



Frank Wu

I was born in 1937 in Shanghai, China. My grandfather was a medical doctor, and my father studied at University of Shanghai, which was founded by a group of missionaries from the United States, and where all of the subjects were taught in English. He became a financial consultant and developed a love for Western cuisine, which was rare at the time. Growing up, I loved painting, especially Chinese brush painting, a traditional style of painting with special ink on bamboo, silk, or paper. You hold the brush lightly between your thumb, ring finger, and middle finger and use wrist flexion to draw. It's so elegant.

Despite my passion for art, my grandfather made me promise to study economics before he died because he felt this training would guarantee a bright future. I married at age 16, which was common in that era, and eventually heeded his request and studied economics at the Shanghai Vocational School. Deep inside, I still wanted to be an artist.

Upon graduation with a degree in economics, I got a job as a technician at the Shanghai Animation Film Studio. I was able to show the studio my talents, and soon parlayed the role into becoming a cartoonist, puppeteer, and artist.

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These thrilled me so much that I threw myself into them, working day and night and often ignoring my role as a husband and father. I had no friends, and no time for myself. I regret that.

Then I came down with Typhoid Fever and became very sick. I suffered a rare sensorineural complication from the illness, which caused me to lose my hearing and ability to speak. These changes forced me to take early retirement, and I was sad to leave my work. My son and daughter both work here in Silicon Valley, so I moved here to Palo Alto to be close to them. This change turned out to be a blessing, as now I get to see my three beautiful grandchildren grow up.



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I live in Stevenson House. I'm an introvert, so when I first got here I spent a great deal of time in my unit. However, having lunch every day at La Comida has helped me come out of my shell. The staff and volunteers really care about me and the other patrons, especially Mary Ruth Batchelder, who is a bright light in my day. I do think she works too hard, though, so my advice to her is to learn from my experience. Your health is as important as your work, and you need to keep an eye on it.