

E-Newsletter of the Organization of Chinese American Women

February 2025



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(from Linda Devine, Editor)

Happy New Year, and Happy Chinese New Year! Welcome to the first e-newsletter of 2025.

As always, my thanks to those who contributed material for the issue, and I appreciate my husband Ed's work on preparing the many photos within.

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 pleased that I recently have been receiving articles and items from new and even first-time contributors. Keep it up!

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

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News from the Virginia Chapter

(from Barbara York, President)

1882 Foundation Annual Year-End Dinner

Several members of the OCAW-VA Chapter attended the 1882 Foundation's annual Year-End Dinner on Saturday, December 17, 2024, at the venerable Chinatown Garden restaurant in Washington, D.C.

<https://1882foundation.org/event-recaps/2024-end-of-year-dinner-recap/>

Executive Director Ted Gong introduced a special guest and a significant announcement. The guest was Lisa Davidson from the National Historic Landmarks Program of the U.S. National Park Service. And the announcement was that the Summit Tunnel in California is now an Official Historic Landmark. The Summit Tunnel was the first railroad line to traverse the Sierra Nevada Range. It was built primarily by Chinese workers and was hand drilled and blasted over 15 months. It is a feat of engineering and brutal hard work.

For more information, here are some links:

<https://1882foundation.org/programs/historic-preservation/summit-tunnel/>

https://noehill.com/nevada_county_california/poi_great_summit_tunnel_marker.asp

<https://www.uprrmuseum.org/uprrm/exhibits/curators-corner/summit-tunnel/index.htm>

That the dinner was held on December 17 is significant because the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act took place on December 17, 1943, when the Magnuson Act was passed and allowed Chinese immigrants to become naturalized U.S. citizens.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the 1882 Foundation, it is the singular organization that keeps alive the fraught history of Chinese in America. Here is a link to their website:

<https://1882foundation.org/about-the-foundation/>

Lunar New Year Potluck Lunch

The OCAW-VA Chapter enjoyed our 2025 Lunar New Year Potluck Lunch on Saturday, February 1, 2025. It was held once again in the Penthouse Party Room on the 23rd floor of Amy Lee's condo building in Alexandria, Virginia. Members, family members, and friends totaled 21 attendees.

There was a huge spread of amazingly delicious dishes that included all the “good luck” food: shrimp, steamed fish, braised pork hock, grilled pork skewers, ham, spareribs, sweet and sour meatballs, duck, lohan jai, spring rolls, fried dumplings, roasted vegetables, a fruit platter, and red bean cake. There was even a Chinese-Indian ginger chicken curry. ☺



Chi Hua Yang carving
the ham

Some of the spread





The Virginia Chapter wishes all OCAW members and their families a Happy, Healthy, and Successful Year of the Snake!

(Photos taken by Amy Lee)

News from the New Orleans Chapter

(from Patricia Ellzey, President)

Annual Asian Pacific American Society (APAS) Fundraising Gala

The OCAW New Orleans Chapter was heavily involved in this event, which was held in the Grand Ballroom of the Panda King Restaurant in Terrytown, LA, on Saturday, November 2, 2024. Those wishing to know more about APAS and its events can seek more information online at: www.apasnola.com

This was a celebration for APAS' 45th year. It began with President Carter's declaration for the first Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Celebration Month, May 1978.

The purpose of this organization is similar to OCAW's. It is devoted to enhancing education and ethnic pride, and disseminating cultural awareness to and promoting better relations with the larger community.

I am very happy to be one of the Founding Members of APAS, as I am also a Founding Member of our local OCAW chapter. It has also been my good fortune to have served as the first APAS Chair from China as well as an OCAW President.

I also am very pleased that both organizations have been so instrumental in helping our local Asian Pacific community as well as our local Chinese American community grow into such productive civic groups that have aided in the development of our communities.

This year, we are very proud that **our OCAW New Orleans Chapter Secretary, Nellie Underwood, was awarded the Outstanding Community Service Award for 2024.** She is very active in the community, primarily serving both as Secretary of our OCAW Chapter as well as Secretary of APAS; serving as a Deacon at the Chinese Presbyterian Church; and supporting numerous other clubs and organizations.



Nellie Underwood, award recipient, and
Dr. Lily Wu, OCAW New Orleans Chapter member



The primary APAS fundraising individuals are named by their ethnic group. They serve as Ambassadors who spearhead their ethnic's efforts to be the one who raises the most funds to win the coveted title of APAS Ambassador for the year. To earn this title, they raise funds by selling dinner tickets, Program Book ads,

and raffle tickets. The Ethnic Ambassador is aided by their family, friends, and community friends. **This year our China Ambassador was Jeanna Chen.** She came in second in bringing in the most funds. This is the highest place we have ever come to winning the title! Congratulations, Jeanna!



