

E-Newsletter of the Organization of Chinese American Women

June 2014

(from Linda Devine)

I hope everyone is enjoying a nice summertime! My appreciation as always for those who submitted articles and pictures for this issue. I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of my husband Ed, who continues to do the photo preparation work for the issues.

Suggestions or recommendations for any aspects of the e-newsletter are always welcome. Please feel free to contact me at: devinefive@att.net.

Have a wonderful summer break, whether you are traveling or are just enjoying some much-deserved relaxation at home. See you in the fall!

Opera International

(from Muriel Hom, Producer-Director)

Opera International and the Organization of Chinese American Women will be presenting an **Operatic Vocal Gala Concert** at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Terrace Theater in Washington, D.C., on Sunday, August 3, 2014, at 2 p.m.

It will feature Huanhuan Ma, Soprano, who was the winner of two Grand Prizes, the First Grand Prize and the Conductor/Director Grand Prize at the 26th Annual Annapolis Opera Vocal Competition. Performing with her will be Caroline G. Gibson and Jessica Stecklein, Sopranos; Rolando Sanz, Tenor; and Alvy Powell, Bass-Baritone. Kai-Ching Chang will be at the piano.

There has been a change in the Tenor soloist, as the singer originally scheduled for the gala could not be released from a government service obligation for that time. In his place will be Tenor Rolando Sanz, who performed for Opera International as the King in our production of *Lucia di Lammermoor* in 2012. Mr. Sanz has sung internationally and also is the director of a youth orchestra which has performed operas at The Music Center at Strathmore in Bethesda, Maryland.

We will be having an exceptionally fine program with all the best arias from the operatic repertoire, and we will conclude with excerpts from the great American opera, *Porgy and Bess*.

Tickets are available at the Kennedy Center Box Office, or call Mimi Hom at 301-412-0969, or email her at: operainternational@gmail.com, and she will send tickets to you. Most center seats are already taken, so please order soon.

News from the Virginia and Maryland Chapters

(from Maria Yang, Virginia Chapter President and Maryland Chapter Acting President)

Lecture on Longevity

On Sunday, April 27, 2014, Dr. Min-Fu Tsan presented a lecture on “Longevity: How to Live Longer” at the Harvest Moon restaurant in Falls Church, Virginia. The lecture was sponsored by the Virginia Chapter of OCAW.

Dr. Tsan, who has an M.D. from National Taiwan University and a Ph.D. in Physiology from Harvard Medical School, is a retired researcher and professor of medicine at Georgetown University. He had previously taught medicine at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and at Albany Medical College. The lecture was prepared in collaboration with OCAW member Dr. Linda Tsan (M.D., University of Maryland School of Medicine), who before her retirement had served as Chief Medical Investigator for Long Term Care at the VA Medical Inspector’s Office.



Dr. Tsan began his lecture by presenting some statistics on average life expectancy. In the United States, the average life expectancy at birth is 78.2 years (74 years for the average male and 80 years for the average female). The oldest documented person in history (Jeanne Calment) lived to be 122 years and 165 days old;

the oldest documented male (Jiroemon Kimura) lived to be 116 years old. On average, females live longer than males. At age 65, a male has a 50-percent chance of living beyond 85 and a 25-percent chance of living beyond 92, whereas a female has a 50-percent chance of living beyond 88 and a 25-percent chance of living beyond 94. Explanations for why women outlive men include smaller bodies (resulting in less stress on the heart), a stronger immune system (since testosterone, the male sex hormone, acts as an immune suppressant), and a lower propensity to engage in physically dangerous activities.

Dr. Tsan stated that, for an individual, the two major determinants of longevity are genetics and lifestyle choices. Over 200 gene variants have been shown to be associated with human longevity; however, for a typical adult, only 20 to 30 percent of an individual's lifespan is related to genetic factors. The rest is due to individual behaviors and environmental factors that can be modified. Studies have shown that lifestyles associated with longevity include a healthy social and family life, regular physical exercise, sleeping 7-8 hours per night, not smoking, limiting alcohol consumption, eating a plant-based diet, and frequent consumption of legumes and nuts.



