



THELMA LAI visited MCS after 66 years

66 years after ...

“The uphill cobbled stone path, that I remember.

The arch by the front gate on Boundary Street, I remember.

The covered playground, the garden inside, the school hall...I remember...

*Oh, they are still around! They look the exactly the same as I remembered them ...
nothing has changed...*

*And just over there, really close by was La Salle College where my cousin studied,
where is La Salle now? ...”*

It was like walking back in time for Thelma Lai - a dream turned into reality on March 30, 2007, a Friday afternoon. Accompanied by her son Eric and his family, Thelma walked from Prince Edward MTR station down Boundary Street to the school. Sixty-six long years had passed. It was the first time since 1940 that Thelma was back on Hong Kong soil, and on MCS grounds.

The visit was prompted by a long story with many twists and turns. Thelma's youngest son Eric and Jocelyn, one of the teachers at MCS secondary section, were classmates for 12 years at St. James Academy (“STA”), the first school the Maryknoll Sisters established in the Philippines in 1926. The two had not been in contact since their high school graduation in 1983. Twenty-four years later, two days after Christmas of 2006, one of their classmates had a sudden urge to update his personal directory. He phoned up one of Eric's classmate whom he had met by chance in a family gathering. Starting from there, classmates of SJA Class '83 were reconnected.

In mid-March 2007, Eric and Jocelyn were once again in touch ...with the good news that Eric will be spending a weekend in Hong Kong with his family and his mother, a MCS alumna of more than 60 years.

Thelma had moved to Hong Kong from Macau in 1938. Her widowed mother of Portuguese descent wanted Thelma to receive better education in Hong Kong. Thelma recounted the daily walk to school from her Sham Shui Po home, when there were no buildings along the road and the hills afar were in sight. The Sisters taught, and like big sisters, played with her. Life was simple and fun until two years later, war started to loom. Fearing that Hong Kong could be easily cut off from the rest of the world, her mother decided to flee to the Philippines where they had relatives.

Mother and daughter landed in Tondo, Manila, where Thelma lives till now. She resumed studies after the War. After completing first year at high school, Thelma went into dressmaking. Her superb craftsmanship earned her a good living to raise a large family..

Thelma is forever grateful to the Maryknoll Sisters for caring for her and her family, especially to Sr. Lorraine and to Sr. St. Rita who gave her boys scholarships to study at St. James Academy.

Thelma celebrated her 80th birthday on July 1, 2008 with her husband, five sons, daughters-in law and many grandchildren.



Thelma with Melaine, son Eric and his family, and Jocelyn