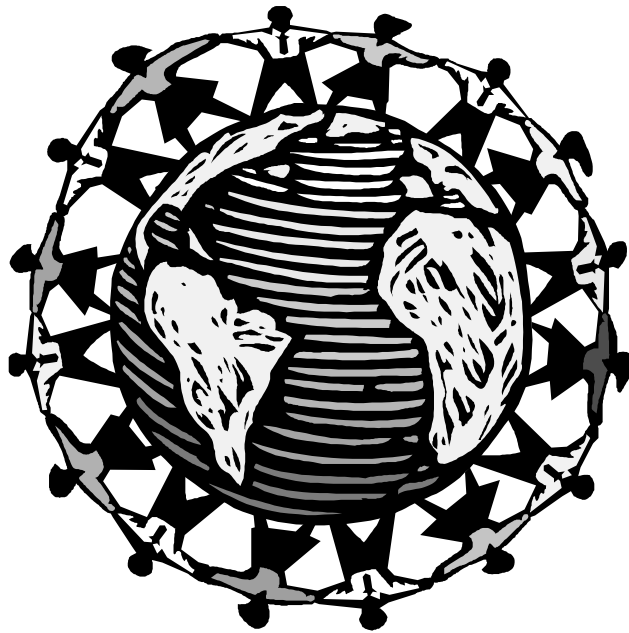


Bergen Community College
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Introduction

In their essays in this volume, Byungjin Kim, Joselyn Mejia, and David Wang remind us that to a non-American, the emphasis on individual freedom and individualism is one of the most striking characteristics of American culture. This emphasis can be exasperating, as it has been at times to Byungjin Kim; it can be inspiring, as Seunghan Sung's essay suggests that it has been to him, and it can be both, as is the case for Joselyn Mejia. To many visitors and immigrants, what is as striking as the American emphasis on the individual is the closely related emphasis in this country on diversity of opinion and, at America's best, on diversity of culture. In accordance with this basic American value, this volume contains accounts of personal, even private experiences, ranging from delight in winter to descriptions of the writer's native country that indicate a homesickness that may be difficult to suppress. And, in David Wang's extraordinary memoir, it contains a reminder that not only is the American emphasis on the individual and on diversity alien to many cultures, but so is the easy, and sometimes unappreciated, access Americans have to education.

The diversity of students in the classrooms at Bergen Community College contributes greatly to the education of those students and of their teachers as well. The diversity of experiences and responses that are recorded in this volume will, we hope, contribute to the education and add to the pleasure of its readers. For these benefits, we wish to thank the students who contributed to this volume, and for the cover design, we are indebted to Marilyn Pongracz.

Dr. Alfred McDowell
Professor Beth Snyder

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Personal Experiences

Winter

Taeyonng Um

Korea

Winter is a season of happiness, celebration, and love. Although the air is cold and a lot of people suffer from fevers, winter is very joyful for most of us. It is because in the winter, we have holidays like Christmas, New Year's Day, and Valentine's Day. On those days, people give love and their hearts to their beloved ones or at least give them presents and sweets. It is cold physically, but it is the warmest season of the year because people share what they can and are happy about it. And the best reason that winter is loved by most people is that when it is snowing, it makes people feel comfortable and happy when the world in front of them is all white. For me, winter is the best season of the year because I like the feeling of stepping in snow for the first time, where nobody has gone over it. I also love snowboarding.

My Mind

Abraham Rosales

Argentina

I'm a simple man that can fly like a bird
when I'm in the forest looking to the sky
or remembering my friends from Mendoza.
In the moment that I begin to travel,

my shadow leaves free of the face of the earth
as it begins to live life again,
swimming on unforgettable past springs
and creating a future in my dreams.
At the time when the sun goes to sleep,
the traveler comes back to reality
from the infinite world of my memories.
It is now when the dreams are wishes
and the happy heart begins to cry
trying to transform the hard life in dreams
and the dreams into a reason to live.

