



# News & Notes

Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

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February 2004

## 105TH GOLDEN DRAGON PARADE

### Welcoming in the Year of the Monkey



In the distant past - when many of us in the Chinese Historical Society were younger - we raised families and attended CHSSC's monthly meetings, surrounded by the warmth and camaraderie of our fellow members. Each year, I remember the children dressed in their little red Chinese jackets, or T-shirts and black pants and sneakers, lining up to walk alongside us in the Golden Dragon New Year parade. I miss the little ones holding their flags and, sometimes, their dangling lanterns.

As children and little birds must leave their nests, the years passed and more of us became empty-nesters. Elementary school-age children went on to middle and high school and off to college and beyond. Our marching numbers dwindled, but we were no less enthusiastic as each year brought out the faithful and a few surprises. One especially memorable occasion was when our small marching contingent was joined by thirty or so German visitors who had just stepped off their tour bus. While not attired in the standard red and black "uniform," I doubt any group had a more enjoyable time. Carrying the requisite American flags in one hand, most of them held either a video or still camera in the other to record the crowd and sights along the way.

For the past six years, I have brought a group of fellow Palos Verdes Rotary Club members to Chinatown's Empress Pavilion for a gourmet Chinese New Year banquet. I have invited other Rotarians to join in the parade in years past as well, and CHSSC members have always been welcoming and friendly to them all. Last year, four Rotarians and eighteen Rotaractors (college-age members) marched alongside CHSSC members and had their pictures taken with both Mayor James Hahn and Miss Chinatown and her court.

This year, the partnership between our two organizations truly reached its potential. Over sixty Rotarians, Rotaractors, Interactors (high school-age) and Youth Actors (middle school-age) swelled the ranks of about fifteen CHSSC marchers, much to everyone's delight. Our leader Johnny Yee was all smiles! As instructed, all were attired in the requisite red and black, wearing comfortable walking shoes. At least five Rotary clubs were represented; about half of the Rotarians had come to Chinatown from El Segundo, taking the Metrorail all the way! Our flags were distributed quickly and efficiently and everyone kept their rows of three neat during the assembly. I, for one,

sorely missed past president, Cy Wong, who has been a mainstay for so many years. Nevertheless, it was a wonderful sight to see so many American flags waving in the breeze.

For years, I've thought our unit needed a lion dance troupe, band or drummer to create rhythm and fanfare for the parade's leading edge, instead of marching quietly through the El Pueblo and Chinatown communities. Evidently, others shared my feelings because three blocks after we started, I suddenly heard young people in the rear yelling: "Happy New Year!" in unison. It was a wonderful surprise to hear their boisterous enthusiasm!

Another delightful surprise was hearing and seeing small packs of firecrackers set off on Broadway and Hill Street, after their absence for so many years. Their noisy explosions added much to the color and excitement of the parade. The single, long firecracker string, tended by the late Bill Hong for so many years, didn't quite create the same festive atmosphere. Thanks to whoever was responsible for that decision!

As the New Year celebration draws to a close (with the last of the banquets threatening my waistline), it is my fondest wish we continue including friends such as the Rotarians in our ranks, to march in the parade together.

May your Year of the Monkey be blessed with good health, happy relationships and abundance in all things.

Angi Ma Wong, Past President

(See the website version of this article at [chssc.org](http://chssc.org) for more Year of the Monkey information)

## MARCH PROGRAM

Wednesday, March 3, 2004, 7:00 p.m.

**Castelar Elementary School**

Multipurpose Room

840 Yale Street, Los Angeles, Chinatown

(Park on playground, enter on College Street between Hill and Yale Streets)

**Featured Speaker: William Chew - Historian, Author, CHSSC Board Member**

**"NAMELESS BUILDERS OF THE TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD"**

Our March General Meeting speaker - CHSSC Treasurer William F. Chew - will present some of the research that shaped his new book, *Nameless Builders of the Transcontinental Railroad*. Mr. Chew will also debut the



book and sign copies. The work examines Chinese railroad workers' contributions to building the Western route of the Transcontinental Railroad, and is dedicated to Bill's grandfather, Chew Wing Qui, who was one of those workers. The long-awaited release is the fruition of Bill's five-year study of the Central Pacific Railroad's payroll records and was inspired by a visit to Golden Spike National Historic Site by Bill and his wife, Natalina.

