



Joy Chen with her husband and two daughters. The Chinese-American shares her secrets of a happy marriage and successful career in her book *Do Not Marry Before Age 30*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Don't tie the knot yet

Former deputy mayor of Los Angeles Joy Chen advocates choosing life partners slowly and wisely in her new book. She shares her thoughts with **Yang Guang**.

While young women in China are pressured to marry early for fear that they will be termed as *shengnu* or "leftover women", former deputy mayor of Los Angeles Joy Chen suggests otherwise in her new book, *Do Not Marry Before Age 30*.

Chen, a 42-year-old American-born Chinese who married her real estate developer husband at age 38, says the central message of the book is how to make choices in life and how to fill it with security, love and happiness.

To convey the message, she recounts in the book the journey she has traveled from being a shy second-generation immigrant to a successful businesswoman.

For the past two months, Chen and her family have traveled across China to promote the book.

She's clearly used to taking control and asked her husband to take their two daughters upstairs while our interview was conducted, before asking the waitress at the Lee Garden Apartment in Beijing to bring two bottles of water, cold for her and warm for me. She didn't ask.

Chen's parents emigrated to the United States in the early 1960s to further their education. They didn't make much money, but saved up as much as they could to buy a house in a good school district.

They didn't allow any TV at home and didn't allow Chen and her brother to socialize with American children, because they were worried their children could be led astray by the "immoral aspects of American culture".

"In the 1970s, the world viewed China as backward and insulated. And the way my brother and I behaved, reflected exactly how the world viewed China," Chen says, adding that she and her brother wore cheap clothes and thick glasses, and didn't speak English well.

"Even after I started keeping up in school, the hardest part was after school when kids were talking and joking about TV and movies.

"I had no idea what they were talking about. On the very few occasions when I could come up with something to say, it was always 60 seconds too late," she explains.

A casual talk with her father one Christmas Eve, however, changed everything.

Her father told her he didn't go to the corporate Christmas party because he never knew what to say to the white people around him. Listening to him, Chen says she had one of those epiphany moments.

"I realized two things: First, my father can never achieve the success he should achieve in his career; second, the reason for this is that he didn't know how to socialize with



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JOY CHEN
AUTHOR OF
DO NOT MARRY BEFORE AGE 30

the white people, just like me." This gave her the motivation to closely observe and blend into American society.

At 31, she became deputy mayor of Los Angeles and was responsible for education and workforce development for the second largest city in the US.

She left politics in 2007 and later founded her own head-hunting firm. At the same time, she wrote a blog to provide career tips to talented young Chinese.

In 2010, Chen received an e-mail from an editor from China Citic Press, asking whether she could write a book to guide young Chinese women on how to be successful in their career and life.

Chen had to decline the invitation as she was too busy. A year later, she received the same request — Chen had just given birth to her second daughter then.

"I started wondering how my two girls should face this world when they grow up as young women and whether I could write anything meaningful for them," Chen says. "And I decided to do a little experiment."

She wrote a blog piece titled "Do not marry before age 30", and it caught on Twitter immediately after it was posted.

"Suddenly, my blog was overwhelmed with so much traffic that

the server crashed after six hours," Chen recalls.

The experience prompted her to stop her headhunter work. For a whole year, she focused solely on researching and writing the book.

Chen says the fear of being labeled an "old maid" forces many women to marry too early and divorce too quickly, as evident in the high divorce rate of up to 57 percent among the post-1980 generation.

"We should not just try to find a 'Mr Right Now', but a 'Mr Right Forever,'" she says.

Chen says she especially cherishes her internship under Yue-sai Kan, the Chinese-American TV producer and entrepreneur whom Time magazine called "the Queen of the Middle Kingdom".

"Before meeting her, all adult Chinese I knew were scientists and engineers working at the most basic levels in laboratories," Chen explains.

"And then I met Kan, a Chinese like me and a woman like me, and she's changing the world."

"Meeting Kan opened my eyes to the possibilities in my own life. A generation later, my hope and aspiration for this book is so that it will help this generation of Chinese women open their eyes to new possibilities in their lives."

Contact the writer at yangguang@chinadaily.com.cn.

bookbriefs

New Ye Guangqin read is a saga

Prunus Press has printed the English version of *Greenwood Riverside*, a novel by Ye Guangqin.

Shortlisted for the 2011 Mao Dun Literature Prize, it narrates the dramatic life story of bandit Wei Futang in the ancient county of Greenwood Riverside, from the eve of the founding of New China to the present.

Ye weaves a detailed saga and portrays with poignancy the lives led by bandits and heroes, the rich and the poor, as well as men and women against the vicissitudes of over half a century.

"The compelling story of power, politics and revolution ... offers a shining gateway to knowledge and understanding of the Chinese people, both past and present," American writer Jerry Piasecki comments.

A descendent of the family of the Empress Dowager Cixi (1835-1908), 64-year-old Ye draws inspiration from her family background and her years of working in rural Shaanxi province.

