



# Locke Foundation Newsletter 樂居鎮基金會

Preserving Locke's history and legacy

www.lockeca.com

Fall 2013

lockefoundation@frontiernet.net

Locke Foundation Presents

樂居基金會

## Harvest Moon Celebration

A Fundraising Event To Preserve Locke's History & Culture

樂居



Event will include Chinese Music, Folk Dance, Martial Arts Demonstration, Stockton Bukkyo Taiko Drums, Mah Jong Tournament, An Auction of Artworks from local artists, and Raffle prizes.

Lunch will be served.

~ Adult \$20 / Children \$10 ~

(Under 12)

**WHEN:** Saturday, Oct. 26, 2013

11:30 AM - 4:00 PM

**WHERE:** Jean Harvie Center Auditorium

14273 River Road, Walnut Grove, CA 95690

(Free Parking)

For more information or reservation call 916.776.1661

Or check our website: www.lockeca.com

Locke Foundation is a 501.C3, Tax ID #20-0364281

FEEL FREE TO PAY AT THE DOOR OR ON LINE

Enclosed is my payment for # \_\_\_\_\_ tickets \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
No, I am unable to attend. \_\_\_\_\_ Enclosed is my contribution for \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to **Locke Foundation** and submit by **October 18, 2013**

Mail to: **Locke Foundation**, P.O.Box 1085, Walnut Grove CA 95690

Locke Foundation is a 501-C-3 non-profit organization. Tax ID #20-0364281.

**FEEL FREE TO PAY AT THE DOOR OR ONLINE VIA PAYPAL**

# The Last Wish of Tom Jung: Delta Patriarch Inspires Reunion Legacy

by Stuart Walthall

Modern America, with its bulging bread baskets and wide safety nets, convenient technologies and advanced medicines, is considered a blessing for those fortunate enough to be living here at the present time. But is 21<sup>st</sup> century America losing something along its path of comfortable modernity? Are core values being diluted by this modern era?

We live in times of transiency and shifting social mores. We broadcast our lives globally via social media, yet many among us seem to grow more isolated and insulated from each other. The capricious nature of today's modern world seems to have a diminishing effect on our traditions and institutions, the foremost being *family*.

But there is one Delta family whose century-long American experience tells a story of tradition and *unity*—a truly American family, whose roots were first planted in the rocky soils of discrimination, poverty, and hunger, only to grow and flourish within the American dream.

This is the Tom family. Their family mantra has been forged by fire:

***"We live as family.... We die as family"***

On June 29, 2013 photographer James Motlow and I had the honor of attending the Tom family reunion held in Locke, CA. It was a privilege sharing the day with the Tom family while witnessing their traditions and meaningful family legacy.

I would like to thank Ron Chan for his help in the preparation of this article. I have liberally used many of Ron's own words as well as photographs and materials he has so generously provided. Ron is the grandson of Tom Jung and the son of May (Mae) and Alfred Chan.

*Words spoken, when remembered, live for a moment  
But words remembered dim with time  
Dreams passed on, and acted upon, live forever*

Watermark shows Chinese character for "dream"

The Tom family reunion has its roots in the dying wishes of Tom Jung. He was the first of the Tom family to touch America over a century ago. Both Tom Jung and his wife Ng Shee were natives of Chungshan County in Guangdong (Canton), China. They were the first generation: the lowest in status, income, and position. *But from the mud*

*grows the lotus flower. Each generation that follows blooms more than the previous*

The Toms lived in Isleton, CA (located 10 miles south of Locke). They had a total of eight children. A daughter born in China had died there, and a baby son had died on the passage from China to San Francisco. Another son born in Isleton had also passed away. The five surviving



**Immigration Documents for Tom Jung and Ng Shee  
(National Archives & Records Administration, San Bruno)**

children, all born and raised in Isleton, included Connie, Howard, Warren, William (Bill), and Mae (May). Bill and May still reside in the Bay Area.

Both Tom Jung and Ng Shee worked long hours, so the children were left on their own most of the time. The responsibility of tending the children fell upon the eldest daughter Connie (Locke Legend, Connie King). Connie spent most of her time watching out for the children, especially the youngest child May. She made sure they were safe. She fed them on what meager food was available (see "Nearly Lost"). She added stability and love to their young lives, all the while living in abject poverty. Having lived through such challenging circumstances brought the siblings together and bonded them through shared struggles. This bonding has been reinforced within the Tom family and has been carried on through generations.

