

Newsletter

October 2009

Australia-China Friendship Society Victorian Branch Inc.

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ACFS Victorian Branch ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

When: 7pm, 25th November 2008

Where: 4th Floor Meeting Room, Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne

Elections: For the Office Bearers and Committee (See page 7 for Notice of AGM and nomination form)

Guest Speaker: The Hon Robert Smith MLC, President of the Legislative Council, will talk about the Parliamentary Delegation to Jiangsu Province to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the sister state relationship between Jiangsu Province and the State of Victoria which took place earlier this year. This was the President's first trip to China.

Refreshments will be served following questions and discussion. Members are requested to assist in supplying some finger food. Remember the doors will be closed at 7:15pm

Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of Founding PRC

A DAY TO REMEMBER- NEW CHINA'S 60TH BIRTHDAY

*--Dear friends at the ACFS Victorian Branch
Exciting News!*

I was honoured by my sponsors Beijing Foreign Enterprise Service Group Co. Ltd (FESCO) to participate in the parade for the great celebration of New China's 60th Birthday and I'm writing a report below:

First, I was chosen with ten others to participate in the march but due to my health, it was changed to riding on the Friendship float instead- a very great honour indeed.

Along with another 26 friends of China which included a number of Friendship Award holders, Olympic volunteer Award winners, business people who have contributed to China's development and a representative of the CCTV 9 News team, Mr. Edwin Maher (who is a familiar face to Australians as a former newsreader and weather presenter on TV at home), we assembled at the Great Wall Hotel at

01:30am on the day, to be taken to the Workers' Stadium for a security check.

After that, we were shown into the stadium and given some food to eat to give us strength for the day ahead. After two and a half hours we were taken to the Friendship Co-operation and Development float to be driven to the assembly point. That's when I found out that we were on one of 60 or so floats, all with a theme, which included to my delight, an education theme float and an environment float showcasing one of the newest developmental concerns of the Government, Environment Protection.

As well as theme floats, many Provinces and cities had a representative float. We were able to get a close glimpse of the Tianjin float, which featured a lovely model of the new fast train (I've been on it several times and it takes exactly 29 minutes to reach Tianjin) circling on a special little railway around the float. Right behind our float was one representing the Arts with a Chinese opera character, puppetry and so on... as well as floats including of course, Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zheming, and the current President Mr. Hu Jintao.

The early morning had been cloudy and drizzly so we were all worried about the parade, but we needn't have worried. At 10:00am, an hour or before leaving our assembly point, the sun started to shine as if on cue and shone very brightly after that from a cloudless sky. At 11:00am, after all the precision military marches, military hardware featuring China's latest developments and civilian services had passed by the leaders' podium on the Gate of Heavenly Peace facing Tian'anmen Square, on which the great Leader Mao Zedong had declared the establishment of The People's Republic of China 60 years before, our floats began to move!

Great excitement ensued as we moved in stately order towards the feature point of the parade, Tian'anmen Square and the Gate of Heavenly Peace where all the very important leaders of the people were assembled to wave at us and us to them! On our float, we were arranged into two groups to keep the float balanced – group one (which included Edwin Maher in a red shirt for people watching at home in Australia) on the rails at the front of the float, and group two (which included myself) on the back rail. It was like this as we waved at the people standing by the side of the road and at the thousands that marched beside the floats.

Thousands of students and other groups from many walks of life took part and marched by the side of the floats and I was actually able to recognize the small group from FESCO, which included some of my friends and amazingly, some of my past students!

Wow, I couldn't believe my luck at being on a float waving back at them as if in a wonderful dream—only the dream was REAL!!!! What a sensation, what a feeling! I could not believe my eyes!

As we passed Wanfujing Street where the young people who were to later release millions of red balloons were assembled waiting their turn, the excitement increased as we were now only minutes from the focal point – Tian'anmen. Meanwhile, up in the sky, jets and other air force planes, some releasing colourful jet streams which streamed across the sky, flew past in a fabulous salute to the Nation. What a sight they made! We all looked skyward to wave at

them and say "hello" amidst very loud cheers from everyone marching on both sides of the floats.

