



STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE ON THE NEWSSTANDS

BY ATHIMA CHANSANCHAI
Washington D.C. Chapter

If on the landscape of Asian American magazines there was a place set aside for its cemetery, the epitaphs of *Bridge*, *Rice*, *Asiam* (later *Transpacific*), *Face* and *a.Magazine* might read, “We were often caught between what we felt the community needed, and what the market demanded,” or “It was the only thing that was out there,” or “Tried to be something for everybody,” or “Burned through money quicker than Troy.”

It has been a rough ride for Asian American commercial glossies.

“It’s been a couple of decades at the most and these magazines are still trying to find their way, and their audience still in the process of evolution. It’s a very early stage,” said Darrell Y. Hamamoto, professor of Asian American Studies at UC-Davis. “In any evolutionary process some species die out.”

The winning formula in this Darwinian struggle seems to focus on several factors: finding advertisers willing to put down dollars for ethnic-specific media, maintaining a consistent vision and content and being business savvy. Even when all these things seem to be in place, problems can arise, such as with *a.Magazine*, the latest casualty of a series of problems that started with an online collaboration.

Hamamoto, who tracks the representation of Asian Americans in the media said that the bottom line is profit. “It comes down to finances,” he said. “National advertisers want to know how to get to our pocketbooks.”

At first, advertisers had to be convinced that there was a population whose pocket they needed to pick. “We were talking about the fact that the 1990 Census was due the following year, and that early projections indicated that Asian Americans [who were being tracked in detail for the first time] would show incredible growth,” said Jeff Yang, co-founder of the recently defunct *a.Magazine*, which was based out of New York for more than a decade. “And of course, we were aware of how much had changed and evolved in our community firsthand. Yet there was still nothing out there that really talked about Asian America from the inside—explored our issues, showcased our achievements, addressed our needs.”

Like other start-ups, *a.Magazine* cobbled together a business from a crew of volunteers. “We vowed to put out the magazine on a guerrilla basis,” Yang said. They survived as such until 1994. “That’s when we



realized the magazine had grown too big to do part-time, after work and without any kind of real business-side force. We ended up getting a bank loan and raising some ‘friends and family’ money, and hiring a full-time publisher and our first few full-time staffers ... and launching A. as a commercial venture.”

A.Magazine would grow to be the most high-profile Asian American magazine, but it folded last year, when it went corporate.

“We’d built up a business over a decade of hard work, and in a year, the whole thing was torn down, millions of dollars were spent, and our erstwhile president had taken a new job in Europe, leaving me to deal with a board of directors who wanted to staunch the bleeding and preserve their ‘Internet valuation,’ forcing us to sell ourselves to a West Coast-based online community called Click2Asia for a whole bunch of worthless stock,” Yang said. “From there, things went from bad to worse.”

Keeping it Simple

Other magazines eyed *a.Magazine*’s demise warily, mourning its passing but taking lessons from it to keep themselves afloat.

“Personally I’m amazed we’ve survived,” said Alex Luu, editor-in-chief of *Yolk*, the hyper-hip magazine showcasing Asian Americans in entertainment, now in its 10th year. “It’s still a battle, but less of an uphill battle now than six, seven years ago.”

He describes a small but tight-knit office in Los Angeles where good writers are still in demand, but where copy overflows as it never has before. “When *Yolk* first started, the Asian American scene, especially entertainment, was very embryonic. We would be scratching our heads for material,” Luu said. “Now we bump material.”

The secret to success, he said, is keeping it simple.

“*Yolk*, in whatever re-vamped format, has always stayed true to one mission—mainstream American magazines are still not featuring up and comers, unknown Asian Americans in any substantial ways, so that’s our job,” said Luu. He said that *Bend It Like Beckham* is a classic case where *Yolk* went ahead of the mainstream and did a story on the director, Gurinder Chadha, three years ago. “Now this film came out and now she’s being offered anything.”

A. was criticized for not being consistent in its content, an assertion former publisher Yang acknowledges as a consequence of survival.

“We were often caught between what we felt the community

Athima Chansanchai
is a reporter at The
Baltimore Sun.

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LEARN MORE Check AAJA’s Web site (www.aja.org/html/news_html/community_html/community.html) to find out more on what’s going on in the Asian Pacific American community. There are links to APA news, resources, a calendar of events and more.



Undoubtedly, many of you—like me—have spent much of the past few weeks gripped by coverage of the war in Iraq. I found myself spending hours of my workday and even more of my free time watching and reading reports of the unfolding events in Iraq. What struck me early on and continued to stay with me was the relatively few journalists of color covering the biggest story of the year.

Certainly, the men and women of the U.S. military have become increasingly diverse, including many immigrants who took up arms for the United States. Undeniably, thousands of the dead are people of color. But where were the journalists of color?

In April, the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) released its latest newspaper survey showing that both the percentage and actual numbers of Asian Americans in the newsrooms have shown slight increases. Asian Americans now make up 2.62 percent of newspaper newsrooms, up from 2.36 percent the year before. But we currently make up 4.4 percent of the U.S. population.

This shows that our work is far from over.

