

Extracts from CCCA Scholarship Award

Mason Chen Since my culmination of my Chinese School studies, I had returned to the school to be a volunteer and teacher aid. I was so excited to be able to work as a teacher aid for a fifth grade class, because there were so many children who actually engaged in the learning experience. While I was in my class, there were only a dozen students, about half the many in the class I aided. At times I felt that they were smarter than me, which made me feel embarrassed, but at the same time I praised their accomplishments for being able to do something I couldn't. Since my return to Chinese School, it has been a little disheartening, as much as I love the school. I noticed a decrease in the population of older students, who serve as role models for the younger students. Less people participate in traditional annual events such as the New Year's Performance and Track Meet creating a less spirited environment. I only wish that Chinese School were as fun for me as it was when I attended my freshmen year. Now, as a senior and working at Chinese School, I still enjoy being on campus, however, there are feelings of nostalgia whenever I look around, remembering the times which I was a student at Thousand Oaks Chinese School and made so many friends, and more importantly developed a love for my culture.

Peter Chang Education is more to me than what I learn by sitting through classes. There are many other learning experiences that are just as important. Thousand Oaks Chinese School taught me a very important maxim, *De Zhi Ti Qun Me*, meaning to live a well-rounded life, and to not excel at one single ability, but to be decent at many. Individually, the words of this maxim bring out different characteristics a person should have. *De*, the ability for a person to value tradition. *Zhi*, the ability for someone to have wisdom. *Ti*, staying healthy both physically and mentally. *Qun*, to learn how to work in and lead a group. *Me*, to strive for beauty and perfection. I have modeled my life after this concept, knowing that all are necessary to lead an exceptional life.

My value of tradition began at Chinese school. Throughout my childhood, I spent every Saturday morning learning Chinese values. Not only did I learn how to speak and write in Chinese, but I also learned how to think with a Chinese mind. Having learned much about my own heritage, I expanded my study of cultures to Japanese traditions. I took a course about Japan at a junior college, so that I could learn the differences between the two Asian cultures. As a result, I have a greater appreciation for my Chinese roots and customs.

Coincidentally, the theories of *De Zhi Ti Qun Me* are the same values that are taught through the Thousand Oaks Chinese School. My classes at a junior college and my ability to work with others have shown me what it will be like to live and attend a university. My preparation for the future has been both academic and cultural and I look forward to whatever challenges lie ahead of me, because I know I have prepared all my life for them.

Eric Fong For the last few years, I've performed numerous times in the annual Chinese New Year Performance. I would always have to attend time-consuming and stressful practices, which were in reality lots of fun. At each practice, everyone would bond together as this mass of teenagers from different schools conversed. When our performances started shaping up by the New Year, I would always feel proud for taking part of the acts. There is an indescribable joy, an aura of energy that one

feels from performing after practicing for months. But things have changed. I still hold the memories of Chinese school, but I have a new dilemma on my hands. As I sit here, typing this essay, I am listening to a song by tension called our story. It's in mandarin and I don't know what they're saying. But I hear fragments of the song that I can identify. How sad, I realize, I don't even know my own language. The language that I used to despise studying, despise working over for in the late Friday nights before school. And I realize that next year as I attend college, I will be taking a language course in Mandarin. I've come to love what I used to hate. How ironic. . .

Chinese school was something that I never really appreciated fully. There are so many great memories that surface when I think of the school. As I leave for a new chapter in my life, I hold onto these memories and embrace the culture of my Chinese heritage that I have so long ignored. After all, we cannot forget our story.

Joshua Chen My experience at Chinese school takes in Redwood High School, where Chinese school used to be, before moving to Thousand Oaks. Nothing actually occurs to me about what Chinese I necessarily learned at Chinese school: what Chinese school left me with was some of the most rewarding friendships I could ever have wanted. I could remember back when I would hang out with Jason Tung and Brian Lu under the structure of the high school, reading different things people wrote on the ceilings over the years. Me, Jason, and Brian would always play tag with the other Chinese school kids after school, trying to bother the old people doing Tai Chi, always leaving us wondering how slow moving could be so exciting. We would always try to play sports with the "big kids", but we always left out of intimidation. Being tripped or bumped too hard to make us scratch our knees on the concrete, or just out of being indecisive and going to the basketball courts and soccer fields and then just leaving. I also remember the humongous Halloween parties our school used to hold; all those prizes from random wholesale bargain stores in China Town and assorted candies, made me want to stay at Chinese School all day. Many of those prizes are things that I still keep with me today, because to me they hold such high sentimental value. Anything that I remember about Chinese school, has a friend involved in that memory with me, but that didn't mean that I couldn't find myself. My associations with my past and still strong friends at Chinese school, helped facilitate and bring out the better person within me, even if the current product is not so archetypical. Chinese school was a place where people grow. Where people learn to associate with others who have similar backgrounds and understandings. Chinese school is a place that will always be embedded in my fondest of memories. Memories that Jason Tung, Brian Lu, and me still share with laughter, awe, and with a longing to experience those moments one more time around.

