



# Gum Saen Journal

JUNE, 1985

VOL. VIII, NO. 1

CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

## AN 1886 CHINESE LABOR BOYCOTT IN LOS ANGELES

(Material created by E. G. Hager, G. E. Kinney and A. F. Kroll.)

**LOS ANGELES TRADES AND LABOR COUNCIL.**  
**PLEDGE. (No. 1.)**

*I hereby pledge myself that, from and after the first day of May, 1886, I will discontinue the patronage of Chinese in any capacity, and the purchase of any article made by Chinese in America. I also promise, meanwhile, to encourage and support any person other than Chinese engaged in the vegetable and laundry business. And after the said first day of May I pledge myself to withhold my patronage from all individuals or firms who, after that date, shall employ Chinese in any capacity, rent houses or grounds to them, or sell goods manufactured by the Chinese in America.*

Name,.....

Residence,.....

**LOS ANGELES TRADES AND LABOR COUNCIL.**  
**PLEDGE. (No. 2.)**

*I hereby promise to discharge.....Chinese now in my employ as.....as soon as I can replace.....with suitable help other than Chinese. And I also hereby pledge myself that, from and after the first day of May, 1886, I shall discontinue the employ or patronage of Chinese in any capacity.*

Name,.....

Residence,.....

Figure 1. Pledge cards issued at time of the boycott.

Prejudice against races, nations, religions, institutions, and ideas is ageless. Prejudice tends to overlook values, to give special emphasis to unfavorable qualities, to destroy the use of reason. Race prejudice emphasizes unfavorable traits in order to justify partiality.

Anti-Chinese agitation began during the Gold Rush and played an important part in California's history. In 1848, there were only 54 Chinese and by 1852 there were well over 25,000 in the State.

Up until the Chinese Expulsion Act of 1882, the Chinese were the largest racial minority and set the pattern for interaction between Caucasians and non-whites in the labor markets. In these relationships economic considerations were as important as racial differences.

What made the Chinese unwelcome, especially during the general business recessions in the second half of the nineteenth century, was that they were too industrious, and too efficient, and they took whatever jobs were most available and profitable. Denying themselves many recreations, they lived so frugally that many Caucasians thought they were men of few wants.

Agitation quickened during depression times or in years when immigration was high, subsiding to dormancy when some relief from either "evil" was obtained.

In March, 1885, a Workingmen's Club was formed, in Los Angeles, later to be known as the Independent Labor Union No. 1, and finally as the Anti-Chinese Union. During the City's 4th of July parade, the Union acquired 1,271 signatures and presented the memorial to the City Council requesting the removal of Chinese beyond the city limits, but this was ruled unconstitutional by the City

Attorney. As anti-Chinese agitation was an essential ingredient for the success of the Workingmen's Party this decision caused its disappearance from the labor scene. However, in 1886, the Los Angeles Trades and Labor Council took up the Anti-Chinese movement.

The Knights of Labor, on February 20, 1886, endorsed the actions of the Los Angeles Trades and Labor Council to boycott the Chinese and to attend, in a body, the mass meeting to be held at the Tabernacle, on Main Street, near Fourth, February 27th.

The day following the meeting, the Los Angeles *Times*, in an editorial, referred to the affair as "humanitarian" that lacked little of being an out and out anti-Chinese meeting. The *Times* adopted a strong stand against the proposed boycotting initiatives of the Labor Council and stated:

The coming of the Chinese to our shores was originally through the procurement of our own people, who wanted their labor, encouraged their immigration. The opposition is not unanimous, by any means, many large and small employers of labor still desire to retain these workers in moderate numbers. . . . It would be a lasting disgrace to Los Angeles to suffer the pending anti-Chinese movement to fall into the hands of the brutal and lawless. If the opposition measures that may be resorted to shall prove to be radical, violent or unreasonable, the movement will fail of its purpose. It has taken thirty years for the Chinese to secure a foothold they may have on the Pacific Coast, and they cannot be wholly displaced in a day, or a year. The idea that these laborers, who permeate, and in some cases dominate our industries, can be got rid of at once, is impractical. The white labor necessary to take the place of the displaced Mongols must be on

the spot when the time comes for making the proposed change, or many of our important industries will suffer, our prosperity languish. Let the lawless, the cruel, the demagogical and the irresponsible classes get hold of the anti-Chinese campaign, and trouble will surely follow.

The *Times* reported in great detail the speeches of this meeting at the Tabernacle, given before an audience of some 6,000 citizens, from 7:45 to 10:35, among the speakers for the boycott were: R. F. del Valle, H. Z. Osborne, J. P. Widney, Stephen M. White, and several others. Due to the lateness of the hour, the coldness of the room and the fact that the audience had dwindled down, other speakers were withdrawn.

In spite of the open disapproval of the Los Angeles *Times*, the Los Angeles Trades and Labor Council, on February 27th, adopted a program covering the following restrictions. Six of the major platforms covered were:

1. To discontinue patronage of Chinese vegetable gardens and laundries, and of all establishments employing Chinese.
2. To encourage and support non-Orientals engaged in raising produce or operation of laundries, hotels, restaurants, etc., without Chinese labor.
3. To withhold patronage from individuals employing Chinese, renting or leasing property to Chinese, or selling goods manufactured by Chinese.
4. To recommend immediate replacement of all Chinese servants by white help.