An Unforgettable Story

Syeda Fatima Shakil

Pakistan

My uncle, who is my father's younger brother, is a famous physician in a London hospital. He had a heart attack in 1995. The doctor, who is also his close friend, told him that he needed open heart surgery. My uncle requested that he deal with his case and do the heart operation. After a little hesitation, the doctor agreed to take his case and gave him an appointment for a cardiac bypass operation.

My uncle came on the day of the operation, and his heart surgeon doctor friend did his cardiac bypass operation. But unfortunately at the end of the procedure, the bleeding didn't stop. Doctors tried very hard to stop it, but it didn't stop. So they immediately investigated the cause of the continuous nonstop bleeding. At the end they found that the platelet count in the blood was very low because of the continuous use of a heart medicine called Percinten. Actually unfortunately the doctor forgot to tell my uncle to stop taking that drug, which dilutes the blood. Maybe he thought that my uncle, who is

also a doctor, would have stopped the drug by himself because every doctor knows that before doing any type of operation, blood diluting medicine should not be taken for at least four or five days before the operation.

At the end, the hospital's administrative jury declared my uncle dead and decided to remove him from the ventilator after three days because they thought there was no hope for him to recover and he looked totally dead. He had been on a ventilator for about three to six months and he was not responding, so they thought that continuing was a waste of time and money.

When the doctor (my uncle's friend) learned about the decision, he protested, but they would not change their minds. So the doctor took an urgent leave for a few days from the hospital and immediately took a trip to Mecca, a holy place for Moslems. He prayed to God deeply with a true heart and cried very much for the sake of his friend's life. After a few hours, the doctor told us later, he felt that God had heard his prayer attentively, and he felt the blessing of God in his heart. So immediately he called to England to know the situation. And he heard amazing news. By a miracle of God, when the doctor completed his prayer, at the same time, my uncle woke up after a long time from a deep sleep and felt completely normal. Now he is still working at the same hospital in England and is perfectly all right.

It was really an unforgettable true story which surprised me. Now I feel even more faith in God and even more belief that there is a God who is merciful and marvelous and has great power and that when we pray with a true heart, He will listen to our prayers.

Have You Ever Seen *Singing in the Rain*?

Seunghan Sung

Korea

Everyone knows the scene. It is raining, and Gene Kelly, who is in a tie, a hat, and a good suit, is playing with an umbrella and singing “Singing in the Rain” so happily. Sometimes he jumps in a puddle, and sometimes he wraps himself around a lamppost.

In fact, I have not seen the movie, but I have seen the scene on TV many times. The scene taught me many things. First, people can sing if it rains. It is not insane behavior. It can be a beautiful sight. Second, rain is not a symbol of sadness only. To think so is just a prejudice. Finally, happiness depends on your heart, not the weather.

Funny Things that Happened in the USA

Karina Costa

When I arrived in the United States, my friend and I didn’t understand or speak one word of English, so we started to have funny experiences at the airport. The inspector asked if we had brought foods. He asked many times in different ways, but we understood only when he mimicked a monkey and said, “Bananas.” Then we went to a hotel to wait for a friend of mine to pick us up. We were very tired and cold, so we decided to take a nap. We turned up the heat, but we didn’t know how to convert Fahrenheit to Celsius. I don’t remember what temperature we set the thermostat for, but after thirty minutes we woke up sweating and scared. We thought that something was burning.

One day my boyfriend asked me to pick him up at his job. It was night, and I got lost. I tried to call him, but I didn’t have success. I couldn’t find the place, so I decided to go back home. I stayed lost for three hours or more. I was very tired. Fortunately, I found Hackensack. On the way, I stopped to pay the toll. I threw in the exact amount of the toll, but the light didn’t turn green. I threw in more money. I didn’t know what was happening. I decided to go ahead, but a white light turned on, and the alarm sounded. I stopped the car; I was getting a little panicked. I went back, but the alarm sounded again.

“Do you know what?” I thought to myself. “Forget out it! If a policeman appears, I’ll try to explain.” My friend said that I would be fined, but until now nothing has happened, and I really don’t know what I did wrong. I’ve been here one year and two months, and I have had many experiences like these. But living is learning.

