

Stream

天之道，损有余以补不足；人之道则不然，损不足以奉有余。^①

The rule of nature is to take from the excess to shore up the scarce; however, the rule of human society is to take from the poor to feed the rich.

--Lao Tzu

^① 出自老子《道德经》第七十七章

Lao Tzu was Confucius' teacher, Chinese philosopher and the founder of Taoism.

贞爷爷 Grandpa Zhen



"I didn't know when or how it would all end, though it seemed endless...Worse still... The Japanese came..."
“我不知道这样的日子何时是个尽头，到底还有没有个头...更糟糕的是...日本人来了！”

Chapter1

Grandpa Zhen is a friend of my grandpa Lin's, he was born in 1913.

He is a kind and humorous man. When I was small, every time he saw my grandpa and I come back past the rice fields in front of his house, he went to visit my grandpa and brought me one or two cakes. He always told jokes to people and made them laugh.

He was thin and always wore a rice straw hat, blue shirt and black trousers. He usually rolled up his trousers, showing the blue veins that stood out on his calf and the two wet rice straw shoes upon his muddy feet.

The full smile on his dark face and his bubbly laughter impressed me most about him, along with the sweet, delicious cakes he brought.

Time flies. 20 years have passed, the boy has grown up and his old friend is now 95 years old. He struggles in a world of deafness and failing eyesight with an injured leg adding to his difficulties, not to mention that half his teeth have rotted away.

When Grandpa Zhen's son and his son's wife would go out to work in the farm fields in the morning, they would wash the rice and put it in the rice-cooker. When it was time for cooking, Grandpa Zhen would plug in the cooker, push down the button to begin cooking, and then heat hot water for them.

Grandpa Zhen has two younger brothers and two younger sisters. His younger brother died in 1959, leaving behind a 12-year-old boy who Grandpa Zhen adopted as his own son. His remaining brother died 20 years ago, his youngest sister died 3 years ago, and his other sister is still above ground at 85 years old, even with her immobilized legs. They got together during the Spring Festival of 2008 and cried on one another's shoulders.

We sat down around the table and talked in a group: Grandpa Zhen, Uncle Mai, Aunt Sumei, her mother, Terry, my friend Zhigao and me. Terry showed them photos of his house in Vermont and his family.

"Oh, this girl is really beautiful, like a china doll." With a big smile, Aunt Sumei pointed to one of Terry's granddaughters.

Uncle Mai asked some questions about different kinds of trees in Vermont.

"Hey, Peng. I heard that your Fat Grandpa has built a nice house, hasn't he?" asked Grandpa Zhen, who had very dry humor.

"Yes, he did." I said. "Do you want to go to visit and see it yourself?"

"I'd like to, but I can't. Thanks," he said.

"I can go and get you a wheelchair, or I can carry you on my back to go," I said.

"No, thanks," he smiled, "I'd better just stay here in my small house."

"Last October, he walked down the road to visit his neighbor from the house, and fell down on a slope and hurt his leg," Uncle Mai said. "And from that time on, he didn't go to visit anyone else."

Then Grandpa Zhen asked me, "How did this American guy come to China, by air or by train?"

I translated to Terry, and then told him the answer, "14 hours by air."

He was so surprised and said, "Oh, 14 hours, my God!"

袁爷爷是我外公的好朋友，他比我外公要大三十岁，为人谦和，平易近人。和他交谈总能感觉到他的幽默风趣，不经意的一个笑话总能把人们逗得开怀大笑。小时候，每次我回来外公家，都要经过他的家门口，他总会在忙完农活后，就到外公家来，给我带上两个大饼。

他戴着一个草帽，脸上带着朴实的微笑，黝黑的肌肤上条条青筋游起，裤脚扎得很高，壮实的小腿肚上还粘着田泥，穿着一双湿的草鞋。瘦瘦高高的个子，蓝衬衫，黑裤子，告别、转身的背影，是我记忆最深的画面，连同那香甜的面饼，和我吃起来“叭嗒叭嗒”的响声。

转眼间，二十年过去了，昔日的毛孩已经长大；而他，也是九十多岁的老人，行动不便，眼花耳背，牙齿也掉了一边。但仍然是那么朴实可爱，儿子儿媳出门忙农活，会把米洗好放在电饭锅里，快到午饭时间，他就会插电煮饭，烧好一壶开水。

