



Sally Wong Avery, J.D.

Born in Hong Kong, Ms. Wong-Avery started her Cantonese pre-school when she was 3. In the 1950's, her family moved to North Borneo. She attended St. Michael's Secondary School, taught Sunday school and visited hospitals. She then landed in California, graduated from San Diego High, Mesa College, and UCSD.

Fluent in Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka, and Toishan, she became a court interpreter, then earned her Juris Doctorate from Cal Western Law School. Later, as Executive Director of the Chinese Service Center of San Diego, she helped immigrants find jobs. She was the first female President of the Chinese Benevolent Organization and co-founded the Chinese Historical Society. With experience from her parents' restaurants, she became one of the first Chinese Certified Food Handling instructors to teach safe food handling practices to Chinese restaurants. She founded Chinese Professional Services and provided free services for low income and limited English speakers. She taught English to Chinese senior citizens and was principal of the oldest Chinese School in San Diego.

Ms. Wong-Avery opened a law office where no one was turned away, cases ranged from bankruptcy to worker's compensation. Some clients only came in to have forms filled out or to have their English mail read to them in Chinese. Currently, the Chinese Service Center aims to help all ages and families (www.cscsandiego.org). She received the Overseas Chinese Commission from Taiwan, Outstanding Teaching Award for over 20 years of teaching Chinese, Asian Heritage Award for over 30

years of service to the Chinese Community, and the Susan B. Anthony Leadership Award. She has been a devoted daughter to her parents Ying and King, a dedicated wife to her late husband Dennis, and works on projects with her dynamic daughter Natasha.

The Chinese Service Center is one of San Diego's oldest Chinese community organizations dedicated to preserving and educating the public about Chinese history and culture. To help preserve San Diego's Chinese heritage, Ms. Wong-Avery also co-founded the Chinese Historical Society with her dear friend and mentor, the late Ms. Dorothy Hom in 1985. Serving the Chinese community and preserving Chinese culture and history have remained paramount in Ms. Wong-Avery's life.

While working in social service, she also remained dedicated to her family. She was actively involved in helping her parents run two popular Chinese restaurants in downtown San Diego. She provided critically needed services – language translation and interpretation, professional referrals, food handling courses, business consultation services and marketing research for corporations wanting to sell their products to the Chinese. Over the years, Ms. Wong-Avery has assisted thousands of people in the San Diego community both professionally and personally.

In the mid-1980s, she also began teaching in downtown San Diego, through the Community College Adult Continuing Education program. As a teacher, she encouraged and helped hundreds of Chinese attain U.S. citizenship. During this time, she was also the Principal of the oldest Chinese School in San Diego, founded by the late Dr. Irene Cheng. To this day, the Chinese School of San Diego remains a popular school to learn the Chinese language and to learn about Chinese customs and culture.
(www.chineseschoolsd.org)

In the mid-1990's, she opened her law office located in San Diego's Mid-City area, where she knew the majority of San Diego's limited English people were located. Ms. Wong spent half her time providing free legal service to low income and new

arrivals. She has always lived by this precept: “Give and not count the Cost. Give and not ask for any rewards.” Every day there were dozens of phone calls and walk-ins to her legal office. Because of her knowledge of Chinese, most of the Chinese looked for Ms. Wong when they had trouble. Because of the variety of clients and their problems, she opened a general practice. She had cases ranging from bankruptcy, immigration, tort, criminal, family, labor, social security, welfare, probate, traffic, workers compensation, etc. Some clients only came in to have their forms filled or some to have their English mail read to them in Chinese. No one was turned away. In 2000, Ms. Wong-Avery remarried and closed her law office. But with so much left undone, she opened an office to continue social service to the community in 2002.

Today, in conjunction with her Chinese School, she also leads the Chinese Service Center of San Diego. The Chinese Service Center aims to help all ages and families in the San Diego Chinese community. Her Center provides direct assistance, various services and also coordinates many of the leading Chinese community events in San Diego (www.cscsandiego.org) She is also the founder of the reputed Chinese Bilingual Preschool (www.cbpsd.com) for 2 ½ to 5-yr-olds.

For her years of work to the San Diego community, she has been recognized by various public and private organizations. She was honored by the Overseas Chinese Commission from Taiwan. She was given an Outstanding Teaching Award for over 20 years of teaching Chinese and as Principal of the Chinese School by the Southern California Council of Chinese Schools. She was awarded Special Recognition from the Asian Heritage Awards for over 30 years of service to the Chinese Community. She was also awarded the 2006 Susan B. Anthony Leadership Award.

Sally Wong-Avery has dedicated her life to improving the lives of others. In her free time, she enjoys collecting books for her personal library, traveling and spending time with her family. The Women’s International Center is honored to present a Living Legacy Award to Sally Wong-Avery for her commitment to

cross-cultural understanding through education and community empowerment.