



# LOS ANGELES-GUANGZHOU

## MONITOR

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### Sister Cities, Sisters' Love

By Yong Yang

As the 2008 Laurence Liu Scholar from Guangzhou, I was invited by Jeffrey Cheung, President of the Los Angeles - Guangzhou Sister City Association to represent Guangzhou to participate in the Hollywood Christmas Parade on November 30th. The Parade, the second largest one in Los Angeles area, took place on the Sunday of the Thanksgiving week. Having had just spent my first Thanksgiving Day in the United States, I was excited to have this opportunity to experience a sister city program in Los Angeles.

Organized by Councilman Tom LaBonge, the participation of the Los Angeles Sister Cities Committee in the Hollywood Parade began four years ago. It aims to



Yong Yang represented Guangzhou at the Hollywood Christmas Parade.

demonstrate and celebrate the friendship between Los Angeles and its 21 sister cities around the world. Two sight-

seeing buses, beautifully decorated as the Sister Cities' floats, carried the representatives of **Story continues on page 2**

### ANNIVERSARY Reception at Chinese Consulate

By Katherine Whitman

To celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between The People's Republic of China and the United States, Consul General Zhang Yun hosted a reception at the consulate on December 12, 2008. Guest at the reception included many city, county and state public officials, local dignitaries and representatives of sister city organizations from around Southern California including

the largest, Los Angeles-Guangzhou Sister City Association.

It was on December 15, 1978 that the United States and China announced that the two governments would establish diplomatic relations on January 1, 1979. Many of the speakers at the reception told of the history leading up to this historic moment including the importance of ping pong diplomacy.

In his remarks Ambassador Zhang called for strengthened

cooperation between the two countries in a time of difficult global challenges. He also delivered the message that the U.S. and China should see each other as partners rather than rivals.

At the end of the formal presentation over a delicious buffet, over a delicious buffet many old friends gathered to reminisce about the successes of the past 30 years of diplomatic relations and look ahead to continuing cooperation.

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## Sister Cities, Sisters' Love

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the sister cities. Dressed up in the traditional costumes of different countries with a sister city banner, we started our journey at 4:00 pm from Councilman Labonge's office. Although it was the first time I ever met the friends of other sister cities, I greeted them warmly and through the friendly conversation learned much about them and the cities they represented.

An older gentleman sitting next to me introduced himself as the Chairman of Los Angeles -- Nagoya Sister City Committee. He told me that this was his first time to participate in the Hollywood Parade, and the two beautiful girls he brought with him were both Miss Nagoya.

Amazed by the fabulous costumes of the sister cities' representatives, I tried but failed to identify each sister city by the costumes they worn. However, I did succeed in taking as many pictures of this wonderful "international fashion show" as my digital camera can possibly store.

The Parade attracted a large crowd of audience, many of them arrived hours before the Parade started to get a good position on the street. Family members came together, and some people even brought their pets.

We became more excited when the float arrived the start point. At this time, Councilman Tom Lange jumped on the float and gave us a detailed instruction on what we should do: say thank you to everyone and enjoy the sister cities' love.

When we finally entered the Parade route,



**Yong Yang represented Guangzhou at the Hollywood Christmas Parade.**

we all got off. Walking beside the float, we waved our hands and handed out brochures to the audience. "Merry Christmas", we greeted them as loudly as we could. People responded to us very friendly. All of sudden, one man in the audience pointed at me and started shouting, "Guangzhou, Guangzhou, I have been to Guangzhou!" He waved his hands to me enthusiastically. I felt so touched that I waved back to him and said, "Welcome to Guangzhou again".

The audience became more crowded as

we marched on the route. We paraded in one line just like one family. Some of us shook hands with audience and some sang their traditional songs.

The Parade lasted about one hour, the entire event was full of joy, laughter and friendship. When it ended, we reluctantly said good-bye to each other. This is a lifetime experience, an experience that will linger in my mind forever.

## Learning Characters and School Pressure

**By Nancy Pine**

Light poured through the solid bank of windows of the first grade classroom in Xuzhou as Xu, my research partner, and I squeezed into chairs offered by two students. Sitting in the back of the room, brightly clad children in winter jackets of yellow, reds, and greens spread out before us. The girls' jet-black hair, festooned with orange and red ribbons, was an antidote to the unheated concrete building. It was March and decidedly wintry. The Chinese teacher pointed to one of six characters on the blackboard.

"Jin," she said, pointing to the first. "Jin," responded the 60 first graders.

"Sheng," she said, pointing to the second. "Sheng," they repeated, strengthening their volume.

"Notice the strokes of this character. What do you know about it?" Hands shot up. "Zhang Qian, you tell us."

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**Elementary Classroom During Lessons.**

## Learning Characters and School Pressure

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A rhythm built. Teacher, one student, teacher, 60 students, teacher, one student. On they went analyzing character parts.



Elementary Classroom During Lessons.

"Now practice them yourselves," she directed, pointing to the board. Xu and I watched 60 first graders engrave the characters in the air with their fingers, their strong voices calling out the name of each stroke—shù, héngzhé, héng, héng, shùwāngou. Vigorous finger movements accompanied each stroke, made in the right order and the right direction—top to bottom, left to right, inside to outside.

Loud-speaker music poured through the open windows. To my surprise the students put down their pencils and massaged the acupuncture points around their eyes. I looked at Xu. "It's a way to relax," he said. "I can't believe they still do this. I used to do those exercises when I was in school 25 years ago. It relieves some of the pressure they feel." In a meeting with the school director, she had also emphasized that they broke the lessons into 20-minute sections to take a relaxation break for a min-

ute or two.

