



# Gum Saan Journal

Volume 37, Number 1  
2015

## Voices of the San Gabriel Valley

Published by



The Chinese Historical Society of Southern California



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**Publisher**

Chinese Historical Society of Southern California  
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**Gum Saan Journal**

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**Front Cover Photos:** Tom Shee Bin's Chinese Tea and Herb Sanitarium at 711 Main Street, Los Angeles; The mountain gate of Hsi Lai Temple in Hacienda Heights; Chinese Garden at Huntington Library in San Marino.

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*Gum Saan Journal* is an annual publication. It solicits manuscripts that explore the historical, cultural, and humanistic aspects of Chinese American experiences, particularly relating to Southern California, as well as contemporary issues of relevance to the Chinese American community. Manuscripts should be approximately 3,000 words in length, using Chicago style of endnotes when necessary. If your manuscript is accepted for publication, you will be responsible for obtaining permission to reproduce any copyrighted materials used in your article.

Submissions should be addressed to:  
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# Foreword

by Donald Loo, President of CHSSC

With this issue of *Gum Saan Journal*, we study the San Gabriel Valley, a collection of small cities east of Los Angeles City with high percentages of Chinese Americans. San Gabriel Valley seems always changing, always on the move. The cities include Monterey Park, Arcadia, San Marino, San Gabriel, and Temple City – each with over 40 percent Chinese Americans according to the 2010 census. Chinese Americans are a collection of people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. There include Cantonese, Shanghainese, Taiwanese, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Korean, Mexican, British, Farsi, and Mongolian Chinese. And there are people of Chinese descent who are multiracial and multicultural. For example, I'm a 3rd generation Canadian Chinese.

We extend heartfelt thanks to the contributors to this issue. They told their stories so generously. We interviewed educators, a social service worker, a Buddhist priest, a mayor, and community leaders. There are many many more voices we should listen to. This is only a beginning.





# Introduction: Transitions in the San Gabriel Valley

by Susie Ling

I was born in Taiwan and raised in the Philippines. My ABC (American-born Chinese) children call me a FOB (“fresh off the boat” immigrant), but I am proud to be a FOB. I came to live in the San Gabriel Valley in 1979. In 1984, I started teaching Asian American studies at Pasadena City College, a community college with about 35% Asian population serving the San Gabriel Valley. In the thirty years that I have lived and worked in the Valley, it rapidly transformed from sleepy bedroom suburbs to an internationally-renowned center of fusion. Change – good, bad, and ugly – seems constant.

In the 1980s, the cities of the San Gabriel Valley first became identified as Chinese American ethnoburbs – or ethnic suburbs. The transition of Monterey Park to the “first suburban Chinatown” (or “Mandarin Park” or “Little Taipei”) was documented by international and national publications such as *Forbes Magazine*, *Time Magazine*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and *World Journal*.

In 2012, Andrew and David Fung gained YouTube notoriety rapping about the 626 region (626 is the area code for the San Gabriel Valley). Focusing mainly on food, the Fung Brothers’ video titles include “626”, “Young, Wild, and Free” (about Asian restaurants), “Colima Road” (about food in Rowland Heights), “Bobalife” (about tapioca milk tea), and “Asians Eat Weird Things”.

Chinese restaurants and markets do dominate parts of this landscape nestled against the San Gabriel Mountains.

Chinese markets in the area include 168, Hong Kong, TS Emporium, Del Mar, San Gabriel Superstore, Thun Phat,



**Hong Kong Supermarket.**





Hawaii, Arcadia, and six Tawa 99 Ranch Markets. Even the Pavilions market in Arcadia was remodeled in 2014 to carry a lot more Asian foods.

I remember when Valley Boulevard was a chain of used tire yards and empty lots with not

a Chinese restaurant or market in sight. I moved to Alhambra in 1979 with my parents. My dad was working in Pasadena, and nearby Alhambra was the affordable bedroom community. By the 1970s, more and more Asian American professionals had developed careers in mainstream society, although most were tracked into the hard sciences or engineering. In those days, Chinese residing as far as San Diego, Riverside, and Ventura would all drive to LA Chinatown once a month or so to stock up on Chinese food supplies. We were so happy when Diho Market opened on 720 S. Atlantic Boulevard in Monterey Park. This was a suburban ethnic supermarket with parking spaces!



**Shun Fat Supermarket at Mar Plaza.**

As more Chinese Americans moved to this valley, complaints ensued that our presence was causing the deterioration of the English language and American culture. I remember a complaint to Alhambra City Hall that Chinese neighbors were planting vegetables in the front yards. Oh my! Everything from crime and graft, traffic, overcrowded schools, and sewage was thought to be caused by Chinese. Libraries discussed whether they should carry books in “foreign” languages. Police officers engaged in racial profiling. First Chinese residents were blamed for the condo craze, and then we were blamed for the proliferation of McMansions. Tensions gradually ameliorated as the numbers of Chinese Americans continued to increase and their economic buying power was recognized. Chinese Americans also became more involved in PTAs, civic organizations, city councils, and even local historical societies.

My parents did not originally move to the San Gabriel Valley because we are Chinese Americans. But I certainly stayed in the San Gabriel Valley because of its diverse Chinese American population. I realized I had the opportunity to raise my children in a community where they could be





proud of their Asian heritage. In fact, I'm of the generation that learned Chinese culture from both my parents and my children. When I was growing up in the 1960-70s, we spoke Chinese at home and English outside the home. If we had to speak Mandarin in public spaces, we lowered our voices. The civil rights movements and globalization changed all that. By the 1990s, my children were absorbing diverse cultures from their friends of Vietnamese Chinese, Japanese Chinese, and Indonesian Chinese backgrounds – and their cousins of Swedish and Chinese background. My daughter learned Mandarin and Spanish from her classmates – not from me or her Popo. And their Mexican, Armenian, Arab, and White peers all know more about the different kinds of boba and noodles than me. I envy this millennium generation's self-esteem built on multiculturalism. Overt ethnic prejudice does still exist but the 626 generation is not as prone to such arcane thinking.

I still worry about our youth. Do we put too much pressure on them? Some students are “model minorities”, filling their schedule with Advanced Placement (AP) classes plus private tutoring. Our youth are multitaskers driving with their iPhones to ballet classes, debate practice, and basketball league. In the San Gabriel Valley, there are families paying about a thousand dollars for (mostly unnecessary) private “college counseling”. I knew one high school senior who applied to 26 universities.

Another area of my concern is the parachute kids. In the 1980s, there were students coming mostly to Arcadia and San Marino to avail themselves of a “superior” American education. But their parents were still working and living in Taiwan (and South Korea) and the teenagers were often left here with little adult supervision. There are now more parachutes kids coming to many more Valley communities such as Monterey Park, Rowland Heights, etc. Young ones come by the sixth grade. Mostly children of China's *nouveau riche*, parachute kids may live alone, board with extended family, or dorm as a group with a paid guardian. As it is the job of the guardians to tend to the physical needs of the parachute kids, the kids obviously view the guardians as paid employees. These teens might get text or Skyped communication from their parents in China or elsewhere. I'm sure some resilient parachute kids transition into their new cultural environment and their adulthood with great success. But I've heard of kids who must have worked very hard to get straight F's. I bump into these teenagers cliqued together at tea houses and public libraries. Will they be the parents of



our next generation of Chinese Americans? Do we as a community have responsibility to help raise these rudderless teens?

In this valley, there are other negative consequences of increasing globalization. First of all, global warming is harshly felt especially in this climate niche on the foothills. Thanks to stronger government controls, the smog conditions have improved since the 1970s; you can actually now see the San Gabriel Mountains. Still, California’s drought and fire cycles oppress our limited resources. Secondly, the economic disparity magnified by globalization also creates tensions. Median household income in San Marino is \$123,357 and for neighboring Alhambra, it is \$49,370. The median household income in La Canada Flintridge is \$123,555 and \$42,041 in El Monte. Sex trafficking, gang warfare, school shootings, and white collar crimes are exacerbated by this socioeconomic divergence. Chinese and other undocumented aliens live in limbo in purgatory. It is strange that rich Chinese American exploit the cheap labor provided by their Chinese Americans brethren.

PERCENTAGE OF CHINESE AMERICANS	2000 CENSUS	2010 CENSUS	CITY MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME <sup>1</sup>
Monterey Park	44.6	47.7	\$ 49,534
Arcadia	37.1	43.9	71,300
San Marino	33.3	43.4	123,357
San Gabriel	36.6	42.1	56,495
Temple City	30.8	41.5	63,429
Rowland Heights	32.4	38.0	61,315
Alhambra	36.2	37.1	49,370
Walnut	28.6	35.4	89,766
Rosemead	32.6	34.9	46,275
Diamond Bar	20.2	25.9	85,910
Hacienda Heights	25.5	24.2	76,118
South Pasadena	15.6	15.7	75,812

**Percentage of Chinese Americans in Some Cities in the San Gabriel Valley.**

<sup>1</sup> From 2014 Guide to LA County Cities, Community Profiles by Civic Publications, Inc. The median household income for Rowland Heights and Hacienda Heights are 2013 figures from Wikipedia.



Michelle Alexander's best-selling book, *The New Jim Crow* (2010), describes the contemporary bimodal pattern of African Americans. Yes, we can all name Black political, business, and entertainment leaders. But the percentage of African American men trapped in our nation's prison system is simply astonishing. Can we not see that Chinese Americans are similarly trapped in this ugly bimodal pattern?



# Eugene and Virginia Lowe

Lowe and Sons, Pasadena

*The Lowes are one of the few Chinese American families that have lived continuously in the San Gabriel Valley since before World War II. Lowe and Sons was a well-known establishment in Pasadena – first as a gift shop, and then as a furniture and interior design firm.*

## Virginia Ng-Yuen Lowe



**Virginia Lowe in a television piece for *Jimmy Kimmel Live*, 2013.**

began our search into our roots. We've done significant genealogy research on seven generations of Lee, Tom, Kan-Tinloy, Ng-Yuen, and Lowe families.

