

DIANE YUN-PENG YING

DIANE YUN-PENG YING was born in 1941 in Sian, Shensi Province, China, where her father, Ying Chun-tsai, was manager of the Lunghai Railroad. She was his third child, but the first from his marriage to Ma Pei-chin whom he had met and courted after having divorced his first wife. Although Chun-tsai was descended from smallholder farmers in Shantung Province, and Pei-chin came from an elite scholar-official family in Honan, they had in common the experience of a modern advanced education. He was the first in his family to attend the university, she had graduated from a teacher's training college. The Yings began their family life—three children followed DIANE—amidst the grave uncertainties of war and civil upheaval.

DIANE passed her earliest years in Sian but at the end of the Japanese war the family moved to Nanking. Here her father, an ardent nationalist and a ranking member of the Kuomintang (KMT), served as the KMT representative for Shantung in the National Assembly. When civil war resumed he went to Tsingtao as the senior KMT official in Shantung Province. Because of the fighting, however, the rest of the family remained in Nanking. There DIANE briefly attended school, but in 1948, as the KMT's fortunes deteriorated and the communists approached Nanking, the family abruptly withdrew to Hankow aboard a plane provided by a relative in the air force. Left behind in this retreat was DIANE's older half-brother who was away at boarding school; he has remained on the mainland ever since.

After a few months in Hankow the family flew on to Taiwan as part of the massive exodus of mainlanders to the off-shore Nationalist redoubt. DIANE's father remained at his post in Shantung until the end, joining the rest of the family only in late 1949.

DIANE YING has only the vaguest memories of these early years of flight and improvisation. What does remain are images of gay family sightseeing outings led by her serene and confident mother who, as YING remembers it, shepherded her children through the wartime trauma as though nothing were the matter.

In Taiwan the family settled in Chiayi, an airforce base in the south, with other relatives evacuated from the mainland. These included Peichin's doctor sister, Ma Pei-jun, and her husband, a senior military officer. YING's father continued to serve as a member of the National Assembly, now reassembled in Taipei, and his salary saw the family through its first years of exile.

YING had entered the Min-chu School in Chiayi and completed her elementary years before her father's health required the family to move to Taipei. His condition deteriorated steadily and shortly after the move he succumbed to a series of strokes. YING was thirteen. To alleviate the family's straitened circumstances her mother took a job as a librarian at the Experimental School in Yuanlin, central Taiwan.

Having started middle school at Taipei Second Girl's School, YING stayed in the capital, lodging with her aunt, the busy and successful Dr. Ma, now also living in Taipei, and visited her mother and siblings only on holidays. Ma, who had five children of her own and whose husband was retired, like YING's mother was the family breadwinner.

After middle school YING won a place in Taiwan's top girl's high school, Taipei First Girl's School. She was a bright student who excelled in geography, history and literature. An avid reader, she devoured Chinese editions of Western books, from Hans Christian Andersen's tales to *Little Women* and *Little House on the Prairie*; she also read Chinese classics such as *Dream of the Red Chamber*, and constantly attended the movies.

From middle school onward YING studied English, and always received high marks. But, despite her affinity for the arts, she planned to pursue science or engineering in college. These fields were considered the most desirable by all the students, irrespective of their personal interests. Her plan was foiled, however, when she failed the university entrance examination for the technical "A stream." Making a quick reassessment—"I had to take a hard look at myself," she remembers—she sat for the arts-oriented "B stream" and passed. This led directly to her matriculation at Chengkung University in Tainan where she discovered journalism.

What if she had passed the entrance examination for the A stream, she has been asked. And she answers bluntly: "I would be a third rate engineer or scientist."

Tainan, the ancient capital of Taiwan, was a quiet provincial town. YING loved the freedom she found there. She played on Chengkung's

volleyball team, joined the Women Student Association and became its chairperson, and freely indulged her fondness for movies—viewing everything from Hollywood westerns to Japanese martial arts sagas. To help pay her college fees she tutored middle school pupils in English and had various jobs on campus.

