



**Name in English:** Sam Chu Lin  
**Name in Chinese:** 赵帝恩 [赵帝恩]  
**Name in Pinyin:** Zhào dì'ēn  
**Gender:** Male  
**Birth Year:** 1939-2006  
**Birth Place:** Greenville, Mississippi  
**Philanthropy:**

**Profession (s):** Television and Radio Reporter, Journalist

**Education:** B.A., Journalism, Communications, Michigan State University

**Award(s):** National Headliner Award for the television documentary “Chu Lin in an Old American Name”; the Golden Mike Award; Community Achievement Award from the Los Angeles chapter of the Organization of Chinese Americans; Lifetime Achievement Award from the Asian American Journalists Association; 2005, Spirit of America Award, Chinese American Citizens Alliance. He also won numerous awards from the Associated Press, United Press International, the Los Angeles Press Club, and the Radio and Television News Association.

**Contribution(s):** Sam Chu Lin led the way for Chinese Americans in broadcast journalism, being one of only three Asian Americans. More importantly he was one of the first journalists who forced his way into the consciousness of many Americans as a highly visible Chinese American appearing on both the national and international news. He first hosted a radio show in 1956 in his Mississippi hometown after convincing sponsors to support him. In the 1960s, he first reached a national audience working for CBS News in New York and began to appear on national radio and television broadcasts. Over his forty year career, he worked for all four major broadcast networks and was a frequent contributor to numerous Asian American magazines, as well as mainstream newspapers like the San Francisco Chronicle and Los Angeles Times.

Sam Chu Lin was the first CBS reporter to broadcast nationally the news about the fall of Saigon and the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. Lin also fought to produce documentaries about Asian Americans including a program on ABC titled “Asian American-When Your Neighbor Looks Like the Enemy.”

Sam Chu Lin believed that journalism should be educational, and that “informing and helping others is what makes journalism exciting.” He felt that journalism was a “chance to use your roots for a positive purpose.” US Secretary of Transportation and former Congressman Norman Mineta said, “Throughout his career, Sam stood strong against discrimination and helped break down negative stereotypes, all the while conducting himself with a great amount of integrity, credibility, and enthusiasm. Sam was proud of his Chinese American heritage. He wasn't shy about using his roots to make the entire Asian American community, and indeed the world, a better place, and today thanks in part to

Sam, doors and minds that were once shut to Asian Americans are now open and accepting."

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### **ASIANCONNECTIONS ARTICLE**

#### **Sam Chu Lin, Asian American Broadcast Pioneer, Dies special from Nichibei Times Weekly**

March 13, 2006

by: AsianConnections

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He was an Asian American face on broadcast news decades before it was en vogue, a tireless journalist dedicated to getting Asian American stories broadcast, and a multi-dimensional newsman without peer.

On Sunday, March 5, 2006, the unmistakable voice went silent, as Asian American broadcast pioneer Sam Chu Lin died suddenly in Burbank, Calif. He was 67.

"Its quite a shock for everyone," said his widow Judy.

From coast to coast, news of Chu Lin's unexpected death sent shockwaves.

Both U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta and Congressman Mike Honda (D-San Jose) called Chu Lin a journalism pioneer.

"Throughout his career, Sam stood strong against discrimination and helped break down negative stereotypes, all the while conducting himself with a great amount of integrity, credibility, and enthusiasm," said Mineta, a former San Jose congressman and mayor, in a statement.

"Sam was proud of his Chinese American heritage. He wasn't shy about using his roots to make the entire Asian American community, and indeed the world, a better place," Mineta added. "And today thanks in part to Sam, doors and minds that were once shut to Asian Americans are now open and accepting."

Mineta went on to call Chu Lin a "committed journalist and consummate professional."

"And he was a kind, loyal, and generous person," Mineta added. "He is someone whom I was lucky to call a peer, but even more blessed to call a friend."

Chu Lin wrote stories that documented the careers of Mineta and Honda.

Honda called him \"one of the giants of Asian American journalism\" and a \"dear friend.\"

\"His life was one of endless commitment to truth-seeking and justice for all Americans, but especially for his brothers and sisters in the Asian American community,\" said Honda in a statement.