My Poa Poa, Lee Tsui Ping, was born in San Francisco in 1875. Along with her three sisters and a brother, she is second generation Chinese American. Their parents manufactured cigars. Poa Poa married Dr. Tom Shee-bin 譚樹彬 in 1895 and began their family of eleven children with my mother, Ora Helene "Oy-Lin" in 1898. Low Choy Tung joined the

I was born at home in Los Angeles in 1927, not far from the USC campus and Exposition Park. We lived across the street from my widowed maternal grandmother, "Poa Poa". Even though I was the eldest of her grandchildren, I didn't know much about our family history. When I was still in elementary school, I went into Poa Poa's attic one day and found two life-size oil portraits of my grandparents in Manchu Dynasty robes. This suggested that my grandfather had a position of power in China. In later years, thanks to the encouragement of our son, Roger, and his wife, Scarlett, of Sierra Madre, we



**Paintings of Tom Shee-Bin and Lee Shee-Ping in traditional Chinese costume.**

family as a second wife and bore seven more children. Poa Poa had bound feet and found it difficult to walk. She spoke very little English. She had many Cantonese friends, enjoyed reading Cantonese novels, and made beautiful hand embroidered clothing. She delivered her own grandchild, Dolores, daughter of her son, John, and Octavia Nelson. Poa Poa practiced midwifery in the 1930s and 1940s.

Grandpa Tom Shee-Bin was born in Hoi Ping, Guangdong, China in 1850. He was educated and was a member of the Manchu Qing dynasty government. In the late 1800s, he became a noted reformer-revolutionary in the movement to replace the Dowager Empress with young Emperor Guangxu. Tom escaped execution and defected to San Francisco in 1889, where he formed the Chinese Empire Reform Association. With his experience in herbal medicine, he became a prominent practitioner along the California coastal cities between Los Angeles and San Francisco. He advertised in mainstream newspapers regularly and developed a practice in herbal medicine amongst the Caucasians. He even employed Caucasian nurses.



**Herbalist Tom Shee-Bin  
and Lee Tsui Ping  
in Western clothing.**



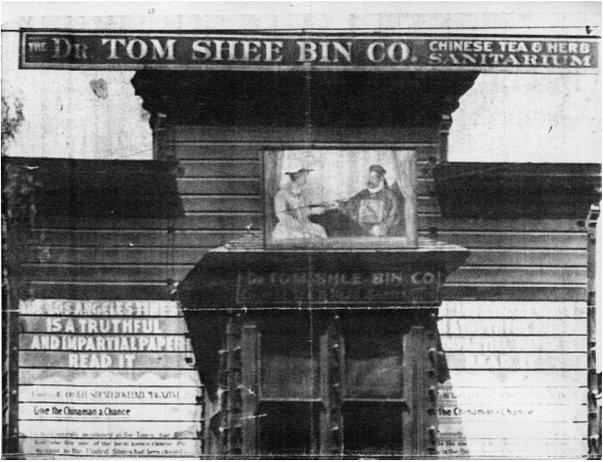
**Wedding of Ora Helene Lee Tom  
and Sing Yun Ng in 1919.**

After the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, the Tom family moved to Los Angeles. My mother was eight at that time. Dr. Tom established his practice and home outside of Chinatown, in an ornate Victorian building at 711 S. Main Street. He had large signage reading “Chinese Tea and Herb Sanitarium”. There are many LA newspaper articles that report Dr. Tom and other herbal doctors being arrested, jailed, and fined for practicing medicine without licenses. One fine was for \$200. Over the years, two of his homes/offices were burned down, destroying imported herbs, pictures, and treasures. Arson was suspected.



Tom Shee-Bin and family at their Chinese Tea and Herb Sanitarium at 711 Main Street, Los Angeles.

(Note: the faint writing on the left side suggests that this image is reprinted from a newspaper and is not a photograph.)





Dr. Tom was quite the disciplinarian when it came to his family. He gave parties and entertained dignitaries from China. He died in 1922 at 72 years of age; he left two wives, two adult children, fourteen under-aged minors, and one grandchild.

My mother, Ora Helene Tom, grew up learning to dispense herbal prescriptions. She drove the horse and buggy for her dad to see Caucasian patients, including the Hearst family and those on Lucky Baldwin's estate, now called Arcadia. Ora also went to court with Dr. Tom for his many arrests and hearings. She rode a motorcycle, drove the family car at 13, and attended Los Angeles High School. There is a family photo of sixteen Toms in a fancy Steyr convertible sedan from Austria with Ora at the wheel. She was a classical pianist who loved to dance and dress up in flapper fashion and fur coats.

My father, Ng Sing Yuen, was born in Canton in 1885, son of a security officer for the Manchu bank. He attended school with Dr. Sun Yat-sen's son and was mistaken for him. He was almost kidnapped during the revolutionary period around 1910. Grandfather Ng heard of this and booked passage for Yuen to sail to Boston, Massachusetts but with very little money in his pockets. He received his English education while working in a cousin's laundry and as a houseboy to a Miss Richardson, who also introduced him to Christianity. Yuen used his given name as his surname, as his real surname, Ng, was tough for Americans to pronounce. At 29, he moved to Chicago and became a bank officer in the foreign currency exchange department. He helped train pilots and send airplanes to China in their war against Japan. Yuen went to Los Angeles to find a Chinese wife and met Ora at a YMCA dance. They eloped the following year. After my brother, Eugene, was born in 1921, our parents traveled to Canton, China to show off their son. My mother harbored deep regrets not to have returned home before her father, Dr. Tom, died.

As a child, I remembered going to the LA harbor to greet and say goodbyes to folks on the steamships. Dad was a ticket agent for the Dollar Steamship Line Company that travelled back and forth to China. He made his living as an insurance broker. His office was in the LA Produce Market building on San Pedro Street, near where most of his clients worked. Mom sold real estate and acquired an elegant home for us on Hobart Street. I had three brothers: Eugene, Calvin, and Aubrey Yuen. From the Crenshaw district of LA, my mom drove us after school to the Chinese Presbyterian





School located in East Los Angeles daily. We made friends, but learned very little of the language. We practiced ping pong and volleyball at recess time. My brothers and I attended Forshay Junior High and Los Angeles High School on Rodeo Drive. We went to the same high school as Mom, though at a different location. There were only about five Chinese families at that time at LA High.

My parents felt it important for us to meet Chinese folks so they took us to the Chinese First Presbyterian Church (CFPC), where we sang in the choir. Meanwhile, Eugene, Albert, and Evelyn Lowe of Pasadena visited CFPC. We found out that we would be seeing each other at USC in the fall of 1945. Eugene and I, his sister, Evie, and William were married in 1948 in a double wedding service at the Baptist Church in Pasadena, officiated by Reverend Phillip Lee.

### **Eugene Lowe**

I was born on June 30, 1930 in San Diego, California. I am fourth generation American. Grandpa Lowe Dai Hung was born in 1865 in Kaigawk, Zhongshan, China and immigrated to San Francisco and Fresno. He worked in the haberdashery business. He married Jennie Lee, who was born in Mendocino in 1883. She was a second generation American who spoke little English. They were parents to Albert, Henry, and Mamie Lowe. Grandma Lowe played a mean hand of Chinese lottery and taught us all how to play mahjong.

On my mother's side, Great-Grandpa Kan John Tinloy was born in China in 1840 and his son, John Tinloy, immigrated to San Francisco. Grandpa John married Chan Gum Shew. They were both born in Canton in 1876. They came to work in the gold mines of Nevada City as camp cooks. They later moved to Grass Valley where they opened a grocery store and were parents to my mother, Ann Tinloy, in 1902. I remember how generous Grandpa Tinloy was in giving us lots of candy bars when we went to visit.

Albert Lowe and Ann Tinloy met in the San Francisco area and married in Grass Valley in 1923, where my sister Evelyn was born. My brother, Albert Jr., and I were born in San Diego where Dad worked for the Bank of America. In 1934, we moved to Calexico, a town on the border of Mexico in Imperial Valley. Mom worked at the Chinese grocery store. Dad spoke

two dialects of Chinese, Spanish, and English. His multilingual skills did well for him as a loan officer for the Bank of America. Many ranchers and entrepreneurs in the Mexicali area were Chinese men who married Mexican women and were then allowed to own property.

While living in Calexico, I traveled to LA in 1936 to play the Chinese boy in the Hal Roach film, *Our Gang* or *The Little Rascals*, and followed up with a stint in the *Tailspin Tommy* serial. Hollywood agents Richard and Bessie Loo also got my mom in a mob scene of *The Good Earth*. Al Jr. and I used to deliver the *Saturday Evening Post* magazine. I was nine years old in the sixth grade; we went to a lot of summer schools.



**Albert Chester and Ann Lowe,  
circa 1950s.**

My dad had worked at the bank for fifteen years in San Diego and Calexico, often training people to be working above him, and he felt that he was not getting anywhere. His manager informed him that the bank was not going to place non-Whites in the management level, so Dad quit his job.

Dad always had this dream of owning an antique shop or museum-type store in LA. But the real estate person encouraged him to go to Pasadena instead, because many of the rich and retired people lived there. So in 1939, we moved to a modest house on El Sereno Street in Pasadena. A neighbor came to our door and said to my mother, "You can't live here, Pocahontas. They'll tell you at City Hall." I was playing in our yard in this all-White neighborhood.

Dad knew a lot of bank officers and got a loan. Along with their own \$1000 and credit from the Quon-Quon wholesale supplier, Lowe and Sons gift store became a reality at 463 E. Colorado Boulevard in Pasadena. The whole family worked there, beginning with saw horses and crepe paper in November of 1939. We sold locally-produced ceramics, figurines, and pottery; American-made jewelry and charm bracelets; and clothing in the Chinese style. Mom taught flower arranging. Al Jr. recalls selling \$75 the first day! That was a big deal in those days.

World War II started in 1941 and there were no more imports from China. People were earning money in the defense industries. Things were rationed so you couldn't buy appliances, cars, etc. – but you could buy American-made junk jewelry and consumer goods. The gift store did so well that we opened a second gift shop called “Lotus Shop” just a block away. We were invited to open a branch in the Huntington Hotel and arranged the lobby's floral displays for many years.

