



News 'n Notes

Chinese Historical Society of Southern California
www.chssc.org • (323) 222-0856

SEPTEMBER 2001

Poet Russell Leong Writes from the Heart by Linda Chong

In the aftermath of the Sept. 11th attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, the public has been called upon to come together as Americans to heal and move on. Fittingly, our scheduled speaker for the October general membership meeting is striving not only to redefine what it means to be an "American writer," but also what it means to call oneself an "American." His views on coping with the national tragedy may even challenge us to rethink the role of poetry and words in helping us negotiate the joys and disappointments of our daily lives.

A professor of creative writing and Asian American Studies at UCLA, Mr. Leong also has served as an editor of UCLA's *Amerasia Journal* for the last four years. He has titled his upcoming talk, "Russell Leong: Journey of a Chinese American Writer," and he plans to read us some of his poetry and discuss the factors that have influenced him most as a Chinese American and as a writer of the English language.

Mr. Leong's latest work, "Phoenix Eyes and Other Stories," (University of Washington Press, Seattle: 2000), this summer won the American Book Award for the year 2000. The collection of 14 short stories center around subjects such as migration, Buddhism and sexuality. It was named one of the best fiction books of the year 2000 by the *Los Angeles Times* and is being translated into Chinese with plans to publish and make it available to readers in Taipei.

That seems to be the natural progression for the book-- which will be available in limited quantities at the meeting-- since Leong says he considers his work relevant to native-born and foreign-born people alike. Weaving tales of characters that include a

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CHSSC thanks MANAA president Guy Aoki and actor Aki Aleong for speaking at our Sept. 5th meeting. If you are interested in viewing parts of the presentation, please call our office.

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- Tribute to Y.C. Hong •
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- and much more

October Meeting

Wednesday, October 3, 2001

7:00 pm

@ Castelar Elementary Multipurpose Room

Enter lot from College St.

Please don't park past the yellow line

The Chinese Historical Society
of Southern California
introduces

Russell Leong
award-winning writer and poet

Please read more about him in
"Poet Russell Leong Writes from the Heart"

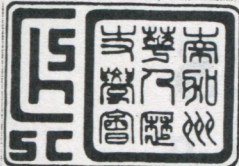
Re-visiting Lang Station and Re-driving the Golden Spike by Kelli Allen

It was exactly 12:23 pm on Wednesday, September 5th, 2001, when our train, racing at who-knows-how-fast, shot through the northern end of the San Fernando Tunnel. Destination: Lang Station. Although the tunnel, completed in 1876 as the country's longest west of the Mississippi River, is frequented by Metrolink and Amtrak trains, this was not just any train ride. The train would be taking an unconventional hiatus just north of the Newhall Station. Her passengers were on a special errand. Accompanied by members of CHSSC, Metrolink employees and other supporters, and once again bearing a commemorative golden railroad spike, former Secretary of State March Fong Eu was on her way to repeat the spike driving ceremony she had performed 25 years ago at the centennial celebration of the railroad completion.

The role of March Fong Eu in driving the golden spike is two-fold. As a state politician, she represents California in recognizing the importance of the railroad completion. 125 years ago to the day, the Southern Pacific Railroad was completed as the first 'iron road' connecting Northern and Southern California. But arguably more significant is her role as a representative of the Chinese American community. In 1875, Charles Crocker hired around 3000 Chinese to work on the Southern Pacific Railroad, 1000 of whom made up 2/3 of the labor for the San Fernando Tunnel.

Upon arrival, I discovered the regular reference to the location as Lang 'Station' to be somewhat of a deception. No

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Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

SEPTEMBER 2001

Historic Italian Hall Museum Seeking Artifacts

The Historic Italian Hall Museum at 622 1/2 N. Main St. is currently undergoing restoration and conversion into a museum and a gallery. In an effort to expand the museum's collection, Dr. Gloria Ricci Lothrop, Museum Committee Chair, has made the following solicitation:

"We are now appealing to your organization in an effort to broaden our search for artifacts for the [museum]. We are looking for clothing, luggage, household items, photos, letters, resaurant menuw, political ephemera, wine-making equipment, musical and theater programs, sports memorabilia, business records or any other item associated with Italian Americans in Southern California. We welcome long-term loans or direct acquisitions."

