

PHOENIX YEES SAVOR SEATTLE

Reflections on the 2012 USA Convention

By Edward Yue

After the World Yee Fung Toy Convention in Vancouver a few days before, the Phoenix Chapter members were led by Grand Elder John M. Yee to Seattle for the National Yee Fung Toy Convention. Those attending from the Phoenix Chapter were: President Joe Yue, his wife Mayen. Advisor David Yee and with his wife Stephanie, and daughters, Meghan and Emily, Advisor Edward Yue, Advisor Rudy Yee and his wife Mary Ann; Brenda (Yee) Fung and her husband William; Jack Yee and his wife Betty. We arrived by bus at the Holiday Inn SeaTAC at 5:00 pm. As usual when out-of-towners like ourselves, but especially Grand Elder John is involved, the local kinsmen met and took us in a neighboring suburb to the Renton Sea Food Restaurant for a delicious Chinese dinner prepared by its Hong Kong chef.

(William, Brenda, Jack, Betty, and Mary Ann after arrival did not further participate in the convention-related activities due to other plans.)

Saturday after breakfast Joe, Mayen and I were met by Benton Ong formerly of Gilbert, Arizona, and his wife Wendee, who drove us to Pike Street Public Market, a world-class site for shopping and sightseeing. We then had lunch at Ivars Sea Food Restaurant on the water front and walked off their renown clam chowder soup, salmon sandwich and fish tacos while taking in the scenic views. After resting at the Ongs' house we stopped for locally-famed jerky en route back to the Holiday Inn.

An Italian buffet dinner was served on the 12th floor of the Holiday Inn at 6 pm. Our first convention-related meeting for business organizational purposes convened immediately thereafter at 9 pm.

Sunday was the first full day of the Convention. After breakfast buffet from 6 to 8:00 am in the hotel's Seven Hills Grille Restaurant, buses arrived to transport everyone to the Seattle Chinatown where we arrived at the Chinese Benevolent Association (Chong Wah / Zhonghua Huiguan) for the 10:00 am ceremony paying respects for our ancestors with Yee Fung-toy (Yu Fengcai) as the model and exemplar, being posthumously ennobled by the Emperor in 1065 C.E. as the Loyal Assisting Duke (Chunghsiung Kung/Zhongxiang Gong). Extensive pictures were taken not only of groups from the various areas represented, but also of each individual delegate (or delegate with spouse and family). These will be featured in the commemorative Souvenir Book prepared for Conventions. Lunch dim sum style was served at noon at the Sun Ya Restaurant just across the street.

The official Grand Opening ceremony occurred in the afternoon with extensive outdoor Lion Dances, martial arts demonstrations, and of course voluminous fireworks just outside Chong Wah and then of course the welcoming speeches inside. In addition to local clan dignitaries, other distinguished guests who made remarks included: Washington State Lt. Governor Brad Owen, Attorney General Robert McKenna (a gubernatorial candidate), and State Legislator, Bob Hasegawa. The official opening banquet dinner that evening convened at the New Hong Kong Restaurant with the usual program of welcoming remarks, entertainment and of course delicious food.

On Monday, the Convention took care of a full day of business; in the meantime, family and guests were given a tour of Seattle including the Hiram Locks and Northgate Mall throughout the day.

Dinner that evening was at the House of Hong Restaurant (Kang Le), and was formally hosted by the leaders of the Seattle local Chinese community. On this occasion, the festive atmosphere was pronounced: not only was there the usual karaoke vocalizing of popular songs, but also classical opera arias rendered to considerable audience appreciation.

Tuesday was a second and a rather long day of Convention business while the tours also went further afield: Snoqualmie Falls as a scenic sight, Bellevue Square, and then Snoqualmie Casino for a bit of diversion... This evening, just before departing on Wednesday, the dinner was a quite high quality buffet served at the hotel. After which, the Convention re-convened to attend to mandatory elections and of course closing ceremonies.

At this final dinner, hosted by the local representatives of the Government of the Republic of China (the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office or TECO), a special guest was Dr. Wu Ying-yi, the Minister (Cabinet-rank) of the Overseas Compatriots Affairs Commission arriving from Taipei, who won considerable applause by short remarks followed by instructions for the meal to begin. Dr. Wu also promised that when the new site for a relocated local Seattle office of the Yee Fung-toy Family Association is inaugurated after the fundraising campaign got so well-launched at this 24th National Convention, he would most certainly return.

While the SeaTac Holiday Inn was quite adequate for this first ever national Yees convention in terms of overall facilities, the only logjam was that the daily breakfast buffet had limited seating capacity. No doubt this was a bearable inconvenience given the excellent connection both by the conventional shuttle but also by the light rail system to the airport itself.

The Seattle Yees were warmly thanked by all for devising a very enjoyable event that will be long remembered, and which will lay the groundwork for a well-attended repeat performance when there's a shiny new local headquarters to show off.