

# SAILING THROUGH THE SEA OF LIFE

Photo: Duke-NUS



**J**oan Huang, formerly a national sailor and currently a first year student at Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School, tells *SMA News* more about school, sailing and some other things in between.

**My sailing career included...** winning a gold medal at the Asian Games in Bangkok in 1998, and Sportswoman of the Year in the same year.

**After graduating with majors in Biomedical Science and Japanese Studies at the University of Pennsylvania...** I decided to pursue Medicine because being a doctor is something I have always wanted to do. Medicine is a fulfilling career because I am able to live happily knowing that I have a positive influence on other people's lives.

**Being part of a diverse cohort that comprises students from a myriad of backgrounds...** adds value to my learning journey by exposing me to different ideas and cultures. Everyone in my class is special and I enjoy learning about them and from them. For example, my good friend in class, Misa Noda, is a talented Argentinean tango dancer who has lived in Japan, Canada and Italy. I've attended some of Misa's performances and practices, and the passion she exudes when dancing is impressive. Conversations with Misa are always interesting and engaging. I also enjoy discussing classical music with Josh Chua, and listening to Lai Hsuan playing the piano and Giselle Reinoso singing.

**Juggling a hectic school life, various community projects, and a passion for sports...** I strive to achieve work-life balance by always being on the go. But, despite having lots of academic work, I make sure that I have time for my family and friends, to have fun and catch up with them. Being with family and friends is a top priority for me, as being with loved ones makes me happy. I am thankful to be surrounded by wonderful people who love and care for me; they are the source of my energy to work hard and play hard.

**In clerkship year, I am looking forward to...** an adventure of learning and discovery. I want to learn from my professors, other allied health professionals in the wards and my peers, and to interact more intimately with patients.

**My personal goals in the next five years are...** to complete medical school and excel in my residency training. I also want to spend more time with my family, including my brother who I do not get to see much of because he is a fighter pilot and is currently stationed in the USA. I also want to contribute as much as I can to the sailing community; I have benefited a lot from sailing, and would like to help other talented and ambitious sailors succeed. Having spent seven years living abroad for college and work, I am glad to be back in Singapore with my family, especially my ageing parents, and to be back within the sailing community again. Between my family, sailing and my career in Medicine, I really think the next five years are going to be awesome.

**I intend to go into the field of...** Orthopaedic Surgery or Gastroenterology. I am especially interested in Orthopaedic Surgery because I enjoy fixing things. I have always enjoyed fixing up my boat for sailing. I think I got that interest from my dad, as he is very good with his hands. He would come up with new contraptions and innovations for my boat. He even made this all-in-one carrying kit that held together my sails and metal foils. I remember it was a major hit back then, and all my friends wanted one too. But it is difficult to make a decision right now about which specialty I intend to go into, after all I am only in my first year of medical school. I look forward to clinical rotations to get a better grasp of the various specialties.

**The experiences I have had in my sailing career will aid my future medical career in ways like...** being able to work in a team. Sailing in a double-handed boat, in a high stress situation such as a major regatta, puts focus and

teamwork to the test. I learned the importance of clear communication and listening skills. My ability to communicate effectively in a team will help when working in any professional setting, but also will really come into play when talking with patients, or with a medical/surgical team. From sailing I also became quite observant. For example, I can anticipate which way the wind will blow by looking at the colour of the water; observing, analysing and adapting are things that I practiced a lot when sailing. Whether I am doing research or diagnosing a patient's symptoms, I believe that my ability to focus, observe, analyse and communicate will bode well.

Since entering medical school, I have found many role models in my professors. They are all giants in their own right. I look up to every one of them, and hope to be as good as them in treating and interacting with patients. Of everyone that I have named above, they all share a common trait of being humble and unassuming despite their achievements. Being humble and unassuming is of utmost importance to me.

**If I could be a microorganism, I would be...** a useful bacteria. Scientists are currently researching the use of bacteria to convert various forms of agricultural and urban waste

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**My role models in sports and Medicine are...** When I was 11, my dad took me to the Singapore Sports Museum. I remember being very impressed with my senior in sailing, Ms Ng Xuan Hui. At a young age, she had already won numerous accolades in sailing. She was my inspiration when I first started sailing. I have numerous role models in sports, as there is always something you can learn from everyone. If I had to name a few, I am most impressed with Lance Armstrong and Dr William Tan, who battled serious illnesses and still continued to create unbelievable feats in sports. Their will power and tenacity to strive inspires me.

into usable fuels. I want to be a useful organism that will benefit mankind. If I had not entered into Medicine, I would pursue a career in environmental sustainability. Sustainability is an interest of mine, which I will hope to continue to pursue along with Medicine. Preferably I would be a waterborne bacteria so that I could still enjoy the water and do some of my favourite activities, sailing, windsurfing and surfing, albeit up and down piles of trash. Hahaha...

**Last but not least, I would like to be remembered as...** someone who cares for and loves the people around me. **SMA**