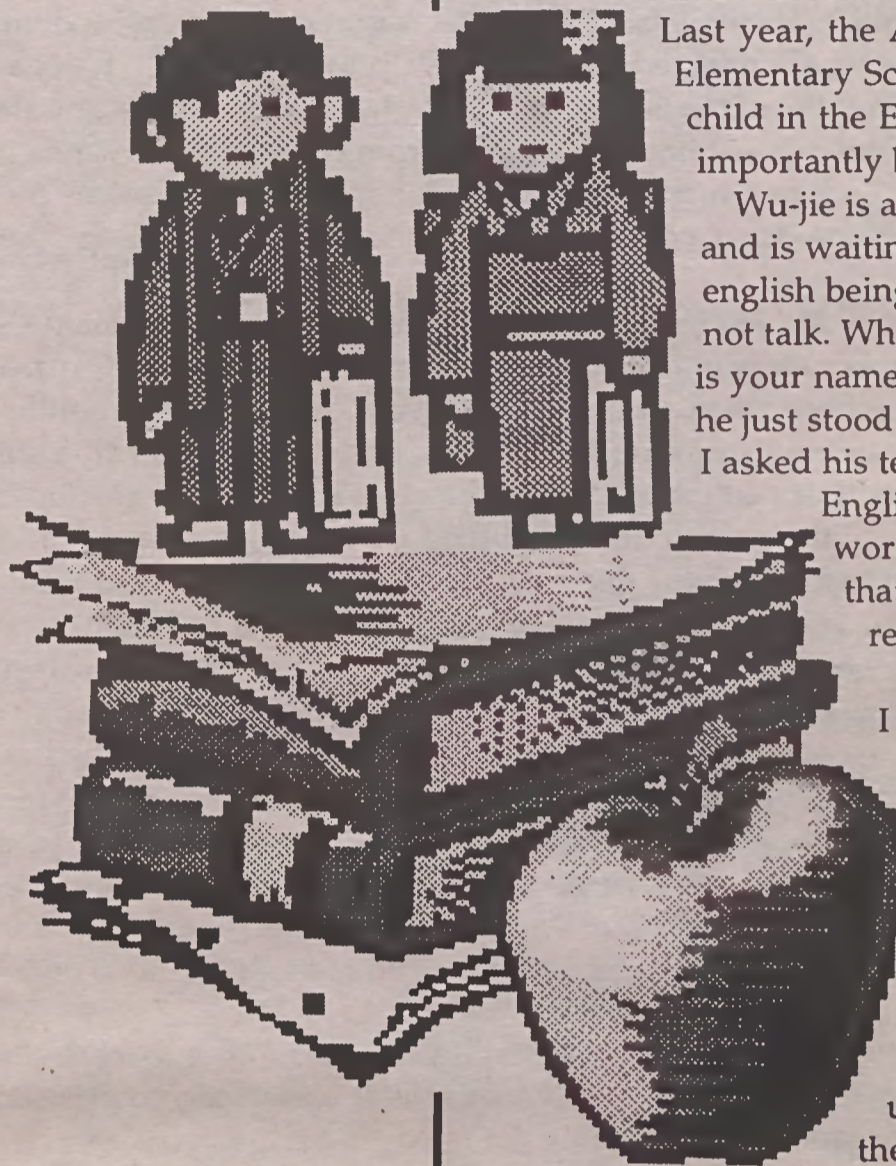




ESL: Making a difference

By Josiah Chen

Let me tell you about my homey, Wu-jie (pronounced woo-gee) Sun. Wu-jie is a second-grader at Forest View Elementary School. Because Chinese is his first language, he has been placed in the English as a Second Language (ESL) program. Last year, the Asian Student's Association established a mentor program with the ESL program at Forest View Elementary School. Once a week for an hour, Nancy Wang, Jen Mar, and I go to the school to act as a friend to a child in the ESL program. During this time, we help them work on their reading skills, writing skills, and most importantly be a friend to the kids.



