



NOVEMBER 2005

Newsletter

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VCCAA Newsletter

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Greetings from the President

On October 6-9, I attended the “Branching Out the Banyan Tree – A Changing Chinese America” conference at the Radisson Miyako Hotel in San Francisco. Dr. George Yu led our delegation (S.K. Leong, Linda Bentz, Angels Soo Hoo, Irene Sy, Dolly Lee) from the Ventura County Chinese American Historical Society (VCCAHS). At a Saturday morning session, a panel of Linda Bentz, George Sandoval, Angela Soo Hoo, and Dr. George Yu presented “Courage and Contributions: The Chinese in Ventura County” video.



“Making History” banquet by the Chinese Historical Society of America was held at the Empress of China Restaurant in San Francisco Chinatown on Friday evening. Yellow River Drummers gave an opening performance. Gary Locke, former Governor of the State of Washington, gave an inspiring keynote speech. The birthdays of Philip P. Choy and Him Mark Lai, Grand Historians, were celebrated. I had the opportunity to meet Lily Lee Chen, former Mayor of the City of Monterey Park, the first Chinese American woman to lead an American city.

VCCAA is a proud sponsor of “When China Ruled the Seas: The Treasure Fleets of the Ming Dynasty, 1405-1433”. Zheng He, the legendary admiral, led the great Chinese fleets in their epic journeys. Members of the VCCAHS are involved in developing this exhibit and in organizing the grand opening activities. Please visit the exhibit at Ventura County Maritime Museum at Channel Islands Harbor in Oxnard.

I am acknowledging the generous donation of \$500 by Tony Chen for a scholarship. Tony has recognized the importance of higher education for high school seniors. VCCAA is grateful for his continued support.

Raymond D. Chong, P.E., PTOE
President 2005-2006

Autumn Moon Festival

By Caroline Tsaw, Chair

VCCAA celebrated our Autumn Moon Festival at Los Primeros Structure School in Camarillo on Saturday, September 18. A crowd of almost 300 people enjoyed the vast assortment of delicious potluck dishes and the traditional Moon Cakes.

Sarah Yim, President of our Youth Club, was the mistress of ceremony. Irene Sy provided a PowerPoint presentation as prelude to the program. The students of the Chinese Language School performed Mi-Feng Zuo Gong & Cai-Quan and told the Autumn Moon Festival story. Justin Sy did a

violin solo of Yue Liang Dai Biao Wo De Xin. The dancers of the Chinese Classical Dance Troupe performed Taiwan Aborigine's Folk Dance, Ladies of the Miou Tribe, and Reflection of Spring Awakening along the Moonlit River. Edward Schoepke recited Libai's Poem.

The Youth Cub was helpful in setting up our Autumn Moon Festival. Many thanks to Lee-May Little of Chinese Language School and Yu-Ling Lu of the Chinese Classical Dance Troupe in coordinating the program.

Halloween Party

By LaRaine Kang, Chair

We had our spooky Halloween Party at Los Primeros Structure School in Camarillo on Saturday, October 29. Kids enjoyed the fun games throughout the dark evening. Over 150 children, parents, and friends enjoyed our dinner of hot dogs and chili beans. Later, we had our costume contest for age 4 and younger, and for age 5 and older. The sister team of

Sarah and Christine Yim did a capable job of emceeding the program.

I am thankful of the support of Edna Tanita, my mom. As always, the Jue family cooked our delicious dinner at the Halloween Party. Our Youth Group provided great logistics support on site.

A Special Letter of Appreciation to Our Generous Sponsors

By Sharon Chiang, Barbara Chieu, Ray Chong, Alice Ginn and Hillary Ling

Every organization needs financial support for viability. VCCAA is fortunate to have so many generous sponsors to make it possible for us to undertake various cultural events for the enjoyment and appreciation of our heritage in our community.

The team of President Ray Chong, Vice President Barbara Chieu, , Sharon Chiang, Alice Ginn and I successfully met our goal to raise \$8,000 in sponsorships. We are thankful the generosity of all sponsors. We duly recognize the Gold sponsorships (\$1,000) of Chester's Asia Chinese Restaurant of Camarillo, DCH Lexus of Oxnard, and Al Lowe Construction of Oxnard.

