

The Asian Reporter

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Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

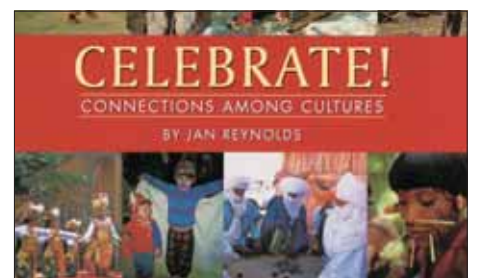


CELEBRATING HERITAGE. Audrey Hinatsu of the Fujinami Kai Dance Group performs Ehigasa (the Parasol Dance) for attendees at The Asian Reporter Foundation's Ninth Annual Scholarship & Awards Banquet. The event, held in advance of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, featured cultural entertainment and recognized the efforts and accomplishments of area Asian Americans. See our special Heritage Month section on page 9. Look for our special banquet issue on stands and online on May 15. (AR Photo/John Wong)



Jimmy Mirikitani's 60-year journey

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Connections among cultures

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Amy Tan: Mixing memory and fiction

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Wang is China's most popular surname

BEIJING (AP) — In a surprise turn-around, the Wangs win. A new study has debunked the notion that Li is China's most popular surname, state media said.

A 2006 survey of 296 million people in 1,110 counties and cities by the Chinese Academy of Sciences found that Li lead the ranks of family names, with about 7.4 percent of the population sharing the moniker. But a recent analysis of household registration data covering nearly all of China's population revealed that Wang is in fact the most common name in the country, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

It said data released by the Chinese Ministry of Public Security showed that 92.881 million mainland Chinese are called Wang — equivalent to nearly one-third of the total United States population. Wangs make up 7.25 percent

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Wu urges commemorative postage stamp for Hazel Ying Lee

United States Congressman David Wu of Oregon has urged the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee of the U.S. Postal Service to commission a commemorative stamp in honor of Hazel Ying Lee, a Portland native and the first Chinese-American female aviator.

"Hazel Ying Lee embodied an unparalleled patriotic spirit and a peerless dedication to her dream," said Wu. "Her commitment to her country at a time when women rarely received adequate recognition for their important role in the war effort reflects her compassion and humanity. Celebrating her life and achievements with a commemorative postage stamp is a fitting and altogether appropriate way to recognize this outstanding American."

Born in 1912, Lee took flying lessons from the Chinese Flying Club of Portland to earn her pilot's license in 1932. At that time less than one percent of pilots in the United States were women.

Lee travelled to China in 1933 with the goal of joining the Chinese Air Force. Despite a shortage of pilots, she was denied the opportunity to fly because she was a woman. Undaunted, she settled in Guangzhou and flew for a private airline. After the Japanese invasion of China, she escaped to Hong Kong and then back to the



United States.

In 1943 Lee became the first Chinese-American woman to fly for the U.S. military when she joined the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), a group of female pilots assembled in an effort to sustain the war effort and free up male pilots for combat. She was fatally wounded in a plane crash in 1944, near Great Falls, Montana, when another aircraft collided with hers in inclement weather.

Rotary offers 2008 Korea study opportunity

Rotary International District 5100 will in the spring of 2008 offer a month-long Group Study Exchange (GSE) based in the port cities of Masan and Ulsan, South Korea. The opportunity is open to business professionals who are U.S. citizens, age 25 to 40, and live in District 5100 (northern Oregon from Salem metro to Baker City, plus southwest Washington).

Participants will meet Koreans working in similar occupations, learn how business is conducted there, and share information as ambassadors of their country and occupation. Airfare, room, and most meals are paid by Rotary, but each GSE team member will need a few hundred dollars for incidental expenses. The trip will also include tourism and cultural opportunities.

Applications must be postmarked by June 29, 2007. Applicants must be available for interviews in mid-July 2007. The GSE will take place March 22 through April 21, 2008.

To download an application, visit www.clubrunner.ca/5100 and choose "Group Study Exchange." To learn more, contact Vicki Yates at (503) 656-9792, e-mail vicki@yateslaw.com, Amy Johnson at (541) 886-2871, e-mail jajohnson@wallowa.us, or Stewart Martin at (503) 368-7474, e-mail stewmartin@nehalem.tel.net.

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Royal Rosarian remains strong advocate for Khmer community issues

By Maileen Hamto
The Asian Reporter

As a teenager watching the Grand Floral Parade at the Portland Rose Festival, Kilong Ung became infatuated with the idea of someday joining the ranks of the Royal Rosarians, an elite group of men and women who are the official goodwill ambassadors of the City of Portland.

At the time Ung, who is now president of the Cambodian-American Community of Oregon (CACO), had been in the United States for only a few years. As a young boy, he survived the killing fields of the Khmer Rouge, and escaped Cambodia to join thousands of refugees in Thailand.

Witnessing the pageantry of the Rose Festival parade, he remembers being impressed by the commanding presence of the Royal Rosarians, dressed in flawless white suits, hats, gloves, and, of course, the signature red rose. "I told my foster parents that when I grow up, I'd like to be one of those guys. They just looked at me and smiled," he said.

