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Asian American Career Choices and the New Generation

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Presence

Presence was born with a mission to nurture the next generation. Bridging the gap between two generations has also become Presence's main focus in order to promote harmonious and healthy family growth. To serve this purpose, Presence provides different educational resources including events, publications and multi-media productions. If you are interested in our resources or want to know more about Presence, please see our website www.PresenceQuotient.org, contact us through email at **info@PresenceQuotient.org** or call **626-810-5200**.

Editor's Corner

Lily Ma

Asians strongly value supporting their families. Therefore, when it comes to choosing a major or a career, they tend to focus on stability. However, since business models keep on changing and the economy has been fluctuating in recent years, even jobs that used to be considered very stable and secure can be gone overnight. College graduates can no longer expect that what they learn in college will apply in their careers. Some even have to look for ways of creating their own businesses. On the other hand, some middle-aged adults, in spite of holding a long-term secure job, never feel fulfilled because their real passions and dreams have never been actualized. In this issue of Presence Family Magazine, we will discuss the patterns and effects of Asians' career choices. We hope that the parents of the new Asian generation can help their children discover their true talents and passions, and guide them into building fulfilling and successful futures.

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Trends and Reasons

Behind Asian Americans' Professional Choices

Agnes Ip
Founder and President of Presence

It is no secret that Asian families strongly emphasize education. To compete for admission to an elite college, their high school-aged children spend most of their free time in tutoring and SAT prep classes.

As for their majors, most Asians choose subjects in science and technology. When it comes to professions, they tend to stay in similiar fields. How do we explain these choices?

1. Asians Tend to be Professionals in Science and Technology Fields

According to the U.S.Census Bureau, the majority of Asian Americans are professionals in science and technology fields, and are not as well represented in production, entertainment, social services and humanistic fields, (Leong & Hardin, 2002; Leong & Gupta, 2007;Fouad, Kantamneni, Smothers, Chen, Fitzpatrick, & Terry, 2008; Tang, Fouad, & Smith, 1999). In 2007, 4% of the American population identified as Asian. Among them, 25% were computer engineers, 17% were medical doctors, 14% were dentists, and 30% were scientists in medical fields. There were only 1% of social service workers (Fouad et al., 2008).

In 2002, Mei Tang conducted a research study to compare the career patterns of three groups of students: Chinese from Mainland China, American-born Asians, and white Americans. The study showed that the first two groups preferred research-based professions, whereas the third group was more likely to be in humanities and

social services-related careers. Tang hypothesized that in the absence of external influences and restrictions, the career choices of these three groups of students would exhibit more commonalities. However, one's dream career and reality often do not match due to practical factors such as financial obligations, personal skills, and the market demand. Since many Asian parents, especially first-generation parents, have experienced poverty and other forms of economic deprivation, they tend to prefer—more so than Caucasians—that their children go into professional fields because of the stability.

Tang reiterated the observation from Walsh and Osipow's book (1983) that minorities tend to be most concerned with survival and financial stability. In general, jobs that are related to science and technology offer relatively more security, easing parents' concern. Tang also cited from Leong & Serefica's article (1995) that the prevalence of Asian Americans in science and research positions is also the result of stereotypes and discrimination in the workplace. Peer influences also play a role—seeing their friends pursue careers in technology and science, rather than the humanities or social service, these young Asian Americans often just follow the crowd.

2. Asian Americans' Career Choices are Influenced by Family Expectations

Major career development theories posit that personal interest is the decisive factor in a person's career choice. As much as Asian Americans recognize the importance of personal interest, recent research on this subpopulation has arrived at a totally different conclusion.

Research has been done (Leong, 1998; Leong & Gupta, 2007; Tang et al., 1999) in 187 universities populated with Asians about how their career decisions are affected by personal interest, self-development, family backgrounds, and cultural adjustment. The results reveal that the career decisions of Asian students are more correlated to family expectations and needs than to personal advancement or interest. As a matter of fact, to most Asians, family upbringing, cultural adjustment, and self-efficacy are the key factors influencing their career choices. There is no direct connection between individual interest and job choice. When it comes to Southeast Asian Americans, family influence is even stronger (Castelino, 2005). While white Americans tend to be more independent in their decision making, Asian Americans and Chinese students are strongly influenced by their fathers. They are more likely to comply with their parents' preferences, not just because of the culture, but also out of a sense of obligation to fulfill their parents' aspirations and to ascend the social ladder so as to bring fame to the family(Leong, 1986).

