

E-Newsletter of the Organization of Chinese American Women

November 2023



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501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization

(from Linda Devine, Editor)

This is our final e-newsletter of 2023. As always, my thanks to those who contributed material for this issue. I also am grateful to my husband Ed for his work on preparing the large number of photos.

I continue to encourage OCAW members to write articles or submit information if there is something you think would be of interest to the membership.

And please feel free to send me any suggestions that you might have for the e-newsletter at:
devinefive@comcast.net

As we close the year, I would like to wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving, and for whatever winter holidays you celebrate, may you enjoy them to the fullest! See you next year! ☺

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News from the Virginia Chapter

(Barbara York, President)

2023 Washington DC Chinese Culture Festival

(from Maria Yang, National President)

The OCAW Virginia Chapter and I were invited by Karina Hou, President of the OCAW Maryland

Chapter, to attend the Washington DC Chinese Culture Festival. It was held in downtown DC on Saturday, September 2, 2023.

Karina was the coordinator of the program and worked hard to make it run smoothly under the high heat of the day. The atmosphere was festive, and the event was well-attended.

Below are some pictures of the Festival, including some I took during the opening ceremony.



Karina Hou, OCAW Maryland Chapter President and coordinator of the program, and
Maria Yang, OCAW National President







(Photos courtesy of Maria Yang)

(from Noreen Hom, former Secretary)

On Saturday, September 2, 2023, a last-minute decision to attend the Chinese Culture Festival in DC turned out to be a wise one, because it was a fun event. The weather was perfect, and we were surrounded by national monuments and museums.

There were tables of beautiful cultural merchandise, including clothing as well as panda bear stuffed animals and headbands. Local merchants displayed their wares, and there were activity booths for children to make Chinese lanterns and play games.

I saw Maria Yang, OCAW's National President, while I was in line to order fried fish and pork at one of the numerous food trucks and stands.

She mentioned that Christina Poy, the Administrative Director of the Maryland Governor's Office of Community Initiatives, and also an OCAW Maryland Chapter member and advisor, had given a speech earlier.

While we walked through the streets filled with colorful tables and booths, we saw Karina Hou, OCAW Maryland Chapter President and coordinator of the program, and Christina Chang, OCAW's Immediate Past National President.

There were two stages of music and cultural dance performances with gorgeous costumes from different Asian countries. There was even a Peking opera.

The event highlighted diversity which included dancers from Africa and South America.

The photos which I took below highlight the wonderful entertainment that we all enjoyed.







(Photos taken by Noreen Hom)

Donations to the Maui Strong Fund

(from Barbara York, President, and Cathy Roberts, Treasurer)

As a result of the wildfires that devastated parts of Maui, Hawaii, in August 2023, OCAW members have risen to the challenge and have raised funds for the island's rebuilding efforts.

Cathy Roberts, National Vice President for Programs and Virginia Chapter Treasurer, hosted a fundraising tea at her lovely home in Oakton, VA, on Saturday, September 9, 2023. It was very successful, and Cathy announced that it raised \$2,150 for the Maui Strong Fund coordinated by the Hawaii Community Foundation.

Cathy sent the contributions to the OCAW Hawaii Chapter to forward to the relief fund, and OCAW Hawaii Chapter President Edwina Lee thanked chapter members for their kindness and support.

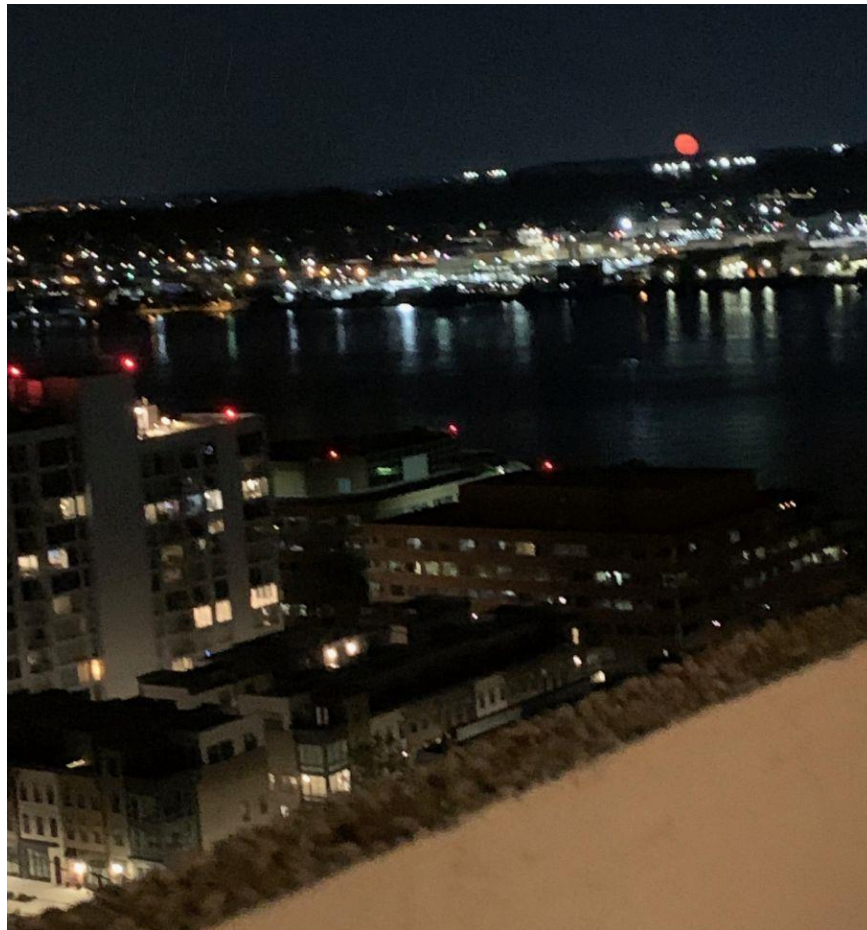
Barbara wishes to thank those who contributed so generously to the fund, and to give special thanks to Cathy whose focus and faith in the project were instrumental in raising the donations.

Mid-Autumn Potluck Party

(from Barbara York)

The Virginia Chapter Mid-Autumn Potluck Party was a great success. It was held on Sunday, October 1, 2023, and 22 members, family members, and friends gathered in the lovely penthouse party room on the 23rd floor of Amy Lee's condo building in Alexandria, VA.

