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YOUR  
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CHECKLIST



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## THE HEART GROWS FONDER

Cyndie Wang and Willie Lee  
August 18, 2007

When Cyndie first met Willie, he caught her eye. At six feet tall, Willie is not your stereotypical Asian. "The first attraction was physical," Cyndie admits. "He was a tall Asian person, which you don't really see."

But, even with Willie's stature at play, Cyndie noticed something else about him – he was a really nice guy. At the time, Cyndie was in college and Willie was working, but both of them were volunteering at an after school program for at-risk youth in San Francisco's Chinatown. Willie had finished college, was studying to become a certified paralegal, and had a demanding job, yet he still found time to volunteer. This really impressed Cyndie, so when Willie asked her out to lunch one day, it didn't take her long to decide if she wanted to go.

Willie's charm lasted long after that initial lunch date – and through a journey of twists and turns as well. While Cyndie and Willie knew they liked each other a lot, Cyndie had many things she needed to accomplish – things that weren't near San Francisco, or Willie. But, even through her new adventures and travels, she and Willie managed to keep in touch. The old adage is true with this couple – absence really does make the heart grow fonder. When Cyndie finally moved back to San Francisco, she and Willie started spending a lot more time together.

By Cyndie's 33rd birthday, their relationship had gotten a lot more serious. To celebrate her birthday, she and Willie went out with some friends to her favorite restaurant, Gary Danko in San Francisco. "I was turning 33 and I was kind of blah about turning 33," Cyndie admits. "And everyone that night was really quiet. I just felt like, 'Gee. Thanks for coming and celebrating my birthday! You know, I'm already feeling blah about it and then no one else seems to be in a festive mood.' The real reason for the dinner's lackluster spirit was nerves – everyone except Cyndie knew Willie planned to propose that night. In fact, while they were all out for dinner, Willie had a friend secretly decorate the house with 12 vases, each filled with a dozen long stemmed roses. When Cyndie and Willie got back to the house, Willie acted like the romantic decorations were for Cyndie's birthday. He threw her off further when he gave her a pair of diamond earrings. She had no idea there was more to come. But, as she was trying on her earrings, Willie expressed his love for Cyndie, ending his

speech on one knee and with a ring in hand. After that, Cyndie didn't feel blah about her birthday anymore.

When it came time to plan the wedding, there were two very important factors for Cyndie – the date and the venue. Cyndie is superstitious and wanted a "good" date, but she also knew she wanted the perfect venue – something that fit her vision of a "classic, city, black tie event." After she found San Francisco's City Hall, she booked the date 8-18-07 because it had eights, which are good luck in Chinese culture, and a seven, which is good luck in western culture. This meshing of eastern and western traditions ended up being a continuing theme throughout the celebration.

"I wanted it to be kind of modern, but yet still with Asian influences," Cyndie says. She accomplished this by incorporating elements from both American and Chinese cultures. Chinese traditions included using the color red in the decor, incorporating the Chinese character for "double happiness" in gobo lighting and in the ice sculpture, and having dragon and lion dancers (this was particularly important to Cyndie because she was a dragon dancer throughout her childhood). Some modern American traditions included having five groom's cakes in lieu of a traditional wedding cake and serving an eclectic cuisine filled with hors d'oeuvres (including tuna tartar and macaroni and cheese), a dinner of miso cod and braised short ribs, and a late-night snack of In-N-Out Burger.

Another unconventional twist to the wedding ended up being one of Cyndie's most memorable moments. For the ceremony, Cyndie made her entrance down the aisle – literally. Instead of coming from behind her guests, Cyndie walked down the steps of city hall *toward* her guests. "When I was walking down the stairs and I was with my parents and looking down, there was Willie waiting for me and then behind him were all of the people who were the most special to me," Cyndie remembers. "It was this feeling that was just so overwhelming, like, 'Oh my God, is this really happening?'" After their long journey, it was *really* happening – Cyndie and Willie were finally together for good. ❧

Photography GEOFF WHITE PHOTOGRAPHERS, Redwood City, CA



Cyndie's choice of deep red was a modern twist to Chinese tradition.



Cyndie said it was hard to limit her wedding party, but she decided to stop at 10 – the number of steps at city hall.





Instead of coming from behind her guests, Cyndie walked down the steps of city hall toward her guests.





Cyndie, a former dragon dancer, said, "I always used to go and perform at other people's weddings, so when it was my turn, I wanted to have them perform at mine."



The favors were a deck of cards designed by one of Cyndie's friends.



Cyndie didn't want a traditional bride's cake so she surprised Willie, who loves to play poker, with a royal flush groom's cake.



**What was your biggest obstacle in planning your wedding and how did you overcome it?**

Cyndie's biggest challenge was managing her budget. "It was hard when I had to make a decision for what to trade off, because I actually didn't want to trade off anything," Cyndie says. "But, I had a wedding planner who was fantastic. And, because she was so objective, she asked some of those tough questions (like) 'How important is this really?' or 'Can we maybe do less?'"



**REAL *weddings***

**STYLE FILE**

- Theme**  
Black Tie Asian Chic
- Culture**  
Chinese
- Colors**  
Red, Ivory and Brown



**STYLE TEAM**

- Wedding Coordinator**  
Events by Morgan, Morgan Doan
- Bridal Gown**  
Rivini
- Bridal Salon**  
Bridal Galleria
- Bridal Shoes**  
Nordstrom
- Groom's Formalwear**  
Men's Wearhouse
- Bridesmaid Dresses**  
Custom Designed
- Hair & Makeup Stylist**  
Makeup by Jonathan,  
Jonathan Nguyen
- Ceremony & Reception Location**  
San Francisco City Hall,  
San Francisco, CA
- Ceremony & Cocktail Music**  
Students from San Francisco  
Conservatory of Music
- Catering**  
McCall Catering
- Florist**  
Bellafiore
- Reception Entertainment**  
Busta-Groove
- Cake**  
Carolyn Wong
- Ice Sculpture**  
McCall Catering
- Photography**  
Geoff White Photographers
- Videography**  
Justin Fone Productions,  
Justin Fone
- Specialty Lighting**  
Everything Audio Visual
- Stationery**  
Khana Shiro, Sophia Kirakawa
- Special Performances**  
Leung's White Crane Lion and  
Dragon Association
- Transportation**  
ERollz Royce Limousine Service
- Rehearsal Dinner**  
Citizen Thai & the Monkey,  
San Francisco, CA
- Honeymoon Destination**  
Italy