



**Center for Pacific War Studies
Oral History Program**

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

Mr. Peter Chu

Young Man in Nanking, China

**First Lieutenant
Chinese Navy**

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**National Museum of the Pacific War
Fredericksburg, Texas**

**Interview with
Mr. Peter Chu**

Mr. Nichols: This is Chuck Nichols and today is November 1, 2003. I am in the Bush Gallery in Fredericksburg, Texas with Peter Chu and his son, Alan Chu. Peter was a young man in China during World War II and we're going to ask him about some of his experiences. This interview is in support of the Center for Pacific War Studies, archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission for the preservation of historical information related to this site.

Mr. Chu, if you would, tell us when you were born and where you were born.

Mr. Chu: I was born in Nanking, Jiangsu. I was growing up in Nanking, China.

Mr. Nichols: When were you born?

Mr. Chu: I was born in 1927.

Mr. Nichols: You lived in Nanking?

Mr. Chu: Yes.

Mr. Nichols: You went to school in Nanking?

Mr. Chu: Yes.

Mr. Nichols: What kind of an education system did they have in China when you were a young man?

Mr. Chu: OK. When I started, six years old, I started to educate in the elementary school til 1945, September.

Mr. A. Chu: He finished high school, the eleventh grade, but during that time, Nanking was under Japanese occupation so that school was actually run by the Japanese or Japanese sympathizers. So they almost had two different school systems there during his education.

Mr. Chu: When I was under Japanese control, I learned Japanese.

Mr. Nichols: How old were you when the Japanese invaded China and came to Nanking?

Mr. Chu: OK. Since _____ the Japan and China War in Nanking. Ten years old.

Mr. Nichols: The Japanese invaded Nanking in 1937.

Mr. Chu: 1937. Yes. Just after World War II, I finished high school. I joined the Chinese Navy and take...

Mr. A. Chu: boot camp

Mr. Chu: boot camp and six months later, I go to Tsingsao at the _____ CNTC, C, Chinese Navy Training Center. This is American Navy, Seventh Fleet to help _____ All the teachers were in Navy. Some officers _____ American warships, mostly landing craft, LST, LSN, ICN _____

Mr. A. Chu: He was telling me that the training session was short. They were trying to produce qualified personnel in the shortest amount of time. So everything was fast-paced.

Mr. Nichols: Let's go back a little bit. What do you recall about the Japanese occupation of Nanking? If you don't want to talk about it, that's fine, too.

Mr. Chu: It's true story. My father, before the Japanese and Chinese War, he served out in the _____ (Songjiang?)

Mr. A. Chu: He served under one Chinese general...

Mr. Nichols: _____ (Dryler?)

Mr. Chu: When the Japanese invaded Nanking, my father decided to stay in Nanking because of family, kids. One day my father was out. The Japanese soldier take a large Chinese _____ (yahmeh?) looks like a _____ (sword?) but it's not. _____ The Japanese take those people, go to the _____ Yangtze River and _____(used the wire?) _____ line up just before the Yangtze River. Then the Japanese used the machine gun _____. When they come to my father, _____, my father speak a little bit Japanese, he say "I'm a driver and I know how to drive a car." At that time in the Far East, _____ not too many peoples knows to drive the car. So the soldier reported to the officer. Officer take out, take my father _____ ask the ...

Mr. A. Chu: translator

Mr. Chu: translator _____ ask some people knows how to drive the car, come out. So at that time, not too many of others _____ Then the Japanese soldiers used the machine guns, killed all the people, pushed in the water.

Mr. Nichols: Pushed them in the river?

Mr. Chu: Yes, Yangtze River. Ah....is the sea. Because the Yangtze River, the water always _____

Mr. Nichols: _____

Mr. Chu: _____

Mr. Nichols: How far is Nanking from the ocean?

Mr. A. Chu: Nanking is about...

Mr. Chu: 900 miles from Nanking to Shanghai.

Mr. Nichols: 900 miles.

