



Newsletter

2021 Vol. 2

MISSISSIPPI DELTA CHINESE HERITAGE MUSEUM, INC.

From the Editor

In this final edition of the year 2021, we bring you the news and happenings of MDCHM. Within you will find enlightenments from the Museum as it is brought to you by our new intern, Ashley Jenkins. Also, an article penned by my brother, John Gong, reflecting his thoughts and experience as he accepted the Congressional Gold Medal on behalf of my father. We are very fortunate to have a piece written by Doctor Lynn Woo as she brought Delta Scholars to a Museum tour, and of course, in this issue we're spotlighting board member Susan Chow.



At our annual Membership meeting, we welcome an old face back as a member of the board of directors. Past president Raymond Wong has decided to lend back his talents and ideas in helping to keep a positive pathway for the Museum in the preservation of our unique history. He has been very instrumental in documenting the oral histories of individuals and families of our heritage.

I hope you find the articles here thought invoking in what dedicated individuals are doing on behalf of the Museum. The Board of MDCHM wish you all a very joyous Holiday Season. Harry Don Gong

From the desk of the President November 21, 2021

Generous, . . . what a wonderful word. It fully describes our many donors this past year with artifacts, money, and especially valuable time to uphold our mission of preserving and sharing their history and heritage of the Mississippi Delta Chinese. A very special thanks to all that have contributed to this on-going story and those that will participate in the days ahead. In spite of the pandemic surge we have continued to be active in so many arenas across the country. Thank you for your generosity



The MDCHM has been very busy entertaining and informing so many visitors from across the country and around the world via The American Queen Steamboat Company as they cruise up or down the Mississippi River. The passengers arrive at Terene Landing (outside of Rosedale) and bus to Cleveland for stop-by visits. The cruises occur throughout the year and we will continue to offer the Museum visits for the coming year.

After 5 years the Congressional Gold Medal was physically awarded to the Chinese WWII veterans in ceremonies in Washington and across the country. This uniquely designed Gold Medal will sit in the Smithsonian, but beautiful replica medals were awarded to each veteran family in respectful, dignified and meaningful ceremonies. The original legislation was co-authored by Mississippi's own late Senator Thad Cochran.

The museum was honored to receive recognition from the Mississippi 2 Museums (in Jackson) for its work in helping preserve history for our state. The M2M board visited the MDCHM at Delta State in the afternoon and a proclamation was made and presented that evening at a lovely dinner after their fall meeting last month. Very nice comments and compliments were passed after their visit.

We continue to get requests from individuals and media from across the nation and around the world from folks that visit our website. There was even a brief visit from a reporter with an article written for the Copenhagen, Denmark newspaper. (We have yet to have anyone translate the article, but we can recognize the folks in the pictures). The museum board tries to respond to each request in a way that will help them share our stories and reflect an accurate and very positive image of the Mississippi Delta Chinese then and now. We try to put them in touch with various sources and contacts to achieve their intents and stories.

Our museum has taken on an intern for 2 semesters, graduate student Ashley Jenkins to help Emily Jones (DSU Archivist) in our projects at MDCHM. Welcome Ashley as we look forward to the progress we can make with your assistance. Wishing everyone a joyous and safe Christmas season and happy new year. Plans are in the works for some fun projects for 2022. Please stay tuned.

News from the Archives



The Mississippi Department of Archives and History held an award ceremony at Kirkham and Hilda Povall's house on October 21, 2021, in honor of local museums. The Resolutions of Commendation award was awarded to the Mississippi Delta Chinese Heritage Museum for continuing to tell the stories and legacies of Chinese people in the Delta. Gilroy Chow accepted the award on behalf of the museum. The board members and supporters of the museum enjoyed the meal provided and the conversations with the other local museum members who also received the award. The award is on display in the Charles W. Capps, Jr. Archives & Museum on Delta State's campus.

The American Queen boat tours have visited the Mississippi Delta Chinese Heritage Museum since the beginning of August 2021. The museum is a part of the hop on hop off experience as an excursion for the boat guests. There have been over one hundred guests to tour the museum in the last few months due to the boat tours. The American Queen tours attract people from all over the United States and other countries. There are three different boats that dock in Terrene Landing in Rosedale, MS, and travel by bus to Cleveland, MS. The tourists enjoy engaging in conversation with the board members and volunteers who help during their visit. We look forward to next semester's group of tourists.

Ashley Jenkins

Thoughts on the Gold Medal Ceremony honoring Chinese-Americans - Houston

Harry called the other day. [actually weeks ago] Harry, my older brother. He asked if I could write a blurb for this newsletter on the experience of attending the Congressional Gold Medal ceremony in Houston this past summer. It was held in recognition of Chinese-Americans who served their country/our country during World War II. Sure. I can do that. Gold medal. Gold medal. Dad. What would he have thought about that? It's an award that celebrates the contributions of a fraction of the American people who were... Wait, I digress.

When we were growing up, Dad and family didn't speak much about the war years. – About what they did. What fears they might have had as Chinese-Americans in this country. How they saw themselves as a people in an area of the country that was so very clearly polarized and stratified, and is there such a thing as a middle?

