

FOODWAYS TEXAS GREATER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT – ICONIC RESTAURANT PROJECT – KIM SON RESTAURANT – PART TWO - INTERVIEW WITH TRI LA - Date of Transcript: 2.17.2019

1 [Interviewer requests and receives permission to record the
2 interview and to use the information gathered]

3
4 [00:00:00]

5 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: Are you recording this?

6
7 FILM CREW: Yeah.

8
9 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: Okay, so, sorry about that
10 interruption.

11 We had some audio difficulties.

12 So, Mr. La if you wouldn't mind going back to – we were at
13 Indonesia.

14
15 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Yeah.

16 So, we left uh, - Vietnam in nineteen uh, - seventy-eight [1978], we
17 uh, - arrived in uh, - in Malaysia about thirty-six [36] hours later.

18 And Malaysian Navy uh, - uh, - tow us to Indonesia and left us there.

19 And uh, - the uh, - Indonesian people bring us in and drop us as – as
20 an empty island.

21 So, we were there for [clearing throat] – we start out, we were the
22 third [3rd] or the fourth [4th] boat was there on uh, - like an – an
23 empty island.

24 So, we started from scratch.

25 We – we build our own huts - - and uh, - from the, you know, ask the
26 locals.

27 Buy some trees and they built - help us build some uh, - house out of
28 it.

29 [00:00:51]

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30 [00:00:51]

31 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: So, we live in there for about [pause]
32 maybe six [6] to eight [8] months, and then we moved to another
33 island.

34 That's when – uh, - the first [1st] three [3] months was rough,
35 because a lot of more people coming in.

36 [Background Noise]

37 And uh, - a lot of people dying, due to malaria [sp], you know,
38 [inaudible], different uh, - different diseases, due to, you know, uh, -
39 the water system, cause we didn't have water.

40 So we just had – everything's by wells.

41 And no - - uh, - no, how do I say?

42 No toilet uh, - in a sense, so you have to build mounds, and do all this
43 stuff and then haul out – haul out to sea.

44 So, that was a rough first [1st] three [3] months.

45 To after about three [3] months then The Red Cross come in to put
46 into – they put a water – a water system in.

47 [Background Noise]

48 So, water system is gonna help us a lot.

49 So, us [inaudible] get uh, - very sanitized uh, - waters for people to
50 drink and stuff like that.

51 [Background Noise]

52 So, it's helped the – the – the disease part, so that uh, - drop a lot.

53 So, the death rate drop a lot.

54 So, after about six [6] months uh, - eight [8] months, we moved to
55 another island where people uh, -.

56 At that time there was more and more people.

57 It was like a few hundred thousand people are left Vietnam -

58 [00:02:09]

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59 [00:02:09]

60 Vietnam.

61 So, they all build like uh, - a 'Camp' in uh, - in another island.

62 [Background Noise]

63 And as they build with like barrack, you know, it's like uh, - like
64 'Military Barrack'.

65 So, each uh, - barrack or how many families or whatever.

66 So, we stay there uh, - for another uh, - six [6] or eight [8] months.

67 And we left; we came here to The States.

68 [Background Noise]

69 Uh, - we came here arrived here in August nineteen-eighty [1980],
70 and moved straight to Houston, and we're here since then.

71 [Background Noise]

72 My Mom's arrived uh, - a few days later.

73 She went and worked for a restaurant here.

74 And uh, - she showed them some of our recipes, and stuff like that.

75 And then she decided to open her own restaurant a year later.

76 So, in nineteen-eighty-two [1982], we opened our first [1st]
77 restaurant of about thirty [30] seat restaurant.

78 And we continued to grow every year.

79 Uh, - we moved in nineteen eighty-two [1982], thirty [30] seats.

80 And then the following year we lease another bigger restaurant just
81 to open it, which has a hundred and thirty [130], a hundred and forty
82 [140] seats restaurant.

83 And then we build uh, - 'The Flagship Location' in nineteen ninety-
84 two [1992].

85 Uh, - and then uh, - but uh, - my parents – we work, they work every
86 day.

87 [00:03:31]

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88 [00:03:31]

89 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: The family all – all work.

90 Uh, - when even when I was young, we worked – I - we start
91 working at thirteen [13] – fourteen [14] years old washing dishes
92 just to help uh, - just.

93 And everybody worked, we put our money back into 'the pot' to, you
94 know, save and build for a bigger restaurant is what it is.

95 Uh, - the same thing for today too, I mean, we draw a salary, cause
96 everything go back to a 'pot' just to build a bigger uh, - ventures for
97 the – for the next – for the 'next generation'. Yes.

98

99 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: And can you tell me a little bit
100 more about your family?

101 Who still works in the restaurant business?

102

103 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: As a matter of facts, uh, -, there's uh, -
104 everybody still work in the restaurant business.

105 [Laughter]

106 Mom's still sitting in – at the – in this restaurant every day.

107 [Background Noise]

108 Uh, - she come here around ten thirty [10:30].

109 [Laughter]

110 Till around six o'clock [6:00], oh no, till about three o'clock [3:00]
111 and she leave.

112 And she's here about five [5] to six [6] days a week almost, and she
113 go to another restaurant the other two [2] days.

114 So, uh, - there's uh, - seven [7] of us in the families uh, -.

115 Two [2] uh, -, two [2] of them – two [2] of my – uh, - six [6]

116 [00:04:36]

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117 [00:04:36]

118 boys and one [1] girl.

119 Uh, - two [2] of the brothers, they're the older brothers, uh, - are
120 dentists.

121 [Background Noise]

122 I am an engineer, but I uh, -, uh, - I turn – joined the restaurant
123 business, and I couldn't get out.

124 So, but it's a fun – fun to fun job.

125 But uh, - there are five [5] of us in the restaurant business.

126 Uh, - four [4] boys and one [1] girl, and my little sister just joined
127 us.

128 So, we uh, - we work every day.

129 Everybody's still work here – either in 'The Corporate Office', or uh, -,
130 or the restaurant, or the uh, - you know, or the commissaries, or
131 running around, doing something.

132 But uh, -, we have uh, - now we have a total of six [6] uh, - six [6]
133 restaurant.

134 And uh, - we just divide it up.

135 Some people who managed a smaller [inaudible] – location.

136 Some uh, - I manage this big one [1], and all the catering around
137 town.

138 So, I do that, and the expansion part is what uh, - I do.

139 Uh, - the other people – my other brother managed all the – the – all
140 the café.

141 My oldest brother is more of a 'strategy person'.

142 And uh, - my second [2nd] oldest brother is 'The Finance Person'.

143 And uh, -, I have to bring my sister in just to train in term of a uh, -
144 of our 'operation'.

145 [00:05:51]

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146 [00:05:51]

147 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: So, hopefully with this uh, - we build for
148 the 'next generation', as well.

149 Maybe my - my niece, my nephew, my own kid, they might pick it up
150 from there - who - but who know.

151 Kids these days, they just like - they might have their 'own path'.

152 But uh, -, that's what we wish for - for them to just pick up and -
153 and uh, -, 'pick up the torch' and move forward with it.

154 [Background Noise]

155 So, everybody's here in the business.

156 You see my Mom and Dad here almost every - every day.

157 And we uh, - ask uh, - many time I ask Mom, 'Why don't you stay
158 home?'

159 And she goes, 'I don't want to die.'

160 And she says, 'If I stay home, I get sick and die.'

161 And uh, - that is here strive here.

162 She's seventy-three [73], seventy-four [74] years old.

163 But she's still here every day.

164 And she still point finger what - for people what to do.

165 So, even so [inaudible] she cannot do anymore, but she is - have a -
166 have uh, - her uh, - her vision is very -very strong, so [inaudible].

167

168 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: So, was your Mom that really
169 brought the family into the restaurant business?

170

171 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Yes, my Mom is the uh, - is the person
172 who just, you know, control everything.

173 And when we first [1st] started, she's just the main.

174 [00:06:55]

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175 [00:06:56]

176 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Have all the recipes.

177 We just uh, - and uh, - and my Mom and Dad started – my oldest
178 brother, 'Tan' [sp] who is – he – he sacrificed his college uh, - life to
179 make sure all his younger brother go to college – graduates.

180 And he just uh, - make sure – and so, he work every day to make
181 sure all – all of us can go to college.

182 So, that's – that's what it is.

183 Uh, - so, he's still – that's why uh, - we still respect him very.

184 I mean, we all respect him tremendous, because of that and his
185 'Vision'.

186 Uh, - his 'Vision' have – have brought us to different uh, - ventures.

187 I mean, we have part of uh, - what like, casinos in Lake Charles and
188 Saint Louis, and New Orleans.

189 So, we have uh, - we partner with uh, - a lot of those, as well as in
190 uh, - we – we partner with like Aero Mart, the food concession
191 companies uh, - around for university, uh, - business building, uh, -
192 medical center.

193 So, wherever Aero Mart manages, we're trying to uh, - be part with
194 that, as well.

195 So, Tan [sp] and uh, - Trie [sp] my two [2] oldest brother, uh, -
196 doing those stuff, and we do the 'Operation' more of it.

197 Yes.

198

199 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: And going back to when you'll
200 came to Houston, can you tell me a little bit about your impressions
201 of Houston when you first [1st] got here?

202 [Laughter]

203 [00:08:22]

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204 [00:08:22]

205 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Oh, this was uh, - uh, - rough for the
206 first [1st] few years.

