

In the second of our super mum series, we feature mother of three and socialite Perveen Crawford, known over the years for her charity fundraising events as well as being Hong Kong's first female pilot. However, even as you are reading this, Perveen is in the Caribbean training for something more out of this world: to be Hong Kong's first woman astronaut.

# Super mums

## Out of this World

By Tracey Furniss

**O**pen the social pages of any upmarket magazine, and you are likely to find Perveen Crawford gracing its pages at some glamorous function. But there is more to Perveen than attending 'A' list parties. When you meet her, you realise she is not just a pretty face but kind and gracious with a generous heart. And after a while, you also realise that she definitely has

an adventurous and fearless spirit.

How many of us, for instance, actually have the courage to follow our dreams? Or walk up and introduce ourselves to Richard Branson in order to fulfil and even surpass them?

Perveen's dream was to fly. "Ever since I was six years old, I dreamt of flying," says Perveen. "I guess it came about when my parents left us in Hong Kong when they went

on vacations. My father had to go back to India to see his parents. In those days travel took a lot longer and we, my brothers and sisters, had to go to school. My parents left us at grandma's place for months. I remember being very upset. I had never flown in my life before, and I thought if only I could be a pilot and fly off to wherever I want to go. That's where my dream began."

Photo: Perveen Crawford with aeronautical engineer Burt Rutan and his sub-orbital rocket plane *SpaceShip One*



Perveen may have taken some of her get-up-and-go courage from her Persian-born father who came to Hong Kong as a recruit for the British Army. He later joined the police force. "I was not from a wealthy family. My father was in the police force. Then he became famous, as he was one of the first to initiate the beginnings of the ICAC. There was a lot of corruption in the police force back then. He was very hard working and brilliant and he passed all his exams to get his inspector's rank. But after all that training and passing his exams they said, 'by the way, you need to pay us \$6,000 to graduate.' He refused as he didn't have the money. He took his case to court. It was a 10-year battle. He never did become an inspector, but he became a lawyer through

fighting for his own rights.

I was born and raised in Hong Kong. I attended St Margaret's College," says Perveen. "An uncle, who was a principal of a school, paid for the fees for all five brothers and sisters. We were very fortunate. After I graduated at the age of 17, I met my husband. He was my first love and hopefully will be my last."

Perveen's first step toward her dream was to join Cathay Pacific as a stewardess. This she did for five years before having children. When she started a family, she became a full-time mother. Perveen now has three children age 14, 18 and 23.

"When my youngest child was about one year old, I saw an advertisement in the *South China Morning Post* for male or female private pilots for the Hong Kong Aviation Club. I said 'Wow' – the ad also said 'with no experience'. So I called them up and an English guy picked up the phone. I explained to him that I was a mum with three kids and asked 'Do you think I qualify?' He said, 'Of course you do, my mother is a pilot and an instructor and has five children.' That gave me the incentive. I called them up in 1993 and started learning. In 1995, I got my licence. It took a year and a half to learn to pilot a Cessna 172 and 182. It took a little longer than usual as I had to also look after my father who was very ill at the time."

Becoming Hong Kong's first female pilot was an accomplishment in itself, but it seems Perveen did not want to stop there. Her spirit for adventure took hold again at a party that Richard Branson was attending last year. "I was at a party at Cyberport for the launch of the Virgin Atlantic flights to Beijing," says Perveen. "We were partying and I asked someone if they'd seen Richard Branson and he said, 'Oh yes, he's sitting over on the sofa there.' So I walked over [to Richard] and introduced myself as Hong Kong's first female pilot. He immediately asked me if I'd like to be Hong Kong's first female astronaut. Of course I said yes."

As part of Richard Branson's Founders team, Perveen joins the likes of John Travolta, Victoria Principal, and it seems Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie have joined the elite group, to be the first 100 Virgin Atlantic commercial astronauts, each paying US\$200,000 for the privilege. The Founders will go into space on *SpaceShip Two*, due to be launched next year, but it will carry only six passengers and two specially trained pilots. So who gets to go first for the two and a half hour flight into space?

Perveen says, "It will be decided through a lucky draw." I'd be curious to know how Angelina would feel if Perveen gets to fly with Brad. "He's not my type," she laughs.

Perveen started her space orientation earlier this year in the Mojave Desert in California and is in the Caribbean on Richard Branson's private island this month for more team building and training with Richard and the other Founders. But she is the first to admit that training for space is tough, with motion sickness being just one obstacle she has to overcome.

