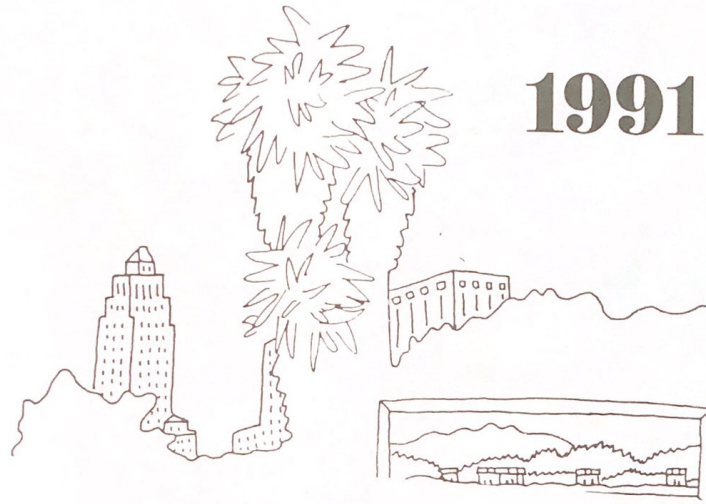


# Voice of Gom-Benn

## 1991



## A KID'S VIEW OF GOM BENN

By Janlee, Meilee, Midori Wong

In the past, the elders of Gom Benn have tried to involve the young people. Some of their efforts were successful but not sustained. Recently Uncle Bing (Wong) of San Bernardino asked me to write an article for the Voice of Gom Benn. So I thought I would ask my daughters to help me write the article. Meilee (age 6) and Midori (age 4) cheerfully agreed to assist me. I asked them what their view of Gom Benn was. Here is their story.

What do you like about Gom Benn? Meilee said she liked watch Uncle Bing play Mah Jong. And she also liked the food. Midori said she liked the Chinese writing on the wall. And Midori like the Gom Benn people who said "hi" to her.

What do you wish about Gom Benn? Meilee said she wished the people at Gom Benn would teach her how to play Mah Jong. Uncle Bing said he would teach her when she got older. Meilee said she wished there were more children at Gom Benn. That way she could make more friends.

What does Gom Benn remind you of? "Nien Nien", Uncle Bing, Mo-Mo, and Uncle Harry (Fook Lie). The people of Gom Benn are special to me. Some are relatives of mine.

In order to attract more kids to Gom Benn, how about having a Gom Benn party for them? Meilee said you would have to ask the elders first. If the elders said yes, the party should have food, and games for kids.

You know, Gom Benn used to have an annual picnic in a park, with food and games? Meilee said why did they stop? Midori said she would like them to start again, and of course, she would go.

Some may think a conversation with a 6 and 4 year old is somewhat elementary, but today's kids are quite advanced. What does this conversation mean for Gom Benn? It tells me that Gom Benn doesn't really have any activities especially for children. Mah Jong is interesting to children because its the only game that is played there. The food is good, but kids probably can get that food at home or when they go to the restaurant so it's not that special. The elders of Gom Benn are what make's it special to kids. But kids don't quite know what their connections to the elders of Gom Benn are.

What Meilee and Midori seem to be suggesting is that Gom Benn have some activities especially for the children of Gom Benn. They would like to meet other children of Gom Benn and make friends with them. Last year, the first kid that Meilee and Midori met at Gom Benn they played friends with, Ernest Wong.



If we examine what the purposes of Gom Benn are, we will find that it was formed to preserve the special Chinese culture and heritage of the people of Gom Benn. The best way Gom Benn does this is through its social activities with its members. The strongest activities are those the elders have organized and sponsored throughout the years. These often do bring together families including the younger generation. However, the bond that keeps Gom Benn together seems to be the older generation. How could the younger generation be more directly included? Perhaps some activities that are especially for children but also involve the older generation.

As usual, the big question is... what and who? What activities and who would organize the kids' activity for Gom Benn if the elders agree to have such an activity. Certainly, the parents should be responsible. However, there needs to be full involvement by the elders, afterall, they are the "heart and soul" of Gom Benn.

There are kids, parents and elders' activities that are fun, cultural and come serve to bring the generations together. These include:

STORY TELLING: There are many stories that the elders could tell children and that they need to know. This could involve the use of slides or videos.

COOKING FOR FUN: Kids like to cook, and cooking Chinese food would be quite a treat for them.

KITE MAKING AND FLYING: An ancient Chinese art to teach kids and to enjoy.

LION DANCING AND KUNG FU: Chinese culture in its most popular form.

CHINESE BRUSH PAINTING AND WRITING: Chinese brush painting and calligraphy is classic, and kids would enjoy practicing it. As hard as Chinese characters seem, they are ideal for children because they are like pictures.

CHINESE ARTS AND CRAFTS: Paper folding, silk making, sewing, and jewelry making.