207 Uh, - cause the language barrier, we don't – we don't speak English.

208 Uh, - we came here; we just like uh, -

209 As a matter of fact, it's a funny story is that we came to uh, - we
210 landed in uh, - in L.A.

211 And we have an uncle live over there.

212 But we don't have to use the phone to call him.

213 And if we would – if we would have to call him, we would probably
214 stay in California now, instead of coming to Houston.

215 Because we don't know how to use the phone, at that time, just to
216 call him to come out to where we stay at – at a little motel in L.A.

217 So, - so, the next day we – they flew us over to Houston, cause of my
218 grandma that was already here.

219 So, uh, - we came here – we live right by University of Houston, you
220 know, and it was rough for the first [1st] few years.

221 Cause we have – we live twelve [12] – fourteen [14] people in a two
222 [2] bedroom apartment.

223 You know, uh, - and it was uh, - you know, you grew up – kids – we
224 were – we were little kids.

225 But – I – I know it's hard for my Mom or for my Dad, because my
226 Mom and my Dad to work at a uh, - like at a uh, - at a convenience
227 store.

228 Uh, - and uh, - uh, - and we got, you know, robbed all the time
229 [inaudible]

230 Because we – we were in a rough rough neighborhood.

231 [Background Noise]

232 [00:09:45]

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233 [00:09:45]

234 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: So, those are the things that we had to
235 go through –

236 [Background Noise]

237 [Laughter]

238 For the first [1st] year, year and a half [1/2] of our uh, - uh, - uh, -
239 of our life here in The States.

240 [Laughter]

241 After we started the restaurant and then everybody joined the
242 restaurant, even the aunts and the uncles – everybody's just, I mean,
243 chip in just to help, you know.

244 Or, if we get an outside job, uh, - work – work, other than that, we
245 just – just put our head down enjoying – enjoying the restaurant.

246 So, as for that, we still supporting them today, regardless of they
247 working or not, we still have to support.

248 They want to support us in the beginning when we were nothing.

249 So, we do have that commitment to them be – for now.

250 [Background Noise]

251 So, you know, when we came over, I mean, we had one [1] car.

252 We don't know what shopping is.

253 The only thing we know is flea market for the – for the first [1st]
254 three [3] years of our life.

255 You know, we don't know anything but just the flea market and
256 that's all we do.

257 We shop at flea market and [clearing throat] –

258 You know, we stay on like food stamp uh, - welfare for the first [1st]
259 year.

260 Uh, - after the second [2nd] year, uh, - third [3rd] year we [inaudible]

261 [00:10:54]

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262 [00:10:54]

263 we off, and we work from there on.

264 We just commit ourselves to, you know, work harder and just move –
265 just move ahead as much as fast as possible uh, - to get out.

266 You know, to become 'The Americans', to get 'The American Dream'.

267 So, I mean, that's what we try to do.

268 And that's why we try to teach our kids now the same things, you
269 know, say, you have to work hard to get it.

270

271 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: And in those early years of the
272 restaurant, how was it?

273 How hard was it to get the supplies that you wanted of getting the
274 Asian ingredients?

275

276 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Uh, -, the first [1st] uh, - few years
277 were a little hard, because not that many Vietnamese here in
278 Houston yet.

279 We all have a few, uh, -, I mean, compared to uh, - Orange Counties,
280 and Jose, L.A. with small – small amount of people here in Houston.

281 But we were the first [1st] one to uh, - uh, - actually, as a matter of
282 fact; we were like the second [2nd] restaurant – second [2nd] or third
283 [3rd] Vietnamese restaurant here in Houston.

284 And uh, - we do uh, - it's the hard part is just – it's easy to get a
285 Vietnamese customer, but it's very hard to get an American customer
286 in, and to stay.

287 And to focus on – to, I mean, to bring it out to 'The American
288 customer', we have to do a lot of promotion.

289 Because a lot of customer come in, and it's like, 'What is Vietnamese

290 [00:12:16]

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RESTAURANT PROJECT – KIM SON RESTAURANT – PART TWO -
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291 [00:12:16]

292 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Food'?

293 When they don't know what – what is Vietnamese food.

294 And uh, - and they just sit down, they look at the menu.

295 They get up and they leave.

296 So, we're like, 'What's wrong'?

297 'What's wrong with our menu'?

298 'What's wrong with our recipe'?

299 And there's a lot of, you know, the – the – the flavor is good.

300 [Background Noise]

301 But just when we write the menu we write – we wrote it in the
302 wrong way.

303 [Background Noise]

304 You know, or created it a different way.

305 In Vietnam you eat chicken, you eat chicken with bone, you know.

306 Here everybody like – like boneless chicken.

307 You know, or they want to have wings, other than that – everybody
308 want boneless chicken.

309 So, uh, - or dark – white meat versus dark meat here, you know.

310 And uh, - so, people like filet of fish instead of whole fish with the
311 head on, some people will say.

312 So, those are the stuff that we look – we look at to correct.

313 And uh, - after a while, we gain the – the 'customer base' that we
314 have today.

315 We bill on, 'If you don't like you don't pay.'

316 [Laughter]

317 So, we – we are almost like a four [4] or five [5] years like that of
318 building 'customer base'.

319 [00:13:14]

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320 [00:13:14]

321 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Uh, - building a 'base' that you come in,
322 you eat, you don't like, you don't pay.

323 And, at that time, it was a very, I mean, it's helped us a lot in the
324 sense that we got a lot of new cus – uh, - new customer coming in.

325 And we – we are proud to say that we were the first [1st] restaurant,
326 uh, - to bring Vietnamese food to the main – to the 'Main Stream
327 American', so.

328 You know, so that's what we proud to say that.

329 Uh, - that's why we grow so much now.

330 We have like six [6] different restaurant in – in the suburbs and stuff
331 like that, you know.

332 Uh, - but as for ingredients, they – they have supermarket here.

333 And they – they bring out their own California uh, - you know,
334 produce, [inaudible] in Mexico they have it – they have it here.

335 Uh, - so, they – when we first [1st] came over there was one [1] uh,
336 - supermarket that sell almost everything – pretty much the imports
337 for the - -

338 So, you have two [2] waves of - - of - -

339 [Background Noise]

340 Of Vietnamese that came.

341 The first [1st] wave was ninety-seventy-five [1975].

342 [Background Noise]

343 So, those are the people who came before us.

344 They setup a little, you know, here in California etcetera.

345 But uh, - the second [2nd] wave is the eighties [1980's] - - uh, - the
346 eighties [1980's] [inaudible] uh, - and nineties [1990's].

347

348 [00:14:25]

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349 [00:14:25]

350 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: So, - so, those are the uh, - uh, - called
351 the uh, -, 'Boat People' the wave that uh, -, the second [2nd] wave of
352 - of the people that came over.

353 So, uh, - but term for us to have - we don't have problem with
354 getting the ingredients we - but it's just uh, -, now it's much
355 easier.

356 Now with much more of it that you can choose from - before you
357 don't have a lot to choose from.

358 Now you get more import from Thailand, from Vietnam.

359 Directly before - before the, you know, right after 'The Wars', the
360 relationship between Vietnam and uh, - and - and 'The U.S.' it's not -
361 it's uh, - it's - it's not good.

362 So, therefore, and, you know, uh, - you - you - you can import stuff,
363 you can ex - we [inaudible] to import.

364 Uh, - so, etcetera, we don't export to you, etcetera.

365 So, the economic uh, - relationship is not there either.

366 So, now it's much better.

367 [Background Noise]

368 Uh, - now you can get fresh stuff from Vietnam directly etcetera.

369 And a lot of stuff that people grew here now, as well.

370 So, they bring stuff here;

371 And they start over the thirty [30] years people are start growing
372 stuff.

373 Uh, - in Florida, Mexico, uh, - for the - the - the thing that we use
374 here, uh, -, for the Asian communities, as well.

375 So, maybe one [1] Asian family that do it, you know, because they
376 know that the market is there [inaudible].

377 [00:15:51]

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378 [00:15:51]

379 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: And when you'll were developing
380 your menu, I noticed that you have both Vietnamese and Chinese
381 food on the menu.

382 Can you explain that a little bit?

383

384 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Uh, - the – the thing with that is, uh, -
385 we first [1st] started out as just uh, - majority is uh, - is – is
386 Vietnamese.

387 And we have a few items that are Chinese etcetera.

388 Uh, - at – at the thirty [30] seat rest – restaurant.

389 So, so, we look across the street – there was a restaurant across the
390 street we really wanted.

391 I mean, we – our dream was to have to – to be able to lease that
392 restaurant.

393 So, one [1] day in nineteen-eighty- three [1983] ish, late eighty-
394 three [1983], I guess, they want to uh, - lease it to us.

395 [Background Noise]

396 They – they don't want to do a restaurant anymore.

397 It was a – it was a Chinese restaurant.

398 So, which is uh, - more Chinese uh, - restaurant.

399 And uh, - at that time, we – we lease it, and they – we – they have all
400 the chef there for us, as well.

401 So, the chef did not leave.

402 So, we hire on the chef, as well.

403 [Background Noise]

404 So, at that time, we have two [2] kitchen.

405 A Vietnamese kitchen and a Chinese kitchen.

406 [00:16:58]

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407 [00:16:58]

408 And right now you walk in my kitchen, you still see the same concept
409 – a Vietnamese kitchen – a Chinese kitchen.

410 And uh, - my other restaurant, you have another kitchen, called 'The
411 Dim Sum Kitchen'.

412 So, we have three [3] kitchen in certain - in certain lo -location.

413 So, here at the – uh, - 'The Flagship' we only have two [2], uh, - 'The
414 Vietnamese Kitchen and Chinese Kitchen.'

415 And that's how we get both of the uh, - of the food uh, -

416 And so, we retain the chef, and we develop it, and we learn from it.

417 And uh, -, I mean, as you work, you learn from your jobs.

418 And you learn the chef uh, -, sauce.

419 You learn how to make them, you know, so now we uniform it, you
420 know, we make it more consistent uh, -.

421 We uh, -, we produce our own sauce for each restaurant to use.

422 So, that's – that's how, and we hire on some like consultant uh, -
423 that's uh, - outside to help us as well, for now.

