



Margaret Chi

November 29, 1928 - August 20, 2023

Margaret Che-Hsi Chi, 97, passed away peacefully in the Lenawee Medical Care Facility (LMCF) on August 20, 2023.

Born in Beijing, China, Margaret received her secondary education at the St. Joseph's middle school in Qingdao. Upon graduation, she spent a year at the bedside of her younger brother Danial who was ill in a hospital. She then, together with her sister Jane, attended the Aurora University in Shanghai where both received a B.A. degree in history of English literatures. She began her teaching career in high schools in the city of Wuxi and later Qingdao. She came to the U.S. and lived in Adrian since 1979.

St. Joseph's Middle School was an institute by the Catholic Franciscan Order, where Margaret became a catholic. Her academic excellence and her active involvement in the religious activities earned her a full scholarship at Siena Heights College of Adrian in 1949. However due to the civil war in China at the time, she was not able to obtain the passport to travel abroad. Throughout her teaching career upon graduation from Aurora University, she was a much beloved and respected teacher. However because of her religious belief, she was persecuted in every political movements in the 50's and 60's, especially during the 10 years culture revolution from 1966 to 1976. Instead of teaching she was made to work as a janitor and other hard labors as a form of punishment. She was physically beaten, mentally abused, and publicly

ashamed. She endured it all.

In 1978 with the help from her older brother Frank, she sent a letter to Siena Heights College and asked if she could still come to study with the scholarship that was offered to her 30 years ago. The then sitting college president Dr. Louis Vaccaro and the dean of graduate studies Sr. Marian Stimson responded to her inquiry enthusiastically by not only reinstating her scholarship but granting Jane, her sister, a full scholarship as well. In the following year Margaret and Jane arrived at Siena Heights College to pursue their graduate studies in Education. They both received their masters degrees with honors in 1982. She was 57. Detroit Press followed the event and reported her story “a 30-year diploma - Margaret and Jane Chi at Siena Heights,” “a dream coming true.” (Detroit Press, May 12, 1982)

Both Margaret and Jane became naturalized U.S. citizens at the turns of the century. In 2003, with their savings they purchased a home in Adrian. The Adrian Daily Telegram interviewed the sisters and celebrated with an article “After a three-decade wait, the Chi sisters love living in America.” (Adrian Daily Telegram, March 30, 2003)

Margaret worked numerous jobs, most notably she was invited to participate in meetings when Siena Heights hosted Aurora University of Shanghai to help establish an exchange program between the two institutions. (Adrian Daily Telegram, November 12, 2002)

In her retirement, she was an active member of the Adrian Senior Center. There she and Jane, known as the Ping-and-Pong during their student years at SHC, enjoyed ping-pong, shuffleboard, and other fun filled activities. They made many friends.

She survived Jane who passed away in 2013. She lived alone in her beloved

home, and received great cares from her friends, and help from Friends Who Care and Adrian Department on Aging. Early in May after an unexpected fall at night she was admitted to LMCF where she was cared until her time.

Margaret never married. She is survived by her 2 nephews Jacob and Maurice Chi, niece Gao-Xian Chi; 5 grand nephews and nieces; and 2 great grand nieces.

In celebrating her history filling life, a Funeral Mass for Margaret will be at 10:30 am on Thursday, Aug. 24 at St. Joseph Catholic Church, Adrian, with Father Michael Newman, OSFS. Preceding the mass, there will be a Vigil gathering in the church starting at 9:30 am. Burial will follow at Oakwood Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Siena Heights University. Condolences are welcome at www.WagleyFuneralHome.com.

Previous Events

Visitation

AUG **24**. 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM (ET)

Holy Family Parish , St. Joseph Campus
415 Ormsby St.
Adrian, MI 49221

Funeral Mass

AUG **24**. 10:30 AM (ET)

Holy Family Parish , St. Joseph Campus
415 Ormsby St.
Adrian, MI 49221

Burial

AUG **24** (ET)

Oakwood Cemetery
East Siena Heights Drive
Adrian, MI 49221

Tribute Wall

MW

“Margaret and Jane were such sweet ladies. We worked together in the cafeteria. For Chinese New Years we would get together to play Mahjong and eat dumplings. Our friendship endured and they can and presented to my students in the Emotional Disabilities classroom one year and wrote all of student's names with Chinese characters on book marks. Siena Heights and my life was blessed by the Margaret and Jane. Enjoy your reunion.

