after about a month, one lady came to see who was making them wrong and who was making them right. I sewed that long, and I never had a pair of overalls come back to me. One day I walked by and that lady was talking to a boy. She said, "Oh, that one new lady sews very well! Nobody can make them that well." Because I made them even, you see.

BF: So you were a success if you'd wanted to stay there.

GW: Yes. But I had to say bye-bye, I've got to go now.

EP: So you came back to Prince, then and did you help Tom?

GW: Yes. I had to help Tom that time.

EP: Because Monkey Wrench was gone.

BF: He always had young Chinese . . .

GW: So I helped Tom.

BF: He didn't have many men to feed, but the Number One Mine in Pioche, which was owned by Combined Metals, was taking ore out under the mountain up there. They decided to drive a shaft over here, and then the Caselton shaft would have the main mine over on this side of the mountain.

EP: And then they just ran it through that drift.

BF: Well, they did before, to take it out. When they sunk the shaft here they were able to take it out on this side. And they established a camp here. It was just the engineers and a few workers when she first came back, when the Prince was closed down.

EP: Did they come down here from the Caselton?

BF: Well, there wasn't any Caselton. They were staying in the bunkhouse here at Prince, and just using the facilities and going up there to work. Gradually they did work . . . there were 3 old houses up there that they fixed up for the engineers, and then they gradually built the camp up there.

EP: So you began cooking for those men.

GW: Yes. Tom cooked and I waited tables and washed dishes.  
BF: And it was the first time you'd ever done any of that, wasn't it?  
GW: Yes, I never did it before.  
EP: So then you began learning the restaurant business, really.  
GW: Yes.  
EP: Were there any great events in that period right after [you returned from China]? I know that Tom died in 1933.  
GW: Yes, he did.  
BF: Was he sick very long?  
GW: He was sick quite a few months.  
BF: What did he die of?  
GW: They said he died of cancer, but I don't know what kind. He kind of swelled up in the legs. When he was sick there was no business.  
BF: No, there wasn't.  
GW: That was Depression time. Every mining crew was down, so nobody was in here. And he had just spent his money buying that store, so he didn't have much money. People helped me so I could take him to San Francisco. He died in San Francisco.  
BF: Everybody helped her get the money together to take them to San Francisco.  
GW: But I came back alone.  
EP: Did you bury Tom in San Francisco?  
GW: No, he wanted to go back to China. He always said when he died, he wanted to go back to China. So I shipped him back to China. So that made me broke. [Laughs a bit uncontrollably] I didn't have any money.  
BF: It took everything she had. You told me once how it was you happened to come back here after he died. The mine was closed and her family, her sister and everybody, was in San Francisco. How did it happen that you came back to the Prince?  
GW: Well, he died, and right away I [put his remains on] a ship; my father helped me. So I came back alone. Oh, I felt sad. I cried all the time. And everything was here in the Prince, in the house. We still had chickens down in the yard.  
BF: Chickens and turkeys . . .  
GW: At that time, I think Bill Adams was here. They helped me feed the chickens.  
BF: Bill Adams was a miner who was living over at one of these houses. He took care of her chickens and everything.  
GW: So I had to come back. And when I came back, I didn't have any money. But I still had a few sacks of rice, so I could eat. And then pretty soon some people came to do the assessment work. They stayed in my place, so I got a little [money]. At that time Jim Coffey and Mr. Thomas, L.

G. Thomas, were still up there, and one family was still over there.

BF: That's over at the Caselton.

GW: When I came back, Mr. Thomas went to meet the train, and he put me in his house. Because of the chickens, every day I walked down to the Prince. Then I used the guesthouse down at the Prince after they fixed it up for me.

BF: First we had the guesthouse here. That's when my father was still alive. And Gue Gim took care of things here. Then they built one up above.

GW: I took care of the guesthouse and then Mrs. Adams came and they gave her my job of taking care of the guesthouse.

BF: Yes. That was after my father died. My father had died, and my older brother had taken over, and there were some changes, so she didn't have that job any longer.

GW: They still gave me \$5. They went to clean [the guesthouse], but I still got the money. [Laughs] Then they thought Mrs. Adams could do it alone. [But I didn't understand that.] When they needed to fix the house, I would come down because they didn't stop me. I didn't know what they were thinking.

Mr. Thomas found [this other woman cleaning the guesthouse] and he said, "Mrs. Wah takes care of this."

Then Mr. Adams came to tell me. His aunt came over and I was fixing the guesthouse. He said, "Mrs. Adams came to tell me, Mrs. Wah, that my aunt takes care of the guesthouse. You don't need to take care of it."

I said, "Well, Mr. Thomas didn't stop me."

BF: They didn't tell you to quit doing it.

GW: So he said, "David told my aunt to go."

Well, I said, "Oh, all right."

But some people said, "That awful lady!"

EP: Mrs. Thomas?

BF: No, this aunt person. A very common, ordinary . . .

GW: That family sued the Combined company 2 times.

BF: Who did? The aunt?

GW: Bill Adams' aunt.

BF: Sued the company? [Laughs]

GW: There was one house below there. He built that before Combined came. They pumped the water and it went downhill, and they kept that water for their potatoes. The Combined company didn't know that. So the Combined company didn't pump the water and their potatoes died. [Laughs] And they sued the Combined company!

BF: Oh! Combined Metals was pumping water out of the mines. That's at Caselton up here. Combined Metals was pumping water to unwater the mine, and it was flowing off down here. And these people, these bad people, planted a patch of potatoes where the water was flowing. Then when they

quit pumping, the potatoes died, so they go and sue the company! [Laughter]

GW: They came and said, "We didn't know anything. They used the water and we never know." But people telephoned me and they talked about that awful lady . . .

BF: Bill Adams and his wife were some awful common people here, and they brought their aunt here.

GW: And they fought to give the aunt the guesthouse [work]. [Laughs] They tried to [take away] the people who came and ate at my place.

EP: So he was trying to take your customers.

GW: Yes.

BF: Not only to maintain the guesthouse, but to take your customers.

BF: They were going to cook down there. It was really my father's house. My son lives there now, but it was our house. My father had established it as a guesthouse when he was still alive, and then he died. And it remained a guesthouse until they got another one. But this woman came to town and decided she was going to get all of Gue Gim's business so she tried to get all the men to come down here [to eat].

EP: Well, she wasn't successful, was she?

GW: I didn't pay any attention.

CHAPTER NINE

EP: You were telling us about your experiences cooking here, and you said that Mrs. Adams was trying to take your business away. She was going to cook at the guesthouse, and she had already taken your job of taking care of it. What happened?

GW: [Laughs] Well . . .

BF: Well, she left.

EP: What happened?

