

“My parents worked very long hours working at Chinese restaurants.”

Yu Jie Chen worked part-time at a Chinese take-out restaurant. “In the evening when the restaurant closed, my mom and I walked six blocks in the dark to where my dad worked as a chef so we could get a ride home. Sometimes when my dad had to work near midnight to clean the kitchen hood, my mom and I took two buses home....”

“Eight years later after our arrival to Minnesota, my family was very excited to purchase a Chinese restaurant in Shakopee! My father went from being a bookkeeper and mom, a farmer in China to chefs in the United States and then restaurant business owners. That was their dream.

“My parents later sold their successful restaurant business to my older sister and retired.”

Yu Heng took over after her parents retired. When she retired, other relatives continued the tradition, including Alex, who graduated Shakopee High School.

And so the family, all three generations, have worked at the Dragon Cafe Chinese Restaurant here in Shakopee!



SHAKOPEE HERITAGE SOCIETY
2109 Boulder Pointe, Shakopee, MN 55379

952-693-3865

shakopeeheritage.org



SHAKOPEE HERITAGE SOCIETY



Yu Heng

**Dragon Cafe Chinese
Restaurant
In Shakopee since 1986**



Yu Heng and Yu Jie Chen, along with their mom, two aunts, and nine children under 11 years old immigrated to America in 1982.

The family had been living in the peaceful village of Kinglam, Onfen, Guangdong, China, where 200 people called home, according to an article by Yu Jie Chen called “Family of 10” from [#minneasianstories](#) Yu Jie Chen’s older sister is Yu Heng.



A picture of the family in Guangdong, China. Yu Heng and Yu Jie Chen’s grandfather and great grandfather are not in the picture as they headed to America first, in 1973, and found work for their three sons.



The three generations of family members moved from Guangdong, China and eventually open the Dragon Cafe in Shakopee. Three generations worked in the restaurant, which has been going strong for over 40 years, serving wonderful Chinese food to people in Shakopee and the area in the Minnesota Valley.



Yu Jie Chen remembered the story. “I was told to get into a minivan, and all of the kids and moms got in a vehicle and off we left the village where everyone knew everyone’s name and everyone are very much alike.”

According to Yu Jie Chen, on the way to America they stayed temporarily with friends and relatives in Guangzhou and Hong Kong.

“When we arrived in the cold Minnesota, at the age of nine I met my grandpa for the first time,” said Yu Jie Chen. “None of us knew any English. We brought with us what we could carry in a few suitcases, with little money. We came to a place where we did not know the people, the food, the environment, and the culture.

“My family and my uncle’s family rented this very old house in Minneapolis. Each family had one bedroom and we shared a small kitchen that fit a table and some chairs. Eleven people crowded into this kitchen to eat. Two families shared one car,” said Yu Jie Chen.

“My parents kept on telling us kids that we need to learn English and do well in school.

“My parents and grandparents never had the opportunity to attend high school or higher level education in rural Guangdong, China. My parents wanted their kids to have the opportunity to go to college.”

And the children and grandchildren did!



Realtor and author Yu Jie Chen