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A Courageous Life

Growing up in a remote region of Hunan Province in China, ‘Sami’ (her English name) has faced numerous challenges and has taken many risks, including marrying a foreigner and moving to a new country. She is now a business owner and offers some valuable insights. Her husband, [David Reeck](#), shares her inspiring story.



Growing Up in Hunan Province

Sami lived in a farming village of about 200 people in a remote region...about 1,000 miles West of Shanghai. Rice was the most popular field crop for consumption. Like other families, her family grew a large vegetable garden with free-range chickens and ducks. Every house had a concrete or cement block wok cooking structure with wood fuel from the hillside. Life was simple and quiet, with plenty of work in the fields. Sami also attended school, walking 45 minutes downhill each morning and then over 1 ½ hours uphill to get home.

So that she would not be a burden to her family, as a

teenager, Sami left her village and moved to Shenzhen, China, near Hong Kong. She worked in a Cantonese restaurant for seven years and sent home money to her family. Then, she moved to Shanghai and worked for another restaurant.

Marrying a Foreigner

While working in Shanghai, Sami met David, who was working in the city as an electrical engineer project manager for General Motors China Investment Company LTD. As their relationship developed, Sami’s parents learned to trust her future husband after a few visits to their rural home. The couple was married in Changsha, the provincial capital of Hunan province. The location of their marriage was in a bureaucratic building like a DMV.

Coming to America

Besides traveling to Hong Kong, which is not within the People’s Republic of China, Sami had never traveled outside her homeland. In 2014, when David was ready to return to the United States with his bride, the newlyweds settled in Roseburg, Oregon. Fortunately, one of Sami’s friends from China had already married a local Roseburg man and moved there two years before. The population of all Asians in the



area (Douglas County) is less than 1%, and the number of Chinese is a couple of dozen people. We have probably met and socialized with every Chinese person in the Roseburg area.

While none of her family has visited her, Sami and David returned to China in 2016 and 2019, just before the Covid outbreak, and back to Hunan Province, adjacent to Hubei Province, which is where the city of Wuhan and the famous virology lab is located.

Staying Connected

Described as ‘China’s app for everything,’ many Chinese people use WeChat—the most used social media platform on earth, for mobile phones, video calls, banking, shopping, Uber-type taxi service, and all forms of communication.

Pleasant Surprises



The hills, rivers, and winter climate are like where Sami grew up in China. Also, she likes our summers, which are low in humidity and sunny, unlike the humid summers in her rural hometown area. She also appreciates “living in a comfortable house in a quiet

neighborhood. In addition, she enjoys fishing and crabbing and spending a couple of hours almost every day in her garden and caring for her chickens.”

Launching her Chinese Xiang Cuisine Food Truck Business

Sami worked for two years at Caddock Electronics Company in Glide, Oregon. She then purchased an older FedEx delivery truck converted into a food truck. Sami and David started this new business venture in 2020, serving food at the



Umpqua Valley Farmers’ Market on Saturdays. Soon, they served at local breweries, including Old 99, Two Shy, Lookingglass, and several wineries. Some of the most popular items on their menu include Chow Mein noodles, pot stickers, and fried rice.

This is her business, and she decides how many hours to put into it. The shopping and preparation of meat and vegetables are quite time-consuming.



Serving at the breweries, usually from 12-8:00 p.m., makes this type of food truck business a full-time job and more.

For Relaxation

Gardening is daily relaxation-type work. We enjoy coffee together every morning and beer or wine most evenings. Sami also likes having dinners with other Chinese in one of our homes. She enjoys cooking Chinese food, especially duck. She also values socializing opportunities with her Chinese girlfriends, typically married to Americans.

Advice for Others

Do what it takes to ensure a comfortable retirement. Pay off all debt, including mortgages, cars, and credit cards. Block out time for socializing. Stretch every morning. Get eight hours of sleep every night. Eat healthy—low-sugar, low-fat Chinese foods made fresh, and use raw ingredients rather than packaged foods (which are not fit for human consumption.) Sami also advises us to focus on our skill areas, continuously learn about your profession, give your best quality work daily, and hold onto your culture.

While Sami has taken several risks in life, like moving to big cities in China, marrying a foreigner, and moving to a new country, her life has been rich and full.

Free Online Courses, Including Introduction to Food and Health



Coursera, a massive open online course provider, offers numerous free learning opportunities for curious minds. One of those courses, provided by Stanford University, is a self-paced Introduction to Food and Health. While enrollment opened on January 4th, it will only take approximately six hours to complete the material. For more information about this class, check out this [link](#).