If you have or know of any items that might contribute to the museum's effort, please contact them at (323) 478-0356. Thank you.

Job Announcement

CHSSC is now accepting applications for the full-time position of Administrative Assistant to support daily operations and programs of the Society, help coordinate walking tours, perform basic clerical work, help compile and edit News n' Notes, fundraise, and take on other responsibilities as seen appropriate by the designated staff supervisor. If you know of anyone interested in this position, please call the office at (323) 222-0856 or have a resume mailed to CHSSC Personnel Committee, P.O. Box 862647, L.A., CA 90086.

UCLA Activity

UCLA is planning a One-day Teach-In and Celebration for the release of a new 350-page illustrated book from the UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press entitled, "ASIAN AMERICANS: THE MOVEMENT AND THE MOMENT" edited by Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu.

What: One day Teach-in & Commemoration of Activism & Community Culture

When: September 29, 2001, Saturday

Time: 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM

Where: James West Center, UCLA (next to Pauley Pavilion)

Cost: FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC; Parking: \$6.00

RSVP: aascsvp@aasc.ucla.edu or call (310) 825-2974

Publications for Sale through CHSSC

Book/ publication	Cost	Tax	Total	Priority	Total (Priority)
Linking Our Lives	\$11.00	0.88	\$11.88	\$4.00	\$15.88
The Lonely Queue	\$40.00	\$3.20	\$43.20	\$7.00	\$50.20
On Gold Mountain	\$20.00	\$1.60	\$21.60	\$4.00	\$25.60
Origins & Destinations	\$20.00	\$1.65	\$21.65	\$4.00	\$25.65
Legacy of Places	\$25.00	\$2.06	\$27.06	\$4.00	\$31.06
Duty and Honor	\$39.95	\$3.30	\$43.25	\$7.00	\$50.25
Gum Saan Journal Set	\$100.00	\$8.00	\$108.00	\$7.00	\$115.00
Gum Saan Journal	\$2.50	\$0.25	\$2.75	0.50	
Walking Tour map (color / paper)	\$1.50 / 50c				

Interested in any of these items? We can bring any orders to the monthly meeting where reserved items can be picked-up and paid for - without mailing cost, of course! We have limited Gum Saan Journal Sets and limited supply of GS Journal back issues, so get them while you can! Call (323) 222-0856 or email chssc2001@yahoo.com to place orders.

2001-2002 CHSSC Officers

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Linda Chong, V.P. Programs

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Cy Wong, Membership Secretary

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Ann Lau Stanley Mu

Ben Nakayama

Bernard St. Property

Now that the houses at 411 and 415 Bernard Street have been paid for, we need to begin planning for the future. The following are possible ideas that the Board is currently considering:

- Make conventional repairs to the buildings and turn the garage into an archival storage facility.
- Make conventional repairs to the buildings and build a large multi-story building that would house the archives and provide meeting and office space at the back of the property.
- Remove one or both buildings in order to build a larger multi-story building.
- Try to have the two houses put on the National Register of Historical Buildings and turn the garage into an archival storage facility.
- Try to have the two houses put on the National Register of Historical Buildings and build a multi-story archival storage facility at the back of the property.

We would like to get your input before the Board makes any final decisions. Would you be interested in serving on a fact-finding committee to investigate the best use of the property? You can write a letter to our P.O.Box or our email, or contact board members with suggestions or comments.



Re-visiting continued from front page

platform. No well-lit, air conditioned seating area. No ticket counter. However, the poignancy of Lang's relative desolation lies in the fact that as such it truly conveys a sense of the conditions in 1876, when thousands of Chinese laborers witnessed the final railroad spike driven in by Crocker.

After some opening comments about the completion of the railroad, March Fong Eu, in an historic and era defining moment,



joined a few other able spike drivers, placed the commemorative golden stake, and hammered away. Here she poses with Leon Worden, president of Santa Clarita Historic Society.

Cambria's Chee Kung Temple

by Roberta Greenwood

Of particular interest to those of CHSSC who visited in Cambria in 1990, is the historic temple which was then attached as part of a residence called the Red House. The home of the Warren family had been created by adding two wings to a house built about 1890. One of the additions had been brought from Main Street, and the other was a structure used by a small community of Chinese seaweed gatherers who came in from the open coast and took refuge during weekends, holidays, or when the weather was too bad to work.