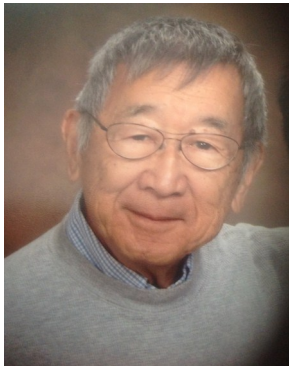
Ron Chan: *"We held the family reunion for many years at Connie's house because Locke represents our Delta roots. Plus, we were able to legally have monumental fireworks displays after it got dark. It was a treat for the elders to watch, but for our children who lit the fiery extravaganza it offered an experience that, even though they may only see each other for a short time each year, created a common memory of shared fun and family."*





*Tom Jung (1865-1954) and Ng Shee (1888-1955)*

Several dozen members of the Tom family attended this year's family reunion. They came from Sacramento, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Seattle. Because of the 100-plus degree forecast, Kim King (Connie's son) had reserved the entire Locke Garden Restaurant for the midday stage of the reunion. The restaurant would offer a comfortable place for the family to eat lunch, rest, play mah-jong, and catch up on each other's lives. Four generations of the Tom family were present at the reunion lunch. Great- and great-great grandchildren of Tom Jung and Ng Shee wandered up and down Main Street checking out businesses



*Siblings Bill Tom and Mae Chan  
Bill's photo courtesy of Ron Chan  
Mae's photo courtesy of James Motlow*

such as the Locke China Imports Shop and the Historic Moon Café Art Gallery, and then meandered to the back of town to visit the Chinese demonstration garden, the community gardens, Connie King's home, and Connie's notorious toilet garden.



*Connie King (1923-2009). Photo courtesy of Liz Wong.*

Ron Chan: "Tom family reunions in the form you see this weekend started in 1998. They are driven by the dying wishes of my uncle Warren who wanted to see and celebrate the entire family before he passed. A year later he was gone. We always take a big group picture. It's meaningful to see each photo. From year to year the photos change. Some family members are no longer in the photo, while new ones appear. Visiting the Delta to celebrate our family reunions also has an early morning ritual which involves going to the Rio Vista Cemetery (Assembly of God Cemetery located 15 miles south of Locke) to visit those who came before us and to pay respects and to lay flowers. My mother (May Chan) always carries five Thermoses to the cemetery. Offering tea and pouring it on the plot is a way to show respect and help nurture the soul who has passed. Tea for Tom Jung; Ng Shee and Tommy King (Connie's husband) receive coffee with cream and sugar. Connie gets decaf coffee. It's black coffee for mom's brothers Warren and Howard. My family dutifully follows my mother as she pours the tea, coffee, and her heart to each of her siblings and her parents. Then we bow three times before them out of respect...

"One time my mother took a Thermos of coffee for her mother and forgot the cream and sugar. Despite our whining because of standing in the hot, dry Rio Vista sun, we went to a nearby restaurant to get the missing cream and sugar. My mother said: "Ma may not know... but I do!"

"I guess in my own meandering way, this is a snapshot of why we have this reunion; why the Delta is so special to us. How Connie so vibrantly represented our life of old, and that the reunion is not just about eating, but provides food for our souls as well. Connie always gave us a bag of homemade char sui (BBQ pork) and almond cookies before we went home. Today Ginny (Connie's daughter) carries on that tradition. So Connie continues to live on, even though she is now gone."

Following lunch and relaxation at the Locke Garden Restaurant the Tom family then moved to Giusti's Restaurant in Walnut Grove (located one mile south of Locke) for dinner. James Motlow was about to start taking group photos when more members of the Tom family showed up. The late arrivals had to skip the luncheon in order to watch grandchildren play in a baseball tournament (which they won). Among the late arrivals was Connie King's daughter Ginny, along with her family. Group photos were taken outside the restaurant in the late afternoon light. Then, after all of the photos were taken, the family entered the restaurant for a final celebration over dinner and special words of gratitude and respect.