As an organization, AAJA has worked over the course of its 22 years to ensure that there is an increase in the number of Asian Americans in print, broadcast and online newsrooms. We've offered fellowships, internships, scholarships, training and mentor programs. We've entered into partnerships with ASNE as well as the Radio-Television News Directors Association. We've issued statements decrying the lack of Asian Americans in newsrooms and argued that more diversity will result in more accurate and fairer coverage of our communities.

But now, I am calling all our members to individually take action. We've all talked the talk, but have we all walked the walk?

Here are three things we can do in our newsrooms and in our communities individually to increase the number of Asian Americans in our industry.

- * *When there are job openings, let's refer candidates of color even if we're not the ones doing the actual hiring. When there are prime assignments, let's make a pitch for our fellow journalists of color in the newsroom.*
- * *Let's get involved in our local high schools and colleges, speaking to students about our jobs, the different opportunities in the industry and the importance of having a broad range of voices and experiences in newsrooms.*
- * *Let's not shy away from being a resource on the Asian American community in our newsrooms. It's understandable that none of us wants to be pigeon-holed into a beat because of the color of our skin. But let's face it, we can't change what we look like. We don't have to cover immigration, demographics or minority issues to provide input on communities of color. We can all do our part to show our managers the value of having a diverse newsroom.*

We can certainly speak as a collective voice. But how much louder would we be if all 1,700 of our voices spoke out in newsrooms across the country? The time for action is now. Many Asian American journalists were excluded from active involvement in the biggest story of the year. I only hope that with the next big story, I'll see more coverage from people who look like me and I'll read more stories carrying Asian American bylines. ■

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Dealing with SARS

THE WORLDWIDE SPREAD of the SARS epidemic has caused panic from Asia to the United States. The World Health Organization has warned against unnecessary travel to areas in mainland China, Hong Kong and Taipei, among other places. News reports from China mention thousands fleeing Beijing, strict quarantine measures, building closures and even the killing of pets in hopes of containing the virus. Meanwhile, many of our colleagues are covering the news in Asia. **Allen T. Cheng**, *South China Morning Post's* China national economics correspondent, who is based in Beijing, and **Tony Caskey**, a free-lance sports and business writer in Dalian, China, share their thoughts on the SARS scare.

Because of the spread of the disease, are any special precautions being taken by journalists in Asia?

TONY CASKEY: I have acquired some 3M face-masks to use when I travel by train or by intra-city bus.

ALLEN CHENG: Not really, other than wear masks if you feel at risk, take lots of vitamin C to boost the immune system, etc. Most newsrooms in Hong Kong and foreign news organizations in China are covering the heck out of this story. But it really has been blown out of proportion. Sure a lot of people ... around the world got this, but this disease has a fatality rate of 4%, which is actually less than the typical pneumonia or the common flu. What is so sensational about this, of course, is the fact that this disease is so new and how hush-hush the Chinese government has been in handling it, which is appalling.

Because of the number of deaths in Asia, how concerned are newsrooms, bureaus or journalists about this disease?

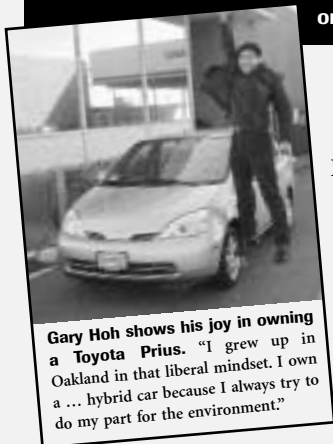
CHENG: *The South China Morning Post* has passed out masks and immune boosting tonics to all staff in Hong Kong and in China.

How has SARS affected your work as a journalist or the way you work? Has it affected your lifestyle?

CHENG: Not really. I still go out. I just write a lot about SARS these days.

CASKEY: SARS has had a large negative effect on my sports free-lancing. Up until about two or three weeks ago, I was writing regular game stories about China's most successful soccer team, Dalian Shide. The Chinese Football Association has postponed matches for one month. Since I am not sanguine

WHY I GIVE. The efforts of individuals outside of leadership often go unheralded. Yet dozens of individuals have an impact on AAJA — individual contributions of money, of time, of leadership and of spirit. These are individuals who step up, often unbidden, to contribute, and then step back into the background. They don't hold office, they don't always serve on chapter boards or even chair a committee. This occasional column is intended to spotlight the power of one, and how individuals move AAJA, help AAJA and change AAJA.



Gary Hoh shows his joy in owning a Toyota Prius. "I grew up in Oakland in that liberal mindset. I own a ... hybrid car because I always try to do my part for the environment."

Paying it Forward

In 2001, as Portland chapter members were getting ready for their scholarship fundraising banquet, their treasurer received a surprise in the mail. One of their scholarship winners from a decade ago had, on his own, enclosed a donation for \$1,000. "We were all surprised," said Maya Blackmun, Portland's past scholarship chair and national advisory board member who remembers **Gary Hoh** received a \$500 scholarship. "We were very surprised. I suspect it's one of the largest single donations from an individual to the

chapter" outside of Stanford Chen's memorial fund. Hoh, a former University of Oregon student, now working at the *San Jose Mercury News*, was the donor. But he hadn't been involved with the Portland chapter since he graduated in 1992 and moved back to the Bay Area where he grew up. So he was a bit of a mystery. We asked him about his gesture.

