

# hammer

by Pamela Lee Wong

Thirteen years old and the world was about to open for Doug Cheng.

What happened?! Junior high school - where the boys got to choose hands-on shop classes like printing, electricity, wood, auto, jewelry, pottery, drafting, and machine shop. For a kid that loved working with his hands, this was no less than a candy shop.

In 1955 Mr. Walker taught Machine Shop at Francisco Junior High School in San Francisco. Walking into the enormous room Doug saw things like a half-dozen lathes, metal bars, sheets and rods that they'd use as raw materials, a chalkboard, a kiln, and a cold-water trough.



manual lathe

Doug remembered it like this.

*One project was to make an 8" metal hammer using the equipment in the machine shop. After teaching us how to properly operate the lathe and how to protect our face and hands from heat, shards, and sparks, Mr. Walker gave us a drawing of a metal hammer with measurements for each dimension. Our job was to make an actual metal hammer with the lathe, kiln, cold-water plunge, and other tools. We set the lathe, cut the metal parts, assembled the tool, heated it in the kiln, plunged it into the water to temper, and smoothed out rough edges. I was in heaven. Using my hands to make something was so much fun. You were graded on how well you used the equipment and how closely the finished product resembled the instructions. And when I rushed home to proudly show my parents, they said 'Oh, a hammer!' Apparently, that was far from the kind of school education they remembered getting in China!*



the hammer!