

The Story of Edwin Young: A Boy from Gilroy

by

Janice Young

**Educator as Author 670/ 770
Dr. Alma Flor Ada
Spring Semester, 2002.**

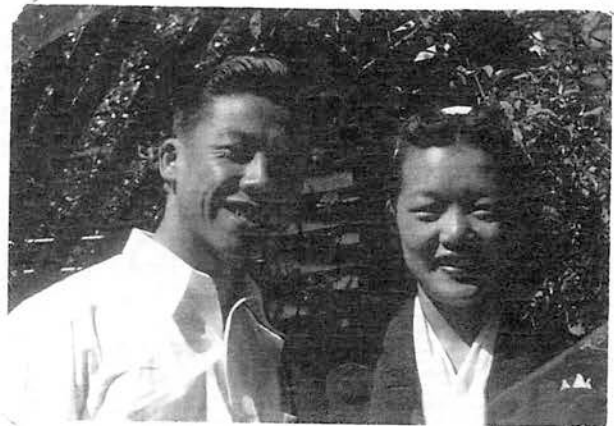
This is the story of my father, Edwin Young who was born in Gilroy, California on December 12, 1913, the fifth of nine children, consisting of five boys and four girls. Three previous babies died during infancy. My grandfather ran the local grocery store and was a well-respected merchant. My San Francisco born grandmother married him at the tender age of 14 and had their first child, May at 15. An arranged marriage, my grandmother did not ever meet her future husband until their day of their wedding. My grandfather was 36 years her senior! My father's youngest sister, Alice was born after her father passed away. All the children helped with various jobs after school while my grandmother took care of the younger children. My father told me about the various jobs he performed during the summer in order to earn money. He and his brothers often worked in the fields and picked prunes and garlic.

My grandmother felt Gilroy's environment was not very appropriate for her young children and in 1930, my father's senior year in high school moved the entire family to San Francisco. My father completed his last year of high school at the former, Commerce High School. That school is now gone. My father was a runner, a sprinter running the 75 and 100 yard dash in high school. Due to his running ability, he was encouraged by his friends to run for the then oldest and largest all Chinese Boy Scout troop west of the Mississippi. He became an honorary member of that troop and is still a member to this very day. It was during high school, in order to stay fit and keep in training for his running, did my father began doing push-ups every morning to gain upper body strength. He continues until this very day to perform a regimen of 100 push-ups every morning and he performs this ritual in 90 seconds!!!

After graduation from high school, my father went to work with his Uncle Paul, my uncle Chuck, and his cousin, Harold. In 1939, he had began to date my mother, Frances Loo, a good friend of his younger



My parents at the World Fair - 1939.



My parents - 1940.



My parents getting married-
1/1941 - Reno, Nevada.



My parents, Aunt Phoebe,
1/1941 - Reno, Nevada.



January 12, 1941 - Their apartment,
San Francisco, CA.

sister, Ruth. Their relationship began shortly after my father had broken up with his present girlfriend, Maddie. In fact, my mother lived in the same apartment building! After approximately a year, they became engaged and were married by the Justice of the Peace during a snow trip with friends in Reno, Nevada on January 12, 1941. They returned back to San Francisco to have a traditional Chinese banquet with family and friends. During this time, my father went to work as a shipping/ receiving clerk at the National Dollar Store. Twenty months later, my older brother, Kent was born at Chinese Hospital on September 25, 1942. My father also held two part-time jobs cleaning up two bars at night. Later that year he went to work for Barrett & Hilp doing construction work. World War II was in full swing, after being rejected from the military service due to an irregular heartbeat, he did his part by working for Shipyard No. 3 as a spray painter. Luckily he only did that job for a year. Though they wore protective clothing, it would not be adequate by today's standards. Due to that brief job he acquired a small scar in his lung due to asbestos exposure but he had no health problems because of it. He went on to work as a job recruiter at Bonnie & Co. placing people in various positions at different companies. In 1945, after the end of World War II, my parents and brother moved up to Seattle, Washington to work at my aunt's father's restaurant, Canton Gardens. In 1946, they returned to the San Francisco where my father worked at a packing plant, United Packing packing potatoes. In 1947, he went to work for another friend who owned a grocery store, State Market in Sunnyvale. There he did the ordering and overseeing the grocery and produce departments. He felt he could do better on his own.