What made you make the donation?

After college, they always ask alumni to give back to the university, and I thought well, if I'm going to give back, I'm going to give back to AAJA first. They helped motivate me to pursue my goal of working in the media. It gave me a big boost to my self-esteem. I wanted to do the same thing for a student in school right now. I wanted to return the favor.

What do you do now, and how did you get there after you graduated?

I'm a sports copy editor and page designer. I saw a listing in AAJA for a part-time sports clerk in October 1992, and kept pestering the editor. It was answering the phones, doing the baseball box scores. In 1996, I was offered full-time work doing different things in features, sports and Mercury Center (the online department). By 2000, I got into sports and was able to do page designing.

Just like that?

In 1996 I was about to leave. The tech-boom era was going and I was doing part-time at Excite, the websearch company. I thought, the money's out there in the tech industry, I should try pursuing that. But that was right when we switched to pagination, and the editor offered me full-time work.

How did you get your scholarship?

I was a Portland student member, and I had done some free-lancing. I had done some Asian American issues reporting because we had made a push for the school to offer an Asian American studies class. It was in the

University of Oregon catalog but they never offered it (lack of funding was the reason they cited); I thought it was misleading because one of the school's selling points for me ... they recruited high school students by saying it was a diverse school. It was a cause we all rallied around, so they pretty much had to find an instructor and offer it, to keep from looking like hypocrites. I knew I wanted to be in a media-related industry and I did believe in Asian American issues. I applied for the scholarship, and I won. I was always appreciative of that.

You didn't think you would get the scholarship?

I was a pretty mediocre student, to be honest. But for years, people would tell me I was a good writer. I had had an internship at a TV station, but nothing eye-popping in terms of prestige like a *New York Times*, or *L.A. Times* internship. But the scholarship was important, to get that kind of validation. It was a nice little boost, that made me think "Hey, maybe I can do this."

Was there a scholarship reception?

We had a banquet in Portland Chinatown. There were only two of us recipients, so we were pretty much the focal point. It was a very proud moment for my parents, who drove all the way up to Eugene from Oakland—that was nine hours—and it took another two hours to drive from Eugene to Portland with my brother. Then they drove home the same day. It was like a 24-hour trip. It was craziest thing they had ever done.

Anything else you remember about that day?

The check was issued on my birthday—Sept. 19, 1991. Stan Chen signed my check.

Did anyone ask you to donate that year? Why did you choose then to give money to AAJA?

Ten years from when I got the scholarship seemed like a nice, round number.

Why such a big chunk of dough? Your award was half that — past President Joann Ng said you definitely "paid it forward."

I know it's a lot. For some people, it's like giving up a week's worth of pay. At the time, it felt like the right thing to do. It happened to be a good time for me.

Some AAJA members who worked hard on raising money for scholarships complain about students who "just take the money and run," so to speak, who aren't heard from again. Did that complaint ever factor into your decision?

No. But I never thought of the scholarship as a prize I won, as if I were on a game show. It was to help me in my studies, to encourage me to pursue journalism ... and keep to the organization in mind in terms of not forgetting who I am. I felt it was about remembering my heritage—and I've always had an interest in history—about where we've been, where are we going. I felt it was now time to help somebody else. I wanted to start with AAJA.

How did the Portland chapter react?

I got a nice thank you card and I got a couple of phone calls. They invited me to their scholarship banquet. They sent me a copy of the scholarship banquet program, which I'm in the list of past scholarship winners, and "What-they're-doing-now" update.

Are you happy with how things are, ten years out?

It's been a long road. I'm really happy I chose this line of work. Makes me proud to see my work in print, knowing that people actually read the stuff we do. I always want to do something in service to community. It's very rewarding, emotionally. I enjoy people I work with, who are very smart, very funny. I had a chance to work in the tech industry and I didn't care for the people I worked with there. I have little regret I didn't take advantage of the boom. I'm happy with what I'm doing. ■

needed and what market demanded,” he said. “Asian America has a subset of ‘active’ Asians who want hard news and coverage of political and social issues, and a subset of ‘passive’ Asians whose interests are much more in the way of service-and-sizzle. The marginal consumers are mostly in the latter subset, so when we addressed their preferences, we saw issue-to-issue spikes in readership. The core readers who were more active participants in Asian America tended to be subscribers or regular newsstand purchasers, but the ones who bought it because Lucy Liu was on the cover made up a considerable segment of our audience. That business reality meant that as we grew, the editorial makeup had to shift more toward lifestyle and entertainment content—that was where the critical mass of readers were, and that critical mass of readers was essential to our being able to draw advertisers and stay alive.”

Luu knows that the cash flow from Asian America is fueling advertisers to invest more in his magazine, which went from printing quarterly to 10 times a year. “We always appeal to advertisers that Asian Americans are a huge percentage of consumers in this country. They weren’t aware that the Asian American dollar is huge and popular—videogames, clothes, cars.”

