



Newsletter

MISSISSIPPI DELTA CHINESE HERITAGE MUSEUM, INC.

From the Editor



Our initial edition of the 2019 newsletter is chock full of many positive happenings this first quarter. In this issue are news announcing a member of our board elected as mayor of his hometown, Lake Village Arkansas, Grocery Stor(ies) traveling on several occasions to the Bluff city, and a wealth of informative text from our president referencing an upcoming summer event and news of the recent past and projects for the future.

I must recognize our board member Libby Jeu's efforts in making the traveling exhibit Grocery Stor(ies) a resounding success with a number of presentations in Memphis. On March 3, Libby took our historical panels to MEM at 200, an event celebrating the opening of the Memphis Bicentennial. Also, the

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The Traveling Grocery Stor(ies) Panels

From the desk of the President

March 25, 2019



The MDCHM Board is happy and excited to announce plans for a mini-reunion for July 7th and 8th. Many people have asked for a Summer reunion to allow for kids and grand kids in school to attend. Delta State has gone to a 4 day week for the Summer. The campus is virtually closed on Fridays, so our activities are set for Sunday Afternoon and Monday. Another concern was expenses, so we are able to minimize outlays by applying for a grant to cover some of the associated costs. More on this later, but be sure to try and save the date for a fun and informative time. Our theme will be Re-entry . . . Mississippi, a Delta Reunion. It will feature an exhibit of Apollo and NASA mementos, pictures, artifacts in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary of the first moon landing. We will also feature a forum of folks from the Mississippi Delta who worked Apollo and other related STEM projects.

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"Delta Wok": Cultural Cookbook

The heat is turning up and the stakes are rising! Competition to see who can submit the most recipes to the "Delta Wok" cookbook project is on.



Each person who submits a recipe will be entered in a drawing for a free cookbook. The person who submits the most recipes will automatically receive a complimentary cookbook.

"Delta Wok" separates itself from more traditional format cookbooks and pursues both historical and storytelling elements within each chosen recipe

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Grocery Stor(ies)

Stories of lives lived behind the counter of MS Delta grocery stores

In their own words layered with their own images, the story of the Mississippi Delta Chinese highlighted in this exhibit presents a glimpse into the lives lived within the grocery stores and markets which peppered the landscape.

Composed of four topic panels and one

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Delta Political

It is an honor for me to report that we have within our MDCHM board family a political celebrity. Board member Joe Dan Yee successfully ran for and won the mayorship of his home town Lake Village, Arkansas, and assumed the office January 1, 2019.



I engaged with Joe Dan regarding his duties and forthcoming challenges and he shared the following. Involved in politics for half of my life, having served on the city council for over 20 years, and these years of service gave me ambition and admiration for the office. The challenges before me involve overcoming small percentages of divisiveness against me and seeking to provide better leadership than my predecessor who had 46 years of community service. Running as an Asian, born and raised in Lake Village, I was reminded by many of the populace "Your father took care of us when we did not have food on our table", and I believe these reflections helped me in winning the election. Personally, I feel more Asians

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displays were presented at the Michael Rose Theatre for the Greater Memphis Chinese New Year Festival Celebration. City dignitaries and international visitors were impressed with the stories the panels portrayed, and so many were unaware of the Chinese American presence in the delta vicinities. Needless to say the traveling exhibits were a "hit" in Memphis.

Also, spotlighted in this issue is a brief bio of our newest board member Jean Joe Maskas, formerly of Clarksdale and now residing in Memphis. We welcome her to our board family and look forward to her ideas and input. Beginning with this issue, I hope to include some photos and images housed in the museum archives, as there is much in visual history to see. If you have stories to tell, photos to share, or ideas to ignite, please do not hesitate to contact us archives@delta-state.edu. HG

cont'd from Page 1 - President
It was such a proud moment to see when the Congressional Gold Medal for Chinese WW2 Veterans was passed by Congress and signed by the President. It is now in final stages of design and will be struck by the US Mint. We understand that the "original" medal will go into the Smithsonian and will cost about \$45,000. A replica will be presented to the families of each Chinese WWII veteran at no cost. Please be sure to check online www.caww2.org and register each vet so that they can be rightly honored. You may go ahead and re-register even if you have already done so.

This June 18th MDCHM and DSU will have a book reading from the newest book Paper Son by noted author S.J. Rozan. This book is a work of fiction, in the murder/mystery genre, 11th in a series that features Lydia Chin, Chinese American Private Investigator who lives in New York City's Chinatown. This story is set in the Mississippi Delta. It will be very interesting to see how a murder occurs in this location and how it works out in the end. You'll have to come and hear the story and then preview it before

its release in July, 2019.
Raymond Wong is planning to kick start the museums oral history project. He will be working on transcribing the video and audio of folks he's already interviewed and is looking forward to adding more interviews of people who have experienced life in the Delta. This is part of our original charter to fully document the lives and stories of settlers and sojourners in this region. This is an ongoing project, so please support Raymond in these efforts.

