

About Nancy (Shu Wen) Yun, (in Chinese – 鄢恕文)

By David Horn, husband.

This website is a memorial to Nancy Yun, who passed away from cancer on February 27, 2018, at our home in San Jose, California.

Nancy and I were schoolmates in high school for six years and classmates for two. We went to one of the best high schools in Beijing, China. Our year had four parallel classes of 40 students per class. She was a Star. She achieved the top academic grades out of all 160 students every one of the six years we were at that school. She was also very talented and a member of a choir that was frequently broadcast on National Radio and TV. She was also very beautiful. I had a huge crush on her and wrote her a love-letter. She wrote me a sweet reply but turned me down. At that time high school romances were strongly discouraged by the authorities. Students were supposed to concentrate on getting a good education and romances were seen as a distraction.

But there was a dark side to her life. After graduating from high school, many of our classmates were accepted by the best colleges and universities in Beijing. But she was not accepted by any of her choices. Why? Her father was a high-ranking finance expert before the 1949 revolution. In 1949 he opted to stay in Beijing and work for the new China, rather than go to Taiwan. In spite of this patriotism, in the early 50's he was branded with the title of “Counter-Revolutionary” and sent to the countryside for “re-education”. The stigma was the reason Nancy was not accepted by any university in Beijing.

At that time the authorities pressured the children of “Politically In-Correct” parents to draw a firm line of distinction between themselves and their parents. Nancy had the principle and courage to love and support her parents. Her mother was beaten to death by the “Red Guards” in the “Cultural Revolution” because, as a teacher of the English language, she was “obviously” a foreign agent. After the “Cultural Revolution”, she was successful in getting her father officially exonerated. That took a lot of courage and tenacity.

But she did get into college eventually after all. She was walking in Beijing when she came upon an event at which colleges from Xinjiang were recruiting students from Beijing. She spoke to a recruiter and told him her story. They checked up on her grades and could not believe what a catch they had

made. She was accepted by the Teacher's Training College in YiLi, right at the extreme west of Xinjiang, close to the border with Kazakhstan. She was a Star.

Being in Xinjiang during the so-called “Cultural Revolution” was actually an advantage for her, as this remote area was shielded from the worst of the turmoil of that terrible period. I saw her once in Beijing during the Cultural Revolution, when she came for a visit.

We both married others, had children, and got divorced. She worked as a teacher in the far west of China, and eventually made it back to Beijing. Her older daughter, who was already in the USA, facilitated her coming to the USA in 1991.

I re-connected with Nancy again after I visited Beijing on a business trip in 1992. I had a re-union with many of our high-school classmates, and they told me that Nancy was divorced and living in Los Angeles. I contacted her and invited her to visit me in New Jersey. She came in April 1993. We were married in December, 93.

Those 25 years with Nancy were the best years of my life. She really enriched my life and brought me great happiness. We lived in New Jersey, Maryland, and moved to California in 2006. She did some teaching of Chinese Literature and Art at Howard Community College in Maryland for a time, but the effort it took from both of us was so great that she dropped it. Her standards were just too high. She just devoted herself to making a great life for both of us. I have been an enthusiastic amateur photographer since childhood. She initially tagged along with me on my photo trips. Then she took up a camera herself and became just as enthusiastic as I am. We joined camera clubs and she started winning contests, often beating me. As an engineer, I had an edge on the technology of photography, but she had the edge on Artistic Intuition.

Where did she get her artistic talent? DNA. Nancy Yun was a direct descendant of one of China's most famous artists – Yun Shou Ping, who is credited with creating a new style of painting. He lived from 1633 to 1690 over the end of the Ming dynasty and into the early Qing Dynasty. He is regarded as one of the “Six Masters” of the Qing period (1644 to 1911).

But Nancy was not just relying on her DNA. She was very ambitious and worked extremely hard on her photography. She won a lot of high awards for her work. Not just at our own camera club, but also at higher levels, including international contests.

She also loved music and dancing, travel, good food, concerts, ballet, museums, etc. She played the piano, and was a member of several local choirs and dance groups. She was even in a singing performance in the Golden Hall in Vienna.

From October 4th to 8th, 2017 we were on a photography club field trip to the mountains of Eastern California, when she had two nights of vomiting and stomach pain.

After we came back home the same thing happened on October 11th. I took her to the hospital Emergency Room. They discovered that the exit from the stomach to the intestine was blocked by a growth. A biopsy indicated cancer.

She had massive surgery that removed her gall bladder and parts of the stomach, liver, small and large intestines.

The cancer was identified as cancer of the gall bladder – a particularly aggressive type.

She started Chemo-Therapy, and had many complications.

She asked me not to inform anyone outside immediate family about her condition. I had to obey her. She suffered greatly and fought the cancer with great courage. Her two daughters came from the US East Coast, and I was with her 24/7 until she passed away peacefully with her daughters and myself at her side.

After Nancy passed away I notified our old friends and classmates, I have received such a torrent of grief and love and support and praise for her, it was overwhelming. Less than a day after I notified our old classmates in Beijing, I received a long document with a collection of support messages and reminiscences from over 30 old classmates.

On March 17, 2018, we held a memorial meeting to Celebrate Nancy's life.

She had many friends. Every one of her friends that I know loved her.

She had a wonderful personality. She was outspoken and honest, caring, principled, courageous, talented, hardworking, and modest.

I miss her and grieve for her death and suffering. Life will never be the same without her.

This web site is a collection of a small number of her photographs. Over the 25 years we were together we travelled extensively – sometimes just the two of us, sometimes with family, sometimes with a cruise or photo-tour. When we arrived at an interesting site, we often moved around separately, because

we found that if we moved together we would often take very similar images. We learned a lot from each other.