

## FILM REVIEW

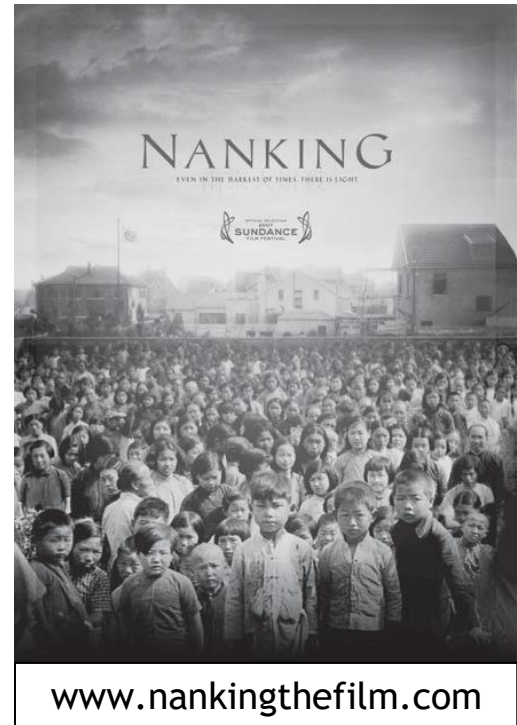
# Nanking

–A Documentary Film

By Walter Ko

The documentary Nanking was about a massacre in far away China in World War II. In July 7 1937, Japan waged a full-scale invasion in Peking (Beijing) then Shanghai and Nanking. They dreamt of brutalizing Chinese people into surrender within three months with bombing, looting and killing. A group of westerners, despite evacuation order from their own government, determined to stay with the citizens in the fall of Nanking, then the Chinese capital. They set up the Safety Zone as a neutral sanctuary for the refugees. This team included John Magee, Lewis Smyth, George Fitch, Bob Wilson, Minnie Vautrin, Mills McCallum, Miner Searle Bates and John Rabe.

This documentary started with this background and setting. The film emphasizes that it is not anti-Japanese but brings out the truth. It started with the busy metro Nanking before invasion. Japanese soldiers made the infamous The Rape of Nanking lasting more than six weeks with 350,000 innocent men, women and children massacred and an estimate of 80,000 women raped after they occupied the City on December 13. Audiences would have a comprehensive impression in the cruelty of such magnitude on the bloodthirst invaders in a compact 89 minutes. The testimonials are composed of the eyewitness account in letters and diaries of the westerners, missionaries, professors, medical doctor, businessmen, Chinese colleagues, Japanese soldiers and Chinese survivors inter-connected with vintage footage. Fitch, Rabe, Dr Wilson and Vautrin gave a fair share of elaborate account. The Chinese survivors, in their senior years, broke into tears in recollecting the rape and killing horror so devastating even after seventy years.



Minnie Vautrin, the only woman International Team risked her life by using her campus to help protect more than ten thousand women and children from Japanese brutality. The grateful survivors fondly honored her as Goddess of Mercy. She survived the war, but was a victim of Nanking Massacre. Dr Wilson and his team in the foreigner-run hospital cared for the bayoneted, burnt, sword cut, rape victims with the powerful record by Rev. John Magee in his Bell & Howell movie camera. His testimonial was brief but his courage and footage were powerful and strong throughout in support of the teams' testimonial. However, Magee's contribution was not emphasized enough as his film was the only moving evidence and he testified at the Tokyo War Crime Trial.

This documentary will no doubt attract worldwide attention. It will confront Japanese right-wingers and other high ranking officials who systemically in the past twenty years, whitewash, distort and even deny Nanking Massacre, the notorious Japanese war crime against humanity. The film showed the die-hards with the Prime minister visiting Yasukuni Shrine where housed the Tokyo Trial convicted and executed Class A war criminals. It was a dangerous attempt to resurrect militarism.

This December will be 70th Anniversary Commemoration of Nanking Massacre. However, the perpetrators show no remorse. This film honored the bravery of westerners and remembers the victims. It would affirm friendship if it included how the Chinese people remembered this team in a meaningful gratitude. In May 2001, a group of Chinese Americans, Chinese-Canadians, Japanese went to Shepherd, Michigan to hold the 60th Anniversary Commemoration of Minnie Vautrin's death with a church service and a gravesite visit, officiated by Dr. Robert Bates, son of M.S. Bates. I had the honor of reading on behalf of citizens of Nanking their appreciation letter.

Dr Hua-ling Hu, author of *The American Goddess of Mercy* – the courage of Minnie Vautrin at the Rape of Nanking made a book dedication by her “Ginling Forever” tombstone in Chinese decorated with a thousand red roses donated by a Chicago Chinese-American. In 2003, Dr Hu and a group of friends set up a Minnie Vautrin scholarship fund to carry on her mission of educating Chinese women. In December of the same year, a bronze bust was dedicated in Ginling Campus for this remarkable American woman educator. On September 27 2004, City of Overland, City of St Louis, Missouri Legislature proclaimed it as Ginling Forever, Minnie Vautrin Day followed by Illinois Governor Blagojevich in 2005 and California Congressman Mike Honda in 2006 who recommended her with a Congressional Resolution in Capitol Hill, a meaningful and significant 120 year birthday gift.

Rev. John Magee had special calling for Nanking. Born in the City, his son David spent his childhood there. He kept his father's camera and the documentary film. With my facilitation and coordination with City of Nanking, in October 2002, David and his wife Frances made a camera donation trip to Nanking for historical truth and evidence. He was excited to visit his hometown and his father's former church, now a middle school, well preserved and restored. The library was dedicated to Rev. John Magee with a wide coverage official ribbon-cutting ceremony. The film would be complete if it includes the Chinese thanksgiving and appreciation, Ted Leonsis was the producer of this film. Touched by the tragic untimely death of Iris Chang, author of *Rape of Nanking*, he determined to help tell the story.

The devil turned Nanking into a burning hell and the angels stood up to protect and save. These angels were the models to admire and transpire. This film not only glorifies humanitarianism and internationalism but also remembers the perished victims. The team of angels including Iris Chang would have a front row seat, smiling at the recognition. The victims would find comfort, understanding that Americans stand up again to testify for their dignity and justice. From this powerful documentary, we witness the Tao of love over violence, courage over cruelty, liberty over horror, light over dark, truth over lie. This documentary keeps the world vigilant so that the perpetrators will remorse with attrition and people of peace with justice will work together to prevent this kind of crime against humanity from happening again.

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*Walter Ko was born in China and grew up in Hong Kong. He came to America in 1973 and graduated from the University of Missouri at Rolla and the Central Missouri State University. Mr. Ko is a board member of this magazine.*