

# Ontario Maryknollers

Official Newsletter of Maryknoll Convent Former Students (Ont.)



## A Special Tribute to Ms. Gertrude Chan

by Wendy Man



Today's newsletter is a special edition dedicating to Ms. Gertrude Chan. Gertrude was our Ontario alumni's Founding President in 1984. She served in our committee over many years as a liaison between the Maryknoll Sisters at the Motherhouse, former teachers and former students. She was also our newsletter editor and webmaster. Gertrude was a diligent learner. Over the years, she kept learning new computer skills and applied her artistic sense to design our newsletters and Christmas cards to the Sisters. She also ensured all the important news happening to our members, Maryknoll

alumni around the world and the Maryknoll Sisters were posted on our website.

I joined the committee in 2011. I was amazed about Gertrude's great memory. She could remember when a former student studied in MCS and all the great stories happened with her in the past. When the Ontario alumni organized the Worldwide Reunion in 2014 and our 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2019, Gertrude played an important role to help gather all the former students and teachers to join our special events. Our committee always had a belief: "If Gertrude started calling our members to attend an event, all the tickets will be sold out soon." Gertrude was a great mentor and gave me guidance when I served as the President over the last 3 terms.



[Motherhouse Trip 2019 Video](#)

In the past few weeks, we collected USD\$5,000 donation from our members to the Maryknoll Sisters in Gertrude's memory. Our treasurer, Patricia Wu, will send the money order to New York in the coming days. She will also list all the donor's names so that Sister Teresa Leung can acknowledge each of the donors. Our committee members and I will surely miss Gertrude dearly. May she rest in peace.

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# Memories of My Big Sister, Gertrude

by Pearl Chan Tam '63



My sister Gertrude was the first born in the family, and she took that role very seriously. Gertrude and Winnie were born before the war, so they were referred to as the “older ones.” My two younger brothers and I were born after the war.

When I was in Primary 5 (Grade 5), Big Sister entered Northcote Teachers' Training College (NTC). When I was in Form 1 (Grade 7), Big Sister started her teaching career at Maryknoll. I was in two of her classes – Geography and Handwork (arts and crafts). I had to work extra hard to earn my marks because I didn't want anyone to insinuate, or worse, assume that I was privy to insider information!

Even though Gertrude enjoyed teaching, and was an excellent teacher, that profession was not her first love. If she had had her way, she would have gone into nursing, with her good friend, Bernadette. She sat for the entrance exam at Queen Mary Hospital, and came out top of the class. But my parents vetoed her first choice and encouraged her to go into education instead.

Big Sister was very good to our parents and did a lot for them. I realized the extent of her helpfulness when I was going through her documents. I discovered all the tax returns, letters and application forms that she filled for them when they were in Canada. Later, when our mom was in the Rehab hospital and then the nursing home, Gertrude visited her every day and took on the job of



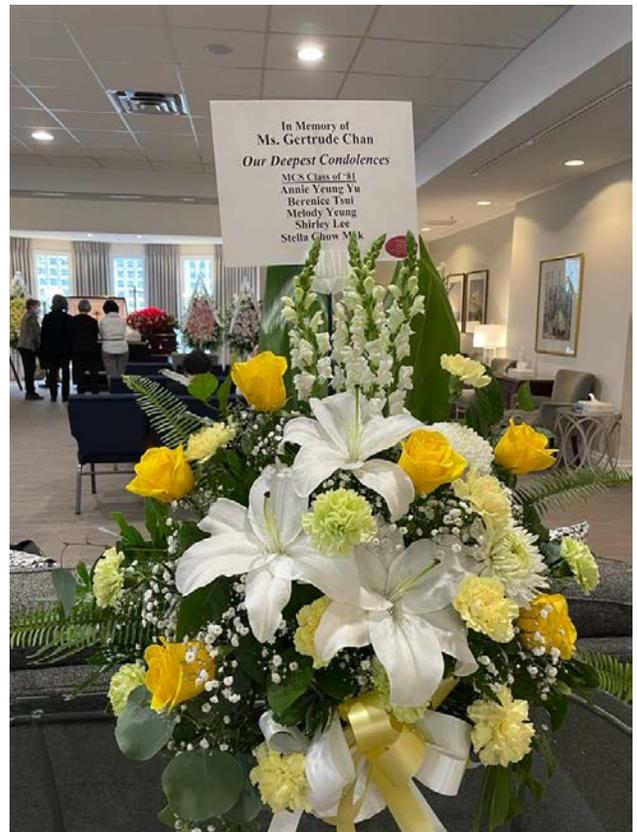
hiring sitters to look after her. All this was done willingly and without complaints. That is why I didn't mind doing things for her, and doing it with the same dedication and selflessness that she gave to mom and dad.