上次去看他，是在2008年的春节，而之前的一次，是在五年以前。为生活而奔忙的我，少有时间回到家乡，但每次回去，一走近那青山绿水、鸟语花香的所在，一看到那黑瓦白墙的老房，童年的记忆就如同开闸的洪水，奔腾汹涌，让我久久不能平静。

去他家的时候是晚上，村里人喜欢在晚上串串门，谈谈农活，唠唠家常。简单寒暄几句之后，我们说第二天清早再来和他聊天，老人家睡得早，白天精神要比晚上好。

老人的儿子，也已经六十二岁了，他是老人的弟弟的儿子，因为父亲死得很早，是伯伯把他带大的，就组成了一家人。在湘北农村，叫作“过房儿子”。我跟他介绍了一下我的美国朋友，特里先生。告诉他我们想听听过去的故事。他很热情地和我们聊起来。

“听说你外公池胖子做了一幢蛮漂亮的房子呢。”他笑着跟我说。我说“是的，你想不想去看看。”他说，“多谢你，我去不了。”老人去年摔了一跤，后来就出门了。

“这位美国朋友是坐飞机来的，还是坐火车呀？”我翻译给特里听后，他说要坐14个小时的飞机。听到这个回答贞爷爷有点吃惊，“我的天，要坐14个小时呢。”

Chapter2

Peng: "Please tell us the story of your father."

"My father went away with General Peng during the time of the PingJiang Uprising when I was very small. The Red Army fought against the Kuomintang army on the Tea Mountain of Tongchen County, and my father died in that battle. My mother was expecting her youngest child, so I had to help her to do housework and look after my younger brothers and sisters. There was no place for me to go and no time to play. I got up very early every morning to find firewood and bamboo shoots in the mountain and sell these things in town and with the money I earned, I was able to buy rice. I took care of the vegetable garden and cooked food for my family. This was my daily work.

There was no land for us to plant rice on because there were four landlords at that time who owned all the farm fields in the village: Mother Liu, whose son was a big official in the Kuomintang government; Helee, whose father was a bandit so he filled his dead dad's shoes to own the farm field; Dwarf Huang, who was a policeman in the county; and Pimin, who was a gambler, as well as his grandfather and his father. We had been languishing in poverty for more than ten years. I didn't know when or how it would all end, though it seemed endless...Worse still... The Japanese came..."

Peng: "How old were you when the Japanese soldiers came?"

Zhen: "I was 25 years old when they went through Lin Village on the way to PingJiang County at midnight."

Peng: "How many soldiers came to town at that time?"

Zhen: "I don't know, they came at midnight by climbing over the YingJi Mountain. First came some scouts who didn't kill people on the way, but the Japanese Army that followed them was cruel! They killed people, raped women, robbed food like pigs and chickens from the villagers. They had the 'Three Policies': 'Burn everything. Take everything. Kill everyone. "

"The village heard the Japanese were coming, and the people fled the village to the mountains. First the women and then the children were organized to escape towards the mountains, carrying what they could. I remember one old woman who walked on one leg: she used a Hunan chair under one knee and moved along. Then came the men, carrying food, chickens, pots and blankets, and leading pigs. All the villagers were hiding in the mountain when the Japanese came.

But Yao Lin, your great-grandfather, went back for more food, and was captured by the Japanese soldiers and thrown to the ground on his back by the well. A Japanese soldier stood on each side of him, a boot on each of his outstretched arms, and another boot against each side of his head. After a few kicks, another soldier pumped a bucket of water and started pouring it slowly into his mouth and nose. They filled him with cold water from a bucket. They wanted him to tell where the villagers were hiding so they kept filling his mouth and nose with water until they sent him into a state of shock. I was very worried about Yao, but fear held me back as I hid in the branches, watching what happened to him. Then the Japanese thought he died so they left him laying beside the well. We rescued him hurriedly and carried him to the mountain. People cared for him until he awoke. I joked with him, 'You are a smart guy- you didn't swallow too much water.'