‘Low Maintenance’

Others have picked up fast that when it comes to the almighty dollar, they need to be creative in marketing themselves—and tightening their budgets. “If you look at other publications, they like to spend money on parties and we’re not at all like that,” said Audrey Panichakoon Crone, publisher of *Jade* magazine, a lifestyle magazine for Asian women. “We have no overhead because we work from home. If we had \$10 million we’d make *Jade* magazine last forever. We’re low maintenance. It forces you to be creative in terms of marketing, everything.”

Crone’s background in advertising and *Jade*’s initial foray onto the Internet helped establish a readership—a move she feels made it a stronger candidate once they went to print, which they started doing last year, after three years of operation. It’s part of a more cautious, more exploratory business model that tests the waters first before making the plunge. “A lot of companies do burn money,” said Crone, who said they tend to burn out too—and fast. Patience pays off in this business. “When you’re producing a magazine you just can’t do it for a year or two and expect to make a profit. It’s a long term type of thing and it takes a long time to build a brand.”

Noodle, a newcomer to the Asian American magazines, started three years ago as a gay-oriented publication. They’re working on their fifth issue

and are starting to see the results.

“Within gay media we’re starting to get the idea that other magazines are starting to see us as an emerging wave. They’ve completely ignored Asians in the past and now suddenly we get calls—‘Where can we find your models, your photographers, etc.’” said Chris Bucoy Brown, *Noodle*’s managing editor. He said that the magazine emerged from his group of friends, who’d graduated from UC-Berkeley and had been at the epicenter of one of the school’s most influential clubs, CAL B GAY, which stood for Cal Asian Lesbian Bisexual Gay Alliances United with Y. The ringleader he said, was Max Lau, *Noodle*’s publisher. The friends would continue their work in the community after their graduation in the mid-90s until Lau flexed his entrepreneurial bent and started *Noodle* about two years ago. “We try to stay political but we know we’re a lifestyle magazine, too. We’re sugar coating the political pill with lifestyle. We’re not *Will and Grace* with a yellow face but at the same time some of the stuff we get back from our writers comes off reflecting that kind of very guppie lifestyle,” Brown said.

He praises edgy vanguard *Giant Robot* for their resilience and commitment to their unique voice.

“One of my heroes is *Giant Robot*. We would never be *Giant Robot* and we don’t strive to be, but they have this irreverence in their voice,” Brown said. “They’ve always maintained it since they were on newsprint to now to really nice stock. They’ve always maintained the same voice to say whatever the hell they want. Yeah, kick ass. I don’t know if we can get away with that. I certainly respect them for that. On the newsstands we’re usually right up next to them and if we get some of that punky flavor rubbed off, great. I would love for us to have that kind of ballsy tone.”

Other magazines are following suit in their own voices—distinct, literary and confident about the future. On the horizon is *Hyphen*, “dedicated to smart, fun and comprehensive cultural and investigative reporting of Asian America.” *Monolid* and *Audrey* are also testing the waters, while in San Francisco, *AsianWeek* holds down the fort for hard news.

Yang hopes their future ends up better than his past. “I don’t think that there’s going to be an other *a.Magazine* anytime soon—that is to say, an independent, community-owned, general-interest title that strives to reach a broad base of Asian Americans,” he said. “Well, it’s possible, but it’ll take someone with a lot of personal wealth deciding to devote it to this cause for reasons other than pure return on investment—and there are people out there like that, so maybe I’m wrong. Maybe there’s an angel out there that’ll make it happen.” ■

about the SARS situation improving any time soon, I think the postponement will be lengthened. Journalism veterans in China have told me I must move to Beijing or Shanghai to take my journalism career to the next level. About a month and a half ago I decided to move to Shanghai. One of the deciding factors was that the FIFA Women’s World Cup was to be played in Shanghai and cities in that area in September and October. I was hoping that with a little luck I could free-lance about this World Cup ... but I sincerely doubt that the Women’s World Cup will be held in China [because of SARS].



May Day in SARS ward:

With a carnation in her hand, Dr. Li Yahong “shakes hands” with her husband, Dr. Wang Xian, using a video-phone at a Beijing hospital. The videophones are installed for the medical staff who cannot join their family for the holiday. XINHUA PHOTO

Do you know of any journalists who were asked to leave Asia for their safety? Or were there any who have requested to leave Asia?

CHENG: Not that I’m aware of. CASKEY: I was a Peace Corps Volunteer in the jungle of Guinea, West Africa, from 1993 to 1995. During that time, I got malaria three times. Had I not had this intimate experience with a nasty disease, I suppose I would be a little more jittery about SARS than I am. But right now I have a “This too will come to pass” attitude about SARS. ■

carving his pie: interview with director Justin Lin

AsianConnections' Arts and Entertainment editor **Lia Chang** spoke with **Justin Lin** right after the opening weekend of his movie "Better Luck Tomorrow."

The movie is distributed by MTV Films in conjunction with Paramount Classics.

Congratulations! I saw the film with a packed house on opening night. The audience was about 95 percent Asian American. Let's talk about your journey since Sundance and your opening weekend whirlwind.



