

# The AACP Newsletter

Since 1970

Asian American Curriculum Project, Inc.

November/December 2005

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## My Novel Experience A Report on NaNoWriMo 2005

By Leonard D. Chan



"It was a dark and rainy night." Actually it wasn't dark or too rainy, but a very enlightening many nights in November 2005 when I wrote my first novel. So it's true, a novel can be written in a month and I and nearly 10,000 others around the world spent the month of November proving this point.

If you didn't catch my article from last year or my recent editor's messages alerting you to National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo), then you might not know what I am writing about.

NaNoWriMo is an event held for the past six years as a kind of writers' marathon challenge. Instead of running 26 miles, people that sign up for this challenge try to write 50,000 words of fiction in one month. In November of 2005 over 59,705 took that challenge and 9,765 of us reached that goal.

For all of you published professional novel writers out there, please don't scoff at the NaNoWriMo participants' efforts. Like the casual joggers that decide to participate in local marathons, most of us are probably not in your Olympic class of writing. But for a multitude of reasons, maybe as many reasons as the 60,000 people that participated, we chose to find out what you already experienced. We wanted to learn of the agony and ecstasy of creating the ultimate creative work for any writer, that being the writing of a novel.

The one message I want to convey is that if I could write 50,000 words in a month, so can you. I am not by any means a very fast or great writer. All that is needed is a little bit of creativity, a willingness to take on the challenge, and enough time.

On average I spent two hours and 32 minutes a day for 29 days on my novel. That amounts to approximately 11 words a minute. Most of you can probably beat this. If you could average 20 words a minute, you'd only need about 84 minutes a day. If you can pump out 50 words a minute, then you'd only need 34 minutes.

For some of you, that's not too much of a sacrifice. All you need to do is just organize your time better and cut out things you don't really need to be doing. In my case I just watched less television. We all should be spending our free time reading anyway, right? We at AACP would appreciate it. Kidding aside, learning to organize your time better is a very beneficial side effect of doing

NaNoWriMo. For me, I found out that I really do have more time than I thought. I've partially gone back to my wasteful ways, but I now know, that if I truly desire to accomplish some project, I can dig deep and find the time.

This leaves the motivational reasons that hold us back. So why should you do it? Haven't you ever contemplated that if such and such celebrity could write a book, why couldn't I? But intellectual jealousy is not reason enough for most of you to take on such a major task. Perhaps some of you believe that novel writing is your true calling and want to try it out. Whatever the case, everyone that takes on this challenge has a different reason for wanting to write a novel. Perhaps you could use some of my reasons.

Besides for giving me material to write about for this newsletter, one of my own personal reason for participating in NaNoWriMo was to use my novel to record a snap shot of who I am or what I was thinking about in 2005. Unless you are a completely creative person that can imagine worlds that are totally different from your own experience, then some part of you will be contained within your book. With the plot I chose for my book, my characters were able to articulate many of the thoughts I have about things. You could do the same.

Upon doing some family research, I often found myself thinking of how little we know about our ancestors. Most of it is just the minimal facts such as date of birth or death and how many children they had. Unless you're famous, most of us will never have a biography written about us. And once the people that knew you are all gone, following generations will have no direct recollections of you. So why not try to record some part of your thoughts for posterity? If you take good care of your book, it will most likely survive longer than you will. I'm sure most of you have something you've learned that you'd like to share with someone.

For those of you that are unconfident of your writing skills, don't worry about it too much. The whole point of doing NaNoWriMo with such a tight deadline is to throw out the inhibitions that keep you from writing. Don't worry about the quality, just get what you want recorded. It doesn't matter whether you put it in writing or just make audio or video recordings. Hopefully future generations will have some way of retrieving what you recorded.

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## 15% OFF STORE WIDE SALE!

Just bring a copy of this newsletter with you to our store and receive 15% off all non-sale items purchased.

Sale ends December 31, 2005

## Asian Pacific American Poetry Month

Yes, that's what we're hoping January turns into. Next month's newsletter will be the third anniversary of our special poetry edition of the newsletter. In our continued effort to promote this vital form of writing, we will again dedicate our book selections and features to poetry. To all the published poets out there, please send us a book sample of any new book you'd like us to help promote for you.

To all readers, please send us a New Year poem that we can use in the next newsletter. A gift certificate will be given to a randomly selected non-professional poet whose poem that we use.

AACP will be holding its second annual **New Year's Poetry Day Celebration** on January 14, 2006 at 1 p.m. Some the writers that will be in attendance include, **Oscar Peñaranda**, **Hiroshi Kashiwagi**, and **Cynthia Chin-Lee**. It's not too late to add your name to our list of honored speakers. Whether you're a professional, novice, or plain lover of poetry come join us at our store for our celebration of the New Year.

