

News Letter

June 2008

Australia-China Friendship Society Victorian Branch

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Our Hearts go Out to the People of South-West China

The Australia China Friendship Society responded quickly to the Earthquake in south-west china. Within two days of the quake taking place the Society donated \$1,000 to the Chinese Government appeal to assist with the recovery effort.

President Louise Clayton presented the cheque at a function at the Chinese Consulate. The Consul General was appreciative of the gesture, acknowledging it as important symbol of true friendship.

To date just under 70,000 people have died, 374,000 people have been injured and 4.2 million are homeless. The Society encourages all members of the society and their friends to consider donating through the Red Cross or the Chinese Consulate appeals.

ACFS 2008

Australia China Friendship Society 2008 Annual Dinner
7.00pm Friday 1st August **Dragon Boat On the Yarra**
\$55.00 per head **10 course banquet**

Join us to celebrate the great friendship between the People of Australia and China

Music, great food and great company. Tickets on sale now and until July 18th - Tex: 03-9654 8099, or secretary@acfsvic.org



H E L P

Dear Friend,

China Earthquake Appeal

I am writing to you regarding the recent earthquake in China which has resulted in the death of over 70,000 people, with millions more left injured or homeless.

The Australia-China Friendship Society is appealing to our members and the wider community to contribute to the earthquake appeal to assist with the rescue effort.

Accordingly I would urge your organization to make a donation to the earthquake appeal in one of two ways.

Moneys can be paid to the Chinese Consulate-General in Melbourne into a special disaster relief fund, as follows:

Bank of China Ltd, 270 Queen St., Melbourne. Tel: 9602 3655
Account name: Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Melbourne
BSB: 353000 Account number: 500001

Alternatively, moneys can be donated through the Red Cross: Tel. 1800 811 700 (24 hours).

In light of the magnitude of this natural disaster and the resulting tremendous human cost, all contributions and support would be most welcome.

Thank you for your consideration and, hopefully, your support towards the earthquake appeal.

Yours in friendship

Louise Clayton

ACFS Vic. President

PRESIDENT'S Report

The Committee and members have been busy since our last newsletter.

On 14 May Committee members and their partners attended a reception hosted by Consul-General Mr Liang Shugen and Mm Liang at the Chinese Consulate-General in Melbourne. It was a nice opportunity for members to become better acquainted with Consular staff and to exchange news and views.

Consul-General Liang warmly welcomed those attending and thanked all members of the ACFS for their ongoing efforts to promote friendship and understanding between the peoples of our two countries. He particularly appreciated our efforts to counter the distorted media reports about recent events in Tibet.

In light of the tragic earthquake, I took the opportunity to make a donation on behalf of the ACFS (Vic) to the Consulate General's earthquake disaster relief fund. Mr Liang was very touched by our contribution and thanked us sincerely.

We also had a bit of fun with an "Olympic Torch" which was lit, with various members holding it and being photographed with their partners and friends.

Earthquake Appeal

It is clear that the aftermath of the earthquake will require enormous and ongoing efforts and resources by the Chinese Government and people. The Committee has therefore decided that, apart from making our own donation, the best way we can assist is by promoting the earthquake appeal and supporting various fund-raising efforts, like the recent Women's Soccer Game and the concert at the Town Hall.

People can still make a donation via the Consulate-General in Melbourne or the Red Cross (details are elsewhere in this newsletter).

In light of the magnitude of the disaster, I would strongly urge all members to do what they can, and to encourage others to similarly support the disaster relief efforts.

Other Activities

Over 30 members attended the Yum Cha held on 1 June at the Happy Palace Restaurant, and enjoyed the excellent menu and company.

On 6 June members attended our first film night for a year. The two films shown proved to be good choices. The feature film was "The Birthday", a thought provoking film, and the documentary was "One Thousand Years of Shaolin Temple". We are planning to resume our regular Chinese Movie Show in the future, so stay tuned!

Details of other activities are noted in this newsletter. I draw members' particular attention to the forthcoming lecture on "China's Western Ethnic Groups - Religions and Politics", to be presented by Professor Colin Mackerras of Griffith University. It should be an informative and topical lecture, and, in light of recent events, very timely.

Louise Clayton

ACSF Vic. President

Sino-OZ Soccer Match

The Amateur Victoria Women's Soccer team and their Beijing Women's Soccer counterpart recently met at the Bob Jane Stadium in Albert Park. The afternoon was rather cool but a clear blue sky quickly came to the rescue. Before the start of the match spectators were entertained with official speeches and melodious Chinese songs.

