

E-Newsletter of the Organization of Chinese American Women

April 2016



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(from Linda Devine, Editor)

I would like to extend my thanks, as always, to those who submitted material for this issue, and to my husband Ed for his photo preparation work.

I continue to encourage OCAW members to write articles for the publication if there is something you think would be of interest to the membership, and I have been gratified that more members are sending in information, even if it is brief.

Please feel free to send me any suggestions or recommendations that you might have for any aspects of the e-newsletter, and I will be happy to see if they work for our publication. My email address is: devinefive@comcast.net.

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New National Vice President for Finance

(from Christina Chang, National President)

I am so excited to announce that Baiming (Betty) Liu has volunteered to be OCAW National Vice President for Finance. I am very happy to have her fill this position, especially since we need to raise funds for our upcoming National Conference to celebrate our 40th anniversary. This position had been vacant for a long while.

Betty is a nutrition consultant. She also possesses good computer skills, and she will work with Cathy Roberts to update our OCAW website. Betty is such an energetic person and is eager to help as much as she can.

Thank you, and welcome Baiming (Betty) Liu!

...and from Baiming Liu:

This is a great honor for me! Thank you all for your trust in me!

I look forward to working with you all!

All the best to you and your families!

News from the Maryland and Virginia Chapters

Ikebana Demonstration and Exhibit

(from Linda Devine)

Every April, the Washington, D.C. Chapter of Ikebana International presents an exhibition at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C., highlighting the art of Japanese flower arranging.

Over a 17-day period, the show rotates three different exhibits of about 28 arrangements each. The arrangements represent the styles of several different Ikebana schools.

In addition, there are four Ikebana demonstrations on the weekends during this time. Each demonstration represents a different major Ikebana school.

On Sunday, April 3, 2016, VA and MD members Maria Yang, ChuHua Yang, and Linda Devine attended the first of the demonstrations. Alice Buch, of the Ohara School, gave an informative presentation, explaining many of the basic principles of Ikebana. The audience watched as she created arrangements illustrating different Ohara styles.



(Photo taken by Maria Yang)



(Photos taken by Maria Yang)





Maria Yang, VA President and Acting MD President; Linda Devine, National Vice President for Communications; Alice Buch, Ohara School demonstrator; and ChiHua Yang, VA Vice President

(Photo taken by Glen Schwartz)

After the demonstration, ChiHua's husband Glen Schwartz joined us to view the first of the three rotating exhibits. Schools represented were the Ohara, Ichiyo, Sogetsu, Saga Goryu, and Ikenobo Schools.

As expected, the arrangements on display comprised a wide variety of looks, and we enjoyed seeing and talking about how the flowers, their containers (an important aspect of the arrangement), and other materials combined to create the piece.



ChiHua Yang and Glen Schwartz

(Photo taken by Linda Devine)

We look forward to subsequent demonstrations and exhibits in the days ahead.

News from the New Orleans Chapter

Madama Butterfly Presentation

(from Betty Butz, Immediate Past President)

The OCAW New Orleans Chapter held a meeting on Saturday, March 12, 2016 at the Chinese Presbyterian Church in Kenner, Louisiana. The meeting was followed by a luncheon, after which members and guests viewed a DVD presentation of Puccini's opera, *Madama Butterfly*, produced by Mimi Hom and Opera International.

The cast included several Chinese opera singers: Zhen Cao, Hai-Bo Bai, Lu-Hsuan Chen, Tianxu Zhou, Sun Yu, and Chen-Ye Yuan, as well as Korean opera singer Hyun-Oh Shin. English subtitles were projected on a wall so the audience could follow the lyrics and the storyline.

Chapter President Pat Ellzey gave an introduction of OCAW member and opera producer Mimi Hom, to whom everyone was grateful for the opportunity to enjoy her work. During the presentation, Pat's husband, Dr. Ellzey, gave an informative talk on opera appreciation.

The show was wonderful, the set-up perfect, and the activity most meaningful. The opera DVD may be shown again in the future.

Introduction to *Madama Butterfly*

Written by Betty Butz

Presented by Pat Ellzey

After Hurricane Katrina, the New Orleans Chapter of OCAW received two precious gifts. First, a cash donation which was used to present a series of health-related seminars. Second, two DVDs on loan from Mimi Hom of operas she produced.