Then the main point came very quickly- the Gate of Heavenly Peace and Tian'anmen on the other side. Words can't describe the sight, we simply uttered "WOW!" From the corner of my eye I caught a glimpse of the Great Square space covered completely in yellow, gold and red- very symbolic indeed, but we had to curb our inclination to look at the Square in order to pay our respects to the assembled leaders who were waving at us and to take account of TV cameras on the other side.

The Chinese leaders were difficult to recognize from a float moving swiftly past, but we knew they were there of course and it was a VERY GREAT HONOUR to be waving back at them! Unbelievable!!! After Tian'anmen, we proceeded to our disembarkation point in a side street along the wide Chang An Avenue and after lots of good-byes, hugs and swapping of cards, we re-assembled on our bus, to be taken back to our starting point.

The sights and sounds are very difficult to describe in words—one had to be there to appreciate them, so I hope everyone at home was able to view the parade on TV to get a taste of it all.

As for me, a very lucky person indeed, I wish to thank the Australia-China Friendship Society for giving me the honour of representing you all on this incredibly important occasion for China whom we all love, and also most importantly, I wish to give a very BIG THANK-YOU to those wonderful friends at FESCO for making possible the opportunity to participate in this unforgettable, once in a lifetime day.

To finish, I wish New China a very happy 60th Birthday and continued prosperity and development in the years to come!

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Lia Cross, long-time ACFS member (Tian'anmen Square)

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Since our last newsletter, there have been a number of events to mark the 60th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. The National Day Dinner held at the Dragon Boat Res-

restaurant was a successful night, as was the cocktail party hosted by Consul-General Mr Shen Weilian. Both receptions were well attended by business and community leaders, including those from the Chinese community, parliamentarians and other friends.

I also represented the Society at a gala dinner hosted by the Chinese Communities of South Eastern Melbourne at the Gold Leaf restaurant in Springvale. The dinner was attended by the Chinese Ambassador Mr Zhang Junsai, the Consul-General Mr Shen Weilian, former Lord Mayor of Melbourne Mr John So, as well as leaders and representatives of a number of other Chinese community associations in Melbourne.

Congratulations are due to our long-time member and friend Mr Maurice Leong, who recently celebrated his 90th birthday at a cocktail reception at Parliament House in Melbourne. In my speech on behalf of the Society I pointed out that Maurice, and his wife Eunice, were two of the earliest members of the ACFS in the 1950s. Maurice had by then already founded the Chinese Unity Association of Victoria, a welfare and social organisation for expats, and was prominent in the See Yup Society. In 1971 Maurice founded the Chinese Fellowship of Victoria. Maurice has worked for the ACFS for more than 50 years, including the 12 years when he was on the committee. Maurice is considered by many to be a great source of advice on local history and matters connected with Sino-Australian relations, and we are delighted that Maurice still attends so many of our functions.

In August the Society presented a talk by Professor Colin Mackerras on the 5th July riot in Xinjiang. It was a stimulating talk, attended by some 100 members and friends, and was followed by a lively question and answer session at the end.

Earlier this month the Society also hosted a talk by Dr Dennis Woodward of Monash University on the topic of China's military modernisation. Again, the talk was well attended and sparked an interesting discussion at the end. We are grateful to Asia Link which supported this event.

As members may know, unfortunately we had to cancel our annual dinner due to a clash with another important Chinese community event. We apologise to anyone who was inconvenienced by the cancellation. However we are proposing to reschedule the dinner to a date in the new year and I hope to see members and friends there.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held in November, so this is the final newsletter of the incumbent Management Committee. I would like to thank all Executive and Committee members for their hard work throughout the past year. Thanks are also given to the Victorian Consulate of the PRC for the assistance and hospitality accorded to our Society.

I believe that our Society will continue to have much work to do over the next year, especially in light of the ongoing anti-China media reports, and some other anti-China activity.

Our Society's role is to promote friendship and understanding between the Australian and Chinese peoples and I am confident that we can play an important part in fostering friendly relations between our two countries.

I would encourage as many members as possible to attend our November AGM, and look forward to seeing you there.

Louise Clayton
President

Does China's Military Modernisation Pose a Threat?

