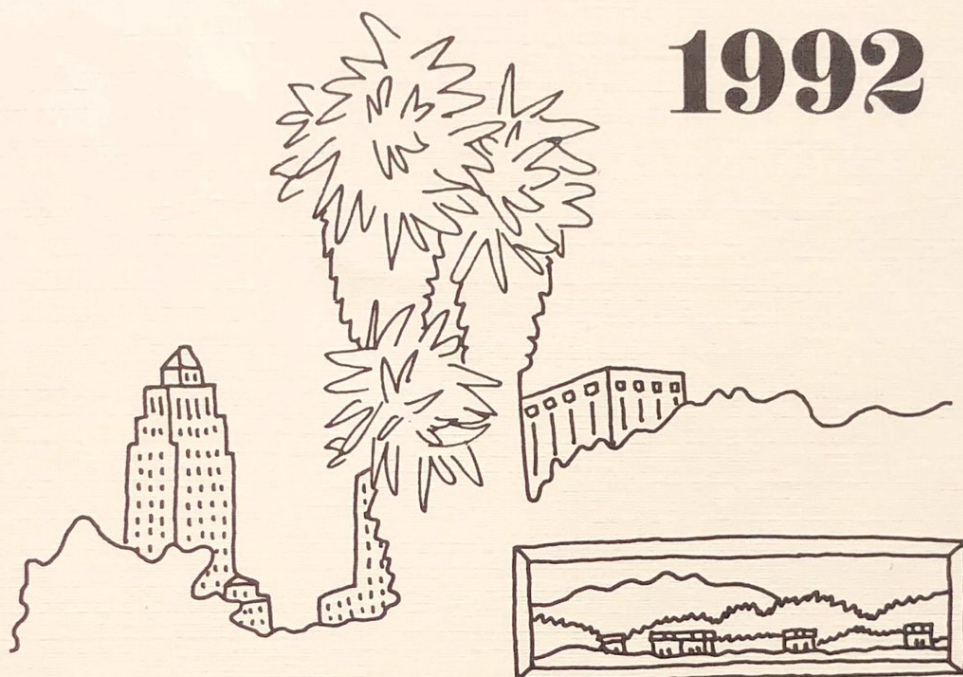


Voice of Gom-Behn

1992



The Gom Benn Connection

By Janlee Wong

Recently I mentioned that I was going to the Gom Benn New Year's Banquet to a friend. "New Year's Banquet at Golden Dragon again?" my friend said, "I'm not going because I've eaten there before. And besides, my kids don't have fun those things anyway."

I thought to myself, "Now what kind of thinking is that?" My friend doesn't really understand what Gom Benn means. It isn't just a banquet every year is it? What does Gom Benn really mean?

Gom Benn really means growing up Chinese in America, especially Toisanese. It was my own experience. My father and mother, and their Gom Benn friends, had a special community in America. They grew up together in Gom Benn, China. They carried that bond here to America. Unlike Gom Benn in China where everyone lived close to each other, Gom Benn people in Southern California were and are scatter all over. Our Gom Benn association connects us in the same tight community that it did for our parents who did business together and celebrated their holidays together.

Growing up for my brother, sisters and I was going to Chinese banquets in L.A. Chinatown. It was going to the Sam Sing Meat Market on Spring Street or Ying Chong Lung on 9th Street. It was Eastern Grocery, Kwan Lee Lung and Phoenix Bakery. It was "deem sum" at Hong Kong Low or Grandview Gardens, eating our favorite "Bak Tong Go". It was "ay gung" and "ay po", "ah bak" and "ah mo", "ah suk" and "ah seem". They weren't really our real grandpa and grandma, older and younger aunts and uncles as Americans think. But every one here from Gom Benn probably had the same ancestors five or six generations ago in China.

My childhood was full of Gom Benn people. There was the Gom Benn people who worked in my dad's restaurant like Larry the cook (Fook Lie), and my Uncle Poy. There was my dad's former restaurant partners like Bing Wong and Harold Wong. There was my San Bernardino cousins like Uncle Bing and "ngay mo," Henry, Jerry, Donna, and Janice. I remember stories about all of them.

Now I'm a dad and have seven and five year old daughters Meilee and Midori. I can't teach them Chinese as well as my parents taught me, but I've told them lots of stories about the Gom Benn people and their community in America in the early years. So for my family, and me, the New Year's Banquet, or other Gom Benn activities are not just an outing to a restaurant to eat., but a chance for my children to connect to the Gom Benn people in my stories. So when they meet Uncle Bing or Harry the cook, they know who they are. "Uncle Bing," they say, "is from San Bernardino and is going to teach us how to play mah jong." "Harry the cook worked in Grandpa Voy's restaurant in Riverside, and used to live in Nien Nien's house." This is the way my children learn about me and what Gom Benn means to me.

