

INTERVIEW:

with Liem Tuai

AFA: Why did you want to be a City Councilman?

TUAI: Well, you must remember, originally I was appointed. I suppose there are a number of reasons why I wanted to be a City Councilman. One, I thought it was a challenge, secondly, because it was something different, I'd never done anything like this before. I've been involved in community affairs before this. I thought this was an opportunity to get more deeply involved, and be where the action really is, to help make decisions, and perhaps try to influence the city in the direction it was going.

AFA: What was your platform?

TUAI: Really not a great deal. Again, I was appointed so I didn't have a platform. I ran for re-election in November of 1969. My basic platform was basically, I could do the best job. I could exercise my best judgement and try to keep the city on an even keel.

AFA: Do you feel the Asian community supports you?

TUAI: Oh, I suppose and you'd have to qualify that. Well, I would have to qualify that, any statement I make. I feel my generation and probably the older generation basically support me. And whether or not the young Asians, and I'm talking about the 18 to 25 year olds, perhaps support me, again I know there's a group that doesn't. Is that a majority or a minority I don't know. And so I'd have to qualify it by saying it that way.

AFA: What is your concept of an Asian-American?

TUAI: I'm really not sure what the question is. I suppose I'd have to define the question before I could answer it.

AFA: What is an Asian-American?

TUAI: I don't really know, because I'd have to define it before I could answer it. An Asian-American, I don't know what that is. I don't consider myself a hyphenated individual. I consider myself an American first. I think what you're driving at is a person, in my definition, who is an American of Asian or Oriental ancestry, whether it be Chinese, Japanese, Filipino or what else. That would be my definition. I consider myself an American first and of Asian ancestry.

AFA: Do you believe in the Domed stadium?

TUAI: Yes, I believe in the Domed stadium.

AFA: At the King Street Station site?

TUAI: Initially, no. I wanted it at the Seattle Center complex. That's the best place for it. It wouldn't have caused the problems of the King Street site. Getting down to the King Street site; I'm committed first to a stadium second to the citizen process of making a determination to where that stadium was.

(Editor's Note: The citizen population had no say where the stadium would be located.)

The City Council had no decision where the site was, it was a county decision. The question becomes whether or not I support a stadium that it (the county) sited, and I do.

AFA: As president of the City Council, are you going to pass legislation zoning codes to save Chinatown?

TUAI: Yes, depending on what you're saying by saving Chinatown, because I think there are a lot of areas down there that should be rehabilitated. And, in fact, some of it rebuilt. This is not to say we shouldn't have low-cost housing in the area. I fought for a low-cost turnkey project down there, which I thought is better than is being built now.

AFA: Do you support housing for the elderly in the International District?

TUAI: Well I've said yes. In fact, I'd like to see another turnkey project.



Photo by Ken Wong

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