Jeanna Chen



Jeanna Chen, Miss China; Cynthia Lee Sheng, President of Jefferson Parish;
Pat Ellzey; and Helen Hu, Ms. China's mother

Sponsoring the New Orleans Skylark Arts Troupe

The OCAW New Orleans Chapter has decided to sponsor the New Orleans Skylark Arts Troupe, a local Chinese Performing Arts Troupe. It is led by and composed of several of our OCAW members and others who generously give of their time and talents to present traditional Chinese fashion, perform classical dances, and sing classic and modern songs. Our chapter chooses to support them because they educate the general public as well as teach and encourage our local Chinese American and Asian American Communities to learn more about Chinese dancing and singing via performances.

The troupe will seek charitable donations to help provide them the funds needed for their expenses, such as renting practice areas, and for their performances, such as decorations, costumes, stage sets, music, etc.

Contributions can be made to the OCAW New Orleans Chapter, and they will be deposited and held for the troupe's use in our Treasury. Since we are a nonprofit organization, we will provide donors with a tax-exempt form.

In 2023 the troupe performed and raised funds for a local organization which assists autistic children.

On Saturday night, November 2, 2024, they were featured and performed at the local Annual Asian Pacific American Society Fundraising Gala.

On Saturday night, November 16, 2024, they performed a free show called "These Memories," a Chinese Music and Dance Gala, at Tulane University in the McAlister Auditorium. It was co-hosted by the OCAW New Orleans Chapter.

The troupe has had several performances and is spreading good will and teaching a lot of Chinese culture to our local community at large. OCAW is very proud of them!

Chinese Music and Dance Gala

(from Lily Yang, chapter member)

"Those Memories," Chinese Music and Dance Gala, was held on Saturday, November 16, 2024, at the McAlister Auditorium of Tulane University.

The Gala was jointly organized by the New Orleans Skylark Performing Arts Troupe and the Tulane University Student Union and Professors Association, and co-organized by the New Orleans Chapter of the Organization of Chinese American Women. Lily Yang, a member of the OCAW New Orleans Chapter, served as the general planner and program director. OCAW members Yong Yi, Qingli Wu, etc., all performed important roles in the preparation of the event, and performed brilliantly in the Gala.

There were 18 programs in total. Vocal music included female solos *Song of the Yangtze River*, *Flowing River*, and *Song of the Yue People*; male and female duet *Kangding Love Song*; and female chorus *Days of Yore*. Instrumental music included violin solo *Olive Tree*, Guzheng solo *Fighting Typhoon*, and Erhu solo *Horse Racing*. Dance programs included the solo dance *Floating Light*; the duet dances *The Fragrance of Tuberose* and *Water Charm of Jiangnan*; the group dances *The Voice of Spring* and *Who Doesn't Love Their Hometown*; and excerpts from the dance drama *Confucius*. The finale of the gala was the cheongsam show "Golden Years" and the chorus of *Tomorrow Will Be Better* by all the performers.



The Voice of Spring
OCAW members Lily Yang and Yong Yi, and others



The Fragrance of Tuberose
Lily Yang and her daughter Mengying Chiangmai



Days of Yore
OCAW members Lily Yang, Qingli Wu, and Yong Yi, and others



Who Doesn't Love Their Hometown
Lily Yang and Yong Yi, and others



Water Charm of Jiangnan
Lily Yang and Ruiyi Jiang

It is worth mentioning that in addition to popular performers like Wenyi Shan and Nicole-Ting Landry, etc., there were also several second-generation Chinese students who performed famous Chinese music with Chinese musical instruments. There were also local vocalists who participated in the performance, singing Chinese songs in Chinese. People are delighted to see that Chinese art is being inherited and spread.

At the end of the Gala, the performers and audience members were reluctant to leave. They communicated with each other and took photos. All the performers and attendees unanimously commented that it was an awesome performance from preparation to stage presentation.

Upcoming Events

Pat Ellzey, Yong Yi, Lily Yang, and Lily Wu are planning a Chinese New Year and Lantern Festival lunch meeting on Saturday, February 15, 2025, which will be held at the Chinese Presbyterian Church in Kenner, LA, at 12:30 p.m.

Following the luncheon, at 2 p.m., we have invited a local successful Chinese architect who will give a humorous and very knowledgeable presentation on the architectural designs that are used to design and decorate the local famous St. Louis Cathedral and the two adjoining buildings.

His name is Louis Kong, originally from Hong Kong, who came to the U.S. to study architecture at Tulane University and has become a very successful architect. Recently he started volunteering to be a tour guide for

the Friends of the Cabildo. He has been very popular with the tourists who have enjoyed his witty and very informative history tour of the French Quarter, and he also has added the architectural history of the designs used on the historical buildings.

We have invited the church congregation and other friends and guests so that we can share this fun and historical presentation by Louis.

