



LEFT: Shirley and David Lum at their wedding, Aug. 17, 1958. MIDDLE: David Lum with his daughter Lori. RIGHT: David Lum, second from right, playing football for Astoria High School in 1951.



Lum’s: ‘If you look at the opportunities in America, it’s wide open’

Continued from Page B1

Q: How’d you keep the store going?
Lum: My brother came home. He ran the grocery store.
Q: So you had an All-American childhood in Astoria?
Lum: Yup. I was here from ’33 to the early ’50s. My mother became a pillar of the First Baptist Church. She learned how to read and write from the congregation. They taught her to read the Bible.
Q: I heard you were a football star.
Lum: I wasn’t a star. We were in the state finals when there were just A and B divisions. Anything under 100 students-and-under was a B school. We had about 300 or 400 kids in Astoria. We played Central Catholic, Portland schools, David Douglas. Our starting quarterback went on to Stanford. He played in the pros. We had an All-American halfback, Dick Pavlat, who was the front cover of Parade magazine in 1953. A guy named Jerry Gustafson went on to play with the 49ers and the

B.C. Lions.
Q: What was it like growing up here?
Lum: God bless I was born in America. It’s the relationship you have with your classmates and your teachers. The teachers wanted me to learn. I was kind of the underdog. I was taught to be very respectful. Everyone was “Mr.” or “Mrs.” I had people help me who didn’t even know me very well. I have to be more blunt than this. I was Chinese, I was different, I was thrown into white society, one of the few. There were a few Chinese kids, but mainly we were a minority. My big thing was to have people like me. I was very respectful to the elders. We’d avoid fights. My folks taught us life’s too valuable. I may not agree with you, but I’ll listen to you.
Q: What were your next steps after high school?
Lum: I went on to Linfield College. I became only the second Chinese teacher in the state of Oregon. There was one elementary teacher who got a job before I did. She’s still alive. She’s 93.
Q: Tell me about your

teaching years.
Lum: I taught at a high school in Echo, Oregon, near Pendleton. My first job was \$3,750 a year. I knew I wanted children. I knew we could maybe have one (on my salary). If my wife worked, we could just make it.
Q: So you left teaching in order to raise a family?
Lum: I became a busboy. I was a waiter, a bartender, sold insurance.
Q: How did you make the jump to auto sales?
Lum: Roger Riutta owned a little gas station and we were buddies in high school. He had a partner, Tom Utti. The three of us got together and we started building up. I was 35, Tommy was 25.
Q: What year was that?
Lum: Fifty years ago, in 1969. This is our 50th year.
Q: In the Warrenton location?
Lum: We’ve only had this 10 years. We started right where the grocery store was on Sixth and Bond.
Q: You sold Toyota vehicles only?
Lum: Yes, Toyota since 1969. In 1978 we bought

Johnson Motor on 16th Street. It was a Pontiac General Motors store. In 1984, we started with Chrysler. In 1990 we got the Jeep line. When Roger died, we bought his wife out. At that point in time, we owned some property in Astoria and some property in Seaside, Funland. Tommy and I split in the early ’90s. He took Seaside and I stayed in Astoria.
Q: Were you a natural salesman? Were you prepared?
Lum: I was not prepared for anything. But teaching helped. At first I have to admit everybody gets in business for money, you do almost anything, except cheat people. After awhile it isn’t about money, it’s about what you want to do for society. You care for other people.
Q: How did you develop your sales technique?
Lum: Mr. Toyota, president of Toyota, said, “Mr. Lum, we are going to make the best cars in the world, and the only way we can do that is if each of you dealers become the No. 1 dealer in your community. That’s the only way we can make it.”

Q: Were you successful from the start?
Lum: No, it was a real struggle. The veterans wouldn’t buy Toyotas — the Japanese were our enemies. My Chinese relatives wouldn’t buy — Japanese were their enemies. I think they caught on that we were willing to give back a fair share. Our goal was to be here forever, to build for our children and their children, not for profits, but opportunities. During the ’70s, Toyotas were becoming popular. The whole atmosphere changed.
Q: Tell me about your family.
Lum: Wife, Shirley, married 60 years. Same house, same spouse. Three daughters and a son, a high test librarian at Jesuit High School, prep school. He’s highly respected.
Q: How often do you come into the office?
Lum: Five days. Every day. That’s because I’ve got a bathroom with a shower. Very nice.
Q: Any regrets over the years?
Lum: I used to be sad that I was not born white and that

I was born in Astoria. I used to cry, “How come I look different? I’m Chinese, I’ve got slant eyes.” There’s been a lot of negative things that happened in my life. Not everything’s rosy. When I was 12 years old, my dad died. I use a softer term than discrimination — we were suppressed. We were held back a little bit. In spite of that, if you look at the opportunities in America, it’s wide open. My mother was 47, she had two children 12 and 15, she had no Social Security, she didn’t know how to read or write Chinese, she didn’t know how to read English — and we both graduated college. My older sisters both became RNs (registered nurses). You can be anything you want to be.
Q: Anything else you would like to share?
Lum: I value all my friendships. Every time I see somebody that’s gone through my life, I always say — and I really mean it — “I’m sure glad you came into my life.” I’m so thankful because everybody’s just been super kind, super nice. The big turn-on for me is helping other people.

