

LIKE MOTHER, LIKE DAUGHTER

By Eun Young Cha

“Mom, is this you?”, I asked in an excited tone as I pointed my finger towards the page. I was looking through my mother’s old album when this faded black-and-white photograph caught my eye. A cute little girl was standing on a big stage in front of a towering American soldier and an old Korean man. It turns out that they were both very important historical figures-- General MacArthur and Syngman Rhee, the First President of Korea. My mother got excited when I asked her about the photo and started telling me about her childhood.

The little girl in the photo was my mom when she was ten years old. She was the child who always attracted attention from people. At school, she was the model student loved by all of the teachers and had many friends because of her favorable personality. At many school events, she was selected by teachers for important roles. On the day the photograph was taken, she was chosen by the teachers as a flower girl--the school representative for this special memorial event. There was actually a larger version of the photograph but it got lost when my mom moved. The written event details, documented by my grandfather, on the backs of those photos got lost with it. Now, all that remains are the few photographs in the album. When I spoke to my mother recently, I learned that she will be donating this memorial photo to a historical museum in Seoul, South Korea. I am proud that this photograph with my mother will be remembered by our country.

My mother has always been a busy bee. She had a full schedule of learning all kinds of things. Growing up, it amazed me how well my mother played the harmonica and the guitar. One of my favorite pictures in my mom's album was of her playing guitar sitting by the window. Her face was glowing in the warm sunlight and she looked like she was in her own world.

My mother learned to play the piano in the midst of raising four children. In addition to learning the piano, she also started learning classical guitar when she was almost 60 years old. She only learned for three months, but her guitar playing already sounded beautiful. Her love for learning never ended. She took her first swimming lessons at the age of 70 and she couldn’t even float in the water at that point. However, because of her persistence and numerous efforts through consistent practice, she grew to be a strong swimmer. She took every challenge step-by-step.

She took so many art classes in her life that I cannot even list them all. A few of them were water coloring, making clay dolls, leather crafting, ceramic art, and decoupage. My mother’s favorite type of art was painting on European-style dolls, bowls, and dishes. I was influenced by my mother’s talent in art and chose to major in pottery.

I visit Korea once in a while. Every time I go, I follow my mom's footsteps and try to learn new things. On my first visit to Korea, I took a month of piano lessons. On my second visit, I learned to play classical guitar and learned to make beaded accessories. I tried table tennis and *gayageum*, a Korean plucked instrument with twelve strings. I've always wanted to learn *gayageum* ever since I was a child.

My mother showed me that age doesn't matter when it comes to learning; her accomplishments and love for her hobbies motivated her to keep moving forward. My mother has shown me that learning will only benefit me in my quality of life. She is a huge inspiration to me and through her, I am still trying to learn as many things as I can. I am still following her footsteps.