Chengkung had only recently expanded from an institute of technology to a university; its language and literature departments were new at the time YING entered. Because qualified Chinese professors preferred the more prestigious schools in Taipei, these courses were often taught by foreigners—Catholic priests and other local church people, and wives of American military men at the nearby air force base. In learning English this was a blessing. YING quickly became familiar with the accents and idioms of British and American spoken English.

YING also studied Spanish and German and took courses in world literature. She remembers in particular her Shakespeare course which was taught by an elderly Chinese scholar who stood before his students and, thoroughly mesmerized by his subject, recited passages and intoned erudite explanations without once lifting his eyes. YING was struck by his rapture and stood first in her class.

Of lasting influence was a course called “Journalistic English” taught by the deputy managing editor of Tainan’s local newspaper, Jerome Yao-lung Chu. Chu was, says YING, the first journalist she ever met. It was his class that piqued her interest in journalism, and it was to him that she later turned for help in thinking through her options after graduation.

She had discarded creative writing, secretarial work, librarianship and teaching, and came up with journalism. But here she had doubts too, and these she discussed with Chu. On the one hand, she told him, she was a good observer, interested in new things, in what was going on, in people. But she had the impression that successful reporters were aggressive and outgoing, which she was not. Was she temperamentally suited to be a journalist?

Chu encouraged her, suggesting that if reporting didn’t suit her, she could become a copy editor. On this note YING decided that, although shy, she would prepare herself for a career in journalism.

For a year following graduation she taught English at Tainan Normal College and worked part-time in the United States Information Service (USIS) library. At USIS she sought advice about American graduate programs in journalism, and made applications to several

American universities. She was accepted by the universities of Oregon and Iowa.

Iowa was more appealing, in part because of the presence there of a Chinese novelist whom YING admired, Nieh Hua-ling, whose husband headed Iowa's well known International Writers' Workshop. In her stories and poems Nieh conjured an image of life in Iowa that YING found attractive. But Oregon offered her a US\$500 scholarship.

She took the problem to George Chouljian, the local director of USIS who had himself studied journalism. He unhesitatingly encouraged her to choose Iowa, and offered to lend her half of the scholarship amount so that she would not have to choose a school on the basis of financial support. Chouljian imposed one condition: YING must sign a statement saying that she would return home after receiving her degree. Startled, YING pondered this requirement and said that she could not promise *absolutely*. Chouljian lent her the money anyway, and both his spontaneous generosity and his condition made a lasting impression on her.

YING also discussed problems she saw in journalism with Chouljian. She recalls, for example, complaining about reports in the foreign press of rumors unfavorable to Taiwan President Chiang Kai-shek and his son Chiang Ching-kuo. Such reports were unfair, she felt. In response Chouljian suggested that rumors thrive in the absence of facts, and that perhaps the leaders themselves were partially to blame because they prohibited a free press. This argument made an impact on YING and forced her to analyze the role and limitations of journalism.

On her way to Iowa, and to save money, YING took a cargo ship to Vancouver, British Columbia, and then a bus to Seattle, Washington. Having arrived in the U.S. with time to spare before classes began, she found a job in Seattle as a live-in babysitter. Her charge was "a very naughty little girl" whose mother, a divorcee, worked as a lifeguard. The house was large and in a pleasant neighborhood. YING was impressed that a woman in these circumstances could live in such comfortable surroundings, and concluded that "the United States must be very rich."

In late summer YING again boarded a bus, experiencing the vast sweep of continent as she crossed the mountains, deserts and plains to Iowa City, which was to be her home for the next two and a half years.

Having taken only one journalism course at Chengkung YING had to start in basic journalism classes at Iowa. It was not easy. In Beginning Reporting, for instance, students were required to do a complete news

story— planning, interviewing three non-students and writing copy—in one three-hour class period. YING's snail-like typing was not up to this pace and she failed the assignment.

