I Am Capable, So I Will Do More

Mei Liao

Interview with Mr. QZ's Mother

QZ, male, born in 1988. The only child in the family. Grade IV intellectual disability. Graduated from a special education school. Started working at Shanghai Papa John's in 2009.

Interviewee: QZ's mother

Interviewer and writer: Mei Liao

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Interview place: QZ's home

Delayed Development and Fragile Bones

QZ's mother: When he was first born, QZ looked fine and there seemed to be nothing wrong...

Maybe that's because the baby was protected by its own immune system for the first 6 months of its life. Once he turned 6 months old, he started getting sick all the time, with a fever running at 40 degrees as well as pneumonia. He probably didn't have a strong build to begin with. And we were driven crazy.

I had 90 days of maternity leave. I was asked to go back to work to a better position, but after 2 days back at my job, I realized it wouldn't work out because there would be no one to take care of the baby at home. My own mom had to work, and I couldn't exactly ask my grandma to babysit, especially as the baby was still young and his bones were not as strong as those of other babies. I figured that after the baby got older, like after he turned 6 months, I could go back to work. But he

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just kept getting sick and I just couldn't go back to work. I ended up taking a year off. Back then, the longest leave you could take was 1 year—longer leave was near impossible.

I took 1 month off before my due date. Before the baby was born, there was pressure on the nerves on one side of my body and one of my legs hurt really bad when I walked. The doctor said it was no big deal, that I would be okay after childbirth and that I couldn't take any medication. So I took 1 month off before the baby was born, which means that my 1 year worth of leave actually ended when the baby was 11 months old.

My mom worked in the hospital and we lived nearby, which was convenient. We knew the hospital well, so we took the baby there all the time. At first there was no definitive diagnosis—he just kept getting sick. And he had allergies and developed rashes so easily. He had tests at the hospital, but no allergens could be found. The pediatricians at the hospital all knew him (giving a miserable smile). If we didn't show up at the hospital during a certain week, they would ask for a reason. That's how often we visited. My workplace was really supportive and didn't mind my frequent trips to the hospital. During my darkest hours, the people around me were all very helpful, so was my workplace.

When he was about 10 months old, we realized that he was developing slower than other kids—he couldn't crawl or sit like the others. He could only sit for a short while before toppling over, and we failed at teaching him to crawl.

We took him to Xinhua Hospital, to the outpatients division for kids with delayed development. The doctor said that what he was going through was not rare, and back then there was no medication or any other treatment. The only prescription he gave was fish oil and other brain supplements that kids nowadays take routinely. In the early 1990s, however, that kind of medication was new and for hospital prescription only. It was pretty expensive and we had to pay out of our own pocket.

We had no choice but to keep investing in buying medication for treatment, but the medication wasn't very effective. To be honest, we were getting too adventurous. There was a research institute with a new drug for internal experiments, and we tried that one too. The brutal truth is that we were desperate enough to use a drug that had not yet been tested or approved. I remember that it was for injection and we used up several boxes for an entire regimen. We were quite liberal with using medication that we believed would help him, because we wanted to speed things along. But nothing really worked.

Q: I heard from some parents that when something goes wrong with the birth...

QZ's mother: I don't think that's the case with me. Right now there's pregnancy screening, but not when I was pregnant. Everything went smoothly when I gave birth and there seemed to be nothing wrong with him when he was first born. The newborn check-up results were normal and he looked perfectly fine. Maybe it's genetic because we have relatives with similar conditions.

I went back to work when he was 11 months old. Back then workplaces still had affiliated preschools. In retrospect, he had a tough childhood. I would bring him to work with me and leave him at the preschool of my workplace.

He has never had a sense of security. He didn't make any fuss at the preschool, but he needed to be cuddled or to have someone keeping him company, otherwise he would cry. My workplace's preschool wasn't a fancy one and one teacher had to take care of a lot of kids, so he ended up crying all day long there. I couldn't do anything about it. I was constantly informed of his non-stop crying and I could only defend him by saying that his development was a little slower than that of other kids.

He didn't have good balance and was more delicate. In almost everything including walking, he wasn't as strong as other kids. Cribs in the preschool came with hand bars. He would hold onto them and stand for a little while before he had to sit down, and he couldn't walk till he was almost 2 years old. When he played with other kids, the slightest push would send him to the floor. My siblings have kids who are 1 or 2 years younger than he is. When the three of them played together, grown-ups were always called to rescue him because one thing or another would always happen to him.

Where I worked was some distance from the preschool, but the medical clinic was right next door so the ladies in the clinic kept an eye on him. They told me they heard him crying all the time and they would often go over to check on him and to cuddle him which they told me helped calm him down. When the preschool teacher had time, she took special care of him, too.

He stayed at my workplace's preschool for 2 or 3 years. When he was 4 years old, he outgrew it and had to be sent to another one outside my workplace. So we enrolled him in a preschool close to where I worked. Again, he was slower than other kids there, so we tried to build rapport with the teacher in the hope that the teacher would take good care of him.

The teacher was very nice. There were stairs at the preschool. Whereas the other kids would sail down the stairs, he was scared and had to walk down one step at a time. The teacher would always walk with him at the end of the line so as to watch him and help him.

We never had grandparents take care of him. It's always been my husband and me bringing QZ up. He was a little bit of a loner at preschool. He spent most of the time playing toys with the other kids, but after a while, he would walk away to be by himself. He is like that even now. Maybe he understands in his heart, but he can't vocalize well. Preschool teachers always told me that he was slower than other kids, but the delay in development wasn't as obvious as in some other kids and wasn't that severe.

There was a physical check-up before elementary school enrollment, when he was 5 or 6 years old. The doctor at the hospital wanted an IQ test for him. When he was younger, the hospital only told us that his development was delayed and that medication should be used to stimulate his nerves, but no IQ test was ordered. So the IQ test results showed that he was indeed developing at a delayed pace and that he had intellectual disability. We tried every treatment and every medication during the earlier stages, and things were just the way they were. There were no more options, so we had to accept it and face reality instead of deluding ourselves.

Q: QZ is the only child. So you didn't have another one?

QZ's mother: There was strict control back then and normally nobody was supposed to have a second child. After the IQ test, the doctor said that because of his condition, I would be allowed to have a second child. I hesitated, thinking, "What if something went wrong with the second child?" There are all kinds of prenatal tests nowadays including tests of the amniotic fluid, which were not available in my time. QZ already has this disability and there were no grandparents to lend a hand. I was already having a tough time with him. If I had a second child, I would be spread thinner and wouldn't be able to focus on QZ, which would affect him to a great extent... After discussing it with my husband, we decided not to have a second child.

Free Rein in Developing Intellect and Building Self-Dependence

Q: After the IQ test, did you think about how to develop his intellect? Did you teach him to read?

QZ's mother: I did teach him and it was extremely difficult. The preschool teachers only taught numbers, and by the time he graduated from preschool, he had been taught simple one-digit additions and subtractions. At home, I kept encouraging him and reinforcing the knowledge, because I already knew that he was slower than other kids. His calligraphy was bad, including writing letters, numbers, and his own name, so I would hold his hand and take my time practicing with him. It just took much more time for him compared with other kids. Numbers like "2" and "3" were difficult for him to write. I would teach him one day and he would forget the next day, so I had to do it all over again.

Q: When did he learn to feed and dress himself?

QZ's mother: Even though he was slower at schoolwork, he picked up other things pretty fast. He learnt to feed and dress himself just like any other kid. And we treated him like any other kid and let him do whatever he was supposed to do at different stages of his life.

He was not at an age to be able to properly feed himself yet, but he would take a spoon and try to do it. He started doing that when he was 2 or 3 years old and made a mess every time. But we let him do it whenever he felt like doing it, while we still fed him at the same time.

He needed to brush his teeth in preschool, so we taught him several times and encouraged him. He was terrible at it but we insisted that he do it himself. One thing good about him is that he has good hands-on ability and likes to apply it. Whenever something physical needed to be done at home or things needed to be organized, he loved to participate. Even now, if I need to clean up the house, he will ask me to wait for his day off so that he can help me. He might get distracted after a while, but he does want to participate. That's why we have encouraged him to learn on his own ever since he was young, and he could dress himself at a very early age. But kids like him still learn at a slower pace.

We used to not have a shower at home and had to go to the workplace to take showers. When he was young, some of my close co-workers would help me give him showers. When he got older, he would go to the men's shower. His dad used to work at the same place as I did, so QZ would know people in the shower room and would mess around with them in there. He was quite outgoing and no one thought he was different except that he started walking late. Once he got older, people saw that he is different. He was talkative, too, but couldn't speak clearly because he was tight underneath his tongue. After he got a snip at the hospital, he became less inclined to talk. He used to talk a lot and he liked communicating with people.

When he was young, he had a pet peeve, some kind of neat freak thing, but he doesn't have it now. When he was almost two and just started walking, he refused to step on mud and would only walk on concrete. And when we took him to the park and put him on the grass, he would howl as soon as we walked away and wouldn't move his feet. He wouldn't touch anything with water on it, and if someone got water on him, he'd be grossed out. When he was at my workplace's preschool, at the end of the day, my co-workers would take him out to play, because he was very mild and obedient when he was young. He was a little neat freak, so the co-workers would tease him by purposefully getting water on him and just mess around with him.

Once we discovered that pet peeve of his, we decided to help him overcome it. So we took him to the park every week and forced him to walk on the grass. Gradually, and unwillingly, he overcame it.

He had been going with me to work since he was very young and he was exposed to all kinds of people. When he was in preschool, my workplace was profitable. In the 1980s and 1990s, the workplace would sponsor travel for the employees, and he traveled with me many times. We would travel several times a year. Everyone at my workplace knew him and called him "little luggage" because he followed me everywhere.

