

Helen Lee: The Gift

ELIZABETH LEE



God has truly been kind by blessing my life with the gift of my mom. She is a valuable mentor who helped shape who I am today. She is one who believed in me even when I did not. She taught me not to settle for less than my full potential. She encouraged me to stretch, pursue new things and areas I never thought possible. She made me see that life is most fulfilling when we make a difference in someone else's life; that we must always be guided by social responsibility, to always be thankful and to share our blessings; and that just when you think you are having a tough time, it is so much tougher for the person who has less. All these have shaped the way I think as well.

I have learned much from my Mom many traits that reflect her own character, which can be summed up as follows:

Be courageous. We must have the courage to be honest and true. Integrity is nonnegotiable. The world of business is tough and, most times, unforgiving. Stand firm on your principles and you will not fall.

Be genuine and grateful. This entails being honest and sincere. Also, be humble especially when success comes your way. To some, I may seem successful given the many positions I hold and the awards and recognition I have been given. However, I have been taught that to whom much is given, much is expected. I thank God for His abundant blessings and for the opportunity and the privilege to be able to do what I do. I may not know where the road may take me next, but I am grateful and am enjoying the journey.

Be unselfish, that is, be kind every chance you get. Kindness can create miracles that can touch another person's life. Help others help themselves. I've learned that when you give value first, the benefits far outweigh what you've given out in the first place. This very lesson on unselfishness gave birth to our pioneering and successful "Ur Van, Ur Business" program, a self-liquidating mobile business venture that encourages people to become entrepreneurs to help supplement their

current income, using the Nissan Urvan. At the same time, for every Urvan sold, P1,000 is donated to a Christian foundation's microfinance arm, providing seed money that helps the poorest of the poor to start their own microbusinesses. To date, we have helped more than 3,000 families and created over 4,400 jobs and counting.

Knowing that you have somehow helped make a difference is a different kind of fulfillment. By being a blessing to others, we also reap and enjoy God's blessings in return. The only way to get ahead in life is to help others get ahead as well. At the end of the year, we not only count the number of Urvans sold, but more importantly, we count the number of families we have helped. Continued success is not possible without the relentless support of our team, our Nissan dealers, media friends who help spread the word, and our customers—all of whom helped make a vision become a crusade.

Be tireless. Be patient. Persevere. Keep up the faith and do not be easily discouraged. Although it can be quite tough, I learned that keeping a positive mental attitude despite the obstacles actually helps keep things in perspective. Perseverance is what separates the winners from the losers.

Be prayerful. Always ask God for guidance, to direct your steps, and to do things according to His will.



Elizabeth with her mom and mentor, Helen

Elizabeth Lee is President, Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Phils. Inc. (CAMPI) and EVP, Universal Motors Corporation (UMC). She has been awarded the 2007 TOWNS (The Outstanding Women in the Nation's Service) for her leadership in the auto industry.