

Meet Mimi Tam

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It was Christmas Day and the first time I touched snow. I was so utterly fascinated by it that the extreme low temperature and the biting wind felt like extra rewards to me for just being there; the Canadian airport. I was immensely captivated by the purity, the lightness and the quietness of the falling snow and marveled at how it blankets everything on the ground indiscriminately like an equalizer. As I was riding on the airport express bus to the nearest metro station looking out the window, I had a distinct and undeniable feeling that I was now living inside a postcard; the kind of postcards that I had seen so many times with beautiful snow scenes and sparsely scattered small country houses in wide open spaces at far away countries.

I started a new chapter in my life that day when I set foot in Canada en route to the United States. Having been brought up in a Convent school in Hong Kong, which practiced traditional British educational models, my anticipated cultural shock was somehow lessened to a minimum, to my pleasant surprise. On the contrary, I felt at home right from the beginning and fell in love almost immediately with my surroundings as well as the people whom I had already encountered so far.

To study Electrical and Electronic Engineering and Economics was very much encouraged by my parents ever since I knew what those words meant. Being the eldest of 3 girls, my academic path started out akin to an experiment. I followed my parents' advice and earned my degrees in both EE and Economics from Jinan University, China under an almost tuition-free policy for academically qualified students. My two sisters were in the US finishing up their graduate studies also in EE as foreign students and were doing exceptionally well. In fact, one of our bonds was the shared experience of still being somewhat of a minority majoring in EE at the time even though it was already in the early 80s when we finished our graduate studies.

Now in the US, I was fortunate enough to have found my first job designing and writing compilers for a 4th generation language. It was gainful employment and the work was actually quite interesting. I was a happy trooper then and along the way discovered that 'Hey, it was not a bad direction where my career path was heading, it was fun work and never boring; perhaps I should nudge it further along and get more fun out of it while I could'. So, I started taking a whole host of EE and Computer Science graduate courses as well as professional programs while working full time. Almost all of my evenings were spent frequenting the campus of Northeastern U, Boston U and Harvard Extension School. On weekends, let's just say that I seldom had to scratch my head to think of what to do and where to go to spend the time.

I went on to do my Master of Science at the University of Wales, Swiss. It's distant learning with mandatory periods of residency. At present, I am also taking some courses at MIT while I am going through a new kind of experience; a kind of experience that I shall not celebrate or embrace but to face with the why-not-me attitude. I do not believe that only good experience is worth savoring. Bad ones from one's own perspective can bring unanticipated enlightenment as well. So, I hope.

Through my 23 working years, I saw and went along with the ride of the most amazing and mind-boggling technology advancement era ever. I was there living the history of using abacus and electronic calculators to mainframe computers to PC, from Circuit Switches to Packet systems, from IP networking to VoIP, triple/quad play via ISDN, DSL, broadband optical fiber, Wireless Mobility to All-IP networks, to say the very least. I worked at Computer Associates on developing compilers, also at Lotus Development (IBM) for 9 years working on desktop media, fax boards and multi-media networking as an engineer researcher. I also worked at PictureTel, now Polycom on videoconferencing room systems as well as desktop systems when PictureTel was regarded as somewhat of a pioneer at the time for commercializing videoconferencing technologies.

Via the dawning of the IP-hyped period, I had the opportunity to work on Circuit Switches, Packet Switches, Media Gateways, Proxies, VoIP stack developments, Circuit Network to Packet Network bridging technologies and other exciting Telecom applications. I saw the beginning of the inevitable decline of the legacy PSTN systems and how disruptive VoIP and Multimedia over IP had been. I also worked at Integral Access as Signaling Software Team Lead and as Technical Lead / Architect at Sentio doing GR-303, V5.2, Fixed-Mobile Convergence, Internet Multimedia Systems (IMS) prototyping and R&D on other forward-looking technologies. I enjoyed participating in numerous Standard bodies such as IETF, ITU-T, ETSI, SIP WG, 3GPP2 and WiMAX Forum. At Motorola, I had the opportunity to work on wireless protocols from GSM/GPRS, UMTS cellular 3G, CDMA and WiMAX to 4G/LTE, E-UTRAN mainly focusing on end-to-end systems and networks architectures.

I previously held roles with a lot of administrative responsibilities; as Technical Director and Director of Engineering and was always careful and diligent in being very technically involved by way of functioning as an individual contributor at the same time.

My professional affiliations include: IEEE Senior Member (8/1995 – Present), Society of Women Engineers (life-long member), Federation of American Scientist (FAS life-long member), Society of Cable Telecommunications Engineers (SCTE) – Voting member, International Executive Guild Member (1/1999 – Present), ITU-T member of SG11 and SG16, TIES member (2/1998 – 2003), NH Justice of the Peace (1/1996 – Present), NH Notary Public (2/1995 – Present) and NENA (National Emergency Number Association) member (E9-1-1). I am not actively involved in any of these affiliations at the moment except now volunteering at IEEE.

In my spare time and I am having more of it these days, I love fancying about stars, planets, meteors, comets and everything and anything hanging above and outside of our blue planet. Our time here seems so insignificantly short and transient. Not to enjoy every moment regardless of circumstances is to rob ourselves of seeing clarities in life. I mostly enjoy watching TV shows about our latest discoveries on heavenly bodies in the comfort of home now. I am also fascinated by theoretical physics in topics like quantum entanglements, 11 dimensions, multiple universe, quantum membranes, constant number of recycling atoms, death and the theory of everything. None of which I knew anything about but always curious to find out more. My favorite TV stations are the Geographic Channels and the History Channel.

I live with my husband and three precious kitties that we call and treat just like our kids and have no qualms about spoiling them in every way that we can.