

## CHINATOWN PHARMACY

By Richard Chu

My father, James Hing Chu, along with Kang Chu were the owners of Chinatown Pharmacy. It was the first Chinese owned western style pharmacy in New York City and maybe in America. Chinatown Pharmacy was mentioned so often during the last reunion I feel compelled to write a little something about growing up in the footsteps of my father and his partner. I had the privilege of taking over the pharmacy for the last 10 years of operation.

The pharmacy was much more than just a neighborhood drug store, it was a meeting place, social hangout and message center all in one. There was a small bulletin board by the front door where news of Chinatown was posted. The owners of the pharmacy were also the photo historians of Chinatown. I have tons of old pictures, negatives and reels of movies to prove it.

Chinatown Pharmacy was synonymous with The Chinese Community Club (CCC). The Chinese Community Club, with help of the Chinatown Pharmacy, held Chinese New Year ballroom dances, Christmas parties for the children of Chinatown and Spring Field Day including a baby parade. CCC also sponsored athletic teams and a Chinese New Year lion dance troop. The Chinatown Pharmacy and CCC became even more closely related when CCC moved from Pell Street to a basement location under the pharmacy. It was pretty incredible that there was so much activity happening in such a small place.

I will close on a personal note. I have been blessed to have lived in the most famous apartment house in Chinatown, 37 Mott Street. Wow, being associated with two landmarks in old Chinatown. A couple of generations before my generation and our younger brothers and sisters were the lucky ones. We lived in a magical place and during an unforgettable era. There will never be a better time or place to have grown up. I still cherish the friends I made over 60 years ago.