

## **Memoir of President Johanna C Yen from Tony Yen**

Dear Friends of the ATOM Family,

I am saddened to share with you that Dr. Johanna Chu Yen passed away peacefully on 21 July 2024 at home in Palo Alto, California. She was 91 years old.

Mother was born on 26 June 1933 in Nanking, the then-capital of China. Her parents came from Ningbo in the nearby Zhejiang province, her father being in the automobile business. After the fall of Nanking at the end of 1937, her family fled to Chengdu in the province of Sichuan where she lived until the end of the Sino-Japanese War in 1945. The family then relocated to Shanghai where she entered the Jesuit-run Aurora High School for Girls and became a Christian. After the communist victory in 1949, she reaffirmed her religious conviction and continued with Catholic youth activities all the way into her college years for which she was jailed twice. She completed her medical education at Second Medical College of Shanghai in 1961 and was assigned to No. 2 People's Hospital of Shanghai to practice OB GYN, after an internship at a teaching hospital affiliated with the medical college.

Both belonging to the same parish, she met the future Dr. Francis Er-liang Yen in the mid-1950s. They married in 1960 and their only child was born in 1962, and we all lived happily in a big house my grandfather built. Such a happy situation turned out to be short-lived. 1966 saw the start of the Cultural Revolution and a ten-year tumultuous period. Digging out her religious background, the revolutionary zealots in charge of the hospital deprived mother of her medical practice and forced her to man the hospital's morgue for over ten years, until 1978, when she resumed seeing patients. Facing such persecution and humiliation, mother never complained, as I saw her smiling face every evening, totally unaware of what she had to endure at work during the day.

She came to the United States in 1983 and settled in Ft. Lauderdale where my father and I had previously arrived, sponsored by my grandmother. Mother passed the board exam and switched to practicing Chinese medicine, seeing a great need for acupuncture to help Americans, especially the elderly. After teaching part-time at a near-bankrupt school of Chinese medicine, she founded her own not-for-profit Atlantic Institute of Oriental Medicine (ATOM) in 1994. Although the school had very humble beginnings, she set her aims high. When asked "why use the word 'institute' instead of 'college'?" she retorted proudly, "Why is MIT an institute?" She was at the helm of ATOM for 29 years and graduated over 800 students, including those with master's degrees and Doctors of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine. For quite a few years, she was also the Acupuncture Commissioner of the State of Florida, appointed by Governor Lawton Chiles.

She finally retired last year and moved to California to be with her family. But she missed Florida dearly. At the end of February of this year, she started to vomit daily and went to the hospital for an examination. To our surprise, the diagnosis was late-stage pancreatic cancer. After a month-long stay in the hospital, she entered hospice care at home in early April. She was happy being cared for at home and was able to celebrate her 91<sup>st</sup> birthday with her family in late June, complete with cake- and noodle-eating. But she continued to grow

weaker and weaker, though without much pain. She said many times recently that she had had a very fulfilling life, done everything she wanted to do, and was ready to move on to be reunited with my father.

Mother had an optimistic disposition throughout her long life, reflecting her firm religious belief and optimistic personality. If she had in one way or another touched the lives of others, it was almost predestined. She was always ready to help others and was also helped numerous times by other people. The \$10,000 donation that she received to start ATOM came from her family and close friends.

Throughout her life, mother was also a person of devotion. In her youth, she was devoted to the church activities; in her adulthood, her family; in her golden years, education. She cared for the wellbeing of ATOM deeply and wanted to see it grow and flourish. "Such a good school," she said to me recently. She was very happy to receive the cards and messages from many of her former students and colleagues and asked me to thank all of you for your love and well wishes. In remembering her, I ask that you also keep her in your prayers.

The memorial service will be held at Fred Hunter's, followed by burial alongside my father in Evergreen Cemetery, both in Ft. Lauderdale, FL.

With deep gratitude,

Tony Yen

21 July 2024