Dad was called for service during the war, auditing manufacturers for the government and for the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) in San Francisco. Mom ran the Pasadena business. She was a very strong woman. I remember going with her to the bank and hearing her say, “I'm not leaving here until you lend me the money.”

My dad was a very popular guy; he was in Pasadena's Masonic Order, Rotary Club, etc. He had an Anglo friend buy a house on his behalf and we moved to 121 S. Chester Avenue, just west of Pasadena City College. By 1945, Al Sr. and Jr. returned from war services and we were headed for USC. We eventually met our respective mates: Al married Rose Marie Chin from Mobile; Evelyn married William Chin of Denver; and I married Virginia.

In 1947, Mom and Dad planned and built a house on 392 S. Wilson Street, now part of the Caltech campus. After we moved in, the neighbors circulated a petition to say we shouldn't live there because as Asians, we would lower the property values. It was startling to see so many signatures on the petition. We ignored them and nothing happened. We kids were in our early 20s, and gave Gung Gung six grandbabies to play with. Dad died suddenly in 1952, leaving Mom to head the business.

Integration was happening in LA, just slower in Pasadena. After we were married, we were so naïve that we tried to buy in the Hastings Ranch area of Pasadena. In 1959, we moved to a lovely area of Florecita Street in northwest Altadena. One day, our daughter, Virgene, announced that she



**Albert Jr., Ann, and Eugene Lowe  
in the gift shop, circa 1955.**

had seen a “native” at school. She had never seen a Black child before. The “White flight” began and today that area of Altadena is mostly Black.

Mom used to warn us about prejudices but I never experienced any difficulties. For instance, we went to Brookside Pool<sup>2</sup>. My mom would say, “If they say ‘only Americans allowed,’ you be sure to tell them that you are an American. Ignore them.” But it never happened to me. After World War II ended, my mother went out of her way to hire a Japanese woman to work for her. Mom just thought it was the right thing to do. That’s all. Mom was on the YWCA board and they discussed interracial issues there. In 1948, she hired Joann Leonard, the first African American to work as a sales clerk on Colorado Boulevard; we faced some criticism.

Ann Lowe did a remarkable thing, unheard of in the furniture industry. She removed the usual furniture front window displays during Easter and Christmas, and presented Christmas carols or a Nativity scene to give testimony of our Christian faith. Mom also hired a high school girl to teach her eight little grandchildren how to type, water the plants, write up sales, arrange catalogs, write essays on store products, and report on it on Saturdays. She named this project, “Lowe’s Recruits.”



**Window of Lowe and Sons.**

During our 56 years of business, Dad’s 1939 “curio store” in a very humble setting, transitioned to nine different locations. At one point, we manufactured lamps with Chinese figurines and imported cane and rattan furniture. We built our last location, Lowe’s Interiors, in 1960 at 3341 E. Colorado Boulevard. It was a two-story building surrounded with window displays and had an interior waterfall. The mezzanine carried accessories and giftware from all over the world. We sold American contemporary home furnishings from North Carolina, and provided trained interior designers.

<sup>2</sup> Brookside Park – Pasadena’s public pool near the Rose Bowl – reserved Wednesdays as “International Days” for non-White swimmers. After protracted legal action, the pool was desegregated in 1947.



At that time, Lowe's Office Furniture on Arroyo Parkway, was managed by Virginia and me along with our bookkeeper, Betty Tabell. After 54 years, Betty still does the books for my law practice. Not only was the Lowe family employed, but we employed two generations of other families over the years. Our son, Roger, closed the last branch of Lowe and Sons in 1995.



**Lowe and Sons at 3341 E. Colorado Boulevard,  
Pasadena.**



**Lowe's Business Designs at 836 Arroyo Parkway,  
Pasadena.**

I passed the California Bar exam in 1977 and have enjoyed 37 years of family and probate law practice; I'm still working. We have attended the San Gabriel Presbyterian Church for fifteen years, where I occasionally preach. We have been building the "Good News" church library of 1500 volumes. We often visit our original church, Pasadena Covenant, because we formed many long-term relationships there with our children. Most of our foreign country travels were to visit with missionaries. Now, some have retired. We recently began doing commercials because our granddaughter, Melody Lowe, is a talent agent. A Shanghai tour guide recognized Virge from her



Herbalife ad! We have represented Time-Warner, Microsoft, State Farm Insurance, Yahoo, Walmart, Candy Crush, Barney's of New York, and pharmaceutical companies.

We have been blessed with three kids and their spouses, eight grandchildren and their spouses, and eight great-grandchildren between 2 and 11 years of age. Aside from Lowes, our last names now include Knoles, Chang, Phipps, Kitch, Abe, Morales, Potter, Liu, and Lomboy. We have careers as lawyers, paralegal, accountants, bookkeeper, teachers, firefighters, film artists, sales persons, medical doctors, missionaries, financial analyst, and the rest are brilliant little students.



**Eugene Lowe in a State Farm commercial, 2013.**



**Sierra Madre Fire Chief Roger Lowe, with his daughter, Captain Kristine Lowe, also of the Sierra Madre Fire Department.**

*Photos courtesy of Virginia and Eugene Lowe.*



# Robert S. Joe 周國康

Mayor of South Pasadena

*In 2011, Robert Joe was elected to the South Pasadena City Council and now serves as mayor. Born in Los Angeles, Bob has a B.A. from Cal Poly Pomona and an M.P.A. from UCLA. He was the highest ranking civilian in the Los Angeles District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He also worked for the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. Bob has been active with Friends of Chinatown Library, San Gabriel Presbyterian Church, Door of Hope (a transitional shelter for homeless families), American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO), Little League Girls Fastpitch Team, and South Pasadena Chinese American Club. He has lived in South Pasadena for decades with his family including three children and two granddaughters. This interview was conducted on September 18, 2014 in South Pasadena.*



**Mayor Robert S. Joe, South Pasadena.**

*(Photo by Jack Pettee.)*

## Los Angeles Background

I was born in Los Angeles. My father, Samuel Joe (1918-2013), came from Canton in 1930 and went through Angel Island. He was about twelve years old, and he came with his brother. He ended up in Nevada and became a houseboy on a ranch. He also worked as a waiter for a Chinese restaurant in Sacramento for ten dollars a month. My mother is ninety years old. She was born in San Francisco Chinatown. Like others in her era, she speaks Chinese, and her culture is as Chinese as if she was born in China. Good thing I can still write my name in Chinese (laughs).

My parents started with a mom and pop store in the area near San Pedro Street and Washington Boulevard. They lived upstairs and worked downstairs. They kept expanding. We moved to San Pedro and 53rd Street, and we ended with a supermarket in Artesia. Of course, we all worked at the different stores.





I graduated from Los Angeles High School which was about fifty percent Caucasian at that time. In school, I was very quiet and not very assertive. I had an extra hindrance because of stuttering. I was trying to catch-up with C and D grades. I tried the track team but I was at the C-level based on my height and weight. I graduated in 1961 and went to Cal State Los Angeles for two years. I thought about transferring to San Luis Obispo for architectural training, but I ended up at Cal Poly Pomona in landscape architecture and graduated in 1967.

I was very protected and didn't get influenced by the civil rights movement. Some of my cousins were actually living in the Watts area, but I was not political then. I did worry about the draft. The funny part is my dad was on the Draft Board. I did get drafted but got a medical deferment.

My dad became interested in real estate. In the 1970s, he was one of the most active real estate brokers in the Chinatown area. Samuel Joe was one of the founders of the Friends of the Chinatown Library. He really really believed that Chinese Americans and their children needed exposure to a second language, English; they needed an opportunity to learn more. Dad was the treasurer for Friends of Chinatown Library for over two decades from its inception in 1976. He actively sought new real estate for the Library to expand from this bungalow at Castelar School. He was a real asset to Friends as he knew many people in Chinatown and he really believed in the Library.

I worked for thirty-three years for the Los Angeles District's Army Corps of Engineers. I ended up as their senior civilian<sup>3</sup>. I was Chief of Planning, Deputy District Engineer for Programs, etc. Without knowing it, I was being trained for political life. I had to work with different public agencies and different cities and counties. Just about every other week, I was meeting with a member of Congress as the Corps had all these projects. For thirty-three years, it went on and on (laughs). I learned that building relationships and trust are the most important factors to success. It takes time, but it is well worth it; I developed lifetime relationships.

I retired for three days and joined the Metropolitan Water District for another ten years. I'm retired again (laughs).

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<sup>3</sup> Robert S. Joe has received the Secretary of Army's Exceptional Civilian Service and Superior Civilian Service Award. He was recognized in the Congressional Record.





## Diversity within the San Gabriel Valley

In the 1970s, I moved to South Pasadena because there was a home for sale in a nice neighborhood. My aunt lived nearby. At that time, I didn't even think of school districts, investment value, and the like. My wife was born in Canton and grew up in Fresno. I have three children. We stayed in the neighborhood even though I did have the opportunity to move. We wanted to raise our children in a stable community. I've lived in South Pasadena for almost forty years.

I'm of Cantonese descent. The Cantonese had concentrated in the Crenshaw district until the midpart of the 20th century as there were restrictive housing covenants. But we were assimilating in the 1970s and moving into different suburbs. This coincided with the Mandarin-speaking population moving into the Valley. Globally, more and more products were being imported from China, Taiwan, and the Pacific region via the Los Angeles-Long Beach ports. About fifty percent of what comes into our harbor stays in the Southern California area. This is part of an international globalization trend. The United States had overturned immigration restrictions in 1965 and then we had the Southeast Asian migration after the Vietnam War. The development of Asian American communities in the San Gabriel Valley came from many factors.

In Rosemead, there are more Vietnamese and Cambodian Chinese. In San Marino, we heard stories of parachute kids from Taiwan living alone in big mansions. There are different clusters of Chinese in Alhambra, Rowland Heights, San Gabriel, and Monterey Park. Each community is unique. Some of the demographics are based on income-level. There are Chinese American bankers, investors, and CEOs and there are Chinese American restaurant workers, construction workers, etc.

