

**Gulfcoast Chinese-American Association (GCAA) Newsletter  
Jan-Feb Issue 2007 (release date Jan 5, 2007)**

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Please note: if you feel you should be on our email list and for some reason are not receiving this newsletter and other GCAA notices, please help us amend our database by sending an email to [elin@ingenious.com](mailto:elin@ingenious.com) with copy to Dr. Kevin Hu at [cunkuohu@yahoo.com](mailto:cunkuohu@yahoo.com) and Helen Pollak at [hwpollak@comcast.net](mailto:hwpollak@comcast.net). Thank you.  
To unsubscribe, see instructions at end of newsletter.

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The GCAA Newsletter is sponsored in part by  
J&K Kitchen & Bath, 4141 Tamiami Trail S.  
Sarasota, FL 34231 Phone: (941) 922-6981 Mobile: 646-831-8181  
The new owners, Mr. KongBiao Ni and Ms. JinXing Yang, will start their business in the first week of January 2007 and warmly welcomes GCAA members and friends with a 20% discount. If you are planning a remodeling or building a custom home, put J&K to work for you. They are also hiring sales staff. If you are a good salesperson and have computer skills, please call Ms. Yang as soon as possible.

GCAA extends a hearty welcome to Mr. Ni and Ms. Yang and wishes them success.  
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**1. URGENT NOTICES: =====**

Please become a volunteer and help make GCAA even better. We have a volunteers meeting on Sunday, January 7 at 4:30P at Grand China Buffet (Bee Ridge & Cattlemen in Sarasota) to discuss planning for the Asolo Gala and our biggest annual event: Chinese New Year Celebration. You association needs YOU! Please do your part and come meet other members who believe in making a positive difference for our community. Thank you!

**2. MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT =====**

## **“ALMOST IS NOT ENOUGH”**

Dear GCAA families and friends,

Once upon a time, near the outskirts of a village, the people discovered a special tree that had sprung up on the slope of a hill. It was identified as a tree that needs regular care, irrigation and fertilization, but bears nutritious fruits and its leaves and bark have good medicinal value. Everyone was glad and soon started to enjoy its many benefits. Everyone also thought others must be tending to this tree because, surely in a whole village, there must be enough people willing to fetching water and applying fertilizer on a regular basis!

Unfortunately only a few people actually did. Some got weary and overworked and could not continue. Few villagers noticed. After a period of time, the tree died.

Does this analogy have a familiar ring? Many times in my life (more than I can be proud to admit) I have heard of or come across good causes worthy of my support (whether it is 80-20 Initiative, Habitat for Humanity, Doctors Without Borders or NPR) and I ALMOST took action.

ALMOST.

And nothing happened until I actually did something about it. . I had hoped to get this column out well before the New Year arrived, and each time, I ALMOST succeeded as I wrestled with juggling my many existing commitments and how best to convey a special message to each one of you, my friends. As days went by, New Year arrived and came.

If our annual CNY & MAF events ALMOST got organized, and ALMOST took place,  
If our bimonthly newsletter ALMOST got published,  
If our small team of dedicated volunteers and board members ALMOST did what their hearts tell them to do...  
Would it ALMOST satisfy us and meet our needs?

Our community cannot reach its potential—nor remain as good as it is—if apathy is allowed to fester. .

Just do nothing and apathy spreads everywhere like a contagious disease.  
Just do nothing and what you take for granted may no longer be there tomorrow.

This New Year, I hope you include in your resolutions to be proactively involved.  
Watch this heartwarming video on the Youngest Grocer in America:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XF8nRC6-YAU&mode=user&search=>

### **How we all can make a difference.**

One thought can spark a movement,  
One tree can start a forest,  
One bird can herald spring.  
One smile begins a friendship,  
One handclasp lifts a soul.  
One star can guide a ship at sea,  
One vote can change a nation,  
One candle can wipe out darkness,  
One step must start each journey,

One person can make the difference,  
And that person is YOU!

The question each of us must answer, deep in our conscience, is not whether we can afford to be involved, but rather whether we can afford **NOT** to.

We all want a better world for ourselves and our future generation. If we want our children to grow up courageous and face up to challenges, then WE must teach and lead by example! Let's walk that talk, put our dreams into action, AND DO WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE IT COME TRUE.