There is a strong negative association between smoking and longevity: among middle-aged people, the mortality rate of smokers is 2 to 3 times that of non-smokers, leading to a reduction of life expectancy by an average of 10 years. Moreover, someone who has smoked since early adulthood can increase his or her life expectancy by several years by quitting smoking in middle age.

Diet is another important lifestyle choice related to longevity. One type of diet that has been shown to be associated with reduced incidence of major cardiovascular events is the Mediterranean Diet, which is characterized by a high intake of olive oil, fruit, nuts, vegetables, and cereals; a moderate intake of fish and poultry; a low intake of dairy products, red meat, processed meats, and sweets; and wine taken in moderation, consumed with the meal. Another healthy diet is the Okinawa Diet, which is characterized by consumption of root vegetables (principally sweet potatoes), green and yellow vegetables, soybean-based foods, and medicinal plants, along with moderate consumption of marine foods, lean meats, fruit, tea, and alcohol. In addition, a number of studies have shown that nut consumption is associated with lower rates of mortality. Nuts (both tree nuts and peanuts) are nutrient-dense foods that are rich in unsaturated fatty acids, fiber, vitamins, minerals, and many other bioactive substances, such as phenolic antioxidants and phytosteroids.

In summary, Dr. Tsan emphasized that lifestyle choices are a major determinant of longevity. To live longer, one should have a healthy social and family life, not smoke, eat a plant-based diet with frequent consumption of legumes and nuts, and engage in regular physical activities.



Celebrating Mother's Day in 2014

Members and friends of the Virginia and Maryland Chapters of OCAW were invited by the Taiwan Benevolent Association of Greater Washington D.C. to participate in a dinner party in honor of mothers on Friday, May 9, 2014. There were 19 members and friends of OCAW at the party.



Mother's Day in the United States (this year on Sunday, May 11) is an annual holiday celebrated on the second Sunday in May. Mother's Day recognizes mothers, motherhood, and maternal bonds in general, as well as the positive contributions that mothers make to society. Carnations have come to represent Mother's Day since Anna Jarvis delivered 500 of them at the first celebration in 1908. The holiday was declared officially by the state of West Virginia in 1910, and the rest of the states followed quickly.



News from the New Orleans Chapter

(from Betty Butz, President)

“Summer Solstice” Meeting

The OCAW New Orleans Chapter will meet on Saturday, June 21, 2014, the first day of summer, starting at 11 a.m., at Panda King Restaurant on the West Bank in Gretna, Louisiana. The meeting will be followed by a discussion on:

ACCULTURATION – our stories of swimming in mainstream U.S.A.

Members will be encouraged to share their views on their role as minority participant observers in social situations.

Cost of the luncheon meeting is \$10 per member, \$15 per non-member.

News from the Silicon Valley Chapter

(from Sophia Yang, President)

Spring Walk and Lunch Social

On Sunday, April 27, 2014, OCAW-SVC members celebrated the arrival of spring in the Silicon Valley, California. We started with a 4.6-mile easy walk along the Los Gatos Greek Trail from Vasona Park in Los Gatos to Campbell Park, followed by lunch at Café Artemis at 1875 Bascom Avenue, #300, Campbell.

The Los Gatos Creek is one of the few urban streams in Santa Clara Valley which remains relatively intact. It is a riparian corridor for plants and wildlife and is part of an intricate system of water resources and flood protection. Nai Hsueh, a Santa Clara Valley Water District Board Member as well as an OCAW-SVC officer, led the walk and talked to us about how the water system in the Vasona Lake area functions to support residents in Santa Clara County.











After two hours of an enchanted hike and chatting, members dined at Café Artemis Restaurant and had a delicious Mediterranean lunch. We all enjoyed very much the beautiful spring scene of northern California as well as the balanced and healthy meal provided by the restaurant.



Saratoga City Commendation

OCAW-SVC received a commendation from the City of Saratoga, California, on Wednesday, May 21, 2014, for being an integral part of Saratoga's Asian American community and celebrating its contributions to the City of Saratoga. Officers and members of OCAW-SVC went on stage to accept the honor from Mayor Emily Lo who is also a longtime member of our organization.

