**Interstate Asian prostitution ring busted by the Feds**

By Cody Yiu

Five individuals, two in New York and three in Massachusetts, were arrested by federal authorities on March 31 on fourteen charges, including sexual trafficking and interstate travel in aid of racketeering, according to the indictment and a public statement the Sampan obtained from the U.S. Attorney General's Of- fice, District of M.A.

The investigation was conducted by the Feds on behalf of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Joined forces by other federal authorities as well as local police officers, namely those of Boston Police Depart- ment, Quincy Police department and Burlington Police Depart- ment, this particular operation in the Commonwealth led to the arrests of Hong Wei, also known as "Ms. Chen," 37, and Xiang Huai Zhang, a.k.a. "Daren," both of Boston, N.Y., and three men from M.A.— Jing Liang Chen, a.k.a. "Mike," 30, and Dong Kai Chen, a.k.a. "Eric," 26, and Deng Kai Chen, 41.

According to the indictment, from August of 2004 through February of 2010, the defend- ants engaged in a conspiracy to entice Asian women to travel to Massachusetts for the pur- pose of engaging in prostitu- tion. The conspiracy involved the use of advertising in various print publications and online classified sites such as Craigslist and the Boston Phoenix, seeking the services of Asian women to work in the defendants’ brothels.

The women, who generally arrived at the South Station Bus Terminal in Boston, were transported by the defendants to various apartments where they engaged in prostitution. The apartments were converted to prostitution locations, and the women were forced to work in the brothels.

One of the defendants allegedly paid a large sum of money last year to place ads in the Boston Phoenix. (Photo by Cody Yiu).

**Taiwan's Got Talent**

Formosa's male soprano becomes a smash hit on YouTube

By Cody Yiu

He is an unusual sight on contemporary television in most cultures. He is pudgy, wears a bowl cut on top and a bow tie below. And he has long suffered from mockery in our [Taiwanese] society. “Being fat draws a lot of mockery in our society.”

Before long, Lin was compared to Susan Boyle, the plain-looking but Guardsman contestant on ‘Britain’s Got Talent,’ and became an instant legend on the Internet after singing “I Will Always Love You.”

Having stuck with the disparaging nickname “Little Fatty” due to hisubby physique, discovering his overnight fame boosts Lin’s confidence in pursuing a career in singing. “I now have more confidence in pursuing a singing career,” Lin said to The Associated Press in a telephone interview. “You don’t have to be a good-looking man or woman to succeed. Just be yourself and try your best.”

Lin said he had long suffered from a lack of self-confidence because “being fat draws a lot of mockery in our [Taiwanese] society.”

Soaring to stardom has been a bumpy road for Lin. After graduating from college last year, he tried his luck on another Taiwanese talent show only to get public criticism for his plain look and his high-pitched voice from the judges.

“One said I should instead pursue the career of a comed- ian, and another questioned whether it was right for a man to sing soprano,” Lin said.

Now Lin is able to leave the past behind and march on with confidence.
Otolaryngology Clinic on the first
April 16, 2010, 2-4 pm. Location: cancer screenings on Friday, offering free oral, head and neck Tufts Medical Center Site and will continue to serve form. AACA is a “Be Counted” were missed on their household’s 2010 Census form or believe they for anyone who did not receive a “Be Counted” forms available in multiple languages: English, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Spanish, and Russian. AACA is available in multiple languages: English, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Spanish, and Russian. Free health screenings at “Be Counted” forms are available at AACA

CHINATOWN

“Be Counted” forms available at AACA

“Be Counted” forms are available in multiple languages: English, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Spanish, and Russian. “Be Counted” forms are available for anyone who did not receive a 2010 Census form or believe they were missed on their household’s form. AACA is a “Be Counted” Site and will continue to serve.

