



NEWS 'n NOTES

CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

appreciation of our chinese american heritage • a non-profit organization • 1648 redcliff street • los angeles, ca. 90026

December 1985

JANUARY MEETING PLEASE NOTE:

DATE: WEDNESDAY, JAN. 8, 1985

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

PLACE: Castelar School, 840 Yale St., Los Angeles Chinatown
(Park on school grounds -- enter on College St, between Hill and Yale Sts.)

AGENDA: Officers and Board members of 1986 will participate in installation ceremonies conducted by Chuck Yee.

President - Ella Y. Quan

Vice-President - Angi Ma Wong

Secretary - Alfred Soo Hoo

Treasurer - Munson Kwok

Membership Secretary - Mary Yee

New Board members - Kiphan Kan, Marjorie Lee

Continuing Board members - Ella Quan, Elmo Gambarana, Don Loo, Eugene Moy

Also on the agenda will be committee reports from the various chairpersons.

PROGRAM:

* Re-live the glamour and excitement of the Society's impressive
* Fashion Show last September. Photo-journalist Carol Nye's beautiful
* slides will be shown, with narration by Doreen Chan, chairperson of
* the Fashion Show committee.

* Start the new year right! Come and join us for this special program.
* Bring family and friends -- all are welcome.

* ATTENTION: All models and interested parties --
* Photos taken by Kim Tsai of Photo King will be on display,
* and reprints may be ordered.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Single memberships are now \$15.00, with spouse, \$20.00; senior citizens and students, \$5.00; Life Membership, \$200.00; Patrons, \$500.00.

Renewals of memberships are due now for 1986. Mail to Mary Yee, 4721 Konya Dr. Torrance, Ca. 90503 (Use Blank Form provided)

A CHRISTMAS PARTY -- VERY VERY MERRY!

The Society's annual Christmas party on Dec. 4, the last event of the year, was an evening of great fun, good cheer, and a warm sharing of the beautiful Christmas spirit that heralds this loveliest of holiday seasons. Members brought in their favorite dishes, and as in Christmases past, the tables were almost groaning under the weight of the tempting salads, main dishes, and the "forget-the-diet" desserts.

David Lauren, gifted pianist, provided Christmas music for both listening and singing. The Christmas carolling was led by Al Soo Hoo, with everyone participating in the traditional Yuletide melodies. Thank you, David, for adding to the beauty of this special evening.

MEMO FROM RUTHANNE LUM McCUNN

Many CHSSC members are by now familiar with Ruthanne Lum McCunn's books on Chinese American history. Her first biographical novel, THOUSAND PIECES OF GOLD, was the story of Lalu Nathoy, a Chinese girl born in northern China. Brought to America in 1872, she was auctioned off as a slave in San Francisco. Taken to an isolated mining camp in Warrens, Idaho, to be used as a prostitute, she was saved from that fate by Charlie Bemis, saloon keeper and gambler. Lalu then became known as Polly, and she earned the respect of the community by her diligence, her kindness and warmth. Subsequently she and Bemis were married, and through the years, she showed great inner strength over adverse conditions and won the admiration and affection of the townspeople. The memory of Lalu/Polly Bemis still live on to this day in that certain area of Idaho.

THOUSAND PIECES OF GOLD is now being made into a film. However, as Chinese Americans so well know, film projects more often than not, are full of distortions, and frequently present quite negative images of them. To continue in Ruthanne's own words:

"Since the book's release, I have been approached by a steady stream of people who wanted to turn it into a film. Because a producer is responsible for the vast sums of money required to make a film, control over the artistic direction of a production must lie in his or her hands. I therefore realized that the only protection I had for Lalu's story would be in my selection of the producer.

"Keenly aware of my responsibility, I sold the option for TPOG to Nancy Kelly early this year. I had seen two documentaries she made, and I admired the sensitivity she displayed in these films. And I hoped that her partner, Kenji Yamamoto, would bring to the film the Asian American sensibility that is so sorely lacking in the industry as a whole. I now have reason to believe that I was badly mistaken.

"I have spent many hours sharing my sources, contacts, and knowledge with Nancy and Kenji. Unfortunately, I have been unable to either sensitize them to the Chinese American experience or to impress upon them the importance for historical accuracy. For example, Lalu was the only Chinese woman in Warrens, but Nancy and Kenji want to introduce a number of Chinese prostitutes. This is historically inaccurate. It caters to the prurient sensationalism and stereotyping that Chinese Americans have suffered at the hands of Hollywood for all too long. And it distorts Lalu's life.

"Unable to alter the direction Nancy and Kenji were going with the story, I asked for the opportunity to purchase back the option for TPOG. This they have refused to do, insisting that our differences are minor. On the contrary, I believe our differences are irreconcilable.

"Like other producers who have met with protests from the Asian American community, Nancy Kelly and Kenji Yamamoto are forging ahead with their project. And like many an author before me, I find that there is nothing I can do about it except to offer my apologies to the Asian American community, to the many people who have read THOUSAND PIECES OF GOLD, and to the spirit of this extraordinary woman who lives on in the memories and hearts of all who have been touched by her."