Xu had said more than once how difficult the move from preschool to first grade is in China. In his home, where I spent a lot of time, I watched his first grade son complete two hours of homework each night. "It's hard for the children and for us parents," Xu said. "Suddenly they can't play the way they did in kindergarten. They have to pay attention and to sit up tall all day." Even on the night of his sixth birthday, his son and a friend who had come to enjoy the celebration had to write the characters of the day, read lesson passages six times, reread the new characters, and write them until they knew them. When they had demonstrated their proficiency, the party with long noodles could start. "If they don't begin to study like this now," said Xu, "they'll never get into college." I had heard other friends say the same thing.

The teacher refocused the six year olds on the characters and pointed out the water radical in several. A radical is somewhat like the root of a word. With fuchsia chalk she traced over them in three of the new characters and pressed the children to study them with their eyes, trace over them with their pencils in their well-used paperback textbooks, and memorize them. She then reviewed characters that differ from each other by only one or two small strokes, writing the similar ones on the board and again carving over the confusing strokes with fuchsia chalk. Changing pace she had them read aloud the four-sentence story in their books, again and again urging them to pay attention to the

characters. They responded with gusto.

The government has tried to reduce school pressure in various ways such as student-friendly curriculum. In 2002 it tried to eliminate Saturday tutoring sessions. Some parents breathed a sigh of relief. A friend and his wife began to take excursions with their third grade son. But other parents and the tutors, afraid their children would fall behind others, urged the reinstatement of these sessions. Within a few months their son was the only one in his class no longer attending. They gave in and sent him back.

As we left the school I thought about the intensity of learning I had just witnessed compared to the more informal teaching atmosphere in California elementary classrooms I knew. From the beginning of the Han dynasty in the 3rd century B.C.E., rigorous imperial exams had provided China with its civil servants. By the 17th century men studied years for these exams, beginning with classical Chinese at age six and continuing daily drill, translating, and memorizing through their twenties or thirties or longer, until they were ready to tackle the exams. Very few passed. Today, Xu pointed out, school topics are modern, but fierce competition continues, and as before, failure translates into dishonoring your family. As we nosed our bicycles into the street he quipped over his shoulder, "There are 2000 years of pressure to do well in school."

Excerpt from a forthcoming book, *1000 Characters and Counting: A Journey through China's Educational System*  
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## Guangzhou Offers Incentives To Attract Foreign Talents

By Ka Kui Kwong

The world economy is slowing, and the global financial crises has pushed millions of people out of work. But in China, some cities are offering incentives to attract both overseas Chinese and foreign talents to fill high level jobs and to start business.

The Guangzhou Municipal Government recently announced a comprehensive package in an effort to attract foreign talents. The package became effective on January 1, 2009, making Guangzhou a strong competitor of Shanghai which has

unveiled a similar program.

A \$300 million fund was set up by Guangzhou to attract top talents and professionals in a wide range of industries including information and biological technologies, logistics management, digital equipment and machinery manufacturing, accounting and finance. The incentives offered include cash awards, living and housing subsidies, tax reduction and government sponsored business loan of up to \$750,000.

As China's economy boomed over the past three decades, the country struggled to

find experienced managers and professionals. Even though thousands of Chinese factory workers have lost their jobs recently, demand for professionals remains strong, as the country works to recast itself as a developed industrial economy, instead of just being a manufacturing center.

"Guangzhou offers a variety of incentives and will try its best to provide foreign talents with good opportunities and favorable conditions," said Mayor Zhang Guangning at a press conference announcing the program.



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## A Visit of Director Mr. Li Ming



Li Ming (left) with Jeffrey Cheung.

### By Jeffrey Cheung

Since its inception in 1981, the LAGSCA has worked closely with its counterpart in China - Guangzhou Foreign Affairs Office (GZFAO) - on many exciting programs.

Our Laurence Liu Scholarship has sponsored ten GZFAO staff members for training programs in Los Angeles, while GZFAO has hosted all the delegations LAGSCA has sent to Guangzhou since 1980s and provided invaluable liaison services which are instrumental in the development of the sister city friendship.

Many of us have fond memories of working with former GZFAO Director General Li Wenzhou in 1980s and Fang Xiaoming in early 2000s. Our long time friendship and collaboration with GZFAO has become a legacy, and one of the key factors leading to the success of numerous sister city exchange programs. We are delighted that this legacy is now being continued by Mr. Li Ming, who succeeded Fang Xiaoming as GZFAO Director General in 2007.

Prior to becoming the GZFAO Director General, Li Ming participated in a one year executive training program at University of Maryland. This program gave him an opportunity to become familiar with American culture, society and lifestyle.

In October, Mr. Li made a short stop LA on a trip to North America. During his one day

stay, he met with LAGSCA President Jeffrey Cheng and K.K. Kwong to discussed potential programs between the two cities. He visited the campus of Cal State University, Northridge where our Laurence Liu Scholar, Yang Yong was currently studying. Mr. Li expressed his gratitude to LAGSCA for the continuation of the Laurance Liu Scholarship and indicated that upon his return to Guangzhou he would start designing a reciprocal program which will sponsor scholars from Los Angeles to visit and study in Guangzhou.

"I have a great admiration for LAGSCA which has made extraordinary achievements in the past 27 years", said Li Ming to Jeffrey Cheung. "I am committed to working with you to develop more exciting programs, and I am confident that there are many great opportunities ahead".

Horatio Li, who has hosted many of our delegations in Guangzhou, accompanied Director Li to the US. Horatio was recently promoted as Deputy Division Chief at GZFAO, as position he well deserves.