\$500 each are:

Central Coast Property Management, Lakeview Garden Chinese Restaurant, Best Western Camarillo Inn, Jim's Fitness, Panda Express, Chinese Combo #1 Restaurant, Metro-Med, Inc. Dr. partrick Kong, Dr. Shang Liao, Dr. Ju-Sung Wu, Polyfet rf devices, Chen's Acupuncture, Dr. Stephen Hong, Oxnard Hueneme Ob/Gyn Medical Group of Dr. Lin, Dr. Huang and Dr. Chiang, Dr. Frank Chieu, Richard's Shanghai Restaurant, Dr. Lee Wan of Coastal Eye Specialists Medical Group, Dr. George Yu, Dr. Christopher Loh, Dr. K Seek Lau, Camarillo Dental Practice, Howard Smith of Morgan Stanley, Attorney Joseph E. Hohenwarter, Soo Hoo Customs Broker and Camarillo Kung Fu Club.

The other generous sponsors contributed \$200 to

A big "Thank you" to our sponsors. We strongly encourage you to patronize and support our sponsors.

Autumn Moon Festival
September 18, 2005



Left: VCCAA President Ray Chong and VCCAA Youth Group President Sarah Yim emceed the Autumn Moon Festival Event

Above: Chinese Language School Students perform a song.

Below: Chinese Classical Dance Troupe performing a dance



Halloween Party
October 29, 2005



Top: Costume contest .

Above Left: Emcees Sarah & Christine Yim

Above Alice Ginn with grandson

Left: Winners of pre-Kindergarten costume contest



Chinese Language School

By Lee May Little, Principal

I'm so happy to see that our big family (Chinese School) is bigger this year. Seeing all ages of students willing to take on the challenge of one of the hardest and most spoken language in the world is truly inspirational.

This year we have a total of 73 students registered. There are a lots of new faces in the conversational class as well as Ping Ying I and kindergarten. The most exciting thing is having ten high school students working to earn their high school language credit through our credit class. Thanks to Mrs. Irene Sy for her hard work promoting our school. We also notice that many familiar faces from previous years are returning with a new determination to attend class and a new attitude to lean. I know we will have a very successful year.

We also congratulate Irene Sy on being recognized by the Southern California Council of Chinese Schools for five years of outstanding and valuable service to Chinese Language education. We are very proud of her and know that she will continue her good work.

I am looking forward to seeing everyone at the Christmas Party.



Irene Sy, second on the left in the red jacket, received recognition from the Southern California Council of Chinese schools, for her five years of hard work teaching Chinese.

VCCAA Youth Group

Youth Update

By Sarah Yim, Youth Group President

Hello to VCCAA's youth. If you have not joined VCCAA's Youth Group and would like to my number

is 639-0455. Also I would the youth group members to help set up and clean up during the Christmas Party on the 10th of December. Thanks and hope to see you there.

Chester's Asia Gift Certificates

By Alice Ginn

Thanks to the generosity of Chester's Asia Chinese Restaurant of Camarillo, we will again this year be selling Chester's Asia gift certificates as a fundraiser. The certificates are \$25 each and may be used just like cash. The VCCAA will receive a percentage of the sales.

Chester's Asia gift certificates make great holiday presents, or you can use them to eat out when you are

too busy to cook during this hectic time of year.

You can place your orders by phone to Alice Ginn, (805) 482-2393, or Lee May Little, (805) 484-5222, or by mailing your check to VCCAA, P.O. Box 806, Camarillo, CA 93011-0806. They will also be available at our Christmas Party on December 10.

A Look at Upcoming Events

Christmas Party

When: Saturday, December 10, 2005 6:00 pm

**Where: Los Primeros Structure School
2222 East Ventura Blvd., Camarillo**

Contact: Lee-May Little, (805) 484-5222

We will celebrate our Christmas Party in Camarillo Old Town on Saturday, December 10. Please join us for the potluck dinner and the arrival of Santa Claus who will bear gifts to kids. Families will celebrate this joyous holiday season with a program of spirited Christmas songs by the students of the Chinese Language School and the graceful dances by the Chinese Classical Dance Troupe.

