

APHAFIC held its 2014 winter meeting at the La Jolla/Riford Branch Library , 7555 Draper Ave, La Jolla, CA from 10:30am to 12:30pm on February 22. A total of 50 people attended. This meeting featured an invited talk on "Chinese-American Veterans of the Yangtze River Patrol and Asiatic Fleet by Mr. Murray Lee, the curator of Chinese American History at the San Diego Chinese Historical Museum and a WWII veteran followed by a trip report by Professor Prof. Ronghui (Lily) Xu, one of our board members on '1213 Volunteer Program' (一爱一生志愿者同盟) based on her meeting with members of the organization and WWII old soldiers in Nanjing in December, 2013

Murray Lee indicated that many Chinese American veterans can trace their origins to the employment of Chinese on many of the U.S. Navy's ships of the Asiatic Fleet stationed in China prior to the Japanese invasion of China, in the late 1930s. The story of three of these men: Tak Ping Huen, Chen Yea Hwa and Jimmy Howo was based on records saved by their sons.

The U. S. Navy needed to have men to serve as stewards and cooks aboard their vessels. The Asiatic Fleet had difficulty getting white sailors to perform these tasks so they looked to local Asian help and enlisted Chinese and Filipinos. Many of these men had families. They suffered long separations as they served aboard these ships during the turbulent war years. As a result of Section 702 of the Nationality Act of 1940, many of these men were able to acquire American citizenship and immigrate to the U.S..

Tak Ping Huen: James Huen, one of his sons, tells how his father joined the Navy in 1932 as a mess attendant aboard the USS Mindanao while in Hong Kong. For four years after the war began, while he served with Navy, the family lived in the village in Enping District. Later they moved to the Portuguese Colony of Macao. In 1945 right after the war they all reunited and Tak Ping was given his U.S. citizenship aboard ship in Shanghai. He became a Chief Petty Officer (CPO) Steward and from 1946 to 1948 they were transferred to a large naval base in Tsingtao. In 1948, the family of seven moved to San Diego and settled on Coronado while Tak Ping served as a steward to Navy captains.

Chen Yea Hwa: He ended up with Hwa as last name due to the misunderstanding of the order of Chinese name: Last name first. He served as mess attendant third class on various ships from 1928-1941. He was on US warship USS Panay, which was sunk in 1937 off Nanking, after being attacked by Japanese aircraft, even though it was displaying American flag and clearly painted as American. Captain Hughes, and sailors ferried 69 survivors with life boat, which was also attacked by Japanese fire. Sailors did not know if war declared between US and Japanese at that point. Chen then transferred to USS Luzon, Yangtze River Gunboat. In November 1941. He left Shanghai for the Philippines and was later scuttled at Corregidor. Chen Yea Hwa was imprisoned by the Japanese and went on Bataan Death in March/April, 1942. He came to Coronado in 1948. After 34 years of service, he retired from the U.S. Naval Amphibious Base in Coronado. Nanson Hwa, one of their children, an active Chinese community leader, was at the meeting.

Jimmy Howo from Yantai, China, served on Asiatic fleet from 1926-1948. He signed on to USS at Chifu, served as busboy and patrolled along the coast of China. He later transferred to other USS warships, like Mindanao, etc. He was reenlisted on USS Pittsburgh, later USS Houston. In 1933, he transferred to USS Augusta off Oahu and in 1940 returned to USS Houston. In 1941 his wife and two sons went to Shanghai. They remained there during the Japanese occupation and endured much hardship. He later transferred to 7th fleet during Japanese's surrender, and witnessed signing on the Missouri, as he was a steward of a high ranking officer. In 1949 when the Communists took over China, he brought his family to US. In Washington he was employed as a chief steward with John L. Sullivan, the Secretary of Navy. In 1955 he became ill on a flight to San Diego and was admitted to Balboa Naval Hospital where he died of hypertension cardiovascular disease. He was only 49 years old with 29 1/2 years of military service.. Mrs. Howo at age 104 in 2014 still lives in San Diego and was spotted occasionally in Chinese restaurants.