Later, some people, mostly young men, wanted to go fight the Japanese. But it was Uncle Bao that made it happen. I remember him... a very tall, strong man with one bad leg. But he moved perfectly in Kung Fu. You did not want to make Bao angry. "

“请跟我们讲讲你父亲的故事。”

“在平江起义后，我父亲跟着彭德怀的军队走了，走到通城茶山跟国民党的军队打了一仗，没打赢，把条命牺牲了。我那时还很小，家里有一个弟弟，一个妹妹，我母亲还怀着最小的妹妹，我只能呆在家里帮她做家务，照顾弟弟妹妹们，没有地方去玩，也没有时间去玩。每天早晨出门，去山上捡点柴，挖些竹笋，拿到镇上去卖点钱，然后买点米回来，就这么度日食（过日子）。

我们没有地种粮食，只有一块小小的菜园。那时村里有四个地主，全村的田地都是他们的。柳官娘，咯崽（她儿子）是在伪政府（这里指汪精卫政府）手里当大官的；何厉，他的死鬼老爹是个土匪；黄矮子，在县城的警察局里当差；皮密，外号‘密老三’，祖孙三代都是靠赌吃饭的。

就这样过了十多年，我不知道这样的日子何时是个尽头，到底还有没有个头，更糟糕的是，日本人来了。”

“日本人来的时候你多大？”

“我已经25岁了。”

“来了多少日本兵？”

“我不知道，他们是夜里翻山过来的。走在前面的是几个侦察兵，倒是不杀人；后面的部队就杀人放火，奸淫掳掠。村里人听说日本兵来了，都慌忙往山上跑，女人和小孩先走，带点能拿得动的东西，男人们背着粮食，赶着猪往山上跑。我记得村里有个老婆婆，一只脚是跛的，她撑着一把椅子走得很慢，我扶着她说，‘只管慢点，还有时间’。等到所有的人都在山上躲好了后，你的老外公——岳老子，又跑了回去想多弄点粮食上来，被几个日本兵抓住了，踢了他几脚，然后把他拖到一口水井边，用水壶往他嘴里灌水，要他讲出人都躲到哪里去了。我心想这可怎么办？岳老子非得让他们灌死不可，我们躲在山上，却又不肯下去救。过了一会儿，岳老子倒在地上一动不动了，那几个日本兵以为他死了，就把他仍在井边，然后走了。我们于是赶紧跑下去，把他救上山来，又是掐人中，又是揉肚脐，总算是醒过来了，我跟他开玩笑说，‘你还有蛮精，没吞太多水下肚。’后来一些年轻后生们都吵着要去跟日本人干，保叔也来了，保叔年轻时是学过功夫的，后来出去闯荡江湖，不知怎么一只脚瘸了，后来就回村子来了，很多年轻人都跟着他学功夫，有些胆大的背后叫他‘保跛子’，但当面都叫他保叔。”

Chapter3 The Legend Of Uncle Bao

The Japanese soldiers were scared as they searched through the empty village for food, jumping at ghosts. They were even more scared of going into the mountains.

Five days before, three soldiers had gone on a longer search into the surrounding village farms, hungrily looking for a pig, some chickens, a steer or even a water buffalo. Finally, they heard what they were hoping for: a hungry pig squealing in the pigsty of a small abandoned farmhouse.

Carefully, they encircled the house, through fields and stacks of rice straw, then threw open the doors of two small outbuildings, warily pointing their rifles at the windows and doors of the farmhouse. One soldier kicked in the door while the others covered him, following the exact pattern of their training. They looked in the few small rooms and checked the loft and the back door leading to the pigsty. They carefully stacked their rifles against the door frame, ready to grab them on the run if needed. The man in charge also had a pistol in a holster. They quickly ransacked the small farmhouse, overturning everything. The rice bin had only a little left, and one soldier started sweeping it into a sack, while another climbed to the loft... Outside, a bird call was heard and answered. A stack of rice straw moved, and then another...

The squealing pig had been brought back from the mountain two nights before by old Uncle Bao and four young people. Bao was a Kung Fu master, who taught the traditional and respectful art to some young men in the village.

There are many large caves in the limestone mountains of Pingjiang County. Some of these caves had been home to Chinese families for thousands of years. Suddenly, the caves were full of people. Smaller caves were pigsties and chickens scratched all around.

Villagers ranged the mountains, looking for bamboo shoots, roots, berries and firewood. Many families cooked and shared meals together in the few large pots they had carried to the mountain.

