



## Yeong Wook Kim, PhD

July 21, 1925 - September 20, 2014

Dr. Yeong Wook Kim, 89, a resident of Huntington Woods, Michigan, passed away peacefully at home on September 20, 2014. Dr. Kim battled respiratory issues on and off for many years and ultimately these issues led to his passing. Yeong was born in Hamhung, Korea on July 21, 1925 to the late Yong Taek Kim Father and Soon Lee Park Mother. He was brother to Ki Wook Kim, Bae Wook Kim, Jung Wook Kim, Kye Wook Kim, Myoung Wook Kim and Sang Wook Kim. Much of his childhood was spent being raised in a mud house, located in an impoverished city in the Northern geographical region of Korea, before the split into North and South Korea. Born at a time when Japan had annexed Korea as a colony, Yeong grew up living in a country under Japanese rule and spoke both Japanese and Korean. He attended the premier preparatory school in Fukuoka, Japan. After this, he studied aeronautical engineering at Tokyo Imperial University with a passion for becoming a fighter pilot. However, at the end of World War II, he returned to his hometown in the Northern region of Korea and caught one of the last "Freedom Trains" to the South. These trains enabled people to cross the 38th parallel South and escape what would become North Korea before the Soviets closed the border. The rest of his family escaped to the South stowed away in a false bottom of a fishing boat. His Mother advised he not return to Japan due to its post-war status, so he then attended Seoul National University in Korea where he graduated with a B.S. in Physics, and completed his Masters Degree there in 1950. At this time, the Korean War started. The

horrors of war made Yeong determined to find opportunities elsewhere and he arrived in the U.S. by himself in 1956 with a single suitcase and one \$20 bill! Yeong eventually attended Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island to complete his Ph.D. in Physics. After completing his doctorate, he had job offers from large companies and universities such as Princeton. Much to his dismay, these universities were unable to change his student visa, which meant deportation for Yeong. However, with the valuable assistance of his lifelong friend Henry Bohm, his wife Lucy, as well as Congressman Charles Dingle, Yeong's case was resolved via an amendment on a Congressional bill. This led to his opportunity to take on a faculty position at Wayne State University in Detroit in 1960. In 1961, Eui-Kyeong "Kyeong" Kim, whom he met in Seoul, managed to come to the U.S. after a 5-year period of separation, where they married and settled in Detroit. Kyeong was a talented concert pianist who was greatly responsible for Yeong's love of classical composers; he especially loved Chopin's Nocturnes and Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata. Yeong and Kyeong had two children, Ann & Ron, and settled in Huntington Woods, Michigan. Unfortunately, Kyeong developed leukemia and passed away in 1975. In 1978, Yeong married his second wife, Kathleen Joyce Kim, who later became a physician, and remained married to her for 36 years, until his passing. Yeong and Kathleen were both avid readers and particularly enjoyed the works of Robert Frost together. In 1987, their daughter Melissa was born. Yeong very much enjoyed spending time with his wife and children as well as his in-laws, the Joyces. His extended family includes Ron's wife, Pam, and their children Thomas, Alice and Spencer, as well as Ann's husband, Alan, and their children Leah and Jeremy. Yeong was very pleased to witness Melissa's graduation from the University of Michigan and too see her pursue her Master's Degree at the University of Hawaii. He also enjoyed the many milestone events in the lives of his grandchildren. Yeong remained on the faculty at Wayne State University for 38 years until his retirement in 1998; however, he was active in attending colloquial speeches and other University events for long after that. Throughout his professional

and retired life, Yeong greatly enjoyed his work, as well as lively lunchtime debates with his friends and colleagues. He was never one for small talk, but was always up for a good debate about politics, religion, or the meaning of life. During his retirement, he continued to work actively on three books: a physics review for graduate students, a theoretical work for experimental physicists, and a memoir of his life which he titled My Journey. Yeong enjoyed a long and full life and never allowed his health issues to stop him from independently pursuing his intellectual passions or sharing stories and ideas with his friends and family. He was a true Renaissance Man, and found great pleasure in fine music and literature; the books he loved most were Jean Christophe by Romain Rolland and Madame Bovary by Gustave Flaubert. He also loved to discuss the possibilities of the future with young people, as they reminded him of his college years at Brown University, encouraging them to set the highest goals for academic achievement. Not only was Yeong a loving husband and father, but he was also a mentor, advisor, and friend to many. He will be dearly remembered and greatly missed. The visitation will be Friday 4-8 p.m. and Saturday 9 a.m. until the time of the service 11 a.m. at the Wm. Sullivan & Son Funeral Home, 705 W 11 Mile Road 4 blocks E of Woodward, Royal Oak. Family suggests memorial contributions to Wayne State University, Attn: Professor Ratna Naik, Chair, Department of Physics and Astronomy, 666 W. Hancock, Detroit, MI 48201 Note on memo line "Y.W. Kim Scholarship Fund, WSU Department of Physics". Share your memories at [ww.sullivanfuneraldirectors.com](http://ww.sullivanfuneraldirectors.com). There will be an open house/brunch at 331 W Oakridge, Ferndale, MI 48220 on Saturday after the service. Please Note: A memorial mass will also be held on Monday, September 29, 2014 at 5:30 p.m. at the National Shrine of the Little Flower corner of 12 Mile and Woodward in Royal Oak.

# Tribute Wall

AB

“ This was so beautifully written! I did not even know all of this about Uncle Yeong. He was such a kind man. I have a lot of memories of him and his family, but one that sticks out is that Melissa and I would ask him to take us to Starbucks when we were in high school and he would always laugh so hard at us and tell us we were so "sophisticated". I can still hear him say that and I think of him every time I go to Starbucks. He had a great laugh and smile! We love you Uncle Yeong!

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**Ashley Bowen** - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

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**Ashley Bowen** - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

CS

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**Caroline Saalwaechter** - March 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

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