



DAISY'S AFTERNOON AT MOCA

BY LENORE LOOK
PICTURES BY LEUYEN PHAM

"DAISY'S AFTERNOON AT MOCA"
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I AM DAISY.



Like the flower.

I am eight.

I live at the Museum of Chinese in
America, aka MOCA.

Well, okay, I don't really live here,
I live on Mott Street, but I come to
the museum after school almost
every day after school, so that I
might as well live here.

I love the lobby.

You get a good view of the street.

And a good view of everyone
coming in and going out.

You can keep an eye on things.

The guard knows who I am.

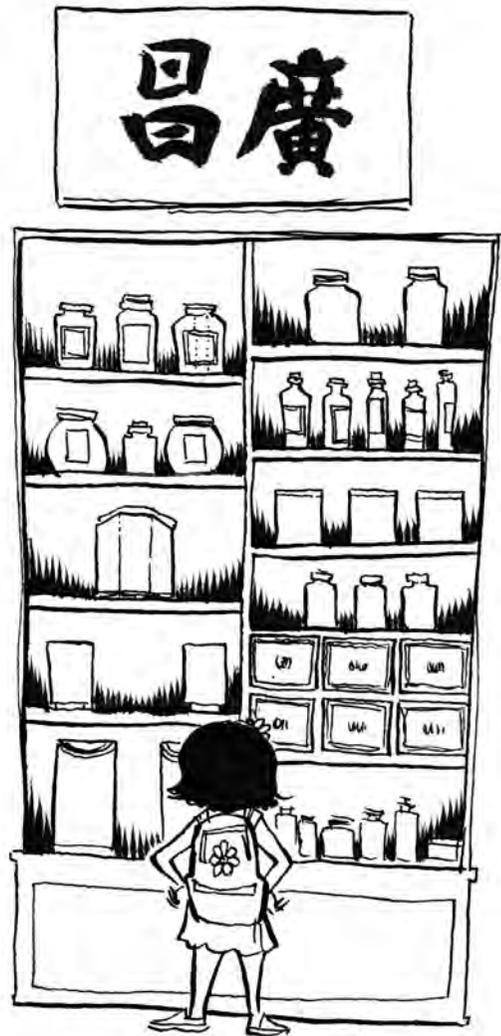
"Some day you'll have my job," he
says to me.

Right. I already have his job!



When I'm not guarding the place, I like to run to the old-fashioned Chinese shop in the back, which doesn't sell anything, but it's "historical", which is the secret code word for TIME MACHINE.

If you stare at it long enough with one eye closed and concentrate real hard, something magical happens.... you'll travel back a squillion years to where you can see the old-timers dropping by for their newspapers and groceries and daily gossip! This was based on a real store that once belonged to Marcella Chin Dear's family in Chinatown in the early 1900s. She was a little girl, just like me! When she grew up, she donated the store's items to the museum.

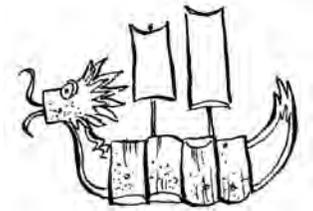


After that, I zip over to the front desk where I can check on things. This is where you can sign up for a special program or workshop! Become a member! Buy a gift! Ask questions!

"When are you ever, ever, ever going to have a dragon boat-making class?" I ask. "It's my goal to make a dragon boat out of old wine corks and win the dragon boat race!"

Silence.

Like I said, I practically live at MOCA, and the museum people said that I might as well work here too.



So now I do.

I got this job to tell you about Chinese American History.

"Hey, you forgot about me," a voice squeaks.



Well, I didn't actually forget.

"You're not part of the job description," I say.

"What's a glob 'scription?"

Silence.

"Never mind," I say.

This is my brother, Bowling Ball. He's in kindergarten.

"Hey, that's not my name," he says.

"Well, you're not part of the program," I say. "I'm supposed to be telling people about Chinese American History."

"Then why are you just standing there?" he asks.

Oooh. Little brothers are so annoying. They don't know anything.

But I know that the Chinese started coming to America a long time ago, as you can see from this photograph.



