

# *Taiwanese American Citizens League - NJ*

## *Newsletter*

NOVEMBER, 1994

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### Editor's Note:

In this issue of the newsletter, we include several articles. The first article is titled "A Time For Action" written by Rolla Tseng. This is about her experience in Houston, TX during the TACL Fifth National Convention held from September 30, 1994 to October 2, 1994. This three-day meeting brought over twenty people from seven different chapters. Several agendas and future plans were discussed at the meeting. The second article is titled "Formosan Melody - The Familiar Tune" written by Wen H. Chang. Wen is currently a member of the Board at TACL-NJ and the coordinator of "Formosan and Melody Concert" held this September at the New Brunswick church. This concert is sponsored by TACL-NJ and the North American Taiwanese Medical Association-Greater NY chapter. It was a fun night as almost four hundred people showed up and enjoyed a good concert. TACL-NJ would like to express special thanks to the performers. The last article is titled "Standing at Ease in the Military" by Dean Chang. Dean became the first Taiwanese who graduated from West Point in 1984. This article was a reflection of his experience at West Point and in the U.S. Army. The article first appeared in AsiAm magazine (This magazine is now called Transpacific) in 1987. Besides minor grammatical changes, the article is intact, as it appeared in 1987. I hope you enjoy reading these articles.

The membership form is also included in this newsletter. In the past, we have received a lot of support from people who become new members of TACL-NJ. With the membership fees, we were able to sponsor several events such as the TACL-NJ Annual Meeting, Candidate Night, a Softball Tournament, Dance Party, and a Formosan and Melody Concert. We will be pleased to continue sponsoring these events next year. In the coming year, we also plan to set up several scholarships for qualified students. By signing up as a member, you will receive Bulletin - the TACL national magazine full of articles like Dean's "Standing at Ease in the Military".

Finally, our 1995 Annual Meeting will be held on January 7, 1995 at the Hilton hotel in New Brunswick. For the meeting we have arranged to have guest speakers, a banquet dinner, and other forms of entertainment. Don't forget to sign up early. We hope to see you there. Have a great holiday.

## TACL - NEW JERSEY CHAPTER NEWS

1. The first TACL-NJ board meeting was held at 2 PM on Sunday, September 11, 1994 at the Taiwanese American Fellowship Presbyterian Church in New Brunswick. A total of 7 board members attended the meeting to discuss our future goals and direction for the coming year. The meeting was led by Julian Chien, the newly elected President.
2. Our annual Meeting is scheduled for January 7, 1995 at the Hilton hotel in New Brunswick. The meeting will start in the afternoon with two workshops followed by a dinner banquet and entertainment.
3. Recent events sponsored by TACL-NJ:
  - Softball Tournament - Special thanks to all the members of the Summer Activity Committee for a job well done and congratulations to TAA-North Jersey for winning the championship.
  - Dance Party - Everyone had a good time at the Hilton hotel in New Brunswick. The music was great as more than a hundred people showed up for the event.
  - Formosan and Melody Music Concert on September 17, 1994 - The audience consisted of almost 400 people supporting this event. It certainly turned out to be a great success and thanks needs to be given to all of you who participated in preparing for the program. Special thanks goes to Wen Chang who coordinate the whole event.
4. Another Formosan and Melody Music Concert will be held sometime in October of next year at Princeton University. Anyone who is interested in participating in this event, please contact Wen Chang at (908) 463-3994.
5. TACL-NJ will join WAATA to sponser Basketball Games on December 23, 1994. The location will be at West Winsor High School. Anyone who is interested in joining the games, please contact Cliff Cheng at (609) 275-8504.
6. One of TACL-NJ's objectives for the coming year is to place more emphasis and to be actively involved in community services. Anyone who is interested in participating or who has comments or suggestions is welcome to contact James Lin at (908) 805-9551.
7. The Fifth TACL National Convention was held from September 30, 1994 to October 2, 1994 in Houston, TX. Julian Chien, Lillian Lin, and Rolla Tseng attended as NJ delegates. Activities included: a delegate meeting, elections for the new National Board of Directors, and planning for the future.