This was a very important occasion – an opportunity to raise money for the victims of the terrible Sichuan earthquake that unfortunately took so many lives and left countless more injured or without a home. As a sign of respect, the audience observed a minute of silence. The match went on and the first goal came from a Beijing striker. At half time, as the temperature started to cool down, we were kindly invited by the Consul General, Mr. Liang Shugeng, to join his group in the Official Box. The second half saw two decisive goals from the Victorian side with a final score of 2 – 1 but, more importantly, people on the day were united with a common spirit. I believe that is when friendship is at its best.

Thank you to all our members for attending the match, your support is valuable and I am sure your help will go a long way towards purchasing further supplies for the people of Sichuan.

Serge Orsor

ACFS Committee member

Relief Concert for the Victims of the Sichuan Earthquake

On the 7th of June a concert was held in Melbourne Town Hall to help raise money for the victims of the massive earthquake that rocked China's Sichuan province. The reaction to this earthquake, which devastated the lives and homes of so many, has been an outpouring of emotion and support for those affected from all over the world.

Rather appropriately, the concert was entitled "Love Around the World". There were musical performances from Penleigh and Essendon Grammar's Chinese Orchestra, Melbourne University Choral Society and other groups. There were also routines with dancing which depicted the tragic circumstances and heroism of the last two months. All of the performances demonstrated a sense of solidarity and sympathy with our brothers and sisters in China.

The Consul-General of Victoria, Mr. Liang, Shugen and the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, John So, both gave speeches thanking the audience for their attendance and generosity. During the evening, there was a period for donation from the audience and a charity auction which both helped raise money for the victims and their families. By the end of the concert, over \$115,000 had been raised, a clear sign of the feelings in the audience.

But perhaps the most touching moments of the evening were the most simple. The first was the time when the audience and performers stood together in silence for one minute, a gesture perhaps more powerful than songs or poetry can ever be. The second was when one unostentatiously dressed man came to claim his prize at the auction. When he was asked why he had chosen to support the cause in this way, fighting back tears, he simply answered "China is my homeland".

I was honoured to represent the Australia China Friendship Society at the concert by being one of the MCs. The spirit of the evening was one I will never forget; a spirit of showing what we can do when we come together to help one another, a spirit of giving generously and a spirit of hope for the future of those touched by the earthquake of May 12th.

ACFS Committee Member

Sandy McLeod

ACFS and Australian Values

Paul Liu, Former President Victorian Branch

The words "Fair Go" and "Stand by your Mate" have always been associated with our Australian values. It is these values that form the characteristics of a "true blue Aussie". I have the feeling that it was those characteristics which led our original members to establish our Society.

In the early 1950s, promoting friendship with people of a Communist country was viewed by the government and the general public most unfavourably, if not with outright hostility. Yet, against all odds, our forebears believed in giving the down trodden Chinese people a fair go and formed the Australia-China Friendship Society, thereby establishing a wonderful friendship which has endured for over half a century. This friendship based on mutual understanding, fairness and equality is a friendship that has proved to be beneficial to both countries.

Students' Rally

It was not just friendship with the Chinese people that made me proud of being a member of the ACFS; it was the spirit of the "fair go" and being able to stand up for what is right and not just blindly follow the current trend or be manipulated by propaganda. Whilst I have always been a proud member of this Society, I can't have been more proud than when, at the end of April of this year, I listened to the address by our President Louise Clayton at the rally of thousands of young people in front of the State Library of Melbourne. They were protesting against the media's biased reports on China and the rioters who tried to stop the Olympic Torch Relay through different countries to Beijing. Louise also spoke at Federation Square at the celebration of the 100 days count down to the Beijing Olympics organized by the Chinese community.

On both occasions, our President spoke with an authority which was based on her well researched history of Tibet, and on her own personal experience and findings during her visit to Tibet in 2004.

Propaganda

Currently, according to most of the western media that are echoing certain "Human Rights" organizations, the people who used violence to disrupt

the Olympic Torch Relay were considered to be “Pro Tibet” for its freedom, whilst those who want to uphold the spirit of the Olympics are seen as “Pro China”! Well, according to our President’s excellent speeches, I would say, above all, that she was for “Pro Australian Values” and a true blue Aussie. She was not afraid to speak up for what she believed was true about her friends, when so many people have no regard for their own professed principles and parrot distorted facts from biased reports which demonstrate a double standard. It is a pity that some of those people who are supposed to be world leaders have exposed themselves as being either ignorant, spineless or with sinister motives, blindly jumping on to the bandwagon and criticizing China. Thanks to them, they have unwittingly made our President stand out from them proudly, like a proverbial elegant stork among a flock of common clucking chickens.