3. Asian Americans Climb the Social Ladder Through Management Positions

In general, Asian Americans are socially and economically well off. Many have seized opportunities to hold upper management positions. For example, one study reports that 42% of 25-year-old Asian Americans have at least a college degree compared to the general U.S. population of 24.4%. Additionally, Asian Americans' median income in 2010 was $64,308 compared to the national average of $49,445 (IpNgan, 2012, p.3).

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, management positions as well as science and technology jobs are predominately held by Asian and Caucasian Americans, more so than other races. Among all management positions, 35.6% are held by Europeans and Caucasians, 25.2% by African Americans, 18.1% by Hispanic and Latino persons, and 44.6% by Asians. However, Asians have paid a high price to climb the corporate ladder. They are constantly facing social obstacles and carrying inexhaustible pressure.

As I mentioned in my previous article, Asian Americans are often stifled by the invisible but tangible "glass ceiling" at some point in their careers (IpNgan, 2012, p.3). One study explains that, according to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, compared to Caucasian men with the same level of education and experience, Asian American men are 7% to 11 % less likely to hold managerial positions. Additionally, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median income for Caucasians with four years of college education is $36,130 a year, while for Asian Americans it is $34,470 a year (IpNgan, 2012, p.3).

Asian Americans often exhaust themselves in their attempts to attain management positions. Around the clock they compete with colleagues, striving to

distinguish themselves. Their minds and souls become worn as a result of insurmountable competition and pressure. "Many studies have shown that Asian Americans — men and women alike — suffer from higher rates of stress, depression, mental illnesses, and suicide in comparison to other races (IpNgan, 2012, p.3).

During my counseling practice, I encountered many Asian professionals who triumphed in their careers but were wearied and drained as people. They entered the professional world because of the seemingly promising future, attractive pay, and ability to provide for their families, regardless of whether or not they had genuine interest in their jobs. Day in and day out, they labored and worked hard. Their passion for work, if it ever existed to begin with, was soon gone. The only ambition they are left with is to retire early so they can finally do what they really like. If given another chance, most would have chosen an occupation that they enjoy!

Now my two children are in college. Not wanting them to make the same mistake, with the support of both my husband and me, our oldest daughter is studying in New York, majoring in art and design. Our younger son lives on campus in Santa Barbara, exploring his new world. As Asian parents, we realize the learning environment is very different nowadays. What we study in college may not be related to the career we ultimately choose. As a matter of fact, many have chosen careers that are different from their majors.

Let's encourage our children to pursue their natural talents and develop their personal interests as they decide on their majors or careers. Rather than pushing our children into the science and technology fields that are traditionally dominated by Asians, parents can help their children lead more fulfilling lives by identifying their children's natural talents and cultivating their unique passions so that they can advance in a career they truly love.

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American Tire / Discount Tire

Bruce Halle opened his first tire store in 1960. He borrowed money from a friend and started out with an inventory of only six tires. After he sold those six, he bought another six. He then went on to become a master at inventory. Today, Discount Tire is the world's largest independent tire and wheel retailer with 840 locations in 23 states.

http://www.forbes.com/profile/bruce-halle/#

Kentucky Fried Chicken

In 1930, in the midst of the Great Depression, Harland Sanders opened his first restaurant in the small front room of a gas station in Corbin, Kentucky. Sanders served as the station operator, chief cook and cashier. Today, there are more than 15,000 KFC outlets in 109 countries around the world serving 12 million customers each day.

http://www.kfc.com

Gil Tam

Passion for the Youth & Career Coaching

Choosing a major and career can be some of the most difficult decisions for a young person. In Asian culture, well-known stereotypes and expectations exist, such as the respect that comes to those who pursue law, engineering, or medicine. There's also society's definitions of stature and success, which elevate people in these fields.

To assist young people in navigating these important decisions, Presence Quotient is launching a new ministry with career coach Gil Tam. Tam is an experienced mentoring and career coach who has a passion for young people. Both his son and daughter acknowledge their Dad's expertise in this area, as he understands both the traditional mindset of most immigrant parents and a new generation that has been influenced by Western values.

