

Asian culture brought to light

BY EMILY BATCHELDER
STAFF WRITER

Despite a seeming lack of Asian presence in North Carolina, Dan Duffy sees no reason to overlook this diverse and growing group.

"Not that much is known about Asians here," Duffy said. "It's small and it's dispersed, but they are here and they are interesting."

Duffy, a UNC graduate student specializing in Vietnamese literature, noticed that the curriculums of the other classes he worked with included very little Asian culture.

That factor, along with encouragement from his peers and colleagues, gave him the idea to develop an "Asia in North Carolina" class to increase the visibility of Asian culture in the state.

Duffy met with students researching individual projects about Asians in the state. Students examined the census, looked at texts and formed focus groups comprising other campus organizations.

"We were doing all this stuff, which was great, but kind of diffuse," Duffy said. "So this year I thought it would be good to come up with a definite public project."

Duffy decided to focus class efforts on a research project that would review the Asian population in the state and profile Asian arts and businesses.

"We blend race and ethnicity a lot," said Christopher Liang, a senior from Winston-Salem who is in Duffy's class. "We often confuse the two terms, and I feel that we aren't at a point in which all Asian-Americans feel united but are just starting to realize that we can have our voices heard if we band together."

Conscious of diverse interests,

Duffy divides students systematically to get different perspectives on all aspects of Asian art, business and populations.

"We wanted to get really different things," Duffy said. "Not just six Indian restaurants and five Korean groceries."

The result was the 36-page first issue of "Asia in North Carolina," a magazine that will be published annually, documenting the public life of Asians in the state.

"The publication is a way for students and the University to make (Asians) more visible to the community and themselves," Duffy said. "It's about highly individualized research and it's also about creating knowledge."

Duffy and his students thought it was critical to demonstrate the range of ethnic identity within the Asian community.

"The publication makes others more aware of how Asians are making a living in North Carolina and helps redefine what the word 'Asian' means," said class member Stephanie Bernabe, a sophomore from Raleigh.

The arts section looks at the availability of Asian art in the state and at Asian performance groups and artists, while the business section examines individuals in different sectors of the economy. The third component of the publication gives an overview of the Asian population in North Carolina and looks at Chinese immigration.

"This type of research needed to be done," said Chris Tonog, a sophomore class member from Fayetteville. "When you think of Asian-Americans, you think California and New York, but you don't normally think of North Carolina or the South, for that matter."

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DAN DUFFY, UNC GRADUATE STUDENT

Aside from highlighting the Asian community, Duffy hoped the project would give students an opportunity to conduct research in a way they normally might not.

"I thought that they would gain experience in doing really individualized research," Duffy said. "They get to learn about whatever it is they wanted to look into, to gain some relationships and make contacts and they get to learn from each other."

Duffy hopes the success of the publication will be instrumental to continuing the class in the future. Other students also hope the magazine is a starting point for an Asian-American studies major or minor, in addition to the Asian studies minor the University

already offers.

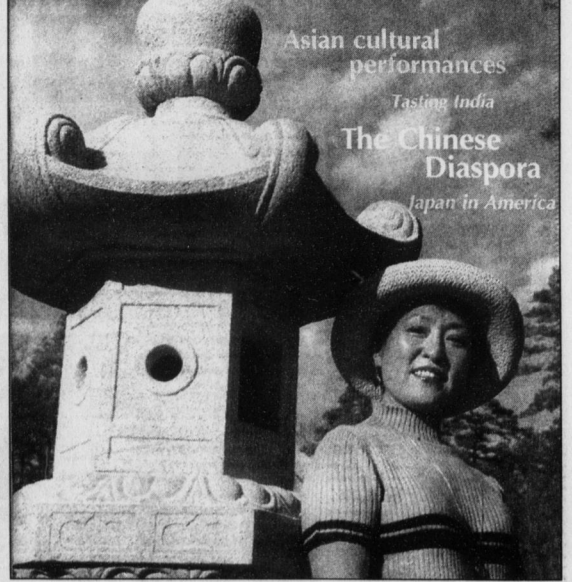
"I really want this to be done regularly, and I want this to be publicly available," Duffy said. "I think this is an opportunity where student work can serve a purpose."

