

# KEEPING THE POTS BOILING

by  
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My life falls into four very distinct parts: (1) my childhood and youth in Shanghai, China; (2) my years as a refugee in HongKong; (3) as a working girl in the U.S.A. and (4) as the wife of the leader of Clan Parlin.

## Shanghai

I was born on October 21, 1922, in Shanghai, the first of four children in a well-to-do family. My mother was from Canton and had been educated in old-fashioned Chinese schools. My father was a graduate of Whuang-Poo Military Academy and, at the time of his marriage, was a General in the army, and was Chiang Kai-Shek's Senior Officer. My father was of great help to the Central Government and persuaded certain important provinces to join the Nationalist cause. For bringing in the Yunan Province, he received a specially struck gold medal which is now in the possession of my brother. His tremendous work and activity produced an ulcer which one of the French doctors in Shanghai mis-diagnosed as TB. Under this incorrect treatment he soon died in his prime—he was 39 then. I was four, Vincent was two and a half, Kerina was one, and my mother was four months pregnant with Lily. It was a great shock as we were all packed up to leave for Canton where he was to be the President of the Police Academy. After the funeral, my mother decided that we were better off to live on in Shanghai.

I was a favorite of my father whom I remember as a very kind, doting parent. Once I remember my mother rebuking him because he had taken me shopping and bought me a very expensive pair of leather boots equivalent to half a month's income of a working family. I also recall being taken by him to Chinese-fashion dinner and opera parties, and falling asleep beside him or on his lap. We had a staff of house servants, including a few chefs who specialized in different types of cuisine.

My mother was a person of great physical energy and carried on with our life in Shanghai. She saw to it that the four of us got a good education. Those days, in China, we did not have public schools. I attended a series of private schools, and was a student at SOOCHOW UNIVERSITY when the Japanese made their advance on Shanghai. At the University, I met James Chiang from another Shanghai family. He followed the University when it moved inland to the wartime capital, Chungking. He finished his law study there but he felt the patriot rise within him. In spite of his family's opposition, he joined the Air Force and was trained by Americans in India and Texas, U.S.A. After the war, we didn't have much of a rejoicing moment over the so-called VICTORY. We were urged by our parents to get married and leave Shanghai immediately. Psychologically, I was not ready then. I had arranged to go to Canton to be with my sister-in-law until James could join me. I remember when the airline called me at home asking for Mrs. Chiang, I told them we didn't have a person by that name, and hung up. Anyway, I went to the airport the next morning with two suitcases and thought that I would be back in a few months' time. Time has no mercy. This is my 31st year that I have been away from my country.

As a law student, without knowing where would be a permanent place to stay, never having an opportunity to take his bar exam, James was compelled to give up his wish of taking over his father's law office later. He was lucky enough to use his wartime experience (training) and succeeded in getting a job as a pilot working for General Chennault's airline. When I fled to Canton, James was working in Northern China. I spent five weeks alone with his sister and her family. That was supposed to be my honeymoon! When General Marshall failed in his efforts to help the Nationalist and Communist parties, the five months' peace talk ended in another war.

## HongKong

It was in May 1949, when Communist troops started to cross the Yellow River. My mother came to join me and we left for Hong Kong with a servant, in a hurry, as refugees. I was quite pregnant then. We moved to HongKong in June. Jeanne was born in September. James didn't get to see us until the end of the year. It was hectic. We were together only briefly from time to time. In 1950, when the Korean War

broke out, he was transferred to Japan to fly with the American Air Force. In December, his plane crashed at Mt. Fuji in Japan where he was killed. My in-laws were still in Shanghai. My mother-in-law died soon after she learned of her son's death. My father-in-law, after heavy questioning by the Communist party due to his law work with different corporations, committed suicide on New Year's Day. My uncle, my mother's elder brother, who spent most of his life in the U.S.A., retired then, was forced to kneel on broken glass and was stoned to death. A series of tragedies happened in our family. Life had to go on. I had escaped the war but as a young widow, I was faced with the problem of supporting a daughter and dependent mother. I joined the airline right away (known as the Civil Air Transport then). After seven years' service, I was transferred to Taiwan. I stayed in Taipei about eight months. I didn't like being separated from my family, especially when Jeanne needed a mother. I resigned and returned to HongKong where I got a job with the American Consulate until our visas were approved. We left for the U.S.A. in November 1959. This was the second time in my life giving up everything and starting from scratch again.