Marcia Welsh - August 24, 2023 at 09:02 PM

“ In Memory of Margaret Chi (part 4)

However, for people who did come close to her corner, were welcomed wholeheartedly. She'd cook them delicious Chinese food and have a wonderful time in her little cozy home. She made many, many friends at Siena Heights, in the Adrian Dominican community, and at the Adrian senior center. Her friends helped her in all aspects of life. Some she accepted, some she adopted, some she ignored, and some she refused. One might say who was there to tell her how to live her healthy life in America, she lived to be 97. On the other hand, without the tremendous outpouring loves from her friends and the communities around her, I didn't think it was possible especially in the last 10 years since Jane's passing. I want to take this opportunity to thank two of her very special friends, Lynn Buell and Maureen Clark. I don't even know where to begin speaking about what these two ladies did for her. They cooked her meal, shopped her needs, took her to the doctors, cared her when she was ill, fed her when she was not able. In her better days they came to play rummikub with her but, speaking of rummikub, Margaret would win most of the games! And when she had any needs, these ladies were always the first to be there. They came to visit her almost daily, and then they called her in the evening every single day to say hello again and good-night for 10 years! I could not do that myself. With my calls I sometimes suggested that she do this or that, but she always responded, "Oh let me check with Lynn," or "I'll ask Maureen". She entrusted them. So on behalf of the Chi family, I thank you Lynn and Maureen for all you've done for her. Thank you from deep of our hearts.

I want to close with a direct quote from a very dear friend of hers and mine, Linda Vaccaro, wife of the former president of Siena Heights College Dr. Louis Vaccaro:

We pray for Margaret's soul and know that she is free from earthy suffering and is with Him in eternal divine love. Margaret was an incredibly humble although a very accomplished woman. She was

lovely to her family and friends, always offering warmth, generosity, and hospitality. Jane was her beloved sister and they were more like twins, in spite of, their difference in age. Together they enjoyed their home, family, friends and shared their joy of life. Margaret had a keen mind and a strong curiosity for learning. She was an educated woman and loved the Adrian Dominican community where she flourished in education and faith. On a lighter note, she was a ping pong crusher, a competitive card and game player, and could ask a plethora of questions quicker than an experienced detective. We know she loved her flower and garden in her yard which made the house a home full of love. Margaret showed us all the importance of having a zest for life, to be strong through the hardships of life, to be positive to move forward, to cherish your faith, be kind, love, and keep a curious mind.

For us we will remember Margaret, a very special friend, and a sweet Chinese American woman who was always offering us a warm cup of tea - just like her.

I thank you all. And may God bless us all.

(Aug. 23, 2023 at Sandy Lake, Michigan)

Maurice Chi - August 24, 2023 at 06:10 PM

“ *In Memory of Margaret Chi (part 3)*

In the mid 1970's the relationship between China and the U.S. began to thaw. Then in 1978 a diplomatic relation was established. At the encouragement of my dad, she thought of the scholarship from Siena Heights College 30 years ago. I wasn't present in their meetings, but I remember one evening my dad pulled out an old Corona typewriter hidden under the bed, and started drafting a letter for her. I was mesmerized by the sound of the typewriter arms hitting the paper cartridge, tick-tick, tick-tick-tick and ding..... After the letter was sent, it was then a long wait. Mails at the time normally took about 2 to 3 week to reach the shore on the other side of the Pacific. We didn't know what to expect - a yes? a no? or a maybe? or nothing if the letter was lost? or more severe trouble if the letter was censored. But I remember one evening my dad returned home with his face lit. I had never seen him so happy and excited. He said, "We got a letter from the college!"

Her life, as well as ours, were forever to be changed from that evening.