All enjoyed its spectacular view of the Potomac River and an unobscured view of the rising full moon.



The food contributions were delicious and plentiful.



Another special treat was that Maria Yang brought two friends who demonstrated how to play classic Chinese mahjong.



The party was so successful that we asked Amy to book the room for a Chinese New Year celebration which is set for lunchtime on February 17, 2024.

(from Amy Lee)

After not seeing the August moon on the 15th or 16th of the lunar calendar, two dozen OCAW members were richly rewarded with a bright orange globe on the 17th when we got together to celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival. Perhaps it was because we had a tableful of delicious food, that the moon came out. With full tummies, we were all awestruck by its magnificence. We even had a mahjong lesson/game going on. Great fun was enjoyed by all.



(front row) Chi-Hua Yang, Cathy Roberts, Amy's friend Shu Shi, Wendy Cai, Jessica Shen, Barbara York, and Amy Lee with Soleil
(back row) Suzy Park and her mahjong playing friend, Wanda Eshleman, Noreen Hom, Pu-Chin Waide, and Christina Chang



Pu-Chin Waide and Jane Pan

(Photos taken by Maria Yang)

Old Dominion Annual Chrysanthemum Show

(from Barbara York)

It would not be fall in Virginia without this truly awesome showing of specimen quality chrysanthemums by the members of the Old Dominion Chrysanthemum Society. The organization is chaired by our own Camilla Ng, former OCAW Maryland Chapter President. The Society held its annual show on Saturday and Sunday, October 28 and 29, 2023, at the James Lee Community Center in Falls Church, VA.

The flowers were breathtaking, and thanks to the photography skills of Amy Lee, here are 6 arrangements for you to admire. The winners of the show will be posted on the organization's website: <https://odcsmums.club>





(Photos taken by Amy Lee)

Upcoming Event

(from Barbara York)

Chinese New Year Celebration

Saturday, February 17, 2024

11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

23rd Floor Penthouse Party Room

400 Madison Street

Alexandria, VA

Mark your calendars! 😊

News from the New Orleans Chapter

(from Patricia Ellzey, President)

APAS Annual Picnic

The New Orleans Chapter participated in the local Asian Pacific American Society's free annual picnic where various Asian Ethnic groups provided a native cultural dish and the general public was invited to try these different Asian dishes. The event was held at the Chinese Presbyterian Church in Kenner, LA on Saturday, October 21, 2023.

Shown in the photos along with some of the dishes that were served is OCAW New Orleans Chapter Secretary Nellie Underwood, who cooked her mother's famous and delicious black bean pork ribs. Nellie served it at the event. There was a huge crowd who attended and who didn't leave a morsel of food left. Needless to say, everyone enjoyed the food and had a fun time!





Nellie Underwood, OCAW New Orleans Chapter Secretary



Upcoming Events

November

The New Orleans Chapter is planning a meeting where some of the new members will present a program on the history and development of the traditional Chinese dress known as the *Qipao* or *Changsam*, along with models. We look forward to this interesting and fun meeting.

December

We are also planning to have our annual traditional Christmas dinner party where we invite our husbands and dates to have an enjoyable time. Our significant others can meet and socialize with other members' significant others. We can bring a gift and play "Dirty Santa," where one can choose a gift but may have it "stolen," or "steal" a gift, or possibly recover their original gift if the person is lucky. This is a fun time for everyone.

Happy Holidays to all!

News from the Silicon Valley Chapter

(Jen Tsao, President)

Maui Relief Fundraiser

(from Anne Hu, Membership/Communications)

The OCAW-SVC Chapter organized a Maui Strong Fund drive in September 2023, urging members to lend a hand to the Maui community who suffered wildfires that brought down many homes and lives. Donation checks were mailed to President Jen Tsao for collection before sending them to Hawaii Chapter President Edwina Lee.

Thanks to members' generous support, we raised a total of \$2450. Edwina confirmed receipt of our donations and has forwarded them to the Hawaii Community Foundation, coordinator of the Maui Strong Fund, along with contributions from other chapters. Edwina was appreciative and expressed her gratitude to SVC and the other donors.

This united effort epitomizes the spirit of camaraderie and compassion within our organization. It's heartwarming to see members come together in times of crisis, making a tangible difference in the lives of those affected. The combined contributions not only provide financial relief, but also convey a strong message of solidarity and hope to the Maui community. We are truly stronger together.

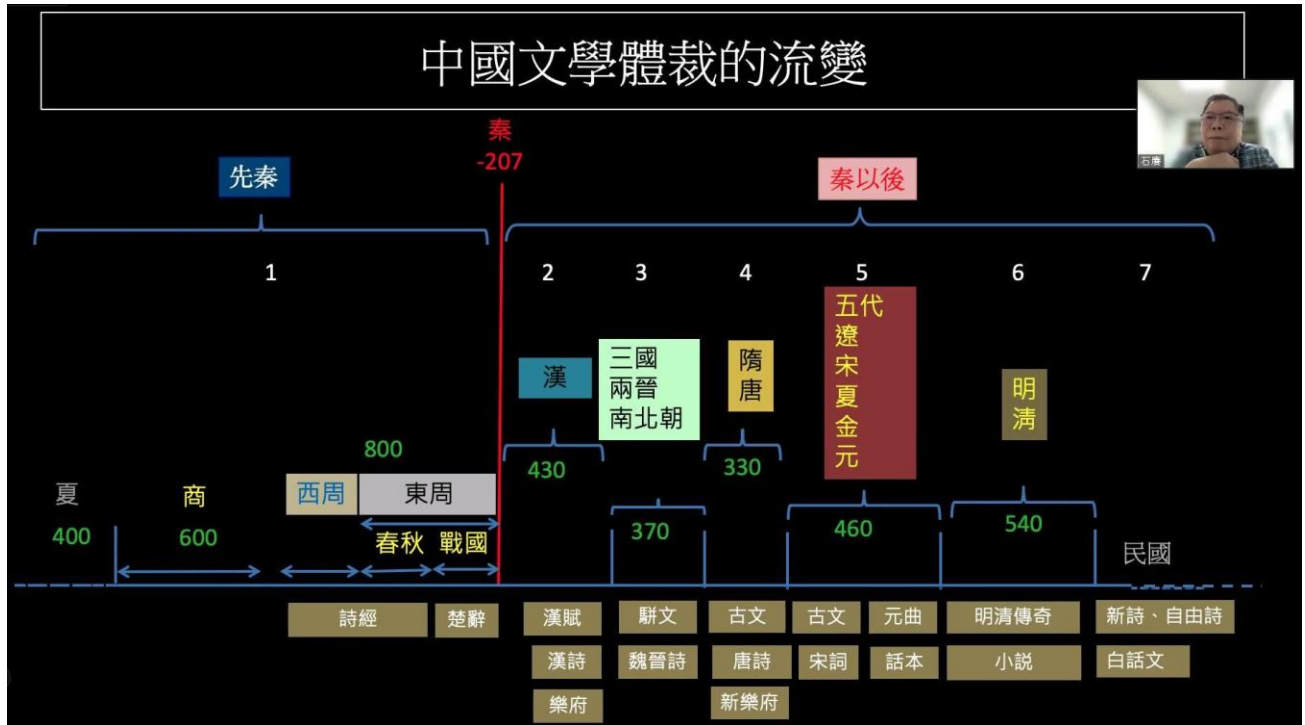
The Changes in Chinese Literary Genres Presentation

