

# Dating the Board

A column in which we get to know the members of the *Options* board of directors through dates with yours truly.

Kim Stowell

## TED NGO

Hometown: Saigon, Vietnam  
BS, University of California/Irvine, Software engineering  
Favorite Restaurant: DeWolfe Tavern, Bristol  
Hero: his mom

Ted Ngo suggested at the outset of our date that I describe him as a “self-made marketing maven, community connection facilitator, and a converted dog lover.” And so there you have it, right? Not hardly.

I met Ted for lunch at Reflections Café in Providence. He graciously turned off his endlessly ringing cell phone as we sat down, and just as quickly turned me down for the requisite photo, as he was not sufficiently clean-shaven. What might have sounded like vanity, however, I came instead to see as a sort of old-world respect, born of a gentility that would not permit a son of No Thieu to appear in print unshaven. And I should mention that all Ted has to do is flash that adorable smile and I am putty in his hands, so I quickly backed off and arranged for a photo shoot at a later date.

In an attempt to begin the interview on a light note, I asked him where he’s from. “Saigon,” he answered, and we were off. As the tale unfolded, I learned that Ted came to this country at age 13 as a refugee. I learned of his father, who died suddenly just before the American troop withdrawal from Vietnam, leaving 18 children behind. I learned how his family had escaped as Saigon fell, leaving all their belongings behind and traveling at great peril through pirate-infested waters to the refugee camps of Malaysia. It was an amazing story, told to me by this mild-mannered American businessman, this self-made marketing maven, this converted dog lover. Everyone has a story, it is true, but I was not expecting this from Ted, and certainly not from the innocuous question I had chosen to begin with. You would never guess it to meet him.



Ted was invited to join the *Options* board of directors by long-time *Options* volunteer Peter Quesnel. “He bugged me for a long time,” Ted laughed, “until I finally went to a meeting. But I had been thinking I should get more involved with the community. I was using my business as an excuse not to be doing more.” Luckily for us, he reasoned that working with *Options* would help him to “be a more resourceful person, personally and professionally. My business is about relationships. I like to be able to make connections.”

For the record, Ted’s work is in the arena of business consulting, with a bit of technology and marketing thrown in. He has a hand in real estate, and loves “creating processes and strategies.” “Economic viability” was a phrase I recall him using too, but words like that make me a little dizzy, so I lost track at that point.

Off the record, Ted knew he was gay at age 10, when he developed a crush on his sister’s boyfriend. He came out to his family at age 25, and has enjoyed their acceptance ever since. “My dad died young, and my mom has always been a loving, generous person. She set a wonderful example, teaching us by telling stories and instilling in all of us a sense of honor, respect and good morals.” Today, he is “very out.” “I never hesitate to come out,” he added, “I have nothing to hide.” He lives in East Providence with his partner of 16 years, and asked me to mention in this article that he would very much like to have the kitchen remodeled. ▼