GW: [Laughs] Nothing. Mrs. Adams wanted to help her aunt. And [laughs] one time Mrs. Snyder came, and she had about 10 people all having a meeting. So [the Adams' aunt] thought for a lot of people she'd buy a lot of food and cook it all.

EP: She thought she was going to get Mrs. Snyder and her guests.

GW: And nobody came. After the meeting, nobody came down. She got mad, and she gave up.

EP: She gave up then. [Laughs]

GW: Yes. Then they made the guesthouse up at Caselton.

BF: They built a very nice . . .

GW: She tried too many times. Mr. Snyder was a very gentle man. He didn't want to go to a party at some house, but Mrs. Adams' aunt called Mr. Snyder, Mr. Thomas and Mr. Kelsey to go to the house and eat she'd cook for them. But Mr. Kelsey and Mr. Snyder, when they'd go someplace . . .

BF: These engineers and people did not want to go and sit in somebody's house to eat. They wanted to be at Gue Gim's where they could have dinner and she'd be serving it and they would have their privacy.

GW: She tried to take Mr. Snyder away and have him not come to my place. But I treated them good.

EP: It didn't work, did it?

GW: No, it didn't work.

EP: You mentioned Mr. Thomas and Mr. Snyder and who was the other man?

GW: Mr. Kelsey.

BF: Snyder was the president of Combined Metals, and L. G. Thomas was his superintendent, and Kelsey was a metallurgist who had come down here.

GW: He was an engineer. He did machine things and engineering.

BF: They were planning to build this big million-dollar plant that they built here, so there were lots of these meetings. When my father was still alive and I was here, I took time off from school to chauffeur my father, because he'd had a couple of heart attacks. We had the president of the Union Pacific up here to give him this railroad that he wanted,

and he had meetings with Snyder and different people. They were usually at this guesthouse where they'd play poker at night. They didn't want to be in somebody's aunt's house.

They liked to go up to Gue Gim's and eat at her place, and then be free to have their business talks and meetings and things. And the office was here; they could use this office. But they had to have a place to stay, so they used our home here until Mr. Snyder got his own guesthouse built up above.

EP: So then you moved up to Caselton and cooked up there?

GW: Well, not yet. At that time, they were fixing up the Caselton. Mr. Snyder was thinking the war would come soon, so he'd have to build a mill. I had bought that house that was the store for the restaurant. So we had to make up the kitchen, the stove, the tables, everything. One time we used the little house we had bought for the restaurant. Tom bought that house, but he had to fix it up for the restaurant, and Tom don't have the money; he was broke. So he had to ask Mr. Snyder to [loan him] the money to fix that up. So Mr. Snyder promised to [help] him.

EP: To fix the store?

GW: Yes, to fix the store.

BF: It was his people who were eating there at that time.

GW: Of course if Tom got the business, then he'd pay it back. So they built it. Prince was not open yet, but Caselton was open. And at that time there were only 3 or 4 houses up there one for the offices and guesthouse (the same house), and they had a couple for families. A lot of families, the families had to come down to Prince to live and the men had to drive cars out to work. I still had the men; they were still using the bunkhouse. So I was still cooking in the Prince.

When the war time came, they built a mill and the Prince and Caselton opened. The government needed people to do lot of work and the government paid high wages. In mining the metals were still low priced. They couldn't pay the high wages here. So the people all went to work in . . .

EP: They all went to the war industries.

GW: Yes. At first the government thought mining was not defense work. But to me, the thing was defense work! You can't make the material [without mining]!

BF: It was not classified as defense work.

EP: As essential mining.

GW: The men had all gone Caselton Mine only had half a dozen [laughing] people working. But I still had people traveling around who came to eat, you see. And I still had about a half a dozen people eating here people coming to Prince, coming to the office, coming down and eating lunch

. . .

So the mining was kind of down. They couldn't get the ore out, so in Pennsylvania, way back east, the factories didn't get the supplies to make the steel and the iron. No supplies were getting in for their smelters. The big steel factories told the government they had no supplies for making war things. So right away the government opened the mining. But the metal prices were all low. The company had to have government help to pay the wages. The government got the money to help them, so they started to hire people to work in the mine. But at that time there were no people to hire the young men went to the army. So they had to go to the army camps and get men to come out to work in the mine.

EP: Oh, really?

BF: During the war, you would be excused from doing military service if you could go into an essential industry. A person who was experienced as a miner could be sent here instead of to the army. My brother David Gemmill used to go to Salt Lake and interview these people to see just how experienced they'd be, and bring them down here. And I guess they did that up at Caselton, too.

GW: In that time, I got some help I got one man to help me with the cooking here. His name was Ong Wing. He used to be in Ely, and then he came down to work for me. He was registered [for the draft] in Sacramento, and they wanted Wing to join the army. So we tried to make him stay. L. G. Thomas and Charlie and Bob Dean wrote and told the army office they needed him here for the mining.

EP: You tried to get an exemption for him.

GW: Yes. The army officer in the Pioche office sent a letter to Sacramento and Sacramento sent it back and said mining was not defense. I said, "Oh, they're crazy. Why is mining not defense? What are they saying that for?"

EP: [Laughs] You were right!

GW: The ore they use to make steel and iron and all those things take lead and zinc all those things came from mining.

EP: What did the Caselton and the Prince mines produce?

BF: It's a complex metal. Of course it's used industrially too, but there's silver here. The complex metal in big ore deposits here there are very big areas of mining here are in this complex metal: lead, zinc, silver, manganese and iron. There's a manganese-iron ore there that's quite important because of its particular combination. We should be mining it right now; we're importing most of our manganese.

GW: At first the Combined company got lead and zinc to make the paint for the airplanes.

EP: So they gave young men exemptions and they came here to

work in the mines. So then you increased the number of people here.

GW: Yes. They'd go to the army camps and get men. David would say, "We need 20," and he'd get 20 army men in the Prince.

EP: Were they still in the army?

BF: Well, no, they were exempted. They had already been inducted, but they hadn't been sent away. So they came here, and Gue Gim had some interesting experiences. They built a housing development for the added number of people (most of it is gone now). It was kind of housing for single men and it was up between Prince and Caselton, and that's where they built another boardinghouse for them. And she ran both of them during the war.

EP: The one here at the Prince . . . ?

BF: The one at Prince and the one up there. And she had some Chinese working for her here, and some up there, and she went back and forth between them, to oversee them. She used to tell me some interesting experiences. It seems that some of the people the army excused to come work in the mines were pretty rough people. Not all of them, but some of them were pretty rough.

GW: Caselton got 200 now.

EP: Two hundred!

GW: So Mr. Dean (he was the superintendent at Caselton) came down to Prince and he said, "Mrs. Wah, you have to hire a cook. A lot of people are coming, and they've got to eat." I asked, "Mr. Dean, where will they stay? You got the houses?"

