

Sienna Lew

“Is that another new wok, grandpa?”

My grandfather Kin Lew has always loved to show off his fancy cookware. That’s because he is a passionate chef. For decades, his cooking has brought many families together (including ours) over delicious meals at his own Chinese restaurant, Happy Dragon.

My grandfather immigrated from China to Tracy, California with his family in 1982. Although he was poor and didn’t have advanced education, he was entrepreneurial and managed to start his own business.

To run Happy Dragon, it took the whole family pitching in. My father and his siblings spent most of their childhood working at the restaurant when they weren’t at school, sacrificing nights and weekends. They contributed by washing dishes, chopping vegetables, taking food orders and serving hungry (and oftentimes demanding and grumpy) customers. They learned valuable life skills while working at Happy Dragon: a strong work ethic, customer service, and how to run a smart business. Though operating a restaurant was very challenging, it brought our family together.

This photo is important to my family history because it captures the essence of my grandfather’s positive attitude that carried my family forward when dealing with hard times. He showed this when he suffered a stroke three years ago. As Kin underwent recovery, he always managed a smile on his face and a “can-do” attitude while undergoing a long and grueling rehabilitation.

Finally, the most valuable information I learned in connecting with this photo are four key principles that are important when facing difficult challenges: staying positive, creativity in trying new things which might be risky, working hard, and surrounding yourself with people who

support you. My grandfather lives his life this way and, as a result, the foundation of my family story is strong for myself and future generations to come.