Perveen first endured the pressures of positive G-force 10 years ago in a twin-engine jet. "It was awful, the pilot was trying to show off what the plane could do," says Perveen. "We experienced over three Gs. I got shoulder ache, headache and nausea. There were a lot of green faces around and most passengers headed straight for the toilets." Perveen will experience 7 G-forces when she blasts off for space in *SpaceShip Two* in 2008. "We have to train and pass fitness tests. I get motion sickness, so I am working on that."

So how do her kids and husband feel about all of this? "My husband thinks I am insane," says Perveen. "My kids don't think it is completely safe, but are used to the idea now. They are quite proud of me for doing this."

And as for the risks, how does Perveen feel about those?

"I'm not afraid of dying," she says, "I would rather die floating gracefully in space than be buried on Earth."

But if Richard Branson has anything to do with it, there will be none of that. He is building a spaceport in the New Mexico desert in preparation for making space travel accessible to all who can afford it, by 2009. The Founders, of whom Perveen is part of, are making history as the forerunners to this, creating a new tourist destination that up until now was only part of the vivid imaginations of science fiction writers. ■





# 超級媽媽

## 香港首位女太空人



超級媽媽系列第二個故事的主人翁，是擁有三個孩子的社會知名人士 Perveen Crawford，她歷來投入多項慈善籌款活動，而且還是香港首位女機師。不過，當你閱讀本文時，她已在加勒比海受訓，準備飛越地球，成為香港首位女太空人。

**翻**開任何高檔次雜誌，你很可能會看見 Perveen Crawford，閃耀於星光熠熠的社交場合，讓篇章之間散發著優雅。然而，對於 Perveen 來說，出席這些頂級盛會，還有更多意義。當你遇見她時，你也會同意，她不僅樣子美麗，而且有顆仁慈、優雅和慷慨的心。然後，你還會發現，她喜愛冒險，擁有大無畏的精神。

我們當中，有多少人能有勇氣，真正把自己的夢想實現？又或登上台階，在布蘭森面前自我介紹，為了完成甚至超越夢想？

Perveen 的夢想就是飛行，「自從我六歲開始，我已夢想飛行。」Perveen 說：「我猜想這念頭可追溯至兒時，那時候，爸媽離開香港渡假，而整個旅程的時間很長，我們兄弟姐妹都要上學，爸媽將我們送到婆婆那裡。爸爸須要返回印度探望雙親。我記得那時很不開心，在這時候之前，我從沒乘搭過飛機，我這樣想，假如我成為飛機師，想要到那裡便可飛到那裡，我的夢想就是在這時候誕生的。」

Perveen 的爸爸在波斯出生，來港當英軍僱傭兵，其後加入警隊。或許，Perveen 也遺傳了父親那種坐言起行的勇

氣。「我並非生於一個富裕家庭，父親是警隊成員。然後，他成為知名人士，因為他是其中一個，促使廉政公署誕生的人。在此之前，警隊出現很多貪污個案。他既勤奮也出色，並且通過考試，原應晉身督察。但在受訓和通過考試後，他們對他說，『順便提一提，你若畢業，便要給我們六千元』。他拒絕，因為他本身也沒有錢。他將案件訴諸法庭，這宗官司歷時十年。他最後從未當上督察，但卻因爭取個人權利成為律師。」

「我在香港出生和長大，在聖瑪加烈書院唸書。」Perveen 說：「有一位叔叔，他是一間學校的校長，給我們五兄弟姊妹支付學費。我們確是非常幸運。在十七歲畢業時，我與丈夫邂逅，他是我的初戀情人，也將是我最後的一個戀人。」

Perveen 實現夢想的第一步，是加入國泰航空公司當服務員，工作五年，才生兒育女。建立一個新家庭後，她專心做個全職媽媽。Perveen 現在有三個孩子，分別是十四歲、十八歲和廿三歲。

「當我最小的孩子約一歲大時，我在《南華早報》看見一則廣告，香港飛行總會徵求私人機師，男女各一名，我

登時『嘩！』的一聲叫好，廣告還說無需經驗。於是我致電查詢，然後有個英國男子接電話。我向他解釋，我是個三個孩子的媽媽，並且問他：『你認為我合資格嗎？』他說：『當然，我媽媽是個機師，也是指導員，她有五個孩子。』這無疑給我鼓勵，我在1993年打電話給他們，然後開始學習，結果在1995年取得牌照。學習駕駛單螺旋槳172及182定翼飛機，需要一年半時間。這比一般人所需的時間稍長，因為我需要照顧當時病重的父親。」

