

# FONG FAMILY HISTORY

## Recollections

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Early stories that I had heard about my dad from some of his friends from China was that he was quite a mischievous youth, but my recollections about him belie that picture of him. We all know of the sacrifices and hard work he and Mom suffered in raising us eight children to be respectful citizens. I write these recollections with great sadness that neither lived long enough to enjoy the fruits of their labor in the successes of their children. They were both truly servants of God.

My dad was known as Rev. Fong So Yick to many of his friends because he was one of the first in his village back in China to embrace the Christian faith through his contact with missionaries there at the time. He and my mother, whose maiden name was Low He Wan, actually ran away from home in Ho Chung, Chungshan County in the province of Canton, to escape religious persecution. In the year 1979, I found the original marriage certificate with the pictures of our mom and dad. The Christian inscription and cross also remain on the wall of their home, in spite of Communist efforts to destroy all vestiges of Christianity in its earlier days. They came to the United States around 1917. My father settled in Oakland and taught in a Chinese school. He also became a lay preacher for the Oakland Chinese Cumberland Presbyterian Church. In 1920, the church decided to move to San Francisco Chinatown, so my father decided to try farming and moved his new family of Paul, Ada and Joseph to Centerville where John and I were born on the John Stevenson Ranch.

After a few years in Centerville, my father moved his growing family to Niles after the humble house they lived in burned down. He packed whatever meager belongings that he had left from that fire on a small sled, hitched the horse he had purchased to plow and cultivate the soil and placed me on top of the sled, as I was still a baby at that time. He drove the horse that pulled the sled, and the rest of the family walked about one mile to the Alameda Creek, which was dry that summer. After crossing the creek following a path made by wagons, the family walked another one-half mile to a big barn. There, my father leased a small farm of ten acres from Mr. Pratali, who had children the same age as John and myself, so we became schoolmates in future years. My father had converted the large barn

into comfortable living quarters for his family. It was about this time that Dad decided to bring his youngest half-brother from China to live with us. Uncle Bill, as we call Fong So Way, became like big brother to us and we looked to him for advice until his death in March of 1999.

This was the first home that I can remember--a large barn of approximately 60 feet long and 30 feet wide with a large sliding door on each end. The north end of the barn was partitioned off for the horse. A corral was built next to this end of the house so the horse could spend time outdoors when he was not needed for work in the fields. The center of the barn held the equipment and workshop and storage. The south end of the barn my dad had partitioned off into cubicles for sleeping lofts, and a combined living room and kitchen. There was a wood cooking stove and a kerosene stove for hot water and heat. Mom did all the cooking for this growing family in this area. We took baths in a thirty-gallon galvanized tub. It was in this house that Inez was born. Now that I look back, that was quite an accomplishment for a young father with a family and little means.

My father met and made many friends who later became quite prominent in the area, such as Fred Lowry and John Stevenson, who became the first mayor of Fremont when all the small towns of this area was later incorporated into a city. Edward Enos, postmaster in Niles and later, the local draft administrator during WWII; Joseph Shinn, a pioneer rancher; and George Roeding, Sr., founder of the California Nursery Co. were all his friends. It was a Dr. Seabart, who delivered some of us children that, in his strong Christian beliefs, helped our parents to name us with Christian names. We all as children attended the original Niles Congregational Church -- walking over one mile whether clear skies, rain or cold. I even remember snow. Should we miss Sunday School, our kindly old Sunday School teacher would come rumbling down that bumpy country road leading to our farm in her old Model A Ford to see if we were all well. We were usually given two pennies each for the offering plate at Sunday School, but oftentimes one of those pennies ended up at our landlord's candy store. Mr. Pratali at that time, also owned the local hotel and tavern. Mr. Pratali was a very influential man in town and a very kind person. As mentioned earlier, his children, Amador and Annabel, became classmates and good friends with John and Joe

through high school. Around Lunar New Year, Amador would always accompany his dad to collect the rent because he knew he would get some firecrackers from us. Very sadly, many years later when I graduated from college, I met Mr. Pratali a very beaten man--a victim of his drinking after his wife died. The small amount of help that I could give him did not save him. I have always remembered the help he gave to my father in getting started during those early and difficult years.

In 1928, the adjacent Bertolucci Ranch became available for my father to purchase. In his hard and diligent struggles he had managed to accumulate enough for a down payment to buy this ten-acre farm with a small three-bedroom house, barn, work shed, garage and large yard. Shortly after moving into this place, sister Rose was born. Father and Mother slept in the front bedroom, the girls in one bedroom and the boys in the third bedroom. This was a luxury to us, and we later poured cement for a floor in the full basement, which had been a wine cellar. We created in this basement a large kitchen with a butane gas stove and dining room with an eight-foot table for this now large family and a bedroom for guests who used to come out to spend the summer with us. The table had bench seats attached to the legs, so we had many a laugh when we had some of our heavier guests sitting on one side and all of us on the opposite side would rise at the same time! The basement was also used in the winter to break the garlic into separate cloves in order to be planted at that time for an early summer's harvest. We had a Victrola to play music while we worked in the basement on the garlic or rosebud-cutting for the California Nursery. In the year 1932, we got our first radio--a dome-shaped Philco--and we enjoyed such programs as Amos 'n Andy, the Jack Benny Show, One Man's Family, Henry Aldridge, The Standard Symphony Hour, Kay Kaiser and His Orchestra, Phil Spitalny and His All-Girl Orchestra, Glenn Miller Orchestra, The Hit Parade, and many other wonderful programs. In addition to the radio, I had my own crystal set--a small thin wire and a rock crystal that picked up radio signals--which I used to listen to while in bed. Television, which began in the 60's, was unknown in those days.

