



# OCKABA Newsletter

NOVEMBER 2008 ISSUE

## Greetings!

Greetings OC KABA Members and Friends,

I hope everyone is doing well during these tough economic times and enjoying the unusually warm autumn weather. With the political ads bombarding our television sets, I can't wait until this election is over. Let's hope that the next president will turn this nation around for the better and bring some order to our economy. On that note, please go out and vote on November 4th!

In this issue, we spotlight a very successful Korean American business woman, Ms. Hee Sook Lee, the founder and CEO of BCD Tofu Corporation. I've truly enjoyed meeting her and hearing about her struggles and drive towards making a successful franchise. It was a very humbling experience. I hope we can learn from her experiences and apply some of her life lessons and virtues to our legal careers most importantly her passion and dedication.

This month, among many events coming up, we will hold our very first installation dinner (which was long overdue). We will cater this event exclusively to our members (rather than having many outside guests). Therefore, we sincerely hope that all of you will attend this event!

Also, enjoy the Thanksgiving Holidays! Time to gain that extra pound you lost or don't need. Let's help the economy and hit the shopping center as well!

Finally, don't forget to set your clocks back one hour for day light savings!

As always, if any members know of any attorneys who are interested in joining our organization please spread the word and circulate this newsletter.

If you have any ideas to put in this newsletter, please feel free to contact me ([hoelpark@gmail.com](mailto:hoelpark@gmail.com))

Yours truly,  
Ho-EI

### Inside This Issue

- 1. Power Interview: "Hee Sook Lee, Founder and CEO of BCD Tofu Corporation"
- 2. Past Events
- 3. Upcoming OCKABA Events
- 4. Upcoming NON-OCKABA Events
- 5. Announcements

### ABOUT US: Orange County Korean American Bar Association

*OC KABA was established in November 2005 to promote networking among minority attorneys, to provide effective legal counsel to the local Orange County community, to serve the Korean American community's legal needs with pro bono services, to promote the appointment of Korean American judges, and to assist law students in making the transition into full-time law practice.*

*There are currently 20 attorneys on the OC KABA Board of Directors and there are about 200-250 Korean American attorneys registered in Orange County.*

# 1. POWER INTERVIEW SERIES: People Who Shape the Korean American Community - The Face Behind BCD Tofu: Ms. Hee Sook LEE

By Min Chai and Ho El Park

In our very first segment of power interview series "People Who Shape the Korean American Community", Min Chai and I (Ho El Park) had the privilege of meeting with Ms. Hee Sook Lee, the Founder and CEO of BCD Tofu Corporation on October 17, 2008 at the BCD Tofu House in Diamond Jamboree Shopping Center in Irvine. I am sure many of you have already eaten at least once at BCD Tofu for a quick lunch/dinner or to sober up from a long night of intoxication. Most of the times, you have to wait on line to get seated. You just can't find instantly made steaming white rice served in a hot individualized stone-pot anywhere else (which turns to "noo-reung-ji" afterwards for desert. Yum!). BCD Tofu prides itself of having 17 restaurant locations throughout the nation and in Korea and serving only what people consider as "well-being" food. Just thinking about this place makes me hungry again.



It was a little over 4:00 p.m, when we arrived at the new BCD Tofu restaurant and among the several customers Ms. Lee was sitting in the far left corner with her master chef and kitchen staff tasting their new menu item, Bibimbab and the new go-chu-jang that was made in-house.

The restaurant had a cool modern interior with granite tables, bright lighting, and a stone back wall finish that gives a refreshing and contemporary look to the restaurant. As soon as Ms. Lee spotted us, she greeted us with her warm and maternal smile, and invited us over to sit at a secluded booth area for a private interview.

Ms. Lee and her family immigrated to the U.S. in 1989 to give her children a better education. After much deliberation, Ms. Lee and her family decided to remain in the U.S. and her husband returned to Korea to wind down their restaurant business in Korea. Ms. Hee Sook Lee, the second oldest of four girls, had taken graphic design classes at Cal State Fullerton, and thought of becoming a precious stone inspector and attended courses at GIA. After she realized that the precious stone/ metal business was monopolized and tightly controlled by the Jewish community, she decided to engage in a different business that had more opportunities for newcomers like herself. With her restaurant business experience from Korea, she decided to look into the restaurant business and researched the different kinds of Korean restaurants in L.A.