They were all excited, but I was not. They got them a place to eat and no place to stay! Then he thought about it and he went to the restaurant in Pioche [to see if] they could take care of the men. You see, in the mine the men have certain shifts, and you have to fit them in. The restaurant [owners] said, "No, we're a restaurant. We feed whoever comes in first."

Then he asked the Mountain View Hotel and they had places for them to stay, but no places for them to eat.

EP: Oh, that's interesting! They stayed at the Mountain View?

BF: Well, he went over to see them and they said they could stay at the Mountain View, but there was no restaurant. They didn't do boarding. They had to haul them over here [to eat]. [Laughter]

GW: And David said, "You have to save the room for us." At that time the Combined company leased the bunkhouse. They fixed it up, you see. He said, "You've got to save room for 20 people for us." So right away they called the government, for them to build that kind of housing, and they built it fast.

BF: They were just like chicken sheds they were built around

these long buildings with flat roofs that caved in.

GW: They built 40 apartments for the men. Some had a wife.

EP: And they had children with them?

GW: Some had children; some were getting married; some were not married before when they came, they got married. Some apartments had 3 rooms, some had 1 room, some had 2 rooms. Two people would have 1 room, people with children would have 2 or 3 rooms.

BF: Most of that housing has been hauled away.

EP: What happened to it?

GW: They sold it.

BF: It was very hastily put together, and the roofs were flat so they didn't hold. A short while after the war, they sold them and they were sliced up and hauled away to somebody who could take them and use them somewhere else for something.

GW: One lady came from Texas. The houses were still good at that time. Lincoln County used them, and they sold [this one unit to that lady] cheap. They sold one apartment unit for \$700 for a 4-family unit.

BF: For 4 families it was just \$700.

GW: Yes. [Note: Chung says that by 1943 the National Housing Authority had build some 40 dwelling houses with 4 units per house, 4 rooms per unit, and also 70 dormitories, 2 of which housed 140 single men.]

GW: The lady from Texas cut it up and put some boards on it, and she sold it for \$3000. I bought one, too. She only paid not quite \$700, \$700 for 4, but I got 2 and I had to pay \$3000. You see how she made money.

BF: Gue Gim bought a little piece that's really just a 2-room apartment, and she has it up by her house. She's kept it through the years, and can rent it out. And you had to pay \$3000 for yours?

GW: Yes, \$3000. But that lady cut them up and put little [walls] in. The big one was \$3000. The second one was just one bedroom and a kitchen and sitting room together, and it was \$1000. She hauled them to Utah on a big truck and some people bought them.

BF: What's left up here is quite a bit, but . . .

EP: Oh, there is still some of the housing left?

BF: Some of it's left. It's on Caselton property, and Prince.

GW: The second time they built, they built different [housing].

BF: Oh, this that's here now?

GW: Yes. After they built the first apartments, they built the second apartments a different way. They built some down at Panaca and they built 3 houses here for samples and let the people come to see them. Later the Combined Company built those wood houses.

BF: The one that's there now, below your place did Combined

Metals built that big thing that's there now?

GW: No, the government built it and the Combined Company bought it.

EP: So these apartments were really government projects and they were ultimately sold. About when did they go in there?

GW: Let's see '43 or '44. [There was a question about] how I was going to move up.

EP: They had to draw names to see who would be the cook?

GW: Yes, who would be the cook. [I was the cook for the Prince, but this was for the Combined Company.]

BF: Who wanted to be the cook, besides you?

GW: I think 2 or 3 [people]. They put in my name, but another man got it. He cooked for 6 months. But all the time, when he got a paycheck, he'd go to Pioche and get drunk.

BF: That's the story of most mining cooks.

GW: He'd go drink and not come back to cook. Till sometime people would go to my place, so my place [laughing] . . . they'd have to hurry up.

BF: She'd have to cook for all those coming down to Prince from Combined Metals.

EP: Well, that's interesting. Why in the world did they ever consider anybody else? Why couldn't they make up their minds that you were a good cook and you had served them in the past and . . . ?

GW: At that time the company did not run it. The government still ran it. So that's why they had to draw names. That man had one leg that was short; he was kind of lame. But he drank, and the government closed it down. They sent 2 men from Sacramento to come down and talk to me. They wanted me to go up [and work at Caselton]. "We want you to go up and take care of that."  
 I said, "Well, I don't know." At that time I didn't care. [Laughter]. I went back to cooking, and they sat down and they talked. Pretty soon they called Mr. Thomas to sit down; he was the mining superintendent.  
 He said, "Gue Gim, will you go up there and cook at the boardinghouse?"  
 And I said, "Where's that cook? Where did he go?"  
 "He's drunk. He won't come back to cook. They want you to go up and take care of them up there."  
 "But I have this in here."  
 "Oh, I'll help you."

## CHAPTER TEN

- EP: Now, you said they were going to hire you to run the Caselton boardinghouse, and then the law said that you had to pay for the facilities.
- GW: Yes, one dollar a month.
- BF: You see, she wasn't under salary. She'd be running it herself as her own business. And she buys her things and then sells the food and she's not being paid by the company to do it. Legally, she must rent the building, so the government . . .
- GW: But the people needed a place to eat, and they came down. So I said, "OK, I'll see if I can get a cook. Then I'll go up."  
Then they talked about renting and fixing things. "On the outside, the government will do the fixing. But inside, if you want to fix things, it's for you do. And you have to shovel snow."  
I said, "How far do I have to shovel snow?"  
He said, "Well, you have to shovel a mile."  
I thought, "Well, you're going to shovel the mile."  
[Laughs]
- BF: From one boardinghouse to another.
- GW: So Mr. Thomas said, "Don't worry, we'll send people to shovel."  
So I paid a dollar and the government included everything. They included water, oil, light and pots and pans. Then I sent away to get people to work, but no people came.
- EP: You were looking for a cook.
- GW: Yes, but the war ended and nobody wanted to come in here. And I sent for people to come in here. They'd look but they wouldn't work they'd go back. But they still asked me to pay the fare back. I said, "No, I paid the fare for you to come. You've got to cook." At last they had to cook 2 months for me. So they worked, and they'd go back.
- BF: Were these all Chinese?
- GW: Yes.
- EP: Did you advertise in San Francisco?
- GW: No. At this time, in San Francisco, restaurants had lots of business! All the restaurants were signing up all the people. [They didn't dare] make the waiter or the cook mad, because there was too much work. Right away they'd take all the aprons and run off. At that time it was very hard to hire people.
- EP: Well, you finally got a man, then?
- BF: She had several young Chinese.
- GW: Yes, finally I got 2 cousins to come in here to work for one month. When they were there a waitress ran down from

Caselton to Prince I was down at Prince then. She said the cook and the waiter were quarreling and the cook right away took all the aprons and wanted to go and not come back to work. So I went up. At that time I was still young and I could see the meat. (Now I can tell the butcher to cut up my meat. Before, we would buy a whole beef and we'd come back and we had to cut up the steaks and stew meat and everything.)

