

OVIATT FRIENDS

A Glance Back at Social Protest

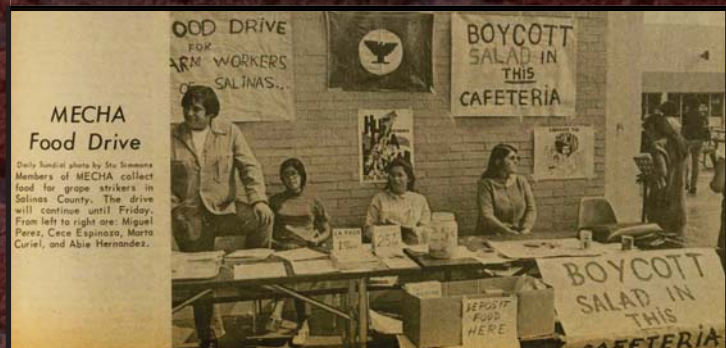
The President of the United States was in town for a fundraiser. Opposition to the Vietnam War was at a fever pitch. The LAPD was determined to protect the President and, maybe not incidentally, its own reputation. As these strands of social fabric spooled out, a peaceful protest turned violent, scores of protestors were bloodied or arrested, the LAPD got a black eye, and U.S. political history underwent a profound shift.

It happened in Century City on June 23, 1967, near the Century Plaza Hotel. The next day the Los Angeles Times' headline virtually shouted at its reader: *10,000 IN MELEE: War Protest Mars LBJ Visit*. And 46 years later, on Sept. 17, 2013, three disparate participants in that "melee" offered their recollections of that night's events at the official opening of the Oviatt Library's newest exhibition—*In Protest: The Shifting Paradigms of Collective Social Action*.

Irving Sarnoff, an organizer of that long-ago anti-war protest, a lifelong political activist and an avowed peacenik, spoke first. The protestors' numbers, he said, were projected to max out at about 2,000, but unexpectedly ballooned to an estimated 10,000. Initially, the march was peaceful, if noisy, with sign-waving picketers repeatedly chanting "Hey! Hey! LBJ! How many kids have you killed today?" The Peace Action Council, an affiliation of 80 to 100 organizations, Sarnoff remarked, "...had a permit to conduct a peaceful march," but a small cohort of marchers, "...part of the pacifist movement," staged an unplanned sit-down as the dissenters approached the hotel. This simple act of dissent, noted Sarnoff, was the kindling for the flare-up that followed.

To Sarnoff, it was obvious that "...an unarmed group would not threaten the...President...There were helicopters overhead and security people..." galore. Yet, the sit-down triggered the police "...to move in and make that group disperse." Most marchers attempted to obey, but finding themselves hemmed in by buildings and with "...nowhere to go," they instead milled about in disarray. Because the crowd apparently did not obey the LAPD's directive, a confrontation ensued, resulting in "...a couple hundred people hospitalized, many people jailed, and... the most significant antiwar demonstration in the country."

Next to add his perspective was Steven Downing, a retired Deputy Police Chief who had viewed the entire encounter from the LAPD's command post on the hotel's 9th floor. To him it was abundantly clear that the spark that set the kindling ablaze was a new, untested and out-of-



touch Police Chief and a cadre of unseasoned police recruits to whom the chief had assigned responsibility for crowd control. William Parker, LAPD Chief for 16 years, had died a year earlier, and Tom Reddin had assumed the job just four months prior to the President's visit. As the confrontation unfolded, said Downing, the new chief, more interested in pomp than action, had donned his tuxedo and left the command post "... to enjoy his dinner [and] be entertained by the Supremes and Diana Ross and the President of the United States." A field commander was left to deal with the nettlesome crowd.

After the infamous Watts riots in summer 1965, remarked Downing, LAPD's strategy for handling crowds had changed. Instead of "widening the perimeter" to let the rioters tire and the conflagration burn itself out, an unsuccessful gambit that had been tried in Watts, the new approach was to "... stop

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Library Creates a “Living Room” for the Campus

“Holy moly! It’s a coffee shop! The Library has mutated into a coffee house,” I thought as I walked into Oviatt Library last fall. Strewn across the Library’s lobby, formerly empty save for a rarely staffed information booth, was a sea of latte-sipping, scone-munching students huddled over small tables. And jutting out from the foyer’s west wall was a Starbucks-like counter laden with an enticing array of pastries, with a queue of patrons waiting patiently to purchase a café mocha or cappuccino. But, what I perceived as Starbucks turned out to be Freudian Sip, the university’s Starbucks-equivalent. I was aware that change was in store for the Library’s first floor and that construction had been ongoing all summer. But what I saw seemed less a renovation than a

transmogrification because the result sure wasn’t a library! At least not one with which I was familiar.

After adjusting to the lobby’s new reality, I scanned the horizon and peered into the depths of the Library proper. What I saw there was equally unexpected. Gone was the long, curved reference desk that for decades had stood guard, the first stop for students seeking an obscure document or random factoid. The tall stacks were no more, their absence opening an unobstructed vista from the south entrance to the north windows. In place of the dowdy furnishings of a bygone era were tables of all sizes and shapes, their tops arrayed with desktop computers, laptops, iPads, Nooks and the like, the electronic must-haves of the myriad students occupying the seats around them. What I was seeing, I realized, was the “Library Commons” that Mark Stover, Library Dean, had told me he planned to create: a brightly-lit welcoming, tech-friendly space to which students would naturally gravitate. And create it he had, albeit with lots and lots of help, especially from Marianne Afifi, the Library’s Associate Dean, and Lynn Lampert, the Chair of the Library’s Research, Instruction, and Outreach Services department.