Please do bring a potluck dish for 10 people to the Christmas Party. If you are too busy to cook a potluck dish, please patronize our sponsors:

Chester's Asia Chinese Restaurant
2216 Pickwick Drive
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(805) 486-3965

Richard's Shanghai Restaurant
1775 East Daily Drive Suite A
Camarillo
(805) 484-2885

Lakeview Garden Chinese Restaurant
4703 Lakeview Canyon Road
Westlake Village
(805) 557-0198

Chinese New Year Party

When: Saturday, February 4, 2006 6:00 pm

**Where: Richard's Shanghai Restaurant
1775 East Daily Drive Suite A, Camarillo**

Cost: \$25.00 per person

Contact: Ray Chong at (510) 915-9810

VCCAA will host a Chinese New Year Party to celebrate the arrival of Year of the Dog 4704 on Saturday evening, 6:00 p.m., February 4, 2006. We will have a formal dinner party and program at Richard's Shanghai Restaurant in Camarillo Plaza in the City of Camarillo. Please join us to welcome the Chinese New Year with hearty conviviality with relatives and friends.

Mr. Huang Haiping, executive chef from China, will prepare a delicious Shanghai-style traditional dinner of eight courses to bring hope for a Chinese New Year filled with all things good:

- "Good Fortune" Seafood Soup
- "100 Birds Singing in the Spring" Shrimp
- "Green & White Jade" Squid
- "Ying & Yang" Scallops
- "Golden Time" Crispy Beef
- "Good Luck" Baby Bok Choy & Mushrooms
- "Shanghai Greeting" Soy Sauce Shrimp
- "Rising Phoenix" Chicken
- "Jumping Squirrel" Fish
- "Shanghai" Sweet Cake

Drinks will include hot tea, iced tea, and water. Richard Lu will have a no-host bar available.

Tickets are \$25.00 per person. We are limited to 80 people as dinner seating capacity for this Chinese New Year Party. Please RSVP with Ray Chong to ensure your seats. He can be reached at (510) 915-9810 (mobile) or raychong@prodigy.net (e-mail).

Ventura County Chinese American Historical Society – The First Five Years

By Dr. George Yu, Chair

Like most projects, the Ventura County Chinese American Historical Society (VCCAHS) started with an idea. A few of us were bantering around the buffet table at the Ventura County Chinese American Association Mid-Autumn Festival celebration in September, 2000. The conversation drifted to the history of the Chinese in Ventura County. It was mentioned that Chinese laborers had already settled in Ventura by the 1860s and had lived in the China Alley across from the San Buenaventura Mission. This piece of immigration history concerning the Chinese was news to most of us.

A suggestion was made to form an historical society to explore and preserve the legacy of these early settlers, and so a meeting time and place were set. Five people were present at the first meeting of the Historical Society. A mission statement was drafted asserting our goal of fostering research and education with regard to the history of the Chinese in Ventura County.

Through word of mouth, we heard of Marie Louie who is a descendent of an inhabitant of the Ventura China Alley in the 1880s. After making contact with Marie, she graciously offered to host the monthly meetings of the historical society. We had our first meeting at Marie's home in Camarillo in December, 2000. At the outset, we knew that a historian with expertise on the Chinese in Ventura County would be invaluable to our society. Linda Bentz was mentioned as an expert in this field. Marie had communicated with Linda over the years regarding the life of her mother, Nellie Yee Chung. Nellie was born in China Alley in 1888. A call was made to Linda and she readily offered her services as our historian. S. K. Leong created our website at www.vccaahs.org, which was linked with that of the Ventura County Chinese American Association.

One of our members heard on the radio that the Ventura City Council had decided to honor the early Chinese settlers in China Alley with a memorial. The motion had been proposed by deputy-mayor Donna DePaola and adopted by the City Council. The task of the design of the memorial was given to the Historic

Preservation Committee (HPC). We approached the HPC in May 2001 to offer our help in the construction of the memorial.

The initial idea of the HPC was to have a plaque that detailed the history of the inhabitants of China Alley. After several meetings and a walking tour of Figueroa Street, where the Alley was located, the idea of a plaque was modified to that of a mural instead. A preliminary mural design was submitted. The design was forwarded to the Ventura City Council and unanimously accepted by all of the attending council members in May, 2002. The City Council also approved a matching grant of \$8000 toward the construction of the mural. The VCAAHS was to provide at least this amount by private donation. Through the generosity of the Chinese American community in Ventura County, we were able to exceed that target. Our next job was to find an artist to finalize the design and paint the mural. The VCCAHS held a design competition for the China Alley Memorial at the end of 2002. Artists Qi Pang and his wife, Guo Song Yun were the winners, with their design of a street scene depicting the lives of the early Chinese settlers.