Duffy's students agree. "I hope that future students of the course will be able to tap into the rich Asian-American culture here in North Carolina," Tonog said.

"I learned that Asian-Americans play a bigger role in North Carolina than one would normally think. There is a definite Asian culture here, though research now is just skimming the surface."

Contact the Features Editor at features@unc.edu.

Asia in North Carolina



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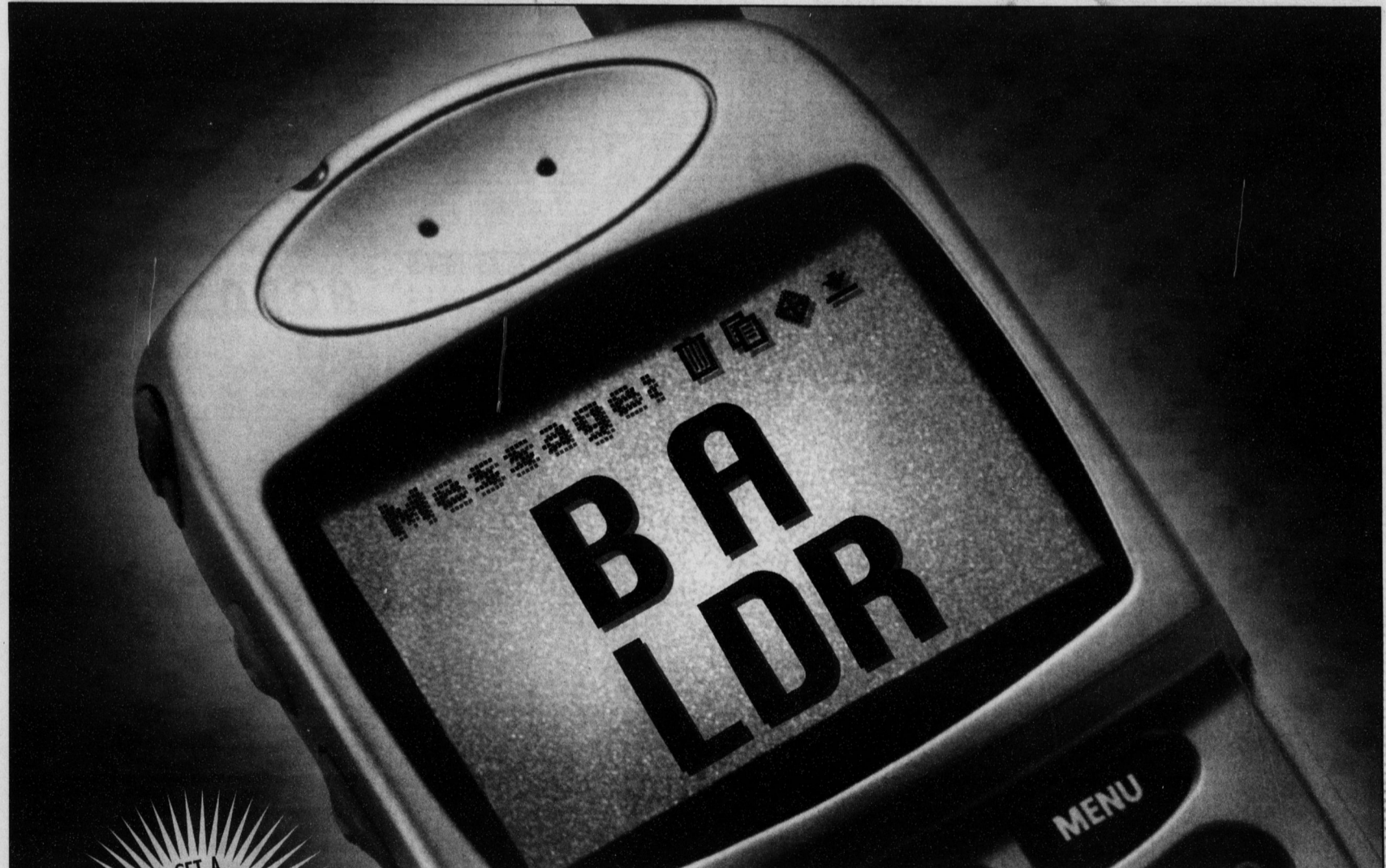
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