Mr. Chew's demographic information on the first Chinese railroad workers has been the focus of controversy and debate, most of which ignores the historical data revealed in primary sources such as the Railroads' existing payroll records. To cast new and irrefutable light on this subject, Mr. Chew went to these sources.

A retired aerospace engineer, William F. Chew holds a Master's Degree in Engineering from UCLA. During his years in aerospace, he developed a critical component for the first Mars landing. He also designed and manufactured a scientific experiment which successfully flew on two NASA Space Shuttle missions. As Director of Engineering for GTI Corporation in San Diego, Mr. Chew headed a program on the commercialization of space.

## == AROUND CHSSC

### THREE HISTORICAL SOCIETIES HOLD POTLUCK AND PROGRAM AT LITTLE TOKYO'S FAR EAST CAFE

On January 31st, The Chinese Historical Society of Southern California joined our kindred folk from the Japanese American Historical Society of Southern California (JAHSSC) and Filipino American National Historical Society, Los Angeles Chapter (FANHS-LA) to eat – again – at Far East Café, the only pre-war Chinese American restaurant left in Little Tokyo.

Why does a restaurant mean so much to a community? The pioneering Issei and Pilipino *manongs* worked so hard to build California, but they shared fun at the dinner tables of Far East Cafe. Bill Watanabe, Executive Director of Little Tokyo Service Center, talked of a Nisei couple who had their wedding party at Far East Café, as well as their 50th anniversary party. A Mexican American visitor exclaimed, "Oh the happy meals we had here. My children loved the fried rice, the noodles." Bill Tom (1956 Olympian), Bill Chew (CHSSC Board Member), and Dr. Andrew Chong (optometrist) talked of their early days as busy busboys. Dr. Chong's grandfather, along with four cousins, opened Far East Café in 1937. In the 1940's, the Chong (nee Jung) family gave Japanese Americans returning from the camps free temporary lodging on the building's second floor. In 2000, the family donated the building to the Little Tokyo Service Center.

It was a nostalgic evening. There are many folks to thank, though it was essentially a team-effort. As I turned off the lights and locked the front doors, I thought I heard the whisper of laughter emitting from the now-empty restaurant walls. Was it the final echoes of today's party? Or were the ghosts of our ancestors talking to each other?

-SL-

## CHSSC MEMBER NOEL TOY YOUNG REMEMBERED

Friends, relatives, and admirers of Noel Toy Young, the first Chinese American fan dancer, and later in life a successful real estate salesperson, gathered to honor her on January 31, 2004. Noel passed away on December 24, 2003 in Vallejo, California.

Masses of white orchids with a large red rose in the center, poster-size black and white photographs of a beautiful young Asian woman, floating candles and yellowed newspaper clippings, all added up to a glamorous, elegant and joyful celebration of Noel's life. Her loving nephew, Michael Now, organized the memorial service at Hollywood Forever Cemetery, complete with a video documenting Noel's exuberant spirit and amazing life and career, interspersed with her characteristic laughter. After the ceremony, participants were escorted to a flower-laden champagne reception and served delicious firecracker shrimp and other delicacies. The festivities were pervaded by the bubbly, lively personality of the honoree, Noel Toy Young.

-MB-

## MARYSVILLE'S BOK KAI FESTIVAL

By Dr. Paul Chace

Marysville's traditional Bok Kai Festival is scheduled for February 21-22 this year. All Society members are encouraged to enjoy this grand celebration. The transplanted Chinese community ritual brings more than 10,000 people to party and participate together. Locally, the festivities are a happy series of events, joining the community in harmonious activities that recognize their common civic citizenship, just as occurred in many old Chinese villages. Ever since the rites began here in the mid-nineteenth century, Marysville's Chinese leaders have invited Anglos to the festival, and announced its events in local newspapers.

The annual festivities are popularly spoken of in Marysville as a 'birthday party' for Bok Kai. This old Chinese saint has the central position in the community's Chinese temple. Popularly considered the protector and patron of the town ever since the Gold Rush, this ancient Lord of the Dark North has protected the town from the devastation of river floods. So, at the Temple, many folk offer prayers and offerings for their continuing good fortune.

The keynote event is the extravagant Bok Kai Festival parade, scheduled for late Saturday morning. Typically, about 120 bands, floats, community organizations, volunteer groups, businesses, church groups, a sheriff's mounted posse, Boy Scouts, Four-H Club members, etc. march together through town. For five generations, the locals have enjoyed the parade. Marysville's grand golden dragon is in the honored final position, to bring its blessings. The procession is reputed to be California's oldest ongoing parade.

