

## My Life Story

### Description



Feeling a little sad today because a news article reminded me of how my dad lost our money in investments when I was young. #bblifestory

[Click here to find out more!](#)

Take for example the 68-year-old retired civil servant and stroke patient who lost half a million dollars on two ill-fated junk issues and swears never to buy bonds for the rest of his life.

Or the Chinese-educated real estate agent who visited a DBS Treasures branch two years ago to collect red packets for the new year, and hesitantly shelled out \$250,000 on Perisai bonds after a salesman persuaded her to do so. His sales pitch? He told her his own father had bought bonds in a similar company, that no one kept their entire savings in cash and that she could always sell the bonds if she chose to later.

In both cases, inexperienced private banking clients were sold unrated junk because they were deemed to be "accredited investors". That is, sophisticated enough to look after their own financial interests because their personal assets exceed \$2 million or they earn at least \$300,000 a year.



Too many people are sold financial products they don't quite understand. Many are swayed by their bankers or financial advisors, whom they believe are more "savvy" than them and have better "lobang".

That 68-year-old civil servant who lost his life savings to bond investments? That could have easily described my dad, except that he lost ours at a slightly younger age.

My parents think I was too small then to remember, but that image and sound of their voices screaming at each other will forever scar me for the rest of my life. That moment when my mum found out that my dad had gotten his fingers burnt in the stock market, and lost all the money meant for my university fees.



So I went around knocking on relatives' doors, asking if anyone would be willing to be my guarantor. No one would. No one wanted to take the risk that if I ran away after, they would have to pay off the loan for me.

No matter how many times I begged and promised that wouldn't happen, no one wanted to take a gamble on me. Not even my closest relatives.

So I had no choice but to give up and pray for a miracle instead. I decided my last chance would be in getting a scholarship.

There was only one problem...I wasn't exactly the brightest kid in class, much less among the cohort.

My grades were pathetic. Yes, I did well enough to get promoted each year, but I was always average, or just slightly above average. My percentile would always be 50 or 60th percentile. Nothing fantastic.

Definitely not scholar material.

But I decided to change my own fate. There have been people who earn scholarships not through their brains, but by virtue of merit and hard work. I decided to just focus on doing my best and let the heavens take care of the rest.

I even used the Ernest Wong (teacher of motivational coach Adam Khoo) method which he taught me in high school, and wrote out a pseudo "report card" for my A levels which I could look at everyday to try and subtly convince myself that would be the report card I'll be getting. It had all As.

I hung this up next to my bedside where I would see it every night and morning, next to my Elvin Ng poster (lol, had a girl crush on him in the past).

But deep down in a very small corner of my heart, I knew that I was asking for was almost impossible. It would take a miracle for it to happen.

My prelims results only reaffirmed that belief. I didn't do too well, and even got a U (ungraded – means too lousy to even get a grade ?) for math.

I HATE MATH. It is the bane of my life, even up till today. Even my math teacher told me I needed a miracle or I would fail my A levels as long as I got even just one U.

Each time I walked out of the exam hall during the A levels after finishing a paper, I never felt like I did well enough to be given an A on it.

Thank goodness for this scheme called the BELL CURVE. It measures your academic performance

against everyone else sitting for the same paper in that year, so your grade will be relative to others instead.

So to get A, as long as you're better than 70% of the cohort (i.e the top 3 in 10), you'll get there.

On the actual results day, I was chit chatting with Elaine to try and calm my nerves. We didn't pay attention to the principal – what she was announcing first was the overall school performance, followed by the top batch students, then top for CCAs, before we would be released to our respective form teachers to get our individual results.

Elaine stood a chance of being announced at the CCA portion as she was VP of the photography club, so we decided to ignore the front 75% of the talk.

Halfway through our conversation, everyone around us went silent. People started turning around to look at us, and my first thoughts were "SH\*T did we just get caught for talking and not paying attention to the principal".

Then Elaine nudged me. "Erm you might want to look at the screen".

(Me in my head) die liao is it my name is on the screen for being rude during assembly.

So I sheepishly turned around to face the stage and the principal, and got a shock of my life.

My name was indeed up there on the screen, but it was for something I never imagined possible.

### Top Students for A Levels 2008

Students who scored straight As in all 7 subjects for the 4 H2 + 3 H1 combinations are...

I only recognised my name, and that of one other girl. The rest was a blur.

Someone then kicked me (I forgot who) and told me to stand up. I slowly stood up, not quite sure what was going on, and then the whole hall burst into applause.

I looked at Elaine's face and she had the same look of shock as I did. Was this really happening?

is and Assessment Board, and obtained the following results

	Level	Grade
	H1	A
	H1	A
L/AURAL)	H1	DIST
	H1	A
	H2	A
	H2	A
	H2	A
	H2	A

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My actual report slip, exactly the same as the pseudo one I created a year ago. Miracles DO happen.

Suddenly everyone was coming up to me to congratulate me. My bio teacher even told me, congrats I knew you would do well! (I rolled my eyes because he always scolded me in class and called me stupid zzz).

My GP and Math teacher came up to me and said, wow that was a surprise! You know, none of us teachers were expecting your name there. But congratulations, you've earned it!

Yup, earned it was the correct term.

When I reached home, my parents then said great! Now you can finally become a doctor or a lawyer!

Wait WHATTTTT? Didn't we have a deal that I could pursue my writing further if I did well?

"Girl, don't waste your straight As! You don't know how many people want to be in your shoes now. If you got a few As, then ok. But straight As, you have to become a doctor or lawyer and make our family proud!"

Whose dreams were I supposed to fulfil? Isn't this MY life, my dreams, my aspirations?

My mum even had the guts to tell me a few years ago that she always KNEW I was going to make it to university, and that's why they spent all that money on tuition for me instead of my sister. Because I was the smarter one.

RUBBISH. I rolled my eyes, but merely smiled at her because #filialpiety right.

Both my parents even told their relatives and colleagues about it, and I was suddenly getting calls from aunties / uncles whom I hadn't spoken to since CNY, coaxing me to go to law or medical school.

To all of them, I politely said, I'll think about it. But I didn't need to think about anything, because I knew what I loved and wanted to do. I STILL wanted to be an author, and WRITE.

In the end, I got my way. I told my parents a deal was a deal and they couldn't go back on their word.

Fast forward to today, although I still haven't gotten any book published, at least I'm author of SG Budget Babe. Thanks to the Internet revolution, I'm now able to be a self-published writer (albeit on a blog) and write about things that I want and believe in.

By a twist of fate, that had somehow led me into the financial writing world, and I've no regrets.

But I still do hope that one day I'll be able to show my kids, look, this is the book that mama wrote!

Thanks to this week's EP @eustaciatan for answering my questions, I might finally be able to self-publish next year. Will put this on the to-do list for 2017. Now the question would be what to write about.

Should I do a book on personal finance 101 for beginners?

Or investing for beginners?

Or a motivational book?

Or a General Paper assessment book of model essays? (I'm a GP tutor on weekends la ?)

Or a book on investing in bonds vs stocks vs real estate?

**Category**

1. Family

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