

E-Newsletter of the Organization of Chinese American Women

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(from Linda Devine, Editor)

I hope everyone is enjoying springtime coming into our lives!

My thanks, as always, to those who contributed material for the issue, and I appreciate my husband Ed's work on preparing the many 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. I am happy to welcome an article from another first-time contributor in this issue, and I sincerely hope that this trend continues!

Please also feel free to send me any suggestions that you might have for the e-newsletter at:
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Opera International: End of an Era

(from Linda Devine)

Muriel Hom, longtime OCAW National Vice President for Programs, founded the highly successful Opera International company in 1994. Including precursor performances beginning in 1989, which were four acclaimed concerts featuring instrumentalists and vocalists at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Opera International served the community for 30 years, offering world-class operas, operatic vocal galas, and benefit concerts in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Thousands were enriched by these musical events which were the hard work and dedication of Mimi Hom and her wonderful group of volunteers.

Mimi had hoped to produce a concert featuring two young Chinese singers whose voices had already garnered much praise in the music world. However, these vocalists have since chosen instead to move toward producing concerts and high school musicals of their own.

Thus, Opera International's last activity was sponsoring the entertainment for the Saturday night dinner for OCAW National's 45th Anniversary Celebration held in the D.C. Metro area in October 2022. Mimi, recently turned 98, has finally retired.



Opera International's entertainment for OCAW National's 45th Anniversary Celebration

(Video clip created by Ed Devine)

There currently is a small amount of funds remaining in the Opera International account. Initial plans are underway to start the process of disbursing these funds. Some thoughts:

- Over its long history, there have been many donors who have contributed to OI's work. The majority of the most generous benefactors have since passed away. However, three are still alive, and they have been asked if they have favorite charities to which we might consider making contributions. It is expected that a portion of the remaining OI funds will be donated in this manner.

- Some OCAW chapters have worked for, and have contributed funds to, favorite charities or community nonprofit organizations. A portion of the remaining funds will be distributed to these entities. Other charities will also be considered.
- Cathy Roberts, OCAW National Vice President for Membership, came up with a wonderful idea: to allot some of the remaining monies to a fund from which Muriel Hom Music Grants will be awarded. Chapters will be encouraged to submit names of deserving instrumentalists or vocalists whose finances could benefit from a small grant to help pay for music lessons, music books, tuition, or other expenses.

As these plans become more concrete, information will be distributed.

News from the Virginia Chapter

(from Barbara York, President)

Upcoming event

Tour of new Japanese grocery/household goods store

On Wednesday, April 9, 2025, a few members of the OCAW-VA Chapter plan to meet and tour Marufuji Japanese Market, the new Japanese grocery/household goods store at Tysons 3 Center in Vienna, VA. We will explore the store, and then also have lunch in their very nice food court.

Marufuji is the first new Asian branded grocery store to open in the DMV (District/Maryland/Virginia) area in the last decade. It contains many interesting items from groceries to household goods to cosmetics. There are some amazingly high-end, expensive items – but a lot of other wares as well.

It has received great reviews for the products it carries – but bad reviews for the crowding and subsequent depleted shelves. However, at the time of day we will be going, the store should be fairly empty and the shelves well stocked.

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Otherwise, all has been quiet with our chapter since the last e-newsletter.

News from the New Orleans Chapter

Chinese New Year and Lantern Festival Meeting

(from Patricia Ellzey, Outgoing President)

The OCAW New Orleans Chapter had its first meeting of the year on Saturday, February 22, 2025 at the Chinese Presbyterian Church in Kenner, LA. A five-course lunch was catered by the Chong Quing Restaurant to celebrate the Chinese New Year and the Lantern Festival. Lily Wu and Yong Yi made the

lunch arrangements, and Lily Yang and her committee decorated the tables and walls with attractive and festive Chinese holiday decorations depicting these celebrations. There were 15 door prizes of rosebush plants and books given out by raffle drawings, and everyone received a red Snake envelope hongbao. Husbands and friends were invited to attend, and all had a good time.

The meeting was very significant since after several years, we finally had an officers election. The new officers are:

President – Yong Yi
Vice President – Lily Wu
Secretary (re-elected) – Nellie Underwood
Treasurer – Ning Kong

A new position of Community Relations Representative was approved, and Lily Yang was elected.

Many thanks to our past officers, especially Nancy Chung who has served as Treasurer for 10 years or more, and Nellie Underwood who is a phenomenal Secretary and agreed to be re-elected.

In addition, it was approved that our chapter formally sponsor the **New Orleans Skylark Troupe** led Lily Yang and the **Feiyang Dance Team** led by Yong Yi. These groups are composed of many OCAW members and have greatly assisted in educating our local Chinese community and the general public through their performances while preserving and honoring our Chinese ancestral culture. We are very proud of their endeavors.