Q: Where have you been to?

QZ's mother: We've been to so many places, like Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Beijing, Nanjing, and Ningbo, and most of the places were close to Shanghai. Actually, he was a bundle of energy when he was very young and his disability wasn't apparent. Every co-worker of mine knew him, because he was the only kid traveling everywhere with us adults. When we went to Beijing, he didn't have the strength to walk and I didn't have the strength to carry him. He knew my co-workers well because he hung out at my workplace all day long. Now he won't talk to them when he sees them. Anyway, without me telling him what to do, he would walk up to one of the co-workers and call him "Uncle" and ask him to carry him. He was nicknamed "the little force" because he liked to join in wherever the action was and he wasn't afraid of strangers. Everyone liked him a lot. He had no temper, wasn't picky about food and didn't fuss when he was tired. All you needed to do was cuddle him when he got tired and he would fall asleep.

He was very gullible and would go with anyone. In fact, my co-workers could easily sweet talk him into leaving with them. And he had the best temperament. Even now, everyone is still saying what a cute child he was. He went along with whatever the grown-ups wanted, made no fuss, and never howled when crying. If he got a

bump from falling and was on the verge of crying, we would just tell him not to cry because everyone was looking at him. He would struggle a little before succeeding in holding back his tears.

We've been taking him everywhere ever since he was young, and he is used to that. So he was not the kind of child that was anxious about leaving home or anxious to get home at certain hours. We have trained him not to be like that. So it's safe to say that we have always given him free rein. I have never been overprotective just because he is different. We give him all kinds of opportunities to participate.

We cut down on traveling after he started elementary school, because it wasn't as easy to travel with him in school. We did go out during summer and winter vacations and on our days off, and we made sure to take him somewhere almost every week.

Q: So he became self-dependent in daily life at an early age. When did he start helping around the house, like making his bed?

QZ's mother: Probably when he started elementary school. He used to share our room. When he was 8 or 9 years old, he moved into his own room, which he was required to keep neat on his own. One good thing about him is that he will organize his room as soon as things are out of place. He would even tidy up our room, and he likes to clean up around the house.

When he was about 10 years old, my mom took him to stay with my younger brother for a couple of days and it was pretty far from us. He tidied up the house there. My brother has a kid who is 2 years younger—he helped her clean up and organize her messy drawers. He has good hands-on ability and is good at helping around the house and taking care of his own needs.

He was a neat freak when he was young, but not anymore. Now he doesn't care as much about being neat. I always point out how sloppy he is and ask him to make himself presentable like clipping his nails. He doesn't pay attention to those details; I don't know why. He is the total opposite of when he was young and doesn't care how he looks.

Special School Education at a Cost of Sponsorship Fee

QZ's mother: An interview was required for him to enter elementary school, and he failed the interview because he was perceived as slow.

We figured that with his delayed development, we would hold him back a year, so he went to preschool for an extra year. We had hoped that he could get into a regular elementary school that way. But he didn't, even though he had been held back for 1 year.

The schoolteacher said that he would have a hard time following the curriculum if we insisted that he go to a regular school. He wouldn't be able to learn anything because of the fast teaching pace. It would also affect the teaching quality at the school.

I backed off after being told the cold truth, and I had to accept it instead of deluding myself about my child's disability, so he ended up going to a special education school.

Q: Did he start with a regular elementary school and drop out later, or did he start with a special education school?

QZ's mother: He interviewed with a regular school and we talked to the schoolteachers. They said very clearly that he would have a hard time at the regular school which wouldn't be good for him, so they suggested that he go to a special education school.

We figured that placing QZ in a special education school was preferable to imposing him on a regular school. The pace at the special education school would be slower so that he could learn something. Before he started school, we tried to teach him at home but felt like we were fighting a losing battle. No matter how many times we repeated, he couldn't remember, and he couldn't focus either. Moreover, once he was older, he seemed to be afraid of other people, so he would be an easy target for bullying in a regular school. So we settled for sending him to a special education school.

It was different back in the 1990s. People nowadays are more accepting and sympathetic. I didn't really expect sympathy, but to have QZ's disability be accepted would have been nice. We had a hard time getting him into a special education school. The truth is that I had to use a lot of my connections, and I even visited the Education Bureau. You had a special-needs kid but it's not easy for you to send him to a special education school.

Q: There were not many special education schools around?

QZ's mother: There's only one in each district and this school would set up special education classes in a number of regular elementary schools in the district. But to get into that class, you would have to register first with the special education school's headquarters. I really pulled all my strings. I was frustrated at having a hard time getting my special-needs child into some sort of school. But I couldn't keep him at home, because he still had the ability to learn and to accept new things. He was not entirely incapable of learning. So I asked for favors and made inquiries everywhere, including the Education Bureau.

There's a special education class in an elementary school close to where my mom lived, but you would have to register with the special education school's headquarters first. So we went to the headquarters and had QZ tested. He met all the criteria and was accepted on the condition that the workplace of one of the parents be notified and then donate to the school.

My workplace was a state-owned enterprise that's getting outdated and losing money. It was willing to provide a letter verifying my family situation, but when it came to donation, maybe they'd never had to do that before and didn't know how to go about it, and they really had no money to spare, so nothing was done about it. I was getting antsy, as QZ might miss the school start date because of inaction.

We had no choice but to seek help from my husband's workplace. He had just started a new job and was reluctant to tell anyone at work about QZ. His side of the family wasn't interested in QZ, maybe because they didn't see him coming to anything. They seldom asked about him or showed that they cared. His mom helped bring up the kids of his older brother and older sister, but refused to lend a hand with QZ, saying that she didn't have the energy anymore.

I was under tremendous pressure, from both inside and outside the family. Luckily my own side of the family was very helpful. My mom was working the whole time and she wasn't good with babysitting or household work anyway, so we were bringing up QZ on our own. QZ got sick a lot, and when we got overwhelmed, my younger brother, younger sister, and sister-in-law would offer help. So my side of the family was a blessing.

When asked to donate to the school, my husband's workplace said that the company, which was a foreign-funded one, had no such precedent, so the only help it could offer was a certain amount of subsidy from the Workers' Union. I decided then that we would pay the donation ourselves. However much the cost, I must get QZ into a school to learn. There was no way I would let him stay home, because he was not completely hopeless.

Before sending QZ to the special education school, I met with the principal. After meeting QZ, he tried at first to kick the ball to the regular elementary school by insisting that QZ go there. But I was told by the regular school to send QZ to a special education school because he wouldn't be able to follow at the regular school. I was very realistic. My ultimate goal was not to send QZ to a regular school but to have him learn as much as possible. So I talked to both the principal and the academics director and told them that the curriculum at a regular school would be impossible for QZ. I didn't care if I came off pathetic, because that wasn't really the issue. I had to respect reality and lobby for a chance for QZ to learn things and to become more self-dependent. So I told them that if I had to, I would pay the donation myself so that QZ could get into the school.

I had asked around and learnt that a lot of kids struggled at regular schools till second or third grade before being forced to transfer to special education schools, which was the ultimate destination for them anyway. I didn't think my kid would be able to graduate from a regular school, so I was okay sending him to a special education school from the very beginning. That way he could learn things, even though it would be at a slower pace. So we ended up paying the donation ourselves for QZ to get in.

Kids with severe disabilities would attend school at the special education school's headquarters. Kids like QZ, who were just slightly slower than other kids, were assigned to special education classes at regular elementary schools. That's how QZ ended up in the special education class at the elementary school close to where my mom lived. The teacher to student ratio at that class was one to a dozen or so, whereas at regular elementary schools, a teacher would have to supervise more than 50 kids, and if your kid was transferred from another school in the middle of the school year, the teacher would have no time for him. At the special education class, which was smaller in size, the teacher could have a relatively easy time supervising the students since there were only a dozen or so of them. Come to think of it, the teachers really had a tough job.

The special education class had two teachers, both of whom were approaching retirement. They had taught for many years and were experienced—they were great teachers and very patient with kids. Young teachers tend to have a shorter temper. QZ has been to several schools and has always had experienced teachers getting close to

retirement. When QZ was in third grade, the special education class had to shut down, maybe because the teachers had reached retirement age. So QZ was transferred to another elementary school where the special education class was a combination of classes from several schools. There were more kids in that class, more than 20 in fact.

The regular elementary school always assigned a small room to the special education class to make it easier for the teachers to keep the kids in check. QZ was relatively quiet and timid. He seldom caused trouble and wouldn't run crazy outside during recess. There was a kid in his class who had ADHD and intellectual disability, but he was smart in some other ways and would fidget in class and give the kids sitting next to him a hard time. The teacher would be talking and he would misbehave or go to scribble on the blackboard. On Open House day, the parents all sat in on the class and that kid just stood up before his parents restrained him.

One time I was picking QZ up and saw the teacher checking homework with her foot on the desk to stop that kid from running out. She said that whenever she wasn't watching closely, he would run out and cause trouble. While other kids were his victims, his own parents would blame the teacher for having failed to control him. That teacher looked already to be in her 50 s or 60 s, and I really admired her for having taken on such a demanding job.

The kid's parents knew what was going on at school, so they were always apologetic towards us. We were understanding because our own kid has disability too, but we can't lock the kid up at home, can we? We kept telling QZ to be forgiving because that kid had a disability, saying, "If he is constantly messing up your schoolbag, just let it go because he has ADHD." QZ is normally very mild, but he can be very stubborn when he gets worked up. If someone kept bullying you and messing around with you, you'd get mad, wouldn't you? But we kept advising him to not take it to heart.

Q: Did each class come with two teachers?

