



NEWS 'n NOTES

CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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Chinatown Heritage & Visitors Center: 323-222-0856

December 2007

December Program

Wednesday, December 5, 2007 @ 6:30 p.m.

Castelar Elementary School

Multipurpose Room

840 Yale Street

Los Angeles Chinatown.

Open to the public, **enter from College Street**
between Yale and Hill Streets.

Holiday Pot Luck



Pot luck will start at 6:30 p.m. The Society will provide a few dishes but we look forward to the dishes that you all will bring! As a matter of organization, we have designated specific groups of people to bring certain items. If your last name begins with the letters below, you bring the corresponding dish or \$5.00:

A-F: Entrees

G-M: Vegetable dishes

N-T: Desserts

U-Z: Beverages

January 9th—The first Wednesday of January 2008 is January 2 and Castelar School will still be closed for the holidays. CHSSC will have its program on the second Wednesday. Henry Ong's oral history class will make a presentation.

Around CHSSC

Recap of 2007 Activities

Year 2007 was full of exciting programs and activities for CHSSC. We organized the following monthly programs on the first Wednesday evening of each month except July, August and November:

- The **disposition of Chinese burial markers** that were found at the Los Angeles Crematorium by Peggy Beetle of Applied Earth Works.
- Slide show on *San Francisco's Chinatown* by its author Judy Yung
- Talk on *Southern Fried Rice: Life in a Chinese Laundry in the Deep South* by its author John Jung.
- A joint program with Friends of Chinatown Library, **Once Upon a Time on Dragon Mountain**, by Jeff Chan, a lion dance master.

(continued on page 2)

Inside this issue:

- Upcoming Programs
- Recap of 2007 Activities
- Tong King Low
- Celebrating Himi Mark Lai: Dean of Chinese American Historians
- Community Calendar



Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

December 2007

("Around CHSSC," from page 1)

- Laura Tyson Li gave a book reading of *Madam Chiang Kai-shek: China's Eternal First Lady*, co-sponsored with the Organization of Chinese Americans Greater Los Angeles Chapter (OCA-GLA).
- Video screening of *A Chinatown Banquet*, a community-based public art and education project about the forces which shaped and continue to influence Boston Chinatown, by Mike Blockstein.
- A book reading of *Driven Out: The Forgotten Chinese American History* by Professor Jean Pfaelzer, co-sponsored with OCA-GLA.
- Presentation of Phase 1 of *Chinatown Remembered Oral History Project* by Will Gow, Project Manager, and 4 UCLA student interns who worked on the project.
- Documenting Los Angeles Chinatown, by William Kwok.
- Video screening on the life of a Chinese American family, the Yee family who came to the United States from China in 1850, then resettled in Pennsylvania and eventually in Los Angeles.

Will Gow started *Chinatown Remembered Oral History Project* that records life in Los Angeles Chinatown in the 1930s and 1940s. Four UCLA student interns interviewed four residents of the period. A video tape screening of the project was the featured program of the Society's June 2007 meeting. The second phase of the project has begun with three interns interviewing other residents. This project is made possible in part by a grant from the California Council on Humanities.

Not to be outdone, Henry Ong, a playwright, secured a grant to offer a free oral history workshop, co-sponsored with CHSSC. Some 20 people participated in eight sessions. Their stories will be presented in the Society's January 9, 2008 meeting.

Gum Saan Journal's Hanford China Alley Edition 2007 was published. Two scholarships were awarded, made possible by a donation from the David and Pearl Louie Family Foundation. Portraits of Pride Project received generous donations from Henry Sakaida, Bob and May Wong, and Dr. Annie Siu. A total of some 7,000 copies of Portraits of Pride Book 1 have been distributed to targeted public and university libraries throughout the country. The goal is to reach 10,000 targeted libraries. Donations of any amount will be greatly appreciated.

A successful annual fundraising dinner honoring the Los Angeles Chinese American banking pioneers was attended by 300 at the Empress Pavilion Restaurant. The Annual Ch'ing Ming Ceremony honoring nineteenth century Los Angeles Chinese pioneers was attended by 80 people, including Councilman Ed Reyes, Assemblyman Mike Eng and Board of Equalization Vice Chair Judy Chu. A summer picnic attended by 70 people who enjoyed a BBQ in the Heritage Center's backyard. At the picnic Marjorie Lee interviewed C.Y. Lee, 90 something years old author of *Flower Drum Song*.

