

# The Scholarship

by Rebecca A. Pung

For Christmas in 1997, our father, Michael J. Pung, gave us an extraordinary gift.

*"Girls, I would like you to open these gifts first, before you open the others,"* he said.

Each of us received a package. The size, shape, and Christmas wrapping on all four packages was exactly the same. No doubt, our mother, Dorothy, had done the wrapping. The packages did not rattle. When opened,

we discovered plaques, small, wooden commemorative plaques with green edging surrounding gold metal plates. On the gold metal plates in black lettering, the words read, "The Pung Girls Scholarship, UND-Lake Region\*." In addition to the words,

also embossed in black, four female characters were aligned in the center portion of the gold metal plate.

*"Look, Kathy! You must be the one leaning back against the desk teaching business students."*

*"Susan! You must be the one word processing with a computer,"* I said. *"Are you transcribing physicians' orders or transcribing medical documents? We both giggled for a moment."*

*"That one's got to be me! I'm leaning forward, resting my hands on my chin, listening to a medical secretary student."*

*"There's Audrey! She's professionally dressed, clutching a briefcase in her left hand."*

*"Dad, tell us the story,"* we asked.

*"I told you girls once, you need an education. If you don't know what you'd like to do, take a secretarial course. You'll always find a job. Someday, as your life changes, you could further your education, if you so desire."*

*"Well, in the past, the Business Club at UND-Lake Region did not have a scholarship for its students. Now, they do,"* he explained. *"I graduated from Devils Lake Junior*

*College and all of you either graduated or took secretarial courses there, and although Kathy told her friends, 'My Grandpa Pung went to Princeton and could take shorthand,' Grandpa Pung, too, attended college and obtained a business degree. The Business Club members*



*with the foundation will announce the first scholarship recipient this spring. They also designed the plaque."*

As children, our grandparents and our parents rewarded us for academic excellence. They taught us about paying for college and applying for scholarships or loans. Our father always reminded us, *"I'll pay for your college as long as you maintain good grades. However, if you stop studying and your grades are falling, you're on your own."* Dad keeps his promises.

Since getting good grades was important and a "must" in our house, sometimes father planned a special evening, usually on a Sunday.

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\* Through the years, the college has had many names. Devils Lake Junior College and Business School became Lake Region Junior College in 1960 and Lake Region Community College in 1981. During the eighties it was known as North Dakota State College of Science-Devils Lake, and in 1987 became UND-Lake Region. In 1999, the college was granted independent status within the North Dakota University System and became known then as Lake Region State College.

"Gather 'round, Michael, and gather up your sisters. Your father wants to tell you about Sunday evening," Mother said one day.

"Oh, my giggly girls! Settle down, and listen to me," Dad disciplined. "On Sunday evening, Grandpa and Grandma Pung will be here for dinner. After dinner, Grandpa will look at your report cards. Make sure I've reviewed and signed them first, though," Dad requested. "That way, Grandpa will know that I've seen them, too." When Sunday arrived, the ritual proceeded in a very methodical manner.

"Dorothy, dinner was excellent. Thank you," Dad said. "Mother's going to do the dishes. Kids, go get your report cards, because Grandpa's ready to look at them. Line up around Grandpa's chair. Kathy, you're the oldest; you're first. Then Susan, Becky, Audrey, and Michael."

Grandpa Pung announced to us, "I'm going to reward each one of you with a quarter for every A, a dime for every B, and a nickel for every C."

"Kathy, let's take a look. M-m-m-m. Overall you did very well." Grandpa Pung squeezed open the rubber coin pouch and picked out some quarters and some dimes.

◆ **Kathy Yager** received her AA and Secretarial Certificate from Lake Region Junior College and a B.S. and M.S. in business and vocational education from the University of North Dakota. She is currently an instructor at Mohave Community College in Lake Havasu City, Arizona, where she lives with husband, Jack Wilhelm.

"Sue, you're next. M-m-m-m. You need some improvement," he said.

"Oh, Grandpa, I'm so dumb!" Susan cried.

"No, no, Susan. You mustn't say that. Here's your reward. You'll do better next time," Grandpa encouraged.

◆ **Susan Pung** lives in Richfield, Minnesota. She's a graduate of St. Mary's High School and attended Lake Region Junior College for two years. She is currently employed at the Abbott Northwest Hospital in the Locked Psychiatric Unit as Health Unit Coordinator.

"Now, Becky, let's take a look at your report card. I see religion, art, and music are all satisfactory. An A in spelling and English. Uh-oh! You've gone down in arithmetic, from an A to a B. Aren't you studying?" he questioned.

"Yes, Grandpa. I'm studying hard. I just don't get it. I just don't!" I answered.

"You'll be okay. Pass the class as best you can," he advised. Grandpa placed the coins in my right hand.

◆ **Rebecca A. Pung** lives in Grand Forks, North Dakota. She received a B.B.A. in business administration with a major in information management from the University of North Dakota and is also an accredited records technician. She is currently employed as the Medical Secre-

tary program director at Northwest Technical College in East Grand Forks, Minnesota. Rebecca wrote two articles which appeared in *For the Record*, a weekly news magazine for health information professionals.

"And Audrey, my last granddaughter. Excellent, as always! Audrey, I'm running out of quarters!" Grandpa exclaimed.

◆ **Audrey Borski** received her A.A. from Lake Region Junior College. She then attended Metropolitan State College in Denver. She went to work in 1979 for Business Equipment Consultants and became a shareholder in the corporation in 1981. Today, over sixty-five percent of its business is in selling a Windows-based touch-screen point-of-sale system to restaurants. She lives in Westminster, Colorado, with husband Russ and sons Derek and Curtis.

"Michael III, my only grandson. Your grades, too, are excellent! Straight As. You're strong in mathematics like your father and I. Here's your money."

◆ **Michael Pung III** is a graduate of Devils Lake High School and the University of North Dakota. He works for U.S. Satellite Broadcasting in St. Paul, Minnesota.

We knew the Sunday evening ritual had concluded when Grandpa's final words were, "Very good work, children. Run off, and play."

"Thanks, Grandpa, for the money," we cheered.

"Oh, Mike's giggly girls," Grandpa Pung would always say to Grandma Pung.

◆ **Michael Pung** was born in Calio, North Dakota. He joined the Navy and came back to Devils Lake in 1946 and attended Devils Lake Junior College.

◆ **Dorothy Scharf Pung** was born and raised in the Crary, North Dakota area. They were married in 1950, and all five of their children were born in Devils Lake. Dorothy graduated from Devils Lake High School, and in the early eighties took classes from Kathy Yager and Janet Wood at Lake Region Community College.

Michael and Dorothy have done extensive traveling, visiting all but five states. They've also been on five cruises. They spend their summers in North Dakota and winter in Arizona.

A recipient of the Pung Girls Scholarship may very well be a mother with two small children, a grandmother, a male, a high school graduate, or a person entering the job market after many years.

"Thank you, Dad and Mom, for educating us and allowing us to choose what we wanted to be. Thank you, Dad, for providing an opportunity to others enrolled in the Administrative Assistant program at Lake Region State College." ◆