And what, you ask—as did I—is a Learning Commons? University Provost Harry Hellenbrand, at the facility’s dedication ceremony, described it this way: “It’s a space where one can access...knowledge, not just from books, but from technology... a place where you can sit and lounge... and converse...eat together, read together, live together... just like a large family living room.” Indeed, the creation of a campus “living room” was exactly what Brent Miller,

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L-R: Elizabeth Adams, Hilary Baker, Rick Evans, Dianne Harrison, Mark Stover, Harry Hellenbrand, William Watkins, and Colin Donahue

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the action as soon as possible with the best tactics available,” thus ending any rampage in its tracks. Complicating the decision-making process, said Downing, was an overwhelming sentiment among the officers that they were there “...to protect the President of the United State [and] to not be embarrassed.... There was no discussion about protecting the people’s right to demonstrate.” Consequently, when those in charge heard unsubstantiated

rumors that the protestors might “... stir things up with smoke bombs and tear gas in the hotel’s air conditioners,” the commander in charge unleashed “...about 100 or 110 reserve recruits from the police academy... with just two months

of training,” to quell the crowd. But attempts by the new recruits to move the closely-packed mass of humanity along were anything but subtle. Instead of skillfully encouraging an orderly retreat, the inexperienced police recruits pummeled or arrested any who failed to move quickly out of their way.

The following day, said Downing, a deputy chief who was not involved in the action became “a super critic” of the LAPD’s handling of the crisis. “You did it wrong,” the critic said. “You violated the people’s rights. You didn’t protect the demonstrators... We should never do anything like that again.” Before the year was up, Reddin was gone and that critical deputy chief, Ed Davis, was LAPD’s new chief. On being installed, said Downing, Davis set down a new set of core principles to guide

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L-R: Robin Abcarian, Richard Abcarian, Stephen Downing, and Irving Sarnoff

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architect of the transformation, had in mind; the concept, he said, "...saturated the whole design process."

To get a sense of the newly configured space, I meandered around the first floor. The room was chockablock with students. Many worked alone, their eyes glued to their electronic gadgetry. Others worked collectively. At large tables gaggles of students googled on giant monitors. Elsewhere, mainly in small glassed-in study rooms, were clusters of students conversing or working together. I even encountered a knot of scholars working on a math problem at a mobile white board. It was immediately obvious that for many students the new facility's principal draw was its multitude of electrical sockets—many tables sported several—into which they could plug their ubiquitous electronic gizmos. But, clearly, the attraction went beyond accessing electricity, for white boards are decidedly low-tech.

But what, I wondered, do students think of the new facility? Said William Watkins, VP of Student Affairs, whose staff had informally polled many Library goers: "There is certainly a buzz among students about the newly renovated space. They like how well it's lit, its lively atmosphere, the accessible white boards, the fresher entrance...the very comfortable, moveable furniture...and the abundance of electrical outlets." According to Sarah Sayeed, a Library support assistant who played a part in the new facility's design, student reaction to the Learning Commons has been "incredibly affirming." Since its debut, she said, the facility has been "...at or near capacity...a testament that it is where students truly want to be."

But as I continued my wanderings, I discovered that the renovations were not limited to the entry-level floor. Two floors up I found an expanded and modernized Learning Resource Center (LRC), a facility formerly housed in

Bayramian Hall. Though the LRC originated as a separate operation, as I contemplated its mission—helping students perfect their study strategies, master critical thinking skills, improve their writing ability and enhance their academic performance generally—I couldn't help but realize that a dynamic partnership with the Library was exactly what the doctor ordered. The LRC's assortment of workshops, one-on-one and group tutoring, supplemental instruction classes, interactive computer programs, educational videos, writing center and much more, would surely complement the Library's goal as an information and study center. Moreover, said Rashawn Green, LRC Director, the new location is bound to bring even more students to the facility. "Students are familiar with the Library," she noted, so will find it easy to "visit...as they work on assignments." Though the semester had barely begun, already the LRC was bustling with activity, not surprising, I suppose, since upward of 17,000 students visited it last year. With greater visibility and easier access, that number, I suspect, will soon increase.

As if the above weren't enough, Information Technology (IT), the university division responsible for all things electronic, is also now housed in the Library, right there in the Learning Commons. This shift was made, I was told, so that students who run into computer-related problems can immediately find help. Putting knowledgeable techies in the midst of students dependent on today's array of electronic hardware struck me as exactly the right thing to do. And fortunately, someone thought to do it.

My visit to the Library convinced me that the renovations and the new partnerships were first-rate. Yet I couldn't help ponder something quite new to me: food and drink in a library. I grew up in a time when such things were anathema, when any attempt to bring consumables

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future police actions in confrontational situations. Though they have occasionally been ignored, those principles, most recently reaffirmed by former chief William Bratton, remain the LAPD's guiding policy today, Downing claimed.