This is the same feeling I get since day one of this project.

You make this huge accomplishment. You're so proud. Then you look up and there is another mountain. This opening weekend was unbelievable.

What compelled you to want to take all of your money to finance "Better Luck Tomorrow"?

Making an Asian American film is such a struggle because we can't even make it on a level playing field. People complain about low budget films. We don't even get to make low budget films. We only make films that are a fraction of low budget films. When I finished the BLT script and took it out, I got a great response. People were excited. But they kept on coming back to me to ask me if I could change it to a Caucasian cast, or a Latino cast, or an African American cast. If I went with an African American cast, changed the ethnicity, I could easily have gotten seven figures. I wasn't tempted at all. I didn't want to change it for the sake of money. Many of these investors were Asian Americans asking for the changes. That's when I first realized that film was such a clash between art and commerce.

Can we address the issue of Asian American investors asking you to change the characters to Caucasian? Did you feel like you were being betrayed by your own ethnicity?

Totally! Being a person of color, a lot of times you get hit twice as hard. It bothered me at first. Then I realized that it is the reality. I could either go with the reality, or do something different. It became a credit card movie. To max out ten credit cards and my life savings to make this film. Once we made the film, it was the most amazing experience.

What is the Sundance film festival process like?

We finished the film. The next hurdle—where do we go from here? You hear that 1000-1500 films get made a year. How do you distinguish your film from everybody else's? The film festival was the next route. Sundance is the top film festival. I learned how relationships are important. We didn't have any. We submitted it blind. They only took 16 films for competition. That was the huge call. The Wednesday before Thanksgiving. I still remember. It literally changed my life. The following Monday, my phone would not stop ringing. Everybody in the industry was calling. Once we got to Sundance, we thought OK, we made it to Sundance. We're one of the top 16 films in competition. Then you find out only a handful of the films get picked up for distribution. It was really tough. We didn't know where we stood. What was great was that we hadn't really shown it to anybody. Of course, our first screening, they put it in the biggest theater—1300 people. After that first screening, the buzz just started. It was a great feeling.

You did "Shopping for Fangs" so you had experience with the film festival circuit.

"Shopping for Fangs" was amaz-

ing. I learned everything from writing to directing from that. So I had my bearings. This was to the next level. It was so intense. To the point where you walk outside—everybody is just hounding you.

Since you never had that experience before, were you overwhelmed?

Definitely overwhelming and a lot of anxiety. You just want to find a good home for the film. You don't even know if people are talking to you because they just want to make it, to cover themselves. Not necessarily because they truly believe in you or your project. We were fortunate. MTV Films came forward and there were two other companies that wanted to acquire it. Clearly MTV Films was the best choice. They got the film. They got the message. They want to bring a film like BLT to their audience. They know how to make films that make tons of money. Once we got acquired, we thought—we made it. But NO! I made an effort to really sit in and understand how the business worked. I'd heard about how Asian American films hadn't made it. I didn't know exactly why. I went and was really very aggressive with meeting with everybody I could meet just to learn. I learned that Asian Americans do have the presence to carve their own piece of the pie. I was in this meeting where I was shown a pie chart of all moviegoers. And African Americans took up almost half the pie. A smaller piece of the pie was Latino. The rest was Caucasian. I remembered asking where are the Asian Americans in the pie. They said, "We know Asian Americans pump a lot of money into the economy and they buy a lot of

tickets but their spending patterns are the same as middle class white people. We consider them white people." I thought that was ridiculous. You've never had an Asian American film distributed so how can you know that they can carve their own piece of the pie. You never had the product for them to show support. It was crazy. Right away I felt, it goes full circle. As a filmmaker, you can make the best film you can. If you are fortunate enough, you make the film you want to make. At the end of the day, it is up to the viewer, for the viewers to say—instead of a talking kangaroo we want to watch three-dimensional Asian American characters. Once that switch is made, then you carve your own piece of the pie.

What is the significance of your title "Better Luck Tomorrow"?

I wanted to find a title that embodied the narrative and the exploration of the film. The term "better luck tomorrow." We hear it—people use it. That saying has to do with what's happening in the present, something that has happened. It also has a connotation of the future. It is in the same scope of the film itself, narratively. I'm hoping what people are going to walk away with is really asking two questions. The first question is: "Wow I know these kids, maybe I was one of these kids, how did they end where they end up?" The second thing is: "Well I know the credits are rolling and the movie is over but I know their lives are going to continue. What issues do they have to deal with [and] what consequences do they have?" I feel if those questions are asked, I feel like I've done my job. ■

GETTING THE LOCAL DISH

BY HALEY MIYOUNG HWANG

Top food critics and food industry journalists were ready to dish the laurels and the dirt on Chicago establishments at a food journalism panel in March. About 20 food lovers, AAJA members, students and at least one restaurateur turned out for the event, hosted by the AAJA-Chicago Chapter at the Tribune Tower. Panelists included Chad Schlegel, dining producer for Metromix,



an arts and entertainment Web site owned by the *Chicago Tribune*;