Ung's boyhood dream recently became reality, as he was inducted into honorary knighthood as a Royal Rosarian, due to his tireless leadership of CACO and raising awareness about refugee issues in Portland.

Karin Hansen, the wife of Portland Mayor Tom Potter, made the necessary introductions for Ung to be in the running as a Royal Rosarian. He joins an elite group of men and women who represent the best qualities of the City of Roses: harmony, good will, and friendship.

"Cleveland High School has always been special to me, but now (in connection with the Royal Rosarians) it is profoundly



special," Ung said of the knighting ceremony. "How likely is it that a Cleveland High School graduate is



REFUGEE TO ROSARIAN. Pictured at a refugee camp during the summer of 1979 are Kilong Ung (center, without shoes), Van Mealy Touch (left, Kilong's brother-in-law), Sivheng Ung (right, Kilong's sister), and Mike Carroll (in white shirt), a World Vision volunteer. (Photo courtesy of the Ung family) At right is recently knighted Royal Rosarian Kilong Ung on the golf course. (AR Photo/Maileen Hamto)

knighthood by a Rose Festival Queen chosen from Cleveland High School? I graduated from Cleveland in 1983, Queen Grace Neal graduated from Cleveland last year. It is even more special that my wife Lisa, who was by my side during the knighting, also graduated from Cleveland. If that is not special enough, Mayor Tom Potter, who was my ceremonial escort, is also a Cleveland alumnus."

Story of survival

Ung is one of only a handful of Asians who are part of the Royal Rosarians, and his path to success is underscored by a history of living in abject poverty, homelessness, starvation, fear, and torture.

He endured the brutal and inhumane conditions in the killing fields of Cambodia for several years. Separated from family, he labored around the clock in mines. After the Vietnamese drove the Khmer Rouge out of Cambodia, Ung was reunited with his elder sister Sivheng. Amid the anarchy caused by the invasion of the Vietnamese

armies in 1979, she orchestrated a plan to escape Cambodia with her little brother. Crossing the border to Thailand proved to be an arduous and treacherous journey.

"We did our best to catch fish, eels, frogs, grasshoppers, et cetera, by hand along the highway. Food was scarce because everyone was scavenging for whatever available," Ung wrote in a draft of his memoirs. "We only travelled in daylight. Morning was the most opportunistic time to travel because there were more people out searching for food and other survival necessities. We would walk all morning on a war-ruined highway and settled in just off the road in the afternoon. We pretended to be squatters."

Path to success, road to healing

Living in the refugee camps in Thailand wasn't easy for Ung and his siblings. When they received sponsorship to live in the U.S., Ung quickly had to learn how to be successful in his new home. Following his arrival to the United States, he worked

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May is Japanese-film heaven for Portland cineastes

Lovers of Japanese cinema will enjoy an embarrassment of riches in May as Portland's Northwest Film Center presents two showcases of films from the trans-Pacific cinematic superpower. Works by master director Kenji Mizoguchi, along with a sampling of films by contemporary directors, will be shown at the Northwest Film Center's Whitsell Auditorium, located in the Portland Art Museum at 1219 S.W. Park Avenue.

"Japanese Currents: New Cinema from Japan" will feature contemporary Japanese films from 2005 and 2006, as well as a program of short films and a free public lecture on the anime industry.

"Mizoguchi Masterpieces" will offer a major retrospective of the films of director Kenji Mizoguchi, who, in a career ranging from the silent era to such late classics as *Ugetsu* and *Sansho the Bailiff*, created one of the most admired bodies of work in world cinema.

Schedules for both series follow. To learn more, call (503) 221-1156 or visit <www.nwfilm.org>.

"Japanese Currents: New Cinema from Japan"

■ May 3, 7:00pm: *Paprika*. Director Satoshi Kon's anime film explores a future world in which a revolutionary psychotherapy device called the "DC-Mini" allows users to cast themselves into the dreams of others. (Satoshi Kon, 2006, 89 mins.)

■ May 4, 7:00pm: *The Great Yokai War*. An eight-year-old boy finds himself leading an epic quest when he is chosen as the next defender of justice and peace, and the previously invisible world of the *yokai* (supernatural beings that play tricks on humans) reveals itself to him. (Takashi Miike, 2005, 124 mins.)

■ May 4, 10:00pm: "Mirrorball: Made in Japan." A program of short promotional films, music videos, and animation provides a dizzying bento box of experimentation and visual creativity. (75 mins.)

■ May 5 & 6, 1:00pm (Sat.), 4:00pm (Sun.): *Spring Snow*. Based on the novel by



ARTIST OF THE FLOATING WORLD. Two showcases of Japanese films – "Mizoguchi Masterpieces" and "Japanese Currents: New Cinema from Japan" – will be shown during the month of May at the Northwest Film Center's Whitsell Auditorium. *Utamaro and His Five Women* (pictured above) will be shown on May 13 at 7:00pm. (Photo courtesy of the Northwest Film Center)

Yukio Mishima, *Spring Snow* tells a story of doomed love between two children of noble families who grew up together, but who are kept apart by an arranged marriage. (Isao Yukisada, 2005, 150 mins.)