They came looking for work. They helped build the Transcontinental Railroad. They dug for gold. They grew fruits and vegetables. And they worked in the fisheries. Bowling Ball blinks. He's very quiet.



Many of the early Chinese immigrants took photographs of themselves and sent them home to their families in China along with money to help support them.

"Look!" says Bowling Ball, pointing to a photo. "That guy liked flowers and books."

"I wonder why they sent pictures," I say. "Why didn't they just Skype or something?"

I wish I could ask these guys,



What did it feel like to be so far from your families? Did you ever see them again? Why did you get your picture taken with flowers and books, and not with picks and shovels?

“What kinds of questions would you ask?” I ask Bowling Ball. Silence.

“Come look at this, Daisy!” cries Bowling Ball, who had already rolled ahead to the next exhibit. He was smudging his fingerprints all over something mounted on the wall. “3-D!”

“That’s a Stereoscope,” I say.

“I know,” says Bowling Ball, pressing his nose against the instrument. “Our class had a field trip here. You look at two of the same photographs through the stethoscope and they look 3-D!”

“Stereoscope,” I correct him.

“That’s what I said,” says Huffy Gutter Ball.

“Stethoscope.”



“They took lots of pictures of China for people who lived far away,” I say. “It was their version of TV or Internet back in the old days.”

“Yup,” he says.



If you made a stereo-view of a special place, where would it be?

This is MOCA's Luminary Wall. A luminary is a person who is an inspiration to others. Many of these luminaries were the first to do or make something special in their work. The following people are Chinese American Luminaries:



Maggie Gee

With 35 to 50 flying hours under her belt, Maggie Gee (b.1923) joined the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPS), receiving her wings in 1944, and becoming one of the first Chinese American women pilots.



Leroy Chiao

In 1996, Leroy Chiao (b.1960) became the first Asian American to perform a space walk. While serving as the first Asian American Commander of the International Space Station in 2004, he voted in the U.S. presidential election, making him the first American to vote in a national election from space.



Michelle Kwan

Michelle Kwan (b. 1980) won five World Championships and eight U.S. Championship titles. She also won two Olympic medals (one silver and one bronze). She is the most decorated U.S. figure skater and received more perfect 6.0 marks in competition than any other singles skater.



Who would YOU put on a Luminary Wall?

What do you admire about him/ her?

Someone in your family or community?

"Sis," scrawls Bowling Ball With Pen.

He fills in the blanks. "Yur #1."

Aww. Sometimes you just have to give your old bowling ball a hug.





Here's a photograph of the old-timers that worked on the Transcontinental Railroad when the network was officially completed at Promontory Point, Utah, in 1869.

Many Chinese great-great-grandpas worked on the railroad, but people blamed them for taking away the jobs from European-American workers. If you look closely you can see that none of the Chinese workers were photographed.

"Bad manners," hisses Bowling Ball With Furrowed Brow.

"Unfair," I say.



Leaving the Chinese out became legal in 1882 when the United States government passed the Chinese Exclusion Act. It was a law that:

Banned Chinese workers from entering the United States, while at the same time workers from other countries were allowed to enter.



Prohibited anyone of Chinese descent from becoming a naturalized American citizen.

Allowed a limited number of Chinese merchants, students, tourists and diplomats to enter the U.S.

It lasted until 1943.

"Do you think someone should apologize?" asks Tilted Bowling Ball.

"Apologize?"

"Mom would make us apologize," he says.

He was right about that.



Here's a picture of a family in front of their laundry business. Once they were permitted to settle in this country, many early Chinese immigrant families opened laundries. The hours were long and the work was hard, but it allowed them to do everything together as a family.

"Why do you suppose so many Chinese families chose to open laundries instead of bookstores or bakeries, or some other kind of business?" I ask.

Bowling Ball stares blankly.

Then he bursts out in song. "DAISY, DAISY . . . I'M HALF CRAZY ALL FOR THE LOVE OF YOU!"

Oh brother.



Fine. I'll tell you then. Working in the laundry was one of the few jobs that early Chinese immigrants could get. Other jobs included working in the mines or on farms. Laundry and cooking were considered "women's work" that male workers from other cultures refused to do. Plus, it didn't require speaking much English.