SVC member Cynthia Chang informed us of an interesting finding. Jeanie F. Jew, a former National President of OCAW, was principally involved in the U.S. Congress' designation of the month of May as Asian/Pacific-American Heritage Month. (Cynthia found information from the book, History of the Organization of Chinese American Women, on page 156 (Jeanie's biography) and also in Appendix 3, page 135, "Asian/Pacific-American Heritage Month," excerpted from the *Congressional Record* 138:141 (October 4, 1992).)

The Silicon Valley Chapter received a proclamation from the City of Saratoga on the occasion of Asian/Pacific-American Heritage Month, and ironically the action has its roots in the efforts of a prominent member of our organization.

Media in the San Francisco Bay Area covered the story. The following is from:

AsianWeek

Posted in: Columns, On the Scene
by Gerrye Wong
June 2, 2014

The City of Saratoga celebrated Asian Pacific Heritage Month by honoring two well recognized organizations in Silicon Valley. On May 21, Mayor Emily Lo presented a proclamation to the Organization of Chinese American Women – Silicon Valley Chapter, which was founded in 1986. With a membership of about 200 members, the OCAW-SVC's goals are to integrate Chinese American women into the mainstream of American society and to encourage engagement in community services.

Present at the City Council chambers to receive the honors were President Sophia Yang, accompanied by members Cynthia Chang, Lisa Tsai, Aichu Wang, Rose Cheng, Yura Shieu, Joanna Yun, and Nai Hsueh. The majority of the members are from Taiwan originally but the organization welcomes any others with similar goals to join them. Many members serve on local commissions and volunteer for many nonprofit organizations. Nai Hsueh is a Board Director of the Santa Clara Valley Water District and Cynthia Chang is a Trustee of the Los Gatos-Saratoga High School District.



Happily receiving a proclamation from the City of Saratoga City Council were members of the Organization of Chinese American Women – Silicon Valley Chapter. *(Photo courtesy of AsianWeek)*

Another article in Chinese about the event appeared in *World Journal*.



(Photo courtesy of World Journal)

SVC Presidents Gather

On Sunday, June 8, 2014, 15 current and former OCAW-SVC Presidents gathered for a luncheon at Uncle Yu's restaurant in Lafayette, California.



Afterward we had a nice visit at Jean Chen's lovely new home in Walnut Creek. As one of our past presidents, Jean has always made a point of connecting everyone together.

Jean is a talented artist, and she has decorated her house with her own paintings and many art pieces. She thoughtfully made gifts for all the ladies – two necklaces of different styles for each person. She also made some Chinese knotting bracelets for ladies who have granddaughters.







We have a former president who joined OCAW on 'day one,' and she talked to us about those initial days. Then each lady shared her story of how and when she joined OCAW. It was very interesting as we collectively put 28 years of memories together!

Some of us had submitted recent and old photos to share, and Jean had created a slide show with them. We viewed the photos while enjoying fruits and snacks that she nicely provided. She also generously offered us some stones and accessories which she uses for making jewelry.

At the end of our enjoyable time together, current President Sophia Yang urged everyone to stay healthy and keep in good shape, as we will all be on stage at our 30-year annual event in two years!



News from the Hawaii Chapter

(from Rena Young Ochse, President)

A Recap of our Meeting at Maple Garden

On Sunday, April 27, 2014, at the Maple Garden Restaurant in Honolulu, we had a great meeting with our member Chris Ling, who was our speaker on the topic of “The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.” The audience listened intently, and members and guests asked questions and talked about their experiences. Guest, Chu Lan Shubert-Kwock is in touch with author Martin Gold who wrote the acclaimed Forbidden Citizens, a book that traces the history of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Besides authoring this book, it is important to know that Gold was critical in shepherding Congressional resolutions of expressions of regret for passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, to unanimous approval in both Houses of Congress in 2011 and 2012. One can learn more about him with an internet search.