In the midst of this and similar frustrations, friends and family suggested she switch to library science, an easier course with certain employment on its completion. But she persevered, learned to compose briskly on the typewriter, and passed the first term. The sailing was smooth thereafter.

Among those who inspired YING to carry on in journalism was Hsu Chung-pei, who had been London correspondent for the *Central Daily News* of Nanking in the years immediately after World War II. A collection of her dispatches had been published in book form, and YING came across it in the Chinese-language section of the university library. With humor and an eye for detail Hsu told how the English made-do amidst post-war deprivation: when invited to tea, for example, an Englishwoman brought her own sugar! YING was moved by the vividness and human interest aspect of Hsu's reporting, and concluded that the secret of her success was, "she always had in mind that she was talking to the Chinese readers back home. China was always in her heart."

YING helped pay the cost of graduate school by taking an assistantship, and she saved money by lodging in cheap, off-campus rooms, always with a roommate. In choosing roommates she adhered to one rule: no Chinese. Having come to the United States, in part to discover the world outside Taiwan, she shared her quarters variously with Americans (both white and black), a Japanese, a Filipina and a Thai—all university students. To further economize, when the weather was good she bicycled to campus.

As part of her academic requirement YING wrote news stories for the university newspaper. She chose to cover the International Writers' Workshop, interviewing and writing about well-known authors who visited the workshop, as well as the workshop's own distinguished participants from other parts of the world. One article—in which she reported the reactions of foreign writers to the Playboy Club in Chicago—was carried by the *Des Moines Register*; in this way she began to earn money from her writing. And covering the Writers' Workshop enabled her to meet Nieh and her husband, Paul Engel. The Engels' home became her home away from home, and she sometimes babysat their two daughters.

Graduate journalism students at Iowa were required to complete a

major project—the equivalent of a thesis—for their MA. YING decided to write an in-depth article about Taiwanese students in America. She had learned that well over 90 percent of them chose to stay in the United States after graduating. Remembering the “condition” Chouljian had put to her, she posed the question in her interviews: “Why aren’t you going home?” The students spoke of Taiwan’s economic backwardness, of fewer opportunities for the highly skilled, of family and other social restraints, and of the oppressive question for Chinese of one’s political identity and loyalty. This could all be avoided, they said, by staying in America. In her article YING let the students speak for themselves as they described the great gap between Taiwan and the United States. Then, in her final sentence she asked: “Will the gap be narrowed by itself?”

The university newspaper gave YING’s article a prominent position and she was rewarded with a high mark and praise from her professors. But the Taiwanese students, who felt exposed by the story, protested; some called her a traitor. YING understood that they had lost face, but she insisted: “Nobody can say what I did was wrong. These are true stories.”

Nearing graduation YING sent job applications to some 30 newspapers in the U.S., most of them on either the east or west coast. Having dwelt in the midwest, she was determined to explore another region if she could. She received several generally positive, but vague replies, and two concrete offers. The *Cedar Rapids Daily News*, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, offered her the assistant editorship of their women’s page, and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* invited her to be an intern for three months, with the understanding that it would explore further options later. She took the Philadelphia offer. But since a gap of a few months existed between graduation and the beginning of her internship, YING decided to launch a project of her own.

In spite of the overwhelming desire of Taiwanese students to remain in the United States, YING had noticed a preoccupation in much of the writing by Chinese in America with misery (“poor Chinese squeezed into ghettos,” “lonely PhD students living in basements”), melodrama and self-pity. She decided, therefore, to make a study of the Chinese who had succeeded in the United States.

Combing through *Who’s Who*, she identified America’s most successful Chinese scientists, industrialists, architects, writers and financiers, and systematically set about interviewing them. How did they succeed, she wanted to know. What made them different? She found that most had learned to turn their cultural differentness from a liability

into an advantage, and that they never complained.