(from Jen Tsao)

On Sunday, October 1, 2023, the OCAW Silicon Valley Chapter held an online talk, *The Changes in Chinese Literary Genres Through the Ages*, by Mr. Kung Shih. The presentation was in Mandarin, and was two hours in length. About 34 attendees joined the Zoom meeting, and the talk was well received.

About the speaker, Kung Shih:

Born in Taiwan. After graduating from National Taiwan University, he came to study in the United States. He has been engaged in the high-tech industry in Silicon Valley, CA, for more than 30 years, and has served as an engineer and a senior executive. Since retirement, he has devoted himself to public welfare undertakings and has served as the Executive Director of The Dynamic Foundation in Silicon Valley. Mr. Shih is fond of reading, painting, calligraphy, and writing, and often shares his experiences with friends in the community.





南唐·李煜《菩薩蠻》

花明月黯籠輕霧，
今宵好向郎邊去，
剗襪步香階，
手提金縷鞋。
畫堂南畔見，
一向偎人顫。
奴為出來難，
教郎恣意憐。

石庚



北宋·范仲淹《蘇幕遮》

碧雲天，黃葉地，
秋色連波，波上寒煙翠。
山映斜陽天接水，
芳草無情，更在斜陽外。
黯鄉魂，追旅思，
夜夜除非，好夢留人睡。
明月樓高休獨倚，
酒入愁腸，化作相思淚。

石庚

【雙調】 《沽美酒》 佚名

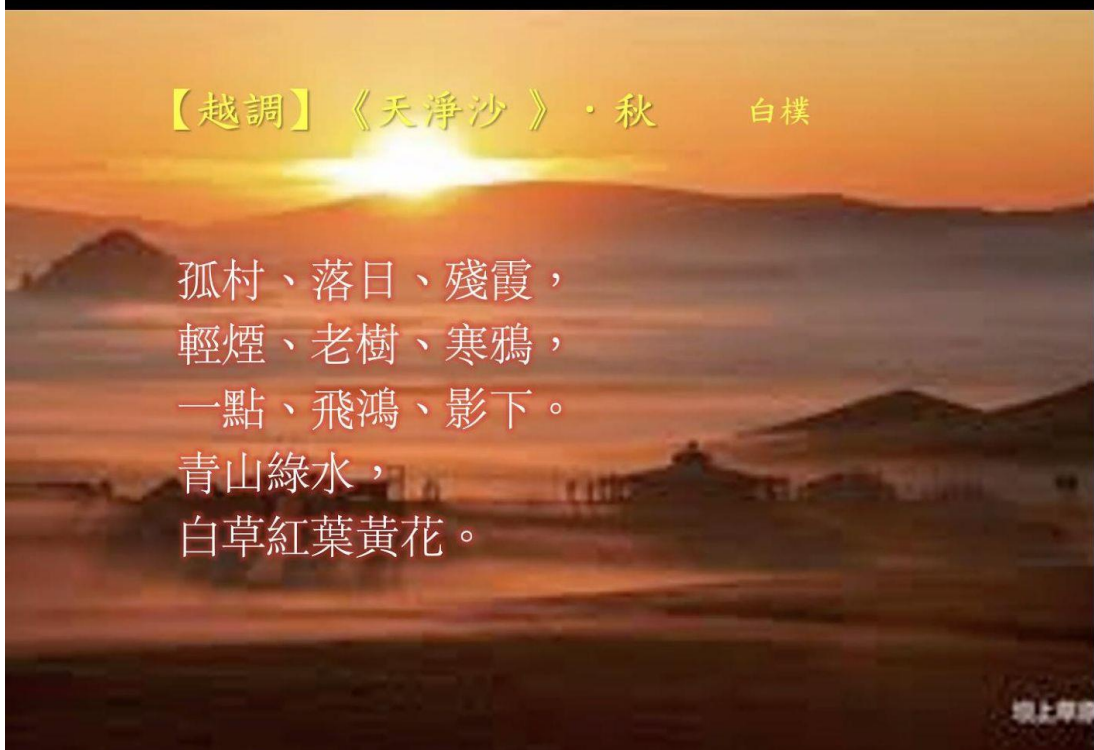


畫梁間乳燕飛，
綠窗外曉鶯啼，
紅杏枝頭春色稀，
芳樹外子規泣，
聲聲叫道不如歸。




散曲 · 小令

【越調】 《天淨沙》 · 秋 白樸



孤村、落日、殘霞，
輕煙、老樹、寒鴉，
一點、飛鴻、影下。
青山綠水，
白草紅葉黃花。



散曲 · 小令
| 平仄通押
句句押韻

Walk to End Alzheimer's

(from Carol Yuan, Secretary)

This is the 9th year that the Silicon Valley Chapter has participated in the “Silicon Valley Walk to End Alzheimer’s” to raise awareness and funds to fight Alzheimer’s disease. The event is organized by the Alzheimer’s Association. The Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer’s care, support, and research. Its mission is to eliminate Alzheimer’s disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health.

More than 6 million Americans are living with Alzheimer’s. By 2050, this number is projected to rise to nearly 13 million. 1 in 3 seniors die of Alzheimer’s or another form of dementia. It kills more than breast cancer and prostate cancer combined. 7 in 10 Americans would want to know early if they have Alzheimer’s disease if it could allow for earlier treatment. Between 2020 and 2030, 1.2 million additional care workers will be added to care for the growing population of people living with dementias – the largest worker gap in the U.S.