In April, we plan to attend one of Louis' tours in the French Quarter.

News from the Hawaii Chapter

(Sharlene Chun, President)

The Hawaii Chapter's Installation of Officers 2025

(from Queenie Chee, Event Chair)

On Sunday, January 12, 2025 in Honolulu, the OCAW Hawaii Chapter Officers were officially installed. The morning started with sunshine and a light mix of rain (considered an omen of blessings to Hawaiians).



Goodbye, Dragon. Welcome, Snake!

(Photo courtesy of Sharlene Chun)



(Photo taken by Queenie Chee)



(Photo courtesy of Sharlene Chun)

The Oahu Country Club Nuuanu Ballroom held 92 attendees comfortably. They witnessed the solemn installation, heard short speeches, enjoyed a healthy lunch buffet, and relaxed to musical entertainment, before the event ended with some fun door prizes.



Reception Table helpers Judy Hee and Lauren Chee

(Photo taken by Queenie Chee)

The 2025 Hawaii Chapter Officers are:

Sharlene Yee Chun, President
Kelly Tan Peterson, Vice President
Kimberly Chun Hoi, Secretary
Leonora Loo, Treasurer

Sharlene and Kimberly are a mother-daughter team, and are held-over officers for a second term by popular demand.

To keep it as a ‘family act,’ the installing officer was President Sharlene’s son, The Honorable Cory Chun, Hawaii State House Representative for the 35th District.

Sharlene is experienced in leadership, having held offices in several other societies and clubs, and is currently the president-elect of the Chinese Women’s Club of Honolulu and the immediate past president of the Ching Clan Society, just for starters.

Her proudest moment was being recognized as the Chinese Mother of the Year in 2016 by the United Chinese Society.

Remember the limerick, “rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief; doctor, lawyer, Indian chief”? Sharlene says the second half of it applies to her children: number one son is a geriatric physician, number two son became an attorney and is now a legislator, and her daughter is chief as she is a teacher of the little Indians in her classes.

Their entire family has a legacy of community service, with generous donations to schools and charities, and a dedication to helping others. It started with the grandparents on both sides, the Yee and Chun families, for almost a century. That spirit of giving continues with them today.

Sharlene's daughter is already following in her mother's footsteps, as Kimberly takes on the office of Secretary for the second year, along with raising her preschool sons, being mother and wife, and also teaching as a profession. She has been in the field of education for over 25 years in a variety of roles ranging from elementary school, religion, and yoga teacher; student services and summer school director; and events coordinator. She currently teaches 3rd to 5th graders, inspiring young minds with her passion for learning. She is deeply connected with her Chinese heritage, is dedicated to promoting cultural awareness, and is actively involved in an organization that spreads appreciation for the Chinese culture within the community.

Our new Vice President, with a nod and aloha to Susan Chong Wong, is Kelly Tan Peterson. Kelly's artistic talent and passion brought her into the design profession and so started her interior design business at the age of 24. Over the past decades, she experienced diverse projects, including involvement with commercial space, government, offices, public facilities, and residential homes. Now the owner of Kel Design LLC, she enjoys the challenge of each project, especially finding undervalued property and turning it into a gem.

We know her as our "Keto Queen" since she first spoke on the topic at one of our membership meetings a few years ago. Besides designing, she is a certified nutrition and health coach, and a certified low carb practitioner. Her vibrant personality quickly garnered a large social media following, and she has spoken at several low-carb keto events in Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, and China. Her award-winning book, *Keto East*, contains many excellent Asian recipes, and her second book, *Keto Baked*, consists of outrageously decadent desserts! Kelly knows what it is like to struggle with food and weight, and Keto was the key to finally freeing her to eat for her health and her taste buds!

At our Installation, we asked her husband, Dr. Dan Peterson, to lead us in our Pledge of Allegiance. He robustly performed this duty, following the loud and lively Chinese Lion Dance that had featured very noisy electronic fireworks!

Dr. Dan Peterson

(Photo courtesy of Sharlene Chun)



Hawaii Chapter's 2025 Treasurer is Leonora Loo. Leonora has had many years of experience in the world of finance: 26 years with Honolulu Federal Savings and Loan, and the Bank of Hawaii. She also worked in stock trading for the Bank of Hawaii for seven years. She held a position for her last 16 years of employment with the Oahu Community Correctional Center before retirement, but be assured it was not with the prisoners!

She is married to Mr. John M.C. Loo, a retired executive vice president of the Professional Insurance Agents of Hawaii. They have one son, Daniel, who works for the Hawaiian Electric Company, and he is married to a social worker, Darlene. They have two daughters: one is in the United States Air Force stationed in Okinawa, and the other is graduating in 2025 from Kailua High School.