YING sold her series of stories about America's positive-minded Chinese achievers to *Crown Magazine* in Taiwan, and later published the articles in *The Brilliance of the Chinese and Others*, her first book. YING's column in *Crown* was well established by the time she started her internship with the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

During her three-month trial at the *Inquirer* she was given a number of different tasks; she succeeded in photography but failed on the copy desk. Her strongest suit was feature writing. As the *Inquirer's* first Asian reporter she was the first to propose reporting on Philadelphia's Chinatown. Her story, showing Chinatown from the inside and depicting it as a way-station to assimilation into American society, was prominently featured. It won her a second three-month contract, and this in turn led to her being taken on as a regular reporter. For the next year and a half YING covered suburban news, and when she could, delved into issues and programs relating to mental health, the deprived and the aged.

YING's success on the *Inquirer* became the pride of the local Chinese community. As a unionized reporter she also achieved job security. But Taiwan was never far from her thoughts and she soon yearned to return as a journalist. "If I stay here and cover only suburban news," she remembers thinking, "I will be using only half my talent." Since the *Inquirer* had only a few foreign correspondents, YING sent a flurry of inquiries to Taiwan. No news organization was interested, but National Chengchi University asked her to teach courses in photography and English writing, and USIS—which interviewed her in Washington—offered her a position as Information Assistant. In August 1970, therefore, against the advice of many friends, she returned home.

At USIS, YING's omnibus responsibilities included acting as the agency's liaison with the Chinese-language media, reporting for its in-house wire service, and contributing articles and feature stories to USIS publications in Taiwan and Hong Kong. For *Student Review*, USIS's bilingual magazine for students, YING interviewed and wrote profiles of Taiwan's emerging young politicians, all of whom eventually rose to prominence in either the ruling party or the opposition. She published a compilation of these profiles in 1974 in her second book, *The Rising Generation*.

By 1973 YING had already grown restless in her comfortable office job at USIS—it was too cozy and calm—and when United Press International (UPI) offered her the number two spot in its Taiwan office, she

took it. She had been recommended for the job by someone who knew her feature writing in Philadelphia. In taking the UPI offer she moved into the unfamiliar realm of on-the-spot news reporting.

Her UPI bureau chief was a veteran newsman who concentrated on typhoons, accidents and other disasters. YING found his notion of news limiting, and his garrulous chatter distracting. She proposed, therefore, a division of time, with her chief manning the office from 9:30 to 5:30, and she from 1 to 8. This way she and her chief overlapped in the office only a few hours each day, but the desk was covered for a longer period of time—breaking news stories paid no heed to the clock—and the arrangement permitted YING to work on feature stories dear to her heart.

From her work at the *Inquirer* YING knew what kinds of stories stood a chance of being carried outside of Taiwan. She therefore interviewed famous visitors like dancer Martha Graham; wrote about the role and status of women in Taiwan; and looked for human interest in otherwise straight news. Her articles describing the genuinely grave reaction to Chiang Kai-shek's death, for example, and an exclusive account of the unhappy homecoming of a Taiwanese who had been drafted into the Japanese army in World War II and had hidden 30 years in the Philippine jungles not knowing the war was over, were carried by UPI subscribers around the world.

Such work attracted professional attention, and after three years with the wire service YING was approached by Fox Butterfield of the *New York Times* to be its reporter on political news in Taiwan. Once again, eager for change, she agreed. On Butterfield's recommendation she also became Taiwan correspondent for the newly launched *Asian Wall Street Journal* (AWSJ). For three years she juggled these dual assignments, writing political stories for both journals, and "cutting her teeth" as a business reporter for the AWSJ as well.

Business was an intimidating subject at first—for two years she avoided writing about the stock market—but eventually she found it intriguing. As she focused more and more on business and economic reporting, she began studying *Fortune* and the business section of *Time* to learn how to make it interesting. When after three years she started working exclusively for the AWSJ its editor, Norman Pearlstein, encouraged her vivid feature writing.