Last year, I took a free nutrition class for fun. As a result, I became more aware of how colorfully packaged, less healthy processed ‘foods’ are typically placed in the center aisles of stores.

Currently, over 1000 [free courses](#) are available through Coursera on a wide-range of topics.

Stretching Is Vital for Healthy Aging

A Harvard Health [article](#) points out that stretching is vital to keep our muscles more “flexible, strong, and healthy.” Regular stretching also helps reduce the risk of strain, muscle damage, and joint injuries. As a research [report](#) from the Healthy Aging Center at Colorado State University reveals, “When we don’t stretch, muscles become shorter and tighter,” which can reduce our range of motion and flexibility, putting us at greater risk of injuries. The authors of the report recommend daily stretching as ideal to improve our “range of motion, flexibility, and blood flow to muscles.” Also, they note stretching can even reduce stress levels by reducing



muscle tension and increasing serotonin levels that help “stabilize our mood.”

The Mayo Clinic offers several [suggestions](#) for getting the most out of routine stretching. Some of those suggestions include:

- Practice smooth movements rather than bouncing.
- “Breathe normally and hold each stretch for about 30 seconds.”
- Focus on having equal flexibility on both sides of your body.
- If you feel pain, back off “to the point where you didn’t feel any pain.”
- “Concentrate on major muscle groups such as calves, thighs, hips, lower back, neck, and shoulders.”

It’s a new year. If you don’t already have a routine stretch practice, now is an excellent time to start one. If you want to stretch along with an instructor, there are many **free** choices on YouTube, including [stretch yoga](#).

A Sociologist's Perspective: Lifespan & Aging, The Psychology of Hate Groups, and More

Register now for this **free**, informative, Zoom discussion with Dr. Emery Smith, “a sociologist, who has researched Nazis and skinheads, taught lifespan development and aging, and income inequality and its effect on education.”

When: Jan 23, 4-5 p.m. PST or 7-8 p.m. EST.

Register: Click this [link](#) for details and registration.

Hosted by: Coming of Age



Civil Rights are Human Rights

MLK DAY January 15

Reducing Type 2 Diabetes Risk

Dominique Baudon, author of a 2023 [Medscape article](#), stated, “[Type 2 diabetes](#) (T2D) is one of the most common metabolic diseases in the world. People with this type of diabetes have an increased risk for microvascular and macrovascular complications and a shorter life expectancy.”

If we don’t already have this serious metabolic disease ourselves, we may be at risk of developing it. However, some new findings suggest that walking faster could help reduce our risk.

Baudon shares that recent research suggests individuals who regularly walk at a brisk pace reduce their likelihood of developing Type Two Diabetes by up to 24%. Fairly brisk walking is defined as 3-4 mph (as compared to normal walking at 2-3 mph). This research involved a review of four studies and included over 160,000 participants.



Let’s commit to keep moving toward becoming or staying as healthy as possible in this new year.

Sleep and T2D Risk

In another 2023 [Medscape article](#), Florence Comite, M.D., explains how poor sleep can contribute to T2D risk. “When you don’t get quality sleep, the stress hormone cortisol increases, which releases stored glucose, making it harder for [insulin](#) to properly regulate sugar.”

“Why Can’t Widows Just Get Over It?”

If you haven’t experienced the loss of a beloved spouse, it might be hard to understand why widows (and widowers) often don’t bounce back to ‘normal’ as quickly as most other people do after losing loved ones. However, if you are a woman and married, there is a good chance you’ll discover first-hand what other widows already know.



Majority of Married Women Become Widows

Widowhood is a particularly difficult kind of loss that [a majority of women](#) “who have ever married” will eventually experience. Surprisingly, the [median age](#) that women become widows in the United States is just a little over 59 years old.

While most widows learn to adjust and move forward, life will likely forever be changed to some degree. No one understands this experience better than other widows do.

Connecting with Other Widows May Help

If you are a widow, consider joining a widow’s support group. Or, if you know a widow who could use some support, encourage her to connect with other widows. Some of these groups are online. One such group is called [Sisters in Widowhood: Life Transition](#). It is a private group on Facebook you can ask to join. Currently, 230+ women are part of this group. Women in this group can safely share their stories, find support, encourage each other, and discover that they are not alone.

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