EP: And your cook would do all of that?

GW: Yes, the cook did that. So I came down. I had to run the [meat] through the meat [grinder] . . .

EP: So you were sawing away?

GW: Yes, and pretty soon he came and he said, "Mrs. Wah, I'm sorry, I have to go." I bawled him out! I said, "Nobody likes you. I paid the fare you've got to cook. If you want to go, you can't go right away. You have to wait for me to hire another cook to come in." Finally he stayed and cooked for a week while I was getting a cook to come in.

EP: I see. So he did stay and cook for you.

GW: Yes.

EP: You certainly had your problems with help, didn't you?

GW: Yes!

EP: What about getting cooking supplies?

GW: Supplies! Oh! Talk about . . .

EP: That was the time of rationing.

GW: They had stamps to buy food, you see. And sugar each man got a little tiny bit of sugar!

EP: Did you have any trouble getting the supplies in?

GW: Oh, yes.

EP: Were you always able to get them?

GW: The meat was not very hard because around here the farmers could kill the meat.

EP: You didn't have to worry about steaks.

GW: No, they brought them to me.

BF: It was very difficult for the other people.

EP: And you didn't always have to pay stamps for meat, because you could get it locally from somebody who did his own butchering.

GW: Yes. You had to pay for stamps for the meat, too. But the other supplies, like sugar [were hard to get]. I asked the men to give me their stamps. Each man who ate in my place had stamps, so they gave them to me. They didn't want to give to me; they were going to give to their girlfriends, or their friends.

EP: Oh. How did you make them supply you with the stamps, then?

GW: I would write out how many meals I served each day and how much sugar each man was using. So then they figured how many stamps I got. At first they don't give them to me, so

I had to send to Carson City.

BF: She could get the stamps from the rationing board.

GW: Carson City had men come and talk to me to get me more stamps. They were very tight for the stamps. If you shorted the stamps, Carson City would fine you. One time, I put my stamps right under my drawer and forgot them, and I was getting the bank report for the Carson City. And they wrote a letter 3 times!

They said, "You have enough stamps to get enough." He thought I used too many stamps. "You used too many stamps!" After that I found my stamps that were stuck in my drawer.

EP: It was a lot of bookkeeping, wasn't it?

GW: Well, the company sent people to help me. Every 3 months, you had to report to 2 places Social Security and the unemployment office.

EP: But that didn't have anything to do with the rationing stamps.

GW: No.

BF: No, it's just that in all that she did have some help from the company.

EP: Then after the war, of course, these young men left the area, didn't they?

GW: When the war was over the mining went down. They weren't using that much material.

BF: They were still mining but it wasn't as much.

GW: And also they had been working for so many years that they took the good ore out and they just left some not very good ore.

EP: When you were running both boardinghouses, did they work 3 shifts?

GW: Yes.

EP: And you had to supply meals around the clock?

GW: Well, in the middle shift they had to take lunches. Some of them wanted to come back at noon to drink coffee. I talked to the superintendent and he said, "Who's going to get up at 2:00 to cook the meal? So they put the coffee in thermoses.

BF: She'd start breakfast down here and get everything set up with her help here, and then rush up to Caselton for their breakfast. She had all these men!

Gue Gim, you told me a very interesting story about how these young Chinese working for you would start talking to you in the afternoon. They'd say (they called her Gim), "Gim, you drive us to Ely?" Tell the story about those young people!

GW: Well, they were a bunch of boys, you see. [Laughs] They were getting . . . you know!

BF: Oh yes, to find girls.

GW: So one time, I think 4 of them said, "Gim, we want to go to Ely." The man in the Chinese restaurant in Ely was their friend. So, "We want to go to the Ely, see my friend." I said, "Well, if you hurry up, clean up, mix up the food, be as fast as you can, so I can take you, you can go." So I took them in the car.

BF: She had a car; she had learned how to drive a car. You hadn't known how to drive a car very long until the war.

GW: Well, not very long, but at that time I knew how to drive.

EP: Well, Tom knew how to drive.

BF: No.

EP: Oh, Tom never learned to drive? So you were really isolated here then until you learned to drive.

BF: It was during the years I wasn't coming here, I guess, before the war when you got your citizenship about that time?

GW: Yes.

BF: Mrs. Thomas helped you learn to drive, didn't she? Somebody did.

GW: Kelley help me.

BF: Oh, Kelley. She had a Chinese here named Kelley.

GW: Kelley was a cook for me.

EP: How did he get the name Kelley?

GW: Well, Kelley is an Irish name. I think in Ely, when he got through work, he liked to go to gamble play some pinochle, or some kind of game. I think that one Irishman there and he were kind of good friends. They would both sit in that place, and when they'd win, they'd say, "Oh! We won!" and like that. The Irishman was a very good friend, and when people said, "Oh, who is that man?" He said, "Oh, his brother, Kelley."

EP: So anyhow, these young men wanted to go up to Ely . . .

GW: Yes.

GW: Yes, I took them made the sacrifice. [Laughs] I mean, they worked, then they'd go to play. At that time it was awful hard to hire people.

BF: She says she had to humor them, so she went up. It was cold during the winter, and she just bundled up and slept in the car until they were ready to come back.

EP: Oh! At the brothels up there.

BF: She'd wait in the car while they were in there.

GW: So at that time I was going up to cook, but every day at noontime I came back to the Prince to rest. I still used the Prince for my place to sleep. Then my last cook passed away and I was alone. I was tired, so I didn't want to walk down, and I would just sleep right down in the chair. Mr. Richley came down and saw me, [laughs] right on the chair, so he . . .