成為香港第一位女機師，已是一項非凡成就，但Perveen似乎不想就此停止。她愛闖高峰的精神，在去年一個派對中又再發揮威力，當時英國大亨布蘭森也應邀出席。「我在數碼港，參加維珍航空開辦往北京航線的派對。」Perveen說：「我們都在參加派對活動，我問別人，有沒有見過布蘭森，然後有人答說：『噢！對的，他坐在沙發那邊。』於是我走到他面前，自我介紹，告訴他我是香港第一個女機師。他立即詢問我有沒有興趣成為香港第一個女太空人。我當然說：好的！」

Perveen成為布蘭森創會隊伍的行列，與尊特拉華特、維多利亞·普林斯帕爾為伍，還有好像畢彼特和安祖蓮娜也加入，成為維珍航空太空之旅的首百位嘉賓，每位收費\$200,000美元。創會隊伍定於明年二月，乘坐太空船二號升空，但只會接載六名乘客和兩名經特別訓練的機師。那麼誰會首先乘搭兩小時半的旅程，登上太空？Perveen說：「這會用幸運抽籤方式決定。」我很好奇，假若抽籤決定Perveen與畢彼特同遊太空，安祖蓮娜將感覺如何？「他不是我喜歡的那類」Perveen大笑起來。

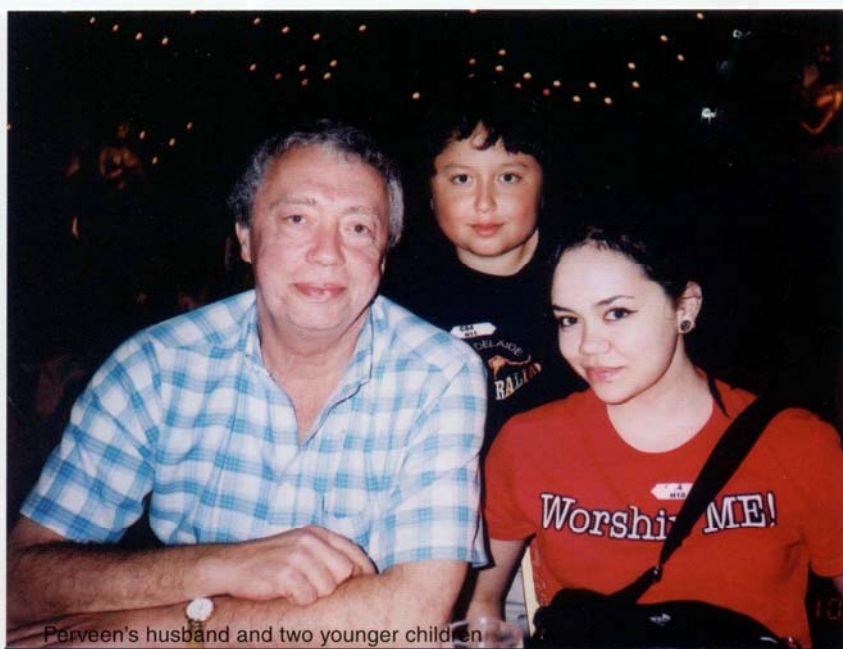
Perveen在今年初，在加州的莫哈維沙漠，參加太空之旅的迎新活動，它位於加勒比海一個由布蘭森擁有的小島上，而整個月，都在這裡與布蘭林及其他創會隊伍成員，接受訓練與建立團隊關係。不過，她是第一位承認太空之旅訓練不易熬的成員，動暈症是她需要克服的其中一大障礙。

Perveen在十年前，在一架雙引擎噴射機上，首次克服地心吸力。「非常可怕，機師嘗試展示飛機可怎樣飛行。」Perveen說：「我們當是要抵受三級以上的地心吸力。我出現肩痛、頭痛和噁心等現象。周圍有許多新鮮的臉孔，很多乘客都往洗手間去。」到2008年，當Perveen從太空船二號飛彈升空時，她將要抵受七級地心吸力。「我們都需要接受訓練和通過體格測試。我有動暈症，因此我正訓練自己，克服這問題。」

她的丈夫和子女對此感覺如何？「我丈夫覺得我很瘋狂。」Perveen說：「我的孩子則認為，這不是百分百安全的，但現在都接受了，他們還因此以我為榮。」

至於風險方面，Perveen又如何評估？「我並不害怕死亡。」她說：「我寧願軀體飄浮太空，也不身葬大地。」

但是假若布蘭森一切準備妥當，這種事情將不會發生。他正在新墨西哥沙漠，興建一個太空港，為2009年開辦的太空旅遊，作好準備，讓所有付得起旅費的人參加。Perveen是成員之一的創會隊伍，扮演領航者角色，開創歷史，為人類旅遊點，開闢新天地。直至現時為此，這仍是科幻小說作家筆下的虛擬世界。■



Perveen's husband and two younger children



Perveen with her eldest son



Perveen's collection of miniature planes