

USCPFA Played Role in U.S. Recognition of PRC

By Paul Morris

This year marks a major milestone in our friendship organization's history: we are 50 years old. The USCPFA was established as a national group in Los Angeles on the Labor Day weekend of 1974. We are observing this anniversary by reflecting on our half century of building friendship across the Pacific and by looking forward to future endeavors.

Readers can learn the details of our early decades by consulting Paul Trescott's authoritative 2015 study, *From Frenzy to Friendship: The History of the US-China Peoples Friendship Association*.

For perspectives from founding members we have posted on USCPFA.org several articles from the *US-China Review* on the early years. You can read the conclusion of Karen Shaw Kerpen's "Roots of Friendship" series that covers USCPFA. Also on the website are "Getting Organized" by Bernie Lusher of Los Angeles, an interview with founder Frank Pestana, and remembrances by William Hinton, Ellen Brotsky Williams and Jan Masaoka.

We will celebrate our 50th birthday in person at the Washington Seminar on U.S.-China Relations, October 17-18. See details elsewhere in this issue.

Below is a selection from "Roots of Friendship" that looked back at the first decade. Note that we no longer have a staff and our membership is around 500 today, compared with the peak of 10,000 in about 1980.



November 1972: The first USCPFA delegation to China in front of the village in which Mao Zedong was born. Back row, center: Bernie Lusher, Claire Hirsch. Front: Jean Kidwell Pestana, Frank Pestana, unknown, Georgia Lein.

The Early Years

Editor's note: The following is a newly edited excerpt from "Roots of Friendship," by Karen Shaw Kerpen, from the September 1982 USCR.

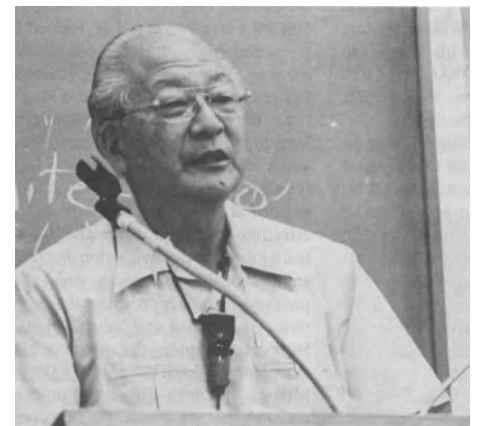
The USCPFA is the largest group that worked to get the U.S. government to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. The 10,000 members it eventually attracted included citizens from different regional, economic and ethnic backgrounds. The early members came from the left, from progressive groups and from anti-establishment organizations. As interest in China grew, USCPFA attracted many people who were sympathetic to, or simply curious about, China. The USCPFA became a mass organization, in contrast to the National Committee on US-China Relations.

The USCPFA's activities were conducted by volunteers from 1971 to 1977, when a small staff was hired at the national level. Volunteers organized the chapters, did their own fundraising and contributed their own time and finances to sustain the work. Some of the founders were unflagging in their efforts to achieve "normalization" of relations. Many people devoted much time and energy to a matter of foreign policy when few material rewards were forthcoming.

Public education was a major accomplishment of the USCPFA. Hundreds of volunteers taught and talked to Americans about China. USCPFA slide shows, courses, trips, publications and exchanges with the PRC brought a new perspective on China to thousands of Americans. USCPFA provided a positive environment that paved the way for formal ties.

USCPFA members found it difficult to persuade people about the PRC's argument for recognition and the need for the U.S. to sever ties with the Republic of China on Taiwan because the opposing viewpoint was widely promulgated by U.S. officials, some Asian experts, Congress and business circles.

The talks, tours and exchanges the USCPFA sponsored with the PRC were positive examples of the good relations that normalization would bring. The PRC revealed its commitment to improved relations by granting thousands of visas to the USCPFA, scheduling educational trips for activists and carefully planning itineraries and exchanges.



Koji Ariyoshi, Honolulu, founding member of USCPFA.



1982: National Treasurer Mark Sheldon, President Unita Blackwell, National Board member and founder Esther Gollobin.

USCPFA 2015–2024: The Faces of Friendship



Left: Washington Seminar, 2016: Li Sanghua, Zhang Min, Bart Trescott, Mme. Li Xiaolin, Diana Greer, Li Kexin, Barbara Harrison, Zhang Heqiang.



Robert Sanborn, 2017.



Northern New Jersey chapter.



DC Metro 2017: Samuel Mok, chapter President Christine Brooks, Janie Tisdale.



Minister Xu Xueyuan, Kitty Trescott, Diana Greer, 2018.



Las Vegas chapter, 2019.



Atlanta, 2015: Ed Krebs (standing) introduces panelists (from left) Walter T.C. Chang, Archie McKee, Sally Ryan, Kirk Huang, Mel Horowitz and Ralph Beha. Photo by Linda Hanley.

National Officers

Our national leadership has been quite consistent over the last decade. Since her election in 2011, President Diana Greer of Richmond has ably and energetically helmed the National Board. Treasurer Woon Chow joined in 2016. Current board members Barbara Harrison, Barbara Cobb, Kitty Trescott, Kirk Huang, Frances Goo and Paul Morris have served for most or all of these 10 years. Marge Ketter and Joan Gates have continued to manage membership.

Seminars and Conventions

- 2015 Sept. National Convention, Atlanta
- 2016 April Washington Seminar
- 2017 Oct. National Convention, Las Vegas
- 2018 May Washington Seminar
- 2019 Oct. National Convention, Minneapolis
- 2021 Nov. National Convention, virtual
- 2022 Oct. Washington Seminar, virtual
- 2023 Oct. National Convention, virtual

Koji Ariyoshi Award

- 2015 Marci Duryea, At Large
- 2017 Robert Sanborn, Midwest
- 2019 Mel Horowitz, NE New York
- 2021 Judy Manton, Northern NJ
- 2023 Richard Pendleton, New England

National Delegations to China

- 2016 Friendship Forum, Chuzhou, Anhui
- 2017 Tour of Shanghai and Hangzhou
- 2018 Friendship Forum, Hainan

USCPFA 2015-24 *cont.*



National Treasurer Woon Chow, 2017.



John Jung, Flo Oy Wong at the South Bay chapter, 2015.



Owensboro/Evansville chapter, 2017.



Linda Mealey-Lohmann, Joyce Hsiao, Minnesota chapter, 2018.



Min Wang, Marge Ketter, SE Florida chapter, 2017.



Vernon Ching, Calvin Say (Hawai'i House Speaker), Frances Goo, Honolulu chapter, 2015.



Dan Etler, San Francisco chapter president David Ewing, 2022.



Yuhe Zhu, SE Florida chapter, sewing masks, 2020.

Videos Profile Members' Friendship Stories

In 2019 USCPFA launched "40 Videos for 40 Years," in which members videotaped their memories of China and USCPFA. Led by Christine Aylward (Southeast Florida chapter and National Board member), the committee eventually received and edited 67 videos. Summaries appeared in the fall 2019 *USCR*.



Christine Aylward



Barbara Cobb



Kirk Huang



Mel Horowitz



Margaret Wong



Randall Chang