

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE RAY QUAN FAMILY
AND THE FAR EAST RESTAURANT

by

George A. Woolsey, Jr.

I'm sure that there are many of you who have enjoyed at least one palate pleasing dinner of oriental delicacies offered ^{here at the} ~~at Grand Junction's~~ Far East restaurant. If not more recently in the newly enlarged and remodeled restaurant, maybe you were there during the new restaurant's opening in 1955, or probably at some point during the restaurant's 28 years of service to the Grand Junction area.

Throughout those 28 years, the restaurant has been owned and operated by the Ray Quan family. Quan first came to the United States from his home in China at the age of 13 in 1934. He arrived in Texas to help in this family's restaurant.

It was a move Quan never regretted.

Recalling his introduction to the restaurant business, Mr. Quan remembers Texas as a "very prosperous place to be." The restaurant there was so busy, in fact, that some of the many oil field customers waiting for the Quan family delicacies were served outside the always-full eating establishment. Seven years later the Quan's moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where their family restaurant continued to prosper. By the early 1950's, however, the family decided to look for a smaller community. They turned their sights to Colorado, examining the potential of several logging towns, as well as Montrose, Delta, Glenwood Springs and Grand Junction. Grand Junction, at that time, was a community of about 20,000 and was much in the national headlines of the day due to the uranium boom. They chose Grand Junction, the site here on 1530 North Avenue which was, in the early

1950's considered to be "way out of town."

The Quan's moved to Grand Junction in 1954, and immediately began construction of their new restaurant. In 1955, Mr. Quan's father and uncle opened the Far East. At the time, their only neighbor was the V.A. Hospital; but the new restaurant was an immediate success.

Throughout his many years in the food service business, Mr. Quan has developed a keen awareness for what his customers want. He supervises the Far East following what he has learned are the four most important features for success. These are the continual monitoring and improvement of the:

1. food
2. the facility and dining surroundings
3. the service and
4. cleanliness

Along with these come Mr. Quan's desire and enjoyment of expressing his family heritage--the tradition of Chinese Culture--through his food and restaurant.

That tradition is reflected in the newly built tri-level Far East building with everything from the large Chinese lamps imported from Hong Kong to the white and green marble from Taiwan that lines the entry and decorates the restrooms to the 65,000 pounds of glazed tile for the roof.

"We have something from almost every country in the Orient," notes Mr. Quan. The one exception is the colorful carpet with the orchid motif, which was imported from England. The teakwood carving used throughout the restaurant was imported from Hong Kong, and the railings were brought from Taiwan, and installed by Taiwanese workmen.

The brass lettering on the east wall of the bar area was also manufactured in Taiwan. With 100 symbols represented, each one translates to the same word. That word is LIFE, which, in the Chinese language, may be written 100 different ways.

Also featured in the restaurant's decor are two ^{brass} relief sculptures hanging ~~at the east end~~ ^{dining area} ~~on the south wall~~ of the restaurant ~~one at either end of the building~~. The sculptures depict the beginnings and the endings of the Chinese dynasty. The one located ~~at the east end of the building~~ ^{on the south wall} ^{which began} tells the story of the beginning dynasty--the Ching dynasty, around 1200 B.C. As Mr. Quan interprets the sculpture, which shows two men sitting by a bridge, the old man in the upper left was a wiseman over 100 years old. The old man took great sorrow in the condition of the country. Ancient China was ~~torn apart--warlords fighting~~ ^{warlords--invaders from the north--the people of China were unsafe, hungry, frightened and suffering}. Noting all of this, but himself being much too old to do anything about it, the man left his home and went up in the mountains to live a life of peace and solitude.

One day however, his solitude was interrupted when he noticed a young man studying on the bridge over a nearby river. The young man came everyday to the bridge to study--perhaps himself to escape the turmoil in the countryside below. The old man watched the youth for many days, and through his observations he recognized the potential and steadfast determination of the young man. The wise old man knew that a young man with such abilities was needed to carry on the knowledge and thus the job of trying to correct the turmoil of the country.

Finally one day the old man came down to where the boy was sitting. He took off his shoes and threw them in the cold waters of

the rushing river; he asked the boy to retrieve them. The youth did just that and offered to help the old man put them back on.

The old man, however, told the youth that he could not put the shoes back on ^{that day} because of family tradition, so he asked the youth to come back the next day to help him put them on.

The youth agreed and returned the following day. The old man however was no where in site--but the youth waited--and finally the old man appeared. This time however, the old man stated that in his readings he learned that he could not put the shoes on that day.

He asked to youth to come back the next day. He did and again had to wait on the old man.

When the old man appeared he told the boy that he could not put the shoes on that day because the country was in such turmoil. The old man again asked the youth to return the next day--as it would be a day for great opportunity for a change in the conditions of the country.

The next day the youth dutifully appeared--and this time the old man was waiting for him. The old man then explained the conditions of the country and how important it was that the country be united. But that such a job would take a very patient man. The old man then took the youth to live and study with him on the mountain. Before he died, the wise old man thus instructed the youth on everything he knew and had seen in his many years. He taught

the youth about people, about the history of the country and about its future. He taught the youth lessons about people and how to govern them.

The youth's name was Ching Ling--and he grew up to become the first emperor of the first Chinese dynasty.

The ending of the dynasty system in China--spanning 3,000 years-- is thus entailed in the hanging sculpture ^{on the north wall of the} ~~at the west end of the~~ ~~Far East~~ dining area. This sculpture tells the story of Ting Dynasty-- the last dynasty in China.

During the dynasty, Emperor Ting had a canal built which linked two rivers--the Jungchi and Yellow. A city flourished near the canal but corruption and foreign powers soon ruled the area and brought the country's downfall. Opium was introduced by foreign powers--and many Chinese became addicted--the country once again was divided--with Hong Kong becoming a British possession.

As they say, "a picture is worth a 1,000 words," and both of the sculptured hangings depict very important aspects of Chinese history and heritage. A vital lesson learned from the first sculpture is: If you have patience the wind will be calm and the wave will be gentle.

Ray Quan has been ^apatient ^{man,} and has also lived the lessons learned from his Chinese heritage. His heritage is not only reflected in his food and restaurant--but also in his home and family. As Mr. Quan

relates--"Even though we are living in this country, it's important to pass on the Chinese traditions to our children."

As their 5 children were growing up, Mr. & Mrs. Quan taught them the Chinese customs and spoke to them in Chinese. Quan also has been passing on the knowledge of the restaurant business to his children.

The new Far East Restaurant took over 2 years to design-and construction has taken over a year. But as the Quan family has learned from their Chinese heritage--patience is a valuable virtue.

January 31, 1984
George A. Woolsey Jr.