



Hong Fort "Joe" Chew

February 5, 1923 - January 16, 2026

Hong Fort "Joe" Chew born on February 5, 1923, in Canton, China, peacefully passed away at home on January 16, 2026.

Joe immigrated to the United States through Ellis Island. He briefly attended technical vocational training in his early days, that served him well later in life. Joe was naturally talented; with a paper and pencil in hand; he could figure the math, measurement and angle for anything mechanical needing to be made or fixed. Joe was honorably discharged from the U.S. Army in 1943. In 1947, the New York Congressional Senate passed H.R. Bill 3071 [known as the "Hong Fort Chew Bill"], which set a precedent providing for relief from deportation after serving in the U.S. military. Thereafter, Joe's dream of providing the "American Dream" for his family entailed him working tirelessly as a waiter and cook in many Detroit restaurants, including his own "Hong Fort Gardens".

In the early 1970s, pursuing a more wonderful life for his family, Joe moved his family from Dearborn Heights to Rapid City, Michigan and enjoyed being able to hunt and fish. Labeled as a "Magician in the kitchen", Joe began working as a cook at Torch Riveria, sharing his mastery of fine Chinese and American cuisine. In 1975, the Kin Fong Restaurant was opened by the Chew family in Kalkaska, the first Chinese Restaurant in Northern Michigan. After retiring, Joe enjoyed sunshine and ocean water in Islamorada, Florida, for 10

years before returning to Rapid City.

Well into his 80 years, Joe enjoyed maintaining and growing Chinese and American vegetable gardens, raising chickens, annually picking Traverse City cherries [generously shared with family & friends], and cut & split wood in preparation for the winter. Joe believed in the benefits of natural foods, traditional Chinese remedies, and venison, a staple credited by many for his longevity.

Joe relaxed by watching his beloved Detroit Tigers baseball, Jeopardy-Alex Trebek, and Wheel of Fortune. Joe's neighbors could find him relaxing on the front porch in nice weather, sharing a wave and a smile with each traveler that passed by. A good cigar and Cuban coffee were among Joe's preferred pleasures. Joe was a quiet, strong and independent man who never forgot and returned any kindness extended to him, with a quiet thank you and warm smile.

In the mid-2000's, Joe brought Xia Li home to Rapid City, welcoming her into the Chew family. In addition to his wife, Xia Li, Joe is survived by his children, Karl (Mai) Chew; Andy (Keena) Chew, Helen (Bill) Artress, and Gina Perry (Todd Chwasek); Grandchildren, Eric (Mary) Artress, Jonathan (Kait) Chew, Liana (Logan) Porchie, Asia Artress (Caleb Merrifield), Sydney (David) Wilkins, Christian Artress (Sarah Holcomb), Ryan Perry, and Christopher, Cooper, Olivia and Sofia Chew; and Great-Grandchildren, Eli & Grace Artress, Atticus, Emmerson, and Carson Chew, and Paislee, Oaklynn, and Lily Porchie, and Weston Artress. Also surviving are a niece, Sue Tseung, and nephew, Shao Shan, with extended families Not to be forgotten as survivors are his two faithful dogs, Chumlee & Rafa. Joe was predeceased by his parents, 2 older sisters, and the mother of his beloved children, Kin Fong Chew.

Joe's family extends a heartfelt thank you to the Department of Veteran Affairs of Gaylord; Dr. Donald Cousineau, and "earth angel" Maureen N. of BrightStar Care, for their assistance, kindness and care for Joe.

Should a memorial contribution want to be made in Joe's honor, the family suggests the Hospice of Michigan (10850 E. Traverse Hwy. #3325, Traverse City, MI 49684) or your favorite charity.

"To the world you were one person, but to your family, you were the world"

A Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday, January 31, 2026 at 12:00 pm with visiting with the family from 11:00 am at Wolfe-O'Neill Funeral Home.

Arrangements were made by Wolfe-O'Neill Funeral Home, our family serving yours.