Laura Yee, senior editor for industry magazine *Restaurants & Institutions*; Monica Eng, a *Chicago Tribune* feature reporter and food critic; Suzanne Ontiveros, food editor at the *Chicago Sun-Times*; and Phil Vettel, celebrity restaurant critic for the *Chicago Tribune*. Most of the panelists fell into food journalism somewhat serendipitously—a few loved to entertain and cook big family meals, one was a waiter in a previous life, one married a chef, one took on free-lance work doing restaurant reviews during school. Volunteer for all kinds of assignments and opportunities will come up, Eng said. A food critic has to become surreptitious and somewhat anti-social because maintaining anonymity is so important, the panelists said. Some go to great lengths to disguise their real purpose. Schlegel said he always uses his cell phone to make reservations because he doesn't want the caller ID to tip off who he is. Vettel always pays in cash or with a credit card that has one of his many aliases—he has to record the reservation time and his alias on his datebook. Eng sometimes has to keep her parents at home because they like to proudly tell the restaurant owners that their daughter is a critic for the *Tribune*. Ontiveros said she does not attend media dinners and

Haley Hwang is a free-lance writer and editor in Chicago.

chef tastings. Keeping a professional distance with the folks in the restaurant industry is

dim sum

NEWS ABOUT YOUR CHAPTERS

ARIZONA CHAPTER El Niño came and rained on our parade. First, it swept away our national board rep—JESSICA MING is now hangin' ten in Los Angeles—soon

after the waves came for our trusted secretary, BELINDA LONG, and sent her Florida-bound. But we have no fear, because a dry heat is around the corner and we shall bloom in the desert once more. The Arizona Chapter drew about 100 people at our scholarship banquet in February (honoring JESSICA SUAREZ, from the University of Arizona, TONY KU and JOANNE YUAN, both students at ASU). The banquet featured playwright/actor/performer LANE NISHIKAWA as speaker. In March, AAJAZ member ABE KWOK served as a panelist on "Multicultural Media: Building Bridges & Boundaries" at ASU, as part of a conference sponsored by the Lincoln Center for Applied Ethics. This summer, AAJAZ will host its annual fund-raiser golf tournament, with an eye on increasing corporate sponsorship/participation and using part of the proceeds to send another scholastic journalist to the annual convention. We also plan on working closely with the newly formed Arizona-NLJJA to host a mixer welcoming the *Arizona Republic's* new executive editor, WARD BUSHEE.

CHICAGO CHAPTER The Chicago Chapter planned to hold a "Rise and Shine Talk" with DAN HERTZBERG, deputy managing editor of *The Wall Street Journal*. Hertzberg, who won a Pulitzer Prize in 1988 for coverage of Wall Street corruption, was to discuss how to do prize-winning work.

FLORIDA CHAPTER On May 17, the Florida Chapter planned to host its annual Unity Mixer/Dim Sum event in South Florida at the Du Barry Chinese Buffet in Plantation, Fla. For the past three years, journalists from AAJA, the South Florida Black Journalists Association, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, the Society of Professional Journalists and the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association have enjoyed an afternoon of fun and fellowship with friends and colleagues. The event is co-sponsored by the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*.

LOS ANGELES CHAPTER The Los Angeles Chapter planned to host a fund-raising mixer May 15 with celebrity chef MARTIN YAN at Yan's new Irvine restaurant, SensAsian. Yan, who has written 25 cookbooks and is host of more than 2,000 PBS cooking shows including "Yan Can Cook," will give a cooking demonstration and sign cookbooks. And, of course, there will be appetizers.

NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER Tickets to the AAJANE-NAAAP-Boston Spring Fever Gala at the Cambridge Hyatt Regency Hotel on May 9 have been sold out. The gala will benefit student scholarships.

NEW YORK CHAPTER At the annual Asian American Heritage Festival, held May 4 at Union Square Park, AAJA-New York was not to be left out. The chapter celebrated with a booth, along with 100 others featuring Asian American crafts, community groups, dance performances and more. The Asian Pacific American Heritage Festival is the largest Pan Asian outdoor event on the East Coast, bringing together various Asian Pacific American organizations and individuals to celebrate Asian America. The chapter will also mark Asian American Heritage month by holding a panel on Asian American magazines. The panel, to be co-sponsored by the Time Inc. employee group known as A3, was scheduled for May 21.

SAN DIEGO CHAPTER The San Diego Chapter, as host of the 2003 AAJA National Convention, has cut back on its usual long list of local activities to focus on planning the National Convention in August. However, chapter members continue to be active, along with attending monthly Board and National Convention meetings. In January, DON CHAREUNSY, BRIAN WONG and MICHAEL ROCHA attended a reception for the National Board of NABJ; JINAH KIM served as spokes-

woman for ALS' "On a Roll for a Cure" event; AMY OAKES and Rocha attended the San Diego Association of Black Journalists' "San Diego Flavor" Super Bowl event; LEE ANN KIM hosted a board retreat at her home; and DARYL LYNN REYES, Chareunsy, Wong and Oakes attended the Asian Business Association's Chinese New Year celebration. In February, Chareunsy, Wong and Oakes attended the "East Meets West" awards luncheon. In March, ANNIE NGUYEN, Chareunsy and Oakes attended ABA's Rice Club Luncheon; and PHIL IGE, PAM CHEN, JENNIFER CASILLIAN, Rocha, Reyes and Oakes attend the AAJA National Governing and Advisory Board Meeting in Los Angeles. Ige is AAJA-S.D.'s National Advisory Board representative, replacing TONY FONG, who moved to Washington, D.C. Finally, the Board at its meeting in April decided to award up to four convention registration stipends to chapter members who are students rather than award scholarships this year.