Writing about Taiwan's economy for the *Asian Wall Street Journal* introduced YING to two striking facts. First, Taiwan's economy was growing dynamically and doing well in comparison with that of other

nations. Second, business and economic reporting in the local Chinese-language press was abysmal. According to YING, such reporting often contained conflicting or unbalanced accounts, the coverage was superficial, perspective was lacking, and there was no analysis. As a professional reporter she found herself asking: Why didn't the reporter ask this question, or go to that source, and if the English-language press can achieve high quality, why not the Chinese?

Her recognition of this situation coincided with her realization that Taiwan's politics mattered less and less as country after country broke off diplomatic relations with Taiwan and reestablished ties with Mainland China. It was no longer politics or foreign opinion about Taiwan that was important, but how Taiwan managed its economy. Business reporting, therefore, was of crucial importance.

At the same time YING had also become dissatisfied with political reporting. Why should I spend all my life watching all those ambitious political figures compete for their own political gains, she asked herself: both sides are just telling lies and fighting for power. On the other hand business reporting could have some accuracy because in business there were basic indicators and figures to use in making a judgment.

YING's disillusionment with political reporting paralleled her growing lack of satisfaction in writing for the English-reading Chinese elite and for foreigners in Taiwan and abroad. She brooded on all these things as she approached her 40th birthday.

YING recalls driving south one day in 1979 with Charles H.C. Kao, an economist and professor at the University of Wisconsin. It was he who first brought up the idea of publishing a new Chinese-language business magazine. But Kao failed to find backers, and the plan lapsed. When Kao was in Taiwan a year and a half later YING phoned him and asked: "If we put up our own money and start the magazine, would you be interested?" He was.

Inasmuch as neither of them had ever run a magazine, and Kao, because of his teaching post, was absent from Taiwan nine months of the year, they decided to recruit a third partner. They chose Cora Li-hsing Wang, an acquaintance who had worked for two Taiwanese magazines. The three partners, none of whom knew each other well, pooled their personal resources to raise 69 percent of the NT\$3,000,000 (US\$75,000) starting costs; the rest was raised from eight "silent investors." In a brainstorming session they chose the name *Tien Sia* ("under heaven") from Sun Yat-sen's formula for economic justice—"Tien Sia Wei Cong"

which they translated into English as *CommonWealth* because of its felicitous double meaning: on the one hand, “universe” or “the world,” on the other Sun’s belief that “wealth under heaven belongs to the public.”

CommonWealth was a collaborative enterprise, and, as with the magazine’s name, the critical early decisions were made by the three. When Wang Yung-ching, the powerful head of Formosa Plastics, offered the fledgling enterprise inexpensive space in one of his buildings, Kao and Wang overrode YING’s fears that this might compromise the magazine’s reputation. (They used Wang’s building for five years.)

Kao became president of the company, bringing his good name and connections to the venture, although he continued to spend only three months of each year in Taiwan. Wang, who became deputy managing editor, was soon devoting most of her time to its day-to-day business operations. It was YING, as managing editor, who built the new magazine. From the beginning *CommonWealth*, which she thought of as “30 percent *Time* and 70 percent *Fortune*,” bore her special stamp.

YING was determined to produce a socially-conscious economic magazine with high quality paper and printing, eye-catching graphics, and smart layout and design. Most of all she determined to develop a team of first-rate writers who would spend weeks at a time preparing in-depth feature articles of a caliber never attempted before in Taiwan. And as often as possible *CommonWealth* would focus on people.

YING had been teaching journalism at National Chengchi University for 10 years and her students were sprinkled throughout Taiwan’s print and broadcasting media. It was to them she turned to staff *CommonWealth*, explaining to them her plan to put their college lessons to work in the new magazine. Three of her former students joined YING and Wang as the first editorial staff: Claire Chow, who was then working for an English-language newspaper; Hsu Mei-ping, from a major Chinese daily, and Weng Meng-ying, editor of a Chinese women’s magazine. This team of five, together with a few recent graduates and Eugene Wu, a former colleague at USIS who joined as art director, put together the inaugural issue.