## "A Time For Action"

- by Rolla Tseng

The Taiwanese American Citizen League's Fifth National Convention was held at the Adam's Mark Hotel in Houston, Texas from September 30 to October 2. Participating chapters which sent delegates to the convention included Atlanta, California, Kansas, New Jersey, New York, Seattle, and St. Louis. For those who attended the TACL Summit in New York, it was a reunion and for others, it was a time to meet new friends. This year's theme was "A Time For Action."

The delegates arrived in Houston from late afternoon throughout the evening. Most wanted to check out the Houston area, so a group of people headed out to the Houston nightlife. The music and people were essentially the same form what the East and West coast are accustomed to, except for the price. The cover charge was a mere \$3.00! What a bargain!

The Convention started early Saturday morning with a Mission Review. TACL decided that it was time that we become more politically involved. There were three main goals we should try and achieve: 1) Have our own category "Taiwanese" in the US census, 2) Change passports to "Born in Taiwan", and 3) Help Taiwan gain membership to the UN. And to achieve these goals, we must learn to work with other Taiwanese organizations. There were very important discussions among the delegates on how working with other Taiwanese organizations is very important in order for everyone to achieve the three main goals for Taiwan. We must learn to work TOGETHER as ONE big community.

After a Texan lunch at the Taiwanese Community Center, there was a delegate conference to make some amendments to the by-laws of TACL and to elect the 1995 National Board. When all the hard work was done, there was an hour break to get ready for the semi-formal banquet and Houston's 6th Annual Meeting.

The meeting and banquet attracted over 500 guests from the Houston area. The Keynote Speaker was Mr. Richard Fisher, US Senatorial Candidate. He spoke on how if he was elected, he would make it a top priority for Taiwan to gain membership to the UN. There were also a host of other activities, recognizing the achievements of Taiwanese-American. Entertainment was provided by dances from the Li-Mei Hua Dance Academy, violin duets by Yvette Chang and Janet Hsieh, and songs from the a Houston Taiwanese Choir. The banquet ended with the quests dancing the night away.

The Convention ended on Sunday with a continuation of the Mission Review. Discussions consisted of the importance of networking and fundraising ideas. A buffet lunch was then provided by the local Joy Luck Chinese Restaurant. For those delegates who didn't have an early flight to catch, touring the city of Houston was offered.

The National Convention was a huge success. It was the perfect opportunity to get TACL's goal in a clear direction and being around the many dedicated members of TACL gave the others members motivation and hope for the future.

## **"Formosan Melody - the Familiar Tune"**

by Wen H. Chang

As a Taiwanese American, I gradually come to the awakening of my identity. I often ask myself the questions, "What would best describes about my upbringing?" The answer, to me, is through demonstration of Taiwanese culture. Yet how much Taiwanese culture do I truly understand - after so many years of education that has been under the umbrella of Chinese culture. Do I understand it enough to tell the difference of Taiwanese from Chinese? Even if I do, do I feel comfortable to introduce them to my friends? I am sure these questions are commonly shared, regardless of age, by many Taiwanese American. Now I have found a common language - music, which we share the same sentiments and can easily convey to others to show what we are made of. It was later through the encouragement of Bob Cheng and the inspiration of Tyzen Hsiao's music, the Formosan & Melody concert finally came into reality.

Thanks to all of you who cared enough to participate in the event, either through planning, financial contributions, or by presence in the concert. There were roughly 350 people crammed into Taiwanese American Fellowship Presbyterian Church on September 17 to appreciate Taiwanese folk music and Taiwanese talents, perhaps also to have reunion with friends - in our mother tongue. Judging from its magnitude many people called it a success, to me it is more as warm-up for our future Taiwanese music concert, possibly a more formal one and in bigger scale.