We had several school groups who have visited MDCHM, especially in February to celebrate the Year of the PIG. Inquiring young minds is one of the primary targets for our efforts in preserving the heritage and culture through the museum.

We get requests from various media outlets from across the country and around the world to cover the story of the Mississippi Delta Chinese. We talk to them and some develop an interest and some just go on to other priorities. It's all quite unpredictable, but we try to be fair to all.

Harry Gong is finalizing plans for The Legacy Wall and will be ready as part of our reunion. Again, many thanks to the donors who have given to keep MDCHM going and enhancing exhibits and our archives viable. We appreciate your actions to support us.

Some of us will be attending the 150th Anniversary of the Golden Spike Celebration. We will have a power point presentation talking about the Chinese settling the Mississippi Delta after the railroad work was finished. Many are still surprised to learn that there were many Chinese who have settled in Mississippi so long ago.

Tim and Easton will be in Mississippi soon to wrap up work on the Delta Wok Cookbook Project. Please see Gabriella's article; please send in recipes and stories.

We have a request for input to our new series, "Where are they now?" It's an opportunity to feature folks from the Mississippi Delta who have gone on to do significant things that have impacted our world. Please submit names of people who have started out in or have roots in the Mississippi Delta region so that we may have the opportunity to feature and honor in the days and years ahead at future events.

Thanks for taking the time to support your museum and let us know what you would like to see in and around it. GC

cont'd from Page 1 - Delta Political
need to be involved in politics to show people that "We are a Big Part of this Country."

Joe Dan's story is not new, as there has been a noticeable sprinkling of Chinese American mayors who dotted the Mississippi Delta. John Wing was the first Chinese American mayor of Mississippi who was elected in Jonestown back during the 1960's and his brother Luck served as mayor of Sledge. Brooks Joe had mayorship in Cary, and Hoover Lee of Louise followed. My own father, Dong J (Paul) Gong served as an alderman in Duncan back during the 1970's and the late Wally Pang ran for Mississippi state congress.

I believe there are common factors that came to play in how these individuals became community leaders. In all of these hamlets, the Chinese grocery store played a vital role as a "community center", as agriculture became mechanized, and more of the citizens were supported by welfare. The heartbeat of these communities eventually centered to these Asian stores, for it was the proprietor of these establishments that like Joe Dan's father who provided credit and support of those with every day needs. Unfortunately, the Chinese grocery stores and Chinese American families are now hardly found residing in these little communities, but for those of us who remain it is still Joe Dan's belief "Become politically involved". HG

Spotlighting Jean Maskas

Hello everyone. I am Jean Maskas, one of MDCHM's new board members. I graduated from the University of Mississippi in pharmacy.



Currently I live in Memphis, Tennessee with my husband, Steve. Clarksdale, Mississippi is my hometown where I grew up with my sister and brother. I have lived in New Orleans, Memphis, and Paris, Tennessee.

Coming back "home" has meant so much to me. Reuniting with long-time friends has been most rewarding. Now I get to join Delta folks who are interested in preserving our rich and interesting history. Visiting with my grandchildren, traveling here and abroad, gardening, and volunteering are some of my favorite things to do. I need to add "walking my new puppy", too!

I am excited to be part of MDCHM.



cont'd from Page 1 - Delta Wok category. A historical cookbook that details lives of Chinese American families growing up in the Mississippi delta, the cookbook will feature personal stories, as dictated by the families that will function in concert with imagery and recipes. Each chapter of the book will be accompanied by two-three family stories that relate to the chapter topic, historically relevant information, and approximately 60 related recipes.

Found at www.deltastate.edu/deltawok, the web page allows people to contribute stories, recipes, interviews, etc. Be a part of this epic culinary collection! Send in your recipes, stories or photographs today. DEADLINE to be considered for the printed "Delta Wok" version is 1 August 2019. EJ

cont'd from Page 1 - Grocery Stor(i)es introductory panel, the exhibit is light-weight and easy to ship and install. Ideal for community centers and public libraries, the traveling exhibit offers an opportunity to explore cultural heritage. While many Chinese grew up in the MS

Delta, those children settled in other areas of the United States. It is our hope that this exhibit will carry a piece of the MS Delta to all areas where Mississippians now reside, providing them an opportunity to introduce their MS Delta to their new hometown communities.

We encourage each host community to incorporate pieces of local history into the display when you host the exhibit.

To reserve the exhibit in your area, contact Emily Jones (ejones@deltastate.edu) or visit www.delta-state.edu

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There are so many stories that need to be told. Having an organization as this gives us means to inform and preserve. Every one of us has a story. There are lot of similarities but diversities too. Hope to see y'all at some of our events.

Grocery Stories Banners

Stories from behind the counters of Mississippi Delta Chinese Grocery Stores have been on display in numerous venues all over Memphis from November 2018

through February 2019 – Memphis Public Library, University of Memphis, Rhodes College, Pink Palace Museum (3 events).



Image from the archives



Jeanne Hoy in her Greenwood High Band uniform, circa 1950's



Board members Libby Jeu and Frieda Quon with city dignitaries at the Grocery Stor(i)es display in Memphis