Because the property was being sold, a study of the structure was made by Roberta Greenwood, Dana Slawson, architectural historian, and Linda Bentz, historian. The building was thoroughly inspected and the grounds surveyed. Historical research investigated old records and photographs, and interviewed local residents who remembered the Chinese and their settlement. The report concluded that the basic house itself was too deteriorated to save, but the Chinese structure was built of redwood and still sturdy. Although it had been mapped as a "joss house," the research concluded that it actually served a dual purpose as a temple and an association hall, tentatively identified as the Chee Kung Tong. It was in use from about 1880 until the Chinese left the area by 1920, and had been moved to become the living room of the Red House in 1925-1926.

The Red House itself has now been demolished, but the temple has been saved. There is also some evidence of a brick oven used to roast the ceremonial pigs, and that will be investigated archaeologically. The land where the temple once stood beside Santa Rosa Creek has been acquired by Greenspace, a non-profit conservancy, which is now raising funds to relocate the temple back to its original location and restore the building. Perhaps in the future, the CHSSC can revisit the site on a happier occasion.

Poet continued from front page

San Gabriel Valley prostitute, an AIDS victim working in China, a Hong Kong movie director uprooted and transplanted to Los Angeles, a divorced Chinese American father, and an alcoholic waiter, Leong's characters are downtrodden anti-heroes living on the edge of society. Their experiences seem to elicit reader sympathy and interest precisely because they are so unconventional. A line from the publisher's synopsis of Leong's book states: "From struggling war refugees to Buddhist monks ... they are linked by their experiences as modern Americans and Asian Americans."

Rather than relying on the tried and true formulas of less controversial story themes, Leong said he has tried to create poems and short stories that offer an alternative view.

"People have dreams when they come to America but sometimes these dreams turn to dust," said Leong, who was born in San Francisco's Chinatown and has been writing creatively for some 25 to 30 years. "Not every Asian American is a model minority. We all end up in different places. I'm not writing sob stories but I'm definitely not writing success stories, either. There are a lot of people out there writing success stories, but I write the other kind."

If Russell Leong's name has an especially familiar ring to it, it may be from seeing it on the covers of about a dozen books on Asian American affairs. Other books by Leong include "On a Bed of Rice: An Asian American Erotic Feast" and "The Country of Dreams and Dust."

The graduate of San Francisco State College (BS, sociology) and UCLA (MFA, film) also was among a select group of writers and poets cited by a recent *Los Angeles Times* article on wordsmiths who have put into writing their poignant feelings about the recent terrorist bombings.

The day of the incident, Leong had plans to read a particular poem at a public appearance. In half an hour, Leong wrote a replacement. Calling it "It's Another City, Today, Sept. 11, 2001," he injected phrases that watching the horrific television footage had left resonating in him. "It's another city today / They say. / HE, or SHE, or THEY, may be praying or plotting / In a mosque. In a temple. In a church. / In a truck, car or plane"

A few days later, he spoke to the *Los Angeles Times* (Southern California Living section, Sept. 17, 2001) of the roles of writers: "shouldn't we be writing about today? ... I think that our duty, basically, is to shape the thinking, whether it's intellectual or emotional, about what's happening. Whether it's [W.H.] Auden or [Pablo] Neruda, poets throughout the world, historically, know the power of language So I think we have this duty to rise to this occasion"

Please come out to our next membership meeting and hear him speak on his work.

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**. Mail articles to P.O. Box 862647, Los Angeles, CA, 90086-2647. **Thank you!**

Thank You for Sept. 5 Refreshment Donations

Natalina Chew ♦ Ruth Lung ♦ Johny Yee ♦ Winnie Lew ♦ Tim & Annie Siu ♦ Bob Lee ♦ Margie Lew
Donna Young ♦ Linda Wong-Smith



Reminiscing . . . the 40's

by Florence Ung Francis

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 our renowned Chinese artist Tyrus Wong. There were many happy faces of both tourists and the Chinese who came to celebrate and enjoy 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 a little like old times!