In planning for the concert, our goal is to make the ticket price affordable in order to attract a bigger crowd. On the other hand the concert overhead expense can mostly be born through the contributions of business community as well as concerned individuals. Fortunately several business owners and individuals accepted the requests as honor and cheerfully contribute a decent amount of money that has helped achieve a balanced budget. Thank you all, your contribution is vital to the success of the concert.

The expense of this concert includes advertisement, piano and facility rental/contribution, audio recording, ticket printing, mail campaign, program printing, refreshments, communication, etc. Also a portion of our income was allotted for performer's compensation and a token amount for their travel subsidy. Performers should be compensated, even little, as much as we are able to raise. The expenses will be more if we are to rent a formal music hall and involve more performers in the next year.

One thing we have achieved with significance is that we have kept both Taiwanese and English speaking audience in mind throughout the planning. The English speaking audience includes the second generation Taiwanese American and friends from local community. Without addressing both languages need the concert would have lost its openness and attractiveness. As planned, the concert program booklet was prepared with 100% translation, to

which many positive comments have been received. Thanks to Norman Chen who spent countless nights translating Taiwanese folk lyrics into English with attentions given to preserve the original context with poetic form. And thanks to John J. Chen who designed and edited our program booklet and turn it into a product of art. Their contribution significantly enhanced the value and appreciation of the concert.

My heart-felt gratitude goes to North American Taiwanese Medical Association - Greater NY Chapter, led by Dr. Ching-Jen Wang, and Taiwanese American Citizens League - NJ Chapter, led by Julian Chien, to take the lead to sponsor this cultural event. To Mr. & Mrs. Bob Cheng from West Winsors, whose zeal to promote Taiwanese Cultural Heritage ultimately mobilizes many of us to produce this cultural concert, I say "Thank you, Bob & Jean." My final and perpetual appreciation goes to my wife, Mei-Li, who has been instrumental through her expertise input on music.

# PERSPECTIVE

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## STANDING AT EASE IN THE MILITARY

by Dean Chang

*It's 5 AM Monday morning and for the umpteenth time, I roll over and hit the snooze button on my alarm to perhaps catch a few more Zs before I really have to get out of bed. Just the other day, I realized that I had been in the Army for exactly three years. Will it be 17 more years of these early morning wake-ups to complete a full 20 years or perhaps just another 2 minus years before my 5-year commitment is up? What a dilemma!*

*As I go to the bathroom, stumbling over clothes and books, I blurt out a little "Oh, shit!" It can't really be that bad. What other job gives its employees thirty days of paid vacation annually and provide free medical and dental care? But then again, my boss has already canceled two of my leave requests and the last time I saw my records, I had accumulated 71 days of leave; or does it matter that I've rarely used the dental and medical facilities (especially when a 5-year old child goes into the base hospital for a cut lip and ends up dead because the wrong medication was given). Good thing I don't mix well with Army hospitals, after having a bad experience when I was a West Point cadet.*

*Well, Dean, forget all this bitching or you'll be late for PT (Physical Training) at 0615 hours (6:15 AM for civilians), I said to myself. Being a platoon leader in charge of 20 soldiers, I certainly did not want to be late. As I back the car out of my driveway, my mind keeps on debating the "stay in or get out after 5 years" dilemma as if the subject was the ball in a heated Ping-Pong game. My oh my, could it have been three years already?!*

Has it been seven years since I first entered West Point and actually spent four of my most productive years (so far) hibernating inside those gray walls of the Hudson?

It seemed just like yesterday when my family and I walked down the steps of Michic Stadium at West Point to be in-processed as a new cadet. At times during my brief span in the Army, I've always wondered if those four years at the Military Academy were worth every minute.

True, the times got better with each year at the Point; but, that first year was a rough one. What college freshmen could or would have stood still at the position of attention and have an upperclassman or two...or three yell derogatory remarks at him "up close and personal," i.e., about six inches away from the tip of the nose. Then again, why was I ever subjected to remembering the daily menu and recite it to any upperclassmen who wanted to know what was for lunch or dinner? Hey, didn't I receive an "award" for my failure to know the menu -- confinement in my room for one weekend? How soon I forget! On top of that, looking back, how ridiculous it was for all of us plebes (freshmen) to walk close, right up against the walls and make military facing movements (right face, left face) at each corner of the hallway we approach, much like a toy soldier.

