

Meet a neighbor 'Gentleman' Jack Din bakes, shares and cares

By Sally King
THE POCKET NEWS

Standing just outside the Central Valley Coffee Shop in Land Park, a man whose physique is much younger than his age, dressed in a perfectly pressed yellow shirt, is smiling at everyone he meets as he walks in to order a cup of coffee.

Jack Din has a lot of history under his belt. His parents came here from China and he grew up in Woodland, moving to Land Park to raise his family. His story may start in a far away country, but it all ends up right here in this neighborhood.

"I have been going to Jazzercise twice a week in Land Park since 1993," says Din. "My youngest daughter is the one who got me started. She wanted someone to go with her to class."

"He's one of the most unforgettable people I've met in my life," says Linda Pohl, who met Jack at Jazzercise. "He's just a gentle man who gives to those around him."

Din was born in what is now officially called Dead Cat Alley in Woodland 79 years ago. He just recently had a birthday. His mother delivered him at home, which wasn't unusual at the time. He had five brothers and two sisters; Frank, James, Bill, John, Hank, Ruby and Lucy. Two of the brothers have died, but the rest of the family still resides in the Land Park and the Greenhaven-Pocket area.

Jack Din's parents, Hew Din and Lock Shee Din, moved from China to Woodland and opened Tai Lee Laundry there in 1925. They remained in business until 1947. His family also started a Victory Garden behind their business.

"It was the only way we could get Chinese vegetables back then," says Jack.

It was during WWII when his older brothers were drafted and sent off to war that Din, as a young boy, would help his parents by picking up and delivering laundry to customers. When the brothers finished their time in the military, they attended UC Berkeley on the GI bill. Jack also went to UC Berkeley to get a business administration degree. Then the Korean War started and Jack signed up with the Army Reserve, retiring 30 years later as a colonel.

After Din's parents closed the laundry in 1947, they moved to Sacramento. All of the brothers and sisters eventually bought their homes in Land Park and Greenhaven.

Din said his brothers had successful careers after serving in the military and completing college. One was an architect, two were accountants, one was a doctor and one was a pharmacist, who worked at the Bel Air Rush River Drive pharmacy for a number of years. Din worked for the state for 35 years with CalPers retirement system until he retired. His sister Ruby married and her husband operated the Fruitridge Pharmacy for more than 30 years. His sister Lucy married Frank Wong and they live on 28th Avenue.

Din has three daughters - two are teachers, one works at John H. Still Middle School and one works for the Elk Grove School District.



Jack Din, 79, with the gang at Jazzercise: Chinese roots and deep roots in Land Park.

Photo by Linda Pohl

The other daughter works for Hewlett Packard. They all stayed in the neighborhood, along with their aunts and uncles and cousins.

Din is now married to his second wife, Mae, who he knew when growing up. Her family and his family were friends and much of her family also live in Land Park. They dated briefly and then broke up, but remained in contact because of the connection between families. After they both became widows they began dating again

and were married on Sept. 11, 1999.

Din used to joke about their marriage as an emergency because they were married on Sept. 11. Since the incident on 9/11/2001, he no longer jokes about it.

Now, along with attending Jazzercise and playing golf, Din bakes eight loaves

of Amish friendship bread every 10 days to pass out to neighbors. He had stopped doing it for a while in the 1990s, but neighborhood pressure took over, so he's at it again.

And if you want your picture taken, just call Jack; he will do it with a big smile on his face.

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