Mr. Gold is coming to Hawaii in August and a tentative date is set for August 6. We will obtain more information, as it is a good community project for us to be involved in. Chu Lan can be reached at clsk@aol.com. Martin Gold’s presentation might highlight both the historical significance of the Exclusion Acts and the political savvy it took to convince both Republicans and Democrats to sign off on what could easily have been impossible resolutions; this was one of only five times the U.S. Congress has apologized for its actions (the others were slavery; treatment of Native Americans; ILLEGAL TAKEOVER OF THE HAWAIIAN KINGDOM; and incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II). It was an amazing feat. Anyone interested in race and nation-building and/or national politics should attend this meeting. We’re celebrating our 25th Anniversary!

Councilwoman Carol Fukunaga Seeks Resolutions to Solve Honolulu’s Chinatown Problems

Honolulu City Councilwoman Carol Fukunaga is scheduled to attend OCAW’s general membership meeting on Sunday, June 29, 2014. She has been invited because Chinatown is in her District 6 that also includes part of Makiki, the rest of downtown Honolulu, Punchbowl, Liliha, Pauoa Valley, Nuuanu, Alewa Heights, Papakolea, Kalihi Valley, and part of Kalihi. She won the Special Election to replace Tulsi Gabbard and is

-serving a two-year remainder term. She also chairs the City Council’s Public Safety and Economic Development Committee.



There are currently three main problems facing Honolulu’s Chinatown: the issues of the homeless occupying its sidewalks and alleyways; the sanitation problems they cause by “going to the bathroom” outdoors; and the effects they have on the businesses in Chinatown and downtown Honolulu in general that could result in driving customers away, including tourists. The City Administration, advised by the state’s and city’s advocates for dealing with the homeless, is boosting affordable housing and in-place human services.

Some of us remember that our family roots were planted in Chinatown, and we celebrate many of our cultural customs there, like Chinese New Year. We also obtain our Chinese food in Chinatown as well as dine in the restaurants there.

Come to the June 29th meeting to share your questions and thoughts with Councilwoman Fukunaga on how Honolulu’s Chinatown should be restored to the clean and thriving community it can be!

Upcoming 25th Anniversary Luncheon

(from Queenie Mow Chee)

Come and celebrate the Organization of Chinese American Women – Hawaii Chapter’s 25th Anniversary with us on Saturday, July 19, 2014, from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the beautiful Oahu Country Club in Honolulu. It will be an occasion to remember to honor the past and look forward to the future, while we enjoy the present patriotically in Red, White, and Blue, and dine on a scrumptious lunch buffet. Being in the month of July and so close to Independence Day, and remembering the basis of the founding of our organization, we remain loyal Americans with hopes and dreams of the betterment of life for all, including Asian and Pacific Islander women.

A Hawaii Senate Proclamation will declare that day as “OCAW Hawaii Chapter Day,” thanks to former Hawaii Speaker of the House, Calvin Say. On that day, the founders and past presidents of our organization will be recognized, and three terrific Chinese American women will be honored. First, how could we ever forget our one and only late OCAW Hawaii President, Rose Lee. The inimitable Miss Carole Kai, our Hawaii celebrity, songstress, television host, and much more, who was Rose’s cohort in many fantastic community events, will share with us some personal moments that bear repeating. Little known facts about Rose’s achievements will come to light. In life, she achieved much but always remained humble and gracious. Her works should serve to inspire us.

Second, Blossom Tyau has received many honors and accolades from various clubs and institutions, but we at OCAW have yet to honor her officially. This is our chance! In all the past events we have had, she was often the one in charge, yet always pointed to others to be recognized. She has led our group to put on some of the best events in the history of our chapter. It was under her watch that our national OCAW held its annual convention here in Honolulu, in conjunction with our tenth anniversary as a chapter. We are fortunate to have Blossom as a stalwart member, sharing her expertise and energy.

Then there is Phyllis Shea, CPA. Without her support, encouragement, and watchful eye, our chapter would not have enjoyed all the wonderful times and successes over the years. And yet, she steadfastly refused any honors in the past from any of her list of agencies and clubs, all the while being a quiet but highly effective guide in many ways. It is high time that we recognize this very special woman. Dr. Sandy Young, who herself deserves much honor for all her international accomplishments, is flying back to Hawaii especially to speak about Phyllis!