Below is an edited version of an interview with Gil Tam along with excerpts and quotes from his children, Bryant and Stacie Tam.

Interviewed by Joanna Wu

Presence Quotient: Gil, tell us more about your career background. When did you retire, and what are you involved in now?

Gil Tam: I graduated from Cal State University of Long Beach with a degree in mechanical engineering and started my career with Southern California Edison as an assistant plant engineer at a power generating station. Over 33 years, I progressed through the management ranks to an executive position until retiring in 2007.

I then began my personal ministry to provide life and career coaching and mentorship to high school and college students, while sharing my Christian faith with them. I volunteer as a basketball coach at San Pedro High School. I also serve as a board member and mentor for the Asian American Professional Association (AAPA), a non-profit with a yearlong mentoring program dedicated to promoting and inspiring Asian Americans to achieve their maximum career and leadership potential. I've remained professionally active by working as a principal consultant at Electric Power Group in Pasadena.

PQ: How did you find your passion in career coaching and mentoring?

GT: Youth ministry has been my passion and calling for the last 25 years. I began working with youth at my home church and fell in love with it immediately. **Most youth hunger for attention and someone to listen to them without judgment.** Most look for role models in addition to their parents, or to fill the void left by a missing parent. I identified with these needs because I grew up in a divorced family; my Dad left when I was 14. My role models and mentors were my junior high and high school drafting teachers, high school basketball coaches, college professors, former bosses, and others. They provided the vital guidance I needed to navigate my career path. **I would not have been able to achieve success in my career without coaching and mentorship from all of them. To offer these gifts to others by providing life and career coaching and mentorship gives me great fulfillment and joy.**

PQ: Can you describe some of the situations you've seen from people who have sought help from you?

GT: I've provided mentorship and coaching to young Asian American professionals. It mostly involves career advancement and the enhancement of "soft" skills, such as interpersonal relationships, communications and presentation, career planning and goal setting, networking, etc.

Most AA professionals are very competent and willing to work hard. However, they often experience difficulty in advancing to management positions because they fail to recognize the importance of soft skills. Typically, as an individual moves up the corporate ladder, technical skills become relatively less important than the interpersonal or soft skills. I help AA professionals develop these skills to facilitate career advancement.

I also work with those seeking to change careers. There are many reasons someone may want to change careers, but the most troubling case I encountered was a young AA certified public accountant (CPA) who told me he had been an analyst for over 10 years and hated his job. He wanted to know how to become a chiropractor. He told me his father made him become a CPA since his father was also a CPA. I told him he could still pursue his dream but that it would require lots of sacrifice and hard work. He was not afraid of the sacrifice and hard work but was afraid his father would be very upset.

In my 10 plus years of working with AA professionals, I've discovered some who are in their current professions because their parents told them to do so, and they were too timid to express that they had other interests or simply did not want to disappoint their parents. In some situations, the parents had financial leverage and the child, not wanting to lose financial support, went along with the parents' wishes.

PQ: Besides your professional background, how has your experience in being a parent helped you in your career coaching?

GT: My journey as a parent was a great learning experience. I learned from my children that just pushing them to study hard and get good grades is not a balanced approach. I learned to listen to them and really get to know them. **I've learned to correct and help them learn from their mistakes, coach them to find their passions, help identify their short-term and long-term goals and develop action plans to accomplish those goals, while providing support when appropriate and finding appropriate mentors to guide their career development.** This is the same approach I use now to provide career coaching for other young people.

PQ: How do you conduct your training/coaching for young people?

GT: My coaching involves the following process:

1. Seek to know the students through interview questions and, if possible, have the students take a personality test.
2. Provide feedback to students to help them understand themselves.
3. Inspire them to find their passion and pursue their dreams.
4. If the student lacks confidence, provide tips to start developing self-confidence. I've found many AA students lack self-confidence because they have been overprotected by their loving parents.
5. Help them set short-term and long-term goals and develop a plan to pursue those goals.
6. Help them develop self-initiative since most young AA professionals believe that sitting in a cubicle and working hard will result in career advancement.

This process varies depending on the individual's needs. If possible, I try to work with the student's parents at the same time, which is critical for the student's success.