424 And we still have people that work with us for, I mean, twenty-five
425 [25] years.

426 Start with us and we opened this a thirty [30] year.

427 We have people work with us for twenty-five [25] years now, and
428 they're still here.

429 And that's – that's uh, - we're proud to say that, and that uh, - the –
430 the – for the kitchen staff, uh, -

431 For the management staff some of them still here with us a long long
432 time.

433 Uh, - I remember I graduated in nineteen ninety-six [1996],
434 University of Texas.

435 [00:18:23]

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436 [00:18:23]

437 I came here in nineteen ninety-five [1995].

438 I came here, I work, and we opened our first [1st] restaurant.

439 Uh, - I go open my own uh, - 'Kim Son' for the first [1st] time, in
440 nineteen ninety-six [1996], and the people there still work for me
441 now.

442 [Background Noise]

443 So, it's like - -

444 [Background Noise]

445 Sixteen [16] seventeen [17] years, and uh, - we – we build them up,
446 you know, slowly from our server to become uh, - supervisor,
447 become manager, become G.M. in the restaurant.

448 So, that's how – that how we do it, so.

449

450 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: Can you talk a little bit about how
451 you went from going to U.T. and being – wanting to become an
452 engineer to getting into the restaurant business?

453

454 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Now that's a funny story.

455 I uh, - as a matter of fact, how did I chose Engineering?

456 Oh, high school, I uh, - have a Physic Teacher that was a – that was a
457 Petroleum Engineer.

458 So, I was thinking, 'Wow, if I joined that, I might be able to travel
459 Vietnam.

460 I might travel ever – everywhere just to work in the Engineering
461 Firm.'

462 But uh, - as I work, uh, - as I go work and stuff like that, I go –
463 after I – after I graduate - -

464 [00:19:31]

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465 [00:19:31]

466 [Background Noise]

467 Even when I was in school, I worked both the restaurant and going
468 to school.

469 In the summer I go back to the restaurant and work.

470 During the holidays, I go back to the restaurant and work.

471 [Background Noise]

472 During the weekends, if they need help, I go back to the restaurant
473 and work.

474 Uh, - but, [inaudible] the restaurant is like uh, -

475 [Background Noise]

476 It's like the back of my hand, I know everything.

477 So, - so, I was like – so, I – I – I graduate uh, - ninety-five [1995].

478 I went to work for uh, - Pennzoil, I went to – I worked for uh, -

479 Unical [sp] as a summer job, you know, off-shore and stuff like that.

480 But then after I – when I graduates uh, - the 'Oil Industries' dip a
481 little bit.

482 So, it was on the down – on – on the down turn.

483 So, we – I decided, okay, I'm gonna join the restaurant.

484 You know, after I had [inaudible] my parents.

485 So, at that time, I know more a little about computers, you know.

486 Uh, - uh, - managing, I try to run with a different style, so

487 [inaudible].

488 So, we implement a lot of new stuff that, you know, in term of like
489 computerized stuff.

490 So, that's what we do.

491 Uh, - after that, I mean, I join – I opened the restaurant.

492 It was hard at first [1st], I mean, I was just only twenty-five [25]

493 [00:20:46]

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494 [00:20:46]

495 old – twenty-six [26] years old, and I, uh, - I ran the restaurant uh, -
496 managing thirty [30] – forty [40] people.

497 And uh, - uh, - I got – I got – I got school by, I mean, seriously I was
498 – I got school by the employees.

499 I was so naïve and stuff.

500 But uh, - you learn from it, you know.

501 So, at one point I almost like, I told my – a lot of people, I almost
502 'throw in the – the white towel', just I want to give up.

503 But because of stress and stuff like that, but uh, - after that, I say,
504 that was nice, it's mine, it's my business.

505 You have to either to hunker down and move forward, or, you know,
506 you let your business die – is one of those.

507 Uh, - it's – it's the livelihood of the business.

508 So, I look it, as my parents here before, so why do I have to give up
509 now?

510 You know, so we just hunker down and just learn from it.

511 You learn from the business, and uh, -, you learn to manage
512 differently.

513 You learn how to control people differently.

514 You learn the food, you – you learn everything.

515 You learn how to, you know, different computer system was out
516 there, research, read a little bit.

517 Uh, - and just explore and – and do it.

518 And that's how I get stuck in – I guess too, I mean, sometimes like,
519 'do I want to be – do something else?'

520 Because a restaurant is a lot of hours, you know, you do – you, I
521 mean, it's – it's tiring, but it's – it's fun, in a sense that is, you know,

522 [00:22:09]

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523 [00:22:09]

524 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: you meet a lot of people.

525 But as you – it's – it's if you don't know.

526 I mean, when I was young, I was a very 'gung ho' about stuff.

527 So, I, you know, kind of like let myself to get taken by the – the – the
528 restaurant business sense.

529 But now you – you learn, you get older, you learn, 'hey, is the
530 restaurant gonna fall apart the next day if you're not there?'

531 When you was young you think, oh, it's not gonna be there, you
532 know, when you – when you're not [inaudible] – if you're not there.

533 So, it's just different now, you know, cause you can learn a lot.

534 But, you know, sometime I'm like, 'oh, do I want to be on the other
535 side, uh, -, yeah, sometime.'

536 But, you know, it always look green on the other side.

537 So, everybody have their own issue when you move to the other side.

538 But I enjoy what I do; it's not that I don't.

539 Yes, of course, it's uh, - the restaurant business uh, -, is the day that
540 the normal people get off is the day that we work.

541 So, - so, it's vice versa, holidays we work, people get off.

542 You know, so it's hard.

543 So, for uh, - a family it's just a little hard.

544

545 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: Can you walk us through a 'typical
546 day' for you?

547

548 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: My 'typical day' here is uh, -, now till
549 today, I mean, for the present is uh, - easier than before.

550 Uh, - before it's like, you know, about when I first [1st] started

551 [00:23:26]

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552 [00:23:26]

553 Is about between coming in around nine-thirty [9:30], I won't leave
554 uh, - get – get the lunch shift ready.

555 Get everything ready, work all the way till about twelve [12:00] at
556 night.

557 Now I have people to help, so as – as that help a lot.

558 So, now for – I come in around ten-thirty [10:30] – eleven [11:00]
559 o'clock.

560 Uh, - checking my email to make sure everything's okay, if I have
561 any banquet, any requests, any catering?

562 Uh, - check with my managers, everything okay?

563 The kitchen, uh, - say that, 'are you ready for the lunch?'

564 Then uh, - and we wait for the – the lunch crowd coming in.

565 Then after that we do paperwork, and I leave around uh, - a night for
566 the dinner crowd.

567 And, of course, it's a daily routines, you know.

568 And we – to all the way to nine o'clock [9:00] at night, eight-thirty
569 [8:30] – nine o'clock [9:00] at night.

570 And, you know, we can leave.

571 Uh, - but like on the weekend it's uh, - - it's busy, uh, - so you stay
572 later.

573 Uh, - the holidays is you stay later.

574 You come early - you stay late.

575 You're the first [1st] one in, and you're also the last one out, so, it's
576 pretty much tight.

577 So, I – I do believe in the management style of uh, - 'lead by
578 example'.

579 So, uh, - I have to 'lead my team' by uh, - being here or being

580 [00:24:47]

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581 [00:24:47]

582 uh, - more responsible for them to respect a little bit more.

583 That's – that's how – that's how I think.

584 But sometimes I don't know is right or wrong on that one.

585

586 **INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU:** What are the big holidays for the
587 business?

588

589 **INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA:** Big holidays are – there's uh, - Mother's
590 Day, uh, - Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and we open both uh, -
591 Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

592 New Year's uh, - Day, uh, - those are the big holidays for this
593 location.

594 But like the uh, - the location down in Bel Air [sp] where China Town
595 is at is – is every holiday, because uh, - that location uh, - cater to a
596 majority of Vietnamese, more Asian.

597 So, you have big holidays, everybody come to Houston, as a place to
598 visit, as a place to 'go to'.

599 The families here that go – you know, they'll – they'll go to a bigger
600 town, that's what it is.

601 And we will – we'll be the destination for them to stop by.

602 If uh, - they ever come to town, we'll be the uh, - the first [1st]
603 destination for them to stop to eat.

604 [Background Noise]

605 Uh, - either at this location, or at the Bel Air lo – location.

606 So, uh, - we're proud to say of that.

607 But uh, - the biggest day I would think will be uh, - Mother's Day,
608 and uh, - Christmas Day, as a matter of fact.

609 [00:26:09]

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610 [00:26:09]

611 And all the Graduation during all the Graduation.

612 And this is May coming up, there's gonna be Graduation left and
613 right.

614 Cause we're close to University of Houston, uh, - Texas Women's
615 University, T.S.U., U of H Downtown, A.C.C., you know, I mean, you
616 name it all.

617 Uh, - Rice University, Saint Thomas, so everybody around the – the
618 area.

619 So, you have big – a lot of big parties going on.

620

621 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: Can you talk a little bit more about
622 the differences between the different locations?

623

624 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Oh, the different locations, we have –
625 we start this is – it's considered our first [1st] location, 'The
626 Jefferson'.