I’ve been very happy to be the team captain for the 9th year. Our team name is OCAW-SVC Friends and Families. We have fourteen team members and donors this year. As a team, we’ve raised \$2,285, which is 114% over our goal of \$2,000, so far. Fundraising will continue until the end of this year. We welcome any donations to support the fight to end the disease. Our team link is:
<http://act.alz.org/goto/ocawsvcfriendsandfamilies>

This year’s Walk was on Saturday, October 14 at Lake Cunningham Park in San Jose. Our president Jen Tsao could not join us this year due to a family event. But at 8 a.m., Jen came to send off those who met at Cynthia Chang’s home for carpooling.



Cynthia Chang, Yura Shieu, Amy Yang, and Jen Tsao

Team members Ai-Chu Wang and her husband Pong Wang, Cynthia Chang, Sophia Yang and her friend Debbie Lu, Yura Shieu, Amy Yang, and I joined the Walk ceremony at 9:15 a.m.



(front row) Ai-Chu Wang and Carol Yuan
(back row) Debbie Lu, Sophia Yang, Yura Shieu, Cynthia Chang, Amy Yang, and Helen Liu (friend from the Stand by You Team)

An annular solar eclipse occurred on that day. We experienced it while enjoying the opening ceremony.





Participants attending the opening ceremony



Walk starting point



In front of the man-made Lake Cunningham. A gorgeous autumn day.



(in the center of the photo) Peining Chang, Ai-Chu Wang, and Pong Wang

Peining is the team captain of the Stand by You team. She is the Senior Community Engagement Manager - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, of the Alzheimer's Association's Northern California and Northern Nevada Chapter.



A long line of dedicated walkers stretches far into the distance.

We completed the 3-mile route around 11:30 a.m.



At the Walk finish line



Group picture with members of three walk-buddy teams

After the Walk, we treated ourselves to delicious Dim Sum at H.L. Peninsula Restaurant in Milpitas.



Yura Shieu, Amy Yang, Ai-Chu Wang, Cynthia Chang, Carol Yuan, and Sophia Yang

(Photos provided by Peining Chang, Pong Wang, and Carol Yuan)

(Editor's Note: SVC is to be commended for their consistent, long-term fundraising efforts to fight this disease!)

Upcoming Event

(from Jen Tsao)

On Sunday, November 12, 2023, at 3:30 p.m. PST, the Silicon Valley Chapter will host an online holiday cooking class for vegetarian dishes.



Ms. YuYu Kuo is going to demonstrate how to make vegetarian turkey, mango salad, and pumpkin porridge for the holiday season.



The event is going to be in Mandarin for about one-and-a-half hours.

The Zoom meeting ID is 840-0851-8274.

The passcode is 629031.

You are welcome to join us! ☺

News from the Hawaii Chapter

(Edwina Lee, President)

Honoring Dr. Sun Yat Sen – The Hawaii and China Connection

by Queenie Chee

(Editor's Note: Queenie is Hawaii Chapter Secretary.)

On Sunday, October 8, 2023, our Hawaii Chapter President, Edwina Lee, led a group of our members to join in a celebration parade at the Chinatown Cultural Plaza in Honolulu to remember the founding of the Republic of China and to honor the founder of the Republic, Dr. Sun Yat Sen.

Captured in photos below, you can see the participants and how gorgeous our Hawaii weather was last month. With so many events happening that day, we were happy to see this turnout.

Hawaii is proud to be a part of China's history and its entry into the modern world through Dr. Sun. When Sun Yat Sen was 13 years old, he came to the Kingdom of Hawaii for his continued education, living with his uncle, Sun Mei.



Susie Wang, Edwina Lee, Wendie Liu, Serena Kyi-Yim, Sharon Chun, and Sharlene Chun represented OCAW Hawaii in the parade.



Sharon Chun, Tina Au, Edwina Lee, and Susie Wang and her husband, John

The young Yat Sen was first sent to Oahu College, the predecessor of the now-called Punahou School (famous for its alumni, President Barack Obama) where he stayed for one semester. He then went on to attend an Anglican-based private school, Iolani School, and was a graduate of the class of 1882. Sun studied English, British history, math, science, and Christianity. A quick learner, he excelled in his studies and even received an academic award for excellence from the King of Hawaii, David Kalakaua. Upon graduation, he returned to his home in China and continued his studies in Hong Kong, and became a physician.

But the seed was planted. He learned about democracy in government and longed to see China take its place in a world that was shaking off the old monarchies. With many contacts back in Hawaii, eager to help his cause through raising funds, a revolution was born. In 1911, the Ching Dynasty ended and China became a Republic.

We, in Hawaii, enjoy the honor of having a role with Dr. Sun in the founding of the Republic of China. From his education where he learned his political ideals, to the generous funding from the Chinese in Hawaii in donations to his cause, our forefathers here in the Islands helped to change the history of China through his Revolution.



An orchid lei was presented to be hung on Dr. Sun's statue by President Edwina Lee.



Statue of Dr. Sun Yat Sen, founder of the Republic of China

(Photos taken by Ross Lee)

Final General Membership Meeting for 2023

(from Queenie Chee)

Hawaii Chapter's last General Membership Meeting of the year took place on Sunday, November 5, 2023 at the Pagoda Hotel East Ballroom in Honolulu.



(Photo taken by Sharlene Chun)

An Italian buffet luncheon with a dessert featuring a variety of flavors of ice cream in cups was unique and a refreshing change. However, it was not the food that was the highlight, but three important aspects that brought a significant turnout of over 90 people.

Those aspects were:

1. The Election of the new OCAW Hawaii Officers for 2024 and the announcement of the results which were:

President – Sharlene Yee Chun
Vice President – Susan Chong Wong (even better the second time around!)
Secretary – Kimberly Chun Hoi
Treasurer – Serena Kyi-Yim

Their installation will take place on Sunday, January 14, 2024, at the Oahu Country Club Nuuanu Ballroom, in conjunction with the celebration of the Hawaii Chapter's 35th Anniversary. The Lt. Governor of the State of Hawaii, The Honorable Sylvia Luke, also an Asian American woman, will administer the oath of office. Former Hawaii Speaker of the House, The Honorable Calvin Say, has agreed to be Master of Ceremonies. With the imminent exit of the Year of the Rabbit and the anticipated entering of the Year of the Dragon, the entertainment will be themed to fit!

