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FaceTime
May Truong[Sam Whiting](#)

By day May Truong, 29, runs a doctor's office. By night she runs after cars for Soiree Valet.

On learning to parallel park.

I grew up in Hunters Point and had a Hyundai Excel. I drove to Washington High School across town, and most of the parking was on a hill. They didn't have a parking lot for the students. Sometimes I had 30 seconds to find parking and run to class. I usually made it just in time. I don't remember ever getting a ticket out there.

On becoming a runner.

I saw an ad in the paper that said valet, and I thought it was working at a hotel or restaurant. I didn't know this type of business existed where you went to people's homes or you did the Opera, my God. I called and my first question was, "Oh, so you hire women?" It seems to be more of a job for a man.

On trying out for the job.

I had to prove I could drive a manual. We had to pull out of a spot and go in reverse and 90-degree park next to a Dumpster, to see how straight we could get it. It was a challenge because it was dark. When I got hired, there were two or three women out of at least 60 or 70.

On her love of cars.

It doesn't extend to working on cars. I just love to drive. In '95 I decided to get a Honda Civic SI, which was the fastest thing ever for me. After owning it for four months I sold it because I knew I'd kill myself in it.

On making a good impression.

I got my hair done for the Opera opening. They pull up in their car, and we converge on them like bees to open their doors. I'm 5 feet 2 and 105 pounds. I wear the only size 36 jacket in the company. That's the smallest they make and it's big on me.

On parking in crowded residential neighborhoods.

If you know the secret streets you go directly there instead of circling 10 times around the same two blocks. You've got to keep your window down, turn your radio off and listen for those car-alarm chirps, listen for those keys.

On fighting other drivers for parking.

Our rule is we don't.

On valets versus cabdrivers.

Runners are better drivers because we care about the cars we're in. We've had incidents with cabs. A cab will hit us. What can you do other than take their information and tell the customer it's an accident? But those are awkward.

On strange customer behavior.

People who think it's their car, and it's not their car. Customers telling us, "My gold cuff links are missing from my car" and you look in their Jag and it's not even their Jag. Their Jag is three cars away.

On shaky customer behavior.

If the customer looks a little drunk, we say, "It will be a few minutes," then we find the host and say, "Your guest is probably not good to drive right now." We give the host the keys and let them know where the car is, then it's up to them.

On the temperament required.

Type-A personality plus patience. Last week I think I came home from an event at 4 a.m., and by the time I sat down on the La-Z-Boy it was 4:30, and I couldn't get to sleep until 5:15.

On developing a work ethic.

I was born in Saigon. I was actually at the gates of the embassy when the last helicopter left. I was 5 or 6. We were in a refugee camp for 18 months. My mother came here, and within three or four months she'd learned enough English to where Bank of America hired her as a bookkeeper. It's amazing how generous this country is. Then my father came and bought a restaurant in the Bay View. My sister and I ran it. I was 10.

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