When you see your fellow GCAA volunteers, committee chairs, officers and Board of Directors, help their spirits soar by asking, "What can I do to be of help?" We'll all grow together, as individuals and as a vibrant organization. Thank you!

*Ed*

Dr. Edward Lin  
President, GCAA  
Encourage Inspire Empower

*"You must be the change you wish to see in the world" Mahatma Gandhi*

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The GCAA Newsletter is sponsored in part by Anthony Olson, PA, 2020 Cattlemen Rd., Suite 100 Sarasota, FL 34232 Phone: (941) 362-7100, and in N. Ft. Myers, FL. (239) 332-4545  
Visit <http://www.immigrationvisausa.com/VisaOptn.html> for helpful Q&A about visa options.

Anthony Olson, P.A., specializes in Immigration Law. "Our relationship with our clients is built on trust, and on the understanding that their desire to make America their new home, deserves our full attention and our best effort in helping them realize their goal of living and working in the United States.

Our firm practices business immigration law, as well as employment-based and family-based immigration law. We can assist you in getting settled in any U.S. state, and help you form your U.S. corporation in the state of your choice."

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### **3. Who to contact about what within GCAA =====**

#### **Matters relating to GCAA Programs:**

Dr. Xueji Zhang [zxj001us@yahoo.com](mailto:zxj001us@yahoo.com) 941- 926-3273  
Valentina Pippin [mvp@comcast.net](mailto:mvp@comcast.net)  
Cheyenne Wu [cheyenne@theblueexchange.com](mailto:cheyenne@theblueexchange.com) (941) 921-4205

#### **Matters relating to membership and how to join**

Dr. Kevin Hu [cunkuohu@yahoo.com](mailto:cunkuohu@yahoo.com) (941) 923-3712  
Dr. Henry Zhu [hexiangzhu@hotmail.com](mailto:hexiangzhu@hotmail.com) (941) 758-2051

#### **Matters relating to monthly socials and Speaker Events**

Helen Pollak [hwpollak@comcast.net](mailto:hwpollak@comcast.net) (941) 929-9266

**GCAA website**

WebMaster: Barry Zhang [bzhang@comcast.net](mailto:bzhang@comcast.net)  
Asst WebMaster: Troy Lim [troyhlim@gmail.com](mailto:troyhlim@gmail.com)  
Asst. WebMaster Becky Culp [becky@pelicani.com](mailto:becky@pelicani.com)  
Asst. WebMaster John Zhu [juntaozhu15@yahoo.com](mailto:juntaozhu15@yahoo.com)

#### **Sarasota Chinese Academy [Chinese Language School]**

Principal: Jinbo Ying ([best\\_ck9103@yahoo.com](mailto:best_ck9103@yahoo.com)) (941) 966-4355.

#### **Other issues:**

Dr. Edward Lin [elin@ingenious.com](mailto:elin@ingenious.com) (941) 966-0890

#### **4. Programs Committee Report =====**

**We have a volunteers meeting this Sunday, Nov 5 at 4:30P at Grand China Buffet (Bee Ridge & Cattlemen in Sarasota) to discuss planning for the Asolo Feb 3 Gala, and our biggest annual event: Chinese New Year Celebration on February 18. Please come and help with your suggestions and team spirit. Thank you.**

**[Asolo Repertory Theater Gala,](http://asologala.com/)** February 3, 2007 See <http://asologala.com/>

Calling all children, live-arts performers and musicians!!! Saturday, 6:00 p.m., February 3, 2007 at the Ritz Carlton, Sarasota.

The GCAA has been contacted by the Asolo Repertory Theater to join their Celebrating a New Dynasty, Chinese New Year Gala at the Ritz Carlton, Sarasota. Everyone interested are invited to perform along the entrance to the ballroom as guests enter the ballroom. Non-GCAA members are also welcome. We expect this to be a fun event and a great opportunity to expose budding talents and showcase the rich traditions of Chinese Culture. In return for our participation, Asolo will make a donation to benefit GCAA.