There are a lot more Asian American elected city officials in the Valley. We do get together and I appreciate the support. But it doesn't really help me get elected. It does not help me serve South Pasadena, as our cities are so different. That the cities are unique and different is not a bad thing; it makes life more interesting.

Each city has its own identity. Arcadia differs from South Pasadena. A friend in Arcadia told me that her daughter's class was 92% Asian.





Interestingly, despite contradictory predictions, the percentage of Asians in South Pasadena did not grow very much between the 2000 and 2010 census. We remain about one third Asian. Our Asian American population is multiethnic with a sizable Korean American population. Even the Chinese American population is multiethnic. And South Pasadena became known for having the most people who are a combination of races. The census showed 1,415 citizens (5.5% of the City's population) – mostly young – who identified as mixed-race; half of these were White and Asian. That was a 90% jump from the recorded figure in 2000.

If you go down Valley Boulevard, things sure have changed. Remember the Bob's Big Boy in Alhambra that became Noodle World? Noodle World served noodles from all over the world: pad thai, udon, spaghetti... I'm nostalgic for Bob's Big Boy but truth be told, there are about a dozen newer hamburger places I can go to today. There are a lot of changes from economic development. There are all these lofts along the Gold Line rails in Pasadena. There are always new technological trends and new social concerns. The ethnic composition of the San Gabriel Valley is not the only change.

People used to complain about Chinese driving down – or parking on – Valley Boulevard. But you adjust to the difference. Driving through Old Town Pasadena or on the 110 Freeway also takes special awareness. I think we now realize it isn't just ethnicity that causes change; there are naturally different cultural niches. We learn to accept.

### **Think Global, Act Local**

South Pasadena is trying to put culture and community together. It is quite different from when I was growing up. There is a lot more recognition of the importance of all cultures. For example, our South Pasadena Chinese American Club (SPCC) is bringing Chinese language classes into the school district. The club was established in 1989 and is led mostly by Mandarin-speaking Chinese, but most members are multilingual working professionals. Many of the members have lived in the community for more than fifteen years and in fact, their children graduated from the District years ago. For example, my youngest is twenty-seven and going to pharmacy school in New York.



Our Chinese American Club's mission is also community service. Since 1990, we have sponsored Moon Festivals and those keep getting bigger and bigger. For fifteen years, we go once a month to the Union Station homeless services in Pasadena. We pay for the food and feed our neighbors. We also routinely pay for the food and feed over a hundred seniors at the South Pasadena Senior Center. We provide grants for our school district, the library, and various nonprofits. The wording for the fund is "for projects that contain educational or cultural (preferably Chinese) content". Our current president, Jeannie Chiu, is also the City's CMO (Chief Marketing Officer). The Chinese Club is an active volunteer group with about one hundred members.



**From left to right: South Pasadena's City Manager Sergio Gonzalez, Councilmember Diana Mahmud, Councilmember Richard D. Schneider, M.D., Mayor Marina Khubesian, M.D., Councilmember Michael A. Cacciotti, and Mayor Pro Tem Robert S. Joe with the lion dancers at the Moon Festival. Sponsored by South Pasadena Chinese American Club, the event was held in September of 2014.**

*(Photo by Sally Kilby.)*



**Mayor Robert S. Joe encouraging members of his Fear Factor Eating Challenge team at the 2014 South Pasadena Moon Festival. Miss Chinatown Katrina Lee empathizes as Princess Diana Ly eats pork blood. The team won!**

*(Photo by Malchon Kao.)*

My children – like most in South Pasadena – had a privileged background. One of my daughters graduated from UC Irvine and then wanted to go to fashion design school. I said, “no” (laughs). But I give her credit, she got a job as an administrative assistant for a large fashion retailer. They liked her so much that she also became their personal assistant. One of her assignments was to plan and organize a \$250,000 Bat Mitzvah that was held at Sony Studios. When she got the assignment, she didn’t even know what a Bat Mitzvah is. But she is resourceful and she got it done. She started from the bottom but she worked hard and built relationships.

Not all youth are from privilege. Like my dad, I support the Friends of the Chinatown Library as a Board member. For our scholarships, the student applicants here have such stories: “My mom works at a sewing factory and my dad works at a restaurant. I came five years ago and we live in Lincoln Heights and I get bused to Chatsworth school.” My own son had a car when he was a senior. In contrast, these students don’t even know how





to drive yet! Friends of Chinatown Library also have scholarships for adults attending Evans Adult School to better themselves. We need programs like that.

Recently, a neighbor stopped me while I was jogging. She said, “I want to thank you for serving the City with a servant’s heart.” That stopped me. I get some complaints and a lot more thanks, but this one touched me. For me, being on City Council is not a political job. I ran to serve this community, which is my home. As a city, we always need to serve our citizens – from maintaining the streets to pruning trees. But I’m proud that I brought a work station for the federally-funded Foothill WIB (Workforce Investment Board) to our library. This is to help our citizens find economic opportunities. City Hall also gives work to five or six at-risk youth. I’m on the Board of a local shelter for homeless families; I get the medical professionals who are members of my church to go to the shelter to provide service. That means a lot to me. I’m very people-oriented. I enjoy serving people.

We all have to be part of our communities. We have to have knowledge, to understand, and to be involved – politically and culturally. It is important to have communities respect and celebrate culture; culture and community must be integrated in our lives. We cannot be single-purpose individuals. It isn’t just about our children or our careers; community must be integrated into our lives too.



# David Yick-Him Yuen 阮益謙

President of Greater San Gabriel Valley Lodge,  
Chinese American Citizens Alliance (C.A.C.A.)

*David Yuen, now a retired chemical engineer, immigrated to the United States in 1957 at the age of 14 as a refugee. In the last 40 years, he has lived in various cities in the San Gabriel Valley. He joined the Greater San Gabriel Valley Lodge of the C.A.C.A. when it was established near 2000. C.A.C.A. is the oldest living Chinese American civil rights organization. This interview was conducted on September 17, 2014 in Monterey Park, California.*



I was born in Chongqing in 1942 during World War II. My family is Cantonese, and we lived in Hong Kong for several generations, since the British took over. I went to Wah Yan 華仁書院, a Jesuit school. I became a Catholic. My whole family came to the United States as refugees from a communist country in 1957.

My maternal great-grandfather, Zhang Yu-ming 張玉明, was in the Chinese Navy during the Qing dynasty. In the 1894-95 Chinese-Japanese War, China should have been well-equipped but there was so much graft in the Qing dynasty that the ammunition was defective. My great-grandfather's battleship was sunk and he was in the sea for three days. Fortunately, he had a little ginseng in his pocket and he survived. In 1910, my great-grandfather's fleet was sent to the United Kingdom for the coronation of King George V. They travelled to the United States on the return sail. It was the first time that the Chinese Navy visited this country. He visited both the American east coast and the west coast.



World Journal article about David's great grandfather.

He told his family about the grapes and vineyards of California; he met Chinese Americans here. When he got back to China, the Qing Dynasty had been deposed, and the Republic of China was established. He remained a naval officer with the Republic and passed away in 1922.

Our family came in 1957 to Claremont, California. My parents and I could speak Cantonese, Mandarin, and English. I could see the United States was very different. At that time, the U.S. was number one in the world and California was number one in the U.S. The education was the best, the crime rate was very low, and everything was great. My father, Dr. Wing Yuen 阮榮, was a research chemist for Sunkist in Ontario. Claremont is a university town. There were a lot of retired people, some who had gone to or worked in China.

After a couple of years, my father got a new position as a citrus expert for a subsidiary of 7-Up in Ventura. We tried to buy a house there. This guy who was in the same church as my Methodist parents said, "If you buy a house, we're going to burn it down." However, we also had some Methodist friends who were very helpful to us. There were a lot more Chinese Americans in Ventura, mostly working in and owning produce markets. Many were paper sons. My mother was a teacher in Hong Kong so in Ventura, she taught at the local Chinese language school 兵子鱗蹠中華學校 on 751 S. Oxnard Boulevard in Oxnard. At a young age, I was introduced to the Chinese American Citizens Alliance through the Chinese language newspapers.



Ventura Chinese school  
in the 1950s.

My maternal grandfather, Fung Tze-che 馮次淇, also came to the United States with my grandmother. He was a liaison officer for Dr. Sun Yat-sen. He had taught at Wham Po Military Academy in Guangzhou. He was a general with the Nationalist Army in China during the war against Japanese imperialists. We were living in Ventura together and I saw both Chinese high official friends of my family as well as local Chinese pioneers. My grandfather passed away in 1969. In 2014, my family donated a lot of



historical documents from my grandfather's and father's collection to the Chinese National Library in Beijing.

I went to U.C. Berkeley for my B. S. and then University of Colorado for my M.S. I am a retired chemical engineer. When I was at Berkeley, I met some of my old schoolmates from Hong Kong. I also met Chinese from Taiwan, Indonesia, and even the Philippines. At that time, I realized we were all the same. We had the same background and we got along well with each other.

In the 1960s, I had friends and relatives who were drafted into the Vietnam War. I even knew people who went AWOL and went to Canada. I was exempted from the draft because I was an engineer. However, I applied for Officer Candidate School (OCS) in 1967, right at the height of the Vietnam War. But they turned me down because of my bad eyesight.

I focused on my career and worked for several companies - Bechtel, C. F. Braun, and Parsons. I was lead engineer in charge of major projects in petrochemical, environmental, chemical, nuclear, and munitions areas. C. F. Braun was in Alhambra on Fremont Avenue, north of Mission Road, so in 1972, we rented in nearby Monterey Park. Monterey Park had very few Chinese then. My apartment manager didn't really treat us very well. As the years passed, more and more Chinese were buying into Monterey Park. Diho Market was established on Atlantic Boulevard. The original residents were making a killing on exorbitant real estate prices. Since 1972, I've lived in Monterey Park, Alhambra, Cerritos, Hacienda Heights, and Rowland Heights with my wife and sons. We were one of the early Chinese families in all those communities. After we moved, it seemed that more Chinese Americans followed (laughs). In Hacienda Heights, some of our Caucasian neighbors wouldn't talk to us. They did some nasty things. However, we also had some good Caucasian neighbors. In 1997, Rowland Heights was just opening a Catholic church, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, when we moved there; now we have regular Mass in Chinese.

