



Oct - Dec 2020 - Issue 146  
**China Council Quarterly**  
221 NW 2nd Avenue, Suite 210-J, Portland, OR 97209  
www.nwchina.org

### LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

2020 has proven quite a challenge, as I'm sure it has for you and your families. I hope you all are well.

Last winter, the board and I discussed ideas to give back to the community, to be more active in pursuing our mission of greater cultural understanding. Then, the global pandemic came in and transformed our organization and our lives.



After regaining our bearings, the Northwest China Council is not letting the pandemic stop us. It may have slowed us down for a time, but we are moving forward.

Our virtual "China Chats" have proven to be popular. With each session, we have seen registration numbers increase. We have been exploring ways to expand the types of events we can do virtually, to bring a variety of interesting events and content to our membership, including a virtual "movie club" coming in 2021. Our own Michael Bloom was our first China Chat presenter and since then we've welcomed award-winning journalists, such as Dexter "Tiff" Roberts and Jonathan Kaufman. We have China Chats programmed for the rest of 2020, with Jim Mockford joining us on November 19th to discuss his book, "The Kite that Touched the Sky" and Hugh Lawrence joining us on December 8th to talk about the hyperinflation of stamps in China and its impact on Chinese history. We look forward to you joining us.

After a brief delay due to the pandemic, Willow is back to teaching Mandarin, only now she is doing it virtually. No more travelling to Old Town for lessons; students can take it from the comfort of their homes. The added benefit of doing lessons virtually is that we have students from as far away as Vermont attending!

We are holding our Annual Meeting and elections virtually this year as well on October 22nd. If you are a member in good standing as of September 30th, you are invited and encouraged to attend. Along with the election of officers, the meeting will consist of a "state of the council" address, followed by a fascinating look back at the history of the Northwest China Council in this 40th year, presented by Executive Director John M. Wong.

On behalf of the board and the Northwest China Council, thank you for your continued interest and support. Rest assured that we are finding ways to continue despite the challenges posed by this strange new world. As always, please reach out to me if you have any questions, suggestions, ideas or comments.

*-Joe Liston, President*

### THE NWCC: 40 YEARS OF PRESIDENTS

Donald Jenkins: 1980-1985

Jeffrey Barlow: 1986-1987

Donald Jenkins: 1988

Lois Beran: 1989-1990

Roger Luedtke: 1991-1992

Mel Gurtov: 1993-1994

Mike Hoffman: 1995-1996

Joanne Wakeland: 1997-1998

Ed Young: 1999-2000

Robert Moon: 2001-2002

Frank Nelson: 2003-2005

Lillian Tsai: 2006-2007

Michael Bloom: 2008-2009

Cathy Chinn: 2010

David W. Kohl: 2011-2012

Victor Lam: 2013-2014

Merrill Keane: 2015

Paul Millius: 2016

Ming Brink: 2017

Victor Lam: 2018

Joe Liston: 2019-2020

**2020 Annual Meeting via Zoom**  
**Thursday, Oct. 22, 2020 7pm**  
**Member Invitations by email**

**NWCC 40TH ANNIVERSARY: THROUGH THE YEARS IN PICTURES**



**1994: Feng Shui talk with Angi Ma Wong**



**1999: Flying Horse Gala & Auction at Portland Art Museum**



**2000: Silk Road Arts Tour**



**2003: Kam Wah Chung Tour with Willow Zheng demonstrating brush work**



**2006: Book talk with Dr. Mel Gurtov**



**2009: Mandarin class end-of-term dinner with instructor Willow Zheng (R)**

**NWCC 40TH ANNIVERSARY: THROUGH THE YEARS IN PICTURES**



**2011: China Business Network “Doing Business in China Through Hong Kong” with Barrett Bingley**



**2016: Flying Horse Gala & Auction at Wong’s King Restaurant with President Paul Millius**



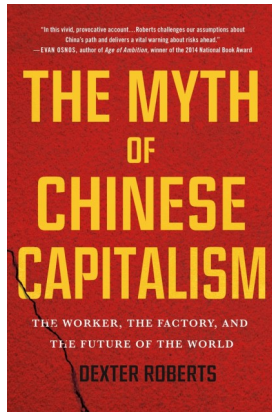
**2016: China Town Hall with Dr. Anthony Kane**