We will end our year's activities with a Holiday Potluck on December 5. There will be food, caroling, a white elephant sale and good company. Please join us.

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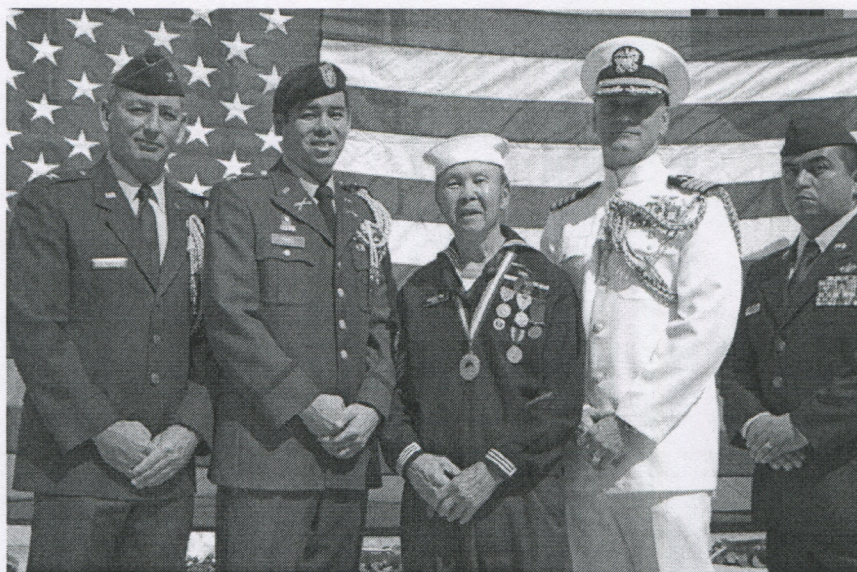
MISSION STATEMENT

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.



Oh, say can you Yee ...

By Stephen Chu



From L to R, Air Force Col. Mike Dembroski, Army Lt. Col. Newman Yang, Navy GM1 Johnny Yee, Navy CAPT Ted Algire, Air Force SGT Sean Chavez. Photo by Stephen Chu.

Johnny Yee, CHSSC lifetime member was in Hong Kong to represent the US Navy veterans at the Remembrance (Veterans) Day ceremony in Hong Kong on 11 November 2007. The solemn ceremony was well attended by top Hong Kong Government Officials, and distinguished military veterans mainly from the WWII Pacific War. Yee was accompanied by an honour guard from the Consulate General of the United States of America, with his wife Esther and daughter Carol in attendance.

Yee was a Gunner First Mate for the US Navy during WWII and was in the thick of the action during the Battle for Leyte Gulf in October 1944, where he helped protect his frigate escort during Japanese *Kamikaze* attacks. During the battle, the US Navy's Third and Seventh Fleet were successful in inflicting heavy damage to the Japanese Navy, sinking several ships, including the Japanese aircraft carrier *Zuikaku* and super battleship *Musashi*.

Yee's brothers' Swan, Joe, Chuck (former CHSSC President), and Johnson also served in the US military. After WWII, Yee continued his service as a Merchant Marine during the Korean and Vietnam wars. He has been honored with an official invitation by Chief Attaché Theodore P. Algire - Consulate General of the United States of America to lay the wreath for all future Remembrance (Veterans) Day ceremonies in Hong Kong into the future.

Yee obtained the American flag from a decommissioned US Navy battleship in 1946 and it was unfurled for the first time on 11 November 2007 in Hong Kong. Though it is over 60 years old, this American made flag was in perfect shape. Yee promised to bring it to the next Chinese New Year CHSSC parade. ... *that our flag was still there. Oh, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave. O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave."*



Johnny Yee.
Photo by Stephen Chu



Tong King Low

By Thomas W. Wing, DC, ND, LAc

The historical account of the Far East Café in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo is incorrect as to its origin and date. My father, N. S. Sue had a share of a restaurant at the location of the Fare East Café on First Street. In 1925, I accompanied my father to attend its annual board meeting. We stayed at a room above the restaurant for that visit. I don't know when the restaurant was started, but it was prior to our visit. I remember the plumbing store located next to the restaurant as I remember admiring the plumbing fixtures in the window. This contradicts the historical account that the restaurant was built in the former plumbing store.

