

Customer Service is a Hallmark of The House of Louie

BY SEAN P. NELSON
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Portland restaurateur Stephen "Hoy Sing" Louie has turned Chinatown's House of Louie from an ordinary Chinese restaurant when it opened in 1987 to a popular venue for out-of-town visitors and dignitaries because of his excellent service.

Louie comes from a long line of restaurateurs. His late father Henry Louie owned the Golden Wheel in Corvallis in 1955. He also owned Portland's Lotus Café, Four Seas Restaurant, New Café, Golden Star, Silk Hat and Teahouse Kitchen.

As a boy, Louie was sent back to China before World War II. He returned afterward with his mother and spent his high school years working in his father's restaurants as a cashier. He now owns and manages Hi Hat restaurant in Tigard and Portland's Fong Chong and House of Louie.

With great fanfare, then-Governor Vic Atiyeh, helped Louie cut the ribbon for the Grand Opening of the House of Louie on the site of the former Rickshaw Charlie's in Northwest Portland in 1988 after extensive remodeling.

"It wasn't that popular when it first opened up. We had a hard time because I didn't have Dim Sum," Louie recalled. When nearby Fong Chong was doing better business because customers rushed over there to get Dim Sum, Louie decided to serve it at both places.

Since its beginnings, Louie has transformed House of Louie from an ordinary Chinese restaurant to



Cutting the ribbon during the grand opening of House of Louie in 1987 are Stephen "Hoy Sing" Louie (from left), former Oregon Gov. Vic Atiyeh and a costumed member of the Chinese community.

a popular venue for the public, politicians and the Chinese community.

Louie is a past president of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, CCBA, which has

represented the Chinese community in Portland since the late 1800's. He has traveled to China with then-Congressman Les AuCoin and represented the Chinese community to Portland

Mayor Vera Katz.

According to "The Portland Chinese Times," Louie recently hosted Taiwan's Chief Commissioner Chung Foo May at the House of Louie last month. Louie

is one of two Oregon Commissioners to Taiwan. The visit is one indication of how important the business and its owner has become. Chinatown itself has also become more important after the

construction of Portland's Classical Chinese Garden.

A hallmark of why House of Louie has become successful is service.

"If a customer complains because I talk to my employee and they say the food is spoiled, I have to help them," Louie said. This also applies if they don't like the taste of something. Louie will often provide them with something else of equal value.

He insists that his employees take care of the needs of his customers in a pleasant manner.

"If a waitress is rude to the customer, it's hard for me to solve the problem unless I know who the person is," Louie said. In these cases, he employs a three strikes and you're out policy. The first two times a customer complains, he talks to that employee. The third time it happens, the employee is fired.

He advises owners starting a new restaurant to give customers good service and good food.

"If you don't satisfy the customers, they complain," Louie said. If a customer doesn't like the fried rice because it is too dry, Louie will mail them a gift certificate.

This kind of bending over backwards to please his customers is one reason House of Louie is so popular.

What advice does he give to minority entrepreneurs about survival through hard economic times like today?

"You just have to work a little harder to survive, to accomplish your goals. Cooperate with each other and work together."

Quality Matters for Rasheed's World of Fragrances



Rasheed Shareef of northeast Portland and a store display for his company, Rasheed's World of Fragrances.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL LEIGHTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

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Move over Paris, there's a Portland entrepreneur that's stealing some of your market share.

Rasheed Shareef is the owner and distributor of Rasheed's World of Fragrances.

He has found a niche selling some of the best perfumes and fragrances in the world today.

Most noticeable is his wide selection of Rasheed's World of Fragrance incense sticks, found in neatly sealed packets with the continent of Africa blazoned over the product label.

The incense sticks are top sellers in several local stores, including JP's Frame Shop, Reflections, Classy Nails, Chuck's Food Mart, Records Galore and Renaissance Market.

With his expertise and use of scented oils from around the world, Shareef also makes colognes, perfumes, soaps, bath oils and other products for direct to customer sales.

Shareef says when it comes to perfumes, colognes and lotions, his customers equate looking good to smelling good.

Shareef says Paris earned the reputation as the perfume capital of the world by importing oils from the world's historic sites for ex-

otic fragrances, namely Egypt, Tanzania and Asia.

Like France and many of this country's leading department stores, Shareef uses these same oils to produce superior products.

He keeps his customers satisfied with quality first, refusing to cut down pricey oils to increase profits like some other commercial vendors.

In Rasheed's World of Fragrances you can count on natural and safe oils, with no harsh dyes or other contaminants.

An African American and long time Portland resident, Shareef started his business out of his home 18 years ago. His business expanded shortly thereafter when he took up a site at Portland's Saturday Market.

Currently, he sells his products directly to stores and by word of mouth. But he hopes to open his own shop soon after refurbishing a building he purchased in northeast Portland.

Shareef has his sights set on expanding the business to include natural and exotic herbs.

He envisions a Rasheed's World of Fragrances showroom that includes a juice bar with herbal ingredients to treat both the palate and health.

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