5. To request the Board of Supervisors of Los Angeles County to send delegates to a state anti-Chinese convention summoned to meet in Sacramento on March 10.
6. To find a legal and peaceful solution to the Chinese question.

The anti-Chinese campaign of 1886 reached a climax on May 1, which had been set aside as a half-holiday by the Trades Council. The day's special feature was another mass meeting attended by several thousand people in Los Angeles. The Council established anti-Chinese ward clubs, each responsible for canvassing their own district. As the campaign moved forward membership grew rapidly and by May 1st, more than 4,000 citizens had signed the boycott pledge to discharge their Chinese help.

The Los Angeles anti-Chinese movement died out almost as suddenly as it had begun. In the first place advocating the discharge of Chinese employees for whom no replacements were available posed an insoluble problem; secondly, the refusal of Chinese vegetable peddlers (almost the city's sole source of supply) to serve families who had dismissed their countrymen caused many people to forget their boycott pledges.

Nevertheless, the Los Angeles Trades and Labor Council continued their attempts and carried notices, for a few months, listing various places to be boycotted that employed Chinese, notably: the St. Charles Hotel, Natick House, Leclède Hotel, Brown's Restaurant and the French-Italian Restaurant.

A roving reporter for the *Times*, interviewed various business men on their views, pro and con, in an effort to ascertain the effect of the boycott. The proprietor of the Opera Restaurant stated: "They

had made a change on Friday evening and put white help in the kitchen and if the restaurateur had not been a cook, it would have been impossible to provide for his customers." Brown's Restaurant response was: "competent white labor could not be found to replace the Chinese let go." A Commercial Street purveyor of comestibles who had discharged his Chinese assistants some time ago, kept their white substitutes for just four days. When recalling the Chinese chief-cook, the latter would only consent to bring back his crew at an advance of \$10.00 per week, which was agreed to, as nothing better could be done."

Robert McPherson, of Orange, said that he had begun a place to be called 'McPhersonville,' on his ranch for the accommodations of his white help replacing former Chinese labor. Another told the *Times* reporter that: "With the embargo lifted from the Chinese laundrymen and vegetable dealers, it is practically impossible to boycott such labor on the ranches, it seems there is little left for the committee to act upon."

One should not infer that brutality toward the Chinese, in the second half of the nineteenth century represented the attitude of the average citizen. Many private citizens and state officers came to the rescue of the hard-pressed Chinese, amid protests and expressions of disgust from the lawless elements.

The sudden rise and equally abrupt fall of an enthusiasm so compelling that approximately one-tenth of Los Angeles' population attended a mass meeting can only suggest a motive more emotional than economic. There was no real urgency in Los Angeles for proceeding against the Chinese.

The 1886 boom was just starting and diverted labor's attention to craft unionism and those de-

mands, as it absorbed much of the population in money-making schemes and plans for the city's development.

The anti-Chinese sentiment in Los Angeles decreased rapidly during this period and the failures of the Workingmen's Party in various elections and the improvement of economic conditions, as well as the departure of large numbers of Chinese for railroad work in Arizona, were all factors in the demise of the boycott movement against Chinese labor in Los Angeles.

**SOURCES:**

Stimson, Grace Heilman. *Rise of the Labor Movement in Los Angeles*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955. 529 pages. [Of special value was Chapter V, "Union against the Chinese," pages 60-67.]  
Los Angeles *Times*, February and May issues, 1886.

## A LOS ANGELES LETTERSHEET OF 1878

by Anna Marie Hager

Ludwig Salvador, an Archduke of Austria, visited Los Angeles in 1876 and described the city in his *Eine Blume aus dem Goldenen Lande, oder Los Angeles (Los Angeles in the Sunny Seventies)* and also noted the anti-Chinese situation as it existed then.

No problem in California has caused more agitation and more closely affected the community at large than that of the inhabitants of the Celestial kingdom. Of late considerable anti-Chinese agitation has sprung up. A group has been formed that has declared, both by word and deed, a veritable war against this peaceful Mongolian invasion.

"In Los Angeles the Chinese have their own quarters and are greatly in demand as laborers. They live plainly . . . all in all they are not popular and in Los Angeles the anti-Chinese feeling is highly developed. The streets of Los Angeles fairly teem with activity. Because of the mixed population, they are always colorful and interesting. On the streets numerous vehicles and carriages are seen — four-seated carriages with heavy springs, light American vehicles, and frequently small carriages driven by Chinese."

Two years late in 1878 Benjamin Taylor wrote in his *Between the Gates*:

"The city is the product of one era of barbarism, two or three kinds of civilizations, and an interregnum, and is in its ninety-seventh year. You meet native Californians, wide-hatted Mexicans, now and then a Spaniard of the old blue stock, a sprinkle of Indians and the trousered man in his shirt and cue. You see the old broad-brimmed, thick-walled adobes that betray the early days. You hear somebody swearing

Spanish, grumbling German, vociferating Italian, parleying in French, rattling China and talking English. You read Spanish, French, German and English newspapers, all printed in Los Angeles. It is many-tongued as a Mediterranean seaport, and hospitable as a grandee."