\"His advocacy on behalf of civil rights and justice for Asian Americans continued to the day he died,\" Honda added. \"It was Sam's interview with Senator John McCain that enlightened the senator to the plight of citizenship denial for Asian American Civil War veterans. And it was Sam Chu Lin's coverage at the critical junctures of Dr. Wen Ho Lee, Captain James Yee and Captain James Wang's careers that kept the Asian Pacific civil rights community rallying to their defense.\"

Honda called Chu Lin a \"visionary\" for working to educate others in the news business about Asian American issues.

\"He once convinced ABC's Nightline to do a program called \"Asian American\" When Your Neighbor Looks Like the Enemy,\" recalled Honda. After doing so, he helped book the guest, checked the script for accuracy, and found historical footage for broadcast.\"

Honda said Chu Lin went on to spend the entire year educating the executive producer about how Asian Americans have been unfairly stereotyped because of the campaign fundraising and spy scandals.

\"His humbleness belied his accomplishments,\" Honda continued. \"In spite of his accomplishments, he never lost the value of humility or the heartfelt treasure of friendship.\"

\"He was my dear friend and mentor,\" Honda said. \"My heart goes out to his wife, Judy, and his sons, Mark and Christopher. His absence in my life and in the Asian community is irreplaceable.\"

But his body of work will live on and inspire generations of aspiring young Asian Americans to dream big dreams, and then go on to realize them.

Sam Chu Lin was born and raised in the Mississippi Delta town of Greenville, about 105 miles north of Memphis, Tenn., and graduated with a communications degree from Michigan State University. Before entering broadcast journalism, he was a school teacher.

\"I learned early on in my life that I have a love for history,\" said Chu Lin, in receiving an award at the Chinese American Citizens Alliance last August. \"Instead of just reading about it, I wanted to witness such events and finally I became a reporter. This was long before there was affirmative action. And there were only a few, if any, Asian Americans in this business.\"

While he was at CBS News based in New York City, Chu Lin went on television live as a reporter and announced to the country the Fall of Saigon, essentially the end of the Vietnam War.

He has been awarded the National Headliners Award for Best Documentary, the Golden Mike, Associated Press, United Press International and the Los Angeles Press Club awards for his coverage of breaking news.

Most recently, he was recognized with a Community Achievement Award by the Los Angeles chapter of the Organization of Chinese Americans.

"During the 2005 Image Awards, the OCA-Greater Los Angeles (OCA-GLA) chapter was very proud to honor Sam Chu Lin with a community service award," said Stacey Ann Fong Toda, OCA-GLA president. "He was never afraid of being pigeonholed as a reporter who could only cover the Asian American community. OCA-GLA is extremely grateful that we had an opportunity to thank Mr. Lin publicly for being the Asian American community's voice in journalism."

While working as a general assignment reporter, Chu Lin also developed a special expertise in dealing with Asian and Asian Pacific American topics. He was often heard on the national weekly radio news magazine, "Pacific Time," produced by KQED in San Francisco, which is also broadcast in Hawai'i, Hong Kong and dozens of other markets.

In Los Angeles, he regularly reported for KTTV Fox News 11.

He was also a contributor to several Asian American community publications. Chu Lin's articles regularly appeared in the pages of the Nichi Bei Times, the Rafu Shimpo and Asian Week. He has also been published in the Los Angeles Times, San Francisco Examiner, among others.

Former TV news broadcaster Chris Chow, who came onto the Bay Area news scene in November of 1970 shortly after Chu Lin was taken aback by the news of his death. He said it is a "tremendous loss."

"Sam was a great storyteller," Chow remembered. "He was an educator. He wanted to change the world."

Chow, himself an early broadcaster on Bay Area CBS affiliate KPIX, said Chu Lin had the "longest continuous career" out of Asian American broadcasters. And while technically a rival, Chow said he looked up to Chu Lin.

"In retrospect, I couldn't hold a candle to him," Chow said.