A guided walk to the harbor from Chinatown

Where: Meet at the Old Gate. When: April 24th; begin at 9:30 am Walk ends at Long Wharf North at 10:30 pm What: Learn about the Greenway and find out about your local national park. Join us for easy walking among the gardens on the Greenway, travel city sidewalks and
great gravel paths. RSVP (jpotter@rosekennedygreenway.org)

QUINCY

QMC to hold annual Green Brush Art Reception

Quincy Medical Center will hold its second annual Green Brush Art Reception from 6 to 9 p.m. Tuesday, April 27, in the McGuincy Building lobby, 114 Whitwell St. The event will include a traditional lion dance by the Wah Lum Kung Fu and Tai Chi Academy, as well as an Asian fashion show with fashions by Drea Designs Couture and Grandasia Bridal and Fashions of Quincy and models from Boston’s Tonton Model Management. Photography, brush paintings and calligraphy by artists from the Chinese American Fine Art Society will be sold at a silent auction. Musicians from the Foundation for Chinese Performing Arts will perform, and there will be demonstrations of brush painting and calligraphy.

Leisure Raffle.

Proceeds will benefit the hospital’s Asian Service Fund, which provides free health education, screenings and publications. Tickets are $68 each and many levels of sponsorship opportunities are available. For more information or contact: Lola Tom, Asian Services Manager, at 617-376-5493 or ltom@quincymc.org or visit www.qmc.org. Tickets are also available at Grandasia Bridal and Fashions, 663 Hancock St.

Model Management. Photography by artists from the Chinese American Fine Art Society will be sold at a silent auction. Musicians from the Foundation for Chinese Performing Arts will perform, and there will be demonstrations of brush painting and calligraphy.

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Job hunting workshop

Help need “Finding Your Next Job?” Find out how to fine tune your resume, cover letters, positive effective cover letters, and ace the interview at the Thomas Crane Public Library, 40 Washington St., Quincy. The series is being presented in partnership with the Quincy Career Center and will be held on Tuesday evenings in April from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Space is limited and registration is required for each workshop. Call 617-376-1361 to register, or visit the library’s online events calendar at thomascranepubliclibrary.org to register.

NEWTON

Newton Cantonese School open house
May 1st (Saturday): 10 a.m. to 12 noon. All classrooms will be open for visitors. The school offers both conversational and literary tracks for learning Cantonese from Pre-school through 8th grade. Conversational Mandarin class starts at 5th grade. The school is located at the Bigelow Middle School at 42 Vernon St., Newton. For more information, please contact Agnes Lee (Principal) at 617-930-3580. School website: www.newton-cantoneseorganizations.org

FUNDRAISERS

AACA Gala

The Asian American Civic Association (AACA) Annual Gala 2010 celebrates the “common roots of diversity.” Set at the renowned Harvard Museum of Natural History, the Gala will feature a sumptuous sampling of international cuisines, exotic performances from the four corners of the world, and a Travel and Leisure Raffle.

Where: Harvard Museum of Natural History 26 Oxford Street Cambridge, MA 02138
When: Friday, May 7, 2010 7:00PM-11:00PM
Tickets: Individual: $150/person ($125/person if purchased before April 1st)
Group: Minimum of (10) - $120/person ($110/person if purchased before April 1st)
Pricing: Limited validated parking. Early reservation required.
Go to www.nes.harvard.edu
Click “One Day Parking Permit”
For any questions, call (617) 495-3772.
To purchase tickets, or if you have any questions, please call Angelina Hong at (617) 426-9492 x212 or e-mail angelinha@aaacma.org

A Little Peace, Dressing Tent

Saturday, April 24, 2010 7:00 pm at the Vietnamese American Community Center, 42 Charles St., Dorchester, MA
Tickets: $20 in advance/$27 at the door
Children: $10 (10 and younger)
To purchase, visit http://www.aavr.org/dessert2010

SAMPAN

SAMPAN is New England’s only bimonthly bilingual English-Chinese newspaper. It is nonprofit and nonpartisan. Founded in 1972, SAMPAN is published by the Asian American Civic Association. SAMPAN is distributed free in Chinatown and the surrounding area. All donations to the publication are tax deductible. SAMPAN is published in English ($100/year; $60/year 1st class mail, $30/year 3rd class mail).