In light of the "well-being" boom in 1996, she selected tofu as her main product and decided to open a soon-du-bu restaurant in contrast to the generalist Korean Barbeque restaurant where they served various menu items or the sul-lung-tang restaurant.

But more important than the soon-du-bu, she invested her time and effort to develop ways to make the best tasting rice, which led her to the individualized stone pots. She realized that if the rice tastes good and is cooked to perfection, the customers would be able to enjoy their meal to the very last bite even with only a few side dishes, which she believed was better than having many unpopular dishes.

In a composed and reserved demeanor, she reflected on the many trial and error experiences she encountered during the one-year period which she tried to develop the best cooking method to cook the rice. Customer satisfaction was the basic principle in this industry, and Ms. Lee definitely seemed to have gotten that under

her thumb as she spoke about the several tribulations and revelations she had through her own customers who offered her countless advice and insights on how to improve her restaurant business, including the individualized stone pots and adding a “well-being” no-MSG tofu soup dish to the menu for health-conscious eaters. Unlike other restaurant owners, Ms. Lee took her customers seriously and took heed to their comments and feedback. It turns out that those comments proved to be more valuable to Ms. Lee than the money she earned from these customers.

With 17 different locations, Ms. Lee is used to the endless commute and traveling as part of her business protocol. When the subject of the newest addition in Manhattan, New York came up, Ms. Lee’s face brightened [*as well as Ho El Park’s face*] and we were able to tell that this was one of her favorites as one of the more “hip” locations. “New York is so different than anywhere else....there’s an indescribable energy in New York...it’s fun,” she says [as Ho El concurred] as she describes the bar lounge at the restaurant. Ms. Lee proclaims that she is used to flying to New York on a red-eye flight, doing what she needs to get done in New York, and returning on a red-eye flight the same night to California, and opening for business the same day on only three hours of sleep! [She used to run a Pho noodle Restaurant in New York]. There are currently 10 locations in California, 2 in Seattle, and 3 in Korea and now 1 in Manhattan. The Garden Grove and L.A. restaurants are kept open 24 hours a day for her customers who had long hours. The customers who come for a late night dinner prefer the tofu soups over a dry burger since it’s healthy and does not upset their stomach. Knowing that these people would come to her restaurants after a hard days work, Ms. Lee admits that she could not turn them away and close during normal hours, even though it does not make economic sense to do so.

***“PASSION WAS WHAT DROVE  
ME TO SUCCESS!”***

As a woman entrepreneur, one might suspect that she had overcome many adversities and challenges over the years, as a woman and a minority. When asked about those adversities, Ms. Lee just smiles and attributes her success to America, the “land of opportunity.” She is a living icon of the American dream, and she has been grateful for the opportunities she has been given since she arrived in the U.S. Because of the many fortunes and opportunities she has been given, Ms. Lee makes it a part of her business commitment to give back to the community in various ways from charitable contributions to local organizations and feeding the homeless.

With a supportive husband and three grown boys, hard work coupled with perseverance allowed Ms. Lee to live the American dream. Her husband, a Seoul University graduate, has always encouraged her to “give it a try,” and been there to support her every step of the way. The three boys have been the driving force behind Ms. Lee’s business. Her oldest son (27) graduated from UC Berkeley and is on missions in China for year, and plans to attend law school upon his return, her second son is in medical school at UCLA, and the youngest is obtaining his MBA at Georgetown University. Talk about a self-sufficient family!

Among a family of men, Ms. Lee appears to have mastered the ability to live as a “superwoman” as she has been able to strike a balance between managing a multimillion dollar business and maintaining a harmonious family life.



(From Left: Min Chai, Ms. Hee Sook Lee, and Ho El Park)

She attributes her success to her talent and business sense to select the ideal restaurant locations, her keen awareness to keep the customers satisfied, and her supportive family. She encourages all young professionals and entrepreneurs to do all that you do with passion, as passion is the single most important ingredient to success. In Ms. Lee’s own words, “If you have passion in all that you do, there will be a day when your efforts will turn into success.”

## 2. PAST EVENTS

### A. ORANGE COUNTY KOREAN FESTIVAL

On Saturday, October 11, 2008, on behalf of OCKABA, Min Chai and Christian Kim participated in the Korean Festival Parade held at the Garden Grove Boulevard, Garden Grove. OCKABA has donated \$500 to show support for this event.



