



# NEWS 'n NOTES

CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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Chinatown Heritage & Visitors Center: 323-222-0856

**FEBRUARY 2006**

## MARCH PROGRAM

*Guest Speaker*

**DENIS MAIR**

*Lecturer and Author*

危机

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1, 2006, 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)**

Language is a constantly shifting cultural adaptation. It shifts with geography, outside influence, and the creative energy of the speaker. Language can be conservative as it must be able to transmit memories from one generation to the next. Language can be alive and constantly changing as it is used in daily interaction, rolling with events and introduction of new technology. It is also often fraught with poor definition, subject to misinterpretation, and sometimes infernally frustrating to translate. Such is the case with a contemporary translation of the Chinese character *weiji* (shown above) for "crisis" as the combination of "opportunity" and "danger." This may be more wishful thinking on the part of New Age gurus and

*(Cont'd on page 2)*

## CHSSC PROGRESS IN GRAVESITE CONTROVERSY

*ATTENDANCE ENCOURAGED  
AT SPECIAL MTA MEETING ON FEB. 23*

*By Jack Ong*

CHSSC Past President Irvin Lai and current President Kenneth L. Chan are working steadily on the Society's behalf to ensure the successful resolution to preserve the contents found at Evergreen Cemetery, the site of the old Chinese cemetery in the Boyle Heights area. During the summer, the Metropolitan Transit Authority began construction of its Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension near the old Chinese cemetery where close to 800 gravesites existed.

Most if not all of the graves are those of early Chinese settlers in Southern California. CHSSC learned of the recent unearthing from a "whistle blower" and took immediate action to prevent careless handling and irretrievable disposal of the remains. Lai and a group of CHSSC members attended a meeting of the MTA Review Advisory Committee on Jan. 19. There, Lai expressed the Society's and community's concerns about the excavated gravesites.

More recently, as a result of Lai's conversation with Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa at the Golden Dragon Parade on Feb. 4, the mayor has assigned John Cho, a field deputy, to work with CHSSC on this controversial issue.

In addition, Lai spoke with MTA Commissioner Peter S. Yao, who is a councilman for the City of Claremont. Yao has agreed to do what he can to arrange for Society representatives to explore the excavation site and view photographs of relics found.

With these and other contacts Lai and Chan have made, CHSSC is actively asserting steady pressure to the MTA for these requests to be provided to the CHSSC and the community:

- Logs, photos, site maps and other archeological reports for the excavation on E. First and Lorena Ave.

*(Cont'd on page 3)*





# Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

## FEBRUARY 2006

(“Meeting” from page 1)

misguided advertisers.

Our special guest for the March meeting is a Chinese American scholar adept at both Chinese and English having been trained in the Chinese classics and interpreting them to the English speaking reader.

Denis Mair is a Seattle native, lecturer on the Chinese language, and is the author of several Chinese works in translation. Among them are the “Autobiography of Feng You-lan,” an eminent 20th century Chinese philosopher; “The Strain of Meeting,” a novel by a former Chinese Minister of Culture, Wang Meng; and “In Search of Dharma,” the autobiography of Chinese monk, Shih Chen-hua. He holds both a B.A. in Chinese and an M.A. in Chinese Literature from Ohio State University. He has also lived in Beijing and Taiwan soaking up the language and culture.

Mr. Mair currently enjoys reading Tang poetry and is writing a book about Chinese ideas and thinking. He is a translator and teacher of English for *Tiandi Jiao*, an organization with sites in Taiwan and Los Angeles that combines Taoism and Confucianism. He spends his leisure time studying the *I Ching* and loves helping others learn its mysteries.

In learning a second language, it is often necessary to not only transliterate word for word, but it is sometimes even more important to translate cultural and contextual meaning. Mr. Mair is eminently qualified to take us through the maze of language translation. So you thought you were bilingual? Maybe what you learned growing up is not what you thought. Come to the next meeting and find out!

N/N

### AROUND CHSSC

#### CHSSC IN THE 107<sup>TH</sup> GOLDEN DRAGON PARADE

*By Angi Ma Wong, Past President*

As my friends and I arrived in Chinatown on February 4<sup>th</sup>, the day of the Golden Dragon Parade, it felt more like a balmy day in June than a brisk Saturday morning in early February. Some shops on North Broadway were closed, though it had been almost a week since New Years Day... the shopkeepers, no doubt, were still celebrating the Year of the Dog, 4704.

