

Tenacity Rules, Always — Melody Funk (1979)

“If you have stood up to the tyranny of fate and of man’s selfishness and ignorance, walked tall when the going was rough, held your course where lesser breeds may have changed theirs, and made the most of your God-given talents in the service of others, the Maryknoll spirit is with you, and may it sustain you in the many more years to come.”

Setbacks may be tough but most of the time, they open doors to new avenues – the Sisters remind Maryknollers time over time.

Melody Funk was with MSC since primary one. She left for Canada in 1979 to continue Form 4 studies. Wanting to serve society, Melody joined the Canadian police agency and was the first Chinese in Toronto to graduate with a degree in criminology and psychology.

“At that time, Vietnamese criminals were very active in Canada. As a native Chinese speaker from Asia, I thought my background and qualifications will put me to good use with the police agency.” Unfortunately, quite to the contrary, Melody was discriminated against because of her Asian look and she wore glasses.

“Thwarted and let down, I was very discouraged.” Melody left the police and worked as a security guard at a department store. “But I can’t stand the job’s slow pace and tardy habits, such as multiple coffee breaks in the day; I quit after a week.”

She returned to Hong Kong in 1988 and find temporary work as a supply teacher. “I was very much at lost with myself at the time, not knowing where my future lies. Like many Maryknollers, I was brought up in a carefree and protected environment. I doubted if I would have the tenacity to move forward in life.”

A degree in psychology would have qualified Melody for a \$8,800 social worker job but it did not. “I had limited practical experience and wasn’t quite prepared to enter the profession. I ended up with working as a merchandiser in San Po Kong, earning \$4,300 a month instead.”

“I was miserable and dejected. I envied my classmates who wear business suits and work in the Central.”

For the next 10 years, Melody took every hardship in her stride, toughening herself with many different experiences. She worked her way up to become American Express’s district sales manager, Chanel’s Hong Kong shop manager, and Burberry’s Hong Kong operations chief.

Luck finally knocked on Melody's door, giving her bigger and bigger shoes to fill.

In January 1999, Melody put another halt to her career. This time, it was for a happy reason — she got married and was pregnant three months later.

"I had failed many times irrespective of all efforts. There are many reasons, some of which are out of my control. But reflecting on all the challenges I had encountered, it dawned on me that they are all opportunities that propelled me to find better ways and truer callings. They taught me to always hold on to my beliefs, stay positive, stand tall and take responsibility."

Maryknoll instills her students an awareness of the importance of trust and integrity and an appreciation for co-operative teamwork and respect for others. "Upholding Maryknoll's values have helped me made many friends and influenced many people."

Melody practices the Maryknoll creed on her two children – '*We believe that each person is formed in God's image. We wish our students to know through Jesus Christ the hope and meaning of life and to liberate their minds from ignorance and their hearts from prejudice.*' "No two kids are the same. Bringing them up will be the most challenging and biggest project of my life." Melody could not hide her pride of motherhood.

Melody is currently a director of three investment companies. She and her husband actively promote microfinancing in the mainland to help the underprivileged to get out of poverty.