2. Connie Lau, Retired CEO of HEI Inc., was honored upon the completion of her successful leadership of the sole electric utility company in the state of Hawaii. She was the first female and the first Asian American and Chinese American to be appointed Chief Executive Officer of a major utility company in the U.S. When she was first given this title, OCAW Hawaii had a special luncheon in her honor, and so we have completed the circle.

3. This meeting's program was a community service event with a focus on the next upcoming generation of Asian Americans to strive for success. For only \$10, any youth under the age of 40 could attend. (There were 23 young people who took us up on the offer! Some of them became OCAW members.) A panel of three successful Asian Americans shared their experiences and wisdom and answered questions that could help young individuals, especially in the U.S. Hawaii corporate world.

The three panelists were: Connie Lau, retired CEO of HEI, Inc., and now President of the Punahou School Board of Trustees; Elisia Flores, President of L & L Inc. (fast food chain of franchises across the U.S.); and Jen Lau, Executive Vice President of Finance Enterprises (Hawaii company in its third generation with subsidiaries in insurance, finance and banking, and real estate and land development).



Panel Speakers Elisia Flores, Connie Lau, and Jen Lau

They were introduced by Vice President Susan Chong Wong.



(Photos taken by Ross Lee)

The Moderator was Queenie Chee. She was assisted by Miss Chinatown Hawaii, Sarah Liu, and Narcissus Festival Queen, Laura Ho, in asking the round of questions. Everyone listened with rapt attention! The vibrant energy projected by these individuals on stage was inspiring!



Queenie Chee, Mistress of Ceremonies and Moderator

Past OCAW Hawaii President, Frances Goo, who was a successful businesswoman as well, presented exquisite handcrafted clay geranium plants which she made personally, to each speaker. She explained that geraniums represent Friendship, Good Health, and Happiness.

President Edwina Lee presented gifts of personally autographed books by our Hawaii Chapter member, Claire Chao, who, with her mother, co-authored *Remembering Shanghai – A Memoir of Socialites, Scholars and Scoundrels*, along with themed bookmarks and a collection of themed notecards in silk pouches. (This book won more than 16 literary and design awards nationally.)

(Photos taken by Sharlene Chun)





The Miss Chinatown queens with Organizer and former queen, Erica Hong and her son, Kyu. Erica is the daughter of our President Edwina Lee.

(Photos taken by Ross Lee)



Edwina Lee with the families of our wonderful speakers
(standing) Elaine and Eddie Flores, Russell and Greg Lau, and Edwina
(seated) Elisia Flores, Connie Lau, and Jen Lau

Newly elected Hawaii Chapter President Sharlene Yee Chun, Tiffany Chaiko (Sharlene's niece), and Kimberly Hoi (Sharlene's daughter). Kimberly is our newly elected Secretary.



Moderator Queenie Chee with Narcissus Festival Princess Jessica Lin, Narcissus 2024 Participant Bo Glover, and 2023 Queen Laura Ho (who also assisted in the posing of questions to the speakers)

(Photos taken by Ross Lee)



Lt. Gov. Sylvia Luke and her husband Mike with Edwina Lee

(Photo taken by Ross Lee)



Enjoying a delicious meal!

(Photo taken by Sharlene Chun)

The event was a great finish to a wonderful OCAW Hawaii Year for 2023!

Books offer

(from Edwina Lee)

Claire Chao, a Hawaii Chapter member, is an internationally known author who wrote a book called ***Remembering Shanghai*** along with her mother, Isabel Sun Chao. Claire would like to donate copies of her books to the various OCAW chapters. These can be used as door prizes or gifts, or to sell as fundraisers. It is a hardcover book, and there are about 24 in a case.

She is willing to ship them to the various chapters at her cost. Please inform Edwina if you would like some of these books, and she can let Claire know. A number of the chapters have already expressed interest in this very generous offer on Claire's part.

From and About Our Members

Tzu Chi Maui Relief Mission

(from Tina Au, former Hawaii Chapter President)

On Sunday, September 10, 2023, in response to the devastation caused to Maui by the wildfires in August, 40 volunteers flew to the island to participate in the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation Maui Relief Mission. Six Red Cross volunteers also met up with the group. This was our third trip to Maui and one of the best trips so far.



Tina Au (center) with fellow volunteers



Our first trip took place on August 27. At that time, we aided a couple hundred families. Our second trip was on September 3, and then we served over 400 families. On this third trip, we helped 523 families and issued 627 debit cards, and the foundation gave out over \$500,000.



For the fourth trip scheduled for the following Sunday, the foundation planned to target at least 600 families. That meant a return to Oahu two hours later than the trips had been, and it was to be a long day. It called for rising at 3:30 a.m. to take the first flight out.

Tina related that when she interviewed the families/applicants, they shared their sad stories, and she and they cried together. When she presented them with a debit card along with care packages, they all gave her hugs and some called her “an angel.” They were so happy. The joyous reaction of the families meant a lot to all of the volunteers.

(Editor’s Note: Tina and the other volunteers are not just donating their time, but also their money, for these missions. They pay all of their expenses for these trips.

Hats off to Tina and the other unselfish volunteers for their conscientious, caring, and selfless acts of kindness!

After this trip, Tina helped prepare and serve food to the homeless. She felt good when she saw the smile on people’s faces, especially the elderly and disabled individuals, when she presented them with a plate of food.)

In Memoriam: Juliette Ling

In the last OCAW e-newsletter (September 2023), it was reported that sadly, Juliette Ling passed away. She was a member of the OCAW Hawaii Chapter for 31 years and was 94 years old at her passing.

The photo that was published was inaccurate. Below is the correct photo of Juliette.



May she rest in peace.

Babysitting Duties

(from Faith Breen, former National President)

Faith came upon an interesting article in *The Economist*. It was entitled, “Babysitting duties are stressing China’s grandparents.” It said that having three generations under one roof is no longer the solution to child care.

Faith thought that this might be of interest to OCAW members, and might help jumpstart this inter-generational conversation.

<https://www.economist.com/china/2023/10/12/babysitting-duties-are-stressing-chinas-grandparents>

The Chinese American Women in History Conference, and the 1882 Exclusion Act

by Maria Yang

(Editor's Note: Maria is OCAW National President.)