QZ's mother: Right, that's the common practice. One teacher for Chinese and the other one for math. Not much else was taught, and some other teachers would step into cover subjects other than Chinese and math. The two teachers were mainly responsible for keeping the kids in check and their office was inside the classroom. Some of the kids were especially naughty and the teachers had to keep a close watch over them from day one. Most of the girls and some boys, including QZ, were very quiet, making it easier for the teachers. But as long as there was one naughty kid in the class, the teachers had to be on high alert.

The kids could manage to learn certain things in the special education class, because the teachers kept repeating the instructions. The kids had bad memory and might forget things if they were taught only once or twice. All of the teachers were nice.

Q: Did you have to tutor QZ at home?

QZ's mother: We did, because we wanted to push him. The first thing after he got home and the minimum requirement for him was to finish his homework. He was timid and a little scared of the teachers, so he normally had no problem finishing homework due the next day. Once we got back home, one of us would do the

housework and the other would stay with him while he did homework. Other kids would finish a lot of homework within a short time, but QZ was slower. We had to teach him repeatedly what had already been taught at school. Even though we didn't expect him to be like other kids, we still hoped that he would learn some things and be able to keep up in the special education class.

He didn't get a lot of what we were trying to teach him. The biggest problem was that he couldn't settle down to learn. You would be talking yourself hoarse and he wouldn't be listening at all. When he first started school, like in first grade and second grade, it was exhausting for us to repeatedly teach him the same things. I would ask him what I had just taught him and he wouldn't know a thing because he had taken in nothing. At school, he looked all peaceful sitting there. Sometimes he would get it but couldn't remember it, and sometimes he wouldn't get it at all. He couldn't answer the questions you had for him because he hadn't been able to focus. If I kept repeating myself, it would get on his nerves and he would throw a tantrum and refuse to learn. A lot of times in elementary school, he would throw a tantrum and refuse to learn. Whatever you said to him, he would ignore you.

The special education class tried to keep pace with regular schools, so there were mid-term and end-of-term exams and quizzes. He would study for the exams at home and get fidgety after a while, so we would take him out for a change of environment. We would go to KFC or McDonald's where we would try to make it fun for him to learn. We had to do that because if we got all pushy, he would get mad. If we yelled at him, he would push back even harder. He was so very stubborn, but kids like him tend to be that way.

We often talked to other parents when picking up kids from school. There were two girls in the class who looked so quiet. They studied hard too and were excelling in every other way. I was quite envious, but the parents said, "They may look quiet outside the house, but at home, they are different." The same with QZ. He was very quiet outside the house, but at home he was unbelievably stubborn. The other parents also said that the girls couldn't take any criticism at home.

After he had finished his homework, if we gave him extra work to do or asked that he review what he had learnt, he would get impatient. Then we would get mad when teaching him, and sometimes I felt like having a breakdown.

Q: So you gave him extra homework?

QZ's mother: No. I was just worried that he wouldn't remember what the teacher had taught, so I wanted to go over it again slowly with him to reinforce the knowledge.

Q: When you tutored him at home, was it harder to tutor him in math or in Chinese?

QZ's mother: About the same. It's a little easier tutoring him in Chinese. When he started elementary school, we changed his first name to characters that sound the same but are simpler to write to make it easier for him.

We wanted him to learn some basic math like addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division and to memorize the multiplication table. We didn't ask him to learn complicated division. Math problems were difficult to teach and we had to repeatedly explain them to him, because his comprehension was limited. If I gave him just numbers to add and subtract he could do it, sometimes on his fingers. We told him

that doing math on his fingers was a bad habit that he should get rid of and that he should learn to do math in his head, but he was bad at doing math in his head.

Q: At the elementary school, in addition to Chinese and math, did he have music, drawing, and PE?

QZ's mother: He did have all of them, but those classes were not frequent and the kids weren't expected to do much. PE, music, drawing, and arts and crafts, they were mainly supplemental subjects.

Q: What did he like?

QZ's mother: I have never seen him particularly interested in anything. When he was young, once we realized his disability... we kept an eye out for whether he had some particular interest so we could help him develop that interest. We also had him try many things, but nothing really interested him.

Q: Did he ever come back from school and tell you that he liked this or that class?

QZ's mother: Not really.

Q: Did you drop him off and pick him up from elementary school?

QZ's mother: We did that when he was in lower grades. I would drop him off in the morning and my mom would pick him up after school. Then my mom had a car accident and broke some joints and couldn't do the pickup anymore. The teacher in elementary school was very nice. Since my mom couldn't pick him up anymore, the teacher would take QZ home with her as she lived right next to school. She would help him finish homework and I would pick him up after I got off work. It went on like this for 2 years before the teacher retired. She offered to pick up QZ for me, but she wasn't getting any younger, so I couldn't impose on her in that way. I decided to have QZ learn to go home by himself, which he should be able to do to be self-dependent. I rode the bus with him back and forth. He only needed to take one bus and walk some distance to get home, since the bus stop was not right at our doorstep. After I rode the bus with him several times, he knew the way.

We were not control freaks with QZ. He had always been with us growing up and we were always out there somewhere, because we traveled a lot both for business and for pleasure. So he had a sense of direction from always traveling with us. I am bad with directions, so I would ask him to figure out the way. We had to train him and to let him do things by himself. I see a lot of parents not being able to let go, which is actually bad for the kids because they miss the chance to train their abilities. You have to force yourself to let go, which is the only way the kids can get trained little by little. I didn't waste time training him to be self-dependent, and when he was in sixth grade, I asked him to go home by himself after school, even though I still dropped him off in the morning.

Q: Did kids in the neighborhood bully him when he was young?

QZ's mother: Not really, since we didn't interact with our neighbors a lot. Even after he started school, he still had limited exposure to the outside world and he only interacted with kids from his school. When he was going to school, kids who lived close by would drop by. There's one schoolmate who lived in the complex right behind us, and he often came to play at our place.

Q: What did the kids play?

QZ's mother: They would talk, watch TV, and play puzzles and board games sometimes. They had some communication. Kids like them had a difficult time keeping up when communicating with people without disabilities. Even though they were taking in new things all the time, their communication with other people was simple and superficial.

Q: How many years' elementary school did he have?

QZ's mother: Six years. Starting in 1996, he was at the elementary school close to my mom's place for 2 years. He spent the next 2 years at a school on Baichen Road, and another 2 years at a special education school. That special education school used to be a preschool, which was rebuilt into a special education school servicing the entire district so that regular elementary schools didn't have to host any special education classes. Those kinds of schools kept being moved and combined. For middle school, he went to an official special education school called Yang Fan School, which is both an elementary school and a middle school. QZ didn't go there till he started middle school. Even though elementary school and middle school for QZ were separate, he only got one graduation certificate showing that he was at Yang Fan School from 1996 to 2005.

Overcoming Temporary Autism

QZ's mother: QZ has his own thoughts, a lot of thoughts actually. But he can't express them and he is an introvert. There was a time when he had slight autism, probably when he was in fifth or sixth grade. He could accept people he often interacted with, but with people he knew but seldom saw, he would behave as if he was scared of them and wanted to avoid them.

When we went out, we couldn't even say hi to people, because he would run off as soon as he saw people he knew. He wouldn't even go into see his grandparents on Sunday. We would be at the building they lived in, and he would refuse to go up to visit them. Whatever we said, he insisted on staying downstairs by himself. His grandparents would come downstairs to get him and he would just run off by himself. Can you imagine how we panicked when we couldn't find him, especially since we didn't live with his grandparents and he wasn't familiar with their neighborhood? He wasn't close to them and they weren't exactly fond of him. And they were not careful about what they said and looked down on him a little because they didn't think he was as good as the other grandkids. QZ couldn't vocalize it, but he has his self-respect. So we had to trick him into going with us to visit his grandparents, telling him that we would go somewhere else immediately afterwards. He would agree to go with us, but once we were there, he wouldn't go upstairs.

Also, we couldn't have company at home. If someone dropped by, he would go out on his own. If the guest stayed for 2 or 3 h, he would linger outside for 2 or 3 h. I was so worried that he might have autism.

Q: Did you not chase after him?

QZ's mother: We would look everywhere for him, sometimes without success. He would stay out for several hours and come back in the middle to check how everything was at home. He would listen at the door. If the guest had left, he would come in, otherwise he would continue lingering outside. One time it was raining hard and he had nowhere to go, so he just sat on the sixth floor staircase. A neighbor tried to talk to him and he just ignored her. The neighbor later told me that he just sat on the stairs for several hours and wouldn't reply when talked to. I explained that he was slightly autistic and would run off as soon as we had company at home. On that rainy day, after the guest had left, we looked everywhere in the apartment complex for him, but we didn't expect him to have been in the building the whole time. He wouldn't tell us later where he had been, and I didn't find out till the neighbor told me several days later.

But we were determined to help him overcome the autism, so we always took him out and forced him to interact with people. We often involved him in what other families were doing. For example, if some family needed help, we would bring him with us to help, and he was very happy and eager to help. If some family was cleaning the house, he would want to participate and help, too.

He likes traveling, so we traveled a lot and exposed him to a lot of people and to society. We traveled to many places, including overseas. He has annual leave at work now, so we will take him traveling when he has leave. We went to the US, Europe, and Japan. Two months ago, we went to Australia and New Zealand.

He got better gradually. As he interacted more with his schoolmates, he started bringing them home, which he had seldom done before. When he was in higher grades in elementary school and especially in middle school, his schoolmates hung out at our place all the time—he wasn't as scared of people anymore. If there was some guest he didn't know, he would go off to his room instead of running off.

Q: So he likes human interaction and is willing to participate in group activities. Was he willing to go to his grandparents' later on?

QZ's mother: He was. He was unwilling to do it when he was in elementary school although he got better once he started middle school. But he has never been able to communicate with his grandparents. He was willing to lend a hand at their place if asked to, like moving heavy things around.

