Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation (AIISF) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote a greater understanding of Pacific Coast immigration and its role in shaping America's past, present and future. Through an array of interpretive programs and educational partnerships, the Foundation preserves the Immigration Station site, a National Historic Landmark, as a place that honors the complex story and rich cultural heritage of Pacific Coast immigrants and their descendants.

Dear Friends,

As this e-newsletter reaches you, the Angel Island fire has been completely contained and the park will reopen soon. Thank you for all your calls and emails expressing concern for the Immigration Station. Due to the courageous efforts of 300 Marin County firefighters, who worked through the night and day to create firebreaks, the flames never touched the historic Civil War buildings and the Immigration Station. We owe the firefighters and the State Parks personnel a deep debt of gratitude. The Feb. 15, 2009 Reopening of the Immigration will proceed as planned.

We also want to thank all of you who attended and supported AIISF's Annual Dinner on September 12, 2008 at the Westin San Francisco. A great time was had by all.

Sincerely,
Eddie Wong,
Executive Director

In this issue

Interview with Laurence Yep

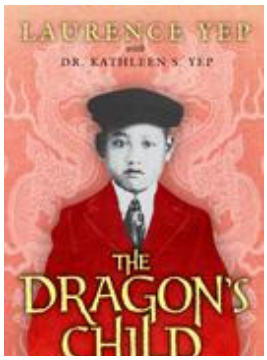
Interview with Kathleen S. Yep

AIISF Annual Dinner - New Discoveries, New Beginnings Event Highlights

Artist Flo Oy Wong Presents Gift to AIISF

Announcements

Interview with Laurence Yep, author of The Dragon's Child
By Eddie Wong



Ten-year-old Gim Lew Yep knows that he must leave his home in China and travel to America with the father who is a stranger to him. Gim Lew doesn't want to leave behind everything that he's ever known. But he is even more scared of disappointing his father. He uses his left hand, rather than the "correct" right hand; he stutters; and most of all, he worries about not passing the strict immigration test administered at Angel Island.

The Dragon's Child is a touching portrait of a father and son and their unforgettable journey from China to the land of the Golden Mountain. It

is based on actual conversations between two-time Newbery Honor author Laurence Yep and his father and on research on his family's immigration history by his niece, Dr. Kathleen S. Yep. - Harper Collins synopsis

EW: What was the impetus to write The Dragon's Child?

LY: My niece Kathleen retrieved my father's records from the National Archives and there was an interview of him at age 10. How many of us get a chance to hear our parents as children. It was a magical moment that got me interested in writing the book. We also found a photograph of father as a houseboy in an Irish family and a vouching letter that he worked there.

The interview transcript was 400 pages long, including previous and subsequent interviews with grandfather and father's brother on the household and farm animals. It included exacting details, touching little things like schools didn't provide desks. Father recalled how pink the buildings looked in Macau, details that children would notice.

The Maritime Library was also very helpful as they tracked the exact departure and arrivals of ships. I even went on eBay to find ship's diagrams and learned that steerage had three bunks to one tier, similar to Angel Island

EW: You capture the bittersweet qualities of life in your book, i.e. the optimism of your father, the bitterness of Wart Man, and the strictness of the teacher Uncle Jing. How did you come up with these characters?

LY: The characters in the book were from the old timers I knew from Chinatown. I used to go shopping with my grandmother who used to take hours because she would stop and say hello to people she knew.

EW: Are there particular challenges in writing for young adults?

LY: You can't flimflam kids. Problems have to be put in concrete terms, not existential crisis like who am I? Situations have to be real and visceral for the audience.

EW: What do you want kids to take away from reading the book?

LY: The older I get, the more I understand what my father went through. He had a strong sense of duty and a certain amount of courage. I admire his not shying away from hard tasks. He and my mother had the courage to make a better life for us. He took a risk to take over a store in the Western Addition (a traditionally African American neighborhood in San Francisco) and put me and my brother through college. He was a good storyteller in his own right.

EW: Do you have any thoughts about how to make Angel Island more visible in America's consciousness?

LY: We adapted *Dragonwings* for the stage at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. and the Lincoln Center in New York. Back East, the audience and the actors only knew of Ellis Island. There should be more emphasis on the human angle. You don't want to ignore the human suffering, but it's hard not to appear like you're criticizing the current generation. You need to hear about the human story and about what America meant to the immigrants at Angel Island.

Interview with Kathleen S.Yep, co-author of The Dragon's Child

By Eddie Wong

EW: What was it like working with your uncle?

KY: Laurence helped raise me and my siblings. When I was in elementary school, he gave me Wonder Woman comics and showed me Godzilla movies . He encouraged me to read and to imagine. So, as adults, it was humbling and exciting to co-create something bridging his literary point of view and my Asian American studies view of our family history

EW: How did you do the research?