Bringing a citizen-grievant's touch to the discussion was



Richard Abcarian, CSUN Professor Emeritus of English, who in the '60's had attended the rally, his three young daughters in tow, to protest an increasingly

unpopular war. He is still haunted, he said, by the surprise and fear he felt when the police set upon the closely-packed crowd and he found himself and his children pushed, jostled and herded here and there with no sense of where

they were expected to go. The confusion and mayhem, he emphasized, were "...really quite scary...Sticks and placards were flying. There was an incredible amount of violence." But amidst all the turmoil he distinctly remembers his daughter Robin's unrestrained and irate response to a police officer's command that they keep moving. "Just shut up, SHUT UP, SHUT UP!" raged the 11-year-old neo-protestor. Yet, in spite of his overwhelming concern about his and his children's



safety, Abcarian said he also vividly remembers the empathy he felt on seeing a "young fellow...who decided to sit down and be passively resistant," perhaps expecting to be arrested, who was instead confronted by "...a phalanx of white-

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Seamanship and Settlement - The Story of Portugal and Macau

Though a tiny nation, scarcely the size of Indiana, Portugal in the 16th and 17th Centuries was an outsized maritime power. Indeed, the country's "...towering history based on its adventures on the sea" determined the nation's "...national character for hundreds of years," said Robert Gohstand, Professor Emeritus of Geography, speaking at the opening of two linked Library exhibits celebrating a near half-millennium of Portuguese maritime exploration and cultural exchange with China. Titled *Seamanship and Settlement: the Portuguese Maritime Tradition and Macau's Architectural Duality*, the exhibits included a host of enchanting photos of the N.R.P. Sagres, a tall ship that today roams the seven seas as a Portuguese Navy training ship, and a spectacular array of prints showing architectural gems in Macau, Portugal's enduring connection with China.

Gracefully interlacing fact with poetic stanzas, Gohstand linked the exhibit's two foci, seamanship and Macau, artfully explaining how in a time without motors or reliable guidance systems, Portugal came to be an oceanic power and in so doing extended its trade far into the Orient. He took his poetic extracts from two of Portugal's epic poets: Luis de Camões (1524-1580), who rhapsodized about the sea-faring adventures of Vasco da Gama; and Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935), who wrote of the exploits of later Portuguese explorers who ventured from relatively safe coastal routes into the open sea.

Prince Henry the Navigator (1394-1460), third son of Portugal's king, set the stage for Portugal's exploratory successes, said Gohstand. Though little-traveled himself,

the prince "...got a taste of empire when he helped capture a Muslim stronghold" in Africa, just below the Straits of Gibraltar. His eyes opened to the potential treasures—slaves, gold, ivory, ostrich feathers, spices—that a sea route to Africa could provide, he assembled "an intelligence service... on mathematics, cartography, navigation, geography, and ship design." And from that "brain trust," said Gohstand, came the information that Henry needed to mount oceanic expeditions.

Alteration in ship design proved immensely potent, noted Gohstand. Hulls, previously deep-drafted, were modified to produce a "...caravel, a slender, maneuverable craft, shallow of draft," capable of sailing close to shore and up rivers. Sail plans were altered so that ships could "point, or tack, upwind," a critical virtue of the lateen design, yet in a following wind could be rigged with square sails to propel the ship more rapidly. Though still primitive, navigation aids also were improved. Among the more important innovations, said Gohstand, were: "astrolabes and cross staffs to measure the altitude of heavenly bodies"; tables that allowed fairly accurate calculation of latitude; sand glasses for a more

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helmeted police officers."

Moderating the evening's discussion was Abcarian's above-mentioned daughter, Robin, who had accompanied her father for an up-close experience in an American rite (and right!): a peaceful protestation of government policy. Now an award-winning LA Times columnist, she added her own recollections and ruminations about her tumultuous introduction as a youngster to "peaceful" protests. "The events of that evening," she observed, "changed the course of American political history, changed the Los Angeles Police Department, and shocked the conscience of the state. People had come to exercise their

constitutional right to free speech but left shocked, confused, injured and disillusioned when police, who they thought were there to protect them, turned on them with nightsticks." Then bringing the evening's discussion back to its purpose—to serve as the opening bell for the Oviatt Library's new exhibit—the younger Abcarian appropriately noted that in the turbulent '60's and '70's, San Fernando Valley State College—as CSUN was then called—"was a hotbed of protest."

The truth of her statement about this institution's history of protest is amply evident in the Tseng Family Gallery's current exhibition, for prominently displayed among

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Robin Abcarian

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accurate measurement of time; and improved charts.

Unable to navigate on the open ocean, earlier vessels typically hewed closely to the shoreline. Consequently, they were unable to explore Africa's coast below Cape Bojador, a turbulent shallows with furious surf and abundant undersea hazards that extended far out to sea. But with improved navigational skills the Portuguese explorers successfully circumvented that fearsome zone, sailing farther south along Africa's east coast until they eventually rounded the Cape of Good Hope and sailed on to the fabled Orient, their ultimate goal. In so doing they gained control of many far-flung outposts in Africa and Asia, including Macau, one of Portugal's enduring Asian colonies.

Also speaking at the exhibition's opening gala was Maria Roliz, President of the Lusitano Club of California, who traced the history of the 3-masted Sagres, from its construction in Germany 75 years ago, through its crippling by a Soviet mine in 1944, its subsequent confiscation by the U.S., its sale to Brazil, and finally to its procurement by the Portuguese Navy in 1951 for use as a training ship. In its more than half century under the Portuguese flag, the Sagres has made numerous extended voyages, the most

notable a 35,000-mile trip around the world in 2010, a voyage that included a visit to Macau. Roliz also treated her audience to a simulated voyage on the square-rigged vessel via a movie of the ship's crew in action on the open ocean.