Thriving at Yang Fan School

Q: Did you have to pull any strings again for him to get into a middle school?

QZ's mother: No. Maybe once we were in the system, we could just follow the system. Also, society started to pay more attention to children with special needs. That wasn't the case before, so we had a hard time getting him into a special education elementary school and we had to ask for favors everywhere. Now I don't think parents are asked to donate anymore. (Laughing)

Yang Fan School was very well equipped and different from the elementary school. It had its own campus with gates that were locked as soon as the kids arrived. The

teachers wouldn't focus on any specific kid because there were a large number of them and all of them had special needs. But the kids were allowed to move freely on campus. Some kids couldn't sit still and would fidget and walk around all the time.

At the school, they were taught both from textbooks and other skills such as baking and arts and crafts. Basically, the teaching was limited to their perceived abilities.

Q: Was there less pressure at middle school than at elementary school?

QZ's mother: A bit less, yes. There wasn't as much they needed to learn from textbooks. At the special education school, the expectations were not that high. Of course, we still had to monitor his studies, but he was older and more disciplined when it came to studies. He would finish his homework as soon as he got home and sometimes he would even finish it at school. And we did make sure that he prepared for tests.

Q: Were there tests at middle school?

QZ's mother: They did have mid-term and end-of-term tests like in a regular school, but the tests were simpler and requirements were not that high. He was too young at elementary school and couldn't sit still to study, so it was tiring to teach him when he knew nothing. It got better in middle school. We just needed to repeat a couple of times and he would get it, like when he had to solve math problems.

He even went to a vocational school for a while. The special education school recommended several kids whose disabilities didn't show as much and who were self-dependent to attend a vocational school in the district. That school had set up a special class for kids from Yang Fan School under the Yang Fan name, but the physical location of the class was a little far from Yang Fan School. The majors offered by the class included horticulture, like planting trees and pruning branches, and baking. I figured that he needed to have a job later on and to be independent, so I sent him to the vocational school to acquire some skills.

Some parents, including us, visited the school and found it to be less than ideal. The kids there were all dropouts from regular middle schools because of misbehavior, so the school was almost like a correctional place.

We proposed that the school set up a separate class for our kids so as to keep them away as much as possible from the other students. It's not that we discriminated against those kids. We realized that the school's environment might not be the best and the kids there didn't exactly look like role models, so we didn't want our own kids to be led astray. So the school set up a separate class for us. We needed only one class since not everyone was interested in going there.

It was during the SARS outbreak in 2003, I remember clearly. The school kept a close watch and measured everyone's temperature before allowing anyone past the gates. QZ's temperature had always been relatively high, higher than 36.5 degrees as a matter of fact. So he was always kept outside the school gates. Since he went to school by himself, he had a difficult time explaining his temperature to the teacher. For that, I made a special trip to the school to talk to the teacher.

The class was shut down after just several months. The environment was really bad and unacceptable to a lot of parents from our class, and the kids got bullied, so a lot of kids stopped going there. We still tried to keep up at first so that QZ could

learn something. But then the school notified us that it was shutting down the class because of a lack of parent recognition and student determination.

So we all went back to Yang Fan School. The teacher there was serious about teaching them baking and often asked them to measure sugar and flour. QZ was happy to do that. The teacher would help the kids get the ingredients ready for what they wanted to make, but would ask them to measure the ingredients and bag them. At the school, there was a special baking classroom with its own oven. Kids often baked there and tasted what they made and commented on the taste.

All of the teachers at Yang Fan School had had training in special education and were very nice. Towards the end, probably because of school downsizing, several teachers were let go. The teachers sought help from parents, hoping that the parents would call on the school to keep them on. We did that, but were unsuccessful. QZ graduated soon after the downsizing.

Q: Did he practice any of the baking skills he learned at home?

QZ's mother: We had wanted him to practice, like baking cakes. But we couldn't get a lot of the ingredients, so he couldn't practice.

Sometimes he would be very excited when he came home after having baked at school. He would bring back little pastries for us to taste and ask us to buy ingredients so he could bake at home for us. I had an agreement with him to encourage him. Whatever he wanted to make at home, we would try our best to make it happen. And he liked it. We bought common things like flour. He wanted baking powder, but it's probably only available at special stores. We couldn't find it in supermarkets, so he wasn't able to use it. We also bought little molds. Most of the time they baked Western-style cakes and bread. He also made Chinese-style steam buns at school and brought them home.

Q: Did the school organize field trips in autumn or spring?

QZ's mother: It did. At elementary school, the teacher had a hard time chaperoning the kids, so they didn't have many field trips. They had a lot more in middle school. Back then, every district had a special education school. The government and society cared about the special needs group, so there were often activities and activity sponsors as well, and the kids went to many places. They tried all of the new things including Dongfang Oasis and the EML train.

Q: Did he come back and tell you how he felt about the field trips?

QZ's mother: He isn't good at expressing himself, but he was happy going out with friends of the same age.

Q: As he grew older, did you ever have this feeling that "this kid is suddenly all grown up"?

QZ's mother: I found that he was becoming more and more like a big kid once he started middle school. At elementary school, we were very protective of him. Once he started at Yang Fan School, he would go to school and come home by himself. The school was close to Tumen Road, which was some distance from where we lived, and he had to take more than one bus to get to school. Fortunately he had a schoolmate who lived in the complex behind us, so they would go to school together sometimes. He would also go to school by himself sometimes. After several times, he knew the way well. We just had to let go and he did well after that.

Q: Has he ever taken the wrong bus and not been able to find his way home?

QZ's mother: He has never gotten lost, but he did take the wrong bus. We bought him a prepaid transportation card, so we told him to take a taxi home if he got really lost. Also, if he got confused about which bus to take, he could walk home. We often walked around where we lived and knew the area well. So he has basically never become lost. It might have happened and he probably just didn't tell us. (Laughing)

He got to interact with more kids at Yang Fan School where the classes were big, with 20 or 30 kids in each class, whereas there were only twenty-something kids per class at elementary school. Once he was older, he interacted more with schoolmates and they would visit each other at home. They would also go out together, like to the supermarket or the mall, but we would remind them not to wander too far. We still worried about kids like them when they were out there and we worried that we might lose them. But I felt better when he was with schoolmates. I would make sure that I knew where they were, which was usually somewhere close to home or to school, and I was okay if they didn't stay out long. There was a time when he would hang out with several other kids all day long and not come home till very late. We would panic and go out looking for him everywhere. We would call the other kids' home and the other kids wouldn't be home either, because they were all together. He wouldn't come home till it got dark and he had had dinner somewhere out and about. It happened several times and I stopped worrying, because they were in the neighborhood and they all knew their way around. But I did question him about where he had been and how he got there. Once I was satisfied with his information, I stopped worrying and let him continue doing it.

If he had stayed home, no matter how we tried to let go, he would still have been under our wings. When he was with other kids and being exposed to the outside world, we couldn't monitor what he did, and that's how he could be free and progress further. I felt that he was different in middle school than in elementary school.

A Good Member of the Sunshine Home

Q: Where did QZ go after graduating from Yang Fan School?

QZ's mother: He stayed home for a while after graduation, but not for long. Then he went to the Sunshine Home. There was no Sunshine Home till after 2000. We have always wanted to expose him as much as possible to the outside world instead of keeping him home. I had the impression that right before and after Special Olympics, people with ID became the center of attention. They were not getting as much attention in the 1980s and 1990s. But then, special education schools were already in existence back then.

Before Special Olympics, there was a principal of a special education school in Xuhui District. He did a great job with TV advocacy, and we felt that finally our kids were getting attention. They used to be discriminated against and people tried to stay away from them as much as possible...

Q: Did he go to the Sunshine Home every day?

QZ's mother: He did. It was like school, with a start time and an end time, and he didn't want to be late or to leave early. (Laughing) He would stay there all day and have lunch. They would do handiwork in a big classroom and each person would be assigned a desk. There would be two teachers watching them, but they didn't get to interact much with each other or with the outside world. He worked hard and the teachers had good words for him. He didn't talk much, didn't make trouble, and was serious about the handiwork.

Q: What exactly did the handiwork involve?

QZ's mother: They did some simple processing for companies which sent the Sunshine Home orders. They wrapped soap bars. Soap bars nowadays come in boxes, but Bee & Flower is an old brand and its soap bars were wrapped in paper. They pasted labels for the soy sauce manufacturer Toudaoxian. They also copied addresses on envelopes for the teachers. They had to copy a lot and QZ often brought the envelopes home to continue copying when he couldn't finish at the Sunshine Home. Because the Sunshine Home got all those orders from companies, it would pay the kids for their work, between 100 and 300 yuan per month, depending on individual contribution. So QZ worked pretty hard for the money.

Q: Did he make new friends at the Sunshine Home?

QZ's mother: There were two boys going to the Sunshine Home with QZ, but we forbade QZ from hanging out with them.

We often went to the supermarket, but QZ never wanted to go with us. It took a long time for him to finally tell us why. There were some kids from the Sunshine Home who worked at supermarkets organizing merchandise, and the other kids would all go together to the supermarkets to both check on their friends and to look around. Two of the kids were bad because they stole from the supermarkets, so we forbade QZ from hanging out with those two.

Those two didn't stay long at the Sunshine Home. One worked for a while at a supermarket, but apparently wasn't doing well, so he returned to the Sunshine Home soon afterwards. But he didn't go to the Sunshine Home a lot, and since we kept a close watch, QZ gradually stopped interacting with him.

The other kid stayed at the Sunshine Home for a while before joining his dad in making a living repairing bicycles. He was always taking things from other people and always coming to visit QZ. I didn't want him to come and told that to his face, so he stopped coming. He was much more active than QZ and smarter, too, but he failed at school. It might have had something to do with his family situation. He was from a single-parent family, without a mom and with a dad who collected garbage and repaired bicycles.

