

Chinese Historical Figures: 1966 - 1976

Chai Meichen (1917-1993)

Chai was wife of Zhou Mingzhen, the late academician of Chinese Academy of Science, a renowned paleontologist and “Father of Chinese Dinosaurs”. Zhou was awarded the Romer - Simpson Medal which is regarded as the Nobel Prize in paleontology.

Chai was deeply influenced by Ba Jin’s work when she was young. The couple later became good friends with Ba Jin. They maintained a very close contact. After receiving his Ph.D. from Princeton University and having been a research fellow there in 1951, Zhou was determined to return to China. “Even it means to get my head chopped off as soon as I landed”. Joining her husband, Chai returned from Taiwan with their two young children, Zhou Ximeng and Zhou Xiqin.

Chai and her family suffered a great deal from political persecution during the Cultural Revolution. Zhou had tried to commit suicide several times but was rescued every time. According to one of his students, Zhou was once taken back for further denounced and attacked shortly after he was revived from one of his suicide attempts. To quench his thirst, he even drank the water from a spittoon.

In 1968, their eldest son, Zhou Ximeng killed himself by lying down on the railroad tracks. Chai has kept blaming herself for her son’s death for the following 20 year: “Why did I take my children back to die?”

Chai was diagnosis of depression in 1990 and was found dead by hanging herself at home on February 26, 1993. Two nights before, she was heard screaming in her dream, shouting, “Ximeng, Ximeng! Mom is coming!”