Anti-China propaganda worked overtime in gearing up the storm in recent months. It went so well, it brought out all those anti-China “experts”, crawling like termites from their rotten wood pile. Unfortunately for them, people in the world do have a brain; when things die down, they may question why it was wrong for the police to arrest the rioters in Tibet, but acceptable for the police to arrest those “Tibetan” rioters in other countries. With those few “Tibetans” and their (in larger number) Caucasian supporters who violently tried to disrupt the Olympic Torch Relay, it would be really interesting to know how many of them have ever set foot in Tibet.

In recent years, many people have visited Tibet, so they too, like our President know better than to be taken in by distorted propaganda. Those who know about China would be able to tell you that China is the only country in the world which gives her minority ethnic groups more privileges than the main ethnic group. Certainly, no such thing has ever existed for the American Indians. If the self styled international “Human Rights” groups hope to gain credibility, they should also be prepared to criticize their own countries for their abuses instead of only concentrating on China.

Life in Tibet

Over the last few years, life in Tibet, as in other parts of China, has improved beyond the imagination of 50 years ago. Do those who are supposedly calling for “Free Tibet” think for a moment that the majority of Tibetans, or their parents who were farm slaves of

their now exiled masters, would be prepared to return to the old feudal system and be enslaved again? The fact is, underneath their high moral mask, those supposed Tibet supporters have no consideration for the people of Tibet. It is only another sinister excuse to attack China by disrupting the Olympics in Beijing. The media that mouth their distorted, unsubstantiated sensational reports can only damage their own reputation and credibility by being tools of other people’s propaganda.

The principle aim of our Society is to create friendship through mutual understanding; it is the direction in which we proudly strive for peace and harmony and to make the world a better place to live in. Unfortunately, certain people in this world seem only interested in causing war and misery, and use propaganda with distorted facts to fan hate and animosity to achieve their ends. It’s regrettable that they misuse words such as “Freedom” and “Human Rights” and taint those wonderful expressions and turn them into meaningless jargon!

Confucius once said: “Only compassion and righteousness can be invincible.” In a way, that’s what our Society stands for. Last month, our President represented us in upholding truth and friendship with compassion, and made us proud.

China’s Western Ethnic Groups Religion and Politics

Abstract: The lecture will focus on the Tibetans and Uygurs, but also mention a few other ethnic groups. The Tibetans live mostly in China’s south-west, Tibet, Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan, and believe in Tibetan Buddhism, while the Uygurs are concentrated in Xinjiang, China’s most north-western province-level unit, and believe in Islam. Religion is important in the cultures of both peoples. It has also been a factor in the separatist movements found of recent years, including the major riots and controversy that has raged about the Tibetans since March this year. The lecture will evaluate the situation among both peoples, suggest reasons for Chinese government reaction and look at prospects for the future.

Speaker: Professor Emeritus Colin Mackerras was born in Sydney in 1939 and he has lived in Queensland since 1974, working at Griffith University for over thirty years. He was very active in administrative, teaching

and research roles there and though he retired formally in 2004 he remains active there.

Prof Mackerras has been a member of the ACFS since 1966. He has visited China over 40 times, teaching, researching, attending conferences and as part of educational or tourist groups. In particular he has taught several times at the Beijing Foreign Studies University, first from 1964 to 1966, but more recently in 2005 and 2006. He was appointed an Honorary Professor at Beijing Foreign Studies University in April 2007.

Prof Mackerras has written numerous books and articles on China and Asia, especially on its ethnic minorities and theatre, and on Australia-China relations. He was elected a Fellow of the Academy of Humanities of Australia in 1999 and appointed an Officer in the Order of Australia in 2007.

Venue: Yasuko Hiraoka Myer Room, Sidney Myer Asia Centre Swanston Street, University of Melbourne
Date: Monday 30th June 2008
Time: 6:30pm for a 7pm lecture start

Members and guests welcome. Please RSVP with the ACFS office by Friday 27th June 9654 8099 or e-mail to secretary@acfsvic.org

This lecture is supported by Asialink

CHINA COMPLETES MASSIVE EVACUATION FROM QUAKE CENTER

WENCHUAN, Sichuan, June 19 (Xinhua) -- China has finished evacuating 111,476 people from an area near the epic enter of last month's earthquake in Sichuan Province to avoid secondary disasters triggered by heavy rains.