The other kids at the Sunshine Home were all the stay-put kind. The two active ones just stopped going there.

Q: How long did he stay at the Sunshine Home?

QZ's mother: About 3 or 4 years. Then the Sunshine Home referred him to Papa John's and he has been working there since 2009.

The Sunshine Home hadn't really wanted to let him go. He worked hard at the Sunshine Home. For the processing orders, there was a lot of heavy work like loading

and unloading, and QZ was the one doing it. He was very close with the driver because he was always helping with the loading and unloading.

Working like a Person Without Disability

Q: Was he interviewed before being hired?

QZ's mother: He was. We just sent him to the interview place and he went in for the interview himself while we were told to wait outside. The company now signs a contract with them every few years and he is asked to fill in the information and sign himself.

At the interview, he was required to perform several tasks including kneading dough, and he didn't pass. Other kids could probably talk their way out of it, but he didn't feel comfortable speaking even though he understood everything. He wasn't willing to communicate, so he didn't do well at the interview.

So he failed the tasks and didn't pass the interview. But we went to the company and explained his situation, and he was hired later than those interviewed at the same time as he was. We desperately needed to get him a job, because the people he interacted with at the Sunshine Home were not... It was a closed environment, so I hoped that he could venture into the real world. It wasn't for the sake of any pay, since the pay isn't high. I just want him to have a stable job and to keep up with society, and it doesn't matter if the work is heavy. Restaurants, after all, service the public, and even though he works in the kitchen, he is still part of society.

When he first joined, he didn't quite get the rules, so when he had nothing to do, he would hang out at co-workers' workstations and talk to W who was his schoolmate. They had been schoolmates since they were young and have always been close and comfortable talking to each other, and I guess they communicated well too when they were going to the Sunshine Home together. The store manager gave them a talk saying that they would be fired if they kept visiting each other and chatting during work hours. He came home and told us about it, and I said, "Where is your common sense? I told you not to go to other workstations. Just stay at your own and do what you are supposed to do." I immediately asked the store manager about it and the store manager said it was no big deal and he was just bluffing. We asked the store manager to be stricter with him because he really didn't understand a lot of things in the workplace, having never been in one before. We also asked the store manager to immediately point out to QZ whatever he was doing wrong, because he is slower than other people and he gets confused about certain things. Gradually QZ got the hang of the workplace and started working hard.

My impression is that he is doing pretty well at the store. A lot of the employees there have fixed responsibilities like making drinks, but QZ can do everything. He used to make appetizers, now he can make pizza dough and step in wherever help is needed. His workload is pretty heavy in the store. He will go open shop in the morning, meaning that he will take out from the fridge everything that's to be used

for a day's business and set everything up. Opening and closing shop are the most tiring jobs. Now he either opens in the morning or closes at night (see Fig. 1).

Q: So he can be entrusted with important work now.

QZ's mother: (Laughing) Now he basically closes shop 4 days a week, which means he has to work till 10:30 p.m. There's hardly any business around 10 p.m., so

Fig. 1 Mr. QZ engaging in cleaning work

he will start organizing, putting all the leftovers in the fridge, and cleaning up. All of the managers the store has ever had said good things about him, including that he is willing to work. He doesn't really care what he does. We have always told him that to be shortchanged may turn out to be a bonus. When he is out there, not everyone will sympathize with him, because in society, no one wants to be shortchanged. He lacks in abilities, which can't be changed, so he has to accept it and not think that everything is a big deal. He will complain sometimes about being overworked, and we will try to comfort him and encourage him.

Q: Do you feel bad about him getting overworked?

QZ's mother: I do, but I seldom vocalize it. If I show it, he will have the psychological hint that he is indeed being overworked and that he shouldn't be. What if he goes to the store and accuses people of abusing him? I am worried about him having a falling out with his co-workers. People like him can't express themselves well and other people might misinterpret and not be able to accept what they say. They are, after all, different from people without disabilities.

He has self-respect too, so we try to encourage him whenever we can. We always tell him that it doesn't matter if he is overworked, because after one night's sleep, he will have been rejuvenated. Having a lot of work to do means that he has value, his presence is appreciated, and he is a pillar in the store instead of dispensable. Some of his work can't be done by anyone else, so what can he do? He likes to listen to encouraging words, so we keep telling him that because he is capable, he gets more work assigned to him. Sometimes hearing this makes him very happy and he will agree with us. Not everyone likes to close shop.

Q: Some of his co-workers might have limited abilities...

QZ's mother: Of all the employees being cared for at the store, he might be the only one who can open and close shop. Don't underestimate the employees being cared for. Even though they are perceived as the weaker group, some of them refuse to be shortchanged and are very stubborn. The store manager is always saying that some of the employees being cared for are impossibly stubborn and if they don't want to do something, no one can make them do it. Only QZ will do whatever he is told to. And he doesn't mind working more. We visit the store sometimes to ask how he is doing, and all of the managers, past and present, recognize his work. He was named an Outstanding Employee for the first 2 years after he joined the store. But sometimes he will throw some small tantrums and misbehave.

Q: What kind of small tantrums?

QZ's mother: Sometimes things will get tense with his co-workers, so he will come home and vent. And we will tell him to compromise whenever he can. Sometimes he just gets exhausted from the long work hours, but we keep encouraging him and making him feel better about it. For a while, the store had no one to wash dishes, and the manager couldn't get anyone to do it. So he had to ask QZ and QZ just took over the job, which was good. We always tell him not to care what kind of work he is assigned, because things need to get done, and if someone else doesn't mind doing something, he shouldn't mind either. He should do whatever he can do and always watch out for things to do and be ready to help if someone is not keeping up the pace.

Q: Has he ever thought about quitting?

QZ's mother: No, because he has the drive. We always monitor how he is doing at work and remind him to cherish the job. It's okay if the work is tiring, because I have always believed in not being overprotective of the child and in letting the child try it out on his own. He might get tired working at the store, but in my opinion, the store is a platform for him to be exposed to society.

He actually knows how to act in unfamiliar situations. He is sometimes sent to other stores to deliver or pick up things, and he has to switch subway lines on this job. He came back and told us that one time after he got off Line 3, which took him downtown, he got on another line in the wrong direction. I've done that too myself. Last time I went to the company, I was supposed to switch from Line 3 to Line 4, but I wasn't paying attention and got on Line 4 going in the wrong direction. So I went all the way to the new train station before riding back the right way. So I asked him what he did then, and he said that he immediately got off after realizing he was going in the wrong direction and took the subway going the opposite way.

He knows most of the Chinese characters, so he can read everything in the subway. I told him, "Don't panic if you always get lost. You just need to remember where the store is and where your home is. The store is on Line 3 and your home is on Line 8. So you can keep switching subway lines and you will eventually reach where you want to go. And you can ask people around you." But he will never ask for help from other people, never. He would rather read the signs himself. I think it's good that he tries things on his own, so that he can handle emergencies in the future. We should just let go.

Q: How does he get along with his co-workers?

QZ's mother: The interaction is routine like chatting and joking. He isn't vocal at all. There's someone who had always been in the same school with him, except for a little while in middle school. Even during that time, that girl still came with other schoolmates to hang out at our place. Then they became schoolmates again. They also went to the Sunshine Home together and joined the store together. She is a little older than QZ. When they were going to school, sometimes kids of different ages ended up in the same class. Maybe she went to a regular school for a while before transferring to the special education school, which is why she is a little older than QZ. QZ interacts with her quite a bit. As far as I know, he doesn't interact much with other co-workers. He doesn't speak much at home either, just routine conversations.

If some co-worker wants him to work a shift for him, he never says no. But when we asked him to talk to the co-workers or the manager about switching shifts for a day that we had made other plans for, he wouldn't do it and insisted that we call the store manager instead. He is really timid.

He is really an introvert who doesn't want to interact with other people. He keeps a lot of things to himself and won't vocalize them. If he did something and is asked why he did it, he will only say, "Because that's the way I wanted it." And he doesn't greet people and gives the impression that he is bad-mannered. We will remind him to greet people when we go out, and he will be contrary and say, "Then I might as well not go today."

Q: Was he happy the first time he got paid?

QZ's mother: The first time he got paid...We ask him to give his grandmas on both sides a red envelope with money inside for every Chinese New Year, and he is happy to do that. The grandmas are happy about it, too, not because they really want the money. He doesn't use his pay. The money just stays in the bankcard and is transferred every once in a while. We will give him an allowance whenever he asks for it, and no one has ever touched his pay. When we plan some travel, he will offer to take money out of his pay to do it. (Laughing) We have never used his money. It stays in the account. When we get older, he will need that money.

Q: When I observed him at the store, the manager on duty and co-workers all complimented QZ on his willingness to work and his not complaining about the tiring work. Even though he graduated from a special education school, the manager treats him as a regular employee. I believe that's where he has succeeded in life.

QZ's mother: The store basically uses him as a regular employee. He is willing to work and to learn, no matter how tiring it is. He is doing well at work except with regards to communicating with others.

Q: Having spent the past several months getting to know your family, I realize that the reason QZ has developed well is that you, as the parents, are willing to let go and have a big heart.

QZ's mother: A lot of parents might think that kids like QZ always get short-changed because of their intellectual disabilities. In my opinion, however, being shortchanged is okay sometimes because it makes him stronger. You just have to let go in a lot of ways. Kids like QZ lack in abilities, so most of the parents are very protective. We are very protective too and do a lot of things for him. But in other things, you must let go.

