



Ventura County Chinese American Association VCCAA



Newsletter

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www.vccaahs.org

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VCCAA Newsletter

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Greetings from the President

Dear Friends,

I hope everyone is enjoying the summer, and getting some well-deserved vacation time. VCCAA's summer season opened with a great and well-attended Memorial Day Picnic and we had our new 2017-18 Board sworn in by Judge Ling. Thank you, your honor, for starting our new Board off right!

I was very pleased that new members of our organization Dolly Lee, Richard Lu, and Xin Jin were willing to step up and offer to contribute their time and talents and serve on the Board. A volunteer organization like ours, is in constant need of new ideas and contributors to succeed. It was also exciting to be able to present scholarships to such a deserving slate of awardees. We all know about the increasing costs of tuition, and I think we can all be proud that we have a robust scholarship program that helps give those talented scholars a little encouragement on their way. The food was a meat-eaters paradise, and we were also treated to wonderful displays of two schools of Tai-Chi, and the opportunity for a number of brave picnic attendees to step up to the front to get some on-the-job training. Thank you Lee-May and all of our chefs and other volunteers who made the event so wonderful.

On June 24th, the Historical Society put on an amazing lecture and walk taking us back in time to Oxnard's China Alley: The Grit and Grace of Oxnard's Chinese. George Yu started us off with a very moving story about his family's own immigration experience, and historian Linda Bentz was in fine form as she lectured with loving, gentle humor, and historical accuracy. There were many re-enactors, including a working (but not wagering) fan-tan table set up by Scott Corbett. There was something for everyone including music, fan dancers, and a traditional Chinese tea ceremony at the venerable Golden Chicken Inn where our walk ended and lunch began. We had attendees from Los Angeles including Eugene Moy from the Chinese American Museum, Santa Barbara, as well as two members of Oxnard's City Council. I think we can count this effort to share this part of Oxnard's history with a wider audience as a success! Historian Linda Bentz has also proposed that a group of us might like to visit the historical archives in Riverside, CA, to see what records we can uncover about members of our Ventura Chinese community.

Thanks to all of you who responded to the Chinese School questionnaire. We received good feedback about what people are interested in. We continue to think about ways to strengthen the school and create a sense of community around its classes. This will be an ongoing process, but we have already arranged to include a Tai-Chi class and hopefully a calligraphy class as part of this fall's offerings.

It is that time of year when I remind everyone that there are a few members who (I am sure you simply got busy and forgot!) have forgotten to pay your annual dues. We don't want to have to drop anyone from our VCCAA family! So please send your membership renewal checks to VCCAA, PO Box 806, Ventura, CA, 93011-0806. And of course, if you don't want to have to remember every year, you can just pay for the lifetime membership and enjoy events for years to come without having to remember to send that annual membership fee!

It won't be long until fall is here. Annie Wang is already starting to plan for our Mid-Autumn Festival on September 30th at the Rancho Rosal School. We also have an invitation to participate in the Oxnard Multicultural Festival on October 7th. Volunteers for our stand are always welcome.

See you at the Mid-Autumn Festival,

Angus

Memorial Day Picnic *by Lee-May Little*

The VCCAA annual Memorial Day Picnic was held on Monday May 29th at the Bob Kildee Park in Camarillo. The participation was great. We were very happy to see many returning old members and their families and friends. Even better we had eight new members join VCCAA that day.

We are grateful to George Ng, Dr. Frank Chieu, and Frank Bell for their skills with Tri-Tip, teriyaki chicken, chili beans, salad & all the other goodies. I can tell that all VCCAA members had the best BBQ lunch in town that day. Also big thanks to our scholarship recipients for helping out with the serving.

After lunch, our Scholarship Chairperson-Louise Dilger welcomed the seven honorable recipients to accept their scholarships. Here are the names and their future plans: Tony Chen Scholarship (\$750) to Kaleinani Nallira, who will attend Occidental College. Dr. Fu-Kuen Lin Scholarship (\$750) to Alexander Li, who will attend Stanford University. Yu Family scholarship (\$750) to Addison Marcum, who will attend one of the UC schools. Lena Lee Ho Dance scholarship (\$750) to Lucy Curtis, who will go to the University of Puget Sound. Little Family scholarship (\$500) to Ellena Thomas, who will attend CSU Channel Islands. VCCAA Academic (\$500) to Jose Chacon, who will attend UCLA. VCCAA Service Award (\$500) to: Sebastian Mireles, who is going to CSU Monterey Bay.



Congratulations to all of our scholarship winners. You made your parents proud, and we wish you the best and continued success. 2017-2018 incoming officers and directors were also announced and presented to the members.

Thanks to Stella Ling for arranging the raffle prizes.

