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WEEKEND BREAK



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50 YEARS OF LUM'S AUTO CENTER



From left, Julie Lum, Lori Lum Toyooka, Shirley Lum, David Lum, Pam Lum and Greg Lum.



R.J. Marx/The Astorian

From left, Lori Lum, Marcus Williams, assistant general manager of Toyota Portland region, David Lum and Julie Lum.

From teacher to entrepreneur

By R.J. MARX
The Astorian

David Lum of Lum's Auto Center is the co-founder of one of the region's preeminent businesses. Lum's is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. We spoke with Lum at his office above the showroom in Warrenton.

Q: Where were you born?

Lum: Columbia Hospital in Astoria, Oregon. Nov. 19, 1933.

Q: How did your family get here?

Lum: If you look at the history of Astoria, there were 3,000 or 4,000 Chinese. The Irish and Chinese built the railroads in the early 1800s. All the Chinese in this area came from the "Supreme Province," the province of Canton. Now they've changed the name to Guangdong. When they built the railroad and they were done, then the Chinese either went home back to China and were looking for jobs out here. They were building the jetties, working in the fish canneries. A lot of them went into the gold mines after the railroad, and they migrated to that area. They wouldn't let them dig for gold, but they did all the grunt work for the gold miners. Just like the fishing industries. The Chinese didn't own the fishing industries or the jetties, but they were hired by the contractors who built the jetty. Dangerous work, and they were willing to work for less money.

Q: How did your father make a living?

Lum: In those days they didn't

have Safeways, Costcos. My father had an uncle who owned a little grocery store in Astoria, Lum-Quing Grocery. We had a couple of grocery stores, one on Sixth and Bond, for close to 70, 80 years. It's called Chinatown because most of the Chinese lived in the area.

Q: How did your mother come into the picture?

Lum: After my father came here in 1896, 10 or 15 years later, my uncle gave the store to my father. In those days, it was prohibited for Chinese to marry anyone but Chinese. My father wanted children, and he was introduced to her by other Chinese. She was born in Wheaton, California. My mother didn't know how to read or write Chinese. She did not know how to read or write English. She was a very bright person, but she wasn't educated. My mother married my father when she was 15 and he was in his 40s. I was the last of six kids. I came in 1933, when my dad was 62. Four or five years later, he had a stroke. He was bedridden for 10, 11 years.



The former Lum-Quing Grocery in Astoria.

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