TEXAS CHAPTER The Texas Chapter held a general meeting in Houston on April 26. The event featured guest presentations and Q&As with JOHN WILBURN, assistant managing editor at the *Houston Chronicle* and DON KOBOS, assistant news director at KTRK-TV, the Houston ABC affiliate.

WASHINGTON, D.C. CHAPTER The D.C. Chapter held a media workshop April 26 for members of the APA roundtable, a group of Asian Pacific American organizations in the local area. On April 29, the South Asian Journalists Association and AAJA-DC held a joint free-lance panel discussion featuring TOM SCOCCA, news editor of the *Washington City Paper*. Also planned is a panel discussion with the Census Bureau on May 12. AAJA-DC journalists including KEN MORITSUGU, WILMA CONSUL and MEI-LING HOPGOOD, will address the bureau at its headquarters in Suitland, Md. The chapter is also planning an introductory session to AAJA's famed executive leadership program. The event June 6 will be led by ELP's chief trainer, Dr. RON BROWN. ■

APPLAUSE

BY LISA CHUNG

MORE THAN A NEW YORK MINUTE:

New York chapter member **Michael Luo**, national writer for the Associated Press, won the 2002 George W. Polk Award for Criminal Justice Reporting for "Small Town Justice." Luo's three-part series questioned the confessions and manslaughter convictions of three poor, mentally handicapped African-Americans in Butler, Alabama. The series led to the release of two defendants, a man and a woman; the third man is in prison for an unrelated crime. ... **Robert Santos**, currently pulling convention program co-chair duties in San Diego, won the 2002 "Reporter of the Year" award from the Associated Press Television Radio Association of California and Nevada. The reporter for KFMB-TV had to show wide-ranging ability in feature, hard news and breaking news-live shot coverage. ... Fellow chapter member **Ti-Hua Chang** was nominated for four Emmys and won in the half-hour special category for his report on the devastating impact of Sept. 11 on Chinatown, a half-mile from Ground Zero. Chang won a FOLIO Award for breaking news from the Long Island Coalition for Fair Broadcasting for his story on a priest who was shot to death during Mass. ... **Virginia Huie** also won a New York Emmy for her entry, "Faces of Ground Zero" and a Gold World Medal at the New York Festivals competition in the human interest category for the same piece.

AUTHOR! AUTHOR!: It took "two years, lots of coffee, aspirin and Pepcid AC," but news editor **Philip Yam** at the *Scientific*

American has published his popular-science book, "The Pathological Protein: Mad Cow, Chronic Wasting and other Deadly Prion Diseases,"



JULIE DAM

which is due out June 2. Meanwhile *People* associate editor **Julie Dam** just signed a deal with Warner Books for her first novel, "A Girl's Gotta Have It!"

THINKING DEEPLY: At-large member **Victor Merina** was named Senior Fellow by the Institute for Justice and Journalism at the University of Southern California's Annenberg School of Journalism, where he will write about how news media cover issues such as affirmative action and treatment of immigrants. He will lead and advise 15 recipients of the Institute's California Fellowships.

INSPIRED CHOICES: *People* executive editor **Jeannie Park**, of the New York chapter, received the Inspiration Award by Asian Profession Extension, a group that promotes the personal development of inner-city Asian American youths. APEX cited Park's "distinguished journalism career and her tireless advocacy on behalf of Asian American journalists. Park also received an Excellence Award in Media by the US Pan Asian American Chamber of Commerce. ... Seattle chapter member **Catherine Shen**, vice president of strategic development for Horvitz Newspapers, was one of seven women featured in an industry article, "Taking Risks, Making Choices: How seven women rose to the top of the newspaper business—and remain there." The article, which put Shen in the company of **Mary Jean**



Connors, senior v.p. of human resources at Knight Ridder and **Gracia Matore**, CFO for Gannett, ran in the March issue of *Presstime*, the monthly magazine of the Newspaper Association of America.

FELLOWS IN THE NEWS:

Allen K. Wan, who recently moved from New York to Tokyo for CBS.MarketWatch.com, was selected as fellow for the American Marshall Memorial Fellowship, which took him across Europe to report and write. ... Fellow New York chapter member **Rong Xiaoqing** of the *Sing Tao Daily* is one of 14 fellows of the first Independent Press Association's Ethnic Press Fellowship, in which she will report on civic affairs of importance to immigrant communities. The \$7,000 fellowship includes monthly seminars and workshops. ...

