



# NEWS 'n NOTES

CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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March 2010

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## March Programs



Wednesday, March 3, 2010  
7:00 p.m.

### Meet Icy Smith

Castelar Elementary School  
Multipurpose Room  
Enter on College Avenue  
between Hill and Yale Streets  
The public is invited  
(free parking)

Most society members are familiar with Icy Smith's book "The Lonely Queue: The Forgotten History of the Courageous Chinese Americans in Los Angeles." She in fact does a lot more than just being a writer. About 10 years ago, she founded East West Discovery Press (EWDP), an independent book publishing and distribution company in Los Angeles. Since its inception, EWDP has published a variety of award-winning multicultural titles with an emphasis on culture, history and social justice. Currently, EWDP distributes thousands of multicultural and bilingual books in 50-plus languages to schools and libraries across the U.S.

Icy will speak about book publishing and discuss some of her latest book projects, including "Mei Ling in China City" and "Half Spoon of Rice" in our upcoming meeting on March 3. "Mei Ling in China City" is based on a true story of events during World War II in Los Angeles China City. A 12-year-old Chinese American girl named Mei Ling Lee was separated from her best friend Yayeko Akiyama when Yayeko and her family were interned in the Manzanar War Relocation Center. By writing letters to each other, both young girls recount their painful separation and their lives in China City and Manzanar. This unprecedented children's book depicts the hardships and cross-cultural experiences of Americans of Chinese and Japanese ancestry during the war years. Icy's new title: "Half Spoon of Rice: A Survival Story of the Cambodian Genocide" presents a child's account of life in Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge regime in the mid-1970's. One review says the book's "powerful child's

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### A Tribute: Lucie Cheng

UCLA professor Lucie Cheng passed away recently in Taiwan. Her impact on our Los Angeles Chinese American cultural and educational community was far-reaching. For us in Chinatown, she is considered a catalyst and visionary.

She was a sociology professor and the second director of the UCLA Asian American Studies Center. It was during her tenure that the Center solidified the principle that as a key part of the activism of the Asian American Movement, academia must reach out and partner with the community. The idea was refined with people such as Bill Watanabe in Little Tokyo. Cheng insisted that the same mission be brought to Chinatown, and she sought to accomplish that action through the then-new Chinese Historical Society of Southern California. She suggested an oral history project because so little was known and documented about the elder generation at that time. So the Southern California Chinese American Oral History Project was born as a joint effort of UCLA and CHSSC.

As the visionary and professor, she understood that it was well past time to capture the history of Chinese Americans to establish a legacy and a public identity for this culture and community for the next generation. This was a pioneering concept in the 1970s.

To carry out this vision, she was joined by several distinguished staff members: Dr. June Mei, Yale graduate on Chinese studies; gifted poet, writer and editor Russell Leong; Fulbright scholar from Taiwan Suellen Cheng; and dedicated librarian and archivist Marjorie Lee. Out of the project began the efforts in creating a collection, an almost unavoidable byproduct of the interviews. So CHSSC created the goal to of becoming a collector of documents, photos, and artifacts. The project lasted about five years with tapes to UCLA and summaries deposited at the library and at CHSSC.

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# Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

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### A Tribute: Lucie Cheng (continued)

Cheng was still not done: “Now, the oral history collection must be used.” Cheng had become an aggressive champion for Asian American women, as well as a leader and role model. She challenged young Asian American women scholars to examine the stories that the oral history interviewees told and to share their findings. These young scholars produced a group of easily accessible, non-academic essays that gave a voice, for the first time, to Chinese American women of Los Angeles.

The essays were compiled into a 1984 book, “Linking Our Lives.” Lucie brought together the CHSSC and UCLA Asian American Studies Center as co-publishers, beginning a relationship that would yield more publications in the future. The editors were Suellen Cheng, Angi Ma Wong, and a production staff which included Society past presidents Ella Quan and Munson Kwok, with Don Loo and his then “modern” computer.

And where are those young scholars today? One is a congresswoman (Judy Chu), two are professors (Susie Ling and Sucheta Mazumdar), one a UCLA dean (Feelie Lee), another a university librarian (Marjorie Lee), and Suellen Cheng is senior curator at El Pueblo Historic Monument. Time has shown that these were great choices on Lucie Cheng’s part.

Lucie Cheng would go on to become founding dean of Shih Hsin University's Graduate School for Social Transformation Studies in Taiwan; editor for two newspapers, including the *Lih Pao Daily*; established the Cheng She-Wo Institute for Chinese Journalism, an archive documenting the history of Chinese journalism; editor for opinion journals — among other accomplishments. The artistic tributes to her have been poetic and extensive, in Taiwan, China and elsewhere.

