

FEATURE

The Chefoo School at Lushan

By Ian Grant

The April 2009 issue of this magazine featured an article on the Lushan Institute, which was proposed to the Lushan administration by the Kuling American School Association (KASA) at its 2007 reunion in Lushan. As that article indicated, considerable progress has been made in the ensuing time, culminating in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding this year in Seattle between the Jiujiang University, the Lushan Administration, and KASA.

There is another school alumni association that is also giving support to this exciting project, namely the Chefoo Schools Association (CSA). How does it fit in? In 1947 the China Inland Mission (CIM) acquired the vacant Kuling American School property and moved its Chefoo School there until the evacuation from China of Westerners in 1951.

The Chefoo School was established by the CIM in 1881 at the treaty port of Chefoo (now Yantai) on the northern shore of the Shantung peninsula. Its primary purpose was to provide a boarding school for CIM missionary children, but it was also available to missionaries from other Protestant mission organizations, local business families, and diplomats. Two famous American Chefusians, as former students are called, were Henry Luce, who later established Time-Life-Fortune magazines, and Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Thornton Wilder (*The Bridge of San Louis Rey*; *Our Town*; and *The Skin of our Teeth*).

美国学堂



*The Kuling American School circa 1938.
Photo by Frank P. Lauridsen*

The school curriculum was based on the British system, and students, for the most part, wrote Oxford entry exams in their senior year. The school proudly referred to itself as “the best school east of Suez.” By 1940 the school included a Prep School, Girls School, Boys School, and a Co-ed School.

All this came to a crushing halt in December 1941 following Pearl Harbor. Much of north-east China was by then under Japanese occupation, and by the Fall of 1942 all Westerners, except Germans, were interned. The Chefoo School was initially interned at a Presbyterian property at Temple Hill in Chefoo, but in 1943 they were transferred to the larger Weih sien Presbyterian Mission Compound, which now housed up to 2000 Westerners scattered throughout northeast China. Experience at this concentration camp is very ably documented by the late American internee, Langdon Gilkey, in *The Shantung Compound*

(HarperSan Francisco, 1975, ISBN 0-06-063112-0). Meanwhile a temporary Chefoo School was established in Free China, in Kiating, Sichuan province in 1941, but it had to be transferred to Kalimpong, India in 1944 as the Japanese were threatening to take Chunking.

At the end of the Second World War the Chefoo School property was in shambles, and this part of China had come under communist occupation as the Japanese armies left. The CIM had to find a new location, and for want of a permanent solution (of course nothing, in those days, could ever be considered permanent), they re-opened the school at the Mission headquarters in Shanghai in the summer of 1946. This was considered temporary, at best, and the Mission was overjoyed when they were directed to the Kuling American School property a year later. KAS was not reopened after the War. After extensive repairs to the buildings, occupation commenced late in 1947, and the school officially opened in January 1948. For the over 120 students, and about 20 teachers and staff, Kuling was a paradise which was vacated very reluctantly by March 1951.

Like KASA, the Chefoo Schools alumni formed an association. Theirs was established in London, England in January 1908, and it



Chefoo School students and staff at Kuling, 1948

continues as a lively organization with branches in England, North America, Australia, and New Zealand. Reunions are held annually in London, Melbourne, and Toronto, and other reunions are held from time to time in Los Angeles, Seattle, Vancouver, Chicago, and Sydney. The primary instrument for keeping alumni in ongoing communication is the *Chefoo Magazine*, which has been published continuously since the inception of the Association.

Since the 1980's many Chefusians, like former KAS students, have happily re-visited Kuling, now referred to as Lushan. Kuling is actually a valley in the Lushan mountains, but the name is not used officially by the Chinese. Indeed, the word Kuling originated in the late nineteenth century as a play on the English word 'cooling', as it was established as a resort for Westerners, and Chinese elites, who gladly spent their summers there to avoid the sweltering cities of the Yangtze lowlands.

A memorable occasion took place in May 2007 when five Chefusians, who had attended the school in Kuling, joined four former KAS students, and about 40 of their offspring, and interested others at the KASA reunion at Lushan in May, 2007. It was on this occasion that the idea of the Lushan Institute was presented to the Lushan administration by KASA in a historic round-table discussion. The primary CSA contact person for this project is Ian Grant, the North America Branch chairperson, and the Editor/Publisher of the official organ of CSA, the *Chefoo Magazine*. For those of us who are joint members of CSA and KASA, it is very apparent that we are kindred spirits. We share the KASA vision for the Lushan Institute that it is "a bridge with China that will not only reach into the future, but will re-tie it to its deeprooted legacy in China".

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Jim Day, the president of KASA International, wrote in the December 2009 KASA News Letter:

... We are on the brink of some very exciting possibilities because of the vision to develop a relationship with Lushan to open the old KAS campus, which in turn has led to the signing of MOU's with the Lushan Administration and Jiujiang University to form the "Lushan Institute."

As you may know, during the course of this past summer, I hosted delegations from both Jiujiang University and Lushan in Seattle. Elsa Porter hosted the Lushan Delegation in Portland as well. Our timing in history could not be better. There has been a very exciting development on the world stage of US - China relations that may be of great consequence for our development of the Lushan Institute. Here is a quote from the Chronicle of Higher Education, November 18, 2009:

Obama Pledges to Send 100,000 Students to China in the Next 4 Years

President Obama pledged to send 100,000 students to China over the next four years. How he plans to do that, though, remains to be determined. In a U.S.-China joint statement, the White House noted that nearly 100,000 Chinese students come to the United States each year, while the United States sends about 20,000 students to China. A State Department spokesman explained the initiative by saying that "China will have a much more important voice in world affairs in the coming years, and we need more Americans who can speak the language, who understand China, and who can do business more effectively with the Chinese." He did not have any information on how the program would be structured or which agency would run it, saying that such details would be announced "at a later date."