Mimi was a child prodigy on the piano, received a degree in music, and has been a music teacher for the past 60 years. Besides giving lessons at home and in schools to students of all ages, she performed as a piano accompanist to instrumentalists and singers. She has performed in concert in Europe, China, and Mexico. In the U.S. she has performed at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Smithsonian Institution, music festivals, and various colleges, and has appeared on two PBS television concerts.

In 1994, with the support of OCAW, she founded Opera International, an opera company which aimed to encourage an appreciation of opera in young people, train aspiring vocalists, and offer affordable admission to opera performances. Thanks to Mimi's generosity, our presentation of *Madama Butterfly* today is free of charge.

Under Mimi's direction, Opera International produced 14 operas, 5 operatic vocal galas, and other musical events. She was named a Baldwin Artist and has received numerous accolades on her work from the media. She was honored in Taiwan in 1991 and by OCAW in 1995 for her longstanding dedication to aiding, developing, and promoting singers. In 2014, she received the Organization of Chinese Americans' Trailblazer Award for her lifelong contributions to the arts.

Mimi has been the Vice President for Programs for OCAW National for over 20 years. She currently is President of the D.C. Federation of Music Clubs, as well as pianist and Director of Music at the Hermon Presbyterian Church in Bethesda, Maryland. Last fall, she organized a concert to benefit the Wounded Warrior Project.

Madama Butterfly was the fourth opera produced by Opera International under Mimi's direction.

News from the Silicon Valley Chapter

(from Carol Yuan, President)

Community Safety Presentation

On Sunday, February 21, 2016, the OCAW Silicon Valley Chapter held a community safety presentation at the San Jose Public Library, West Valley Branch, in San Jose, California. It was given to build rapport with the community, and to provide statewide trends related to criminal activity and tips to prevent crime. About 20 members and neighborhood friends came to the presentation. It ran from 2 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Our guest speaker was Captain Rick Sung who is the Captain and Commander of the Santa Clara County Sheriff's West Valley Patrol Division. The West Valley Patrol Division provides law enforcement service for the cities of Cupertino and Saratoga, the town of Los Altos Hills, and unincorporated areas in the West Valley community. The subject of Captain Sung's talk was "The Sheriff's Office in Partnership with Community."

Captain Sung first gave us information on the history of the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office. The office covers an area of 9600 square miles, with over 1700 county employees. It is the 4th largest county sheriff's office in California. It has been serving this community since 1850, and the population was around 12,000 back then. Laurie Smith is the current Santa Clara County Sheriff. Sheriff Smith is the first female County Sheriff in the history of the state, and she has been the Sheriff since 1999.



Rick Sung, Captain and Commander of the Santa Clara County Sheriff's West Valley Patrol Division

Captain Sung then mentioned how California Proposition 47 has affected statewide criminal activity trends. **Proposition 47**, the ballot initiative passed by California voters on November 4, 2014, reduces certain drug possession felonies to misdemeanors. It also requires misdemeanor sentencing for petty theft, receiving stolen property, and forging/writing bad checks when the amount involved is \$950 or less. Because some criminal activities would not be defined as a felony, it encourages criminal activities indirectly. In 2015, burglary, robbery, auto theft, home theft, and violent crime among different cities have increased between 11% to 130% from 2014.

Captain Sung has been giving numerous safety presentations to communities on different occasions, no matter the size of the audience, to build rapport and a relationship between the Sheriff's office and communities. He said law enforcement agents want to be friends with the community. They need to understand different cultures and also help the community know them so that residents of the community will trust its local law enforcement agents and work with the agents to fight crimes effectively.



To protect our homes and belongings, and to help law enforcement agents do their job better, Captain Sung recommended the following:

1. Have good house numbering – be of a readable size, and illuminated or reflective.
2. Install a property gate or fence.
3. Keep doors and windows locked and closed while going out. In 2014, 16% of residential burglaries were through open or unlocked doors or windows.

4. Shut window and door coverings while going out.
5. Install a wide-angle (180-degree) door viewer (peep hole).
6. Turn on your alarm system and ensure that your alarm company or neighbor has the code.
7. Attach a “No Trespassing” sign onto your gate or fence. If one enters, that individual may commit the California crime of trespassing.