Some biographical notes on the writer of the letter, Henry Dwight Barrows, indicate that he was born in Mansfield, Conn., February 23, 1825, and died in Los Angeles August 7, 1914, ninety years of age. He left Boston and sailed via the Horn to San Francisco, arriving there in 1852. He took a position as teacher of music at the Collegiate Institute at Benicia, which he held until 1854.

William Wolfskill, of Los Angeles, offered Barrows a position to teach the Wolfskill children. Barrows began his work, in the Wolfskill home, late in 1854. Later in January, 1857, Barrows traveled to the East Coast to pay his respects to President Buchanan and present him with a gift of California wines and fruit.

Juanita Wolfskill, eldest of the Wolfskill daughters, became his wife on November 14, 1860. President Lincoln appointed Barrows a United States Marshal for the Southern District of California in 1861, an office he held for four years. Barrows served as one of the founders of the Historical Society of Southern California and contributed over 49 articles to that Society's publication spanning 1887 to 1913.

As moderate and rational a man as Barrows was, his letter is indicative of the mood of the times when one contemplates the vote taken in Los Angeles County, a year later in 1879, on the Exclusion Act: 6,616 for and a mere 48 votes against the Act.

FROM THE ROOMS  
OF THE  
BUREAU OF INFORMATION.

Mr. [Name] San Angeles, Cal. Oct. 8. 1878  
 Dear Sir: (Yours of 13<sup>th</sup> ult. is rec<sup>d</sup>. In regard to the evils of  
 Chinese Immigration, I believe the people of the Atlantic States  
 have an adequate conception of them. If 1/10 or 1/4 or <sup>perhaps</sup> ~~some~~  
 1/2 of the people of the U.S. who depend upon labor for their  
 subsistence, were to be underbid by quasi Slaves, who,  
 without families & without any of the responsibilities the State  
 has a right to demand of its citizen, & who, because they live  
 like hogs, can work for wages that would starve out  
 white people or compel them <sup>to</sup> live like swine, to compete  
 with them; if in addition to this, this alien class would  
 not assimilate but only come here to maintain an  
imperio in imperium - & besides, if not merely the  
 some millions that our population consists of, <sup>but</sup> ~~but~~ some  
 hundreds of millions might come here & make Peking &  
 Hong Kong of our cities & swamp our civilization & liberties  
 - if all this & more overtake us, then I say let us legislate  
 against the invasion the wrong the overwhelming wrong that threatens  
 by self preservation is the just & binding law of nature & operations.  
 If you could not get Bergant's address in the Senate & also a Report of our Cal. sent  
 out on the subject by the State of arguments. Remember me  
 to your father & family. Yours truly, Wm. B. Barrow

Figure 2. Facsimile of Barrow's inflammatory letter.

## TRANSLATION

Mr. G. E. Talbot      Los Angeles, Cal.    Oct. 8, 1878

Dear Sir: Yours of 13th inst. is recd. In regard to the evils of Chinese Immigration. I believe the people of the Atlantic States have no adequate conception of them. If 1/10 or 1/4 or eventually 1/2 of the white people of the U.S., who depend upon labor for their subsistence, were to be *underbid* by *quasi slaves*, who, without families and without any of the responsibilities the State, has a right to demand of the citizen, & who, because they live like hogs, can work for wages that would starve out white people or compel them also to live like swine, to compete with them; if, in addition to this, this alien class would not assimilate but only come here to maintain an *imperio in imperum* and besides if not merely the same millions that our population consists of now but some hundredths of millions might come here & make Peking & Hong Kongs of our cities & swamp our civilization & liberties — if all this & more menaces us, then I say let us legislate against the unclean, the leprosy, the overwhelming deluge that threatens us! Self preservation is the first & binding law of nature & of nations. If you could get Sargent's speech in the Senate & also a Report of our Cal. Senate Committee on the subject, you would find in them plenty of arguments. Remember us to your fathers family. We are all in tolerable health.

Very truly

H D Barrows

## **ANNA MARIE and EVERETT G. HAGER**

The writers have long held a sincere interest in the Chinese of California and are members of the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California. Their first article appeared in the December, 1979 *Gum Saan Journal* on the legendary 'dragon boat' *Ning Po*.

As an indexing team they have compiled indexes for *Touring Topics/Westways Magazine* (1909-1970); the *Historical Society of Southern California* (1884-1975); the *California Historical Society* (1958-1976); and the *Pacific Historical Review* (1932-1974).

Currently, they are compiling indexes for the noted *Baja California Travel Series*, published by Dawson's Book Shop (their index volume to be number 50), and for the twenty-one volume history of the California Missions, edited by Msgr. Francis J. Weber.

It may be of interest to note that the H. D. Barrows' *Letter Sheet* was discovered by a friend in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, indicative of the distances our southern California epherma can travel!

## REMEMBERING WORLD WAR II

A Letter by Lillian Fong

I was a schoolgirl attending school in Los Angeles when World War II broke out. When I heard that the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, I could not believe it at first.

I had some Japanese-American friends that I met in high school. They left Los Angeles to go into a relocation camp. After that, we wrote letters to keep in touch. Then they left the camp in California and went further inland.

