

Chinese Embassy Speech
Richard Hide, Chairman, HERO
2nd September 2010

Your Excellency Ambassador Liu, Ladies & Gentlemen

I am delighted to represent the Hong Kong Escape Re-enactment Organisation (H.E.R.O.) to celebrate with you the 65th anniversary of your victory over Fascism.

Firstly, on behalf of the Hong Kong Escape Re-enactment Organisation (H.E.R.O.), I would like to express our sincere thanks to the Chinese people of the Depang Peninsula, in particular the people of NanAo, for their courageous acts in assisting our forefathers upon their escape from Hong Kong on the night of the 25th December 1941 when the Island was overwhelmed by Japanese forces.

The local Chinese people, at great risk to themselves, assisted a large party of 68 mainly Europeans and Chinese to break through the enemy-held line into Free China. Not only did armed local guerrillas lead and protect the party, but local civilians also supplied food and nourishment even though their own means were meagre.

H.E.R.O. members were honoured and privileged to meet Liu Bo, one of the last surviving members of the East River Column, while retracing our forefathers' steps on the Depang Peninsula from NanAo to Waichow (now Huizhou).

With the advent of the World Wide Web the descendents were able to find the story of how the Chinese people assisted their forefathers, and began looking for further information. This, in turn, led to descendents contacting each other via a dedicated website, where we were able to collate all the stories, and thus H.E.R.O. was formed. Members of H.E.R.O. come from all over world - the United Kingdom, Ireland, Europe, the USA, Canada, Hong Kong, China, and Australia.

H.E.R.O. members agreed that we should go to Hong Kong and mainland China, not only to see for ourselves where these momentous events took place, but more importantly to meet and thank in person the people of NanAo and the

Depang Peninsula. This we achieved in December 2009, 68 years to the day after the escape by our forefathers.

HRH Prince Philip, who had previously heard the story at a dinner function, kindly endorsed the H.E.R.O. expedition to maintain the cultural ties forged between our forefathers and the Chinese people. The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region agreed to sponsor a museum exhibition covering these events which was opened on the 24th December 2009 and will continue for a minimum of two years.

H.E.R.O. is now planning to travel again to China for the 70th anniversary of the escape in order to further express our thanks and appreciation to the people in some of the many towns and villages our forefathers travelled through on their long and arduous journey across Southern China to the border with Burma. Many of the escapees wrote down their experiences in letters, diaries, and articles; the common theme throughout was the kindness and generosity of the Chinese people. My own father recorded

“On the whole of this journey the hospitality of the Chinese was wonderful. We were passing through the poorest part of the interior of China, but whatever place, no matter how large or small, the people gave us the best they could”.

Having experienced at first hand the delightful country and friendly people of the Depang Peninsula, H.E.R.O. is at present pursuing a project to erect a memorial at the place where our forefathers first came ashore to commemorate the part played in the escape by the people of NanAo. Not only would this be a permanent living reminder of the Sino-British cultural ties, it would also be a point of interest for tourists in what is a most interesting and attractive part of Southern China.

On behalf of the H.E.R.O. members from all over the world, I thank you for this opportunity to tell you about our organisation.

Richard Hide 魏理查
H.E.R.O. Chairman 主席