

## Grateful Tribute to Jim Fong by Randy Fong

It is a daunting task to adequately describe my Dad and pay tribute to him in five short minutes. But here we go. I am grateful that on Dad's last full day when he was still alert and conversing that I was able to visit with him in the hospital and say thank you on behalf of Jocie, Marie and myself. I know Dad is listening from above so if you don't mind I would like to continue my conversation with him:

Thank you Dad for sharing your life story with us and teaching us to be grateful for all the good things we have. I remember you telling us about growing up in Chinatown during the Depression and the air raid drills during World War II. Your family with seven brothers did not have much and lived in a two room apartment on Grant Avenue. You served our country in the military and then after returning to California you overcame discrimination as you applied for jobs and looked for a house to buy. And you would always remind us that compared to your generation, how good we have it now.

Thank you Dad for living the American Dream, for providing for us, encouraging our independence and supporting our dreams.

Thank you Dad for being reliable, steady and always there to help us or others.

Thank you Dad for teaching us how to make good decisions. You were very practical, analytical, organized, and never impulsive. You loved going to Costco on your weekly treks, because you knew they always had the best prices and snacks.

Thank you Dad for your sense of humor and constantly teasing us and Mom. I can still picture the little twinkle in your eye when you were being mischievous.

Thank you Dad for showing us how to be friendly and make other people feel at ease. No one was a stranger to you. I didn't realize till I was older how much you liked to talk. And you were able to keep conversations going by injecting "Anyway" and then moving on to another topic!

So, anyway, thank you Dad for being unconventional at times. This includes falling in love with a pretty Japanese girl in Tokyo and then marrying her even though we just fought a war with Japan. It includes buying an RV to go on many camping trips full of happy memories when we were young and exposing us to interesting and beautiful places in the West. It profoundly changed our lives. It led to me having a career with the National Park Service and now your granddaughter Catherine is working for Yosemite.

Thank you Dad for being very protective of the family and always concerned for our safety and well-being, including your two granddaughters. We three siblings can remember the endless times you would remind us about maintaining our vehicles and getting the oil changed. And avoiding bad neighborhoods. And not doing anything risky.

And I learned something new about you Dad when Carol and I spent time with my former Sunday School teacher, Bob Fonda, up in Redwood National Park a few years ago. When I was younger Bob piloted small planes and took the teen boys from the church on plane trips. Bob knew I wanted to fly with him, but when he asked why you wouldn't let me go, you replied, "But he's my only son!"

Thank you Dad for being a role model of a kind and gentle person. You were always willing to help out other people who needed help. One example was Uncle Nelson, Fong brother #3. You and mom told me he was probably the smartest of the 7 Fong brothers, but tragically he suffered from schizophrenia and ended up living most of his life in VA hospitals or halfway houses. I remember how you would take me as a young boy on visits with him and bring him new clothes to wear. I think you took me along not only to provide you company, but to show me how to be a kind and caring person.

Thank you Dad for showing us what it is to have a loving marriage. You and Mom had a lot of fun together and supported each other in raising us your extremely well-behaved model children. You and mom were a wonderful team and you let her keep you in line.

Thank you Dad for taking the entire family to church and for embodying your faith in how you lived and treated others. You taught us to always do the right thing and to always be honest. The only exception was how you drove in San Francisco. You would double park in Chinatown and at your 70<sup>th</sup> birthday party one of your work colleagues shared how one day he was riding with you in downtown San Francisco, and he exclaimed, "Jim you can't make a left turn here, it's illegal!", and you replied, "Yes, I can. I'm Chinese".

It's a good thing that Dad was born Chinese because he loved eating Chinese food with friends and family. Thank you Dad for taking us to so many great Chinese restaurants. This is reflected in one of the Jim Fong quiz questions I asked at your 70<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration:

Jim Fong's hobbies include:

- a. Eating at Chinese restaurants.
- b. Finding good Chinese restaurants.
- c. Telling other people about the good Chinese restaurants.
- d. All of the above.

You all know what the correct answer was. I could go on and on, but I need to close now.

Finally, Dad thank you for your life, your love for us and everything you gave to us. I miss you tons already, but I look forward to seeing you again one day. In the meantime please give Mom a big hug for the three of us and the rest of the family. I love you Dad.