Arthur Britto, President of the Macau Arts Culture and Heritage Institute, offered his thoughts on Macau's unique architectural heritage. A former Portuguese colony, Macau was administered by Portugal from the mid-16th century until late 1999, when it was the last remaining European colony in Asia. It is now a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China (located near Hong Kong, China's only other SAR). Referring to images of structures on display in the Library's hallways, many of them recognized by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites, Britto elaborated on the dual nature of the city's architecture. Western influence, he said, is clearly

obvious, as in the façade of the Church of Mater Dei and the remains of St. Paul's College, the first Western-style University in Asia and just one of two examples of Baroque architecture in China; St Joseph's Church, also in Macau, is the other. Many of the other buildings shown in the exhibit, Britto said, represent a fusion of Chinese and Western influence. —jdole

Exhibitions and the opening event sponsors were: the Oviatt Library's Old China Hands Archive and the Department of Special Collections and Archives; the International Institute of Macau; the Lusitano Club of California; the Macau Arts Culture and Heritage Institute; and the Friends of the Oviatt Library. The exhibition filled the Library's halls on three floors from its March opening until July 10, 2013.



L-R: Maria Roliz, Robert Gohstand, Mark Stover, Arthur Britto



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the roughly 200 documents and memorabilia is an assortment of papers related to the SFVSC administration's response to the riots on campus in the '60s. But visitors to the newest exhibition will also be rewarded by an amalgam of photos, pamphlets, newspaper clippings and political cartoons related to the disturbances in Watts in 1965 and Detroit in 1967, and the public outbursts in 1992 following the Rodney King beating by police, as well as many other significant social action movements across the country. All items on display, said Ellen Jarosz, curator of the exhibit, are from the Library's archival collections, an astounding set of documents that

together chronicle a wide range of social actions that played out in the 20th Century. The exhibit, open to

the public at no charge, can be viewed through July 2014. —jdole



In creating the exhibition, Ellen Jarosz, Special Collections and Archives Librarian, was aided by Holli Lovich, Archives Coordinator, and Joyclyn Dunham, Projects and Program Coordinator.

Cover images from In Protest exhibition.
Top: Daily Sundial, October 14, 1973 - Lettuce Boycott on Campus.
Center: "A Plan for Black Liberation." 1960. Gilbert G. Benjamin Subversive Activities Collection.
Bottom: Demonstrators advocating change to US foreign policy in Central America. Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador -- Los Angeles Collection



2013 Oviatt Library Outstanding Student Employee and Scholarship Winners

Outstanding Student Nominees

Precious Allen	Roberto Flores
Andrei Burke	Karla Martinez
Michelle Dollente	Kevin Matsuno
Maria Duran	Evelyn Rodriguez
Juan Garcia	Vince Morel Vilan
Mehrbanoo Farehi	Parisa Zahabi

Outstanding Student Awardees

William Broughton
Cristal Diaz
Andrea Larco
Crystal Monroy
Rachele Pedraza
Maher Qassis

Scholarship Winners

Marianne Afifi
Tiffany Navales
Rachele Pedraza
Daniel Ramos
Paria Soroushi
Vince Morel Vilan
Gaja Yoon

Mary & James Cleary
Anuradha
Krishnamurthy

Dr. Karin Duran
Luisa Gonzalez

Virginia Elwood
Ashley English
Ardis Flenniken
Erika Panosian

Bonita J. Campbell WISE Endowment
Ashley English

Friends Of The Library
Cristina Gutierrez
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Juan Garcia

Richard & Diana Homer
Edrina Younan

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Tiffany Argumedo
Jose Avendano
Zachary Burgenbauch
Mehrbanoo Farehi

Lois & Ralph Prator
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Liliana Jimenez
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Carlos Vazquez

Cindy Ventuleth
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Rushing Waters, Rising Dreams

Tia Chucha's *Centro Cultural and Bookstore* in Sylmar is a wellspring of life. Founded in 2001 by artists, former gang members and community activists working for social change, it was the first organization of its kind in the Northeast San Fernando Valley, home to about a half million people and the second largest number of Mexicans and Central Americans in the nation (after East Los Angeles). It is an area of great poverty, which includes Pacoima, with its gangs, housing projects and struggling families, tucked in against other working class towns such as Sylmar and San Fernando. Tia Chucha's motto: "Where Art and Minds Meet—For a Change" states its purpose...through the arts you can create self-sustaining communities and bring about healing. Until it entered the scene, there were no trade bookstores, no movie theaters, no art galleries or cultural spaces in the Northeast Valley, despite its large population.