In recent months, many articles appeared in the Chinese newsletters about Y.C. Hong, the attorney, and his accomplishments, but no one can really know a person until they have heard his words. He and his wife Mabel were very active in the 40's in the Chinese community. Mrs. Hong was a very kind and caring person. Mr. Hong and Peter Soo Hoo, one of the founders of Chinatown, together inspired young people to be more civic minded. They sold war bonds during WWII, had the whole community marching for the March of Dimes, organized the first all Chinese Boy Scouts, organized banquet meetings with local Chinese leaders, and went before Congress to speak on behalf of the Chinese people regarding the "Exclusion Acts". Their accom-

plishments for the Chinese community were outstanding. They were inseparable, and because of their mutual respect, enjoyed working together.

Why did I start this article? While looking over my memoirs of the 40's, I came across a philosophical and inspirational letter Y.C. Hong wrote in 1948 to the newly-organized 'Mandarins' regarding their St. Valentine's Dance:

"Greetings, Mandarins!

"All work and no play certainly make life monotonous. Tonight, St. Valentine will cast over you and yours his magic romantic spell once more. Yesterday's cares belong to the past- it has no part in today's agenda. So, on with the Dance, and a hearty toast to Romance!

"Your success as an organization has been due to faithful adherence to the four guideposts of good fellowship: CONTACT, CONFERENCE, CONFIDENCE, and CO-OPERATION. Keep up with this fine tradition and you will find every Chinese youngster in this community aspiring to become a Mandarin and every young man proud to be one. The world loves a good fellow, a staunch friend and a hard worker . . . in other words, a real Mandarin.

Y.C. Hong

President, Chinese American Citizens Alliance"

Why is the gallery named Hong Art Gallery? Y.C.'s son Roger, an architect and planner, is responsible for the transformation and is carrying on the family tradition - a legacy that cannot be denied.

Lawyer continued from page 4

themselves. The program offered amnesty to Chinese men who had entered the United States over the years on false documents, a wave that began in the latter 19th century following a major fire in San Francisco that destroyed most immigration papers. In exchange for the disclosures, authorities promised not to deport the men--promises attorneys such as the Kwan brothers demanded be kept, especially since, at that time, the United States and the People's Republic of China had been experiencing a period of icy relations.

"We had, from time to time, men placed in deportation proceedings and at that time, we argued that they couldn't be deported because they would suffer persecution from the Chinese," said the veteran lawyer. "When many of them left China, it was still the Republic of China, and we said they couldn't be sent back to a China that was now being governed by the Communists."

The efforts of these pioneers in immigration law also were aimed at helping Chinese American veterans of foreign wars bring their families over from their ancestral homes.

Please plan on joining us for an evening of food, fellowship and fanfare for a doyenne of Los Angeles history who also is a trailblazer for Chinese Americans.

EVENTS & EXHIBITS (cont'd)

October 11, Thursday, 7:30 pm
"Salute to Gold" Ice Skating Show
 w/ Kristi Yamaguchi, Brian Boitano, Midori Ito, etc. @ Anaheim Arrowhead Pond. \$15 - \$55
 (714) 704-2400

October 13, Saturday
"Cracking the Coconut: Thai Cooking" with Su-Mei Yu
 @ L.A. Central Library
 (213) 228-7201

October 20, Saturday, 4:30 & 7:30 pm
One Cold Dark Night, a live performance of Annette Lee's story that 'weaves 1950s radio thrillers w/ Chinese mythology and folk lore' @ Autry Museum, \$12-17 (323)667-2000, ext. 327

October 20, Saturday, 1-4 pm, Free
Myanmar Family Festival
 @ Pac. Asia Museum, Pasadena
 (626) 449-2742 ext. 41

Oct. 19-21 Fri./ Sat. 8pm, Sun. 3pm
Orchestral Performance of Tan Dun's 'Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon' score; Barkley Theater, UC Irvine (949) 553-2422

Oct. 25-27 California Council for the Promotion of History Conference
 @ Queen Mary, Long Beach
 (916) 278-4296

October 29, Monday Angelus-Rosedale Living Hist. Cemetery Tour; meet historical figures, like Fong See. reservations req. \$17 (323) 732-2774

November 9, Friday
CHSSC Fall Dinner, lawyer Wellington Kwan will speak @ Empress Pavillion

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



Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

SEPTEMBER 2001

Thanks to all who contributed to this month's News 'n Notes!