We should not forget the legacy she created in her moment in *our* community. Appropriately, the UCLA Asian American Studies Center and the UCLA Department of Sociology are planning a memorial and tribute. Details are available on the Center's [website](#) or by calling 310-825-2974

### Transition

Since Thanksgiving, CHSSC has been without administrative staff. While some volunteers have been generously volunteering their time, some of our operations have obviously been impacted. The website and the web newsletter were only partially updated. Some phone calls have been missed, unanswered or lost. Requests for tours got delayed responses. So we apologize.

But change is coming. We have just hired new staff. I see CHSSC being in a good position. With everyone’s help and assistance, big improvements will be seen. So stay tuned! -GH

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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*News 'n Notes Editor*  
Gordon Hom

### 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

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### ICY Smith

eye view of war is harsh and realistic—like its subject—though accessible and thought-provoking.”

If you are interested in learning how CHSSC supported her transition from public relations to writer, please join our meeting on March 3. East West Discovery Press’s award-winning children’s titles will be available for purchase after the program. Part of the proceeds will benefit the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California.

### Acknowledgements

Snacks for the February monthly meeting were provided by Nino Wong, Winnie Lew, Susan Sing, and Tim & Annie Siu

Gilbert Hom’s efforts with Evergreen’s Crematorium Memorial Wall.

Board member Winifred Lew’s tireless volunteer work in the CHSSC office during this transitional period between staff members.

Eugene Moy, Bill Chun-Hoon, Elsie Chan, Jenny Cho, Linda Chong for conducting Chinatown walking tours.

J. W. Wong for helping CHSSC and the Dragon Parade

Diane Poon’s leadership in hiring and selection of staff.

Jenny Cho for all the book tours and signings.

### Welcome to Our New Staff Members

#### Fenton Fong Eng / Administrator

Fenton was born and raised in New York City. He attended the Cooper Union as an art major. He has resided in Arcadia since 2001. His career has been in the field of advertising as a creative director. Currently, he is very involved in his community and is also a Kung Fu instructor. Fenton is looking forward to utilizing his skills to further grow CHSSC.

#### Christina Huh / Assistant Administrator

Christina was born in Ohio and raised in southern California. She graduated from the University of Southern California with a degree in print journalism and Middle East studies. Currently, she is freelancing, teaching herself how to sew and trying to get her on-line store off the ground. She hopes that with her journalism and social media skills, she can increase membership and interest of CHSSC.



Jenny Cho @ Cerritos Library with Councilwomen Carol Chen and Laura Lee



2010 Dragon Parade CHSSC Leading THE Parade



## Community Calendar



**Wed FEB 24 7pm**

**UNCLE TOISAN by Charlie Chin**

Enjoy this favorite uncle, as he shares stories of arriving and striving in America

Torrance Cultural Arts Center

**Thursday February 25, 2010 6:30**

**Arthur Dong's—Hollywood Chinese**

So. Pasadena Library 1115 El Centro Street

**Saturday February 27, 2010 11:30**

**Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision**

Glendale Library

**Saturday-Sunday February 27-28, 2010**

**Firecracker 2010 5K/10K Run/Walk**

**Kiddie Run Bike Rides Night n'Day Festival**

<http://firecracker10k.org/>

**Tuesday March 2, 2010 7:00**

Autumn Gem—China's first Feminist

UCI Humanities Hall 178 [www.autumn-gem.com](http://www.autumn-gem.com)

**Saturday, March 6, 2010, 12:00-7:00 pm**

**9th Annual Lantern Festival**

Chinese American Museum See [www.camla.org](http://www.camla.org)

**Sunday, March 7, 2010 12:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.**

**Lantern Festival** - Pacific Asia Museum 46 N. Los Robles

**Monday, March 8, 2010 9:00 A.M**

**Evergreen Wall Memorial Dedication**

**Saturday, March 20, 2010 11:30**

**"Big Read" Chinese-American History**

led by John R. Jung, Phd

Alhambra Library 101 S. First St 91801



**Wed MAR 31 7pm**

**AMERICAN BAMBOO by Cherylene Lee** Experience how a real life family copes with loss in the midst of the Great Depression  
Torrance Cultural Arts Center

**Tuesday, April 20th, 7 pm**

**Flora Jan by Fleur Yano**

new book *Unbound Spirit: Letters of Flora Belle Jan*  
Cerritos Library

**Sunday May 2, 2010**

**CHSSC Banquet**

**June 24-26, 2010**

**API Historic Preservation Conference**

San Francisco's Japantown



**Chinese Historical Society  
of Southern California**

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