On the right end of the house grew a large willow tree under which Uncle Bill, with the help of the boys in our family, built a mud



oven like those seen in China. There, Mother always had a wok full of boiled water for whatever purpose hot water was needed, as there was no hot and cold running water in those days. This, of course, was only when the weather allowed us to be outdoors. Many a time during the harvest season, we would pick fresh corn from the fields and throw the husked corn into that wok for the sweetest tasting corn one could ever savor!

In one corner of the yard, we had a pigsty to raise a piglet we bought in the fall of each year from the Whipple Ranch in Decoto (now a part of Union City). This pig was raised on cooked food and "fahn jiu," plus fresh corn and other vegetables. By late spring, this "little porker" was about 200 pounds, and our butcher friends from Sang Cheong Market in Oakland would come out to our ranch to help us butcher this pig and roast it Chinese-style in a cylindrical brick oven they had built near that mud oven. Great parties were held there with our many friends from the city, enjoying freshly-roasted pig and "jee heet jook" (pig blood porridge) and all the trimmings. This was an annual event as we repeated the process again with the purchase of a new piglet in the fall of each year.

Also in my memories are several sad recollections from those early days. Our baby, Jacob was born in the early 30's, but was with us for only a month after struggling with pneumonia. When my brothers, Paul and Joseph were 12 and 10, respectively, my father wanted them to meet their grandparents in China. Very unfortunately, Paul contracted a fatal disease while there, so Joe returned home to us by himself, somewhat shaken. He re-enrolled in school and became a classmate of brother John because of the loss of two years of education at Niles Grammar School where we all attended.

My first day at school was a memorable one as John, who was one year ahead, introduced me to all his friends, telling them not to pick on me, as I was his little brother and he was to protect me. Then, after school was dismissed, John and I got into the biggest fight over a silly baseball glove. This was the only fight that I can ever remember in all of our lives. John and Joe were always the most caring and sharing persons that I ever knew. It is so sad that they were both called home to heaven at such an early age of 40.

It was also on that first day of school that I got my first puppy of undetermined breed--a cute black and white dog that we named Max after Max Baer, world champion boxer of local origin. Maxie and I grew fond of each other, and we became inseparable up until the day almost 20 years later when I was called to serve in the Navy during WWII. Max became a real hunting dog and enjoyed the sport as much as we did. Hunting was one of the great enjoyments of our childhood on the farm. We hunted with slingshots that we made ourselves from selected branches from the trees we had on the farm. I remember the first BB gun my dad bought for us to learn how to handle guns. We often shot birds for our mother for the medicinal soups she made for us. Later in our youth, we purchased a 22- rifle and 20-gauge and 410-gauge shotguns to hunt ducks, quail and pheasants on and around the farm. We also used the rifle to shoot rodents, such as gophers and squirrels that ate some of our crops or dug holes in the ground where we planted. Pheasant season was exciting as our tomato fields and its surroundings were abundant with the birds, and often we would be able to go out at sun-up to get our limit of two birds before going to school. Max loved to flush out any game and recover them after the shoot. Everything we brought home served to supplement our meager meat diet, which made Ma and Pa very pleased in those early years.

Among other enjoyments in those days were games of softball, kick-the-can, basketball in our homemade court, and swimming in our own 'ole swimmin' hole that we created by damming a narrow part of the creek with sandbags and the help of the neighboring farm boys. We built a raft of several abandoned hot water tanks and a diving board using the seat from an old buckboard wagon. One day in 1936 while playing along the creek, we discovered an abandoned Model T Ford of 1925 vintage. With a team of horses, we pulled that old pickup truck out of the creek and brought it home where we cleaned it out, reset the magnetos to provide the spark necessary to make it run, put a salvaged a ruxle rear transmission and found ourselves with our own car! There were six of us neighborhood farm boys plus a schoolmate we called "Bruiser," because he was the biggest of us all and played tackle on the high school football team. Five of us including Bruiser piled into that Model T and took it on its first trial run all the way up to Calaveras Dam near Milpitas and back again

avoiding the local speed cop the whole way. We had no license for our little jalopy, so we did not venture much on public roads. The only mishap was a blown front tire when Bruiser decided that he wanted to ride in the front seat. We repaired that tire with the repair kit that we carried and returned home after a trip of nearly 30 miles. I learned to drive when I was 12 years old, and my favorite chore was to deliver cornstalks to the neighboring dairy, where I could unload the Model T by spinning it around the cow corral at full speed until the cornstalks all fell off. Our deal with the dairy people was to trade our cornstalk as feed for the cattle for the raw fresh milk that we all drank in our growing-up years.

Social life on the farm involved visits from our distant relatives working for the California Nursery owned by George C. Roeding, or the ranch of Joseph Shinn, Sr. There was a Chinese camp on each of these ranches that had a kitchen building with a large wok on top of a brick stove, bunk rooms with hard bunk beds such as those found in China, an outhouse and a small vegetable garden. The Shinn camp, situated on the edge of Niles Lake had a fish trap fashioned out of rice sacks, much like those observed in later life on a trip through China. Among those cousins and uncles I remember were Fong Day Ngim, who served as the camp barber in his spare time; Fong Buck Ngee, the camp cook; two Fong Gwei Mao, one being called Big Mao and the other Small Mao; and Lum Wa Sung, who eventually brought his wife over from China and established his own family unit and farm in Niles. The camp at the California Nursery was often our resting point as it was midway on our one-mile trek to school each day. From the Shinn camp was Fong Hung Bong, who was the labor camp leader because he could drive and speak English. He used to drive his old 1929 Dodge truck the five miles to visit us. Fong Hung Bong was an envied one because he was the only one to own a real automobile. We later inherited that old Dodge, but it was sure hard to drive because there was no power steering in those days and it burned so much gas. Also living in Southern Alameda County were several other Chinese families during those years of the 30's. Our nearest Chinese neighbor was the Yan Lira family consisting of six boys and one daughter, Joan. The Fong Wah Yo family lived in eastern Niles, the Low Gum Bong family lived in Newark and Cheng Wah Sung farmed the Patterson Ranch.



