

# Immigrants: Restaurant owners acquitted of hiring illegally

From Page A1

Sexton said Chen's actions after the immigrants' arrest show that his client was not intentionally violating the law.

"Chen didn't run, hide or take off with his passport," Sexton said. "He walked into the immigration enforcement office without a lawyer to give them the IDs of the immigrants. He wanted to show federal officials that these people were legal."

Zhou's attorney, Justin Durstock, said his client bought the \$225,000 home with savings and money from his father, who also immigrated to the United States.

Zhou lived in the home along with Asian Buffet workers until he moved to Marion, Ohio, months

before the raid. He moved to Ohio to open another Chinese restaurant and had never met the three illegal immigrants.

Zhou testified that he had not sold the home because of the slumping real estate market.

"This has taken an emotional toll on my client," Durstock said after the verdict. "He has been sick throughout the trial. At one point, we had to stop testimony because he got so ill."

To help disprove the government's conspiracy theory, defense lawyers called Chinese business expert Larry Grubbs of Harrison to the stand. Grubbs, who lived in China from 1995 to 2000 while working for Texaco, holds seminars on how to conduct business in China.

"The Asian Buffet's business practices were very typical of Chinese businesses," Grubbs said from the stand on Thursday.

He told the jurors how the Chinese typically work 12-hour days, six days a week and live in dormitory-style housing with their co-workers. A business in China typically provides food, housing, shelter and transportation for its workers.

Charles Schaffner, who represented the third co-defendant, Chun Ya Cheung, declined to comment because his client is awaiting sentencing on separate charges. He was found guilty last month in connection with illegal immigrants working at another Chinese restaurant he co-owns, the Empire Buffet in Crescent Springs.