**2019: Annual Meeting at Happy Dragon Chinese Restaurant**

**THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS**





***The Myth of Chinese Capitalism: The Worker, the Factory, and the Future of the World* by Dexter Roberts**

**St. Martin's Press; March 10, 2020 288 pages**

Dexter Roberts had been a *Business Week/Bloomberg* journalist in China for 23 years and only left China last year. Roberts wrote that from the beginning of his stay in China, he was interested in the migrant factory workers who provided the cheap labor that propelled the dramatic rise of China. For that reason he visited Dongguan 东莞, the enormous factory town in central Guangdong, over a dozen times. He interviewed and got to know many of the factory workers and in particular followed a group from Binghuacun 炳花村, Guizhou. He visited Binghuacun numerous times and has continued to keep in touch with many members of the Mo family, who are former farmers-turned-migrant workers from that village. A main theme of the book is about the urban/rural divide and how it may affect the future of China.

China has had an explosion of growth and impressive infrastructure buildup over the last several decades. Roberts pointed out that the benefits are mostly going to about half the population who live in the cities. This has led to massive inequalities in income and wealth. While the unprecedented economic expansion was fueled by migrant factory workers who provided cheap labor, most are left behind during the boom along with those in the countryside.

The bargain put forth by Deng Xiaoping almost 40 years ago, that the Chinese people would agree not to push for

liberty in return for improving livelihoods, has mostly been met. Deng had stipulated that some people had to get rich first; and as long as the overall living standards were rising such inequality had been tolerated. But now the current economic model is meeting increasing headwind. Labor costs are now cheaper in Mexico, Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia and other places, so the cheap-labor model may no longer be working. The factories are finding it difficult to make a profit. They are turning to robots as well as squeezing the workers in pay and healthcare benefits. Labor protests have continued almost daily in many areas. The party has been mostly successful in keeping the protests localized using what has been described as "repression and responsiveness." To control and placate the populace, the government would be responsive in raising some wages and living conditions while repressing and severely punishing labor organizers with extreme sentences.

The wide rural and urban divide has in large part been due to the household registration hukou 户口 and the dual land use systems in place since the 1950s that have severely disadvantaged rural areas. There are huge gaps between rural and urban healthcare as well as education. Since migrant workers in the cities are not "residentially registered" in the cities, they do not have access to the better urban healthcare or schools for their children. There may be much property speculation for city dwellers but rural people are not allowed to monetize their land holdings, since all rural land is state-owned and reserved for farming purposes, which is understandable since less than 15% of the land in China is arable. In addition, there are abuses by local officials who profit from selling land parcels to developers.

The party has been cognizant that China must shift from the capital-intensive cheap-labor manufacturer-for-the-world model to a service and consumer-based innovative economy. A bold blueprint for growth was set forth by the 2013 Third Plenum to abolish both the hukou and dual land use policies in order to integrate migrant workers into the cities and provide them with greater opportunities. However, little or no progress has been made with oppositions to such plans from urban dwellers, local rural officials who depend on land sales for most of their

## THE MYTH OF CHINESE CAPITALISM (CONT.)

revenue, as well as the current leader Xi Jinping. Therefore, Roberts thought it would be extremely difficult to transition from a cheap labor model to a service-based innovation model with half the population left behind with little income, poor health and poor education.

One of what Roberts termed a myth is the assumption that with rising living standards, the Chinese people would demand more civil rights. This rationale was used by Bill Clinton to allow China's entry into the World Trade Organization. But what is happening is that the better-off urbanites are not demanding more civil rights. Rather, urban protests today are by city parents to stop migrant workers and their children from having access to the urban schools since competition is already fierce. Urban people do not want to see their schools and medical facilities overwhelmed by migrant workers and their children.

