

A short history of OCPA

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by Ngee-Pong Chang, Bing-lin Young, Chi-Sing Lam and Cheuk-Yin Wong

This is a brief description of the history of OCPA, mainly some of its milestones. The need for networking had been in the minds of many ethnic Chinese physicists working overseas since the 1960s. The number of ethnic Chinese physicists in North America and elsewhere had greatly increased in the 1980s with the arrival of many young physicists from Mainland China, in almost all physics graduate schools through the CUSPEA program or other means, and as faculty members or visiting scholars in many physics departments. Many of us in North America felt the need to establish an organization in the Chinese physics community, not only for the networking among us in North America, but also with our colleagues in Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and elsewhere. Starting in mid 1989, many interested colleagues, who later became founding members, held intensive discussions through emails and a number of face-to-face meetings. A not-for-profit corporation was registered in the State of New York in June, 1990 under the name "Overseas Chinese Physics Association Inc". With a half year preparation, to draft its Charter and Bylaws, to plan its organization structure, and to select the initial officers, OCPA was formally established in early 1991.

The establishment of OCPA has allowed us to interact more effectively among colleagues in the States, and in Mainland China, Taiwan, and elsewhere. In this early period, an annual meeting was held for several years in conjunction with the APS Spring meetings in Washington, DC, and later in Atlanta and other places. A special topics session entitled "Physics without Borders" had been organized by OCPA and hosted by the Forum on International Physics at the APS meeting, featuring general talks by well-known physicists, including several Nobel laureates. To maintain the opportunity of face-to-face interactions among members, a special event has also been organized later by OCPA in the annual March meeting, and it has been continued to date.

In order to recognize outstanding works of young Chinese researchers in all areas of physics, the Outstanding Young Researcher Award (OYRA) prize was established in 1992 and the Asia Achievement Award (AAA) prize in 1993. These prizes have also been continued to date. These prizes have become high profile activities of OCPA for close to two decades. Winners of these awards are all now well-established scientists in North America, Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore.

With the increased interactions among Chinese physicists world-wide and the rapid expansion of research activities in the Asian regions, it is felt that a conference series with the OCPA perspective should be organized. After almost two years preparation involving many OCPA members in North America, Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore, the first of the OCPA conference series, entitled First International Conference of Frontier of Physics: Looking to the 21st Century, was held in Shantou, Mainland China, in Aug 5-9, 1995 hosted by Shantou University. It is appropriate to quote part of the statement of the conference goal that appeared in the

conference poster: “The conference encourages participation of all physicists, ... to meet and network, and to look towards new research strengths and directions for the coming century”. The subsequent OCPA conferences, the latest one OCPA7 in August 1-5, 2011 held in Kaohsiung, show that the statement still rings true today. It should be noted that over the years, the number of participants of the OCPA conference has been increasing. And all the conferences are highly successful owing to the dedicated OCPA organizers and the enthusiastic local host institutions and their capable local organizing teams.

The establishment of an organization has its historical background, and OCPA is of no exception. It is a product of the needs of the time and the interactions among the relevant people. We clearly remember the energy and enthusiasm of all colleagues involved leading to its gestation and formation. We have received encouragement from several senior colleagues. There are too many colleagues who have contributed to the creation of OCPA to be named here. But we feel we should make some exceptions. We have received strong support from Prof. T.D. Lee and Prof. C.N. Yang, to whom we have also sought counsels for many times, and some of the meetings mentioned above were held in Prof. Lee’s Columbia physics office. Another senior colleague who had been involved very closely during all stages of the formation of OCPA, and to whom we had also consulted frequently, but he declined to be named as a key officer is Prof. Leroy Chang. Professors Lee and Yang, and Leroy had given their full-hearted support to OCPA after its formation, of course. Unfortunately, Leroy passed away several years ago.

After 20 years, OCPA is under a new generation of leadership and will adopt a new name to reflect more appropriately its international outlook. OCPA is expected to enter a new phase by responding to the reality of the world today.