Thanks to 趙昕 for the Tai-Chi demonstration and Edward Hu for the Qi-Gong lessons. And the many who volunteered to cook rice and help out behind the scenes. You made this picnic and this organization a success. Hope to see you all again next year! 謝謝大家! 🙏

明年再相聚! 😊😊

Oxnard China Alley Walk: *The Grit and Grace of Oxnard's Chinese Event at the Heritage Square Chapel* by George Yu

The Ventura County Chinese American Historical Society (VCCAHS) was invited by The Friends of Heritage Square to present the history of the Chinese in Oxnard on June 24th. Members from VCCAHS worked with the Ventura County Chinese American Association (VCCAA) board members to present a reenactment of the everyday activities of early Chinese residents living on the historical Oxnard China Alley. Activities included letter writing, roadside vendors and even a fantan (game of



city in that capacity. Linda's talk was followed by a screening of the documentary 'The Grit and Grace of Oxnard's Chinese' which was edited by Yun-Seng Chao, our historical society member extraordinaire. Irene Sy, VCCAA board vice-president, as well as a member of our historical society, coordinated the sound system. Angus Simmons pitched in as Earle Stanley Gardner, Esq, of Perry Mason fame and lawyer to the Oxnard Chinese population in the early twentieth century. Scott Corbett, our society's second historian was the dealer at the Fan Tan table with help of Christina Molitor. Grace Leo brought the fortune cookies for

luck) table. A poster exhibit of the Oxnard Chinese community in the early nineteenth century through the early 1970s was complemented by museum quality photos and annotations on their significance.

The event was attended by over 75 people including Oxnard City mayor pro tem Carmen Ramirez and councilman Bert Perello. The highlight of the presentation was a talk by our own historian, Linda Bentz, on the story of the Oxnard Chinese community dating back to the early 1900s culminating with the election of Bill Soo Hoo as mayor of Oxnard in 1966. Bill was the first Chinese American elected as mayor of any California city. He was also the first native son of Oxnard to serve the



winner at the Fan Tan table as well as her husband, Ricky, and their daughter, Jennifer. Ricky served as the event photographer.

Nearby, Lee-May Little and Yubin Fu played the part of street vendors who displayed beautiful traditional Chinese children costumes. Dolly Cheng brought her Tai-Chi group from Thousand Oaks to perform at Heritage Square. She was also instrumental in arranging the post-talk lunch at the historic Golden Chicken Inn which has been in continuous operation since 1929. In addition to a delicious lunch, we were also



treated to a wonderful tea ceremony hosted by Elaine Lo and Helen Shih of the Conejo Chinese Cultural Association Tea Group. Dr. Hillary Ling and Mr. and Mrs. Richard Lu were our popular 'letter writers' and provided beautiful Chinese calligraphy souvenirs for attendees of the event. Shuqin Zhao and her husband, Xiao Dong, provided recorded Chinese music for our enjoyment. Lixin Durborow and Xin Jin, VCCAA board members, helped with registration, donations and DVD sales of 'Courage and Contribution – the Chinese in Ventura County'. At the conclusion of her talk, Linda Bentz led an animated walking tour through the few remaining landmarks of the Oxnard China Alley including Mama Soo Hoo's Orient restaurant and the Bing Kong Tong building.

The VCCAHS would like to express our appreciation to Gary Blum, president of the Friends of Heritage Square, for his hospitality in hosting this function. We are pleased to share the history and legacy of the Oxnard Chinese including their struggle to overcome racial discrimination and economic challenges.

George Yu
Chair, Ventura County Chinese Historical Society

Upcoming Events!



Mid-Autumn Festival *by Annie Wang*

When: Saturday, Sept 30, 2017 at 6:00pm

**Where: Rancho Rosal School
3535 Village at the Park Drive
Camarillo, CA 93012**

Contact: Annie Wang, (805) 377-9005

It's that time of year for the Chinese to celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival. It is so called because it is in the middle of the eighth month, which is a full moon. We used to celebrate the full moon by eating fruit and moon-cake while children played with their lanterns and neighbors. Why do people celebrate the moon in mid-Autumn? It's because of a story that happened long ago in China.

On the 15th day of the 8th month of the lunar calendar the moon is full, and it is time for the Chinese people to mark their Moon Festival, or the Mid-Autumn Festival. The round shape of the moon symbolizes reunion. Therefore the day is celebrated as a holiday for family members to get together and enjoy the full moon representing an auspicious token of abundance of harmony and luck.

There is this story about the moon-cake. During the Yuan dynasty (A.D.1280-1368) China was ruled by the Mongolian people. Leaders from the preceding Sung dynasty (A.D.960-1280) were unhappy at submitting to the foreign rule, and set out to coordinate the rebellion without being discovered. The leaders of the rebellion, knowing that the Moon Festival was drawing near, ordered the making of special cakes. Embedded in each moon-cake was a message with the outline of the attack. On the night of the Moon Festival, the rebels successfully attacked and overthrew the government. Today, moon-cakes are eaten to commemorate this legend.



Please bring a dish to be shared sufficient for your family and ten-plus extra people. Beverages will be provided by the VCCAA.