For the first issue YING selected as the lead story Taiwan’s economic miracle over the past 30 years. She approached the story primarily from the point of view of who were the architects of growth, the pioneers, the brains, and how did they do it. Chow was chosen to research and write the piece. Meanwhile YING herself cleverly staged a “debate” between

the Nobel Prize-winning American economist Milton Friedman, who was visiting Taiwan, and Y.T. Chao, the colorful chairman of China Steel and a future cabinet minister. Their lively exchange was also part of the first issue, which appeared on the newsstands in June 1981.

By the time of *CommonWealth's* birth, one major aspect of the original plan had already been changed. The magazine was to have been a fortnightly, but the pioneering weeks—finding the office, finding people—were harder than anticipated. A friend suggested a monthly instead and the managing team agreed.

YING and her partners brought out *CommonWealth* without advance market research and in full knowledge that no serious magazine had ever turned a profit in Taiwan. (That magazines were risky employment for journalists accounts for the fact, in YING's opinion, that none of the male writers she tried to recruit were willing to join.) Furthermore, the costs of producing a quality magazine were high; without wealthy backers, these costs had to be passed directly to the consumer. Knowledgeable persons warned the price tag of NT\$98 (US\$2.75 in 1987) was forbiddingly high. But the neophyte publishers forged ahead, "by instinct" YING says, and with a vague belief that Taiwan's readers would respond to a good product.

They did. The first 10,000 copy run of *CommonWealth* sold out in two days; YING rushed happily to reprint the issue three or four times. Advertisers were impressed by the initial number of buyers and the magazine was a commercial success from the beginning. In seven years its circulation rose to 90,000, making it not only Taiwan's largest business magazine, but the second largest of Taiwan's some 2,700 periodicals.

An "Editor's Note" in the first issue shows that YING had an idea of who her readers might be. "We want to be a bridge between the government and the people," she wrote, "between the foreigner and locals, between the private businessman and scholars."

The appearance of *CommonWealth* coincided not only with the flourishing growth of Taiwan's economy, but with the coming to age of a new generation of decision makers, technocrats and intelligentsia in business, government and academe. They were of the generation that grew up after the exodus from the mainland, pragmatics who focused their attention upon Taiwan itself and the development of its economy and institutions. Highly educated, they were eager for accurate information and lucid analyses of relevant trends at home and abroad that would help them steer their companies and government agencies. *Common-*

Wealth appeared just as this emerging class of professionals began playing a pivotal role.

YING sought to appeal to these busy leaders and to a wider public as well. Knowledge of business and the economy, she said, “should not be only in the hands of a few officials and a few scholars and traders and businessmen.” One goal of *CommonWealth*, therefore, was to “let all the people know.” To succeed it had to be relevant, yes, but also interesting. To make it so, YING trained her young reporters in the Western techniques of feature writing. Under her guidance “*CommonWealth-style*” has come to mean colorful, multi-sourced, fact-filled articles that are fresh and easy to read.

In addition YING has filled the magazine with monthly updates on Taiwan’s finance, trade and industry, and analyses of long-term social and economic trends important to Taiwan’s prosperity—including developments among its trading partners and neighbors. She has also kept its readers abreast of the newest in managerial styles and corporate strategies and routinely offers profiles of the country’s “movers and shakers.”

CommonWealth’s style is to interview a number of people for each story, rather than presenting the opinion of one person. For example, in the May 1987 issue which examined the declining world influence of the United States, the Tokyo correspondents for *Forbes Fortune*, the *Asian Wall Street Journal* and the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, as well as the managing editor of the leading Japanese business weekly, were asked to give their views on the relative competitiveness of the United States and Japan. There were also excerpts from *Ideology and National Competitiveness* (by Ezra Vogel and George C. Lodge), and *Time* to present American views of “what’s going wrong” in America.

Although *CommonWealth* cannot have a correspondent in the People’s Republic of China, it covers events there in a monthly column called “Across the Straits” and reprints stories written by foreign journalists.