The Chinese American Women in History Conference, organized by the 1882 Foundation, took place in Washington, D.C., from Thursday, October 5 through Saturday, October 7, 2023. It was a great privilege for me to be present at the conference and have the opportunity to meet the Executive Director of the Foundation, Ted Gong, as well as other distinguished presenters.

The main program on October 6 (from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) featured a lineup of esteemed speakers, including Felicia Lowe, Jalena Keane-Lee, Thandi Cai, Emmi Dunn Bahurlet, Dr. Andrea Louie, Dr. Alexa Joubin, Dr. Yunxiang Gao, Dr. Graham Hodges, Robin Lung, Jennifer Lin, Leslie Li, Jenny Co, and Joy Chong-Stannard.

While many individuals participated in the conference remotely, I had the privilege of attending in person on behalf of OCAW, given the convenient proximity of the location for me.

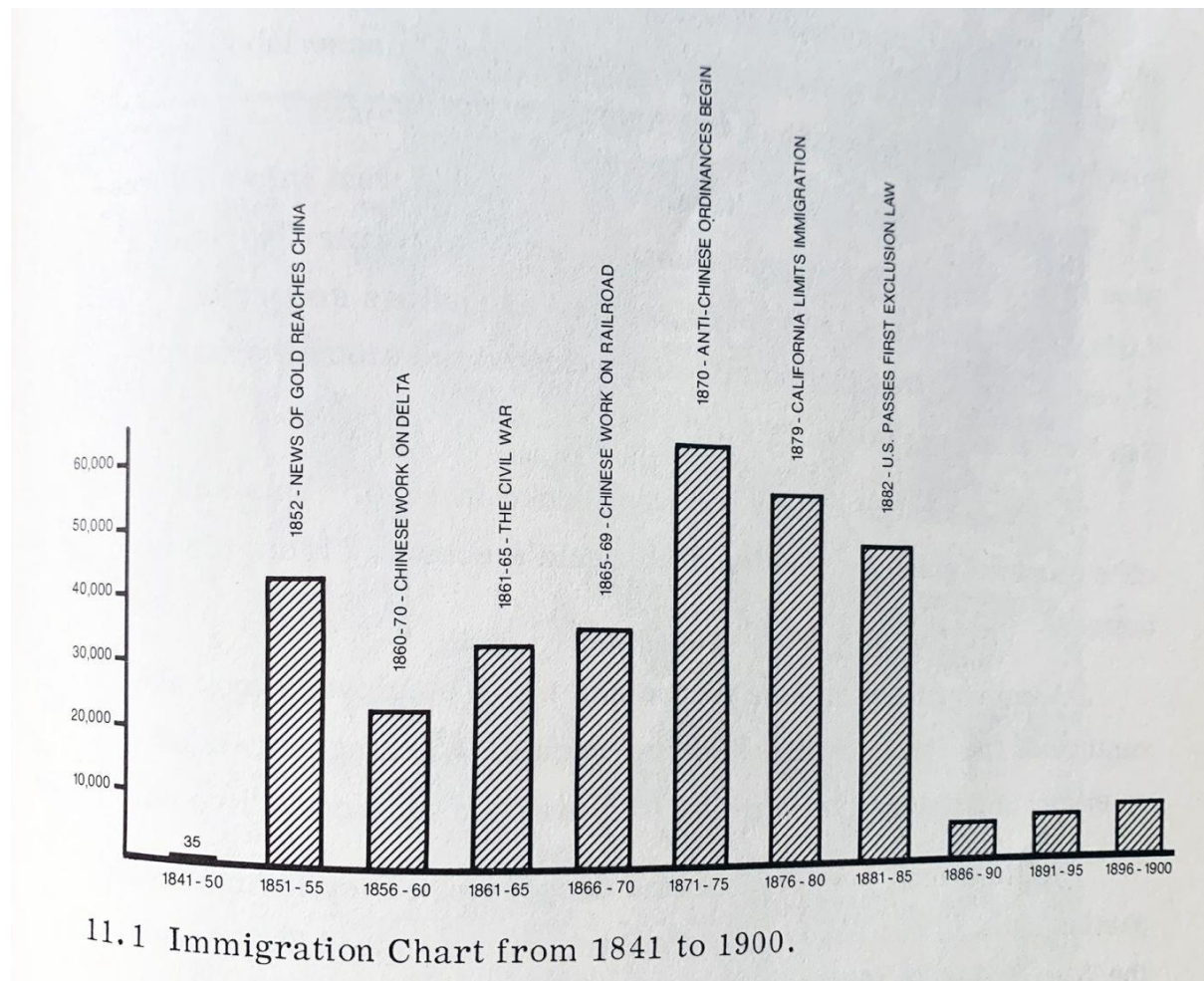
The conference proved to be a captivating and enlightening experience. It afforded me valuable insights into the history of Chinese-American women, prompting me to delve deeper into the historical context surrounding the 1882 Exclusion Act.

In the 1860s, during a period when California required Chinese labor, the United States sought to maintain positive relations with China. This led to the negotiation of the Burlingame Treaty in 1868, which permitted Chinese immigration to the United States and vice versa. The treaty granted equal rights and freedoms to immigrants in both countries.

However, by the 1870s, the United States no longer needed Chinese labor, yet there was a significant influx of Chinese immigrants arriving in San Francisco annually. American workingmen's parties exerted pressure on the U.S. Congress to halt Chinese immigration.

The anti-Chinese sentiment grew so strong that in 1880, the Burlingame Treaty was amended to allow the U.S. government to restrict Chinese immigration. This marked the first instance in U.S. history where a specific group of people was targeted for immigration limitations. The American labor movement continued to push Congress to enact further laws against Chinese immigration.

The Exclusion Law of 1882 was enacted, allowing teachers, students, merchants, and tourists to enter the United States, but prohibiting laborers from immigrating for a decade. It also stipulated that no Chinese individuals could become naturalized American citizens. As a result, Chinese immigration saw a sharp decline after the implementation of the Exclusion Law, with only 10 Chinese immigrants admitted in 1887, compared to the previous influx of more than 40,000. The Exclusion Law was extended in subsequent decades and was further tightened with the Immigration Act of 1924. (Please view the Chinese immigration chart from 1841 to 1900.) The Chinese Exclusion Acts were not repealed until 1943, when the United States was allied with China in the war against Japan.