Following our meeting, a notable local, successful Chinese architect, Louis Kong, gave a well-received presentation on the architectural history of our local famous St. Louis Cathedral. He is very witty and humorous as well as knowledgeable, so our members and guests were delighted to have heard his talk.

Louis is also a volunteer tour guide for the “Friends of the Cabildo.” This historical building is located next to the St. Louis Cathedral and was originally the New Orleans government building. We were originally scheduled to go on Louis’ tour in April or May, but many found that they could not go due to previous commitments such as vacation trips to China, etc. Thus the tour is now scheduled for November.

This article is my last duty as the New Orleans Chapter President, and I wish you all well. It has been a pleasure to have served all of these years.

Patricia Hew Lee Ellzey

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Editor’s Note:

I believe that all of OCAW joins me in congratulating Pat on her ‘retirement’ as New Orleans Chapter President, and thanks her for her numerous years of service in this position. She served two stints for most of the past ten years. Pat has wanted to turn over chapter leadership for a while, and usher in new blood, and now several new members have stepped up to assume leadership roles and has made this possible.

Pat has assured us that she will remain as an advisor to the chapter, and counsel the new officers. Best of luck to them, and best wishes to Pat, who can now relax as “President Emeritus”!

The Feiyang Dance Team brings Chinese Culture to Local Communities

(from Yong Yi, Incoming President)

In the first quarter of 2025, the Feiyang Dance Team showcased vibrant Chinese cultural performances at multiple local events in the Greater New Orleans area. The team participated in Chinese New Year celebrations at Covington Nursing Home, Tulane University, New Orleans Northshore, the Chinese Presbyterian Church, and a local elementary school, as well as the Mardi Gras festivities at a Kenner nursing home.

Through traditional dance, the dance team shared the beauty of Chinese culture with diverse audiences, fostering cross-cultural appreciation in the community. Their performances were warmly received, highlighting the importance of cultural exchange.

The team looks forward to continuing its mission of promoting cultural understanding through art in future events.



Dancing *The wish* brings joy to Covington Nursing Home.



Vibrant performance of *My hometown is beautiful* lights up Northshore new year festival.



Feiyang dancers bring joyful dance *Girls from Daban City* to Tulane University.



At a local elementary school, young students experience Chinese dance with *My hometown is beautiful*.

The New Orleans Skylark Troupe performs at the Avanti Senior Living Community Nursing Home

(from Lily Yang, Community Relations Representative)

On Friday, March 22, 2025, under the bright spring sunshine, the Avanti Senior Living Community in Covington, LA, hosted a heartfelt and unique performance. The passionate performers from the New Orleans Skylark Troupe delivered a carefully prepared artistic show, bringing the warmest care and comfort to the elderly in this beautiful springtime.

At noon, the senior residents arrived early at the venue, their faces beaming with anticipation as they awaited the start of the performance. First, Tina Soong introduced the event, expressing gratitude to the Skylark Troupe for their presence and to all the elderly attendees for their support. Then, Director of the Skylark Troupe, Lily Yang, introduced each performer on stage one by one.



Tina Soong and Lily Yang

The performance began with an erhu solo, *Horse Racing*, by Professor Yuanhong Shi. The stirring melodies of the erhu echoed through the air, vividly painting a scene of galloping horses racing across the field in a jubilant and exhilarating spectacle.



Wen Lai, Wenyi Shan, Qing Liu, and Lily Yang presented the classical dance, *A Smile with a Flower*. Rooted in traditional Chinese dance, the performance featured graceful and fluid movements, conveying inner peace and a deep reflection on life. The audience was fully immersed, enjoying this unique visual feast.





Cuilan Li performed a bamboo flute solo, *Fragrance and Drum Dance*. The crisp and melodious flute notes seemed to transport the audience into a scene filled with birdsong and floral fragrance, allowing the seniors to experience the beauty of nature through the soothing melody.

Another performance featured a xiao solo, *Ge Xi Mei Ling*. The soft, flowing notes of the xiao gently drifted through the air, immersing the audience in its enchanting music, creating a relaxed and serene atmosphere in the venue.



Nicole Landry performed a solo vocal piece, *The Flowing Stream*. Her clear and bright voice, combined with the beautiful and melodious tune, captivated the seniors, earning their deep appreciation.



Lily Yang and Mengying Chiang, mother and daughter, performed the duet dance, *The Fragrance of Tuberose*. Their seamless coordination and graceful, delicate movements mesmerized the audience, drawing them into the enchanting performance.



Mason Wu performed a guzheng solo, *Battling the Typhoon*. The stirring and dynamic melody vividly portrayed the fierce struggle between workers and the raging storm. Another piece, *The General's Command*, was grand and powerful, with its dramatic and fluctuating tones bringing to life the spectacle of ancient warfare and the bravery of the soldiers. Both performances earned enthusiastic applause.