## Tom Family reunion (continued from Page 3)



**The Tom Family Reunion 2013**  
 Bill Tom and Mae Chan in Center  
 (Photo by James Motlow)

Last to arrive at the restaurant were Ginny and her immediate family. Each family member struggled to carry multiple white boxes wrapped with red yarn, filled with char sui and almond cookies.

### Tom Jung's Final Words

The following are excerpts of the last words of Tom Jung. They were recorded on January 21, 1954, just weeks before he died. The words are literal in their translation from Chinese, as Tom Jung spoke little English. The source is a video of the Tom Family History by Bill Tom, which contains an audio recording of his father, Tom Jung. These words were captured on tape in order to record the final wishes of a loving father as he reached out to touch his children for the last time. Mr. Tom passed away on March 3, 1954 at the age of 88.

*"Today is 1954, January 21, 1954. I, Tom Jung, am sitting at home and wish to leave a message to my children."*

*"To my oldest Howard: man and wife should live in harmony. Do not argue. Take care of your business. Clayton (Howard's son) is presently in high school, and when he finishes ... Howard, you must see that he goes to college. Clayton must learn a profession so he is not left behind as a common laborer."*

*"Bill, Warren, Connie, and Mae- brothers and sisters, and in-laws: do not raise your hands in anger against each other. Live in harmony. Let big problems be little problems, and let little problems be no problems."*

*"Brothers and sisters stand united, or others will look down upon you. When you are not united, you bring shame upon yourselves. The older ones must look after the younger, and the younger must look after the older."*

*"For the past several years I have not been able to walk or able to stand. I am fortunate that I have your mother, who has taken care of me. She cooked my meals, served me tea, and brought me water. She brought me my chair and helped me sit down to eat. I am forever grateful to her."*

*"My children have come to see me. They brought a lot of food for me to eat, and when I see them it makes me happy. Today, you children have all undertaken your responsibility to honor your parents, and I am satisfied beyond what I anticipated."*

*"You must be united and live in harmony. You must remember everything I have said."*





## Nearly Lost Daughter and Sister

The following was written on August 7, 1998, by William (Bill) Tom, son of Tom Jung and Ng Shee. Bill is the older brother of Mae (May) Tom Chan.

### Mae Tom Age 13, 1938



Mae was born of a very poor but proud family, as were many other kids during the Great Depression. Originally, our parents were relatively wealthy and decided to increase their wealth by investing into the operation of a pear farm up in Courtland, CA in 1928. They expended a lot of money in employee wages, food, labor, equipment, etc to get a crop of pears ready for harvest

in August 1929.

Harvested they did. The best money for pears was to ship all the green pears back to the Eastern market where fruits were in great demand. Before my father was to receive the money for his shipments, the Great Depression hit in October, and my father owed so much expense money

that he went broke. He did not know enough to file for bankruptcy, but he owed money to his friends. It took him almost 20 years before he was able to pay back what he owed. But he paid back every cent.

Meanwhile, back at the house, in a typical day we had hot tea for breakfast, one slice of bread sprinkled with sugar for lunch, and for dinner we had three saltine crackers in a cup of hot water. I still remember my mother telling me to keep swallowing saliva when my stomach started to growl.

Across the street from our house was a middle-aged couple who had no children of their own. They owned a candy and knick-knack shop up front and lived in the back part of the house. The name of the candy store was Wing Hing Lee.

One day they asked our parents to give them Mae as they had the means to feed and clothe her, instead of having her starve. No money was offered in exchange. On the delivery date, all our parents needed to do was walk across the street with Mae. Our parents abruptly changed their minds and said that if we starve, we will starve together as family. Hungry as we were, we stayed a united family.

## Planning for Locke's Centennial in 2015

Two important projects are well underway in Locke: The Locke Centennial Building Survey and the Locke Centennial Building Genealogy Project. These two ongoing projects involve gathering historic materials pertaining to the history and legacy of Locke.

The LCBS is currently seeking historic photographs of Locke's buildings, its various structures, and landscapes. These images will then be catalogued and offered as a resource to historians, students, authors, artists, and the public in general.

If you have any digitized images and materials you would like to share with these two valuable programs please send them to the above email addresses.