One of the best vehicles to protect your home is to install a surveillance camera system. Law enforcement agents would use the photos collected from surveillance cameras to create suspect track files which would be distributed nationwide.

Citizens can also go to www.crimereports.com to become informed about recent crimes in their neighborhood.

The final note from Captain Sung regarding protecting our homes is “Anything is better than nothing.” The more our home is protected, the more it is a hindrance to a would-be burglar and the less chance it would be broken into.



Upcoming Events

Sunday, May 15, 2016 – Health Seminar: How to prevent Colorectal Cancer and Digestive System Cancer

Saturday, May 21, 2016 – River Clean-up and Spring Gathering

Sunday, August 7, 2016 – 30th Anniversary Celebration and Annual Officer Installation and Youth Achievement Award Presentation

Please go to our website, <http://www.ocaw-svc.org/>, for updates on our chapter.

News from the Hawaii Chapter

(from Rena Young Ochse, Treasurer and Newsletter Editor)

February General Membership Meeting

The OCAW Hawaii Chapter held its first meeting of the year on Saturday, February 21, 2016 at Maple Garden Restaurant in Honolulu. There were 43 members and guests in attendance.

Our keynote speaker was Dr. Rosalind Mau, Ph.D., who spoke in detail about the Year of the Monkey and Chinese traditional customs which are still observed today. The 2016 Narcissus Queen and Court were in attendance and were very interested in learning about this year of the “Fire” monkey and what it entails.



The Narcissus Queen and Court: Jessica Cheng, 3rd Princess; Queen Ashley Fu; Jill Lau Fukumoto, 2nd Princess; and Lena Zheng, 4th Princess



Dr. Rosalind Mau with the Narcissus Queen and Court

Upcoming Event

A fundraiser is planned for Saturday, July 23, 2016 at the Pagoda Floating Restaurant in Honolulu. The theme is “Viva Las Vegas,” and the event is in its planning stages. The committee is chaired by Isabella Rose Monzon and her sister, Gigi Ko.

Viva Las Vegas

Lunch Buffet

Saturday, July 23, 2016
10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The Pagoda Hotel International Ballroom
1525 Rycroft Street
Honolulu, HI 96814

Tickets: \$60 per person
Attire: Black, red, or white (optional)

Featuring: Boutiques – Country Store – Silent Auction – Bingo Game
Prizes – Best Las Vegas Outfit Contest – Vegas Style Entertainment

News from the Kohala Hawaii Chapter

Kohala Senior Citizens' Chinese New Year Celebration

(from Lani Eugenio, President)

On Monday, February 8, 2016, a Senior Citizens Club meeting in our Kohala community was held with about 100 people in attendance, and Puanani Woo was the guest speaker. She spoke on 'Chinese 5 wishes,' which are good luck, health, happiness, prosperity, and longevity.

For her talk, Puanani had prepared an 8-page color handout and distributed it to audience members. The handout included information on Chinese New Year and the 5 wishes, as well as a page titled "Feast of Good Fortune," which featured 12 Chinese New Year foods and an explanation of what each food meant to living Chinese. She did a great job imparting her knowledge and sharing her laughter.



Educator, Administrator, and Author Puanani Woo spoke about the significance of words and food used during the Chinese New Year celebration.

We then had a nice lunch prepared by the Senior Citizen Board. The delicious meal featured char siu chicken, fried rice, soy beans, and almond cookies. Our OCAW Kohala Chapter donated the noodle dish, for long life, which was prepared by Vice President Mary Ann Lim's daughter's restaurant.



Faye Yates' narcissus flowers as well as my leaves were out on display, and Lana Lewis was the fortune-teller.



Lana Lewis delighted the Seniors with readings of their fortune for this year, The Year of the Monkey.

Also, I talked about some of the prominent people in our community who were of Chinese ancestry. A particular person of interest for OCAW members was Yun Tau Zane, who was the first Miss Hawaii in 1948. *(Editor's Note: See more information below.)*

As you can see, our chapter played a big part in the Senior Citizens' Chinese New Year Celebration.



The Lion dances around the firecracker to bring good luck to the club and its members.

(All of the above photos were taken by Lani Eugenio.)

* * * * *

Yun Tau (Zane) Chee, the first Miss Hawaii, helped break the color barrier in the Miss America pageant. She passed away in 2002 at age 73. The following appeared in the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, March 2, 2002.