www.sampan.org

Contact: Lola Tom, Asian Services Manager, at 617-376-5493 or ltom@quincymc.org or visit www.qmc.org. Tickets are also available at Grandasia Bridal and Fashions, 663 Hancock St.

www.QCC.edu

Fall 2010 Healthcare Faculty Openings

Nursing (ADN and PNP)
Respiratory Care
Occupational Therapy (OTA)
Interested applicants should visit our website www.QCC.edu for a complete job description, requirements and application procedures. All applicants for these MCCCD unit positions must apply online by April 25, 2010.

www.sampan.org

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SAMPAN is a publication of the
Asian American Civic Association

10th Annual Gala 2010, April 24, 2010

Can you help find a free health screening event near you? Let's find out!
According to the indictment, Boston’s South Station was a popular transit spot for interstate human trafficking. (Photo credits)

**Commonwealth News**

**PROSTITUTION, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

In addition to the court document also records the alleged sum payment of $13,125 from Zhang to the Boston Phoenix over numerous months in 2009 to advertise in the publication's "Female Escort Section." Wei and Chen were charged with sex trafficking and harboring an illegal alien and using force, fraud, and coercion to compel the women to engage in a commercial sex act which the defendants benefited financially. The indictment charges all of the defendants with engaging in a conspiracy to coerce and entice women to travel to Massachusetts for the purpose of engaging in prostitution.

The indictment also lists a several accounts in which the defendants alleged to have traveled from New York to brothels owned by Wei in Massachusetts, as well as phone conversations the defendants had with women about traveling from out of state to Massachusetts to work in Wei's brothels.

If convicted, defendants Wei and Chen face a maximum sentence of life in prison on the sex trafficking charge, 20 years in prison on the forced labor charges and 10 years on the harboring charge. All of the defendants face a maximum sentence of five years in prison on the conspiracy and inducement of travel for prostitution charge, and Wei and Zhang face a maximum sentence of imprisonment of five years on each of the interstate travel in aid of racketeering charge.

"Successful prosecutions of traffickers rely heavily on the cooperation of victims and law enforcement’s ability to gain their trust. The District of Massachusetts is working with outstanding case agents, investigators and advocates who understand the complexity and sensitive issues facing victims of human trafficking, particularly sex trafficking," said Carmen Ortiz, United States Attorney, in a statement.

"Human trafficking is a widespread crime that exists in both urban and suburban communities, as today’s arrests demonstrate," said Special Agent in Charge Bruce Foucart in the statement. "ICE investigations reveal that victims of these crimes often suffer threats of physical and mental abuse."

The U.S. Attorney General’s Office, District of M.A., told the *Sampan* that further investigation relating this case is still underway; therefore, further information regarding inner workings of sex trafficking rings cannot be disclosed.

**CHINATOWN NEWS**

**COMMUNITY DISCUSS PHASE II STAGE I OF CHINATOWN MASTERPLAN**

**BY NATALIE ORNELL**

One hundred people gathered at the Josiah Quincy Elementary School last Saturday to discuss the new stage of Phase II of the Chinatown Masterplan, which will be completed this July. Attorneys included community residents, members of the Chinatown Coalition, and representatives from the firms Tainter and Associates and Community Circle.

Following the presentation, attendees split into Chinese and English speaking groups to pose suggestions and ask questions about the presentation.

Community Circle Consultant Daphne Politis said, "Chinatown has wonderful qualities but interesting challenges." She then outlined the sites or key anchor areas providing strength to the neighborhood and connection to open spaces and streets, noting the impact the community can have on publicly owned versus privately owned property.

"When we look at Chinatown to improve it we looked at public and buildings to improve, those that belonged to public and those that were privately owned. For those that are publicly owned the community has more control over what can happen there. For those that are privately owned, the community cannot control it but it still has influence."

