

Rick Goings

Tupperware Brands chairman and CEO gets ...

Up close & personal

By THEAN LEE CHENG
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AS Rick Goings, chairman and chief executive officer of Tupperware Brands Corp became more successful, he began to think about making a difference in life.

"I was in my 30s when I decided that. I asked myself what cause I would like to focus on. Because of my business, I began to focus on the difference between men and women and how they view the business world," says Goings.

Because he was heading a global direct selling company that deals in food storage, an area that interests mainly women, he discovered the business was making him a student again.

"It all started with the difference between a woman's and a man's brain. Women are better at multi-tasking and this can be seen even from as far back as pre-historic times. Women look after the house, bring up the children, keep the fire burning at home while the men go out to hunt.

"In my adult working life, I have heard of remarks directed at women calling on them to 'act like a man'. Please, I want to tell every woman reading this, 'don't act like a man'. Instead, leverage on your power. I want to tell every father and brother reading this, 'give your daughter, or your sister, the freedom to be a woman,'" says Goings who was here in Kuala Lumpur to talk to employees and dealers of Tupperware.

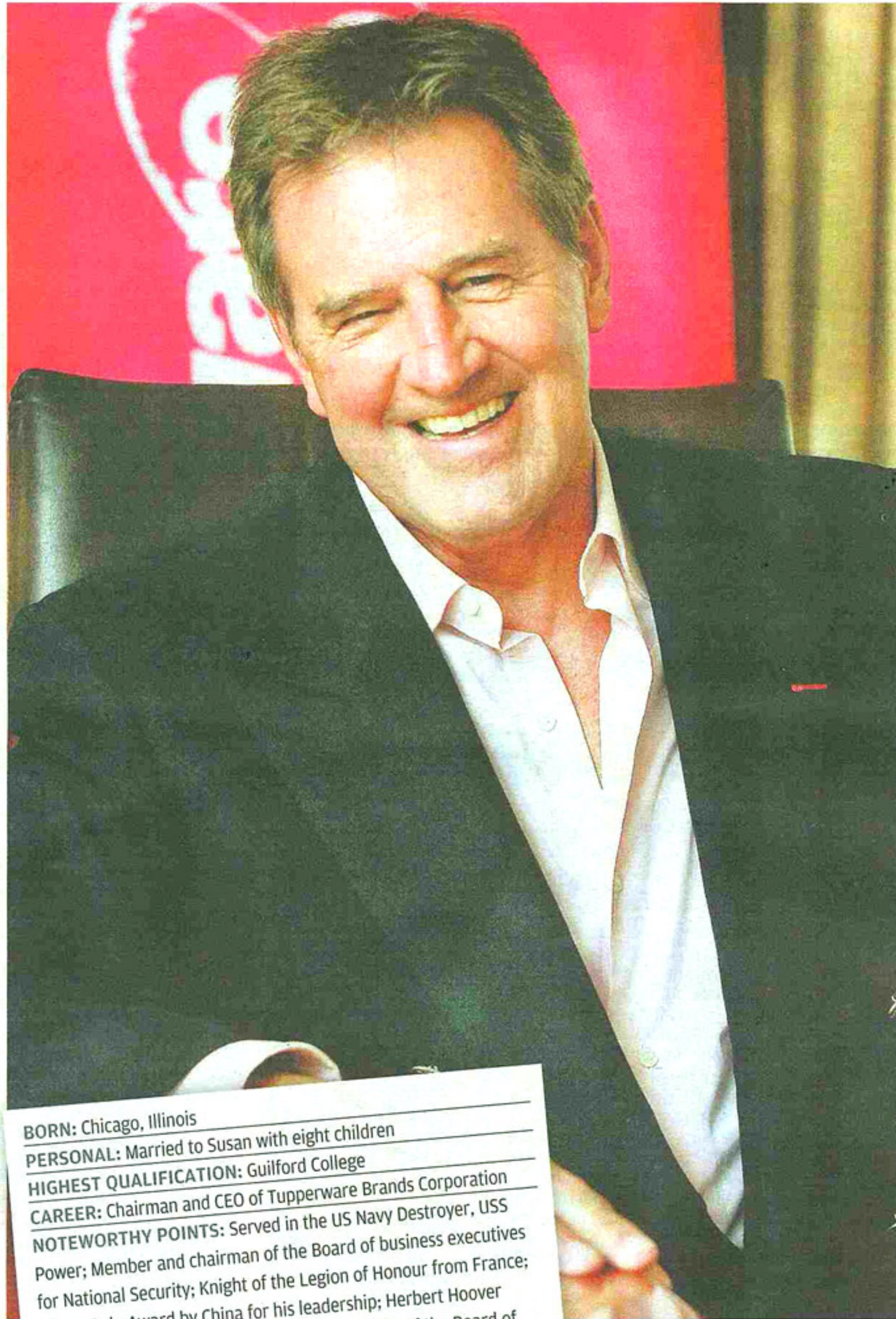
Unknown to him then, his interest in gender issues started when he became a member of the national Board of Governors of the Boys Club of America, a club for youngsters. He noticed that 40% of the members were little girls. That paved the way for the club's name to be changed. As he looked back at the various involvements and interest groups he got himself attached to, he noticed an underlying thread – women's issues.

