

BOOK REVIEW

Using the Metaphor of Achieving Dreams

Dinah Lin has written a highly interesting book about her success as a Chinese-American woman

Reviewed by Foster Stockwell

Daring to Dream Once Again, It's Never Too Late

By Dinah Lin

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Dinah Lin has written a highly interesting book about her success as a Chinese-American woman in both the business and government circles of the United States.

She begins her account by telling how her mother took her brother and her, both quite young at the time, on a boat out of Shanghai to Hong Kong. The year was 1949 and this was just as the Communist army was entering the city. The three of them then progressed to America to join her father, already living in the U.S.

They settled at Mount Vernon, Ohio, where Dr. Harry W. Miller had established a factory to manufacture soy milk, a product Miller had developed while working as a Seventh-Adventist missionary in Shanghai. The Lin family had been a part of the Seventh-Day Adventist community there, and her father had been the church treasurer. He would later own a Chinese restaurant in Akron, Ohio, and a several small motels, one in Williamsburg, Virginia.

The Lin family was the only Asian family in Mount Vernon. The town is located in the center of the state and today has a population of only about fifteen thousand. Dinah's potential for achievement developed early in her first years of schooling in Mount Vernon. She was the valedictorian of her eighth grade class and later the high school homecoming queen.

As to the matter of prejudice against Asians, she says she experienced only a little. Two examples from her childhood relate to being

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ignored when party invitations were sent out, and being invited to a dance by a young man who later took pains to withdraw his invitation. As she puts it, these events didn't matter much because she always chose "to see the glass as half full, not half empty." She reports that as a Chinese American she always helped to demonstrate that it was possible to break through any prejudicial barriers.

Dinah Lin entered college as a student of international studies at the American University in Washington, D.C. But before she graduated, she married and transferred to Columbia University in New York to be with her husband who was completing his degree at the Wharton Business School. The couple later moved to Hong Kong where her husband had a job and where her two children were born. The couple divorced after sixteen years and she returned to college, this time majoring in economics at Barnard.

She began her business career with the Union Carbide Company in New York where she was hired as Associate Manager of Union Carbide's Investor Relations Department. From there she moved to Chicago as the Director of International Business Development for Telaction, a high-tech startup company. Over the

years she worked altogether for at least a half dozen companies that ranged from high-tech startups to Fortune 500 corporations. She also spent three and a half years in government service, working from 1989 to 1992 as a senior official in the George W. Bush administration. She was first appointed to be the Associate Director at the Minority Business Development Agency of the Department of Commerce, and then as Director of the Office of International Affairs.

In 1992 she joined Burger King as an executive responsible for developing franchises in Asia. Here she opened Burger King establishments in Japan, Korea, and China. She had some difficulty convincing other officials at Burger King that China would be a lucrative market for hamburgers, but after she began negotiations in Beijing in 1993, she was able to prove the company executives quite wrong.

The book is breezily written and quite readable. It details some of her many experiences in both business and government. Dinah Lin's attitude toward life might best be summarized by a quote she includes from the actress Josie Bisset "Dreams come a size too big so we can grow into them."

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Foster Stockwell grew up in China (12 years) as the son of American missionaries, first in Fujian Province and then in Szechuan Province (city of Chengdu). Returned to the U.S. just before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941.

After completing college, became a writer and editor working for various magazine, newspaper, and book publishers. For 20 years was a senior editor for World Book Encyclopedia in Chicago, and for 10 years was the publishing director for China Books and Periodicals in San Francisco. Has written six published books, two of which are about China (Religion in China Today, and Westerners in China) and has traveled to China more than 15 times over the past 25 years, working as a polisher and consultant for the Foreign Languages Press in Beijing. Now retired and living in Des Moines, Washington.

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