The Anniversary is also a good time to raise funds for the causes that OCAW Hawaii Chapter has supported over the years. Thus, a small but elegant Silent Auction will be held, with Kimberly Oliveira in charge. Outright monetary donations are, of course, always welcome. So make it a point to be there to help in the celebration. Enjoy the ambiance of Waolani Valley at the Club, honor some very special people, have fun dining with fellow members and friends, and kokua! The cost of the luncheon is \$50 per person, and checks may be made payable to OCAW-Hawaii. Send your checks with your name and the number of guests indicated to: OCAW Hawaii.

Talk Story: Chinese Railroad Workers Honored

by Mohkeed Wong

(Editor's Note: Mokheed is a friend of the OCAW Maryland Chapter. Her husband, Ted Gong, is very active in Washington, D.C. Chinese community organizations and activities, including Talk Story.)

"No one knows me; they don't know my sacrifices..." These were the thoughts of a woman who lived in the mid-1800s in a Chinese village when food was scarce, life was hard, and the people sought different ways to overcome adversity.

Her husband found escape in opium. Her brother went to America where he first worked in the gold mines and eventually lost his life blasting rocks while building the Transcontinental Railroad. To survive, her teenage son left home in search of a better life, also working on the railroad.

Life in her village was challenging. With many men gone, the women were left to fend for themselves, awaiting news from abroad. Sometimes that came in letters with reports of improved life and with plans and hope that the women would be sent for. Sometimes boxes were sent back to the village – boxes with returned bones of loved ones.

On Saturday, May 10, 2014, at the Talk Story event organized by the 1882 Foundation and the Chinatown Service Center with the Chinese Community Church in Washington, D.C.'s Chinatown, Andrea Yee performed a wonderful skit, taking her audience on a journey back in time and giving them a glimpse into how life was. She dramatized what the men went through in America – discrimination in the gold mines, the challenge of hard labor and working with explosives on the railroad, but also the security of employment and

finally getting enough to eat. She also reenacted for us what women would have felt in those days after they saw their men go.



Andrea, an actress living in San Francisco, California, is the great-granddaughter of one of those pioneers who worked on the Transcontinental Railroad. She was in Washington, D.C. to attend a ceremony by the U.S. Department of Labor on Friday, May 9 to celebrate the induction of the Chinese Railroad Workers into the Labor Hall of Honor for their economic and historic contributions to this nation.

Ted Gong, one of the organizers of Talk Story events in Washington, D.C.'s Chinatown, introduced Andrea, remarking that reports often tell of the men who came here to seek a better life and of their struggles, but there is little recorded about what the women left behind went through.

