

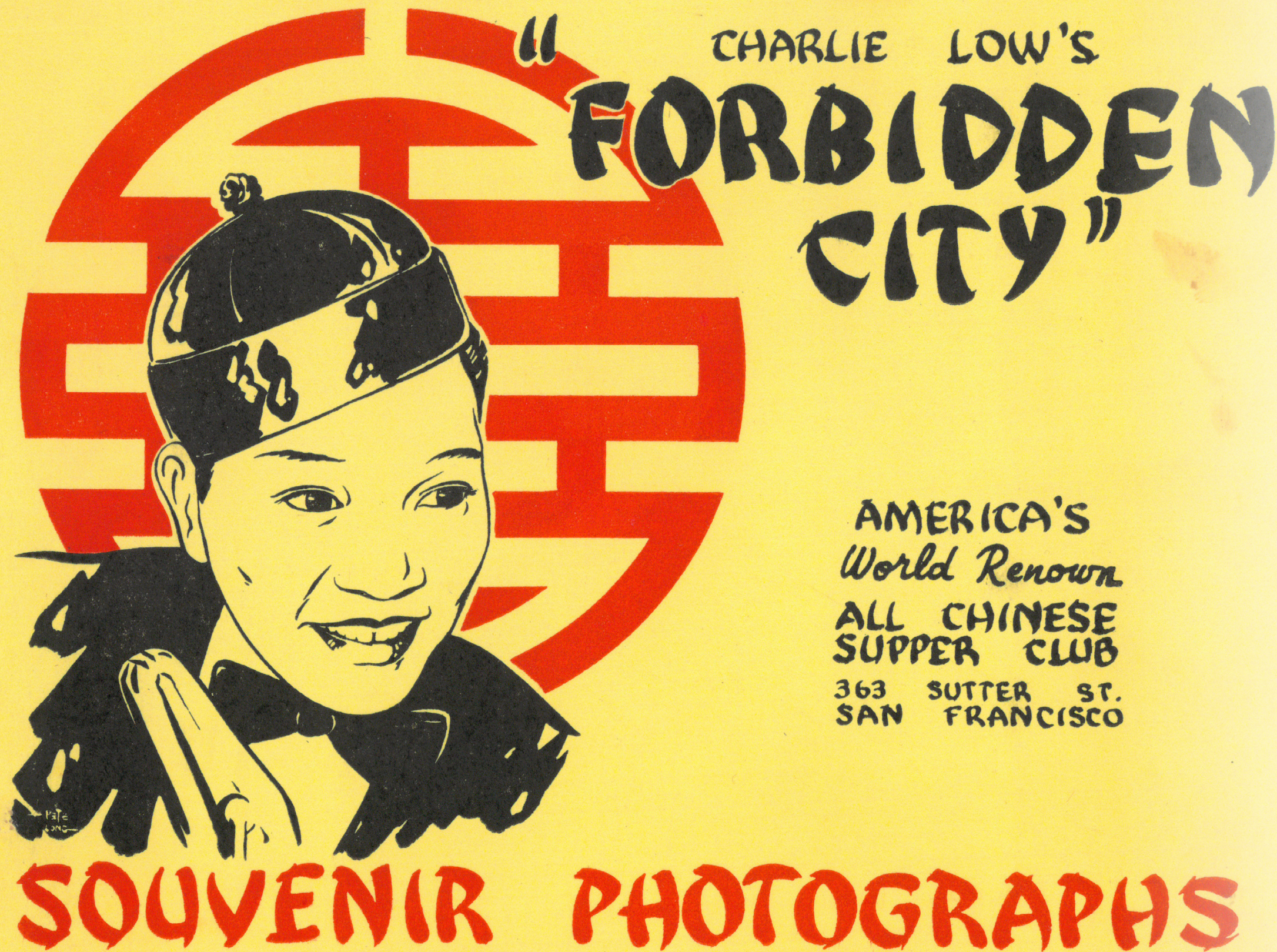
Enjoying a great meal are Alamedans (L to R), Toichi and wife, Tomoye Hitomi, *Mitsue Ozeki*, Mas Nakano, and his sister, Sue. The man far right is unknown, but might be Sue's husband. Photo from Mitsi's *Forbidden City* souvenir folder, dated *February 12, 1942*.