According to Chow, Chu Lin's career hit a sour note when, at the urging of his union, Chu Lin became the plaintiff in a suit against his employer at the time, KRON-TV. As a result, he lost his job and was public enemy No. 1 in the world of Bay Area TV news.

"He had to commute to LA because he was blacklisted in the Bay Area," said Chow, who said he was essentially told that he would never work in the town again. He was hurt deeply by what happened there."

He found a home at Fox 11 News in Los Angeles, where he would fly down to work at on weekends.

A colleague there, weekend anchor Susan Hirasuna, spoke about him with respect.

"I admire the fact that he was so dedicated to getting Asian names and faces out in the public eye," said Hirasuna, who noted that Chu Lin would encourage news directors at the station to allow him to do stories on Asian Americans.

"He was so dedicated to the field of journalism, and more specifically ethnic journalism," she added.

Chu Lin also found a home away from home at the offices of Rafu Shimpo, a Japanese American bilingual newspaper based in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo District. He would start contributing articles to the paper in the 1990s.

"When it was like elections or politics, it was like the Sam Chu Lin page," recalled Naomi Hirahara, who served as Rafu's English Section Editor from 1990 to 1996 and is now an author.

"He was very underrated," Hirahara said. "People didn't realize that he did have to break a lot of stereotypes. Especially in his day, he had to be more assertive."

"He was so curious," she remembered. "Wherever he went, he looked for stories."

It was Hirahara who established the contributing writer relationship with Chu Lin.

"He would just sit there (at the Rafu office) and pontificate," she said. Sometimes he would sometimes ask very personal questions, much like an uncle, she said.

Chu Lin was at Hirahara's wedding, and ended up being a sort of an emcee. "I really adored Sam," she said. "He was a total character."

"He paved the way for a whole lot of others who came on after," said Takeshi Nakayama, a long-time Rafu staff member who left the paper in 2001. "He opened up the doors for a lot of Asians to go into broadcast journalism."

Nakayama called Chu Lin 'tireless' and 'ubiquitous', saying 'no story was too big or too small for him to cover'.

Nakayama recalled Chu Lin wanted to write a book on the Chinese contributions to Mississippi.

\ "I think Sam was such a great mentor to so many Asian American journalists,\ "said current Rafu English Section Editor Gwen Muranaka, who fondly remembered that he took time out to mention the Rafu and other ethnic publications in his OCA acceptance speech last fall.

Chu Lin was often misunderstood, said friends.

\ "A lot of people thought Sam was difficult to work with,\ " said Chow. \ "A lot of people misunderstood him. They thought he was arrogant.\ "

However, Chow indicated that it was Chu Lin\'s drive for professionalism that perhaps gave people that misperception.

\ "Sam was really great at getting people to hone their message for mass media,\ " said Chow, who noted that Chu Lin did a lot of things \ 'behind the scenes\ ' to help Asian Americans.

\ "He gave freely because he believed that with information and knowledge, people would be liberated.\ "

It is that altruistic nature that many remember fondly.

\ "Sam is the type who just wants to help everybody,\ " said his widow Judy. \ "He wants things to be equal; to be fair.\ "

Some of those the reporter helped were the creators of one of the most recognizable superheroes, Superman.

\ "I will never forget visiting the shabby apartment of Joe Shuster, who first drew Superman,\ " Chu Lin said in his CACA speech.

He said Shuster and writer Joel Siegel sold their creation for \ 'a measly \$125.\ '

The two men, he said, became destitute while their work earned \ 'tens of millions of dollars\ ' each year.

They had fought unsuccessfully for years in the courts to get something in return, Chu Lin said.

\ "A CBS News producer and I persuaded Walter Cronkite this was a story that needed to be told,\ " Chu Lin said. \ "At first the Superman people wouldn\ 't cooperate, fearful negative publicity would impact their stock. Then they abruptly changed their minds.\ "

Chu Lin was among those invited to a special ceremony, where Shuster and Siegel were presented with retirement benefits and were told their bylines would be restored.

Chu Lin is survived by his wife, Judy, and two sons, Mark and Christopher.