CHINESE GARDENING: The elders of Gom Benn are expert in this. They could help the children start seedlings.

If the elders of Gom Benn reviewed their membership, they could certainly find "experts" in each of these activities. And we parents would be glad to help organize it. Afterall, we too are of Gom Benn.



The grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Gin Yip Wong, Johnny, married the former May Quan at the South Pasadena United Methodist Church on 6/30/90. The ceremony was witnessed by the many friends and relatives of the bride and groom. That same evening, a banquet was held at the Empress Pavilion Restaurant in Los Angeles. In attendance at the party that evening was about 350 to 400 well-wishers to wish the happy couple many many years of wedded bliss. The Best Man was the master of ceremony who introduced the two families to their guests.

Another wedding that summer was the marriage of Raymond Wong, son of Mrs. Kam Fong Wong, the Thien-Ann Vu on August 1, 1990. The eleven o'clock wedding was held at the Lake Avenue Congregational Church in Pasadena with a wedding banquet that evening at the Miriwa Restaurant in Los Angeles. The bride wore her native Vietnamese attire at the banquet. Mrs. Hoy Yuen was the Mistress of Ceremony at the evening.

The Family donated \$100 to the Gom-Benn Association and \$50 to the Gom-Sing Magazine.

The son of the Yam Yans, Kwok Yen Yan, was married to Lisa Le Ngnh Phuong on September 15, 1990 at the St. Anne's Church in San Francisco. A wedding banquet was held that same evening at the Grand Palace Restaurant in San Francisco. The newly married couple honeymooned in Paris, France and returned to have another party in Los Angeles for the Yuen's relatives and friends who could not attend the wedding up the bay area.

Kwok Yen and Lisa had a long courtship as the bridegroom waited for Lisa to graduate from San Francisco State University where she earned her degree as a Certified Public Accountant.

The Gom-Ben Association had a combination Mother's Day-Father's Day buffet on May 6, 1990. Everybody had a good time dining on fried chicken, dim sum, barbecue pork, soysauce chicken and apple pie. Ying Chong Lung donated a crate of oranges and a box of almond cookies and Kai Wah Wong donated a bottle of booze.

The Moon Festival luncheon buffet was held at the Gom-Benn Association on October 23, 1990. Fried Chicken, Dim Sum, Chow Mein and barbecue pork were served at the luncheon. Karl Lee, president, and his sister, Mrs. Roy Lim, donated a box of moon cakes and Kai Wah Wong again donated a bottle of liquor.

Tung Geen Wong was killed during a robbery attempt on his tenants's business in South Central Los Angeles on October 27, 1990. He was in the auto repair business ever since he came back from servicing his country during World War II.

Tung Geen met his wife, Sue, when he was stationed in Japan during the war. After their marriage they settled in the Los Angeles area and together they



have a son, James, and a daughter. The couple have three grandchildren.

Services for Tung Geen were held at Rose Hills Cemetery on November 3, 1990 at 1:00 P.M. Karl Lee was speaker at the service. After the service some of the guests gathered at the restaurant in Monterey Park for dinner. The family donated \$200 to the Gom-Benn Association and \$50 to the Gom-Sing Magazine.

Another annual event was the Thanksgiving buffet at the Association office on 11/10/90. Ray Gin roasted the turkey and made the dressing and gravy for the luncheon. Bing Wong donated two apple pies from Marie Callender, Kai Wah Wong gave us another bottle of liquor and Ying Chong Lung generously gave us a crate of oranges and a box of almond cookies. After the luncheon, the men folk retreated to their mahjong game while the women folk sat and visited with one another.

Mr. and Mrs. Wing Yow Wong and their daughter, Sue, and Sue's two children went to visit their native country during the winter of 1990. The visitors went to visit their maternal grandmother's village and also their paternal grandfather's village. It was quite an experience for the children.

The Gom-Benn Village Association had their year-end celebration dinner ("Hon-Nin") January 27, 1991. At that dinner, it was decided to have the New Year's dinner at the Golden Dragon Restaurant on 3/16/91. We had quite a turn-out that evening with everybody wishing one another a very Happy New Year of the Ram.

Consular Mar just finished his five-year stint at the Los Angeles Consulate's Office and headed back to China for a brief vacation before he takes over the duties as ambassador to England. Mr. Mar came to the Gom-Benn office upon his arrival in Los Angeles and was well received by the Association members. He was a guest of honor at a farewell dinner before he left. Over 400 people attended the farewell dinner at the Empress Pavilion. Representing the Gom-Benn Association were Mrs. Pak Kam Wong, Lui Wong, Tung D. Wong, Leonard Hio and Roland Wong.

Mr. and Mrs. Park Kam Wong just returned from their umpteenth trip to Hong Kong and mainland China. Park Kam went back to China for treatment for his Parkinson's disease and his wife accompanied him. His spouse knows a lot of people in Hong Kong and while he was getting his medical treatment, she went to visit friends and relatives and did a lot of shopping.