Yun Tau (Zane) Chee: Miss Hawaii of 1948, First Asian in Miss America Pageant

Yun Tau Zane, as the first Miss Hawaii, helped break the color barrier in the Miss America pageant. Zane was the runner-up in the first Miss Hawaii contest in 1948 and took the crown after the winner was disqualified for not having enough high school credits.

Later that year, Zane, whose ancestry was Chinese, traveled to Atlantic City, NJ, for the Miss America pageant, becoming the first Asian American contestant.

The pageant, founded in 1921, had a long history of racial exclusion. Sometime during the 1930s, a rule was adopted specifying that contestants “must be of good health and of the white race.” Until at least 1940, all contestants had to complete a biological data sheet that asked them to outline their lineage.

Then, in 1941, Mifauny Shunatona, a Native American from Oklahoma, was admitted to the pageant. In 1945, Bess Myerson became the first Jewish Miss America. Three years later, Yun Tau Zane and Irma Nydia Vasquez from Puerto Rico pushed the ethnic boundaries further when they joined the pageant. More than two decades would pass before the pageant had its first black contestant, Cheryl Brown of Iowa, in 1970.



Yun Tau Zane (*on left*)

Yun Tau Zane was born in Kohala, Hawaii. She was a 20-year-old home economics major at the University of Hawaii when she won the Miss Hawaii title. She vied for Miss America because she hoped to earn money for college.

She learned the hula from Hawaiian hula master Winona Beamer and performed the dance for the talent portion of the national pageant wearing a holoku, a traditional Hawaiian fitted gown with a flowing train. People were “intrigued that I didn’t trip on the train,” she recalled in the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* two years ago.

Having grown up among the many cultures that make up Hawaiian society, she was not aware she was making history as the pageant's first entrant of Asian ancestry, according to her husband, Hon Ting Chee. “Being from Hawaii, she didn't have any idea of the discrimination on the mainland,” he said.

But she was greeted warmly by the other contestants. “They were all together for the same purpose,” he said, “so they were friendly to her.”

Although Zane did not win the national title, she was named Miss Congeniality, which came with a \$1,000 scholarship. After graduating from the University of Hawaii, she earned her teaching certificate at the University of Wisconsin. She taught kindergarten in Hawaii for 33 years, retiring in 1986.

(from Puanani Woo)

April 2, 2016

Aloha OCAW Sisters:

We 8 happy senior citizen female members of the **OCAW Kohala Hawaii Chapter** are thriving. Lani Eugenio, our active president, will be bringing you up to date on what the Chapter is up to.

Keaukaha-Panaewa Farmers Association aka KPFA: When Pauline Tsui and I finished the book on the history of OCAW in May of 2013, I closed that book chapter of my life by noting it in one of our *OCAW E-Newsletters* and mentioned that I started volunteering with the KPFA Board of Directors. I am still a volunteer there.

Chinese New Year: My Chinese mother was a wonderful teacher for me. She was 1st-generation Chinese born in Hawaii; both her parents emigrated to Hawaii from China. At Chinese New Year time she would frequently remind me *again*, of important lifestyles to live by. “All Chinese mothers teach this,” she’d tell me.

So for my friendly talk with the Kohala senior citizens on Monday, February 8, 2016, I talked about 5 Chinese wishes for a good life which occur as I’ve learned them, in this order: first, good luck, then health, happiness, prosperity, and longevity. The senior citizens and I had lots of fun reacting back and forth over these assumptions.

Book: The Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii 100th Anniversary in 2011, Editors Vernon W.C. Ching and May Lee Chung, 2013, 271 pp, 8.5x11, brilliant red/orange hard cover.

It was interesting to me that the **Table of Contents** of this book notes its four parts by using what I call ‘Chinese wishes,’ under which are the numerous pages of pictures and narratives of significant events and people. The four parts are:

- Part I Prosperity
- Part II Long Life
- Part III Good Health
- Part IV Happiness

Book: Aloha ‘Aina Volume II: More Big Island Memories, Edited by Gloria Kobayashi, Published by East Hawaii Cultural Council Hawaii Museum of Contemporary Art, 2014, 199 pp, 8.5x11, soft cover. Its **Table of Contents** is divided in this way:

- 1 Community Builders
- 27 Courage
- 47 Encounters
- 75 Love

- 91 Plantation Life
- 109 Resilience
- 125 Special Places
- 155 Youthful Spirit
- 187 Glossary
- 191 Contributors

Book: As noted in a previous *OCAW E-Newsletter*, our Chapter chose to complete a book about Kohala featuring the Neula/Lim Ohana and other wonderful multi-ethnic families. We will focus on the Chinese acculturation in the Kohala district and most likely will include their strong presence in the Hamakua district as well. We will consider heading our chapters with significant Hawaiian lifestyle words.