Goings was recently part of a delegation that visited Iraq to learn more about local businesswomen, the challenges they face in Iraq's fast-growing economy, and the potential business and investment opportunities in the country. The delegation was the first of its kind to visit Iraq solely for the purpose of studying women's issues.

The trip was part of his work with the Board of Business Executives for National Security (BENS), a non-partisan organisation that supports the US government by applying pro bono best business practice solutions to its most intractable national security challenges. He was made chairman of BENS this year.

Last year, French president Nicolas Sarkozy presented Goings with the distinguished decree of *Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur* for his service to and support of disadvantaged children and women in developed and developing nations.

China recognised Goings with the Marco Polo Award in March, 2000 for his leadership and his significant role in China's economic development. In 1999, the Boys & Girls Clubs of America honoured Goings with its highest award, the Herbert



BORN: Chicago, Illinois
PERSONAL: Married to Susan with eight children
HIGHEST QUALIFICATION: Guilford College
CAREER: Chairman and CEO of Tupperware Brands Corporation
NOTEWORTHY POINTS: Served in the US Navy Destroyer, USS Power; Member and chairman of the Board of business executives for National Security; Knight of the Legion of Honour from France; Marco Polo Award by China for his leadership; Herbert Hoover Humanitarian Award for his leadership; Member of the Board of Trustees, Rollins College; Member of the Board of Governors, Boys & Girls Clubs of America for over 20 years
FAVORITE PLACE: Any place Susan and I are together. It's not just any one place; I am fascinated by and enjoy a variety of cultures and places
FAVORITE FOOD: Japanese
HOBBIES: Golf and fitness training
VALUES: Character is what you do when no one is watching
INSPIRATION: Watching people wake up their potential!

Hoover Humanitarian Award, for his outstanding leadership as National Chairman.

Honoured though he may be, Goings says it is not accolades he is after. "I love dealing with women's issues. It's in my DNA," says Goings who, other than his time in the US Navy as a navigator on the USS

Power, a World War II-era destroyer, also worked in Avon Products, another women-related company. He headed Avon's cosmetics division and joined Tupperware in 1992. He became its chief executive in 1997.

"In Mel Gibson's movie *What Women Want*, Gibson puts on stock-

ings and wore lipstick to discover what it is like to be a woman. I will not go as far as that. I simply enjoy being involved in issues related to women. When I do things for women and girls, I think of my daughter who died at 26," he says.

Goings says there are various programmes to help women. In the case of Iraq, organisations find that when they micro-finance and train a woman in entrepreneurship, she becomes more confident and with that she can influence the community she is in.

But gender aside, there are two people inside each of us, says Goings.

"We are the person we are today and the much greater person we can become. The purpose of life is to live up to our fullest potential – how do you grow from the person you are today, to the person you can become?," he says.

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Very often, if one were to question why one's life is the way it is, many consider themselves as victims. They may have lost a loved one, or suffered some other loss. But in reality, Goings says we are never victims. There is this word – responsibility.

"If we take the word 'responsibility' and slice it right in the middle, we have response and ability. How we respond to losses is an ability. When I was in the navy, I was trained to swim, to jump out of a craft, to always have the ability to respond. You may not like what is happening, but you know how to respond. That makes you a warrior, not a victim."

The setback is, says Goings, many go through life without taking responsibility for themselves.

"In an abusive relationship? Don't like the house you live in? How do you spend your holidays? Are you happy with the career you are in? Is there something you want to learn but never did? I am posing these questions because ultimately, we have to take responsibility for our own lives. Take responsibility for your health because you cannot execute your plan unless you have health. Build your relationships because that is all that matters. The greatest wealth is not money, but relationships. Any destination in life is fine if you have nothing in mind, but is that the way you want to go?"

As Goings considers the talk that he has prepared for employees (a day after the interview), he brings up two names – Former British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill (1951-1955) and tennis player Rafael Nadal Parera. "They never gave up."

Goings said wherever he goes, in whatever sectors he has found himself in, he somehow has a connection with people.

"I find that I can talk to people, to build that affinity with them. You are where you are today, or else you do the necessary to change it. It may be scary to make the change, but to me, getting out there and facing the unknown is better than being in a bad situation. Why do you think I am doing all this? Be the change you want to see in the world."

His second marriage to Susan 14 years ago has also made him very happy. He carries a picture of her smiling in the camera on his mobile phone and is extremely proud of what they have achieved together as a couple and in their personal lives.

"Isn't she really pretty?" he asks, as her picture appears.

He has three daughters and two sons from his first marriage while Susan has three children from her first marriage.

"Susan refused to go out with me for years because the children were little. She was my first date after many years, so she is very special," says Goings.