Tia Chucha's is a venue for community rebirth, providing a vast array of classes, open mics, exhibits and performances in dance, art, poetry, creative writing, music and music lessons, and cultural performances and classes. In March of 2013, Trini Rodriguez, one of the founders, along with CSUN Professor Denise Sandoval and filmmaker John Cantu, came to the Oviatt Library to talk about Tia Chucha's. Sandoval, along with Trini's husband Luis (another co-founder), had co-edited *Rushing Waters, Rising Dreams*, a book chronicling and offering some of the works of Tia Chucha's. An Ethnic Studies major at UC Berkeley, Sandoval had absorbed its teachings, especially: "Be the Change You Want in the World." The book's title was taken from the city of Pacoima, which means "rushing waters" in the native Tataviam language, the Tataviam Indians having nearly all converted to Catholicism at the Mission San Fernando by 1810, and suffered great losses from infectious diseases, to which they had no immunity, brought to them by New World settlers. The inspiring



notion of Luis Rodriguez was to heal and nurture the present residents: "The worst aspect of poverty is the spiritual poverty that accompanies it. When we provide places for people to imagine, to dialogue, to express, to share, and to create, we uplift the spirit needed to also help remove the real constraints of current economic and social realities." The book "allows the people of those communities to speak their stories—their truths." One of the programs described in the book epitomizes Tia Chucha's goal to create community through healing and developing identity: the "Young Warriors" group allows youth to realize themselves through arts, music and culture—"Every youth is a warrior of their own struggle."

Alongside the book, John Cantu created a 40-minute documentary, which was shown to the Oviatt audience. His extremely well made film was packed solid with images, music and art of Tia Chucha's, nearly to bursting. When asked why it was so tightly edited, Cantu noted that he specializes in editing trailers for the motion picture industry, where not a second is spared. The film needed to cover a lot of information, and was used in local gatherings, where, with time left over for questions and answers, it might neatly fit into a short, one-hour community meeting. Though raised in North Texas, Cantu had made the film because he was inspired by Luis Rodriguez. When he was beginning the film, the staff of Tia Chucha's told him: "love your work, believe in your vision." Clearly, this was true of the book, the film, and most notably, the place and the people who work and learn there.

For more information on Tia Chucha's visit: <http://www.tiachucha.com/>. Or take a real visit to this local treasure at 13197 Gladstone Ave., Unit A, Sylmar. Grow with your community.

--jparker

All About ©opyright: The Basics and Beyond for Academic Libraries

They came from as far away as Cal State Bakersfield and Cal State San Marcos to attend a full day workshop on copyright law and procedures at Oviatt Library in August 2013. The emphasis was on copyright basics for libraries, but the information presented was useful for writers concerned about protecting their works, and university professors, for safeguarding their own works and in sharing writings or media of others they might use in their lessons.

The session began with a presentation on “myCSUN tablet initiative,” as CSUN’s Music and Media Librarian Lindsay Hansen gave an overview of how tablets were to be used in classrooms. Ms. Hansen is a two-time recipient of the university’s research award for pedagogical support for e-texts.

The bulk of the day was given over to Martin Brennan, the Copyright and Licensing Librarian at UCLA’s Young Research Library. Mr. Brennan explained in great detail such topics as copyright basics, fair use, limitations on exclusive rights, and copyright term and the public domain in the United States. He also provided a list of some of the key resources for copyright (excerpted below).

A third presentation was by Franny Lee, who demonstrated a product of her company, SIPX, Inc., the Stanford Intellectual Property Exchange. The SIPX is a

web-based technology, created to manage copyrights and deliver digital course materials through the web for the higher education marketplace. Frances Gateward, a CSUN faculty member in Cinema and Television Arts, is currently working with the software for her classes.

A good time was had by all as we learned how to have safe text.

Some Key Resources for Copyright

ALA Copyright Advisory Network:

<http://www.librarycopyright.net/>

The Copyright Genie:

<http://librarycopyright.net/resources/genie/>

Fair Use Evaluator:

<http://librarycopyright.net/resources/fairuse/>

Know Your Copy Rights:

<http://www.knowyourcopyrights.org/>

Teaching Resources and Clearinghouse

EDUCAUSE Copyright resources:

<http://www.educause.edu/Resources/Browse/Copyright/17092>

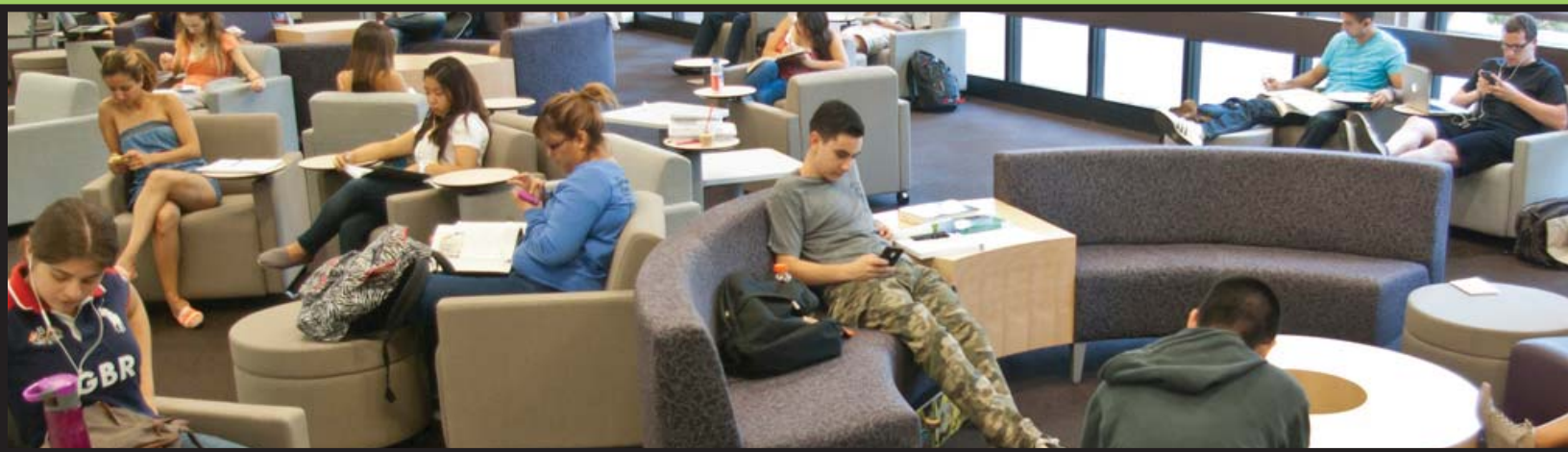
Copyright Advisory Network Wiki:

