

Jessie Grace Young

May 18, 1937 ~ April 30, 2022

Jessie Grace Young (■■■■ Yáng Zh■ng Jiàns■n): A Remembrance by Her Children Audrey, Andrew, and Dan
If you want to know just one thing about our mom, it's this: She began life with enormous challenges worthy of a Dickens novel...and then spent her life striving to bring joy and humor to others despite those ordeals.

A REMARKABLE BIRTH AND RESCUE

Jessie was the daughter of An-Teh Chang and Julia (Tso Yao) Chang neé Bong. She was born on May 18th, 1937 in Shanghai, China—a kitten-sized triplet delivered two months prematurely and barely alive at just over two pounds. Her identical sisters did not survive. Although deemed beyond saving, her grandmother Nabu Bong rescued and cared for Jessie, nursing her back to health with dropperfuls of soy milk. Throughout her life, Jessie expressed deep love and gratitude for these early years with her grandmother.

THE ORPHANAGE

She lived at home until age six, when our grandfather, who worked at the Christian Children's Fund, put her into one of their orphanages, where she lived for five years, and then in a boarding school for three more. As Jessie recounts, "my father said he had too many girls to feed."

These were harrowing times for Jessie. On meager bowls of rice, a mouthful of vegetables per meal, and occasional morsels of meat, her tiny stature and frailty were worsened by malnutrition.

She recounted to us the cruelty of her older classmates (and had many scars on her hands to prove it), but also the kindness of a few compassionate teachers. "I hid in the school library from the other girls," she remembered, "and I was so afraid of the salted bodies and loud funeral bells in front of the Buddhist mortuary next door."

Jessie remembers, during this time, visiting her family on holidays. She had four older siblings—Mary, Lily, James, and Jewel—and two younger, Jasmine and Jansen. "The house was full, so I slept on cushions on the floor," she told us, and spent much of the time with the housekeepers, who treated her sympathetically.

In 1937, the Japanese military invaded and occupied Shanghai. Jessie recalls hearing about Chinese citizens being beaten or shot for walking too slowly in front of occupation soldiers. Despite these experiences, years later, she came to love Japanese food, culture, and people.

THE ESCAPE

After the Allied liberation in 1945, which destroyed swaths of Shanghai, the situation went from bad to worse. Shortly after the 1949 revolution, Mao's communist party swept through the ravaged city, arresting dissidents and later starving them in "reeducation" camps. Political divides fragmented families, and Jessie's uncle scrutinized her father, eager to inform.

In these last days of imperial China, Jessie reflected: "I was so afraid. Fires and gunshots everywhere. I hid under a

desk with the last teacher in the school."
Jessie's father paid the border guards to allow his family entrance into British Hong Kong. With the help of a school teacher posing as their mother, Jessie, Jasmine, and Jansen made a perilous crossing through the gates, just days before the Iron Curtain fell.

THE BLOSSOMING

Jessie's teenage years in Hong Kong glimmered with hope and transformation.
She attended a British girl's school where she befriended classmates, painted traditional Chinese watercolors, wrote English and Chinese calligraphy with elegance, and played Beethoven and Mozart on the piano. She wore new clothing for the first time in her life. A petite four-foot-eleven beauty, Jessie quickened the hearts of many dashing young men.

AMERICA, MARRIAGE, AND FAITH

In 1957, at the age of 20 years old, Jessie emigrated from Hong Kong to Virginia with her parents and two of her siblings, Jasmine and Jansen. Her brother James and sister Jewel were already in the US each having come separately. Within a year, all had settled in Los Angeles, eventually finding home in the San Fernando Valley. Later in the 1980s, the siblings who remained in China, Lily and Mary, joined the family in the U.S.
In 1961, Jessie met Paul at the "Chinese for Christ" fellowship and married within a year. Theirs was a classic "opposites attract" story. Paul was an introspective and devout Christian who worked twelve-hour days as a graphic designer and art director. Jessie was an ebullient, social, and mischievous spirit (though she never drank alcohol). Despite their differences, for nearly 60 years they loved and supported each other through many emotional storms and calms.
In 1963, Paul and six fellow Christians founded the Mandarin Baptist Church of Los Angeles. In this nurturing community, the two found many lifelong friends.

MOTHERHOOD, SACRIFICE, AND LOVE

Audrey was born in 1963, Andrew a year later, and Dan in 1971. For many years, Jessie was a stay-at-home mom taking care of us kids and managing the finances for the family and for Paul’s advertising design business.
Paul's work was fraught with the uncertainties of a freelance career. So Jessie, with minimal English skills, jumped into secretarial training. She was a phenomenally fast typist and impeccable with numbers.
She worked the cash register at an Asian grocery store for a short stint, then began her career at United California Bank (which later merged with First Interstate, and then Wells Fargo). She befriended vice-presidents and entry-level clerks alike, and was beloved by her entire department for her daily cheer and hosting of co-worker birthday parties.
In 1986, with the children out of the house, Paul and Jessie moved south to Rancho Palos Verdes, where Paul worked for an advertising firm, and Jessie began a decade of daily four-hour round-trip commutes to her work in the San Fernando Valley—not for her own financial comfort but to support Dan in his education and later success in business.
"I remember us being so poor we had to count change in the laundry room," Dan reflects. "Mom worked insane hours so we could have food and clothes. I remember her pain and the tears in her eyes."