To ease the traffic situation, the school hours were changed from 8:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. to the new hours from 9:00 A.M. to 3:30 P.M. I liked the new hours much better.

When I graduated from Polytechnic High School, Los Angeles, there was no senior prom, no class ring and no year book with graduation pictures. On commencement day, lots of the boys in the senior class were not around to take part. Many of them were in the service already and were far away from Los Angeles.

My first job after graduation was in a sewing factory. It was close to home and I worked 5 days a week from 7:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. Then a lot of Chinese girls, including me, went to work for the Federal government under civil service. We worked at the Supervisor of Shipbuilding, Terminal Island, San Pedro. I made more money as I worked 6 days a week, 8 hours a day making a 48-hour week. The Federal government had Sundays off and only one holiday a year, Christmas. I rode in a carpool to Terminal Island and gasoline was rationed. Later I worked for the Federal Housing Administration and it was closer to home.

My oldest brother joined the Navy and served in the Pacific. My second older brother was drafted into the Army and was sent to Europe. Everybody was writing lots of letters; I was writing to relatives, friends and even strangers. Most of the young men were in the service and there were not many young men walking around the streets of Los Angeles. Front windows of homes had flags with stars on them. Each star represented a man in service from that home.

I remember getting ration books for the family from the Ration Board. The books had stamps which were used to purchase shoes, butter, meat, cheese, sugar and other scarce commodities. I would get into cigarette lines to get packages for my uncle although I did not smoke. I got into nylon stocking lines as that was the only way to get them, other than the black market. There were times when items were hard to get such items as toilet paper, milk, bread, chocolate bars, cooking oil, soap, coffee, etc.

It was considered patriotic to plant Victory Gardens in your yard. Mine was a flop. It was a lot of work and the birds and bugs ate the seeds that I planted.

There were blackouts sometimes. A warden would come around to see if there were any lights that could be seen outside of the house.

Things made out of metal were not being made as metal was used for the war effort. There was a scarcity of cars, washing machines, stoves, refrigerators, roller skates and other metal things.

There was a scarcity of rubber and there was no elastic available. We had to improvise without elastic. I remember gathering up rubber and taking it to the gasoline station where it was being collected. Rubber bands were unavailable and people substituted Scotch tape. People saved tin foil, used stamps and other things and brought them to the high school.

The government told us not to travel unless it was necessary. The transportation system was for the use of servicemen traveling from their bases to home on leave and back. The transportation system was inadequate for the use of both war effort and civilians taking vacations. Most people abided by the government rules concerning travel.

Since people could not travel or buy things such as cars and washing machines, they used their money to purchase war bonds starting with \$18.75 for a bond worth \$25.00 in ten years. I remember getting paid twice a month and the government took out \$6.25 a paycheck. After three paychecks, I was entitled to a bond. Some stores that sold war bonds gave free things away such as movie theater tickets, President Roosevelt pictures, Norman Rockwell pictures of paintings and coupons to have your picture taken and you would receive one free picture.

I was working six days a week with only Sunday and Christmas off; it was hard to get marketing, shopping and other business taken care of. There was a shortage of workers and stores and business did not open for lots of hours.

I am happy to report that all my family survived World War II, both on the home front and the service. Eventually my Japanese-American friends returned to the Pacific coast. In 1956, I visited Hawaii and saw Pearl Harbor and the Punchbowl Cemetery.

Lillian Fong was born and raised in Los Angeles. She is an active Life Member of the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California.

CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA  
1648 Redcliff Street • Los Angeles, California 90026

Place  
Stamp  
Here

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1975-1985

MEETINGS: 1st Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. Visitors welcome.  
appreciation of our Chinese American heritage • a non-profit organization



# *Gum Saen Journal*

DECEMBER, 1985

VOL. VIII, NO. 2

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CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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## DEDICATION

Helen Louise Lim Young



*A remarkable woman whose impact extended far beyond  
the boundaries of her Chinese American community.*



Helen and Arthur Young at the Chinese Garden Festival, sponsored by Committee to Conserve Chinese Culture, August 23, 1981.

## HELEN LOUISE LIM YOUNG

HELEN LOUISE LIM was born on March 1, 1926, the second daughter of Lim Yoke Wee and Jung Shee Lim (nee Lee). Our parents were immigrants from the Tailand district of Toishan. Our father had come to the United States in the early 1920s like so many other men from that area. He worked as a cook and later in various laundries. When his bride arrived aboard the President Lincoln on January 4, 1924, he and a brother started their own laundry in East Oakland. It was there (Eastlake Laundry) that Helen was born. Four sisters and two brothers were subsequently born to the family, all delivered at home (laundry) by Dr. S. L. H. Lamb, a Caucasian woman physician. She and her daughter performed most of the home deliveries for the immigrant population in Oakland. They both spoke fluent Cantonese.

A vivid recollection which greatly influenced Helen was that of her father being an expert cook and baker. Every Saturday, he would prepare dough for the baking of bread and rolls for a Sunday treat. He was also an expert in Chinese and American cooking. Even as a laundryman, he retained these skills by cooking all the meals for employees and family. Helen observed, helped, and learned those skills and shared this expertise in cooking with others throughout her life. She could prepare all types of cuisine (Cantonese, Mandarin, American, etc.)