Mr. A. Chu: miles (discussion with Mr. Chu)

Mr. Nichols: Kilometers. So 900 kilometers.

Mr. Chu: Yes, about 600 miles.

Mr. Nichols: So Nanking was about in the middle.

Mr. A. Chu: No. It's close to the eastern _____. It's not too far from the sea really. China is so big.

Mr. Nichols: I know. It's very large.

Mr. A. Chu: _____

Mr. Chu: It's really a true story.

Mr. Nichols: The tide would take these people out to sea that the Japanese had killed?

Mr. Chu: Yes. The Japanese...

Mr. A. Chu: civilians

Mr. Chu: ...these are OK. It's the leader man.

Mr. Nichols: The soldiers were very brutal.

Mr. Chu: Yes, the soldiers have no choice, follow the orders. In three weeks, just one city, Nanking, ...

Mr. A. Chu: _____ (300 ?)

Mr. Chu: Just in three weeks, killed 300,000 people but til now the Japanese still don't agree.

Mr. Nichols: No, I know the Japanese will never agree. Didn't the Japanese receive a lot of their culture from China, too? Their religion, their language, a lot of things, copied from China?

Mr. A. Chu: They copied, but they modified it. The religion, well, the Buddhism is not really indigenous to China. It came from India. _____

Mr. Nichols: Confucianism came from China, didn't it?

Mr. A. Chu: They modified it. In Confucianism, they classify people into four different classes: scholarly part, farmers, followed by the artisans, and then the merchants. By the time this idea comes to Japan, they change scholar to "samurai." It's not exactly the same.

Mr. Nichols: The Japanese like to copy and change things so they can say "It's my idea."

Mr. Chu: Yes, they want to change it. True story.

Mr. Nichols: Did your father drive for the Japanese army then all during the war?

Mr. A. Chu: You mean my father, or my grandfather?

Mr. Nichols: Your grandfather, his father.

(discussion between Mr. A. Chu and Mr. Chu)

Mr. A. Chu: He says yes.

(discussion)

Mr. A. Chu: He actually became a driver working for the Japanese, it's almost like a military intelligence branch or something, some kind of military intelligence branch.

Mr. Nichols: What about your mother?

Mr. Chu: Oh. My mother _____ four _____ used the black from the wok, cooking wok, the black color, all over the face, make like ugly because _____. At that time, all the ladies think protect. Don't let the Japanese girl, Japanese soldier _____, but my mother, lucky. It's OK because my father at that time can speak a little Japanese, ask the Japanese officer, army officer, ask one...

(discussion)

Mr. A. Chu: He asked a Japanese officer to write a piece of paper and the paper contained something like "The people who live in this house, they are not criminals. They are

not bad people. So army soldiers, don't bother the people who live in this house."

Put it on the door or something.

Mr. Nichols: They were off limits.

Mr. A. Chu: Off limits. Right.

Mr. Nichols: Did you have sister and brothers?

Mr. Chu: I had one brother and four sisters.

Mr. Nichols: Were they older than you or younger?

Mr. Chu: All younger than me.

Mr. Nichols: Because of the paper that your father had written, they were protected from the Japanese?

(discussion)

Mr. A. Chu: He says the when the Japanese soldiers saw that piece of paper on the door, they _____ and go in there.

(Mr. Chu speaks in Chinese)

Mr. A. Chu: This is a little story. This is going to take a lot of translation. This is shortly after the Japanese, like three or four weeks after the Japanese had attacked Nanking, and across from my grandfather's house, there was another family lived there. They have two daughters, college-age, _____ rape(?) and know what's going on with others, so they decided to come home from the university. They were followed by some Japanese soldiers. They realized that they were being followed so they went into the house, in the front door and just immediately got out from the rear door. The Japanese soldiers went in there with a bayonet and tried to locate them. They could not locate them so they locked the rear door and were about to set the house on fire, try to force the people out, but unknown to them, there were already

some Chinese civilians outside the house and they blocked the front door so the Japanese soldiers end up getting trapped inside the burning house and were killed in that house.