627 Our second [2nd] location is in Stafford [sp] or near like Sugarland
628 area.

629 So, that – that location serve the same menu, but they add Dim Sum
630 to it.

631 So, they have this uh, - they have the – the same menu as the
632 Jefferson location.

633 But on the weekdays and the weekend they have – they have Dim uh,
634 - Dim Sum service.

635 And uh, - we opened our third [3rd] one which is 'The Bel Air
636 Location', that is a little bit different, this is our – our first [1st]
637 'buffet concept'.

638 [00:27:13]

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639 [00:27:13]

640 'Asian Buffet Concept', it's uh, - Vietnamese [sp], majority of
641 Vietnamese uh, - food, traditional Vietnamese food, Hot Pots, uh, -
642 some Chinese, Noodle Bars, uh, - Japanese Stations, uh, - uh, - a lot
643 of Vietnamese Desserts Sta – uh, -, Station', etcetera.

644 And uh, - it's pretty much like a uh, - a 'Monthly'.

645 My brother had run like a different uh, - theme for – for the
646 restaurant, just to bring customer in.

647 Uh, - that restaurant is uh, - have been doing really well.

648 Uh, - as a matter of fact, was a big restaurant.

649 And our other uh, - uh, - stuff is wedding, Asian wedding.

650 We do uh, - a lot of like Vietnamese weddings.

651 And we're uh, - we're proud to say we are the uh, - the one that
652 people call first [1st] when they want to do uh, - when uh, - they
653 want to do a wedding.

654 So, we are the first [1st] uh, - to call us, and other restaurant will
655 [inaudible].

656 So, we're really happy too, and when we do now – we do catering, as
657 well, to uh, - hotels, uh, - that for uh, - the 'new generation' that they
658 like the 'hotel concept'.

659 But the 'old generation' is don't like the hotel food.

660 So, they still want the Asian foods, so that's where we came in.

661 We would come in and we do all these Asians, just like at the
662 restaurants.

663 And uh, - we serve uh, - in the hotel for – in the 'hotel atmosphere'.

664 So, uh, - and we currently – we grow with another uh, - uh, - another
665 concept called 'The Kim Son Café', which is much smaller scaled
666 down uh, - restaurant.

667 [00:28:59]

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668 [00:28:59]

669 Typical our restaurant is fifteen thousand [15,000] square feet – the
670 big one.

671 [Background Noise]

672 So, the 'café concept' is three thousand [3,000] square feet.

673 So, we do much smaller, uh, -, for 'control purposes' for uh, - just the
674 bigger the more headache, just put it that ways.

675 And you have people, employee issue; you have, you know, all stuff.

676 Uh, - [inaudible] issue, so small is easier.

677 You don't use a lot of, if you win, you win a little bit, you lose you
678 lose a little bit, as well.

679 Or you build big, you lose you lose very big.

680 You know, so, we build – we – we have – we just grew three [3] of
681 'em the last two [2] years, 'The Kim Son Café' concept.

682 And uh, - we about to venture into a new concept, a smaller concept
683 than that, which is a 'counter service concept' for uh, - 'Noodle Bar'.

684 Uh, - the name is Nam, uh, - N, A, M., which is stand for 'Noodle And
685 More'.

686 And it's the concept is which is uh, - upscale, uh, - 'Noodle Bar'.

687 So, you go in, you walk to counter, you order, we bring it out to you.

688 But strictly Vietnamese [sp] food, uh, - in a nice upscale
689 environment, with all Wi-Fi [sp], where a student can sit there, surf
690 the net.

691 We have a little counter; have a little coffee, desert, etcetera.

692 So, those are the things that we're trying to go uh, - and uh, -
693 hopefully with that and be successful, we will be able to go to
694 different cities with that concept.

695 It's the same thing with 'The Kin Son Café' it's easier to grow.

696 [00:30:32]

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697 [00:30:32]

698 You can pick up – you cannot pick up like fifteen – eighteen thousand
699 [15,000 – 18,000] square feet restaurant and grow, it's really hard.

700 I mean, people want us to do it, but we say, 'oh, no, it's – it's hard.'

701 It's easy to pick up a three thousand [3,000] square feet and though.

702 And [inaudible] ten [10] people, 'okay, let's build a team of ten [10].

703 Other than that, you know, it's hard.

704 You bring a team of two hundred [200] so, - so.

705 That's what – that's our new uh, - our – our new ventures, as we

706 opened that in about August of this year, 'The NAM Concept', so

707 hopefully it's worked.

708

709 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: And how do you choose new
710 locations?

711

712 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: We chose new location in a sense that
713 uh, - where the – the – we look for an area with a – the density is
714 said to be high.

715 [Background Noise]

716 Of course, the income levels have to be there.

717 Uh, - uh, - the demographic has to be good evenly, and uh, -

718 We – we're not in a sense of we don't have – to have to go to an

719 Asian area only.

720 So, we're trying to go mainstream more to enter – and we're trying

721 to educate people how to, you know, uh, - eat Vietnamese food

722 [inaudible].

723 So, we make videos 'how to eat stuff etcetera', you know, uh, - just –

724 it's not like another 'Noodle Bar' of – in the Asian uh, - of town.

725 [00:31:51]

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726 [00:31:51]

727 In uh, - in 'The Asian Market', we don't want to be that.

728 We want uh, - I mean, we want to take this to, uh, - Uni – University
729 of Texas, Austin, about two [2] or three [3] in Austin, San Antonio,
730 uh, - Texas A & M.

731 [Background Noise]

732 Uh, - [inaudible] Texas, Florida, it's – it's easy to grow this way.

733 And uh, - I mean, we do – that's our 'ultimate goal'.

734 And uh, - but location wise, we just had to look at where's uh, - it's –
735 we have a little chart that we go by, it's the income level, etcetera.

736 And uh, - you know, it's easy to do.

737 You can do two thousand [2,000] square feet you're okay.

738 I mean, the neighborhood is good.

739 We're trying to goes in neighborhood that has a uh, - you know, let's
740 say if you go U.T., you know where Westlake uh, -, we could go to
741 Westlake and just drop one.

742 And you go to Cedar Park you just drop one there.

743 So, [inaudible] people just like, 'oh, I'm just gonna walk outside to a
744 mile down the street, I go to a Noodle Bar'.

745 Instead I have to drive, you have to drive [inaudible] all over just to
746 find it, in – in - a nice environment.

747 You don't want it had to be clean, had to be, you know, upscale, uh, -
748 those things we're looking at.

749 Uh, - [Background Noise]

750 We just don't want to put out uh, - just a 'Noodle Bar'.

751 We want to put out a nice uh, - uh, - a nice place for people to enjoy.

752 I mean, there's a lot of Noodle – uh, - Noodle House out there, but
753 it's just – it's not uh, - up to uh, -, the uh, - how I say it?

754 [00:33:22]

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755 [00:33:22]

756 In the cleanliness and stuff like – what we're trying to do.

757 Uh, - we're trying to make it a more upscale a little bit.

758 Uh, - a reasonable price, but it's a nice environment, nice
759 atmosphere.

760 So, - so, that's what we're trying to do.

761

762 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: Can you tell me a little bit about
763 how your clientele has changed over time?

764 And during the – for example, at the first [1st] Kim Son was it mostly
765 Vietnamese customers?

766 And when did you'll make the decision the go more 'main stream'?

767

768 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Our – the first [1st] two [2] years is
769 seriously is all Vietnamese, it's, I mean, we – we look at customers
770 American.

771 'Wow, customer American customer, come on, come on, let's do it.'

772 And they're looking at me and they're like, oh, they're leaving.

773 So, 'oh, what's wrong'?

774 You know, but as years grow our fourth [4th] or fifth [5th] year, we
775 dedicate ourselves to bringing more to the main stream, because we
776 know that the Asian Market is very limited.

777 [Background Noise]

778 You have very small amount of Asian people live here.

779 You have millions of the Non-Asian.

780 You have only in the hundreds of thousands of the Asian.

781 So, therefore, you – it's how – what you do?

782

783 [00:34:29]

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784 [00:34:29]

785 You grow – you want to grow multiple multiple store, you can't.

786 [Background Noise]

787 So, you have to go main – main stream, so how you do it?

788 You have then – you have to, and like I said before, we just have to
789 bring them in, let them taste it, they'll like it, and they don't pay for
790 it.

791 And our demo – it's changing from the day we opened was now,
792 before it was a hundred percent [100%] Vietnamese - - uh, -
793 Vietnamese or, ninety percent [90%] Vietnamese, ten percent
794 [10%] American.

795 Now we've – it's the reverse; it's eighty percent [80%] American, uh,
796 - for this location anyway.

797 Uh, - and say twenty percent [20%] Asian, and especially on the like
798 other – on a 'special event' Asians still like to come here.

799 But they like to go to Bel Air more, because there are more of the
800 Vietnamese uh, - uh, - traditional stuff.

801 You know, so, here's we have uh, - you can – if you come for lunch,
802 you'll see it's eighty percent [80%] uh, - of the – the clientele here is
803 American.

804 And uh, - twenty percent [20%] is Asia – Asian.

805 Uh, - that's how we change over the years.

806 And we try to view that, you know, [Background Noise]

807 We – where at the Bel Air location, we – we do, is a – is a reverse.

808 The Bel Air location is doing ninety percent [90%] Vietnamese-Asian,
809 and ten percent [10%] American.

810 And, of course, we want to get more American coming in over there.

811 So, now it's like we want – how do we draw that, you know?

812 [00:35:59]

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813 [00:35:59]

814 So, it's – with different restaurant we cater to different –

815 [Background Noise]

816 Like this – on the – in the suburb the new Kim Son Café, we cater
817 toward only American clientele.

818 So, of course, where you have Asian live there and they come in,
819 because they don't want to drive to Bel Air.

820 They don't want to drive downtown, they, if – if you live in The
821 Woodlands, no, you don't want to drive to downtown just to go eat.