Secretary Kimberly Chun Hoi; Treasurer Leonora Loo; President Sharlene Chun; and The Honorable Cory Chun, Hawaii State House Representative for the 35th District, Installer

(Photo courtesy of Sharlene Chun)



(Photo courtesy of Sharlene Chun)



(Photo taken by Queenie Chee)



Guests enjoyed the sumptuous buffet



A baby Chinese lion

(Photos taken by Queenie Chee)

Our Chinese community leaders were represented at our installation event by the United Chinese Society president Ivy Yeung, the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office Director General Jerry Chang and his Deputy Jeff Lee, the Associated Chinese University Women's president Brenda Young Matsui, and the Chinese Women's Club president Roberta Wong Leung.



(front row) Roberta Wong Leung, President of the Chinese Women's Club; Brenda Young Matsui, President of the Associated Chinese University Women; and President Sharlene
(back row) Ivy Yeung, President of the United Chinese Society; and Jeff Lee, Deputy Director, and Jerry Chang, Director General, of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office

(Photo taken by Queenie Chee)

We were graced with the 2025 Miss Chinatown, Hawaii, Jacelyn Ho, and the 2025 Narcissus Festival Queen Alycia JinQiu Abordonaldo and her princesses, all dressed in their elegant quipao/cheongsam.



Jacelyn Ho, President Sharlene, and Ivy Yeung

(Photos courtesy of Sharlene Chun)



75th Annual Narcissus Festival Queen and Princesses with President Sharlene

Many of our past presidents were in attendance. They were asked to stand and be recognized with a hearty round of applause.



President Sharlene and donor Sandy Fong

(Photos taken by Queenie Chee)



President Sharlene's two grandsons

Miss Caroline Ellie Feng offered the invocation in song, *The Queen's Prayer*. The hymn was composed by the last Monarch of the Hawaiian Kingdom, Her Majesty Queen Liliuokalani. Ellie later gifted us with two more renditions from famous Broadway hits, just before the door prize giveaways.

As the crowd ate their desserts, two members from the Over the Hilltop Serenaders, Phil (Event Chair Queenie's younger brother) and Kazuo, sang and played on their guitars – a Beatles Medley, a few local ethnic songs from the 1960s, and Hawaiian music. Their group volunteers their entertainment to senior care homes and community events, and were kind to take time away from their Sunday golfing to entertain us.

Door prizes were contributed generously by the owners of Market City, Marvin and Sandy Fong, past OCAW Hawaii Chapter President Edwina Lee, President Sharlene Chun, and Queenie Chee. (Of note: Marvin Fong is the son of the late U.S. Senator Hiram Fong.) Those gift cards are always useful, and the decadent box of Italian chocolates by Venchi was the grand prize. The cute Snake Year centerpieces were made by President Sharlene.



Donated gift cards and items for the Lucky Number drawing

Two cases of care packages filled with toiletries as well as monetary donations were brought to the women's shelter at the Institute of Human Services (IHS). Someone anonymously dropped \$21 cash into the box. We wish to thank that person and will happily provide them with a receipt should they so desire.

We who are so richly blessed must not forget those in need.



Donated items to IHS

(Photos courtesy of Sharlene Chun)



President Sharlene and Edwina Lee, Membership Chair and Immediate Past President

(Photo taken by Queenie Chee)

Everyone, have a splendid 2025!

From and About Our Members

A Tribute to Jeanie Fong Jew

(from Cynthia Chin-Lee, Silicon Valley Chapter member)

(Editor's Note: Tributes in memory of Jeanie written by Christina Poy, former President and current Advisor of the Maryland Chapter, and Maria Yang, National President, were published in the November 2024 e-newsletter.)

Along with co-founders Pauline Tsui and Julia Chang Bloch, Jeanie Fong Jew (1941-2024) helped start the Organization of Chinese American Women (OCAW) in 1977. A national nonprofit organization focused on leadership and community service, OCAW has worked at the local and national levels on several issues, including immigration, naturalization education, and voter engagement. Articulate and intelligent, Jeanie served as OCAW national president from 1997 to 2001.

In addition to being passionate about OCAW, Jeanie also worked tirelessly to obtain recognition and a designation for the contributions of Asian Americans at the national level. Because of her efforts, every May in the United States, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month recognizes Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders for their achievements in our country despite many periods of persecution and discrimination.

A close family friend, Jeanie and I were distant relatives; her father and my grandfather came from the same village in Toishan (Taishan), Guangdong province, in southern China. In addition to our village ties, Jeanie

managed my father's (William Chin-Lee) campaign for D.C. delegate for Congress in 1972. I remember Jeanie's visits and her generous spirit, creativity, political savvy, and sense of humor. She constantly encouraged other Asian Pacific Americans to speak up, run for office, and become politically involved. Says Christina Wong Poy, Maryland OCAW member and Administrative Director at the Maryland Governor's Office on Community Initiatives, "Jeanie 'adopted' me as her goddaughter and encouraged my participation in political and community affairs. She always checked in on me and wanted to make sure I was doing OK."

