Suey (Susie) Ping Woo
(Born 1911, died 2010)

“We didn’t become rich, but we made a living and we put our children through school. They can all support themselves.” – Susie Ping Woo

A Winslow businesswoman who was also active in the community, Susie Bow Woo considered her children to be her greatest accomplishment.

Suey (Susie) Ping was born in Toy Shan, China, on January 21, 1911. She married Shue Bow Woo in Hong Kong in 1932, a marriage that was arranged by her aunt. The Woos came to Winslow soon after their wedding and Shue began working for his cousin, Lun Woo, at his Sun Grocery on Front Street. The Woos opened their own store, the W. Bow Meat Market, at 214 Kinsley Avenue in 1933. “We worked long hours. We got up at 7 am and worked until 11 pm,” explained Susie. They even stayed open on Sundays and holidays prior to World War II.

When Susie first arrived in town, the contrast between Winslow and Hong Kong was stark: “Dust was everywhere. When the wind blew, I choked and choked. There were no trees or grass downtown.” For her first fourteen years, Susie was the only Chinese woman in town and she did not yet speak English: “I didn’t know if I could make it. I was so lonely. But I kept busy with our children and helping in the store.”

As her five children – Helen, Curry, Ruby, Wilson, and David – grew, their conversations of mixed Chinese and English gave Susie an incentive to learn English. Around 1940, Susie attended her first class with Molly Seeley, a member of the First Baptist Church who gathered Susie and the wives of the Japanese men working for Santa Fe Railroad. “She was like a mother to me. She was already 76 years old. I didn’t know any English until then. She invited me to their women’s parties, and I came with a baby in one arm and another in the stroller.” After she learned English, Susie studied for her naturalization test and became an American citizen in 1952.

Susie was proud that four of her children were valedictorians of their Winslow High School classes, and that all five of them graduated from college. Their professions ranged from lawyer and legal secretary to post-office employee, school teacher, and pharmacist.

Susie was a member of the Winslow Business and Professional Women’s Club and was recognized as their Woman of the Year in 1957. She served on many committees and helped organize the annual fundraising teas. In 1945, she hosted a special Chinese tea in her home to raise money for the Chinese nursing fund, complete with displays of Chinese antiques and silks. Susie was also a member of the First Baptist Church and the Parent-Teacher Association.

In 1976, after 43 years of operation, Susie and Shue Bow Woo closed their store and retired. They later moved to the Phoenix area when Shue’s health began to fail. Susie passed away on Oct. 18, 2010, in Glendale, Arizona, at the age of 99.

Top: Susie Bow Woo at work in the W. Bow Meat Market in the late 1930s
Middle: Shue Bow Woo on his way to make deliveries from the store on Kinsley Avenue
Bottom: A Winslow BPW event in the 1960s with Susie Bow Woo (far left), Mabel Nagel (third from right), and Vada Carlson (Rodriguez) (second from right)