



# Jen Toy Wong

JUL 6, 1931 - AUG 19, 2010



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## Jen Toy Wong

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**E**ulogy for Jen Wong (by her nephew Kelly Lee) We have gathered today to remember, honor, and celebrate the life of Jen Toy Wong. Jen was born on July 6, 1931 in Oakland, California. She was the third daughter of Yim Yuk Wong and Lee Shee Wong, and the sister of Betty, Caroline, May, Rose, and Amy, who preceded her in death. She is survived by her sisters Toy and Clairelle, brother Lawrence, and brothers-in-law Gary and Jimmy. She is also survived by: 5 nephews: Kelly, Kirby, Sherwyn, John, and Darrell. 7 nieces: Sandy, Donna, Denise, Dina, Robin, Stacy, and Tina. 6 grand-nephews: Gabriel, Jason, Charlie, Chevy, Andrew, and Jordan. 3 grand-nieces: Sherilyn, Tatiyana, and Kahlia. 1 great grand-niece, Melaniya, and 1 great grand-nephew, Aaron. Jen attended Lincoln School and graduated from Oakland Technical High School. She immediately began working for the Alameda County Welfare Department (later known as the Alameda County Social Services Agency), where she devoted her entire career. She began as a social worker, got promoted to supervisor in 1970, and became an investigator in 1985. She retired in 1989. Until the business was sold in the mid-1960s, she also worked at our family restaurant, the Far East Caf  , coming in during her lunch break and on weekends to help her sister Toy. For everyone who knew her, Jen touched their lives with her boundless generosity, warmth, and sense of humor. She genuinely cared about other people, often putting aside her own concerns. If you ever needed help-whether you were in financial straits, needed someone to talk to when you were down, or were seeking guidance if you weren't sure what direction to take-she was always available and more than willing to give whatever she could. I think what I heard my Auntie Jen say more than anything-and I can hear her voice now-was, "Do you need anything?" After both our grandparents passed away 25 years ago, Auntie Jen eventually became the family matriarch-making sure that we would continue to get together for dinner on a regular basis, to follow our Chinese customs and traditions, and to celebrate holidays



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and birthdays-she always bought the cake, sometimes two. Auntie Jen also very selflessly assumed the role of caretaker for her sisters Betty, May, and Clairelle when needed. She always thought of others before herself. Jen had an insatiable love of travel and liked to shop, go out to eat, and watch movies featuring her favorite Chinese actors or listen to music with her favorite Chinese singers (all young and male!). She enjoyed getting together with her family, relatives, and friends, no matter where they were (whether in the Bay Area, up in Sacramento, down in Southern California, or across the country in New York) and discovering new places as well-it could be a new restaurant or bakery just a few miles away or at the other end of the globe. In the movie Auntie Mame, Rosalind Russell portrayed a wealthy, eccentric woman who traveled around the world with her young nephew, determined to enjoy the best things in life. In a very dramatic fashion, she declares: "Life is a banquet, and most poor suckers are starving to death." Now, I don't think Auntie Jen would ever refer to anyone as a "poor sucker" (Auntie May might, but not Auntie Jen). What I think Auntie Jen would say is this: "Life is a banquet-and you're all invited"-because she didn't want anyone to be starving, whether of food or any of life's pleasures. As many of us know, every other Friday when we would all get together for dinner, Auntie Jen would prepare a huge amount of food (there would be a huge wok, a pot on every burner, a couple of pans in the oven). She always wanted to make sure there was something that each person was especially fond of-and if it was your birthday, well, she had to make something even more special (tofu for Donna, chicken divan for Stacey, salmon for me!) No matter what, there was always more than enough to feed a dozen or even twenty of us, with plenty to pack up and take home. But as mentioned, the "banquet" of life that Jen enjoyed and invited you to was much more than one about food. It was the "banquet" that represented all the good things in life that she enjoyed and wanted you to enjoy as well. One of the most special qualities of Auntie Jen was how she took pleasure in knowing and seeing how much YOU yourself were enjoying, whatever you were doing, wherever you went. There were so many times when I would call or talk to her after she came back from one of her many trips to ask how it was, and she would always tell me in a very excited voice, "Oh, we had such a good time!" And then she would proceed to give me a detailed



