

optimum absorption. At the very least, in giving yourself this quiet time, you allow yourself to listen to your soul and relax into a good night's sleep.

The Phoenix—Living Feng Shui

The phrase *feng shui* means wind and water. Many of you are aware of the use of feng shui in interior design. In that popular translation of its use, however, feng shui loses its essence. Aside from both that and the textbook explanation, I grew up living the idea of feng shui: I learned the concept from my father and the villagers in Taipo Market—a place with good feng shui, a spot of the best convergence of good chi.

The world's natural convergence of landscape provides feng shui as well. If you pay attention, you can know good feng shui from the exchange of your vibrations with the world around you. Certain shapes provide that vibration. You become a feng shui master as you become attuned with the chi around you. Certain kinds of food (gluten and casein) fill you with toxins, and you lose this chi. But if you eat properly, your internal chi flows, sending out better vibrations. You become an intuitive eater, finding food that sings to you and that your body sings about after you eat it. Develop this sensibility, and you will learn to respond to your landscape in a similar way.

As a child, I watched the Man family—a clan of more than 30—posed for a portrait in front of our house in Taipo Market. The head of the clan hardly ever stepped outside his home, yet he came all the way to our house for that photo, wearing the formal mandarin outfit saved for special occasions. I asked my father why they picked the spot in front of our house. He said that the old man agreed to come only because that spot had good feng shui.

Later I learned that the members of the Man family are descendents of the last prime minister of the Sung Dynasty, who died in prison because he would not yield to the Mongols. His descendents left for the Tai Po area and settled there for more than 500 years. They had lived as farmers, close to the land; they knew about feng shui. (Be sure, when you visit Hong Kong, to see the Man family's ancestral memo-

rial in Tai Po. Prime Minister Man's most famous poem is carved on the wall there.)

My father told me that he had learned about feng shui from Ah Ma and the villagers. Once he said to me, "May, you are a phoenix that plays a flute!" I answered, "What do you mean by that?" and he told me a story I will never forget:

Ah Ma was looking for a burial plot for herself and her children. (The Chinese believe that the place where they are buried affects their descendents.) Ah Ma took a risk in creating a new life for herself and her son and grandchildren, and she wanted to be sure that the generations to come would do as well. She found a spot for burial and asked a feng shui master to check it out. He said the land was good. When she was buried there, she would face the brook that ran by the burial plot. The brook made a beautiful sound, like a phoenix playing a flute.

"Your female line will prosper if you are buried in this spot," he said. "Are you sure this is the spot?" She answered: "This is just fine. I would like my female line to play the flute and make beautiful music."

My father said, "See, May, you are the phoenix that plays the flute." So when I sit or walk to the *Tao of Music* in my backyard, I feel the exchange of vibrations—the orb, my trees, my lake, the good chi of those and of my Ah Ma. I am the phoenix playing beautiful music. I have not left my Ah Ma's lap.

The Holy Grail and the *Tao of Youth*

Why do I put those two topics together? You should know by now that I like to tell stories and to put unlikely ideas together. Three years ago I went back to Hong Kong to work with high-school classmates to plan a 40-year class reunion. I traveled to Hong Kong by myself, on the way reading *The Da Vinci Code*. I stayed at a friend's apartment and spent every free moment reading that book.

Intrigued with the concept of the Holy Grail in that book, I began to look for other writings on the subject. What were the stories behind the myth? And why has the myth continued for so many years? Soon I came across *The Holy Grail: Its Origins, Secrets and Meaning Revealed* by Malcolm Godwin. He summarized some of the