The purpose of history is to study and understand the past. It allows us to learn from past events and experiences, gain insights into human behavior and societies, and make informed decisions for the future. History helps us preserve our cultural heritage, identity, and traditions. It can serve as a source of inspiration, a means of evaluating progress, and a way to avoid repeating past mistakes. Overall, the purpose of knowing history is to provide perspective and knowledge that can guide us in shaping a better future.

Note: The information above on the Chinese Exclusion Act is from the book, *An Illustrated History of the Chinese in America*, by Ruthanne Lum McCunn.



Maria Yang with Ted Gong, Executive Director of the 1882 Foundation

Gold Mountain Tour

by Veronica Li

(Editor's Note: Veronica is a former Acting President of the Virginia Chapter. She went on a Gold Mountain Tour this fall to see the amazing work done by Chinese railroad workers. She was asked to write an article for the tour's organizer, the 1882 Foundation, and the Foundation was happy to share it with others.)

I've heard about Chinese "coolies" building the railroad in America. But as a 1960s immigrant from the big city of Hong Kong, I thought I had nothing in common with these villagers who came to the "Gold Mountain" 150 years ago. However, the recent hostility against Asian Americans for allegedly spreading COVID-19 has awakened my interest. Perpetrators attacked Asians of any kind, killing and maiming them, and robbing and vandalizing our stores and institutions. Some of us were yelled at and told to "go back to where you came from." This violence has inspired me to delve into Chinese-American history. I feel this knowledge is key to discovering my place in this country.

That was why I joined the Gold Mountain Tour (September 30-October 1, 2023). Standing on Donner Summit of the Sierra Nevada, where Chinese railroad workers completed a marvel of 19th-century engineering, I've never been so proud to be Chinese-American. Without these workers, the Transcontinental

Railroad linking “sea to shining sea” wouldn’t have been possible at this critical juncture of American history. To the nascent American empire, the railroad was the bond to secure the fragile Union.

The tour was sponsored by the 1882 Foundation, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management. John Kusano, the organizer of the tour, is a director of the 1882 Foundation and has served 35 years with the Forest Service. The docent, Phillip Sexton, is an historian, a former Forest Service member, and a contributor to the seminal book on the subject, *The Ghosts of Gold Mountain*, by Gordon Chang of Stanford University. These volunteer guides ran the tour without a hitch, showed us the spectacular views of the Sierra Nevada, and told the story of the first Chinese Americans.

The story begins in 1862, when President Lincoln signed the Pacific Railroad Act, authorizing the construction of a Transcontinental Railroad to connect the country east to west. This was at a time when the civil war threatened to tear apart the north and south. The enterprise would be a public-private collaboration. The government would provide bonds and land grants to two private companies. The one in the West, called Central Pacific Railroad (CPR), would be responsible for the road starting from Sacramento, California, while the one in the East, Union Pacific (UP), would start from Omaha, Nebraska. Seven years later, the two tracks connected in Utah to form the Transcontinental Railroad.

Shortly after CPR broke ground in 1863, they realized the difficulty of obtaining laborers. The company initially wanted to hire only white men, but only a few hundred responded to the recruitment efforts, and many didn’t stay long, preferring to find their fortune in gold and silver mining. Railroad work was hard and paid little. One of the company directors, Charles Crocker, suggested hiring Chinese workers. They had come for the gold rush in the 1850s, but a decade later, the easy gold was gone, and discriminatory actions by both the government and public had driven many Chinese from the goldfields. Crocker had recruited a Chinese crew for road construction earlier and had been satisfied with their performance. However, James Harvey Strobridge, the construction supervisor under Crocker, objected. He thought the Chinese were too small and weak to do the heavy labor. His boss’s legendary reply was, “Did they not build the Chinese wall, the biggest piece of masonry in the world?”

The first stop of our tour was Bloomer Cut. All 56 of us disembarked from the comfortable coach and walked ten minutes to the railroad tracks. To my untutored eyes, it was just a railroad curving through a cut in a hill. Fortunately, Phil, the docent, taught me the significance of this site:

This was where the first experimental group of about twenty Chinese joined the white workforce. There they faced a long, tall ridge made of a conglomerate rock as hard as concrete. Before power tools, the picks and shovels at the workers’ disposal were no match for the rock. Black powder had to be used to blast open a 63-foot-deep, 800-foot-long cut at the center of the ridge. An accidental explosion killed one worker and blinded Strobridge in one eye, bringing home the danger of these volatile explosives. From then on, his Chinese workers called him “One-eyed bossy man.” Strobridge had this to say of them: “They learn quickly, do not fight, and are very cleanly in their habits.”

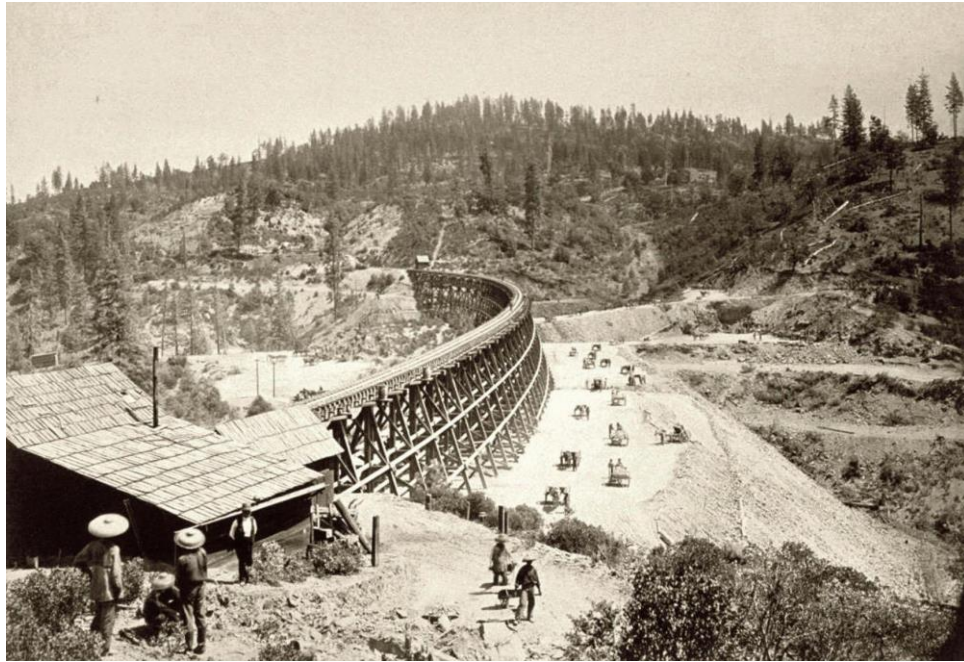


Bloomer Cut

As the Chinese mastered drilling, blasting, and other railroad work, the company was so impressed that they recruited workers from southern China. Altogether, 12,000 to 15,000 had worked on the railroad, making up 90 percent of CPR's workforce.