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report, almost minute by minute, not just where she went or what she did-but really about everyone else.I remember hearing from her years ago about Sandy and her boys when they went to Tahiti, of being with Tatiy and Kahlia at Disney World and much later in China, all the trips to Las Vegas with her sisters and nieces, what happened to her and Auntie Betty when they drove to Yuma, what Chevy talked about when she went to L.A., Dina and Tina climbing the Great Wall, Darrell walking the Harbour Bridge in Sydney, and more recently, about Robin and Jordan and everyone else during her last trip to China just a month ago. She loved talking about all of this because she genuinely shared in everyone's enjoyment. Who else do we know that has that gift?I wasn't able to be on that last trip, but I did take her to the travel agency when she needed to pick up the tickets. And while sitting and waiting for the travel agent, she continued to think about what other trips she could take. "Let me look at that brochure," she would say to me, "get me that flyer." She had planned to return to China this fall, bringing yet another part of her extensive clan.Now it's very easy to see Auntie Jen as this very sweet and giving person-because she was. At the same time, she was no fool. Tricksters, shysters, tramps, and thieves-if you were dishonest or tried to cheat her, she had you figured out. She would not allow herself to be bullied or cajoled into doing what someone else demanded if she thought otherwise. The barbarians at the gate could stay outside the gate. I learned a long time ago that there are those in this world who are intent on doing you harm, who exalt themselves by oppressing others, who derive satisfaction by holding you back. But in time I realized how such things can be transcended, that the karmic wheel can be turned around, and that you can still follow the right path and not be diverted by the jackals, have elevated thoughts and a compassionate heart, and do good work in this world. Auntie Jen helped show that to me in the way she lived her life. Working for the welfare department seemed to be the perfect job for her-taking care of people, seeing to their needs-as was being the loving auntie, sister, cousin, or friend that she was for so many of us.Jen had an innate sense of what was important and what was not. As she would often tell my cousin Denise, "Don't sweat the small stuff." I would often hear her say, "Don't bother," whenever she was faced with something that she didn't think was important, that could take away your enjoyment of life. Save



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the sweat for the bigger stuff. And so she, as petite as she was, could navigate herself through the world in this very wise and confident way. I remember when I was getting ready to go with her to China a few years ago, and she told me about the markets in Hong Kong and how she wasn't at all fearful of the Mongkok section, where the triads (Chinese mafia) supposedly are. She could go anywhere and not be deterred. For Jen, it was just "move aside, fellas." I remember the story she loved to tell about how she had a whole suitcase full of DVDs that she bought during one of her other Hong Kong trips. She could make her way through customs without batting an eyelash. "Don't block my way." She could not be deterred nor detained. She would just smile and be her naturally sweet self, and make it through! Nobody else could get away with that. If Auntie Jen were still alive, I think she would eventually get her own plane-and she would take all of us on a trip to China or perhaps some other part of the world. I know she wanted to visit Sherilyn in Paris. She even showed me an article in a travel magazine about Dubai not too long ago. But right now, I see her up in the heavens, in an invisible plane, like Wonder Woman-and she would be in the pilot's seat. And with her on this plane, sitting in the front in first class, would be Grandpa and Grandma: Grandpa would have his feet up, reading a Chinese newspaper; Grandma would be passing out moy to everyone. And there would be Auntie May, with her headphones on listening to opera, and Auntie Betty would be there, with a slot machine that she somehow got installed. And there would be Auntie Rose, serving everyone's meals, and Auntie Caroline, who would put down her knitting to serve dessert. And there would also be Uncle Charlie, who I think would be the co-pilot, and he would have on this cap and pilot's jacket (looking sharp!). He would sit down next to Auntie Jen and ask, "So where are we going, Jen?" And she would say, "Don't worry, I've got it all taken care of." She would tell him to find some movie to play (probably with Bruce Lee or John Wayne)-or else one of her many Chinese movies that she brought on board-for everyone to watch. Well, I don't know when any of us will be on that plane. I hope not too soon. But I do know when it's my time that I want a window seat, because if Auntie Jen is flying that plane, you know there will be a lot to see and enjoy along the way! Because as she showed us, life is a banquet-so have a good time!



## Tribute Wall

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GO

**Gomsnonened** posted:

Do not quite understand what is at stake.

December 19 at 3:36 PM

GO

**Gomsnonened** posted:

Thanks for sharing your thoughts. Take care.