*Picture on the Right: Christian Kim, Min Chai, Supervisor Janet Nguyen and her husband, Chris.*

### B. WHITTIER LAW SCHOOL'S OC LAW FIRM PRACTICES SPECIALTIES DAY

On October 25, 2008, some of our OCKABA members participated at the Whittier Law School's OC Law Firm Practices Specialties Day where practicing attorneys share their law firm experiences with law students. Our OCKABA member, Ted Kim was one of the panel members. Jennifer Kim, Jenny Park, and Sonny Koo also volunteered at this event.

### C. SECOND BROWN BAG LUNCH MCLE: "BASICS OF IMMIGRATION LAW"

On October 29, 2008, OCKABA held its second brown bag lunch CLE seminar. This time the topic was on "Basics of Immigration Law" and Ms. Ja Suh of OCKABA gave a seminar on this topic. Approximately 10 of our members attended this event where they learned about various visa types and procedures, as well as the basic rules of immigration. It was very informative and useful for all of the members who attended regardless their field of practice. Handout materials were given out to each of the attendees along with the certificate of attendance to receive MCLE credit.

## 3. UPCOMING OCKABA EVENTS

### A. GENERAL MEETING!

Please don't forget to attend our general meeting scheduled for November 6, 2008 at 6:00 PM at Kring & Chung, LLP, 38 Corporate Park, Irvine, CA. This will be our last general meeting before our installation dinner! Please try to attend this important meeting.

### B. Hiking

We have tentatively scheduled a hiking trip for November 8, 2008 at 8:00 am at Peter's Canyon in Orange. This event is open to all OCKABA members and their families and friends. This hiking trail allows dogs as well. It would be a great event for members to get to know one another while enjoying the beautiful surroundings. Everyone is welcome to come and go at their own pace! If you are interested, please contact Arthur Kim at [akcal00@yahoo.com](mailto:akcal00@yahoo.com). If no more than five affirmative responses are given, then this event will be cancelled or rescheduled. Hope everyone decides to come!

### C. OCKABA INSTALLATION DINNER

OCKABA will host its first annual installation dinner on November 13, 2008. It will be held at the Crystal Jade Restaurant in Irvine, CA, starting at 6:00 PM and ending at 8:00 PM. All OCKABA members and invited! This would be a great opportunity to meet all of our old and new members and thank the past leaders for their dedication and support!

## D. Community Law School

OCKABA will hold its Fourth Annual Community Law School Day on *March 21, 2009* at KIA Motors, Irvine CA. Save this Date! We will plan early so please volunteer! If you are interested in speaking at the event, or volunteer in any other way, please contact Star Lopez at [star.lopez@gmail.com](mailto:star.lopez@gmail.com).

## 4. UPCOMING NON-OCKABA EVENTS

### A. WINE TASTING EVENT

On November 6, 2008, from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm, the American Red Cross will hold a free wine tasting event at the Center Club located at 650 Town Center Drive, Garden Level in Costa Mesa, CA 92626. All wines will be available for purchase. RSVP to Michael Heyn at (714) 481-5367 or [mheyne@oc-redcross.org](mailto:mheyne@oc-redcross.org) before November 3! You can also RSVP with our new OCKABA member, Eileen Chung at [chung.eileen@dorsey.com](mailto:chung.eileen@dorsey.com).

### B. ASIAN BUSINESS LEAGUE'S 24<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER

Asian Business League is holding its annual awards dinner on November 6, 2008 at 6:00 PM at the Omni Hotel, in Los Angeles, CA (251 S. Olive Street). Hee Sook Lee of the BCD Tofu Corp. will receive the "Entrepreneur of the Year" award. Individual Non-member seat at the dinner is \$225.00. If interested in attending or for more information, please contact Stephanie Vanlochem at (213) 624-9975.

### C. 24<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MOCK TRIAL COMPETITION.

Constitutional Rights Foundation of Orange County is holding a Mock Trial competition for local high schools on the following dates: Round 1 (November 18, 2008); Round 2 (November 20, 2008); Round 3 (November 25, 2008); Round 4 (December 2, 2008); Round 5 (December 4, 2008); Round 6 (December 9, 2008). All rounds of competition will be held at the Central Justice Center of the Orange County Superior Court, Santa Ana, between 4:30 and 7:30 PM. If you are interested in volunteering as the scoring attorney or the presiding judge, please contact Wendy Townsend, Program Manager at [wtownsend@crfoc.org](mailto:wtownsend@crfoc.org) or call her at (714) 259-1521 X102.