Culture and Country

The American Classroom

Joselyn F. Mejia
Peru

When I began college in the United States, I was not prepared for the American style of education. It is very different from Peruvian education.

In Peru, students usually listen to the instructor. They ask questions only to clarify something they do not understand. Peruvian students usually do not question or doubt the instructor. They repeat what the instructor, who is usually right, tells them. In America, students talk as much as the instructor does, sometimes more. They say what they believe in class (their opinions). Also, sometimes they disagree with the instructor. Most professors encourage students to be independent and to think for themselves. In some classes, Americans critique each other’s work. I found the American classroom shocking at first.

The first time a professor called on me in class, I couldn’t say anything, so she called on someone else. The second time she called on me, I repeated what she had said. Consequently, she got angry with me and again called on another student. She asked the American the same question she had asked me. The student spoke for several minutes. In his answer, he disagreed with many things the professor said. He was also eating a muffin and drinking coffee right in class. This behavior was shocking. I thought the

student was very rude and disrespectful. But, in fact, the instructor was pleased by his answer. I think the professor thought that the American student was the best student because he spoke up during every class and gave his opinions.

Now, after several months at an American college, I like the American classroom. I think that I am even becoming an American student. I speak up in class when I want to, or I just sit and listen when I do not have anything to say. My English has definitely improved a lot because I have had to talk in class. I bring water or soda into afternoon classes to keep me awake when I would rather be taking a nap. I can leave the classroom during a class to use the restroom. In Peru, I might have to wait to go, perhaps for several hours. In addition, American students sometimes come to class late. I could never come to class late in Peru.

In general, I think students in American classrooms are more comfortable than students in Peruvian classrooms because they have more freedom. They can do and say what they want without being afraid. Teachers and students show respect for each other's opinions. Finally, I think that that style of education helps students improve, learn, and develop more in a classroom.

Chinese and American Culture

David Wang

China

Chinese culture is different from American culture in many important aspects. These differences result in different lives in these two countries.

First, these countries have different histories. Chinese civilization is one of the oldest in the world. About 2,300 years ago, Confucius and Mencius established their thinking system, Confucianism, and it became the fundamental thinking system of the feudal age. This thinking was suitable to the feudal economy, so it played an active role in this age. In the eighth century, China became one of the most powerful countries in

the world. Generation after generation, the thinkers kept developing Confucianism in order to serve the feudal empires better, and it became more perfect than before. After the 15th century, the world economy changed rapidly because of the use of new machines. The capitalist system replaced the feudal system gradually. The latter had become an obstacle to progress. But in China, Confucianism was so strong that the advanced capitalist thinking could not be accepted by the people easily. This was the reason that China became a backward and poor country in the last four hundred years. In contrast with China, although the United States has a shorter history, it doesn't have thinking obstacles in developing its capitalist economics. Besides, because it was a new country, it was able to adopt the reasonable part of the European capitalist system and give up the unreasonable part. This is one of the important reasons why this young country developed so rapidly.

Next, the people of these two countries have different ideas about material wealth. In the last fifty years, the Chinese government practiced the idea of "Equality in Material Wealth." In 1949, after the property of the rich people was seized, the poor people became the "masters" of the country. Chinese people could not own their private land and businesses until 1979. This communist idea was so strong in the Chinese people that many of them still hate rich people today. As a result, some people use other people's names to save money or save it abroad in order to avoid trouble. Some rich people try to leave their country after making money because they are afraid that the revolution which happened in 1949 might happen again someday. This idea of "Equality in Material Wealth" has a long history. In the past three thousand years, the poor people have rebelled hundreds of times. Most of them shouted this slogan while seizing the property of rich people. Because this idea inspired the poor people to fight against the rich people instead of nature, the material wealth of the country didn't increase. The country became poorer and poorer because of the continual wars. Things are different in America. The idea that hard work leads to material wealth is very strong in this country. Therefore, people raise their standard of living by hard work instead of depriving rich people. In addition, because of America's incredibly abundant natural resources, the United States appears to be a land of plenty where millions can seek their fortunes.