At first, the sitting president of Siena Heights College responded enthusiastically to want to welcome her to the campus. Then during the prolonged formal application process, he learned that Margaret had a sister with whom their lives depend on each other. As a result the college not only reinstated her scholarship, but granted Jane a full scholarship as well. In 1979 they arrived at Siena Heights College to pursue their graduate studies in Education. They both received their masters degrees with honors in 1982. She turned 57 later that year. Detroit Free Press reported their achievement, I quote, "a dream come true," and, "Sunday's commencement will mark the end of the Chi sisters' formal American education, but the love affair with this country that started as a childhood dream will go on."

Will go on, indeed! Margaret and Jane worked numerous jobs, both

on and off campus. In 1993 they became naturalized U.S. citizens. A few years later they, with their limited incomes and savings, purchased their little dream house in Adrian where they lived happily ever after.

But “will go on”, it was easy said than done. Adapting to a new life in a new culture in a new country didn’t come easy. Years of pain and sufferance in her past life in China could be eased but could not be erased. The wounds were there, and they were there to stay. Margaret’s personality changed drastically. At her youth she was out reaching, open minded and confident. She was among the first women to ride on a bike, and to dress in a blouse and jeans. Now that she had all the freedom in the world, she became rather restrained, timid, and insecure. She refused to learn how to drive, and was even uncomfortable to shop for her cloths. She never was able to pursue another teaching career in this country. She was not a radiating sun anymore, but morphed to a stove, quietly sat in a small corner of a room. Only one who came near it, felt her warmth.

Maurice Chi - August 24, 2023 at 06:08 PM

“ In Memory of Margaret Chi (part 2)

But the political instability was at its worst point. Though the Japanese occupation ended in 1945, China soon fell into a civil war. Struggled for power were the established Nationalists and the uprising Communists. By 1948 the Nationalist government retreated from one city to another and eventually to Taiwan. As a result she was unable to get the necessary documents to travel abroad. In the meantime, my uncle Daniel had a very bad infection on his leg and was admitted to a hospital. Aunt Margaret became his nursing aide, and spent most of her days at his bedside. It was not until months later when two American marines, Lenard Israel and Robert Norman brought penicillin to my grandfather, my uncle Daniel's life was thus saved. Then she went to college together with Jane.

Margaret and Jane were admitted to the Aurora University in Shanghai, where they both majored in the History of English Literatures. They graduated 4 years later and both became English teachers in high schools. They first taught in Wuxi, a city near Shanghai, but later moved back to Qingdao due to my grandfather's illness. They taught in different high schools in Qingdao. In the 50's and 60's there were many so-called political movements in China that were aimed to purge the class enemies in all levels. Her involvement during the St. Joseph school years in the Salvation Army put her in such a bad position because the officials didn't know that the Salvation Army was a charitable organization. The word 'Army' was thought as a counter revolution armed force aimed to over throw the communist government. She was made to confess. Then her religious belief became apparent. Thus in every political movement, she was isolated and made to confess again and again. During the so-called culture revolution between 1966 and 1976, the persecution worsened. She was not allowed to teach. Instead, she was made to clean toilettes, pull heavy wheel carts like a donkey, and other hard labors. She was physically beaten, she was mentally abused, and she was constantly ashamed in front of her students.

In spite of all the humiliation she endured, she remained a respected and beloved teacher amongst most of her students. Her students were everywhere, in China and in the U.S. Some remained in contact with her to this day. By using a Chinese idiomatic expression: the peaches and the plums are everywhere.

*She had no choice but to accept whatever came upon her, but her inner self remained resilient. In the latter part of the culture revolution, she got hold of a copy of *The Count of Monte Christo* by Alexandre Dumas (in English of course, it would've been long burned had it been in Chinese.) She read it as if she were a sponge and the book were water. For over a month, every day or every few days I would come to her, and she told me the whole story of Monte Christo, a few chapters at a time. How she adored Edmond Dantès! His life story, fancied in the head of Alexandre Dumas, resonated her own which, in contrary, was so real and present. Did she draw strength from Edmond Dandès? You bet your thousands she did! I only wish I had the pen once held by the Dumas so I could write her story to the history book.*

Maurice Chi - August 24, 2023 at 06:06 PM

“ In Memory of Margaret Chi (part 1)

Dear friends. First of all thank you all for being here today. Your presence, your condolences, your thoughts and prayers mean a great deal for me, my brother Jacob who cannot be here today, and the rest of the family. It saddens me knowing not only I've lost a wonderful loving aunt, but the last member of the generation above me. I wish I could put it in words how much peace and comfort you've brought me. I thank you.

