

Speaking Request

**Mississippi Delta Chinese Heritage
Reunion**

Friday, October 27, 2017

Logistics:

- Time of arrival: a few minutes before 5pm
 - Time of welcome/remarks: 5pm or when President LaForge and Mayor Nowell are assembled together
 - Location of welcome/remarks: Martin & Sue King Railroad Heritage Museum, standing about four steps up on the staircase in the museum.
 - Contact Person (with cellphone number): Emily Jones, 662.820.3021
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Background of Event:

- This is our second MS Delta Chinese Heritage reunion. Our first was in 2014 and we had a heavier schedule of lectures. Every event was surveyed so that we would know how to plan for the next reunion, if we had one. Based on those survey results, we have tempered this year's programs with large blocks of time for family and friends to either hang out with each other, make a quick trip to area towns to see where family stores used to be or to participate in several of the collection building projects hosted over the weekend.
- We saw families exchanging photographs and stories at the 2014 reunion and quickly squared out space to conduct oral history interviews. This year, we are more prepared. We have the MS Digital Library consortium on site to facilitate scanning and information gathering on images and manuscript materials brought to the reunion. Volunteers have been trained to conduct oral history interviews which can be arranged by signing up on the message board on the first floor of the Union.
- Documentary filmmakers and authors who have used MS Delta Chinese collections for their works will be set up throughout the reunion weekend to demonstrate how they have incorporated our collections into their works. The more our donors see how their collections are sharing an accurate and balanced experience, the more they trust the archives & museum's custodianship.
- The majority of our guests have only visited MS because of the first reunion and now this second one. They do not see the daily progress we make in collection development, story-sharing, and museum improvements. The museum's exhibits have expanded and we will launch the first traveling exhibit following the reunion. We will take this opportunity to share the progress made over the past three years since their last visits.
- Our 2014 reunion had almost 300 guests attend. Right now, we are hovering at 267 registered. Because of the generosity of the QEP, we are able to open the daytime events to any DSU student. While we all enjoy getting together to reminisce, we all pretty much know our own story. We need to make the reunion a place where everyone in our community can come to learn about this history.

Schedule of events:

Friday, 27 October 2017

9:30am – Registration Opens, Union, 1st floor

10:30am – Welcome and Opening Remarks

Dr. Jean Lau Chin program, Union, 2nd Floor, East Lobby

Noon – Lunch, Union, 2nd floor, West Lobby

1 - 4pm – Booths are open Union, 2nd Floor, West Lobby

MS Digital Library (capturing images of families & stores)

Genealogy Assistance (Raymond Seid)

Delta Wok (capturing stories, recipes and contacts for cookbook project)

Grocery Stor[i]es: Stores & Stories exhibit preview

Steve Yee prints

Authors available to sign purchased books

Libby Jue

John Jung

Augusta Scattergood

Journey Stories and *The MS Chinese Veterans of WWII: A Delta Tribute*

My Journey to the Past & Back by George Jue

DSU Bookstore is open (Union, 1st floor)

4 - 6pm - Reception hosted by the Railroad Heritage Museum (115 South Bayou, Cleveland, MS 38732)

6:30pm - Catered Catfish Dinner, Ewing Hall, Jacob Conference Center

MS Delta Chinese Heritage Museum is open, Capps Archives & Museum building, 3rd floor

Saturday, 28 October 2017

7am – Walk the Green Mile (begin at the Union)

Rise & Shine refreshments

8am – Tai Chi with Dana and Stretching for Seniors with Dewey Wong

(weather permitting, this will be held on the Quad just in front of the Union; inclement weather location: Union, 2nd floor, West Lobby)

9:30am – Registration, Union, 1st floor

10am – Outdoor games and Booths are open (Union)

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Grocery Stor[i]es: Stores & Stories exhibit preview

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Libby Jue

Augusta Scattergood

John Jung

Journey Stories and The MS Chinese Veterans of WWII: A Delta

Tribute

My Journey to the Past & Back by George Jue

DSU Bookstore is open (Union, 1st floor)

MS Delta Chinese Heritage Museum is open, Capps Archives & Museum building, 3rd floor

Noon – Lunch, Union, 2nd floor, West Lobby

1:30 pm – Dr. John Thornell, Union, 2nd Floor, East Lobby

2:30 – 4:30pm Booths are open (Union)

MS Digital Library (capturing images of families & stores)

Genealogy Assistance (Raymond Seid)

Delta Wok (capturing stories, recipes and contacts for cookbook project)

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Journey Stories and The MS Chinese Veterans of WWII: A Delta Tribute

My Journey to the Past & Back by George Jue

DSU Bookstore is open (Union, 1st floor)