In his chapter on the Party, Roberts pointed out an interesting historical figure Wang Mang 王莽, who ruled around the 1st century AD. Wang was born into a royal family but developed China's first national social security system and seized all landholdings of over 100 acres and distributed five-acre parcels to each farming family. He won support from the peasants just as Mao did two millennia later. "The strong," wrote Wang, "possess lands by the thousands of mu [about one-sixth of an acre], while the weak have nowhere to place a needle." But Wang's reign was only a short 14 years and he was soon overthrown. The Taiping Rebellion 太平天

國 during the Qing Dynasty was another example of a socialist experiment that took over a large portion of the country; but the uprising was eventually put down with the help of foreign military assistance. Mao finally succeeded with the support of the peasants in the last century. However the early communist utopia was soon overtaken by a Soviet-style Leninist authoritarian government.

China's premier scholar of the countryside Fei Xiaotong 费孝通 wrote in 1948: "Miracles may occur, of course, but they cannot be taken for granted. In order to

guarantee that the government will serve the people, people will first have to check the power of the government" which sounded true for all governments. 80 years after Fei Xiaotong first wrote about China's countryside, it is still struggling. In many aspects, the party has placed a lower priority on meeting the needs of the rural peasant class who'd brought them to power.

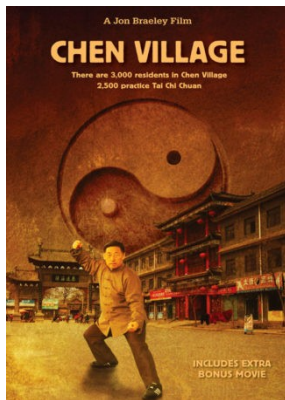
With changes in the global labor situation, factories are increasingly automated, and low-skilled manufacturing work is being performed by robots. Migrant workers in many cities are told by the government to go home to figure out new ways to make a living. Thus China is currently facing its biggest transition since the 1980s to change from a capita-driven low-labor-cost exporting model to one based on service and driven by innovation. Many migrant workers returning home to start their own business go bankrupt due to lack of skills and knowhow. Since they have been away from their villages for decades, they even speak with a changed accent and do not know village people or local ways as well. The government's wish for a service-driven consumer-based economy requires good-paying service jobs. In reality much of the service jobs are low-end, such as motorcycle delivery with low pay, high accident rates, and no time to eat. A high-tech globally-competitive industry may be partially achieved in some areas. But with about half the population systemically denied the means of earning a good living, good healthcare and good education, Roberts questioned that a transition to a service and consumer-based innovative economy would be possible.

In closing Roberts wrote "*The question is what happens if the millions of migrants like the Mos eventually decide that the carrot is insufficient, the stick unbearable. How would the party confront a sustained movement against its rule and would it ultimately survive? And could this derail China's continued economic and political rise? Those are real questions as the party struggles to navigate the end of an economic model that powered China's rise for decades, but still today doesn't provide a fair chance for one-half of the people in whose name it rules and is leaving them out of its grand visions for the future.*"

-Gabe Zee, NWCC Book Club member

## KANOPY STREAMING: FILMS RELATED TO CHINA

As life continues amid the COVID-19 outbreak, we're spending more time at home and now especially indoors as the weather turns cooler. As many of you know, Kanopy is a free movie-streaming service that's accessible through public libraries and universities, with its focus being on "thoughtful entertainment." Its selection of films and film genres is extensive, with new additions announced every week. Such a variety makes for no shortage of substantial and thought-provoking material that helps take our minds off current hardships, personal and public. As someone who'd already been using this service on a regular basis, it recently occurred to me to view and feature in this issue a few general interest films that are in some way related to China. I explored different options and settled on four. All were enjoyable for different reasons, covering a multitude of aspects of Chinese life in China and the U.S., and so now I'll share them here:



**Chen Village (2009)**

Located in Henan Province in eastern China, Chen Jia Gou aka Chen Village is a remote, nondescript place which just happens to be the birthplace of Tai Chi Chuan. The majority of its denizens are members of the Chen family, whose namesake style of Tai Chi Chuan has been preserved and practiced for 400 years. Students both domestic and international come to Chen Village regularly to study with the masters and refine their skills. Foreign students interviewed for this film all praised the simpler, more peaceful quality of life without the myriad distractions of the hectic outside world. I found it particularly interesting to learn that "the practice of calligraphy is the same as the practice of martial arts...book and sword share the same origins."