How to think about individualism is also a difference between these two countries. In China, especially before 1979, the party leaders criticized individualism severely and asked people to advocate collectivism. They didn't allow individuals, a great evil, to exist. Everyone worked for others, and all the property was owned by the collective. Actually, it was owned by nobody. The "masters" of the collective didn't take care of it. On the contrary, some "masters" tried to take more "soup" than the others from this "big pot." The person who worked hard would be taunted by others. This is another reason why people lived in straitened circumstances for so many years. In the United States, working hard for themselves is the right of the people, and it is no one's business but their own. Through hard work, materials are produced. People raise their living standard by hard work.

The differences between the cultures of these two countries result in different living standards.

Differences between Korea and America culture

Byungjin Kim

Korea

There are many differences between Korea and America. Most of them are the result of the contrast in philosophies. Confucianism, which is still dominant in Korean culture, dictates many of the customs and values that might seem strange to Americans. Examples can be found in everything, from table manners to the roles of men/women to morality.

The first example can be found in table manners. Korean table manners are about showing respect to elders, whereas Western table manner are about being polite and using one's utensils properly. In Korean culture, elders are given precedence in everything. During a family dinner, the grandfather/grandmother is the first to sit at the table, and the rest follow according to age group--parents and uncles/aunts next, then the children. Similarly, the grandfather/grandmother is the first to raise the spoon, the first to eat, and

the first to taste a dish. Finishing the dinner is the same. The grandfather/grandmother puts the spoon down first and rises from his/her seat first; the rest of the family follows accordingly. No such consideration is given to the elders in American culture. If any respect is shown at the dinner table, it is according to social position or power, not age. American table manners are more about technicalities such as how to use your napkin, which utensil to use for a certain dish, or how to hold a teacup or a wine glass. Due to the influence of Confucianism in Korean culture, showing proper respect to elders is more important than using utensils correctly.

Second, because of the role of men and women in Confucian culture, men have to earn money for the family even if they hate their jobs. Being the head of a family has a vastly different meaning in Korean and American culture. In Korea, a man has enormous responsibility to support his family at all times, regardless of any circumstances. On the other hand, American men can afford to quit their jobs if they want to look for a better job or if a personal or health-related crisis arises. In such a case, American women can help their husbands by supporting their families in place of the men. However, Korean society doesn't allow women enough financial power to support an entire family. Traditionally, women are expected to stay at home and clean the house, cook the meal, and take care of the children. Even though much has changed about women's role in society, allowing them better jobs and more power, they still are reluctant to go out to work and leave their children to babysitters. Because of these factors, men have no choice but to stay at their jobs and earn money to support their families.

Lastly, in Western philosophy, the basic level on which morality is judged is the individual. In Confucianism, on the contrary, morality is judged on the basis of interpersonal relationships. The Five Relationships of *Mencius*, a great Confucian philosopher, teach "that between father and son there should be affection, between ruler and minister there should be righteousness, between husband and wife there should be proper distinction, between elder and younger there should be proper order, and between friends there should be faithfulness." This doctrine of the Five Relationships is the cornerstone of all Confucian moral and social teaching. In Korea, people are judged upon how they interrelate with others. American morals, however, are based more on individual merits. Values such as independence of thought and judgment, self-reliance,

creativity, and the courageous exercise of a responsible freedom are stressed. Americans pride themselves in being self-reliant, being able to strike out on their own and achieve the American Dream. The core of Confucian morality is maintaining proper relationships with people around us rather than our individual virtues.

These customs and ideas might seem strange to Americans, but to Koreans they are just part of everyday life. Just as individualism has existed in America since the time of the Pilgrims, Confucianism has been part of Korean culture for hundreds of years. Although its effects are diminishing with each generation, Confucianism is still the foundation of modern Korean society. Americans might be puzzled by Korea and Confucianism, but remember, we are just as befuddled by American individualism and your inexplicable table manners.

Buyukada

Hande Demirkaya
Turkey

Buyukada is one of a group of nine islands that lie peacefully on the blue waters of the eastern Marmara Sea.