<http://librarycopyright.net/wiki/>

Protecting Author Rights

Creative Commons: <http://creativecommons.org/>

--jparker



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into a library was guaranteed to generate reprimand, even expulsion. Yet here the students were munching and slurping with abandon, with nobody lifting a finger. This is truly a new day! As I thought about it, though, I realized that the consumption of food and beverage in one’s living room is commonplace, the consumables’ accessibility relaxing and comforting. And the Learning Commons is, after all, the campus living room.

It appears that Dr. Timothy White, Chancellor of the CSU system, also wondered about the food/library connection, for when he toured the Learning Commons

shortly after it opened, he approached a student with a question: “Are you here for the coffee or are you here to study?” Her answer? “I’m here to drink my coffee, eat a scone...and then I’m going to study for three hours.” Said President Harrison, who accompanied the Chancellor and heard the response, “That was an honest, wonderful answer and a beautiful illustration of exactly what we had hoped the new space would become,” the “living room...and the center point of the campus.” Indeed, she said, “I believe it already has.”

—jdole

A Jewish Family in Wartime China

As bombs fell around the squalid concentration camp, “Mum would engage us in a game,” said Ester Shifren, at the time a young Jewish girl living as a prisoner-of-war in Shanghai. To allay her children’s fears, “Mummy cheerfully encouraged us” to squirm into a space among stacked trunks, “...and [sing] our favorite songs.” The tale of her mother’s endeavor to distract her children in wartime China was but one of many with which Shifren enthralled her audience at a Friends of the Library-sponsored luncheon in November. All her stories, and many more, are vibrantly recounted in her recently published book: *Hiding in a Cave of Trunks: A Prominent Jewish Family’s Century in Shanghai and Internment in a WWII POW Camp*.

“The day after Pearl Harbor,” Shifren noted, “...the Japanese marched into Shanghai and took over every major

operation,” including her father’s warehousing business. Heeding a directive from their ally, Germany, the invaders in 1943 decreed that all stateless refugees—mostly Jews who had fled Germany, Austria and Poland—were to be incarcerated. Most of the émigrés, said Shifren, were moved to “...the foul-smelling slums of Hongkew... an overcrowded, dilapidated, grimy-walled, rat-infested ghetto”

that was already the home of about 10,000 Chinese “...living in abject squalor.”

In the war’s early stages, Shanghai’s European residents—Shifren’s family, the Benjamins, among them—were largely left alone. But, because they were British subjects, in 1941 the Benjamins were forced to wear red armbands, as were other long-time residents of the city’s international enclave whose ancestors hailed from the allied nations of Britain, the U.S., or Belgium. About a year later the armband-wearers were compelled to move to a makeshift POW camp, their homes, cars, furnishings and jewelry confiscated. When hustled off to their new quarters in a girls’ school, the soon-to-be prisoners were permitted only a few personal items—clothing, cooking supplies, blankets and what food they could scrounge—most of it conveyed in trunks that later for the Benjamin children became a sanctuary during bombing raids.

The Benjamins joined hundreds of others at the school, where the family was squeezed into a damp, bug-infested

basement. There was no privacy. Twice a day they endured roll calls. Contact with the outside world was forbidden. Food was scarce. To boost morale and occupy time, teachers among the captives organized classes for children. Shifren’s mother directed amateur theatrical productions whose performances drew even their Japanese captors, and the children played invented games in the sports areas.

Life in the school complex was tolerable, if barely, but a few months before the war’s end the internees’ fortune took a turn for the worse. As the war approached its nadir, the camp’s occupants were unceremoniously relocated to “Yangtzepoo... a long-condemned, derelict cluster of... hospital buildings, mortuary, and ...barracks...[all] in a dreadful state of disrepair.”

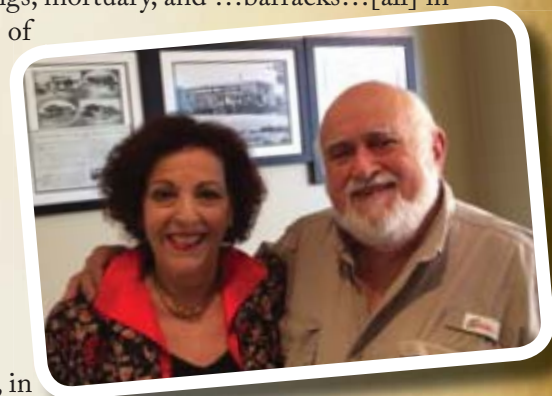
Sanitation in their new quarters was deplorable, toilets were filthy, bugs crawled the walls, and preparing food, in the only kitchen

proved to be onerous. Medical care was non-existent. Here, life as a POW was dreadful. “We were starving; we had no food and no clothes.”