Jeffrey Lee, Jeanie's nephew who teaches scuba diving and Cantonese, writes, "My aunt Jeanie was a key part of my life from the very beginning. She invited me to many OCAW events when I was in D.C. since I lived in Hong Kong for decades."

Jeanie realized that the history and contributions of Asian Pacific Americans were largely ignored during the 1976 U.S. Bicentennial celebrations. Upset by the omission of Asian Pacific Americans in the history books, she set out to change things. Her grandfather, M.Y. Lee, had worked on the transcontinental railroad that connected the East and West coasts of the U.S. and was later murdered in anti-Chinese violence in Oregon. Jeanie worked on Capitol Hill as a congressional staffer, and with Ruby Moy, another staffer, asked Rep. Frank Horton (R-NY) and Rep. Norman Mineta (D-CA) to introduce the legislation that would eventually be approved by Congress and signed by President Jimmy Carter as Asian American Heritage Week. That week was later expanded to become Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month and was made an annual designation by President George H.W. Bush. Jeanie chose the month of May for several reasons, honoring the many Chinese workers who helped complete the transcontinental railroad in May 1869 and the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants to the U.S. in May 1843.

Jeanie was married to Robert Jew, an Air Force veteran and director of Equal Employment Opportunity and Civil Rights at the National Archives and other agencies. They were married for over 60 years. Says Bob, "I'm extremely proud of her and astonished by how much she was able to accomplish for Asian Pacific Islander Americans. She always dreamed big and her next goal was to set up an Asian American Pacific Islander museum on the Smithsonian mall."

Cynthia (Cyndi) Chin-Lee, speaker, author, diversity change agent

Sharing the holiday spirit

(from Tina Au, former Hawaii Chapter President)

(Editor's Note: The following item was published in the January 2025 E-Newsletter of the Tzu Chi Foundation Pacific Islands Region.)

Every third Saturday of the month, Tzu Chi Hawaii hosts Heart Lotus Ohana activities at the Palolo Chinese Home in Honolulu. On Saturday, December 21, 2024, in celebration of the holidays, carolers shared music and merriment.

Besides a sing-a-long, volunteers like Tina Au offered the residents individual attention and healing touch through massage. Tina also donated 14 blinking Santa hats for the performers.



Tina Au

A Memorable Moment: Singing the National Anthem

(from Jen Tsao, Silicon Valley Chapter Immediate Past President)

I've always admired the singers who perform the National Anthem at events. I never thought there would come a day when I'd be the one singing it.

Back in mid-December last year, I received an exciting email from my choir director! She shared that one of our former choir members, Daniel Tu, now living and working in Japan, was about to receive a promotion in the Air Force, and invited us to sing the National Anthem and the U.S. Air Force Song at the ceremony. I was absolutely thrilled!

During the two weeks leading up to the ceremony, our choir members practiced the songs with great enthusiasm! On the day of the event, Saturday, January 4, 2025, after saluting the flags, we proudly performed the National Anthem *a cappella*. We also sang the U.S. Air Force Song to close the ceremony.

According to Daniel, "It was so moving to have you singing our beautiful country's music." To be a part of such an important event was a unique and moving experience in my choir life! I was filled with happiness, excitement, and pride for my choir group. "Mission accomplished!"



COSMO Choir



Air Force Captain Daniel Tu promoted to Major Daniel Tu



Major Daniel Tu (*center*) with COSMO Choir. Angel Tu, Daniel's mother (*left of Daniel*); Keiko Kagawa, COSMO Choir Director (*right of Daniel*); and Jen Tsao (*right of Ms. Kagawa*)



All of the event guests

Award plaque

(from Queenie Chee, Hawaii Chapter Event Chair)

On Wednesday, January 22, 2025, Dr. Leina'ala Ahu Isa, OCAW Hawaii Chapter's past president in 2004, 2005, and 2018, received an award plaque for her support (through her management position with Hilton Grand Vacations) of the University of Hawaii sports teams nutrition program.

Often overlooked, but so important to athletes, is a healthy diet. The 'Braddahhood and Sistahhood Grindz' was founded initially to provide good meals to the college athletes with an emphasis on proper nutrition. It expanded its program to include helping these athletes in career development, professionalism, resume-writing, mock interviews, and job placements.

Dr. Lei, as we often call her, served as a past State Legislator as well as Trustee for the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (elected positions), and is a professor at the Hawaii Pacific University as well as the Marketing Executive for Hilton Grand Vacations. She is a doting grandmother and somehow finds time to spend quality time with them, too!