PQ: How did your children find their own paths?

GT: Like many Asian parents, my wife and I pushed our children to study hard, get good grades and get into a good college. We did not spend enough time coaching them about finding their own passion and career direction.

Our wake-up call was when my son, Bryant, received academic probation at UC Irvine. A computer engineering major, he told us that he really disliked his science classes. When I asked him why he decided to study computer engineering, he responded that he thought I wanted him to be an engineer. I did not remember telling him to major in engineering but he must have inferred this during our discussions. **I immediately told him that he could study any subject and pursue any career he's passionate about.**

He decided that he wanted to study business management and still completed his degree in four years. He is now a project manager for Southern California Edison and enjoys his work very much.

My daughter, Stacie, also struggled to find her passion and career path. During her senior year at USC, she decided to take a break from college and went to work in a bar and grill because she wanted to learn the restaurant business. My wife and I were shocked and disappointed. We tried to convince her to finish her degree first, but she wanted to pursue this new dream and finish her studies later. My wife and I supported her and kept the communication channel open. Stacie worked for a few years in the restaurant industry but ultimately decided she wanted to pursue a career in sports marketing.

I learned a great deal from my own children and hope to use what I've learned to help other young people find their passion and career paths.

PQ: What do you think are parent's roles when it comes to a young person's career search? What should they do and not do?

GT: Asian parents are capable of guiding their children in finding their career paths. However, some loving and caring Asian parents focus too much on "directing" their children's career paths instead of guiding them to find their passions and careers.

It is not effective for parents to direct or dictate what career their children should pursue. This approach only works if the child happens to enjoy the directed career path. Otherwise, the child will be another professional who hates his/her job. Instead, **parents should help children find their passion and guide them to a career that matches.** This is not easy. Some children know very early what their passions are and what career they want to pursue. Some take longer to figure this out.

Parents should have an open mind and build strong communication by doing more listening and seeking to understand their children. Young people will talk if they know you will listen to them without judgment. Most parent-child confrontations can be minimized if there is good communication. If necessary, parents should seek other mentors to help them guide their children's career decisions.

Both Bryant and Stacie have acknowledged how helpful their Dad has been in supporting their career goals and personal interests.

Bryant, the younger of the two, is currently a project manager at Southern California Edison, helping to manage large capital construction projects. After the setback of receiving academic probation at UCI, he discovered his interest in business and the thrill of being an entrepreneur and has pursued various business ventures, including his most recent project, a clothing line called Alfred Banks that caters to young, passionate and driven individuals.

"Life is too short to be doing something that someone else wants you to do," Bryant said, advice he's given to younger people who have chosen majors and careers because of parental expectations. Bryant, who was in a fraternity while at UCI, has stayed in contact with students and young people seeking help with their resumes, networking, and job opportunities. He has successfully helped more than a few people secure positions at SCE and acknowledges how vital it is to know people, beyond having the high GPA.

Stacie completed her bachelor's degree this year after taking a hiatus from school, a shock to her parents and other relatives. Stacie considers herself a "black sheep" in her family, having worked in the bartending industry for about seven years now. She currently works as a bartender in Hermosa Beach and is pursuing career opportunities in the sports and business industry after going through an emotionally toiling layoff earlier this year from the Clipper's marketing department.

Both Stacie and Bryant give credit to their Dad, who they describe as more "Americanized" and who has always been open to their personal passions and interests.

This is a new and different generation, she said, as far as differences from its immigrant or first-generation parents. Young people, like herself, are not trying to rebel or displease their parents, but want freedom to make choices on their own.

"We just want to talk sometimes," Stacie said. "Be open to hearing why we're doing what we're doing. 'Just be there to support me. You don't have to like it.'"

Stacie has definitely taken a non-traditional route and is grateful for the support system and has no regrets.

"Whatever you end up doing, do what you want to do […] Everything I've wanted to do or learn, I've done it," she said. "If you do what you love, you're going to be successful because you're going to put yourself all into it."

A WINTER PARADISE IN MEXICO

Los Cabos

Lily Ma

Los Cabos is located at the southern tip of Mexico's Baja California peninsula, surrounded by the Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Cortez. There are usually 350 days of sunshine in Los Cabos with temperatures between 78 and 82 degrees from October to April, but reaching over 100 degrees the rest of the year. It is a perfect place for an escape to avoid the chill in winter time.

