

# She married foreigner, now lives in a foreign land

By Shaoping Wu

I met my husband in Beijing, China in 1986 when he was teaching at Beijing Foreign Studies University as a Fulbright professor. Our friendship grew with time, and eventually we decided to get married.

That was thundering news to both of our universities. Though China had opened her door to foreigners in the past 10 years, for most Chinese — especially bureaucrats — to marry a foreigner still sounded dangerous and threatening.

I talked the matter over with the leaders in my work unit to get permission for marriage. The memory of that bitter, hurtful confrontation with the president still remains in my mind and heart. When I came to his office to talk about the possibility of marriage, he was very stern and questioned me in a suspicious and rude tone.

"You have made use of our unit just for the purpose of marrying a foreigner, haven't you?"

I answered, "When I came to this unit, we were still only friends. I hadn't yet decided to marry him."

"You are lying," he yelled at me.

## GROWING

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The word "lying" hurt my self-respect deeply. "If I had made up my mind to marry him," I said, "then I would not have bothered to get myself transferred to your unit. I knew how difficult it would be to get permission from you leaders."

My answer irritated and angered him. Flying into a rage, he pulled the door open and ordered me to go. I left his office humiliated and with no more words.

Other officials added their disapproval, sometimes in the form of "good advice." The Party Secretary asked me to reconsider the case because, he predicted, "Your marriage will end up in tragedy."

In spite of this great pressure I insisted on my rights.

Finally they had to approve since the new Marriage Law permits a Chinese to marry a foreigner. Even so, it took us many months to fulfill all the legal requirements. The marriage bureau finally gave us our certificate on April 22, 1987.

Len had come 10,000 miles from America to find me in China. Our union was indeed beyond national boundaries and social systems. Would it work out wonderfully or end up tragically?

Time will tell, but "so far, so good." We have been married for almost 10 months. During this period, our marital life has already gone through tests. I had a miscarriage during the first week I arrived in Los Angeles. The surgical cost was enormous — over \$2,000. That was incredible to me, for in China medical care is free for government employees.

Then we flew to Rochester, rushing to rent an apartment, to buy furniture and a car, to arrange everything in our new home. No sooner did we settle down when Len had to resume his position as a busy English professor, driving to SUNY Geneseo and leaving me on my own most days.

I have tried to meet people, look for work teaching Chinese language and culture, and get familiar with the new food, customs, language, and values. Adjusting to this country has not always been so easy. People's lives here are very different.

So it has been a hard time, but so far we have managed to overcome the problems and strains. We have lived through spring, summer and autumn. Though the cold wind had stripped the trees of their colorful leaves, our affection for each other has remained green, like the evergreen tree. Now I believe that love is holy and eternal, beyond national boundaries and social systems. And we expect a lovely flower to come from our love.

Shaoping Wu, 36, lives in Rochester with her husband, Leonard Moss, 55. She tutors American students in Chinese at Nazareth College and will present a lecture series, "Introducing Modern China," in April at the Rochester Museum and Science Center's Gannett School of Science and Man.



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