

Memories of an ACAASU Conference

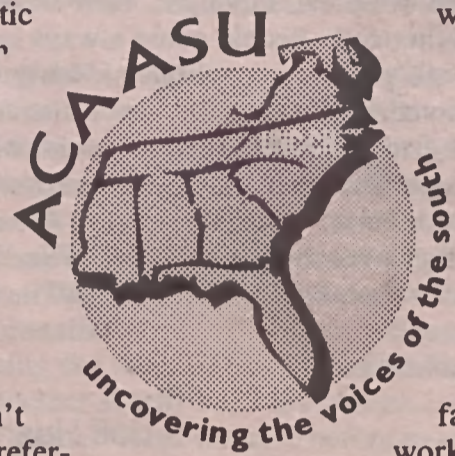
"We're Staying Calm... Very Calm..."

By Grace Chu, ACAASU Conference Coordinator

It was on the second day of the weekend-long Atlantic Coast Asian American Student Union (ACAASU) Conference at Emory University that David Liu, the president of UNC's Asian Students Association at that time, elbowed me during one of the panel sessions and said, "Why don't we bid for it?" He was referring to the location of the Conference in the following year. I laughed and went along with his joke, replying, "Why don't we?"

Looking back, that exchange was probably one of the best misunderstandings I have ever made. Chairing the ACAASU Conference committee this year was an awesome experience—not only because I had a neat and fancy title, but also because I had an opportunity to work with one of the best groups of people to coordinate this massive event at UNC.

I don't remember how people initially volunteered to help out with the Conference. It seemed to just happen. At first, the Conference seemed like a black hole; you didn't know where all the effort and time was going. Nonetheless, people still willingly put their energy into this project. Roy Jan, Wendy Hung, and Nancy Wang called over one hundred universities in the South to locate Asian student organizations, and subsequently, to bring in the more than 25 universities and 5 high schools that attended the Conference. But there were many others—the fifteen people who volunteered to clean the Dean Dome with Grant Cheung until 3am on the night before winter finals; Tracy Yang, the ACAASU Conference Treasurer who also volunteered to take on the



food committee; Joan Shields, who moved boxes of Asian American literature for distribution; and Patrick Link and Selena Dewitya, who curled up on the floor and futon in my dorm room at 4 in the morning.

Watching the different pieces of the puzzle fall in place made the hard work worth it for all of us. Little successes kept us motivated—our first hundred dollars from First Union, the message from Jed Lau that we had confirmed our first speaker, and then the message from Jeff Huang that we had also confirmed Patsy Mink as another speaker. No one knew, though, the degree to which these little successes would make up the much larger success of the ACAASU Conference.

The Conference weekend itself was the culmination of several weeks of anticipation. Would people leave the Conference with a positive experience, or would they leave with the impression that it had been a waste of time, we wondered. By the middle of the weekend, however, we knew that we were putting on a spectacular conference. Over one hundred people registered to participate the Conference on the first day, and in one night, attendance jumped from 100 to over 200. Participants were astonished by our ability to schedule Chancellor Hooker to speak in support of Asian Americans, and by San Mo's idea to conduct interactive workshops during the Conference.

In the end, I breathed a sigh of relief because I knew that ASA here at UNC not only had made a difference within our campus community, but also had become a role model for Asian American activism in the South.



Photos by Sterling Chen



Clockwise from top: "Asian American Gender Issues" workshop; keynote speaker Ken Hakuta; semi-formal dance Saturday night; "Religions in the Bible Belt: Interfaith Dialogue" workshop.



Photos by Pete Lee

Left: Susana Moua performs a traditional Hmong dance. Right: Volunteers prepare dinner plates.

Another Successful "Journey Into Asia"

By Anh Nguyen

Imagine traveling to Asia, experiencing all the flavor and sounds of the continent, without even leaving a room. On November 17, 1995, such an opportunity was offered in the Great Hall of the Student Union with "Journey Into Asia," an annual dinner celebration hosted by the Asian Students Association in collaboration with other Asian students organizations. The emcees of the event, attended by both students and local residents, were ASA President Jeff Huang and ASA Vice President Alex Lee, with closing remarks by Grace Lee and Amy Huang, members of the Korean American Students Association. Tables were busied by ASA members, while per-

formances featured both members of ASA as well as members of the local Asian community.

The dishes served at "Journey Into Asia" were representative of numerous Asian countries, and were provided by the Indian Palace of Chapel Hill, the Mandarin House of Durham, and the Hunam Restaurant of Chapel Hill. Stage performances included the Lion Dance, the Angels Dance, a Hindu love song, a Korean drum dance, an instrumental segment, an Indian dance, and a dinner band. The "Costumes of Asia" event was the finale of the show, bringing together the featured Asian cultures with outfits from the different countries.

"[The evening] was an artwork of culture," commented Long Nguyen.