In the summer of 2004, the Pangs spent seven weeks of daily effort in order to complete the mural. On August 26, 2004 the grand opening ceremony of the China Alley Memorial was attended by the mayor, city council members and citizens of the City of Ventura and neighboring communities. On that day, visitors were treated to Lion Dances, firecrackers, Chinese dances as well as a reception in the courtyard of the Ventura County Museum of History and Art. The Memorial stands over thirteen feet tall and is almost sixty eight feet wide. The artists skillfully blended the various daily activities in China Alley against a rosy background, suggesting the re-emergence of this once vibrant community from obscurity. Since October, 2005 the City of Ventura has formally taken over the maintenance of the Memorial from the VCCAHS.

During our meetings with the HPC on the China Alley Memorial, we learned that there was no original

building or historical landmark in Ventura Chinatown to tell the story of these early settlers.

When we conducted an internet search on relevant teaching materials on the history of Chinese Americans, we came across an award-winning CD made by the San Jose Chinese Historical and Cultural Project, titled *Golden Legacy*. In addition to telling the story of the restoration of the San Jose Ng Shing Gung, a Taoist temple, the CD also contains a set of curriculum materials on Chinese and Chinese American culture.

Consequently, we were inspired to make a documentary, on the history of the Ventura County Chinese communities, which may serve as a teaching aid on California history and social studies in our schools. We conducted oral histories and videotaped interviews with members in the Chinese community. With the financial support of our local Chinese American community, the Historical Society enlisted the service of George Sandoval of WestEnds Production to direct the documentary, “*Courage and Contribution – the History of the Chinese in Ventura County*”.

The film received rave reviews at its premier at the Rockwell Scientific Auditorium in Thousand Oaks on May 15, 2004. We also showed the film at the

Chinese American Studies Conference in San Francisco in October, 2005. We have developed a teacher’s guide, paying special attention to the California History-Social Studies Content Standards of Grade 3-12. We are setting up in-service lectures for the teachers on our documentary with the help of Diane Dempwolf, director of Curriculum and Instruction in Ventura County and Jeff Chancer, assistant school superintendent, Ventura Unified School District. Our goal is to provide a copy of the documentary to every school in Ventura County.

Our current project is to publish a book on the history of the Chinese in Ventura County. This will document the history of the Chinese in America and will highlight the personal stories of some of the pioneers in this county. The book will serve as a reference for students of history who desire an in-depth look at the era and the struggles of the Chinese who lived in Ventura County over almost one hundred and fifty years ago. Once again, we will need the help of our community, as both financial and informational resources in order to complete this task. We are honored and excited to explore the legacy of the Chinese pioneers in Ventura County as we continue into this new millennium.

Scholarship News

By Barbara Chieu, Scholarships Chair

Students who are interested in applying for VCCAA scholarships may obtain applications from the college counselor at their high school beginning the third

week in January. Only high school seniors are eligible to apply.

When China Ruled the Seas

The Treasure Fleets of the Ming Dynasty 1405-1433

By Howard Smith

This December the Ventura County Maritime Museum will premier the first American exhibit of, "When China Ruled the Seas, the Treasure Fleets of the Ming Dynasty: 1405-1433. Commanded by a eunuch, Admiral Zheng He, the fleets represent perhaps the single greatest accomplishment in naval history up until the 20th Century.

And why, you might rightly ask, should we care about events that occurred half a world and 600 years ago?

Because the decision to ground the fleet in 1433 and destroy most official records of its existence was perhaps the single greatest blunder of in all of modern history. This act, whose repercussions shaped the modern world order within which we all now live, plunged China into 600 years of decline and represents the ultimate triumph of partisan politics over common sense and the national welfare.

To understand how this one colossal act of petty partisanship destroyed an empire, one needs to first grasp how dominant China once was in world affairs.

By 1405 China had already been a powerful empire for nearly two thousand years, its initial unification coming at the same time as the early days of the Roman Empire. In scope, scale, population, wealth and technology, it equaled or surpassed every single one of its European contemporaries during those times.

The third emperor of the Ming Dynasty, Zhu Di, usurped the throne after defeating his own brother in battle. The young general commanding Zhu Di's forces was Zheng He. To legitimize his regime and cement his power, Zhu Di undertook four extraordinary projects.

First he moved his capital from Nanjing to what is now the modern city of Beijing. There he employed thousands of workers to construct from scratch the Forbidden City, which still stands today as one of the world's largest palace complexes. To feed this army of workers with food from the fertile south, he built the thousand mile long Grand Canal, a feat akin to

building a waterway from Los Angeles to San Francisco and back again.

