

Tommy Wong's Viewpoint Is Changed After Seeing War

Went Back to His Native China With Happy Dreams, But He Returns Seeing Ghosts—Talks of Japanese Affronts to America.

Feb. 16-1938

Tommy Wong, who sailed last summer for his first visit to his native China after 18 years, went away dreaming dreams, but returned seeing ghosts.

Brought to this country as a little boy some 19 years ago, Tommy Wong was left a young stranger in a strange land in 1927 when his father was killed at Wadesboro. His mother had remained in China when he came with his father to seek his fortune in America.

But things broke well for Tommy Wong. He was industrious and honest and had a ready smile. He was taken into the home of Mrs. W. W. Bennett, of Wadesboro, and his advantages and opportunities became those of the average American boy. He finished public school, then college, and came to Greensboro to live and to work. As manager of the Lotus restaurant, he earned money and saved it.

Longs to See Old Home.

As his savings accumulated, an old longing overtook him. He began to wonder about the countryside where he was born and about his mother and his brothers. Had they changed much in those 18 years? Finally he decided to go home, and he was happy.

"The only thing in my mind which is absolutely certain now is the fact that after all these years I'm really going home," he said.

That was in June, 1937. This country was all excited about the court reform bill, about the slaying of a New York artists' model, about strikes and threats of strikes and about a renewed rebel drive on Madrid, Spain. But there was nothing in it all affecting Tommy Wong directly. He was happy to be homeward bound.

But in China he found great tension. Even as he arrived a diplomatic crisis had been reached between his homeland and its traditional enemy, Japan. War—war on his own people—broke out July 20 when a north China garrison was fired upon by the Japanese.

Tommy's people are Cantonese and he went there to visit them. While he was in Canton the Japanese began raining bombs on the city. Women and children were blown to bits in the streets and in their homes. Blood, human blood, stained the pavements. Mass murder was in process.

It took something out of Tommy Wong.

"When I left here," he recalled Monday, back at the Lotus restaurant after an absence of eight months, "I hated to see a chicken killed back there in the kitchen. That's all gone now. Now it seems everybody must kill to keep from being killed."

Tommy has immense faith in China. He believes she will be able to hold out against Japan for at least three more years and, in that event, he sees an outside chance of victory. China has the man-power and the organization. What she desperately needs now, he said, is money with which to buy guns. There is where the American Chinese can help.

Not Easy to Conquer.

China is not going to be easy to conquer, he explained, because the "Chinese can stand more suffering than any people on earth."

Tommy Wong has some very definite ideas about Japanese affronts

to America and Americans in China.

"Japan knows she can go so far without getting into serious trouble with America," he said, "and she is doing it." In this connection he listed the sinking of the Panay and the "mistreatment" of various American citizens. The purpose behind it all, he explained, is to discredit the United States in the eyes of the Chinese and thus to weaken their morale.

"An American, a Chinese and a Japanese are together," he said, by way of illustration. "The Japanese slaps the American. Nothing happens. He slaps him again and nothing happens. It is only natural for the Chinese to ask himself what sort of man the American is."

Thinks China Should Be Helped.

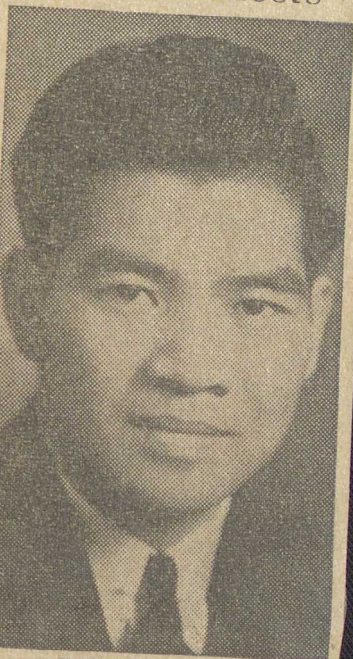
Tommy thinks it would be to the interest of both the United States and Great Britain to lend more support to the Chinese. He sees more behind the war than the mere acquisition of territory by Japan. He wonders what would happen to the American and British worker if Japan, given the immense supply of raw materials and cheap labor that are China, should enter into direct competition for the world markets for manufactured goods.

He also thinks Germany, Italy and Japan are working in unison. He believes that one of the explanations of the "pirate" attacks on Mediterranean shipping is the desire of Italy and Japan to keep Great Britain occupied in the Mediterranean. This weakens the possibility of more of the British fleet being sent into the waters of the orient.

And so it is that Tommy Wong, who went away last summer happy in the dream of "really going home," comes back with the ghosts of war on his mind, seeing pictures of the innocent suffering, of man's inhumanity to man.

"I do not know what the world is coming to," he said, and left it at that.

He Sees Ghosts



TOMMY WONG.

Tommy Wong to See Mother After 18 Years Separation

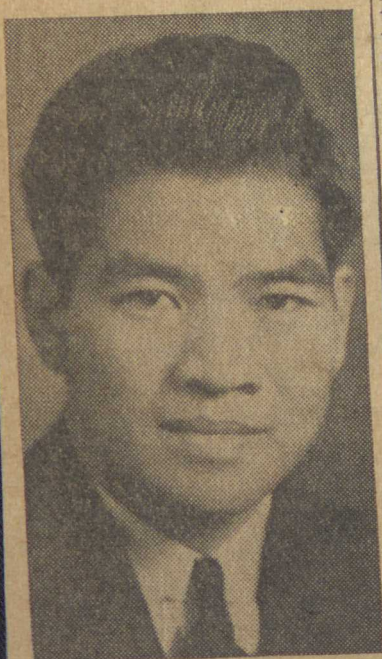
Young Chinaman, With College Education and Experience In the Ways of American Business, Leaves Saturday On Return to Native Land.