On Thursday 8 October, the Australia-China Friendship Society (Victoria) held a very successful talk at the AsiaLink Centre in Melbourne. The talk was given by recognised expert Dr Dennis Woodward titled "Does China's military modernisation pose a threat?".

Dr Woodward is currently a Senior Lecturer in Politics at the School of Political and Social Inquiry at Monash University and has a PhD in Chinese politics. His presentation was informative and certainly helped those present to deepen their understanding of the issues involved. Many in the audience asked some very good questions or made contributions to the discussion.

It was suggested by Dr Woodward that the evidence points overwhelmingly towards China not being a threat to other nations and that there is a good case to argue that China's military modernisation is self-defensive in character and not aggressive.

Some important reasons for modernisation were pointed out.

* The 1991 Gulf War underlined a quantum

leap in the technology of the weapons of war. Numbers no longer counted as in the past. The subsequent invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan confirmed this. In a major conflict between states, superior technology and rapid deployment can be decisive.

* There were also the attacks on Yugoslavia and then Serbia under the name of NATO.

* The collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe provided another element of the new situation. The stalemate of the previous period was no longer there.

* China perceived a difficult situation, under a new level of threat in different conditions, and existing deficiencies in her military capability.

For China, the main issue is to maintain territorial integrity. China's military expenditure is perhaps 5 per cent of that spent by the USA, making it clear that China is not engaged in an arms race, but spending enough to discourage attack.

China's military modernisation is not just about hardware. It also involves a change in the way in which the military is organised. Emphasis is being placed on developing smaller units that are more highly trained and able to be deployed more quickly. A situation in the recent past where military organisations were in the position of running enterprises to increase funds is being changed to one where there is reliance on government subsidies and the military focuses its time on military affairs.

A great deal is being invested in learning from other countries and importing new technologies, within the context of learning how to copy and improve, in order to maintain self-reliance and self-sufficiency.

It was also noted that China is the only nuclear power that maintains a no first strike policy, in contrast with the USA that maintains its own pre-emptive strike policy.

Events such as this talk are a good vehicle through which to promote a better understanding of China and build stronger links between the peoples of our two countries.

Joe Montero
Vice President ACFS Vic

Maurice Leong - 90 Years strong

On September 22nd, one of our oldest and most senior members turned 90. At a giant reception held at Queen's Hall, Parliament House on September 10, friends, colleagues and family celebrated Maurice Leong's birthday and his life which has been dedicated to China and Australia-China friendship.

Society President Louise Clayton Ms Lou Clayton spoke on behalf of the ACFS, as did Chinese Consul-General Mr Shen Weilin, Mr James Merlino, Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation and Minister assisting the Premier for Multiculturalism, and Ms Liz Beattie, Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism.

Maurice (and wife Eunice) joined the ACFS in the early 1950s and has been a staunch member ever since. Maurice served on our Committee for many years, as well as working for many Chinese organisations in Victoria. He is in constant demand for advice - government, museums, historic sites or people seeking information on their ancestors. He is considered an authority on the history of the Chinese in Victoria.

He says he has still more goals - travelling home to see friends and family and carrying out research into the history of those who were part of the foundation of the Victorian society we are today.

We all wish Maurice the best of health and happiness in his 91st year and many more into the future.

Editor

Are you lost?

We are updating our database, especially email addresses, to contact you better and quicker. This way, we can tell you of news and events as they happen and contact you if something quick and special comes around.

Please email us your correct email address where we can contact you. If you have changed your address (email, street or postal) in the past 12 months, please let us know your new one.

We look forward to serving you better and above all, staying in touch.

Kind regards, **THE COMMITTEE**

A new book finally details the long-unsung role Chinese workers played in bolstering the allied effort in the first world war, writes **Ed Peters**

Missing In Action

Some were heroes some were villains, but all the volunteers for the Chinese Labour Corps (CLC) were transported halfway around the world to a distant land to take part in a war that could not have been more foreign.

Not so much the unknown Warriors as the "Unknown workers", about 200,000 men – mainly from Shandong Province – played a little known but key role helping the allies in the last years of the first world war, toiling within shell shot of the front line for as little as 10 Yuan a month.