In 2000, I joined Chinese American Citizens Alliance when the Greater San Gabriel Valley Lodge was founded. I felt like I needed to contribute to the Chinese American community. I saw a glass ceiling and other subtler signs of prejudice. When I was Vice President of the San Gabriel Lodge, there was a resolution in front of the California legislature, Assembly



Concurrent Resolution No. 42 (Fong), which was passed in July 2009 and signed by Governor Schwarzenegger. It reads in part:

*Resolved, that the Legislature deeply regrets the enactment of past discriminatory laws and constitutional provisions which resulted in the persecution of Chinese living in California, which forced them to live in fear of unjust prosecutions on baseless charges, and which unfairly prevented them from earning a living. The Legislature regrets these acts and reaffirms its commitment to preserving the rights of all people and celebrating the contributions that all immigrants have made to this state and nation.*

It was the state of California that originally pushed for the discriminatory Chinese Exclusion Act in the 1880s. But the apology should also happen on the national level. I wrote the original resolution to request the U.S. Congress to apologize for the Chinese Exclusion Act. The resolution passed the 2009 C.A.C.A. National Convention and was picked up by Congresswoman Judy Chu 趙美心. Dr. Judy Chu is the first Chinese American woman to serve in Congress, and she has represented the 27th Congressional District since 2009. By 2010, the 1882 Project was a nonpartisan coalition of Chinese American and Asian American groups including C.A.C.A., Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA), and the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) backing this resolution. The Senate passed Senate Resolution 201 in October 2011 and the House passed House Resolution 683 in June 2012. With that, the 112th Congress expressed “regret” for the Chinese Exclusion Act. I still think it should have been an “apology.” C.A.C.A. was established in 1895 to protect these civil rights.

In June 2014, the California legislature with Senate Joint Resolution 23 (DeLeon and Huff), titled “Chinese Americans in California”, passed another statement, which reads in part:

*This resolution apologizes to the Chinese people for the enactment of past discriminatory laws and constitutional provisions which resulted in the persecution of Chinese living in California, which forced them to live in fear of unjust prosecutions on baseless charges, and which unfairly prevented them from earning a living. Reaffirms the Legislature’s commitment to preserving the rights of all people and celebrating the contributions that all immigrants have made to this*

*state and nation, and requests Congress to adopt resolutions of apology to the Chinese American community for the enactment of the Chinese Exclusion Laws.*

This act is very important to Chinese Americans. This concerns us as a people and our dignity and citizenship. To address these historical wrongs allows us to be sure about our future. We've worked so hard from the railroads to the agricultural fields. I have friends who are chicken farmers in Chino and friends from Fresno who are 7th generation Americans. There are Chinese who came more recently from Hong Kong, from Taiwan, from mainland China, from Southeast Asia... Not all Chinese Americans are college graduates. There are many today that are in construction, in the restaurant business, etc. They don't make much money. They need help in job training. But we all share the same story.

In 2014, our struggle was against Senate Constitutional Amendment 5 in the California legislature. In January of 2014, the State Senate easily passed a request for a ballot measure to allow race-conscious admissions at public universities. Affirmative action was banned by California voters in 1996. There was

great concern in the Chinese community that SCA 5 would be used against the admission of Asian students. Large campaigns through the Chinese press, social media, and email lists were organized by activists to force the State Assembly to reexamine SCA 5. Yes, this is a complicated situation but you need to understand that Chinese Americans are very sensitive because of past injustices and we are becoming politically more aware.



**Greater San Gabriel Valley Lodge  
at the 2014 Chinese American Museum Banquet.  
From left to right: David Yuen (President),  
Charles Mau (Vice President), Alice Mah (Board member),  
Lisa Yang (former President), Greg Miller (member),  
Sharon Wong (Treasurer), and John Wong (former President).**

We should all know our history so that history doesn't repeat itself. We need our elected officials to be responsive to our grassroots community.

It is an interesting time for Chinese Americans. Our lodge is open and has members of Caucasian and Mexican descent. We are allies with other Asian Americans. We wish to recruit more mainland Chinese and young members. Civil rights is our constant struggle. I have two sons, and they are established and doing fine. My wife and I are retired. But what about my two young granddaughters? What about other Chinese Americans who are less fortunate? What about our Latino neighbors? Will they have the opportunity to compete? Will they get the equality they deserve in America? I hope everyone has that opportunity. We ask for equality; we don't ask for more. That's the C.A.C.A. agenda.



**Yuen family in June 2014. From left are Amy Yuen (wife), David Yuen, Spencer Yuen (elder son), Nancy Yuen (elder daughter-in-law), Tabitha Yuen (elder granddaughter), Eden Yuen (younger granddaughter), and Stanley Yuen (younger son).**

**Amy is a recently retired bank executive, Spencer is a software engineering supervisor, Nancy is a professor with Biola University, and Stanley is a medical statistician consultant.**

*Photos courtesy of David Yuen.*

# Ken Tcheng and Michelle Freridge

Asian Youth Center (AYC), San Gabriel

## Introduction

In the 1980s, the Chinese American community in the San Gabriel Valley received a lot of negative attention. There was concern in Monterey Park that Chinese language signs were a danger to community safety. There was concern in Temple City that bridal shops were fronts for prostitution houses. There was concern that Valley Boulevard was being “taken over” – problems ranging from school overcrowding to traffic were thought to be related to the growing population of Asians. The Chinese American community had growing anxiety that youth delinquency was on the rise.

It was at this time that a group of problem solvers came together under the auspices of San Gabriel Valley United Way’s Asian Task Force. Two prominent members of that Task Force, which came to be called the Asian Youth Project, were Dr. Judy Chu and May To. In 1989, Asian Youth Project applied for independent nonprofit status and began the job of providing critical services especially for youth and their families. Renamed Asian Youth Center (AYC) in 1990, it is now one of the most important multilingual social service agencies in the Valley.

During its inception, Asian Youth Center served 100 youth with a budget of \$160,000. Today, it serves 4000 youth – 90% of which are low-income – with a budget of \$2.6 million. AYC youth are multilingual and multicultural. The agency provides services in Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Spanish, and English. Approximately 43% of the clients are of Asian Pacific descent, and about 35% are of Latino heritage. A significant portion of the day-to-day services are education enrichment services for after-school hours. Youth and family services programs focus on at-risk individuals.

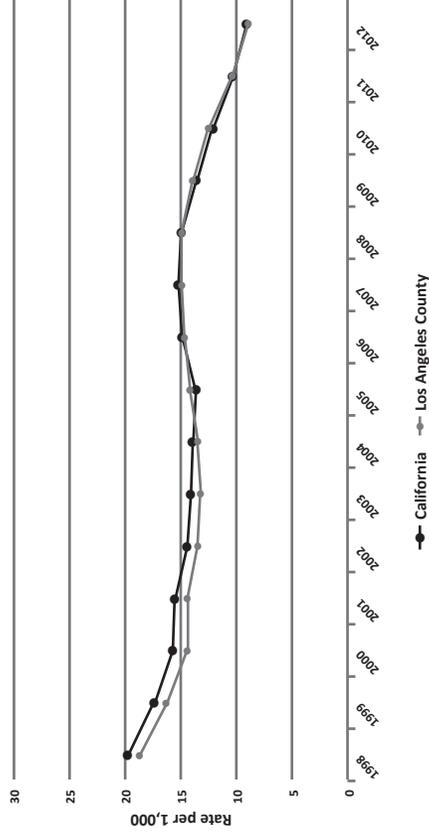


**Asian Youth Center,  
100 Clary Avenue, San Gabriel.**

From its inception to 2010, the AYC's Executive Director was May To. May was born in Canton and received her sociology degree from the University of Hong Kong and her Masters in Education from UCLA. May To had previously worked for International Institute and Chinatown Service Center. The current Executive Director of AYC is Michelle Freridge. Michelle is originally “a farm girl from Michigan” and began at AYC as Development Director in 2002. She has a Bachelor's in history from Michigan State University, a Masters in Public Administration from Western Michigan University, and a Juris Doctor from Loyola Marymount University.

Asian Youth Center has had the support of many corporate, education, business, and community leaders. Many on the Community Advisory Board have given their time for over a decade. The 2014 Board of Directors reflects AYC's strengths and includes President Ken Tcheng, a water utility executive and President of San Gabriel Unified School District Board of Education; First Vice President Jim Smith, Monterey Park Police Chief; Second Vice President Evie Jeang, attorney for the Ideal Legal Group in Alhambra; Treasurer K.T. Leung, CPA of Leung Accountancy Corporation in San Marino; Secretary David Lawton, San Gabriel City Police Chief; and Past President Dr. Gay Yuen, a Cal State LA professor.

**Juvenile Felony Arrest Rate: 1998 to 2012.**



Number of juvenile felony arrests per 1,000 youth ages 10–17. As cited on [kidsdata.org](http://kidsdata.org) from records of California Dept. of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center, Monthly Arrest and Citation Register (MACR) Data Files (Jul. 2013).

## Interview with President Ken Tcheng and Executive Director Michelle Freridge

**Tcheng:** AYC was born to address the needs of Asian immigrants. We are now at our 25th anniversary, and the need is still there. San Gabriel Valley continues to be the home of many new Asian families. Now we serve not only Asian immigrants but 35% of our clientele are Hispanics. There are similar struggles.

For me, there is a personal connection because I'm an immigrant too. My family came from Laos in 1969 to Illinois. My dad was working in New York and Mom was in Illinois with four boys. We didn't speak English and it was difficult. An organization like AYC would have been such a valued resource for us. I can certainly relate to the need.



Freridge and Tcheng at Asian Youth Center, San Gabriel.

I'm also the President of the San Gabriel School Board. As parents and community members, we all want our children to be educated and productive in the world. Our hope is that someday, AYC will not be needed. That's our vision.

**Freridge:** Some of our funding is from the Probation Department to do gang intervention and to prevent juvenile delinquency. And if you look at the statistics for the last fifteen years, the juvenile arrests have decreased despite the fact that the population has increased. That's partly because such programs like ours are effective. We are in the "put ourselves out of business" mode. Hopefully, we can shift our program to meet other needs.