NEWS FROM EVERY CORNER

- * The Moon Festival buffet luncheon at the Gom-Benn Assn. was held at the Assn. Office on September 15, 1991. Everybody indulged in fried chicken, dim sum, sodas and all the other goodies brought in by Assn. members. Kai Wah Wong, whose family owns and operates Joe's Liquor in Cerritos furnished us with two boxes of moon cakes and a bottle of spirits.
- * Members of the Jiangmen Overseas Chinese Affairs were in the southland on September 29, 1991. The following visitors: Wu Dan Chu, Director, Li Pei Zheng, Chen Xian Fang and Ye Yu Fang paid a visit to the Gom-Benn Assn. Office where they were entertained by Mrs. Boy Jin Wong, Mrs. Margie Tam, Mrs. Park Kam Wong, Lui Wong, Tung D. Wong, Pon Lim, Ray Gin and Ronald Wong.
- * Karl Lee presided over the get-together with the visitors and were informed by the visitors regarding economic conditions in Jiangmen, which seem very promising. They presented the Gom Benn Assn. with a flag. A reception attended by over 400 people was held at the Emperor Palace in Chinatown.
- * The Karl Lee's oldest daughter, Winnie, was married on November 9, 1991 to Mr. David Lewis at a 2:00 P.M. ceremony at Hollywood Presbyterian Church. The young couple are now making their home in Irvine, California, where Winnie is an accounting manager for Moly Construction Company and the bridegroom is employed at a computer firm. A long and happy life together for the newlyweds and we want to acknowledge your generous donation of \$50.00 to the Assn.
- * Our apologies for omitting this happy event last year of the arrival of a baby girl to the household of the Neil Wongs. Thanks ever so much for your donation of \$50.00 to the Assn., and also to Mrs. Julie Chan and her mother for each donating \$20.00 to Gom-Benn.
- * We had our Thanksgiving luncheon on November 17, 1991, which was enjoyed by all who attended. Ray Gin donated a roast turkey with dressing and gravy, Bing Wong of San Bernardino again contributed two Marie Callendar apple pies, Ying Chong Lung gave us a crate of oranges and some almond cookies, Kai Wah Wong donated a bottle of booze. Chow mein, fried chicken and dim sum were also served at the luncheon. After lunch, a meeting was held for the election of new offices for the coming year, 1992-1993.
- * Darrell and June Lai, son and daughter-in-law of the Heartley Lais welcome a new addition to their household, Christopher. The little baby boy joined big sister, Elison, at E. Sinatra Street in Cerritos. A party in the baby's honor was hosted by his grandparents at the Golden Palace Restaurant in Los Angeles.
- * Fuk Yue's mother, who had reached her century mark, passed away in Hong Kong recently, and Fuk Yue and his nephew, James Wong, went back to Hong Kong to finalize arrangements to have her body shipped back to Rose Hills Cemetery for burial. Services were held on April 10, 1992 at 3:30 at Rose Hills. The family donated \$100.00 to Gom-Benn Assn. and \$50.00 towards the scholarship funds. Fook Yue's sister from Boston also came for her mother's services and she donated \$10.00 to Gom-Benn Assn. and \$100.00 towards the scholarship fund.

- * The officers for the Gom-Benn Assn. for the 1992-93 fiscal year are: Lui Wong, president, William Wong, vice-president, Chinese secretary, Ronald Wong and Leonard Hoi, English secretary, Chew Hoi and Edna Gin, Treasurer, Tung D. Wong and committee volunteers: Karl Lee, Harold Wong, Bing Wong of San Bernardino and Ling Jue Wong.
- * Thanks to the combined effort of Gene Art Wong and his brother, Roger Wong, the dreams of a community center in Wor Hing Li was finally accomplished last year. Roger Wong was the main principle in the letter-writing between Gom-Benn participants and Wor Hing Li officials. After we got the go-ahead to start the project, it was but only a short time before former Wor Hing Li residents started the drive to get the building started through generous donations of all involved.
- * On May 18, 1992, a group of former Wor Hing Li residents will be journeying to their homeland for the dedication ceremony on May 23, 1992. The following people will be making the trip: Mrs. Shirley Hoskin, Mrs. Margie Tam, Mrs. Boy Jin Wong, Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Gin, Mr. and Mrs. Lau Tat Ming, Mr. and Mrs. Park Kam Wong, Mr. and Mrs. Yam Yan, Mr. and Mrs. Dearl Sai and a couple of friends of Mrs. Park Kam Wong, and Ronald Wong. Gene Art Wong.
- * This will be Judy's and Dearl's first trip to China and Judy is anxious to visit her father's house in Toishan. We hope that we will be able to visit Dearl's parents' house in "Sak Kay"*
- * Congratulations are in order from the many friends and relatives and particularly from all the members of the Gom-Benn Association on the election of Ben Wong, son of Mrs. Boy Jin Wong, to the City Council of West Covina.
- * The election in West Covina was on April 14th and Ben received the second highest number of votes edging out the other two incumbents. A victory party was held at the Great Wall Restaurant following the election and there was a reception at the West Covina City Hall on April 21st for the winners. Congratulations Ben and may this be a stepping stone to bigger and better things to come.
- * Linda Huang, the second daughter of Mrs. Fay Wong of Riverside, and Carey Huang are the proud parents of a baby boy, Mark Elliot, born March 26, 1992.
- * Mark, who lives in San Francisco with his parents, also has a "dey Dey" (big sister), Keilin, who is 4 years old. She is a big help to her mother and father by taking care of Mark. She lets her parents know when Mark is crying and when he needs to have his diapers changed. Grandmother Fay Wong is especially proud as she now has a total of 12 grandchildren.