Mr. Nichols: Was there a large underground movement or resistance movement by the Chinese in Nanking while the Japanese were there?

(discussion)(Mr. Chu speaks in Chinese)

Mr. A. Chu: He says, during the early part of the occupation, when the Japanese soldiers were on patrol on the streets in Nanking, initially two people would be assigned to a patrol unit. Later on, that number was increased to four, then to eight because they found out a lot of soldiers went on patrol and they never came back. They went missing. Some of them were killed on the street and body was left on the street. Some of them were just never seen again.

(Mr. Chu speaks)

Mr. A. Chu: Even when they had increased the patrol size to eight, there were still _____casualty that the whole unit went out and nobody came back. So sometime after that, they decided not to patrol the streets because the casualties are too high.

Mr. Nichols: There was an organization called "Sino-American Cooperative Organization." American intelligence sent people into China and they helped train Chinese guerillas, spies, and what-have-you. Do you recall if any of those were in Nanking or were they farther into western China?

Mr. A. Chu: I don't know if my father is aware of that _____

(Mr. Chu speaks)

Mr. A. Chu: He says that he was aware of that unit, that organization, but that he learned about that unit long after the war was over from reading books. He did not have a

direct...he did not witness those activities conducted by the guerillas directly. All he can report is what he has seen during his presence in Nanking. So he did not directly witness any guerilla activities or any kind of unit that was organized by the Sino-American intelligence organization.

(Mr. Chu speaks)

Mr. A. Chu: The story that he told you about what happened to his father and what the Japanese officer did for the family and also what happened to the neighbor across the street, he saw it himself.

Mr. Nichols: Those are his personal observations. All the while the Japanese were there in Nanking, you were going to school then?

(discussion)

Mr. A. Chu: After the Japanese captured Nanking, about a month or so, school was re-opened and he went back to school.

Mr. Nichols: Was Nanking ever bombed by American airplanes or did the Japanese bomb Nanking before they invaded?

(discussion)(Mr. Chu speaks)

Mr. A. Chu: Many times. He says that when Americans joined the war, Nanking was bombed by joint forces between the American Air Force and the Chinese Air Force. From his recollections, the bombing probably took place around '43, '44 and '45.

Mr. Nichols: I thought I read somewhere that the Chinese would go to the bomb shelters and that they were so crowded that some of the Chinese died just from the ...

Mr. A. Chu: That may be in _____ (Chongqing? Chungking?) because I remember reading something about

(discussion)

Mr. A. Chu: bomb shelter

Mr. Chu: OK. Because of too many people inside. Over 5,000 people. Rank. Air rank. Not fresh air.

Mr. Nichols: This was in Chungking?

Mr. Chu: Yes, Chungking.

Mr. Nichols: Where is Chungking located?

Mr. A. Chu: Chungking is also located on the Yangtze River, but further upstream.

(discussion)

Mr. A. Chu: My father's recollection is maybe somewhere around 2,000 kilometers but probably better verify it with a map.

Mr. Nichols: Is this where Chiang Kai-shek had the government, in Chungking?

Mr. Chu: Yes. Capitol.

Mr. A. Chu: Yes _____ was in capitol.

Mr. Nichols: Did the Flying Tigers fly over Chungking or have airbases around Chungking? Airfields?

Mr. A. Chu: I think when the Flying Tigers first went to China, the base was in another province near _____ and that province is very close to Szechuan which is where Chungking was located.

(discussion)

Mr. A. Chu: The base is also close to Burma

Mr. Chu: _____ supplies from India to _____

Mr. Nichols: They built a road from India across Burma to China, the Ledo Road. Is that what it was called?

Mr. A. Chu: I think as a little boy, he would only know it as the Chinese name. It was just called something like _____ (Chinese name) Burma highway.

Mr. Nichols: Did the Japanese ever invade Chungking on land or did they bomb it?

(Mr. Chu speaks)

Mr. A. Chu: My father says that the Japanese tried but they were blocked. They were not able to move into Chungking because I think it was more like, if I remember my geography correctly, it was more like _____ and it was flat so they couldn't move into Chungking.

