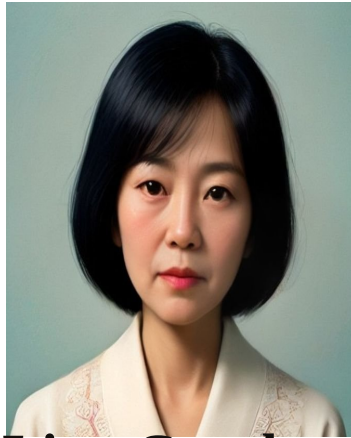




Mei-Ling Carolyn Fong

January 14, 1953 - September 1, 2026

Oakland, California

Mei-Ling Carolyn Fong died in Oakland on September 1, 2026. She was seventy-three. Born there on January 14, 1953, to parents who had come from Guangdong by way of a long patience, she grew up above a grocery that sold both ginger and Wonder Bread and treated both as ordinary. She learned English at school and a second set of manners at the table. She never treated either language as a costume.

She sewed piecework in a shop off San Pablo as a young woman, then spent twenty-two years as a preschool aide in a church basement that smelled of crayons and rice. She was the adult who could sit on the floor without making a production of it. She kept extra socks in a drawer for the child whose morning had already been too long. When the district sent a new form, she translated it twice: once into English that a tired parent could use, and once into the quiet that says you are not in trouble for needing help.

She married Daniel Fong in 1976. They bought a bungalow in a neighborhood that later became expensive around them. They stayed. A son and a daughter went through public schools she trusted more than she trusted real-estate talk. After Daniel died in 2018 she kept the garden of bitter melon and the habit of walking a neighbor's child to the bus when a shift ran late.

Neighbors remember a woman who swept her sidewalk and yours if the wind had been unfair, who kept a coffee can of buttons labeled in two languages, and who could sit through a graduation without making it about herself. She liked the estuary early, before the heat, when the hills still looked like a place a person could walk. She died in Oakland, the only city she had ever needed. The extra socks are still in the drawer. That would have pleased her more than a eulogy.

Services

A memorial in Oakland with tea afterward. In lieu of flowers, a gift to a preschool supply closet or adult English class is welcome.

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