After a casual lunch at historic Philippe’s, we crossed the bridge to meet CHSSC’s parade master, the legendary Johnny Yee, and the CHSSC flag unit, just as we have for the last 30 years. Seeing Johnny and Board member Irvin Lai’s energy level reminded me of two Eveready bunnies—you just can’t keep them down!

The ranks of the Society’s marching group—identified by our red CHSSC tee shirts—began to swell remarkably. Friends of CHSSC from six local Rotary clubs had pressed their youth groups into service. Eventually, our numbers reached 123 CHSSC marchers—15 adults and 108 young folks, just 7 bodies shy of last year’s all-time record. Those who had joined us a year ago were anxious to participate again. I am always thrilled to see

(Cont’d on page 3)

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

#### Officers

Kenneth L. Chan, President  
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Jeannie Liu  
Eugene Moy  
Jack Ong  
Mary Yee Kwok

*News ‘n Notes Editor,*

*Monica Merritt-Kwon*

### 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.





(“MTA” from page 1)

- An inventory of all artifacts and details of where they are stored.
- Complete information about the 108 skeletons unearthed.
- Restitution to families of the displaced deceased.
- A final resting place for the unearthed remains in Evergreen Cemetery, with an appropriate monument to be placed near the former gravesites.
- A formal apology from MTA to the Los Angeles Chinese community for failing to notify leaders when bones and artifacts were discovered last June; and failing to consult with members of the Chinese community for cultural sensitivity and expertise while MTA continued to excavate the site.
- Implementation of MTA policy to follow laws regarding proper environmental impact review prior to excavations as well as proper artifact preservation.

CHSSC member Sherri Gust, an archeologist with Cogstone Resource Management, Inc., is currently working with a team to treat and catalogue the artifacts and remnants discovered at the Gold Line site. She will share the progress of the work with CHSSC.

An ad-hoc subcommittee of the MTA Review Advisory Committee is scheduled on Thursday, Feb. 23, at 6:30 p.m. at the Boyle Heights Sr. Citizen Center, 2839 E. 3<sup>rd</sup> St., Los Angeles, CA 90033. All who are available are encouraged to attend.

“This will be an extremely important meeting, and I encourage as many Society members as possible to attend,” Lai said. “We will be discussing what will be done with the remnants and artifacts – where they will be reburied, what kind of monument should be created, and other vital issues. If it weren’t for the Society, who knows what would have happened with the graves of these early Chinese pioneers buried at this site, a potter’s field outside the cemetery. They were subjected to horrible discrimination and exclusion then, and we cannot allow any further degradation of them and their legacy.”

### CHSSC MEMBERS CAN LEND SUPPORT AT UPCOMING MEETING!

An ad-hoc subcommittee has been formed to address this issue and CHSSC members are encouraged to participate. The first meeting will be on Thursday, Feb. 23, at 6:30 p.m. at the Boyle Heights Senior Citizen Center, 2839 E. 3<sup>rd</sup> St., Los Angeles, CA 90033.

(“Parade” from page 2)



(Photo by Don Loo)

the two organizations closest to my heart—CHSSC and the Rotarians—partnering proudly in leading the Golden Dragon Parade.

For years, I have felt the parade’s kickoff was a little restrained and had vowed to find a drummer to liven things up. Well, this year I delivered not one, but *five* young percussionists from Westchester High School who kept the beat along the entire length of Broadway. Understandably, their energy began to flag on the return trip up Hill Street, so we marched in silence on the final leg.

In addition to the groups from the Rotary Clubs marching with us, the colorful contingent of FCC, *Families with Children from China*, marched with us as well as a cluster of cheerleaders from a Venice-Marina Rotary Club-sponsored cheerleader academy. It was exciting to see so many youngsters marching along side us.

The energy of this year’s parade was different but it was all good! Kudos to the LAPD motorcycle escort which started the parade with their zigzagging officers, flashing red, white and blue lights, and loud sirens. Hurray! The parade had begun with genuine flair. Then, along came Irvin Lai from the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, sandwiched between two teenagers borrowed from the Rotarian youth carrying the Chamber’s banner.

By time-honored tradition, only CHSSC’s past and current presidents may carry the Society’s parade banner. This year, I shared the honor with Susan Dickson and President Ken Chan. It’s a kick to be on the banner with Susan because she is so well-known. Over the entire parade route, her past and present Castelar Elementary students were calling out “Hi Miss Dickson!” and waving to her. The suave and smiling Ken Chan, was holding up his end of the banner on the other side.