In 1927, my father was cited by the Federal Drug Administration for excessive claims for his flu medicine and I went with him to the hearing in Los Angeles. We stayed at the rooming house above the restaurant, and had our meals at the Tong King Low.

When I left home to attend chiropractic school in Southern California in 1939, my father came down from Modesto to live with me. We were frequent patrons at Tong King Low. During the WWII years, the manager told of his waiters being drafted and in 1943 he thought had to close the restaurant. I designed a cart that can hold the used dishes and new supplies to reduce the amount of employees needed. I made four of them for him which kept the restaurant open for another year. In 1945 the manager himself was drafted and Tong King Low was closed.

This contradicts the account that Far East Café was established in the 1930s and was once the site of a plumbing store.

Words of Wisdom

What is most valuable, is not what we have in our lives; but who we have in our lives.

—Cy Wong
Past CHSSC President

Historical Chinatowns

Celebrating Him Mark Lai

The Dean of Chinese American Historians

On October 28, 2007, the Chinese Historical Society of America celebrated Him Mark Lai's life at a luncheon at the Empress of China Restaurant in San Francisco. There was a preview of *Him Mark Lai Digital Archive Project*, an upcoming world-wide resource including materials from Lai's collections of research materials to groundbreaking articles, books and films.

Mr. Lai is a charter member of CHSSC. Albert Chang, M.D., a CHSSC Board of Director, represented the Society at the celebration and presented Mr. Lai with a Certificate of Appreciation for his pioneering contribution to the study of Chinese American history.

Him Mark Lai was born in 1925 in San Francisco and earned a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from the University of California at Berkeley in 1947. His aptitude in history was evident early on. As a high school student he won First Prize at a San Francisco city-wide history contest. In the early 1960s he took courses in history at UC Berkeley's extension program taught by Stanford Lyman.

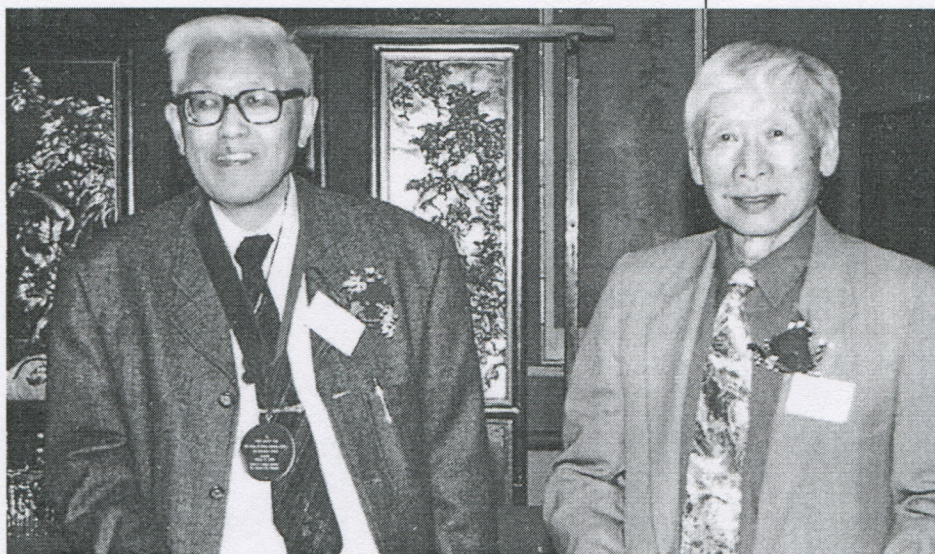
Lai researched and published articles on Chinese American history while pursuing a career as a mechanical engineer in the field of nuclear and fossil-fuel plants. He retired from his engineering career in 1984 in order to concentrate full time on his research on Chinese American history.

Prior to Lai's pioneering research the mainstream writings on Chinese American history were from the view of historians who denied Chinese American subjectivity and humanity. One historian, Gunther Barth even went as far as blame the lack of conventional sources of their history on the "illiterate or poorly educated sojourners."