822 So, you're just gonna drive to – we open – we just opened one in The
823 Woodlands.

824 We opened one in the – uh, - on like Interstate Ten West [I -10
825 West], you know, the more city area.

826 So, - so, people don't have to drive to downtown to have – to have
827 our food, they just go around the corner.

828 And that's what our 'goal' is to – it's a small neighborhood we open
829 small store.

830 People in the neighborhood they just come out, let's say we go to
831 Clear Lake or something like that.

832 We go to Austin, we open a small joint, people come out.

833 One in North – one in middle – one South.

834 And you have people who come in for it, instead of you put one
835 downtown; people on the North side cannot go to that.

836 So, we try – it's easy to drop along the line, it's easy that way.

837 So, that's what we want.

838 So, the demographic for different location is different.

839 All our café is targeting to our Americans – not toward the – toward
840 the mainstream.

841 [00:37:09]

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842 [00:37:09]

843 I mean, so now I said the mainstream is everybody.

844 I'm not catering – I'm not just catering to Asian, so, - so, that's what
845 we want.

846 Uh, - that's the 'ultimate goal' is that.

847 So, now the majority of our store coming out is will be – go toward
848 the 'mainstream'.

849 Uh, - yes, uh, - a lot of people say, 'oh, we don't [inaudible] but we
850 still serve the same food in the last thirty [30] years.

851 You know, because a lot of people see that so many American come
852 here.

853 They just think, 'oh, that's uh, - that's not a [inaudible] blah, blah,
854 blah.

855 So, there's always that – but I don't – I don't understand is uh, - it's
856 the same recipe, the same cook who cooked for the last uh, - uh, -
857 twenty [20] something years till now.

858 Is this, it's not like anybody changes; the recipes are still the same.

859 And we just - - uh, -, you know, doing different things.

860 Just, you know, uh, - creating new stuff.

861 You know, a lot of fusion [sp] and stuff, so that's what we try to do,
862 as well, using the same recipe but we fuse them differently.

863

864 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: Can you talk a little bit more about
865 Fusion Food and how you go about creating it?

866 And which – which tastes you want to bring in?

867

868 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Yeah. Fusion Foods, we uh, - Fusion, I
869 mean, we're saying that we do a lot of –

870 [00:38:17]

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871 [00:38:17]

872 Let's say – let's say, for example, I go out somewhere, I eat, and I
873 see something that's good.

874 Uh, - I like to bring it back, but I'll bring it back to a chef and say.
875 'Okay, I eat this, I want this, how do we create this for the Asian,
876 with an Asian flair to it'?

877 Linguine, Spinach Linguine.

878 We have Grilled Shrimp; we have the Coconut Curry Sauce, Linguine
879 uh, - Spinach Linguine, we'll put it on.

880 So, it will be called a 'Pasta', okay, I using uh, - using uh, - spaghetti
881 noodle with seafood sauce, Asian Seafood Sauce.

882 Revised [inaudible] Marinate with a uh, - Asian Reduction Sauce.

883 Uh, - Filet Mignon, same thing, uh, - bacon wrapped, you know, uh, -
884 with the Asian Reduction Sauce.

885 Shrimp Brochette but we do an Asian Style to it.

886 So, we pick up from the uh, - the uh, - The Western uh, - Cuisine, and
887 we twist it to an Asian, with an Asian twist to it.

888 And so, some people like, 'oh', cause that's how you draw new
889 clientele.

890 People will say, 'I could not eat this because it's 'So Tradition', but I
891 can eat this, I see this before, as I can see a piece of ribeye steak.

892 'I know what a piece of ribeye steaks like'.

893 'I know what Linguine's like.'

894 'I know what Grilled Chicken's like.'

895 Let's say we do Chicken Breasts with Marinade with Lemon Grass.

896 You know, it's just an Asian – just an Asian Flair to it.

897 Serve it with Coconut and Curry Sauce.

898 Tia – a little Tia Style.

899 [00:40:00]

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900 [00:40:00]

901 So, those are the things we do.

902 That's – we twist it a little bit, that's how we do it.

903 It's not like Traditional Fish Sauce – cook Fish Sauce all the time.

904 So, that's typical Vietnamese Food, you cook a lot of Fish Sauce,

905 Curry, Cocoa, you know, so those are the stuff we do – we – we twist
906 it a little bit.

907 We make it more uh, - palatable [sp] to the uh, - uh, - for the
908 'Mainstream of American Guests', uh, - because some people walk in,
909 and they still to this day, some people cannot eat Fish Sauce.

910 I mean, Traditional Fish Sauce, I even – I don't sometime, because
911 the 'Traditional' is really strong.

912 So, you know, but I'm used to it, don't get me wrong.

913 I mean, I cook with them every day, some days I don't, it's just
914 sometimes it's – it's strong for people.

915 I could understand that.

916 So, sometimes we bring out a dish; a sample; a uh, - two [2] days
917 ago I bring out a dish.

918 It was, oh, my gosh, it's a [inaudible], and I said, 'We make you a
919 different dish', but they like it.

920 Just uh, - the flair is down a little bit with not so – so like traditional
921 sauce, you know.

922 So, those are the things we're – we're trying to do.

923 How do you accommodate that?

924 Uh, - it's Asian, you like it; as for American it's too strong, of a uh, -
925 uh, - a flavor.

926 So, we have to find different way to do it, that's how we do it.

927 Are you eating at another restaurant, going out to eat a lot?

928 [00:41:14]

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929 [00:41:14]

930 Trust me; I eat out almost three [3] days a week; four [4] days a
931 week, just to learn uh, - from take it back here.

932 What can we do with it?

933 And so, those are the things that we're trying to do.

934 And it's good that I bring my Mom with us, and so she pick all – she
935 knows right away, bam, I got it for you.

936 You know, so that's what she is, but that's what we do.

937

938 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: Can you tell us an example of
939 going out to a restaurant and being very inspired by it?

940

941 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Okay, let's say for example, I mean, our
942 [inaudible] when we're is uh, - we go to Pappasito's [sp] a – a lot,
943 and like Pappadeaux's here in town.

944 So, we make a dish called uh, - 'Golden Treasure Fish'.

945 So, - so, we take the fish; we sear it; the same thing at Pappas [sp],
946 they have the sauce on top.

947 The Fry Fish is uh, - like the – like the Etouffee [sp] on top of fish, so
948 we do it the same way.

949 We get the fish; we sear it; and we cook the sauce with the Scalloped
950 Shrimp with a vegetable, and we sauté, we put it on top of the fish,
951 and we serve with like steamed rice, so it's the same concept.

952 Before we don't have those kind of stuff.

953 People was like, 'Why you do this'?

954 So, with this when – but when we bring it out, the customer like it,
955 it's different.

956

957 [00:42:20]

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RESTAURANT PROJECT – KIM SON RESTAURANT – PART TWO -
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958 [00:42:20]

959 You don't have to just get fried fish all the time.

960 You have fish, Grilled Fish, with uh, - Shrimp and Scallops on top of
961 it.

962 So, you learn from those, like that's a good example right there.

963 And you go, uh, - eat uh, - a salad, and you like it, is it okay?

964 Have her bring the salad back.

965 Asian don't have roman lettuce in the salads.

966 In Vietnam they don't have that – that kind of stuff.

967 You know, they don't have green leaf in Vietnam.

968 They don't have those mixed – mixed green in Vietnam.

969 When you [inaudible] a salad, they don't – don't know what that is.

970 They have just like salads tossed, and like jelly fish and stuff like
971 that.

972 Those are called – called really traditional, but American they cannot
973 have jelly fish salad every day.

974 [Background Noise]

975 So, you have to do mixed greens.

976 So, how – what are you gonna use?

977 An Asian restaurant you [inaudible] ranch, you cannot use ranch; you
978 cannot use blue cheese dressing.

979 You're like [inaudible] what you?

980 You use blue cheese.

981 So, you know, so you have to come up with different dressing.

982 You come up with [inaudible] ginger dressing, uh, - vinaigrette, uh, -
983 uh, - Asian vinaigrettes.

984 Uh, - you know, things like that that we have to twist to make it
985 work.

986 [00:43:20]

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987 [00:43:20]

988 Uh, - that's what I – that's what we do to, you know, ginger

989 [inaudible] dressing.

990 They love it, and we put grilled chicken on there.

991 And it's not just regular grilled chicken like American grilled chicken.

992 We marinate with – it's a lot of flavor, you know, lemon grass, you
993 know, or lemon grass beef on it.

994 Or, honey glazed chicken, so we do that with that – with that Asian
995 flair there, you can see the Asian flair.

996 And using the traditional American lettuce, just like mixed green,
997 roman, cucumber, tomato, stuff like those things.

998 And we use an Asian sauce and Asian meat, and there you go, you've
999 got a dish.

1000 Those – those are things we uh, - I mean, that's helped us in many
1001 ways.

1002 And we – people order that a lot, so, as you can see – see I'm here in
1003 the kitchen every day and I see it coming out.

1004

1005 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: Do you feel like this Fusion food?
1006 Does it reflect your own role, as an Asian American of interpreting of
1007 blending Asian America?

1008 Or, is it more of the cooking for you?

1009

1010 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: You – you definitely right.