Politis noted that the public needs to be clear about what it wants so the community can move in that direction. In a privately owned building the community has the right to negotiate community benefits. A list has been developed that describes the kind of properties that would most enhance Chinatown, for example, according to Politis a certain percentage should be set aside for affordable housing and there should also be mitigation of environmental health issues. These essential spaces include a library, civic center, and community center; many attendees expressed the desire to have more recreational spaces in Chinatown.

Politis emphasized that "public input is a part of all redevelopment projects whether public or private." Chinatown Gateway Coalition member Lawrence Cheng, discussed key sites for development including 50 Herald Street, R-1 where the YMCA Bubble, used to be located, the R-2 zones 25, 26a, and 26b, and P12.

"I’ve been involved in this discussion since the 1980s. You can dictate a lot of uses and benefits. We highlighted these given areas because they are the open and remaining land in Chinatown," Cheng said.

Politis also discussed potential development in anchor areas in Chinatown including South Bay, Phillips Square, the New York Streets, and the Hinge Block area.

The plan proposes strategies that make it safer and easier to walk in the neighborhood. It also seeks to be more inviting to visitors who are walking by the T or South Station. Politis identified areas where more parks, plazas, and other areas can be created: places for gathering, resting, celebrating and places that help people connect to each other.

She noted that the plan identifies ways to make these connections and in that way the community has more control.

As an example Politis displayed a diagram of Harrision Avenue with an adjacent diagram showing potential for more lighting, fencing, additional planting, and more room for people and less for cars.

When groups split up to discuss improvements and concerns the issue of parking came up several times.

Howard Le who attended this meeting for the first time said, "The parking in Chinatown is too expensive. They will prohibit people from coming to the Chinatown businesses. I propose a public parking garage with a lower parking rate. If it’s too expensive people may go to the suburbs. Also I want to reassess the residential parking. I once came at night and tried and there were too many vacant spots."
Accepting Applications

Housing

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China Trade Trail Symposium 2010
Celebrating Historic Connections within Massachusetts and Across the World

Date: April 24, 2010
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Location: Boston Athenaeum
10 1/2 Beacon Street, Boston, MA
Cost: Free of Charge
Advanced Reservation Required
All Presentations in English

Pre-registration is required. Space is limited. Don’t miss out—register today!
info@forbeshousemuseum.org OR 617-696-1815

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By Susan Philipse

Appearing before a throng of supporters in Quincy Center’s Five Spices Restaurant, former Assistant Attorney General Tackey Chan on April 10 officially announced his candidacy for the 2nd Norfolk district on Saturday afternoon.

“I want this to be a campaign of advocacy. Times are tough and it’s time for some people with knowledge about both the inside and the outside to contribute,” Chan said.

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CHANG, continued from page 4

going on and trying to help everyone in Quincy, not just a few groups,” he
added, pointing to the audience.

“It is always good to see more Asians running for state government positions,” Winkay Leung,
President of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA), wrote in a note to the Sampan.
“The Second Norfolk District includes the City of Quincy, which has a very large Asian population.
Being a long life resident of Quincy, Tacky Chan will understand the needs of its residents and represent
their interests at the Massachusetts House of Representatives,” Leung wrote.
Chan’s bid comes after Democratic State Representative A. Stephen Tobin’s announcement that he
would vacate the seat that he has held since 1989. In something of a domino effect, Democratic State Sena-
tor Morrisey announced his decision to vacate his seat to run for district attorney. Tobin then announced he
would run for State senate, leaving the district’s state representative seat open for the first time in two decades.
Thus, Chan points to this being a time of opportunity.

The Second Norfolk district includes Ward 1, and precincts in Ward 3, 4, and 5 in the city of Quincy.
Chan faces competition from Democratic candidates Elaine Dwyer, Leo J. Kelly, Joseph Keegan and Republican
John Iredale. It has also been reported that Ward 1 City Councilor Margaret LaForest and Martin Aiken have also
expressed interest in the seat.

With such a politically active climate, area newspapers report intense competition for campaign contributions and
volunteers. Tacky Chan’s campaign invites assistance with canvassing, mailings, giving rides to polls, hosts for small events and
general word of mouth. “It is all about meeting people,” Chan added.