At night, there were endless discussions about how to resist the Japanese occupation, what was known about the Japanese invaders, and what the future might bring, as well as the typical bedtime stories for children.

The brutality of the Japanese and the horrible fate of other towns were well known. Some young men wanted to go into the village at night and fight the Japanese soldiers. A young woman, who had come home from a day in a mountain field to find her parents and her young daughter lying in blood on their doorstep, walked over to him from the cooking area with a large knife. Waving it at the young men, she said, "I will go with you!!"

And even in the mountains, Japanese planes were known to bomb a place where smoke from a cooking fire was seen. So cooking was done at night, when the Japanese planes rarely operated, and a blanket was kept ready to cover the firelight.

The discussion continued. "We need guns and swords to fight the Japanese!" said the young men.

Finally, Old Uncle Bao stood up, and everyone became quiet.

"We need to think first. Think quietly and carefully. The Japanese have guns and can kill us at a long distance. The Japanese have swords and can kill us at a shorter distances. We have only our hands and our feet..."

Bao reached down and picked up a hatchet, with its wooden handle and heavy blade. "...and our old household weapons".

"We must only fight very close, very hard, very well practiced, and very well planned."

A chorus rose up, "Yes!! Yes! What will you do?? How will you do it??"

Bao thought for a long minute.

"If you all agree, I will pick some young men to go with me, and show the Japanese that they are not "Divine" and their "Emperor" speaks only with wind."

"Yes! Yes!! We agree!! What will you do??"

Bao thought again.

"Here's how we will do it: first, there are many strong young men here. I am sorry, but I must pick only a few. We need disciplined minds, not hot heads."

"When... we come back, we will tell you how it went. But we do not want the Japanese to learn what was successful or what was a failure. For now, it is better not to talk about it."

He paused and looked over everyone.

"Sometimes, some young men and I will go away to practice and to plan... Please. Do not talk about it."

He turned to go back to his bed deep in the cave. The young woman with the knife stood in front of him. "What about me??"

He looked at her for a long time. She saw his face moving.

"We are all family. We all grieve."

He reached out and put his hands on the side of her shoulders, then down again.

"I will think about it."

Back near the village, another bird call was heard. On each side of the farmhouse, a stack of rice straw moved, tilted a little, and was still again. Five figures moved quickly and quietly to the walls of the farmhouse and the back door near the pigsty.

From each side of the door, eyes met, heads nodded, and hands carefully grasped the rifles leaning against the door frame. Two young men quickly moved the rifles to the sides of the house. Instantly, two others with hand weapons at the ready took their place beside the door. There had been a big debate about the rifles, but Bao prevailed.

He had said, "We are not sure about the rifles, how they are loaded, where the safety latch is. Also, we have trained for close fighting, not shooting. What if we are wrong about where the Japanese would put their rifles? Keep our plan, use our training, use our hands and feet and weapons. Move fast, get close, fight close, fight hard."

They were very lucky. The first man out the door was stooped under a heavy sack of rice which he carried over his shoulder, hands together, looking down at the ground in front of him. The hatchet hit him carefully, just above the rice sack in the back of the head. He fell heavily, face down, with the rice sack on his back. A second later, the attacker was once again hidden beside the door, out of sight.

A second soldier rushed out, reaching down to help his comrade up. He was hit hard in the back of the neck and the back of his ankle, to ensure he couldn't get up again.

"Pig!" was called out loudly, and as planned two young men flew in the door, spreading out right and left, joined by another running in from the back pigsty door, all with hatchets raised. They stopped, staring at the last Japanese soldier, who was frozen in fear on the ladder to the loft.

Bao appeared in the doorway. The fifth fighter was out watching the road and the surrounding fields. If all had failed, his job was to escape and to tell the others what went wrong.

The Japanese soldier was quickly bound with rope, hands behind him and tied to his waist, ankles bound at carefully-measured distance, hobbling him. A rope and leash went around his neck. In a quick improvisation, one of the heavy bags of rice was tied to the leash.

"It was easy!" yelled one boy of 17. "They never even raised a hand against us!"

Bao slowly raised his hand and waited.

The four quickly arranged themselves respectfully in front of him, as they had in so many lessons over the years.

Bao looked pointedly at the dead soldiers. "Death is NOT easy! Where did you learn to disrespect your enemy??"

They hung their heads.