When Big Sister was in the hospital and later, in the palliative care unit at Bridgepoint, it became obvious that she was not going to go home again. I began to check her phone messages, and returned some calls, informing the callers about her situation. I also had to go



through some of her stuff. It was then that I found out the extent of her helpfulness. She had several sets of keys, none of which belonged to her. I think she used to check the mail and do things for friends who are living abroad. Her neighbours also told me how much she helped them, and MCS Former Students' Association mentioned how much she did for the newsletter. All I know is that she used to pick up prescriptions and groceries for friends, and delivered them. She also took her neighbours grocery shopping, because many of them didn't drive. That's why her days were usually busy, but not hectic.

Today is Saturday, July 10, and my Big Sister has been gone for more than five weeks. I can't believe it. Somehow it seems that she is still here, and all I need to do is pick up the phone and call. It will take some time for the fact to sink in, that she is gone, forever. However, her memory lives on, in the minds and hearts of all whom she touched.



# **“Ode to Gertrude”**

by Winnie Chan Ng '57

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*To Lily and Asa Chan, their most blissful moment came  
When first-born Gertrude Kai May arrived in the fall of 1936.  
Daddy's girl was doted upon and pampered by all, especially by Little, her 3<sup>rd</sup> Grandma  
Who adored everything about her, even her goo goo ga ga.*

*Peace and serenity was interrupted by the Second World War.  
Fear and famine descended upon the British Colony of Hong Kong.  
Even Mama needed to, for the first time, join the work force to bring home some bacon  
To ensure the family's welfare was not forsaken.*

*When War terminated in 1945 Gertrude was ready for formal education.  
Mama enrolled her in the prestigious all-girls Maryknoll Convent School.  
There the Sisters taught her not only the A, B, C and 1, 2, 3;  
They also instilled into her the basic virtues of faith, hope and charity.*

*Ten years of happy days Gertrude spent at her school.  
She liked her teachers, her classmates and above all, the lovely swimming pool.  
The nuns, especially Sister Mary Eucharista, had a huge impact on her.  
This may well be why she followed their footsteps and trained to become a teacher.*

*Two years of exemplary teaching won her the scholarship to further her education in the U.K.  
At its completion Miss Chan was briefly seconded to tutor at H.K.U. and then resumed her teaching  
at Maryknoll.*

*Thousands of young ladies she had inspired.  
Many of whom still kept in touch long after she retired.*

*Political rumblings in Hong Kong brought forth a brand new chapter.  
In '78 Gertrude decided to resign from Maryknoll and emigrate to Toronto, Canada.  
Her interest and expertise once again drew her into education.  
After a decade of involvement, she finally threw in her towel and retired with great satisfaction. .*

*Now what was Gertrude like? In case you want to know.  
She was diligent, determined, dedicated, disciplined and of course very thorough.  
However she could be obstinate, irritable, finicky and mighty hard to please.  
But if one were to stay in her good books one should and would be at ease.*

*Gertrude, your earthly mission has been fully accomplished.  
Your place in heaven is now securely established.  
Mom and Dad are there waiting with open arms to welcome you.*

# Happy Moments Down Memory Lane

