



# News 'n Notes

Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

www.chssc.org ♦ (323) 222-0856

**AUGUST 2001**

## Upcoming Event!

**Wednesday, September 5, 12:30 pm**

**125th Anniversary of the Completion of Southern Pacific Railroad Celebration at Lang Station**

Join CHSSC and former California Secretary of State March Fong Eu for a re-enactment of the 1976 Golden Spike ceremony at Lang Station.

**Call our office for details (323) 222-0856.**

## Mogao Caves: Preserving China's Artistic and Cultural Heritage

In the famous 16<sup>th</sup> century Chinese novel, *Journey to the West* (aka. *Monkey*), written by Wu Cheng-En, monk Xuan Zhuang and his 3 comic companions travel to India on a mission to bring Buddhist scripture and religion to China. Although the novel is much more a cultural satire than a historically accurate documentary, its exalted position in Chinese literary canon helps explain the significant role of Buddhism in Chinese culture. Such novels, legends and oral traditions of Buddhism in China are enjoyed and appreciated by the common people, but much more precious, unadulterated evidences of the early spread of Guatama Buddha's legacy are hidden under sand dunes along the Silk Road of China in what are called the Mogao Caves of Dunhuang. At our June 6<sup>th</sup> meeting, Dr. Neville Agnew of the Getty Conservation Institute, currently a research fellow of the Dunhuang Academy in China, presented a slide show and lecture on the preservation of the fragile iconographic murals of the Mogao caves.

Understanding the audience's probable range of knowledge on the subject, Dr. Agnew started out by explaining the significance of preserving cultural heritage. Conservation is a multifold academic effort in that it delves into almost every discipline, from history to chemistry, from art to physics. With a grin, Dr. Agnew suggested that "everything but astronomy plays a role".

Merchants of silk and other goods historically frequented the Silk Road, a series of routes connecting eastern Europe to what is now Xi'An, China. In 366 AD, monks and other believers began carving murals in caves at the ancient city of Shazhou (lit. "sand city"), today's Dunhuang. Dr. Agnew noted the overwhelming contrast experienced upon leaving the dreary desert to enter into the caves, a paradise of sacred Buddhist art. The

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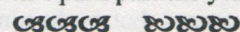
## SEPTEMBER PROGRAM

**Wednesday, September 5, 2001**

Multipurpose Room  
Castelar Elementary School  
Chinatown, L.A.

**7:30 pm**

Enter lot from College St.  
Please don't park past the yellow line.



The Chinese Historical Society  
of Southern California  
introduces

*MANAA President Guy Aoki*  
and

*actor Aki Aleong*

Please read Linda Chong's  
article below to learn  
more about this program.

## Chinese Americans in Hollywood and the Media

Our new "season" is finally here and we are extremely happy to announce that, on Sept. 5, the date of our first meeting, we will have not just one speaker, but two!

Please come out to Castelar Elementary School and hear two entertainment industry professionals speak about the way Hollywood and the mainstream media have occasionally been less than respectful in their treatments of Chinese-American issues.

Both of our scheduled speakers are active with MANAA, the Media Action Network for Asian Americans, an organization founded nine years ago to combat negative images and stereotypes of Asian Americans on the pervasive small and big screens. MANAA also serves as a watchdog against racial slurs and messages.

Our first presenter will be Guy Aoki, the president and co-founder of MANAA. Aoki, who by day is a writer for a syndicated radio music show, will be featured on an upcoming episode of the spirited late-night television show, "Politically Incorrect With Bill Maher." On the show, scheduled to air Aug. 27, Aoki will verbally spar with stand-up comedienne Sarah Silverman, who recently referred to Chinese in the United States as "chinks" during

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# Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

**AUGUST 2001**

## **Farewell . . . and Welcome!**

As we begin the new year for CHSSC activities and programs, we'd like to extend a special thank you to those who ended their service on the Board in June and to whom Cy Wong, Membership Secretary, will be presenting awards of appreciation at the September 5th meeting: **Munson A. Kwok, Ruth Lung and Jeffrey Tung**. As we bid them a grateful and heartfelt farewell, we welcome three new voices. We are excited for them to be a part of the Board and to contribute their talents to CHSSC. We thought you might like to learn more about them and hear from them directly:

**Linda Chong**, V.P. Programs, a writer and researcher who studied at USC and University of Hawaii, has had extensive experience in Asia and looks forward to offering her ideas and talents. Why does she want to be part of CHSSC? "I was intrigued by the work of the society because I found it reassuring that there were people in the community doing this kind of research away from a university campus. I also think the society provides an important community service, not just in terms of the most obvious - the walking tours - but by hosting forums and events that are relevant to Chinese Americans. I'm excited to be part of the board this year because I'd like to do my part to make things happen."