"Yun. Now, in this case, what is the Plan?"

Yun stepped forward. "One, we keep watch. We plan a quick escape into the forest. Two, we bury the soldiers where they can never be found. Three, we take the rifles, but do not fire them now. Four, we do not take any identification or other things from the soldiers. Finally, we place head-sized rocks across the main road, and put the soldiers' hats on them."

There was silence.

"And?" Yun thought feverishly.

"What about Brother Pig?"

"Oh. We bring him, of course!"

The dead soldiers were loaded on a cart usually used for carrying straw, the bloody dirt was carefully buried and footsteps were swept away. A plan was made to bury the soldiers carefully on a different farm, deep under bales of straw.

The hats were attended to. The small sacks of food they had lived on during the past 3 days were retrieved from the stacks of straw that had been their hiding places.

Yun went to get the pig. As he joined the group, Uncle Bao said, "Give Brother Pig some of your cooked rice. He did his job well, he is very hungry, and he has a long walk home."

保叔的传说

保叔，人称“保跛子”，长得牛高马大，只是一只脚瘸了。年轻时做过镖头，仗义疏财，遇人危难，必拔刀相助。村中一班恶少，闲来无事，游手好闲，自保叔回乡后，却都不敢滋事扰民，却跟着保叔，每日习些拳脚枪棒，村中从此太平。伪政府曾予以保长等官职，让其管理乡务，保叔婉拒。

日寇侵华，神州陆沉鱼烂。村中年轻后生，有加入国军的，也有跟着彭德怀去闹革命的。但整个村子还是得有些男人留下，保护一村老幼妇孺。保叔将村中年轻后生组织起来，打些刀枪斧头，买些鸟枪土炮。这十多号人，在闲时就为村民搬运货品，把外面买来的食油盐醋，用两匹骡子运进来，那时没有公路，生活用品的运输依赖骡、马。保叔将这个运输队取名为“英集马帮”，闲时搬运，战时护村，成为当时的一支民兵队伍。日本兵沿汨罗江进入平江县城，必须经过英集岭，这个地方群山环绕，地势险峻，易守难攻。

日本兵在午夜进入县城，城中百姓能逃的都往农村里逃了。日本兵在城里修了一个碉堡，平时也躲在里面不敢出来，其人数并不多，有时让伪军也穿上日军军装，以充数量。但日军占领的只是一座空城，粮匮弹乏，旷日持久之下，日军只得去农村寻找粮食。一队日伪兵通常由三、五个日本兵，十几个伪兵组成。

村里的百姓都躲在山上，女人小孩住山洞，男人们搭棚子住，并负责放哨。日本兵不敢上山，只能在村民们的房子里翻箱倒柜，找点吃的。但是这一次，他们却是去无回了，因为保叔经过一段时间的侦察，已经制定计划，决定出手了。日本兵在一户人家竟然发现了一只猪，狂喜之下就只顾着找绳子，把枪都堆放在猪圈门外。而门外，保叔和他带领的小伙子们已经悄然靠近了，先是有两个小伙子藏在猪圈外的一堆稻草里，他们负责把日本兵的枪拿走。保叔带领其它人冲进猪圈，将三个日本兵捆了起来。就在汨罗江边的一个沙滩上，保叔架起一把切猪菜用的铡刀，把三个日本兵砍了。

后来，保叔把他们的尸体掩埋了。回来后小伙子们把那只借来的猪扛到山上，还给了老乡。

“后来怎么样了？”我问贞爷爷。

“后来城里的日本兵没有见到他们的人回去，叫嚣着说要‘血洗林思洞！’当他们组织起人马要杀过来的时候，突然县城北门响起枪炮的声音，就没有来了。

后来我们知道那也是保叔干的。日本人投降两年后，保叔生病去世了。”

Chapter 4

Peng: "Where did you get the news of Japan's surrender at the end of World War Two?"

Zhen: "I didn't know anything about it. I only heard their ancestral nest was destroyed by another country and that all the Japanese soldiers had disappeared from the town in a single night. They were hiding in some block-houses, but there was no place for them to find food. All the townspeople went home to the village, but the Japanese were afraid of going to the village any more. People said the Manchurians treated the Han nation cruelly during the Qing Dynasty, but the Japanese were much crueler than the Manchurians."

Peng: "What happened in the village after World War Two?"