1011 I mean, it's a – it's a uh, - one [1] of those things.

1012 It's a blend as you grow up here.

1013 Uh, - you see it's like, okay, I eat what I like.

1014 I know what you eat and what you like.

1015 [00:44:32]

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1016 [00:44:32]

1017 So, I say, how do I make he like my food?

1018 You know, so you have to make it in a way that you know how to
1019 blend it in a ways for the other people to uh, - eat it.

1020 But using your knowledge what you have.

1021 Using what you have at the restaurant, I mean, and then you modify
1022 to make for the customer.

1023 But I think what I – I learn a lot is when I go out to eat I learn.

1024 Cause I – but you – it's not just only the cooking part aspect of it.

1025 But it's just had to learn how to adapt to the new uh, - the new
1026 trend.

1027 You cannot be in the old days all the time.

1028 You have to learn to be with the new – the new trend of cooking.

1029 Uh, - the new – the new uh, -, how do I say it?

1030 The new trends of restaurant tools, greens, everybody going greens,
1031 organics.

1032 Everybody going no MSG, everybody – so we are working toward all
1033 of that.

1034 We are making our stuff – the majority of our stuff now contain no
1035 MSG added to it, you know.

1036 So, we are working towards that step.

1037 We see that side we don't see.

1038 But that's how we work toward it, and – and people don't know it,
1039 but we works towards slowly every – every day.

1040 Our research uh, - kitchen is just working every day on it just to
1041 make sure that we are moving – that the same direction, as the
1042 outside econ – outside industry, as – as – as a whole.

1043 A new chef they'd say you see on T.V. every day is everybody's

1044 [00:46:03]

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1045 [00:46:03]

1046 just, I mean, they have new stuff coming out every day.

1047 It's just uh, - I mean, it's just changing the way of cooking a lot, so –
1048 so.

1049

1050 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: Do you think Americans have
1051 become better at eating Asian food over the years?

1052

1053 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Definitely, definitely for sure.

1054 I mean, people come here.

1055 They – before I would say they wouldn't try uh, - our traditional
1056 anchovy sauce.

1057 But now some people like, they come, they order an item.

1058 I say – they say, I want the rue sauce.

1059 I don't want the alternative sauce to this – for this dish, which they
1060 know, you know.

1061 So, a lot of people come in uh, - and trying.

1062 Of course, they're still a lot of new customers out there that have not
1063 been here.

1064 And that's what we want to bring them here.

1065 And they – once they're in we know we get – we get them to stay,
1066 because uh, - we're – we always tell them.

1067 [Background Noise]

1068 You know, we always teach our employees to this is what we
1069 recommend first [1st] for the first [1st] timer, second [2nd] timer,
1070 etcetera.

1071 So, to just – just to retain, and uh, - we have, I mean, that was really
1072 – [inaudible] that's just to get people in here is more important.

1073 [00:47:15]

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1074 [00:47:15]

1075 So, like you say, there's a lot of people don't know us.

1076 We hit thirty [30] years, and still – still a lot of people in Houston
1077 don't know us.

1078 Or, people move from other city to here and they don't know us, so,
1079 stuff like that.

1080

1081 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: Are there any foods that you
1082 would like to try at the restaurant, but you don't think it would go
1083 over very well?

1084

1085 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: For me, I don't like a lot of fried stuff
1086 even I got to eat and I like more grilled sautés [sp].

1087 So, some of the stuff here I – if it's fried I just don't try it.

1088 You know, so, uh, - a good example, I mean, I say, it's just uh, - I
1089 working here for, I don't know, since I was thirteen [13], fourteen
1090 [14], fifteen [15] years old.

1091 I'm forty [40] now, forty-two [42] now.

1092 I might be eat like sweet and sour pork maybe once or twice.

1093 Sad to say, but everything else but that like maybe once or twice,
1094 because I'm – and I – I – I'm not a vegetable person either.

1095 So, you know, so, I don't – those are one [1] example uh, - I – I
1096 don't do.

1097 So, but the majority I try everything else, uh, - I – I have to, because
1098 uh, - I'm working with it, train the people, as well.

1099

1100 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: And when you're training people,
1101 how?

1102 [00:48:36]

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1103 [00:48:36]

1104 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: Do you ever meet resistance when
1105 you try to introduce new dishes?

1106 When you go out and – you're inspired and you come back, do they
1107 ever say, no, we're?

1108 Do your chefs ever go, 'No, we don't really think that will work'?

1109

1110 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Uh, - yes, you do, but then you put it on
1111 the table as the majority of win you had to do it.

1112 So, there's no other choice.

1113 And you put on a vote and – and there's five [5] people voting, and
1114 four [4] say, yes, and one [1] says – and one [1] says, no, you still
1115 have to join it.

1116 And I get out voted a lot of time, it's not anything wrong.

1117 We put it on the table, 'hey, this is a new dish, you like, you don't
1118 like'.

1119 There's us four [4] or five [5] of us like, and you don't like it, sorry.

1120 Uh, - you have to join the team, it's not, you know.

1121 [Background Noise]

1122 There's no way out.

1123 It's uh, - it's uh, - we voted for all of it already, it's just three [3] –
1124 three [3].

1125 Then okay, we think about it, okay, we scrap it.

1126 And other than that we – if all of us are voting and one [1] person
1127 don't do it, so we're gonna go – we're gonna go with it.

1128 And uh, - those are – this happens a lot, don't get me wrong, Sherry.

1129 I mean, [inaudible] happen uh, - many time.

1130 I brought some dish and they think, 'What are you thinking?'

1131 [00:49:37]

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1132 [00:49:37]

1133 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: And they're like, 'Yeah, but hey,
1134 [inaudible] work outside, how do you – how do you want to modify
1135 it?

1136 That's it, uh, - so, those are the things that we're looking at.

1137 Like, you know, like before – like a good example using you mod –
1138 like you mod - you modify food.

1139 In Vietnam they don't have quails, they have pigeon.

1140 Well, American don't eat pigeon, and, you know, they eat quails.

1141 So, you have to convert that to the same recipe where you convert to
1142 quails.

1143 That's simple; it's a very simple recipe.

1144 The Americans you have pigeon – 'Pigeon, you feeding me pigeon,
1145 the one that crawl on the street?'

1146 You know, things like that.

1147 Uh, - the – the quail is just, you know, you see people shoot quail;
1148 they eat quail all the time.

1149 So, those are the thing.

1150 [Background Noise]

1151

1152 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: How often do you add or subtract
1153 things from the menu?

1154

1155 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Oh, oh, every two [2] years.

1156 We're just about to redo our menu, and we take out a lot of stuff, so,
1157 and we add things to it almost every two [2] years we do it.

1158 And we – with that in mind, we also do research within those – those
1159 two [2] years.

1160 [00:50:47]

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1161 [00:50:47]

1162 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: And we – we add – add, and we do like,
1163 we run a special.

1164 That's good and it went well, and then we add it to the menu, you
1165 know.

1166 Other than that we just like – uh, -, uh, -, we – every two [2] year we
1167 change the menu.

1168 Update, we print, add new item, delete items, uh, - uh, - stuff like
1169 that.

1170 I'll bring item from our banquet department, bring it out to the
1171 menu, so – so that.

1172

1173 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: Can you tell us a little bit about
1174 your supply chains?

1175 Where do you get your ingredients from and so on?

1176

1177 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Oh, we uh, -, we got over – we use
1178 Sysco – Martin – I mean, some produce-wise you have like all the big
1179 names here.

1180 Just a regular supermarket, as well, sometimes you more, or like say,
1181 for example, some Asian uh, - vegetable you cannot get at a Sysco,
1182 or uh, - some produce – [inaudible] producer or whatever it is.

1183 Uh, - you have to go to them to get it, you know.

1184 Other than that you have uh, - but you have people now they – they
1185 do – you have people to - -

1186 [Background Noise]

1187 The bean sprout company, they have tofu [sp] companies already, so
1188 you have those already.

1189 [00:51:55]

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1190 [00:51:55]

1191 **Yep, I mean, it's – it's readily available as – at a wholesaler.**

1192 **You know, you have uh, - sauce and stuff like that, they have it all.**

1193 **These days now, there's really, there's nothing you cannot get out**
1194 **there.**

1195 **You want it, you – really you research it and you can get it.**

1196 **Either you order online from California, straight from Thailand,**
1197 **straight from China, straight from Vietnam.**

1198 **Wherever it is, you order they can, India, you want some spices, you**
1199 **order, they send you directly.**

1200 **Really if you have a uh, - a – a need, you want, they will – they will**
1201 **come to you.**

1202 **It's just the cost wise, cheap or expensive.**

1203 **[Laughter]**

1204 **And one [1] of those things that's it, you know.**

1205

1206 **INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: Is there any part of Kim Son that**
1207 **you feel is uniquely Texan in that regard?**

1208

1209 **INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Uh, - we uh, - Texan, well we have uh, -**
1210 **we do it a lot.**

1211 **When we were about six [6], eight [8] years ago, we do the rodeos**
1212 **every year.**

1213 **We have a part at the rodeos every year, the only Asian restaurant at**
1214 **the rodeos.**

1215 **And, you know, Asian food at the rodeos, believe it or not, we do that**
1216 **almost ten [10] years, seven [7] to ten [10] years.**

1217 **And at that, that's when I was in – in the – at the – at U.T.**

1218 [00:53:08]

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1219 [00:53:08]

1220 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: And it was, I'd come back during the
1221 rodeos, riding – riding the bus back here on Thursday night.

1222 Work Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

1223 Get on a bus, and ride back with it, cause I don't want to drive,
1224 because just so tiring.

1225 You know, so I just go down to Greyhound down – down to – down
1226 the street, jump on the bus and sleep, [inaudible] and you have to be
1227 back over there.