Ryan Tanaka, founder of the Braddahhood Grindz; Stan Souza, pro golfer at Waialae Country Club; Dr. Lei, Award recipient; Derek Kanoa, Executive Vice President, Hilton Grand Vacations; and Timmy Chang, head coach of the University of Hawaii Rainbow Warriors football team

(Photo taken by George Casagan, Hilton Grand Vacations photographer)

Chinese Calendar History, and 2025, the Year of the Snake

by Maria Yang

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

The year 2025 in the traditional Chinese calendar is the Year of the Snake. Snakes are known as “little dragons.” The year begins on January 29, 2025, and ends on February 16, 2026.

Based on archaeological evidence, some form of calendar has been used in China for three-and-a half millennia. The Western Gregorian calendar was adopted by the Republic of China effective January 1, 1912, for official business, but the general populace continued to use the traditional calendar. The status of the Gregorian calendar was unclear between 1916 and 1921, when several competing warlords controlled China. From 1921 to 1928, warlords continued to fight over northern China, but the Nationalist government controlled southern China and used the Gregorian calendar.

After the establishment of the ROC by the nationalist government, the Gregorian calendar was officially adopted on January 1, 1929. The People's Republic of China has continued to use the Gregorian calendar since 1949.

The Chinese traditional calendar is lunisolar, incorporating elements of a lunar calendar with those of a solar calendar. It is not exclusive to China but is followed by many other Asian cultures.

The Gregorian calendar is used for day-to-day activities in Taiwan. However, the traditional calendar is still used to mark traditional holidays such as the Chinese New Year, the Dragon Boat Festival, and the Mid-Autumn Festival. It is also used in Chinese astrology – for example, when choosing the most auspicious date for a wedding or building opening.

Unsurprisingly, some of the earliest printed items were calendars, since the Chinese found it necessary to calculate and mark which days were auspicious and which were not.

The two oldest printed Chinese calendars are dated 877 and 882; they were found at the Buddhist pilgrimage site of Dunhuang, China.

The practical benefit of this system is that the calendar is able to keep pace with the solar cycle while at the same time retaining months that roughly correspond with lunar cycles. Hence, the term Lunisolar calendar. The latter is essential because many traditional festivals correspond to significant moon cycle events. For example, the Mid-Autumn Festival is always on a day of the full moon.

The stem-branch cycle is the other system by which years are marked historically in China. This system is based on two forms of counting: a cycle of 10 Heavenly Stems and 12 Earthly Branches. Each year is named after a pair of one stem and one branch called a stem-branch. The 10 Heavenly Stems are associated with Yin Yang and the Five Elements. The 12 Earthly Branches are associated with the 12 signs of the Zodiac. Each Earthly Branch is also associated with an animal, collectively known as the Twelve Animals.

Therefore, this year is called “the Year of Yi-Si, or the Year of Snake, the Year of Wood Snake, or the Year of Green Snake.” Wood is one of five elements, and green or blue is the color of wood.

The Chinese calendar remains culturally essential today. Most traditional festivals, such as Chinese New Year and the Mid-Autumn Festival, occur on new or full moons. As an element of conventional culture, the

traditional calendar has much cultural and national sentiment invested in it. The calendar is still used in more traditional Chinese households worldwide to pick auspicious dates for important events such as weddings, funerals, and business deals.

As stated in the 2025 Yun Lin Temple published calendar, written by Khadro Chu Rinpoche, Spiritual leader at Yun Lin Temple, “the Green Snake year will gradually break free from the chaotic and tumultuous situation of the previous two years, transitioning from ambiguity to gradual clarity... Thus, the year should be a year of positive upward change.”

Happy Lunar New Year! I wish everyone a prosperous, healthy, and productive year!

Create Your Own Blue Zone

by Cynthia Chin-Lee

(Editor’s Note: Cynthia is a Silicon Valley Chapter member.)

Most of us would like to live a long and healthy life, and what better way to do this than to study and emulate the lifestyles of the world’s longest-lived communities? Called the “Blue Zones,” and popularized by Dan Buettner’s best-selling book of the same name and the recent Netflix series, these zones include communities in Okinawa, Japan; Sardinia, Italy; and Loma Linda, California. What do these communities have in common? A mostly plant-based diet, exercise, and strong family and community connections. As a member of the Organization of Chinese American Women, you are probably already making strong community connections. How about exercise and diet, though?

During my full-time working years, I exercised 3 to 4 times a week, doing light weights at the company gym, yoga classes, and short bike rides. As a retiree, I’ve been able to increase my exercise. I still do light weights and yoga, but I’ve replaced biking with jogging (to obtain high impact), and I enjoy swimming occasionally. To achieve the magic 10,000 steps a day, I take walks with my local friends and with my husband and college-aged son. In short, exercise is well-integrated into my daily schedule.