EP: You were asleep on . . . ?  
BF: Well, she'd be up at the other boardinghouse, but she'd be so tired she'd be asleep on a chair.  
GW: Mr. Richley told the company to add one more room for me, so I had a bed in there to rest at noontime.  
EP: Oh, up at Caselton.  
GW: Yes, up at Caselton. At that time I still walked down from Prince, but when the snows came, it was too deep and too hard to drive the car, so then I decided to stay in that room at Caselton. I still stay there I only come down to my house here in the daytime for the restaurant.  
EP: Now is that where you have your restaurant?  
BF: Yes, the one that's up there.  
EP: Does that belong to the Caselton Mine?  
GW: Yes.  
BF: It belongs to Combined Metals, yes.  
EP: And you still rent it for a dollar a year?  
GW: No, they won't care . . .  
BF: They don't let her pay. That was only during the war when the government was involved.  
EP: You don't own it, do you?  
GW: No, but I want to buy it.  
BF: She'd like to buy it, but she's been given use of it for the rest of her life, as long as she wants to stay there. But we've been wanting to get her to come back down here, because of her garden and everything. When this mine closed down first, before they closed down up there, she closed this boardinghouse down.  
EP: When did the boardinghouse close up there at Caselton?  
BF: I don't think after the war it was ever used as a boardinghouse. Mines don't have that system anymore. In the first place, miners get so much money they all own cars, and they go to town. They don't even live at the mines any longer. You don't have single itinerant miners, you see, who are forced to live at the mine. Even if they did, if they had a trailerhouse or something they'd probably like to sit home and eat a TV dinner and watch the television rather than all swarm into a boardinghouse. There used to be a lot of boardinghouses in town, in the early days. The miners would come down Miners' Gulch and they'd be boarding at different places, and they got their 3 meals a day.  
EP: After the boardinghouse closed down, did you continue cooking up there then for the public?  
GW: Yes. The men were all gone, but once in a while the office men still came down. Then the office men all moved away; nobody's there now.  
EP: Do you live up there alone then at that mining site?  
GW: Yes.

BF: Well, there's been a change. Mr. Ed Snyder died, and other people were running the mining properties here. And the person who owns Combined Metals decided to sell the houses in the camp, so they've all been sold to individuals. This was an innovation in a mining camp. Mostly the mine houses are very valuable when a mine is operating, and you want them to be free for the mining personnel.

EP: And they're not worth anything if the mine's closed down or not much.

BF: Well, no, but when the mines open up again, if you don't have those houses, it's pretty rough. So it's been a kind of a surprise to me that they've done that. Kerr McGee is a big oil company and it owns all the mineral rights now to those mines.

EP: Is that who owns . . . ?

BF: They own the mineral rights, but they don't own the houses. For some reason, when it was all split up, the Combined Metals got the mill and the houses but they didn't get the mineral rights. And Kerr McGee, who bought the mineral rights, I think should have bought the mill and the houses too, so that if they ever wanted to operate, they'd have them. But this means that Gue Gim is up there where she's near some people who've moved in, because most of these houses now have someone who owns them. It's somebody in Las Vegas who comes up, or somebody in Salt Lake who comes down here.

EP: That's in Caselton Heights.

BF: That's Caselton Heights.

EP: Those are the people, then, that I asked for directions. So when people come up here to eat at your restaurant, they are in fact eating at that old boardinghouse, right?

GW: Yes.

BF: And she doesn't have boarders, you see. The mine boarders were on kind of contract you'd get so many meals a day, including your lunch, which might be packed up so you could take it down the mine.

EP: The miner paid that.

BF: Or it was taken out of his wages, usually. That's a different system than just feeding somebody who comes in. And without any help, she can't take people unless it's by appointment. You can't just drop in. You haven't had any boarders for a long time, have you? I think there have been a few. One summer the BLM [Bureau of Land Management] was down here doing a study of the range, and I think they probably had a boarding system here some set arrangement for their people.

EP: So you've been in semi-retirement for a while.

GW: Yes.

EP: And you just cook occasionally, don't you?

GW: Yes. After the mining, people came and lived in there, and they'd come down and eat, and sometimes on the weekends I'd get very busy. But since my last cook passed away I can't do that much, so I took down the sign down on the highway the wind knocked it down. I thought, "[If people] come, I have to work day and night all the time."

EP: By yourself.

GW: By myself. When the men, the good people, all went to war, they left some people who were . . .

BF: Riff-raff.

GW: I almost got killed 2 times. One time, one fellow who I think was half-Indian (they say when Indian people drink and get drunk they are very mean) went to Pioche to a dance. I had a waitress and she promised that man go to the Pioche dances with him, but she went with a young man and left that older man. He went to that dance, he drank, he couldn't walk and he was angry. He wanted to come down and talk to her and shoot her, or something. It was a good thing I was there. He took a long hunting rifle and was holding it like that. He was strong.

It was during cook's rest time, so they hadn't come back I was the only one in there. You see, we had a 12:00 lunchtime, and they'd eat till 1:30. The cooks would go off till 3:30, then come back to cook the evening meal. So at 2:00 this fellow came 2:00 or 2:30. He was holding a gun, he knocked on the door, and I had the curtain down. I opened the door and I said, "What do you want, Mister?" He said, "MY BOY WENT IN THE ARMY! HE WAS KILLED IN CHINA! KILLED IN THE ARMY!" He pointed the gun right into my ribs!

I said, "Well, Mister, I'm sorry your boy got killed, but I didn't make him go. Uncle Sam took your son."

BF: And it wasn't the Chinese, it was the Japanese who'd killed him.

GW: I said, "You get mad at Uncle Sam. You can't get mad at me.

"I WANT TO EAT!"

I said, "Well, I can give something to eat, but nothing's cooked. I can give you pie and coffee. Is that all right?"

He said, "Yes, all right." He came into the room and put the gun down and I gave him the pie and coffee. He sat down and ate and the 3 engineers came down, and one of them grabbed the gun.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

- EP: We've brought you up to semi-retirement, when you're cooking for a few people here and there. As we've gone through this interview, there are a few things that I would like to come back to briefly. One of the things was an observation you made on the Mormon attitude toward mining, and how it was changed. Could you tell me a little about that? When the Mormons originally came, they were originally farmers, weren't they?
- GW: Yes.
- EP: Did they provide Pioche and this area around here with foodstuffs?
- GW: Yes, and they raised chicken to sell, and that kind of thing. They did top work; they didn't work down in the mines in the early days. The government did not protect the people much. They let the people go down in the mine and work.
- EP: There weren't any mine safety laws and that kind of thing.
- GW: No, there weren't.
- EP: And you're implying that there has been a change in that attitude.
- GW: Yes.
- EP: What changed them?
- GW: Their young men wouldn't go down and work in the mine; they worked up top. But after the government changed the law, if they worked in the mine and got a wound or broke a bone, they had money, like insurance. Then their family would have food.
- EP: That is, if the father were hurt or killed.
- GW: Yes. But I forget when they started that. But I know that if the man got killed, they had \$2000 for that. And if he had children, each child got so much money a month till the child was 18 years old. I stayed in L. G. Thomas' house and I know one man got killed, and he told me about that.
- EP: And after that the Mormons were willing to go into mining, into the shaft.
- GW: Yes, then they went down in the mine.
- EP: But originally and traditionally they were not miners, right?
- GW: Yes.
- BF: I don't know how much you know about Pioche and this area, but Pioche was a very rough mining town.
- EP: I read a newspaper account from a Salt Lake newspaper in the 1800s, and it said, "Big News, Someone Died a Natural Death in Pioche." [Laughs]
- BF: Long after other places had become law-abiding, Pioche remained the roughest, toughest town left in the West. This was true in the '20s. As a matter of fact, Will

Rogers, the great humorist, came here. He used to write a little article that appeared in the L.A. Times, and he datelined it wherever he happened to be. And for 3 days in a row it was datelined "Pioche, Nevada." He said, "I'd always heard about Pioche. I'd heard it was a tough town. And I decided I'd go up and see it." He said they were absolutely right, it was still pretty rough. Up until the Depression days, I'd say, it kept that reputation. The Mormons lived in Panaca. There were some Mormons in Pioche, because people had married Mormons and all, but they were not in the mines.

