

## *Book Review*

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Eleanor McCallie Cooper and William Liu, *Grace in China, An American Woman Beyond the Great Wall, 1934-1974*. Montgomery, AL: Black Belt Press, 1999, 400 pages.

This is the story of Grace Divine Liu, a American woman who followed her Chinese husband from the U.S. to Tientsin in 1934 and, through the circumstances of the Japanese invasion, the Chinese civil war, Liberation, and personal adversities, remained for forty years, without visiting the United States. Her cousin, Eleanor McCallie Cooper, and her son, William Liu, tell it lovingly and uncritically. They have relied on memoirs, family correspondence, and the articles Grace sent to various magazines in China and abroad. Interviews with Grace's daughters and Chinese friends and William's own recollections fill gaps where papers were lost or destroyed. Chinese and American newspaper clippings, CCP and PLA circulars and communiqués, and 150 photographs complement the text.

Grace Divine, of Chattanooga, Tennessee, went to New York City in 1926 to pursue a singing career. Joined later by her mother and a young cousin, Grace lived in an apartment in the Morningside Heights area and met Liu Fu-Chi, a Chinese hydraulic engineer recently graduated from Cornell University, who lived in the same building. Mrs. Divine, a philanthropic sort who, taking the name "Faithful Joy," volunteered for Father Divine's soup kitchen in Harlem, soon invited the young foreign student to dinner. A romance and baby ensued, but, by now, 1932, the Great Depression necessitated Fu-Chi's return to China.

The young family ultimately settled in the French concession area of Tientsin, where Fu-Chi headed the Water Works. Grace's life of relative leisure revolved around dinner parties, movies, and beach holidays. There were occasional cultural blunders, but they were dismissed with aplomb. All this changed after 1937 when the Japanese invaded eastern China and floods, natural and man-made, brought famine. The period of Japanese occupation was particularly difficult for the Liu family, with the winters unusually cold, food scarce, and Fu-Chi unemployed and broke because he refused to collaborate. Grace and the three children suffered serious illnesses, for which they had no medicine, and they experienced symptoms of malnutrition such as hair loss.

Civil war between Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist forces and the Chinese Communists followed the defeat of Japan. Fu-Chi got back his job at the Water Works, but now he faced the prospect that the facility to which he had devoted his life would be destroyed in the fighting. He feared what a Communist victory would mean, not only for himself, but also for his foreign-born wife and his Amerasian children. The Lius could have left the country, but they elected to stay

and they embraced the revolution. With amazing adaptability, Fu-Chi threw himself so much into the task of modernizing and expanding the Water Works that he was selected a "model worker" for three years. The children took pride in rebuilding their schools and in scholastic achievements. Then, in 1955, Fu-Chi died of lung cancer and his family was left almost destitute. They had to move from their comfortable house to two rooms in a dilapidated mansion shared by seventeen families. Grace's friends urged her to return to the United States, but instead she took a job teaching English at Nankai University. Ten years later, in 1967, during the Cultural Revolution, Red Guards arrested and denounced her as a "counter-revolutionary American spy." They subsequently arrested William, too, accusing him of plotting to overthrow the government.

These experiences and Grace's serious decline of health prompted her to return to the United States in 1974. Her Tennessee family, not having heard from her for twenty years, had presumed her dead. She visited relatives and friends, scattered across the country, whom she had not seen for forty years. She died of cancer in 1979 and her ashes were taken back to Tientsin, where they were placed beside those of Fu-Chi in the Hall of Revolutionary Martyrs.

This book is an easily readable description of China in revolution that will help students with a view from within the Great Wall, physically, but beyond the Great Wall, metaphorically. Rather than being a scholarly tome with footnotes and bibliography, it emphasizes the human experience. Grace was a well-read, perceptive observer whose letters and memoir recounting the Lius' bare survival during the 1940s and 1950s will bring both tears and laughter. Her passage about the 1949 arrival of Communist troops in Tientsin reveals the emotion of being caught in a maelstrom: "My first sight of the [PLA] was not reassuring. Dogtrotting down the street . . . the square, squat, fur-hatted soldiers had a savage look. But when the line halted and the soldiers leaned against the wall 'at ease,' I saw their faces, and the horde changed before my eyes into a crowd of jolly, red-cheeked Chinese boys, laughing, scuffling, and kicking at each other like schoolboys on a lark. Any fears I might have had of a fierce, ruthless, conquering army evaporated" (p. 192).

Grace was also a rebel, not just by marrying Fu-Chi, but in becoming an apologist for the New China during the Korean War, which she considered an act of American imperialism. Her letters to her family, as well as to various publications around the world, reflect a growing disillusionment with American foreign policy and, in many respects, she showed prescience about the future of Chinese, Russian, and American relations. Her pro-Chinese opinions soon resulted in a severance of correspondence with her baffled and worried family at home. Finally, the suffering of Grace and her children during the Cultural Revolution, poignant and painful to read, demonstrates the personal cost of revolutionary excess. It is a fascinating story, assembled mostly from Grace's own words, about a remarkable woman.