

# Jung, Douglas Class of '41

## Lawyer-MP led a life full of firsts

**TOM HAWTHORN** Special to The Globe and Mail February 2, 2002

VANCOUVER -- Douglas Jung, who has died at the age of 77, was elected to the House of Commons just 10 years after Canadians of Chinese ancestry were belatedly awarded the franchise.

His triumph was the more remarkable in that few voters in Vancouver Centre had shared his Progressive Conservative sympathies in recent elections. Fewer still shared his ethnic heritage.

Every advance in Jung's career seems to have been a marker in the history of race relations in Canada. He was the first Chinese Canadian to be accepted to the British Columbia bar; the first to appear before the B.C. Court of Appeal, the highest court in the province; the first to be elected to Parliament; the first to represent Canada at the United Nations.

He was a trailblazer in the land of his birth, a man of sharp intellect and ambition who came of age just as Canadian society began to dismantle legally sanctioned racism.

In 1944, when his own country considered him to be less than a full citizen, Jung risked his life by volunteering for duty as a saboteur behind Japanese lines.

As a veteran, he at last earned the right to vote. After his election, he campaigned to redress some of the wrongs committed against fellow Chinese Canadians.

Douglas Jung was born in Victoria on Feb. 25, 1924. His father, Vick Ching Jung, an immigrant of humble means from Guangdong Province in China, named him after Douglas Street, the city's main thoroughfare. He was the youngest of three sons.

His birth came eight months after the implementation of the Chinese Immigration (Exclusion) Act on July 1, 1923, which essentially closed Canada's doors. The date came to be known as "Humiliation Day" in the Chinatown ghettos.

He inherited a world in which property covenants forbade him from buying land in many neighbourhoods. He was barred from the practice of pharmacy, medicine and the law. He would sit in segregated movie houses. He also could not swim at Crystal Gardens pool, the glass-topped oasis that was a playground for Victoria's other children.

Jung completed his public-school education at Victoria High School as the Second World War raged. He enlisted soon after the Canadian government reversed a policy barring Chinese Canadians from serving in the armed forces.

The British wanted to recruit soldiers of Chinese background who could be sent into Asian jungles to blend in with the local population as secret agents.

Jung volunteered for clandestine warfare and was sent to isolated Commando Bay near Penticton, B.C., for intense training in the arts of demolition, sabotage and silent killing.

"We looked like cutthroats," Jung recalled in *Unwanted Soldiers*, a 1999 National Film Board documentary. "We were not in military uniforms. We were unshaven, dishevelled."

Jung, a sergeant, belonged to Force 136 of the British-led Special Operations Executive. His perilous assignment was to organize resistance behind Japanese lines. He was equipped with a suicide pill, which he was to be used to avoid torture should he be captured. As a spy, capture meant death.

"We were prepared to lay ourselves down for nothing," Jung said. "There was no guarantee that the Canadian government was going to give us the full rights of Canadian citizenship. We were taking a gamble."

Both his brothers also served. Arthur Jung piloted a Lancaster on bombing missions over occupied Europe, while Ross Jung served in a medical unit.

The war ended not long after Douglas Jung parachuted into the Borneo jungle.

He returned to British Columbia in 1946, where he took advantage of veterans' benefits to complete a bachelor of arts and a law degree at the University of British Columbia.

In 1947, the provincial government ended restrictions on voting for Chinese Canadians. That same year, the federal government revoked its discriminatory immigration laws, although it would be another two decades before any large-scale immigration from Asia would be permitted.

Jung, who continued to serve in the militia as a captain, began practice as a lawyer after graduating in 1953. He was a dapper man, rarely seen without a tie and jacket, his black hair carefully groomed and precisely parted on the left side.

He made his electoral debut as a Conservative candidate in a provincial by-election held on Jan. 9, 1956. Leslie Peterson, a future cabinet minister, handily won Vancouver-Centre for Social Credit.

Jung finished a respectable second, a moral victory that also had a touch of the historic. His candidacy was the first by a Chinese Canadian for a seat in any Canadian legislature.

Just 17 months later, he became a member of Parliament in a shocking upset. Ralph Campney, a veteran of the First World War, was defence minister in the Liberal government and thought to be safe in the federal riding of Vancouver Centre. His challenger was a 33-year-old upstart in a riding that had only about 1,400 Chinese Canadian residents.

Jung polled 9,087 votes to Campney's 5,357. The Giant Killer, as he was called, helped John Diefenbaker to form a minority government.

Jung said he had become a Conservative because he could never support a party that had discriminated against his people.

The 1958 Canadian Parliamentary Guide notes tersely: "First M.P. of Chinese extraction."

Diefenbaker sent Jung to the United Nations as Canada's representative to the Legal Committee. "I took my place there," he once told the Vancouver Sun, "and an usher came over and said, 'I'm sorry, sir, but this seat is for the Canadian delegation.' "

Jung replied, "I am the Canadian delegation."

He won re-election by a massive 10,117 votes in the Diefenbaker landslide of 1958. That same year he was elected national president of the youth wing of his party.

Jung caused a stir when he said he wanted to visit China, which had fallen under Communist control. The issue was controversial in the Chinese-Canadian community, which he once described as his best ally and his harshest critic.

On Dec. 6, 1958, he married Joy Calderwood, but their union ended in divorce.

As an MP, Jung proved to be indefatigable advocate. He convinced the government to grant an amnesty to those Chinese who came to Canada under false names.

He also helped to create the National Productivity Council, now known as the Economic Council of Canada.

Jung lost his seat in 1962 to Liberal J. R. Nicholson, an industrialist who was a pillar of the establishment and would later serve as B.C. lieutenant-governor. The Conservative also lost elections in 1963 and 1965, before bowing out as a candidate.

Jung ran a successful legal practice specializing in immigration issues for many years. He died in his sleep of heart failure at home in Vancouver on Jan. 4. He leaves a son, Arthur, and a daughter, Elizabeth. He was predeceased by both his brothers.