1228 And uh, - yeah, we at the rodeos for seven [7] years believe it or not;
1229 it was fun, but it's tiring though, I don't want to do that anymore.

1230 I'm [inaudible] [Laughter]

1231

1232 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: Can you tell us a little bit about
1233 the designs of the different restaurants?

1234 How are they designed differently?

1235 And maybe about this one [1] in particular?

1236

1237 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: This restaurant was designed by uh, -
1238 Ms. uh, - Trinh Phan [sp] was the uh, - Asian arc – Asian arc, uh, -
1239 Architects here and she graduated University of Houston.

1240 It's very traditional, as you can see, as a uh, - with the artwork, uh, -
1241 with uh, - wood, and other artworks uh, - like uh, - hand-sewed uh, -
1242 all those things I like, is uh, how do I say it, embroidered, uh, - hand
1243 by itself.

1244 And we bring it all here.

1245 Uh, - that's a very unique sense here.

1246 I mean, this restaurant has not changed since nineteen-ninety-two

1247 [00:54:24]

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RESTAURANT PROJECT – KIM SON RESTAURANT – PART TWO -
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1248 [00:54:24]
1249 [1992].
1250 And uh, - people like it that way.
1251 I mean, we just change wallpaper, other than that we don't do any
1252 major.
1253 You know, we want to move the bar to become a little more like a uh,
1254 - new-trend restaurant.
1255 But we do for other restaurant, but not here.
1256 We try to keep this thing as uh, - as – as original as possible.
1257 So, that's what we try to do.
1258 The other restaurant we – we do – we have like a mod – we try and
1259 modernize a little bit.
1260 But for this restaurant we try and like keep it the same, as much as
1261 possible.
1262 Keep it as people see when they dine here twenty [20] years ago.
1263 Like we try and keep [inaudible] coming twenty [20] years later.
1264 You know, so they still feel at home here.
1265 We have a lot of people coming here five [5] days a week, four [4]
1266 days a week.
1267 So, you don't want to upset those people, so.
1268
1269 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: And the people who come here
1270 four [4] or five [5] days a week, are they usually locals?
1271 Or local businessmen, or they just really like the food?
1272
1273 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: They like the food, local business
1274 people.
1275 Sometime they come and it's like, we – we become families pretty
1276 [00:55:26]

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1277 [00:55:26]

1278 much.

1279

1280 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: You know, we teach our employees, uh,
1281 - first [1st] time they come as a customer.

1282 Second [2nd] they come they'll still customer.

1283 The third [3rd] is half [1/2], friend and customer.

1284 When they're six [6], to seven [7], ten [10], they come here cause
1285 they liked you a lot.

1286 They like not because of the food.

1287 They know the food is consistent.

1288 They like because who you are, as a restaurant, as – as someone who
1289 treat them well.

1290 Someone who uh, - as a family, people – you know, just like you
1291 want, I go to your house, we come, we have a family dinner, that's
1292 how it is.

1293 And my Mom still come up and say, 'Hi' to everybody.

1294 So, just make that uniqueness, you know.

1295 I still go and walk every – every table; people that dine with us when
1296 I was eighteen [18], seventeen [17] and eighteen [18] years old,
1297 when I still remember, Mr. and Mrs. 'so and so'.

1298 You know, and they really appreciated that.

1299 That – you still remember them.

1300 Sometime they now come in and 'Hey, I haven't seen you in a long
1301 time.'

1302 But, you know, those are the things we want.

1303 To keep the family environment coming in and saying uh, - so people
1304 don't see that, oh, you grew big, you forget them.

1305 [00:56:27]

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1306 [00:56:27]

1307 No, we don't want that at all.

1308 That's what – you see my Mom here, I'm here the majority of the
1309 time, because we – that's what we want.

1310

1311 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: Do you have any 'off menu items'
1312 for the returning [inaudible]?

1313

1314 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: We just uh, - they come in, they sit
1315 down, we know who they are, and we just send – I just send from
1316 the kitchen, and I create something different, I send it to them.
1317 Something that they did not order normal, I just say.
1318 'Hey, you try this', you know, and they really like it, in that – in that
1319 sense.

1320 Uh, - especially, like example, yesterday we're cooking to do some
1321 uh, - wedding food.

1322 And a couple come in, they dine with us almost like every week, it's
1323 like twice a week here.

1324 And they came in yesterday, I saw them, I sent it out to them, they
1325 really like it, you know.

1326 It's just those kinds of stuff.

1327 They come up and give me a hug, and stuff like that.

1328 That's families right there, you know, so, friend of the family and
1329 friends, so, that's what I see as.

1330 That's what I want to the environment.

1331

1332 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: Is there a difference between
1333 what you normally serve at the restaurant and what you do when

1334 [00:57:25]

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1335 [00:57:25]

1336 you're catering?

1337 Or, is there a difference in wedding food?

1338 Is there a specific [inaudible]?

1339

1340 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Yeah, we do uh; - cause our wedding
1341 food is more of a uniqueness.

1342 A very – very uh, - like very traditional.

1343 And uh, - we just don't want it served out here in the restaurant.

1344 Some – only a few item that we bring it down with the rest, we make
1345 it.

1346 We – with your wedding on Saturday we would make it on
1347 Wednesday.

1348 We prep, marinate everything Wednesday.

1349 We shop on Monday, cut everything, prep on Wednesday.

1350 Cool it down, chill it, Saturday we bring it to the restaurant, we cook.

1351 And the majority of the time we, you know, we don't – we don't try
1352 not to sell at the restaurant.

1353 So, that's what we try to do.

1354

1355 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: What's the feel that you want
1356 when customers come into like Kim Son?

1357 Is there a different feel for each location that you want them to get?

1358

1359 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: The feel for uh, - the big Kim Son,
1360 especially at this one [1] is more [inaudible] to the uh, - you know,
1361 you have an event come in here, special events.

1362

1363 [00:58:31]

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1364 [00:58:31]

1365 Uh, - like the one [1] we do for like the cafes more [inaudible] and
1366 some [inaudible] like a 'neighborhood store'.

1367 You come in; and you can come any time.

1368 Here people like to; you have a lot of business people here and
1369 families.

1370 And we – we serve the surrounding here area a lot.

1371 And people still like to drive twenty-five [25] – thirty [30] minutes to
1372 this location.

1373 Don't get me wrong, even we open down in like The Woodlands and
1374 stuff.

1375 But when they drive from The Woodlands here to do an event, and
1376 then in town, they're gonna stop by here regardless.

1377 And that's what they – they feel [inaudible], 'Oh, I just want to visit.'

1378 And uh, - you know, they go to downtown and they do visit Kim Son,
1379 something like that.

1380 So, that's what we want; that we want a feel for.

1381 And for the restaurant now in the – like the suburb, that's just more
1382 on a daily uh, - like I say.

1383 Sherry you want to go; I want to have a dinner tonight.

1384 We're gonna go; I can go there twice – twice a day, twice a week.

1385 But you don't want to drive to downtown twice a week, do you?

1386 You know, it's just hard.

1387 People just like; I would just like to go to around the corner; get
1388 some simple stuff; and I – I'm on my way out.

1389

1390 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: How many people do you serve
1391 every day?

1392 [00:59:36]

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1393 [00:59:36]

1394 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: For this location, I serve over six
1395 hundred [600] at this location.

1396 But on the weekends I serve uh, - about a thousand [1,000] people.

1397 Or The Bel Air location, on a busy busy day, they can serve two or
1398 three thousand [2,000 or 3,000] people.

1399 You know, and then so two thousand [2,000] at least.

1400 Our 'Wedding Department' can hold up to four or five hundred [400
1401 or 500], five hundred [500] people for a wedding.

1402 Like this weekend we have five hundred [500].

1403 Five hundred [500] here; five hundred [500] another location.

1404 Five hundred [500] at Bel Air.

1405 Two [2] outside catering for another four hundred [400]; and two
1406 hundred [200].

1407 [Background Noise]

1408 So, we can do sim – simultaneously of three thousand [3,000], four
1409 thousand [4,000] people at a time.

1410 Plus the restaurant is still running, so those are the things that we
1411 can do.

1412

1413 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: Do you maintain relationships
1414 with other restaurants that aren't in the Kim Son family?

1415

1416 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Like uh, -?

1417

1418 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: Just as friends or as?

1419

1420 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Well we have – I have a lot of friends in

1421 [01:00:32]

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1422 [01:00:32]

1423 the restaurant business.

1424 I mean, we – I invite them all here sometimes just to do a 'feast'.

1425 Just do, I cook, and they enjoy.

1426 Or, I go to their place; they cook and I enjoy.

1427 So, things that – I have a lot of friends in the restaurant business, a

1428 lot of – a lot of 'chef friends'.

1429 So, I mean, this – the restaurant industries are small.

1430 And you – you just, you know, you try to be friendly as possible to

1431 people.

1432 It's – it's not anything.

1433 It's just like; it's help.

1434 I mean, sometime people need help, you help them.

1435 When the time - when it's your – your turn they help you.

1436 That's how – that's how it goes; that's how the World go around.

1437 You know, it just says how you don't want, 'Oh, I ignore you', you

1438 need help.

1439 No, it's – we're not like that.

1440 I mean, we have uh, - I mean, we learn from the – from the 'get go',

1441 you know.

1442 You know, you have to be uh, - humble a little bit on your word, even

1443 you grow big.

1444 So, that's what we do.

1445 Still at that normal, we're not, no, we still have chef that go open

1446 their own restaurant.