## Give Us Your Feedback

Please feel free to send us your reviews, comments, and book suggestions. You can contact us at - [aacpinc@asianamericanbooks.com](mailto:aacpinc@asianamericanbooks.com)

### Up Coming Events

Here are some events that AACP will soon be attending. Invite us to your events.

Date/Time	Event	Location
Jan. 14 1pm	New Year's Poetry Day Celebration at AACP	529 E. 3rd Ave San Mateo, CA
Feb. 4 Date may change	Book Release Celebration of <i>In Good Conscience</i>	San Francisco, CA
Feb. 19	San Mateo JACL Day of Remembrance Event	College of SM San Mateo, CA
Other Event of Interest that AACP May Not Attend		
Dec. 24 2:15pm	Christmas at Manzanar Join Park Guide G. Enck for a 30 min. discussion of holidays at camp.	Manzanar, CA
Dec. 26- Jan. 1	Annual Hmong International New Year Celebration	Fresno County Fairgrounds Fresno, CA
Jan. 21 1pm	Hiroshi Kashiwagi Reading and Book Signing	Western Addition Branch Library San Francisco, CA
Jan. 29 10am-6pm	Vietnamese Spring Festival & Parade Parade 11am-1pm	Parkside Hall 180 Park Ave. San Jose, CA
Jan. 21- Feb. 12	Chinese New Year Celebration Events in SF	Chinatown San Francisco, CA
Feb. 11 5:30pm	Chinese New Year Parade	San Francisco, CA

## Editor's Message

Hi Everyone. I finally finished the November/December newsletter. If you read the article about my novel writing experience, you have a pretty good idea why this is coming to you so late. This also means that the second part to the October newsletter article on McCarthyism and the Asian American Community is now scheduled to come out in our February newsletter. My apologies to you all.

### Please Help

I also apologies in advance for this section. Each year when I make a plea for your help, there are always a couple of you out there that do not want to be badgered for donations and decide to unsubscribe. If you're one of those people that's had enough, please forgive us. You are under no obligation to make any contributions. Just sit back and continue reading.

However, since we are a non-profit organization that depends on the generous assistance of others, I send you this gentle reminder that we are so in need of your help. In a year filled with disasters, such as the one that has just past, there are so many people in need. We understand that there is only so much money to go around.

If you cannot afford to donate money, we can always use your volunteer help. One person can really make a big difference. For example, Sophie Wong, a returning volunteer to our organization, is spearheading a film festival that will be co-sponsored by AACP. Sophie has done an amazing job in getting this project going. If you have some spare time, Sophie can use your assistance on this project. We have plenty of other projects just waiting for someone like Sophie to help get them done. So if you're looking for volunteer opportunities, please keep us in mind.

### End of Year Thanks

Thank you Philip Chin and Sophie Wong for all your help. AACP is fortunate to have your assistance. Thank you Jaime Young and Melissa Eng for your help at various events. It was great seeing you. To all the other past interns, good to hear from you and or see you. We may really need your help in the coming year, so stay in touch. To the AACP board, thanks for all your help and feedback too. Thank you Florence and Mas Hongo, AACP would be nothing without your continued dedication.

Many thanks to all the friends and family members that have assisted me in so many ways. Without you, I would not be able to continue helping AACP.

Thank you to all the friends of AACP and other newsletter readers. Knowing you are out there keeps us going. Help us to better serve you. Stay in touch.

Finally, one last goodbye and thanks to a departed founder, Shizue Yoshina. We'll do our best to keep what you started going.

Happy Holidays Everyone!

Leonard Chan  
**Executive Editor**

**My Novel Experience**  
(Continued from page 1)

You can wait till the next NaNoWriMo in November of 2006, but if you have something you'd like to create for posterity, just go ahead and make any month your NaNoWriMo. Set up your own challenges or deadlines. Maybe do something every day for posterity, but just don't let another day slip away. Tomorrow may never come.

*Here are some other thought about my novel writing experience.*

At the beginning, I had a lot of second thoughts about signing up for NaNoWriMo. Would it be worth the added stress-don't we already have enough? Was this a dumb idea, a waste of my time? Why try it if I wasn't sure if I could finish it? Was my basic idea good enough and would I be able to write 50,000 words on this topic? Don't I have better things to do with my time?

In the end I put aside my second thoughts and went ahead with signing up for NaNoWriMo. I figured that the only way to answer most of my second thoughts was to just go ahead and do it. And when it was all over I think I did have my answers.

