

# Hu knows the art of making dragon kite

Li Huacheng and Xu Wei

“**M**ake the structure of a kite with bamboo strips, and then tighten the corners of the bamboo frame with cotton thread.” In the classroom of Caowang Primary School, folk artist Hu Ping tells students what traditional kites are and how to make them.

Hu was not born into a rich family. In his childhood, the salary of his father was the only source of income for his family. His father was then a veteran maker of dragon kites in the village. The only happy memory he has in his childhood is watching his father flying the dragon kites each year during the winter.

However, at that time the young and aggressive Hu didn't follow his father's advice to study making kites. The then 14-year-old Hu came to Shanghai to learn glass blowing at a small workshop in Xuhui District. The kites made by his father were the only property of his. When he was 25 years old, he moved to Jiading District and started his 30-year career of glass making at Shanghai Xinhui Glass Factory.

After retirement, Hu accidentally took up kite-making with bamboo strips because his granddaughter wanted to have a kite. But it was not as easy as he expected. Fortunately he got to know Xu Bolong and other grassroots craft artists at Xuhang Town. He began to learn kite-making from the very beginning, including the simple techniques of making bamboo strips.

“During Hu's early days at



Folk artist Hu Ping shows off the dragon head kite he has made. He now teaches students how to make the kites.

our kite making team, he was not the best to make kite,” Xu Bolong recalls. “But Hu is very diligent. He often spends a long time on making a single kite.”

When Hu was making the dragon head of a kite, he amazed his friends with his creativity. Based on his childhood memories and some photos, he managed to make a detachable dragon head in one month. The dragon head is now very portable as all the 48 tiny components can easily

be detached.

Hu also stayed up overnight, working on new methods to improve the dragon kite's technical performance in contests. Inspired by a dream, he came up with an idea to create another small dragon kite, which will climb up along the kite line to the dragon head of the big kite. The small dragon kite doesn't have wings but it is equipped with pulley.

It is such kind of creativity that helped Hu and his team win silver medals in the

Dragon Category and the Kites with Hard Wings Category at the Kite-flying Contest of the 7th Shanghai Farmers' Sports in October, 2011. Hu is now working on how to make the flying dragon head spit out a bead curtain.

Walking into Hu's home, one is greeted by a 2-meter-long “Giant Eagle” painting. In fact, it is a giant eagle-shaped kite, which is Hu's most recent work. “After trial flying, I find that the kite still needs some improvement,” Hu says.

In terms of its craftsmanship, the kite is just a copy of Jiading's traditional butterfly kites. “In recent years, I have learned a lot of traditional kite-making techniques from old artists of Jiading,” he adds. “I want to add something new to cater for the tastes of today's kids.”

Apart from making kites, Hu is also invited to Tongji University, Xuhang Primary School and Caowang Primary School to teach students to make the kites.

## Eternal sunshine of the aged people's poetry club

Liu Bihua, Fan Dan and Xu Wei

IN Anting Town, there is a well-known poetry club for aged people at Xin'an Residential Community. Most of the members are old farmers with only primary school education. Although they are retired, they bear in mind that one is never too old to learn. Poetry writing is also a way for them to express their hope and appreciation for life.

For elderly people, poetry studying can not only broaden their knowledge, cultivate their taste, but also add fun in their retired lives.

Xin'an is a newly built community with more than 1,000 families. At the beginning of last year, its neighborhood committee chief decided to set up an amateur poetry club after noticing that some aged people were interested in poetry writing. The club soon attracted a lot of people to join. So far, the club members have

written around 300 poems of different themes and genres.

Zhang Xiangjun is the director and instructor of the club. Before his retirement, Zhang worked for the forestry public security bureau. Although he doesn't have a high educational background, he is very enthusiastic about the poetry in the Tang (AD 618-907) and Song (960-1279) dynasties. Over the past 20 years, he has created a great many works.

To him, poetry can be classified into two major styles — classical and modern. No matter in what style it is, it should be meaningful and rhyming.

As the club's instructor, he encouraged the members to read more beautiful poems. As an adage goes, “After reading 300 poems of the Tang Dynasty, you can at least intone poems even you can't write them.” Today, a few members have grasped basics about poetry genres and styles. Additionally, the poetry club



Members of the poetry club in Xin'an Community exchange their inspirations of poetry writing.

frequently organizes outings and contests. Excellent poems are exhibited in the community. When a club member has a birthday party, usually he will get blessing poems from other members.

Zhang's family used to live in the forest region of Xiaoxing'an Mountains in Heilongjiang Province. The beautiful natural landscape

nurtured Zhang's emotion and enthusiasm for classical poetry.

After work he spent a lot of leisure time studying ancient poetry of the different dynasties. He also had a lot of gatherings with the local poetry lovers to exchange ideas about artistry and aesthetics of poems.

In 2005, Zhang and his fam-

ily moved to the Xin'an Community of Anting Town. The peaceful and poetic environment again ignited his passion for poetry writing. He then wrote more than 60 poems themed on the Wusong River and the Anting Town.

When the poetry club was founded in January 2011, Zhang was invited to be a cultural consultant. He has offered the club members a lot of valuable learning tips and methods. His works have also been compiled as a reference book for the club members.

Over the past year, Zhang has devoted himself to poetry teaching and making. The lessons and learning schedules he prepares for the students are not tedious. Instead, they're combined with games, music and contests to arouse more old people's interest in poetry. His efforts have paid off. Now even those who don't have a high educational background can read and write poems on their own.