

April 10, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Benjamin Yee. My address is 1364 Park Avenue. My home is the only real house on the entire length of Park Avenue, diagonally opposite the City Hall. I have called Emeryville home since 1984.

My family leases the restaurant across the street to Rudy's Can't Fail Cafe. My Mother and Father operated the restaurant for 36 years from 1964 to 2000, then called Eugene's Ranch House. In its heyday we served between 500 to 600 customers a day. This was when Emeryville was an industrial power house full of blue collar workers, and before fast food establishments figured out that they could serve breakfast.

Of those 36 years, as Number One Son, I worked next to my Dad for 30 years until his retirement at the age of 89. Our restaurant was much more than a place to grab a meal. I have always felt that our place was an extension of our living room, kind of like "Cheers" of TV fame. We knew most everyone by name, where they worked, what they did and believe it or not...their birthdays! If we didn't know your name and you soon became a regular, you were added to our list. Every year we would have an open house Christmas party on the Friday before the holiday starting at 5pm. We would put out a full spread including beer and mixed drinks. The place was packed, standing room only, and full of cigarette smoke!

When my parents purchased The Ranch House, I was 10 years old. I grew up there and in the early years many of our customers grew up in the neighborhood as well. From those days to the present, I have witnessed Emeryville evolve from a sleepy little industrial town into a retail and entertainment mecca, and home to thousands of new residents. Many of our customers shared their stories of what it was like in the old days - many of them great, and funny!

Did you know that the 2 story Victorian on the corner of Park and Holden (one block away) was once a bar/restaurant called "The Shanty"? Upstairs was a "hotel" with rooms whose occupants rented by the hour.

Our good friend John Freitas grew up nearby and he told me that in the fall his family would go over to the Santa Fe Railyards (now Home Depot) and purchase cases of grapes. They would bring them home, clean out the bath tub and stomp them to begin the winemaking process. To my 10 year old imagination it was like that famous episode of "I Love Lucy."

Another one of our customers was taught by grade school teacher, Anna Yates.

Apart from the stories that were told to me first hand, I have gained a wealth of knowledge from the Emeryville Historical Society. Through their newsletters I have been able to have a clearer understanding of our collective evolution. I feel that our history should continue to be documented for the newcomers who want to call Emeryville home. In that way, their understanding of its history will help their roots to grow deep and strong.

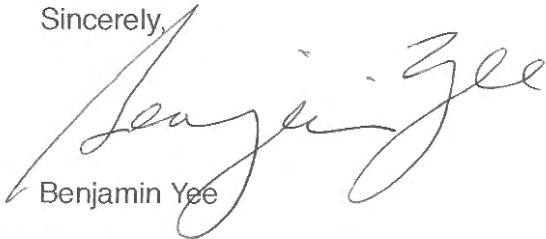
I would love to see future articles about the creation of the Watergate Condominiums, the Emeryville Marina, as well as the controversy that surrounded the building of Pacific Park Plaza. Also, why Emeryville was chosen as the location of the first new train station in our country in

decades. How many people know what existed across from City Hall before Pixar came to town? Do they know that steam powered cars were built in Emeryville, or that a company here built gauges for submarines?

Our community's history spans over a hundred years and I feel there is a great interest in our community to learn about its past. When a new homeowner closes escrow, a welcome package could be created introducing our new neighbor to some of our city's programs, such as the annual tree lighting, or the marathon, or the community pool at ECCL. This could be coupled with coupons from local businesses, an introduction to Emeryville's history and an offer to subscribe to the newsletter.

A grant from the City could be a kickoff to a stronger and more involved sense of community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin Yee". The signature is fluid and stylized, with the first name "Benjamin" and the last name "Yee" clearly distinguishable.

Benjamin Yee