Did I really learn anything by being governed by the cadet regulations to do such things as fold my laundry by the numbers or make my bed according to specifications on a daily basis?

What made me want to "stick it out" after my first or second year at the Academy? And are those the same factors that tug at me from time to time to stay in until the 20-year mark? It must have been something.

It certainly wasn't the twice a week parades in front of the GAP (Great American Public) in our full dress gray uniforms with the swallow-like tail and gold and the heavily starched white pants. Nor was it the blandness of wearing prescribed uniform for each different occasion (whether it be for classes, dinner or formal occasions). Maybe I enjoyed staying in my room on Friday nights studying and getting up for Saturday morning classes for all those four years.

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Each hour of the day was filled with activities. If it wasn't attending classes or studying for upcoming tests, it was participating in mandatory athletics, or keeping keep our rooms impeccably straight (i.e., ensuring all uniforms in the closet faced the same direction and clothes hangars were spaced exactly two-finger widths apart, etc.), or delivering upperclassmen's laundry to their rooms on a weekly basis.

During my plebe year, the days soon became weeks and the weeks slowly melted into months. With each day of harassment or hazing, it was another day closer to when our plebedom will end and for me to start to act like a normal human being again.

Somehow, all that bullshit became common everyday business. I got used to the crap and realized that when I'm an upperclassman, I, too, can play the same mind games on the new class of plebes.

*Well, I'm already at the military police gate entering into the post base. The military police on duty gives me a salute but I know he's actually saluting my blue car registration sticker (as distinguished from the enlisted/non-commissioned officers' red sticker), and not me. At least another two miles before I get to my office.*

Nevertheless, plebe year at West point was when I first learned to be a subordinate and to follow instructions. Yes, during my 18 years prior to becoming a cadet, I followed orders of my parents and teachers. But never before with the consequences of disciplinary actions of "walking the area" or the ever-present chance of being expelled from the Academy for too many repeat offenses of disobedience. Wouldn't that be the ultimate in "losing face!?"

That first year was a rude introduction to a standardized and structured lifestyle, if one can call it any style. The once-hectic, activities-filled days soon became very common and almost routine. Mandatory attendance, such as classes (What? college classes mandatory?!), parades, lectures and meetings were often welcome relief from the constant hazing of the upperclassmen:

Plebe year did teach me the importance of managing my time wisely. If I wasn't studying, I'd sneak a 10-minute catnap between classes (as long as it was after 9:30 AM because, get this, no one can sleep during the time our rooms were subject to the daily morning inspections) or perhaps take a break and help my fellow plebe classmates distribute mail or laundry to upperclassmen's rooms. During the hours after class, we'd either be drilling for parades or participating in athletics. Well, hasn't the day ended, yet? No, not exactly. I still need to prepare my dress gray uniform for dinner, recall the dinner menu, and remember how many days until the Army-Navy game, until Christmas leave, until spring leave, until Graduation, until...

"Hey, guess what roomie? We have a mandatory Honor education class after dinner."

"Oh, shit!" I said.

What more is there to know? The Cadet Honor Code states: "A cadet will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor tolerate those who do..." That's pretty easy, isn't it? That was also something unique, Honor: the anchor in the trio of words that make up the Academy motto: "Duty, Honor, Country." In time, those words had been ingrained into our daily lives. The great majority of past and present cadets have come to live and be guided by those words.

General Douglas MacArthur had always referred to those words for guidance in his duties, even though he was ultimately fired for insubordination by Harry Truman. I guess "Duty, Honor, Country" didn't mean attempting to conquer Manchuria during the 1950s.