**Forever, Chinatown (2016)**

Let yourself be transported back to the early 20th century when U.S. Chinatowns were compulsory residential zones for Chinese immigrants and their families who were trying to "make it" while having to negotiate daily life in cramped quarters. Artist Frank Wong makes it easy: for the past 40 years he's been creating three-dimensional miniature dioramas of shops, restaurants, living rooms, studio apartments, kitchens, etc., in order to preserve his memories of growing up in San Francisco's Chinatown. This film is a journey through Frank's life as he describes how it has unfolded and what is important to him today. Upon his death, he plans to have all his works cremated so that he can live in them forever, thus the liberal inclusion of fantasy elements in them all.



**Soul of A Banquet (2014)**

Not only a visual feast for the eyes, but also a biographical portrait of a tough and enterprising immigrant Chinese lady intertwined with an analysis of how Chinese cuisine was affected by historical events in China throughout the 20th century. Cecilia Chiang, the matriarch of modern Chinese cooking, tells the story of her life, starting with her privileged upbringing in Beijing, her visit to San Francisco to see her sister, and her accidental undertaking of opening a Chinese restaurant called The Mandarin, which ended up keeping her in the U.S. Right away she knew she wanted to focus on the cuisine from her own childhood, which hailed from the great pre-Mao culinary houses. Directed by Wayne Wang (The Joy Luck Club), this film surveys modern Chinese history through the lens of her family's life as well as the fate of traditional cuisine.

**KANOPY STREAMING: FILMS RELATED TO CHINA (CONT.)**



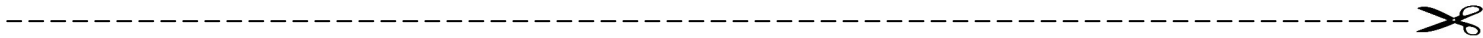
**They Chose China (2006)**

This Canadian-French production, directed by Oscar-nominated filmmaker Shuibo Wang (*Sunrise Over Tiananmen Square*), traces the lives of a group of young American UN soldiers who fought in the Korean War, ended up as POWs, and after a 90-day “limbo” period decided to stay in China. They do so to escape McCarthyism, which has branded them as turncoats and traitors and has just sentenced two of their since-returned fellow soldiers to lengthy prison terms; and to instead start openly promoting peace, which they could not safely do back home. One thing which really stood out to me in this film is that the few Black soldiers in the group saw profound improvements in their own lives because they were now free of white supremacy and had new opportunities.

One constant theme in each film is how the influence of place on a person should never be underestimated, whether it’s where we’re raised or where we choose to go. Our environment plays a decisive role in shaping us in our formative years, as can be seen in *Forever*, *Chinatown* and *Soul of a Banquet*. But of equal importance is what places we’re drawn to as adults and why, as is highlighted in *Chen Village* and *They Chose China*.

In these trying times, you can indulge in brief periods of respite through these intimate portraits of life in China and the Chinese Diaspora in the U.S.

-Shireen Farrahi



**Northwest China Council Membership Application Form**

Northwest China Council Members receive invitations to China Council events, a subscription to the quarterly newsletter and discounts on admissions fees and books.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/State/zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_  
 Occupation \_\_\_\_\_  
 Special Interest in China \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to volunteer to help the China Council with:

\_\_\_\_\_ Assisting at events  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Publicity  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Hosting/Escorting speakers/Chinese visitors  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Office Work  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Fund-raising  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Recruiting members  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Research

Membership Category — Please check the category you wish:

Individual	\$50	Sponsor	\$175
Family	\$75	Major Donor	\$375
Senior (65+)	\$25	Patron	\$750
Student (Full-time)	\$10	Phoenix Circle	\$1,500

Please detach and return with a check payable to the Northwest China Council. To use MasterCard or Visa, please complete the following information.

Card No. _____	Expiration Date _____	Signature _____
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Established in 1980, the Northwest China Council is a non-profit, non-partisan, dues-based educational organization. Our mission is to promote greater understanding of Chinese history, culture, business, contemporary affairs, and US-China relations in the Portland, Oregon metropolitan area. And to build a bridge between the peoples of Oregon and China.



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