EP: There was a great deal of rivalry. The people in Panaca were LDS and they looked down on these gentiles.

BF: Well, those up here looked down on those, because the gentiles always kind of felt sorry for the Mormons, too. You just thought, "Well, who'd be a Mormon?" Charlie Thompson told me when he was a young blade, it was a great thing to go down there in your buggy, and go and spark the Mormon girls see if any of them would hop in and go with you. But if you were caught, they were out after you with shotguns. Nobody lived in the town of Panaca who was not a Mormon, not one single person, up until the Second World War.

In the Second World War, the boys went off and brought back brides and so forth. And they built this housing place down there they built one here, and they built another one down there houses, instead of sheds. And this being government housing, the Mormons could not keep you out. So there are non-Mormons in Panaca now.

The thing that changed Pioche was that Pioche remained a mining town; it was rough and so forth there were more saloons than any other place of business until just as the Depression was going on but beginning to lift. Combined Metals opened up their Number One Mine again, and Mr. Snyder hired a superintendent by the name of Henry Coleman to come here. He was well known by everybody around here. He happened to be a bishop in the Mormon church, and he was different in that he was a miner. I guess he was educated. Was he a college man?

GW: I don't know.

BF: I don't know, but he was the foreman or superintendent. It was before they sunk this shaft over here. They were still hauling all this ore laboriously out through and under the mountain and up and down to get it out over there. At the Number One up above town, the custom in the old days was to hire a great many itinerant miners single men, Italian and Welsh and Cornishmen. They'd drift from camp to camp. If the food was good, they might stay a while.

EP: Were there many Slavs here? You know there were mostly

Slavs in Tonopah.

BF: There were some. I remember we had a family here, and I thought they were Polish or something, but there were Slavs in part. In any case, there was a turnover among the itinerant, single miners, that was greater, certainly, than when the miners had families. So every day, with a crew as big as they were hiring, there'd be some who didn't turn up for the job. And the way to get a job was just to turn up at the collar of the shaft. Mr. Coleman would be there, and if you were a miner, you could get on. And the way Pioche changed its face overnight was: He didn't fire one single old-time, experienced hard rock miner, but, as they drifted, he'd ask the new ones who came up to the collar of the shaft what their faith was. And most of them of course were Catholic. (There were Polish and Italians.) Soon the word got out that if you were a Mormon, you could get a job in Pioche. And Mormon boys from southern Utah and all over began flocking to Pioche. They didn't know anything about mining. They didn't have to; they could get hired.

EP: Now, about when was this?

BF: This would have been about 1934 or '35 or '36. We were deep into the Depression but they were getting ready to open up again here. And Mr. Coleman was here a long time. They ended up building a Mormon church in Pioche, which we'd never had . . .

EP: Was that the beginning of the invasion of Mormons?

BF: It was almost overnight. Because you see, that was a big labor force. And the accident rate was high. Those boys were inexperienced. They'd drill into holes where the dynamite hadn't gone off. But those who survived learned pretty fast. But that changed the whole labor force. Of course, an old-time miner, if he liked it here and stayed on, could. There were a few of those who always hung around. But a lot of them just quit quickly, because they didn't want to work in the mines with these inexperienced . . . they called them pumpkin-rollers.

EP: Why?

BF: That was just a phrase they used because they were farm boys. The old-time miner was very jealous of his experience, and the fact that he knew his job. And he didn't want to work down there with this crew coming in.

EP: Well, how interesting! And Henry Coleman was the man.

BF: But Pioche changed face overnight. A man from Ely who had run a butcher shop there came down, and as the Depression lifted a little bit, he opened a store called the Cash and Carry, where the Lincoln Market is now. That family's kept that store until just this year; it was sold. It was Butch Holacher. He was a Mormon and he got busy with the other Mormons that were around, and they built a church in

Pioche. They have a very important church in Pioche now.

EP: Now that's interesting. I knew about the old historic rivalry between Pioche and Panaca.

BF: Oh, yes! It was so acute, it would be like somebody going into Panaca today and building a Baptist church. You couldn't imagine that. That is a Mormon town. This town used to have a Catholic church it was just an open rip-roaring town. As I said, a few Mormons lived here because their parents had been, or they'd married one or something, but there was no church. They did supply foodstuffs. It was sort of a love-hate relationship. They freighted in here because I know that R. E. Mathews' (Mr. Mathews' dad) father ran a freight line. Your husband Tom had a cousin here?

GW: No, I don't think he had a cousin here.

EP: At least Arlene Smith remembers something like that. But they had a corral, and Tom helped take care of Mr. Mathews' horses.

BF: Down in Panaca, you mean?

EP: No, here in Pioche. And she knew Tom.

BF: Tom Wah? Well, that was the period when Gue Gim was telling us that he did odd jobs when he came down from Ely.

EP: No, this was in the late teens and the early '20s.

BF: He would have been here at Prince then. So that must have been somebody he had hired.

EP: Well, she recalled that name. As a matter of fact, I didn't tell Arlene what the name was. I asked her, and she said Tom Wah. But he may have had an interest in that corral.

GW: Maybe it was before he came to the Prince.

BF: But he never left the mine. He never left here unless he went to . . .

EP: Well, that may have been earlier, then. She was a small child, though. She told me she remembered going down there. And this corral, she said, was near the joss house, in the Chinese section. And that they took care of the horses in the corral for him. She liked going down there because he always gave her a piece of candy, she said, and she really liked coming up from Panaca.

BF: Oh, they did business. In fact, we had peddlers here every summer. We could get no fresh stuff [grown] in town. The stage went over to town every day to get the mail, and supplies from the store, but there was no fresh stuff. The peddlers would come up from St. George in the summer with old beaten-up trucks with the canvas over the back bed. We'd buy peaches and everything they had, including eggs. So the Mormons were doing that.

EP: So there was a love-hate relationship.

BF: I don't think anybody hated them. I think the Mormons

didn't hate, but were very suspicious of the gentiles.

EP: Well, when I say that I don't mean anybody was frothing at the mouth.