JOY IN THE AUTUMN YEARS

In 1996, Dan and Tiffany brought Jessie and Paul to Salt Lake City, Utah, to retire. After first moving in with Dan, Tiff, and their infant son Jake, they settled into a condo with Dan's help and, later, a beautiful townhouse in Park City. They spent many gratifying years with their grandson Jake and granddaughter Nyah, and looked forward to visits with Audrey and Irwin's sons Matt and Alan, all of whom they cherished dearly.
In 2014, Jessie and Paul moved to the Atria retirement community, later called Cedarwood, in Sandy, Utah. Andrew would visit on the couch for weeks at a time and found the staff to be "angels on earth" that deserve to be honored here. Jessie befriended residents and staff, many who confided that she was "a darling and favorite." She was especially grateful for the staffers Denise, Norma, Piedad, Ryan, Everly, Ralph, Becky, Henry, Jason, Brett, Liz, Maria, and Rosario.
Jessie was a popular resident who chatted with everyone and often handed out fortune cookies in the dining hall. Once, she taught the house chef Derek how to make her famous shrimp stir-fry—which the kitchen staff cooked up

to the delight of all the residents.

Over the years, Audrey and Andrew made many trips from Southern California and Colorado, respectively, to spend time with the family in Utah. Daniel, Tiff, and the grandchildren visited nearly every weekend with Jessie and Paul, who loved dinner outings. Jessie was especially fond of Chinese dim sum.

IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS....

So, what was Jessie like, day to day? Some glimpses:

• Early in our childhoods, Mom was a, well, "less-than-admirable" cook (our friends snuck many a meal into the garbage bin) but grew to become a superb one. She made legendary zongzi (Chinese rice tamales that took days to prep), pot stickers, savory beef roasts, duck, bok choi, steamed sea bass, grilled wings, sesame fried rice, and more.

• Gift-giving was one of her great joys, a way of expressing her love when words failed her.

• In Southern California, she nurtured and grew fruit-laden trees to the astonishment of her neighbors. Her secret: a backyard bucket and keeping us kids well-hydrated….

• She loved thrift store treasure-hunting for gifts, apparel, and shoes that fit her tiny stature and feet. Andrew took her on many epic, all-day, multi-store shopping sprees.

• She adored plushie stuffed animals and kept an overflowing menagerie by her bed.

• She was born in the Chinese Year of the Mouse—an optimistic, tidy, and energetic archetype—and fit the bill in many ways. She squirreled away trinkets, money, and snacks in every hidden nook and cranny in the house—and in dozens of fancy boxes and jars.

• She had an itch for slot machines that she would gratify every few years when Dan would take her to Las Vegas. She loved the scratch-off lottery tickets that Andrew would "smuggle" into Utah (a non-gambling state).

• She was an indoor city girl most of her life, but when pregnant with Dan, went for vigorous walks. In her later years she brought her houseplants onto the balcony and sat with them in the sun every day.

• She was astonished by her motherhood. After we'd grown up, she'd often say "I can't believe you big kids came out of me!"

• She often wondered what her triplet sisters were like and hoped to reunite with them in heaven.

• She dealt with lifelong health issues and the emotional pain of childhood trauma, but always managed to offer kindness and joy to others despite those challenges.

Jessie Grace Young passed away on April 30th, 2022 just shy of age 85. Through it all, Jessie was truly full of GRACE and forever YOUNG.

Here on planet Earth to remember and celebrate her life are: her three children Dan (m. Tiffany, with children Nyah and Jacob and granddaughter Jinora); Audrey (m. Irwin Wong, with children Matt and Alan); and Andrew. She is also survived by her siblings James, Jewel, Jasmine, and Jansen; and by her nephews, nieces, and their children.

As Dan recently wrote: "Thank you for believing in me and being the best mom I could ever have. I love you and will continue to do what you taught me." Know that he speaks for all of us!

Memorial services will be held on Saturday, June 18, 2022 at Larkin Sunset Gardens, 1950 East Dimple Dell Road, Sandy, UT. A visitation will be held from 12:30 - 1:30 p.m. Service at 2:00 p.m.

If you would like to watch the services online, please click on the blue "Watch Services" button above. You will be prompted to login to your Zoom account. To sign up for your own free account, visit the Zoom sign-up page and enter your email address. You will receive an email from Zoom (no-reply@zoom.us). In this email, click Activate Account. The recorded services will be available within 24 hours of the services and will remain on the website for 30 days.