



Peter Tai Yuen Kan

April 12, 1927 - January 7, 2026

Peter Tai Yuen Kan was born on April 12, 1927, in Canton, Kwangtung province, China. He passed away on January 7, 2026, in suburban Detroit, Michigan.

Devoted husband of Juliana for almost 75 years, eldest son of Hang-Yung Chan and Nai-Kuang Kan, eldest brother of Henry (Maureen, Margaret), Ellen (Mark), Philip (Alice), and Katherine (Eugene), loving father of Kenneth (Mary Ann) and Karen (Brian), adored grandfather of Francis, 甘乃生 and Peter, 童立生 and kind uncle to many nieces and nephews.

In his younger years, Peter lived in Hongkong, Shanghai (French concession), Peking, Nanking, Macao and Chungking.

1946 brought travel to the U.S. on the USS General Scott. Prior to the start of classes at Gannon College in Erie, Pennsylvania, Peter stayed, along with his brother, Henry, for three months at the home of the Chinese Ambassador to the U.S. in Washington, D.C.

1949 marked graduation with a B.S degree in chemistry. Immediately after, Peter enrolled in the M.S. program at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. In 1950, his future wife, Juliana, arrived on campus. Peter and Juliana married in 1951, settling in Ann Arbor, later moving to Detroit.

Peter worked as an industrial chemist at R.P. Scherer Corporation. He returned to academic life and completed his PhD in organic chemistry at Wayne State University under Dr. Carl Djerassi. It was Dr. Djerassi who invited Dr. D.H.R. Barton from University College of London to attend one of Peter's

seminars at Wayne State. Dr. Barton would win the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1969.

Peter started a new job at Wyandotte Chemical in 1957. The family moved to Livonia and later, to Plymouth.

BASF Corporation bought Wyandotte Chemical where Peter worked for a total of 38 years. He developed new monomers for the synthesis of polyurethanes. A later project focused on a series of catalysts for foam production for which he obtained over 30 U.S. patents.

In the 1970s Peter lived and worked in Ludwigshafen am Rhein, Germany, as a delegate to BASF. He was instrumental in facilitating polyol technology transfer from BASF (US) to BASF (Germany) and in setting up a new production plant in Antwerp, Belgium.

Peter retired in 1995, after being feted at numerous retirement celebrations in three countries.

Peter was a man of great intellectual curiosity and encyclopedic reading habits. He enjoyed classical music, Chinese cuisine, travel throughout Europe, Australia and China. He was an energetic arborist and gardener. A generous man, Peter's other distinctive qualities were warmth, directness, and precision. His dedication to his family, immediate and extended, was evident to all. He was always brilliant and funny but, in his later years, clearly extraordinary in the degree to which he relished not only all that life brought to him, but what he could bring to the lives of others.

Memorial service to be held at Vermeulen-Sajewski Funeral Home, 46401 Ann Arbor Road West, Plymouth, Michigan 48170 on Saturday, June 13, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a contribution to Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago,

<https://www.luriechildrens.org/PeterTaiYuenKan>

To share a memory, please use the Share a Memory tab on this webpage.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

JUN 13. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Vermeulen-Sajewski Funeral Home Plymouth
46401 Ann Arbor Road West
Plymouth, MI 48170
(734) 459-2250
plymouth@vermeulenh.com

Tribute Wall



“ *I've worked on Pete's house several times over the last 30 years. My favorite customer ever. He will be missed.*

Michael Smith - June 16 at 05:49 PM



“ *Unfortunately I will be out of the country during the Memorial Service for Dr. Pete Kan. I had the honor to work with Dr. Pete Kan in polyurethanes R&D from 1990 until 1995, when he retired. During this period Pete made invaluable contributions to isocyanate technology and product development for BASF in collaboration with colleagues in Ludwigshafen, Germany and isocyanate manufacturing plants in Geismar, Louisiana and Antwerp, Belgium. I have the highest regard for Pete both professionally and personally.*

Ted Biermann - May 18 at 02:20 PM

AT

“ Peter, Juliana, Mike, and Angie have shared a friendship spanning seven decades—an incredible bond. In truth, our connections began even before we were born. Peter’s father and Angie’s father were college friends, and our mothers were close in high school. We were young once, fearless and full of life—taking on jobs, raising families, managing mortgages, and still making time for each other. The monthly gatherings, filled with children, laughter, and noise, are memories I’ll always treasure. After dinner, the men would gather for poker, while the women stayed up late chatting. Those were truly special days.
Peter, I hope you’re enjoying lively poker games with your friends in heaven. I’ll join you someday.
Rest in peace.
Love, Angie Tsou

angie tsou - May 16 at 11:46 AM