

Lum family steeped in Lathrop's history

Long before there was any bank at all in Lathrop, there was Delta Market.

For decades, the family-owned mom and pop grocery store was known to many people by its nickname, "The Bank of Lathrop." People who either did not have the time to make the trip to a bank in Manteca or just wanted to save gas, simply had to stop by Delta Market to cash their pay checks and conveniently do their shopping at the same time.

Those were the days when Lathrop was still a small community of more or less 5,000 souls who called the historic rail town home.

And those were the days when the town did not even have its own barber shop, its own beauty salon, its own bank, clinic, library, Baskin-Robbins, not even a motel to speak of or a single fast-food restaurant. Lathropians had to drive to Manteca, past two train tracks, to do their banking transactions and other basic errands. And woe to those who came to Manteca to buy a tub of ice cream on a sizzling summer day and - alas - on the way home, had the misfortune of running into not just one but two stalled trains that went back and forth at seemingly infinitesimal number of times before the annoying ding-ding-ding of the down crossing guard arms finally went up and you were finally free to finish the short drive home.

But the one constant in Lathrop for decades was the Delta Market. I should say, the now-defunct Delta Market. For several decades since the early 1960s, Delta was a fixture on Seventh Street next to the Post Office and just across the road from the former Southern Pacific Railroad tracks, now Union Pacific. In the 1990s, Delta moved to a new and larger building at the end of the re-aligned Seventh Street facing Louise Avenue. That building later housed the Pena's Mercado Store which recently became Luis Mercado.

Old Delta Market building still there

But the old Delta Market building is still there where it was for decades on Seventh Street, only this time, it is now the home of the Lathrop Police Services, a new church, a beauty salon, a pizzeria and an early childhood school called The Learning Tree.

As constant as Delta Market to the socio-economic and political fabric of this historic town is the Lum family. To many longtime residents of Lathrop, the two are interchangeable, one and the same even though the market has long been gone. Even so, you'll still find a lot of people referring to the police station as the old Delta Market when giving directions to the police office's location.

While the family-owned grocery store is now just a historical footnote, the Lum family is still an intricate part of the fabric of life in this 20-year-old incorporated city. The seeds of the family's community involvement were planted early on when the late Bicky Lum and his wife May moved to this then-sleepy town of Lathrop in the early 1960s to start a family and a small business. From the beginning in their own quiet way, and without seeking any kind of publicity, the couple actively supported financially and otherwise countless community projects and activities even while they struggled to raise a family. The Lum name was well known not only to Lathrop School, which was the frequent recipient of the family's generosity, but to the many organizations in town such as the early Lathrop Chamber of Commerce and French Camp-Lathrop Lions Club, and the many annual town celebrations such as Lathrop Days.

The Lums were more than happy to maintain their anonymity in their support for the various community projects, many of them involving the youth. In fact, they always avoided publicity with a passion. I can't count the number of times I tried to take pictures of Bicky and May Lum for the now-defunct Manteca News and later the Manteca Bulletin and each time, I was politely turned down.

The seeds of community involvement that the older Lums planted in their children later came to fruition.

Back in the 1980s, when incorporation was still a glimmer of hope in many Lathropians' eyes, son Jerry Lum became very active in the Lathrop Municipal Advisory Council which was the precursor of today's City Council. I remember covering several meetings of this council which he chaired. It was always interesting for me to see the youngest member of the dozen-or-so committee as the one presiding over the meeting.

One of the Lums' daughters later followed her parents' footsteps and started her own business in town. While many young graduates often dream of going away to college in the big cities and pursue their dreams away from home, Connie Lum Perez did the opposite. After studying psychology at UC Berkeley, and then graduating at UC Davis with a degree in Human Development and Early Child Development, she returned to Lathrop and quietly started The Learning Tree. Her business, which has been located in the family's Delta Market building complex for a number of years, is now celebrating its 25th anniversary.

**Rich tradition of
Lathrop community
involvement**

Connie is not the only member of her family who is continuing the family's tradition of community involvement. Her husband, Jose, is also a city Planning Commissioner. He is also involved as a volunteer in the annual Lathrop Days, Lathrop's July 1 birthday celebration, and other civic projects.

Connie said her father never failed to remind them to "always give back to your community that has always supported you."

That family tradition is again in full force. Tragically, the impetus for that has been the untimely death of a young member of the family - Bicky and May Lum's 28-year-old grandson, Jeremy, the son of Jerry Lum. The story has been rehashed countless times in the news media, and will likely continue as the family continues to seek answers and, at the same time, launch a "Justice for Jeremy" effort aimed at promoting "positive change of awareness, policies, and procedures for the mentally ill." Jeremy, who was a member of the first class to graduate from Sierra High School and who later received a bachelor's degree in Philosophy from UC Berkeley, was diagnosed as bipolar four years before his death. At the time of his death, he was enrolled in the nursing program at Modesto Junior College.

The Lum family has always been the go-to people whenever the community needed help and assistance at various fund-raisers. Now it's the Lums who are asking the public to come out and help them in their own need, but even that need is directed at helping other people. The latest of these planned events is a Jeremy Lum Memorial Poker Tournament fund-raiser on Sept. 11 starting at 6:30 p.m. at The Emory Hall in Manteca sponsored by the Jeremy Lum Memorial Fund.

For more information about this fund-raiser and other planned events, you can log on to the "Justice for Jeremy" on Facebook or e-mail nick.glogovac@hotmail.com to reserve your space.

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