



EDMOND JOSEPH GONG

OCT 7, 1930 - MAY 19, 2015



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EDMOND JOSEPH GONG

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Former State Senator Edmond Joseph (“Eddie”) Gong passed away on May 19. He was 84 years old. Gong was the son of Chinese immigrants who owned small grocery stores in the Overtown section of Miami. Throughout his history-making political career and later success in business, he remained a committed father and husband.

Born to Joe Fred and Fayline Gong, Eddie and his four sisters all attended public schools in Miami. In 1963, Gong became the first Asian American elected to the Florida legislature serving as both a senator and representative from 1963 to 1972.

When Gong was a senior in high school in 1948, he caught the attention of the dean of Harvard College who was visiting Miami seeking promising public school students from different regions. This was at a time when Harvard admitted primarily New England prep school students.

The dean was taken by Gong’s academic and extracurricular successes as well as by his charisma. Just the summer before, Gong had been elected Governor of Florida Boys Nation by his peers and later elected President of Boys Nation nationally. While in Washington D.C., Gong met President Harry Truman in the Rose Garden.

After graduating in 1952 from Harvard, Gong served two years in the U.S. Air Force as Captain. After his military service, Gong went to the University of Miami Law School where he earned his law degree. While in law school, Gong worked at the Miami Herald covering numerous beats around the still growing city.

After finishing law school, Robert F. Kennedy appointed Gong as an Assistant U.S. Attorney, Department of Justice where he prosecuted white collar crimes on the federal level.

In 1963 when a new seat in the legislature was created he saw his chance to enter politics, which had been a passion since his teenage years. He believed Miami needed a visionary to represent it



Obituary

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at the state level.

Gong's opponent was a longtime Miami politician from a prominent old Miami family. But Gong ran a feisty grassroots campaign with more grit than money, securing key endorsements from both the Miami Herald and the former Miami News.

After nearly a decade in Tallahassee, Gong was asked to serve as Associate Director of the Institute of Politics at Harvard University in Cambridge, MA. He later returned to Miami where he continued to practice law as well as build and manage a number of successful real estate investments around the state. He also served as director of several Miami-area banks.

Above all, Gong was a dedicated family man. With his first wife, Sophie Vlachos, he had five children. Their eldest son, Peter, died in 1978. Sophie passed away in 1983. In 1988, Gong married Dana Clay and the two were devoted to each other until the moment of his passing. Gong also was passionate about fishing. He spent many sunny days deep jigging in the blue waters of the Gulfstream off Triumph Reef.

Gong is survived by his wife, Dana, his four children Frances Gong of Miami, Madeleine Gong of Amesbury, MA, Joe Gong and E.J. Gong Jr., both of Seattle, WA and five grandchildren.

Services will be held on Saturday, May 23rd at 10:30 AM at St. Thomas Episcopal Church at 5692 N Kendall Drive in Coral Gables.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Gong Family Scholarship Fund at Harvard University. The program provides scholarship money to qualified Asian American students from the state of Florida. Checks should be made out to Harvard University (write on the memo line on check: Gong Family Scholarship #370-532589). Send to Recording Secretary's Office, Harvard University Alumni Affairs and Development, 124 Mount Auburn Street, Cambridge, MA 02138





Events


EDMOND JOSEPH GONG

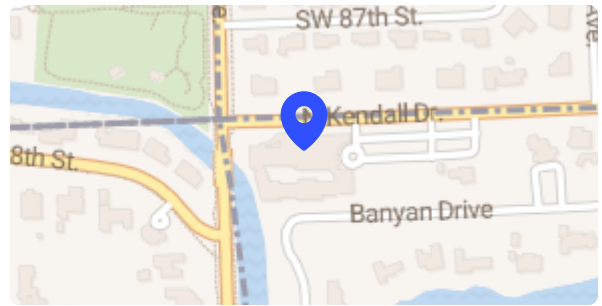
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Service


 **Saturday**, May 23, 2015

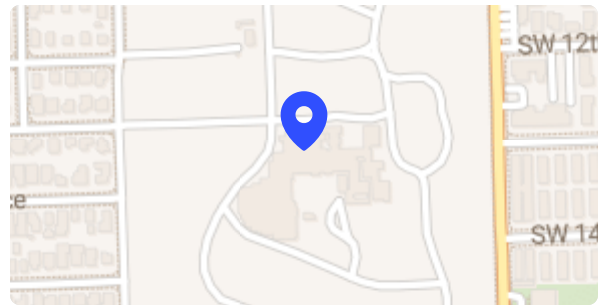
 10:30 AM ET

 **St. Thomas Episcopal Church**
5690 N. Kendall Drive, Coral Gables FL



Cemetery Details

 **Woodlawn Park North**
3260 SW 8th Street, Miami FL 33135





Tribute Wall

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Anonymous sent a Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum to the GONG family.



May 22 at 10:09 AM



Robert Huebner posted:

Eddie has been a true friend,since he first helped me in law school in the 60s. In 1965 ,I remember when he showed up in Vietnam as reporter. He was an exceptional person, who touched many people's lives in many ways. I am thankful for knowing him.Robert Huebner

May 22 at 7:38 AM



Pat Moore Freels-Saul posted:

My condolences to an outstanding man whose entire family contributed to much to so many. Eddie was president of his class of 1948 at Miami Senior High and his sister, Lillian, was my good friend. She and I were cheerleaders in the class of "49. Pat Moore Freels-Saul

May 22 at 6:15 AM



Jim Bramlett September 13 at 1:22 PM

Pat, I saw your comment on Edie Gong's obituary. I hope you are well. God bless you. From Jim Bramlett, MHS '49.



Pam Anderson posted:

He was smiles and love, joy and grace. Ever the gentle man, he will be so missed.Pam Amderson

May 22 at 4:43 AM



Tribute Wall

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William T. Moore posted:

When I was a young lawyer in Miami I was president of the Jr. Chamber of Commerce. Eddie agreed to be the "mystery man" in a contest I came up with as a recruiting tool for the organization. A vacation in the Bahamas was the prize. Eddie had been named honorary president of the United States when he was at "Boy's State," as I recall. That was one of the clues in the contest to name the "mystery man." Eddie and the entire Gong family were wonderful people. They lived near the Orange Bowl, as did my family and I We had known the Gong children, Helen, Eddie, Lillian and May Jewel since we were small children, living in the same neighborhood and attending school together (except for the oldest girl, Helen). Just last week I had a flash back about the Gongs and wondered how they were doing. The lives of everyone who knew Eddie and his family were enriched. My thoughts and prayers are with you all. --William T. Moore

May 22 at 3:22 AM



Phyllis Johns posted:

A true gentleman; so nice and kind. I'm so sorry for your loss. Phyllis Johns

May 20 at 7:54 AM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring EDMOND by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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