I've been with AYC since 2002. I have a history degree from Michigan, where I grew up. I have found working in the nonprofits so rewarding. This agency in the community has a small town feel to it even though we are in a major urban area. People know each other, people are genuine and accessible. We all feel very connected and welcomed here. The small town welcome is what we want to extend to new immigrants.



We actually provide services from East LA to Pomona, from the Antelope Valley to Huntington Park. We cover one third of Los Angeles County.

**Tcheng:** My wife is a school teacher and she was born and raised in East LA. When my wife and I relocated to the Valley, we wanted a place to raise our two sons. We've lived in Alhambra and Rosemead. But we settled in the City of San Gabriel because we like the small town feel.

The Chinese American community in the Valley is quite disparate: you have the affluent and the not so affluent.

**Freridge:** But the Chinese community is not as bipolar as you think. We see wealthy youth arrested and on probation too. We see more kids of privileged backgrounds than you think. Sometimes, their parents have no idea. The kids may be respectful at home and even get good grades, so the parents trust their kids. But when the youth get arrested, the parents are shocked that their children are acting like American teenagers outside their parents' view. They may be arrested for joy riding, drinking, tagging, or breaking and entering. These are all typical entry delinquent behavior. Some of these kids would get connected with AYC through pro-active defense attorneys or the Probation Department. At that time, we have parent education. Sometimes you have wealthy and educated parents sitting next to very low income parents learning the same things about their kids.

The kids also join social learning model groups – behavioral therapy. We teach the youth to think about the consequences of their actions, to make better choices, to stay away from other delinquent peers, and to stay out of trouble.

There is a stereotype that when youth get in trouble, they are tainted; there is shame and fear in the family when there are such problems. One of our biggest concerns is that both the youth and their parents understand that one mistake will not prevent them from going to Harvard or succeeding to be a lawyer, doctor, actor, or in any way achieving the American dream.

The majority of the people we serve are Asian and Hispanic; about 12% of our clientele are African American, American Indian, White, and "other." But everybody seems to go through the same developmental stages regardless of their cultural and ethnic background. Young people need to go





through asserting independence, rebelling against parents and authority – it is ubiquitous in American culture.

If we were in Taiwan or another country, our work as a youth agency would probably be quite similar. In fact we had a visitor from China recently who's studying juvenile delinquency. Our discussion showed that there are a lot of similarities in trends and traits.

Right now, our counseling program is not ongoing and we no longer provide clinical counseling for families including issues of domestic violence.

**Tcheng:** I have always tried to be engaged in my own kids' activities, so AYC is very personal. I see that my boys have the same American patterns; for example, they like to play sports. I try to be involved with their activities and thus with them. That means volunteering time and monetary support. I am active with the San Gabriel Educational Foundation that supports the public schools.

And I see the issues my wife goes through as she is a school teacher. Because of my activities, friends and neighbors approached me to run for the San Gabriel School Board. Actually, I'm an introvert and I don't like public speaking. You don't know how much stress it was for me to campaign door to door and talk to people (laughs). But the School Board is a form of public service. If you want me to help, I should and I will help. After I finished my first term on the School Board in 2005, AYC Executive Director May To called me up and said, "You don't have anything to do now, why don't you join our Board?" (laughs). I want to help where I can. Now I serve both AYC and the School Board.

**Freridge:** Actually, Ken and former president, Gay Yuen, have taught me a lot about the difference between management and leadership. I was a very good manager but I'm also learning to be a leader.

For example, AYC has learned a lot about interracial interactions. In our work with gang intervention, we have learned about the community dynamics that cause gangs to form. We are beginning to understand why there is a need for youth to protect themselves, and the causes that push youth to have strong need to have identity via an enemy. Once the youth are down that road of gang involvement, how do you intervene?





As a result of our increasing diversity, we are actually getting better at working with at-risk youth. We deliberately create mixed-race and other diverse groups of kids. We want them to meet each other, learn from each other, and to exchange ideas. We want them to see each other as individuals. It then becomes harder for them to objectify each other as the enemy. AYC is providing multilingual services, but we are also providing interracial experiences at the same time. I think it is critical to do that.

Interestingly, our parent services are mostly monolingual – in Chinese or in Spanish. So we don't have as much opportunity to provide interracial experiences for adults. We need to find ways for them to sit next to each other in the classroom and share.

**Tcheng:** As a community member, I don't see much interracial tension at schools. But it is with adults that there is much more politics. In our last local elections, it wasn't pretty. The population of our community is Asian and Hispanic. Politics can cause more problems, more polarization.

**Freridge:** There are those who want to empower their own ethnic interests. Some community members have a more traditional separatist approach. But there are other leaders and organizations that are crossing over. Even OCA (Organization of Chinese Americans) is more pan-Asian. This reminds me of earlier American immigrant history. In the late 19th century, there was much tension between Italians, Germans, and Jews. I think intercultural communication and cooperation is a good thing. That principle guides our agency's work.

We do see dialogue between the kids about race. We see this at the elementary school level to the high school level. Just the other day, one of the little Hispanic first grade boys asked his teacher, "Why am I the only bean amongst the rice?" (laughs). But for him to have that metaphor, you know race is talked about in the home. We try to handle this in age-appropriate ways. We try to provide cultural exchanges opportunities that actually enrich people's lives.

**Tcheng:** Why am I politically active? My stupidity? (laughs). The San Gabriel School Board had been fractionalized by politics. But I find myself not able to say no to my community. In elections, you have to spend money. But I'm stubborn and I do not want to ask for money and I do not want to spend money. So I only put up a few posters and did one mass mailing to





voters. I lost a couple of school board elections by a small minority of votes. But community members and parents kept encouraging me to run again. I don't like that in today's political world, school boards are a beginning arena for some with higher political ambitions. That hurts our schools! I hate political functions. I don't have a thick skin. I don't see myself as a politician, I see myself as a parent and a servant.

The one thing I want to tell other Chinese Americans: get involved, especially if you are an immigrant! For many Asian families, education is a priority. But you have to get involved in the schools. There's a fear factor for immigrant parents that they may not speak the language well, or they may not understand the culture. Or they say they are too busy. But we have to get involved. You have to vote, you have to get involved in the community and influence the environment you live in. That's the American way. That's why we immigrated. I would say the same thing to Latino parents and immigrants.

**Freridge:** I want to share two things with our community. First, even if kids rebel, they still love and need their parents. I see parents who are in crisis when their kids are arrested or get in some kind of trouble. But it isn't the end of the world. Your kids are still good kids. They still need their parents' support. It will work out. Sometimes the family has such high expectations that it feels like the end of the world when there is a bad grade or an arrest. But kids are resilient; they can still become great adults. A lot of immigrant parents take their kids' mistakes very personally. But this isn't a rejection of the parents or their culture. Sometimes, it's just about growing up in America. The child is having a different experience growing up in America but they can't find the words to explain their difficulties. That divide can create such stress in families. It hurts me to see this divide.

The second thing I'd like to share is that nonprofits need support. Philanthropy is another way to get involved in the community. We need volunteers. Some immigrants think that governments take care of everything, but that's so not true. Historical societies, museums, art institutions, and social service agencies are YOURS; they don't belong to the government. And they need our support.

**Tcheng:** Asian Youth Center started as May To's baby. May was a very nurturing and down-to-earth person. She was sincere.





**Freridge:** May To taught me about management. I had not worked with such a large staff before AYC. May was incredibly patient and comfortable with ambiguity (laughs). Sometimes it takes time for things to resolve themselves. May's vision was not only to serve the Chinese American community, but also to connect it to the larger society. It was about empowering. May never had any fear of politicians, schools, or corporations. She was about connecting with others, not isolating our agency. She partnered with everybody and was very accessible. She was a great influence on us.





# Venerable Miao Hsi

Hsi Lai Temple, Hacienda Heights

*Hsi Lai 佛光山西來寺 (Coming West) is one of the largest Buddhist temples in the United States. It is affiliated with Fo Guang Shan, one of Taiwan's most powerful Buddhist organizations. Venerable Miao Hsi is one of nine directors at Hsi Lai Temple. This interview was conducted on June 25, 2014 in Hacienda Heights.*



**Hsi Lai Temple, Hacienda Heights.**

Like all peoples, early Chinese American pioneers brought their places of worship with them to California. By 1853, Sze Yup Association had built one of the first temples in San Francisco, followed by hundreds of others in the late 19th century. Pioneering Cantonese preferred Taoism but often blended Buddhist and Confucian ideals. Temples were centers to gather and sometimes places to stay. The Bok Kai Temple built in 1854 in Marysville, the Oroville temple built in 1863, the Won Lim temple built in 1869 in Weaverville, and the Hanford Taoist Temple built in 1893 preserve some of this early California history.

By the 1890s, Japanese Buddhist missionaries were establishing temples in Hawaii, San Francisco, and then Los Angeles. Little Tokyo established the Higashi Honganji in 1904, the Nishi Hongwanji in 1905, and the Koyasan in 1912. Today, there are almost two dozen Chinese Buddhist institutions centered in Rosemead, Monterey Park, Temple City, and El Monte. Korean,





Thai, Sri Lankan, and Tibetan Buddhists in the United States also have their own traditions.

The largest Buddhist institution in America is Hsi Lai Temple 西來寺 in Hacienda Heights in the San Gabriel Valley. Established in 1988 after twelve years of planning and construction, Hsi Lai is part of Taiwan's Fo Guang Shan 佛光山 Buddhist order. Hsi Lai – meaning “coming west” – is a Buddhist institution that blends much Chinese culture and tradition. Hsi Lai is affiliated with University of the West (established 1990) in Rosemead and the IBPS Rose Hills Memorial Columbarium in Whittier (established 1999).