In Wenchuan County, 72,000 people were relocated hours before the rain started on Wednesday night. The three-day mass relocation ended at 8 p.m., just two hours before heavy rain began to fall, said the Aba prefectural work team for disaster prevention.

"Many old people were crying as they trekked out of our home village," said 51-year-old Chen Mingfeng, a resident of Longxi Village, Wenchuan. Chen and the elderly from her village, numbering about 400, moved out of their homes above a mountain to another village on Monday morning.

"We were ready to move at any time. You see, there are rifts on the mountain everywhere," she said.

Now Chen and her family live in a tent and get daily rice rations from the local government. Although the public kitchen is still being built, she said she was grateful for all the government had done.

Xie Xiaoquan, head of the health bureau of Aba, had to disinfect toilets in the makeshift relocation centre every morning and afternoon. "This is an important task," he said. "We won the race with disasters, and we also have to ensure the residents' health."

Wu Zegang, deputy Communist Party secretary of Aba, said the risks of floods and geological disasters such as landslides will rise in the approaching main flood season. "The top priority of our relief work is to transfer residents whose lives are endangered by secondary disasters to safer areas," Wu said.

Emergency workers have built 2,458 temporary houses and put up 34,000 tents for displaced people. The rest of the relocated residents are from nine counties of Aba prefecture, which governs 13 counties including Wenchuan, the epic enter of the May 12 quake. Aba is inhabited mainly by Tibetans and people of the Qiang ethnic group.

In Wenchuan alone, 15,941 people were killed by the quake, which left 7,662 missing and 34,583 injured.



MAKE A DATE



Chinese Fujian puppets ACFS Session
When: Sunday 1:30pm 29 June
Where: Melbourne Chinese Museum



Lecture: Pro. Colin Mackerras
When: 7pm Monday 30th June
Venue: Yasuko Hiraoka Myer Room, Sidney Myer Asia Centre



ACFS Vic. 2008 Annual Dinner
When: 7.00pm Friday 1st August
Where: Dragon Boat On the Yarra

Zhangjiajie, a classic natural beauty

Tower R Liu

In Western countries, when people talk about China, most of them know of Beijing and Shanghai, and for their natural scenery, it seems everyone knows Guilin, Huangshan or beautiful Jiuzhaigou. But hardly anyone knows about Zhanjiajie.

Zhanjiajie is located in the north west of Hunan Province. It was established in 1982 as China's first national park. The heart of Zhangjiajie's scenery is Wulingyuan, which covers 264 square kilometres and includes the Zhangjiajie National Park, the Suoxi Valley and the Mount Tianzi Natural Reserve. In this area you can see typical Karst landforms of the western Hunan type. It has over 3,000 quartz-sandstone peaks of which 243 are a thousand metres high. I was so lucky to have been taken there by my relatives when I visited in early April this year. This is the most beautiful place I have ever seen in my life.

We were driven from Changsha, the capital city of Hunan, to Zhangjiajie, a journey of just over 3 hours, thanks to the newly built freeway. In the past, it was one day's journey by coach. When the car entered the boundary of Wulingyuan, the mountains and rivers suddenly changed to a unique pastoral landform. The mountains, most of which are like big rocks, stand on the land and appear at 80° to 90° angles, which is rare both in China and abroad. The pure clear spring waters flow down from the mountains and form little rivers. The mistral landscapes make it seem like you have landed on another planet.

The Wulingyuan has four distinct seasons. In springtime, there is normally a fair bit of rain in the mornings. Afternoons become clear but sometimes seas of cloud form and look like waterfalls. The hazy fog hangs over and promptly changes into clouds, dimly floating and hiding among the peaks. I was very

lucky to have had the chance to view such wonders when I was there. The spring is the best season to see seas of clouds. But I have been told that red leaf will cover much of the area in October. That promise may lure me to return in autumn next time.



Since 1992, Wulingyuan has been listed on the World Natural Heritage Register by the United Nations (UNESCO). Since then it has been developed into a tourist hot spot. However, from both the biological and the ecological perspectives, the environment has been maintained in its natural, primitive state. It has abundant resources, with over 3,000 species of higher plants and two primitive sub-forests. In the zoogenic circle there are 116 species of terrestrial vertebrate. The area has been well conserved for almost everything.

Today you can take a train or coach from Changsha or nearby cities to get to Zhangjiajie. Also, the international airport built in the 90s is not too far away (at the city of Zhangjiajie, 25km from Wulingyuan). Over 4 million tourists visited Zhangjiajie last year. But the environment is still as beautiful, the mountains and clear waters are as untouched as before.