The Sarasota Chinese Academy has been gracious to consider the Asolo gala event as a dress rehearsal for GCAA's Chinese New Years celebration. Children from the school will perform at both functions. We also encourage individual responses from Families with Children from China (FWCC), especially young kids who love to perform. No special training required. Remember, the cuteness factor goes a long way! Let's build some goodwill out there and show everyone what the Chinese culture is all about!

Participants are asked to arrive at the hotel at around 5:30 p.m. We will inform everyone as soon as we get more details such as gathering room assignment. Please wear traditional Chinese costume if you have one. Contact Valentina Pippin at 308-6474; [valentina.pippin@skysothebys.com](mailto:valentina.pippin@skysothebys.com) or Cheyenne Wu at 921-4205; [Cheyenne@TheBlueExchange.com](mailto:Cheyenne@TheBlueExchange.com) if you would like to participate. Let us know ahead of time if you have any specific requirement for your performance so that we may arrange it ahead of time.

**[GCAA Chinese New Year 2007 \(CNY07\) Celebration](#)** February 18, 2007

Here's to the Year of the Boar!!! This year the Gulfcoast Chinese-American Association (GCAA) will celebrate its annual Chinese New Year festivities on **February 18, 2007**. The event to be held at the Grace United Methodist Church in Venice features live performers. This year's highlights include martial arts and the traditional Lion Dance to be performed by Tang Martial Arts. Students from the Sarasota Chinese Academy will perform various Chinese songs and dances. Anyone who would like to share their on-stage talents is welcome to participate. Please contact Valentina Pippin or Cheyenne Wu, Co-chairs of the GCAA Program Committee as soon as possible. After the performance, ticketed members, guests and non-members are invited to a sumptuous Chinese buffet dinner at the Marco Polo International Buffet and Grill.

Please send your prepayment checks to Nancy Cao, GCAA Treasurer, 3839 Bellewater Blvd Riverview, FL 33569 no later than February 9, 2007. **Attendance is limited to 350 persons, so hurry!** Last year, the event sold out well ahead of time, so to avoid disappointment, don't wait!

Receive your member-discounted admission tickets by sending in your membership renewal at the same time. See fee schedule below. Your 2007 Chinese New Year ticket **will be mailed to you** prior to the festivities, **provided** correct fee amount is mailed in by the 2/9/07 deadline. Please be sure to bring the tickets with you to the event.

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**Year of the Boar Chinese New Year (CNY07) Celebration**  
**February 18, 2007      Mark your calendar and RSVP now!**

**Event:** Program and Lion Dance at Grace United Methodist Church, **FOLLOWED by**  
Buffet dinner at Marco Polo's beginning at 6:30P

**Program 3:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.**  
Grace United Methodist Church  
Fellowship Hall  
400 Field Avenue E  
Venice, FL 34285

**Dinner:** Marco Polo International Buffet and Grill 6:00 p.m.  
549 US Highway 41 Bypass N (Bird Bay Plaza, near Big Lots)  
Venice, FL 34285  
(941) 412-3988

**CNY07 Admission Fee (Including Buffet Dinner):**

GCAA Members:            \$12.50 (adult) \$7 (child age 3 to 10)  
Non-members: \$20:00 (adult); \$10 (child age 3 to 10)

**GCAA annual membership dues for 2007:**

\$25 per immediate family (2 adults and children);  
\$45 for 3-generation family (4 adults and children, including in-laws/grandparents)  
\$15 for single fulltime student

Contact: Valentina Pippin  
[Valentina.Pippin@skysothebys.com](mailto:Valentina.Pippin@skysothebys.com)  
Telephone: 941-308-6474

Or: Cheyenne Wu  
[Cheyenne@TheBlueExchange.com](mailto:Cheyenne@TheBlueExchange.com)  
Telephone: 941-921-4205

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**5. Upcoming events and attractions =====**

In its on-going efforts to serve its members, GCAA is pleased to announce the 2007 Speaker Series. This event will be held in the afternoon of the first Sunday of each month preceding the monthly dinner social. **HOWEVER, THE LOCATION IS NOT AT EITHER OF THE RESTAURANTS.** It will be held instead nearby, **from 3PM to 4PM, in the auditorium of:**

**The Faith Presbyterian Church**  
**1201 North Beneva Road (at 12th Street)**  
**Sarasota, FL 34232**  
**Map & Direction**

**Sunday February 4, 2007: Dr. Edward Lin, Founder of Ingenious Technologies Corp.** will give a talk on "My American Odyssey—Powered by Belief." Dr. Lin is a Yale-University trained anesthesiologist 麻醉学家 and inventor 发明家. He was cited in Who's Who in America and Who's Who in Science and

Engineering. In 2006, Dr. Lin was an Honoree in the Modern Marvels Invent Now Challenge, cosponsored by the National Inventors Hall of Fame, Time Magazine and the History Channel.