Mr. Chu: _____ by the Japanese _____ Pearl Harbor in 1941 so the Americans joined World War II. Chinese got some modern weapons from U.S. _____ Japanese Air Force _____ American P-38, P-51, more faster than the Zero so other hand _____ When the alarm coming, Japanese just like landing _____ Almost the end World War II, Japanese even _____ cannot supply. Japanese soldier hungry so the Chinese family have to feed _____ but the old lady, the young man _____. So Japanese people is OK, but the leader man is bad. May I say something?

Mr. Nichols: Sure.

Mr. Chu: American _____ Japanese _____ Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! _____ come. No! No! No! _____

_____ Americans not that much know about the Oriental people. _____

_____ Japanese _____

Everybody knows German, Chinese, Japanese, the Army, given nothing to eat, nothing to pay, still fight. But now, it has changed. Everything is changed now.

The Japanese remember _____ the island, small island, nothing give back, always take! Never _____ back. But the Chinese know about the Japanese because _____.

The Japanese Navy, very strong Navy in the war, the money comes from where? From China. _____

_____ All the Navy, the money from _____

Mr. Nichols: I know the Japanese would like to see the Americans out of Japan, off of Okinawa.

Mr. Chu: Saipan, Okinawa

(discussion)

Mr. Chu: The Japanese soldiers. Because just like you look at Yamashita, _____

_____ He did a bad thing _____

American soldiers. Yamashita was very, very bad. And Yamamoto, he die by the P-

38, shot down in the _____ ocean. But _____

_____ Pearl Harbor _____

First couple days, yes, and the _____

So every time _____ China, he got a lot of land, money _____

only one city, over three months, that he cannot, but Chiang Kai-shek. The Japanese _____ from the north attack to the south, but Chiang Kai-shek put a lot of good soldiers in Shanghai _____ from the east to west because east _____ lots of water, so the highways _____ tanks cannot use.

Mr. A. Chu: Let me paraphrase. My father was trying to say that if you look at the entire Chinese history, all of successful conquest was pretty much done by north to south direction and Chiang Kai-shek decided that he cannot allow the Japanese to use north-to-south strategy and so forced them to fight an east-and-west campaign. That kind of made it hard for them to use a mechanized force to destroy the Chinese Army.

Mr. Nichols: The war ended in 1945. Did the Japanese leave immediately?

Mr. Chu: Yes. _____ good for Japanese. _____
_____. A lot of people wander from Chungking to the home

Mr. Nichols: Were you always short of food in Nanking during the Japanese occupation?

Mr. Chu: _____
Japanese soldiers, no food, not enough. _____
Americans had lots of meat, but the Japanese soldiers, not so much meat. Rice. So rice not enough for Japanese.

Mr. Nichols: After the war ended, is this when you and your family left China or was it a few years later before you went to Taiwan?

Mr. Chu: _____ just after World War II, after one day or so they signed,
_____ go over there _____ First day I got over there, they don't want me because I'm too young! The second day I'm liar-- I'm 18! So they take _____

Mr. Nichols: When did Chiang Kai-chek leave mainland China and go to Taiwan to set up his government? Immediately?

Mr. Chu: 1949.

Mr. Nichols: He was fighting with the Chinese Communists...

Mr. Chu: Yah.

Mr. A. Chu: From '46 to '49.

Mr. Nichols: ...during that time and finally was defeated and left.

Mr. Chu: _____ war, Communist China, just one day _____

Mr. A. Chu: My father was involved in that _____, I think 1958, _____ island of _____ (Quemoy?) His ship was near the island that day and he got a little mark on his _____ (forearm?) that a piece of shrapnel...

Mr. Nichols: This was '58?

Mr. A. Chu: '58-'59. Eisenhower was still president

Mr. Chu: It was after Korea. Yes, after Korean War. American Army sent _____ to the island _____.

Mr. A. Chu: Samoa, I think that is the island.

