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Asian-American Pioneer at HP Recalls Long Career



Reporting [Sue Kwon](#)



Hewlett-Packard Headquarters in Palo Alto.

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During WWII, Art Fong was at the MIT Radiation Lab doing Microwave and RADAR research for the US Department of Defense. After WWII ended, in 1946, Bill Hewlett visited Fong and offered him a job at Hewlett Packard. He was their 6th Research & Development engineer, their first Asian-American and the first Asian-American technologist in Silicon Valley.

Through his long career in Silicon Valley, it was his skill in science and computers that drew attention, not his race.

But Fong was often reminded of his Asian heritage. "It's a very strange thing, because Asians have a difficult time everywhere. When we came to Palo Alto in 1946 and we couldn't find a place to live because all of Palo Alto had it written in the land deeds," he said. It was illegal for him - a Chinese American - to buy or rent a house in the desirable parts of Palo Alto. That didn't stop him from trying. He did find an empty lot on Parkinson Avenue near the city limits of Palo Alto and built a 4 bedroom house to raise his four kids. This area now has become a desirable area with the best schools, near the Main Library, Children's Library & Theater, the Community Center, Rinconada Park with tennis courts, swimming pools & playground and the Children's Museum.

Today, in their 1992 home, he built next door to the first; his garage workshop is filled with artifacts. He helped develop microwave, radar, and satellite TV technology for HP. Records show in the mid 1960s, almost 30% percent of HP revenue came from his designs.

Fong is proud of that, but these days his passion and energy is focused on the scientists and engineers of the future. In the past 30 years, he and his wife, Mary, had funded generously to Scholarships and Doctoral fellowships for science and technology students at UC Berkeley and Stanford. Also his passion for innovation lives on in his family.

"I feel good. Of course I feel like jumping up and down but my emotions don't let me get away like that. I'm happy," he said. "I have four children and five grandchildren and one great grandchild on the way and that is all great."

Art Fong was born in Sacramento, California. Graduated from UC Berkeley in 1943, was on the research staff at the MIT Radiation Laboratory from 1943-1946, invited to join HP in 1946 and received MSEE/Computer Science in 1968 from Stanford. He retired from HP after 40 years, in 1986 and was a HP staff consultant until 1996, a total of 50 years.

Google “*art fong, engineer at HP*” for more details of his technical life.

Mary and Art were wed in March 1943 after graduation at UCB and spent their honeymoon on a train to Boston. Boston born Sheryl is a school teacher. Daughter Wendy works at Google, son Kevin is in Venture Capital. Grandson Christopher Wong is at IBM, Granddaughter Kelly Fong works at Medtronics and twin brother Michael is at Acer Computers. The twins are Kevin’s. .



Historical Landmark No. 968, **HP Garage**

at 367 Addison Ave Palo Alto, CA 94301



Art and Mary