Susan Philipose is a second year student at Tufts School of Medicine.

Cody Yiu contributed reporting.

Boston — On the morning of April 6, hundreds of immigrants gathered before the State House’s Grand Staircase to
celebrate and advocate in the fourteenth annual Immigrants Day at the State House. Organized by the
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA), the event drew immigrants and allies from as far as away as
Lowell, New Bedford and Springfield, and also from many neighborhoods and towns around Greater Boston.

Among the attendees were Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center’s (BCNC) Anna Fan, Vanessa Li and Judy Chen.
The purpose of the event was made clear by Avi Green, executive director of MASS-Vote. “We are here to
ask our government to extend to us all the basic rights that we should enjoy as human beings.” These
rights, he emphasized, are not handouts or favors, but basic necessities that return to immigrants some of what they have given to their communities. Marcorly Almeida, Organizing Director at MIRA, noted that immigrants comprise 17 percent of the workforce in Massa-
chusetts, whereas they make up only 14 percent of the state’s population. That means immigrants contrib-
ute more than their share to the economic prosperity of a state whose native-born population is aging
and retiring. “We work everywhere from housekeeping to high technology,” said Almeida. About half of the PhD’s awarded in Massachusetts go to immi-
grants.” And when all these legislators go home, it’s immigrants who clean up the State House.”

In return, the gathering asked its legislators to consider immigrants’ needs in its upcoming budget. The Citizenship for New Americans pro-
gram has been deeply cut over the past two years, for example, and the gathering insisted that cuts go no deeper.
Maria Angela Chedid, a student from the Ja-
maica Plain Community Center’s Adult Learning Program, spoke with quiet fortitude about the importance of such programs to immigrants from all walks. “I was a TV announcer in my native Venezuela,” she said. “Not to speak good
English for me who made a living by communications is very hard. But it’s much different when you are an adult than when you are a child. We need some help to start over.”

Advocates also asked that the legislature pre-
serve the Governor’s restoration of funds for the 30,000 legal im-
migrants who lost their state-sponsored health

SEE CELEBRATION, PAGE 6

Affordable Senior Housing

Constitution Cooperative Apartments, where residents have a voice in the management of their building, is cur-
rently accepting applications for studio and one bedroom apartments. Heat & electricity included.

Located in the heart of City Square in Charlestown, this active senior housing co-op is within walking distance to shop-
ping, banks, churches and is on an MBTA bus line.

Rent is based on 30% of income (income limits apply) to qualified seniors 62 and older and to younger persons who are mobility impaired requiring the special design features of accessible units.

Call 1-800-225-3151 for leasing information.
insurance last June. Many speakers recognized the difficulty such blows have had on immigrant communities. “I know it’s not easy to come here year in and year out to say you’re relevant and deserve support,” said state representative Marie St. Fleur in her impassioned comments. “But you need to go to the polls and say you must be recognized. One vote matters.”

That urgent mood extended beyond current budget concerns to the national demand for comprehensive immigration reform, which the audience pledged to support at week’s end with call-in days to their national representatives and senators. As Dr. Sigelia Montes-Barreto, board president of MIRA, noted, “I have been working for ten years on this issue, and I feel confident reform is within our grasp, but we need to keep pushing. The three words you need to remember are: organize, organize and organize.”

Led by MC. Damani Lopez, Program Director at Agency ALPFA, the event also included heartfelt comments by State Representative Linda Dorcena Forry, whose parents were immigrants from Haiti in the 1960s, and a colorful presentation of traditional Mexican dancer by Harvard student Folklorico de Aztlán.

In the audience were also numerous speakers and/or aids from legislative offices, including Antonio Cabral, Gloria Foss, Ronald Mariano, Ann-Margaret Ferrante, Antonio Cabral, Gloria Gee, and William Browns.