Our second stop was the Cape Horn Promontory, overlooking a gorge surrounded by mountains covered with trees and shrubs. The place was nicknamed after the notoriously treacherous Cape Horn near the tip of South America. Sculpting a path along the sheer cliffs was a major test for the Chinese workers. To create a ledge for the railroad bed, they were lowered by rope onto the cliff to drill holes and plant explosives in the rocks. Once they lit the fuse, they hollered to be hauled up. But sometimes the powder exploded before they reached safety, and there were a number of casualties. Images of the period show the use of wicker baskets to lower workers onto the mountainside, but modern research indicates the baskets weren't employed at Cape Horn. Regardless of the method used, building a passageway in seemingly insurmountable conditions was a tremendous achievement.

From the mountain, we arrived at a ravine near Secret Town. (Miners wanted to keep the place secret after discovering gold there.) The tracks here looked ordinary until Phil told us what was buried underneath. It was a trestle bridge, a magnificent centipede-like structure built with locally felled trees. At 1,110 feet long, 95 feet high, and stacked like a house of cards, it must have been a frightening sight for passengers looking down into the deep ravine. Because the wood often caught fire from the embers from train smokestacks, Chinese workers were assigned to shore it up with dirt. The ravine is now completely filled, which is why we can no longer see the remarkable structure.



Secret Town Trestle

(Source: University of California-Berkeley, Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology)

Summit Tunnel was the highlight. Before the tour, John, the organizer, had sent us several emails to prepare us: Bring layered clothing as rain and temperatures in the forties are in the forecast. Also, bring walking sticks for the hour-long hike to Summit Camp. As the drizzle turned into sleet, I regretted not wearing my long johns. And as the terrain became more and more rugged, I regretted not bringing my walking sticks. In hindsight, the “hardships” gave me a taste of the harsh conditions at 7,200 feet elevation in the Sierra Nevada.

Summit Camp, where several hundred Chinese workers lived for two years, 1865-67, is a barren landscape of granite outcroppings and slippery gravel. In relatively flat areas, remnants of the foundations of huts remain. Already shivering on a fall day, I couldn’t imagine living in a flimsy shack in freezing temperatures and heavy snow. In the winter of 1866-67, numerous storms dumped record snow here. Imagine opening the door in the morning to find a white wall blocking your way. To get to work, you have to tunnel through the snow. You live in this maze of sunless burrows for months until the snow melts. But that’s not the worst. An avalanche can wipe you and your companions away in the middle of the night. Such incidents happened. Some of the bodies were found in the spring. One of them, who was swept away while he was working, was found still clutching his shovel.

If living conditions were bad, working conditions were insufferable. For the railroad to cross the Sierra Nevada, digging 15 tunnels through solid granite was required. Three-man teams hacked away at the face of the mountain. While one held the iron chisel, two others took turns to pound the chisel with a sledgehammer. How many hands were smashed is unknown. When a two-foot hole was dug, explosives were planted, and the men would run for their lives after lighting the fuse. Around 2,000 workers were killed in the construction of the railroad from Sacramento to Omaha.



Summit Tunnels

Progress was an excruciating average of 14 inches a day, which increased to 22 inches when nitroglycerin was introduced. Workers operated in three shifts, 24-7, digging into the mountain from two ends. At this rate, it would take them five years to complete the longest tunnel, called #6. Engineers came up with a plan. They measured the point that would be the center of the tunnel and ordered the workers to dig a vertical shaft to a depth of 75 feet. From the center, they would dig outwards to meet those digging inwards, thus doubling the number of facings from two to four. In this way, the 1,687-foot summit tunnel was completed in two years.

These original tunnels are no longer in use as the railroad has been rerouted. Union Pacific, the current owner, has closed the tunnels to tourists. Unfortunately, trespassers have smeared the walls with graffiti, a grave disrespect to the workers who shed sweat and blood building them. The 1882 Foundation is now working with other concerned agencies to declare the area a National Historic Landmark. They are working with UP to support access to the tunnels in order to expand their educational programs and tours.

I had the chance to peek into the short tunnel #7. In spite of the graffiti marring the walls, the deep holes bored into the granite and blast scars are still visible. Perhaps on future Gold Mountain tours, visitors will be able to inspect the wonders of tunnel #6.

Another spectacle on the summit is the Chinese Wall. It's a 75-foot-high retaining wall to hold the fill for the gap between tunnels #7 and #8. Stones excavated from the tunnels were chiseled into blocks of varying sizes and stacked together without mortar. Today the wall stands in all its glory after all these years and countless trains running over it. Only the best masonry skills can attain such endurance.



Chinese Wall

Finally, back in the comfort of the warm bus, I looked out once more at the summit. The Chinese workers' ingenuity, talents, industriousness, and fortitude are written all over the mountains. But what impressed me more than anything else was that they dared to stand up for themselves, contrary to the popular belief that they were "coolies" and therefore slaves. They went on strike to demand higher pay and shorter shifts in the life-threatening tunnels. Their wage of \$30 a month, minus the board they had to pay out of their own pockets, was grossly unequal to white workers' remuneration. CPR countered by cutting off all supplies to the strikers. After starving for eight days, they succumbed. But they had made their statement. Company managers realized they could no longer take the Chinese workers for granted. There is evidence CPR conceded to the workers' demands shortly after.

The last leg of our journey was a train ride from Reno back to where we started, Sacramento. Watching the scenic view of mountains, forests, and rivers, I thought of the thousands of Chinese workers who made my ride possible. They paved the way not only for the railroad but also for me as a Chinese American. They're my roots, and I continue in their footsteps in pursuing the American dream of liberty, opportunity, and happiness. This was the same quest that motivated the first European settlers in the New World. So now I know: we all come from the same place.

Note: This Gold Mountain Tour is the fifth such tour. There is one every year (except during the height of COVID). Anyone interested should contact John Kusano: jkusano1882@gmail.com

(Photos taken by Veronica Li)