Previous Events

Memorial Visitation

JAN 31. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

Wolfe-O'Neill Funeral Home
106 S. Cherry
Kalkaska, MI 49646
(231) 258-5121
<https://www.wolfeoneill.com/>

Celebration of Life

JAN 31. 12:00 PM (ET)

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Tribute Wall

TF

“ Tra and Dong's family purchased the Strength & Solace Spray for the family of Hong Fort "Joe" Chew.



Tra and Dong's family - January 30 at 12:31 PM

TF

“ Tra and Dong's family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Hong Fort "Joe" Chew.

Tra and Dong's family - January 30 at 12:31 PM



“ 92 files added to the album Life Tributes



Wolfe-O'Neill Funeral Home - January 30 at 11:00 AM

VD

“ Violet D. purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Hong Fort "Joe" Chew.



Violet D. - January 29 at 11:26 PM

LH

“ Love the Holcombs. purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Hong Fort "Joe" Chew.



Love the Holcombs. - January 28 at 01:48 PM

LH

“ Love the Holcombs. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Hong Fort "Joe" Chew.

Love the Holcombs. - January 28 at 01:48 PM

JD

“ Julie and Daryl purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Hong Fort "Joe" Chew.



Julie and Daryl - January 27 at 02:28 PM

JD

“ Julie and Daryl planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Hong Fort "Joe" Chew.

Julie and Daryl - January 27 at 02:28 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Hong Fort "Joe" Chew.



January 27 at 01:16 PM

MH

“ Mark and Cheryl Hitchingham planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Hong Fort "Joe" Chew.

Mark and Cheryl Hitchingham - January 23 at 10:30 PM

MH

“ Mark and Cheryl Hitchingham purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Hong Fort "Joe" Chew.



Mark and Cheryl Hitchingham - January 23 at 10:30 PM

EB

“ We are so very sorry. What a wonderful family. Mr. Chew was so wonderful to our community. Jerry and Ellen Besaw

Ellen Besaw - January 23 at 08:32 PM

DM

“ I had the pleasure of knowing Mr. Chew through the VA clinic in Gaylord. We looked forward to his visits and I enjoyed his calm pleasant demeanor. He was appreciated for his service to this country and his contribution to his community. He will be missed!

Dr. Robert Mee - January 23 at 04:16 PM

DP

“ My sincere condolences to the family. I never got to meet Joe, but he raised some great children!

Deb Payne - January 23 at 01:42 PM

GP

“ Joe was good friend to my family. We were in the same grades as you kids, and enjoyed it! I worked w/ Joe at Torch Riviera and at Kin Fong Chew, (kid's mom's name, I was told), he was good! Kids worked there too, and they were as good as their dad! Well, Dad has his friend to share their stories with again. We're thinking of you.
🌸 Gayle Penrod

GAYLE PENROD - January 23 at 12:33 PM

DH

“ Dave and Diane Heymes purchased the Crystal Cross Bouquet for the family of Hong Fort "Joe" Chew.



Dave and Diane Heymes - January 23 at 11:47 AM

DH

“ Dave and Diane Heymes planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Hong Fort "Joe" Chew.

Dave and Diane Heymes - January 23 at 11:47 AM

DH

“ Joe was not only an inspiration to family and friends, but to humanity itself



Dave and Diane Heymes - January 23 at 11:39 AM

LH

“ Oh my goodness there goes a legend. We first met Joe back in the 1970s when he was a chef at the torch Riviera. He was a friend of my families when we moved here and has been in an out of our life. We purchased a river property across from him in later years and had some great visits.. he would walk over to see the progress we were making, and we would stop when he was out in his yard. My condolences to all of his family and friends.

lynn herbers - January 20 at 07:58 AM

JL

My deepest condolences! Joe and his wife raised an amazing family. All of you kids are such good and caring people! From the days of Chinese food at the Riviera- (my first job as a dishwasher-working with Joe, and dear friendship with Andy - who was so good to me when we moved up here. My dad was always impressed with Joe and his work ethic - and great sense of humor. You are all in my thoughts and prayers!

Jamy Loose - January 24 at 09:46 AM