Life and work in HongKong were pretty grim but as I look back on my HongKong days, they were not entirely bad. I was young and gay and full of energy and good health. I succeeded in making friends and a reasonable social life.

## **In the United States**

When I applied for an immigrant visa to the U.S.A., I included my mother, of course, in the application. Mother was a diabetic. When Jeanne and I were due to leave, mother had to stay on in HongKong to clear her medical report. We left our mother to Vincent to take care. Jeanne and I came to Englewood in November 1959, as a temporary arrangement, staying with Jeanne's godparents, Harriet and Steve Watt. My mother came a year later. I managed to move into an apartment. We were very happy to be together again. After changing a few jobs, I eventually got a job in the accounting department of Richardson-Merrell, a pharmaceutical manufacturer. I became adept in accounting procedures, and was very much involved in computer work.

Immigrating to the U.S.A. was a big step for me to take. Having two dependents to support, using my second language to make a living.

I worked real hard to meet most of the requirements with my work, to keep my mother comfortable at home, and to see that Jeanne got a good education. I had many difficult moments and many problems—the sad moment when we lost our mother; the happy time when Jeanne completed her college education. Life can be beautiful, also can be mean.

Soon after coming to Englewood, I met the Parlins who invited us to come to the Methodist Church where we sat with the family in the Parlin pew. Thus began a friendship, and the families became close. In 1972, Miriam died. In 1973, Richardson-Merrell moved to its headquarters in Wilton, Connecticut. I was forced to give up my Englewood residence and bought an apartment in Norwalk near my work. I started to learn driving then. I was all settled to stay with my job until I retired. Charles came to see me from time to time, and sometimes we met for an evening together in New York City. Now I am getting into another chapter of my life.

## **As a Member of the Clan Parlin**

After twenty-five years of widowhood, living alone for eight years since Jeanne went to college in 1967, I had been so used to being independent and free that the idea of a second marriage never entered my mind. So, when I heard Charles' suggestion of marriage, I didn't think it was possible. He shut my mouth up and told me not to say *YES* or *NO* then. He gave me six months to consider. I call this "marriage proposal, executive style". I didn't think hard at first, still thought it was not possible. Then I started to take a close look at him. I found he is a wonderful person, crazy about his family and very proud of every member of it, as I am of my family. I analyzed our relationship. My love for him has built up during the past years of our friendship mostly from my respect for his kindness and generosity, my admiration for his great wisdom in what he said and did and, above all, my greatest respect for him stemmed from his constant loving care and attention he devoted so willingly to his dear wife when she suffered her miserable and long illness. Yes, I decided to share the rest of my life with him.

In my 56 years of life, I have been pushed into many changes—suffering from two wars, being compelled to give up my college education, adjusting my life from the old-fashioned Chinese way to the

modern western style. I have survived all these perhaps because I, at those times, have needed only courage and strong will. Now, by choice, I took on yet another change in the latter years of my life. I realized this time would involve not only adjustment of my routines, but also affect my own and the feelings of many others. I not only need courage and strong will but also understanding, patience and lots of love.

I completed my fifteen years of service to Richardson-Merrell, I submitted my resignation, and promised to stay on for a while until the office found my successor. I left my work on February 2, and we were married on February 7, 1976. It will be three years soon since we were together. I have been living a much more complicated and busy life. I am very happy with my choice. More important is, Charles is happy, too. We discuss everything together and compromise as much as we can to make every problem worked out the best of it. My grateful thanks to all the family members, including mine, for their understanding, cooperation and support. My life has been shifted from one place to another, from one style to an extremely different way. It seems like I have always changed the pots. When it started to boil, for some reason, I had to give up and start a new one. This time, with God's will, I hope I can keep it boiling, and boiling with happy bubbles.

There are a lot of incidents in my life which I like to tell to the family. With the deadline of publishing this volume, and my limited vocabulary in English, it is difficult for me to express the way I want at the moment. Hopefully, some day I can write a few more chapters to squeeze into the *Volume 4*.

The Two Grandsons  
who missed Volume II



1. Blackwood—1936

2. Donald—1938



3. Kaye and her Parents  
Shanghai, China, 1922



Grace and Wilbur Davis

Their marriage—1934



Chris Blackie Charlie Nancy Harold Rob  
Charles Joan M. Joan B. Camilla Miriam  
Timmie, Jennifer, Heather, Hyla, Kenny, Stephen, Andy, Nathan

The Charles C. Parlin, Sr. Family—1968





Ruth  
George Steward

Jim  
Muriel

Kathy

The George Steward Parlin, Jr. Family—1977