

Mom is a PhD

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I woke up early in the morning as usual. Snowflakes danced happily in the sky like white butterflies and then quietly rested on the ground. I tried to remember that happily bang bang sound of fire crackers in Chinese New Year's Day back in China. The time was February, 1997, Chinese New Year's day. I sneaked to my son's bedroom and put a red bag with lucky money inside under his pillow – a big surprise to him, a big surprise to every Chinese kid from their parents in the morning of Chinese New Year's Day. "If mom were with me, she would give me a big red bag with lucky money in it," I murmured, "Who will give me a gift today?"

That day we had a meeting which started an hour earlier than my regular working schedule. I tried to be there on time but was still a little bit late. Soon after I found a seat and relaxed myself, I heard my name was called. Both my boss and I went up to the front where my boss introduced my contributions to the audiences. I was honored "Significant contribution to design and technology." People applauded like the happily bang bang sound of fire crackers in the morning of Chinese New Year's Day. The award was really a big big surprise to me. My eyes were all wet; my heart beat was so fast that I believe it was up to 120 per minute.

Nobody in the room knew it was Chinese New Year. I sat in my seat and chewed my best new year's gift quietly with so much joy. I joined the company in January, 1995. Having soaked in universities for 17 years, I found the new job in industry to be really a big challenge to me. "Welcome to the industry," my boss welcomed me. I was the only employee with a PhD degree in engineering in the company when I joined the company. Work had piled up for me before I started. Because of lack of expertise in connection technology and finite element analysis, the company had spent much money and time for outside consultant services without getting any solutions to our design problems.

The company stopped using the consultant firm when I took over the challenges. At the beginning, I worked very hard to understand our products thoroughly, to create design methods for connector design and methods for analyzing plastic housing. Design engineers came to me for solutions: "Dr. Lee, will this work?" "Dr. Lee, please tell me what to do and where to go." My colleagues call me Jane usually, when they call me Dr. Lee, they are anticipating a solution from me to their design problems. My shoulder could sense the load and the responsibilities from their mouths.

During those early days when I worked in the industry, sometimes, I felt frustrated and missed university life badly. My boss would encourage me: "Jane, give industry a chance." Many thanks to him for his supports and encouragements, I got used to the industry life and started

to bring contributions to the organization soon. Early this year, the company filed two patent applications in connection technology in my name.

That night after I shared a bedtime story with my son Jerry, we played spelling games.

“What is the word that has five letters, starts with J and ends with Y?” Jerry asked.

“Jerry.”

“Yes! How do you know it?”

“Mon is a PhD.”

“What is the word that has eight letters, starts with T and ends with C?” Jerry tried to quiz me with a hard word.

“Terrific!”

“Yes, how do know it?” Jerry is getting excited.

“Mom is a PhD!”

We continued and continued.....

“What is the word that has three letters, starts with P and ends with D?” Jerry asked.

“Pad?” “No!” “Ped?” “No!” “Pid?” “No!” “Pod?” “No!” “Pud?” “No!” I tried to spell P and D with the five vowels, but I could not get the answer.

“What then?” I asked.

“PhD!” Jerry was so excited because he won the game finally.

PhD is truly for Permanent Head Damage. I even didn't know it was PhD!

Even though I lost the game to my son, I was very proud of my education.



Graduation Ceremony