



# TUCSON CHINESE CULTURAL CENTER

祖筭華人文化中心

**Tucson Chinese Cultural Center**

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## HISTORY PROGRAM

### Combining Two Tucson Chinese Families

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Two Chinese families that have deep roots in Tucson are the Chan and Don families. Throughout the years they married within, thus combining these two prominent Tucson Chinese families.

The Chan family consists of four boys and two girls: Edward, Lyman, Keylor, Paul, Florence, and Anna. Their father, Hung Chan, emigrated from China in 1916 and soon thereafter met Aster Lee with whom he started a family. Prior to settling down in Tucson, their father's job took them all across the West Coast, moving to California, Oregon, Washington, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, and Arizona all within a 12-year span. Both Hung and Aster were a team; Hung was a Chinese herbalist, while Aster helped gather the herbs, cook them, and bottled the liquid medicine in daily doses for the patients. When the Chans finally settled in Tucson in 1940, the population was only 26,000. They rented a house from Mr. Lee Hop at 1202 N. Stone Ave. where they opened the Chan and Kong Herbs Company 1940. Edward and Lyman both served in the U.S. Military in World War II following their graduation from Tucson High School. Edward served in the air force as a bombardier stationed in Italy, while Lyman was in the marines.



The Don family consists of three children: Janie, Goldie, and Anthony (Tony). Pictured to the left is the Don family in 1932. Their father, Don Toy, came to the United States from Mexico. He enrolled in the army and served during World War I in France. Following his discharge he went to China and met a young lady who became his wife, Lily Chan. When he was able to bring her to the U.S., they opened the Don S. Toy grocery store on North Meyer. In 1938 they homesteaded three sections of land in Avra Valley where he built a home and began cattle ranching on the weekends, mainly as a hobby. In 1926, Lily help found the Tucson Chinese Evangelical Church that is still around today on Fort Lowell Rd., which is now known as the Tucson Chinese Baptist Church.

Three of the Chan siblings married into the large Don family. Florence Chan married Phillip Don, while Edward Chan married Bessie Don, and Anna Chan married Tony Don. Phillip and Bessie were siblings and Tony was their cousin.

Anna Chan was born in 1931 in Washington. The photograph to the right is Anna at the age of 13. Growing up she attended Roosevelt Elementary School, and graduated from Tucson High School in 1948. In 1953 she graduated from the University of Arizona with a bachelor's degree in business administration. Tony Don was born in 1927 in Tucson, Arizona. While he and his sisters lived in Avra Valley they attended a one-room schoolhouse. He later attended Tucson High School, which he graduated from in 1944. Soon after he enlisted in the navy and then enrolled in the University of Arizona to study biological science.



Anna met Tony at the Tucson Chinese Evangelical Church when she was nine and he was thirteen years old. Pictured to the right are members of the Tucson Chinese Evangelical Church in 1938. They dated throughout high school, and even went to prom together. Once reunited at the university they, along with a group of friends, created the Sino-American Club. The club started off like a large family, but then couples began pairing off - for example, Ray and Stella Lim, Arlene and Francisco Lee, Harold and Jean Don to name a few. Anna and Tony began dating again in 1952, and were married a year later. The couple moved to San Francisco where Tony was in dental school. In 1955 they moved back to Tucson and Tony became the city's first Chinese dentist, and the state's second. Anna and Tony had three sons: Michael, Norman, and Damon. The three sons followed in their father's footsteps and also became dentists, thus creating the Don's Dental Dynasty. Tony passed away in 1990 at the age of 63 years old.



The combination of the Chan and Don families has left an impact on the Tucson Chinese Community that will last for generations to come.