A founding member and the first secretary of CHSSC, **Ann Lau** is also a board member of numerous other organizations, including the Visual Artists Guild, South Bay Chinese American Chamber of Commerce, and LA 80-20. She currently resides in Torrance with her husband and two daughters. Back on CHSSC Board, Ann hopes "that we can get more volunteers involved in doing community research". When asked about her vision for CHSSC, she explained, "I would like to see it as going back to our roots of providing research information regarding contributions of Chinese-Americans in Southern California. . . I would like to have a continuing oral history project of our pioneers before they die off. I would like to begin the process of compilation of all our speakers' speeches into a journal for each year beginning with the first speaker of this 2001-2002 season. I would like to actively involve young people into the Society and have them propose and direct projects of their own interests."

**Stanley Mu**, another recently elected board member, has a long history in Chinatown. His family was displaced from Old Chinatown and, in New Chinatown's Central Plaza, his family established an herb shop which later became Mu Brothers curio shop. A WWII veteran, Stanley later worked as an engineer for missile research and development at Hughes Aircraft until he retired in 1986. He has rich family history, knowledge and life experiences, all of which will help in his efforts to contribute to CHSSC board. Welcome, to all three of our new board members!

## **Congratulations**

Once again, Icy Smith's *The Lonely Queue* has been recognized as the "unprecedented pictorial history book" that it is. The text was named a finalist in the multi-cultural non-fiction category at the 2001 Independent Publisher Book Awards at BookExpo America 2001 in Chicago. Nationwide recognition is indeed flattering; however, on May 25, Los Angeles City Councilmember Mike Hernandez conveyed gratitude for Smith's effort "to enhance community betterment" through recording Chinese American history by presenting to her a 'Certificate of Tribute'. We join in celebrating the heritage Icy so beautifully and successfully conveyed in *The Lonely Queue*.

## **Award of Merit for Dr. Frances Wu**

USC Alumni Association recently presented to Dr. Frances Wu the School of Social Work's Dean's Award for Outstanding Community Service. After being involved in social work in Nanking, China and then in New York City, she began to focus on the plight of elderly Chinese Americans. In 1974, she became the first Chinese scholar to earn a Doctorate in Social Work (D.S.W.) from USC. Her passion to serve the elderly came to fruition in her 1980 founding of the Chinese American Golden Age Association and Golden Age Village in Monterey Park. Her success in helping the Chinese community is indeed meritorious.

## **2001-2002 CHSSC Officers**

Irvin Lai, President

Eugene Moy, Vice President

Linda Chong, V.P. Programs

Henrietta Yuan, Secretary

Cy Wong, Membership Secretary

Ella Quan, Treasurer

Franklin Mah, Financial Secretary

## **Board Members**

Susan Dickson, Chairperson

Pete Chinn      Winifred Lew

Gilbert Hom      Dr. Wing Mar

Ann Lau      Stanley Mu

Ben Nakayama

## **'Thank You' for June 6 contributions for coffee & refreshments:**

Aurora Bahou  
Susie Ling  
Ruth Lung  
Ella Quan  
Johnson Yee  
Roselyn Yee  
Donna Young  
Noel Toy Young

## **Welcome, New Members!**

CHSSC would like to extend a warm welcome to those who have joined the society in the last few months. We hope you enjoy your membership with us!

Allen Barasoda      Mary Manuil  
Karen Bradkin      Paul Yee  
David Law      Allen County Library





Y G A P  
volunteers  
& CHSSC  
members  
take a  
break to  
pose for a  
photo.



Volunteers  
weeded,  
planted  
flowers, re-  
potted  
plants, and  
washed the  
interior  
walls.

### The 'Wind & Water' of Echo Park Lotus Festival 2001

On Saturday July 14<sup>th</sup>, a typically bright, steamy day in L.A., I gathered a couple friends together for a cultural excursion to Echo Park's Annual Lotus Festival, a summer celebration of Asian and Pacific Island cultures. Embarrassing as it is to admit, considering my Los Angelian nativity, I had never been to the famous park off the 101 freeway. Comfortably nestled at the small foothill valley of a residential area, the park has a picture-perfect view of downtown. Although untrained in geomancy, I sensed that the park has great 'fengshui'... literally: a constant cooling breeze ('feng', right?) and a small placid lake (but you don't want to drink any of *this* 'shui'!).