CommonWealth rarely focuses on Taiwanese politics, but it does cover trends that have a bearing on politics. It was the first Taiwanese publication to examine seriously the generational changes in national leadership. The staff researched the oft-repeated statement that “Mainlanders control the politics and Taiwanese the economy.” What percentage of the cabinet and congress, they asked, was Taiwanese, and what percentage Mainlanders, i.e. those born in mainland China. They

found, not surprisingly, that 85 percent of the members 70 years of age or older were Mainlanders; but of those under 70, 87 percent were Taiwanese. As for business, a survey of 500 companies showed that among owners and senior executives Mainlanders were represented roughly in proportion to their presence in the population—25 percent.

Researching its own readership, *CommonWealth* found that 43 percent is in upper and middle management; 89 percent college educated; 76 percent in government, manufacturing, finance, services or foreign trade; and 76 percent male. The latter figure is interesting in light of the fact that from the very beginning *CommonWealth* has been an overwhelmingly female enterprise. Today 75-80 percent of all its employees are women, and women dominate, especially on the editorial side. For example, of the 13 reporters recently sent to Japan to prepare a special issue on that country, 12 were female.

That *CommonWealth* does little political reporting is undoubtedly one reason it has never been called to task by government censors who, in Taiwan, act after the fact. More importantly, however, YING rejects “American-style” adversarial, or “watchdog,” journalism as not comporting with Taiwan’s current situation and goals. She prefers the Japanese model, of the press helping national development; “it thinks about its country’s development all the time,” she says, and sees *CommonWealth*’s contribution in these terms. She also believes in positive, as well as negative, news. “If you read our newspapers day after day you may think that Taiwan is home to the bulk of the world’s problems, but if you go abroad and compare, you feel that our problems lie within the realm of the solvable.”

This does not mean that *CommonWealth* eschews tough journalism. But in addressing provocative issues, YING says: “We just state facts. We do not advocate anything. All our criticisms are positive criticisms . [this way] we are able to bring a lot of touchy issues to the public.”

For example, to investigate a rumor that a major trust company was heavily overextended in illegal loans, *CommonWealth*’s reporter meticulously gathered all the known facts, made careful computations of the company’s assets and debts, and conducted interviews with dozens of people familiar with the company and its operations. The reporter then confronted the chief executive of the company with a number of embarrassing but knowledgeable questions, his revealing answers to which were printed.

Later *CommonWealth* investigations revealed that the company had

been in violation of government regulations for two years. The magazine traced the government inspector in charge of the investigation, the minister who did not punish the infractions, and the governor of the Central Bank who was responsible for the inspections. It published a chart showing the line of command. When presented in this calm, objective way, nobody could deny responsibility.

For covering controversial topics, YING says: "There are no fixed rules to follow . . . You've got to make a judgment call on each case and let your conscience be your guide." She is mindful of *CommonWealth's* influence, and adds, for her the bottom line is, "each of us is a citizen."

In keeping with her sense of social responsibility she gives thorough analysis and extensive coverage to broader trends, providing pre-warning to the public. For example, recognizing that Taiwan's economic miracle is shadowed by the degenerating living environment, *CommonWealth* in October 1986 published an in-depth study of the problem entitled "Big Company, Big Pollution and Big Responsibility." It has explored the transition of leadership—in social, economic and political fields—from the older generation to the younger and pointed out the need among the latter of vision, insight, integrity and decisiveness. (See "The Leadership Crisis," July 1985; "Taiwan in Transition," March 1987; and the June 1987 editorial, "Poor Government, Rich People".)

The journal thus plays a unique role as catalyst in addressing topics crucial to Taiwan's advancement. This is a new element in the informal roundtable of high-level business talk in the country. In addition, the journal's quality printing, graphics and glossy format have set new standards for Taiwan's publishing industry. YING's hands-on management, and her insistence upon training new reporters personally, have kept the journal's performance impeccably high. It received the Best Magazine Award of the Republic of China in its second year of publishing (1982), and in 1987 the Folio Asian Magazine Publishing Award for the Best Use of Photography.

