



NEWS 'n NOTES

CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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February 2009

February Program

Life of Dr. Lily Chou, Pianist and Pastor and Piano Recital

Wednesday, February 4, 2009 @ 7:00 p.m.

Castelar Elementary School

840 Yale Street

Los Angeles Chinatown

Enter from College Street between Yale and Hill

Dr. Chou was born in Shanghai, China, and raised in Hong Kong. She began studying piano at age of five. At 19, she came to the United States to further her music education at Bob Jones University, Juilliard School of Music, and University of Southern California. She has taught at various universities and performed in major cities in the United States, South East Asia, Russia, Austria and Guyana as a soloist and ensemble player.

Dr. Chou has a second career as a pastor after receiving her Master of Divinity from Duke University in 1999. She is now the assistant to the senior pastor of Alhambra True Light Presbyterian Church in Alhambra, California.

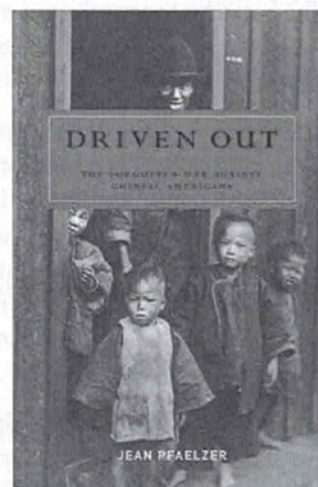
After a presentation on Dr. Chou's life, she will give a short piano recital. The public is invited to attend. There is no admission fee to our monthly speaker programs.

CHINESE AMERICAN STORIES READING LOS ANGELES CHINATOWN February 14th, 2009, 2:00—4:00

Writing from Chinese American Stories—community, family and personal memories and narratives—will be presented at the Chinatown

(Continued on page 3)

Around CHSSC



Update on book reading and signing of "*Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans*"

The date of the book reading and signing of *Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans* by Professor Jean Pfaelzer has been changed to Thursday, January 29, 2009, @ 7:30 p.m. CHSSC and Pasadena Museum of History are co-sponsors. It will be presented at the museum, 470 West Walnut Street at Orange Grove Boulevard, Pasadena, California. Admission is \$10 for CHSSC and Museum members and \$15 for non-members. For reservations, please call 626.577.1660, ext. 10.

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Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

February 2009

MY TURN

by Angi Ma Wong

Time to confess.

As a campaign news junkie, my anxieties and my past finally caught up with me on the day before the election. My husband Norman was ready to turn on the news in our office when I stopped him. Bless him, he did, grudgingly, retiring to watch non-stop news in another room while I stayed at my computer, going about my daily business, trying to keep myself grounded.

As a naturalized U.S. citizen born in post-war China who loves and appreciates this, my country with a passion, that Monday was too emotional for me. I had finally reached information overload, much like the days following 9/11, when my appetite diminished and my sleep was disrupted. Long-buried memories of my high school years living in Washington, D. C. in the 1960s as a diplomat's daughter surfaced at odd moments, juxtaposed with those of my past four decades living in Los Angeles.

I was a senior at Woodrow Wilson High School in the city's Northwest section staffing the school telephone switchboard (anyone else out there remember those?) in the fall of 1963. Those of us in the main office were puzzled when a teacher stopped at the counter on the afternoon of November 22, telling us that the President had been shot. A few minutes later, an incoming call came in and I answered. A flat voice announced that President Kennedy had been shot and was not expected to live and that all schools were to be dismissed for the day. My family spent the following days transfixed by spectacle on television Johnson's swearing in on Air Force One, mourners filing past JFK's body lying in state under the Capitol rotunda and the funeral entourage. It felt unreal and bizarre and I had panic attacks for a while. A short year later, I was attending parties at the Johnson White House.

