

A Lot of Class

by Edna Ikeda

The new Asian American studies class here at UC San Diego has caused quite a stir among the Asian American students and community. For one thing, you just don't get speakers like Min Yasui, Lawson Inada, Laurence Yep, Norman Mineta and Yori Wada here very often—let alone once or twice a week!

Yasui arrived during the second week of class (UCSD professor Peter Irons was featured the preceding week). Los Angeles and other big cities may see a lot of Yasui, but here in San Diego there was a lot of excitement about his arrival.

Yasui was greeted the weekend he arrived with a dinner at the house of class instructor James Lin, sponsored by Asian Pacific Student Alliance (APSA). Yasui's schedule for the next four days included numerous lectures at UCSD and San Diego State, a JACL fundraiser, an informal community reception at his penthouse, interviews with no fewer than three radio stations and a newspaper, and a meeting with local politicians and an Asian American lawyers' group.

Writer Lawson Inada described the class as an "ongoing conference." His UCSD lecture was followed by an evening of festivities: an informal reception with students and community and an impromptu poetry/music jam session with a local jazz band.

This is the fifth week of class, and with the fifth guest speaker, children's author Laurence Yep, here in town, one would think

that the APSA students and community are getting tired from the pace by now! By week ten, there will have been an additional seven guest speakers.

Instructor Lin commended the students in APSA for their involvement in everything from putting out publicity and press releases to picking up speakers at the airport. He was grateful for the student/community support.

Last winter, Lin first heard that UCSD might have funding for an Asian American studies class. In December, he made a special trip to UC Berkeley to visit Elaine Kim, chair of Asian American studies there. With her help and an enormous number of phone calls, he compiled a list of speakers. Since there was no time to find an instructor, math professor Lin put his own name in. By late January, funding had been approved and the class was on its way to being a reality.

The students feel they are benefiting greatly from the class. Leidyne Lau, an APSA member, said the class was a "wonderful experience." She hopes the work done on the class this quarter will make it an ongoing thing. She thought it "will help give support to the [students'] culture and themselves, their self-esteem."

Ming Leung, a UCSD anthropology major and APSA member, also felt good about being in a class with other Asians and viewing topics from an Asian American perspective. He spoke of self-discovery:

"It's like meeting someone that you know, that you hadn't seen for a while—like meeting a lost friend."

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