*Moon Festival 2001
Los Angeles Chinatown*

CURRENT & UPCOMING

EXHIBITS & EVENTS

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

September 29, Saturday, 10 am - 5 pm
CPSA Crime Prevention & Safety Fair @ Castelar Elementary (213) 621-3043

Sept. 29-30, Saturday & Sunday
LA Chinatown Moon Festival (see schedule)

Oct. 2 - Dec. 2 Play *Flower Drum Song* starring Lea Salonga @ Mark Taper Forum; group tickets for Sat., Nov. 29 may still be available through CHSSC office; tickets can be ordered at (213) 628-2772. Call soon!

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

October 6, Saturday, 5 pm
UCLA Asian American Studies Center
"Millenium Legacies & Tributes" dinner @ UCLA Faculty Center (310) 825 - 1151

October 7, Sunday, 10 am - 5 pm, Free
Jeanne Yanai's arts and crafts show @ Torrance Cultural Arts Center 3330 Civic Center Dr. (310) 781 - 7150

Oct. 8 - 28 China Health & Fitness Tour \$3,749 per person, led by Dr. Betty Gaw (800) 779-2856 *still openings*

October 11 Org. of Chinese Americans Annual Image Awards Banquet @ Wilshire Grand Hotel (213) 250-9888

Saturday, Sept. 29

- 2 pm Opening Ceremony: Lion Dance in Central Plaza
- 2:15 pm Lantern Parade from Central Plaza, through Chinatown to CHSSC Chinatown Heritage and Visitors Center
- 2:30 - 5 pm Moon Festival Arts and Crafts @ CHSSC Heritage and Visitors Center; face painting, storytelling, crafts, brush painting

(The following events will be held in Central Plaza)

- 2 - 3 pm Book Signing: Icy Smith
- 3 pm Mooncake demonstration
- 3:30 pm Feng Shui Lecture with Angi Ma Wong
- 4 - 5 pm Chinese Acrobat performance & Martial Arts demonstration
- 5 - 5:30 pm Chinese Opera Demo
- 5:30 - 6 pm Dance Troupe
- 6 - 7 pm Acrobat performance & Martial Arts demo
- 7 - 8 pm Music by Zhiming Han and Evelyn Xu
- 8 pm Moon Festival Ceremony
- 8:30 pm Moon viewing & Mooncake sampling

*CPSA Crime and Safety Fair @ Castelar Elementary, 10 am - 3 pm

Sunday, Sept. 30

(All Sunday activities will be held at Central Plaza)

- 2 - 3 pm Music
- 3 pm Chinese Acrobat performance
- 3:30 pm Mooncake Making Demonstration
- 3 - 4 pm Book Signing: Angi Ma Wong
- 4:30 pm Chinese Acrobat performance
- 5 - 6:30 pm Moon Festival Fashion Show by Peter Lai
- 6:30 - 8 pm Music
- 8 pm Moon Festival Ceremony
- 8:30 pm Moon Viewing and Mooncake Sampling

*Chinese calligraphy, papercutting, horoscope facepainting and knotting will be going on in Central Plaza both afternoons.

Immigration Lawyer to Speak at Banquet by Linda Chong

Mark your calendars now for our fall fundraising banquet, scheduled for the evening of Nov. 9th at the Empress Pavilion. In addition to enjoying a sumptuous feast, you will be treated to plenty of food for thought! Our scheduled keynote speaker is attorney and community activist Wellington Y. Kwan. A senior partner of the Los Angeles immigration law firm Kwan & Motallebi, Mr. Kwan will discuss "The Evolution of Chinese Immigration Since World War II."

During the middle part of last century, Mr. Kwan and his brother, Hiram, were instrumental in fighting for the rights of longtime California residents who were of Chinese descent and who found their efforts to bring their families over continually thwarted. The Kwans soon discovered that the lifting of overtly racist legislation such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of the gold rush days was only half the battle; the other half involved being ever vigilant of discriminatory policies and practices that implicitly or consequently blocked the entry of Chinese to the United States.

Mr. Kwan also plans to discuss ways in which the 1960 "Confession Program" was as much about legitimizing Chinese Americans in the eyes of U.S. immigration officials as it was about reclaiming their true identities for

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CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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TELEPHONE _____

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

I am interested in helping with:

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☐ Other _____

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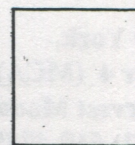
- ☐ 25th Anniversary Commemorative T-Shirt

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

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Chinese Historical Society of Southern California
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