You need to catch a ferry in Istanbul to get to Buyukada. The trip takes just thirty minutes. Most people who live on the island work in Istanbul and commute there by ferry every day. The population on the island is not high, but it increases during the summer time. In the winter, lots of people leave this beauty and return to Istanbul, but come back to spend their weekends. It is an attractive place for tourists. A lot of wealthy people from other countries have summer villas on Buyukada.

All motorized vehicles are prohibited on the island, except helicopters, ambulances, and fire engines, which are used in emergency situations. So, you will have to walk, ride a bike, or catch one of the horse-drawn carriages if you would like to do sight-seeing on Buyukada. And there is plenty to see there! The Victorian-style houses and the unique monasteries are sure to catch your eye and take you back to the nineteenth century. The most famous spot is Aya Yorgi. It is a church and monastery. You can join the ceremonies once you are there.

The environment is almost untouched by human hands; therefore, it's popular as a resort. You don't have to own a villa to go there. There are a few luxury hotels and affordable guesthouses where you can stay. Buyukada's restaurants offer you a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to eat the most delicious and fresh seafood ever. These restaurants are all located along the coast of Buyukada and, therefore, let you enjoy the beauty of the Marmara Sea and the Asian coast while you are having a pleasant dinner.

But it is better to see something once than to hear about it a thousand times.
Welcome to Buyukada.

Zakopane

Dorota Jadamiec

Poland

The name of the city where I lived for twenty years is Zakopane. It is in the south of Poland. Zakopane is a highland city. To the north of the city are the beautiful Tatra Mountains. If you want to see them, you have to go by funicular up Mount Czuba-Powka. From there you will see a beautiful panorama of the Tatra. In front of the funicular station is Mount Cziewont. It's a very high mountain, about 500 feet, and it has very characteristic shapes. All the mountains from the south to the north look like a sleeping soldier. On the south side, Cziewont has a circular shape. This is the head of the soldier. Farther are glens like eyes and elevations like the nose and mouth. On the top of the elevation is a big black crucifix. It's a very traditional crucifix for the people of Zakopane. If you go to the north, you can see different shapes which look like the rest of the body of the soldier. The glens are very dark, gray, and green. The color of the elevations is lighter because of the sun. Behind Cziewont is Mount Gerlach. It's the highest point of the Tatra, about 5200 feet. Gerlach looks like a cone. On the left side it's very dark, almost black, but on the other side it is very light. On the bottom of the Tatra is a colorful forest. The Tatra Mountains are very beautiful, teeming with love. I cannot tell everything about them. You have to go to Poland and see what they look like for yourself.

Lublin

Magdalena Stec

Poland

There are many interesting cities in Poland, but I would like to write about Lublin, where I used to live. Lublin is in the eastern part of Poland near Warsaw, the capital. The small Bystrzyca River divides Lublin in half. Lublin is a very beautiful and interesting city. It has an old tradition and history. Lublin has many new districts around the old town. When you go through the gate of the old town, you can see many beautiful and historic tenement houses, cathedrals, and churches. Every day at 12 A.M. you can hear the bugle call from the city hall. Deep in the old town, there is a big castle with sixty-foot-high walls and enormous stairs to the red brick tower. Now it is a museum inside, but during World War II it was a prison for captured soldiers. Between the old town and new buildings there are attractive parks and squares where you can go for a walk. In this city during the evening, you can find many restaurants, nightclubs, and discotheques. Lublin has a modern and a traditional culture. You can go to the theater to watch a play by Shakespeare or see exciting rock concerts and new Hollywood films. I think that Lublin is a very attractive and interesting city.

Raul Lopez

Mexico

Barcelona: A Wonderful Place

Barcelona is located on the shore of Spain and is known to be a very cosmopolitan city. The languages spoken in Barcelona are Catalan and Spanish. Although Spanish is the native language, most of the people there prefer to speak

Catalan. The Catalans are a very proud people and consider Cataluña to be a separate region from Spain. They have fought Spain's government, seeking their separation as an independent state governed by their own laws and traditions.

