

Idiom by Lon Yan

夙願得償

su4 yuan4 de2 chang2

When we are in our 80s and 90s, most of us would probably be taking life easy, that is, if we are still alive. But for Kimlan Jinakul of Thailand, it's time to study. The 91-year-old woman has just earned her bachelor's degree after working on it for the past 10 years.

She was a bright young student but never got the opportunity to go to university, until she was 72, when she enrolled in an open university, majoring in human ecology.

She didn't get a degree to start a new career. But completing university has always been her dream, so we can say she has “夙願得償” (*su4 yuan4 de2 chang2*).

“夙” (*su4*) means “old,” “original,” “願” (*yuan4*) “hope,” “wish,” “desire,” “夙願” (*su4*

yuan4) means “a long-cherished wish (or desire, dream),” “得” (*de2*) “to get,” “to gain” and “償” (*chang2*) “to compensate for,” “to fulfil.”

Literally, “夙願得償” (*su4 yuan4 de2 chang2*) is “long-cherished dream is fulfilled,” which is what the idiom means – “to have a long-cherished wish realized.”

Apart from “夙願” (*su4 yuan4*) – an old-cherished dream, there is also “夙志” (*su4 zhi4*) – an old-cherished ambition.

But not all things “夙” (*su4*) are positive. “夙怨” (*su4 yuan4*) is “an old grudge.” “夙嫌” (*su4 xian2*) is a “long-standing resentment.” People against which we hold “夙怨” (*su4 yuan4*) and “夙嫌” (*su4 xian2*) must be our “夙敵” (*su4 di2*) – old foe; long standing enemy.

Terms containing the character “償” (*chang2*) include:

償還 (*chang2 huan2*) – to pay back; to refund

補償 (*bu3 chang2*) – to compensate; to make up for

償命 (*chang2 ming4*) – to pay with one's life (for a murder)

無償 (*wu2 chang2*) – free; gratuitous; no charge