Los Cabos consists of two main cities, San Jose del Cabo and Cabo San Lucas, connected by a 20-mile corridor along the coast. Resorts are found in both cities and along the corridor. These resorts boast private beaches, swimming pools, and lots of activities and children's programs. Many of them also provide all-inclusive packages. You can just stay at your resort the whole time without a problem. If you care for water sports and activities, you can visit the marina at either city (though Cabo San Lucas features more options). These activities are priced much lower than those we find in the States. You can choose from sport fishing, parasailing, swimming with dolphins, or just a sunset cruise if you like something more relaxed.

When we visited Los Cabos this past summer, our most favorite part was the relaxing environment there—sunshine and beaches, relaxing Latin music, nature's melody of the waves cutting at the shore, smiling faces from the local people. No wonder we met people who gave up their successful lives in the States and moved to Los Cabos just to seek a different and peaceful lifestyle. From the happiness that the local people exude, it's hard to imagine that those who work at the resort are only making about $6 per day. It's so true that happiness is not always linked to wealth.

If you would like to visit Los Cabos someday, try to avoid summer months. It's hot and humid there in summer, and hurricane season also falls between August and October. When we were there this past August, we were so "lucky" to have three days of pouring rain. The locals said they had not had rain for two years. Even with the rain, Los Cabos is still a paradise to us, with its beauty and its peace.

DARE TO BE DIFFER

FOUR DREAM PURSUING STORIES

Although Asians demonstrate a certain pattern in their career choices, we can still find people with different goals and dreams. The following stories belong to people who dare to be different among Asians. Fueling their pursuits, we can see that personal talent, passion and perseverance, opportunities, and the support of family and of others have all played a very important role. We rejoice and are excited to learn about these dreams, and wish that their lives be abundantly blessed and fulfilled as their dreams continue to grow.

Story 1

Soaring IN THE SKY

Jonathan Ma

My mom gave me a wide-body pullback airplane as a souvenir from her trip to San Francisco in 2005. After receiving that gift, for some reason, I gradually became interested in airplanes. I started collecting airplane models, researching different airplanes, and talking to pilots every time we traveled, and I got to know a lot about airplanes and careers in aviation. I had few friends when I was in middle school, but this new interest gave me joy and opened up a new career goal for me, as well as helping me develop meaningful friendships with those who shared the same passion.

I had my first real flight experience in August 2010 on a Cessna 172, and I could take full control of the landing

Photo by Melanie Johnson and http://diamondbar-walnut.patch.com/

the second time I flew without any assistance from the flight instructor. I enjoy taking off and landing the most because there are always challenges that require skills and good control, especially when it is windy. I also like to fly at different airports on different aircrafts for more challenges. At times I have been scared in difficult situations. My only failed landing thus far was at John Wayne Airport. The turbulence was just too great when I tried to land following a Boeing 737, and I had to touch down and go back up into the sky. Taking off from the El Monte Airport was a real challenge too, as there are so many buildings nearby. I just had to ascend quickly to be safe.

I was placed in a special education program starting in seventh grade. Unlike my friends, I am not in many honors or AP classes. I cannot share the struggles they experience in their pursuit of academics, nor do I achieve the same things they do in school. But flying helps me to find my life goal and anchor so that I also have something to be proud of. I just turned sixteen and I am looking forward to flying solo soon. I am sure that would be an awesome experience.

... this new interest gave me joy and opened up a new career goal for me, as well as helping me develop meaningful friendships with those who shared the same passion.

Feedback from the Mother

My son Jonathan had experienced unusual struggles in his growing process compared to other children. He cried and showed tantrums easily. He had a lot of problems dealing with his emotion and interpersonal relationship. Eventually he was diagnosed with attention deficit disorder and social-emotional issues, and therefore classified to be a special child. But to my surprise, he also has a very special dream —to be a pilot.