I worked in high tech for over 30 years in Silicon Valley as a technical writer and manager, but my life pivoted right after my retirement from Oracle, a large, multinational technology company. A month after retiring, I had my annual mammogram, and the radiologist saw something. She advised a biopsy which my husband quickly argued against. “If you have cancer,” he said, “then a biopsy could spread the cancer cells.” When I asked the doctors, they said that the biopsy, which would extract three samples of tissue from my right breast, might cause tumor seeding, but it was very rare.

I decided it was worth the risk of doing the biopsy so that I could know for certain whether I had cancer or not. The biopsy results came back within a few days. I had a small cancerous tumor (invasive lobular carcinoma) that was estrogen-positive, meaning the cancer should respond to hormone-blocking therapy. Two surgeons, from different medical organizations, recommended the same plan: lumpectomy and radiation and then hormone-blocking drugs.

Most people would accept the treatment plan, obey their doctors, and pray for the best. In my new investigative journalist mode, I began interviewing breast cancer survivors (most of them my own friends) and reading widely. Fortunately, it was pretty easy to find survivors. One in three women in the U.S. will get cancer sometime in their lives. I had a longtime friend and fellow writer, Su Ann, who had breast cancer

over 15 years ago. I remembered that she had had a lumpectomy, but when the surgeon said she needed to do more surgery, Su Ann stepped back and began her research. I witnessed firsthand Su Ann's successful integrative journey. She said "NO" to more surgery, changed her diet to plant-based (vegan), and took up tai chi and tapping.

Inspired by her example and amazed at the many books from cancer survivors who had radical remissions from integrative methods including diet, exercise, traditional Chinese medicine, and more, I decided not to blindly follow my doctor's orders. I negotiated with my medical team and asked for one treatment in the conventional medicine protocol: the hormone-blocking drug Letrozole. Although the doctors had scheduled surgery, I cancelled it. I took Letrozole right away, changed my diet, and took many nutraceutical supplements from the Nutritional Oncology Research Institute (NORI) in the Los Angeles area.

I became a low-protein, whole foods, plant-based eater, giving up seafood, meat, dairy, and eggs. My diet is full of fruits, vegetables, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and rice. I eat beans, nuts, tofu, and legumes in modest amounts. The new diet and the increased exercise make me feel great, but what is more important have been the results. Within 8 months, my PET scan found no evidence of disease (NED). Every 6 months I have an ultrasound checkup, and every year I have a mammogram. My tumor shrank at every checkup until 2-1/2 years from my diagnosis, the radiologist could no longer find the tumor. I reversed my breast cancer without surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy.

Through it all, my friends and family, my church, and women's groups have listened to, supported, and cheered me on. Although I don't live in Okinawa, Sardinia, or Loma Linda, I have found my own Blue Zone right here in my backyard. I'm here to tell you that community, exercise, and diet can make a huge difference in your health. You can create your own Blue Zone.

For more details, read my blog (cynthiachinlee.com/blog).

Cynthia (Cyndi) Chin-Lee, speaker, author, diversity change agent

A Trip to Tibet

by Yufan Lu

(Editor's Note: Yufan is the Silicon Valley Chapter President.)

"Tashi delek," a Tibetan greeting to wish someone good luck, echoes in my mind. It seems that I was still lingering in the Potala Palace, Jokhang Temple, Sera Monastery, Barkhor Street in Lhasa, Tibet, and Tashilhunpo Monastery in Shigatse. Wandering along the shore of Yamdrok Lake, there are still many explanations I have heard, scenic spots I have seen, streets I have walked, restaurants I have eaten at, and shops I have visited.

I always cherished a dream that one day I could travel to Tibet and see the world's highest land. In April, 2024, my dream came true. More than forty of my university alumni from all over the world decided on a two-week journey to Chengdu, Nyingchi, Lhasa, Shigatse, and Xining during the peach-blossom season. So we booked the tickets and prepared the special permits needed for staying in Tibet legally.

The plane took off from Chengdu Shuangliu Airport and flew for two hours. While the plane was flying over these high mountain areas, I started to feel a headache, tightness in the heart, and difficulty breathing. My

stomach was upsetting me and I felt like vomiting, so I quickly took out the paper bag from the pocket of the front seat. After vomiting twice, my chest tightness was much relieved.

The plane landed at Linzhi Airport. When we stepped out towards the parking lot, two local tour buses were waiting there. I boarded the bus and took out the oxygen meter from my handbag and measured my blood oxygen level. To my surprise, the meter showed only 78. My heartbeat was much faster than usual. But soon I was distracted. The snow-capped mountains, the flowing mist between the mountains, the wilderness with scattered yaks, the rushing river, and the scenery along the way attracted my attention and eased my stress.

The first night was to be spent at the Tianyu Tibetan Theme Hotel in Nyingchi.