So in 1948, with a small loan from my Uncle Al, then a physician, my father with two other friends bought a medium sized grocery store named Monte Market in Richmond. My father and his friends were the first Asians to have a business in that area. However, my father's friends, Ed Jann and Howard Jang felt they could do better running the business by themselves and wanted to buy my father out. My father agreed if they would give him

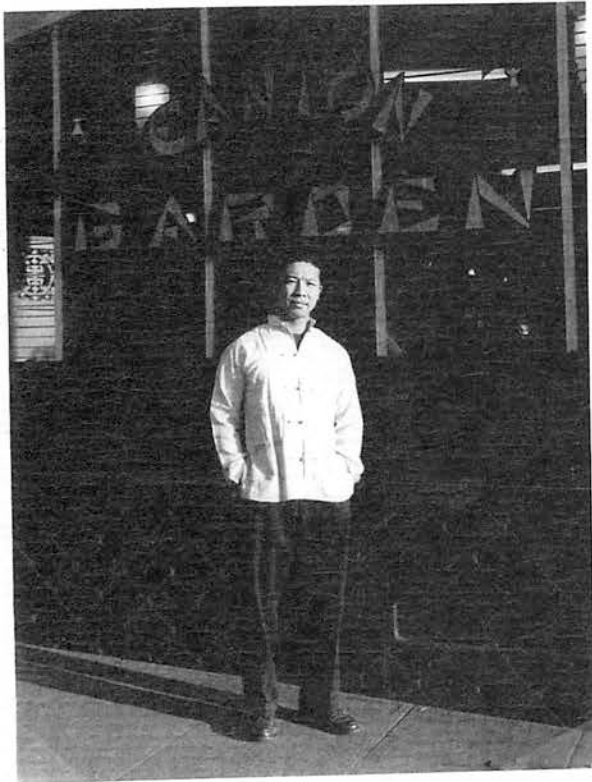


January 12, 1941 - Their
wedding day.



January 12, 1941 - My parents (left to right)
Aunt Claire, Aunt Margaret, Aunt Alvira.

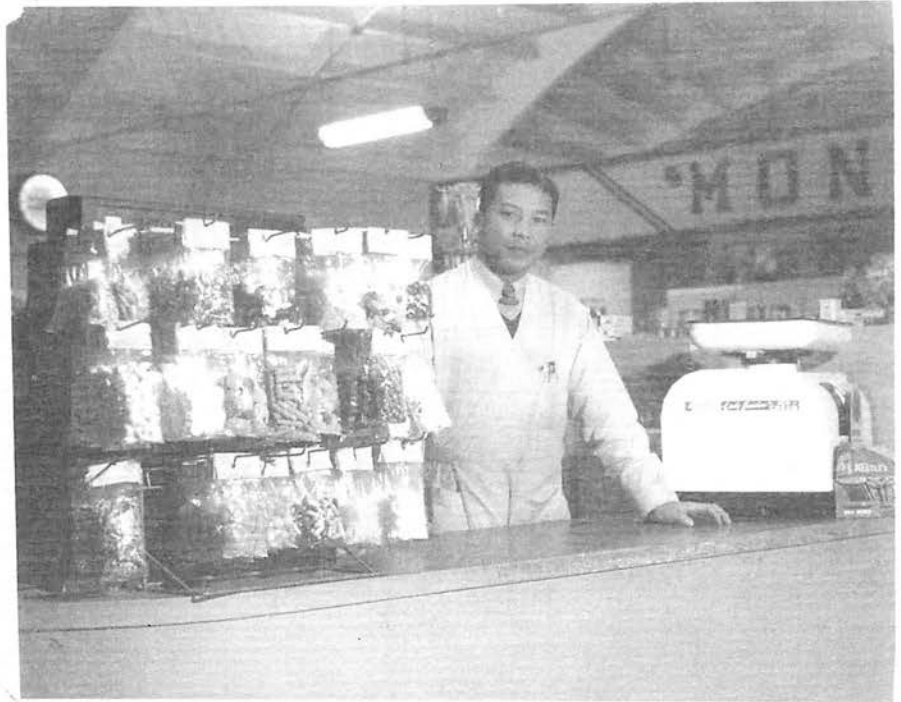




Dad - Canton Garden Restaurant -
1945 - Seattle, Washington.



Dad at Monte Market,
Richmond, CA. 1950.



Dad - Monte Market, Richmond, CA.
1950.

Dad at Monte Market,
Richmond, CA. 1948-53.