The celebratory 100,000 firecrackers were set off immediately in front of the reviewing stand this year, which had been relocated back to North Broadway from Hill Street. The parade then came to a standstill as the venerable Jeff Chan and his Immortals—the oldest Lion Dance troupe in town—performed superbly in front of the grandstand.

(Cont’d on page 4)



(“Parade” from page 3)

From our viewpoint at the front of the parade, the sheer number of spectators this year was impressive. Never have we seen so many viewers behind the barricades. Whether due to the spring-like weather, increased publicity, or because this parade was a week after Chinese New Year Day, it was truly “standing room only.”

After the parade, Johnny shared that he had had 140 flags at the ready and they were all distributed to the marchers. Another record for CHSSC! We can all be proud of this wonderful showing and participation. When all the flags had been furled and put away, Johnny walked over to ask me for 6 individuals to march in the parade a *second* time. And how could I turn Mr. Johnny Yee down? I volunteered two Rotarian pals, along with CHSSC member Paul Chace, and made my way to the Empress Pavilion to decorate for the evening’s Rotary Club dinner.

And, by the way, did you see that our wonderful organization and Johnny Yee received mention on page B3 in the Sunday, February 5<sup>th</sup>, edition of the Los Angeles Times? Way to go CHSSC!

### FEBRUARY REPORT

*Patrick Hong, Automotive Journalist*

*By Roy Nakano*



(Photo by John Lamm, courtesy of Road & Track Magazine)

There was something different about the audience that came to see the February CHSSC guest speaker. Susan Sing noticed it. “Wow, there sure are a lot of guys here.” Actually, there were a surprising number of car enthusiasts from both genders present. They came to hear automotive journalist Patrick Hong.

Outside of the burgeoning community of import tuners, Asian American automotive journalists are few and far between. Among the big four American car enthusiast magazines – *Automobile*, *Car and Driver*, *Motor Trend*,

and *Road & Track* – only two Asian Americans grace the senior editorial staff. Both work at *Road & Track* – the longest-running of all the magazines. The most prominent is Patrick Hong.

Patrick’s interest in cars developed early while growing up in Taiwan. In 1982, a 10-year old Patrick, along with his parents, James and Jennie Hong, and his three older sisters immigrated to Southern California. James Hong’s import and export business included the transaction of automobiles, which further piqued Patrick’s interest in cars. Patrick’s introduction into the world of automotive journalism came during a fateful day while attending the University of California, Irvine. Someone entered the room to ask, “Does anyone know anything about cars?” Patrick thought she had car trouble, but she was a jobs counselor – and there was a position for a part-time road test assistant at *Road & Track* magazine.

So, in 1994, Patrick began his career as a car journalist while finishing his Bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering at UCI. After completing his Master’s in Aerospace Engineering from the University of Southern California, Patrick was hooked. In 1997, he became part of *Road & Track*’s permanent, full-time staff, as the publication’s road test editor. In 2004, Patrick elevated to the position of Senior Technical Editor, and is currently responsible for strategic planning, content creation, and the magazine’s instrumented vehicle performance testing program.

One may think being an automotive journalist for *Road & Track* magazine is all fun and games. Well, that’s not far from the truth. One day, Patrick could be flying to Sicily to test a 1,000 horsepower, 16-cylinder Bugatti Veyron 16.4 sports car (he did). On another, it could be a trip to Crewe to drive the world’s fastest four-door sedan – i.e., the new Bentley Continental Flying Spur (he did that too). How about the new Mercedes-Benz CLS500 four-door coupe in Rome? Most recently, he was in Hawaii testing the new Lexus GS450h luxury hybrid sedan. “Hey, it’s hard work,” he insists.

Having driven so many fast machines, where does one go to kick it up a notch? In Patrick’s case, it was literally airborne. He managed to convince his boss to arrange a test flight in a Navy F-18 Super Hornet jet fighter, and to compare it with the most extreme cars of the day. It just so happens that *Road & Track* had a connection with the Navy’s Vice Admiral of the Pacific Fleet, thereby allowing Patrick to be catapulted off of and land on the U.S.S. Nimitz aircraft carrier.

The most memorable moment for Patrick, however, had less to do with cars and more with his Chinese

(Cont’d on page 5)





(“Hong” from page 4)

heritage. The opportunity came when Patrick and *R&T* Editor-at-Large (and photographer) John Lamm were invited to join Ferrari in a cross country tour of China in one of two Ferrari 612 Scagliettis. The tour encompassed several days, and Patrick was able to meet many people along the way.

