

BLAZING ORANGE-NECKS

by
Michael Chang

Many Asian foreigners immigrate to Californian cities, such as Los Angeles, Costa Mesa, Monterey Park, San Jose and San Francisco. Recently a pronounced trend shows that more of these Asians are migrating into the suburbs. Typically they are employed as white collar professionals who now live and reap the benefits and comforts of suburbia. They enhanced the intellectual pool within public schools, and contribute their scholarly accomplishments toward the professional, medical, scientific and research fields.

Within the decade of the 90's a second generation reverberated from these immigrants and assimilated within the predominately Caucasian suburban areas such as Contra Costa in California. I discovered that not all Asian youth come from upper-middle-class backgrounds and arduously obtain multiple engineering or medical degrees; a new breed of Asian Generation-X youth activity has erupted. The youth do not want to study anymore and they are bored and restless in White suburbia. They begin to work blue collar jobs, work with their hands and chew tobacco in the sun until their necks turn from yellow to burnt orange. Within the bowels of red-neck suburbia, the Asian ORANGE-NECKS have risen out of the ashes.



I recently completed a two-year study on these "Orange-necks" via extensive interviews and travels with several of them raised in Orange County and its sister conservative county, Contra Costa, California. I decided to release a partial study of my work as follows:

We descended into Big Sur for Labor Day weekend of 1994. Last night Billy Kao cooked us a dinner of reheated Safeway fried chicken in his rice-cooker powered by his Honda generator. After dinner we capriciously veared off the Pacific Coast Highway somewhere between Big Sur and Hearst Castle. We traversed inland towards the coastal mountains of Los Padres National Forest to seek an open spot for a night's rest to escape the three-day weekend tourists who littered themselves to full-capacity along PCH. This morning we shot out of the mountains like a bat out of hell toward the Salinas Valley. We were now four-wheeling and discharging firearms in the Fort Liggett Army Reservation. I felt a little queasy about the red-neck army in juggernauting tanks who may pursue us for trespassing.

"Yee haw, Ga nee ngah!" (Chinese translation for "fuck your mom") they yelled to the top of their lungs as we soared through the air. Chuck Lee, Billy Kao and I landed or felt like we touched ground onto the soft powdery dirt open-expanse. After

a harsh landing I inquired Chuck about the shattered noise coming from the truck-bed.

"Oh that, that be my ex-white girlfriend's dishes I ate my Spam off this morning. Shit it was so cold this morning I stayed in my sleeping bag and I piss in horizontal position. Horizontal position bad, no pressure and I piss on my Thermarest. Now it's so damn hot I need speed to cool off."

Meanwhile, Billy fondled his .22 calibre pistol and added, "Shit I wish I had my AK-47 and my AR-15, but the damn liberals banned them. Now we have to shoot .22 or else I get deported back to Taiwan."

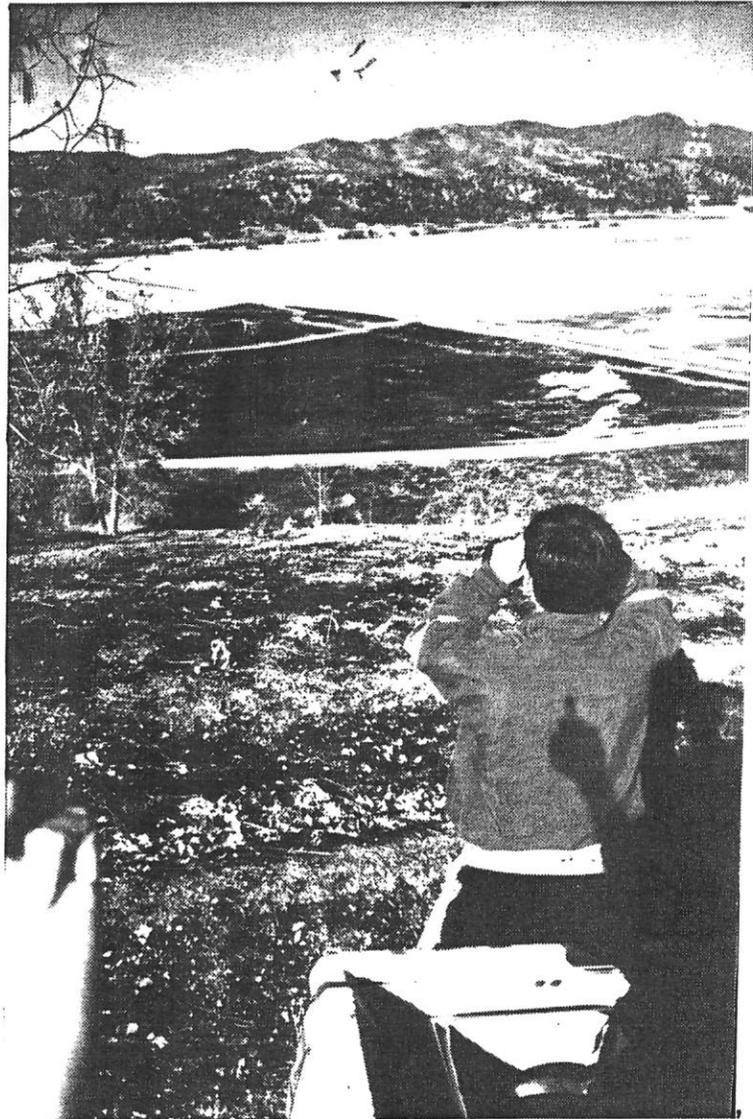
The old model Nissan 4x4 groaned from Chuck's heavy foot on the pedal. A long trail of airborne dust snaked behind the truck enveloped by dirt. The tachometer registered near 5000 RPMs in third gear. The Doors, Pink Floyd and Enya blasted out of the boom box on the floor. Chuck grinded the gear to four-wheel drive and ascended the 500 ft plateau to gain a commanding view of the broad flat, treeless expanse down below, ripped up into a wasteland by the U.S. Army tank practice maneuvers. Already we heard a couple of shotguns crackling in the dry air from somewhere below us.

