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“The journey is the reward”
Chinese proverb

My journey with ASIANetwork was not that as a keynote speaker, conference panelist, committee chair, board member or Executive Director; yet, from 1999 through 2002 I journeyed with each of these persons. When I became an employee of Augustana College in 1992, I worked with the History Department and as a result became acquainted with Van Symons and his dedication to the mission of ASIANetwork. There were numerous times that I read articles by ASIANetwork members or heard of programs that ASIANetwork supported. In addition to being an employee of the college, I was also a non-traditional student working towards a bachelor’s degree in religion and history. I soon came to know the generosity of the programs sponsored by the Freeman Foundation and its association with ASIANetwork as I became one of the first students to receive a Student-Faculty Freeman Fellowship, which allowed me to travel to China in 1998.

However, one of the most memorable steps in a journey that started in 1999 was when Van came into my office and asked if I would support his work as ASIANetwork’s Executive Director in the role as his Administrative Secretary. For the next three years, I worked closely with the ASIANetwork institutions and members, attended conferences and board meetings, and organized all of the mailings to the membership. I have been grateful for the opportunity to meet numerous members who have inspired me with their own research and expertise. Not just Augustana faculty but members from around the country such as Suzanne Barnett-Wilson, James Leavell, Gita Rajan, Anne Prescott, Joel Smith and Henry Rosemont - thank you.

As the Administrative Secretary for ASIANetwork it seemed easy enough: type minutes, mail out notices, prepare

conference packets. However, as this journey started, I soon realized there were ways in which I could help others make their journeys a little smoother. I remember going to Van and explaining that ASIANetwork needed a membership directory. It would not take “too much time”—just send out forms for members to fill out and return when they sent in their membership dues, compile the data into a database and print out the directory! By the spring conference, ASIANetwork had its first printed membership directory.

In the spring of 2002, I attended my last ASIANetwork Conference. At that time, my position at Augustana changed and I would no longer be able to continue with ASIANetwork. Ruth Symons stepped in and created a niche of her own within the organization. Since she has been on board, I discovered that the directory is now online, the membership database has grown and she has worked closely with the editors of the newsletter.

Over the years, ASIANetwork members have benefited from memorable conferences, timely programs, outstanding speakers, innovative newsletters, and unique opportunities for both faculty and students. I am proud of the contributions made by those in my position. You probably have talked with either Ruth or myself, but did not realize who we were. We were the ones at the Registration Table; taking notes at the meetings; on the other end of the phone when you called to inquire about your institution’s membership status, submit a name change or change of address; or to ask questions about programs and upcoming conferences.

As you reflect on how ASIANetwork has served you while housed at Augustana College, I hope that you will fondly remember the journey that Ruth and I took with you.