Love to all,

Puanani Woo

Advisor, OCAW Kohala Hawaii Chapter

From and About Our Members

Chinese New Year Foods

(from Rena Young Ochse)

A candy dish is traditional during the holiday. Also, Jai is very popular at this time; each ingredient represents a symbol of good luck, health, and prosperity. Most of the Chinese people in Hawaii follow these traditions.

Then there is “Gao,” a Chinese New Year pudding. When fried, it is slightly crispy on the outside, and remains pasty on the inside. The Guangdong variety is also called *nian gao*. It is sweetened, usually with brown sugar. It is distinct with a dark yellow color. The paste is poured into a cake pan and steamed once more to settle the mixture. The batter is steamed until it solidifies, and it is served in thick slices. It may be eaten as is. The *nian gao* becomes stretchy and extremely sticky. It can also be served as a pudding flavored with rosewater or red bean paste.

The next stage is optional as it can be pan-fried afterward, often with egg.

Recipe for Chinese New Year Gao

1 1/3 cup water
1 pkg Chinese Wong Tong (bar) or box of dark brown sugar
1 can coconut milk
1/4 cup canola oil
1 lb mochi flour or mochiko
1 1/2 tbsps sesame seeds, toasted
8 red dates
1 ring mold, microwave safe

Boil water with brown sugar and cool. Mix coconut milk and oil well. Stir in mochi flour, and blend the sugar water and coconut mixture gradually together until smooth.

Spray microwave mold with PAM. Pour in the batter and cover loosely with plastic wrap. Microwave for 16 minutes. Sprinkle with sesame seeds on top and place red dates in the middle. Cool – and enjoy!

Meaning of Ching Ming (or Qingming) – Tomb Sweeping

(researched by Rena Young Ochse)

Tomb sweeping is regarded as the most important custom in the Qingming Festival from which the name ‘Tomb Sweeping Day’ is derived. Cleaning the tomb and paying respect to the dead person with offerings are the two important parts of remembering past relatives. Weeds around the tomb are cleared away and fresh soil is added to show care for the dead. The dead person's favorite food and wine are taken to offer to them, along with paper resembling money and other material goods. The paper replicas are burned in the belief that people still need all of these things in the afterlife. The Kowtowing ritual before the grave is also performed.

Today, with cremation often preferred over burial, the custom has been extremely simplified in cities. Only flowers are presented to the dead relatives and revolutionary martyrs. No matter how respect is shown, good prayers for the deceased are expressed.

Stronger protections for crime victims in Hawaii

(from Rena Young Ochse)

Even in the Aloha State, tragedy can strike and one day one could become an unfortunate victim of crime. Hawaii is one of 18 states without constitutional rights for victims. There has been a push here for stronger protections for victims.

Marsy’s Law for Hawaii is seeking a constitutional amendment that will create permanent and enforceable rights for victims as they maneuver through the complex judicial system. The act protects and expands the legal rights of victims of crime to include 17 rights in the judicial process, including the right to legal standing, protection from the defendant, notification of all court proceedings, and restitution, as well as granting parole boards far greater powers to deny inmates parole.

Hawaii Chapter members are urging citizens to get involved and show support for equal rights for crime victims. It has been one of the top stories appearing currently in Hawaii media, like the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*.