■ May 5, 4:00pm: *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*. The long-awaited sequel to an anime classic, the film offers an intellectually engaging and esoteric vision of a society overrun by technology. (Mamoru Oshi, 2005, 99 mins.)

■ May 5, 6:00pm: "So You Think You Want to Work in Anime?" Portlander Caroline Junko King, who worked in Japan as an animator and director, offers a behind-the-scenes look at the world of Japanese animation. (40 mins.)

■ May 5 & 6, 7:15pm (Sat.), 1:00pm (Sun.): *Always – Sunset on Third Street*. The winner of 13 out of 14 of Japan's Academy Awards, including Best Film, *Always* uses digital wizardry to re-create

the Tokyo of the 1950s, when the formerly war-ravaged country was filled with unbounded — and sometimes unfounded — optimism. (Takashi Yamazaki, 2005, 132 mins.)

■ May 5, 10:00pm: *Yaji and Kita: The Midnight Pilgrims*. The world's first gay samurai road-movie musical. 'Nuff said. (Kankuro Kudo, 2005, 124 mins.)

■ May 6, 7:15pm: *Hana*. Director Hirokazu Kore-eda (*Nobody Knows*) creates a tender samurai film set on the edges of the historically true tale of the "47 Ronin." Laid-back samurai Soza is supposed to avenge his father, but he's much more interested in the beautiful Osa and would rather seek serenity. (Hirokazu Kore-eda, 2006, 127 mins.)

"Mizoguchi Masterpieces"

■ May 11 & 13, 7:00pm (Fri.), 5:00pm (Sun.): *Sisters of the Gion*. Widely regarded as the finest Japanese film of the prewar era, *Sisters of the Gion* focuses on

two geisha in Kyoto's red light district who differ in their attitudes toward men, but share a sad fate. (1936, 70 mins.)

■ May 11 & 12, 8:30pm (Fri.), 9:30pm (Sat.): *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemums*. An exploration of female self-sacrifice set in the world of 19th-century Japanese kabuki theater, *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemums* follows a young actor on his own who is joined by a former servant who offers him unquestioning loyalty and devotion. (1939, 115 mins.)

■ May 13, 7:00pm: *Utamaro and His Five Women*. A fictionalized biography of a famous artist, *Utamaro* is set in the "floating world" of bars and bordellos in 17th-century Edo. (1946, 95 mins.)

■ May 17, 7:00pm: *Ugetsu*. Ranked among the greatest films of all time, *Ugetsu* tells the story of an ambitious 16th-century village potter who abandons his devoted wife for the wealth of the city and the illicit pleasures of a ghost woman. The film won the 1953 Venice Film Festival Silver Lion. (1953, 96 mins.)

■ May 20, 7:00pm: *The Life of Oharu*. Based on one of Japan's most revered novels, *The Life of Oharu* established Mizoguchi's international reputation with its exquisite composition and breathtaking sequence shots. The story concerns a beautiful 17th-century Kyoto court lady expelled for dallying with a lower-class man (Toshiro Mifune) and gradually reduced to prostitution and begging. (1952, 135 mins.)

■ May 24, 7:00pm: *Street of Shame*. The plights and dreams of women working in a post-World-War-II Tokyo brothel come under Mizoguchi's sympathetic scrutiny as rumors fly about an impending anti-prostitution law. (1956, 88 mins.)

■ May 27, 7:00pm: *Sansho the Bailiff*. Early Japan comes to life in a moving period drama based on a folktale about a provincial governor whose forced exile affects his wife and children. (1954, 125 mins.)

Royal Rosarian remains strong advocate for Khmer community issues

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hard to achieve success by earning a solid education at Reed College, securing a sound professional life, while also staying active in civic issues.

His work in the local Cambodian community has engaged youth and families in preserving Khmer heritage through various activities. This past weekend, CACO volunteers and supporters brought issues of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal to the forefront through a two-day forum that included panel discussions by Khmer Rouge genocide survivors and scholars of Cambodian history and culture.

"Almost 2 million people died as a result of the atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge. Despite



ROYAL ROSARIAN. Kilong Ung, current president of the Cambodian-American Community of Oregon, was recently knighted as a Royal Rosarian. (Photo courtesy of the Ung family)

widespread acknowledgment that the leaders of the Khmer Rouge committed crimes against humanity, there has yet to be an international war crimes tribunal to hold them accountable. As survivors and escapees, we want to be able to tell our stories," he said.

The United Nations and the Cambodian govern-

ment are scheduled to prosecute surviving senior Khmer Rouge leaders sometime this year, he said.

"No one knows what effect this may have on the Cambodian population, though community leaders hope it will bring a sense of closure and healing to the survivors of the Khmer Rouge regime," Ung said.

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