(continued on page 5)



Historical Chinatown,” from page 4)



*Him Mark Lai (Left) and Philip P. Choy (Right) at a CHSA banquet
As its Grand Historians. Photo courtesy of CHSA*

Chinese American: A History of Communities and Institutions (2004). Social scientists and historians, dating back to the 1850s, have written about these institutions in Chinatown but from the point view of outsiders. Lai's book gives these institutions heart and soul.

While Lai is a charter member and founder of CHSSC in 1975, he is not an original founder of the Chinese Historical Society of America (CHSA) in 1963. But he quickly became a leader in moving CHSA in the direction of professional history, hosting

conferences and publishing volumes of collected research. The most important of which has been the journal series, *Chinese America: History & Perspectives*, beginning in 1987.

Virtually all authors of major studies of Chinese American history in the past thirty years acknowledge Him Mark Lai's untiring guidance and assistance.

He has spared no expense in traveling across the United States, from Chinatowns in all major cities to small towns and ghost towns in remote rural areas, to collect and preserve materials relevant to Chinese American life, past and present. He made a living as an engineer but his true passion is to collect, rescue and preserve Chinese American history.

Starting in 1985, he has been a consultant to the National Society for the Study of the History of Chinese Overseas in Beijing. In 1985 he co-directed the China tour of the exhibition *Two Centuries of Struggle and Achievement: The Chinese of America 1785-1980*. This exhibition had been shown in seven U.S. cities. The tour in China traveled to Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Taishan, Zhongshan, and Hong Kong.

(Continued on page 7)

For over four decades Lai searched, rescued and collected conventional historical sources in both Chinese and English. Those sources were either ignored or dismissed as non-existent by both Chinese and non-Chinese historian prior to the advent of Chinese and Asian American studies in 1969. In 1977, Lai with Karl Lo, published *Chinese Newspapers Published in North America, 1854-1975*. Another important compilation by Lai is *A History Reclaimed: An Annotated Bibliography of Chinese Language Materials on the Chinese of America*, published in 1986. Many of his fruits of labor can be found and accessed in a special Him Mark Lai Collection in the Asian American Studies Library of Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley.

Lai collaborated with Thomas Chinn and Philip Choy and published the first comprehensive Chinese American history, *A History of the Chinese in California: A Syllabus* (1969) and with Philip Choy, *History of Chinese in America: An Outline* (1972). Both works provided an agenda for pursuing further research.

Based on four decades of meticulous research into Chinese language sources, he published a seminal study on key organizations and institutions in Chinese America, *Becoming*



Acknowledgements

- Roberta Greenwood donated *Chinese American Death Ritual*, edited by Sue Fawn Lee and Pricilla Wegars, to the CHSSC's reference library.
- Adrienne Loo gave a donation to CHSSC in honor of Joyce Mar.
- Eleanor Chin, CHSSC member made a large amount of donations to the white elephant sale of December 2007. They were delivered to CHSSC office by Lupe Chee and her son Marshall.

This 'n That

Questions:

1. Who is the first woman instructor in the physics department of Princeton University (at a time when 'girls' were not allowed to study there)? What year was it?
2. Who is the first woman to receive an honorary doctorate from Princeton University?
3. Who is the first woman to be elected President of The American Physical Society?
4. Who is the first woman to receive the Cyrus B. Comstock Award of the National Academy of Sciences?

(Answers on back page)

Condolences

Condolences to Stan Lau whose wife of 58 years, Dora Wong Lau passed away on October 24, 2007. Stan and Dora were two of the charter members who launched CHSSC. Stan served as the Society's first President in 1975-1976. Dora was the first female

design technician at the Los Angeles County Department of Water and Power where she retired in 1986. In addition to her husband she is also survived by nieces and nephews.

Announcements

Volunteer Opportunity:

Have you ever wondered how you can make a difference in the world? If you can volunteer just a few hours every week, you can change someone's life. Just a couple of months ago, the Echo Park library opened a brand-new Adult Literacy Center to serve the communities of Echo Park, Chinatown, Edendale, and Little Tokyo. Now, adults living in these neighborhoods who cannot read English above a sixth-grade level can now get free, individualized help at their library. And you can help by becoming a volunteer tutor.