OCAW Hawaii Vice President Chu Lan Shubert-Kwock (wearing white hat)
advocating for Marsy's Law in Hawaii

From Rena Young Ochse

Rena found this “**Think Tech Hawaii**” video, entitled “China and the 2 Dragons,” to be very interesting. In it, Johnson Choi, President of the Hong Kong-China-Hawaii Chamber of Commerce, shares his experiences as a businessman and community member in Hong Kong and Shanghai.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbxnDlzsvyA&sns=em>

About Yvonne Louie, New Orleans Chapter member

(from Betty Butz)

CA C'EST BON

/sa say bone/

Yvonne Louie related an amusing experience from her days working in her family restaurant in Houma, Louisiana, where Cajun French was a commonly spoken language. A customer commented “ca c'est bon,” meaning that the food was good. In response, Yvonne brought to the table barbequed pork ribs, assuming that the customer wanted “char siu with bones.” Word spread that Yvonne's place served the best BBQ ribs in town. The restaurant thrived for many years. :)

Yvonne is a Cantonese speaker, and she quipped that neither she nor her Cajun customers spoke much English, but they got along really well communicating in Cantonese and French!

From Mimi Hom

Mimi has enjoyed performances by the **Akhmedova Ballet Academy** of Silver Spring, Maryland, and feels that the dancers are very talented. The Academy is presenting *Sleeping Beauty* on Saturday, May 21, 2016, at 7 p.m. at the Montgomery College Cultural Arts Center at 7995 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, MD. Special guest artist is Simone Messmer, principal dancer with Miami City Ballet.

If you are interested in the Academy or the upcoming performance, more information can be obtained from the Academy's website: www.akhmedovaballet.org.

First Moon

by Betty Butz

February 2016

Over a year ago, I contemplated cruising over the Caribbean Sea under a full moon. I imagined dry, sunny days giving way to a golden, full moon over calm seas that sparkled with silvery waves. With my husband by my side, and brimming with cheerful expectations, I lounged on the top deck of the *Carnival Dream*, anticipating the first full moon of 2016. It was cold and windy in New Orleans on departure day, too cold to stay outside much. Winter still had its firm grip on us. There were storms coming our way and storms brewing up in the Atlantic. Since the *Dream* was heading to Key West, I realistically hoped that the weather would become more pleasant and I could see the moon and its halo against the backdrop of a few clouds on a balmy night.

Key West was a bit warmer, but the wind was just as strong. I realized that I had a good opportunity to listen to a turbulent sea in near gale force winds. At one a.m., I bundled up, went out to the narrow balcony, lay flat on a small lounging chair, and honed my senses. Rushing past the full moon were billowing patches of clouds, layer after layer, of varying thickness and density that conjured up a wild Goya composition. The lowest cover appeared like wisps of black smoke drifting back and forth, as if there were some kindle hidden farther away. The glow of the moon tinted the clouds in different shades of gloom. It shone through intermittently when the clouds parted long enough, giving a telescopic effect of the moon receding and coming to the foreground again. The dramatic, multi-dimensional quality of the sky made quite an impression on me. Twelve stories below were endless crashing waves and distant roars of unfathomable menace. In the midst of the howling winds of a tempest, I felt small but strangely at ease in a big ship with all the comforts of a bedroom just a door away.