During World War II, many U.S. Marines from a nearby barrack brought their laundry to our facility. Helen baked cakes and cookies for them on a regular basis until the war ended. As a thank you, she was invited to be their special guest at Thanksgiving dinners on the base (U.S. Naval Supply Depot).

Despite the long hours and 6½ day week in the laundry, outings in the laundry truck to Alameda, Walnut

Creek, San Jose, and San Francisco, the 1930s and '40s were events greatly anticipated each year. Those were pre-freeway days and usually took all day. Picnics at Fleishhacker Zoo culminating with dinner in San Francisco Chinatown were typical highlights of an otherwise labor intensive life. In later years, prior to her marriage, she would continue this same tradition, planning outings and events for nieces and nephews (e.g. cable car rides, Sierra snow trips, etc.).

Helen's mother was 17 years old when she left her village and journeyed to America where she started her family at age 18.

When Helen became 18 years of age, she was thrust with the responsibility of heading the household when her mother died in 1946. Father had died 2 years prior in 1944. Her older sister had died in childhood.

Helen held the family together, maintaining the home by utilizing her cooking, sewing, gardening, and homemaker skills. The youngest brother was 9 years old at the time and she raised him plus 6 other siblings until they completed their educations or married.

The family moved to west Oakland in 1934 or thereabouts where a larger laundry (Stanford Laundry) was established with three other partners. It was in this community that Helen attended Lafayette Elementary School. In 1938, she became seriously ill during an influenza epidemic after which she was required a very, very long convalescence. She had a home tutor for several years and finally returned to classroom instruction for high school at Oakland Technical High School where she graduated in 1947. She later enrolled in the San Francisco Baptist College and received a B.A. in Sociology in 1957. She would later begin a lifelong love of travel at this time by attending a semester at the University of Heidelberg in Germany. Trips to France, Netherlands, etc. were also included.

At about age 12, Helen exhibited a talent for drawing and designing. In later years, she regularly produced coats, suits, and dresses of original design or of designer fashions for herself and her sisters. She was

also adept at gardening; chrysanthemums were her specialty while living in Oakland. She would later complain that the adobe soil in Los Angeles prevented her from growing flowers. The succulent did well, however.

All the children, beginning at age 7 or 8 were sent to Chinese School (Wa Kue School). Class hours were from 5:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M., Monday through Friday, and 9:00 A.M. to 12 Noon on Saturdays. Of all the 7 siblings, Helen learned and retained the most, having been in the "highest class" and one of the top 3 students therein. She would retain her Chinese language skills throughout her life, subscribing to the San Francisco Chinese language daily newspaper into the years of her life in Los Angeles. She could read, write, and speak the language (also Mandarin), whereas, the rest of us can only speak Cantonese.

Helen's dedicated service to the Chinese Independent Baptist Church of Oakland will forever be imprinted into the history of that institution. She began her attendance there in 1940 and was baptized in 1944. She steadily assumed greater responsibilities by teaching Sunday School and eventually becoming the Sunday School Superintendent. She expanded the annual summer "Daily Vacation Bible School," a 2-week session of religious training, arts and crafts, games, and field trips. Many of the students from those sessions and the Sunday School classes have become today's leaders, elders, and teachers. Several of those youngsters have gone on to become ministers in other communities in California.

Helen was instrumental in establishing the Women's Missionary Society — a monolingual group of women who met in her home monthly for Bible study and fellowship. She also taught them sewing and food preparation. They were to become her helpers when church dinners were needed. The biggest projects were the annual church Thanksgiving dinner and the youth group graduation banquets. She was responsible for the planning, purchasing and cooking for an average of 200-300 dinners per event. Realizing that she could not possibly do the job alone, she recruited and delegated individuals to assist. The Chinese wom-

en who were inexperienced in "American" cooking soon became her dependable "kitchen staff."

The food for church events such as the annual picnic, retreats, and conferences eventually became her sole responsibility.

In addition to the ability to actually do the job, she also exhibited an extraordinary enthusiasm for each new challenge.

She literally "attacked" each new task, and other workers were soon caught up in the same desire to achieve the high standards that she required for herself. Other church projects included sewing the Christmas costumes for the church pageants, organizing the Mother's Day Tea, and coordinating the New Year's Eve Progressive Dinners.

During the interim of out-going and in-coming church pastors, Helen (with her sisters) continued the work by providing transportation, teaching, organizing special events, etc.

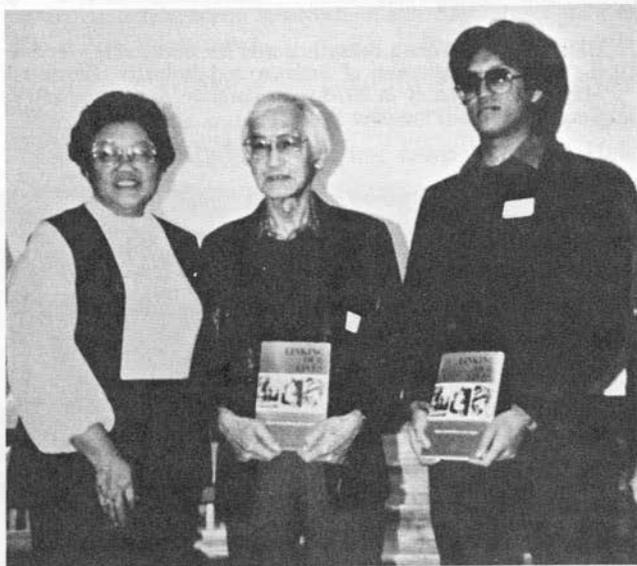
Upon the arrival of a new minister, Helen was instrumental in assisting with the resettlement of the family in the community. This included everything from buying the rice to obtaining furniture and clothing for the new family. She is still fondly remembered by three past ministers for those thoughtful gifts of love, care and concern.

