



Dedicated to My Parents and Teachers

The two most important groups of people, as far as young people are concerned, are parents and teachers. Find Harry Wong's tribute to these groups in his life in the **Go**ing **Beyond** folder for Chapter 6 or scan the QR Code in the book.

The Two Most Important Groups of People

A Tribute to My Parents

Before I was five years old, my parents said something to me over and over again. They even got my relatives to say it to me, as well as my neighbors, and the local merchants.

Several times a day, I would hear, "Little Harry Wong, when you grow up, what kind of a doctor are you going to be?" This was accompanied by their pointing out to me, as positive role models, that my uncles were all doctors and that my cousins were studying to be doctors.

They told me that it was a foregone conclusion that I would be admitted to medical school, even though the competition was tough in those days. What they wanted to know was what I planned to specialize in.

Not being in kindergarten yet, I said, "I don't know."

And then came their reply, "You're going to be a brain surgeon, aren't you?" (Luckily, they did not tell me to be a proctologist.) In other words, they believed that I had the intelligence to be the ultimate of all doctors, so brilliant that I could even operate on other people's brains.

My parents conveyed a message of high or positive expectations to me. For this I will be forever grateful to them, and I send them my love.

Harry K. Wong

A Tribute to My Teachers

The other reason I achieved success in school and life was my teachers. When I was in elementary school, I remember distinctly that my teachers had a saying that they would repeat often, year after year, one teacher after another. This saying became ingrained in me as a driving force or expectation in my life.

They would say, "You can be anything you want to be. You can even be president of the United States, the CEO of a company, or someone who does things for other people (and the example they gave was Mother Teresa)." The message of expectation I received was that I could be a world leader or a leader in whatever field I chose.

It is sad that young people today get very little urging to become leaders or heroes. Rather, they receive messages from the media and from friends that it's not cool to succeed in school. Luckily, I was born and raised in San Francisco's Chinatown, where crowded conditions and poverty did not matter. I had a family, good schools, and a culture. A favorite "put-down" when I was growing up was "rice bucket," which was applied to someone who was so lazy and useless that all he did was sit around all day and eat until he looked like a bucket of rice. We youngsters were expected to make more of ourselves than that. We were all

Dedicated to My Parents and Teachers (continued)

expected to work hard and do well in school, and this expectation was reinforced by wonderful teachers who embraced a culture that assured us success would result from hard work.

My teachers conveyed to me a message of highly positive expectations, a powerful message that told me I was a hard worker and good enough to be anything I wanted to be, even to hold the highest office in the nation.

I thank my teachers for having that expectation of me.

Harry K. Wong

What parents and teachers convey to young people in their formative years as expectations will influence young people to achieve accordingly.