

108 On My 80th Birthday

Tender Lin

108 八十歲生日感言

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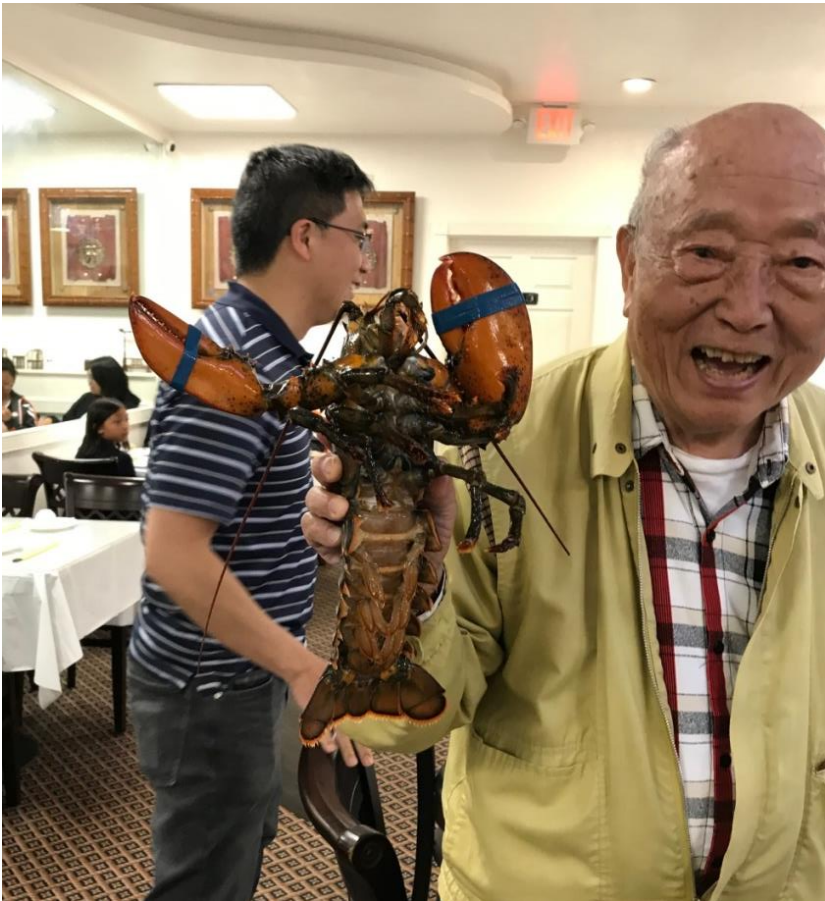
Without a doubt, it is highly worthwhile to celebrate one's 80th birthday, as it is normally considered as a long journey for one to reach. About four years ago, my old time friend in Taiwan, Professor Huang, notified me almost a year ahead of his time for celebration of 80th birthday. Upon notification, I told his secretary that I could not attend but would love to write an article of congratulation for him. Now it is my time to have my 80th birthday and my family wants to do all the celebration for me. I was uprooted to the United States. I cannot have such fancy celebration as Professor Huang did. However, at least I can do the same as my countrymen did. They often just invited several friends to attend birthday party.

人生有幾個八十？能過八十歲生日當然是件值得慶祝的事。記得四年前，老友黃教授為慶祝他的八十歲生日，他在年前就通知我，準備在政大校園，開大型慶祝大會。我立即回應他秘書的要求，說我無法親自回台參加，但必定寄上祝賀文。今年輪到我要過八十歲生日，家人給我慶祝。流落異鄉的我，自然就不可能像黃教授那樣，把生日辦得那麼風采。然看到以往灣區這裡的鄉親，都邀請幾位親朋好友，聚餐慶祝生日，我自感也可以這樣做。

It was so special and warm-hearted for my family to take full charge of my birthday party. I never thought about I would get two celebrations this time. The first time, my three children in Bay Area invited us the parent on my birthday to Millbrae, CA for the celebration. Because of my second daughter who lived in Florida could not join, so they got to find another time to celebrate. The best time for them would be the day close to the coming national holiday, July 4. At that time, my second daughter could fly to Bay Area for family gathering, so they chose July 7 and a Chinese restaurant in Pleasanton, CA for second-time celebration.