Zhen: "The village remained quiet for several years."

"One day I went to sell firewood in town, where many people on the street were talking about the Liberation Army, who had arrived in town that morning.

The Liberation Army rounded up and disarmed Dwarf Huang's police station and all the police officers of the Kuomintang government were taken to the plaza. By the time I arrived at the plaza, a crowd of onlookers had gathered. The Liberation Army told people that the Kuomintang government had been overthrown in the revolution, they explained the discipline regulations that the soldiers adhered to, and showed us the paper money of the communist government, which they called RMB.

A soldier said to me, 'Comrade, please deposit your firewood at your friend's house. There are too many people here, so could you please sell it tomorrow?' I agreed. When I came back to the plaza at lunchtime, the crowd was still there. Another soldier walked up to me with a bowl of millet and said, 'Help yourself to some millet. It's good, especially because there is no millet here in Hunan.' I said, 'I am okay, I am okay.' He put it in my hand and said, 'Take it, take it!' He was a young and sincere man, so I ate the bowl of millet, and it was delicious!

I went to the town to sell the firewood to the PLA the next morning. They were really nice men and they didn't bargain with me, so I sold it at a good price.

“后来你们是怎么知道战争已经结束了的？”

“我并不知道战争已经结束了，只是听说日本人的老窝让人给操了。后来日本兵都走了，一夜之间走得干干净净。人们都说北寡佬（满清统治者）毒，日本人更毒！”

“后来村子里怎么样，打内战的时候？”

“村子里倒是太平了很久。应该是四九年吧，有一天我正在卖柴，走到大街上，突然听到打了一枪，我心想怎么会打一枪，后来看到一伙军队，把警察局长黄矮子带了出来，所有的国民党警察都站成一排。机枪都拆散了，我心想看看到底会怎么样。人越来越多，都围着看，后来才知道，这是人民解放军，在收缴国民党警察的武器。他们向围观的老百姓讲现在是共产党的天下，给老百姓们发些纸钱，叫做人民币。”

‘同志，你明天再来卖柴吧，今天我们的队伍太多人了，你把柴寄放在朋友家里，明天再来吧。’一个解放军对我说。

我说，‘好的’。

我把柴寄了，过两天又去了，把柴卖给他们真好，你开口什么价就是什么价。

还有一个解放军给我端来一碗小米，‘同志，你吃小米吧，小米好吃呢，你们这里没有小米的呢。’

我说，‘我不吃，你们吃喽’

他又说，‘你吃喽，你吃喽。’

他们买了我的柴，又给我东西吃，我说什么价就是什么价，这解放军真好。”

Chapter5

Peng: "Please tell us about the Great Leap Forward?"

Zhen: "I was the captain of the Help-Each-Other Cooperative in the village during the Great Leap Forward."

"Meetings, meetings, meetings, day and night. I was bewildered by the noise and the crowd. County leaders held a meeting in the afternoon asking for charcoal and they wanted it by the next morning! Oh, my gosh! It was so ridiculous and there was not an atom of common sense so what we got them was not charcoal, but scorched wood.

Those leaders were from big cities or somewhere and they didn't understand agriculture. They were bold talkers so they became government mouthpieces.

They gathered all the men in the village to live together in the commune and eat together in the canteen. They did many, many ridiculous things at that time like putting bamboo mats around the rice field to protect the rice shoots from the wind, keeping the rice warm by putting boiling water in the paddy. A friend of mine laughed at those ideas, and as a result he was publicly denounced by those leaders.

After the commune members harvested the crops, all the packages of rice were gathered in the commune and then were carried by a tractor whose destination no one knew. Later, the government's leaders held another meeting and calculated the amount of charcoal and rice produced by each village cooperative. A tortoise was placed on the back of the representative of the slowest cooperative as an insulting reminder to move more quickly next time.

Some brave young men wrote a protest song and sang it on the mountain at night; this song was very popular at the time.

The People's Government is really ridiculous,
They planned to plant rice before the Spring Festival,
They tried to speed up the growing seeds with boiling water,
But nothing grew in the fields until April eighth."