What you should know about heart attack

A heart attack is also called a myocardial infarction or MI. It occurs when a blood vessel that feeds the heart muscle becomes blocked. Blood flow stops to a part of the heart. If treatment is not done right away, this part of the heart muscle dies. A scar forms in this part of your heart.

Blockage may occur from:
• Fatty deposits called plaque
• A spasm in the blood vessel
• A blood clot

Signs of a heart attack
• Pain or pressure in the middle of your chest, arm, jaw, shoulders, neck or stomach. It may spread from one place to another.
• Feeling of tightness, choking, achng, squeezing, burning or heaviness
• Occurs both during activity and at rest
• Lasts for more than 15 minutes
• Sweating
• Shortness of breath
• Weakness
• Nausea or vomiting
• Feeling scared
• Dizziness

Call 911 right away if you have any of these signs. Sit or lie down until the emergency squad arrives. Do not drive to the hospital or delay by calling your doctor.

Discharge instructions after a heart attack

The heart takes several months to heal.
• Go to your follow-up doctor’s appointment
• Ask about getting into a cardiac rehab program
• Limit your activity for 4-6 weeks.
• Rest each day.
• Increase your activity over time
• Rest for 1 hour after eating meals and at least 30 minutes after activities such as bathing, showering, or shaving.
• Limit stair climbing. Take the stairs slowly.
• Avoid lifting more than 10 pounds or 4.5 kilogram
• Do not vacuum, move grass, rake or shovel. You may do light housework.
• Ask your doctor when you can drive and when you can return to work. You may ride in a car short distances.
• Sexual activity can be resumed when you are able to walk up 20 stairs without problems.
• Follow the diet your doctor and dietician suggest.
• Eat foods that are low in fat.
• Avoid salty foods.
• Weigh yourself each day to check for fluid build-up. Extra fluid makes your heart work harder.
• Call your doctor if you gain 2-3 pounds or 1 kilogram over time.
• Avoid temperatures that are very hot or very cold.
• Do not take hot or cold showers.

Hong Kong citizen faces charges for attempting to illegally export military parts from the US

March 26 – U.S. District Court in Boston made public an indictment charging a Hong Kong citizen with conspiring to, and attempting to, illegally export defense articles designated on the United States Munitions List in violation of the Arms Export Control Act. The defendants are Hok Shek Chan (a.k.a. John Chan), 57, of Hong Kong, was charged in an indictment with conspiring with two Malaysian nationals, Wong Fou Loy (a.k.a. Aaron Wong) and Ngo Tek Chai (a.k.a. T.C. NGO) and others to knowingly and willfully export and cause the export of 10 indicators servo driven tachometers used in C-130 military flight simulators from the United States without a required license or written authorization from the Department of State.

The indictment further charges Chan, Wong and Ngo with attempting to illegally export the illegal export of the military flight indicators from the United States in violation of the Arms Export Control Act.

“The alleged charges are serious and as a result of the exceptional coordination between federal and international authorities, Mr. Chan has been returned to the U.S. to face them,” United States Attorney Carmen M. Ortiz said.

Protecting national security weakness is our top priority,” said John McKenna, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Department of Commerce, Office of Export Enforcement, Boston Field Office. “This action is a clear signal that federal law enforcement agencies continue to work together diligently to prevent U.S. technology from falling into the wrong hands,” he concluded.

“Mr. Chan’s extradition to the United States showcases the diligent work conducted by ICE and its domestic and international law enforcement partners in safeguarding sensitive military technology,” said Bruce M. Foucart, Special Agent in Charge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office of Investigations in Boston.

“Export violations involving military components are a serious threat to our national security and a top ICE priority.”

“The illegal export of U.S. military technology and weapons is one of the most significant and growing threats to our national security,” said Ed Bradley, Special Agent in Charge of the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, Northeast Field Office. “The indictment and extraditio of Mr. Chan are the direct result of the significant investigative efforts of the agents of DCIS, ICE and Commerce,”

Bradley said.

The case was investigated by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Department of Commerce, Office of Export Enforcement. Do you like traveling? Do you speak Mandarin?