Dr. Lin will share his incredible personal story of coming to America at age 16. You'll have to hear it to believe it. Dr. Lin hopes to inspire you to dream the impossible, believe in yourself and put the power of positive thinking to work. Invest in your own personal empowerment by attending and bringing your family and friends. **SEATING IS LIMITED. For all Speaker engagements, please RSVP the number in your party to Ms. Helen Pollak at [hwpollak@comcast.net](mailto:hwpollak@comcast.net). This will help us in our planning. Thank you.**

**Sunday March 4, 2007: Nancy Cao, Accountant with Dowell & Perez** will give a timely talk on "How to maximize your 2006 Income Tax Returns." Benefit from Ms. Cao's excellent knowledge of the latest tax rules and laws so you can minimize your tax liability and keep as much of your hard earned dollars as possible. More details to follow.

Future Speaker topics will include an update from Dr. Carolyn Bloomer on the budding Sarasota-Xiamen Sister City relationship, consumer tips on health, life, long term care and medical insurances, financial planning, immigration and other topics sought by the general membership. Please email your suggestions for future topics to our Programs Committee.

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## **6. Volunteers needed=====**

to help with various programs of GCAA, and to take over the Editorship of the GCAA newsletter. This is your chance to develop personal growth and derive satisfaction at the same time by serving your community. Please contact Dr. Xueji Zhang, or Cheyenne Wu if you are willing to do your part. "We all can make a difference, and we must!"

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TRANSLATORS sought to translate our GCAA newsletter into Chinese so we can reach out to the Chinese in our area who have limited proficiency in English. We are not seeking to translate the entire newsletter; we can start with minimal sections (such as GCAA Good Sundays) that are important for helping maintain channels of contact and social activity. In the future when our website is up, we also will need help with translations there. Please volunteer to help. Thanks!

## **7. Notice of GCAA Good Sundays=====**

Our monthly social is held at 5:30P on the first Sunday of each month. These are not official meetings, just an opportunity to meet other families who share or are interested in Chinese friendship, culture and heritage. If you plan to attend, please RSVP the number in your party to Helen Pollak at [hwpollak@comcast.net](mailto:hwpollak@comcast.net) by Friday so the restaurant can plan space and waiters accordingly. A discount is extended to all attendees. When a major program is approaching (such as Chinese New Year), the Programs Committee and other volunteers often meet earlier, at 4:30PM, to discuss planning matters. Please join them and lend a hand. **This is YOUR association and it can become better with you being an active part of it. Thank you.**

For odd numbered months, Jan/Mar/May/July/Sept/Nov 2007, it will be at:

Grand China Buffet (Tel: 341-9868)

3969 Cattlemen Rd., Sarasota, FL 34233

At the southwest corner of I-75 (Exit 207) and Bee Ridge, between Burlington Coat Factory and Home Depot.

For even numbered months, Feb/Apr/June/Aug/Oct/Dec 2007, it will be at:

Oriental Buffet (Tel: 377-6699)

4458 Bee Ridge Rd, Sarasota (Take Exit 207 and head west for 2 mi;

turn left before MacIntosh into the plaza at the southeast intersection with McIntosh).

## 8. Kudos to our members and families =====

Don't be shy. Please let us know what's happening in your family that our community should know about. We'll all crow along.

## 9. Feature Article

### **Intestinal Bacteria Could Cause Obesity**

Hi folks,

Have you ever had the gut feeling that as infirmities creep upon us, that there is only a fat chance we'd ever be slim and trim again? Well, here's news for ya. Did you know that no matter how flabby we may appear on the outside, we have lots of Firmicutes (pronounced, "Firmie-Cuties") on the inside? Honest! Read the attached new scientific finding below.