CommonWealth has thus moved far beyond its pioneering days. Some of the original staffers like Chow and Hsu have left the organization. Wu, on the other hand, had designed every *CommonWealth* cover since its inception until 1988 when he moved to the United States. With a staff now of 80 the magazine has moved its quarters to a modern office building and is in the process of further expansion. The founding partners have survived as a team and now run three companies with interlocking boards: CommonWealth Magazine Company, of which

YING is chairperson; Global Views Magazine Company, which is one year old and publishes a magazine devoted to global issues, is under Wang's management; and Commonwealth Publishing Company is chaired by Kao. The latter has published three recent books by YING—*The Decision Makers* (1983), *People of the Pacific Century* (1985) and *Waiting for Heroes* (1987). The original partners remain the majority owners of these privately held corporations, although they are releasing some of their stock to introduce a profit-sharing scheme for their employees.

YING is unmarried and has for many years lived with her mother. She relaxes in the camaraderie of her extended family, and enjoys the simple recreations of good eating, reading, and attending the movies. Over the years she has become an avid supporter of the arts, especially dance.

In 1976, even before starting *CommonWealth* YING was honored with the Ten Outstanding Young Women Award. In 1984 she received a Jefferson Fellowship, and in 1985 was recognized as the Outstanding Alumnus by Chengkung University. In 1982 and 1986 she received what she probably values most, the Best Magazine Editor Award. Her five books have proved popular and she continues to lecture in journalism at National Chengchi University.

YING, however, continues to be deeply concerned for the future of Taiwan. Rapid prosperity, she notes, has brought people more wealth than they know what to do with. Business, social and now political changes have occurred at a rapid pace. Previously there was a more stable, harmonious society which emphasized responsibility rather than rights. But now thoughtless materialism and self-seeking individualism are replacing the older Confucian-bred virtues of discipline and social responsibility. As the level of political participation and the standard of living have been elevated, people seem to be less happy than before. There is an imbalance in society. YING believes there is too much emphasis on the economy and making money and too little emphasis on how to live together; there is no higher meaning to life.

The social deterioration she deplores can be seen in the rise of gambling and pornography, the desecration of religious shrines and in deviant rituals—such as strip-tease dancing at funerals. People are becoming lazy; absenteeism at factories is on the rise. YING sees in all of this a gaping spiritual void and a need to return to relevant traditional values.

She worries, too, about trends in her own profession, especially the

rise of commercialism in the American and international media. As news organizations are bought out by business conglomerates, news is being sold more and more as entertainment, and the value of news organizations to owners is determined by profit ratings. Even though YING believes fervently that journalists should make reporting interesting to readers—after all, *CommonWealth* must sell—she fears a trend internationally in which editorial decisions will be made, not on the basis of newsworthiness but strictly on the basis of popular appeal. Such a perspective corrupts journalism—and journalists.

As Taiwan, with the removal of martial law after some 49 years, enters a new period of newspaper deregulation and rising media competition, YING counsels her fellow journalists and editors against such corruption. Using *CommonWealth* as an example, she urges editors to avoid a race for scoops and provocative stories, and instead to “compete for credibility with the public.” She reminds them that “the pursuit of fact and truth . . . is the duty of reporters in any country.”

September 1987

Manila

REFERENCES:

CommonWealth. Issues 1981 - 1987.

Lohr, Steve. “Magazine Mirrors Growth of Taiwan,” *New York Times*. October 7, 1982.

Teng, Clair and Chrissie Lu. “Rebuilding Trust in the Media—Yin Yun-p'eng Talks About Ethics in Journalism,” *Sinorama*. Vol. 13, no. 1. January 1988.

Ying, Diane Yun-peng. “Quality and Professionalism as Essential Ingredients to Publishing Success.” Presentation to Group Discussion. Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation, Manila. September 2, 1987.

Interview with Diane Yun-peng Ying and interviews with and letters from persons acquainted with her and her work.



徐之芳