Wu-jie is a very shy person with the typical Asian-mom haircut, has the same expressionless look all the time, and is waiting for some teeth to grow back. Another thing is that Wu-jie does not talk. Maybe this is a result of English being his second language or maybe he just does not feel comfortable in the States yet, but he just does not talk. When I first met him, I performed the customary introduction of "Hi, my name is Josiah Che, and what is your name little buddy?" However, I did not receive the customary response of "My name is Wu-jie." Instead he just stood there looking at me as if I was Casper the Ghost and not even there. But I found out his name after I asked his teacher. At first, I noticed that he seemed a little out of the group. He was really quiet, did not speak English very well, and came from a different background from the rest of his classmates. As I began to work with him, he became more talkative, that is when he was reading books to me. But I still could see that he still did not have that many friends. Each week during the spring semester, the situation remained the same. Well at least until the last meeting of the year between us.

It was a nice April day and all the kids were playing outside during recess. When I came to see him, I also brought him a present. The present, which was a bag of ball and jacks, was just a little farewell gift for the year. I gave it to him and explained how to play the game. After we began to play, one of his classmates came up and asked if he could play too. We said sure little buddy. We began playing and all of a sudden more little kids started coming up to us asking if they could play with us. The next thing you know there was a line of around 15 kids waiting to play. Wu-jie was on Broadway, the center of attention! He had lots of fun with the other kids and played with them extremely well. It seemed like all he needed was a little nudge to help him along, and then he could handle it from there.

The ESL program has been a lot of fun for me. Sometimes the kids just need a helping hand from us older people that they look up to so much. So I encourage anyone who is interested in helping these children out to contact either ASA or myself to find out more information about this program.

Here is a little follow up on the story. Things ended well last year with Wu-jie, but it seems like this year when I went back, he forgot who I was. He seems to get along with his classmates better, but he still does not talk to me very much!

Religious leaders discuss differences in denomination



By Robin Munasato

On Wednesday, October 8, 1997, SANGAM, the Southeast Asian Awareness group at UNC-CH, hosted a religious forum called Circles of Faith.

Representatives of the Hindu, Islamic and Christian faiths were invited to lead the discussion.

"Circles of Faith fully describes our role of uniting different paths into a single realm of understanding," said Sangam Minority Affairs Committee Coordinator, Rachana Sura.

Each representative spoke for four minutes, presenting the major beliefs of each religion. Afterwards, the audience had the opportunity to ask questions.

The audience addressed religious topics such as common ground that members of faith could come together on, salvation or spirituality outside of an organized religion, missionaries, Holy Wars and the caste system. The audience also asked about each religion's view on gender roles and moral responsibilities.

Perhaps the most fruitful discussion stemmed from a question which a student, Minesh Patel, asked. Patel said he felt the forum discussion was idealistic in that it strived to reconcile religious differences which would continue to exist in the minds of people outside the forum.

"How as a Hindu, or how as a religious, spiritual being, do I go out and live

my life and respect other religions, when they sometimes won't respect mine?" he asked.

Dr. Michael Shelle, a UNC professor who served as a representative of Christianity in the forum, responded.

"If you believe in something very deeply, you got to hold onto those beliefs," he said.

"You can't sort of give them up just to be friends with someone else."

"We can't be totally the same because we don't share the same beliefs, but we try to work out whatever issues we have," Shelle said.

A representative of the Islamic faith, Mr. Sayed Mustafa responded to Patel's question as well, saying that a person should disregard others' lack of respect.

"The problem is theirs, not yours," he said.

"If they have problem understanding or wanting to understand something else and therefore not respecting, (that's) their problem."

Hindu representative, Dr. Kishor Trivedi, expressed similar opinions. He said while he could not change another's actions, he could control his own.

"It is not possible for me to change someone else," he said. "So, the best way for myself is to be a better and better and better person."

"If I am a Hindu, a better Hindu. If I am a Christian, (a) better Christian. And let the others behave as they want to. There is no way that I can control them," Trivedi said.