Also included in the Locke Building Genealogy Project will be any archival materials that relate historically to buildings and people of Locke. Such materials include: newspaper and magazine articles, books, documents, film, oral histories, and more.

The LCBS is being spearheaded by James Motlow, co-author of BITTER MELON: Stories from the Last Chinese Town in America. You may contact James Motlow at: [jmotlow@yahoo.com](mailto:jmotlow@yahoo.com).

### The Locke Centennial Survey Wish List

1. Historical Photos of Locke
2. Historical Materials Related to Locke
3. Contact Information for Past Residents of Locke
4. Volunteers Skilled in Web Site Design
5. Cash Donations to Help Fund the Projects

Those interested in contributing to the Locke Centennial Projects may do so by using the following contact information.

Locke Foundation  
Attn: LCBS/LCBGP  
P.O. Box 1085  
Walnut Grove, CA 95690

The town of Locke will be commemorating its centennial in 2015. We sincerely hope you will be coming to Locke to join us in this year-long celebration. In the meantime we would appreciate your generosity, your skills, and your continued support of the town of Locke.

# Delta Pride: Necessity was the mother of invention

By Eileen Leung

The Sacramento River Delta area spawned a plethora of patents from the late 1800's to mid-1900's, and not all of them were related to farming. Information for this article was taken from extensive research done by Ron Chong, great grandson of Leong Yee Chong, pioneer asparagus farmer in Grand Island area.

"Researching patents relevant to ancestral occupations can add insight about their social status and their place in society. Historical events can often shape or influence your ancestor's choice of occupation or trade. Luck always plays a role in achieving success, but also ingenuity and perseverance plays a significant role. As we found that the Chong family had funded the start of a family produce business in 1932, from monies derived from their asparagus plow and services business, we elected to research for relevant patents at the U. S. Patent Office. This led to rediscovery of seven U.S. patents for asparagus plow and implements held by the partnership of Tony Miller and Jue, Sam, Bing and Look Chong, plus five patents held by the competing Paris brothers. Their success was based on having the best design, that withstood the rigors of pulverizing the root and dirt in the old asparagus fields; whereas, prior plow designs would not last or required excess maintenance."

Here is a sample of patents from various Delta towns:

## Walnut Grove

1886: Fire escapes as fires were common in wooden buildings. Invention related to folding ladders which could easily be deployed yet could be folded up when not in use.

1922: Portable tire pumps

1920's: Airplane, auxiliary lifting wing, directional stabilizer, control and mechanisms variable camber propellers. Chinese-American pilots were being trained in Walnut Grove and Courtland area to help nationalist forces in China. Unfortunately, these airplanes were burned in an act of sabotage.

1931: Asparagus packing gauge

## Ryde and Grand Island

1867: Improvement in Hoe Design

1868: Improvement in farm wagon

1873: Machinery to remove grain from exterior hull without breaking the kernel to produce pure flour.

## Courtland

1888: Pesticide Spray nozzle for pesticides in fruit orchards, vines and shrubs.

1900-25: Improved methods for packing and sizing pears

## Clarksburg

1930: Portable irrigation head-gate

## Elk Grove

1884: various patents for farm implements, including hinged-swing gate, windmill head, voting booth, shaving brush, bale-tie machine, voting booth, newspaper wrapping machine,

## Florin

1938: rotary saw invented by Chinese American Howard Chinn

## Hood

1938: Funnel strainer, frusto-conical body with semi-spherical strainer.

## Locke

1928: Temperature sensing marks for filling cans; markings would indicate whether or not food has been fully cooked.

## Isleton

1924: Asparagus slicing and dicing machine, remove outer skin of tough stems, cut into cubes for cooking.

1924: Traveling vehicle whereby merchandise could be stacked for easy dispensing, cooled by ice.

1929: Automate packing of asparagus vertically in cans.

## Rio Vista

1886: Gang plow and cultivator, liquid fuel burner,  
1925: Aeroplane (not airplane) design with flapping wings to simulate bird in flight.