Why Echo Park? The festival is held at Echo Park largely because of the lotuses living in the lake. Lotus is a popular symbolic motif not only for the Chinese but for many other Asian countries as well, and as a common thread, provides an appropriate theme for the festival. According to an article by Annalisa Magnusson found at [www.echopark.net](http://www.echopark.net), the beautiful stand of lotus at the northeast end of the lake is the largest outside of Asia. Legend suggests that back in the 1920s "evangelical Chinese missionaries planted them for use as food," but their origination remains a mystery. Another significant element of the Lotus Festival, in regards to the Chinese, is the fact that the timing loosely corresponds with the Dragon Boat Festival, a popular Chinese holiday commemorating the beloved Spring and Autumn Period poet Qu Yuan. The frantic search for his body after he drowned himself in a lake along the Yangtze River in China is relived annually with the

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### Kudos to YGAP Volunteers

Nearly 30 volunteers from the Asian-American social and professional organization YGAP recently donated their time and energy toward efforts to beautify CHSSC's Bernard Street houses by performing landscaping and cleaning work.

The bright, sunny day on which the July 21<sup>st</sup> "work party" was held was punctuated by pleasant diversions such as a barbecue lunch provided by CHSSC (and delectably prepared by "chef" Cy Wong) and a slide show and walking tour of Chinatown led by Eugene Moy, who exposed many of the YGAP members to different aspects of the L.A. community with which only a few had had some prior familiarity.

YGAP is an acronym that stands for Young Generation of Asian Professionals, and the organization, while based primarily in Orange County, holds regular events that are well attended by dozens of young adults from throughout Southern California.

YGAP social director Brenda Ching, who approached CHSSC about the prospects of holding a joint event, said the beauty of this particular function was that it fell under the categories of social, community and cultural interaction.

"YGAP is really excited about getting to know the history of Chinatown and reacquainting ourselves with our heritage and what is an important part of our history (as a whole) in Southern California," said Ching. "Here, we were learning about our heritage *and* giving back to the community. We look forward to working with the society on additional projects."

Adding that "this was really a cooperative project," Ching noted that many of the gardening tools used by the volunteers were loaned to them by Rebuilding Together, the Pasadena-based chapter of the Christmas in April organization that refurbishes low-income homes throughout the country. Its activities are similar to those of Habitat for Humanity, and YGAP had established a relationship with Christmas in April by volunteering on a regular basis to help with building projects in Orange County.

In the spirit of cooperation of which Ching spoke, and in order to keep the costs to CHSSC down to a minimum, businesses in the San Gabriel Valley donated many of the items used in the event. By far, the most generous contributions came from Home Depot Alhambra, whose manager Brad Lichtfield interfaced with Linda Chong to donate several flats of red, white and purple vinca flowers, a dozen rosemary bushes, and several bags of wood chips to round out the new and improved look of the lawns. Even the much-smaller San Marino Nursery pitched in by donating a bag of wood chips for the cause.

Although most of the YGAP members spent their day planting flowers and bushes that now line the front lawns, some also carried out important cleaning tasks and "prep work" on the interior walls of the 411 house, where the office is located. We appreciate the willingness and hard work of the YGAP volunteers and look forward to continuing our relationship with them.

### • CHSSC Office Wish List •

If you would like to donate specifically to assist in the modernizing of our office here at Bernard St., please specify on the check or include a note. Donations will go towards the purchase of a new copy machine, DSL monthly service, & a fax machine.





# Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

**AUGUST 2001**

## **Chinatown Art Festival by Roger Hong**

During the Art Festival in July, I went to the old Li Po Restaurant to view the art gallery and was quite amazed and unprepared for its transformation into an art gallery, with its plush carpeting and exhibit of paintings of Chinatown by many artists, including the mural by Chinese artist Tyrus Wong, which has retained its beautiful colors through the years. There were many happy faces of both tourists and the Chinese who came to enjoy themselves, and to see the Fashion Show and the outdoor screening of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. It was a bit overwhelming, as I have not seen so many people in Chinatown for many years. It was like old times.



**Save the Date! We are planning our  
Annual Fall Dinner for November 9.  
We'd love to see you there!**



## **September 4-5 Asian History Play**

A theatrical play to confront Japan's military past, entitled "Reunion", written and directed by Yoshiji Wanatabe of the theatrical group Imagine 21 based in Japan, is a personal testimony of the sufferings inflicted upon both Chinese and Japanese people by the Japanese militarists during World War II - a genuine and emotional reflection of the war crimes.

Wanatabe, the son of a Japanese Imperial Army officer, has experienced the lingering post-war consequences first hand. Wanatabe wrote the play as his own atonement for what he regarded as the sins of his father and to confront his family's past.