One thing for sure, though, the Honor system was another reinforcement of the strong moral and ethical background I was raised in. I had heard that one of the cadet's father was in the Mafia when I was there. I wondered how hard it was for him to become indoctrinated into the system, or if he had

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ever succeeded. Nevertheless, I had seen many expulsions of cadets because of honor violations as well as many unjustified pardons given by the Superintendent or the cadet Honor Board. I once sat in on an Honor Board where cadets of the four classes convened to decide the fate of an alleged cadet charged with an honor violation. I compare that to being one of the Roman noblemen sitting above the coliseum giving the thumbs up or down to the victor down in the trenches on whether to finish off his defeated opponent.

In retrospect, was that Honor Code part of the West Point's concept of becoming a "whole person" or was that another mind game...or were they the same...

*Well, two more stoplights before I pull into the parking lot. Traffic is pretty heavy, I hope I find a parking space; I hate walking long distance to my office. Why can't all Army buildings have assigned basement parking with elevators at one's command?*

Speaking of walking...I once spent four hours of my free weekend time walking back and forth behind the stone battlements in the inner black asphalt courtyards known as the "area." Yes, no one going through the Academy should bypass the chance to be an "area bird," even though some have.

Here I was, carrying a Korean war-vintage M-14 rifle on one shoulder with my clean dress gray uniform and highly spit-shined shoes serving punishment tours when I could have been "racking out" (cadet slang for sleeping). I was walking four hours because I had overslept by 1-½ hours to an appointed place of duty. I guess that sleep was worth the 4 hours; it was too nice an autumn day to be inside, anyway. From another point of view, I wouldn't have wanted to oversleep if I were ever in combat.

My four hours seems minuscule compared to some more unfortunate souls where most of their free time was spent walling the area. I have known some who have spent over 200 hours being "area birds." Even during Graduation Week, I always see a handful of seniors walking off their "tours" night and day in order to graduate. I guess this type of punishment was better than being chained up inside a cold, damp dungeon. Good thing the Army doesn't have the "area," many of our soldiers would walk too many hours and not get any training accomplished, surely a detriment to the national defense of this country.

Hey, Academy life wasn't too bad. Just think, could I have met all these people who have gone through the same bullshit as I have (like being hazed and harassed, being controlled by a set of stern regulations, or taking virtually the same courses, all 22 credit hours that first semester, and going through summer field training as if there were summer camps) if I had accepted that scholarship to the University of Pennsylvania? But then, there is something to be said about diversity.

Well, how about that power surge when the plebes or the soldiers address me as "Sir, this..." and "Sir, that...?" I guess that is a trip.

Would I have studied the engineering courses at UPenn (not that it was a choice at West Point)? Probably not. I would have been like the thousands of stereotypical Asian Americans striving to study medicine or the hard sciences and wearing thick glasses.

I even doubt that I would have gotten into the journalistic side at UPenn and become the school's yearbook editor like I did at the Academy.

So why is it I'm complaining about this five-year commitment that I'm obligated to for all that camaraderie and experience I have gained?

Could it be that Napoleon McCallum from the Naval Academy makes more money moonlighting as a running back for the Los Angeles Raiders than he or I do as a Lieutenant?

Is it because David Robinson, another Naval Academy graduate, only has to serve two years of his military commitment before he can become another NBA millionaire? -

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Or am I just putting a facade because this whole business, my personality, mixed with West Point and the Army, is a curious blend of inspiration and drudgery that is too big a puzzle to solve? Inspired to lead but perhaps hesitant to be governed by regulations; hesitant to be guided by regulations but yet given the responsibility to be flexible and creative.

*Well, here I am, inside my office in my PT uniform of black T-shirt and bright, yellow sweat pants, looking like a half-sun-baked banana. Do really want to do PT? I'd rather go back to sleep.*

*Quit the whining and go out and do those exercises with the troops, I said to myself. Am I really going to take anymore of these early morning?*

*As I hit the cold air outside, I blurt out, "Oh, shit!"* ■

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