A wide variety of community entertainments occur through the day, and Saturday and Sunday evenings are filled with family dinners. Grand invitational banquets at the two local benevolent halls bring out civic leaders to dine with their Chinese hosts. This year, on Saturday afternoon, Society member Paul Chace will present a public program, "Early Visions," featuring video-films assembled from earlier Bok Kai festivals, some dating back 75 and 80 years.

Sunday afternoon features the traditional lucky bomb rite, when 100 bombs are fired individually, each launching a red-ribboned



lucky ring high into the sky. Many strong youths joust to catch these lucky rings falling from the heavens. It is a grand athletic competition, and the luckiest-numbered bomb rings can be sold for big dollars. Lucky temple bomb rites were common in early Chinese California communities, but Marysville is the only town that continues the traditional event to this day.

## == ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Condolences

The Society extends its sincere condolences to Leland Wong and Betty Wong Oyama on the recent passing of their mother, Mae Jing Wong.

### Recent Contributions

The Society thanks Adrienne Chen for her recent donation of \$10,000, given in memory of Choy and Esther Wy.

### January Meeting Refreshments

Thank you so much to Ruth Lung, Winnie Lew and Dorothy Louie Lew for the delectable refreshments at CHSSC's January 14, 2004 General Meeting.

### New Volume on the Post-September 11, 2001 Asian American/Pacific Islander Experience Published by CHSSC Member, Icy Smith

East West Discovery Press has released *Voices of Healing: Spirit and Unity After 9/11 in the Asian American and Pacific Islander Community*. Editor Icy Smith is the award-winning author of *The Lonely Queue: The Forgotten History of the Courageous Chinese American in Los Angeles*. For further information, phone: (310) 532-1115.

## == HEALTH & WELLNESS

### Type 2 Diabetes is Epidemic in the United States

By Dr. Betty Gaw

Being a pediatrician, the ever-increasing girth of our children is apparent and concerns me deeply. One-third of American children are overweight and one-fourth are obese -- putting them at high risk for early onset of type 2 diabetes. Moreover, 41% of obese seven-year-olds, 70% of obese ten-year-olds, and 80% of obese adolescents become obese adults.



When I completed my pediatric training forty years ago, juvenile type 2 diabetes was unheard of. Today, there is an alarming diabetes epidemic, propelled by the scourge of obesity. This alarming incidence is highest in Asians, Pacific Islanders and Hispanics and is largely driven by the abundance of high calorie, processed foods, saturated trans-fats/hydrogenated fats, over-consumption, and sedentary lifestyles. Effects of this metabolic illness such as shortening of longevity and low self-esteem have far-reaching health, and psycho-socioeconomic impact for our children, their families, and society. It is therefore incumbent upon parents, teachers, counselors, coaches, nurses, and doctors to take corrective action, because sick children grow

up into sicker adults. There are 143 million diabetics in the United States today and the number is skyrocketing.

### Signs and Symptoms of Diabetes:

- Being overweight or obese and, occasionally, weight loss;
- Frequent thirst and urination;
- Frequent infections or wounds that heal slowly;
- Numbness and tingling in the hands or feet;
- Sweet, acetone-like breath;
- Weakness, lack of energy, being accident-prone;
- Falling asleep easily, even in the daytime;
- High blood sugar while the cells are starved of glucose;
- High insulin blood level, known as insulin resistance;
- Elevated blood glucose, i.e., a fasting blood sugar test result of greater than 100 milligrams per deciliter - and greater than 140 milligrams per deciliter, two hours after a meal;
- Memory loss, with risk of developing Alzheimer's Disease;
- Depression;
- Fragile bones, muscles and tendons which rupture easily;
- Retinopathy, which can lead to blindness;
- Heart and artery disease and stroke risk, due to atherosclerosis;
- Kidney failure.

Diabetes affects every body organ by causing toxic levels of glucose and insulin, which is why it is known as a wasting disease. Excess urination excretes vitamins, minerals, proteins, and glucose and depletes nutrients from the body.