Dates: 9/4 - 7:30 p.m., 9/5 - 2:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. at East-West Players' David Henry Hwang Theater in Little Tokyo. \$25 general admission, \$50 donor. Group of 10 or more \$15. For more information, please call Ann Lau 310-539-0234.

## **Hollywood** *continued from front page*

an interview on "Late Night With Conan O'Brien." Aoki plans to speak about his objections to Silverman's remarks, as well as her defensive and insincere attempts to apologize as a result of demands by organizations such as MANAA.

The next speaker on the bill will be actor Aki Aleong, a 48-year veteran of television, film and theater who will share his observations on the development of roles for Asian-Americans in the mainstream visual media. A Chinese-American originally from New York, Aleong plans to screen a sample of his work at our meeting while offering some thoughts on what the future may hold for actors of Asian descent.

Aleong has been featured in more than 40 films and 250 television shows. Some of his better-known work includes roles in box-office successes such as "The Hanoi Hilton," "Missing in Action III," featuring action star Chuck Norris, and "The Quest," starring Belgian martial artist Jean Claude Van Damme and former James Bond, Roger Moore. Aleong also has been seen on major television network programs such as "Martial Law" and "Walker, Texas Ranger." On daytime television, his list of credits extends to popular soap operas such as "General Hospital" and "As the World Turns."

The Chinese Historical Society of Southern California is looking forward to hosting these two speakers, who will touch on media issues of historical relevance while updating our membership about current events that might be of interest to them.

**For those interested in submitting articles or announcements to possibly be included in News 'n Notes, items must be received by the 15th of that month. Contact News 'n Notes editor Kelli Allen at (323) 222-0856.**

## **CURRENT & UPCOMING EXHIBITS & EVENTS**

**Aug. 31 - Sept. 1 Cine Sin Fine  
East LA Chicano Film Festival,  
(626) 289-5407**

**Sept. 8, 10am  
Elysian Park Walking Tour  
(213) 481-0815**

**Sept. 16, 7pm  
Chinese Acrobatic & Talent Show  
East LA College Auditorium  
(323) 721-0774**

**September, Tuesdays & Thursdays  
Free Summer Concerts @  
Pershing Square Park  
(213) 847-4970**

**Sept. 8, 10am - 5pm  
Family Free Day @  
Asian Pacific Museum  
(626) 449-2742**

**Sept. 21  
Chinatown Service Center  
30th Anniversary Dinner and  
Silent Auction  
(213) 808-1700, ext. 207**

**Sept. 3 LA's 220th Birthday  
Celebration @ El Pueblo  
(213) 625-5045**

**Sept. 8 Red, Classic & Cool  
East West Players Jazz & Blues  
(213) 625-7000**

**Sept. 27 - Oct. 28 RED (a play)  
East West Players @  
David Henry Hwang Theater  
(213) 625-7000, ext. 17**

**Sept. 4-5 Reunion, by Watanabe  
(see article above)**

**Sept. 11, 10:30am - 4pm  
Guangdong Business Fair  
(213) 626-8368**

**Sept. 29-30  
LA Chinatown Moon Festival  
More information to come.**

**Sept. 8, 9am - 11:15am  
Old Pasadena Walking Tour  
(626) 441-6333**





### CHSSC Projects Update

The Archive Project, a plan to convert the garage into a climate-controlled, high standard archive storage and processing facility to centralize and document our collections, has been initiated with Gilbert Hom installing shelving in our storage room in 415 Bernard St. We will soon be soliciting volunteers to assist with this exciting, multi-phase project.

CHSSC will soon be publishing the 25th Anniversary book and we are currently seeking photos to augment the articles. If you have pictures we could use, please contact Kelli (323) 222-0856 or send them to the office.

### EVENTS (CONT'D)

**Oct. 1 LA County Fair @  
the Fairplex in Pomona  
(909) 623-3111**

**Oct. 25-27 CCPH Conference 2001  
(562) 435-3511**

**Oct. 26 - Jan. 21  
"Rags-To-Riches" Exhibit @  
Gene Autry Museum  
(323) 667-2000, ext. 329**

**December 9  
Save the Date! CAM 5th Annual  
Historymakers Awards Banquet**

**In New York,  
October 4 (MCA)  
Harvest Moon Celebration  
(212) 619-4785**

中秋佳節

LA Chinatown  
Moon Festival 2001  
September 29-30

Mark your calendar for this  
event full of entertainment,  
mooncakes, and  
other activities!