In the 1930's, the success of the Miller and Chong asparagus plow, and its robust revenue stream in the midst of the Depression, had not gone unnoticed by Leon Paris of Rio Vista. With his brother Fred, they designed and manufactured an asparagus plow remarkably similar in design to the Miller and Chong plow. Leon Paris ran the plow business from Rio Vista, offering services to asparagus farmers to chop up their old asparagus fields. His brother Fred Paris

## 1st Prize Winner in Locke Foundation Essay Contest

Locke Foundation (LF) has awarded its first place Essay Writing Contest prize of \$500 to Hannah Dumas, graduating senior and valedictorian from Rio Vista High School. The contest was open to high school students in the River Delta School District. Contestants were required to submit an essay on How will I Help Preserve the History of Locke and Maintain its Cultural and Historical Significance? The panel of judges included Joyce Eng, chair of contest and LF board member, Darrel Woo, Esq., board member of LF and Sacramento Unified School District board, and Wayne Miller, property manager, Locke Management Association.

Hannah's maternal great-grandparents emigrated from China and settled in Rio Vista. She credits her maternal grandmother with teaching her Chinese cultural values and traditions. She wrote "Locke must be maintained as a historically significant place not because its inhabitants built levees, but because they had the courage to make the trek here, and worked hard to make a living for themselves and their families in this new country."

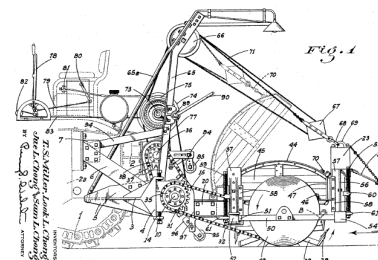
The daughter of Tom and Allison Dumas, Hannah will be attending University of Southern California, majoring in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Studies. An honor student, Hannah has compiled an impressive 4.5 GPA and participated in numerous athletic and community service activities.



*L to R: Joyce Eng, LF Essay Contest chair, Hannah Dumas, Tom Dumas, and Clarence Chu, LF president, at Locke Boarding House Museum on July 28, 2013.  
(Photo courtesy of Locke Foundation.)*

Information on the Second Annual Essay Contest will be distributed to Delta high schools in early 2014 .

## Delta patents (continued from Page 6)



of Berkeley was a Stanford graduate, who worked as an excavation contractor. Fred Paris' experience with rotary trenchers lent to design of an

"asparagus root grubber" for his brother Leon. Fred Paris was awarded five patents. The strong similarity of their design resulted in a lawsuit being filed by the Miller and Chong partnership, which was eventually contested and settled in the U.S. District Court in favor of Paris family.

The partnership of Tony Miller and the Chong brothers (Bing, Jue, Sam, Look) was able to identify a growing need to plow and disc the old asparagus fields. The existing fields were maturing, past their prime for asparagus harvest, and would need to be renewed for different crops. By

the mid-1920's they were able to produce their first asparagus plow, which consisted of a large set of sharpened cutting blades mounted in a cylindrical plane (Fig 2 above), and rotated at about 200 rpm while being pulled by the tractor (lower-right in Fig 1 below). They continued to refine and patent their designs into 1938, with their 10th patent. After his brothers moved to Sacramento, the plow business was continued by Look Chong into the 1950's.

The ingenuity and creativity of Delta farmers' contributions to development of California agriculture are a source of Delta pride.

*LF is grateful to Ron Chong for permission to use data from family web site: <http://chong.zxq.net>*

## Locke Foundation Membership Application/Renewal

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_ Tel (    ) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to volunteer for the following activities:

Event planning \_\_\_\_\_ Publicity \_\_\_\_\_ Membership recruitment \_\_\_\_\_

Write articles \_\_\_\_\_ Grant writing \_\_\_\_\_ Historical restoration \_\_\_\_\_

### Membership Dues: circle one

\_\_\_\_\_ \$25 Individual Annual/\$200 Lifetime

\_\_\_\_\_ \$50 Family or Non-Profit Organization Annual/\$300 Lifetime

\_\_\_\_\_ \$100 Business Annual/\$500 Lifetime

Make check payable to Locke Foundation. Please return this form with check to Locke Foundation  
P. O. Box 1085, Walnut Grove, CA 95690. Tax ID: 20-0364281.

Office use only:

Date application received \_\_\_\_\_ Membership Year \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

Locke Foundation  
P. O. Box 1085  
Walnut Grove, CA 95690

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