Edwin Dixon Bristow was our principal at Niles Grammar School located at First and B Streets directly across from the Veterans Memorial Hall. In a span of 20 years, there was always at least one member of our family in attendance at this school. When Uncle Bill attended school there, he achieved fame as the school swim champion. I graduated from Niles Grammar School in 1937--the same year sister Ada graduated from Washington Union High. John and Joe were freshmen at the high school and thus, began another 10-year span of Fong Family attendance, sister Rose being the youngest and graduating in 1944. In walking that mile home from school each day we often stopped by the California Nursery cookhouse where the Chinese cook would some times give us a piece of pie left over from lunch. In the fall there were chestnuts on the ground which we picked up to cook that evening. An alternate way from school was through a cherry orchard. We would choose this route when cherries were in season. One afternoon on our way home about five of us were picking a few cherries to eat. Mr. Bristow drove his car up to that orchard and brought us back to school for a strapping on each of our hands for stealing cherries. My 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher was horrified, not at the physical abuse, but that I, her star pupil was among the group.

Our high school days were fun and memorable. Joe played on the baseball team as their star pitcher, John played football, and I played lightweight basketball and tennis. When the 7th period notice was announced to excuse J. Fong for practice, we all got up and left our respective classes, regardless of the sport in season. It was a rule at home that only one of us could participate in a sport during any time, so that two of us could be home to help with the afternoon chores on the farm.

Work on the farm was hard, and we all had our duties and chores to perform. Ada, being the oldest daughter, helped Ma around the house, doing all the housework and laundry and occasionally worked on weekends at the International Kitchen to earn a few extra dollars. I also earned movie money by mowing and watering lawns for others at 20 cents an hour. Wow! That was big money for a 12-year old in those days. Since none of us had an allowance, this was the only way we had money for things such as movies or the purchase of sports equipment for school. Some of us also sold fruit and



vegetables to our neighbors for spending money. We had our bicycles for transportation and took turns each day to go into town for the mail. My father always looked forward each day for a check from the produce broker who took our harvest to San Francisco to be sold. He was at the mercy of the broker for the price of each crate or box shipped and sold. Our crops included summer squash and corn and string beans in late spring, garlic in the early summer, tomatoes in the fall, and cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli in winter. All of these crops required constant planting, cultivation and irrigation to bring them to harvest. We even worked during moonlight to get the irrigation done in time. Often during the hot summer months we took a midday rest from the hot sun and worked late into the evening to accomplish the work.

In the spring, our tomato crop was contracted to a cannery even before it was planted. Harvest time was in the Fall, when we hired migrant workers to pick the tomatoes should the harvest be more plentiful than we could harvest ourselves. We would hire a truck to haul the 80-pound boxes to the cannery in Hayward. Payment was by the ton, so we always looked for a big crop each year. In 1940, Pa bought a new Chevrolet to replace the used 1934 Ford pickup he had bought a few years earlier. He didn't know how to drive and left the driving to us boys. That truck was a pleasure to drive and could haul a bigger load to sell our crops to local markets. There were no supermarkets in those days, and local managers of chain stores often purchased their produce directly from the farmers. We sold to the Niles Market and the Hayward Lucky stores, as well as to shippers that packed the produce for the Eastern Markets. There was a shipper named Lee Look How who bought most of our green stone tomatoes (called stone because of its firmness and roundness very desirable for eating as opposed to the larger canning tomato) and shipped them to Hawaii. In later years, his son Alfred became a prominent optometrist in Chinatown during the same years that I practiced the same profession in Oakland and San Leandro.

Pa purchased a new horse to do the plowing and cultivating after we moved onto the new farm. It was a mare we called Belle, which had been bred between a saddle horse and a plow horse, so we were able to ride her occasionally. In the spring when she had not been working all winter, she was quite frisky and tried to throw us off

her back. But when we placed little Gary, Ada's two-year old son on her back, Belle would stand perfectly still. That horse had much wisdom. During a total eclipse one year, Belle fell asleep in the middle of a job. She knew that the 12 o'clock or 5 o'clock whistle from the tile plant a half-mile away meant lunchtime or quitting time, so she hurried back at the sound...and she was not even a union member! Belle did like to be ridden, and we had many a good time together. In later years, we bought a used McKormick tractor with a five-foot steel back wheel for plowing, disc plowing and harrowing. I spent many hours singing to myself as I drove that tractor tilling the soil--hours upon hours and then coming home with dust-on-face so thick as to be almost unrecognizable!

It was during the last semester before graduation that my father asked me to drive him to town in our newly-purchased 1940 Chevrolet pickup truck to see the postmaster, Edward Enos, who had become a good friend; then to the bank, known as Central Bank at that time; and to the grocery store, to which he had been selling some of the produce grown on the farm. When we were on our way home he instructed me to distribute the boxes in the tomato field for the harvest and to hire the pickers. He finished our conversation with the advice that no matter what I do or wherever I might be, I should not be afraid if I knew that God was at my side. He asked me to drop him off at home and to call the doctor, as he was not feeling well. I did as he told me, and that was the last time I saw him alive as he passed away of a heart attack that afternoon. Often times after that I thought about going into the ministry but then thought that the pay would be slim. That was hypocritical thinking, but I felt that there would be other ways to serve the Lord.