By 1968, I had transferred from Virginia Tech, married, moved to Los Angeles, and was a senior at USC. After living in New Zealand, Taiwan, Washington, D.C. and Blacksburg, it was here in my namesake city, that I experienced discrimination for the first time in my life. While looking at apartments to rent in Ladera Heights, my husband and I encountered comments such as, "The apartment is already rented," and "You can't afford it," that accompanied the slamming of doors in our faces during our search. And I was stunned during my California History and Government class at USC when the professor launched the semester on the first day by declaring "California has always been a racist state." It was a seminal moment I often tell as "lighting the spark" of my fascination with the history of the Chinese experience in America, enriching my life.

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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.

Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

February 2009



February Programs

(Continued from page 1)

Branch of the Los Angeles Public Library, 639 N Hill Street. These stories were developed and collected in an eight-session writing workshop conducted by writer Judy Soo Hoo.

Participants of the workshops include Linda Chong, Anna Gee, Wai-Yin Khuh, Ann Lau, Shirley Chu Ng, Susie Szeto, Henry Ong, Bo-Gay Tong Salvator, Joo Tao, Marshall Wong, and Ron Wong.

The presentation is free and open to the public. There is limited free parking on the premise, and additional parking in the streets nearby.

My Turn

(continued from page 2)

I recall the roiling turmoil of race and social issues coupled with the war in Vietnam that consumed our emotions and opinions in those tumultuous years. I was thrilled by Reverend King's stirring speech at the Lincoln Memorial and the triumph of Bobby Kennedy's nomination, followed by the dark, despairing days that followed their assassinations. And a year later in September, at my first job as a rookie English and journalism teacher at Horace Mann Junior High School, I discovered that white and black teachers sat on the opposite sides of the teachers' lunchroom while those very few of us of Asian heritage sat in between.

On Monday before Election Day 2008, I couldn't bear to watch or listen to any more analysis by political experts and pundits about the candidates. Throughout the day, the radio and television remained silent but I finally allowed myself to listen to KNX while driving to my evening Rotary meeting. Afterwards, I rushed home to listen and watch Senator Obama's speech to over a quarter of a million well-wishers in Chicago's Grant Park.

With a pounding heart, I was uplifted at the images of the crowd's diversity filling the television screen, representing our multicultural nation. The energy and the hope were tangible and transcended our diversity and differences. I was so overwhelmed and exhilarated that our country could unite with such fervor and energy to

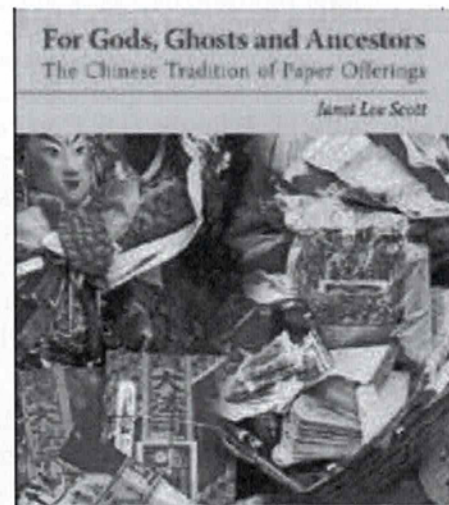
celebrate our freedom and exalt in our democracy. My entire being filled with pride for everyone in our country who cared, argued, and exercised our personal and collective power to vote.

It was a sign. After all, these past decades since those tumultuous days of my youth, the Class of '68, the Age of Aquarius and the Flower Power generation's time had truly arrived for us to rediscover and re-engineer ourselves and our country again. I felt in my deepest of hearts that my fellow Americans had heard the cry of our beloved country and we finally responded. I felt our wings.

Yes, we can and we did. Way to go, America!

The Author is a past President of CHSSC. My Turn was published in Daily Breeze (12/03/08)

Burning Paper as Offerings



The Chinese burn paper representations of everyday objects to send them to the deceased in their afterlife. Burning paper is part of ancestor worship and good luck rituals integral to Lunar New Year celebration. You can read more about the practice of paper offerings in *For Gods, Ghosts and Ancestors: The Chinese Tradition of Paper Offerings* by Janet Lee Scott. It was published by University of Washington Press in 2007, with 64 color illustrations.



