

MY TURN

■ Wayne Chan



The hottest restaurant in town
— but not in a good way

As a humor columnist, 2020 has been a tough year to write about. How does one make jokes about a global pandemic? How do you say anything original about an election that doesn't antagonize one side or the other?

Fortunately, I have found something humorous (at least for me) to tell you. Unfortunately, the humor comes at my own expense. My own ineptness to the rescue!

First, a little backstory. 2020 was supposed to be the year that all of our kids moved out of the house, with my wife and I becoming "empty-nesters." Then, along came COVID-19, and all our best-laid plans were put on hold.

As a family of five, trying to stay safe means eating at home a lot. But, in an attempt to stay sane and avoid having permanent dish-pan hands from washing dishes day in and day out, we have made an effort to eat out while social distancing. That means eating only at restaurants that have outdoor seating.

Eating outdoors can be very pleasant ... in the summer. In July and August, being seated outside was literally like a breath of fresh air. But now that winter is almost here, eating outdoors is a test of endurance. It's a time when you start ordering a bowl of soup not because it's terrific soup, but because the steam helps keep you warm before you start to forget why you're even there.

But, not to worry, never fear — Weather Man is here!

Maybe that's overstating things a bit. I didn't literally change the weather, but I did manage to find a portable butane heater that I could stuff into a backpack then set up while we dined outside. And, at \$50, it was a relatively inexpensive solution to our cold-weather dilemma. It also meant we could now eat outdoors at restaurants that didn't already have large, portable propane heaters, which meant we could start eating at Chinese restaurants again. Side note: Your mileage may vary, but in our experience, Chinese restaurants have virtually no outdoor seating and therefore, no reason to invest in heaters that would keep their guests warm.

In fact, the Chinese restaurant we visited didn't even really have any outdoor

seating set up — we had to ask them to bring out a table and chairs and we sat next to a row of parking spots in front of the restaurant. They gladly obliged.

The only thing missing now was the heat. So I pulled out the portable heater, assembled it, screwed in the small butane tank under it, turned the gas up, lit it with my lighter, and voila — we had heat!

As the flame grew, I stretched out my legs under the table, leaned back, and without saying a word, anyone observing could see that I was pretty proud of myself. I could see the headlines: "Man conquers the elements." "Independent thinker overcomes barriers during global pandemic." "Resourceful man of action keeps family warm while battling frigid conditions!"

I'm thinking, "Man, my wife must be so impressed with me right now!"

Except ...

Except in my moment of self-congratulations, I noticed that a bit of the flame was now coming out from behind the control knob. It gets bigger. And bigger. After another minute, the entire heater sitting on our table was engulfed in flames.

The headlines in my mind immediately change: "Idiot man burns up entire restaurant from camping stove stunt." "Clueless customer starts a literal hot pot at Chinese restaurant." "COVID not bad enough threat for one moronic customer."

I managed to get the heater down to the concrete beside the table. Our server came out and proceeded to pour three glasses of water on the fire to try to put out the flames. No luck. Finally, the owner of the restaurant emerged from the kitchen with his wok — filled with water — dumping it on the heater. The fire was put out. Disaster averted.

Despite the fire bomb I initiated, the rest of our dinner went as planned, and we still managed to have a very nice (if very cold) dinner outside. The food, unfortunately, was great.

I say unfortunately because the food was so good that I still want to go back. Fortunately, I think I can still make it happen because I'll be wearing a mask. It turns out that masks not only serve to protect you from the virus, they also make you harder to recognize.



STRINGENT RULES. A woman walks by posters to promote the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo. Due to the global pandemic, athletes at the Tokyo Olympics this summer won't have the luxury of hanging around once they've wrapped up their event. (AP Photo/Koji Sasahara)

Tokyo Olympics: Many rules,
no partying, no hanging around

By Stephen Wade

AP Sports Writer

TOKYO — Athletes at the Tokyo Olympics won't have the luxury of hanging around once they've wrapped up their event.

No late-night parties in the Athletes Village. No nights — or early mornings — on the town.

Instead of getting to know their global neighbors, Olympic athletes will be encouraged to leave Japan a day or two after they've finished competing.

From the opening ceremony to life in the village on Tokyo Bay, the postponed 2020 Olympics will be like no other. There'll be stringent rules and guidelines — and maybe vaccines and rapid testing — to pull off the games in the middle of a pandemic that has been blamed for more than 1 million deaths worldwide.

"Staying longer in the village increases the potential for problems," John Coates, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) member in charge of overseeing Tokyo preparations, said at a briefing for

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