



**EDITORS' NOTE** Chinese-American Yue-Sai Kan ([www.yuesaikan.com](http://www.yuesaikan.com)) is an Emmy-winning television producer, best-selling author, entrepreneur, and humanitarian. In 1972, Yue-Sai created the weekly television series *Looking East*, the first of its kind to introduce Asian cultures and customs to a growing and receptive American audience. In 1986, the television series *One World*, produced and hosted by Yue-Sai, aired on China's national television network CCTV, giving millions of Chinese the first glimpse of the outside world. In 1992, she successfully transformed herself from a TV personality to an entrepreneur by creating the Yue-Sai cosmetics brand, which is recognized by over 90 percent of the Chinese population today. She also created a lifestyle product line called *House of Yue-Sai*, which focuses on interior design and home furnishings. Yue-Sai has written eight best-selling books, spreading the knowledge of beauty, etiquette, health, and success among Chinese readers.

Yue-Sai's humanitarian efforts have primarily been focused on education and children. She has built schools in her hometown of Guangxi and libraries in poor regions in Northern China. As a board member of the Shanghai Soong Ching Ling Foundation, she has helped raise millions of dollars for the well-being of women and children. Three years ago, Yue-Sai signed on to be the National Director of the Miss Universe China pageant, which seeks to encourage young people in particular to be charitable, educate them about exemplary values, and create a positive image and celebrate women by empowering them to use beauty for positive social change. Yue-Sai Kan is the first and only living American featured on a Chinese postage stamp.

**You have achieved great success. Would you provide an overview of your career and many accomplishments?**

The one common theme to my many careers is that I truly love doing them, and I was a pioneer in all of them. I started as a TV producer and host. I enjoyed it a lot, as I realized that what I was producing was not done by anyone else. I was producing a show about Asia when Asia was not a hot topic. Then I was invited to produce and host the groundbreaking *One World* for CCTV (China Central Television), the first series produced and hosted by a foreigner for China. Millions of Chinese people got their first glimpse of the outside world through this series. Then I went into cosmetics. In the early 1990s, cosmetics were not used in China and the only

## A Pioneer

### An Interview with Yue-Sai Kan

shades you saw in the country were gray and blue. I basically popularized the use of cosmetics and opened a way for others to go in. My Yue-Sai brand started the beauty industry in China. All of my books were the first of their kind in China as well. Now I do a lot of charity trying to show the Chinese how to execute their charity well and transparently.

**You are known as a leading entrepreneur, businesswoman, and philanthropist. How do you blend these areas together within your life?**

I never saw any conflict of interest. It seemed natural for me to combine everything.

**What excites you about writing books, and would you highlight your latest book?**

I have written eight best-sellers in China. I write books only with the Chinese in mind. I think their needs are different from people in other countries. It is only about 30 years since the Chinese have been exposed to the outside world. What they need to know and learn obviously is different. For example, there have been a lot of makeup instruction books in the West but in China, I wrote the first one, geared towards the special features and coloring of the Chinese. Etiquette books are plentiful but

Chinese traditions have to be taken into consideration when you write an etiquette book for the Chinese.

I am interviewed often and, during interviews due to time constraints, one cannot really explore a question fully. It is only by writing a book that I have the opportunity to address issues fully.

My latest book is called *Life is a Competition*. I have been running the Miss Universe China franchise over the past few years. I noticed that it takes something special to become Miss China, because we weed out thousands of girls each year from the regional competitions and also from our Web site applications. What makes one stand out more than the others? The winner has special qualities, and she also has to complete special preparations. This kind of competition in life doesn't just apply to those who compete in beauty pageants. Today, it starts in kindergarten when parents try to get their kids into the best schools; the same thing happens with high school and college. We are in a lifelong battle to win. My book explores all of these points.

**What is the current state of the Chinese economy and how great are the opportunities for significant growth continuing?**



Yue-Sai Kan at a CBCF Charity Gala (above) and at a book signing (opposite page, top); 2012 Miss Universe China pageant (opposite page, bottom)



The economy in China is doing well. It is still growing at 7 percent. With the government's plan to move millions of people from the countryside to the cities, China will continue to grow fueled by this movement. Not only is growth impressive, but it is also impressive that many take funds from China to invest in real estate, energy, and service sectors in Australia, several African countries, and the U.S.

**You have been a major force behind the growth of the Miss Universe China pageant. What is your vision for the pageant?**

I know the President of Miss Universe, Paula Shugart, as I have been a judge twice. They approached me a few times to take over the China pageant, saying that China had been rather disappointing because the candidates have not been strong. As a large country, it was expected that China would do better in the biggest beauty contest in the world. This is a significant challenge since, unlike other countries, China does not have a pageant culture. Well-trained contestants do not exist. We have to search for girls with potential and really train them. Our training includes English, etiquette, psychology, and runway walking techniques, as well as how to answer questions. I'm sure in some other countries, some of these elements are not even in the training manual.

**You have touched countless lives through your philanthropic work. How do you direct your efforts in this regard and what makes this such a major focus for you?**

I have been given much, and those who have been given much should give back. My parents were philanthropic, always doing things for those less fortunate, even if those efforts were never recognized as philanthropy through organized charities. I remember when growing up, there was an "uncle" who came to stay with us. It was many years later that we found out he was not even related to our family. He had lost his job, and someone swindled all his money and home so he became homeless. All that time, my parents never told us the reason. Their generosity was natural and we

learned from them. In modern China, "charity" is a new term. At the beginning, this was considered against the communist doctrine. The government was supposed to support each citizen from cradle to grave. In recent years, the government recognized the importance of citizens helping each other, thus taking the burden off of the government. Like anything new, there has been a lot of abuse. The laws are not clear and people are skeptical about where the money goes. I think it will continue to improve, including the ability for individuals and corporations to receive tax deductions more transparently and easily.

**What advice do you give to young women beginning their careers who look to you as a role model?**

For young people starting out, you must ask yourself three questions: Do you have special talents in what you have chosen to do? Yes.

Everyone has special talents. You need to identify your own talents realistically.

Second, are you passionate about what you do? The test is if you find you are doing things that you are passionate about, you will forget the concept of time. You can be doing it 24 hours a day. You need this passion to be able to work hard and to overcome problems.

Finally, is what you do good for others? This question must also be answered positively. You can be a very talented drug dealer and passionate about it, but when it comes to this question, your answer cannot be a yes. Only if what you can do benefits others, can you really find your calling.

**With all of your accomplishments, what are you most proud of?**

I'm most proud that I have achieved much with great integrity, hard work, and honesty. I have never made a penny at the cost of someone else.

**How do you define success?**

Success is contentment. If I am content with what I have and have done, I am successful. I have met too many people with enormous wealth and fame who are really miserable. Superficially, they may be considered successful but, in the deep definition, they are a failure. This "success" can come to just a regular person, like a woman who chooses to stay at home and raise great children.

My mother once said to me that I should not feel so sassy and proud of being so famous or "successful" while I was in my 20s. The real success of people, she said, depends on how they will live the last 20 years of their lives. At that time, will they be surrounded by loved ones, financially independent, and living a healthy life? If they are not, they are not successful. So the most important thing when we are young is to learn to prepare ourselves for our last 20 years. Learn to live healthy. Learn about money. And learn to love and give throughout all your life. ●