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Please apply in person at 161 Devonshire Street, Boston, MA 02110
People

Chinatown remembers
Linda Wang, intrepid mother and longtime special ed advocate

Linda Wang, a Chinatown resident and an active member of the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center (BCNC) Family Service program, died March 29, 2010 of a heart attack. Wang, a native of Guangdong, China, was active in helping parents of children with disabilities. Despite her limited English skills, Wang, a mother of an autistic child, was first elected as a member of Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SPEED PAC) in June 2008. During her term, she advocated for the rights of Chinese-American parents in the public school system. She was the treasurer of the Council in 2010. Her story was featured in the Sampan on August 15, 2008.

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Youth

Technology and iPod

“Technology has changed a lot over the years. Back in the day, record players, cassette tapes, and CDs were used until the iPod was invented. Now, iPods are considered to be an item of everyday life.” - Wendy

Artwork by Wendy Situ

Technology and iPod

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Wah Lum Kung Fu going forty years, and still kicking

By Rebecca Chang

The Wah Lum Athletic School celebrates its 40th anniversary this month, and will be gathering a variety of martial artists in a special “Master’s Demonstration” to commemorate the milestone. To date, tens of thousands of students have gone through Wah Lum’s programs, and Wah Lum remains a central fixture in Boston’s Chinatown.

The school draws from the Northern Praying Mantis style, developed nearly four centuries ago in China. As the Manist Revolution in China, citizens and martial artist Lee Kwan Shan in the 20th century, who combined the exquisite extended fist of the Mantis with his family’s “seeking leg” style. As World War II began to rage in Europe, Lee was met in Canton by the current Grantmaster Chan Pui, who then was only six. At that tender age, Chan was the youngest Lee ever had taken on.

The teenage Chan was forced to flee the civil strife that followed the Communist Revolution in China, swimming to Hong Kong with few possessions. Beginning anew as a sailor, Chan found his way to Boston by the early ’70s, where he settled to begin life yet again as a busboy in Chinatown restaurants. As Mai Du, leading one of the newest Wah Lum schools in Malden, puts it: “It’s truly amazing. He was just serving barbeque chicken, then people found out he knew kung-fu, and asked him to start teaching. He was a prodigy.” Chan has since been featured in venues as diverse as the Discovery Channel and Kung Fu Magazine; and Wah Lum now holds over a dozen schools across the US, centers in Switzerland and Brazil, and a temple in Orlando, Florida (where Chan Pui himself now resides.)

One of Wah Lum’s — and Chan’s — major distinctions has been its openness to diversity of style and background. At a time when many practitioners still believed that the art should be taught blood relations alone, Wah Lum embraced a variety of pupils. Sifu Bob Rosen, who is currently the chief instructor for Wah Lum, was indeed the first American martial arts instructor to work in Boston’s Chinatown. Rosen recalls that when he first met Chan in the ’70s, he found it remarkable how the experience of the martial art itself seemed to transcend language and cultural barriers between people. “Master Chan was very mystique-filled,” Rosen remarked. “We could communicate through just the experience of kung-fu. It was amazing how he could do that with all the different peoples that came through his door.”

Mai Du echoes that in her own experience, Wah Lum offered “a more diverse family,” and remains a particularly positive space for youth development. Martial arts, Mai stresses, offers a “positive and healthy environment for young people to grow up with,” and in contrast to seasonal sports, which disband yearly, fosters a supportive, long-term network. “To this day,” Mai exclaims, “I still have same family from earliest training, family sticks with you for the rest of your life.”

Much of the Wah Lum family – along with many elite martial artists from around the globe — will come together on May 1, 2010 for the celebratory show. The demonstration will begin at 7:30, and will take place that the John Hancock Hall Auditorium. Call (617) 350-7530 or visit www.wahlampai.us for more information on ticketing.

Rebecca Chang is a Sampan correspondent.

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Grandmaster Chan Pui and Sifu Bob Rosen, Chief Instructor of Wah Lum New England, practicing in early years. (Photo courtesy of Mai Du)