Interviewee: Yi Guixiang, female. Born in 1945

Location: Pengtian Village, Guangchang County, Wuzhou City, Jiangxi Province

Interviewer: Yi Yangmin

Interview date: 02/27/2016

Interview place: Yi Guixiang’s home

Interview length: 00:02:57

**Transcript**

Yi: (We) got no food in 1958. (I) got nothing to eat but chaff if I didn’t go to work. Those who didn’t work grabbed the bowls but got nothing to eat. I worked in a factory making mills. I worked there to gain something to eat. But those who didn’t work got no food. They ate chaff day after day. Those who did iron-sand washing also ate chaff a lot, at the canteen. The (production team’s) team leaders also ate chaff. They make a meal out of chaff and two *liang* of rice, with ground potato, or more like potato grits instead of well-ground potato, to serve their families. They divide one such meal into several servings. Starting from 1959 people got paid according to how much work they had done. People who did their jobs earned themselves food. The more they did, the more they got to eat, and vice versa. In the case of my family, we had more people and hence got more food. Families with less people got less to eat. The food supply has to be calculated and we didn’t dare to eat too much. If we ran out of food, we would borrow some from others. We went everywhere to borrow food. If we borrow food, say, this spring, we will get nothing left after we return them in winter. What would you get to eat at that time when nothing grows (during the winter)? Nothing grew on the farmland and even if you planted some crops, they would only grow a little bit, without grains. But nowadays an acre of land grows thousands *jin* of grains. The distribution of farmland to individual household began in 1959, when things started to get better. Days before that were not good and before 1958 you got no food even if you work for the production team. After 1958, 1959 and 1960, the individual household pattern came to an end and food started to be available. Meals are cooked at the canteen. I ate at the canteen in 1958. In 1959, after eating at the canteen I would go to the mill factory to make mills, like that kind of grinding tools. I started to cook in the canteen in 1959, for a year. People would get nothing to eat if they went late for the canteen and if they got nothing, they started to scramble for food. People scrambled to eat and if you grabbed nothing, you got nothing to eat. People sat at one table and each table was shared by eight people. But I couldn’t make it on time and I even had a kid with me. Then someone else would grab something for me, but if they didn’t get me anything I had no choice but ate nothing. What all the people got was just one basket of cooked rice and each one would only grab such a little. Someone would even take away all of them using a plate, leaving the rest of us nothing to eat. I went there very late and the kids I brought with me made it even less convenient for me (to get food). I had several kids and they couldn’t get food, but I could do nothing about that. But even if there is no food, I would prepare them some milk to drink and some chairs to sit down. I would work there, to do that kind of mill. I had to make more (mills) and got a lot of work to do.