In an article that appeared in *Road & Track*, Patrick pointed to his visit to an elementary school in Golmud as his most poignant. “Seeing all the innocent children showing such energy and enthusiasm for learning, despite harsh living conditions and minimal resources. Their bright eyes and smiles will live with me forever. They are the future of China, and I wish them the best of luck.”

During the Q&A session, someone asked Patrick what kind of car he drove at home. The audience had a good laugh with he said it was a minivan. “My wife, Elise, and I have two sons and two puppies. Between them and all the stuff I carry around with me, that minivan comes in pretty handy.” Fortunately for Patrick, Elise shares his passion for cars. “We both enjoy attending motor sport events, and racing our go-kart on weekends.”

In May of 2006, Patrick will begin his dual MBA studies at UCLA and National Singapore University.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### SAVE THE DATE!

CHSSC's annual Spring fundraising dinner will be on Saturday, May 6th, 2006 at the San Gabriel Hilton. Please save the date! We will be honoring Chinese and Chinese American actors and actresses.

#### FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING SNACK DONATIONS

The Society warmly thanks Ken Chan, Dorothy Lew, Winnie Lew, Ruth Lung, and Johnny & Esther Yee for the delicious snacks they provided and set-up for the February General Meeting.

#### WELCOME, NEW CHSSC MEMBERS!!!

On behalf of CHSSC President Kenneth L. Chan, Membership Secretary Peter Liang and the CHSSC Board, we extend our warmest welcome to Sam Chang, Families with Children from China-So Cal, Kelly Fong, Jan Lin, Patrick Lord, Dr. T.K. Lin, and Victor & Frances Seeto.

#### WORDS OF WISDOM FROM PAST CHSSC PRESIDENT CY WONG

Man's highest achievement has been accomplished by two kinds of persons - those smart enough to know something could be done, and those too dumb to know it couldn't.

If you're satisfied with the way things are going, it's because someone who wasn't did something about it.

#### CALL FOR SPRING DINNER RAFFLE PRIZES

We again solicit your kind donations of gifts to be raffled at our Spring 2006 dinner on May 6th. Generous gifts of new items such as books, electronics, food baskets, handcrafted items such as cushion covers, etc. will greatly benefit the Society. For those who wish to be acknowledged, please wrap and ID your donations with your name, address, and phone number. If you have any questions, please contact raffle prize chairperson Dr. Betty Gaw at 323-665-6030 or [bettycgaw@hotmail.com](mailto:bettycgaw@hotmail.com).

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND THANKS TO CHSSC VOLUNTEERS

The Society would like to acknowledge and convey many thanks to those individuals who have volunteered their time in benefit to CHSSC. Chris Merritt was a tremendous help to our Administrator. He volunteered for a week to file and organize much of the Society's office paperwork. Yvonne Chang, Ann Lau, Jack Ong, JW Wong, and a friend of Ann Lau's worked tirelessly the week before the weekend of the Chinese New Year parade and festival to clean and install new exhibits in the Chinatown Heritage and Visitors Center. There are some new things to see, so come visit us soon!

#### THANK YOU TO NEWS 'N NOTES MAILING TEAM

The Society expresses its appreciation to the volunteers who assemble once monthly to stamp, label, and fold about 450 copies of our newsletter. The team has included Gilbert Hom, Ji Kwon, Susie Ling, Jeannie Liu, Don Loo, Susan Merritt, Eugene Moy, Joey Nakano, Katie Nakano, Susan Sing, JW Wong, and Kyra Woo.





### HEALTH & WELLNESS

#### BRITTLE BONES BREAK



By Dr. Betty Gaw

#### Bone Overview

Bone is a matrix of calcified tissue consisting of protein, collagen, calcium, phosphorus, and silica. The skeleton is made of bones and teeth and provides the frame for the human body. Bone is live tissue, dynamically growing or shrinking depending on the presence of bone-forming nutrients and their metabolic needs. Bone growth takes place from conception till age 20, therefore children need to be fed foods rich in calcium and phosphorus as well as protein to achieve maximum bone development. The denser your bones are, the stronger your bones will be to resist fractures.

#### Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is the thinning of the bones caused by nutrient imbalance. Your bones become more porous as osteoporosis sets in. An estimated 10 million people suffer from osteoporosis. Often the first diagnosis is made after a fracture occurs. One out of every two women and one out of every four men over the age of 50 will have an osteoporosis-related fracture in their lifetime. Osteoporosis can strike at any age. It weakens the bones and can lead to disability and loss of work.