Shirley Hoskin and her mother, Mrs. Boy Jin Wong, just returned from their annual vacation to Kwantung, China and Hong Kong. Mrs. Boy Jin Wong still has relatives in Kwangtung and she and Shirley usually make their yearly trips to China after Mother's Day.

Three newcomers for the Gom Hong and Hong Soon Village arrived recently



and settled in the Los Angeles area. One of the newly arrived is waiting for the rest of his family to join him here. Most of them are already gainfully employed.

Dorenda Wong, daughter of Leland and Dorothy Wong of Hacienda Heights and granddaughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bing Wong of Los Angeles will be entering high school in the fall. It seems like only yesterday when we celebrated Dorenda's month-old party at the Wong Family Benevolent Association, and she will be going into high school soon. How time flies!

And talking about time escaping from us, Kelley Gin, son of Gary and Cathy Gin of Upland has already finished his first year at Dominican Catholic College in San Rafael, California. Kelley is majoring in Psychology and minoring in English. He is working at his grandparents' restaurant in Ontario earning his tuition and room and board for the fall semester.

The three children of Ben and Debbie Wong of West Covina—Courtney, Justin and Adam—are already earning their way to college. Courtney and her brothers have been very busy modeling clothes in department stores and now they are doing commercials in television studios. Aunt Margery was asking Adam one day what he did in front of the television cameras. "I stand there and smile," says Adam.

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08 April 1991

Immigrant from Gom-Benn Village

by Uncle

We wished to immigrate to the United States  
With golden opportunities to start a new life.  
Although behind we left China's great rural land and our village  
Where expansive beauty of ten thousand LI, one could behold.

Our senior members encouraged our young to progress  
And to persevere with diligence day after day.  
For our tribesmen, striving for more development,  
Faith and confidence were truly needed to succeed.

Gom-Benn Village Society was organized.  
With historic purpose we established an office site.  
Our location was Los Angeles, where our clan resided  
And our families throughout the land continued to grow.

Elementary in the beginning was our project and our hopes.  
Now good fortune and prosperity abound and surround us.  
Strong were the roots of our origin, which has enriched us all.  
Always with love and kindness we reach out to our neighbors.





Linda W. Huang  
June 26, 1991

## Ngin Ngin

I don't remember the pictures I used to draw for my Ngin Ngin. I do remember my dad sitting at his old wood desk writing letters and paying the bills. It was the kind of desk that had all sorts of compartments and a fold-down panel for writing on. I used to love opening the miniature door, pulling out the little drawers, and taking out the secret compartments that were disguised as columns on each side of the door.

Whenever Dad wrote a letter to his mother, he would ask us to draw something for "Ngin Ngin" too. At that time, I wasn't really sure who Ngin Ngin was. Dad, a reticent type of person, never talked about Ngin Ngin, at least not to us. Years later, I finally did meet Ngin Ngin when she came to live with us.

In the beginning when Ngin Ngin lived with us, she seemed almost as distant as the person that we used to draw for. She was a tiny woman with bound feet. She had a dignified and stern demeanor that came with years of being an authoritarian mother-in-law in China.

I would have loved hearing Ngin Ngin talk of her life, her history. She was born before the turn of the century so there would have been much to tell, but Ngin Ngin was not a storyteller.

Ngin Ngin stayed in her room most of the time. It was a small cozy room that filled with sunshine. It had a #4 on the door, a remnant of a time when we had boarders. As we walked past her room to go down the stairs, we always saw her sitting, forming a silhouette against the window of light. She liked to sew and mend clothes so I used to bring her all my skirts that needed to be shortened as the mini skirt was popular at that time.

When my friends visited, they were always curious about the occupant of room #4. But my friends were as much an oddity to Ngin Ngin as she was to them. She would ask if I really understood what they were saying, or if their hair was real, it was so light and curly.

As the years went by, a certain amount of affection developed between Ngin Ngin and us. We called her "Grumps" and tried to make her laugh. She returned our affection with an art that my mom said only one with bound feet would have time to create in China. One afternoon we discovered in her room, beautiful, intricate paper cutouts of butterflies. We were delighted with them; they were so extraordinary! She cut endless varieties of shapes and patterns-- spiders, butterflies that turned into masks, snowflakes, water lilies, classic Chinese symbols, symmetrical designs, and organic patterns that looked like creatures. She cut them out of any type of paper she could find. She mainly used newspaper, but we also found patterns cut into junk mail advertisements, magazine pages, and even our old homework assignments.

Then one morning, Ngin Ngin fell from her bed. She became paralyzed and had to go into a rest home. She quietly died a few years later. She was 98 years old. She had spent a fraction of her life with us, but she had left a legacy for us to remember.