Melody Rene Hsiou Attending Thousand Oaks Chinese School for almost ten years has been one of the most valuable educational experiences of my life. I started Chinese School at age seven, when it was still on the Redwood Middle School Campus. Early every Saturday morning I would climb up the long staircase and into my Chinese school classroom, where I learned the "bo po mo fo" alphabet. For the next few years, I moved through each grade and learned how to read, write, and communicate in Chinese. I loved going to Chinese school. I made many of my closest friends through class and I was able to participate in so many outstanding activities. My favorites were the annual Chinese School Track Meet, Chinese Cultural Summer Camp, and the yearly Chinese New Year performances in which I

performed dances I learned with the Peony Dance Troupe. At Chinese Cultural Summer Camp, I learned about Chinese culture, Chinese Martial Arts, and various other Chinese traditions. The camp was such a wonderful program that I attended for seven years in a row. For the past three years, I have dedicated my time to this same camp as a Chaperone and the camp newsletter editor.

I feel so fortunate to have had the experience to go to Thousand Oaks Chinese School. I have always been proud of my Chinese-American culture. I know that the skills I acquire today will help me very much in the future. The Chinese-American population in the United States is growing rapidly, so I plan on further strengthening the knowledge I have gained through Chinese School at college next year.

Tiffany Tu Throughout my Chinese School years I got to participate in many activities, beginning with the after school 'ke wai hwo dong' (third period), where at a very young age I learned art, calligraphy, origami, and 'tai ji tren' (martial arts). I always looked forward to the new origami lessons Mr. Cheung was to teach each week. As I was exposed to my culture with these activities, I realized I wanted to learn even more about my heritage.

Through activities such as Chinese Dance, I became more aware of what my heritage was like. I remember during my favorite dance, the Qing Dynasty dance, we had to wear shoes that had blocks in the center, instead of having heels in the back. My teacher told us the story of how the Qing Dynasty girls would dance for the Emperors wearing these types of shoes. In addition, I am naturally shy person and I was never very comfortable on stages, but participating in Chinese Dance allowed me to overcome my fear of performing in front of people.

As time went on, I also participated in the Reverie Youth Orchestra. Looking back on this reminds me of the times when my friends and I would become so nervous before we started to perform, but play flawlessly throughout the concert. Eventually, I had the privilege of becoming Concertmaster of the orchestra, which this was one of my greatest achievements.

Bianca Chang I do not remember much of Chinese School during my preschool and kindergarten years. Years later, my parents enrolled my sister and myself into Chinese School again when I was in 7th grade. We were enrolled in the "Reading and Writing" class with Ms. Zhou, who taught us about Chinese customs, culture, and language. My teachers were able to enrich the Chinese knowledge that my parents had taught me, and I stayed in the same class for three years with two teachers, Ms. Zhou and Ms. Muo.

Both my teachers spent a lot of time beyond the handout notes and textbook and really showed us the "Chinese Ways." Because of my work ethic, I did well in class, even though I did not expect to remember what I had learned. Then, in the winter of my freshman year, our family went to my dad's college reunion in China. I met almost 40 of my dad's classmates' children, half of them born in America like myself, and my interest in the Chinese language was sparked once again. Because of what I had learned in class, I recognized certain Chinese characters off billboards and menus, and had a great interest in learning new words, such as ordering "mashed potatoes" at the very westernized I was even able to teach my peers some Chinese, an exciting experience for me. Of course, I told my Chinese school teachers about it when I got back. I hope to one day bridge the two different worlds of Chinese

culture and American culture, similar to what my parents have done, but from a different vantage point. I truly appreciate the lessons my teachers taught and will always remember Chinese School.

Alan Ning Ring! Ring! Ring! Click. With a grunt of satisfaction I hit the snooze button on my alarm clock early on a Saturday morning for some more much needed rest. Sadly that rest is short-lived. Within moments, my mother bursts into the room, tears the warm sheets and blanket off my body exposing me to the cold morning air and says: “*kuai xing-xing, lan chong!*(wake up, you lazy worm!) *it's time to go to Chinese School!*” Those were the words that I had heard every Saturday from as far back as I could remember. I had always wondered what the point of it all was. I dreaded going to Chinese School. I didn't seem to learn anything, and I was always bored during breaks because I didn't have friends to socialize with. It seemed like the best way to ruin a weekend.

But looking back on it all, I really regret not putting my whole-hearted effort into learning Chinese. I have neglected my heritage, my roots, my culture. Now I will have to spend a fortune on college tuition to study what I could have and should have learned years earlier. Although I am able to speak and understand simple phrases, it is by no means anywhere close to full mastery of the language. Chinese school was a blessing, not a prison. There were many things that I had the opportunity to learn which I attended, not only Chinese language, but cultural studies, arts & crafts and more. If I could turn back time, I would be sure to re-live my days when I went to Chinese School with much greater enthusiasm.

Perry Lee

As I look back upon my experiences,
I notice a gaping void,
A schooling that lacked true substance,
And learning: the most important of all

Although here I met many friends,
Chinese was rarely taught -
Students never wanted to learn,
And teachers would always give in

Chinese School's strength,
Was it's very downfall,
And up to this day,
The problem still exists

Rather than focus on learning,
It becomes a social "thing,"
Where people come to talk,
And education takes back seat.

The expectations are low,
The student's resolve even lower,
You know something's wrong,
When students can't learn ten words a week.

How students can justify this,
Is truly wrong and disturbing,
Grades need to mean something,
Or why bother going in the first place

Why keep up the façade of learning,
If everyone knows what goes on,
Why call it a school,
If learning is not even a priority.

Chinese School has so much potential,
Yet far to come and go,
Change is dearly needed,
Will it ever come?