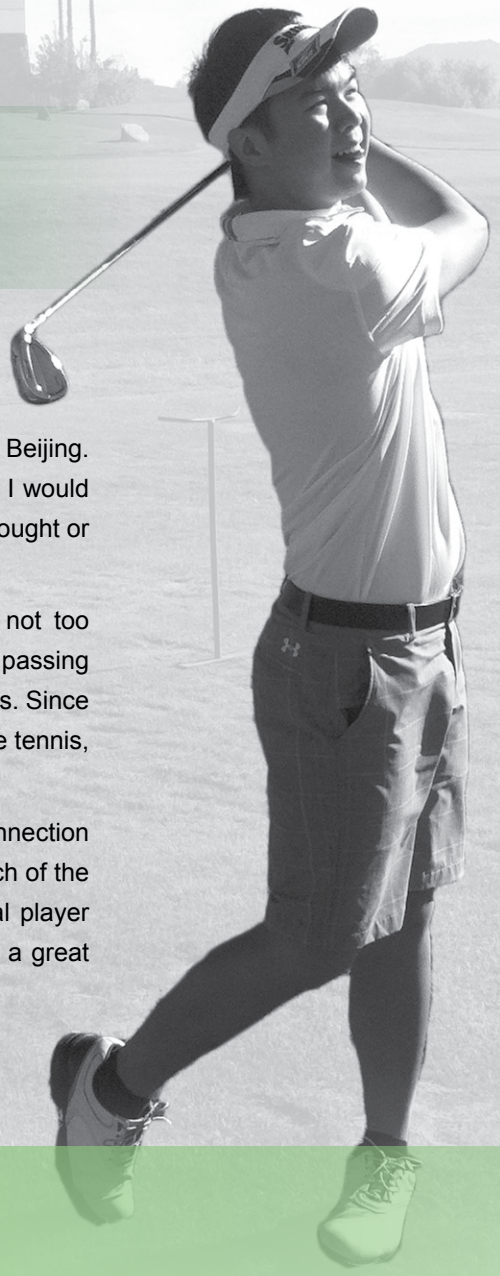
I don't remember when he started his love of airplanes. He has a countless collection of airplane models. He knows everything about airplanes. One day he told us that he wanted to learn flying an airplane. He started to get training when he was about 14. Although he usually has concentration issues, when he gets to the pilot seat, he is calm, confident and pays full attention. His instructor gave him this comment," He is the youngest student in the flying school but he is flying better than many adults." Jonathan is becoming more cheerful and confident as a person after he has started flying.

Once I was on board when he flew. When the plane flew over our neighborhood, I realized how different the view from the sky is compared to the ground. At that point, I deeply felt that my son's world is in the sky. No wonder sometimes we cannot appreciate or fully understand him because we live on the ground, not in the sky. We are all unique in God's creation. I rejoice when God reveals to my son who he is, and allows him to have his own dream and a long life passion. This is truly a great blessing and I am grateful for him.

Story 2

My Golf Dream

Jack Ma



When I was in ninth grade, my parents had a meeting in Beijing. When they came back home to Chengdu, my mom asked me if I would go to play golf in Beijing if given the opportunity. Without much thought or hesitation, I jumped on the idea and said yes.

I had been an OK student at school—not too bright but not too bad. My goal was to simply complete my schoolwork and earn passing grades. My passion during those years had been fixated on sports. Since elementary school, I had tried swimming, biking, badminton, table tennis, triathlon, basketball, and soccer.

Golf, considered a "rich man's sport," seemed to have little connection with my family. But by coincidence, we met the former head coach of the Chinese National Golf Team, who had also been a professional player in Professional Golfers Association of America. This coach was a great

Father's Sharing

I still remember the comment from my son's friends — they called him a "free spirit" when he was in elementary school. While the majority of students went to after school enrichment programs, my son went to the beach, rode his bicycle, or played ball. I was only expecting him to pass his classes with a C average; getting As was not required. My wife did not agree with these expectations, but there was only so much I could do.

I never thought Jack would become an athlete. I just wanted him to grow up happily and be healthy. I think good health is above all other matters; I grew up with asthma and did not want him go through what I had experienced.