KY: I was an ethnic studies major at U.C. Berkeley and connected with the Roots program at the Chinese Culture Center. I asked my 93 year old grandmother for any leads and she came back with a letter with grandfather's name and a document number. I talked with the Chinese specialist at the National Archives and Records Administration at San Bruno and he came back with a stack of old folders that had mildew smell. I flipped open the file and saw a photograph of my grandfather as a terrified young boy and I just cried. Through these papers I met my great-grandfather and my great uncles for the first time. The files included maps of villages in China, photographs of San Francisco before the earthquake and the transcription of their interrogations. One of the most moving things was seeing my grandfather's chunky handwriting a child and to imagine what he was feeling as he signed his name to the paper, unsure of his future.

EW: Describe the process of collaboration.

KY: My uncle, in many ways, defined the field of Asian American young adult literature. He won the Laura Ingalls Wilder lifetime achievement award in children's literature and his books are required reading for California students. And, yet, he really defined the process as a collaboration. It was humbling to work with and learn from him. We looked at the interrogation process itself to seek out the dramatic scenes. As we exchanged drafts and combined our comments, we kept on thinking about the social significance of a single experience and achieving this through plot, dialogue, or character development, such as my grandfather's stuttering.

EW: What do you want young people to take away from the book?

KY: Young people, hopefully, will relate to the challenges my grandfather faced and to how people find strength and courage under challenging circumstances. The story provides a way to identify with the characters and compare it with current examples of detention. And, hopefully, readers will be inspired to explore the extraordinary things their family has experienced and done-just as we did with our family's story.

AIISF Annual Dinner - New Discoveries, New Beginnings Event Highlights

On September 12, 2008, 250 friends of the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation gathered at the Westin San Francisco Market Street to celebrate "New Discoveries, New Beginnings." Felicia Lowe and Forrest Gok hosted the evening's festivities which began with a stirring call to action by Judge Delbert Gee, who encouraged everyone, especially descendants, to become involved in helping AIISF preserve the Angel Island stories for future generations.

Jazz pianist/composer Jon Jang previewed musical themes from "Angel Island Voices," a

new symphony being composed for the East Bay Symphony 2010 season. Keynote speaker, Dr.Erika Lee, gave a riveting speech highlighting a few poignant stories of Mexican and South Asian immigrants at Angel Island. Go to www.aiisf.org to read the full speech.

The evening concluded with a rousing live auction led by Forrest Gok. Please join us next year for another celebration. Pictures from the Annual Dinner are available at www.aiisf.org.

Artist Flo Oy Wong Presents Gift to AIISF

Award-winning artist Flo Oy Wong donated the Lowe Wing Sun made in usa: Angel Island Shhh rice sack to the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation on October 11 at the Community School of Music and Arts in Mountain View, CA. Filmmaker and former President of the AIISF Board of Directors Felicia Lowe accepted the artwork, which was dedicated to her father.

The evening also celebrated Flo Oy Wong's 70th birthday as well as opening Raising the Voices: Installations by Flo Oy Wong, a survey of five installations focusing on family and community. The show will run October 11 to November 26, 2008 in CSMA;s Mohr Gallery, which is located at 230 San Antonio Circle, Mountain View.

We wish to thank Flo for her generous gift and plan to display it at the Immigration Station.

Happy Birthday, Flo.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

· Our friends at the Angel Island Association are teaming up with BayWood Artists, a professional group of plein air artists, for an exhibition entitled Capturing Angel Island. The show opens with a free reception on October 24 at the Bay Model, 2100 Bridgeway, Sausalito. Baywood Artists will donate 50% of all proceeds from the sale of artwork to AIA to be used for the park's shoreline restoration. The show runs until November 17.

· Our friends at the California Historical Society invite you to a book talk and signing of A History of Alcatraz Island: 1853-2008 by Gregory Wellman on Thursday, November 13, 2008 from 6 pm to 8 pm. CHS is located at 678 Mission St., San Francisco.

· Our friends at the Chinese Culture Center present Icons of Presence: Asian American Activist Art, a de Young Museum satellite exhibition featuring the work of Nancy Hom, Jim Dong and Leland Wong, from October 23, 2008 to January 3, 2009. The opening reception is on Oct. 23 from 6:30 -8:30 p.m. at Chinese Culture Center, 750 Kearny Street, 3rd Fl, San Francisco

· The exhibit Asian/American/Modern Art: Shifting Currents, 1900-1970, which features the works of Flo Oy Wong, Gary Woo, and others will be on display at the de Young Museum

from October 25, 2008 to January 18, 2009.

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