*Ed*

US scientists have discovered that "gut microbes" - bacteria that live in our digestive tract - could be powerful clues to the cause and treatment of obesity.

This remarkable news was published in *Nature* this week and conducted at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis.

The clue lies in the relative abundance of two major families of intestinal bacteria: Firmicutes and Bacteroidetes. These make up 90 per cent of the bacteria in the gut of humans, and, coincidentally, white mice.

Researchers in the first of two parallel studies found that as obese people lose weight, the balance between the Firmicutes and the Bacteroidetes changes - the latter increasing in abundance as an overweight person gets slimmer. (It would seem that the microbes ending in "cute" are perhaps not as lovable as their name implies!).

The second study was conducted in a neighboring lab using white mice. Here, researchers discovered that the bacteria in the guts of obese white mice were more efficient at extracting calories from complex carbohydrates than the bacteria in the guts of slimmer mice.

Also, in an earlier study, they had shown that the guts of obese mice had the same depletion of Bacteroidetes as found in the guts of the obese humans.

This means that you could have two guys eating the same amount of food (i.e. consuming the same calories) each day, and doing the same amount of exercise (i.e. burning equal number of calories) but over the course of several years, one gradually gets fatter and the other stays the same. Why? Because the one who stays the same has more Bacteroidetes in his gut, extracting fewer calories from the same amount of food.

The poor guy who gets fatter has a more efficient calorie grabber in his gut, and the excess gets stored as fat - putting him at higher risk of eventually becoming obese.

Trillions of "friendly" gut bacteria digest the food we eat by breaking down complex molecules like polysaccharides (complex carbs found in fruit, vegetables and grains) into simple sugars for energy. The excess is converted to fat for longer term storage. However, these studies suggest that the simple equation (calorie value of food intake) - (energy we use) equals (the fat we store), is different for different people.

These studies form part of a growing body of research revealing fascinating new insights into what we are made of and what makes us tick.

We used to think that the human body was a collection of cells with the same DNA imprint - like a unique bar code for each person. However, within us, in our guts, lie communities of microbes that outnumber our cells by 10 to 1, and, according to the researchers behind these two studies, "they may contain 100 times more genes than our own human genome".

The researchers suggest that intestinal bacteria could become "biomarkers, mediators and potential therapeutic targets" in the fight against obesity.

***"An obesity-associated gut microbiome with increased capacity for energy harvest."***

Peter J. Turnbaugh, Ruth E. Ley, Michael A. Mahowald, Vincent Magrini, Elaine R. Mardis, and Jeffrey I. Gordon.

*Nature* 444, 1027-131 (21 December 2006) | doi:10.1038/nature05414

**9b. Solicitation for Articles and Reports =====**

If you have any news or announcements of interest or pride and relevance to the GCAA, FCC and USCPFA, please send it to [elin@ingenious.com](mailto:elin@ingenious.com). Letters to the Editor are also welcome. Thank you.

**10. Helpful Info and articles of Interest =====**

<http://www.heraldtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061209/APA/612091973>

**Science Casts Doubt on Arson Convictions**

BY ROBERT TANNER/AP NATIONAL WRITER/December 09. 2006

EAST STROUDSBURG, Pa. -- The firefighters could see the blaze flickering over the hill before they even reached the church camp.

By the time they got to the five-room cabin, it was already too late. Ji Yun Lee lay curled in a ball on the floor. Flames roared over and around her.

Her father, Han Tak Lee, sat silent, barefoot on the grass outside. The night sky above him glowed orange as electrical arcs sizzled and popped.

Investigators quickly sifted through the sooty ashes, the charred walls and floor, the melted roof and the buckled pipes and came up with an explanation: arson - and murder. Lee, they said, had killed his daughter.

The clues were everywhere. From patterns on the cabin's floor to collapsed springs on the furniture, most of the lessons taught to budding fire investigators turned up in the cabin. The local experts - the county fire marshal, a state-hired fire analyst, a chemist - spoke without hesitation that the evidence proved arson.

No one questioned their conclusion. Not the jury - not even the defense attorney disputed that the blaze was intentionally touched off with a flammable fluid.

It was a textbook case, and Lee was dealt a guilty verdict and a life sentence.