BF: Yes, I know what you mean. But there is a certain element of that, too. There was a man by the name of Rulon Stoopin who came up here as a peddler. He came every year, and Mother would buy everything he had. She'd buy fresh eggs, even though we had a few chickens here too. One time these eggs were all rotten and I mean really rotten, rotten eggs. So when he came the next time she asked about it. "Now, Rulon those eggs were rotten. I've saved them; I want to show you. He said, "Oh, damn tithing . . ." (Because someone paid their church tithe with the eggs.)

GW: Well, in the Depression there was not much work and a lot of women from the south and from Utah came to Pioche.

BF: That was when Coleman was here.

GW: Yes.

EP: Well, that is interesting. That's good social history.

BF: And there were plenty of other men available for work, too. Because after all, the mines had been closed down. It wasn't as though you couldn't get an experienced Italian or Slav or . . .

EP: But he just used his influence . . .

BF: Well, he wanted to get them jobs because they all needed work; everybody was out. But if you were not a Mormon, you'd better not go to Pioche.

EP: That was really a change.

BF: It was just overnight, just like that. We thought it was regrettable, in a way, because Pioche became a far less interesting town.

[Tape is turned off for a while.]

EP: Mr. Coleman was behind building the Mormon church.

BF and GW: Yes.

GW: And at that time, a lot of Mormon families were living here and over in Prince, too. Every morning when they'd walk to the street, they'd have to pay 50 cents for building that church.

EP: Oh, they were raising funds?

GW: A lot of women who lived in Pioche didn't want to go to town.

BF: Yes, people Mormons who lived here didn't want to go to town, because you'd get buttonholed for your money.

GW: At that time Mr. Kelley came from Ely. I didn't give him a job, so Mr. Thomas put Kelley to work in Pioche sweeping the office.

BF: Oh a janitor.

GW: Sometime [his friends] came to see and talk to Kelley, and they lived in the Prince. They'd say, "You can go to

town."

"I don't want to. You walk in the street, they see you, they walk up you, you got to pay your 50 cents."

[Laughter]

EP: They were working hard then, weren't they?

GW: Yes, they were working hard.

EP: There's something else that I have read about, and I would like some of your observations. I understand that there was a red-light district down in the Chinatown area. Was that true?

BF: I don't think she knows what . . . [several talk together]

BF: It wasn't necessarily the Chinese town. I know something about that. The red-light district is where the girls are in houses for men.

GW: Yes.

BF: When Geysler Ranch burned down, and my family had to get into Pioche quickly . . . I was born kind of accidentally here. My father had just sold the ranch, in fact. But they established themselves in Pioche until I was born, and then had to stay a few months because I weighed about 2-1/2 pounds, and couldn't be moved. And it was winter. And the school that's there now was a very nice school. It was built in 1913 . . .

EP: 1909, I think.

BF: OK. Well, the house the folks had was up at the top of town as you go out. (It's still there.) My sister, 11 years older than I, and David, would walk down to school and back. And Mother was quite disturbed about living in town because Pioche was very, very rough then. And the red-light district was right smack across the street from the school. I don't know whether it was on this side of the school or on this side of Main Street, but as you go down Main Street toward the new courthouse, and toward the school, on this side . . . that would have been Chinese town down there. So it was close, and that could have been what they meant.

EP: Were the girls down there Chinese?

BF: Were the girls Chinese, or not?

GW: I don't know. I never heard about that.

BF: I never heard that either.

GW: Tom never told me.

EP: I'm not trying to be nasty or anything as far as Chinese women are concerned. But I have heard that there were Chinese girls in the red-light district, and that you were the only Chinese "lady" in town.

BF: Really? How did such a story get out?

EP: Well, I'll show you; I have it printed here. That's what I would like to clear up.

BF: It could be true that some of the girls were Chinese, but

it was so hard for Chinese girls and women to get into the county that I can't imagine they'd need to do that.

EP: That's exactly it. That's why I'm asking the question.

BF: Well, I've never heard it. Was this from some history?

EP: I read an article; I'll show it to you. And it said that you were the only Chinese lady in town.

BF: I think when Gue Gim came there weren't any other Chinese women here.

GW: No, there were no other Chinese in here at that time.

BF: She went to see that one man, she told you, before he died. But that was shortly after you came here, wasn't it? That last Chinese man.

EP: Mr. Wing?

GW: Yes, Mr. Yee Wing.

BF: That was pretty soon after you came, wasn't it?

GW: Well, you see . . .

EP: It couldn't have been, because Tom lived until 1933.

GW: Tom was kind of an old man when he died; he died at 71.

EP: Yes, but you see Mr. Wing must have lived after Tom, or he wouldn't have been the last man in town.

GW: Yes, Tom passed away and then Mr. Yee Wing died.

BF: Did he run the laundry, then?

GW: No, he ran the restaurant.

BF: Oh, I see.

EP: That's what I understood.

GW: I came in 1916 and there were no Chinese women here. Tom would go to town and see about 20 old men who were there, but they worked in Winemucca in the coal mines. The men all worked out at the mining camps.

EP: The Chinese men from Pioche all worked away from Pioche?

GW: Yes. Then once in a while, when they'd get a holiday, they came to town.

EP: They come back to their homes in the town?

GW: Yes. Charlie Wing was the oldest man. He had a son, the youngest, who they called Wing. The father passed away, then in a few years his son passed away.

EP: And that was the last Chinese man?

GW: Yes, the last one.

EP: All right. That's what I thought.

GW: Maybe a long time ago they had that kind of red-light house, but I don't know about it.

EP: Well, I'll show you the article. It must have been the figment of someone's imagination.

BF: It could easily have been. My thought is that that red-light district in Pioche was made up of the kind of women who were always in these mining camps, and they were rough and whatnot. In fact, Lincoln County just outlawed prostitution in the last . . . they had a special election for it. Most people were against outlawing it. They did

not wish to outlaw it, because you have these official houses down the other side of Alamo that were licensed. But the DA who came in here was unknown he was filling out someone else's term and he wanted to get known. He went around to every Mormon in the country and got them all excited about this terrible thing that was going on down there, and it was going to demoralize the young people, and he got them all out. I didn't even hear this first special election coming up.

EP: I read about it.

BF: So they got it outlawed. It didn't stop prostitution, but

GW: . . .  
When I came in they didn't have a red-light district. When I first came I just stayed at the Prince; it took me a long time to go to Pioche.

EP: Well, that's why I asked the question. You see, Mrs. Wah, that's why we wanted to do this tape; I wanted to clear up some of those things. So when you came here, there were about 20 other Chinese men who came in and out of town but who maintained homes here.

GW: Yes, they did not stay here. They came through here, and maybe they'd go to San Francisco, or somewhere else. They'd come through here to see Tom. Tom would come back and tell me, "Oh, Pioche is very lucky with the older people. We've got the oldest man in Pioche." Tom would go to town.

