



ERICK MITCHELL | DISPATCH RECORD

Quan Wong, who owns a Mei Yuan eatery in Burnet, is anxious to open his new Chinese restaurant in Lampasas. He is no stranger to hard work and said he is looking forward to sharing his culinary offerings with more customers.

The long road from Vietnam to Lampasas

Chef ready to open new Mei Yuan here

BY ERICK MITCHELL
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LEAVING CHINA BEHIND

Some say the American Dream is dying, but for Quan Wong it is as much alive today as when immigrants saw the Statue of Liberty en route to Ellis Island.

In the coming days, Wong and some area investors will open Mei Yuan, a Chinese restaurant at 1702 Central Texas Expwy. However, the road to success for the 62-year-old Wong is a long and winding one.

Wong's father served his country against the Japanese in the Second Sino-Japanese War, which saw more than 14 million Chinese people killed. After that bloodshed, China endured a civil war that ended in 1949 and saw the rise of Chinese Communist Party leader Mao Zedong.

In the fight against communism, Wong said his father felt abandoned when Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the Republic of China, fled to Taiwan after defeat. Wong's father was able to flee China himself after surviving a fall off a cliff where about 50% of those who attempt it die.

"To him, it is no country anymore; he feels betrayed, like they abandoned him," Wong said of his father. "So then, he goes to Vietnam just to be a regular farmer. And then, Ho Chi Minh come and try to take our land."

Minh was prime minister and president of what is now the Socialist Republic of Vietnam who fought against the U.S. and South Vietnamese during the Vietnam War.

Born in 1962, Wong was raised in the thick of the war and remembers feeling an adrenaline rush while carrying M-16 ammo as a child. Wong lost two brothers in 1968 due to the conflict.

"I was about 7 years old, and I already had seen anything and everything already. And it is tough," Wong said. "That is why I look at American kids. They have it all; they're so spoiled. They don't know what it is like to grow up in a Third-World country — all the food we waste, the world would fight for. We are so fortunate. We are so lucky."

Wong's father and one of his brothers served in the U.S. Special Forces during the Vietnam War.

"American Special Forces [are] real hard to select," Wong said. "The Vietnam War, you just couldn't tell. In daytime they could be South Vietnamese, and at nighttime they're VC [Vietcong]. They selected a special group of Chinese people who fight the red communism, and my father and brother did that."

SETTLING IN TEXAS

In 1979, Wong and his family settled at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls. A month away from being 17 at the time, he was able to secure his first job at United Electric.

"I work in factory," Wong said. "I don't speak the language, but I work so hard I get promoted to be a foreman, a supervisor."

Wong said his poor familiarity with the English language, foreign

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Painting sessions offered at library

Silas Brown, at left, and Apollo Brown work on their miniature chair painting projects at the Lampasas Public Library. The library hosted the children's event last week in conjunction with the kickoff to its annual Katherine Mezger Painted Chair fundraiser, which will culminate April 27.

Kempner VFD receives new truck

BY ERICK MITCHELL
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The Kempner Volunteer Fire Department has added a brush truck to its fleet after receiving federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act.

Also, the volunteer department is looking to complete the fitting of two fire engines it soon will acquire from the Killeen Fire Department.

Kempner VFD Chief Connie Green said the department received the new brush truck the first week of March.

Many volunteer fire departments received money from the American Rescue Plan that Congress passed in 2021 for COVID-19 economic relief. The only stipulation of the \$250,000 the Kempner department received was that funds had to be spent on a new vehicle. Although the brush truck the Kempner VFD received is dated from 2019, it never has been used.

The vehicle will be used during wildland fires, which are more likely

to occur as the summer approaches. The Kempner VFD often assists other agencies when dealing with large brush fires.

"We help each other out, so anytime one of these wildland fires get out of control and need mutual aid, we can assist," Green said. "In the end, we are all in it together."

The Kempner VFD currently has three brush trucks and two older, five-ton vehicles. Green said adding a new vehicle to the fleet is always beneficial.

"With some of the older equipment, especially our old surplus five-ton vehicles, as things age eventually they stop making parts because there are fewer of those vehicles around," she said. "Parts to maintain those vehicles start to dwindle, so it helps when we finally get a newer model."

When Green joined the department seven years ago, she said Kempner had some brush trucks that had been used for more than 20 years. With

proper patience, the new brush truck should be able to serve at least two decades, she said.

The Kempner VFD still is awaiting delivery of two used fire engines it purchased from the Killeen Fire Department. Green said the Killeen department has yet to receive the two new fire trucks it purchased, which has put the transfer of the engines to Kempner on hold.

When the Kempner VFD does receive those fire trucks, it will retire one of its older engines and use that equipment to outfit a truck from Killeen. That will leave one engine that still needs to be fitted.

The department's 44th annual BBQ and Auction/Raffle fundraiser is scheduled for April 27 from 1-3 p.m. Proceeds from that event can be applied toward new equipment.

Area residents interested in supporting the Kempner VFD are encouraged to attend the event and purchase a barbecue brisket platter.



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Kempner VFD Chief Connie Green stands at left, alongside Kempner volunteer firefighters, in front of the new brush truck the department received earlier this month.

WEATHER

Date	High	Low	Rain
March 17	59	53	0.54
March 18	62	49	0
March 19	65	42	0
March 20	67	46	0

Total rainfall for 2024: 4.23 in.

Data from the Lower Colorado River Authority (site 11 miles west-northwest of Lampasas near Nix).

BRIEFLY

TEXAS HISTORY MONTH PROGRAM

Former state historian Bill O'Neal will bring a presentation on "John S. 'Rip' Ford, Texian Hero" to the Lampasas County Courthouse Monday at 6 p.m. Ford was considered a soldier extraordinaire and an important figure in the formation of Texas.

The program is co-hosted by the Lampasas County Historical Commission and the Oran Milo Roberts chapter of Daughters

of the Republic of Texas. The presentation is part of recognizing March as Texas History Month.

GOOD FRIDAY CANTATA

"The Last Living Words" will be performed March 29 at noon and again at 6 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church, 401 S. Chestnut in Lampasas.

The cantata performance will be followed by a brief message about the meaning of Good Friday, which commemorates the crucifixion of

Jesus. For more information about the program, see page 2 inside.

BRUSH CHIPPING SERVICE

The city's free brush-chipping service will conclude next week. From March 25-28, trucks will collect brush stacked curbside at residences on the northeast side of town — those north of First Street and east of Key Avenue.

Municipal offices will be closed March 29.

TEXAS PRESS ASSOCIATION
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