



*Ping teaches art to children and adults.*

**Ping Chen** is an accomplished painter and graphic designer who lives in Riverview, Florida. She grew up in China under difficult circumstances. She is now fulfilling a lifelong dream of teaching art.

**FAMILY BACKGROUND:** Ping's father, Yang Chen, was a professor of calligraphy and literature. In 1958, her parents lost their freedom during the Chinese Cultural Revolution under communist leader Mao Tse Tung. Intellectuals were regarded as possible threats or even spies in the eyes of the new government. So, Ping's father and mother raised her and her two sisters in a labor camp that was similar to a prison.

**HER CHILDHOOD:** Ping was treated poorly by the teachers at her school. "I felt sorry for them. If I hated them, it would create two negatives. I decided to smile instead," says Ping. "I told myself, I will draw pictures and make the world beautiful," she remembers. "This is how I would comfort myself."



*Ping grew up in a labor camp.*



*Ping's success story has been written about in local newspapers*

# Mei's Role Model: Ping Chen

**EDUCATION:** Ping earned a bachelor's degree in Literature from the Hei Long Jiang Province Teacher's College. Ping came to the United States in 1991. She worked in Chinese restaurants to save money for English and art lessons. Eventually, she enrolled in a technical school and studied computer graphics, advertising and Web design.

**PROFESSION:** Her students range from 5 years to more than 50 years old. She teaches them to draw and paint using acrylics, charcoal, watercolors, pastels, and other media. She also teaches calligraphy with her father in her home studio and Mandarin Chinese at the University of South Florida. Ping's classes are highly regarded and popular. She has many future students waiting for an opening to one of her classes. She is known for her caring and gentle manner and the way in which she makes learning fun. She wants her students to enjoy creating and to see the beauty in the world. "I was abused as a child," she says. "I told myself that one day I would go to college and become the best teacher I could be."

**HER LIFE NOW IN THE U.S.**

Ping treasures the freedom and peace she has in her life now. She always strives to do the best. She explains, "I was given no choices for so long. Now I use all my energies because I am so hungry and grateful for the opportunities I've been given."

Ping is now a United States citizen, but she has not turned the back on her Chinese heritage. She has a deep respect and appreciation for China's art, history and literature. She shares this passion with her students.

**PING'S MESSAGE to MEI READERS:** *"Be yourself. Be proud. People will look at you sometimes because you have an Asian face. Take that interest and turn it into a positive experience. If you have a goal in life, never give up on it. Always face your problems with a positive attitude and use your best efforts to solve it."*



*Ping teaches a class in her home studio.*