Before their wartime imprisonment, the Benjamin family had led a decidedly upscale life in Shanghai. Her extended Jewish clan, Shifren explained, had “... lived and thrived in China for... more than one hundred years.” When the Jewish refugees from wartime Europe streamed into China, one of the few countries that afforded them sanctuary, the Benjamins and other resident Jews “...helped the new arrivals with accommodations, soup kitchens, supplies and financial assistance.”

With old photos as guideposts, Shifren took pains to lay out her ancestral ties to China, a lineage that traced back five generations. It was in the 1840’s, she noted, that her great-great grandfather, a ship’s captain, and his wife, both British émigrés from India, joined a mid-century wave of Jewish immigrants to China. Putting down roots in Shanghai’s International Settlement, a non-Chinese enclave founded by the British after winning the Opium Wars, the couple flourished and prospered.

Her 19th Century ancestors, Shifren explained, were well educated and financially well off. In Shanghai her extended family thrived and had by the time of her birth in the late 1930’s, “amassed great personal wealth [and] led opulent lifestyles.” Her grandparents lived in a grandiose 24-room home graced with tennis courts and swimming pools where they “...entertained lavishly.” And



Pictured above right: Old China Hands Ester Benjamin Shifren and Dr. Robert Gohstand.

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befitting his social status, her grandfather kept racehorses and regularly took his family to the races, often returning afterwards with "...bags bulging with money." Shifren's well-to-do predecessors also "...donated generously" to fund the construction of hospitals, schools, synagogues and cemeteries, and in so doing "... contributed greatly to the diversified culture of the city that has been called the 'Paris of the East.'"

Born into a life of privilege, before the war the Benjamin children were watched over by a doting Chinese *amah*, or nanny, who pampered them with sweets from nearby shops purchased with money Shifren's parents provided. Bathing required her father to visit a local *lilong*, or alley, where he would order hot water. Then at a specified time, Chinese laborers would trundle up the hill, barrels of scalding water hanging on bamboo poles across their shoulders to fill the family's tub and tote away the previous day's water.

Shifren recalled with fondness visits as a young child to the *Bund*, Shanghai's smelly but throbbing waterfront. There she was mesmerized, she exulted, by the "tantalizing aromas of roasting chestnuts, peanuts, sunflower seeds and sweet potatoes"; "...sweating [laborers] pushing and pulling their loads"; "...elegant, well-groomed Chinese ladies [weaving] unsteadily...on deliberately-deformed, shrunken 'lily' feet"; and by "...dancing monkeys and ear cleaners and people writing letters for others." But it was the incessant rhythm of the "...man with the shaved head...who beat on a little black *tok-box* all day" that most set her mind awl.

Not uncommonly, she recalled, activity on the Bund was disrupted by an elaborate funeral procession.

Typically, such mourning parades included a giant photo of the deceased; a sedan chair carrying female family members; a cohort of close relatives dressed in rough, white "mourning" cloth; a large assortment of distant relatives, friends and business acquaintances; sometimes a smartly-uniformed brass band; and, if the deceased were important or wealthy, a "crying crowd" hired to wail loudly, the better to honor the departed. Equally entrancing to Shifren were the folks who "tagged along for the fun...hopeful of receiving food, candy, and lucky coins."

Among her intriguing tales, Shifren recounted intimate stories of her immediate predecessors, each accompanied by an ancient photo of the relative. Particularly enthralling was the almost regal visage of Shifren's tall, slender grandmother, haughtily modeling a newly purchased fur coat on the porch of her mansion, a ritual she reenacted yearly after purchasing a replacement coat. Shifren spoke reverently of her mustachioed maternal grandfather, a Sephardic Rabbi from Persia, who specialized in the ritual

slaughter of chickens and other animals, forswearing more ordinary rabbinical tasks because "...

others needed the work more." A stunning

portrait of her mother in her younger years elicited murmurs of appreciation from the audience; a talented dancer, artist and "five times a sports champion," Shifren's mother, we were told, had declined thirty-two offers of marriage before accepting Mr. Benjamin's proposal.

For weeks after the war's end in 1945, many newly freed families continued to live in POW camps because they had nowhere else to go. So it was with delight that they accepted an invitation to join in a bit of revelry aboard the HMS Belfast, a British warship moored in Shanghai. Dressed in the finest clothes they could muster, the newly released prisoners found their way to the docks for their first real taste of freedom in years. At the ship the former internees were greeted by "...sailors in pristine white uniforms [who] welcomed us warmly onto the deck and made us feel free and loved." A band played and the guests feasted on cakes, cookies, cheese, crackers, jam, fruits and chocolates, fare they had not savored in years. For the youngsters, the sailors staged running and racing games. The smallest were entertained in an improvised swing. For

Shifren, the joyful occasion so contrasted to her years of deprivation that she "...couldn't stop giggling and laughing." But the pleasure was reciprocal, she said, for "...it was obvious that the sailors were enjoying themselves immensely, too."

Memories of that jubilant shipboard party were rekindled sixty years later in 2005 when Shifren and others who as children had delighted in the sailors' games

and refreshments were again invited onboard the HMS Belfast, now a museum permanently berthed in London. In a short movie of that reunion, Shifren's audience watched three sailors from those earlier festivities, the only ones who could be located, choke back tears on greeting the troupe of children they had earlier befriended. Shifren, identified as the occupant of a shipboard swing in a photograph taken at the 1945 get-together, was selected to express the former POWs' sentiments regarding the postwar party. And she did so with panache, exulting about "...how absolutely wonderful it was of you to have us on the ship," and thanking the misty-eyed sailors for "...the loving feeling you gave us...that the war was really over." As she spoke there was scarcely a dry eye in the crowd. —jdole



Top photo: HMS Belfast
Bottom photo: The Bund, Shanghai, China

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The Friends Used Bookstore Closing Permanently

The Friends Used Bookstore will be closing permanently this Spring.

