

Can you imagine...

By Rick Swantz

Can you imagine leaving home at age 13 and returning unannounced at age 25 to see your mom, who - when she sees you - thinks you are a stranger?

Can you imagine leaving your young wife to travel 3,000 miles for your education and professional destiny and reuniting 13 years later - and then living together happily for another 40 years?

Can you imagine a young man so thankful to be able to eat, work, learn and succeed that later in life he interrupts an extended business trip to fly across the United States for a one-hour ceremony to honor his "old professor?"

On May 4, 2001, the Department of Food Science and Technology dedicated the Bor S. Luh Food Lab on the UC Davis campus. Martin Yan (B.S., '73; M.S., '77, Food Science), TV host of "Yan Can Cook," flew from New York to California to be the master of ceremonies. He flew back to New York the next day, although his home is in California.

In China, the term "old" is one of deep respect. Martin likes to refer to his "old professors" whenever he talks about his days as a student in the department. Dr. Luh was also his mentor and friend. You see, Bor and Bai Luh brought homesick foreign students into their home for meals and made sure they were safe and welcome in this land so far from home. Martin left China as a child and returned to his surprised mom with his food science degrees.

Several years ago, Bor and I walked in the UC Davis Arboretum for awhile and then sat on a bench in the shade. He told me that he and Bai were married in 1940. Bor was



Martin Yan (left) visits with two of his "old professors," Bor Luh (center) and Herman Phaff.

able to come to the United States to study in 1946. Bai could not join him. He earned his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in food science and food chemistry at UC Berkeley in 1948 and 1952, respectively. He joined the UC Davis food science and technology faculty as a food scientist and lecturer in 1952. Bai was permitted to come to the U.S. in 1959.

That day in the arboretum, Bor talked very modestly about his career. Other faculty members told me he would be this way. He asked about my responsibilities, and I remember his remark. "If you have a project, they will give," he said.

On another occasion, we met in the Memorial Union. I bought him a cup of tea. He thanked me several times and said "nice tea" several times during our visit.

My sense is that Bor thanked everybody a lot and complimented everybody a lot. My day brightened up whenever I saw him. I'll bet most folks felt that way.

It is through Bor and Bai's generosity that we were able to build the Bor S. Luh Food Lab here on campus. That must have been the project he was talking about in the arboretum.

Note:

I wrote the first four paragraphs of this article in May and almost threw them away. I re-read it recently and decided to use it for my development article for this issue of CA&ES Outlook because we are focusing on foods for health.

While working on this article, I learned that Bor died shortly after attending his grandson's high school graduation ceremony in Hawaii. He was 85.

[Editor's Note: See "In Memoriam," page 33]

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