Nyingchi, a city in southeast Tibet

After a short break for lunch, we started our first stop in Tibet, going to the Riben Scenic Area and visiting the Qujue Lhakhang Temple. The temple gate is usually closed, so visitors can only enter by climbing up the wall along the earthen ladder. There is a huge pagoda and a huge prayer wheel, and the peach tree in the courtyard had grown tender green leaves.

The next day we set off for Bomi. The bus drove on the famous Tibet section of National Highway 318 for seven hours. The altitude of Nyingchi is 2,980 meters and the altitude of the county is 2,723 meters. We passed Sejila Mountain, which has an altitude of 4,728 meters. Our tour guide allowed us only half an hour to stay for pictures and scenery-viewing, since he worried the high altitude might cause trouble.

That night we stayed at the Zangwang Hotel in Bomi, a quite luxurious hotel. We had stone pot chicken for

dinner. At sunset, we walked along the Yarlung Zangbo River, looking at the towering snow-capped mountains in the distance and the flashing neon lights on both sides. The spring breeze of Tibet in April is warm. Strolling in the commercial district, I saw people circling in the square, singing and dancing. Touched by the music and atmosphere, we joined the group and followed the steps and the rhythm to dance the nowadays popular Guozhuang Tibetan dance.

On the third day in Tibet, we visited the ruins of the Garang Palace and Garang Lake in Bomi County. Bomi County boasts that the most beautiful attractions in the county are: the most beautiful Midui Glacier, the most beautiful Yungang Fir Forest, the largest Bodui Peach Blossom Valley, the highest altitude Yigong Tea Plantation, the most beautiful Bomi Essence Section of National Highway 318, and the largest Chaqin Glacier in China.

On the way back to Linzhi, at the Lulang Forest Viewing Platform at an altitude of 4,000 meters, the bus stopped and the driver asked everyone to get off to try their luck and see if they could see the Mount Namjagbarwa Peak between the undulating mountains with snow peaks in the distance. It is said that the peak can only be seen occasionally for 30 days a year. We were really lucky. The driver gave us only 30 minutes because the altitude of the viewing platform was over 4,000 meters. With expectation, we finally saw Mount Namjagbarwa after the clouds cleared. In less than 30 minutes, the peak was covered by clouds again.

The destination of this trip was Lhasa, where we could see the Potala Palace. We had experienced the hardships as the car was driving on a winding mountain road. We encountered an excavator for road construction. The convoy had to travel one way. The car stopped at an altitude of 4,200 meters. The foreign air was thin, and some alumni in the car began to breathe oxygen. Looking out the window, the distant mountains were covered with snow. The snow-capped peaks were towering and surrounded by clouds and mist. The glaciers were hanging, the mountains were undulating, and the forests were vast. The streams were gurgling, the lakes were pure, and ducks and birds abounded.

That morning, I went horseback riding, did archery, went yak riding, drank tea, and ate barley candy. Riding a yak costs money. This time it was ten yuan per ride, which was half cheaper than the twenty yuan per ride the day before, so I rode both yaks. At noon, I ate Yajiang carp, which is steamed carp with bean paste. It is said that Tibetans do not eat fish because they think the life of a fish is sacred. Imagine that a fish gives birth to hundreds of offspring. How many lives will be destroyed by eating a fish? I saw groups of black carp in Garang Lake, each of which was about ten pounds and huge. We also tasted Tibetan chicken, which seemed to have a tighter texture.

At night, we checked into the hotel, which is said to be the best hotel in Tibet – the St. Regis Lhasa Resort, since it faces right to the Potala Palace and has a beautiful night view. My reaction toward the high altitude was still severe, with nasal congestion, sore throat, and chest pain. My oxygen meter read below 90, so when I arrived at the hotel, I put on the oxygen machine, and finally my blood oxygen was above 90 mg.

On the sixth day, we visited the Potala Palace and the Jokhang Temple. After visiting the latter, we went out and met the monks in the temple who began to practice collectively. Because photography is not allowed in the inner rooms of these two places, there were no internal photos.



The Potala Palace in Lhasa



The Potala Palace

(Photos taken by Yufan Lu)

On my return trip, I took the train from Lhasa to Xining. This is a magical “Sky Road.” A railway stretching more than 4,000 kilometers connects Beijing to Lhasa. It was first launched on July 1, 2006, passing through Beijing, Hebei, Henan, Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Tibet, and other provinces and cities. In order to experience this “Sky Road,” I felt that the opportunity was rare, so I resolutely chose to take the train and enjoy the scenery along the way. And the scenery was beautiful!

The happiest thing during my trip to Tibet was having my picture taken by YaoMu Photography Studio in the Potala Palace Square, with me wearing beautiful makeup and wearing the special dress. It looked so elegant! I spent some money, but it was worth it, because it became such an unforgettable experience on the trip.



Yufan Lu in the Potala Palace Square

(Photo taken by YaoMu Photography Studio)