

Good business, good friends

By SHARON SETO

It was 1918 when my grandfather, Dock Seto, left China and came to Canada in search of a better, more prosperous life. In those days, a head tax of \$500—a small fortune—had to be paid to the Government of Canada if you wanted to remain in the country. My grandfather, at 18, joined his two older brothers in Barrie to start their own restaurant business.

Starting a restaurant was a very costly and risky adventure, but proved very successful for many Chinese friends and ancestors of my grandfather. Later, my grandfather moved from Barrie to Orillia to start a partnership with cousins. In 1928, he returned to China to marry. Then in 1931, my grandfather came back to Canada to nurture a young, growing business, leaving behind his

wife to nurture two young sons.

World War II had then broken out and my grandfather lost all communication with his family. It was only after the war that he was able to make contact with his family and find them alive and well.

The immigration laws in Canada had then begun to change. A head tax was no longer necessary, and Cana-

dian citizens were permitted to bring their wives and children over to the new country. At this time, Canada only allowed children 18 years of age and under to enter.

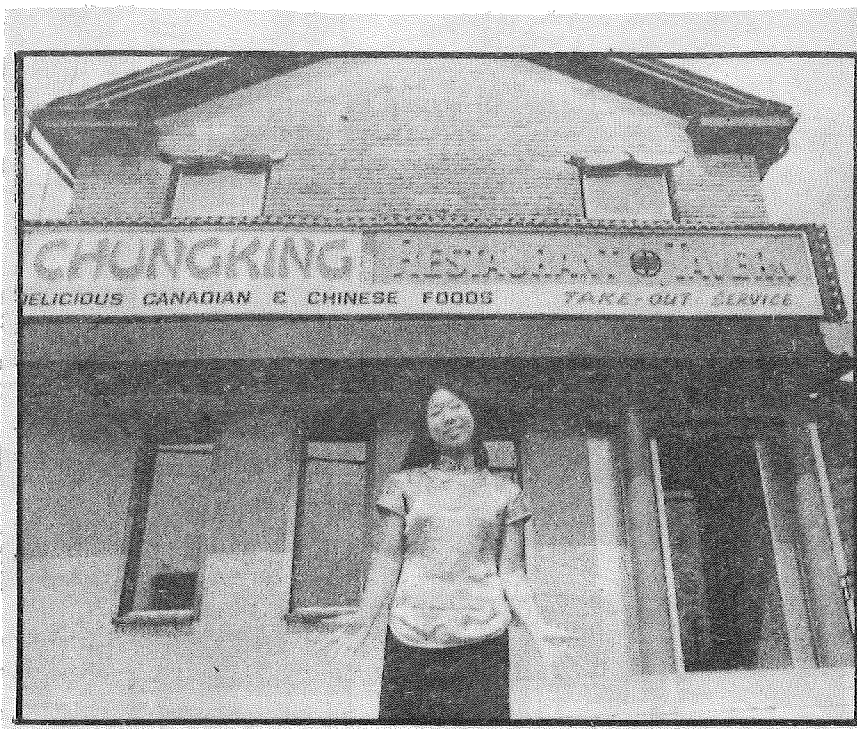
It was 1950 when my Uncle Sam came over to join my grandfather. My grandmother remained in Hong Kong with her 20-year-old son. It was in Hong Kong that my dad attended college so that he could learn English. It was important if you were going over to the "New Land." To be able to communicate effectively with your clientele was one factor that determined a thriving business. And a thriving business was a factor that determined how well you survived.

In 1951, Canadian immigration laws changed again, so that Canadian citizens who had children 21 years of age and under were permitted into the country. My father arrived in Canada, followed by my grandmother a few months later.

My dad first worked with my uncle as a busboy for my grandfather. My dad and Uncle Sam continued to work in Orillia for six more years. Then, in 1957, one of my dad's uncles read an ad in the paper regarding a restaurant for rent in the north end of a little village called Streetsville. My dad and my uncle came down



The Queen Street location in 1960 (right)



GORM LARSEN/THE TIMES

Sharon Seto outside today's restaurant

from Orillia to look at it. Driving into Streetsville, they were so surprised at finding such a tiny suburb that they questioned the chances of a successful business. Well, their uncle persuaded them to commit themselves. He felt they would have to open a place of their own in order to really experience running and managing a restaurant.

The restaurant was named Hoy's Cafe, after my father, and business began to grow. It was only a small community of a few thousand. My dad remembers a lot about those times: no mail delivery, fields and trees that are now residential areas, very few

main roads, and many country roads, but most memorable are the friendly and helpful people. The residents of Streetsville welcomed newcomers with open arms. My dad says it was like being a part of one happy family. He enjoyed becoming a part of the town. Getting involved, he became a charter member of the rotary Club of Streetsville. A year later, my mother arrived in Streetsville to marry my dad.

By 1960, the lease to the restaurant had expired and my dad moved south on Queen Street to our present location. My sister Donna and I had been born then, and the

Seto family had grown to seven.

The house that my dad bought was well over a hundred years old. It had previously been the Streetsville Blacksmith's Shop, then it became the Streetsville Printing Office, and then it was changed into a residence. My dad and Uncle Sam remodelled and moved into the new Hoy's Cafe.

In 1963, my uncle returned to Hong Kong to marry and he brought my Aunt Helen here to Streetsville to start their family.

My dad and uncle noticed a great many changes in Streetsville—more businesses had

—developed, the town was growing wider, and the population was growing. Streetsville was a fast-changing, fast-expanding community. They felt there was a need for a higher quality family restaurant. Renovations went underway—the interior was remodelled to a slightly more sophisticated dining lounge, a liquor licence was obtained, and the name was changed to Chungking Restaurant and Tavern.

Chungking is a famous, ancient city in Northwest China. It was, long ago, a war-time capital. Chungking was chosen because it was a famous, dignified name, and an historical reminder of China.

Friendships and family have grown considerably over the past twenty years. My dad doesn't like to refer to his customers as patrons, but as great friends.

The Seto family has grown to twenty-two. Six were born here in Mississauga, and cousins have immigrated from Hong Kong and The People's Republic of China. We remain proudly in Streetsville with four generations.

The help and the support of such a warm, friendly community has established a family, produced a successful business and has bonded great, long-lasting friendships.