



李嘉

LEE CHIA

a journalist's life



IN MEMORIUM

By Topaz and Victor Lee

Biography of Lee Chia

1918 - 1998



**... Author, journalist, war correspondent, columnist, poet, scholar
of Chinese and Japanese literature & history, international food and wine gourmand.**

AS one of the most well known Chinese correspondents in Asia, Lee's articles, columns and books were widely read for almost a half-century. His coverage ranged from chess tournaments to the art of drinking sake, from international politics to war. He was known for his quick wit and sense of humor. As an expert on Chinese and Japanese current affairs, Lee was a popular television commentator and political analyst in Japan, where he resided for most of his career.

AS Tokyo bureau chief for the Central News Agency of China (Taiwan) from 1947 to 1983, Lee covered major international events during his long career as a foreign correspondent. Among them, the surrender and occupation of Japan; the Tokyo war crimes trial; the Korean war and armistice and Japan's political and economic evolution from a vanquished nation to a superpower.

Lee's assignments took him around the world. They included: Israel's Six Day war against Egypt and its Arab allies in 1969; the U.N. Decision to withdraw its recognition of Taiwan in 1971 and Ronald Reagan's presidential inauguration in 1980.

The son of a mandarin family, Lee was born in Soochow, China in 1918. His father was a prominent lawyer who took pride in his vast library of both Chinese and English classics. By the time, Lee was admitted into a missionary elementary boarding school in Shanghai, he was already speaking English fluently, having read many of his father's books at home. In high school, Lee studied

Japanese as a second language. While in school, he developed a love for poetry and essay writing.

Lee attended Shanghai University and joined the growing student activist movement eventually dropping out in 1936. His parents then sent him to Japan to study. Lee was admitted to Daiichi Koko, the most prestigious college prep school in Japan, and then to the exclusive Tokyo Imperial University.

In 1937 when war broke out between China and Japan, Lee left Tokyo with hundreds of other patriotic Chinese students and returned to the mainland to join the Chinese Nationalist army. Lee however, did more writing than shooting as a soldier.

He was assigned to a military newspaper as a reporter. After a while, he left the army and became a freelance poet and writer, contributing to several major papers in China. He eventually started a monthly literary magazine in Chungking, China's provisional capital, and also served as the impresario for the Chinese philharmonic orchestra shortly after its inception.

In 1942 during World War II, Lee married Chiang-yong (Topaz), a music student in Chungking. A year later, he wrote and staged "Akiko," the first western opera in China. It was an instant hit.

That same year in 1943, the British army, which had an acute shortage of officers proficient in the Japanese language, recruited Lee. Since he knew not only Japanese but Chinese and English, the British instantly offered him a position as a civilian intelligence officer with the rank of Major. Lee served with the allied armed forces in India until the end of the war.

After the war ended in 1946, Lee returned to China to work again as a journalist. A year later, he found himself back in Tokyo, this time as a correspondent for the central news agency of China (C.N.A), the Republic of China's (R.O.C.) Government wire service. Soon after, Lee became the Tokyo bureau chief, a position he would assume until his retirement 36 years later.

In 1950 when the Korean war broke out, Lee and other Tokyo-based foreign correspondents were immediately dispatched to Seoul. As the story goes, Lee gained notoriety as the first of his colleagues

to cross the 38th parallel during battle along the Yalu river. While on a break in the action, he received an urgent message from his superiors reminding him that, "a dead correspondent is not a good correspondent."

During his many years in Japan, Lee was active in the foreign correspondents club of Japan, where he was elected club president in 1963-64. Lee also served as club treasurer in 1980, continuing in that position for a record eight more years.

In 1980, Lee was assigned temporarily to Houston, Texas. During that year, the governors of Tennessee, Kentucky and Arkansas awarded him honorary state citizenships.

Lee retired from C.N.A. in 1985, but continued freelancing as a columnist for several papers in Taiwan and Hong Kong. In 1991, he and his wife Topaz immigrated to Portland, Oregon. He became an American citizen. In 1996 he died from cancer at the Age of 81.

Lee Chia was a man of many interests. He loved traveling, music, the arts, food and wine. Most of all, Lee loved to read. His house was filled with hundreds of books, classics and contemporary, written in Japanese, Chinese and English.

Books are part of his legacy, a good portion of which his wife Topaz Chiang-yong and his son Victor donated to the Knight Library of the University of Oregon.

Just as his father's books planted the seed of adventure in a young Lee Chia ... It is his family's hope that his books, available from the University of Oregon Library, will inspire young journalists to discover new worlds and peoples.



PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION



(UNDATED) -- From Left to Right: John Rich (NBC News), Ernie Hoberecht (UPI), Max Desfer (AP), and Lee Chia of Central News Agency of China (CNA) during a reunion in Washington, D.C. of Korean War foreign correspondents.



(1964) -- Lee, Chia, then President of the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan with Japanese Finance Minister Kakuei Tanaka, who would later become Prime Minister of Japan.



(1951) -- Lee Chia, Third from left, Posing with Other War Correspondents and South Korean Officers During the Korean War



(1963) -- Lee Chia, then President of the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan at a Luncheon Hosted by the FCCJ for Philippine President Diosdado Macapagal.



(1977) -- Lee Chia on Assignment with Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda.



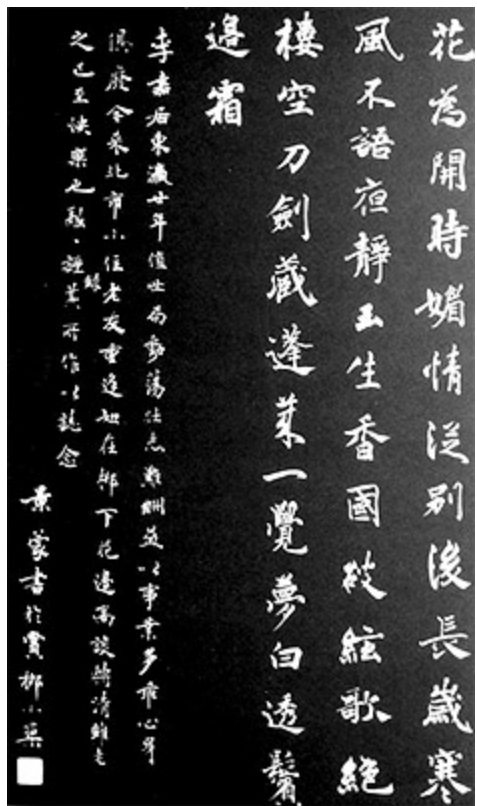
(1979) -- Lee Chia and Wife Topaz at a Cocktail Reception Hosted by Greek Prime Minister Karamenski During an International Press Institute (IPI) Convention in Athens.



(1984) -- Lee Chia and Wife Topaz at a Reception Hosted by the King and Queen of Spain During an International Press Institute Convention in Madrid.



(UNDATED) -- From Left to Right, the Late Taiwan President Yen Chia Kan, Lee Chia and Japanese Nobel Prize Winner Kawabata During an International Pen Club Convention in Taipei, Taiwan.



UNDATED) -- Lee Chia's Poetry Written in the Mid-1960's. Calligraphy by His Good Friend Jimmy Wei, R.O.C. Minister of Information.