### How to Help Our Children Avoid Diabetes

- Limit time on the computer and in front of the television;
- Limit daily caloric intake;
- Set a goal of one hour exercise each day, which increases burning of fat and glucose and builds lean muscle mass;
- Eat nutrient-dense vegetables, fruits, whole-grain foods, beans, nuts/seeds, leaner meats, seafood, monounsaturated oils such as olive oil, and avoid fried foods. Breakfast is a must to set the metabolism in motion;
- Eat slowly and chew well to aid digestion;
- Limit fruit juices that are high in fructose, cut out sodas which contain 10-12 teaspoons of sugar, and drink low or non-fat cow's milk, soy milk, or protein drink;
- Eat meals together as a family whenever possible;
- Get regular checkups by a doctor who is not overweight and is thus a good role model;
- Request a referral to a diabetologist to consult on diabetes, once diagnosed;
- Maintain a healthy weight, monitoring body weight three times a week;
- Monitor the blood parameters which are markers of health or disease;
- Allow time for meditation and relaxation;
- Get adequate sleep, aiming for the optimal eight hours per day;
- Join a diabetes or weight control clinic for support and education.

With our New Year's resolutions still fresh, let us resolve to take positive, affirmative action for our children and ourselves. By improving our mind, body and spirit, we can live in greater balance and harmony. Achieving good health requires knowledge, motivation, and action, and is the path to a high quality of life and personal happiness. I invite you to join me in taking a big step toward being HEALTHY, WEALTHY and WISE for yourself, your family and your friends.



## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

**Monday, February 23, 2004, 6:30 p.m.**

**VOICES OF HEALING – PRESENTATION AND BOOK SIGNING - EDITOR, ICY SMITH**

Chinatown Branch Library  
Hill and Ord Streets, Chinatown

**February 28 to April 10, 2004**

**ZHI LIN – CROSSING HISTORY/CROSSING CULTURES: PAINTINGS & DRAWINGS**

Koplin Del Rio Gallery  
464 N. Robertson Blvd., West Hollywood  
Information: 310-657-9843

**Monday, March 1, 2004, 6:30 p.m.**

**MICHAEL NOW – MY AUNT, NOEL TOY YOUNG – A CELEBRATION OF LIFE**

China Society of Southern California  
Golden Dragon Restaurant, L.A. Chinatown  
Information: 323-463-1396

**March 3, 2004, 7:00 p.m.**

**DR. WING MAR - CHINESE AMERICAN PORTRAITS OF PRIDE PROJECT**

Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Torrance  
Information: 310-783-0032

**March 7 to June 6, 2004**

**REVISITING EAST ADAMS: AN EXHIBITION OF PHOTOGRAPHS AND MEMORABILIA FROM THE EAST ADAMS NEIGHBORHOOD, CIRCA 1930's TO 1950's**

Curators, Jennifer Cho & William Gow  
CHSSC Chinatown Heritage and Visitors Center  
411 Bernard St., Chinatown  
Information: 323-222-0856

**April 19, 2004, 6:30 p.m.**

**REVIEW/BOOK SIGNING – AUTHOR CHEN CHEN (COME WATCH THE SUN GO HOME; THE ABBOTT & THE WIDOW)**

Chinatown Branch Library  
Hill and Ord Streets, Chinatown

**Saturday, April 24, 2004, 6:00 p.m.**

**CHSSC 2004 ANNUAL SPRING DINNER – AUTHOR IRIS CHANG (THE CHINESE IN AMERICA: A NARRATIVE HISTORY)**

Empress Pavilion Restaurant, L.A. Chinatown  
Information: 323-222-0856

**April 29 to May 6, 2004**

**VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS ASIAN FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL**

Directors Guild Theater & Japan America Theater  
Information: 213-680-4462 x 68

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Chinese Historical Society of Southern California was organized in November, 1975. The purposes of the Society are: 1) to bring together people with a mutual interest in the important history and historical role of Chinese and Chinese Americans in Southern California; 2) to pursue, preserve, and communicate knowledge of this history, and 3) to promote the heritage of the Chinese and Chinese American community in support of a better appreciation of the rich, multi-cultural society of the United States.

## 2003-2004 CHSSC OFFICERS

Linda Wong Smith – President  
Pete Chinn – Vice President  
Eugene Moy – V.P. Programs  
Ben Nakayama – Membership Secretary  
William Chew – Treasurer  
Franklin Mah – Financial Secretary  
Susie Ling – Secretary  
Dr. Betty Gaw  
Gilbert Hom  
Dr. Wing Mar

News 'n Notes Editor, Randy Bloch

February News 'n Notes Contributors: Angi Ma Wong, Susie Ling, Dr. Betty Gaw, Natalina Chew, Bill Chew, Paul Chace & Maureen Bloch.



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