



## A Testimony of MRS. JULIA LEE TAN (Founder of Grace Christian High School Manila, Philippines; 1907-1993)



### **“A Widow's Mite”**

#### PART 2

##### **(15) Christ-Centered Emphasis**

Principal Mrs. Julia Lee Tan, came from three generations of Christian families, and was involved with Christian education for some 65 years. Because of her own heritage, she wished for every student the same spiritual heritage also. She emphasized not only the school's group Bible classes and chapels, but, more importantly, the students' personal spiritual life and growth. Some 70-80% of our students were non-Christians. But before they graduate, 90-95% have accepted Christ as their personal Saviour. Untold numbers of parents and community friends have also come to know the Lord through the school.

##### **(16) American Missionaries & Staff**

Aside from Christian education, the Grace Christian High School is recognized today for its curricular excellence. In earlier years, the school had many American missionaries.

Among those missionaries who were with GRACE for some 30 years were: Robert and Ella Bergstresser, Dwight and Darlene Johnson, Earl and Ruth Bittenbender, Ralph and Alva Romine, Ray and Alice Kalbach, Edna Johnson, Helen Kornfield, Roland Kincher, and Dale and Sharon Gregory.



The spiritual teaching, influence and Christian leadership of the missionaries in the school have produced many long-lasting spiritual fruits. Because of them, Grace Christian High School also became known for its strong English standards. And the same emphases continue.

Most of our school administrators and faculty have been with the school for over 30 years, among whom are Mrs. Virginia Tiu Khoo, Mrs. Wang Chua Siu Hian, Miss Charing King, Mr. & Mrs. Rodrigo Gomez, and Mrs. To Yap Siu Yong. About 70% of all students at GRACE studied from Kindergarten to Senior High. There is an atmosphere of "family and loyalty" at GRACE.

## **(17) Key Ingredients: Love & Care**

And how did Mrs. Julia Tan, as head of this big "family," bring everyone together?

"LOVE" is what many people have noticed whenever they come to GRACE. Mrs. Julia Tan literally considered the school as her home, being its 24-hour-a-day loving "mother and guardian." Many school matters, regardless of how major or minor, received her loving attention and experienced guidance.

Residing inside the school, Mrs. Tan would arise every morning before 5:00 a.m. for Bible reading, prayers, hymns and meditations, and then face the day with joy, confidence and inner strength. Every night, when everyone else had left, one could still see her lovingly involved in school affairs.

Mrs. Tan not only loved the students, she also cared for the welfare of the school's 300 teachers and staff. She was deeply involved in their personal lives, whether in joy or in sorrow. She was particularly burdened for the spiritual life of the leadership, that the leaders appropriate strength from God, the Fountainhead of all wisdom and strength.



## **(18) Strong Christian Principles**

Mrs. Tan administered the school, based on lifelong convictions and principles. She insisted that every teacher must be a born-again Christian or at least a seeker of salvation in Christ. And every teacher must actively participate in the school's spiritual activities. This principle has always been maintained, despite the ever-present urgent need for qualified teachers.

Another example is not to allow sports activities on Sunday, which would clash with Sunday school and church worship time and activities. Such measures may appear stringent, especially in this third largest Christian school in the world, but it shows the moral and spiritual calibre of its founder and principal Mrs. Julia Lee Tan.

In her 45 years of Christian education at GRACE, Mrs. Tan has been through untold hardships, tears, dangers and sacrifices. But to her, hardships are blessings in disguise. As Christ said: *"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33).

## **(19) School Succession: son Dr. James**

Mrs. Julia Tan's insight and convictions extended even to the early appointment of her future successor. In the year of 1977, in Rockville Maryland, at the home of her son James, and with all her children present, Mrs. Julia Tan asked each of her children for long-term



commitment to the Grace Christian High School in Manila.

All of the children loved the Lord and were serving Him in our various professions abroad. But it was brother James who finally said "Yes" to Mrs. Julia Tan. He and his wife had previously returned from the States to serve in the school full time from 1969-75.