In conclusion, for her surviving brothers and sisters, Helen was more "mother" than "big sister". Each sibling "grew up" under her care and supervision to become productive citizens in their local communities (2 nurses, 1 school administrator, 1 civil engineer, 1 shop supervisor, and 1 aviation inspector). Later, she would become one of the great "aunties" who always knew how to "give a kid a good time."

Helen was deeply committed to continuing the Chinese customs and traditions of the Lim family. She returned to Oakland for celebrations, holidays and special events (Chinese New Year, Lim picnic, weddings, births, etc.). In the early years of her marriage, she was very homesick and when she finally became a Southern Californian, she still left a little bit of her heart in the bay area.

Her returns became a *raison d'être* for the "gathering of the clan," and it was at these happenings that she was most happy.

Author, Rose Luey, sister of Helen L. Young, collaborated with her sisters, brother, and their families over Thanksgiving dinner. Each one told of what he/she remembered about Helen.



Presentation of *Linking Our Lives: Chinese American Women of Los Angeles* to husband Art Young and son Hobart Young by Ella Quan, Jan. 1985. The Society's first book is dedicated to Helen Young.



Helen and Art Young being honored for outstanding services to the California Museum of Science and Industry. Presented by Mayor Tom Bradley in 1978 with Caroline Ahmanson and ROC Consul General Ping-Nan Chang.



Chinatown Los Angeles Yesterday and Today Executive Committee at the Walking Tour Kickoff Dinner, May, 1981. Rear: Paul Louie, Munson Kwok, Helen Young, Bill Mason, Gerald Shue, Charles Wong. Front: Ella Quan, Karen Huie, Gloria Shue.

## CHINATOWN'S HELEN YOUNG

by Allen Fong

She was a marvel to those who loved her; a dynamo who took an idea from concept to detail without pause. L.A.'s Lotus Festival, Dragon Boat Celebration and the Chinatown 10-K Run all grew under her guidance. She was a Head Start teacher, present at the creation of a Lincoln Heights program in East Los Angeles. She taught herself Spanish over the years, dedicating herself to "the kids."

Though she was active on all levels of the Chinese community, Helen Young's work with children shows her qualities best. On one occasion, she cooked lunch for 35 kids for a week because the school lunch program had not come through. Each day, she'd take out her wok, cleavers, fresh meat and vegetables to stir fry up a meal. She got her reward the following week when the kids complained about the baloney sandwiches they would be getting from then on. Helen Young had the gumption to berate Chinese merchants who refused to contribute to children's programs. She reminded them that it wasn't just their own who were deserving, but that we're all in this together.

Chinatown's 1982 10-K Run, an activity KNXT is involved with, was dedicated to Helen Young. We hope all those involved will find her spirit while participating in the event. "She was one of us, but maybe a little better, a little more special."

Allen Fong of KNXT met Helen when she solicited KNXT's support for the Firecracker 10K Run. One of Helen's many dreams, the 10K Run was a huge success from its onset. Today, KNXT continues to support this annual event in Chinatown.



Walking Tour Docents – Helen Y



er Docents — Helen Young, front center.



Arthur and Helen Young  
relaxing with Dolores Wong.

Helen and husband Arthur posing  
with a 1980 Golden  
Wok winning dish.



Munson Kwok, Helen Young, Suellen Cheng Kwok at a 1981 function.

## MAI POINA OE LAU

(Forget Me Not)

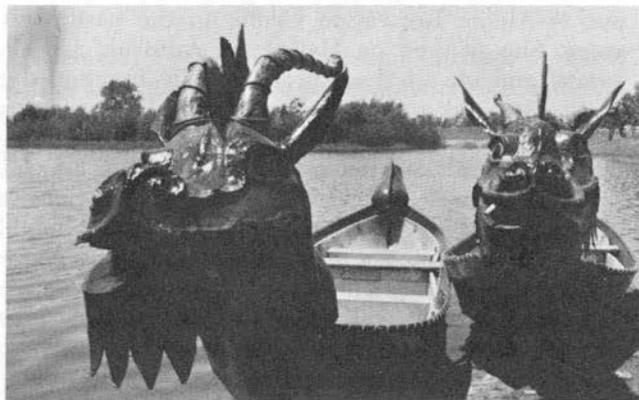
by Tani Marsh

Helen Young was one of the most remarkable women I have ever known. Our relationship developed over the years through her efforts to be sure the Hawaiian Community was represented in all community affairs. She never missed the Hawaii's Daughters' Luaus or annual Holoku Ball, and would brag to all about the beauty and quality of the events.