Right after I graduated high school, I took an intensive course in aviation metalsmith to fill the need for workers at the newly-opened Alameda Naval Air Station. I had worked there for four months when Joe had a tragic accident on the tractor as the hot exhaust pipe had broken off, lodged between the spokes of the back wheel, came over the top of his head and pinned his ankle on the clutch, burning his flesh to the bone. This necessitated amputation, and I was called home to run the farm until the time I went into the Navy.

Brother John was always the most adventurous of us three surviving brothers. He was the first one to leave the farm immediately upon graduation from high school in 1940 to take a job delivering meat for the Ninth Street Market in Oakland. John loved to drive and was quite skillful--known as the fastest deliveryman in town. He played on the amateur football team in Oakland Chinatown called "The Dragons." It was during this time that he met Lilly Jiu and brought her home to the farm one Sunday to announce that they were getting married. Of course, it fell upon me to take care of the rituals of delivering the wedding cakes and other tasks related to the formalities of a wedding of two Chinese families. Lil and John were very caring of me while I was attending U.C. Berkeley and welcomed me into their home, especially when they needed a babysitter. I loved the opportunity to take care of those cute kids, Shirley, Larry and Karen. Eventually, John went to work for Interline Trucking, but was refused membership into the Teamsters Union, which at the time was an all-White organization. John decided to buy his own semi-truck with a huge trailer and contracted as an independent driver with Interlines, which later became part of 99 Trucking. John would make daily trips to Napa, Vallejo and the vicinity delivering auto parts and other freight and made many friends along this route. When World War II began, John took a contract with the U.S. military to deliver food from the embarcadero in San Francisco to all of the various military bases throughout Northern California. He always made a point to return home each evening to his family. John loved fishing and had many fishing companions. (One Christmas, John bought Lil her own fishing tackle as his Christmas gift to her.) John loved life, and he loved people. During the Christmas Holidays, he would take all the kids at Presbyterian Church in his big truck to go Christmas caroling. There never was a time that he would refuse our quest for help. Once I asked him to haul our winter's supply of hay for the horses on a hot August day in the San Ramon Valley. We loaded 240-pound bales from the ground up onto the bed of his truck, and then unloaded it again into the barn on our farm. Needless to say, we both lost several pounds that day. Brother John was a man of great integrity. He relayed to me one day that the FBI had been observing him for several months to learn about him and eventually to offer him a job with the bureau. John was a great family man and loved his family dearly. He refused the offer. Their second home on 6th Avenue



and East 20th was just as happy and joyful. There they had a nice basement family room in which John and Lil hosted many a fun-filled party. John's life touched many, and God called him and Joe home when they were yet quite young.

Brother Joe was a tall, handsome six-footer (tall for Chinese at that time). He was a great athlete and was the starting pitcher for the Washington Union High School in his junior and senior years. After graduation, Joe pitched for the Milpitas Merchants, a semi-pro team that earned its pay by the passing of the hat. We all attributed his pitching skills to his broken arm in his boyhood days. The healing of herbal medications that my mom used always seemed to do the trick. Joe stayed on the farm after graduation from high school, but after his misfortune with the tractor resulting in an artificial foot, he went to the city to become a meat cutter in Jack and Ada's store. Joe, like John, was a great brother to me, a very sensitive person and even offered to help fund my college education. Fortunately, the GI bill took care of that. Joe married Helen Eng and raised two very talented children. Stevie is now a pianist aboard the Princess Cruise Lines, and it is so nice that he now drops by every so often between cruises to tell of his adventures on those trips to exciting places. His sister Kathy is Head Librarian in San Mateo and is also involved in Washington as Chair of the Board for the Schools and Libraries Corporation. Their little sister is married and living in a Washington D.C. suburb, giving Steve a chance to feel at home when he is on the East coast.

We graduated high school just when the U.S. entered WWII, and many of our classmates were lost in the war. My brothers and I were fortunate to get deferments because of our essentiality to produce food for the war effort. It was toward the end of the war that I was called into the Navy, because I had taken a test and qualified for special training as an electronic technician. While I was in basic training or "Boot Camp," Inez and Dr. Herbert Yee got married and that was the only marriage of our family that I missed. While in school, VJ Day happened, and World War II was over, but not without the loss of so many friends and many of the best of our nation's youth. I feel very fortunate in surviving the war because I had remembered my father's advice to me on the day he died--I would never be afraid, whatever I do or wherever I would be, as long as I knew God was by my side. I know that He watched over me in those



times. I was given a great pep and loyalty talk on VJ Day to remain in the Navy, including a 30-day leave and a chance to finish college if I chose to "ship over" into the regular Navy for four more years. The enticement sounded so good—especially going home for 30 days--that I agreed to sign over. While enjoying being a civilian for 30 days, I had second thoughts of the U.S. Navy. God, again, looked out for me as I returned to school in Chicago and was called into the office. It was brought to my attention that I had failed to sign the required affidavits to become a regular Navy man. I refused the option to sign those papers and was immediately shipped out to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where I was assigned to Personnel Administration until my discharge nine months later. This incident permitted me to return home and attend the University of California and Los Angeles College of Optometry (now Southern California College of Optometry) and to meet and marry that wonderful and beautiful woman, Lena Chew. We have such a wonderful marriage raising Neal and his four sisters--Jill, Heidi, Charlotte and Polly. God has truly made my journey through life a joy. And now to enjoy eight grandchildren is such a wonderful experience.