While he was growing up, he was often verbally abused by other people. Especially at the regular school, other kids would go to the doorway of his classroom to provoke him with abusive words. He would come back and tell us about it. But what could we have done? He is the way he is and we have to accept it. If he was shortchanged, so what? If he was bullied, so what? I couldn't keep him home just because he was being shortchanged. He needed to go to school. So I just told him to ignore those kids and take it easy himself. Sometimes when he was verbally abused, he took it pretty hard even though he didn't express it.

Kids like QZ need self-esteem—and my sister and brother are good at helping him with that. They always encourage him and prioritize his needs. His female cousins are like that, too. If they want to dine out together, they will always wait for QZ's day off. That boosts his confidence and as a result, he likes to interact with them more.

Harmonious Family on Its Way to Stability

Q: He gets along well with his female cousins. Does he interact a lot with similar-aged kids of other relatives?

QZ's mother: His dad's side of the family lives some distance from us, so we don't see them often and there's not much interaction.

The kids of my brother and sister are 1 or 2 years younger than QZ and live close by. We used to have to work on Sunday, so I would leave QZ with my brother or sister. The kids basically grew up together and QZ used to be more talkative. Now that they are older, they talk and interact less, but we still see them a lot. The female cousins often come to our place and say hi to him when they see him. He won't greet them except for some mumbled acknowledgement. We often dine out together. He doesn't talk a lot in front of them and there's not much one-on-one interaction.

Q: How does he interact with his dad at home?

QZ's mother: QZ is stubborn. His dad likes to talk down to him as a parent and if he does that too often, QZ gets mad and extreme and will just ignore his dad. He needs more encouragement. Sometimes he will do something wrong like breaking something, and before we can say anything, he will get mad at himself or even blame us for not having put that thing in the right place.

Q: Did his dad take him out a lot when he was young?

QZ's mother: He did take him out a lot. We have always brought QZ with us wherever we went, including traveling. His dad would do the preparation and figure out where to go and what to do, and I would just tag along. Now that QZ is older, he will help his dad with the preparation before every trip and do some research on the cell phone or computer. And he will argue with his dad sometimes. His dad is busy at work, but he always goes on trips with us. He does interact with QZ a lot, but QZ just doesn't like to open up to his dad.

He will tell me things and ask me to relay messages to his dad. I will tell him to talk to his dad directly, but he won't. He isn't exactly scared of his dad, because he often argues with him. But he really doesn't like talking to his dad, maybe because his dad doesn't know how to talk to him either. He is always talking down to QZ as a parent and QZ finds it hard to accept.

Q: Would you be comfortable going out with just your husband and leaving him to fare on his own at home?

QZ's mother: Not for long. I am comfortable only if he is home by himself for a short time. When he was young, we would leave him with my mom when we traveled for business. One time when he was in middle school, we prepared food for him and he stayed home by himself for one night. When he was going to the Sunshine Home, there were several times when we were gone for 2 or 3 days. When we are not home, he can boil wontons for himself. After he started working, there was one time when we went on a trip for 2 or 3 days but he couldn't take time off, so I cooked some food for him. If he wanted to eat wontons, he would boil them. Otherwise he would just make some rice and microwave the food I had cooked.

He learned how to make rice when he was in middle school. He would go to school in the morning by himself, and since he got home early, he would scoop up some rice, put some water in and cook it in the electric rice cooker. My workplace used to be around here, but then it moved to the suburbs. He would get home earlier than I did from the Sunshine Home, so he would make the rice and I would make the dishes after I got off work. I normally keep him away from the gas stovetop.

He can survive at home by himself with no problem, but not for long, because he can't really cook.

Q: What does he do at home on Sunday?

QZ's mother: He doesn't seem to have a lot of interests. He watches TV and plays games on the cell phone and computer sometimes. He doesn't read much. We used to ask him to read newspapers and books as much as he could, but he wasn't interested. When he was young, we bought him a lot of children's books, but he wasn't into them at all. He likes handiwork. If we need to get something done, he likes to participate and to use his hands.

Q: Have you thought about him dating?

QZ's mother: People like him won't get dates that easy. There are not many of them and the circle is small. He hasn't met anyone who is right for him.

Q: Has he ever told you how he feels about this?

QZ's mother: Not in so many words. We thought about matchmaking for him and asked him if he wanted it and he did want it. And we did look around, but there's just no one right for him.

Q: So you will let things take their own course?

QZ's mother: Right, we will let things take their own course.

Q: Do you have any expectations for the future, or for society and the government?

QZ's mother: I just hope that QZ can have a stable job and can work long term at companies like Papa John's. People with ID have no expectations except to be included into society instead of being abandoned by society.

I hope that the government will issue more preferential policies encouraging companies to hire special-needs groups and to provide them with a platform to work so that they can be guaranteed basic living standards.

I also hope that all walks of life can care more about their emotional lives and daily lives and provide them with a healthy and happy living environment. If that can be done, the future will be bright for them.

Interview with QZ's Co-Worker (I)

Interviewee: Ms. Qu

Interviewer and writer: Mei Liao

Interview date: July 15, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where QZ works

Q: How would you describe QZ at work?

Qu: He is very down-to-earth, hard-working and doesn't complain. He doesn't talk much and is very mild. He will do whatever you ask him to do. For example, when the lady doing the dishes is late, all you need to do is to ask him, "Mr. QZ (in a friendly and teasing tone), could you please do the dishes?" and he will immediately do it. Sometimes we will be short-staffed, and he will be asked to work OT and he will do it, no questions asked. He is the most capable of all the employees being cared for. He can do everything both in the dining area and kitchen, and he can close shop too.

I kind of admire QZ. The company is always launching new drinks. Those drinks are formulated differently from the previous ones, and we are supposed to memorize the new formulas. I can't do it all the time, but whenever I ask him, he can tell me.

Q: As far as work goes, is there any difference between him and regular employees?

Qu: He doesn't do an even job when he spreads ingredients on the pizza, and he can't quite control how the pizza ends up looking.

All of the employees being cared for have a tough time making sure that the pizza is perfectly round and good-looking. Sometimes the customers will complain and we will have to apologize and make another pizza.

Our store is a special store that's known as a Caring Restaurant,¹ with quite a few employees being cared for. Several years ago, there were four female employees being cared for working in the dining area greeting customers, ushering, and waitressing. They would make mistakes sometimes like spilling water, and the regular employees would apologize for them and try to make up for the mistakes and explain that they were employees being cared for. Some customers were very understanding, while others wouldn't take it saying that they were paying to be served well and employees being cared for were none of their business. Shanghai is such a big city and you get to see people of all sorts.

We received a lot of complaints, and some customers even posted online pictures of one of the employees being cared for. I am talking about that girl there (pointing to an employee in the kitchen). She looks pretty and not like an employee being cared for, and you can still find her pictures online. Gradually the company changed the policy and moved the employees being cared for to work in the kitchen.

Interview with QZ's Co-Worker (II)

Interviewee: Mr. ZH

Interviewer and writer: Mei Liao

Interview date: July 15, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where QZ works

Q: How would you describe QZ at work?

ZH: He works hard and doesn't mind it. We will get busy sometimes and ask him to work OT, and he will do it without any complaints whatsoever.

Some of the employees being cared for will get mad if you have a talk with them about where they did wrong. You will ask them if they know where they did wrong and they will reply that they don't know. QZ doesn't talk back like that. He will just nod and admit his mistake without saying another word.

¹In Shanghai, Papa John's has two Caring Restaurants (爱心餐厅) where there are a larger percentage of full-time employees with disabilities than regular full-time employees. Therefore, they are demo stores for how Papa John's is creating jobs for people with disabilities.

QZ is capable at work and his workload is the heaviest among all of the employees being cared for. In fact, he has the same workload as the regular employees.

The employees being cared for can't keep anything to themselves. They show it whether they are happy or unhappy, and their lives are relatively simple. Regular people like us have a lot to think about and to fret about. They don't. They sleep when they are tired and work when they are not. And they don't have a lot of fun. They just stay home on their days off. QZ is better in that regard. His dad takes him traveling every year and he always gets a 10-day trip or so to see the outside world.

Interview with QZ's Co-Worker (III)

Interviewee: Ms. Zhou

Interviewer and writer: Mei Liao

Interview date: March 16, 2018

Interview place: Restaurant where QZ works

Q: How long have you known QZ?

Zhou: QZ joined early, probably in 2009. I joined even earlier.

Q: So you have known him ever since he joined. When you first met him, did you know that he was an employee being cared for?

Zhou: I did, because more than a dozen employees being cared for joined that one time.

Q: Did they all train with you?

Zhou: Right. There were probably 15 of them and they all got trained here before being assigned to other stores.

Q: So you were literally running a training base.

Zhou: Right.

Q: How many from that group stayed with you?

Zhou: I still have eight with me now, having lost several in between. Now there are one, two... eight employees being cared for at our store.

Q: Did anyone new join later?

Zhou: Yes, like Guo. He joined later.

Q: Back then, did you train the employees being cared for yourself?

Zhou: I did. I was the main person training them on the job, because I had worked in training previously.

Q: Were there any differences between training them and training regular employees?

Zhou: Definitely. They had to be taught many more times. Regular employees would get it after being taught one or two times, but they had to be taught eight or ten times and a lot of repetition was required. Even now, daily repetition is a must. You will talk and they will listen and acknowledge. But they will forget once they are really doing the job.

Q: Which positions was QZ trained for?

Zhou: QZ was trained to work in the kitchen, to make pizzas and appetizers.

Q: How long did the training take?

Zhou: He could work independently pretty soon, but he fell short of the standards.

Q: “Pretty soon...” was that in comparison against employees being cared for or against regular employees?

Zhou: QZ is adaptable compared against employees being cared for.

Q: Once the job became official, how is QZ performing?