由家人為我辦的生日慶祝會，真是特別又溫馨。萬萬也沒想到，他們竟為我辦了兩次，不只是一次的生日慶祝會。第一次是在五月三十生日當天，三位住在灣區子女，在 Millbrae, CA 一家華人餐廳，慶祝我的生日。然因住在東岸佛羅里達州的二女，未能參與，再加以他們都有工作在身，就得找一個適當的時間和地點。最後他們發現最好的時間是國慶假日。在那個時候，二女可飛來加州住上幾天，與家人團聚，所以就選定七月七日在 Pleasanton, CA 一家華人餐廳，舉行第二次慶祝會。

Right from the beginning, the first celebration was indeed very meaningful. My family knew that I loved both Chinese and Japanese foods, buy because the



chosen Japanese restaurant having no vacancy that day, we went to another Chinese restaurant instead. It really served very delicious foods. At first, I was shocked to see waiter showed me a large lobster, because he already knew I dreamed of it all the time (Photo 1). It was about some twenty years ago, we lived in South Carolina. My first daughter sent me a box of lobsters from Boston to

celebrate my birthday. I had tasty lobsters for several days and I mentioned about that great occasion ever since. Therefore, my family wanted to treat me with lobster again. Of course, we also had full table of great foods and birthday cake too.

第一次的慶祝，可不是草率進行。子女們徵求並知道我喜歡的是日餐和華餐。因當天選定的日餐館爆滿，就轉到華餐館。出乎意料之外，該餐館料理真是道地，很合乎我的口味。最叫我難忘的是，他們都知道我一生最夢想要吃的龍蝦。想起上一次吃龍蝦的盛況，可已是二十幾年前的事了。在那時，大女兒特別從 **Boston, Mass**，郵寄一箱大龍蝦來慶祝我的生日。我痛快地吃了好幾天。在日後的談話中，我經常提起它。或許正因為是這樣，子女們要我重溫舊夢，就在慶祝當天，特別招待我一隻大龍蝦 (圖一)，叫我吃得津津有味。當然，整桌上的佳餚和生日蛋糕，好吃就不用說了。

Needless to say, the Chinese restaurant at the second celebration served ten great dishes and three different types of cakes. At the time of this writing, I still felt salivated to that smoked/spicy fish dish it served. I brought the left over back home that day and had two more meals with it at home. While I tasted it, I



told my wife, "We got to visit that restaurant one more time." There were a total of four tables for guests that day (Photo 2) and the room was

decorated with blooms spelled out "80". I was so excited and told all the attendances, "I was most appreciative and admired of my family today" (Photo 3).

第二次慶祝會上的華人餐館，也是佳餚一大桌。我最愛吃的是那道麻辣燻魚，在當天沒吃光，還帶回家多吃了兩餐。它的口味好到叫我邊吃邊對太太說：「我們日後要再去造訪」。宴會當天，除了家人外，也邀請親友參加，共有四大桌(圖二)。子女們安排了十道大菜和和三種不同口味的蛋糕，並在堂中以「80」氣球點綴，真是叫我感激萬分。我當場就說：「今天我最感激和最驕傲的是我的家人」(圖三)。



How
ever,
birthday
celebratio
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not be
limited
only to joy
of
gathering.
To me, its
great
meaning
should be
the sharing
of life

wisdom from the main character. Several days prior to celebration, Mr. Jesse Wang asked me what my feelings on coming birthday are. It caught me off guard and I did not give him a concrete answer. Few days later, my wife asked me if I prepare to say anything during the coming party again. Both of these two instances rendered me to have a deep thought of the matter.

然慶祝生日的最大意義不只在親朋好友的歡樂聚餐，更是在過生日者是否分享他在過去一生取得的教訓？在生日前幾天，王詩吟先生就曾問我對生日的感觸何在？我那時沒給具體回答。日後，我太太又問我在生日宴會上要說些甚麼？這兩件事教我不得不正視這問題。

Finally, I decided to have a brief speech on my birthday party for 10 or more minutes. Right at the onset, I gave out my title, “Living without limits” and spelled out the difference between “Life” and “Living”. I realized that the audiences were all from the East and were rooted in the Buddhist and the Confucius doctrines. In other words, they all believed that their dates of death were already predetermined. Namely, they were written on the so-called “Wordless Book of Heaven” or on the Classic of “Six Levels of Reincarnation”. Even they have lived in United States since their adulthood and have received Christian doctrine, their belief on predetermined death do not change, simply because Christianity treating death as God’s calling. Therefore, regardless of the belief on death is from the East or the West, life is limited.

果然，我在宴會上決定分享生日感言。在短短十幾分鐘內，我把我的主題清清楚楚的說出它：「生活不設限 (Living without limits)」。我先把生命 (life) 和生活 (living) 兩者分開，不然就會說不清。我深知在座的親友都來自東方，從小深受佛家和儒家思想的影響。相信生命的最終點是天生注定，也就是說死期在生前早被寫在「無字天書」上或說「六道輪迴」的佛經上。即使他們壯年來美國，有了基督教信仰，但也改變不了命定說，因為死亡在美國這裡說是神的召喚。所以說，不管是命定或是神召，都在說生命是有限的 (limited)。

