

Interview with Linda and her Sister Susan, 25th May, 2012

For the full interview and transcript, go to the archives section of this website.

Q: Your background story of your family's history.

00;05;24 -

Susan: Well I guess our grandfather came over in the 1800, late 1800 something, and I guess he's one of those railway guys. And he came here to Toronto, he settled in Toronto, and then he married our Irish grandmother, so it would be in the early 1900s because dad is the second youngest, born in 1915.

00;06;05 – 00;06;30

Susan/Linda: So there was three older ones. So I don't know how old the older one but then Elsie is three years younger than dad. <She's still alive and she's 95, isn't she?> Yeah she is. Yeah aunt Elsie.

Q: What was your grandfather's name?

00;06;33 – 00;07;01

Susan/Linda: Well he used, our name should be Kwan but for some reason, I guess the way the Chinese use the surname first, Kwan Sue, his name is Sue. So in theory we were Kwan Sue as our surname. <Yeah so it's on my birth certificate as Kwan Sue>

00;07;08 -

Linda: So it's really weird for a man to have the name Sue.

00;07;10 – 00;07;46

Susan/Linda: Yeah but I don't think too many other than dad registered that because on my signature paper I never used the name Sue. But I think dad used it on yours and Bill. <And also Ken did it for Cindy> Ken did it for Cindy but not on Ken's citizenship papers. So we are really mixed. But this is, the Chinese surname is Kwan but it is the way it was carried on, Kwan Sue.

Q: You thought he came to work on the railway but do you know for certain?

00;07;52 – 00;08;34

Linda: No, I do not know that past and the only time I know is when he established in Toronto and he marry a WASP [white anglo-saxon Protestant], I was told. And then dad has the restaurant, when we came over, and since I learn a little bit English and these good customer for years, that they've been going to the same restaurant, when my grandfather and grandmother was around as well, so they more or less filled me in what grandmother was like.

Q: What did they tell you?

00;08;36 – 00;09;24

Susan: Well, they said she was a terrific lady. They said "No matter how poor you are when it comes to Thanksgiving, Christmas, if you can't pay your milk, fine, but you will have the ham, the turkey, whatever that occasion is, you have, and you pay me when you can." But I have, in my

mind always wondering, “Is my grandmother really back from home, that she moves here by herself?” Or was she hungry in those days, in England, eh, or Ireland.

Q: So you think she migrated by herself, not with the family?

00;09;25 -

Susan: Yeah, she is by herself, we know that. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: Do you know how they met each other?

00;09;32 -

Susan: She must have worked for grandfather. But dad said, of course dad was young too when she died, and but before I was saying she went to China. What it was, why she was marrying my grandfather and grandfather would have money for her to send back home, yes, to support her family.

00;09;59 – 00;10;24

Susan: But we have, after that, dad say no, he does not know, but as a kid that they were, and also they told by these other people that when I came what grandmother was like. So I have never find out and I never will. But from the character told, she must be a really lady.

Q: Your grandfather opened a restaurant in Toronto? Do you know the name or where it was?

00;10;37 -

Susan: They, no, there were one that my dad had, is on Queen Street. Washington Café no longer there. But that part we do know but all the other one, what it happened was, every few year he would sell the business, he would go

back to China, back and forth because after my Irish grandmother died in China.

00;11;06 – 00;11;32

Susan:

She went back, well before she did, the two of the kids went back first and then she, with the other three went back. And but she died in China. And so grandfather back and forth. Go back home to see the kids. And then come back here, work, establish a business, and then sell it and go back, back and forth a few times.

Q:

These were children they had together.

00;11;35 -

Susan:

Yeah with the Irish grandmother, five kids.

Q:

Do you know her first and maiden name?

00;11;43 -

Susan:

Her first names is Alice Grady.

Q;

Do you know why he sent his Canadian children back to China?

00;12;20 – 00;13;07

Susan/Linda:

Actually, after grandmother died those two stayed in China, one of them stayed in China. <They were daughters> One came back. Norman came back but Lily stayed there until she married there and she came back after immigration allows the Chinese to. So she and Lily come back in the '50s then. But uncle Norman came back I guess as a teenager and stayed in Canada.

Q: Did they want the children to be educated in China?

00;13;14 -

Susan: We don't know.