My years at Cal were hectic as I was then in my mid-twenties, and I and a lot of other WWII veterans were intent on getting as much of an education and a profession as soon as possible. My studies took me through two summer sessions, and I finished my pre-optometry qualifications by the end of the second year and third summer session. I was accepted to the School of Optometry at U.C. and the Los Angeles College of Optometry on the USC campus. After a visit to Southern California, I decided on the southern school in L.A. I entered Cal in the same year that Pappy Waldorf took over the dismal football team to lead them to three straight Rose Bowl games, until he was recruited to join the 49ers as a recruiter. The following year Stanford went to the Rose Bowl. In return for tickets in Los Angeles, my roommate Calvin and I put up some of our Stanford friends so I got to see four consecutive Rose Bowl games. Calvin Yee, my brother-in-law Herbert's brother, and I were roommates while he attended Loma Linda Med school and I attended Optometry school. He was a Seventh-Day Adventist and was not to eat meat unless he was a guest. So I cooked everyday and invited him as a guest to join me for dinner if he would do the clean-up. We did this

routine for about nine months until I got us both jobs every evening at the local Methodist Hospital carrying dinner trays to patients. This turned out to be a great deal for us as it took almost the same amount of time for us to cook and wash up after dinner, but now we could sneak our meals and get paid for it. The head dietician told us that we were not to eat there, but the head cook always had a dinner tray set in the men's locker room for both of us each evening. On Saturdays I had the job of relieving the head pot and bottle washer in the morning, so I learned the art of "pearl diving", the name given to dishwashers in those days. Calvin taught me so much about being a good Christian, and we became very close going to church together and attended the Chinese Christian Youth Organization's retreat at Asilomar in 1950. It was here that he met his future bride Virginia Jang, better known as V.J. Calvin and I centered our social life on weekends around the group at the Chinese Congregational Church pastored by the Rev. Ivan Wong.

After receiving my Doctor of Optometry degree in May of 1952, I returned to Oakland to find a place to practice my new profession. It was a frustrating time, and one day while driving toward San Jose, a little voice spoke to me and reminded me of the advice of an American Optical practice advisor to take a look at the Elmhurst area of Oakland. The area was thriving in that time in 1952. The post WWII years were the years of Eisenhower's presidency of peace and prosperity. Brookfield Village was the new and prestigious place to live. The new Chevrolet assembly plant was at the site of now Eastmont Mall. White truck was at the current site of Foothill Square. Gerber Baby Foods and American Can Foods were going strong at 98th and San Leandro Boulevard, and the Dodge plant and other plants were in full swing in that area. A check with the local postmaster indicated that there were 38,000 mail drops and the residences had the second highest income per capita in the city of Oakland. How times have changed! I rented a small store at 9611 East 14th Street and set up to practice. While in school I had accumulated a small amount of equipment and, with the supplement of some new equipment, I began my practice with my own hand-carved sign over the doorway. This was in November of 1952, and the practice started out slowly, making me wonder if I had made a mistake. About six months later, I took a week to spend at the

Chinese Christian Youth Conference at Lake Tahoe. It was there during prayer time that God spoke to me that I should not be so concerned about making a living, but to use my God given talents to serve Him. I returned to my practice and instead of charging for minor services I asked that new patients to make a donation to their church. To my surprise, I became very busy because of the word of mouth of my presence in the community. God has been part of my practice since, as well as in all of my other endeavors.

On the Sunday of the July 4th weekend 1954, I was invited to speak at a Jr. High Sunday School retreat near Laguna Honda. Being on that side of the bay, I decided to drop in at a Cal Alumni picnic being held at Los Altos Country Club. It was there I spotted a cute young lady named Lena Chew and asked her for a date. After three months of courtship, we became married. Our children have a hard time believing that we got married so soon after meeting, but I feel that God led her to me as we are in our 45th year of marital bliss. Fourteen months later, in November of 1955 we were blessed with Neal Elliot Fong, the first of five wonderful children. Following Neal, came Jill Melinda, then Heidi Jane, Charlotte Kay, and finally baby Polly Ann. God has been so good. From that point on, I enjoyed practicing in the many offices that I began elsewhere. I took in many a young graduate as partners until they built up enough of a following to start their own practice. I thank God that I ended up with two great partners that made it possible for me to retire, and they now carry on the practice in a beautiful office at the 580 Marketplace in East Castro Valley where my name still remains on the door. Thank you, Richard Sequeira and Paul Peng.

In 1956, a group of eight fellows that belonged to the Wa Sung Service Club took group lessons from John Fry--then a golf professional at Alameda Golf course--and there began many years of joy and fellowship. Playing mostly on Wednesday afternoons, we were called the Wednesday Club until that day two years later when we formed the Oakland Chinese Golf Club. This provided many opportunities to play the many golf courses within two hours drive. For many years, we were affiliated with Pasatiempo in Santa Cruz through the courtesy of its then owner who was an honorary member of our club. Through the game of golf I made many friends and developed many business acquaintances in my career. In my

retirement, golf has been my major form of enjoyment and exercise, playing at least three days a week. In my last year of playing golf I had two unexpected surprises—first was to meet Jack Nicklaus in person and having him sign his autograph on my hat, and second, to achieve my first hole in one! Unfortunately, in late September of 1998 I suffered a heart attack which has curtailed my golf until my return to health by the grace of my Savior, Lord Jesus.

One of the great thrills for Lena and me was in the year of 1978, when we were asked to arrange trips to China by Gene Louis, who organized Chinese-American Tourist Groups on a regular basis. Following President Nixon's "ping pong diplomacy" in 1972, which broke down the bamboo curtain and opened China to a select few, we were invited to be the 4th group of 25 Chinese Americans to visit China. After several briefing meetings at Gene's home, Margaret Lee and I were selected to be group leaders. Her ability to speak Mandarin—the national language of China--and my travel experience made a good team. During the mid 70s, I had the opportunity to organize and accompany groups of several hundred to Hong Kong.