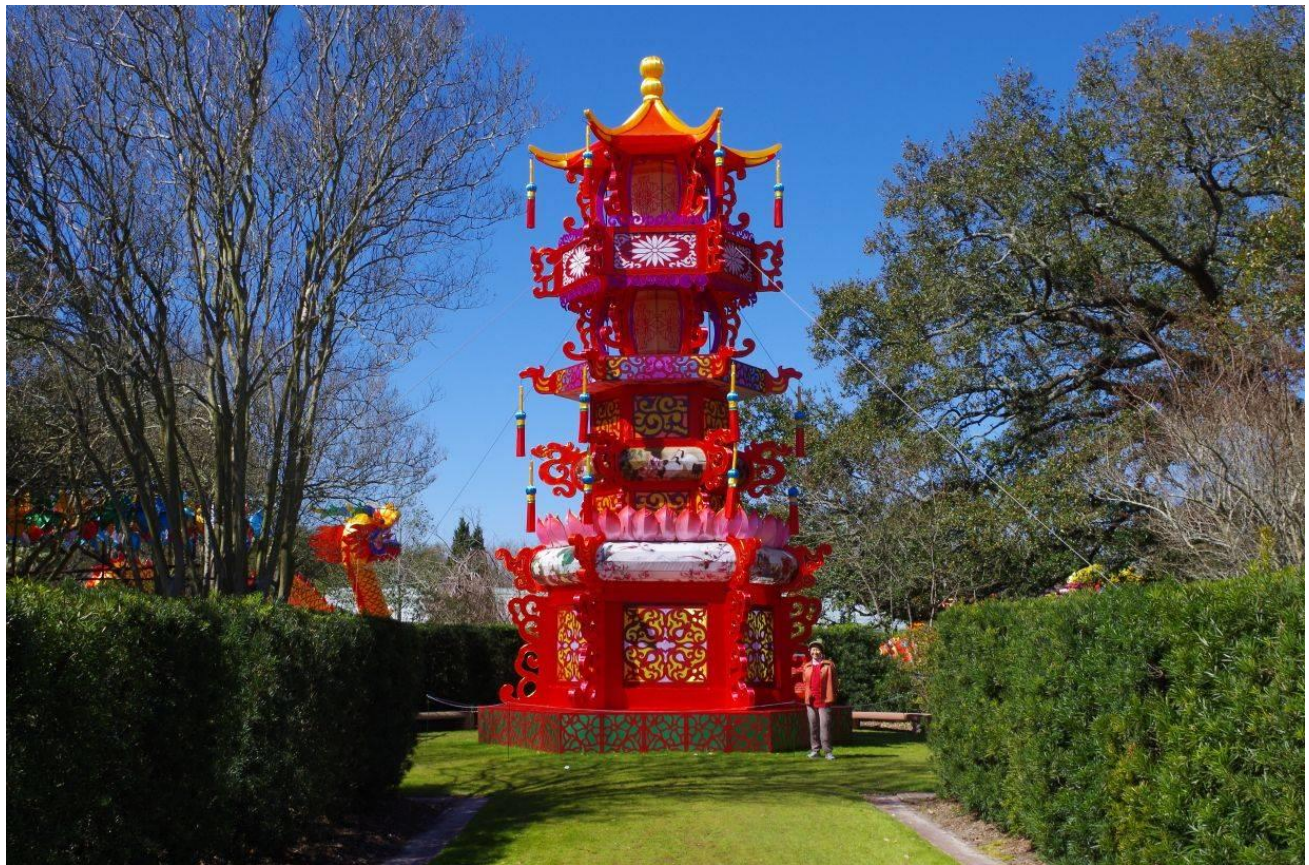
After a week at sea visiting the Bahamas, we came home to multiple seasonal celebrations of Mardi Gras, Valentine's Day, and lunar new year. One of the Mardi Gras parades boasted the theme of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, a text that I had studied in high school. The colorful floats and themes from the story echoed the wild winds and storms in the Caribbean Sea that I had experienced a week earlier. At this time of year, Americans of Chinese descent are doubly blessed as everyone is upbeat, on the way to the next party, the Chinese New Year celebration being one of many. Parties are in the mainstream.

Chinese New Year is based on the lunar calendar, which served as an almanac for farmers who toiled according to the seasons. New year day occurs on the second new moon after the shortest day of the year. After months of diminishing sunshine amid the dreariness of winter, everyone looks forward to spring. In China, the spring festival goes on for 15 days. On the final day, full moon day, a lantern festival is unveiled to mark the arrival of spring.

On this wonderful, second full moon night in 2016, the New Orleans Botanical Garden at City Park presented **China Lights**, a lavish display of gigantic lantern sculptures depicting Chinese cultural symbols and mythical creatures. In Chinese, the show is called /tian xia di yi deng/, meaning ‘first lanterns in the world.’ The artwork was produced in Zigong, Sichuan, with final assembly on site. The show runs through May 1.

My son and I had the good fortune of visiting the exhibit on a comfortably cool morning under clear blue skies. Soft breezes and flourishing plant specimens greeted us among the endless array of silk sculptures that shimmered in the sun like magic. Recorded string music sounded like “Moon reflections on two ponds” played on the erhu, a two-string instrument, in the background.

All of the following images were captured by Arthur Butz.



Pagoda

The shape and architectural details of a pagoda remind one of the rugged, mountainous terrain of China. The multi-tiered structure physically and metaphorically encourages people to look up to higher levels, to try to obtain a view from above, to stretch the mind. It is a place for contemplation, self-reflection, and meditation. It is a common fixture in landscape painting, and is often associated with monasteries and quiet places of learning.



Dragon



This dragon lantern sculpture is 130 feet long.