My name is Maurice. Margaret is my aunt, but she is also like a mom to me. Back in the days when I was little in China, she, my other aunt Jane, and my mom were so much alike. They were about the same height, worn about the same short hair, and dressed about the same style and color of cloth, it was difficult to tell them apart. So when my playmates or classmates saw any of them, they would yell "Mao-Mao (my nickname), your mom!" Yeah right! 2 out of 3 times they were wrong. When they saw two of them together, boy were they confused. All three of them loved me in different ways, motherly love as one put it. Many years later after my mom passed in 2000, I still got 2 moms - aunt Margaret and aunt Jane. They lived in Adrian at the time so I came to see them less often than not, but they held me very close to their hearts. I was, say 46, but felt like I was 6 whether or not I was with them. After Jane passed away 10 years ago in 2013, I had only one mom left, that was Margaret. She was 87, and slowed down quite a bit. But she still thought I was 6 - of course - one can never grow up in the eyes of its mom. So today I am here to say good-bye to my last mom, my dear aunt Margaret. I feel I finally grew up.

In my almost 70 years of knowing her, she is by any measure unremarkable, that is, remarkable without any measurable boundaries. But in this eulogy you will hear me talking both my aunts a lot. That is because not only they looked alike, but they almost share the same life together throughout their lives. They went to the same school together, attended the same university, both studied at Siena

Heights. Neither of them married. They lived together most of their lives.

She was born in Beijing, China. She had three siblings, my dad who was the oldest, my aunt Jane, and my uncle Daniel. Her childhood days were happy but unsettled, because it was a time the political instability made my grandfather, who was a medical doctor, move from one place to another seeking a safe haven to raise the children. At one fishing village when she was about 10, my dad who was 4 years older than she, took them out in a marsh where after each time it rained, they watched little white mushrooms emerging from the ground. They picked them and put them in a basket and give them to my grandfather. He loved mushrooms. They also picked wild flowers, caught crabs and dug clams. It was the happiest time of her life. The family eventually settled in the city of Qingdao. In her youth, she always looked up to my dad. My dad had a profound love to music and, hence, so did she. She played the violin and the piano.

My grandparents were protestants. But they sent their two daughters to the St. Joseph's, a catholic school by the Franciscan Order. The school was taught by the Franciscan nuns. There Margaret excelled in all academic fronts, received baptism, was confirmed, and became a catholic. She was very active in her early religious life, and joined the Salvation Army (which later in her life gave her so much trouble.) She became fluent in English. Upon graduation in 1948 the Franciscan nuns sought her a full scholarship to study abroad at Siena Heights College here in Adrian.

Maurice Chi - August 24, 2023 at 06:03 PM



“ Thank you for sharing Margaret's story...it was illuminating and wonderful. As a Siena Heights student in the mid 1980s I worked with the Chi sisters. They definitely enriched my college experience at Siena. RIP Margaret!

Scott McClure - August 24, 2023 at 10:26 AM

DK

“ Margaret was such a sweet lady . Our condolences to her family and also to her close and good friend Lynn Buell. Lynn was always there for her whatever she needed when her nephews could not be here. Lynn spent countless hours at LMCF with Margaret and during the ten years since her sister passed and Margaret was suddenly alone. Lynn was a loyal and good friend to Margaret. So very sorry for your loss Lynn! Our condolences to you my friend.
Dan and Barb Kirkendall

Dan and Barb Kirkendall - August 22, 2023 at 09:02 AM

AS

“ I remember Margaret and Jane coming to Grand Court and printing our residents names in Chinese. They were a couple of delightful sisters and our residents enjoyed their story! Go rest High Margaret reunited again with Jane, and prayers for her family.

alice stiekes - August 21, 2023 at 01:55 PM