When Jack dreamed of becoming a professional golf player, I totally supported him. When our family visited Beijing, my son had the opportunity to receive free golf lessons when my wife worked for an American golf coach as an interpreter, the former coach of China National Golf Team. To be honest, initially I did not want my son to play golf. It was a struggle for me because golf was considered a luxury sport mainly for the wealthy, but I am just an ordinary man and a servant of God. How could I afford to pay for the lessons? I could not understand why God would provide him with an unsuitable opportunity. On the other hand, I did not want

mentor to me. In half a year's time, my skills were obviously improving as strokes were getting lower. The thought of becoming a professional player or coach soon set in. As I matured in this sport, I found golf was challenging because it required soundness of both mind and body. As the sport became harder and more demanding, I felt I was stumbling upon the first hurdle in life and got very upset. I started to feel lost and uncertain about my dream. Luckily my parents and friends remained supportive and encouraging, and I finally figured out my own playing strategies to improve. Golf became my good friend as time went by.

One day my coach said, "It would work better for your golf career if you studied and played in the U.S." That was how I came to Riverside County in Southern California, a totally new and strange place for me. This past summer I turned eighteen, and I also started community college. At the beginning, it was an abrupt shock to have to adapt to a different culture, language, and new ways of doing things. Gradually I learned to adjust and be more independent. I applied to college, filled out all the forms, obtained my student visa, and endured multiple interviews all by myself. Although there might still be tough times ahead in life and in golfing, I will continue to press on to become a professional golfer. I tell myself to follow my golf dream no matter what, and I know the key is perseverance and to never give up.

"Although there might still be tough times ahead in life and in golfing, I will continue to press on to become a professional golfer. I tell myself to follow my golf dream no matter what, and I know the key is perseverance and to never give up."

Jack Ma

Jack and his coach

to strike down Jack's interest in golf or bury his potential to become good at the sport. I was anxious, but I knew I had to let him try it.

I thank God for giving me a remarkable son. He is not only my sport companion, but also my life coach, and because of him I ran my very first marathon. He taught me how to become a father and a teacher. When I look at my son now, I only have praises for God.

United Parcel Services (UPS)

James E. Casey, at only 19 years old, teamed up with three partners to open American Messenger Co. in 1907 with the slogan "best service, lowest rates." The company operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and delivered using messenger boys on foot and bicycles. Later it used motorcycles and package cars, and then airplanes. In 1919, the company changed its name to United Parcel Service. Today UPS delivers more than 15 million packages a day to 6.1 million customers in more than 220 countries and territories around the world.

http://news.investors.com/management-leaders-in-success/081111-581136-what-did-ups-jim-casey-do-for-the-mail-plenty.htm?p=full

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Parcel_Service

Story 3

A Dream of Love

Sundi Sunarjo • Interviewed by Lily Ma

Sundi liked to open her home to her friends and serve different cuisine when she was in college. She enjoyed it so much that she wanted it to become her career.

After graduation, she worked in different restaurants and even in the kitchen of a hospital. However, her mission of serving food to others with love went unrecognized by her coworkers. Eventually she quit her job in 2009 and opened her own restaurant to fulfill her dream. This is how "Love to Go," her business, was born. It is a dessert joint where she serves her own creations of yogurt soda (a special drink that combines fresh fruit, yogart and Italian soda) and "waffza." (snack made from waffles) She serves unique food and builds a culture of love-sharing, including sharing the love of Christ. Love to Go welcomes custom orders to cater to different tastes and needs. Sundi thinks that through this kind of service and communication, she can turn this business into a service of love.

