

## Preface

I have been a Professor of Mathematics at the University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada since 1971. I retired in 2010 and have been awarded the title of Professor Emeritus, University of Waterloo. I am a Western guy. My daughters all call me Mike or Dad. During my career, one of my chief responsibilities was to supervise graduate students, both Master's students and Ph.D. students. It was through this supervision that I met some students with whom I would eventually have a father/daughter relationship. I should explain this type of relationship as it plays a central role in this book. It is an ancient Chinese tradition and roughly translated goes like this.

If two people (any gender combination) become close,  
they may choose to have a family relationship  
and it is expected to be long term.

Before agreeing to a father/daughter relationship, there is a lot of “getting to know each other.” We talk a lot about our families, how we grew up and our career aspirations. We also talk a lot about China. I have visited China three times. Each visit was about 4 to 6 weeks. Once the father/daughter decision has been made, it feels like a miracle has happened. There is a lot of hugging and the girl begins to act like a daughter and I begin to feel and act like a father. It truly is a wonderful time. One daughter told me that if we were physically in China, her parents would have a party in our honour to celebrate our new relationship.

Some of these relationships have been ongoing for 13 to 15 years. These include *Jiameng*, *Zhengzheng* and *Jing*. Others started a little more recently, approximately 7 to 12 years ago. These include *Lan*, *Yuanyuan*, *Lei* and *Xiaohui*. I met many of these girls at the University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada and they were in their 20's at that time. Indeed, I supervised many of their Master's programmes and two I met in an undergraduate course I taught. I shall refer to these girls as “Chinese girls”, but only to differentiate them from Western girls. Actually all but two are now Canadian. These girls came directly from China, got their advanced university degrees here, liked Canada so much that they decided to stay here, became Canadian citizens and started their families here.

One might think it would be difficult to have a good father/daughter relationship with so many girls. When they were at school here, things were

quite simple. I would see them on campus every three or so days. But when they graduated, they moved away. Four moved to Toronto, one to Edmonton, one to Hamilton, one to Chicago and one remains in China. All of these moves are job related. I encouraged each girl to contact me for about a one hour chat each week. If there was some kind of emergency or success, then of course they would call anytime. In each call we would just share the events of the week. We used Skype, telephone and email. We have several parties each year where we all get together. Sometimes we have parties at our place and sometimes the girls will invite Patti and I to their places. Patti is my wife and among her myriad of talents is the ability to cook fabulous meals.

These girls came to Canada fresh from China. In this book, I will detail their frustrations, their successes and mostly just times of great fun! My hope is that the reader will enjoy these anecdotes and come to the same conclusion as I have. That is, other than surface differences, Chinese and Canadian girls are pretty much the same.

One note. In this book, I will often speak of using Skype. This is a computer programme which connects two computers over the internet. People using Skype can connect with each other using audio and video. So each person can see and hear each other and just have a conversation. Best of all, it's free. I spent a month in Nanjing one time. When I was having my morning coffee, I would chat with Patti while she had her evening glass of wine (Nanjing is 12 hours time difference from Waterloo). In the evening, we would get in Skype contact again while I had my evening beer and she had her morning tea. In the future, Skype may be replaced by something more up to date but I am sure the basic audio/visual capabilities will be maintained.

