

The engagement and wedding of Stanley & Grace Young by Stanley Young



Grace and Stanley Young with Stanley's mother, Grace Mew Long, at the time of their wedding in 1927.

For the engagement, a 'good day' had to be decided on. Our birth days and hours of birth were taken into account and referred to a book, and a date was set. Then there was the matter of gifts. The bride's parents wanted, through a go-between, so many hundred cakes, so many catties of dried foods like mushrooms, abalones, shark fins, sweets, wines etc. A cattie is a measure of weight about 11/2 lbs.

For the wedding, another 'good day' – 2.12.1927 – had to be decided on. More gifts changed hands and I remember receiving a new suit of clothes and an extra pair of trousers and a live rooster was included.

The wedding took place in Shekki in the afternoon. The bride arrived in a flower covered sedan chair and covered in a red silk material. A band of drums, cymbals and a flutelike instrument started to play and crackers were let off. I lifted the silk curtain in front and the bride stepped out. A marriage certificate was signed by some elders in the village.

The banquet was held in the court yard of Hong Kwang's house which had some very bright lights installed. During the dinner some armed guards with guns and pistols patrolled around the house because bandits were about at that time. Eating did not finish till about midnight and we were to return to Hong Kong that day. We had to travel by junk which was to leave about 5 or 6 o'clock that morning because it had to wait till it was high tide in the river before it could sail.

I think we just sat around till about 4 or 5 o'clock when we were carried in sedan

chairs to the wharf. It was early morning. As we passed the markets were starting to open up. Fresh fruits, vegetables, live poultry, fresh pork etc. Arriving at the wharf the junk was loaded with live pigs, fowls, fish, ducks, vegetables etc.

We had a very small cabin with a bunk and straw matting which we did not use. A basin of hot water, towel, a mug, toothbrush and a curved steel for scraping the tongue was brought in which we did not use. Breakfast of rice, fish, soup, vegetables etc was provided which looked nice but we did not eat because the water used was taken from the river coloured brown.

The junk was moved along by a little steam boat tied to its side until we arrived to the open sea when it was untied and towed along.

Arrived Hong Kong that afternoon.

Wife had a personal maid to look after her for several weeks.

Another reception was held. The custom at that time was to give a gift before receiving an invitation. As gifts arrived, usually by an amah, we handed them an invitation and a small red packet containing some coins.

The reception was held at the International Hotel in West Point which was the fashionable area of Hong Kong at that time. A big flower covered sign with electric lights all around it was hung outside the hotel with the words 'The house of Kwan is celebrating a wedding'.

The banquet was on the fourth or fifth floor and as the guests arrived in the lift their names were announced by a man we engaged and a band of musicians would start playing drum cymbals and a flute like instrument and we would meet and welcome them. The person we engaged was working as a sort of commissionaire at the Sincere and Company standing at the front door greeting customers.

Although guests arrived early in the evening, dinner did not start till about 9 or 10 o'clock which was the custom in Hong Kong. The guests would sit drinking tea, eating red melon seeds. I think there were also one or two mah jong tables.

A long string of crackers was hung outside the window where we were, which reached down to the footpath below. This was lit and let off and dinner commenced.

During the dinner my wife and I with a personal maid went to each of the tables to drink with the guests who gave little red packets containing money and collected by the maid. Many valuable gifts were received, some gift vouchers and many silk dress lengths.

After a month, we both made a visit to Shekki again which was the custom.

Now after so many years, 60 years, may I say 'Our ship of marriage, through strong winds and high waves, has not foundered in the sea of matrimony.'