Our China visit was a very exciting trip starting in Guangzhou, where we were briefed on our itinerary by the local representative of the China Travel Service. The year 1978 was only two years after the Cultural Revolution, and there was still tension in the air, but we were assured that we were "guests" and that we should enjoy ourselves. A guide and a younger assistant were provided for us throughout the entire trip. Over a period of thirty days, we visited several cities including beautiful Kweilin and Chansha, and then journeyed on to Beijing. From there, we flew to Xian, where we were among the first tourists to visit the diggings of Chie'n Zhi Huang's terracotta army. We were even welcomed to go down to the excavation site to talk with the archaeologists. We continued on by train to Loyang to visit the Lungmen Caves, and on to Nanking, Soochow, and Shanghai, and then on the famous Shanghai-Hangzhou Express to Hangzhou. We flew back to Guangzhou to enjoy our farewell dinner at the very beautiful Panxi Restaurant, which was built over a lake. Exiting China through Hong Kong, we satisfied our hunger for western food which we had not enjoyed for more than 28 days. Traveling together for thirty days--many times in close quarters--you learn to love or hate your companions, and I must say that we have many close friends



from this trip, especially Ed and Margaret Lee whose company we still enjoy today.

After writing a critique about our trip for the China Travel Service, we were invited to return to China the following year to enjoy the celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the founding of the Peoples Republic of China. The contrast between our trip in 1978 and 1979 was tremendous. In November of 1978, six months after our first trip during which the local people were reluctant to talk to us, the Chinese government and the U.S. normalized relationships. In 1979, the changes were notable, and we found the native Chinese approaching us to strike up conversation in order to learn English, which they were now eager to do. Leading the group of twenty five, we were pleasantly surprised to arrive in Guangzhou again and find that the guide assigned to us would be that young lady assistant that traveled with us the previous year. She had been promoted to be a main guide. This trip took us through southern China to Nanning and Kunming, the base for the China Burma Theater of war of WWII, where we saw and climbed through the famous Stone Forest. From there, we took one of the most fascinating train rides for 22 hours nonstop through beautiful mountains to Chendu, 2,200 miles to the North. Our train traversed about 500 bridges and 500 tunnels carved over a period of 10 years, much like our transcontinental railroads passing through the Rocky Mountains. From Chendu, we traveled to Chungking, the wartime capital of China during WWII. There we visited the wartime quarters of Chou En Lai, where stories of intrigue and spying between Communists and Nationalists took place. One of the interesting finds we saw was Chou's 1938 American-made Buick parked in a small garage in the back of the building. After two nights in Chungking, we boarded a local steamboat for a four-day trip down the Yangtze River through the Three Gorges, visiting historical sites along the way. Our ship was one of the regular ships that travels the river, picking up native passengers with loads of baskets full of live chickens and whatever they produced to sell in Wuhan, our final destination. Thus, we were able to view firsthand the life of the river people. We stayed two days in Wuhan, the "Chicago" of China because of the crossing of the railroad and the river where commerce was promoted. From Wuhan, we flew back to Guangzhou and hired a

taxi driver to take us to our parents' native home near Sekkhi in Chungshan County in Southern China.

It was in Sekkhi on October 15th, 1979, at the end of this trip that I met my Godmother from Macao. Sisters Ada, Inez, and Rose had entered China from Hong Kong and met us at the hotel. My godmother lived in Macao and maintained an apartment in Sekkhi. On that first afternoon of our visit, we were invited to her nephew's wedding banquet in her village. We arrived via a small Japanese pickup with a camper shell and wooden bench seats in back. The banquet was prepared by the villagers in tank tops cooking in woks right in the middle of the street. The food was delicious, but our appetites were dulled as everyone dipped their chopstick into a family-style common serving bowl. The next morning my seventy-ish godmother met us at our hotel riding on the back of her grandnephew's bicycle. She then took us to our father's childhood home. It was then that I first saw that aforementioned marriage certificate of my parents.

The house was made of bricks and tall eight-foot doors with a six-inch threshold to keep unwanted crawling insects and rodents out. The sitting room consisted of several antique chairs and tables. The kitchen in back had a wok and a dining table with several square stools around it. Following the visit to our ancestral home, located next to the village school, we walked about one block to our cousin Non Joe's home, which had the same high threshold and tall door. We observed that many of the villages had watch towers from which to watch for bandits in the olden days. My mother use to tell us these stories of her childhood when kidnappings were commonplace.

On that first visit to our father's village in 1979, sisters Ada, Rose, Inez and I also found our mother's home in Kai Gok. We had no idea where to begin, so we asked an old woman in a fruit stand if she knew of my mother's younger brother. She informed us that he had passed away six years ago. Ada then asked the old woman if she had ever known the "old fisherman," which was our mother's father's nickname. Excitedly, she answered that he had passed away a long time ago, but that his grandson still lived in the village. Without another word, she jumped over her counter and ran off. Fifteen minutes later, the old woman returned accompanied by an old man in

ragged shirt and cutoff jeans who called out our Chinese names, so we knew he was truly related to us. Our mother used to write home to her family each time a child was born to her and asked them to give each of us a Chinese name. That grandson would be our first cousin on our maternal side. He took us for a ten-minute walk to his home where my mother was born and raised. There we met cousins and nephews that we never knew existed and also found a picture of brother Joe's wedding on the mantle. Being my brother's best man, there I was in that picture that my mother had sent back to her folks right after the wedding. It was a weird feeling to see your own picture in a place 3,000 miles away in a home you never knew to exist before. That home, again, was like the homes we saw before, but had a cistern in back from which the inhabitants drew their water. I left them the sport coat I was wearing, as well as other gifts and felt it was a grand reunion with all my mother's relatives. We celebrated with a big dinner at the hotel where we were staying.