Venerable Miao Hsi is one of nine directors at Hacienda Heights' Hsi Lai. Born in Hong Kong and educated in Vancouver, Miao Hsi has penned a number of translations of important Buddhist documents. She tells the Temple's story, “In 1976, our Master Hsing Yun 星雲大師 of Taiwan-based Fo Guang Shan went to Washington DC to attend the Bicentennial celebration. During this trip, he was approached by Chinese Americans to establish a branch temple in this country. At that time, the Taiwan NT\$ exchange rate to the US dollar was not favorable. Taiwan Chinese were not familiar with American culture and the idea seemed impossible. But the Chinese American benefactors were persistent.”



**Venerable Miao Hsi at Hsi Lai Temple.**

Venerable Master Hsing Yun was born in 1927 in Jiangsu, China. He trained to be a monk at a young age under Master Zhi Kai of the Linji Chan school of Chinese Buddhism. In 1967, Venerable Master Hsing Yu founded Fo Guang Shan in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. The 370-acre compound is the largest monastery in Taiwan and has established over 200 branches and temples around the world with a network of 1500 monastics. This modern reform Buddhism adopts to meet the needs of the modern world.





Master Hsing Yun tested the American waters with a small Hsi Lai Temple in Gardena. The nuns and monks scraped money together, got a small car, and built a little gathering space. A second effort was called Bai Ta (White Pagoda) in Maywood. By 1978, there was a more concerted effort – mostly funded by Taiwan devotees – to build a larger institution to meet the needs of Chinese Americans and others. Fifteen acres was acquired on the barren hills on the border of Hacienda Heights and La Habra Heights. Venerable Miao Hsi explained, “Traditionally, temples are not built in the middle of cities; temples are located in more remote areas and especially on hills. We did not consider feng shui as we are not superstitious.” In 1980, Hacienda Heights was an affluent predominantly White suburb of 50,000. It is, however, an unincorporated area of Los Angeles County.

“This was a horrendous project,” continued Miao Hsi. “We had no idea what it would take and LA County did not know how to deal with us.” The plan was to establish a Chinese-style structure with an inner court yard, living space for staff, and meditation retreat services. “The beginnings were very controversial; it was absolutely horrible. We had to get a petition signed to get this temple. We didn’t learn until later that there was a petition going around at the same time to stop us from building a temple. After we got the permit, the County put up a lot of obstacles. Of course, there was a need for safety in this unconventional location. It is huge and on a hill. We were told more than once to tear structures down and rebuild. No one had seen an architectural structure like this. At one point, we had to set a Buddha statue on fire to prove its resistance to fire. It was an unimaginable construction task and it was our first project outside Taiwan,” explains Miao Hsi.



The mountain gate of Hsi Lai Temple.





Just south of the 60 freeway, Hsi Lai Temple opened its doors as the Mandarin-speaking Chinese population was growing in the San Gabriel Valley. Between 1980 and 1990, the Asian American population in Hacienda Heights grew 150%. According to the 2010 census, 37% of the community is Asian American. About thirty monastics live onsite but many more use the facilities as they are traveling through. Hundreds of volunteers service the temple from planning events to sweeping the courtyard. About 300-400 people visit the main shrine of the Hsi Lai Temple on an average day. On most Sundays, the dining hall serves close to 1,000 lunches. For a special event, tens of thousands come. And then there are the first fifteen days of the Lunar New Year when the Temple swells with worshippers and the curious. “One New Year, even the shuttle buses carrying visitors from the off-site parking lot could not get through because of the traffic,” said Venerable Miao Hsi. “That day, some visitors chose to walk the two miles uphill from the off-site parking to visit the Temple. It is a very important tradition especially at New Year’s to visit a temple. Some Vietnamese like to visit ten temples in one day and take a bus tour for this purpose. We were shocked when the local police told us we had passed the 100,000 mark on New Year’s day.” The Temple is well-decorated at Lunar New Year and features dragon dances, folk dancing, drum performances, and the like.

“But we have a lot of other activities year round,” said Venerable Miao Hsi. “We sponsor Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts troops; we teach in English and Mandarin; we have a library; and of course we counsel all the time. Western society is so stressful. People will say, ‘I’m so down’, ‘I lost a loved one’, ‘I lost a job’ or ‘I’m so confused’. We want to offer the space for them to find the answers. The shrine allows you to calm yourself and read sutras. In a service, you are with a big group but you can still find answers in yourself.”

Venerable Miao Hsi expands, “We nuns and monks wear different hats. We administer a large temple; we teach. We have our quiet moments. It is a joy to see so many people interested in Buddhism. Even if they don’t become devout Buddhists, we plant seeds. We make the teachings accessible, we make it available.” The Temple offers traditions that are thousands of years tried to the contemporary world. There are overnight meditation retreats, there are 3-night meditation retreats, and there are 7-day meditation retreats. Miao Hsi continues, “For several years, a Philosophy class from Whitter College has been coming to us. For seven days, these



young students unplug from their real world, wake up at 6 am, participate in silent meditation, eat, meditate again, and lights out at 10 pm. This is on-site. We still have all that tradition. We provide opportunities for people to look within themselves spiritually – in English or Mandarin language.”

Hsi Lai is sensitive to accommodate the rhythm and technology of the community. “We email; we have Facebook. We have adjusted and Americanized. We have services on Sundays. We recognize that Sunday is the day that people are most available with their work schedule. We work with two calendars: the lunar calendar and the Gregorian calendar. We adjust. We shift the observance of Buddha’s birthday to a Sunday. We celebrate Mother’s Day and Father’s Day. We pray for world peace in January along with other faiths. We tried to do this on January 1st but we had to compete with the Rose Parade and football, so we moved it to the first or second Saturday of January. We work with Thanksgiving and Halloween,” laughs Venerable Miao Hsi. “But my Master is very wise. He is almost 90 years old now. In the early days, Master Hsing Yun would come to the United States three to five times a year. He has travelled around the world and met international dignitaries including the Pope. He understands our reality. But now, Master Hsing Yun no longer takes long flights. We have to be synched with changing times but stay true to the teachings.”

For the last twenty plus years, the Temple has diligently had open houses for its neighbors in the 91745 zip code area of Hacienda Heights. About 3,000 invitations are sent out for the community to attend workshops in tie knotting, Chinese drumming, calligraphy, and the like. At 6 pm, there is a gathering in the main shrine with the abbot, before the free dinner and prize drawing. Venerable Miao Hsi reports, “But we have had people tell us, ‘Never send us mail again; we do not want to be associated with you.’ We participate in the local July 4th Independence Day parades. In the early years, we Buddhists were booed.” Even buying the affiliated campus was controversial. As it had been a Christian school, there was reluctance to let Buddhists buy the location in Rosemead in the early 1990s. Hsi Lai

古動公告

JUNE 六月		PLACE 地點
DATE 日期	ACTIVITY / 活動名稱	
Every SAT 9 Am - 4:30	Chinese Dharma Class 人間佛學院	TBA 另行通知
Every SAT 2 - 5 Pm	Youth Orchestra Rehearsal 佛光青少年交響樂團	TBA 另行通知
MON - FRI 3 Pm - 6 Pm	Buddha's Light Hsi Lai School After-school Program 西來學校課輔班	Hsi Lai School 西來學校
Every WED 7 :30 Pm	Fo Guang Choirs 佛光合唱團	TBA 另行通知
Every THU 10 Am -	Chinese Dance Troupe 舞蹈班	ASSEMBLY MALL 二合堂
Every 2 <sup>nd</sup> Fri 7:30 - 10 Pm	Great Compassion Repentance Service 大悲懺法會	MAIN SHRINE 大雄寶殿
SUN 1 9 Am - 5 Pm	One Day Meditation 一日禪	Meditation MALL 禮堂
12 & 27 10 :30 Am	Chanting Service 光明燈法會	MAIN SHRINE 大雄寶殿
SUN 8 9:30 - 3:30	Blood Drive 捐血活動	TBA 另行通知
SUN 22 1 Pm -	"Sounds of the Human Voice" Korean Competition 人間音緣卡拉OK歌詠比賽	AUDITORIUM 法堂
FRI - SUN 27 - 29	Buddha's Light Children's Summer 佛光兒童快樂營 Camp	TBA 另行通知
SAT 28 8:30 - 5 Pm	One Day Meditation (Chinese) 中文一日禪	Meditation MALL 禮堂

Calendar of activities  
at Hsi Lai Temple.



University changed its name to University of the West for easier recognition. The school is accredited by WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) and offers a range of courses in business, English, psychology, and religious studies. Bachelor, master, and doctorate degrees are available including a Buddhist chaplaincy program.

“We are part of the Buddhist-Catholic Dialogue and go to meetings at Loyola Marymount University. We are part of the Interfaith Dialogue. When Lee Baca was Sheriff, he started a Clergy Council after September 11 and we were an active member.” In 1980 the Buddhist Sangha Council of Southern California was formed, embracing different groups of Buddhism. Since 1969, there has been an Interreligious Council of Southern California. Since 1989, the pioneering Los Angeles Buddhist-Catholic Dialogue met formally. They join together each year to participate in the multireligious World Peace Day.

“We are part of the Arcadia Interfaith Action Group, established after the LA Riots. Every year there are two major services: National Day of Prayer in May and Thanksgiving. We go to different churches in Arcadia and chant. In January, we invite other Buddhists, Mormons, Catholics, Protestants, Sikhs, Jews, Hindus, and Muslims.”

Venerable Miao Hsi concludes, “I’ve lived in the San Gabriel Valley for almost fifteen years. It is changing. Chinese, Vietnamese, and Koreans are moving eastward to Chino Hills, Diamond Bar, and Rowland Heights. These are diverse neighborhoods. It is commercialized but the social fabric of these communities is on the positive side. Mainland Chinese have blended in. In China, the Buddhist temples are hundreds and even thousands of years old but they don’t actively teach Buddhism. They are more historical landmarks. But we are open and accessible. Many people – Hispanics, mainland Chinese, other ethnicities – find us warm and open. They feel comfortable here. Here, we are a house of worship and contemplation. We are accessible and thus, popular. This temple is user-friendly. We are wanting to share and tell our story.”