#### Risk Factors

Gender, age, ethnicity, family history, and life style are all factors in determining if you will be diagnosed with osteoporosis in your lifetime. Due to women's small structure, they are more prone to develop osteoporosis than men. After menopause, bone loss accelerates due to diminished hormone production. As we get older, the body is unable to restore and absorb nutrients essential to keeping our bones strong. It has been found that Caucasian and Asian women are more at risk than African American and Hispanic women. It is important to be aware of your family's medical history. If a close relative has or was diagnosed with osteoporosis, you may have a predisposition to it.

Eating well and being physically active is important to preventing osteoporosis. Eat a balanced diet, limit the

intake of caffeine and alcohol, stop smoking, and get a good amount of sleep each night. Perform simple weight bearing exercises such as walking, jogging, or dancing to help strengthen bones. If these simple steps are not taken, the thinning or loss of bone will occur.

#### Prevention of Osteoporosis

To prevent osteoporosis, be sure to take calcium with vitamin D. In addition to bone growth, calcium is used for muscle contraction, nerve transmission, neuronal firing, and to strengthen skin, hair, and nails. Calcium can be found in low-fat dairy products, soy products, dark green leafy vegetables, nuts, whole grains, and salmon. In addition to following a healthy diet, you can take calcium supplements with vitamin D. Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium. Exposure to the sun for 15-20 minutes a day may enhance the natural production of Vitamin D by the body, but with advanced age this may be unreliable. Vitamin C also helps the body absorb calcium.

#### RECOMMENDED CALCIUM INTAKE (mg/day) *National Academy of Sciences (1997)*

<u>Ages (years)</u>	<u>mg/day</u>
Birth – 6 mo.	210
6 mo. – 1	270
1 – 3	500
4 – 8	800
9 – 18	1300
19 – 50	1000
51 or older	1200

#### Detection

The outward physical signs of osteoporosis are shortening of height, loss of teeth due to the shrinkage of jaw bones, and dowager hump – hunching of the upper back below the neck. Measure your height every year. Should you have any chronic disease such as diabetes, renal disease, or are taking any bone-depleting medications or alcohol, monitor your height 3-4 times a year. There may not be pain until these weakened bones are stressed or fractured.

#### Conclusion

A life-long balanced nutrition is mandatory if bones are to be nourished and preserved. This must be taught and instilled in our young at home and in school. Good nutrition is not a one day or once in a while habit. You cannot binge on cookies, soda pop and potato chips and expect your bones and tissues to thrive. Bones are dynamic, dense, durable, and demanding live tissues that must be nourished in order to grow and be strong.

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### COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Ongoing, Often

#### **BONE MARROW DRIVES by ASIANS FOR MIRACLE MARROW MATCHES**

Various locations throughout L.A. area

Information: (888) 236-4673; [www.asianmarrow.org](http://www.asianmarrow.org)

Ongoing, Often

#### **"FINDING OUR FAMILIES, FINDING OURSELVES" EXHIBIT**

Museum of Tolerance

9786 W. Pico Blvd., West Los Angeles

Information: (310) 553-8403; [www.findingourfamilies.com](http://www.findingourfamilies.com)

Thursdays, 3:00-7:00 p.m.

#### **CHINATOWN FARMERS MARKET**

727 N. Hill St., L.A. Chinatown

Information: (213) 680-0243; [www.chinatownla.com](http://www.chinatownla.com)

First Saturday of Every Month, 10:30 a.m.

#### **"UNDISCOVERED CHINATOWN" TOURS**

L.A. Chinatown

Information: (213) 680-0243; [www.chinatownla.com](http://www.chinatownla.com)

Through February 26th, Tuesday-Sunday, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

#### **"IMPRESSIONS: MILTON QUON'S LOS ANGELES" EXHIBIT**

##### **"SAM BOI LEE: A PORTRAIT OF MY MOTHER" EXHIBIT**

Chinese American Museum

425 N. Los Angeles St.

El Pueblo State Park at Olvera Street, L.A.