During this visit we also had the opportunity to visit Auntie Karen's (Uncle Bill's wife) village near Sekkhi, visiting her sister. In that village all the people gathered in the village square in the evening to enjoy the show on the lone television set. In subsequent years, we sent our children to visit our cousins, as well as my father's house in China bearing bicycles, cooking oil, and other foodstuff from Hong Kong. In 1981, Neal and Jill visited China with a program called China Summer Camp, which I helped to coordinate in its earlier years. The young people spent three weeks in school in the area of their ancestors and each having the opportunity to visit their ancestral villages. Then they toured the highlights of Kweilin, Xian, Shanghai, Soochow, and Beijing. The following year Heidi, Charlotte, and Polly attended the same camp. One of the very touching letters that Heidi wrote to me was one she sent while in my father's house. It went on to say "Here I am writing this letter with tears in my eyes, as this is where Christ entered my life through my grandfather, and then through my father to me..."

Following that visit in Kai Gok, Lena and I proceeded to find Lena's mother's village in Xinhui where citrus fruits were grown. After crossing several rivers on ferries that were like rafts carrying four or five cars, we arrived at her mother's village where a tearful meeting was held between her cousins and herself. We then returned to

Sekkhi for a return to Hong Kong via Macao visiting the home of Sun Yat Sen on the way, who was the founder of the Republic of China after overthrowing the Manchus in power during the 19th century and up to 1924. We stayed at the Hotel Lisboa for one night. Leaving Macao, Lena and our baggage had already boarded the hydrofoil that was to take us back to Hong Kong, and I was called back to fill out the immigration papers and pay a transit fee. Hurriedly, I completed the transaction and took off running for the hydrofoil, which was already untied from the dock. I leaped aboard and took my seat and then realized that I still had the Macao immigration officer's pen in my hand. It was pen from Meier Racing Enterprises of San Leandro, California, my hometown!

Sisters Inez and Ada, friends Leland and Sally Chew and Lena and I made a second trip to my parents village again in 1980, after visiting my first cousins Non Joe and Elsa Wong, in Sidney, Australia. They are the children of my father's younger brother, So Hoon, who passed away in Hong Kong after practicing herbal medicine in China for most of his life. It was so great to meet these cousins for the first time. Mon Joe, after many years of practicing herbal medicine with his father in our family village of Ho Chung, was finally allowed by the Communists to leave China to stay with his sister, Elsa. At the age of 60, he finally married a woman from his village and sired a son. Elsa and cousins Jim and Ann, who also maintained a residence in Sydney, showed us many of the sights of Sydney. There, we also met a distant cousin of affluence in Sidney's Chinatown. The story is told that he and his father ran a grocery store in New Zealand for many years before WWII, and after the war they closed their store to open a hamburger stand for the GIs. In those two post-war years, they made more money than they had in the ten years as grocers. The father decided to sell the store in 1947 and go to China to retire. They stayed in Sidney before going to China. They began to receive letters from China telling them not to return because of the eminent takeover by the Communists. Stuck in Sidney with his life savings, he began to invest in real estate and today, is considered the unofficial mayor of Chinatown.

From Australia, our group traveled to Jakarta, Bangkok, Singapore and then on to Hong Kong where we met Herbert Yee, Inez's husband. We took a catamaran directly from Hong Kong to



Chungshan harbor, a 40-minute ride, and then a 20-minute ride by taxi to our new hotel in Sekkhi. We arrived a day late in Sekkhi due to a labor strike in Australia, and my cousin told me that there were about fifty people claiming to be relatives waiting for my arrival on the previous evening! We asked them to gather as many of those who were there for a big luncheon at the new International Hotel where we stayed.

From Sekkhi, we rented a van large enough to accommodate all of us and my nephew, and we proceeded to go to Lena's mother's village a second time. We stopped at the Xinhui Hotel afterward for a rest. After a short while, a woman approached us who had bicycled several miles from the village, because she had heard we were acquainted with the newly-elected president of the United States, Ronald Reagan. Herb had in his briefcase a 5 x 10 glossy picture taken while Reagan was his dental patient at the time of his governorship of California. Whenever we had to pass through any inspection, Herb would open his brief case and exposed the photo of himself standing next to Reagan. Word had gotten around very fast that we all were friends of the U.S. President, and it opened many doors for us on that trip. Our next village would be to Toishan, Herb's ancestral village. We, again, had to cross many rivers by ferry. At one point, the line to board the ferry was so long that we were fourteenth in line. My nephew asked me for a ten-yuan bill and ran to the ferrymaster who waved us ahead of the line to be the first aboard the next ferry. I subsequently found out that the ferrymaster was told that our van held foreign dignitaries. The hotel at Toishan was crowded so we had to stay overnight in the hotel at Hoiping before our next morning's trip to Toishan. We all had to sleep under mosquito nets as the hotel was next to a river. Arriving in Toishan, Herb was welcomed as a great hero as he had sent money to build a new school in the village where he was born. There, we saw our first water buffalo up close, as it kept cool in the waterhole near the village. We visited with Herb's relatives in the village of narrow passages between buildings much like those found in Xinhui. From Toishan, we crossed several other rivers returning to Sekkhi visiting Sally Chew's ancestral village. There, we saw chickens and cute white dogs with upturned tails, which we were told were raised for food in that village. On our way back, we traveled through Doumen, a village just south of Sekkhi,

making a complete circle of the Pearl Delta region. Traveling back to our hotel in Sekkhi, we rested overnight before taking a bus back to the Chungshan Harbor followed by my nephew on his motorbike wearing the New York Seltzer sweatshirt I had given him. We boarded the catamaran returning to Hong Kong where we picked up our excess baggage that we had stored at the Miramar Hotel and flew back to the U.S. after another exciting thirty-day trip.

