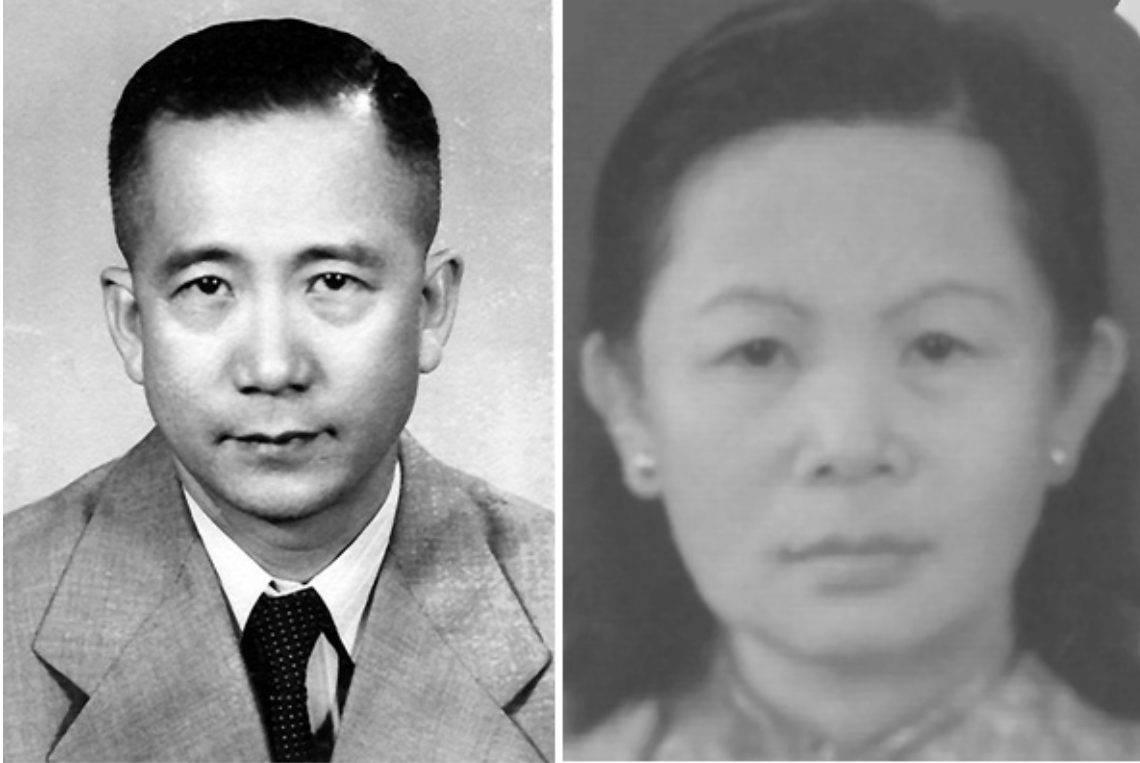


## **Chow (Chau) family history**

July 2004

By Doug

based upon conversations with family



Chau Sing Tai (1905-2001) and Hon Kam Lai (1905-1992) were both born on the island of Hainan but did not know each other until they met at their arranged marriage. Dad went to Hong Kong twice, once at the age of 17 and again at the age of 19. Most likely they were married in 1924 (at the ages of 18-19) during this period between trips to Hong Kong.

Dad's first few years in Hong Kong were spent working very hard as a bus boy, a delivery boy, an office boy, and as a printer's apprentice. In addition, he carried water for an inn maintained by the Hainan Business Association. He worked during the day and went to school at night. The tuition for his schooling was paid for by a prominent man from Hainan who eventually became knighted.



Around 1927 there was a labor strike in Hong Kong and they returned to Hainan. The first of their children, Tak To, was born in 1927 and was the only one born outside Hong Kong. The oldest sister, Tak See, was born in 1932 followed by Tak Ling (1936), Tak Ying (1938), Tak Ching (1939), and Tak Chun (1941). All the girls were born at Kowloon Hospital in Hong Kong. Their mom was able to keep all the children's birth certificates together, an amazing feat in light of what was to come starting in 1941.

The Japanese had been allowed to occupy Hainan island in 1939 and during this occupation all the grandparents were killed in the fields.



HONG KONG DECEMBER 25, 1941

In December 1941 the family was living on Victory Road in Hong Kong. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of December, the Japanese invaded Hong Kong and Tak See can remember the British cannon being fired close to where they lived as well as hearing air raid sirens. A few months later, in either February or March 1942, the family had to leave Hong Kong because of food shortages. This move was to be the first of many during the years of World War II. They settled in the city of Zhanjiang, a French colony in southern China close to the border with Vietnam. It was during this time that Mom lost a baby girl in childbirth and was seriously ill because of severe bleeding.

As the Japanese came closer on their move south into what was then known as French Indo-China, the family had to move again. A pattern developed where Dad would go ahead to find a place to live and then get word to the rest of the family to meet him. After a stay of about a year, another move to Luizhoa was made followed a year later by a move to Guiyang and then in 1944 to Chungking (Chongqing). While in Chungking Mom became very ill.

By today's standards, these moves were incredibly difficult and it is amazing that the family was able to stay together as well as they did. Tak To would travel with other people from Hainan who Dad knew while Tak See would travel with Tak Ling and Tak Ying. Keep in mind that Tak See was about 12 years old at this time. Mom would travel with the two youngest children in a separate truck. Tak Ying remembers almost being run over by a military truck that fortunately stopped 1-2 feet from her. An additional hazard of these journeys were bombings by Japanese aircraft. In spite of all these obstacles the family was able to eventually reunite and continue their life together.

A different kind of separation took place with Tak See and Tak Ling as they stayed in a school 7 miles from the rest of the family. They were able to see each other every week or so at the most. At this time, Tak See was in grade 6 and Tak Ling in grade 2. With all the moving about, some of the girls had to repeat grades. In 1945 Tak See finished grade 6 and then entered a Junior High School in 1946 while they were still in Chungking.

Tak See stayed in Chungking in 1946 while the rest of the family moved to Canton. It appears that Tak To's appearances were very few and far between because Tak See remembers that any visit from her brother was treated as a very special event.