Oxnard's Chinese Community

by Linda Bentz

The city of Oxnard grew up around the Sugar Beet Factory that began operations in 1899. Chinese settlers developed a community on Saviers Road (currently Oxnard Blvd.) between 7th, 8th and A streets. An alley ran through the center of this block, thus giving the area the name



China Alley. Many of the Chinese men who came to Oxnard during this period were farm laborers who harvested beets that were processed into sugar at the factory.

During its 45 years of existence, approximately 200-600 men were present in Oxnard's Chinese community. A few Chinese families also made their homes in China Alley. The community was made up of stores, employment agencies, laundries, restaurants, gambling establishments, the Bing Kong Tong and the Chinese Fire Brigade.

This thriving community began to decline during the depression. Grocery stores could no longer sustain their businesses, and the buildings in China Alley were removed in the 1940s and 1950s as part of modernization projects. By 1960, only 60 people of Chinese descent remained.

The City of Oxnard holds a very important place in California history. William (Bill) Soo Hoo, a native son, was the



first man of Chinese heritage to be elected mayor in California. His parents Soo Hoo Yee Tom and Soo Hoo Jung Hall (Mama Soo Hoo) came to Oxnard in 1920, and resided in China Alley. There they opened a store called Wing Chen Lung. The business later became a restaurant, and its final location was on Oxnard Blvd. near 7th Street. It was called Mama Soo Hoo's Orient. Six children were born into the Soo Hoo family: Dorothy, Rose, Irene, Bill, Bartley and Edward. Bill was born in 1924 and attended local Oxnard schools. He served in the military during the Second World War, and while overseas he earned two battle stars.

Bill's journey into politics began when he experienced institutionalized discrimination, face to face. Upon his return from the Second World War, he wanted to build a house. He purchased a house on Deodor Street in Oxnard. Bill described the events that followed.

[The land owner] called me up two days later and he says, "Bill, you can still buy this but I just found out you can't live there." I said, "What do you mean I can't live there?" He said, "There's a clause in here that says 'Caucasians only', but there's no law against you buying it, but you can't live there. . . . I said, "What you're telling me is I'm good enough to go out and fight for my country, and possibly die for my country, but not good enough to live in it."

After experiencing the impact of discriminatory laws, Bill was determined to make changes in Oxnard. His public involvement began when he served on the Grand Jury in 1956. He was the first man of Asian heritage to serve in this capacity. The City Council was the place where Bill decided to start his political career. In 1960, he made his initial run for the ruling body among a field of twelve candidates. He placed third, however only two seats were available. He was undeterred and in 1962, Bill ran again for City Council, and that time he was successful.

His ascent in politics continued, and in 1966 he became "Oxnard's Native Son Mayor." With only sixty people of Chinese ancestry in the city, and perhaps only ten who were registered, Bill appealed to the greater population in Oxnard. The new mayor was catapulted into worldwide fame.

The history of the Chinese in Oxnard is important because it illustrates experiences of a community that has not been told in local histories. Chinese residents in Oxnard helped to establish the community, and left a legacy of hard work and dedication.

Chinese Language School *by Irene Sy*

Happy Summer everyone! The 2016-2017 academic year ended on June 9th this year. Here are some of the activities we had this eventful year: We had a Speech Competition, our very own Christmas party where we had a gift exchange, silent auction, and Chinese New Year celebration where students enjoyed making dumplings and collecting lucky money (hong bao – red envelope); helped out in the Camarillo city-wide spectacular Chinese New Year celebration as well as the Multicultural Book Fest.



Our upcoming 2017-2018 academic year will begin on September 1st, 2017. The registration

form can be downloaded from our website at: <https://vccls.wikispaces.com/>

Our school site will remain at the Pleasant Valley Recreation Park District (Camarillo Community Center) at 1605 Burnley Drive in Camarillo. Class time is 7:00PM to 9:00PM every Friday evening and 7:00PM to 10:00PM for credit class. Please share this info with anyone interested in joining the school. Thank you for your support. I can be reached at vcchineseschool@aol.com or vccls93012@gmail.com if you have any questions. I look forward to another exciting year ahead.



More Pictures from Memorial Day BBQ and Oxnard China Alley Walk



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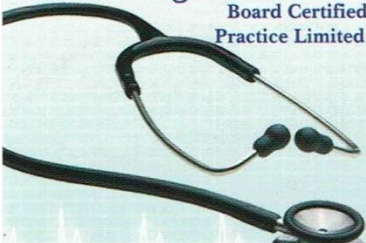
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Dance Troupe

is currently welcoming new dancers!



All classes are currently open

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(Intermediate & Advanced)

Monday 4:30pm - 6:00pm
(Beginner)

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Upcoming Events



WHAT	WHEN	WHERE	Point of Contact
Mid-Autumn Festival	Saturday, September 30, 2017 at 6:00 pm	Rancho Rosal School 3535 Village at the Park Drive Camarillo, CA 93012	Annie Wang: (805) 377-9005
Chinese Language School Begins	Friday, September 1, 2017 at 7:00pm	Camarillo Community Center 1605 Burnley Drive Camarillo, CA 93010	Irene Sy: vcchineseschool@aol.com vccls93012@gmail.com



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