1948-53
Dad and my brother,
Kent, 1948-53.



that price that he asked for which they did. Meanwhile, my father had purchased another smaller grocery store by himself in another part of Richmond right near the National Guard Armory. It was during this time he decided to move over to the East Bay tiring of the commute across the San Francisco Bridge. He had already paid back the loan to my uncle. My parents bought their first home in Richmond. That part of Richmond had a large Afro-American population consisting of blue collar workers who generally held two jobs. Many of the people held seasonal jobs working in the canneries. People did not do things on credit nor had credit cards as we do today so my father often let them have credit until their next paycheck. For the most part his customers were honest and generally paid my father whatever they owed him.

My father's friends, Ed and Howard were having trouble running their store and they realized that they should have never let my father go because *he* was the true force that could operate the store properly. They asked my father to come back. Due to poor management, after only six months, Howard and Ed had to close up Monte Market. But by this time, my father was extremely successful operating his own store. He remained at that location for approximately 8 years. Many of my father's former customers followed him to his present store known simply as Young's Market. In 1959, my father found a bigger, medium-sized grocery store in El Cerrito named Rainbow Foods. In February, 1963, my parents sold their home in Richmond due to the new construction of a freeway nearby and bought their present home in El Cerrito. That is where we still reside today. The new grocery chains were fastly gaining ground and in 1964, my father wisely sold his last and final grocery store. His old friend, Charles Wong who had a grocery store nearby when he had Young's Market, now had a medium-sized store and wanted my father to come and work for him. My father worked for him for 2 years. In the meantime, my mother already had been working as a receptionist-bookkeeper at the same large independent grocery store my father would eventually work

at before he decided to finally retire. He worked for this friend for 12 years.

Despite being a young widow, my grandmother managed to invest in stocks, send money home to relatives in China, and put my uncle through medical school. Later on in her final years, she had given each one of her children shares of stock. My parents' wise investments helped put my brother and I through our earlier years in college. I am truly amazed at all that they did and the sacrifices they have made for us.

My father really showed his faith, positive attitude, and willingness to try to make things possible for his children when I decided to go back to graduate school after a 9 year hiatus. It was difficult finding a program that would not interfere with my teaching schedule. San Francisco State University had a joint doctoral program with the University of California at Berkeley in special education. It was a divided program where one would spend half of the time at San Francisco State and the other half of the time at the University of California. The primary requirement was that I was to reduce my full-time teaching position to 2/3 time with the promise of a minimal stipend. I came out of the informational meeting with the department chairman feeling a little depressed. My father's reaction was, "There are other universities, you don't have to go here." He was right and that's how I rediscovered U.S.F. When I began the doctoral program at U.S.F., my father would often stay up with me as I studied or worked on various projects. He would putter around the house or ask if I wanted something to eat. He finally stopped staying up late with me at my insistence after the first year.

It is from my father and his positive philosophy that there is always a way and his "the glass is half full philosophy" that I knew I could overcome obstacles despite having a physical disability. I remember how my father often tried to teach different types of swimming strokes to increase my physical mobility but due to my poor gross motor movement and coordi-



January, 1991 - My parents at
their 50th anniversary party,
Oakland, CA.



January, 1991 - Kent, me, & my parents at their 50th anniversary party.

nation of my left arm and left leg was not very successful. He never told me that I could not do things but tried to help me find ways in order to at least attempt to do so. He often helped exercise my arm and leg to increase my mobility.

My father showed much compassion, empathy, and understanding concerning my physical limitations. One day my mother sent me along with my father on a banking errand. She suggested that while we were out in that area that we stop and get another pair of white saddle shoes that I was required to wear as prescribed by my orthopedist. I always got 2 pairs every year until I was a junior in high school. My father did as he was told, but I had spotted a pair of red leather Mary Jane shoes. I was totally intrigued due to the fact that I could wear them with a strap or place the strap in back of the shoe and wear them without it. I thought they were the most beautiful pair of shoes that I have ever seen. My father decided to purchase them for me. My mother was horrified and thought my feet would be ruined. My father's remark was, "She needs to be like any other kid." I was delighted.

That type of understanding always made my father and I very close without really speaking of it. We still have that same type of closeness that allows us to be able to live together and enjoy each other. Until this year, my father has not had any major health problems which is highly unusual for someone his age. He continues to be self-sufficient, independent, and physically fit and has resumed doing his 100 push-ups regimen every morning in his usual 90 seconds, not to mention being able to still drive. The doctors marvel at him and consider him a very young 88 year old. I truly believe that his positive philosophy has helped him continue to be vital, active, and healthy. So ends my story of a boy from Gilroy.