Wenyi Shan's solo performance of *Memory* brought the event to its climax. Her beautiful and captivating voice evoked cherished memories in the hearts of the attendees.



Nicole Landry, Wen Lai, Wenyi Shan, Qing Liu, and Lily Yang presented a female ensemble, *Days of Yore*, filling the room with warmth and heartfelt blessings for the senior audience.



Finally, the performance concluded with the stunning cheongsam showcase, *Golden Years*. The performers were Nicole Landry, Wen Lai, Wenyi Shan, Qing Liu, and Lily Yang. The audience was treated to an unparalleled visual and auditory feast, leaving them deeply moved and exhilarated.



After the performance, audience members eagerly shook hands with the performers, praising the show for its brilliance. The New Orleans Skylark Troupe expressed their love and respect through art, embodying the traditional virtue of honoring and loving the elderly. They also promoted Chinese traditional culture. It is believed that this warmth will remain in the hearts of our senior citizens, adding even more beauty to their lives.



Additionally, soon after this event, the New Orleans Skylark Troupe was scheduled to perform another show for the senior residents at Oak Park Village in Slidell, LA.

News from the Silicon Valley Chapter

(Yufan Lu, President)

Hakone Gardens Lunar New Year Festival

(from Cynthia Chang, Public Relations)

The Silicon Valley Chapter of OCAW participated in the 17th Annual Lunar New Year Festival held at Hakone Gardens in Saratoga, CA, on Sunday, February 23, 2025. Our chapter was honored to receive a Certificate of Appreciation from both the Chair of the Hakone Foundation Board of Trustees and the Mayor of Saratoga, Belal Aftab.



As part of the celebration, we hosted a Chinese Calligraphy Art Exhibition booth, led by Chapter President Yufan Lu, who performed live demonstrations of traditional Chinese calligraphy. Volunteers Annie Ying, Sophia Yang, Carol Yuan, and Cynthia Chang also contributed their time and energy to support the event.



Yufan captivated visitors by demonstrating the five major styles of Chinese calligraphy. In addition to showcasing the brush techniques, she shared the rich etymology of Chinese characters and provided insights into their evolution throughout history.

The Glamour of Chinese Hieroglyphics

by Yufan Lu

Chinese characters originated from ancient hieroglyphics, and traces of this origin remain visible in many modern characters. In 1899, Beijing scholar Wang Yirong discovered oracle-bone inscriptions on tortoise shells and animal bones – marking the earliest known form of Chinese writing from the Shang Dynasty. Prior to this discovery, understanding of early script came mainly from bronze inscriptions on ceremonial vessels.

The evolution of Chinese script was standardized through three major dynastic eras:

- The **Seal Script** during Qin Shihuang's reign in 221 BCE, when written language was first unified;
- The **Clerical Script** during the Han Dynasty in 202 BCE;

- And the **Regular Script** beginning in the Tang Dynasty (618 CE), which also established the “Eight Principles of Yong” as a foundation for brush technique.

The invention of paper by Cai Lun in the Eastern Han Dynasty allowed calligraphy to flourish. This era gave rise to expressive cursive styles, including the famous *Lanting Preface* by Wang Xizhi and the revered works of Zhang Zhi, known as the “Sage of Cursive Script.”



At the event, Yufan used the character for “Spring” (春) to illustrate the evolution and beauty of Chinese writing, making it accessible even to those unfamiliar with the language. Many visitors were fascinated and requested the character “福” (Good Fortune) to bring home as a blessing for the new year.

The day was filled with vibrant performances and cultural showcases, including a traditional lion dance, dynamic kung fu demonstrations, tai chi, folk singing, shadow puppetry, and hands-on arts and crafts. Children dressed in festive attire enthusiastically joined the Lunar New Year Costume Parade, which was a crowd favorite. Delicious food added to the festive atmosphere, making it a joyful and memorable celebration for all.



News from the Hawaii Chapter

(from Sharlene Chun, President)

A Harvest Moon Tea

On Sunday, September 15, 2024, the OCAW Hawaii Chapter hosted a special event in the Nuuanu Ballroom of the Oahu Country Club in Honolulu. It was a benefit for the Hawaii Chapter, Ho'ola Na Pua, Maui Strong, and The Legal Clinic.

We celebrated the Harvest Moon Festival with an English Tea and a Mini Silent Auction with our Speaker Claire Chao. Claire is an OCAW Hawaii member who co-authored *Remembering Shanghai: A Memoir of Socialites, Scholars and Scoundrels*, with her late mother, Isabel Sun Chao. Claire generously donated hardcover books which were available for sale at the event. Claire was unable to meet us in person but her talk and appearance through visual media worked out well.