You do not have to have any special skills or background, just compassion, patience, and a desire to help. Volunteer tutors work one-on-one with students, helping them improve basic reading and writing skills, and assisting them in reaching life goals both large and small. Tutors receive free training and meet with their students for two to three hours per week, at their closest library branch.

For more information about the LA Public Library's Adult Literacy Program, including how to sign up as a tutor (or how to refer a student), stop by or call the Echo Park Library at (213) 250-7808, 1410 W Temple St, 90026, or contact the Adult Literacy Coordinator, Lisa Hsia, at hsia@lapl.org.

Reminder:

Chinatown Revisited Exhibition will continue until December 30, 2007. It features the recreated office of Y.C. Hong, a noted immigration lawyer, and the cloisonné artworks of Jim Fong. It is at the Central Plaza on Gin Lin Way, opens Saturdays and Sundays from 1:00 to 5:00, \$3 admission.



("Historical Chinatown," from page 5)

Among Lai's major works are: *A Brief History of Chinese Americans, From Overseas Chinese to Chinese Americans, Nineteenth-century Chinese American Journalism, Chinese Politics and the Chinese Community in America, The American Chinese: History and Community, Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940, A Survey of the Studies of Overseas Chinese in America and Chinese Americans*. For more information please visit www.himmarklai.org.

The Chronicle of Higher Education proclaimed Him Mark Lai as "the scholar who legitimized the study of Chinese America." The Him Mark Lai Digital Archive Project will enable historians, students, and others worldwide to have access to his scholarship of Chinese American history.

References:

L. Ling-Chi Wang, *Him Mark Lai: A Tribute to the Dean of Chinese American History*, Celebrating Him Mark Lai: The Dean of Chinese American Historians, 2007.

Weiye Ou, translation by Piera Kwan, *A Brief Biography of Him Mark Lai*, Celebrating Him Mark Lai: The Dean of Chinese American Historians, 2007.

Community Calendar

Through January 27, 2008

Rank and Style: Power Dressing in Imperial China

Pacific Asia Museum

46 N. Los Robles Avenue, Pasadena, CA

\$7 general admission, \$5 seniors and students
(626) 449-2742

Through February 10, 2008

China on Paper Exhibition

An exhibition on cultural exchanges between Chinese and Europeans from the 16th Century to the 19th Century

The Getty Center

Los Angeles, CA

December 3, 2007 @ 7:00 p.m.

China Society of Southern California

Gongshi: Stones from China, the Hunt for Perfection

Speakers, Larry and Nina Ragle.

Golden Dragon Restaurant

960 N. Broadway, Los Angeles Chinatown

\$13 members, \$14 non-members

RSVP, Mrs. Brown, 323-463-1396

December 8, 2007 @ 10:30 a.m.

Lecture on Hidden Meaning in Chinese Art

By Terese Tse Bartholomew, Curator of Asian Art, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco

Pacific Asia Museum

46 N. Los Robles Avenue, Pasadena, CA

\$7 general admission, \$5 seniors and students
(626) 449-2742

January 27, 2008

Chinese New Year Festival

Bowers Museum

Santa Ana, CA

February 8, 2008

The Chinese and Korean Galleries reopens

Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Wilshire Boulevard at Spaulding Avenue

Los Angeles, CA

February 16, 2008

The Chinese Garden, Liu Fang Yuan opens

The Huntington Library

San Marino, CA

(Answers to questions on page 6)

1. Chien-Shiung Wu, Ph.D., in 1943.
2. Chien-Shiung Wu, Ph.D.
3. Chien-Shiung Wu, Ph.D.
4. Chien-Shiung Wu, Ph.D.

Chien-Shiung means “strong hero” in Chinese. Dr. Wu’s father, Wu Zhong-Yi, an engineer by training, abandoned his career to take part in the revolution that resulted in the establishment of the Republic of China in 1911. After the revolution he opened the first school for girls in China where his wife was a tutor and his daughter was a student. Chien-Shiung Wu later enrolled in a teacher training program at the Suzhou Girls’ School and graduated as valedictorian. Dr. Wu became a renowned physicist. Her portrait is in the CHSSC’s **Portraits of Pride Book 2**, scheduled to be published early next year.



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