

The Apricot Outlook of Katherine Koon Hung Wong

Dennis W. C. Wong

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The Apricot Outlook of Katherine Koon Hung Wong is a son's loving tribute to his hardworking, multicultural mother.

Dennis W. C. Wong's memoir about his relationship with his mother, *The Apricot Outlook of Katherine Koon Hung Wong*, first covers her experiences in her own words, after Wong questions her about her life.

This book began with a psychology term paper. For that work, Wong transcribed recordings of his mother describing her family and the basic story of her life. She revealed that she was born in Honolulu, Hawaii, as one of eight children.

Though Katherine's style of speaking is direct, a picture of her difficult childhood nonetheless emerges: she recalls her sister dying in her arms, sharing a bedroom with her parents and three sisters, and starting work at the family's laundry business at the age of nine. She does not complain about or lament the hardships among these memories; instead, she presents them as simple facts.

Upon her marriage, Katherine's home life became more multicultural, featuring both Hawaiian traditions and Chinese ones. This multiculturalism extends to her narration, in which her languages overlap; the book's glossary of terms is helpful in understanding the intricacies of family names and food references, as are Wong's internal explanations.

Dennis made his last recording in 2009, when his mother was at a rehabilitation center. She is remembered as having relished each visit with her children; throughout the recordings, her steady work ethic and strength are front and center.

Inspired by Katherine's perspective on the importance of family connections, Wong attempted to locate his family in China after she passed. He writes about going through old newspapers and media for mentions of his family; of attending a Chinese genealogy class; and of attempting to locate his family village. These efforts were not without their difficulties, especially because of complications with family names. At the end of the book, these efforts to reconnect with Chinese family members are unresolved—a matter for continued research and travel.

Obituaries and poems for Katherine and other departed family members are included in the book to emphasize the depth of her family's love and appreciation for her. Pages of photographs embellish her chronicle, picturing her both as a new mother and while she ate cake on her eighty-third birthday.

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DELIA STANLEY (December 11, 2020)

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