

Mr. Guy Thom, Sr.

By Joe Wong

Mr. Guy Thom Sr. was the original chicken driver for the Yuen Roy Chicken Co. and at night would pick up the Chinese newspapers from all the various newspaper companies and take them down to the main post office at City Hall and many young kids would take a ride with him and help drop off the papers and I was one of those kids.

Half of the kids in Chinatown had worked, at one time or another, for the Chinese Newspapers...rolling and wrapping them for mailing all over the U.S. There were 4 or 5 newspapers, so there was a need for lots of kids. I have forgotten how much they paid. I wrapped for awhile, but found delivering and selling them paid more, so I did that mostly.

Anyone remember the Journal on East Broadway or the Tribune on Bayard St. and the Mun-Hay Bo on Elizabeth St. across from the 5th Precinct? And the one that many of the elders didn't like, the one on Mott St. on the other side of Canal St. It was pro-communist and some of my customers used to tell me I'm not buying from you, if you sell that company's paper!! So I would hide those papers from their view.

Guy, Jr. was a little boy when I used to hang out with his dad. I was only a 13 or 14 yr. old myself and when I was 16 I got his job delivering chickens because he was tied up in the market skinning chickens.

I looked up to Guy, Sr. as my mentor, he spoke English, was very Americanized, drove the truck like it was part of himself and could fit through the narrowest spaces without any effort. Watching and riding with him was a joy to see. I learned all my good driving habits from him and I was a better driver for it. He was the dad I wished I had. My parents were country people from the village and spoke probably a dozen words of English in the 60 years they lived in America. Guy Sr. was the man I tried to emulate and I don't think he was very highly educated, but he read all the best books and the Wall St. Journal and had an interest in the stock market, all self educated. I learned not only about driving but many things about life in the streets of New York....I am not ashamed to say when I came upon a difficult decision, I would ask myself, "What would Guy have done?"

I met Guy Jr. at the last reunion and spoke to him at length and we talked about his dad. I think I told him how much his dad influenced my life. Jr. contacted me after the reunion of '06 when he saw my name on the roster and wondered if I was the Joe Wong his dad had mentioned long ago. Also, Jr. had a letter his dad had mailed to me in California, but it was returned as I had moved, but he still kept the letter among his papers and Jr. gave it to me at the '08 reunion when we finally met.

His dad and I lost contact with each other after I went into the marines in 1952 and I wished I had kept in touch as I would have wanted him to know how I turned out in life. I think he would have approved of his student. Guy Tom was a great man.