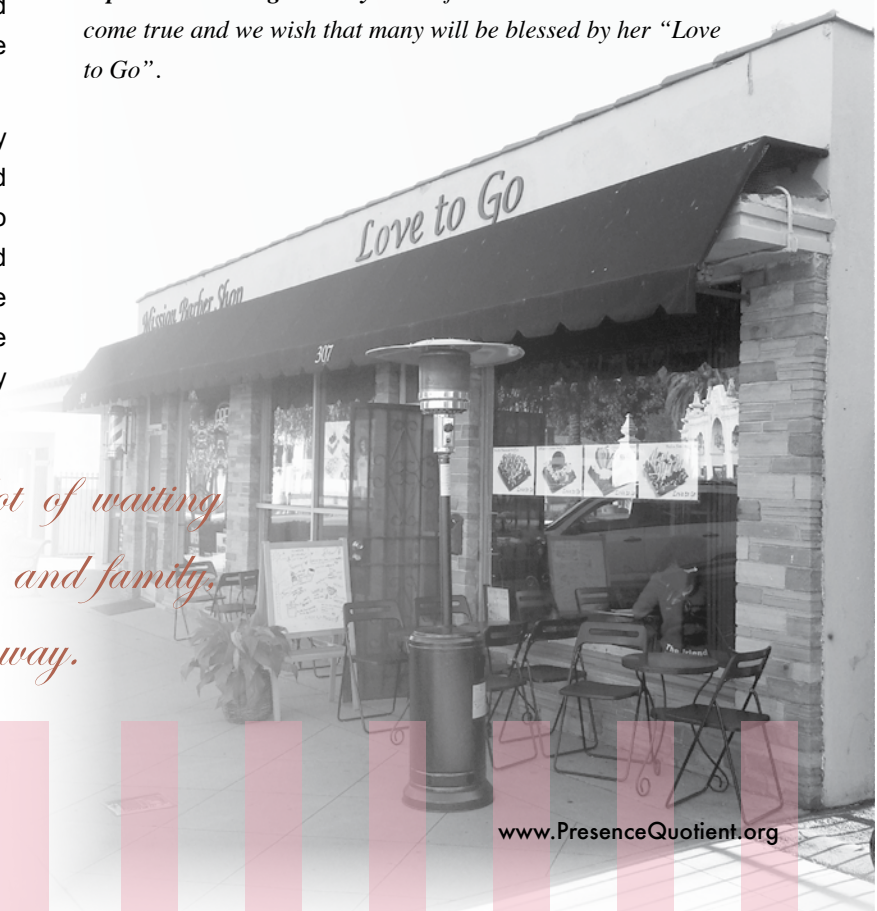
However, it has not been an easy path, especially during the first two years. Business was not good because of a lack of advertisement, and Sundi had to do everything by herself. She gave up personal time and cut down on her involvement in church. Even though she sacrificed so much, business was only getting by. She could only cover the costs of operation, not generate any income. She almost wanted to give up.

A dream to come true takes a lot of waiting and persistence, support from friends and family, adjustments in expectations along the way.

After a while, Sundi realized that she had to refocus her original goal and dream. She wanted to spend more time at church, requiring cutting down the business hours. Surprisingly her business turned around thanks to some Christian friends who volunteered to help. They share the same vision as Sundi, and their encouragement helped to develop a fellowship among them outside the church. This in turn made her dream come true.

* * *

In the process of interviewing Sundi, I could sense that she has an ideal about food and food service. She is passionate about this ideal, but struggled to find people who can share the same. ***A dream to come true takes a lot of waiting and persistence, support from friends and family, adjustments in expectations along the way.*** *We rejoice to see Sundi's dream come true and we wish that many will be blessed by her "Love to Go".*



Seventeen Precious Years

Story 4

Connie Sun

Seventeen years ago, I joined a very special group of parents welcoming my eldest daughter coming into this world. The joy and excitement soon were replaced by hospital visits and uncertainty. My daughter, Priscilla, was born premature. She developed different kinds of complications in the hospitals. She was released to us two months and seven days after her birth.

Raising her was a long and challenging process. I started taking her to early intervention programs since she was three months old. She was delayed in all areas of development. At that time, I had been a general education teacher for 6 years. I love being a teacher. Because of Priscilla, I decided to switch to special education. I was hoping that I could better help her if I had the proper training. Shortly after I started going back to school again, I landed on a job teaching preschool special education students. I loved this job! Even though it was challenging to deal with the behavior problems, potty training, and lack of language and social skills these kids exhibited, I had the most fulfilling experience.

It was my dream come true. It is such a blessing to be able to teach these kids about Jesus while the parents participate in the worship services.

During these 17 years, my world was wonderfully enriched by these kids who are the pure hearted described by Jesus in the Bible. I truly believe that they are the ones who can see God. April this year, God also answered my prayer. I became part of a special education ministry at Great Commission Church International called Special Blessings. It was my dream come true. It is such a blessing to be able to teach these kids about Jesus while the parents participate in the worship services. Thanks to all the volunteers, we were able to provide good care and supervision to 6 to 9 families every Sunday. I know that the need is very big. There are still so many parents who are not able to go to church because their special child does not fit in.

If you have never encountered anyone with disability, I encourage you to do so. You will be so blessed by becoming acquainted with someone with disability like I have been for 17 precious years.