In believing death either is predetermined or in god’s calling, we have no choice but to readily accept that we have no control. Therefore, in our daily living, death should not be treated as an issue to be entertained. In other words, all of us should not waste time on the uncontrollable death. This was the very reason for me to distinguish between life and living at the onset of my speech. I focused on daily living. Whenever I received propaganda brochure from life insurance or cemetery- selling company, I often tossed it into waste basket without any second thought. Few months ago, my wife and I attended a free-lunch talking from Neptune Society. It wanted us to invest \$3000.00 for their funeral service. I questioned myself why I have to set a limit on myself even I am still alive and ironically, death is not on my control. Therefore, I did not have any interest at all. In 1976, I overheard that Chinese premiere, Chou en-lay, wanted his countrymen

to cast his ashes in sky upon his death. I was shocked to hear that news but I admired his decision. Right now, I told my family at later day they can cast my ashes over the entrance of San Francisco Bay under Golden Gate Bridge.

既然死是由神決定或命注定，那就不在你我的掌控。既然是這樣，那麼在日常生活中，死就不該被當作課題 (Issue)。也就是說，你我不必要把時間和精力浪費在無從掌握的死亡上。所以我一開講，就把生命 (Life) 和生活 (Living) 分開，並把重點放在生活上。每當我收到那些推銷墓地或生命保險的



傳單，我會不假思索，就把它們丟入垃圾箱內。記得幾月前，我陪同太太去參加 Neptune Society 的免費午餐會。在會中，得知要出資三千元去購買他們提供的殯葬服務，我一點興趣也沒有。我問我自己，我還沒死又何必給自己設限，更何況那個限根本又不在我的掌控？！記得在 1976 年，我聽到中國周恩來總理要人把他死後的骨灰撒在天空中，我聞之震驚但更是佩服他的做法！我現在就告訴我家人，可把我的骨灰撒在舊金山金門大橋下的海灣口。

門大橋下的海灣口。

Living is different from life for it is unlimited. So to speak, it is exactly like that popular saying, "there is will, and there is a way." Unfortunately, some people stray into the wrong path. They know that living has no limit but they

unconsciously set the limit for themselves. Eventually, they suffer from it without their knowledge. For instance, a friend of mine loved to say to me, “Our average age in life is so and so now, so we only have so and so years to live” or “In our community, this number of people in our age died a year, therefore, we have to have this number of foreign travels in a year and this number of eating out in a week”, etc. As I heard of these sayings, I often lost my further interest in conversation. To me, limit setting restricts living flexibility. I always want to live freely.

生活跟生命不一樣，它應是「沒限」，也就是人常說的「有志者，事竟成 (There is will, and there is a way)」。可是，有些人的心態走偏了。他們明知「沒限」，卻要「設限」。結果，自作聰明反為聰明誤。譬如說，有位鄉親平常喜歡設「限」。記得在談話中，他總喜歡提醒我說「現在平均壽命是幾歲，算起來，你我還有幾歲可活」；或說「像我們這年紀的灣區鄉親，每年都有四或五位往生，我們現就要規劃每年出國玩幾次和每週外吃幾次」等話語。他這樣的設限，喪失了生活的自在度，我不感興趣，因為我要怡然自得。

It is also miserable for one who loves to test the limit too. It is even downright stupid for one to relentlessly attempting to reach the bottom of a limit. In 2001, I moved to San Francisco Bay Area for retirement and I joined “24-hour Fitness” as a member. I did my exercise by exploring myself, observing others, and listening to my body. Occasionally, I noticed some members attempting to test the limit in exercise. For instance, there was one middle-age man who loved to intermingle fast running with slow walking on thread mill until he was fully sweated. I really admired that he had such great energy, but I did not see his healthy look. To me, he came to test his limit and he wanted to know how fast and how long he could run. His mentality was “no pain, no gain. On the other hand, I was just the opposite. I got on thread mill and I set my speed at 3.6 and my mileage at 2.0. I walked about half hour and retired from thread mill. Then, I utilized other hand-exercise equipments. I pushed, pulled, lifted, and bended for another half hour. Finally, I soaked in hot spa, did some massages, and took shower for another half hour. I never had any interest in testing any limit. My

mentality was always “No pleasure, No Gain.” What I wanted from my exercise could be construed by the saying on the wall, “Making a Difference.” Whenever I completed my exercise, I had a good appetite. Up to the present day, I have exercised for 18 years, and I still maintain my degree of momentum (Photo 4).