Cataluña, also known as Provincia de Cataluña, has strong cultural and financial roots that have been enriched throughout time by the influence of the other ethnic groups that invaded Spain. This city is a famous tourist attraction. You can walk by Las Ramblas Avenue and observe the different and amazing styles of architecture such as the Gaudi style. You will see the most beautiful eighteenth-century buildings and visit luxury stores like Cartier and Rolex. In the Plaza de Cataluña you will find antique stores and the famous leather market.

Other places you can visit while in Barcelona include La Sagrada Familia, Park Guell, Mont Guic stadium, the Spanish town, the Picasso Museum, and the Barcelona Museum. Since you will develop an appetite, don't forget to eat in the different Catalan restaurants where you can taste and enjoy the different culinary choices such as Paella, a typical dish made with rice, seafood, and peppers. If you plan to visit Spain, don't forget to stop in Barcelona.

A Memoir

Going to College

David Wang

China

When I was thirteen, I entered the most famous middle school in Tsingtao, a beautiful seashore city in China. Usually, about ninety percent of the students in this school would get through the college admissions exam and go to college. It was a very high percentage because only a few young people had chances to go to college in those

years. From then on, I began to dream about college, and with the passing of time, the dream became stronger and stronger.

In 1966, when I was fifteen, “The Great Leader” Chairman Mao started the Cultural Revolution. All schools and colleges were closed. My college dream had to become dormant for some time.

Three years later, I had to leave my parents and was assigned to a textile mill which was located in a mountain area far from the city. These factories were established to prepare for wars. It was a big factory with thousands of workers. Every day, after eight hours of hard work, I always read. I was keen about reading. Since I had no table or chair in my bedroom (about 30 workers lived in a big room), I had to read in my bed. I covered myself with a heavy cotton-wadded quilt. In winter, since there was no fire in the room, I covered my whole body, including my hands, with the quilt, and tried to open the book with my mouth. My favorite books were about history, philosophy, and economics. Some of the books I read were forbidden by the government in those years because they had been written by “the reactionary learned authorities,” or foreigners, before the Cultural Revolution. In addition, I kept writing essays in different areas, and some of them were published in the magazines and newspapers. I gradually became famous in the factory. The workers gave me a nickname, “The Professor.”

In 1972, the colleges opened again. Instead of admitting middle-school students, they admitted workers, peasants, and soldiers. The applicants didn’t need to get through academic examinations. The lucky ones were to be chosen by the managers of the departments in which they worked. The next year, our factory got its first quota in its history. Although many workers thought their “Professor” was the best one to go to college, I didn’t make it. The son of a very important person was chosen. This man didn’t care about acquiring knowledge. In those days connections were more important than anything.

That fall, a young woman was assigned to our factory to be the assistant-manager. Her name was Suli. She was only 25, three years older than I. Because she often published essays in newspapers, she was famous. All the people thought that she was a new political star with a bright future. Most of us believed that she would become the manager of this big factory after the old manager retired. She was very busy. In addition

to managing the factory, she often attended different kinds of meetings, went to other cities or provinces to do business, and dealt with newspaper reporters.

One day, while I was having lunch in the dining hall, she came towards me with her bowl in her hands. "I have known you for a long time," she said in a friendly way. "I like your essays, especially the ones about economics."

"I have read your essays too," I replied. "They are excellent."

That noon, I didn't read as usual. I talked with her for a whole hour. After that, we met once or twice every week during lunchtime. We discussed different subjects, exchanged books, and advised each other about our essays.

When winter was coming, she gave me a suggestion: to establish a study group. She managed to give me the key to the meeting room and let our group study there during the night. How wonderful it was! The young workers could read and write on the table instead of on the beds, and we even had a fire during the winter. To compensate for using the light and fire, we did some paperwork for the factory. Although Suli was busy, she tried to join us when possible.

We became familiar gradually. One day, after the other members of the group had left, she asked me to stay for a while. She took out two books. They were math and physics textbooks. "I hope I can go to college if possible," she said, "but I was born in the countryside, and the educational conditions there were very poor. I hope you will help me if possible." She continued, "I know that you used to study in a very good middle school." After that, we often studied textbooks together. She was very clever. Although she had studied in a poor school in the countryside, she did exceedingly well in her studies.