Miriam Wydra—An Unsung Hero

By Yvonne Chang



Miriam Wydra

Photo Courtesy of Angel Island Immigration

If you were to ask any Chinese American who is Miriam Wydra, chances are you will get a blank stare and probably accompanied by a shrug. If you were to do a search on the internet you will come up with one result. That result tells the questioner that Miss Wydra, as the clerk for the U.S. Congressional Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, requested that the Committee be furnished with information with respect to the number of persons who might be affected by the enactment of H.R. 2522. This Bill provides expeditious naturalization of former citizens of the United States who have lost their United States citizenships.

As told by her sons Jeffrey and Mark Mendell to the readers of the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation website, www.aiisf.org, their mother worked long and hard behind the scenes to get enough members of the Congressional committee to support repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act. In spite of the fact that China was an ally in WWII, there was opposition in the U.S. for a repeal.

Miss Wydra came to the United States alone at age 16 in 1929 because her parents feared that conditions for Jews in the pre-Nazi Germany were already becoming difficult. She was detained for a long time at Ellis Island by the U.S. immigration authorities and was almost denied entry.

The Chinese Exclusion Act was finally repealed and President Roosevelt signed the Magnuson Act in 1943. Customarily the pen a President uses to sign a bill is presented to the sponsoring congressman but in this case it was given to Miss Wydra. Everyone agreed that she had worked so hard on the repeal that President Roosevelt presented the pen to her with an authenticating letter. She kept the pen and letter but never mentioned this to her family until almost 50 years later. Her sons explained that as a recent immigrant dedicated to the ideals of her new country, their mother thought the Chinese Exclusion Act reflected unacceptable prejudice and did not fit with American ideals.

Miss Wydra's family agreed that this important historical artifact should be donated to an appropriate organization. In 1996, Miriam Wydra Mendell, at 83 years old, and her family brought the pen and its authenticating letter to Angel Island and, in a ceremony there, presented it to the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation.

U.S. Immigration Station at Angel Island Grand Re-Opening

The following is an announcement from the U.S. Immigration Station at Angel Island:

"We are pleased to announce the Grand Re-Opening of the U.S. Immigration Station, Angel Island on Sunday, February 15, 2009. The dedication ceremony will begin at 10:30 a.m. with a blessing by the Federated Indians of the Graton Rancheria, the original inhabitants of the site, and short speeches by elected officials, state parks leaders, and AIISF and community leaders. The Marin Chinese Cultural Association Lion Dance Troupe will perform at 11:35 a.m. as officials cut the ribbon to re-open the Detention Barracks."

For more information please go to Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation's website at www.aiisf.org



Remembering JEM YIN LEW

1924-2008

Karen Polyniak, Jem Lew's younger daughter, wrote this memoriam which is reprinted with her kind permission. Jem is well-remembered as a "fixture with his camera" at CHSSC activities and for his photographic recording of community events when he and wife Alvina, a local journalist, documented a wide range of activities.

Jem Y. Lew was born on October 26, 1924 in rural Canton (Guangzhou), China, and came to America with his father when he was twelve. After attending Polytechnic High School in Los Angeles, he rose to second lieutenant in the Army Air Corps during World War II, and after the war, attended UCLA.

According to our grandfather, Dad was supposed to return to China and find a wife, but instead he met a co-ed (our future Mom Alvina Ng). They wed 60 years ago on July 3, 1948, being married over 44 years. When Dad graduated in 1949, Mom gave him a lifetime UCLA Alumni Association membership. We children grew up Bruin Fans, attending many basketball and football games. Our parents belonged to the Founders Club and their names are on the Donor Wall outside Pauley Pavilion.

Dad was not one for the corporate world. He co-owned a machine shop (Blue Chip Manufacturing Company) for many years and dabbled in other entrepreneurial enterprises including JEM Raceways (a slot car venture) and Universal Auto Sales and Truck City, selling used automobiles.