Except the textbooks were wrong. Within a few years of Lee's conviction, scientific studies smashed decades of earlier, widely accepted beliefs about how fires work and the telltale trail they leave behind.

Today, fire investigators are taught that the clues relied upon in the 1989 investigation of the cabin fire don't prove anything more than an accident.

And some of the leading U.S. experts on arson say that Lee - an immigrant who worked six days a week

to bring his wife and daughters from South Korea to America - was the victim of a horrible tragedy, not a criminal. There could be hundreds more like him, people wrongfully convicted of arson, these experts say.

Pennsylvania courts have repeatedly rejected the argument that the prosecution's case was built on bad science.

"I never killed my daughter. I never set the fire. I'm not the right person to be here," Lee, now 71 and hair going gray, says through a translator during an interview at Rockview medium-security prison in central Pennsylvania. "This is not arson. This is an accident."

A definitive count isn't possible, but the best estimate of leading fire investigators across the country is that there could be hundreds of mistaken arson prosecutions, all built on the same ideas that were uprooted more than a decade ago.

The new arson science could become the most powerful tool to reveal wrongful convictions since DNA testing began overturning rape and murder cases in 1989. So far, 186 men and one woman have been freed because of the new technology.

This isn't just about correcting the historical record. Not only are people behind bars because of faulty arson investigative techniques, others may be on their way. Critics say that some investigators, in rural counties and big cities, resist the new science and prosecute cases based on discredited methods.

"How do you know someone's guilty if you don't know a crime has been committed?" says Richard Custer, principal architect of a pivotal document on arson.

Another investigator - John J. Lentini, a widely known fire expert who has worked with national arson investigation groups to unravel the old misconceptions - has been a consultant on Lee's case, analyzing evidence and testimony.

His conclusion: "While the Commonwealth's witnesses may have believed that they were testifying truthfully, the fact is that the jury was misled by objectively false testimony."

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Things were rough for the Lee family that summer of 1989.

Han Tak and his wife, Esther Lee, had lived apart seven years while he got his start in the United States. She and their two girls stayed in Seoul.

Now the family was together in New York City and tension was high.

There were long hours at the Lees' clothing store on Seventh Avenue near Madison Square Garden, where all the family worked. And Han Tak was too strict with the girls - too traditional, too many rules, Esther recalls as she traces the journey of her troubled marriage.

Worst of all, Ji Yun, 20 and the oldest child, was ill again after a few years of calm.

Manic depression had surfaced a year or so after they immigrated. Medication had helped, so well that she got into a prestigious art college to paint, but things were unraveling again.

"She didn't eat. She didn't sleep. She couldn't be still," says Esther, sitting in her quiet apartment in Fort Lee, N.J. A painting by Ji Yun - flowers, a blur of purple, white and green - sits next to the lone couch. "I was exhausted."

Their Pentecostal pastor thought prayer might help. It seemed like a respite: a trip out to the countryside, hours from the city, a quiet, cool retreat with preachers and prayer.

So Lee woke early on that summer Saturday and father and daughter set off. They drove across the bridges out of New York, out on the interstate to rural Pennsylvania, to the church camp and its small, wooden cabins. And they prayed, with one and then two pastors, until the wee hours of the morning.

That's when everything went much, much worse.

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Up until the 1990s, this is what fire investigators were taught:

- Fires always burn up, not down.
- Fires that burn very fast are fueled by accelerants; "normal" fires burn slowly.
- Arsons fueled by accelerants burn hotter than "normal" fires.
- The clues to arson are clear. Burn holes on the floor indicate multiple points of origin. Finely cracked glass (called "crazed glass") proves a hotter-than-normal fire. So does the collapse of the springs in bedding or furniture, and the appearance of large blisters on charred wood, known as "alligatoring."

Firefighters and investigators arrived at these conclusions through decades of observation. But those beliefs had never been given close scientific scrutiny, until an effort that began in the 1970s and continued through the 1980s.

"There were a lot of rules of thumb, but very little scientific understanding," said Jonathan Barnett, a professor of fire protection engineering at Worcester Polytechnic Institute and a leader in the investigation of the World Trade Center collapse.

Once researchers began to apply the scientific method to beliefs about fire, they fell apart.