**Mogao** *continued from front page*

statues and 45,000 square meters of murals depicting other-worldly beings and sacred rituals awoken the spirit and create a heavenly atmosphere in the middle of a desolate land of seemingly endless sand dunes.

One of the most valuable of the nearly 500 caves is Cave 17. Just at the turn of the century, Taoist Abbot Wang Yuan uncovered this particular cave which contained over 60,000 scrolls and documents, including the first known printed book, a Buddhist sutra from 868 AD. In 1907, Sir Aurel Stein traveled to Dunhuang to study the findings of the cave and, in fact, convinced the monk that he was on a mission to retrieve the Buddhist scriptures Xuan Zhuang had brought to China from India so many centuries before.

Dr. Agnew showed slides of specialists documenting and studying the murals on the cave walls and emphasized the challenge and importance of preserving the grottoes. Efforts have been made to control the wind-swept sand dunes from overtaking the caves. Besides obvious environmental issues outside the caves, conservationists also have to address the microenvironment of the paintings. The hair-thin layer of paint on the caves is both exposed to the air and subject to internal temperature changes in the rock and clay. Photographing, drawing, documenting and annotating continues to reveal the significance of the figures depicted, which discovery more than validates the tremendous international effort to preserve the sacred cultural heritage contained within the caves.

Why is it so important for us Americans on the other side of the planet to understand and appreciate the efforts made by Dr. Agnew and his associates? It all comes down to the question my aerospace engineer father and countless other fathers, I'm sure, have wondered for years: why the humanities? At my graduation ceremony in April, the speaker suggested that the greatest gift one can offer to another community or people is a sense that one knows, understands, and respects that group's contributions and culture. The Mogao Cave preservation project is an expression of the basic human desire for mutual understanding and acceptance. Such efforts in the humanities play significant roles in international relations and cross-cultural communication. Thank you, Dr. Agnew, for your lecture and your work.

### Thanks, Yvonne!

Since the beginning of last year, Yvonne Chia has designed and edited *News 'n Notes*, as well as assisted with other programs and projects like the CAPP project. We appreciate her time and talents and wish her success in the future.

**Lotus** *continued from pg. 3*

dragon boat races, another event of the 2-day festival.

The difficulty of finding a parking spot and, later, the crowds of people of every ethnicity swarming the festival grounds made me realize just how popular this multi-cultural, multi-faceted event really is. Local Asian American organizations distributed information, food booths with everything from phad thai to roasted corn fed the masses, and several carnival rides provided excitement for kids. At the center of the festivities was a large stage on which a multitude of cultural dances and demonstrations were performed, from Samoan singing with ukulele accompaniment to the lion

dance and taikwondo.

Along with many others, I found myself drawn to the handcraft booths and especially interested in any examples of Chinese folk art. A traditional paper cutter enthusiastically demonstrated his meticulous art to onlookers. Most enthralling was a woman from mainland China who sat weaving leaves into amazingly intricate animal figurines.

A few hours later, we left the park a bit more cultured and happy than when we arrived. At dusk, the view of Downtown across the lake is rather nice, even for a nature buff, and I recall being pleased with the balance that such a large hustle and bustle city has found in embracing cultural differences and communicating the vitality of diversity. Although I'm definitely not qualified to analyze the 'fengshui' of the city of Los Angeles, as a local, I sense that efforts to understand each others' traditions and communities has brought us closer to balance. If you didn't get to the Lotus Festival, be sure to mark it on the calendar for next summer.





# CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Please include me on the membership roster that will be available to members only

I am interested in helping with:

- ☐ Programs  
☐ Publications  
☐ Research  
☐ Membership/Publicity  
☐ Fundraising  
☐ Volunteering  
☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Membership:

- ☐ New  
☐ Renewal

- ☐ Gum Saan Journal (2 Issues Annually) \$5.00  
☐ Active Member, annual \$25.00  
☐ Additional Member, annual \$10.00  
(spouse, same household)  
☐ Contributing, annual \$10.00  
(senior citizen over 60 and student)  
☐ Institutional, annual \$50.00  
☐ Life \$300.00  
☐ Corporate, annual \$100.00  
☐ Life Patron \$1,000.00

- ☐ Donation: Please accept my tax-deductible donation(s) to the following fund(s)

General \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Scholarship \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Publications \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Office \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ 25th Anniversary Commemorative T-Shirt

\_\_\_\_\_ \$20 for one \_\_\_\_\_ \$18 for two or more

sizes ☐ Medium ☐ Large ☐ X-Large

Make checks payable to: CHSSC

We are a tax-exempt non-profit educational organization



Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

P.O.Box 862647

Los Angeles, CA 90086-2647

FIRST CLASS