YANG GUANG

Coelho releases novel on values

Celebrated Brazilian author Paulo Coelho has released his latest novel recently. Titled *Manuscript Found in Accra*, it examines "values that span time".

It is Coelho's 22nd offering. His previous works, including *The Alchemist*, *Veronica Decides to Die* and *The Zahir*, have sold over 140 million copies in 73 languages.

The latest novel plays with fiction and reality in telling a story about a Greek sage known as Copta, who features in a manuscript discovered by an Englishman centuries later.

"Distinguishing fiction is really hard not just for writers, but for anyone. We live under a barrage of information that we believe is real, even when it can't be," Coelho says.

This story "is based on values, and values are never fiction. They pass through time," the writer adds.

The titular manuscript is a 1307 retelling of a meeting between Copta and the people of Jerusalem, just before the Crusaders arrived in the late 11th century.

Copta "urges men and women in the city to seek wisdom in everyday life", the publishing house wrote in a statement marking the release of the new novel, which will have a first run of 100,000 copies.

The award-winning author has held a seat at the Brazilian Academy of Letters since 2002.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Psychologist to exorcise demons with book deal

A psychologist known worldwide for her pioneering treatment of suicidal patients (and her own mental health struggles) has a book deal.

Dr Marsha Linehan will describe her personal and professional journey in a memoir acquired by Random House, the publisher announced recently.

The book's working title is *The Vow: From Hell to a Life Worth Living*. It is scheduled to come out in the fall of 2013. Linehan will collaborate on the book with the acclaimed author and scientist Roger Levin.

Linehan, 69, is the developer of Dialectical Behavior Therapy, or DBT, used for suicidal patients, including those with borderline personality disorder.

In 2011 Linehan revealed that she, too, had suffered from borderline personality disorder and had tried often to kill herself.

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To me, fashion is not only about luxuries, it's an upward attitude that supplies positive energy to the human spirit."

LIU JIANG
AUTHOR OF *POETIC TREND*

Trends Media Group President Liu Jiang reveals in his latest work, *Poetic Trend*, his thoughts on love, business, travel and life. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Shining a light on new trends in poetry

By MEI JIA
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Sitting in his fashion empire, crowned by 17 trend and lifestyle magazines that he started 19 years ago, Trends Media Group President Liu Jiang is a peaceful, thoughtful explorer of life's positive energy through poetry.

Liu's latest collection, *Poetic Trend*, launched mid-July in Beijing, shows his friends and business associates a surprising aspect of the author — sensitive to nature and beauty, adventurous, and persistent about recording his feelings and experiences in a plain and philosophical language.

"To me, fashion is not only about luxuries, it's an upward attitude that supplies positive energy to the human spirit. It's the same with what I do with poetry," the 56-year-old says, talking in a sincere and confidential tone. "And I seldom complain or hate, or let emotions linger."

Liu, laughing, describes himself

as being too frank and says if he gives a public lecture he sometimes offends people by revealing more than expected.

He borrowed money to start his extensive empire in a rented yard.

In the early 1990s, when the country was adjusting itself to the new market economy, Liu was a pioneer who emphasized the quality of the first Trends magazine and focused on advertisements, which won him a return of 200,000 yuan (\$31,400) in the first year.

Now his magazines take up 15.5 percent of the country's magazine market share, and have more than 1,000 employees.

Liu recalls the hard days, when he tried to borrow money for the first issues but was refused.

In his poem, *The Yard for Trends*, a seven-stanza work dedicated to his business startup, he writes without anguish or pain, and tells the story in a happy tone of several faithful people realizing their dreams.

The same approach is revealed in his account of historical events: "I write about my thoughts on the 'cultural revolution' (1966-76), but nothing cruel or bloody about it," he says.

"But the times changed with the country's economic growth. I'm grateful for the age and the society that I'm in. So, I decided to be a contributor to prove that in times like these meaningful change can be achieved through effort."

"That's where my affirmative power comes from, and where my poems rooted."

Liu says heartfelt happiness is his primary when it comes to business management.

Liu was formerly a Chinese literature major and worked as a journalist. He has been writing poems since junior high and had his first collection, *Love Deep in Time*, published 20 years ago.

Critics noted the first collection of poems was easy to follow and full of love.

He has continued to write even as he has developed his business.

The new collection is a selection of 100 poems created over the past 20 years. They're divided into four sections, recording his thoughts on love, travel, business and life.

"His poems show a bright and healthy orientation that I think will shine strongly in leading trends," says Li Xiaoyu, poetry critic and editor.

"That's what made him successful in the business world, because fashion is all about leading a lifestyle," Li says.

Li adds Liu's themed poems on starting and developing Trends business is remarkably moving.

"He knows how to control his language and emotion, and how to approach a deeper level with a light and relaxed expression," she says.

"I believe poetry still has its audience," Liu says.

"What I intend to do is to contribute with fresh and musical pieces that are inspiring."