Mitsie

Alamedans during WWII

FORBIDDEN city



Mitsie's souvenir folder cover

The World War II clock was inevitability ticking for Mitsue Ozeki.

In just 12 days, she and all the Japanese in Alameda, CA., would be forbidden to remain on their island home. On February 24, 1942, a great injustice was about to descend upon them, solely for having the face of the enemy.

So Mitsie and her pals responded as young people would, by driving across the Bay Bridge to San Francisco for a final night of fun. Their destination? The aptly named Forbidden City Chinese restaurant. It was February 12. She had 12 days before the 24th.

Today, we know their destination was the Tanforan Assembly Center and later, the Topaz Relocation Center in Utah. But back then, no Japanese was really sure what was about to happen, just a few weeks before it did.

Bay Region Hit Hard By Ban

SAN FRANCISCO, Feb. 5.— Vast coastal areas including several cities with large Japanese population were declared restricted areas by Attorney General Francis Biddle in Washington Monday.

Practically the entire city of Alameda, Richmond, Vallejo, Martinez, Monterey, Pacific Grove, San Luis Obispo, Pismo Beach, Oceano, Arroyo Grande, and more portions of Los Angeles were included in the order.

Among the hardest hit were the 246 alien Japanese in the city of Alameda and those in the Japanese residential district around Wanto hall and Buddhist church in Oakland who must vacate by February 24.

Kashu Mainichi Shinbun • February 5, 1942

In its time, Charlie Low's Forbidden City was the most popular nightclub in San Francisco's Chinatown. Opening in 1939, there was resistance from local Chinese elders, not accustomed to the nature of Low's splashy floor shows, with singers, magicians and chorus lines of scantily clad dancers.

By 1940, the club was packed with thousands of patrons per day. No wonder. Noel Toy (Ngun Yee) would essentially dance in the nude, with just a large fan or ostrich feathers for company. Business was brisk.

The club was the place to be, with mostly Caucasian customers, wanting a taste of the oriental exotic. Anna May Wong, Humphrey Bogart and Judy Garland patronized the club.

With her future in the hands of the government, she didn't pout. She instead chose to go to a nightclub, as if it might be her last chance to ever do so. Mitsie did her best to enjoy herself that February night. It was her nature to do so. So she ate, laughed, and tried to forget that in 12 days, her future would turn towards a great unknown.

Not much time, is it?

ALAMEDA
Japanese
American
HISTORY PROJECT



Mitsie in 1945... at another nightclub during WWII. For more, see the PDF, "A Night at the Club." Special thanks to Kay Yatabe, Mitsi's daughter, for access to photos and information.



“ CHARLIE LOW'S
**FORBIDDEN
CITY** ”

AMERICA'S
World Renown
ALL CHINESE
SUPPER CLUB
363 SUTTER ST.
SAN FRANCISCO

SOUVENIR PHOTOGRAPHS

Souvenir folder from Forbidden City restaurant in San Francisco, February 12, 1942. Given the date (on the inside of this folder), this must be a last night out for Mitsue Ozeki and her friends before all the Japanese in Alameda, CA., would be forced to leave their island home by order of the U.S. government on February 24.

**Toichi & Tomoye
"Tommie" Hitomi
Tommie was a Yamashita**

**Mitsue
Ozeki**

**Mas Sue Sue's
Nakano Nakano husband?
(brother & sister)**

As your host, I sincerely
hope you have enjoyed your
evening at Forbidden City,
and that this photograph
will bring happy memories.
May we meet again . . .

Charlie Low

Autographs

February 12, 1942



Souvenir folder from Forbidden City restaurant in San Francisco, February 12, 1942. Given the date, this must be a last night out with friends before all the Japanese in Alameda, CA., would be forced to leave their island home by order of the U.S. government on February 24.