Hawai'i chapter member **Heidi Chang**, an independent reporter/producer, has been awarded a 2003 Hong Kong Journalism Fellowship, which includes a study tour in China and Hong Kong, and seminars at the East-West Center in Honolulu. The seven fellows had their China trip postponed in March, when war broke in Iraq and SARS reports came in from China. In the meantime, Chang has become one of four rotating writers for the "This Sunday" column at the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*. ... Washington D.C. chapter member **Corinna Wu**, producer of "Science Update" at the American Association for the Advancement of Science, was chosen for a



HEIDI CHANG

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ON THE MOVE

BY VICTOR PANICKUL
Portland Chapter

Lisa Fung, formerly deputy arts editor at *The Los Angeles Times*, has been promoted to arts editor. In her new role, Fung will supervise and shape the work of critics and reporters covering art, classical music, theater, dance and architecture for the *Times'* Calendar section. **Cheryl Getuiza** has left KDCI Channel 30 in Carlsbad to accept a reporter/part-time anchor job at NBC affiliate KOB1 in Medford, Ore. **Leslie Guevarra** has been named deputy managing editor for the *San Francisco Chronicle's* copy desks. Guevarra is a founder of the San Francisco Bay Area Chapter. **Mike Hale** has been promoted to assistant deputy editor of Arts & Leisure at *The New York Times*. Hale was previously television editor at *The Times*. New York chapter member **Stan Honda** has been hired as a staff photographer for *Agence France-Presse*, based in New York. **S. Mitra Kalita**, formerly a business reporter at *Newsday*, has joined *The Washington Post* to cover education. **Daniel K. Lew** has been promoted to assistant editor at *California Horsetrader*, where he previously was art director. **John Liu** has been named presentation editor at *The Louisville Courier-Journal*. **Patty Pan** recently moved from Columbus, Ga., to Charlotte, N.C., to work as a nightside general assignment reporter with WSOC-TV, an ABC affiliate. **Darlynne Reyes** has begun a job as a reporter at KSWB. Reyes, who was news director at KDCI Channel 30, is co-chair of the 2003 AAJA National Convention in San Diego and an AAJA-San Diego Board member. **Janelle Wang** was hired as a reporter for KGO-TV in San Francisco. She formerly anchored at KPTV in Portland and was vice president of broadcast for the Portland chapter of AAJA. ■

To submit items for On the Move, e-mail victorpanichkul@aol.com.

CASE Media Fellowship, “The New Face of Security: A cutting-Edge Program in Bioninformatics and information Assurance,” held at West Virginia University. ... New York chapter member **Lia Chang**, arts and entertainment editor for AsianConnections.com, has been selected as a fellow for the National Tropical Botanical Garden Journalism Program in Kauai. ... Portland chapter member **Tracy Jan** received a Newspaper Association of America fellowship to attend the Poynter Institute’s “Reporting, Writing and Editing: Covering the Beat” seminar. Jan is an education reporter at *The Oregonian*.



LIA CHANG

STUDENT TRIUMPHS: At-

large student member **Yuta Usuda** said he struggled with English for three years when he came from Tokyo to Marshall University in West Virginia, but this April, hard work appears to have paid off for the Master’s degree candidate in print and broadcast journalism. Usuda brought in two first place awards in the newspaper feature writing and radio in-depth reporting categories at the Society of Professional Journalists’ annual competition for the region (Region IV). Usuda also won two honorable mentions in the television category, and another in the National Broadcasting Society National Student Electronic Media Competition. ... Seattle chapter



YUTA USUDA

member **Lie Shia Ong**, a junior at the University of Washington, won the Blethen Journalism Scholarship for 2003. ... Minnesota chapter student member **Sada Konkol** was selected to give the student address at the University of Minnesota’s College of Liberal Arts graduation.

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA MEMBERS SAY “OH, BABY!”:

Reporter **Sue Kwon** of KPIX-TV and her husband, Danny, welcomed son Merix Kwon Guillory, who arrived March 7 at a whopping 5 pounds, 6 ounces. “Half of his body weight is in vocal chords,” Kwon reported. Eleven days later, on March 18, *San Jose Mercury News* reporter **Cecilia Kang** announced the arrival of daughter Leyla Sehi Unsal, a bruiser at 8 pounds, 6 ounces—and nine days past deadline, “but well worth it,” Kang said. ■

necessary in order to keep one’s objectivity, Vettel said. He doesn’t want to know who has a sick wife at home and feel guilty about writing a bad review. “Giving a bad review is like telling someone his kid is ugly,” he said. When it came time to dish the dirt on local restaurants, the panelists shied away from disparaging remarks, choosing instead to focus on their favorite places in the city. In order to get zero stars in a review, Vettel says that a restaurant has to be “almost aggressively bad,” and “prominent enough to deserve a smackdown.” One of the restaurants that warranted the “Big Egg” during his 14-year career was Michael Jordan’s Restaurant, which is now closed. Yee, who covers food trends, believes that just like any beat, you need to get to know the basics of food in order to write about it. A reading list for aspiring food journalists should include *Larousse Gastronomique*, *Food Lover’s Companion* and *Kitchen Confidential*. ■

Items for applause can be sent to Lisa Chung at LChung@sjmercury.com.



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