Billy climbed out of the truck and peered towards the westward coastal mountains with his binoculars from our vantage point, "Hey look at those fat red-necks down there throwing clay pigeons towards us." He soon lost interest and he put on a three-foot wide brimmed sombrero to fend off the increasingly torrid sun and plinked his pistol at a can on the ground.

Chuck proudly wore his "National Rifle Association 50ft Marksman Award" baseball cap and immediately commenced firing his virgin .22 Marlin Papoose in all random directions.

"Could you believe this shit, I picked up this .22 pea-shooter yesterday in San Jose after waiting 14 days for a background check. I told them I'm a fucking civil engineer, I am not a felon, I am not 5150, and I'm not a danger to society as well as to myself."

While the two Orange-necks were firing their guns atop the plateau, I passed the time by reading a magazine issue of the "Complete Book of the .22 Rimfire" which was tucked underneath the truck seat. I saw a picture of an apple-pie American kid with a tidy combed and creamed fresh haircut with neatly sculptured sideburns. He totted a .22 rifle. I also saw an apple-pie American dad posing with a rifle in hand next to his fresh-family-kill of four prairie dogs laid out neatly by their ground-hole. Another picture showed a gun resting on an elaborate mount poised next to a mother ground squirrel with her three siblings hanging upside down by their tails from a barbed-wire



fence with .22 ammo boxes on the top fence rail. An article read as follows:

"By its very nature, plinking is pure pleasure. Plinking is a timeless pursuit for men and boys. A passion for plinking can lure a teenage couch potato from a stuffy living room into the out-of-doors for fresh air and exercise. And the carefree informality of a plinking session is the best bridge yet for the well-known generation gap between father and son. Pent-up tensions are forgotten as Pop opens a pathway back to his own youth, when a freshly fired .22 rimfire case smelled sweeter than Chanel No. 5, and the son senses the commonalities instead of the antipathies of their relationship."

I mused for a while thinking about the lack of interest in firearms from the fathers of both Billy and Chuck. A generation gap existed because the fathers of both of these youths did not share this common outdoor experience. Alienated from their traditional parents, they have absorbed and learned to live the lives of red-neck suburbia. Perhaps from an Asian traditional point-of-view, the suburban American "gwei low" (In Cantonese translated literally as "white ghost", a commonly used derogatory term for white people) adulterated and infected their children's lifestyle and diligence in their pursuit for higher education and in their professional careers. However, perhaps they represent a by-product of two cultures, the best of both worlds.

Billy Kao, the sombrero kid, is currently undertaking graduate studies in environmental engineering at San Jose State. At his present rate he may or may not graduate in about five years or so. Billy Kao, the environmental man in the sombrero, disposed of his bullet ridden cans in their proper place before we departed.



Chuck Lee previously worked as a professional civil engineer in the Financial District of San Francisco, but quit his job to pursue humanitarian endeavors via writing (See "Pains, Trains, & Automobiles" in this issue). His current odd job is working at the Sears Tire and Auto Center.