The winter passed. Spring came. After spending a lot of time together studying textbooks, both of us made good progress. In addition, she told me her opinions about politics, economics, and the events happening in our factory. She was honest and frank and hated the injustices. But in that age, these character traits would be obstacles in her political life, I thought.

That summer, news came: a quota had been assigned to our factory again. That night, Suli said to me, "I have heard your story about applying to college last summer. I

don't agree with the idea that managers get to choose the person. Workers in this factory should have the right to choose too.”

I agreed with her opinion, but I didn't think the situation would change. The next day, she gave a suggestion to the managers of the factory in the meeting: divide the factory into ten departments and every department choose three candidates. The candidates who got more than five ballots would qualify to be discussed in the decision meeting held by the managers. Her suggestion was passed.

After balloting, I got nine ballots, the highest total in the factory. Suli got seven, the third highest score.

The meeting was held on a very hot afternoon. The people who attended the meeting were the managers of the factory. Because Suli was one of the candidates, she should not have attended the meeting. To our surprise, it was said that she attended the meeting too. Some friends told me this information. “It was not fair,” they complained. “It's obvious that she wanted to get an advantage for herself.”

There was no news about the result of the meeting in the following several days, and Suli avoided meeting me on those days. I didn't know what had happened. I was nervous about it. Someone told me she was busy visiting the VIPs in the country and they thought that she was doing more things for herself. Some even said that maybe she was preparing the luggage to go to college.

This morning, when I was working, the door opened suddenly. One of my friends ran toward me.

“Hi, Professor,” he shouted loudly, ‘you got it.’”

He stopped my work, grasped my hand, and pulled me out of the room. There was a red paper on the information bulletin. We ran toward it. I will never forget the words on it. They were “David Wang has been selected to attend college.”

“My dream has become true,” I shouted in my mind.

The following days, I was busy preparing my luggage, doing different kinds of paperwork, and taking photos of my friends. But I could not say goodbye to Suli; the others told me that she had left the factory for Beijing to do business. Before the last day when I left this small mountain town, I got a letter from her. In this letter, she

congratulated me and said that she had to stay in Beijing for one more week and could not see me to the train station. I had to leave before her return because the university would open soon.

Later, my friends told me what had happened with the university election. Before the decision meeting was held, the manager had a talk with Suli. He hinted to her that a VIP's son who worked in our factory wanted to "use" this quota although he had fewer ballots. To comfort Suli, this VIP hinted that he would manage to make another quota for her next year. After thinking about this a whole morning, Suli told the manager that she promised to give up her competition, but she asked to attend the meeting.

In the meeting, the manager told the others that I was not a suitable person to go to college because my grandfather was a rich farmer before 1949. People kept silent; no one was stupid enough to fight against that VIP. To their surprise, Suli did. She insisted that the result of the voting was important. "If we don't care about the result of the voting," she asked, "why did we do it?" She reminded the managers of a quotation from Chairman Mao, "the great leader," that "the people were the real heroes," and no one could fool them. In that age, if someone used a quotation from Mao, no one dared to go against that person unless other people could use another quotation from Mao in rebuttal. But few people wanted to use this method. It was very dangerous. The meeting was closed without result. In the following days, Suli went to visit this VIP to express her idea. She told the VIP the story about me and the opinion of the people in our factory. The VIP pretended that he had never hinted his idea to the manager because he was afraid that his enemies would use this event against him if Suli told this story to the other VIPs whom Suli knew.

Suli paid a lot for her action. The factory that the VIP managed to assign her to later was a smaller one. This was the punishment which he gave her. The next year, the son of the VIP "used" another university quota successfully.

Suli suffered a difficult time in the following years until the VIP retired. Although she still had the dream of going to college, the factory she worked at never got a quota. Three years later, she gave up her dream at last and married. She was 29 then.

I never had a chance to go back to this mountain town, and I never saw her again.