Reeling from mom’s gambling

Dear Annie: Since 2013, my mother has inherited \$475,000, which she has cast into a bonfire of casino losses, church donations, failed business investments and undisclosed other ventures. My late father and I advised her to pay off the home mortgage, and we were strongly rebuffed. Fast-forward to 2019, at 82 she is penniless; she has a mortgage far in excess of the home value. Additionally, she has run up over \$25,000 in credit card debt. (I paid for bankruptcy attorneys, but she failed to use them.) She has absolutely nothing to show for it — no new appliances, car, etc. She lives in a small town in a low-cost-of-living state, has an income of \$2,050 a month from Social Security and her pension, and about \$850 left over after all her expenses. I paid off two foreclosure notices within five months until I found out that she has a larger monthly surplus than I do.

I told her that I had my own expenses and could no longer pay her debts. Her response was “I thought you loved me” followed by “I thought you were doing so well and were making all this money.” She’s always been stubborn, childlike and secretive with her money, so apart from several years of almost daily casino visits, I don’t know what she did with it. Now my finances have been decimated, and I have had to pull from my retirement accounts. Since she has squandered a life-sustaining inheritance with nothing to show for it, has ample positive monthly cash flow and a bankruptcy attorney on retainer in case she decides to discharge the credit card debt, do I have any further obligation to her? We have not spoken in several months, since I stopped paying her mortgage. Although sad, I’m resolved to the situation. But I wonder if I’m missing something, because I can’t seem to find anyone

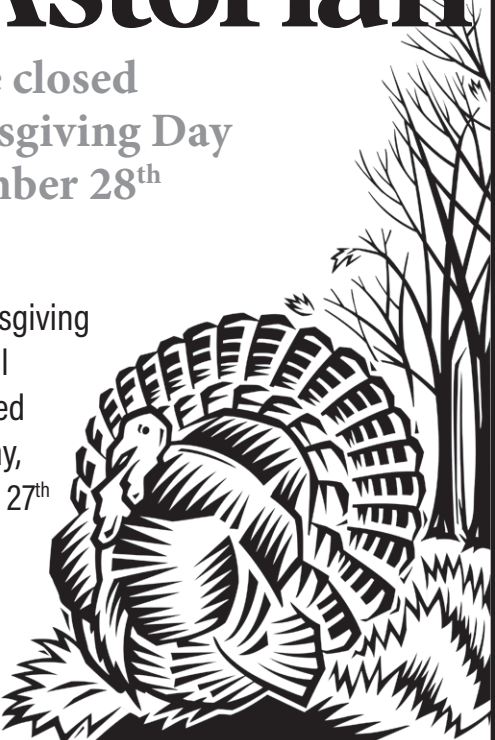
else with financially irresponsible parents. She won’t tell me what she spent her money on, nor did she take my advice to pay off her mortgage, so colleagues ask why this is my problem. I have two other siblings, but I’m the one with a bit of discretionary cash, so I’m always the one pulled into situations that require a cash outlay. — *Frustrated*
Dear Frustrated: You have no financial obligation whatsoever to your mother — and you never did, truth be told. Your heart was in the right place in trying to help her, but to continue paying her mortgage would be a huge mistake. To gain the strength to maintain the boundaries you’ve set, you might draw support from a group such as Families Anonymous (<https://www.familiesanonymous.org/>) or Gam-Anon (<https://www.gam-anon.org>), where you’ll find you’re not alone. Therapy might also offer an eye-opening perspective.

Dear Annie: I have worked in the senior living industry for the past 20 years, and I am astounded by the number of people who bring children to visit their elderly family members and then allow the children to run around the building unsupervised. We have experienced unsupervised children banging on our piano, messing up the puzzle that our residents have been diligently putting together, playing with the ice machine and running in the hallways. Now that I am as old as many of our residents myself and am experiencing balance issues, I understand how frightening and dangerous it is for seniors to have children running in a building. Please remind parents that a community full of elderly people is not the place for kids to have a free-for-all. — *Now I’m Old, Too*
Dear Now: You raise some excellent points. It’s lovely for children to visit older family members in senior living communities, but safety and courtesy are a must.



In observance of Thanksgiving
the Astorian
will be closed
Thanksgiving Day
November 28th

The Thanksgiving edition will be delivered Wednesday, November 27th



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Saturday Sports Extra Survey

1. Do you subscribe to the Astorian?

☐ Yes

☐ No

2. If you don't subscribe, where do you get your Astorian newspaper?

☐ Buy it at a newspaper rack or store

☐ Read it at work

☐ Get it from a friend or neighbor

3. How often did you read the Saturday Sports Extra section when it published between September 7 and November 2?

☐ Once or twice - not often

☐ Three to five times - probably half of the time

☐ Six or seven times - almost every week

☐ Every single week

☐ I've never read it

4. If you read Saturday Sports Extra, which features did you read? (check all that apply)

☐ Friday night feature game story and scores

☐ Athletes of the Week

☐ High School sports wrap-up

☐ Oregon College Football previews

☐ Seattle Seahawks preview

5. What suggestions would you make about improvements in this section, or in the Astorian?_____

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or scan the QR code to take you directly to the survey from your phone