In the course of our happy marriage was the thrill and excitement of the marriages of our three oldest children. The wedding of Neal to lovely and loving Pauline at Berkeley Presbyterian Church was a beautiful and memorable event. Sister Polly sang, and Neal also sang to his bride during the ceremony. The reception was held at the new Ferry Plaza Restaurant overlooking the bay at foot of Market Street. One of the surprises for the newlyweds was our friends sailing their boat around the restaurant flying a banner celebrating Neal and Pauline. The union has produced three wonderful grandsons--Andrew Scott, Joel Alexander, and Eric Joshua who bring so much joy into our lives.

Jill was married to a wonderful and hardworking Mike Au in the brand new beautiful sanctuary of the Prince of Peace Church in Saratoga. The reception was held at the new French Hotel Sofitel in Redwood Shores and featured New York Seltzer bars throughout the lobby. They have two lovely and lively daughters, Alyson Cathleen and Megan Elizabeth, whom we enjoy so much.

Heidi and Gary were married at the Church of the Nazarene on Redwood Road in Oakland. Following was a joyous banquet at Silver Dragon. Born in Anaheim Hills, little Alaina Michelle made her appearance in 1991, followed by Ryan Michael, after they had moved to the town of Columbia near Sonora. In May of this year of 1999, little Evan David made his appearance, giving us a total of eight beautiful grandchildren. Evan just stole our hearts as he came to visit us for a short time at Jill's home at two months and again staying overnight with Grandma and me at three months. We love all our grandchildren but in infancy so much more.

In 1974, a group of us headed by Paul Ong tried to start a new bank in the Lake Merritt area of East Oakland. After much work and investment, we were turned down by the State Superintendent of

Banking, because of the unheard of event of two national banks failing in an industry that had no failures previously. Years later in 1979, my then CPA invited me to join a group of businessmen to start a new bank in San Leandro. Without telling my wife Lena, I invested a great amount of money borrowed at 22% (yes, interest rates were so high at that time savings deposits were getting 16% return) in order to participate in this new venture. We named the bank, "Bay Bank of Commerce," the name I had chosen for our bank back in 1974. On February 13th, a Friday, we opened the doors in a small rented 1,100 square foot building on Joaquin Street and Washington Boulevard, until our new 14,000 square foot facility on Juana and East 14<sup>th</sup> was completed six months later. This is now our headquarters building for a bank of three branches--San Leandro, Hayward and San Ramon.

Of the original 13 directors, I am proud to be one of the only two outside directors remaining along with the majority of the original management staff. At our annual Christmas party, it is my privilege to have instituted the practice of having invocation before we enjoy our dinner. I am much indebted to my brother-in-law Herb Yee for his advice, as he had served as chairman of several banks in Sacramento. This venture has been a great joy and satisfaction to me in providing an interest in my retirement years. My pre-admittance Stanford-Binet and Minnesota Aptitude tests both indicated my interests in biological sciences and that of business. I thank God that he has seen fit for me to serve in both endeavors.

In this year of 1999, our bank will be merged into GreaterBay Bank, a bank holding company that will surround the San Francisco Bay. This will allow Bay Bank of Commerce to make much larger loans and offer many other services to the community. My experiences and involvement with Bay Bank of Commerce from beginning to the present have been very exciting, as we have seen how we have built an institution that is so influential in the greater communities of Alameda and Contra Costa counties and one that has contributed so much to the financial growth of businesses in these areas. Much of this success, I must attribute to our founding president, Dick Kahler, whose wisdom and banking knowledge is considered to be the best among his peers.

I look back on my life and realize how great and how good God has been and will continue to be forever in the lives of all of our loved ones. All of our children love God and serve Him in some way. He has given us wisdom in times of uncertainty and confidence in times of challenges. To Him I give all the glory for all the things past and that to come.

Addendum: Dr. Joshua Fong was founder of Bay Bank of Commerce and served as Chairman of the Board and Chairman of the Holding Company until it merged after 19 years. It became Greater Bay Bank trading on the NASDAQ and one of Standard & Poor's 500 companies.



# Wells Fargo buys bank

Greater Bay  
has 41 branches  
in the Bay Area

► Dilbert **C2** ► Market Report **C3-6** ► Classified **C7-12**

San Francisco Chronicle

Saturday  
May 5, 2007

# BUSINESS

WASPAR 257215

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## GREATER BAY BANK

October 16, 2007

*We have some good news to share with you!* Earlier this year, Greater Bay Bank's parent company, Greater Bay Bancorp and Wells Fargo & Company entered into an agreement to join our two companies. It's a great match. Wells Fargo and Greater Bay Bancorp share common values, culture, and above all a commitment to the success of our clients and to the communities in which we live and work.

We are pleased to announce that Greater Bay Bancorp and the following banks and businesses are now officially a part of the Wells Fargo family:

ADB Insurance & Financial Services  
Coast Commercial Bank  
Greater Bay Bank  
Greater Bay Capital  
Greater Bay Venture Banking  
Mid-Peninsula Bank  
Peninsula Bank of Commerce

Bank of Petaluma  
Golden Gate Bank  
Greater Bay Business Funding  
Greater Bay Private Capital Banking  
Matsco Financial Corporation  
Mt. Diablo National Bank  
Santa Clara Valley National Bank