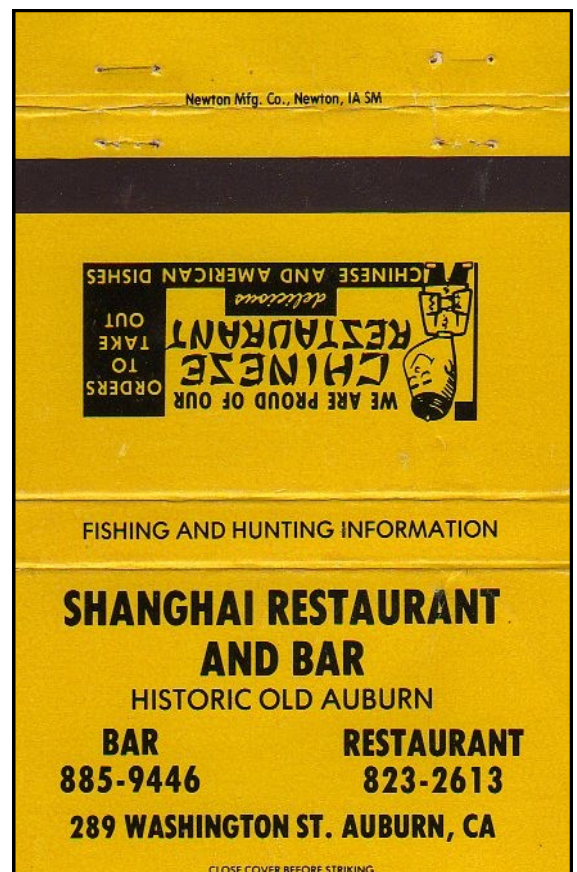
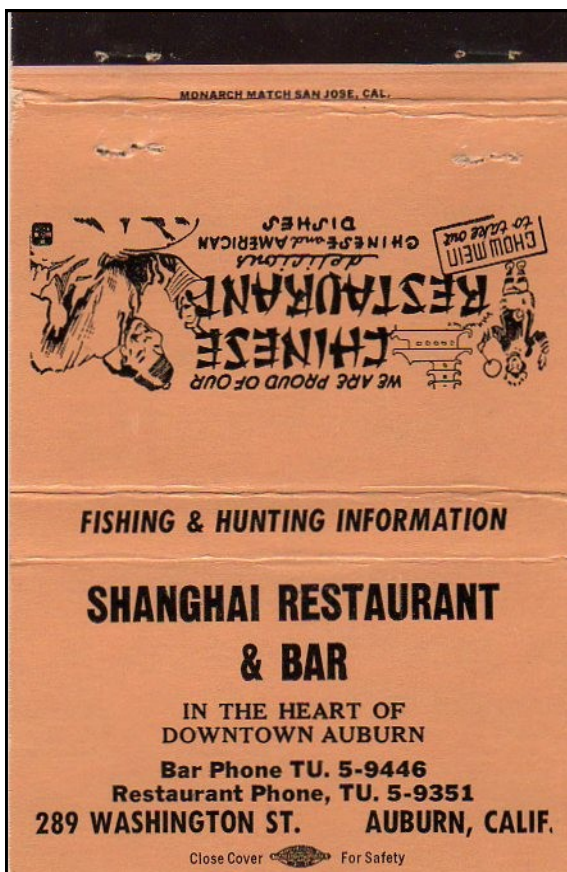


The Shanghai

By Mike Prero

Admittedly, this is a *really* local topic (Auburn, CA), but the Shanghai has two special connections to collectors: it is a Chinese Restaurant, and it has a great history...one that Chinese Restaurant collectors may be interested in, especially if they have one or more of The Shanghai's covers in their collections.



For 92 years, The Shanghai Bar and Restaurant had served Auburn and the Sierra Foothills. Located in Auburn's Old Town, it was located 30 miles northeast of Sacramento, in northern California. The Yue brothers, who ran the place throughout the decades, said that theirs was the oldest continually owned family restaurant in the state.

If the walls could talk, they would tell of nearly a century full of parties, good times, and Cantonese cooking at the Shanghai, which offered a cozy setting of weathered brick and wood walls, lofty ceilings, and a floor of rich walnut.

The Yue brothers' great-grandfather came to California from Canton, China, in the 1870s. He got a job supplying food to ranches. Eventually, he bought a ranch, himself, where the Yues' grandfather, Charlie, grew up. Charlie went into business for himself, opening the Shanghai in 1906.

In those days, gold miners patronized the business, not just for drinks but also for provisions, fishing equipment and licenses, and guns and ammunition. Among other challenges, Charlie faced demands for "protection" money made by the Tongs, a kind of Chinese mafia based in San Francisco. It was a time when gunfire sprayed Old Town, Auburn.

Charlie died in 1948, and his sons, Harry and Carl, ran the Shanghai for the next 30 years. Carl's sons, Herbie and Richard, at age 12, began coming in to sweep out the sawdust and shells left by peanut-eating customers and to oil the floor in the early mornings. Their uncle, Lloyd, slept on a couch in the bar and doubled as a night watchman. He awoke one night to the noise of someone breaking in the back door. Lloyd pulled his pistol and blasted away into the darkness. Satisfied he'd hit what he was aiming at, Lloyd promptly went back to sleep. In the morning, he and the sheriff removed the burglar's corpse. I tell you this anecdote because Lloyd and some former employees came to believe that ghosts inhabited the old building. For a time, they heard footsteps, faucets turning on mysteriously, and doors opening and closing when nobody else was there.

Carl died in 1978, and his sons took over. They removed the plaster from the walls to expose the old brick and made more of an effort to decorate, but while the owners of some old bars may attempt to use history to draw an upscale crowd, the Yues have retained the Shanghai's rough-hewn appeal.

"Liquor in the front. Poker in the rear. And good eatin' on the side." That was the bar's ribald motto, which the brothers had had engraved on wooden coins and printed on bumper stickers. And so the Shanghai lived on...until it finally closed in 1998.

I have eight covers from the Shanghai, all 40-strikes, and none older than the 70s. I assume there must have been other issues during those first 70 years; if you happen to run across any, I'd certainly appreciate the opportunity of trading for them.