A major revelation came from greater understanding of a phenomenon known as "flashover." When a fire burns inside a structure, it sends heat and gases to the ceiling until it reaches a certain temperature - and then in a critical transition, everything combustible in that space will catch fire. Instead of a fire in a room, now there is a room on fire.

When that happens, it can leave any number of signs that investigators earlier thought meant arson - like the burn holes on the floor that used to prove multiple starting points. And it can cause a fire to burn down from the ceiling - not up as investigators had been taught.

Significantly, flashover can create very hot and very fast-moving fires. And it can occur within just a few minutes, dashing the concept that only arson fires fueled by accelerants can quickly rage out of control.

And the crazed glass? It comes from water being sprayed on hot glass, not a hot fire. The collapse of bed springs and the "alligatoring" - they can't say anything definitive about a fire's cause.

The studies began to chip away at the old beliefs - critics call them myths - but it took years. Through the 1980s, texts at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Md., still taught the traditional techniques.

It wasn't until 1992, when a guide to fire investigations by the National Fire Protection Association - "NFPA921: Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations" - clearly laid out, in a document relied upon by authorities nationwide, that the earlier beliefs were wrong.

"It's not that they're bad investigators or there's been any conspiracy to promulgate erroneous conclusions - it's just the way it was," says Custer, the former associate director of the national Fire Research Laboratory and one of the principal editors of the 1992 guide.

"How many years did we think the Earth was flat?"

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In the calm, cool hours before daybreak on July 29, 1989, firefighters carefully put the charred remains of Ji Yun's body onto a blue sheet. Investigators quickly became suspicious.

When the first responders arrived at 3:22 a.m., Han Tak Lee seemed calm. He didn't cry. He sat on a bench across from the burning cabin with two bags of luggage at his feet. He "remained complacently seated throughout," Patrolman James D. Leigh-Manuell wrote in his police report at 9 p.m. that night.

State Trooper Thomas Jones, doubling as county fire marshal, wrote in his report a week later: "Mr. LEE remained almost emotionless and while in view of this officer made no attempts to console his wife (when she arrived from New York later that day). Mrs. LEE on the other hand was being escorted to the scene and upon nearing the burnt building almost collapsed and had to be physically assisted from the scene."

Prosecutor E. David Christine Jr. held Lee's demeanor against him.

"Helping her up wouldn't be an admission of emotion, would it, ladies and gentlemen?" he asked during his closing arguments. "That is what a husband does to his wife when their daughter is dead, and only a few hours dead?"

Several jurors later acknowledged how much that swayed them.

But Koreans say that men traditionally don't express much emotion, and never in public. And Lee is nothing if not traditional, his wife and surviving daughter say.

"Koreans don't go crazy with emotion like Americans," adds Dr. Louis Roh, a Korean-American deputy medical examiner in Westchester County, N.Y., who briefly was involved in one of several appeals.

Lee says now that, watching the cabin burn, he was overwhelmed and stunned into silence.

"I found that I just lost my spirit and my mind there. It felt like all the blood drained out of my body," he says. "In Korea, men are not allowed to cry. If your daughter is suddenly found dead, there's nothing you can do. You just lost your soul. You can't even think."

When authorities interviewed Lee through a translator that morning (he speaks very little English), his story didn't convince them:

He had fallen asleep exhausted after praying and woke to the smell of smoke. Fire was in the other bedroom in the small cabin, his daughter's bedroom. He ran out. She wasn't outside. He ran back, called for her, didn't hear or see her, thought she had already escaped. He threw the luggage out the door. He banged on the bathroom door and, overcome by smoke and fire, went out the back door.

Jones, who was called to the scene before dawn, had his mind made up by 8 a.m. That was when he received word from the coroner that Ji Yun had only a small amount of carbon monoxide in her blood - too little, he instantly concluded, to have died from smoke inhalation.

"It tripped a red flag to me. ... This girl was probably dead when the fire started," he testified in court. "At that point in time, instead of being at a fire scene, I was now at a crime scene."

The coroner, however, concluded in his documentation of Ji Yun's death that she was alive when the fire started and was killed in the blaze. Another of the state's arguments - that Lee had poured 60 gallons of fuel oil to start the fire - was never scientifically challenged. It doesn't stand up, Lentini argues now, because it would have flooded the cabin, turned up in chemical tests and burned the arsonist.

