

# Smuggled Asian refugees not fleeing political persecution

By EVE BRITTON

CENTRAL COAST BUREAU

The Chinese coming to America today are not fleeing political persecution, but probably are making a capital investment.

Edward Friedman, an Asian expert from the University of Wisconsin, speculated yesterday that Chinese from the booming economy in Fujian Province are coming to America to make more money to send home to families, or possibly to bring families here.

"I'm only guessing here," he said. "But they are coming from an economic boom area, they are not political refugees, they are not joining family, they are young people with family ties making the family fortune."

Friedman based his guess on the economy of the province and the fact that most of the refugees are males in their 20s.

"It's the global phenomenon of labor, it is an investment in family, in the future," he said. "These are

probably the most enterprising, hard working, ambitious people — the world's best workers."

Friedman is visiting the Monterey Peninsula to give a series of seminars on China at the Naval Postgraduate School.

Friedman said he would guess, from his tours of Asia and his knowledge of the area, that the young men coming to the United States are also fairly well educated, and come from middle-class families.

"My impression is that they would tend to have more education to even have enough vision to know (the United States) exists," he said.

Workers in Fujian make roughly \$50 a week, as opposed to the \$7 a week they made just a few years ago under the Communist regime.

"Even though they are moving ahead fast, they have jumped many, many levels by coming here, just by making minimum wage," he said. "They'll take the

lowest paying job and save every penny."

In the past, Friedman said, when people did manage to leave the controlling Communist regime in China, it was to avoid political persecution.

A retired DLI Chinese instructor, Sidney Wong, was born in the United States, moved to China, then came back here in the 1940s. He said he has a hard time understanding why the Chinese people are risking their lives to come to the United States now, when things in China are "getting better."

"People may be thinking everywhere in this country is gold," he said. "But I don't know. I think China is doing fine. I don't know."

Friedman said his guess is that the young men do not know exactly what conditions they will endure to get to the United States.

"I doubt if they really know the risk."

Wong, who came to the United States in the 1940s to train as a fighter pilot, said when he left, it was to escape.

"It was Communist," he said. "There was a civil war going on. I saw there was no chance of fighting the Communist conditions. Now it's different."

Wong, who returned to China in 1980 and 1985, said if he lived in the country today, he doesn't know if he'd leave.

"It's hard to think about it," he said. "I don't know."

## Smuggling operation doesn't surprise boater

CENTRAL COAST BUREAU

While nearly 200 Asians were led past his sailboat on Moss Landing's B Dock yesterday, Craig Harder continued to make repairs to his 65-foot, two-masted vessel.

Harder wasn't surprised that a smuggling operation had occurred in the normally quiet harbor.

Coast Guardsmen and sheriff's deputies had been investigating rumors of smuggling ever since his Hispaniola had been struck by the 46-foot Pelican on May 17.

Harder said the Pelican had been cut loose from a chain and the vessel rammed into his stern.

The operator of the vessel, an Asian, had paid him some cash

to settle the accident, Harder said.

Still, Harder called sheriff's deputies to investigate the incident.

"The sheriff's deputies did a full check," Harder said.

Sheriff's deputies and Coast Guard spokesmen referred all questions about the boats and crew members to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

An INS spokesman said the ownership of the boats is under investigation.

The Pelican's owner is listed as a Vietnamese woman who lives in Southern California, but harbor officials said yesterday they are certain the Pelican and the Angel had changed ownership in the past month.