In July 1986, after graduating with a Doctor of Science degree from George Washington University, Dr. James Tan and his wife Judith, and their children, immediately returned to Manila to serve at Grace.

### **(20) Four Illustrations--Turtle, Horse, Cow, Fish**

Mrs. Julia Tan liked to show her visitors the four animals (pictured) in her living room. The first one is a TURTLE, reminding her of "The Tortoise and the Hare" story. The turtle is slow but perseveres and finally wins the race. Mrs. Tan liked to point out that for over 40 years, she had tried to work slowly and steadily in God's service.

Two other animals are the HORSE and the CARABAO. The horse reminded her to be always alert and active in the Lord's work, and the carabao called her to be faithful, hardworking, and willing to sacrifice without turning back.

The last animal is pictured in a bowl full of beautiful, tropical FISH. This reminded her to be a "fisher of men," and to show forth the beauty of a Christlike life.

### **(21) Home Life--Peter, Paul, John, James, Esther**

Mrs. Julia Tan, single-handedly raised her children up in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord." She loved each of her five children—Peter, Paul, John, James, and Esther--sincerely, devotedly and sacrificially.

Although missing a father, home life with Mother was filled with love, joy and laughter. Every mealtime was an event, when the children were encouraged to talk, and were treated with respect and encouragements.

In their daily Family Devotions, Mrs. Julia Tan had the children memorize many Bible passages, hymns, and prayers. Her example, in words and deeds, are lovingly and forever etched in the Tan family's treasured heritage, hearts and memories.

Mrs. Julia Tan did not advocate using the whip on her children. Even when the children were rowdy, she would rather use loving admonitions and spiritual teachings. She realized that if the home were to be perfectly quiet and calm, that would mean no children. Having children means a certain amount of noise and boisterous atmosphere.



She would often cite Proverb 14:4 "*Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but much increase is by the strength of the ox.*"

And yet, Mrs. Julia Tan actively taught her family what is the right path in life. When discipline was truly needed, Mrs. Tan did not spare the rod. Once on a Saturday evening, as a special "treat," Mrs. Julia Tan cooked a delicious meal for us. But the children were not well-behaved and did not listen to admonitions. And so, even as the tempting food was spread on the table, Mother Tan forbade the children--and herself--from eating.

Years later, as her five children had grown up and were ready to establish their own families, Mother would actively encouraged each of them to pray for God-fearing life partners. And there were joyful days indeed for their mother, as each of them found God's will in life for them.

## **Loving Memories**

On December 31, 1993, 8:00 PM, our beloved Principal Mrs. Julia Tan peacefully went to be with the Lord. She was 88 years old. For two years after her hip replacement operation, she had been bedridden with debilitating illnesses. But she never uttered one word of complaint. Instead, she reflected the peace and joy of her Lord. She was given the best that medical and nursing care could provide. And her nurses all respected and loved her.

Mrs. Julia Tan was comforted by the love, prayers, encouragements and care of her children, relatives and friends. Her children who were abroad returned to Manila often, just to be with her, to pray and to encourage her. But in the end, it was God's best will to call His faithful servant to higher spheres of heavenly joys and service.

Mrs. Julia Tan's loving touch in her family would always be cherished and treasured by her family--a widow who nurtured with five small children to maturity.

And Mrs. Julia Tan's Christian educational teaching and training of thousands of students at Grace Christian High School would continue to influence and bless the local community, and yea the worldwide kingdom of God.

We have missed very much our dear Principal Mrs. Julia Tan. She had been the ideal mentor, educator, friend, family to all of us. We will follow Principal Mrs. Julia Tan's Christ-like example and wise precepts in our lives.

Mrs. Julia Tan is now in Heaven, in the presence of God, Who loved her and gave His own Son Jesus Christ to die for her. She has rested from her labors and her works will continue to follow her. (Revelation 14:13).

Someday--and it could be soon--Christ is coming again. All living Christians will be raptured, those who have died in the Lord will be resurrected, and we will all meet the Lord in the air. Forever to be with each other, never to be separated again.

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus ... Amen." (by Dr. Paul Lee Tan)