December 1 at 6:30 AM

TN

**Tiffany Ng** posted:

I still remember when I was young and you came to visit my family and I in New York. We instantly became friends talking about the "New Kids On The Block." Since then, every Christmas you'd spoil me rotten with your generosity and many packaged gifts! I used to look forward to receiving your postcards as you've traveled the world telling me about your adventures. I read them and wanted to travel the world when I grew up as well. Suffice to say, I have as I'm writing and thinking of you from my home in Sydney, Australia. I wish you had to chance to come out here for a visit. You have, and will be, very missed! Love, Tiff

September 4 at 3:17 AM

DH

**Denise Hom** posted:

My Aunt Jen was always there to help me with my daughter Tatiyana. She always arranged her schedule so she could spend time with her little Tatiy. She was a second grandmother to her great niece. Auntie Jen always had kind words to comfort me with when I was upset or stressed out. I will miss our talks and her beautiful smile. Rest in Paradise Auntie until we meet again....Your Loving Niece Denise

September 3 at 11:31 AM

CN

**Candy Ng** posted:

I missing your simile!

September 2 at 6:45 AM



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**Kelly** posted:

For everyone who knew her, Jen touched their lives with her boundless generosity, warmth, and sense of humor. She genuinely cared about other people, often putting aside her own concerns. If you ever needed help—whether you were in financial straits, needed someone to talk to when you were down, or were seeking guidance if you weren't sure what direction to take—she was always available and more than willing to give whatever she could. I think what I heard my Auntie Jen say more than anything—  
-and I can hear her voice now—was, "Do you need anything?" There was no one else like her. She will be greatly missed, but will always be in her hearts.

August 30 at 2:49 PM



**Anita (Nina) Green** posted:

My name is Anita (Nina) Green. I am a childhood friend of Denise, Donna, Dina and Darrell Hom. I first met Auntie Jen when I was about 12 or 13 years old. I remember her as a very kind, thoughtful and sweet person. I can remember visiting the home, meeting all of the "Auntie's", and Auntie Jen offering me Chinese Candy and other sweets. I am deeply saddened to hear of her passing. My deepest condolences go out to the family of Jen Wong. With Sympathy and Love to All, Nina~

August 29 at 12:27 PM



**Tina** posted:

Auntie Jen was kind enough to include me in an opportunity to travel to China with her and two wonderful cousins. I immediately saw how gregarious she was because everyone in our tour group started to call her "Auntie." Everyone looked after her as if she was their family because she was so much fun to be around. With all the beautiful photo opportunities, we also discovered many silly photo opps. Auntie Jen was right there with us, the good sport that she was, as we made her do silly things for our photo opp! She thought we were so goofy! Auntie was so easy going and kind to everyone. Her little giggle and smile put everyone in our tour group at ease, feeling like they knew her prior to the trip. I will never forget this trip, Auntie Jen. I enjoyed the time with you, Dina, and Stacey. It was such a privilege to travel with you! In the short stent of our travels, you have left an indelible mark on me with fond memories of you!

August 28 at 12:31 PM



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KH

**Khalia**(: posted:

What can i say about my Auntie Jen? Well, she is a very caring person who always puts others before herself. I got along with her very well because we both have a good sense of humor and we always made eachother laugh. We had a really special relationship and i'm gunna miss that a lot. My favorite memory with her is going to China because it was a really great expierence and i wouldn't have gone on this once in a lifetime trip without her taking me. I think about her everyday and I thank her for all the great and wonderful things she has done for me. i miss her and love her soo much. I want to be just like her when i grow up, because she is a truly amazing person.

August 27 at 9:38 AM

DO

**Donna** posted:

I have been blessed to have so many special memories with my Auntie Jen:) Auntie was a truly amazing woman who always thought of others before herself. I remember when I took her a couple of years ago to Apple Hill. She really loved that place she bought so many apple pies to bring home to give to the family. She enjoyed their pies so much we had to drive up there one more time just to buy more pies. Auntie you have left a wonderful legacy for our family and you always kept us all together. You will truly be missed.Love, Donna

August 26 at 2:58 PM

DK

**Dina Kakalia** posted:

I remember as a young girl of 10 or 11 my Aunt Jen took me to San Francisco on BART for my birthday. We had lunch and walked all over the place. I remember standing on Market Street and there was a vendor taking pictures and making them into picture buttons. She had the vendor take of picture of me so that I could remember the wonderful day we spent together. To this day I still have that picture button. There are so many precious moments and fond memories I have of her. I will always cherish those times we had together. I will miss you Auntie...

August 26 at 2:38 PM



## **Memories only last if you share them**

Join us in honoring Jen by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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