Many questions were raised for Sino-Japanese war during the Q&A session. One question for Murray Lee was where he was during WWII. Murray served in the US Merchant Marines on the Atlantic. But he was discharged from the Coast Guard. He was at the celebration of V-J Day(victory over Japan Day) event in Time Square New York where the famous picture of an American sailor kissing a woman in a white dress (V-J Day in Time Square: KISS) was taken on August 14, 1945. Discussion soon shifted to Diao Yu islands, the disputed island which was supposed to be returned to ROC by Japan according to the 1943 Cairo declaration. Jack Meng explained that after the WWII, US got administration rights of Okinawa. In 1972 pursuant to the Okinawa Reversion Treaty, the US transferred administrative control of Diaoyu Islands to Japan over strong protestations from China

Professor Ronghui (lily) Xu presented a report of her trip to Nanjing, meeting with members of 1213 volunteer program-Nanking branch (the SDCHM winter 2013 newsletter). She indicated that the trend in China now is to rediscover WWII; this organization cares for still surviving WWII veterans. Many of them became homeless due to renouncement by their family members during the Cultural Revolution. During cultural revolution, they were sent out of prison and returned to their birth places so they, as former nationalist officers, were prevented to congregate during the power struggle between Liu Shao-qi and Mao Tze-dong. They were lucky to not have to be imprisoned all their lives.

Lily introduced the Nanjing civil resistance against Japan museum, which has collection of hand prints and artifacts of old soldiers, war time Chinese and Japanese magazines, covers and donation receipts to the war efforts, including one by Kung Hsiang-his (孔祥熙), the Minister of Finance of Republic of China during wartime and one of the richest men in China. Mr. Zhao Qian, head of the museum, presented a calligraphy scroll to APHAFIC.

She also brought back to us copies of magazine: INSIGHT with its mission of revealing true history of Sino-Japanese War in China and certificate of appreciation to our donors. Our donations were given to Project for warming winter of Sichuan army corps (川軍團暖冬計畫) for old soldiers in country village of Xingwen county, Sichuan province (四

川興文縣農村老戰士) and to Mr. Zhang Guangcai (張廣才), 94 year old, one old soldier of Sino-Japanese War.

Question was raised on the living conditions of Sino-Japanese War veterans : Are most of them living by themselves or with their families? Most of them live in senior apartment provided by the government. For those vets live outside of the facility, the organization provided financial support to upgrade their living conditions like Mr. Zhang Guangcai (張廣才).



Murray Lee presented his talk on Chinese American served in US Navy ship in Yangtze River prior to WWII. (photo by Fei Lu)



Certificates of appreciation from 1213 volunteer program, presented by professor Lily Xu to donors : Nancy Lo, USCPFA (Lilian Wang), APHAFIC and July Lu (accepted by Jack Meng) (photo by Fie Lu)



Jimmy Howo

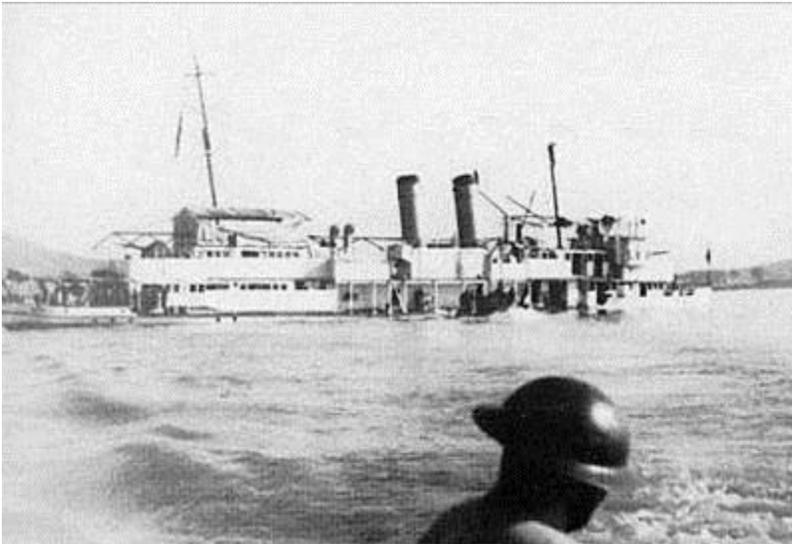


Chen Yea Hwa



Tak Ping Huen and family with James on the left

provided by Murray Lee



Panay patrol boat in Yantze river, December, 1927



Mr. Zhang Guangcai (張廣才), one old soldier of Sino-Japanese War, showing his letter of appreciation for our donation to him, saluted to us on 2014/2/20 (photo by Mr. Zhao Qian (趙汧), the vp of Nanjing 1213 program).