Almost a century after the conflict ended, the CLC is finally receiving the recognition it deserves, thanks to a forthcoming book. *A Good Reputation Endures Forever*, that is the brainchild of Canadian-Chinese author Judy Lam Maxwell.

The title is taken from one of the inscriptions on the headstone of the 2000 or so labourers who died overseas- including 10 shot after being court-martialled and lie buried in Commonwealth cemeteries in Europe.

"I stumbled across the story of the CLC while researching the broader topic of Chinese immigration", says Maxwell, who is coordinating production of a volume that will also include contributions on a variety of related topics by 9 other writers.

"China was never properly acknowledged for its huge manpower contribution to the allied war effort. There is a personal input too, apart from my Chinese ancestry- my father fought at the battle of Passchendale and I have often wondered if he saw any Chinese labourers whilst he was in Europe".

Whilst most members of the CLC were illiterate and left no written record of their part on the war, Maxwell has unearthed numerous official documents and diaries kept by western officers who served with the corps.

"One of the best sources was Dr. Harry Livingstone, who carried out medical inspections while attached to the Canadian Expeditionary Force. He took many fascinating photographs that we'll be including in the book", says Maxwell.

France and Britain – faced with a desperate shortage of able bodied men in the face of appalling casualties recruited Chinese labourers, with Western missionaries often acting as intermediaries. Men from

Shandong were reputed to be industrious and able to cope with the European climate. They were set to work up to 18 hours a day building roads, railways and canals, delivering rations, stevedoring and – after the ceasefire in November 1918 - taking on the mammoth and gruesome task of clearing the battlefields, burying the dead and dealing with unexpected ordinance.

The first labourers were recruited in late 1916. Each CLC volunteer was paid US\$15 recruitment fee and then shipped from the port of Weihaiwei to Europe, having been contracted to work for three to five years. Gang leaders were paid US\$15 per month; clerk interpreters received US\$60. Half of the volunteer's pay was remitted to his family on the mainland and deductions were made for food and accommodation. Officers noted that their men still found enough money to gamble.

Considering they were required to work in such a formidable war, The CLC did remarkably well for non-combatants. They were not intended to be deployed within (about 16 Km) of the front line, but the reality was that Chinese were frequently subjected to enemy action. Hundreds died when transports were torpedoed and hundreds more were killed in bombings and long-range shelling. Many Chinese labourers also died of influenza epidemic that ravaged the world after the war ended.

Compensation for those killed or injured was slim. The authorities paid out US\$100 for the death or total disablement and not more than US\$50 for partial disablement.

While little is known about the individuals of the corps who were plunged into the maelstrom of war and vanished into obscurity afterwards, there are some traces of notable CLC volunteers. Several of them were decorated for their actions, including Wang Yushao who was awarded the meritorious service medal for putting out a fire at an ammunition dump near Cambrai in June 1919.

"The corps was one of the real successes in the first world war", says Maxwell. "Although a latecomer to the western front the CLC was also one of the last formations to quit the field. Many of these Chinese workers remained in France, although most were repatriated".

"The experiences of these once in a lifetime opportunities would have forever influenced them. China should be acknowledged for their contribution, but 90 years later seems way too late".

A Good Reputation Endures Forever: Recapturing the History of the Chinese Labour Corps is due to be published by Hong-Kong based Blacksmith Books this autumn. *form South China Morning Post*

AUSTRALIA – CHINA FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY, VICTORIAN BRANCH INCORPORATED NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULE CHANGE: HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Currently, sub-rule 4(11) of the Society's Rules provides for "Honorary Life Membership" as follows:

"(11) In addition to ordinary membership there shall be one other grade of membership known as Honorary Life Membership. This will be granted by motion at the Annual General Meeting of the Association to members who have contributed significantly to the objects of the Association over many years."

The Objects of the Association are those contained in Rule 3:

"To promote friendship and understanding between the peoples of Australia and China."

