

## Autobiography by James L. Fong

My parents, Kay and Gee Shee Fong, welcomed me, son number 5 of what would be 7 boys, on June 23, 1928 at a hospital in the middle of the San Francisco Chinatown.

Art and lunch were my favorite subjects at Chinatown's Commodore Stockton Elementary school. My teacher noted that I and my classmate, Art Lee whose parents owned the Eastern Bakery, were artistic. We were asked to paint water color cards depicting scenes of daily life in Chinatown. One interesting sight I painted was the meal delivery men who walked around Chinatown balancing covered plate of food on their heads.

Every day I would wait for the clock to reach noon. Then I would run home for lunch. On the way I would buy lunch for a few cents to share with my brothers at home. My home bound mother would then send me to Jackson Café to buy a sandwich to eat with her coffee. My mother did not go out much with so many boys to watch.

When I got older I became traffic patrol and helped students cross the busy intersection of Stockton Street and Washington Street.

Many of my good friends like David Dung lived in Chinatown. There were 4 or 5 of us. We attended the same schools: Francisco Junior High and Galileo High. During WWII it was better to stay close to home and we could choose between Galileo and Commerce High Schools. I and my friends preferred Galileo since in addition to math and science the curriculum included electives like auto shop and carpentry.

Galileo High was near the army barracks and ship docks of Fort Mason.

Graduated from Galileo High School in Feb. 1947. All my friends were from Chinatown. Commerce High were for clerical . WWII you can go too far away from home. Hop on streetcar. Army barracks were nearby so a lot of. Riot on Alcatraz. Smoke from fires. Batan march prisoners were rescued and arrive home by ship. Fort Mason shipdock. Then went on and enrolled in City College of San Francisco. Majoring in Engineering Drafting while helping-out after school @ father's laundry (little time for homework). Graduating from CCSF in June 1949with Brother's Nelson (electronic) and Ernest (business) with an Associate Art Degree.

Like Edwin & King, we had a difficult time finding work due to discrimination. We took a lot of civil service exams & got on their waiting list.

Finally in April 1950, I was offered a position as a Cartographic Draftsman from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation in Sacramento. Worked there until January 1951, took a leave of absence when I was drafted into the U.S. Army due to the Korean War.

I was sent to Camp Roberts for my basic training (16 weeks). During my 8<sup>th</sup> week of training, I was interviewed and given the option to stay behind and enroll in leadership school after basic. To which I turn-down-it would mean I will be obligated for 4 years of service instead of just 2 years. In the summer of 1951, I was given orders to ship-out with 5,000 others to the Far Command. When we arrive at Camp Drake (outside Tokyo), I and 2 other men were send to be interviewed at GHQ/FEC 500<sup>th</sup> MISG in Tokyo.

Thereafter, I was assigned to this army unit up to Dec. 31, 1952. My duties were to prepare classified drawings, maps and miscellaneous capture documents from Korea.

In July 1952, started dating Fumiyo and decided to be released from active military service in Tokyo when my 2 years obligation was up. Accepted Dept. of Army civilian job position as a GS-6 Illustrator working out of the same office when I was on active duty. Army provided free billet for dept of Army civilians (DAC) men of the Yaesu Hotel in Tokyo.

Fumiyo and I were married on May 30, 1953 @ GHQ Tokyo Chapel.

In March 1954, Fumiyo and I decided to resign my position and have the Army move us back to San Francisco. 1<sup>st</sup> floor/ big main 3 bedroom apt, 2 small apts on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. 2<sup>nd</sup> floor opposite Ed. Soon after settling down on Powell St., I found a Draftsman position with the city of San Francisco working out of City Hall. After six months, I left the city and took a new position as a delineator with the Division of Highways in the Traffic Department.

Went to get breakfast in the middle of the night while Fumiyo was in the hospital. Randy was born August 26, 1954. Ladies at the office suggested names like Roger, etc. We came up with the name of Randall. Brought box of chocolate and cigars to the office when Randy was born.

Had to wear a suit and tie since worked in the assessor's office. The public would come to the counter. Had three top brand name suits by Botany 500. Bought them at the PX in Japan.

Lived at Powell St. Baby sat for Ed and Evie. Watched over Janice. Janice would escape from her crib. Took Dennis on a road trip with Grandpa and Grandma to visit Uncle Ralph. He was undergoing basic training at Ft. Ord.

I was rated top of the Delineator exam list. Then in May 1956, I was appointed the position of a Jr. Civil Engineer after passing an exam. I was assigned to the construction department and sent to Marin County to help with 3 major US 101 freeway construction projects.

In October 1957, I was promoted to Assistant Highway Engineer after passing that exam. Continued working within the construction department working on major construction projects within San Francisco and San Mateo County.

Jocie was born. Never lived in Powell St. apt. Bought Eichler home in the suburbs San Mateo Highlands. Eichler was Nurse asked Fumiyo where did she live. She did not know the new address.

Marie was born. False alarm. Induced.

By March 1961 I was reassigned to our SF district office to assist within a project design squad. We prepared alternate geometrics studies and route planning of a major Novato US 101 bypass freeway.

Plans, specifications and estimates for this project was prepared and sent out for contact bid. Our squad also prepared plans for the construction of interstate route 280 freeway bypassing the town of Woodside.