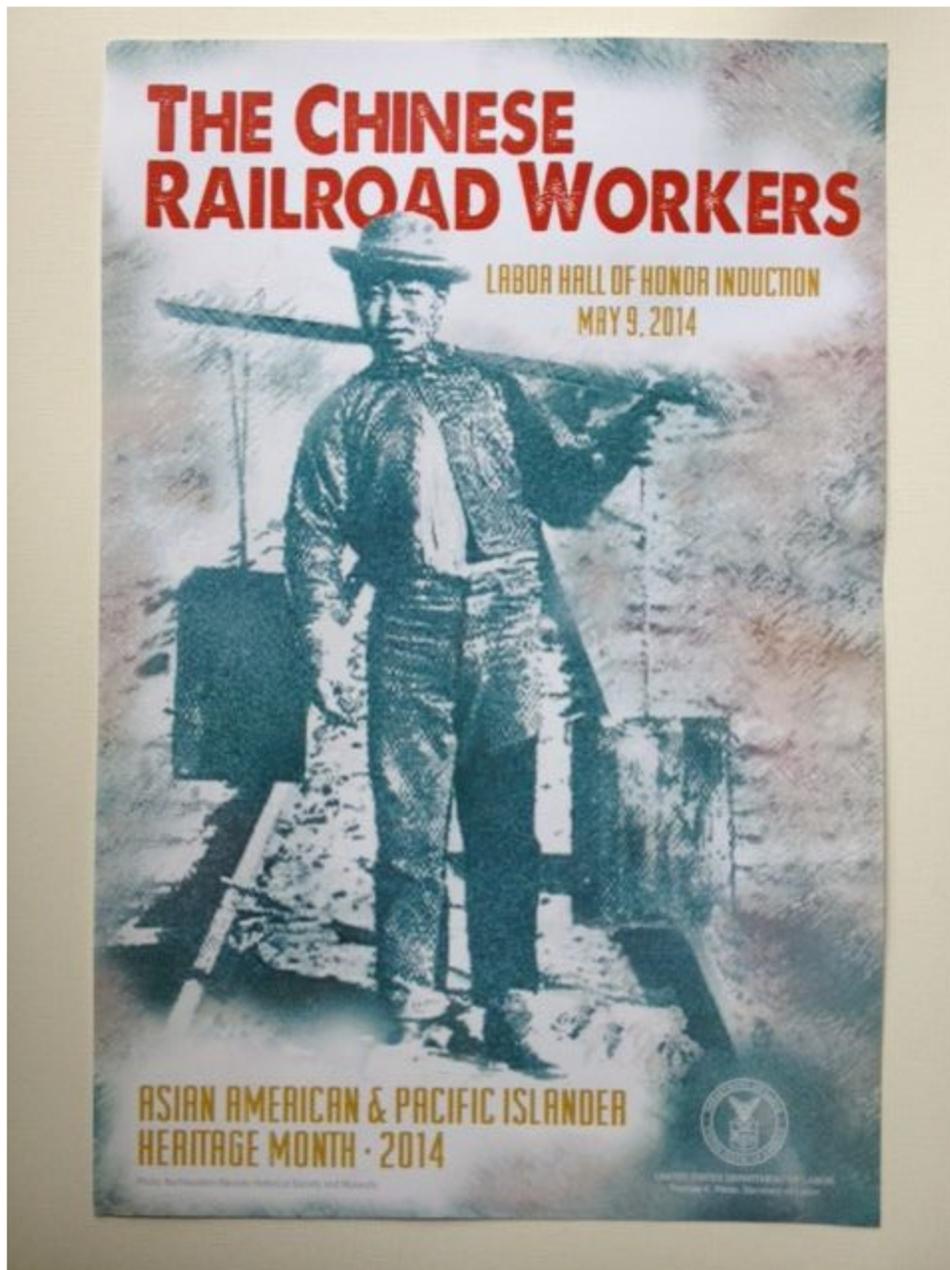
Andrea gave a moving performance of what that might have been like as she traced the history of such a family and what these workers went through. In one box of returned bones, we discover that a brother died when his laundry shop was set on fire. This occurred after the completion of the railroad when many Chinese went on to set up their own businesses and had their fortunes turned because of discrimination and violence against them, leading to the Chinese exclusions laws. Through her character, we also saw the anguish she experienced when her hopes to be reunited with her son in America were dashed because of these laws.

The Talk Story event also featured other descendants who were here to attend the DOL ceremony, Connie Young Yu and Carolyn Kuhn. Connie, a historian and author who works with Stanford University's Chinese

Railroad Workers in North America Project, spoke at the DOL event to represent the descendants. Her great-grandfather was a foreman who worked on the railroad. She said that many people do not know they have ancestors who worked on the railroad because there was a time when Chinese laborers were regarded as the lowest class of human beings. The induction into the Hall of Honor, she said, “has made it right.”

Carolyn Kuhn is from Denver, Colorado, whose railroad worker great-grandfather, Chin Lin Sou, is well-regarded as a pioneer and community leader in Colorado. Also present was Carolyn’s sister, Linda Jew.

All four descendants expressed how deeply moved they were by the Department of Labor’s event and that their great-grandfathers were finally being acknowledged by this government for their contribution.



In his induction speech, Secretary of Labor Thomas Perez recognized the railroad workers' role in building the nation and advancing the labor movement, laying the foundation for the extraordinary American prosperity that would follow. Many perished in the harsh winters and working conditions, he said. Those who survived faced prejudice, low wages, and social isolation, but they took a stand to organize fair wages and safer working conditions.

The pioneers inducted were the 12,000 Chinese railroad workers of 1865-1869 who completed the western section of the Transcontinental Railroad.