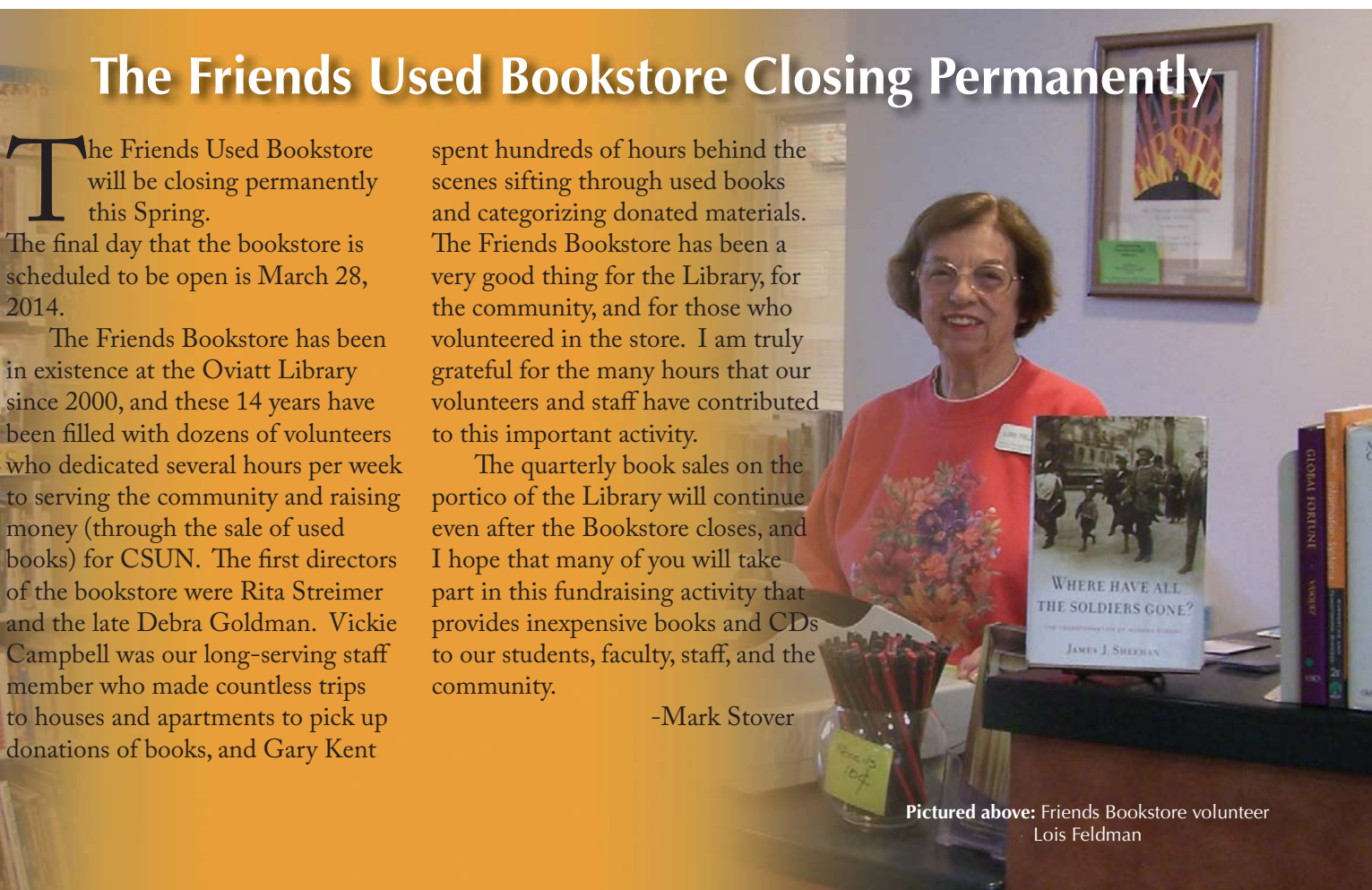
The final day that the bookstore is scheduled to be open is March 28, 2014.

The Friends Bookstore has been in existence at the Oviatt Library since 2000, and these 14 years have been filled with dozens of volunteers who dedicated several hours per week to serving the community and raising money (through the sale of used books) for CSUN. The first directors of the bookstore were Rita Streimer and the late Debra Goldman. Vickie Campbell was our long-serving staff member who made countless trips to houses and apartments to pick up donations of books, and Gary Kent

spent hundreds of hours behind the scenes sifting through used books and categorizing donated materials. The Friends Bookstore has been a very good thing for the Library, for the community, and for those who volunteered in the store. I am truly grateful for the many hours that our volunteers and staff have contributed to this important activity.

The quarterly book sales on the portico of the Library will continue even after the Bookstore closes, and I hope that many of you will take part in this fundraising activity that provides inexpensive books and CDs to our students, faculty, staff, and the community.

-Mark Stover



Pictured above: Friends Bookstore volunteer
Lois Feldman