To begin with, the family's medal aspirations were pressed by my oldest sister, Camille, who had become quite involved in the San Antonio chapter of the Chinese-Americans Citizens Alliance. First through the research she had done on the Pershing Chinese in San Antonio; then in further research she had done on the founding of the Chinese Baptist Church in San Antonio; and still more by the keen interest she took in cousin Gwen's work in her book which compiled names, data, and interviews of the Mississippi Chinese-Americans who had served in World War II.



With COVID having thrown a spike-protein wrench at the world, Medal ceremonies were understandably moved to back burners. It was a point of great pride Camille [and so many others] took to call attention to those who answered their nation's call and did so with distinction. She was to have received it in Houston on behalf of the family, however Camille fell victim to an untimely passing Christmas morning 2019. That honor moved to me since I'm just up the road in San Antonio.

Dad didn't speak much about the War. Actually I don't remember him ever speaking of it in my presence. He died when I was 20 during the year of our nation's bicentennial. My only recollection of anything to do with Dad's service during the war was the occasional mention of my Dad and his two younger brothers who did join the military and how the youngest just missed active duty as the war had ended. Sister Bettie had once said Dad had seen his best friend in the war killed.

So what did the gold medal do for me? It brought back thoughts of my father who died many years younger than I am now, thoughts of how he was the oldest son of an oldest son and therefore had ingrained into his being the idea of duty, being the dutiful son that he always had been.

They say performing arts are ethereal, a wisp, done and gone. The individual performance is monumental and then but a memory. War leaves scars at the settings of battles, on people at the borders of towns, states, and, yes, countries that experience the displacement war requires. Then we remember them in our minds or choose not to. The congressional Gold Medal brought back those memories that might have been held back from my branch of the family had it not been for those who recognized something – the importance of the Chinese-American communities having put their young sons and daughters in harm's way because we are Americans, too. So in Houston, Texas, September 05, 2021, at the Chinese Community Center we gathered to honor proudly those members of our families who gave of themselves. I ran into my great-aunt Tam and cousin Sonya from the Dallas area as well as Alice and Audric from the Delta who'd come in from Mississippi. It was a beautiful ceremony on a bright Sunday morning.

Dong Jung (Paul) Gong served in WWII U.S. Army Air Corps 301st BG 352nd Squadron 1943-1945 and was discharged from the service having achieved the rank of Corporal. He graduated from Mississippi State College under the GI bill and lived in Duncan, Mississippi until his death in 1976. John Gong, San Antonio, Texas

Scholars visit the Mississippi Delta Chinese Heritage Museum

On June 10, fifteen undergraduate students from around the nation visited the Mississippi Delta Chinese Heritage Museum. These students were part of the Delta Scholar Summer Institute Program. Delta Scholars are a group of talented and socially conscious undergraduates who take part in a 2-week academic and community engaged program led by faculty and researchers from the University of Mississippi (UM), Mississippi State University (MSU), and Harvard University.

This year's participants were undergraduates from mostly the Southern region and include the following: UM, MSU, Harvard, Yale, University of Missouri, Southern Illinois University, University of Louisville, Mississippi Valley State, University of Southern Mississippi, University of Georgia, Mississippi University for Women, LSU, and University of Alabama. As part of the Delta Scholars programming, students were taken on a tour of the Mississippi Delta. The Mississippi Delta Chinese Heritage Museum was the first stop of their tour. The Scholars learned more about the demographic diversity of the Mississippi Delta and the history of the Chinese in rural Mississippi. Here, they also learned more about the demographic shifts of the Chinese over time from Lynn Woo, one of the faculty members of the Delta Scholars Program and researcher at the UM Center for Population Studies.



Continue on page 3

Continued from page 2

The Delta Scholars Program is a collaboration between the University of Mississippi Center for Population Studies; Mississippi State University Social Science Research Center and Shackouls Hoors College; Harvard University Law School, School of Public Health, and the Phillips Brooks House Center for Public Service and Engaged Scholarship; and the Delta Directions Consortium.

Lynn C. Woo serves as the Associate Director of the University of Mississippi Center for Population Studies and State Data Center of Mississippi. She is also the Coordinator for the Society and Health Academic minor for the College of Liberal Arts at UM. She holds a BS in biology, a BA in sociology, and an MA in Sociology. She is currently a doctoral candidate in Higher Education at the University of Mississippi.

Lynn Woo



Support MDCHM When You Shop

The Kroger Family of Companies donates to participating organizations based on a percentage of spending. Depending on where you live and if you shop with The Kroger Family of Companies (such as Kroger, Fred Meyer, Ralph's, Smith's, etc.), you may be able to participate in Kroger Community Rewards by linking your shopper's card to MDCHM.

Sign in to your account and select Mississippi Delta Chinese Heritage Museum or BT044. If you live outside the Delta area, hopefully the museum will be listed in your region.

Spotlighting a Board Member



I am a graduate of Delta State University (DSU) and the Methodist Hospital (Memphis, TN) medical technology program. I worked at the Methodist Hospital microbiology department for 29 years - first as a student intern, then as a medical technologist, and later as a laboratory manager.

Upon returning to Cleveland, I worked at Baxter Healthcare and DSU. In December 2019, I retired from DSU and am enjoying the spoils of retirement.

I have served as an MDCHM board member since the museum's inception. Currently I assist the treasurer and am the contact person when someone makes an online donation or sends an email via the website. Depending on the nature of the email comments or requests, I will respond or will forward to one or more of the board members for their input. It's gratifying to be a part of the Chinese Museum and to witness its growth and acknowledgements.