Zhou: He can get his job done on his own. In other words, he hardly needs help with his job, unless we get really busy during dining hours, at which time he will need one or two co-workers to lend a hand.

Q: His mom said that when he first started the job, he didn’t quite get the rules and would exchange positions with his classmate. Does he still make mistakes like that?

Zhou: It was normal for him to make mistakes when he had just started. Even now, he still makes some minor mistakes, but everyone does.

Q: What kind of minor mistakes, for example?

Zhou: For example, you will ask him to move things to the other side and he will say he got it. But when you check later, the things are still at the original place.

Q: So he gets forgetful.

Zhou: Whether QZ gets things done depends on his mood. When he is in a good mood, everything goes smoothly. When he is in a bad mood, he will just ignore you. You will be standing here talking to him, and he will just turn around and walk off. Sometimes when you try to talk some sense into him, he will get impatient, throw a tantrum and throw things around. But those occasions are very rare.

Q: QZ’s mom said that he knows how to close shop. Does he still do that?

Zhou: He doesn’t do that now, because now we have a late-night shift selling take-out till midnight. If he closes shop after that, he won’t have any public transportation home. He normally gets off work at 9 or 10 p.m.

Q: Of the eight employees being cared for, how would you rate QZ’s work attitude and capabilities?

Zhou: He is up there.

Q: Are there any other employees being cared for who can also close shop?

Zhou: He is the only one who can.

Q: Then who closes shop now?

Zhou: An older guy who lives several minutes from the store.

Q: What are the processes for QZ learning about new products?

Zhou: He can do it, but he can’t vocalize how he does it. He can’t memorize things.

Q: How does he pass the tests then?

Zhou: He seldom passes. We allow them to copy from printed materials, because it’s impossible for them to memorize anything.

Q: Will you scold him when he makes mistakes?

Zhou: He will throw things around if you scold him, so it’s too scary for you to scold him. He will calm down himself and everything will be fine. You don’t have to say anything.

Q: After he has calmed down, will you still point out his mistakes to him?

Zhou: Of course I will.

Q: Do you also give him compliments?

Zhou: I do when he has done a good job.

Q: Do you see QZ chatting with co-workers?

Zhou: He doesn't do that a lot.

Q: Does QZ communicate more with regular employees or with employees being cared for?

Zhou: QZ doesn't normally communicate with anyone.

Q: Is QZ connected with anyone on WeChat?

Zhou: No. We have a WeChat group for the store but he isn't in it. He probably doesn't use WeChat.

Q: Do you interact with him a lot?

Zhou: Our interaction is limited to work.

Q: He and W were classmates, and they seem to have a lot to talk about.

Zhou: W is very bubbly and can chat anyone up. She has today off. QZ seldom talks. If you don't talk to him, he won't approach you to talk.

Q: Do regular employees look down on employees being cared for?

Zhou: Not at our store, because everyone knows about the employees being cared for. Almost all of the current regular employees joined after the employees being cared for, and there have been quite a few turnovers. I am the only one remaining from the earliest group.

Q: So the employees being cared for are experienced employees.

Zhou: Right. Time flies, and they have been here for more than 8 years.

Q: Can employees being cared for mentor new hires?

Zhou: We do have employees already working at certain positions train new hires, and we will track the progress and provide more training if they didn't get the standard training.

Q: Has QZ ever trained anyone?

Zhou: No. He is kind of shy and can't vocalize even though he can get things done.

Q: What shifts does he normally work now?

Zhou: Afternoon shift. Employees being cared for normally work afternoon shift from 10:30 or 11 a.m. to 8:30 or 9 p.m. Two other employees being cared for, Xu and Yin, joined at the same time as QZ. They perform very well and are mild-tempered. They were transferred to W store and carry the weight in the kitchen. In fact, all of the three workstations in the kitchen at W store are manned by employees being cared for, three of them in total. We have a lot more employees being cared for here.

Q: Because this store is a Caring Restaurant.

Zhou: Right, and it used to be the store where training was given. For many years, regular as well as employees being cared for were trained here. But the store is too old, so is the equipment, so no more training is given here.

Q: How do you know that those two employees being cared for carry the weight at W store?

Zhou: Our store is close to that one and there's something going on between the two stores every day, like moving supplies from one to the other. There's also the WeChat group, and everyone knows everyone, so I have access to feedback from W store.

Q: Too bad that the two employees being cared for you mentioned are not on our interview list. Parents had to volunteer for and agree to the interviews.

Zhou: Xu is the best-performing one, doing a great job at all of the positions and very mild in temper.

Q: How many employees are there at this store?

Zhou: A total of 21 including part-time. Five work in the dining area and the rest work in the kitchen.

Q: Of the 16 that work in the kitchen, 8 are employees being cared for.

Zhou: Seven.

Q: And the eighth one works in the dining area?

Zhou: As cashier.

Q: Really? Can employees being cared for work as cashiers?

Zhou: They can. She was hired as cashier. You can't really tell that she is an employee being cared for. She has delicate looks and dresses stylish. She has today off.

Q: There are different kinds of disability, some are intellectual whereas others are physical. Does she have intellectual disabilities?

Zhou: She does. Every employee being cared for at our store has intellectual disabilities. There's a deaf and mute employee at K store who is doing great.

Q: It's great that an employee being cared for can work as cashier, because calculations are required and money is involved.

Zhou: Per company policy, employees being cared for are not to work in the dining area. But she has special approval from the boss, because she has the ability and good looks.

Q: Do you treat employees being cared for the same as regular employees?

Zhou: Not really. Regular employees can recognize their mistakes, but employees being cared for can't. They will feel wronged if you point out their mistakes, so you will need to be more patient with them.

Q: Do you communicate a lot with the parents?

Zhou: I don't, because it's the store manager's job. For the past several years, the manager had had a meeting with the parents once a year.

Q: Are there group activities at this store?

Zhou: We have a monthly town hall at the store. We will buy some food and chat about business for that month and who has done well and who should have done better.

Interview with Mr. QZ

Interviewee: Mr. QZ

Present at Interview: Ms. W and Ms. ZZ

Interviewer and writer: Mei Liao

Interview date: Afternoon on July 15, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where QZ works

Because of the interview, QZ came to work early. W is also an employee being cared for and an old schoolmate of QZ's. She is outgoing. After getting permission from the manager on duty to sit in on the interview, she yelled excitedly, "Come over here, QZ!" while running with ZZ, another employee being cared for, to the dining area. QZ is more of an introvert. He followed them with a faint smile, and the three of them sat down facing the interviewer. At the beginning, QZ would often look at W before answering questions. He stopped doing that as he gradually relaxed.

Q: Were you and her (pointing to W) schoolmates?

QZ: Right, ever since elementary school.

W: Right, ever since elementary school.

Q: Your mom said that while you were going to school, you would visit each other at home.

W: Right. QZ came to my place and I went to his.

Q: What did you do?

W: Poker, hide-and-seek, everything.

Q: QZ, do you remember what you guys played?

QZ: (Looking apologetic) I forgot.

Q: Do you remember which year you graduated in?

QZ: I forgot.

Q: Did the two of you graduate at the same time?

QZ: No. I graduated after she did.

W: He did it later, I did it earlier.

Q (directed at W): Which year did you graduate in?

W: June 2005.

Q: So QZ might have graduated in 2006.

W: Either 2006 or 2007, right?

Q: Were you ever in the same class?

QZ: No. She was in the senior class and I was in the junior class. I am younger.

W: We got to know each other in PE.

Q: Do you remember how you got trained before you started working?

QZ: I went to a school for the training.

Q: How long was the training?

QZ: Two months.

Q: Do you remember what you were trained in? And which parts were easier and which were more difficult?

QZ: I forgot.

Q: Do you remember anything from the first day at work?

QZ: No.

Q: Which shifts do you normally work?

QZ: Morning, afternoon, evening. I work all shifts.

Q: When does morning shift begin?

QZ: 8:30.

Q: But the store doesn't open till 10, right?

QZ: I will come at 8:30, set up everything including the ingredients on the counters and chop up vegetables. The delivery guy helps sometimes.

Q: What do you do at work?

QZ: I knead and toss dough, slice pizzas, and make drinks and appetizers. I do pretty much everything.

Q: Is it hard to knead and toss dough?

QZ: Not really.

Q: How long does it take to learn? How long did it take you?

QZ: Two months.

Q: You do it best now. Are you the best employee at this?

W: He is.

QZ: I am not. Ms. Zhou does it best. I mean the manager on duty, Manager Zhou.

Q: What else can you do?

QZ: I can make drinks.

Q: Can you be more specific?

QZ: I can make mocha and pretty much anything.

Q: Which drink do you make best?

QZ: They are all very simple to make.

Q: So you are very good at making all of them?

QZ: Right.

Q: That's awesome. How long did it take for you to learn to make the drinks?

QZ: One week.

Q: So making drinks is easier than kneading and tossing dough.

QZ: Right, it's easier.

Q: What else do you make?

QZ: Appetizers.

Q: How do you make appetizers?

QZ: You just put them in the oven. It's really easy.

Q: So appetizers are the easiest to make?

QZ: Right. For example, you take four chicken wings, put them on a tray, put the tray in the oven, and that's it.

Q: How long is the baking?

QZ: About 15 min.

Q: Does the oven make a sound automatically after the 15 min?

QZ: It doesn't. You put the tray in the oven, the tray will come out by itself when the time is up, then you transfer everything from the tray to the plate.

Q: What else do you do?

QZ: I slice pizzas.

Q: That's good. What else?

QZ: I clean up tables in the dining area when it gets busy. I also do the dishes.

Q: Isn't there a dishwasher?

QZ: There is. The person doing the dishes normally comes to work at 4 p.m. When we get busy and run out of forks and knives, the manager on duty will ask us to hand wash some.

Q: What else do you do?