For Andrea Yee's skit, the link is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MV4z2lpSnEQ>

The Chinese Historical Society of America recorded the DOL ceremony. For video highlights of the Labor Hall of Honor Induction for Chinese Railroad Workers, the link is: <http://chsa.org/2014/05/labor-hall-of-honor-induction-video-highlights>

Birthdays

by Betty Butz

(Editor's Note: Betty is President of the OCAW New Orleans Chapter.)

Summer was always a happy time for me when I was growing up in Hong Kong. At least five members of my family had summer birthdays clustered fairly close together. To celebrate the season, an auspicious day would be chosen when all those who could would show up at home for watermelon and ice cream in the afternoon. Then we would go out, walking in small groups, taking up most of a narrow, one-way street, to a Chinese restaurant for a large family meal. Since everyone loved western-style birthday cakes which were not offered on the menu, we would bring our own to celebrate the birthday season. Instead of one person feeling special on that day, everyone was special because the focus was on the family.

The tradition of celebrations as an extended family must have contributed to the expansion of our clan. Before I finished high school, I became an aunt seven times in six years. No one told me that I had any influence on the babies popping out at such regular intervals, but secretly I felt I was head of the babies brigade. There was always a baby around to coo at. I never ceased to be amazed by the dedication of my sisters-in-law in their tireless, selfless catering to small children at all hours of the day and night. Life was filled to the brim with energy and optimism.

My mother graduated from midwifery school in China in the 1930s. She witnessed and helped in many deliveries, dedicating her life to bringing forth the next generation. She gave birth eight times herself. After I was well anchored in school, she went to work for the Hong Kong Government Health Department. Her main job was to immunize small children in remote areas that did not offer regular health services. She reached out to families that lived on boats, and mothers who had difficulty getting medical care for their children. Every day was a blessed day for her as she was amply rewarded by the improved health conditions that she made happen. Life came with many uncertainties for boat people, and birthdays were kept quiet as folks did not want to draw attention to their situation. After retirement from public health work, my mother led an active, exemplary life of community service well into her nineties.

I no longer have the luxury of speaking with my mother, but thoughts of her continue to inspire me in my view of the world. In the past few years since my mother's passing, a night-blooming cereus plant in my

garden has given me a profusion of fragrant flowers every full moon in the summer. Each flower only blooms for several hours, but since I get many flowers every summer moon, fleeting moments of beauty bring a different impact. Sometimes I pause to think of birthdays and what they mean.

Individual birthday celebrations were not a big deal until I became a mother. Bonding with an infant is a wonderful, powerful, life-affirming human experience. As a new mother, my sense of purpose took a drastic turn towards a life revolving around a routine most suitable for a baby. Birthdays became milestones to observe with glee. I joined other young mothers to enjoy the occasion, seeing each other's precious children growing bigger and more capable.

My son started school in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. His peers' parents spared no effort to create lasting, loving memories for their children. Birthday parties for the entire class were held at amusement parks, private pools, barbecues, and hay rides on the levee. The genuine affection and gracious generosity of our friends left fond impressions that nudged me to move back to the area when the opportunity came.

Birthday observances are a very important ritual to a growing child. One of life's greatest rewards is affirmation of one's presence by another. In the case of a child, the presence of family creates joy and purpose. While friends may come and go over time, home and family are permanent anchors for one's well-being. Thus, birthdays should be spent with family. Gifts need not be more extravagant than the recognition of the birthday honoree.

In my mother's old age, I made a point of speaking with her on the telephone on my birthdays to thank her for my life, and to ask her to tell me stories about my birth. Although I never had a formal birthday party for me only until I was sixteen years old, the family celebrations gave me enough recognition for the rest of my life because they reminded me of my position, where I came from, and where I belonged.

In 2014, the New Orleans Chapter will observe its 25th anniversary. We are fortunate that some of our founding members still live in the city so that we can ask them to tell us stories of why and how we came about, how we grew up. As chapter president, I am proud that we have established a presence among the various Chinese American communities in the Big Easy, doing things that we all enjoy. Since OCAW guidelines are fairly broad, we are free to follow our instincts and do what we feel is the best for everyone. It is indeed a nurturing organization. We are mirrors of ourselves, happy to grow up and to count the wrinkles on our faces together.