

Report on interview

Interviewee: Wong Kwan Cheung, Joseph

Interviewer: Li Po Kwan, Luka

Place for interview: Ah Cheung's home

Date and Time: 31st March, 2000 ; 5:30pm---6:02pm

Topic: Ah Cheung's childhood story

J---Joseph, Ah Cheung

L---Luka

L: Joseph, can you introduce yourself?

J: Am.....my full name is Wong Kwan Cheung, I am already 41 years old, but still look very young! Am.....I only studied at primary school. When I was very little, I suffered from a disease, which called "Glass-bone", that made my arms and legs are very short and the body became very small just like a baby. But it is not a big problem, because small body is easy to go anywhere. My private vehicle is a baby trolley, but it cannot stay with me for a long time, it always broke down, so I already changed many baby trolleys.

L: Now you are living in Choi Hung Housing Estate, then what about before? Where did you live before?

J: I have lived in three places. But in fact I have lived in many places. In earlier time, we lived in Mong Kok, then we moved to Choi Hung Housing Estate, no longer, because our family became bigger, so we moved to Oi Man Housing Estate, where in Ho Man Tin. After..... my mum died, we turned back to Choi Hung Housing Estate, so that my brother and his wife could look after me easier, do you understand? So we departed from Choi Hung Housing Estate and also got together in Choi Hung Housing Estate.

L: So how many brothers and sisters do you have?

J: Ah..... five brothers and sisters totally. I have two older brothers of different mother from me. The oldest brother is living in main land China,

second older brother is living in Choi Hung Housing Estate, and my third older brother has immigrated to Canada. I also has a little weak minded older sister, who is living with me now, and I am the youngest one.

L: Your mother must very love you, because you are the baby one.

J: Mmm.....(he was drinking tea, but he agreed my point).

L: What about your father?

J: My dad? He had gone very early. He died when I was 17, just finished primary school. I was an adult student. Because I was living in hospital while I was very small, so I haven't learned the formal primary school education. Ah.....I was living in hospital for about 6 to 7 years, then entered a proper hostel school, which was only for those weak-ability persons, called Kwun Tong Alison Red Cross School.

L: How many years did you study in that school?

J: Well, including kindergarten, I studied in there for 7 years, and finished it at 17 to 18 years old.

L: Woo.....so how old were you when you entered to hospital?

J: I began to live in hospital when I was 3 to 4.

L: Did you suffer from this disease when you were just born, or after a period of time?

J: This.....I might suffer from the disease when I was just born, but then found out that after a period of time. Until two years old, I began to have problems. I cried loudly when my mum touched me, and she could hear the sound inside my body just like my born wanted to break up, so my mum looked after me very carefully. Then my mum brought me to see doctor, and he said that it was called "Glass-bone", I might live for no longer. My mum was very sad but she didn't give up me, still looked after me. My mum said that while she still was alive, she must cared for me. In the early time, if a mother had a handicapped baby, she would leave him

on the street or in hospital, because everyone was very poor in 1960s.

L: Who support the whole family life?

J: My mother. Because my father already suffered from half body paralysis, so my mum was very poor in her life.

L: Have you got any unforgettable memory? Something like made your mum angry?

J: Every kid will always make his parent angry. My mum went to see me once a week when I was living in hospital. When she came, I would ask her to buy comic book, sticker and snack for me. Also when every time she came, she would help me to bath, went to toilet, etc.

L: You bathed once a week?!

J: No, but just because it was more comfortable she helped me to bath. Then.....I would be sad if she couldn't come, or I would cry when she left.

Everyone in hospital was very love me, they always gave me many toys and stamps. Sometimes I would talk to the foreigners and listen to the sisters talked English in order to learn more.

L: You said that your mum went to see you every week, so is it just like a family day?

J: I think so. I could eat chicken leg and drink tasty soup; I like to eat chicken leg!

In the time I was living in school's hostel, I went back home once a week, sometimes my mum would come to take me back home after school. If she was playing mahjong at home before she came to take me, she would ask someone instead her for a while. So I always told her that I was hungry, wanted to eat this or wanted to eat that, in order to avoid her went back to play mahjong too early. Also sometimes she would let me sitting on her legs and watching her to play mahjong, then gradually, I also can play mahjong!

L: Do you have more events that you can deeply remember?

J: Am.....my mum's job was making shoes, used a needle-work machine to make sporty shoes. I must went back home in long holiday, so I must help my mum to do the minor work, such as cut the needle line and put a chop on the shoes. Helping my mother to do these works I could have a good feeling of gaining money with my mother. My mum was very poor, because sometimes my mum had to work overnight and the others would complain that the needlework machine was too loud.

L: That means you haven't really get a job by yourself?

J: Not really! I have worked in "Protecting firm".

L: What is "Protecting firm"?

J: Those firms would accept the handicapped and give them work to do, or let them take some works home to do. Such as the counting work or making plastic flowers, etc. Sometimes would work with the little weak mind persons or the persons who get mental problems.

L: How old were you when you worked there?

J: Am.....about 19 to 20 years old.

L: Did you claim that the God treats you very unfair, so that you couldn't help mother to do more works?

J: I didn't think about that. I only felt that my mum and my sister loved me very much, and I can talk! I feel that my illness is not a big problem, also I can feel many people treat me very kind. But I just thought that I gave many troubles to my mum. Sometimes when the nurse helped me to bath or while I was playing with my classmates or they wanted to help me, they might carelessly hurt me. Then I might need to have operations, and needed to ask mum to come to sign for the operations. After leaving hospital, and went to school, I could play many games in school. I did do an English drama and singing in a show!