Next to insure the safety of his nation from the Mongols to the north, he rebuilt all three thousand miles of the Great Wall – a distance comparable to the entire US – Canadian border between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

Lastly, he commissioned the construction of the largest fleets the world would ever see up until the First World War and placed his loyal servant, Zheng He, in charge as its Admiral. Zheng He, who is also known by his given name, San Bao, built a navy and merchant fleet comprised some 300 ships and some 25,000 personnel.

The largest crafts in Zheng He's navy were the Treasure Ships. Some sixty of these behemoths were constructed in the boat yards of Nanjing. At over 400 feet in length, these vessels built of teak and with water tight compartments were the size of World War Two aircraft carriers. The centerpiece of the Maritime Museum's exhibit is a recently and locally crafted scale model of one of these magnificent boats. The ships Columbus sailed across the Atlantic eighty years later, the Nina, Pinta and Santa Maria, were so small by comparison that together they and their crew could have fit three times over on the deck of a single Treasure Ship. It was not until the very end of the age of sail in the late 1800's that any nation dared try building a single vessel that approached the size of the Chinese Treasure ships.

Ship construction was not new to the Chinese. They had sailed the Indian Ocean and engaged in trade with Africa, Arabia, Indian, Indochina, Indonesia and the Spice Islands for hundreds of years. Readers of history will remember that Marco Polo returned to Europe from his great journey aboard Chinese fleets two hundred years before Zheng He set sail on the first of seven voyages of trade and commerce.

Long before European ventured into the Atlantic, Chinese traders were bringing back trade goods from East Africa that included a giraffe as a present for the Emperor. The wealth that flowed into China from these voyages was staggering. Again a comparison is in order.

After the one surviving vessel of Ferdinand Magellan's fleet made its way back to Spain in 1522 filled with cloves and cinnamon, it contained enough of those spices in its hold to wipe out the entire debt of the Spanish government. In the days before refrigeration, spices represented one of the few methods of preserving food and feeding the growing population of a nation. That ship was little bigger than the Santa Maria. Each voyage of the Treasure Fleet brought back to China cargo many thousands of times more valuable than Magellan's.

Zheng He's fame was so great that even today he is still worshiped as a god throughout South East Asia in numerous temples named San Bao, that were built in his honor. Legends about him abound, the most famous of which are known to children around the world as "The Seven Voyages of Sinbad the Sailor."

But this fame and the influx of wealth into China was not without its problems. While the day to day administration of government in China was in the hands of the Mandarins, the entrenched bureaucrats of their time – the fleets and the army were controlled by eunuchs, such as Zheng He who were fiercely loyal to the Emperor.

During Zhu Di's reign the balance of power in the empire swung back and forth between the Mandarins and the eunuchs, who perhaps in their own way, representing the two political parties of their time. But when Zhu Di died and his grandson assumed the throne, the Mandarins rose in influence.

Zheng He, who had died on the return trip of the seventh voyage and was buried at sea with honors, was unable to hold the influence of the Mandarins in check.

In a move to under cut the power of his political rivals, the chief Mandarin, Liu Ta Xia, decreed that the fleets were to be grounded, the records destroyed and further overseas trade forbidden.

The greatest navy in the world disappeared overnight and China began a six hundred year decline that is only now being reversed.

Fortunately not all the records vanished. Zheng He's charts made their way to Europe and enabled Prince Henry the Navigator to establish his sailing school.

The European Age of Discover and subsequent colonization of the world began only after the Chinese removed themselves from the game.

It's a known fact recorded in the journals of both Columbus and Magellan that each explorer set sail on their respective voyages with maps and charts of places no European had ever seen. Magellan even describes cruising along the South American coast looking for the Straits that would later bear his name, because he knew that the straits were there.

Had Liu Ta Xia not made this decisions based purely on partisan politics, the Chinese could have well been the nation that colonized the Americas, created vast trading empires and dominated world history instead of the Europeans.

We can only speculate what would have happened had the great fleets of the Ming Dynasty continued to sail...

About the Author: In addition to being member of VCCAA, Howard Smith is the Chairman of the Board of the Ventura County Economic Development Association and a Vice President and Financial Advisor at Morgan Stanley in Oxnard.