Dad loved to sing informally, especially the "Army Air Corps Song" ("Wild Blue Yonder"), the "Star Spangled Banner," "I've Gotta Be Me," "My Eyes Are Dim," "You are my Sunshine," and the song with contradictory lyrics, "Oh! Susanna" by Stephen Foster.

When our parents retired they teamed up: with Mom writing and Dad taking photos of numerous Asian American community events. They were involved with the Chinese American Citizen

Alliance (co-founded by Mom's grandfather Walter U. Lum) and the Asian Business Association. In Chinese, the name "Jem Yin" is associated with our Dad being the first male great grandson. Using his first name as a homonym, Mom would call him her "Jem & a Jewel"

Jem Lew was predeceased by wife Alvina who passed away in 1993. He is survived by his sons Mel and Rod of Long Beach; Scott (wife Evelyn) of Rancho Cucamonga; daughters Laurie of Beijing and Karen (husband Mike Polyniak) of Bakersfield; brother

Maurice (wife Daisy) of Los Angeles; and Sister Sue of Seattle, along with numerous cousins, nieces, nephews, grandnieces, grandnephews and great-grandnephews.

A public memorial service will be held on Saturday, February 7, at 11:00 a.m. with lunch following at Bethany Church, 2250 Clark Avenue, Long Beach, CA 90815. Directions to Bethany Church are at www.bethanylb.org/SiteSections/AboutBethany/MapAndDirections.html.

Save the Date

Sunday, 3 May 2009

34th Annual Dinner

Honoring

Chinese Americans in Sports

Including the First 2 Chinese American Olympians

Donations for silent auction and raffle are appreciated.

Stay tuned as more details become available.



Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

February 2009

Historical Chinatowns

Lovelock's Old Chinatown

Reported in the Asian American Comparative Collection Newsletter of December 2008 is an article on the Frank Chang Museum in Lovelock, Nevada.

Lovelock's old Chinatown was nearly forgotten but thanks to the efforts of one man, Larry DeLeeuw. He built a museum in the garage of his motel, Cadillac Inn, paying tribute to the Chinese who helped settle the town of Lovelock and acknowledging the contribution by Chinese laborers in building the Central Pacific Railroad. He began working on the exhibition around 1998.

The collection of artifacts includes bits of rice bowls, opium pipes, a lantern, a statue of buddha, a Chinese male mannequin that looks home made, coins and various other artifacts. DeLeeuw found them in the ruins of Lovelock's old Chinatown. The Los Angeles Times reports that De Leeuw became interested in the history of Lovelock after hearing about it while researching the history of another Chinatown in Marysville, California. The World Gold Council News of February 8, 2008, reports that previous excavations in Lovelock had uncovered 119 gold coins from the old site of its Chinatown, along with firecracker labels, medicines and a snuff tobacco jar.

The Cadillac Inn's address is 395 Cornell Avenue at 14th Street. Take I-80 exit 106, then west on Main St., then right (north) on Cornell Avenue of Lovelock, Nevada.

Admission is free and donations accepted. The Inn's telephone number is 775-273-2798.

Acknowledgements

- An anonymous donor gave \$10,000 to CHSSC's Portraits of Pride Project (PoP). The donor is a friend of a PoP founder and this is his second major donation in the last two years.
- Gordon Hom installed a storage shed to make room for more office space. This marks the beginning of getting the facility ready for the proposed Family History Project.
- ^{Howard} Mike Fong alerted the editor of News 'n Notes of the Grand Re-opening of U.S. Immigration Station at Angel Island. (see page 4).
- Winnie Lew and Susan Sing provided refreshments for the January 14 program meeting.

Reminders

1. Deadline for submitting the CHSSC/David and Pearl Louie Foundation scholarship application for 2009 is April 3. Application, criteria and other details can be downloaded from:

www.chssc.org/Scholarship/2009application.pdf

2. Any student in the 6th through 12th grades in any accredited school is eligible to enter a student essay contest sponsored by the Pacific Asia Museum. Contestants are asked to write an essay imagining themselves traveling on the Silk Road Route. For details and to download a flyer go to www.pacificasiamuseum.org/calendar/pdf/Silk_Road_Essay_Contest.pdf. Deadline is March 31, 2009.

Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

February 2009



Community Calendar

Ongoing events

Masters of Adornment: The Miao People of China

Bowers Museum

2002 N. Main Street, Santa Ana, CA

This important collection of exquisite textiles and silver jewelry on loan to and from the Bowers Museum's permanent collection highlights the beauty and wealth of the Miao peoples of southwest China. More than an examination of masterful techniques and beautiful style these objects reveal hundreds of years of Miao history and tradition and, the patience and dedication to achieve beauty.

www.bowers.org

Open everyday except Mondays and major holidays.

Liu Fang Yuan

Inspired by the centuries-old Chinese tradition of private gardens designed for scholarly pursuits, Liu Fang Yuan, or the Garden of Flowing Fragrance, combines the scenic beauty of nature with the expressiveness of literature to give deeper meaning to the landscape. A walk through its paths enriches the mind and spirit alike.

Huntington Library

1151 Oxford Road, San Marino, CA 91108

(626) 405-2100

www.huntington.org

Open everyday except Tuesdays and major holidays.

Saturdays, 8-9:30am

T'ai Chi Classes

Veteran instructor and CHSSC honoree actor Chao Li Chi will lead you through the steps of the 'yang' style in the peaceful surroundings of Pacific Asia Museum's courtyard garden. New participants are welcome. Classes are \$6 for Museum members and \$7 for non-members.

For more information, call 626-449-2742 ext. 31.

Saturdays, 10am-12noon

Chinese Brush Painting Classes

Respected instructor Guang Li Zhang offers students demonstrations, lessons and workshops.

The ongoing six week session is \$90 for museum members and \$99 for non-members.

For more information, please call ext. 31.

Thursday, January 29, 2009 @ 7:30 p.m.

Book reading and signing, *Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans* by Jean Pfaelzer.

See page 1 for details.

Saturday, January 31, 2009, 10:00 a.m.—8:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 1, 2009, 10:00 a.m.—6:00 p.m.

Chinese New Year Celebration

Golden Dragon Parade—January 31 @ 2:00 p.m.

Los Angeles Chinatown

Sunday, February 1, 2009, 11:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.

Chinese New Year Festival

Huntington Library

1151 Oxford Road, San Marino, CA 91108

(626) 405-2100

General admission

Monday, February 2, 2009

History and Development of the Chinese Written Language and Calligraphy

By Professor Hun-hsiang Chou of UCLA

Besides covering the historical development of Chinese characters the speaker will talk about how new Chinese words are created and accepted; Chinese dictionaries and how to use them; "simplified" Chinese script, etc.

Bring examples of calligraphy for show and tell.

Golden Dragon Restaurant

960 N. Broadway, Los Angeles Chinatown

Optional dinner @ 6:45 p.m., \$15 per person

RSVP to Dorothy Brown, 323-463-1396

Lecture @ 8:00 p.m. is free

Saturday and Sunday, February 7 and 8, 2009

The 31st Annual Los Angeles Chinatown Firecracker 5/10K Run

Celebrating the Year of the Ox

USA Track and Field sanctioned course.

www.firecracker10k.org

323-256-1363

Proceeds benefit Needs2Read Project and Los Angeles Chinatown community organizations

(continued on back page)

Community Calendar

(Continued from page 7)

Sunday, February 15, 2009, 1:30 p.m.

Lecture: Land of the Silk Dragon: Home of the Miao

By collector, curator and author Phila McDaniel

Culture of the Miao with emphasize on their elaborate costumes.

Bowers Museum

2002 N. Main Street, Santa Ana, CA

www.bowers.org

Friday, February 27, 2009 @ 6:00 p.m.

Chinese Chamber of Commerce New Year Banquet

Empress Pavilion

988 N. Hill Street

Los Angeles Chinatown

213-617-0396



Wishing You

Happy Year of the Ox

Lunar Year 4707

From

CHSSC Board and Staff



Chinese Historical Society

of Southern California

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Los Angeles, CA 90012-1703