L: Did you need to wear uniform?

J: Of course! I needed to wear a white shirt with a Red Cross logo on it.

L: What subjects did you study?

J: Same as you people, Chinese, English, Mathematics, Social Science, Health Study, etc.

L: Which subject did you like?

J: English and Chinese! I was not good at Mathematics.

L: But I heard that your school results were very good.....

J: It's nothing! Our class was only few students, so everyone could be good on result.

L: What did you play with your classmates?

J: Chinese Chess, Jumping Chess and playcards, etc.

L: Which one is your favorite?

J: Chinese Chess!

L: It seems that your classmates and teachers treated you very good, right?

J: Yes!

L: Am.....your school results were good, did you wish to go to secondary school?

J: Of course I wanted. But because of my handicapped problem, and also have glass-bone, those schools were afraid to accept me. Moreover, there was no secondary school for handicapped only, then I studied at home by myself.

L: Do you still study at home now?

J: Yes, I learn to write articles.

L: How's the relationship between you and your brothers and sister?

J: My sister has the closest relationship with me. Although she is little weak mind, she is a good sister. Am.....and the relationship with my brothers is fine, because I lived in hospital for a long time, not always could see each other, I haven't got any deep feeling with them.

L: You said that your mum loved you very much, if you did something wrong, would she use physical punishment on you?

J: My mum never beat me, she afraid of my glass-bone.

L: How's about if your brothers and sister did something wrong?

J: My mother never beat anyone, only scolded. My mum was a kind mother.

L: Did anyone treat you unfair because of your illness?

J: Am.....people will use special sight to look at me, they feel I am a very poor person. When they saw I went out with my mum, they always asked my 'Is he your son?' 'Can he eat?', we were fed up to answer those questions, can you understand? Sometimes they were too kind to give us money that made us very embarrassing!

L: Oh, you must be very upset.

J: Mmm.....a little, I felt upset for my mum, people always asked her, disturbed her. Because I often went out with my mum and sister, that was very attractive.

I didn't sit on baby trolley a long time ago, there was my mum holding me when every time we went out. Later, my mum was getting old, so I sat on baby trolley.

L: Can you describe that how do you feel your childhood?

J: Describe the childhood.....mmm.....happy more than tears.

I just said before, in hospital, those Sisters and nurses liked me, at home, my mum loved me. But when my mum died I was very sad. Sometimes my glass-bones get hurt, I would be unhappy. However, many parents do not love their children. Also their children do not cleverer than I do and they do not smarter than I do too, right? So should be satisfied.

L: To compare with current children's lives, which childhood do you think is better and happier? Are yours or theirs?

J: I think mine one was better. Living in that era, substance was not enough to everyone, many things we got were exchanged by our hard working. Also we know how to treasure everything. But now is different, substance is too enough, the children do not know how to treasure. In our era, we got many things by ourselves.

L: How do you compare your childhood with the current life?

J: When I was small, my mind was pure, not much life experience, no limitation in my life, no need to hide myself in front of others, more happily. Now, I see the human in more different ways. Some events may not follow what you expected, do you understand? When I was a kid, I thought that if you working hard and give out something, you must get back something. For an instance, if you love a girl, you chase her very hard and give out many things, you would think you can make her happy. But when you grow up, you know the theory is wrong. If you want to get together with that girl, the first thing is needed is that the girl also loves you.

L: Do you think that you are still happy now is because of your childhood?

J: Yes, yes! Many events happened in my childhood can expand my mind. First thing is my mother's love, because she never gave me up. No matter how hard is my life, I am still living here, because I can't let

my mum disappointed. Also I can't let those people who looked after, who taught me, who helped me all the times feel disappointed. Although there were some events hurt my heart, such as I needed to depart from my family, couldn't live with them when I was small; or during the operations; or feel hungry at home but can't get any food, because there are nobody at home. Those painful events give me much life experience. I must be strong, although sometimes will feel painful in heart, those events must go away very soon, then I will be happy again.

L: At last, I want to ask you how do you feel the physical punishment on the children. Do you think it is an effective education?

J: Firstly, maybe I am lucky, I have no experience on physical punishment. But I think suitable physical punishment can be effective. What is suitable physical punishment? That is we should give the kid some signals what is wrong and what thing they cannot do. To see the children in this era, they are so naughty, one of the reasons they become that is because their parents love them too much, so the parents let them do the wrong thing and do not correct them! Therefore, I agree that when the children do something wrong, suitable punishment should be given, such as beat their hands or their pats in order to let them know they are wrong. Physical punishment is allowed, but cannot be too harsh. I think teach them patiently is better. In fact, there is stronger stress, stronger against. Beating is not a method to make someone change mind in this era. However, before using physical punishment, people should think clearly, try to not hurt the children's minds.

L: And how do you think the future lives of children will be influenced by the physical punishment?

J: It needs to see the growing life of the children, see how do those people treat them, whom close to them. If they can understand the reason they get punishment, then they may not use physical punishment wrongly. Otherwise, their minds may get hurt already, and the punishment would not change their mind or they would just correct their action for a while. So I think after punishment, there must need someone teach them turn back to correct way. But if the children are hardly taught, then physical punishment is not work on them. So we also have to see if the adults or

parents understand their children or not, think about whether the punishment is worked or not. If use it wrongly, the children's minds will get hurt, so physical punishment is deeply influenced to the children.

L: OK, then we stop at here. Thank you very much, Joseph.

J: You welcome. Ha ha ha...