EP: What do you mean, he'd go to town?

GW: Tom had to go to town to the bank.

BF: Yes. He'd go over [to Pioche] on the stage or something.

GW: You see, he'd take a check and go over there and pay the grocery store. Most of the time he'd walk over, and sometimes he'd ride the mail car.

BF: I don't remember ever seeing him . . .

EP: So there were about 20 Chinese people in Pioche then. Well, you had Tom buried in China. Was there someone there to receive his body and see that he was buried properly?

GW: Yes, one relation there took care of that.

EP: When you die, Mrs. Wah, do you want to go back to China?

GW: No. Some day I'll go to Pioche and pick out my ground.

EP: You're not planning on leaving us soon, are you?

[Laughter]

GW: No.

EP: I'm glad.

BF: I think you ought to be buried in your garden.

GW: I'd like to be in my garden, but I don't know if the company would let me.

EP: Oh, sure.

BF: I talked to Paul about it. He said that was perfectly all right; he fixed it up. We'll have the board of directors

write you a letter so it's OK. I feel the same way. I don't want to be in a graveyard. I want to find an old hole and jump in it.

EP: [Laughs] Do you still have the papers that those people in China gave you for your son? The letter that they wrote for Tom, giving your son to him.

GW: Yes, I think I still have it in a safe box.

EP: Do you have some pictures of you and Tom, or anything like that?

GW: Well, I don't know.

BF: You see, the place burned down.

EP: Yes, you lost many of your precious things. When you became a citizen, was it difficult for you?

GW: Yes, that was kind of hard. You have to go through all the Constitution, you know.

EP: You had to learn the Constitution and the history of the country.

GW: Yes. I had to read and I had to know . . . well, they don't ask all the questions, but you have to read them all.

EP: Where did you get your citizenship papers? In Pioche?

GW: Yes, in Pioche.

EP: Well now, Tom was an American citizen. Why didn't you become an American citizen?

GW: Well, he lost the paper, and he couldn't ever prove it.

BF: Probably a birth certificate is the only thing that would have proved it.

GW: Nobody could prove he was a citizen. When he was born there was no certificate. There was just a woman at home to deliver the baby.

EP: A midwife.

GW: And then his mother died so soon.

EP: So there was no one to vouch for him.

GW: Yes.

EP: Why did you become a citizen?

CHAPTER TWELVE

- GW: Because they allowed Chinese people to get citizenship. Before, they didn't let them. So I thought, "Well I've got a chance to be a citizen. If I get a chance to go to China, and then I come back, I won't need [to go through those] questions."
- EP: Yes. You wanted your citizenship so that if you went to China and came . . .
- GW: Yes, I could come back more easily. And second, if I am a citizen, I won't hear American people, these men, all the time say, "Goddamn sons of bitches Chinese," you know.
- EP: Did you hear that kind of thing, Mrs. Wah?
- GW: All the time! They followed me all the time!
- BF: Who were they! The people who came to eat at your place?
- GW: Yes. At payday, they'd go to Pioche and get drunk. The mine fixed [it so that] if you worked here, you would sign [a list on] the wall. If you went out [for a meal], you had to check out and come to tell me. If you didn't do it that way, then every day I'd be making [too many] lunches and wasting all that food. Finally I talked to the superintendent. I said, "Look at that [waste] of food. They go, and they won't tell me . . ."
- So the company made them sign [the list], saying, "I'm not eating here, I'm going to town." And many people came from Utah, and on payday they'd go home. So they had to come and tell me, "I'm going home."
- EP: Yes. Then you wouldn't have prepared meals.
- GW: Yes.
- BF: Well, why did they swear at you?
- EP: Because you reported to the company that they were not having their meals?
- GW: Yes. If they were not here [for meals and they didn't sign out], I would add up how many meals they ate here, and the company would have to take their meals out of their pay on payday.
- EP: Even though they hadn't eaten it. And then they were mad, because you charged them.
- GW: Yes. They came back here drunk, and they'd say, "Come here."
- I'd say, "Well, what? What do you want?"
- "I didn't eat here for 3 days."
- I'd say, "You tell me before you go."
- And: "NO! I'm not . . . But I won't pay," and like that.
- They'd be too drunk.
- Tom told me that when he was in Arizona, a man he worked for kicked him in the pants and said, "The goddamn Chinese!" And he cut Tom's head.
- EP: Cut Tom's head?

GW: Yes. He had a big scar. And he went to court and the man just said he was drunk. So Tom always said, "Never talk back to one of them. Because he'll hurt you, then he'll say he was drunk, that he didn't know."

EP: So Tom said that if a person hurt you, then he would say, well, he was drunk and wasn't responsible.

GW: Yes. He told me, "Don't talk back to him." But this one man was standing at the table; he wanted to hit me. He said, "Goddamn you sons of bitches Chinese . . ."

EP: Did that hurt you a lot, when they said things like that?

GW: Well, I didn't pay any attention.

EP: Did you suffer any other kind of insult because you were Chinese?

GW: Yes, there were a lot of things. Some men said they would make trouble for me, and they'd come and talk and be rude. I'd say, "Well, they don't know anything." So I wouldn't pay them much attention.

EP: Well, you did become a citizen, and hopefully that settled some of that business.

GW: [Laughs] Well, now all the people come and they're very nice. They talk to me very nicely.

EP: You have an honored place in this community, don't you, now?

GW: Yes. I live alone and when all the people who moved away come through, they all they come to see me. And some people say, "Oh, we were young. We are so . . ."

EP: So they apologize, then, when they come back.

GW: Yes. Now they're all making up. It makes me happy.

EP: Do you remember them?

GW: Oh, yes, I remember them. They say, "We were young, we didn't know anything, we all the time would bother you and hurt your . . ." I raised pigeons and chickens and ducks, and they would shoot them. [Chuckles] So now they [apologize]. They're good people.

EP: Mrs. Wah, we've done a lot of talking, and I'm sure that there are a lot more things that we could talk about, but I've run out of tapes. But I thank you very much for talking with me, and I thank Mrs. Frizell for sitting here and adding considerably to our conversation.

GW: Well, you're welcome. I live in Lincoln County; I like living in Lincoln County. I always obey the law, obey the government. I never make trouble and I never go to the court to complain.

EP: You've been a good citizen.

BF: She's grateful for being a citizen; she's a good citizen.

GW: When I go to the store to buy something, I never cheat. If I get something and forget to pay, I go right away and pay them. One time a store man made a mistake in adding my bill, and they cheated themselves by \$80. I came back and

I told him, "You made a mistake. You cheated yourself."  
EP: Well, you can go to sleep at night without any burdens,  
can't you?  
BF: Yes. She's well respected.  
GW: Yes. [Chuckles]