更可悲的是，有些人喜歡測限 (test the limit)，測不到底線就不甘休。二〇〇一年我來到舊金山灣區退休後，入會「二十四小時健身館 (24-hour Fitness)」。我自我摸索，模仿他人也聽我的身體，自由自在地運動。我看到少數人運動是在「測限」，反而害了身體。譬如說，有位中年男人，他每次來健身館，就在 Thread Mill 上急速快跑一段時間後，再慢走一小段，如是循環持續到滿身大汗。我真佩服他有那麼多力氣，能做這樣的運動，但我看不出他的健康有多起色，他好像是在測試他能跑多久和多快，尋找那莫須有的體能極限，抱者「No pain, No gain」的運動心態。我呢？卻是相反，我先以 3.6 速度在 Thread Mill 上快走 2.0 英里，大約半小時後就退下場。接者，我運用其他運動器材做些推、托、拉、舉的手部運動，時間大約半小時。再接者，我泡熱湯、按摩、和洗澡，時間也大約半小時。我對測限一點興趣都沒有，我是抱者「No pleasure, No gain」，我要的只是能夠如同體育館牆壁所說的「有所不同 (Make a Difference)」。如是運動過後的午餐，我發現食慾大增。我已經在健身館運動十八年了，仍然保持相當的運動熱度 (圖四)。

“Living without limits” was the title of my 80th birthday speech and can be construed as my living philosophy. It is a positive attitude toward daily life and can be applied by anyone. I was thoroughly enjoyed to be able to share it at my 80th birthday banquet.

It was totally out of my imagination for me to hear a news report on “Lives life without limits” on ABC TV station three days later after my banquet. I was so elatedly shocked. It is said that in Santa Clara, Utah, there was one Tetra-Amelia man (Photo 5) who was born without hands and arms and was hired as football coach at a high school. He was a handicap man but never gave up. He often said to others, “Who says I can’t”. I believe we all have heard stories like this before, and we always admired the perseverance behind such independence-seeking behaviors.

生活不設限 (Living without limits) 是我八十生日感言，也是我的生活哲學。它所展現的是一種日常生活態度，它是樂觀進取的，任何一個人都可將之派上用場。我在生日宴會上以此與親友分享，自感得意。但萬萬也沒想到宴會三天後，突然在 ABC 電視台上，看到一則新聞標題說「Lives life without



limits」。我很是驚喜，原來它是說，在 Santa Clara, Utah, 有一位出生就沒手沒腳的 Tetra-Amelia 患者 (圖五)，最近被一所中學聘為足球隊教練。說他雖是殘障，但不向殘障低頭，始終嗆人說「Who says I can't」。類似這樣的生活故事，你我都聽過，

也都會佩服他們追求獨立自主 (Independent) 的毅力。

English is not my native language but the title of my speech surprisingly appears to be closed to the ABC news report. As I heard the news, I immediately felt that I got a heart-echoed friend. However, the news title used "Lives life" but I used "Living" instead. This is the total difference between us. Since life is limited, so I used the word, living, in my speech. Living is totally unlimited. Don't you agree with me if we ask anyone to unlimitedly live his limited life, he is bound to hit his head against wall? If my usage of the word," living", is the right choice in English for denoting daily life, then I want to assert that my speech title is superior to the news report title.

英文不是我的母語，我的生日感言跟這新聞標題很接近，我一聽頓時覺得碰上知己，不得不高興起來。然新聞標題用的是「Lives life」而我用的是「Living」，這是我們的不同所在。「Life」是生命，它是「有限的

(limited)」，如世人所說有生必有死。因此，我標題特意改用另一個英文字「Living」，把它說是生活，並強調它是「無限的 (unlimited)」。簡單地說，如要叫人無限地 (without limits) 去過 (lives) 有限的生命 (life)，不就要強人所難，要撞牆壁了。假如我沒把英文字 Living 用錯為生活，那我要說，我的生日感言比新聞標題更能傳達正確的生活理念。

In summary, I insist that life has limit but living has no limit. In my daily life, I do not like to set limit, nor do I like to test limit. This is my attitude toward life. This attitude not only can be applied to the people who are born different, but also can be applied to the regular people like you and me. At this moment of my reflection, I can't help but to think about my father and my mother. They died respectively at age 70 and 80 and today I am surpassing 80. Heartedly speaking, all later days of my life are to be treated as the bonus from God and Fate. I want to live happily and freely without any limits.

總而言之，我秉持生命有限但生活沒限。我一向不設限，對測限一點興趣也沒有。這一生活態度是我八十生日感言。我覺得它不只可應用到那些生來不同 (born different) 的人，也可廣用到所有的一般人。想起家父在七十，家母在八十就往生，今天的我已活過八十。可說以後的日子，都是神和命給我的紅利 (Bonus)，我就要每天無限地去活，快樂和自在。

Note: The article is to be collected into my book: "Life Asks, I Answer (命問我答)", Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing, Volume III, No. 108. I welcome any criticism and remarks.

註：此文將被收入在本人 (Tender Lin) 的著作：Life Asks, I Answer (命問我答), Amazon Kindle Direct publishing 第三集第一〇八篇，歡迎批評和指教。