

GEM interview with Tony Lai

Tony Lai will be fourteen by the end of March and become the youngest university graduate in Canada in May. To find out more about this remarkable UPEI student, the Gen sent free-lance reporter Alix Kreap to chat with Tony. Here is his report:

GEM: Why did you want to skip seven grades in school?

TONY: I hated riding yellow school buses with green seats, so I decided to skip high school. [smiles]

GEM: Don't you miss high school life?

TONY: No. How can I miss something I know nothing about?

GEM: Don't you have any problems socializing in university?

TONY: No, I have no problems communicating with other students, since almost no one communicates with me anyway.

GEM: Aren't you being pushed too hard by your parents? Have you ever had a breakdown?

TONY: Don't you wish I'm doing quite well, thank you.

GEM: How have you been doing in your course?

TONY: Not bad, I suppose. I have an over 95 average for the 34 courses I've completed, although one of my teachers told me there

was still room for improvement.

GEM: So, you must work very hard!

TONY: You can't say studying four hours every day including weekends, aside from lectures, is not working hard.

GEM: Isn't this a case of child abuse?

TONY: Of course it is, but I'd rather call it student abuse. All students have to go through it, and I'd rather get it over with now than later.

GEM: Can you tell me any advantage of studying so early?

TONY: I can make money earlier. I have received various scholarships and have even been offered a full-time job by a computer firm based in Ottawa, starting this summer. Of course, I turned the job down.

GEM: You don't seem to be well-known at UPEI.

TONY: Actually, I appeared on CBC Compass for 30 minutes two years ago. I was also on the CBC National News last year. My National News story was rebroadcast on the American CNN News Service. Maybe I'm better known outside UPEI.

GEM: You must have an intense interest in the subjects you're studying.

TONY: No.

GEM: Do you think the computer science courses are too demanding?

TONY: As long as I get high marks, I don't mind.

GEM: How can you get a Bachelor of Science degree in just three years?

TONY: By studying hard and taking a lot of summer courses. I can't understand why more students don't do it. Is there anything wrong with graduating in three years?

GEM: Why are you in such a hurry?

TONY: Why not? Next question please.

GEM: What do you think of the teachers at UPEI?

TONY: No comment. However, I am very grateful to Prof. Sharkey and Prof. MacDougall for helping me get started here.

GEM: Let's turn to other questions. Do you have a girlfriend?

TONY: No. Girls must think I can't afford one. [smiles]

GEM: Do like sports?

TONY: Sports? No.

GEM: Do you like rock music?

TONY: It's boring.

GEM: It seems you're not an average student. Do you have any hobbies?

TONY: No. Watching TV news

programs can't be considered a hobby.

GEM: Good. Do you read the Gem?

TONY: I like reading articles written by my brother in the Gem.

GEM: Alright. Do you like arts courses?

TONY: Not much. In arts courses it seems the teachers have too much control over students' marks. I'd rather study arts courses on my own and avoid endless assignments and tests.

GEM: Aren't you worried about being too specialized?

TONY: Of course not. In my opinion, as long as one has an inquiring and critical mind, one will automatically have a very broad base of knowledge.

GEM: How have you developed at UPEI?

TONY: Well, I've grown taller — eight inches, or 20 centimeters, to be exact. [laughs]

GEM: Are you proud of your achievements?

TONY: I've been very lucky. It's luck that I entered UPEI early. It's luck that I get high marks. It's luck that I'll graduate at fourteen along with the 1986 senior class. And it's their bad luck because they've got to see me graduate at Convocation.

GEM: What are your plans for the future?

TONY: I intend to get a Ph.D. degree in computer science as early as possible.

GEM: We wish you success and good luck in the future.



Challenge '86 stats bring bad news

OTTAWA (CUP) — Allocations of federal money for the Challenge '86 student summer employment programme have dropped in all but two provinces, according to the department of employment and immigration.

Only Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island will get more money than last year. Quebec and Ontario will get \$3 million and \$5 million less respectively.

The total national funding for the Student Employment Experience Development, Work Orientation Workshops and Student Entrepreneurs is \$125.6 million, down \$17.5 million from last year's allocation.

This part of Challenge '86, which gives private companies 50 per cent of the cost of hiring

summer students, and municipal and non-profit sectors 100 per cent of the cost, took a deeper cut than expected. The government took \$7.5 million out of the programme's budget to allocate to the Career-Oriented Student Employment Programme, which provides money to federal departments to hire summer students.

Sandra Kearns, a public relations officer at employment and immigration incorrectly told CUP in January that the \$7.5 million was an additional allocation provided by the federal treasury board.

Barbara Donaldson, chair of the Canadian Federation of Students, said the late announcement of provincial allocations and the

reshuffling of money for COSEP shows Challenge '86 is as disorganised as Challenge '85 was.

The government announced Challenge '86 in December, two months earlier than the announcement last year. Donaldson says the current revisions show the programme early for political reasons, when it really wasn't yet organised.

"A lot of people didn't know to apply because they didn't know what money was allocated for each province," she said.

Donaldson said Finance Minister Michael Wilson is planning to cut the budget of employment and immigration, which funds Challenge '86, by up to \$300 million in his Feb. 26 budget.

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