MS Delta Chinese Heritage Museum is open, Capps Archives & Museum building, 3rd floor

6pm – Catered BBQ Dinner, Ewing Hall, Jacobs Conference Center

**dress delta casual*

Composition of group:

The majority of the audience were either born or raised in the MS Delta within Chinese grocery stores. They are doctors (ER/optometrists/surgeon/cosmetic/GP), pharmacists, lawyers, engineers (civil/environmental/geotechnical/mechanical/etc.), educators (K-12 and Higher Ed), dieticians, entrepreneurs, accountants, authors, musicians, politicians (primarily local mayors and tons of aldermen/councilmen/councilwomen), philanthropists, homemakers, etc. They no longer live in the area and some have already lost their tangible connection to the region because their parents/siblings/extended family have passed away. But they come back anyway.

Of the 326 registered guests, only 100 live within MS today. That means that our network continues to spread wider and wider. And yet it seems that no matter how far they go or how long it is between visits back to Mississippi, they come when they are called. Only a handful of local, non-Chinese residents have registered to attend. I believe most were waiting until the last minute to register. Unfortunately, we had to close registration on Monday night because we had met our maximum capacity for food and other supplies. We have 22 DSU students registered and that was made possible because of a grant through the QEP.

Introduction of President LaForge:

- I do not have an official introduction but if one is provided, I can have it read.

Talking Points:

- This is a very casual gathering after a day full of sharing histories, learning, and reacquainting.
- Larissa Lam Chiu and her husband, Baldwin, are attending. They are members of GRAMMY LA's music guild. Baldwin created the film "Finding Cleveland" about his journey to the Delta in the summer 2015 to try to find the grocery store his grandfather and great-grandfather had owned. He didn't know much because Baldwin's father, Charles, was only an infant when the two men left their Chinese village to settle in America. Charles doesn't remember his father and grandfather because he was so young when they left. Charles' father and grandfather were favorites among townspeople in Pace, we all found out during the 2015 summer. Unfortunately, Charles' father and grandfather passed away in Pace before they earned enough money to pay for passage of their families to join them. Only the barest of essentials was shipped back to the families in China when they died. Charles and his grandmother would eventually come to America, leaving his mother behind in the village. Charles married and created his own family in California, never once thinking he could find the graves of his father and grandfather. But Baldwin, Charles' son, decided it was time to find them. So, in the summer of 2015, they boarded a flight to the delta. Through a series of amazing happenstance, I found a Bible with Charles' father's name in it and connected him with the family who had bought the store in Pace after the two men passed away. Among the many items that the family had kept when they took ownership of the store were letters...and one letter in particular was extremely significant to Charles. He finally heard his father's 'voice' in the letters talking about how much he missed his young wife and son and how often he thought of them. Charles heard his father. He held his father's Bible and he was connected to a heritage he didn't even know existed for him. Pretty awesome.
- Luck Wing, the former Mayor of Sledge is attending. If he wasn't the first, he was one of the first Chinese mayors in Mississippi. His brother, John, was mayor of Jonestown and their cousin, Hoover Lee, was mayor of Louise. "Hoover Sauce" is some of the best bar-be-cue sauce you'll ever have. I'd put it right up with Abe's.

- The Chinese community are dedicated to preserving their history and they have demonstrated that in numbers. In 2009, the University Archives, which documents the history of the entire Delta, would have revealed that only 18 Chinese men and women lived in the Delta. We had a gaping hole in our history. Since then, we have acquired over 60 private manuscript collections. Those collections have allowed us to provide materials to write books (Water Tossing Boulders, by Adrienne Berard; funded by a grant through the MS Humanities Council), develop choreographed performances from our oral history collections (South of Gold Mountain by H.T. Chen Dance Company, New York City), produce two books for fundraising efforts (Journey Stories: The Cleveland Chinese Mission School and The MS Chinese Veterans of World War II: A Delta Tribute by Dr. Gwen Gong), support the production of several documentaries including “Finding Cleveland” (won the highest award from the Oxford Film Festival in 2015), “Leadway,” and “Honor & Duty: Chinese Veterans of WWII” among others. The Aljazeera News Company documented our foodways in two segments that are available to view online and CNN used one of our images as their lead header for a week when they were covering the Asian American and Pacific Islanders month events including the bill set before Congress to recognize the Chinese WW II veterans.
- The collection of MS Delta Chinese history has made the Italian community jealous because I get asked all the time when I’m going to do an exhibit on them. It’s a perfect opportunity to remind that community that if I don’t talk about their history, it’s only because I don’t have anything to talk about! The Archives doesn’t grow the facts, we just preserve them. So, we need to keep collecting and receiving great things and we will make them available, too!

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