In the old days, one of the few times that Chinese immigrants didn't work was during the Lunar New Year. The celebrations always brought the whole Chinese American community together.

"Still does!" says Bowling Ball. "I love the Lion Dance and firecrackers!"

"I love going to see PohPoh and GungGung!" I say.

"I love the decorations!" he squeals.

"I love the hung baus!" I say.

"I love the crowded house!" he cries.

"I love the new clothes!" I say.

"I don't," says Bowling Ball. "I don't like 'em at all. They're itchy."

Right. Bowling Balls are generally naked anyway.



Theater was another event that brought the Chinese American community together. Cantonese Opera was a very popular form of entertainment for many of the early Chinese immigrants who knew the stories by heart and often sang along.



Chinese opera was first performed more than 700 years ago. Actors wore colorful costumes and masks or face paint. You could tell the personality of the character by the color of his face. Traditionally, men played all the characters in Chinese operas, even the women's roles. Many of the operas told stories of the wars between the kingdoms that now make up China.

"I like the masks," says Bowling Ball, putting on a mask in the gift shop.

"But they're scary," I say, slipping on a mask too.

"Rrrrrrrr," growls Ferocious Tiger.

"Rrrrrrrr," Fiery Dragon roars back.

Then we chase one another around the lobby.

We're very scary until it's time to go home.

For a greasy little bowling ball, he's okay. As a little brother . . . well, I suppose I might have to make him a part of the job description after all.



It's Daisy here again.

Shhh. Bowling Ball's asleep.

Now I can tell you that MOCA started as a community history project in 1980. Some people in Chinatown realized that in the same way that holidays and entertainment brought them together, their histories did too. They loved sitting around talking about "the old days," or "back in the day when my GungGung didn't have three cents for a stamp"



Then they saw that the memories of their neighborhood would be lost if they didn't start collecting stories and personal belongings. From this simple idea, MOCA grew into a history project and today it's a museum that keeps and retells the stories and memories of Chinese Americans in New York City and throughout the country.

So Bowling Ball and I are starting our own memory project and museum. It's called MOHOME, Museum of HOME! We're collecting drawings of self-portraits of kids and their homes – what they look like when they're in the place where they live. This way, when they're grown up, they can come to MOHOME and remember!



Do YOU have a project idea for your school, family, or neighborhood? What would you name your Project?

Finally, with your family passes to MOCA, please drop by and say hello! You can find me guarding the front door . . . or zipping around the back . . . or checking out the gift shop . . . or reading in the lobby . . . or testing the water fountain downstairs . . . or . . . ooh, there's just SO much to do at MOCA and so little time!



Mission, History & Programming

The Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) is dedicated to preserving and presenting the history, heritage, culture and diverse experiences of people of Chinese descent in the United States. The greatly expanded MOCA at 215 Centre Street is a national home for the precious narratives of diverse Chinese American communities, and strives to be a model among interactive museums.

The Museum began as a community-based organization founded in 1980 as the New York Chinatown History Project by historian John Kuo Wei Tchen and community resident/activist Charles Lai. It was created to develop a better understanding of our Chinese American history and community and to respond to the concern that the memories and experiences of aging older generations would perish without oral history, photo documentation, research and collecting efforts. Through the years, MOCA has developed into a trusted community anchor and educational resource.

MOCA STAFF

Jessica Chao
Interim Director

Karen Lew
Associate Director of Education

Carolyn Cervantes Antonio
Director of Development

Frank Liu
Director of Technology

Beatrice Chen
Director of Education & Programs

Sophia Ma
Assistant to the Director

Marissa Chen
Development Assistant

Yue Ma
Associate Director of Collections

Samantha Chin-Wolner
Collections Assistant

Herb Hoi Chun Tam
Curator & Director of Exhibitions

Vivian Chiu
Communications & Outreach Coordinator

Ting-Chi Wang
Exhibitions Manager

Emily Chovanec Schappler
Visitor Services Manager

Bonnie Chin Washburn
Director of Operations

Jannette Lau
Director of Corporate Relations

Book Design: Cynthia Lee

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Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA)
215 Centre Street
New York, NY 10013
www.mocanyc.org

T: 212.619.4785
F: 212.619.4720
education@mocanyc.org