Mr. Chu: Then the Communist _____ no more. But Americans helped China a lot. Even Communist China, _____, no modern weapons supplied to China _____

Mr. Nichols: When Russia finally entered the war, did they ever get _____ Manchuria or did they _____ mainland China?

Mr. Chu: Oh, bad! Bad! Russians very bad. Take everything!

(discussion)

Mr. Chu: Manchuria, he don't want go back home. He want to wait for a while, waiting Chinese Communists control land. He take all _____ all the factories, the machines, equipment _____ lots of girls, the Chinese raped _____

Mr. A. Chu: A lot of girls were raped by the Red Army.

Mr. Chu: _____ but the Japanese soldiers _____ take the Chinese girls, Korea girls, _____ girls, _____ for the soldiers. _____ Taiwan, Korea, send the paper to the courthouse, the Japanese courthouse, they don't agree.

Mr. Nichols: No, they deny everything.

Mr. Nichols: After you joined the Chinese Navy, you were an enlisted man or officer?

Mr. Chu: When I joined the Navy, I was _____ Then after _____ I become Chinese Navy officer, _____ I was First Lieutenant, _____ got out of the Navy, joined the Merchant Marine.

(discussion)

Mr. A. Chu: I need to re-phrase that. It wasn't very clear. When he joined the Navy, he was an enlisted man, but because there was not enough officers, so they had some sort of quick training program to _____ anyone who would apply and become an officer. Later on my father did become an officer.

Mr. Chu: I was a First Lieutenant. _____ I wanted to get out of the Navy because _____

Mr. Nichols: The Merchant Marine was better than the Navy?

Mr. Chu: Oh! _____ (100?) more than the Chinese Navy, 1 ½ years.

Mr. Nichols: The Chinese Navy did not pay well?

Mr. Chu: Yes, it's good. 100 U.S. dollars. Other than the U. S. Navy, how much _____
_____ Same position \$1,200

Mr. Nichols: Sure

Mr. Chu: Yah. _____ 100 dollars.

Mr. Nichols: What did the Merchant Marine pay you?

Mr. Chu: When I joined as a civil engineer, _____ is \$400 U.S. dollars per month.
_____ after _____ months, raised me up to the Chief Engineer _____
\$600.

Mr. Nichols: Big difference.

Mr. Chu: Yah, big difference, but _____ How much does it
pay _____ Double. \$7,000. When I come into the U.S. he tell me finish the
school. OK, _____ When I was 70, _____

Mr. Nichols: You didn't come to the United States when your son came? He came first and then
you came?

Mr. A. Chu: We came together

Mr. Nichols: You came together.

Mr. Chu: Yah.

Mr. Nichols: And your wife?

Mr. Chu: Yah, together.

Mr. Nichols: And your other children?

Mr. Chu: Yah.

Mr. A. Chu: My one younger brother.

Mr. Nichols: You have one brother.

Mr. A. Chu: Yes, two of us.

Mr. Chu: _____ in college ten years, take _____ degree. When he was after the high school, he asked me _____ (take a double e "EE"?) After two years, he tell me he don't like. He changed from EE to economics. After master's degree, _____ find a job. _____ go back to school again, take a double e "EE" _____

Mr. A. Chu: My brother did not like arithmetic or science or mathematics, but he is very talented artistically.

Mr. Chu: Yes. _____ After six months in _____ (France?) to attend American and French student _____ After France, go back Columbia University, one year, got a master's degree _____ but only _____ just like his father, no grandfather yet. He don't want to marry!

Mr. Nichols: We appreciate your relating your experiences to us. We don't have many first-hand experiences from that part of the world, other than the American G.I.s that have come back from the war. We try to interview as many different people as we can to get a broad perspective of the war. We don't have a lot about the China-Burma-India theater. That's kind of a forgotten part of the war, but it's always good to have someone from another country that participated in some of those major things in their country, especially Nanking because it's always good to hear comments from someone who was there and give us first-hand his experiences.

Mr. Chu: I think you know a lot about the Chinese people.

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Tape 1021

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