## Dr. Cathy Wei 魏瑞琴

Mandarin Language Professor,  
Pasadena City College

*Originally from Taiwan, Dr. Cathy Wei has lived in Monterey Park, Alhambra, and Pasadena in the last twenty-five years. She is an*



**Dr. Cathy Wei**  
in her office.

*active member of Pasadena City College's President's Asian Advisory Committee and the Pasadena Sister City Committee. As a mentor teacher, she consults with educators and policy makers in Taiwan, China, and within the United States frequently. In 2006, she was awarded the Cherry Blossom Teachers Making a Difference Award, and in 2011, she was the recipient of the Pacific Regional Faculty Member Award from the Association of Community College Trustees. This is based on*

*an interview on September 29, 2014 in Pasadena, California.*

### Coming to the San Gabriel Valley

My family's ancestry is from Hsinchu 新竹 in Taiwan and I grew up in nearby Taipei. My family has been in Taiwan for about 20 generations. We know that our ancestor was originally a military officer in the early Ming dynasty in Henan. He then went to a small village in Fujian – maybe due to expulsion or to escape persecution of some sort. We are of Hakka 客家 ethnicity. I did my undergraduate degree majoring in Mandarin language at the National Cheng Kung University 國立成功大學 in Tainan in southern Taiwan.

In 1983, I came to the U.S. to pursue a master's degree and then a doctorate in education from USC. In 1987, I became the principal of the San Marino Chinese School. The San Marino Chinese School was established by the San Marino Chinese Club about thirty years ago. We had nearly 1,100 students and we used the San Marino High School campus on Saturday mornings. Today, there are Chinese language classes on several campuses in San Marino including Huntington Middle School, and Carver and Valentine Elementary. At that time, most of the San Marino Chinese community was from Taiwan. The Chinese were attracted to the quality





public education system in San Marino. Today, affluent Chinese - from Taiwan, China, and elsewhere - are also in the Arcadia Unified School District. Both school districts have over 60% Asian students.

Concurrently, I was a broadcast news announcer with 1300 AM, a Chinese language radio station called Zhonghua Zhe Sheng 中華之聲 . 1300 AM K-Asian was established in 1984 as a pan-Asian frequency with programs called Asahi Radio, Radio Saigon, Radio Korea, etc. It changed ownership and format and is became a 24-hour Mandarin language station 中文廣播電台. Now, it is not the only Chinese language radio frequency in the Los Angeles area.

### **Teaching Mandarin**

In 1991, I became the first fulltime professor of Mandarin in the Pasadena City College (PCC) Languages Division. For a long time, I was also an adjunct professor of Mandarin at USC. PCC was established in 1924 with 267 students. Today, it is considered as one of the best community colleges. PCC has a high Chinese American population as it serves the San Gabriel Valley cities of San Marino, Arcadia, Temple City, Rosemead, South Pasadena, and La Canada. We have about 26,000 for-credit students of which 27% are of Asian descent. About 12% of our staff/faculty is of Asian descent. PCC used to have even an even higher percentage of Chinese American students in the late 1990s with many coming from nearby Alhambra and San Gabriel Unified School Districts – which are outside our official district. PCC has taught Asian American studies continuously since 1971.

The PCC Languages Division teaches twelve foreign languages including American Sign Language. Now there are three fulltime Mandarin language instructors plus several part-time instructors. We offer about 50 sections of Chinese courses a year. We go up to Level 5. Our class offerings include Chinese civilization, Chinese calligraphy, and Chinese literature in translation.

In the last 25 years, there have been changes in the teaching of Mandarin. This may be an indicator of the changes in our community, in international relations, and in our thinking. From when I first started, it was easy to see several categories of learners: (1) non-Asians who saw





opportunity to work in China or Taiwan; (2) heritage learners or American-born Chinese; and (3) other Asians especially Japanese and Cambodians.

Over the years, our Chinese language classes were in high demand but now the need has stabilized. This is because the high schools – and even some elementary schools – are also offering Mandarin courses. In 2006, the Bush administration wanted to increase the number of Americans speaking Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Hindi, and Farsi, what the administration defined as “critical-need languages.” President Bush established FLAP (Foreign Language Assistance Program) that offered grants to public schools teaching “critical-need languages.” Almost all our local high schools offer two years of introductory Mandarin now and even some Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Starting in 2009, Pasadena Unified School District has a Mandarin dual immersion language program that starts in kindergarten! Our local universities noticed that the number of students taking upper level Mandarin language was dropping. That’s actually because there are so many opportunities now for serious students to enroll in universities in Taiwan and in China to specifically learn language. The universities in China have international dormitories, special curriculum, and scholarships! They actively encourage study abroad.

In 2003, I helped bring the HSK (Hanyu Shiuping Kaoshi 汉语水平考试) test to PCC. The HSK is a standardized test instituted by the Chinese government for non-native speakers. The test certifies your level of Chinese language proficiency. Again, the number of students taking this test has stabilized as there are so many other opportunities for people to get certificated.

### **Huntington Library’s Chinese Garden 流芳園**

Huntington Library in San Marino is two minutes south of the PCC campus. As I know some of the people involved in this project, I’ve had opportunity to witness the development of one of the largest Chinese gardens outside of China: Liu Fang Yuan 流芳園, Flowing Fragrance Garden. This project is an example of the development of the Chinese American community in the San Gabriel Valley.

Huntington Library was a gift to the community from Henry and Arabella Huntington, the transportation magnates. The Huntingtons had amassed a world-renowned collection of art and books. They also amassed





an incredible collection of plants and cacti. As early as the 1910s, Henry Huntington was building a Japanese garden on his property with a moon bridge, bronze bell, and tea house.

The Chinese garden was an idea that was conceived in the 1980s by the Huntington trustees. The first phase didn't open until February 2008. The Phase I garden covers five acres and includes a lake, seven pavilions, five stone bridges, and sheltered walkways. They imported craftsmen from Suzhou Institute of Landscape Architecture and Design to do the intricate work in San Marino. The cost was reported to be \$18 million for construction and millions more for endowing education and cultural programs. That's just Phase I. This was only five acres of the proposed 12-acre project. The fundraising goal for Phase II is \$22 million and Phase III and IV are in progress.

This was a project that saw the cooperation of the affluent Chinese American community with mainstream society. Generous contributors include Beth and Wilbur Woo of Cathay Bank; Peggy and Andrew Cherng of Panda Restaurants; and Judy Yin Shi and Joel Axelrod – she was a docent when they lived in San Marino. There was also a gift from the Cheng Family Foundation. George and Arlene Cheng are from Malaysia and successful real estate investors in the San Gabriel Valley. A lot of Chinese Americans including more established Cantonese families and newer immigrants from all over came together. Huntington also earned donations from more traditional sources of funding such as the Annenberg Foundation. Chinese government officials heralded this project and brought a lot of in-kind support with their visits. For example, COSCO (China Ocean Shipping Company) shipped in many containers of Chinese stones and tiles.

A friend told me that you had to get on a waiting list to volunteer as a docent for the Chinese gardens. It really is a beautiful, authentically traditional, and poetic garden. It is a success story for all involved.

### **Pasadena's Sister City: Xicheng 西城区**

In 1997, I brought a group of PCC students on a Study Abroad program to Beijing. Since the 1980s, PCC has had Study Abroad programs to Oxford and Florence, and more recently to Madrid, Mexico, and elsewhere. During this particular Study Abroad semester, two members of Pasadena's Sister City Committee tagged along.



Sister City program was started by President Eisenhower in 1956 in hopes of encouraging international peace. It connects U.S. cities with similar foreign communities. Pasadena has had a very active Sister City program. Their first city was Ludwigshafen, Germany – which was bombed 107 times during World War II. This was really a postwar relief effort led by American Friends Services Committee, a Quaker-affiliated organization in Pasadena. Pasadena then linked up with Mishima, Japan in 1957; with Järvenpää, Finland in 1983; and Vanadzor, Armenia in 1991. But members of the Sister City program wanted to have a “people-to-people” exchange with China.

The Sister City leaders carefully studied many districts near Beijing and in 1999, Pasadena Mayor Bill Bogaard signed with his counterpart from Xicheng 西城区. There have been many meaningful exchanges since. They send books on Chinese culture to our libraries; we reciprocate. Many of their students have lived with Pasadena host families and our Blair High School students have visited Xicheng. There are electronic exchanges. I’ve been the chair of the Xicheng Subcommittee for some years.



**Pasadena City College Study Abroad-Beijing at Feihe International Inc. 飞鹤乳业.  
CFO/lawyer of the state-owned formula company, Judy Tu,  
was Dr. Wei’s student at San Marino Chinese School. April 2012.**



**Left to right: Business Professor Daniel Raddon of PCC, Judy Tu of Feihe International, and Mandarin Professor Cathy Wei, April 2012.**

After I immigrated, I started out entrenched in the Chinese American community especially as the principal of San Marino Chinese School. But over the years, I saw myself growing via expanding my voluntarism. Especially with the Pasadena Sister City Committee, I came into contact with non-Chinese who are genuinely passionate about understanding Chinese culture. I see them give of themselves selflessly. I've met so many non-Chinese students who truly want to learn Chinese language and culture. This teacher has become the student; I also want to expand my horizons.

In these last five years, I've been the faculty sponsor for PCC's Global Club. The club is mostly – but not all - Chinese immigrant students and our mission is cultural exchange and volunteer work. We sponsor programs on campus to highlight Chinese culture; we've featured the Lantern Festival, martial artists, calligraphers, and the like. Recently, we showcased Chinese opera singers juxtaposed to Italian opera singers. We had a student show with Chinese folk dancing and Latin salsa dancing; everybody had fun. The Global Club also goes out to volunteer – hosting bone marrow drives, feeding the local homeless, and helping children learn Mandarin Chinese language. The Mandarin speakers in the Global Club are the Chinese language assistants in all eight classes of the Mandarin Dual Immersion Program at Field Elementary School in Pasadena. In the academic year of 2013-2014, the Club members volunteered more than 1,000 hours at Field. The Chinese students learned about the American educational system and got to know many American families. I hope our students develop





leadership skills in an American context and they learn internationalism. This is the same way I learned to immerse myself into American society.

Perhaps the whole Chinese American community has had time to assimilate and be more community-minded. We need to see ourselves as Americans because that's what we are.

*Photos courtesy of Dr. Cathy Wei.*



