

(my visit to her home in summer 2009)

Dear Uncle Yang and warm-hearted people who supported me,

Time flies. I am 18 years old now and I am going to college. I want to write to you to talk about my life.

My Childhood

Everyone has a colorful childhood. I grew up in the mountains. There was only one family living there. We lived in a shaky house built by mud. When it rained, the roof leaked. We tried to fix the roof for a couple times, but it wouldn’t work. There was bamboo surrounded the house. When summer came, we could not sleep because of mosquitoes. Sometimes, I was very scared because power was always out. We had to eat, take a shower, and sleep in the dark. When I lied in my bed, I thought to myself that what if the wild animals in the mountains attacked us? It must be horrible. At the time, we did not have running water. We had a huge water tank. Every time, I would follow my father to get not-so-clean-water from the river, carrying them in two big water bottoms using a shoulder pole. Year after year, we filled the water tank, and went get the water from the river, and then refilled the water tank.

Our clothes and shoes were all from other people. Sometimes, we picked up some pieces from garbage, but after cleaning, we could wear them. The kitchen place was also made of mud and old cement. Our house was so poor that there was nothing decent. When I was eight, I helped my parents to do house chores, such as making dinner, doing laundry, cutting woods, picking pigweeds, herding sheep, seedling, and picking vegetables...etc. Although I was not good at these and sometimes I got myself hurt, I never cried because I knew by heart that I should be independent. I often got sick when I was young. I grew up by taking herb medicine. I was also a naughty child. I ran on the log bridge and often fell into the river, but I stood up myself. I was accompanied by fish even I was almost drowned once. I picked up fruits when I was logging. They were so sweet that I would never forget. I needed to cross the river on my way to school. Sometimes, if it was raining hard, I needed to detour and take the long way. When I was nine, I had a traffic accident. My Father’s leg got hurt. Things had become difficult.

My junior high school

Just before I went to junior high school, our family had a misfortune, making life more difficult. It was a hot summer. My father and I were pulling weeds in the cornfield. He suddenly fainted. I was horrified and got him to the hospital right away. At first, I thought he suffered sunstroke. But after examination, he was found to have gallbladder cancer. The surgery took a long time and doctors took one gallbladder out from my father. It was fortunate that my father survived, but he could never do hard labor. At that moment, we lost hope as the backbone of our family fell. I took care of my father by myself for 17 days and nights straight. My mother ate squash for 17 days because we had no money for food. There was only RMB20 left. All the money had been spent on my father’s treatment. My mother was disabled when she was born, and could not take care of herself alone. It was a bitter summer. Every time I was on my way to school, I would take a couple bags for collecting recycles. I sold them in exchange for money so that I could buy medicine for my father.

My high school (Tonghai’s comment: Due to her very poor background and poor grades, she went to a vocational high school—sort of lowest level in high school rating. They learn a special skill of choice which they could use to find a factory job after graduation. Most of them do not go to college. Some, like her, work very hard and take special college exams to try to get to college---one academic part and one special skill part. It is very hard in general. It turned out that this school fit her really well as you can see from below. )

I had been the Class Monitor and the commissary in charge of sports. In terms of work, I always set myself as an example. I completed the tasks from my teachers excellently. Thus, my teachers trusted me in these tasks. I was a great assistant to my teachers, and a great example for my classmates. As a student, I was strict with myself. I studied hard, actively participated in student organizations, and also volunteered. I love sports and usually showed myself during each year’s School Game, earning different prizes. I usually spent more time on things than everyone else. We were not genius so we needed to make efforts. Each successful story has hard work. I tried my best so that even I failed, I would not regret. Of course, I had a lot of weakness too as no one was perfect. I tried to improve myself by admitting my weakness and working on it.

My grades were excellent. I was always the first place when taking exams. Sometimes, I would be the third place. I had earned scholarships. Although it was not a big amount of money, I was very happy. I was awarded the “Virtuous and Competent Student” twice. During the “Show Ourselves” Competition, I won the third prize of Skills at a provincial level two years in a roll. I was also awarded the “Three Good Student” (Model Students good at study, moral, and sports), “Excellent Student Leader”, “Excellent Youth League Member”, and “Excellent Volunteer” a few times…. As I was reaching my college dream, my father’s health worsened. He could leave us at any time. I thought about quitting school. At this time, you encouraged me to continue my school. You talked a lot to me about your experience as well as others’ stories, and the advantages of going to college. I was really touched. I thank you from my heart. It was you that pulled me out of anxiety and despair by supporting my college tuition. Without your help, my college dream would be a bubble. You have supported me since elementary school. I still remember Uncle Hu and you visited my house six years ago (2009).

After all this, I am an 18-year-old teenager girl now. It has been a hard walk for me. I was under great pressure, I was not confident, I cried, I was looked down by others...In the future, I will work harder and become more confident and strong. I should pursue what I want to do when I am young. My family needs me. I will walk firmly and improve my family’s life step by step despite hardness.

Thank you for the help and caring in the last decade. It not only helped me in material goods, but also encouraged me. Thank you again. I will become someone like you who help the others.

Lastly, I wish you and your family great health and good fortune. I am looking forward to hearing back from.

The kid you supported

Zhu Baofeng