"When China Ruled the Seas" Exhibit at Ventura County Maritime Museum

Grand Opening : 11:00 am - 5:00pm, December 4th 2005 (Sunday) at the Ventura County Maritime Museum, 2731 S. Victoria Avenue, Oxnard, CA 93035

to have an opportunity to work with the Maritime Museum Channel Island in Oxnard to put up an exhibit on Zheng He, China's Famous navigator. Please come share and propagate Chinese Culture and Activities with the public on our heritage.

By Irene Sy

The VCCAHS, VCCAA and CCCA are very grateful

Quotes

The foolish man seeks happiness in the distance;

The wise grows it under his feet. *James Oppenheim*

Always go to the bathroom when you have a chance.

King George V

Good people do not need laws to tell them to act responsibly, while bad people will find a way around the laws.

Plato

Always go to the bathroom when you have a chance.

King George V

We would often be sorry if our wishes were gratified.

Aesop

Moral indignation is jealousy with a halo.

H.G. Wells

Life is pleasant. Death is peaceful. It's the transition that's troublesome.

Isaac Asimov

The difference between 'involvement' and 'commitment' is like an eggs-and-ham breakfast: the chicken was 'involved' - the pig was 'committed'..

Source Unknown

Newsletter inputs are welcome!

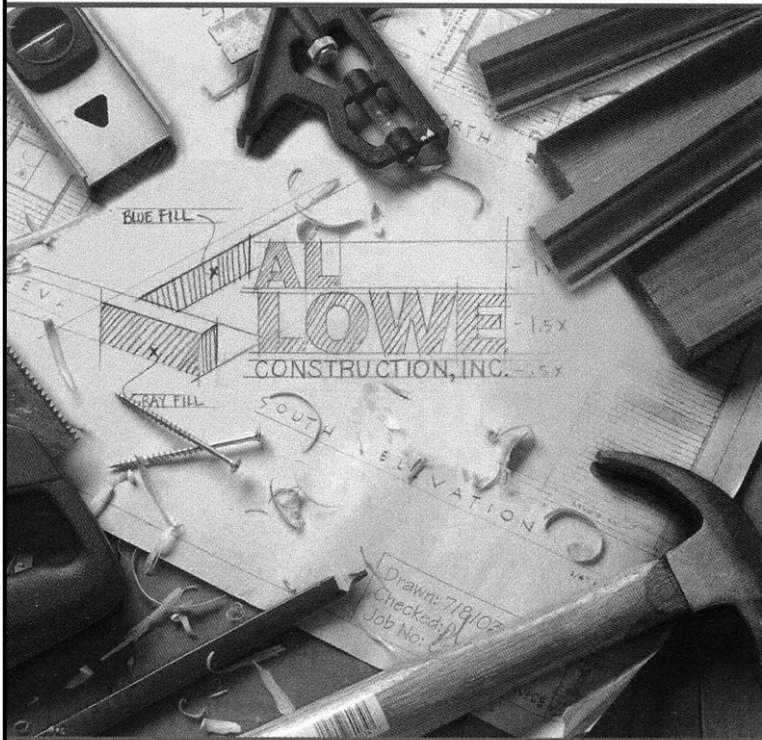
The *VCCAA Newsletter* welcomes the submission of articles, constructive comments, suggestions, or personal experiences that you want to share with the other members. Please write to *VCCAA Newsletter*, P.O. Box 806, Camarillo, CA 93011-0806; e-mail to me at gweggie@gmail.com.

Again, this newsletter did not include any translation to Chinese. We have a need for volunteers to assist in translating the English written articles to traditional Chinese. If you or if you know someone who may be able to spare a few hours four times a year (May, Aug., Nov., Feb.), please contact me.

Greg Chang
Newsletter Editor

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Upcoming Events

WHAT	WHEN	WHERE	Point of Contact
“When China Ruled the Seas” Exhibit Grand Opening	December 4, 2005 Sunday, 11 AM	Ventura County Maritime Museum 2731 S. Victoria Ave., Oxnard	Irene Sy (805) 482-4675
Christmas Party	December 10, 2005 Saturday, 6:00 PM	Los Primeros Structure School 2222 E. Ventura Blvd., Camarillo	Lee May Little (805) 484-5222 Barbara Chieu (805) 482-4765
Chinese New Year Party	February 4, 2005 Saturday, 6:00 PM	Richard’s Shanghai Restaurant 1775 East Daily Drive Suite A Camarillo	Ray Chong (510) 915-9810



Year of the Rooster
4703