“请给我们讲讲大集体，生产队的事情。”

“我在大跃进的时候当了十年互助组的队长。搞生产队吃了很大的亏，天天开会，夜夜开会，开得人都是懵的。今天才开会，明天就要炭，烧只红薯也要十几分钟吧，怎么能说要就有呢。从天光（出太阳）做到断暗（太阳落山），一天的工钱才一毛钱，真是碰达鬼哦，后来才做到5角钱一天。

县里来的那些领导只会讲大话，根本不懂农业。初春的时候要栽禾苗，他们怕禾苗冻着，于是找来晒谷用的竹席子，把稻田围了起来，为了给禾苗保暖，把烧开水倒进田地。村里有些人把这些事当作笑话讲，结果被抓去批斗了。

每次收粮收炭后，还要开一次会，哪个生产队交得最少，就给那个生产队长背上一个棉布做的乌龟。有些胆大的年轻人，写了一首歌，晚上跑到山上唱：

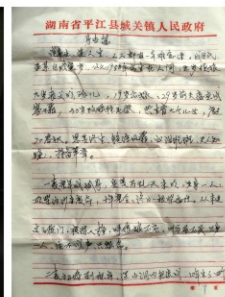
人民政府真懵懂，
年关未到浸禾种，
烧来滚水把秧催，
四月初八没禾栽。”

给儿女们的信 Letter to my children



Talk with each other; do not make a decision alone.
Share with each other; provide what the others lack.
Help each other; cherish your happiness in your daily life.
This is what I expect of you, my children.

家里有什么事情，大家一起商量，不要一人包办。家里没事的时候，大家多多来往，彼此多谈心交往，互通有无是人性所在，不计前嫌，就是一个好人。
孩子们，这就是我对你们的期望。





第一次和特里去见她，是在08年2月，她住在山顶的老房子里，她的儿女们都在深圳，做大生意，赚了钱给她做一幢别墅，第二次见她，是在09年5月，新房子已经做好了。

当我们问她更喜欢哪所房子里，她说，“我真的更喜欢住我的老屋。”当我们问她是否还记得她小时候的事情，她的笑容突然凝住了，接着她告诉我们，她的母亲在她五岁的时候就去去世了。



Big Grandma

Peng's grandma's cousin. The first year we met her, she lived in a small, neat house on a hillside. A big house was being built next door. We talked about her life, and Terry asked her to tell us a story from when she was a little girl. Her face clouded over as she told us her mother starved to death when she was five.

The next year, the huge new house her successful businessmen children had built was finished. Terry asked her if she would move into the new house. She said, "I really like the old house better!"



Letter to my children

To talk about one's life, to talk about what happened before... well, we know that everybody had some hard luck, we have shared the same difficult experiences sometimes.

My name is Zhou Meng'mei, I was born in 1938. My mother died when I was five years old. Then I was orphaned when my father died when I was nine years old. I got married when I was nineteen. I had four children in ten years, two girls, and two boys. And then my husband died after a short and painful illness.

I married again with my second husband, Mao, when I was thirty. Then we had three children in all, two girls, one boy. In my life time, I had seven children, and I am now seventy years old.

It is difficult to me to look back, or talk about my life, but I am afraid that my children know nothing about it. So, I have asked someone to write down the story for me, as an oral letter to my children. The first thing is, I don't know why did fate make such fun of me. Why did it leave me an orphan when I was small, at the time that the whole country was in a state of ferment? (Japanese aggression and Chinese Civil War)

I got up so early every morning, found some firewood and sold it, and wove cloth to make a living. This was my lifestyle for more than ten years. Carried a shoulder pole and went out to work in the morning, and sat down to weave cloth with an oil lamp until midnight. I didn't go to school and study there for even one day. I cried in the silent night in a cold, empty room. I didn't complain for anything, but my poor fate.

I got married to Chen, my first husband. We built a house in a mountain cave. We had four kids. I carried one on my back, leading two by my hands, and with the biggest one following behind, we climbed the mountain in search of wild vegetables and fruit for food. Chen and I both worked hard to feed the family. But we were still starving, so later we had to move to Jiangxi Province to live and work with his older sister. Life was so difficult, but what worse was, my husband got sick on the journey and died several weeks later. I was left behind with four children.. how could we survive? His aunt (my husband's older sister) and I agreed to leave the oldest boy with her. Then I walked back to my old hometown, carrying the two small girls in bamboo baskets on a shoulder pole, with my small son following behind. It took us four days, and we finally came back to our old home in the mountain cave.