Information: (213) 626-5240; [www.camla.org](http://www.camla.org)

Through March 19th, Sunday

#### **"DRAGONS, DRUMS, FIRECRACKERS, AND FLOATS: A CHINESE AMERICAN TRADITION" EXHIBIT**

Chinese Historical Society of America

965 Clay St., S.F. Chinatown

Information: (415) 391-1188, [www.chsa.org](http://www.chsa.org)

Through April 9th, Sunday

#### **"TALK STORY: AN AMERICAN FAMILY" EXHIBIT**

Chinese Historical Society of America

965 Clay St., S.F. Chinatown

Information: (415) 391-1188, [www.chsa.org](http://www.chsa.org)

Through May 14th, Sunday

#### **"ISAMU NOGUCHI - SCULPTURAL DESIGN" EXHIBIT**

Japanese American National Museum

369 E. First St., L.A. Little Tokyo

Information: (213) 625-1770; [www.janm.org](http://www.janm.org)

Through May 31st, Wednesday

#### **"WHEN CHINA RULED THE SEAS: THE TREASURE FLEET OF THE MING DYNASTY, 1405-1433" EXHIBIT**

Ventura County Maritime Museum  
2731 S. Victoria Ave., Oxnard

Information: (805) 984-6260

February 24th, Friday, 6:30 p.m.

#### **LANTERN FESTIVAL BANQUET**

Empress Pavilion Restaurant

988 N. Hill St., L.A. Chinatown

Information: (213) 721-0763; [www.camla.org](http://www.camla.org)

Through March 19th, Sunday

#### **EXHIBIT: "OPEN TO THE FOUR WINDS" OIL PAINTINGS BY LONG NGUYEN**

Bamboo Lane / Revisited

418 Bamboo Ln., L.A. Chinatown

Information: (213) 620-1188, [www.galleryrevisited.com](http://www.galleryrevisited.com)

April 17th-18th, Monday-Tuesday

#### **"1906 CENTENNIAL - SAN FRANCISCO UPRISING" GALA DINNER & COMMEMORATIVE BREAKFAST**

Palace Hotel

2 New Montgomery St., San Francisco

Information: (415) 391-1188, [www.chsa.org](http://www.chsa.org)

May 6th, Saturday, 6:00 p.m.

#### **CHSSC SPRING DINNER**

San Gabriel Hilton

225 West Valley Blvd., San Gabriel

Information: (323) 222-0856; [www.chssc.org](http://www.chssc.org)

June 10th-11th, Saturday-Sunday

#### **3RD ANNUAL CHINESE FOOD FESTIVAL**

L.A. Chinatown

Information: (323) 680-0243; [www.chintatownla.com](http://www.chintatownla.com)



## UPROAR OVER DEMOLITION OF HISTORIC CHINATOWN BUILDING

*By Monica Merritt-Kwon*

Over the weekend of Christmas 2005, two buildings, designated as historic landmarks, were demolished. These buildings were the last remnants of Deadwood, South Dakota's historic Chinese district.

The central building, commonly referred to as the Wing Tsue Building, was built in 1896 by Chinese immigrant, Fee Lee Wong. Wong arrived in Deadwood, South Dakota in 1876 at the age of 30. When he arrived, he had a couple of mining claims which he sold to establish his business, the Wing Tsue Emporium ("wing tsue" means "assembly of glories"). The store sold silks, fireworks, Chinese curios, imported teas and food products, and Chinese herbal medicines.

Over its 100 years of existence, this building served as a store and a lumberyard. It was located in the middle of Deadwood's Main Street, in the middle of a row of three buildings owned by Gene Johner. Johner received permission to remove the building on the south side but was given explicit instructions by historic preservation staff to "retain as far as possible

the façade on the north building and to maintain and restore the Wing Tsue Building." The building on the north was known as the Hi Kee building.

The great-granddaughter of Fee Lee Wong, Edith Wong of San Luis Obispo, California, expressed her shock and dismay over the demolition of her family's historic building. She had once been inside the building in 2000 and in 2004, she and other descendants of Fee Lee Wong had a reunion in Deadwood. The family inquired about buying the building but the price was too inflated. The family asked the Deadwood Historic Preservation Commission to do everything possible to preserve the last remaining vestige of Deadwood's Chinatown.

Historic preservationists, city officials, and the business community have all expressed their disgust over the demolition of these buildings. But what makes this whole story even more repugnant is that the demolition and clearing of the rubble was not supervised by an archaeologist as was mandated. There is no telling what has happened to the remains of these historic buildings.

Now that the building is gone, Edith Wong's goal is to somehow find the original bricks from the front façade so that the historic Wing Tsue Building could be recreated.

N/N



**Chinese Historical Society  
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**415 Bernard St.  
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