At the 1981 Holoku Ball the Daughters acknowledged and presented leis to three outstanding women in the audience. They included Sybil Brand, Martha Raye, and Helen Young. In her usual humble way she was touched by the honor as she didn't expect to be recognized.

As a member of the Hawaii's Daughters, I look back at that evening and I'm so glad we let her know that we appreciated her.

Tani Marsh was another volunteer recruited by Helen and became one of the "permanent" chairs of the entertainment committee for the annual Lotus Festival. Her dance studio students also perform for the Festival and for the different plazas in Chinatown during Chinese New Year.



Dragon boats ready for Dragon Boat Festival, Legg Lake in 1978.

## A REMARKABLE WOMAN

by Judith Luther Wilder

Helen Young was a remarkable woman who worked tirelessly for her community — a community that focused on Chinatown but also extended beyond to include other Asian Pacific communities, to friends who were white, black, yellow, brown and red in Monterey Park, Long Beach and San Gabriel and to her Hispanic friends and children in the El Sereno and Lincoln Heights Head Start programs.

During the last fifteen years of her life, Helen's strength and commitment were felt throughout the entire country. She became known as a Mover and Shaker and when government agencies and corporations and the media did not move quickly enough for her, she was not timid about giving them a little push. Her touch is everywhere — the Chinese Historical Society, the East West Players, the Firecracker 10-K, the New Year's Parade and all the Chamber of Commerce events. She was determined that Los Angeles begin to appreciate and understand Asian culture and traditions and she started and developed many programs to showcase Asian art and dance music. She developed the Lotus Festival, the Dragon Boat Festival, the Union Oil Asian Pacific Art Exhibition in Long Beach. She worked on the Festival of Masks, the County Fair, Head Start and virtually every program that has come out of Alpine Recreation Center in the past twelve years. She worked on Halloween carnivals and day camps and on all these programs she functioned as both a general and a soldier. She could give orders with the best of them but when push came to shove and her friends needed someone to stay up all night to sew costumes, it was Helen they called. She was always proud to serve as a leader but also humble enough to take on the most tedious and tiring chores. She mingled with politicians and corporate executives, new refugees and children who had just been given their first pair of shoes. She badgered television performers into publicizing her events, cooked for festival volunteers, drove children on field trips, sewed costumes for dancers and silk screened T-shirts. Two

years ago, when a scheduling problem occurred at the Alpine Day Camp and the federal lunch program began a week later than expected, Helen took it upon herself to cook lunch every day for 35 children. Each day she appeared at the center with her "wok," cleaver and vegetables and cooked such wonderful meals that the children protested when the regular summer lunch program began. They'd never had it so good and somehow the federal lunch program of bologna sandwiches and stale carrot sticks didn't quite measure up to Helen's home cooking. She did it all — she led and she followed — and in the process, she made certain you did your share. Helen took her responsibilities seriously and she was never shy about reminding you that you, too, had a duty to contribute your energy, your talents. She demanded a lot from her friends and family. (It never occurred to her, I think, that we might not *want* to work all night silk screening T-shirts, but she never demanded half as much as she gave.) She was one of us but she was, perhaps a little better, a little more dedicated, a little more . . . special. She was a wonderful role model — not only for son Hobart but for all of us — a fine friend, a good person to have in your family, on your side for a crusade or a festival. In many ways, she uplifted us and made us better than we normally are — we were always aware that if we were going to keep up with her, we had to work a little harder, move a little faster, stretch our resources a little further and those of us who value her spirit and drive — those of us who loved her — do not let her go easily.

Helen was a remarkable woman and chose to define her life through service to her community. In so doing, she is guaranteed to live in our hearts and in all the hearts of the hundreds of people whose lives she enriched . . . for a very long time.

Judith Luther Wilder met Helen at the first Lotus Festival. Helen's enthusiasm rubbed off and Judith soon chaired the Art Exhibit at the Festival. The two became close friends and were involved in other cultural festivals and events throughout Greater Los Angeles.

## HELEN LIM YOUNG

Helen Young was a graduate of San Francisco State College with a B.A. in Sociology, 1957. She spent the summer of 1958 in Munich, Germany studying sociology and German. She had a number of jobs. Between 1960 and 1967, she seems to have stayed home, probably taking care of Hobart. Then in 1967, her career as Headstart Teacher began. In conjunction with the Child Development Supervisor, she assumed responsibility for the total program within the Child Development Center. She served as team leader providing direction and guidance to the assistant teacher and volunteer. She was very proud that four of the assistants trained by her are currently Head Teachers.