By HAZEL BEACHAM.

1937

Suppose you and your mother lived so far apart that you hadn't been able to visit her for 18 years. Suppose you had carefully saved all of your pennies for 18 years in order that some day you might be able to see her again. And then suppose that one day you suddenly realized there was no longer anything which might prevent your making that long-anticipated journey. Wouldn't you be the happiest person in Greensboro?

Going Back Home



TOMMY WONG.

That's why Ping Wong (Tommy Wong to you) is all smiles today. After 18 years of planning and saving Ping Wong, who has been manager of the Lotus, local Chinese-American restaurant, for the past two years, is returning to China to visit his mother and two brothers. On the morning of June 26 Ping Wong will sail from San Francisco on the S. S. President Coolidge with China as his destination. Is it any wonder then that the past 18 years have passed much more rapidly than the past several days?

Also to See Brother.

But before Mr. Wong bids adieu to these United States he has another treat in store for him. Saturday morning he will leave Greensboro for San Francisco where he will spend several days before sailing as the guest of his brother, who accompanied him to this country and who he has not seen since they arrived in America years ago.

"San Francisco seems almost as far away as China when you live in Greensboro," he explained, "and then, too, I'm afraid to spend too much time in California because I might decide to visit Hollywood—and I never would get to China."

When Ping Wong was a little boy his father brought him to America in an effort to give his boys the educational advantages which this country offers. Shortly after their arrival in California his father turned to the south for support and opened a laundry at Wadesboro, N. C.

In 1927 his father was killed, leaving the child alone and penniless in a country which does not even speak his language. But Mrs. W. W. Bennett, prominent Wadesboro citizen, was sympathetic and soon adopted the Chinese boy and took him into her home where he received the same training and all the advantages which American boys and girls receive.

Capable, Popular Student.

After he moved into the Bennett home his name was changed to Tommy, and since then he has been Tommy, rather than Ping, to all his school friends and business associates. Tommy enrolled at the public schools, and upon his graduation from the Wadesboro high school he was widely known as one of the most capable and also the most popular members of his graduating class.

When fall came Tommy noticed that a number of his classmates were planning to go away to school, and he decided that he, too, wanted a college education. He selected Wake Forest as the college of his choice. Mrs. Bennett, with the assistance of Col. H. Montague, of Winston-Salem, and other friends, made it possible for Tommy to attend college.

At Wake Forest he majored in government and was graduated in 1935 with an excellent scholastic record, his favorite study being accounting. He is extremely fond of American sports, playing football, basketball and baseball throughout his high school and college career. He was graduated from college not only with scholastic honors, but was a three-letter man.

Restaurant Manager.

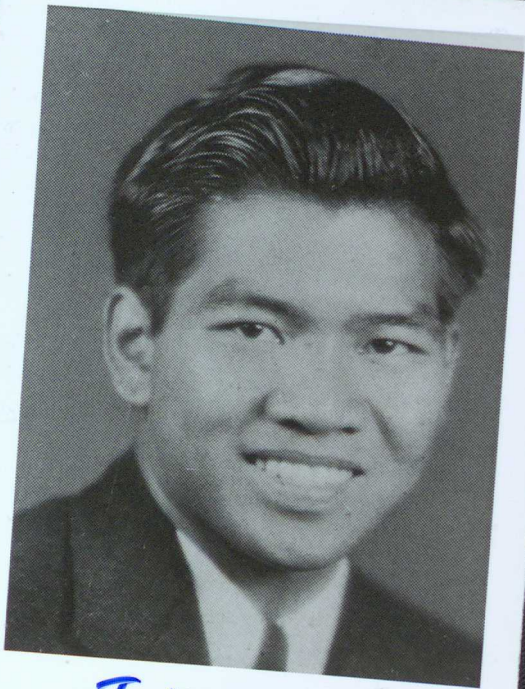
Immediately following his graduation he was offered a position at the Lotus, and so he moved his residence to Greensboro where he has spent the past two years providing chop suey and chow mein for the hungry residents of this vicinity. As manager of the local Chinese-American restaurant Tommy will be replaced by Peter S. Jung, of Norfolk.

Tommy for 18 years has corresponded regularly with his mother, who writes that, as we would say it, she is "thrilled to death" with the prospects of seeing her son once again. It seems that his brother in San Francisco is a rather poor correspondent, and consequently, Tommy knows less about him than he does about his two brothers in China.

At present he is planning to be in China for one year. After that he has no plans. He may remain in China with his people, he may return to the United States, and he may return to Greensboro.

"I certainly have enjoyed my stay in Greensboro, and I appreciate everything that the citizens of Greensboro have done for me. I should like to come back to Greensboro. But the future is uncertain. In fact, the only thing in my mind which is absolutely certain now is the fact that after all these years I'm really going home.

"And I'm going to find out if chop suey is really a Chinese dish too," he added.



T. Wong



*Forest Memories
Wake of Forest.
Tom P. Wong
cl. '35*

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