

DR. AND MRS. EN SEONG HO: A REMINISCENCE

by
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I first met Dr. and Mrs. En Seong Ho when I married Norman Soong in October of 1936 and lived in Nanking for a short eight months before I left Nanking to meet my parents, two sisters and a brother, who had arrived in Hong Kong in July. Dr. Ho was my mother-in-law Ella Ho Soong's oldest brother. So Dr. Ho was Norman's maternal uncle.

The apartment Norman and I rented was in a new compound called Pan Ch'iao Hsin Ts'un 板橋新村. It was separated from the large Ho compound by a small lane. Norman and I could go to the Hos' through their vegetable garden which spread out behind their spacious mansion.

Dr. Ho's office was in the front where his patients waited. He was the only western dentist of repute in Nanking, having had the best training possible under a western dentist in Hawaii. He was so popular and necessary to the dental well-being of the upper-class residents that even Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek had to use his services. A story that we all delighted in was his refusing to take the Gissimo on demand but made him wait like everybody else for his turn in the true American ideal of fairness and equality which was the doctor's creed. And, to our amusement and surprise, the head of the Republic of China had to put up with Dr. Ho's principled stand.

Dr. Ho was a short, stocky man of few words. But he knew exactly what he stood for, what he wanted, and all about him obeyed him without demurring. He was not given to social amenities, but one day he asked me what I needed for our home. We had just the bare necessities because we had to make do on Norman's meager salary from the China Press of Shanghai. I said I could use a desk. Not too many days later, a small, well-built desk arrived and stood in our parlor, a solitary symbol of hope for more prosperous days ahead.

I saw more of Mrs. Ho than her husband. She was a sister of Dr. K. F. Li, a close friend of my father's in the Bo Wong Tong and Mun Lun School of Honolulu. She told me that when she first went to Honolulu to marry Dr. Ho, she had a terrible time. My mother-in-law was asked to help her with the manual chores and other adjustments to an immigrant existence. Ella was not very patient (she became a very strict and successful public school teacher, one of the pioneer Christian Hakka girls who shocked the Chinese community by getting an American education and earning a good living!), Mrs. Ho told me with a rueful smile. She, like many well-to-do Chinese, had been spoiled by cheap servant labor in her home country. It is no wonder that she worked hard to convince Dr. Ho to go to Nanking and open a practice there.

The decision was a wise one. The life in Nanking was one of prosperity, opportunity, prestige, and luxury that few Chinese in Hawaii enjoyed. And she had at her behest all the servants she needed.

During the years before the Japanese invasion in December of 1937, the city of Nanking was humming with the energy of a youthful nation, eager