QZ: That's about it.

Q: You already do so much, kneading and tossing dough, slicing pizzas, making drinks and appetizers, cleaning up tables and doing dishes. That's awesome.

W: Of all the things that need to be done in the kitchen, making drinks and appetizers is easiest for me. Kneading and tossing dough is a little hard because it needs physical strength.

Q: What do you do when things quiet down and there are not many customers, like now?

QZ: I get the ingredients ready and chop up vegetables.

Q: So you do the prep work?

QZ: Right, prep work.

Q: You are all very capable. I heard from your mom that sometimes you open shop and sometimes you close shop. Every one of you is doing great.

W: When it gets busy in the dining area, I go out there to help too.

Q: Do you ever do customer-facing work?

QZ: I don't. She did (pointing to W), such as taking orders.

W: I did a couple of times. The customers said I was very good and thanked me. I got water for them and they thanked me saying, "This waitress is really nice."

Q (talking to W): Right, you are always smiling.

W: The most important thing is to finish your job first before taking on other tasks, right?

Q: Right. Have you ever made any mistakes kneading and tossing dough or making appetizers?

QZ: Rarely. Sometimes they would take the wrong order in the dining area, and the food I made would just be left there since it's not what the customers wanted.

Q: So you rarely make mistakes yourself?

QZ: Right.

Q: Does the manager on duty tell you what to do every day?

QZ: Right. On Saturday night, the manager will print a form showing when I should arrive for work and when I should leave. Most of the work is assigned by the manager.

Q: What about the part of the work that's not assigned by the manager?

QZ: I will figure it out myself. For example, I will refill the ingredients or take them out of the freezer to defrost.

Q: Your mom said that sometimes you are sent to other stores to pick up things.

QZ: Right, things are moved across stores. For example, if we are out of chicken wings or dough here, we will just go to another store to get them.

Q: Do you take the subway yourself to get them?

QZ: Yeah. Sometimes two people will go if there's a lot to be picked up.

Q: Have you ever taken the wrong subway?

QZ: No.

Q: You have a 1-h break at work. What do you do during the break?

QZ: I don't get to take the break when it gets busy sometimes. We are not as busy Monday through Friday, so I will rest and play on my cell phone during my break.

Q: What do you play on the cell phone?

QZ: I do some random browsing or watch movies.

Q: What do you do for lunch?

QZ: I bring what's cooked from the night before, put it in the fridge and microwave it for lunch.

Q: Do you get tired at work?

QZ: Not really. It's okay.

Q: None of you gets tired at work?

(Asking W): Do you not get tired?

W: Not really.

Q: You come to work every day and you are not tired?

W: No, none of us gets tired. We don't mind working hard.

Q: Do you ever get unhappy? Have you ever thought about quitting?

QZ: No.

W: We have never thought about that. QZ and I have been working here for more than 6 years, actually closer to 7 years. I joined in November 2009 and he joined in December 2009.

Q: So the two of you are senior employees. (Pointing to ZZ) And she is a newbie.

W (laughing): We are senior and she is junior. We are old generation and they are young generation.

Q: Do you get along with co-workers?

QZ: I do.

Q: Can you give me an example of how you get along with them? Do you do anything with them besides work?

QZ: When there are a lot of orders for drinks, the manager on duty will send them over to help make drinks.

Q: So you help each other when it gets busy.

QZ: Right.

Q: Have you made any good friends here?

QZ (pointing to W): Her.

The other employees being cared for joined later. We were among the first ones to join.

Q: So you can mentor the new staff.

QZ: Right.

Q: How do you mentor them? I would like to hear.

QZ: I teach them step by step, starting with making appetizers and drinks before moving on to kneading and tossing dough.

Q: It's awesome that you are kind of a teacher now. What's your plan for the future? Do you want to work here long term?

QZ: I do.

Q: Anything interesting happening at work?

W: Do you mean at work or outside work?

Q: Both. Working and interacting with co-workers, for example.

W: There is. I remember that we had a townhall meeting in either June or July of 2010...

QZ: We were given pizzas, snacks, and goodies including birthday gifts.

W: We also went to sing karaoke.

Q: This job sounds fun.

QZ: ...I am happy here and I get bored at home. I have no one to hang out with at home, while I have a lot of co-workers and friends here. It's just my parents and me at home, and I am on my own sometimes when they go to work.

Q: On your days off, if your parents are not home, do you go out by yourself?

QZ: I seldom do that.

Q: What do you do after work and on your days off?

QZ: On my days off? My friend owns a hot pot place and I help out there.

Q: What do you do there?

QZ: I clean up tables.

Q: What's the difference between working at the hot pot place and working here?

QZ: It's much busier there than here. On winter days and rainy days, we have a lot of takeout orders here and hardly any dine-in. At the hot pot place, it gets busy from noon till night and the table turnover rate is four or five.

Q: Do you go to that place on all of your days off?

QZ: I only go when it gets really busy, which isn't often.

Q: What else do you do at home? Do you know how to cook?

QZ: I do. I learnt at school. I know how to cook some dishes and cook rice.

Q: Do you still cook now?

QZ: My mom cooks at home. I don't have time to cook now that I work.

Q: Do you watch TV, play games, or read books?

QZ: I watch TV and use the PC.

Q: What kind of TV do you like to watch?

QZ: I watch shows.

Q: What kind of shows do you like to watch?

(Silence)

Q: You don't remember? What do you do on the PC?

QZ: There are movies on PC, right? So I watch movies.

Q: What kind of movies do you like?

QZ: ...Action movies.

Q: Your mom said that she often takes you traveling. Do you remember the places you went?

QZ: I have been to Japan and Australia.

Q: Which places do you like?

QZ: ...Japan, I guess. It's clean there and the hotels were nice, all five-starred. I have been to other hotels that were pretty far and not as nice, because they were part of the travel agencies' packages to save money.

Q: Did anything interesting happen on your trips?

QZ: Traveling is tiring. You have to get up really early and fly from one city to another. Sometimes you have to get up at two or three in the morning. And you don't get breakfast till you have packed and got on the plane. And you stay up late at night. Also, I swam and saw the ocean.

Q: Do you swim?

QZ: Not often.

Q: Now that you're working, do you still have time to travel?

QZ: We have annual leave and I use that for traveling.

Q: Do you parents decide where to go or do you suggest places?

QZ: They make the travel decisions.

Q: Is there any place you want to go?

QZ: I've been everywhere.

Q: Okay, that's it for the interview today. Thank you all.

Observation of QZ at Work

Observation place: Restaurant where QZ works

Observation date: 16:30–22:30, July 15, 2016

Observer and writer: Mei Liao

Because of the interview, QZ arrived at the store before his normal workday started.

Time	What QZ did	Remarks
16:10	Put on apron and got ready for work	
16:57	Made pizza (kneaded and tossed dough, added ingredients, and put the pizza in the oven)	
17:05	Took the cheese pizza out of the oven and placed it in a to-go box Took chicken wings out of the oven and placed them in a to-go box	Together with a co-worker, double-checked the quantities of the takeout orders and engaged in small talk with a light-hearted expression
17:18	Made thin-crust pizza	Saw a hole in the tossed dough and patched the hole
17:25	Made pizza	
17:31	Made pizza	
17:40	Made pizza	
17:44	Made pizza	
17:48	Made pizza	
17:55	Took pizza out of the oven	
17:59	Made pizza	

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Time	What QZ did	Remarks
18:10	Made pizza	
18:13	Made pizza	
18:16	Took bread sticks out of the oven. Refilled the ketchup bucket on the pizza-making counter	
18:20	Made pizza	
18:25	Made pizza	
18:30	Took pizza out of the oven	
18:42	Made pizza	
18:45	Made pizza	
18:49	Made pizza	
18:56	Refilled the ketchup bucket on the pizza-making counter	
19:10	Made pizza	
19:30	Refilled the ketchup bucket on the pizza-making counter	
19:51	Checked stock in the fridge against a list	
20:01	Put empty plastic dough molds in the storage cabinet	
20:03	Made pizza	
20:10	Organized ingredient containers	
20:14	Made pizza	
20:18	Took inventory	
20:28	Made pizza	
20:40	Took pizza out of the oven and placed it in a to-go box, boxed chicken wings	Together with a co-worker, double-checked the quantities of the takeout orders and engaged in small talk with a light-hearted expression
20:51	Mopped down the dough kneading counter	
20:53	Organized ingredient containers and cleaned up counter	
21:07	Made baked rice	
21:09	Made pizza	
21:24	Put away cleaned storage boxes	
21:26	Took pizza and other items out of the oven and placed them into-go boxes	
21:35	Made appetizer tray, chicken rolls and other food	The employees clocked out one by one. Only QZ and the manager on duty were left in the kitchen

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Time	What QZ did	Remarks
21:43	Took food out of the oven and placed it in a to-go box	
21:46	Sanitized work counters	
21:50	Rinsed the drains	According to a co-worker in the dining area, rinsing the drains is the job of the delivery person who is a regular employee. QZ gets along very well with the delivery person. The delivery person helps out in the kitchen when he has time. Taught by regular employees, QZ learns fast and makes great progress in everything. At that particular moment, the delivery person was out on a delivery. QZ happened to have time, so he rinsed the drains
22:00	Cleaned up the dough kneading counter and used a mop to scrub off flour stains	
22:09	Pushed inside four delivery vehicles from outside the store, took in the advertisement board	According to a co-worker in the dining area, the delivery person is in charge of the delivery vehicles. But he wasn't back yet, so QZ did his job for him
22:12	Locked the front door	
22:13	Turned off lights in the dining area and the main lighting in the kitchen	
22:30	Left for the day	

*Translated by Cissy Zhao**Edited by Andy Boreham and Zijian Chen*

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