1447 They fail, they come back, we still accept them back, cause there's no

1448 hard feeling.

1449 You know, people want to do well.

1450 [01:01:34]

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1451 [01:01:34]

1452 Even though we know they open to compete against you, but what?

1453 So, what, you know, it doesn't mean not everybody; restaurant

1454 is – it's a hard restaurant; it's a hard job.

1455 Eighty [80] – eighty [80] – eighty-five [85] percent is uh, - failure

1456 rates, so.

1457 The – the only successful rate it's only twenty [20] percent.

1458 So, you know, it's not just learning how to cook and you can open a

1459 restaurant, having the chef fail outside, you know, so.

1460

1461 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: We noticed on your website that

1462 you guys host a lot of cultural events.

1463 Can you tell a little bit about the events that you host and why?

1464

1465 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Just we stress supporting the

1466 communities, we don't host it.

1467 [Background Noise]

1468 The – we're not the 'hosting people', but we are the facility that have

1469 the space big enough for the communities uh, - uh, - people that do

1470 uh, - host – want to host event.

1471 We do Chinese New Year's Event for uh, - like different uh, - different

1472 organization, church, fund raising for uh, - church, fund raising for

1473 temples.

1474 And we donated those – those events.

1475 [Background Noise]

1476 You know, when we say we; let's say for example, a – a priest want

1477 to come and ask.

1478 'Hey, can you Kim Son help for fund raising?'

1479 [01:02:43]

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1480 [01:02:43]

1481 Say it's, 'fine, we provide the food; you just pay the – the – the
1482 service – uh, - the – the employees.'

1483 'And we donate the food, and whatever fund you raise you can keep.'
1484 It's things that we have done before.

1485 I mean, we have done for – we raise like half a million dollars for a
1486 church before just in one [1] event.

1487 Some people donated uh, - so, this is one [1] of those things that you
1488 have to do.

1489 We do fund raising for like – like politicians, you know, we do that, as
1490 well.

1491 It's – it's not that we don't do it.

1492 So, we – we're uh, - whatever our view of political view, we just take
1493 it as – as – as neutral.

1494 Because you're in the restaurant business, you have to.

1495 You cannot lean to one [1] side too much; you lose your clientele, so
1496 that's what it is.

1497 [Background Noise]

1498

1499 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: Are many of your clients tourists,
1500 as Houston has grown larger as a city?

1501 [Background Noise]

1502 Or, did they – or is the – or is the core of your clientele still your
1503 regulars?

1504

1505 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Uh, -, to be honest, uh, - eighty percent
1506 [80%] – seventy [70%] - eighty percent [80%] of my clients still –
1507 still are regulars.

1508 [01:03:48]

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1509 [01:03:48]

1510 Are still my regulars, cause we, of course, we're trying to build the
1511 other twenty – thirty percent [20% - 30%] new customer and bring
1512 them in.

1513 But, uh, - the majority of ours are still our – our regulars; have been
1514 dining with us for years; uh, - years and years.

1515 And when we have people that dine with us when they were two [2]
1516 years old, now they become older and they're still going here now
1517 they.

1518 And we've seen three [3] generations go through this restaurant.

1519 I have seen three [3] generations go through this restaurant.

1520 Grandma, kid and grand-daughter come here when they was – you
1521 can see them grow – grow older; I see that too.

1522 For being here twenty [20] something years I've seen that, so.

1523

1524 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: Can you tell me about your
1525 favorite memory that's associated with the restaurant or with food?

1526 [Laughter]

1527

1528 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Or with food?

1529 Our restaurant, you know, I – my favorite memories, you know,
1530 when I was young.

1531 [Background Noise]

1532 You, I mean, we take things uh, - we take things for like granted in
1533 the many ways now.

1534 I mean, we're – before I – I remember uh, - at about when I was in
1535 ninth [9th] grade, ten – ten – uh, - tenth [10th] grade, and uh, - I was
1536 working eighth [8th] grade then.

1537 [01:04:56]

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1538 [01:04:56]

1539 And at night we used – we used to open late.

1540 [Background Noise]

1541 And uh, - we're open till – till two [2:00] in the morning – two or
1542 three [2:00] or [3:00] in the mornings.

1543 And we do; and there's line out – out the door at two [2:00] in the
1544 morning.

1545 And when we say a line out the door, we have a hundred and twenty
1546 [120] – a hundred and fifty [150] seats – a hundred and sixty [160]
1547 seat restaurant; the line is out the door.

1548 We're full at two [2:00] in the morning.

1549 And uh, - I remember I was bus boy at night.

1550 [Background Noise]

1551 And at the end of the night, I just pull four [4] chairs together, and I
1552 sleep until my – my brother finished the pap – the paperwork and
1553 then we go.

1554 And those are – are good memories.

1555 At night you sit there, and you get like, you know, at eighth [8th]
1556 grade, ninth [9th] grade, you got tips like thirty or forty bucks [\$30 or
1557 \$40], you're really happy.

1558 [Background Noise]

1559 You know, you're like, 'wow, I got some money to go, uh, -'.

1560 [Background Noise]

1561 So, now, you know, you – that's uh, - that's the good memories you
1562 have about it.

1563 That's a really good memory that you say, 'Oh, hum, you don't – now
1564 you takes – a lot of kids take things for uh, - for granted on that – on
1565 that way.'

1566 [01:05:57]

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1567 [01:05:57]

1568 And another one [1] is I remember washing dishes; I had to put a
1569 trash bag over my head to – to get my clothes not wet.

1570 Because we uh, - I love – I love to spray, you know, so I do that.

1571 So, I cut the two [2] arm in; I put – I stick two [2] arm in, and I put
1572 a bag over and start washing dishes.

1573 Those are memories, you know, that you have for the restaurant
1574 [inaudible].

1575 So, now I just try to help them sometimes [inaudible] but they say,
1576 'get out of the kitchen'.

1577 [Laughter]

1578

1579 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: Are any of your nieces or nephews
1580 or your – your own kid involved in the business?

1581

1582 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: Not yet.

1583 [Background Noise]

1584 Not yet, we uh, - we, of course, I – I trust; I persuade them every
1585 day.

1586 I – I ask them every day, 'Who want to join?'

1587 You know, because Grandma and Grandpa create this.

1588 We need someone to take the – the torch; maybe ten [10] kids take.

1589 My oldest brother want his boy to take it.

1590 Maybe – hopefully my daughter might join.

1591 We're trying to – we need at least a couple of 'em to come in and
1592 take the torch, yeah, so hopefully as well.

1593 We got fourteen [14] – she got fourteen [14] – my Mom got fourteen
1594 [14] grand kids, and some of them will take uh, - somebody will take

1595 [01:07:03]

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1596 [01:07:03]

1597 it.

1598

1599 **INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU:** Is there anything that you want to
1600 talk about that we haven't talked about yet?

1601

1602 **INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA:** We've gone – we – we went through a
1603 lot of stuff.

1604 You know, a lot of good question.

1605 I mean, that's the whole story about our – our business.

1606 I mean, we enjoy what we do, and it shows, and we don't uh, -

1607 [Background Noise]

1608 I'm proud to say that our family have – uh, - our family in thirty [30]
1609 years have not have a very good rep – very good reputation in
1610 Houston.

1611 [Background Noise]

1612 I mean, when you ask about the [inaudible] of Kim Son Family, you
1613 don't hear a bad name out there that we, you know, we cheat people.

1614 You know, our integrity is high, you know, etcetera.

1615 We just – we don't like to cheat people in many, in any way.

1616 We don't like to, you know, stab people back, etcetera.

1617 We don't like; we leave all those to – we're just strictly business.

1618 We just like to focus on the customer.

1619 We just like to go around doing stuff.

1620 So, we don't like to join the pol – the – the politic side of this and
1621 that, you know.

1622 It's hard when you're in the business it's hard.

1623 [Background Noise]

1624 [01:08:01]

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1625 [01:08:01]

1626 So, - so, cause, I mean, so that's what we're proud of to say.

1627 The integrity of the restaurant, it's uh, - the family is - is very high.

1628 All our kids graduates uh, - I mean, all our kids in school.

1629 None of them uh, - thank God, knock on wood that they turn, you

1630 know, bad kids or anything.

1631 Cause, you know, [inaudible] it could be, you know, worse.

1632 Cause kids these days, they think they have money, they just do

1633 stupid stuff.

1634 And thank God none of my kids are like that.

1635 So, uh, - hopefully they cross their fingers for the 'new generation'

1636 that won't do that.

1637 That's all it is; just train them well – well.

1638 [Background Noise]

1639

1640 INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: All right, thank you so much for
1641 taking the time to talk to us.

1642 [Background Noise]

1643 We really appreciate it.

1644

1645 INTERVIEWEE: TRI LA: I mean, uh, -

1646 [Background Noise]

1647 I like to tell the story as much as I can, so, to the people.

1648 [Background Noise]

1649 Alright. Alright.

1650 Sorry about the noise.

1651 [Background Noise]

1652

1653 [01:08:54]

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1654 **[01:08:54]**

1655 **INTERVIEWER: SHERRI SHEU: I don't think it's [inaudible]**

1656 **[Talking Over Each Other]**

1657

1658 **FILM CREW: Yeah, like it's uh, - get pizza.**

1659 **Get a little of that, it's pretty good.**

1660 **It sounded good.**

1661 **[Background Noise]**

1662

1663 **[01:09:07]**

1664

1665 **[01:09:07] End of Audio Recording – TRI LA – KIM SON**

1666 **RESTAURANT – PART TWO - Date of Transcript – 02.17.2019**