No animal embodies the spirit of the Chinese people or represents China's national unity more than the dragon, which is a symbol of dignity, strength, and power. This auspicious creature – believed to be a descendant of the Chinese people – is a national icon linked with powers over the natural world (particularly water, rainfall, hurricanes, and floods), and bestows fortune, longevity, strength, and endurance. The dragon appears in a variety of colors – blue, black, white, and red – but a yellow dragon is the most revered of all.



Opera Lady

Peking opera is considered a Chinese national cultural treasure as it embodies historically significant stories played out in wonderfully designed costumes and accompanied by dramatic music. A character's personality is often depicted by color and stylized gestures. The image above shows a lady of noble virtue, who is also smart and loyal.



Monkey Arbor

In honor of the Monkey in the year of its namesake, an arbor path with hanging lanterns overhead and brightly colored silk tulips lining both sides lead to the silk sculpture of the monkey. The rounded shapes complement the spirited liveliness, resourcefulness, and flexibility of the animal.

Monkey

Let's all get smarter in 2016!





Fish

The pronunciation of fish /yuu/ in Cantonese and in Mandarin sounds like “surplus”; thus the fish is a symbol of plenty. In south China, fish is commonly served at the new year eve meal.

A business custom at the end of a lunar year is to pay off debts so that the new year will start with a fresh slate. Children in traditional families are often given pretty, decorated red envelopes with money inside, to place under their pillows. The idea is for each child to wake up in the new year with a surplus. In the new year season, children are presented with new clothes, new shoes, and new school supplies.



Note the four red characters on the side of the fish. They read, from left to right, /nian nian you yuu/, meaning “Year after year, may there be surplus.” It is a common expression used during Chinese New Year as family, friends, and acquaintances greet each other during the 15 days of celebration.



Lotus Pond

The lotus flower is a symbol of purity as it grows from roots mired in the mud and stays unspoiled. It is also a nourishing plant; the roots are edible, the leaves are used as wrapping for steaming food, seeds are nutritious, and dried seed pods can be used as decorations that last a long time. A lotus pond is also a favorable environment for fish, frogs, and mandarin ducks.

While the lotus flower is celebrated for its beauty and purity, the lotus seed pod is a symbol of plenty. Lotus seeds, called /lian zi/ in Mandarin and /leen dsi/ in Cantonese, are sugar-coated and served as snacks during Chinese New Year. “Lian zi” rhymes with ‘many sons.’ A common wish is “May you have many honored sons.” Wishes for having many daughters are rare.

Traditional Chinese values expect a son to help the family grow by taking in a wife, and having children under the family name. A daughter is expected to enter another household and further the goals of the husband's family.

Families with few resources often focus on formal education for sons, while daughters learn homemaking at home.



Panda Playground



Golden Flowers



Cranes

The crane is a symbol of grace and longevity, often depicted with pine trees in landscape painting to express good wishes for a healthy birthday, especially for the elderly. It is believed that energy from the pine trees and crane could help one live longer.

In the China Lights exhibit, the flock of cranes is set in a small Japanese garden, although it is cordoned off to visitors.



Qilins / Chimeras

A qilin /chi lin/, pronounced /kay luen/ in Cantonese, and “kirin” in Japanese, is a mythical creature that was believed to appear at the arrival or departure of revered rulers. A comparable animal in western mythology is the chimera, although these two creatures convey different cultural connotations. The chimera is a monster whereas the qilin is a fortune-bearer.

Qilins most likely existed in people's imaginations in order to lend importance to auspicious occasions. It is represented by the head of a dragon with a single horn, the back of a tiger, the hooves of a horse, and the tail of an ox, and its body is covered in the scaled skin of a snake. These attributes enable it to ward off evil spirits. In a qilin dance, movements are choreographed to suggest liveliness, intelligence, gentleness, and courage that bring goodwill and prosperity to all.

In the China Lights show, four qilins gather around a pillar. Each one is composed of many small bottles filled with colored water that make the creatures sparkle.



Lantern Walk

This path of enlightenment meets the lotus pond at right angles. At the end of the walk, visitors are rewarded with a beautiful vista on both sides.



Painted lanterns

May your moonlit nights be beautiful and tender like the glow of a painted silk lantern.

The sculptures are even more attractive when lit up after dark. The evening shows also offer live music and fusion Chinese/New Orleans cuisine. The Year of the Monkey has certainly brought us culture, beauty, and joy in style.