I suffered much when I married my second husband, Mao. We had three kids later, and then there were eight together in the family. We worked the whole day in the farm fields, but it was still hard to feed the family. I kept bees, planted vegetables myself and sold some of these things in the town, to be able to buy rice. Because I sold something and did not only work with the Help Each Other Group, I was denounced as a capitalist during the Cultural Revolution. My life improved when Deng Xiaoping opened China, and now my six children are grown up.

It's difficult for me to remember all my life:

When my children got sick, I prayed for them.

When my children went to school, I cooked breakfast for them.

When my children made mistakes and their father lost his temper, I interceded for them.

When my children left the school to the bigger society, I worried about what kind of job they could get, and their future.

When my children got married, I ran around to make preparations.

I worked so hard and suffered so much in exchange for the happiness and success of my children. My two Sons and four Daughters have now grown up and have their own families and their own business. With age and several kinds of illness, I fall into decline from day to day, just like the sun goes down behind the mountain and the light fades. I don't want my children to make a lot of money; I just wish them to be living in honesty and happiness. I only hope they will always stay together as a family, all live in peace, and don't quarrel and hurt each other for trifling things, such as money.

Talk with each other; do not make a decision alone. Share with each other; provide what the others lack. Help each other; cherish your happiness in your daily life. This is what I expect of you, my children.

This letter is for my children at the day I die.
28th, May, 2007

给儿女们的信

说说身世，讲讲人生事，每个人都有一本难念的经。我生于1938年，五岁时，我的母亲死了，九岁时，我的父亲死了，我成了一个孤儿。我在19岁出嫁，29岁时前夫病死，成了寡妇。30岁改嫁到毛家，一共生育了7个儿女，现在我已经70岁了。回想我的人生，饱经风霜，过往的事情不堪回首，没有人知道，所以我请人帮忙写了这封给儿女们的信。

第一，我慨叹命运，幼年就成了孤儿，兵荒马乱的年代，天还没亮，就一个人早早起床，砍柴纺纱来度日，这样的日子过了10年。整天一根柴扁担，从来没有进过学校的门，夜深人静的时候，叫娘娘不应，叫爹爹不灵，孤身一人，泣不成声，只怨自己命苦。

第二，我嫁到陈家，在深山洞里成了家，10年生了4个小孩。我拉着大的，背着小的，满山遍野找野菜，和孩子们相依为命，苦度年华。偏偏碰上了苦日子，我跟着前夫流落到江西他姐姐那里，沿途吃尽苦头就不说了，我的前夫染病，一卧不起最后死了。我一个人带着4个小孩，怎么来度日子呀？

第三，再婚嫁进毛家，刚开始受了很多苦难，接着又生了三个小孩，全家一共八口人，整天劳动，养家糊口很艰难，我养蜂种菜，却被当作资本主义，遭到批斗。往事不堪回首，还好遇上邓小平改革开放，生活才有了改善，6个子女，2房人，都已经成长成人。

往事不堪回首：

儿女们病了，我就很着急，为他们祈求，只愿病痛快点好，感谢老天爷。

儿女们到了上学的时候，我为他们操碎了心，早早地起床为他们做早餐，只希望他们能有个好成绩，学到些真本事。

儿女们做错了事，父亲脾气急要打人，我只得上前去恳求，错误都由自己来承担。

儿女们长大成人，我还是不放心，如果没有职业怎么谋生，为了他们都有一个好前途，我操碎了心。

儿女们成家的时候，我又为他们忙里忙外，奔波操劳。

做娘的吃尽了苦头，换来了儿女们的幸福，2个儿子，4个女儿，都已经成家立业，不希望他们光宗耀祖，只希望我没有白费心机。

我现在已经是年近古稀，疾病缠身，就好比太阳要落山了。我别无他求，只希望我的儿女们精诚团结，不要为了一些小事伤了和气。不管是哪家生的，哪家养的，都是有缘才能相聚，长大成人，成家立业，得来不易，希望你们都要珍惜。

家里有什么事情，大家一起商量，不要一人包办。家里没事的时候，大家多多来往，彼此多谈心交往，互通有无是人性所在，不计前嫌，就是一个好人。

如果哪一天我死了，这封信就是我对你们的嘱托。

2007年5月28日。