We enjoyed a delicious buffet lunch and homemade Mooncakes as favors. Douglas Chong, our Hawaii Chinese History expert, explained the different mythical stories and legends about Chiang Ye, The Jade Goddess on the moon.

I was happy to hear that other OCAW chapters also celebrated the Harvest Moon Festival. It's wonderful when we can understand and celebrate our Chinese heritage.



President Sharlene Chun with talented OCAW member Ellie Feng, Miss Hawaii Chinatown Princess, who created the table centerpieces symbolizing the moon



Preparing for the event. Ellie Feng; Sharon Chun, OCAW Hawaii and National Webmaster; and Sharlene Chun

Table set with a centerpiece of a Dragon (Year of the Dragon), a miniature cheongsam that covered a bottle of Hau Yau (oyster sauce), and a wired ring made by Ellie Feng. Numerous desserts accompanied delicious tea sandwiches.







OCAW members Cynthia Ching, Serena Kyi-Yim, and Sandy Young helping at the Reception table



Queenie Mow Chee, M.C., and OCAW Hawaii
Event Chair

Our first course, tomato bisque



Sharlene Chun and Queenie Chee holding homemade mooncakes, which were given out as favors



Mooncakes



Talented OCAW member Sarah Liu, Miss Hawaii Chinatown Queen, who made and packaged all of the mooncakes



Douglas Chong, Hawaii's renowned genealogist and historian, explaining how important the Harvest Moon Festival is in the Chinese culture, and why it is celebrated every year



Richard Lin, Director General of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Hawaii, and his wife Joy; Sharlene Chun; Kelsey Poaha; Dr. Lawrence Tseu; and John Berger, Honolulu Star-Advertiser journalist



Hawaii Councilman Calvin Say; John Wang; and OCAW members Susie Wang and Sharon Chun



Robert Ching, and sister and OCAW member Cynthia Ching



Claire Chao's book with extra memorabilia for the Mini Silent Auction

Silent Auction table



Dr. Juanita Liu entertaining us with Chinese songs with video backgrounds pertaining to her songs



The Miss Hawaii Chinatown Court, all OCAW Hawaii members, modeling the cheongsams they wore when they won their title. Dr. Juanita Liu accompanying them on her moon harp.

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Editor's Note:

On Sunday, March 30, 2024, the OCAW Hawaii Chapter hosted its first General Membership Meeting of 2025. It featured "A Taste of Singapore" and speaker Dr. Jeff Healy, who spoke on women's wellness.

A report is currently being written for the next issue of the e-newsletter.

Washington, D.C.'s Famous Cherry Blossoms

by Maria Yang

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

Washington, D.C.'s famous cherry blossoms reached peak bloom on Friday, March 28, 2025, according to the National Park Service. This happened about a week after the city started its annual Cherry Blossom Festival.

Thousands of cherry trees with pink and white flowers surround the Tidal Basin and nearby parks, creating a beautiful scene near some of the city's famous landmarks.

Peak bloom happens when 70% of the Yoshino cherry trees, the most common type around the Tidal Basin, are in full bloom. The National Park Service, which tracks the trees each year, announced that the March 28 peak bloom was slightly earlier than the average date of April 3 but more than 10 days later than last year's peak on March 17. Warmer temperatures usually cause the blossoms to bloom earlier.

My husband Bill and I took the Metro to Washington, D.C., on Saturday, March 29, to see the cherry blossoms. Since it was during the three-day peak period, the flowers were in full bloom. The Metro trains were packed with local residents and tourists. Many people take the Metro instead of driving to avoid traffic and parking issues, getting off at the Smithsonian Metro station.



Hundreds crowd the metro stations waiting for a train to take them to the cherry blossoms.



Metro trains are packed with local residents and tourists.

Spring's arrival and the beauty of the blossoms bring large crowds to the Tidal Basin. The best place to see them is around the Tidal Basin in West Potomac Park, but there are also many trees along the Potomac River and Washington Channel in East Potomac Park.

Even though we live close to D.C., we don't visit the blossoms every year, but this spring we wanted to. Like most tourists, we took many photos despite the crowds and shared them with friends who couldn't visit this year.

According to the National Park Service, the idea to plant Japanese cherry trees in D.C. dates back to 1885, when writer and diplomat Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore first suggested it.

Japan gifted more than 3,000 cherry trees to the U.S. in 1912 as a symbol of friendship. That year, First Lady Helen Herron Taft and the Japanese ambassador's wife, Viscountess Chinda Iwa, planted two Yoshino cherry trees along the Tidal Basin. Over the next few years, more trees were planted in the area. We are very fortunate to have this beautiful gift every springtime.



Maria Yang and her husband Bill

(Photos courtesy of Maria Yang)