At the Committee's recommendation, it is proposed that the Rule be amended (as set out below) for the following reasons:

1. The current definition confuses Honorary Membership and Life Membership. In practice the Society has only ever conferred Life Membership.
2. The current criterion is unsatisfactory as conceivably, Honorary Life Membership could be conferred on a non-member of the Society on the basis of he or she contribution to the Society's objects even though the person may not have contributed to the Society's affairs.
3. The procedure is unsatisfactory as Honorary Life Membership is to be conferred only by way of a motion and at an AGM.
4. It is therefore proposed to amend the Rule to provide for one additional class of membership, namely life membership, and a more practical means of conferring same.
5. An alteration to the Rules requires a Special Resolution of which 21 days notice has been given prior to a General Meeting.

Accordingly, Notice is given of the following Special Resolution for the AGM:

"That Rule 4(11) be amended to read as follows:

"(11) In addition to ordinary membership there shall be one other class of membership to be known as Life Membership. Life Membership may be conferred upon a member of the Association by resolution of the Committee upon the written nomination of another member of the Association addressed to the President or Secretary and the Committee shall in considering the nomination have regard to the following:

- (a) whether the member has continuous membership of at least 30 years;
- (b) the nature and extent of the nominee's contribution to the affairs and activities of the Association whether by the holding of office or otherwise; and
- (c) the nature and extent of the nominee's contribution to the objects of the Association.

A Life Member shall enjoy all the privileges and benefits of membership but shall not be required to pay subscriptions."

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of AUSTRALIA-CHINA FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY, VICTORIAN BRANCH INCORPORATED

Notice is given that the Annual General Meeting of the Australia-China Friendship Society Victorian Branch Incorporated will be held on Wednesday 25th November 2009, at 7pm at Ross House, 4th Floor, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne.

The Special Business of the meeting will be to consider the Special Resolution, notice of which is given in this newsletter.

The Ordinary Business of the meeting will be to confirm the minutes of the last AGM, to receive the financial statement and the reports for the last financial year and to elect the Officers and Committee members of the Society.

ACFS Victorian Branch NOMINATION FORM: 2009

All financial members of the Society are eligible to nominate for the office of President, Vice President (two positions), Treasurer, Secretary and Ordinary Committee member (up to twelve positions).

Nominations must be in writing and must be signed by the candidate. If the number of nominations exceed the number of vacancies a ballot will be held at the Annual General Meeting.

NAME of NOMINEE: (Print)

POSITION:

SIGNATURE OF NOMINEE:

CONTACT DETAILS Tel:..... Mobile:.....

E-MAIL:

NOMINATOR: (Optional) (Print) (Sign)

This nomination form must be delivered to: The Secretary, ACFS Vic Branch, Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne, 3000, not less than fourteen days before the date fixed for the Annual General Meeting.

All nominees are requested to enclose a brief written introduction about themselves with the nomination form. The introduction will be circulated to members at the AGM prior.

THE AUSTRALIA-CHINA FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY'S AIMS

Cultivate friendly relations with the people of China by fostering the study of China's history, language, culture, social and political structure.

Promote mutual understanding through friendly exchanges between the people of China and Australia. Strengthening ties with travel, the exchange of ideas, information and trade between the two countries.

To seek to clarify misunderstandings between the peoples of China and Australia, which may arise from the misrepresentation of information.

PRESIDENT: Ms. Louise Clayton
VICE PRESIDENT: Mr. Joe Montero
Mr. Tower Liu
SECRETARY: Mr. Neil Barker
TREASURER: Mr. Dong Chen
COMMITTEE: Mr John Breheny
Mr Craig Skinner
Ms Bernadette O'Connor
Mr Anthony Leong
Mr Wellington Lee
Ms Suzette Murray
Mr Serge Orsor
Ms Diana Tang
Mr Alexander McLeod
Dr James Doery
Mr Phil Parker
Mr Barry Pond

ACFS (VICTORIA) Inc. A0038007M ABN NO. 39 746 574 225

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Family Name (Mr /Mrs/Ms/Other).....

Given Names

Address.....

P/code.....

Phone

Fax

Email.....

VICTORIAN MEMBERSHIP RATES

Family \$40.00

Single \$30.00

Concession \$15.00

Corporate on Application

I/We support the Society's aims:Signature/s

I/We enclose the sum of \$ for my/our membership subscription.

YOUR DONATION WOULD BE GRATEFULLY RECEIVED

Please forward cheques to the Treasurer at the address in the left corner below

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