

## **Community history, Chinese**

### **Franklin Chew** (b. 1942)

*He was born in Malaysia, where he received his primary and part of his secondary education, then came to Australia, where he matriculated from Melbourne High School and graduated from the University of Melbourne. He is a leader in obstetrics and gynaecology, based at the Mercy Hospital for Women. From 1982 he was on the foundation committee of the Chinese Association of Victoria (CAV), was its President in 1985 and 1986 and foundation chair of its Building Project Committee, responsible for raising funds, then supervising the erection of the CAV's extensive educational and cultural centre at Wantirna in Melbourne.*

**Franklin Chew:** ...Before we were from Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Indonesia, China, everywhere. So that moulds our values and when you get together, you like to talk about old times, what you like eating, drinking or doing. And it's no different from the Irish or Scottish or English or Italians or Greeks. Now and then you like to do that. Not all the time, you know. Most of the time, nine to five, Monday through Friday, we're eating and speaking dinky-di Australian...

...it is an evolving nation, migrants are also evolving, because when they first hit the place they don't know the culture, they have to learn and they have to integrate. And they're willing to integrate, I believe, because if they don't integrate they'll die...

**Diana Giese:** Your community as you see it is adjusting to change the whole time, whereas you think that the government spokespeople seem to be arrested in an idea that things are static?

**Franklin Chew:** Some of them. I wouldn't say the whole lot. Depending on the make-up of the government. There are some Ministers who are really with it, who are more broad-minded, you know.

...

**Franklin Chew:** Nowadays the world is becoming smaller and smaller. All the big companies are becoming international and amalgamating so the kids that we have who are highly professional in corporate management are all involved in world management. They're travelling everywhere.

**Diana Giese:** And this is what your children do?

**Franklin Chew:** Well, my daughter and one of my friend's children, they are all CAV's children, and they are all very high up in the corporate world...they are fortunate that their parents are all highly qualified and learned in good schools and set the example for them to follow...

**Diana Giese:** But they also know who they are.

**Franklin Chew:** It's got nothing to do with being Chinese, though.

**Diana Giese:** But they know who they are so they've got the confidence to move forward on that basis.

**Franklin Chew:** ...they have to have that fullness of their character to have their own self-confidence and esteem to be able to stand out and lead...

...

**Franklin Chew:** I'm looking for good executive committee people, but everybody's busy, you see. Everybody's busy.

**Diana Giese:** So that's really the secret, isn't it, of keeping these associations going? Because if you look at some of the other older associations in Melbourne, some of them are very much in the doldrums because they haven't been able to recruit younger people...

**Franklin Chew:** Yes, every association runs through the same problem. You have keen people, and after a while...it waxes and wanes. It's not easy to find a good, energetic, inspired leader. A good

leader inspires his team and the team works well...My ultimate wish is to set up the CAV centre so that it is self-financially viable. At the moment it's a strain to keep it afloat, so the second half phase of the project is not completed...If I can set up something there like a reception centre, restaurant or whatever it is, they generate income and sustain the other side—and finish, the job's done.

...

**Franklin Chew:** I think our greatest achievement [the CAV] is to show the rest of the Chinese community groups what we can do, and we have really shaken them up when we took charge...they wanted our leadership. They wanted us to take over the Federation of Chinese Associations...

**Diana Giese:** The umbrella organisation...which expresses the Chinese voice...This [amalgamation] has been much talked about, but never happened.

**Franklin Chew:** The need is there. We tried a few times by telephone connection throughout the nation, but every city—Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and Queensland—they've all got their factions fighting. That's because they all want to do too much. As I said to our FCA, 'Don't do too much. You're competing with your membership association activities.'...every sub-group has got their own peculiar interest. You don't try and celebrate all their interests. You become the big brother, just stay out there and look after all the general things.

(From interview with Diana Giese, ORAL TRC 4581, 2000, *Chinese Australian Oral History Partnership/Post-War Chinese Australians*, National Library of Australia)

## Link

Chinese Association of Victoria <http://www.cavinc.com.au/>