It wasn't a waste of time at all and it was well worth the little bit of extra stress. Most anything you do in life is a learning experience and this experience has given me a new perspective on the book making process that will hopefully prove to be invaluable for my work with AACP. I don't know if this


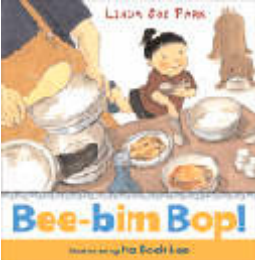
experience has improved my writing as I had hoped. Frankly, I think my writing has gotten sloppier. But I do believe that I have a new appreciation for novelist and the work that they produce.

As expected, I did have some struggles with ideas for the book. An interesting observation is that you can spend an awful lot of time researching small things that don't amount to much towards the plot. Sometimes the research and outlining actually slowed me down. For most of my past literary works I have found research and outlining to be invaluable tools to writing a good piece, but for speed novel writing, it can become a hindrance. I think I now understand why a lot of books seem to start so slow. It takes awhile for a story to amass enough momentum. Once the characters are developed and the plot has some direction, the book truly begins to write itself. Again, just get started. You can always go back and add the needed researched details once you've completed the first draft.

I wasn't able to complete my story after writing 50,000 words, but there's enough so far to give me encouragement that what I had written wasn't that bad. It still needs an ending and a lot of edits before I dare let anybody see it, but I can't help smiling when I think about what I've achieved. I rank this achievement up there with my edit work on the book *Petals of the Vanda* and my past work as a software engineer making wonderful educational products. But this time I did it all on my own.

Thank you very much Chris Baty for founding National Novel Writing Month!

The following books are discounted an additional 20% from the listed price for subscribers to our newsletter. The discounts on these books end January 5, 2006

	<p><b>Kamishibai Man</b> By Allen Say 2005, 32 pages, Hardback.</p> <p>In Allen Say's latest book, <i>Kamishibai Man</i>, he takes a nostalgic and reflective look into his childhood experiences with Japanese street storytellers. Say's book reminisces of a time when children's storytelling was a regular and fun group outdoor activity rather than a solitary home pastime.</p> <p>Say uses an interesting change in art style midway through the book to provide the illusion that you are there on the street listening and watching him tell a story using the kamishibai man's traditional tool of picture cards.</p> <p>Let <i>Kamishibai Man</i> create new fond memories for your young ones.</p> <p>Item #3319, Price \$17.00 - for newsletter subscribers <b>\$13.60</b></p>
	<p><b>Bee-bim Bop!</b> By Linda Sue Park Illustrated by Ho Baek Lee 2005, 29 pages, Hardback.</p> <p>"<i>Bee-bim Bop!</i>" - just the title alone sounds playful. That what you get when you read this book - an amusing and fun look at the making of a traditional Korean dish by a child and parent.</p> <p>Famed author Linda Sue Park draws upon her past experience as a food journalist to create this wonderful children's picture book that contains the recipe for a dish that also serves as the title for this book.</p> <p>Item #3334, Price \$15.00 - for newsletter subscribers <b>\$12.00</b></p>



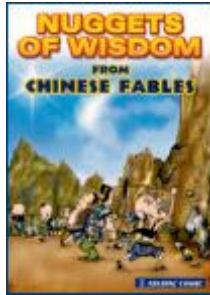
### **Quick & Easy Origami Christmas**

By Toshie Takahama

2004, Origami box kit with a 62 page instruction book and 60 sheets of paper.

Looking for a stocking stuffer? How about getting "Quick and Easy Origami Christmas?" If you choose not to use the paper that comes with the kit, you could always use the wrapping paper lying around on Christmas morning. Learn to make an origami Santa, Christmas tree, and more with this wonderful compact packet.

Item #3335, Price \$14.95 - for newsletter subscribers **\$11.96**



### **Nuggets of Wisdom From Chinese Fables**

By Wu Jingyu & Geraldine Chay

Commentary by Chua Wei Lin

Illustrations by Tian Hengyu

2003, 117 pages, Paperback.

This is another marvelous book in the ASIAPAC book series which imparting Chinese and Asian culture and philosophy through comic style art and story telling. In *Nuggets of Wisdom* you'll learn centuries old Chinese wisdom through concise and revealing little fables told with a comic book sensibility.

Item #3337, Price \$12.95 - for newsletter subscribers **\$10.36**



### **Christmas Origami Book Bundle**

#### **Christmas Origami – 2 Party Decorations**

By Heian International, Inc.

1985, 13 pages, paperback.

#### **Christmas Origami – 3 Gift Wraps and Cards**

By Heian International, Inc.

1985, 13 pages, paperback.

#### **Christmas Origami – 4 Wreaths and Displays**

By Heian International, Inc.

1985, 13 pages, paperback.

Are you in the decorating or craft making mood for the holidays? How about getting our Christmas Origami Book Bundle? These three books contain 25 great ideas for your decorating and craft making holiday needs. Origami paper is included.

Item #3336, Price \$14.85 - for newsletter subscribers **\$11.88**

