

Celebrating the Life of Syn Duk Choi

Ernest Patton
January 30, 2016



Dr. Syn Duk Choi passed away peacefully surrounded by her loving family on January 28, 2016 at the Anne Arundel Medical Center in Annapolis, Maryland at the age of 95. Born on January 27, 1921 in North Pyongan Province in Korea, she was a dedicated mother, brilliant scholar, respected teacher and most importantly God's faithful daughter.

Under Japan's colonial rule, the Korean people were forced to participate in Shinto worship. Nevertheless, she kept her Christian faith, despite facing persecution. In January of 1942, she married Dr. Soo Jang Joo, M.D. and lived in her husband's hometown, Hamheung City, in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula. By 1948, her family moved to Seoul in order to take refuge from the communist regime in the North. Unfortunately, when the Korean War broke out in 1950, she lost her husband, who was taken captive by the North Korean Army. Then as a widow, with four children in a war-torn country, she faced overwhelming adversities alone. Even in the face of so many difficulties, Dr. Choi always overcame them with a victorious spirit guided by her dedication to her family.

In 1954, her faith led her to join the Unification Church, where she was actively engaged in various church activities, including as the president of "Sunday Club," a weekly gathering of English speakers and others meant for internal guidance and fellowship.

Eventually, in order to provide for her family, she sought opportunities in America. She received an International House fellowship from the University of Chicago, where she earned her Master's degree in Social Sciences in 1958. She came back to Korea and worked at the U.S. Operations Mission to Korea as an education advisor from 1958 to 1962.

Dr. Choi led a successful career as a professor and a scholar. She became a tenured professor at Ewha Womans University in 1973. She further expanded her intellectual pursuits at Princeton University in New Jersey, from 1968 to 1969 and then Southern Illinois University, from 1969 to 1970; eventually she received her PhD from Ewha Womans University in 1975. From 1976 to 1980 and again from 1985 until her retirement on February 19, 1987, Dr. Choi served as the Director of the Department of Sociology at the Ewha Womans University. Also, she was elected as the 23rd and 24th President of the Korean Sociological Association in 1980 and 1981.

In 1999, she immigrated to the United States to be closer with her family. In America, she actively contributed to her community, for which she was honored in the Senior Leadership Hall of Fame in the Chicago City Hall, as well as given the community leadership award by the Chicago Korean Community. She became a naturalized US Citizen on March 20, 2006. In 2007, she was appointed as an "Ambassador for Peace" by the Universal Peace Federation in Chicago, IL.

Dr. Choi is survived by her two sons and two daughters and their families: Dr. Douglas DM Joo, former President and Chairman of The Washington Times, and his wife Myung Mi Joo and their children, Hoon Hwi and his wife Yeonsil and two sons Eungman and Eungdo, Hoon Pal and his wife Hwa Sun and their son Eung Joon, and Hoon Chul; Mr. Dong Rin Joo and his two children, Eun Young (Joo) and her husband Byungjin Yoon and their children Yeseul and Yein, and Do Hwi; Dr. Soonja Juh; and Ms. Soon Hee (Juh) and her husband Mr. Woo Sung Hong and their two sons, Souck Rai and his wife Keun Kyoung and their children Kyoung Eui and Yon Eui, and Souck Hwan and his wife Young Ju and their children Kyoung Seo and Kyoung Yeun.

The Seonghwa ceremony will be held on Monday, February 1, 2016 at Fairfax Memorial Funeral Home 9902 Braddock Road Fairfax, VA 22032. There will a time to greet the family from 9 AM with the services from 10 AM. For more information contact Rev. Ernest Patton or Rev. Young Chul Jang.