But the morning of the fire, with a crime already suspected, the pieces soon fit into place, lining up neatly with the lessons the investigators had been taught at the National Fire Academy.

Pour patterns on the floor that indicate multiple points of origin? Check.

"Alligatored" charring? Check.

Crazed glass? Check.

Damaged furniture springs? Check.

Investigators had the evidence to back up their suspicions. Han Tak Lee was a killer.

Lee's lawyer never disputed the conclusion of arson. He argued instead that Ji Yun, suffering from a mental illness, had started the fire herself to commit suicide.

The family has never accepted that. She was a quiet and troubled girl, they say, but also an innocent and religious one who viewed suicide as a sin.

The jury didn't accept the defense attorney's argument, either. They believed the experts.

On Sept. 17, 1990, they convicted Lee of murder.

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Lee's case was largely forgotten, but not by the Korean-American community or by people in his homeland.

Koreans here bristled at what was seen as cultural prejudice, convinced he was viewed with little sympathy in small-town Pennsylvania.

Lee had been a respected businessman in New York and, back in Seoul, a high school teacher with many admirers. His students, and even former classmates, raised money for lawyers. They won support in their fight from the South Korean government, though it led to naught.

An appeal on inadequate counsel won him a hearing, but no change in the outcome.

An appeal last spring sought a new trial, arguing that scientific advances in arson investigation essentially created new evidence.

Christine, Monroe County's district attorney, did not return repeated phone calls. An assistant argued before the court that the new science was, in effect, simply "two expert witnesses that have opposing views." A Pennsylvania state court agreed and rejected Lee's claim.

Lee's attorneys appealed that decision on Nov. 27 to the state Supreme Court.

Other experts have looked at Lee's case and agreed with Lentini's conclusions. "That's a perfect example of a system run amok," says David M. Smith, a former city bomb and arson investigator in Tucson, Ariz., who retired to start his own investigation firm.

If successful, Lee's case could become one of a few opening the door to scrutiny of arson convictions nationwide.

Another is the case of Cameron Todd Willingham, executed in Texas after courts there refused to consider his claims of innocence. A panel of experts hired by The Innocence Project, known for its work

using DNA to expose wrongful convictions, concluded that the fire that killed Willingham's children was accidental.

It's a nightmare, where a defendant's truthful account is held up as lies because the court's accepted expert is scientifically wrong, says Barry Scheck, an attorney and co-founder of The Innocence Project. "We need a systemic re-examination, an audit, of these old arson cases," he says.

How many could be wrongfully convicted of arson?

There are 500,000 structure fires overall a year; 75,000 of them are labeled suspicious. Lentini, who has campaigned widely to improve investigators' knowledge, says most experts he talks with believe the accuracy of fire investigators is at best 80 percent - meaning as many as 15,000 mistaken investigations each year.

Convictions are far fewer, but it's naive to imagine some juries aren't convinced, he says.

"Even though we've made enormous advances in the past 15 years, I keep getting all these cases that might as well have been done in the '70s or '80s," says Gerald Hurst, a fire investigator in Austin, Texas.

The hardest part is that there's often no clear guilty party or explanation with arson, as DNA can provide. In the Lee case, another defense investigator argued the blaze started from a short in an electrical cord, but Lentini says the hard evidence either burned up or was ignored by the county investigators, and later destroyed.

For the Lees, there's no getting past the tragedy that took Ji Yun. But they still want one more chance from the justice system.

In prison, Han Tak Lee exudes a kind of desperate hope as he meets with a reporter and translator. For the lone Korean speaker at the 2,061-inmate prison, it is a rare chance to hear his native language. "I never regret," he says. "I have very strong faith. I will get out as a free man."

Back in New Jersey, his wife can't shake her sorrow.

She doubts the justice system. She questions her own anger after her daughter's death, guilty that it may have convinced investigators to charge her husband. And she is unsure about coming to this country at all, given what befell her family.

"We had American dream," she says. "We dreamt about a better life. But the better life didn't happen."

Still, a small dream remains.

If Han Tak could be free, she would like to bring her husband a meal. Something simple - some rice, some kimchi, some barbecued meat. A meal that tastes like home.

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