### D. Korean-American NPO Conference

Good Neighbors USA will host a "Korean-American NPO Conference" on November 13, 2008 (from 9:00 AM) to November 14, 2008 (4pm) at New Life Oasis Church at 3119 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Los Angeles, CA 90010. This event consists of seminars, discussions, and networking relevant to Korean American Nonprofit Organizations. For more information, please email Ho El at [hoelpark@gmail.com](mailto:hoelpark@gmail.com).

### E. NAPABA Conference- November 19-23, 2008 in Seattle

The National Asian Pacific American Bar Association ("NAPABA") will hold its national convention starting November 19, 2008 through November 23, 2008 with a theme entitled: "Building on Our Legacy: 20 Years of NAPABA". It will be held at the Sheraton Seattle Hotel, 1400 Sixth Avenue, Seattle, WA 98101. Please go to [www.napaba.org](http://www.napaba.org) for more information.

### F. OC Presidents' Council Holiday Mixer- December 3, 2008 (Costa Mesa)

The Orange County Presidents Council will host a "Holiday Biz Mixer 2008" on December 3, 2008, between 5:30 - 9 PM at the Garden Terrace in South Coast Plaza at 3333 Bristol St., Costa Mesa, CA 92626. Cost is \$15 per person if registered and paid by November 3, 2008; otherwise it's \$20.00. This event is sponsored by South Coast Plaza and Quattro Caffe. It is a business mixer with entertainment activities organized by over 20 affiliate multicultural chambers and associations around Orange County. For more information or to RSVP, please contact Radi Miranda at (714) 552-3993 or Mohammed Islam at (949) 726-8804.

## G. OCAABA'S Holiday Mixer

The Orange County Asian American Bar Association will host a Family Holiday Dim Sum Party with other local bar associations (TALA, VABASC) and OCKABA may co-host this event. The date has been set for December 6, 2009 from about 11:00 A.M. to 2:00 PM. Please contact Jenny Park at [JPARK@lbbslaw.com](mailto:JPARK@lbbslaw.com) or Gloria Lee at [Glee@coxcastle.com](mailto:Glee@coxcastle.com) for more information.

## 5. ANNOUNCEMENTS

### A. Looking for Website Administrator!

OCKABA is looking for someone to volunteer a small portion of his/her time to keep our website maintained and updated. If interested, please email Star Lopez@ [Star.Lopez@gmail.com](mailto:Star.Lopez@gmail.com).

### B. Need volunteers for newsletter!

We are looking for few volunteers who are willing to contribute their time for our monthly newsletters. Please contact Ho-El if interested at [hoelpark@gmail.com](mailto:hoelpark@gmail.com).

### C. Membership Application and Dues

If you have not yet already done so, please pay your membership dues for the year 2008. For all those who became attorneys within the past 0-5 years (regardless of which state), the fee is \$40. For everyone else, the fee is \$80. If you are a law student, there is no fee; however, you must fill out an application. Also, whether or not you are a new member, all OCKABA members must fill out a membership application each year. All checks should be made payable to "OC KABA"

Please mail your completed application and membership fees to:  
HCC Surety Group, 9841 Airport Blvd., Ninth Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90045  
(Attention "John C. Yi"; RE: 2008 OC KABA Membership Application)

For a copy of the *membership application*, please email Jennifer Kim at [jkim@rutan.com](mailto:jkim@rutan.com)

### D. Do you want to be published?

The California Lawyer Magazine has asked us to submit an article in their In Pro Per section. Please contact Min Chai @ [mkc@oswald-yap.com](mailto:mkc@oswald-yap.com) or 949-788-8900 for more information.

### E. Get Published Here!

If you can't get published in the California Lawyer magazine, you still have an opportunity to get published in our very own newsletter. Please share your success/horror stories with your fellow members. We want to know more about each of our members and their experiences as an attorney. Advice and tips are greatly appreciated to help our members become better attorneys. Let us know and we'll add your stories and thoughts in our next newsletter. Contact: Ho-El Park [hoelpark@gmail.com](mailto:hoelpark@gmail.com).

### F. Questions and Comments

We're here for you! Any and all ideas/comments/ criticisms are all appreciated. Please email/call any of our board members and officers for any questions/comments. Thank you. If you find any errors in this newsletter, please email me at [hoelpark@gmail.com](mailto:hoelpark@gmail.com)