Helen's contact and community public relations were with

- Focus
- Real to Reel
- Community Feedback
- Gallery
- Let's Rap
- KNBC Saturday Show
- KNBC Sunday Show
- KNXT (KCBS-TV) Two on the Town
- People's Corner
- Noontime
- It Takes All Kinds
- Truman Jacques Show

Some of the community organizations with which she was involved included:

- Board Member, Council of Oriental Organizations, 1965-72
- Chair of Board, Services to Asian American Youth (SAAY), Oriental Service Center, 1970-73
- organized Project Headstart for Chinatown, 1970
- coordinator (founder) of Lotus Festival, Los Angeles City and County Parks and Recreation Departments, 1971
- organized free PAP smear tests for women in Chinatown, 1972
- entertainment coordinator for City's Asian Pacific American Heritage Week, 1979
- volunteer, San Gabriel Valley Chinese Cultural Association, 1975-8

- consultant and helped form first Festival of Masks, 1975
- consultant, B'nai B'rith Bicentennial Salute, 1976
- Board Member, Chinese Historical Society of Southern California from about 1977; public relations director of Los Angeles Chinatown: Yesterday and Today; docent for walking tours, co-ordinator of Golden Wok, 1980
- consultant, Chinatown Teen Post
- organized Tri-City Youth Group for East Los Angeles-Japanese American Citizens League
- volunteer, Garden Theatre Festival, Downtown Discovery Festival, 1970
- organized and coordinated each Dragon Boat Festival since 1976
- member, Monterey Park Chamber of Commerce, Chinese Committee
- Board Member, Citizens for Asian Americans of Monterey Park
- Board Member, East West Players, 1977-8
- member Advisory Board, Chinatown Service Center, 1979
- volunteer and organizer, Alpine Recreation Center, from 1977
- secretary, Los Angeles/Guangzhou Sister City Association, 1980
- panel member, National Conference of Festivals
- consultant, Plaza de la Raza Mexican Festival
- consultant, City of Fresno Parks and Recreation
- founder, Los Angeles Chinatown Firecracker 10K Run
- volunteer, Friends of the Chinatown Library
- volunteer, distributed hobby materials to senior citizens and for the House of Happiness, a home for emotionally disturbed Asians

### **EDITORS' NOTE**

We are proud to present the life story of Helen Lim Young as an example of one of those outstanding individuals who worked to define and to shape a new community. That community is Los Angeles Chinatown Today. The beginnings can be dated back to the mid-1960's when the population of the then relatively quiet Chinatown began to explode, fed by the new

immigration and, later, by the influx from Southeast Asia. That time period is concurrent with Young's all-too-short career of not quite 15 years as an active community leader.

As the tributes suggest, she was not only a leader and an inspiration, but usually one of the hardest workers on a project. She was also among the earliest to realize that a strong community requires bonds and networks among all peoples, and so she moved to eliminate the barriers isolating the Chinese American community.

These writings also serve as an example of family history, at which we encourage all our members to work.

The lasting legacy of Helen Young challenged and motivated the Society to create "Linking Our Lives: Chinese American Women of Los Angeles."

We are honored that she was one of us, active Charter Member and Member of the Board of Directors. We will never forget Helen.

Munson Kwok  
Ella Quan

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Society thanks Art Young, spouse of Helen Lim Young, her sister Rose Luey, Allen Fong, Tani Marsh, Judith Luther Wilder, and Sumi Haru.

### A TRIBUTE TO A GREAT LADY

by Sumi Haru

My phone used to ring at 7 a.m., even on weekends. The caller was my dear friend, Helen Young, doing her thing. That is, being a volunteer. Many times the word "volunteer" conjurs up the image of a dilettante, a person who dabbles superficially at an activity.

But Helen was far from a dilettante. She was a volunteer in the truest sense — giving freely of herself, always in the background pushing others into the limelight. Yet, the true media event was, in fact, Helen Young.

My television colleagues always called on Helen to help us put our program together. She supplied us with the most articulate and knowledgeable people from the community. Sometimes we even talked her into being the guest writing "Gung hay fat choy" to

open the show, in addition to dressing the set and providing information for our viewers.

She was one of the best public relations pros we ever worked with, never pushy; but always reaching the objective, to publicize community activities. If only the "paid" P.R. people could have learned from her.

Her creativity was unmatched: Tarps for food booths sewn from remnants of cloth, costumes molded from scraps, and decorations miraculously appearing from odds and ends; the flash of energy sewing hapi coats in the wee hours of the morning, then humbly asking us if we would mind trimming the threads; after working all day, she cooked meals for us at our evening meetings, even in the park — always the lady with the electric skillet making sure her troops were nourished.

And nourished we were. Helen could have written the manual for volunteers because she defined the meaning of "conviction," "devotion," "commitment" and "love." Many of us were fortunate to have had her as our mentor. I only hope we absorbed some of the magic our role-model created: the ability to give freely without the thought of personal gain and the talent to inspire others to do the impossible.

We must celebrate her gifts to us, the lessons she taught on how to hurdle barriers by taking the optimistic approach and never seeing the negatives, and just assuming every project will be successful.

We happily receive these gifts from Helen and will do our best to be deserving of them in our attempt to live up to her example.

Who of us would have the nerve to go to a foreign government and ask them to give us a dragon boat? How could any government say "No" to Helen Young.

If Helen had her say right now, she would tell us, "Why are you still sitting around here, this is a waste of time. Get out there and do something for the community!"

Yes, Helen. But, we'll miss you.

Sumi Haru, senior producer and moderator of Gallery on KTLA, worked with Helen at the Lotus Festival. She was mistress of ceremonies of the entertainment section and helped recruit other named Asian actors and actresses. Sumi also volunteered to recruit emcees for the entertainment in the Chinatown plazas as well as announcing the participants in the Chinese New Year parade.

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