



Volunteer of the Quarter:

Ernie Stanton:

The Money Man

You want to know how the park has handled its finances without paid staff since the 2012 government park closure?

Look no further than this guy here.

If you go down to the village on most weekends, you are likely to find Ernie Stanton enjoying a sandwich by the beach and exchanging the latest baseball stats with local beachgoers. Don't be fooled by his relaxed demeanor: Ernie has been one of the most hardworking volunteers since Friends of China Camp took over operations of the

park in 2012.

Ernie was one of dozens of steadfast volunteers who scrambled to raise funds and spread public awareness to keep the park open during the 2012 closure crisis. He was often found tabling at farmers markets in San Rafael sporting a "I'm A Friend of China Camp" shirt, handing out maps and encouraging parents with strollers to take their kids to the Village beach.

After FOCC took over China Camp from the State, someone had to assume the financial operations of the park. Chief Financial Officer is an arduous and time consuming job; it doesn't have the same glamor or public praise as that of an educational docent or trail volunteer, but without it, park operations would come to a screeching halt.

Ernie doggedly stepped up to the plate, and spent the last five years volunteering behind the scenes as FOCC's CFO. He spent thousands of hours tracking the park's income and expenditures, collecting and processing the day use and camping fees, and overseeing the park's membership and event permitting.

But his time at the park hasn't just been confined to office work; Ernie also spent countless weekends supporting the late Frank Quan, the last shrimper of China Camp. Ernie had such a respect for Frank and his cafe's legacy, that after his passing, Ernie and several other volunteers (Andy Fletcher, Tommy Dwyer, and Frank's cousin Georgette Quan) made sure that the cafe continues to be regularly staffed and accessible to the public every weekend.

Stanton has put in so much time to operate the park, that he is one of the top contributing volunteers at FOCC: He put in a whopping 960 volunteer hours in 2017. When asked about why he has contributed so much of his time and energy to keep the park alive his only response was:

“I did it because I didn’t want to have to jump over a gate to get to the beach”.

Did we mention he also has a keen sense of humor?

Though that quote can be interpreted as entirely self-serving, once you get to know him, it becomes very obvious that the thousands of hours that he has contributed over the years have been not just for himself, but for the community.

Not only has Ernie been a driving force that has kept the park open and operational, but he also has ensured that it is accessible. Those who know Ernie can tell you that he is a fierce advocate for underserved populations, a reflection of his former experience as a teacher in the San Francisco school system.

Instead of implementing a \$8 or \$10 vehicle fee like other parks in the area, he advocated to push the price down to \$5. “Equity for all” is his standing slogan; he was adamant that the park was accessible to local low-income families as much as anyone else.

Ernie has recently handed the tedious job of CFO to former board chair and village museum history docent, Ed Lai. Though Ernie is scaling back, you need only to look around at our thriving park to see evidence of his hard work and passion for China Camp. For half a decade, he took care of the things that we all too often have taken for granted like the electricity, phone lines, garbage, firewood, office supplies, and many other innumerable functions within the park.

Ernie kept it going so that we all don’t have to “jump over a gate” to enjoy the park.

From all of us at **Friends of China Camp**, we want to **THANK YOU** Ernie for the thousands of hours that you have generously given to keep the heart of this park beating! We are so grateful to you!