

# Up from The Rank and File

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## A Memo

**James C. Ma**



**Cong Er Deng Bing Dao Jiao Shou**

Dedicated to  
My Father and Mother



**The author was 9 years old (far left) with uncle, younger brother, Zhongxin, father, mother, and eldest sister, Zhonglan.**

The author passed the Joint College Entrance Examination and was admitted to NCKU in 1960. His buddies in the 5<sup>th</sup> company held a party for him. The author is at the front center.



Some of the closest buddies:  
(from left to right) the author (in rear),  
Wang Jingfan, Sun Jingfu, Kuo  
Guangren, and Wang Yuhuai.



The literature and arts friends in the  
army: (front) from left to right: Li  
Chunsheng, Wang Yu huai, Yang  
Zhenying  
(back) Sun Jingfu, Zhu Guangxi, the  
author.





**From left to right: younger sister, Yulan, eldest sister, Zhonglan, the author, wife, Paolien, nephew, Jiankang in Hong Kong in 1989.**



**After 40 years' separation, and during the Chinese New Year, the author had a family reunion with Yulan, Zhonglan in Hong Kong in 1989.**

**When pursuing his doctorate in 1975,  
the author was with his wife, son and  
daughter.**



**In 1977, the author and his family toured Lake Michigan.**



Receiving doctorate at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale in 1978.



The author took his first trip to the U.S.A. for furthering his studies:  
from left, Wang Bao-xia, Paolien and Taohung, Wang Bao-hwa, the author and his mother-in-law (in rear).



The author with his family, son, daughter-in-law, two granddaughters.



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# Preface

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This memo consists of three parts. In the first part, I describe how I, as a teenager, ran away from home in 1948, how I escaped from a Communists' detention center located in the central eastern Shandong Province, how I survived by being a peddler selling shoes in Qingdao, how I was sort of student again, in an abandoned silk factory at township, Changanzhen, and how I ran through the hilly lands to get to Fuzhou, and how I was drafted into the army illegally in the Penghu Islands. During the period of six years from 1948 to 1954, at one time, I was in danger of being killed falling off the rather steep cliff of a hill when retreating to the south in the Mainland, at the other, I almost died of typhus, the terrible disease spread on the Penghu Archipelago. As I ranked non-commissioned officer in the army, I once imagined that if I could be discharged from the army honorably, I would be content with very little living my life out as a nobody somewhere in Taiwan.

In the second part, education comes into focus of my life. With the amount of \$940 given to me when I quit the army, I got my undergraduate program done. And with the help of my friends, I got on two trips to the U.S. and got two advanced degrees. And I was asked back to my alma mater to teach, and assumed many different university administrator jobs from chairmanship of the department through to deanship of student affairs, the highest position of my teaching career. During those two terms in office, I met with a lot of student protests due to the changes of political climate. I had never been frustrated by their parading on campus, nor did I look for the negative side of the students who had launched those movements. But they were often led by their own ideology, not considering the other students' points of view as a whole. Once I thought I was a problem solver, "untying all forms of the knots the students had tied." The most regrettable thing was that there were 26 students who died of car accidents and others when I was in office.

The third part is perhaps the heart-rending one. In it, I describe how I invited my sisters to Hong Kong for a family reunion in 1989 and how I paid a visit to my hometown after 44 years' absence. Overall, I am a man who has witnessed a tiny part of the civil war between the Chinese Nationalist army and the Communist army, and experienced the 713 Incident taking place in the Penghu Islands. I am greatly indebted to my little sister-in-law, Wang Bao-Hwa, and assistant Professor Rebecca Chung for their editing.

Without their assistances, this work can't be done so easily.

## Chapter 1

### An Archaeological Site--- Ling County

My birthplace is a small railway station named Huangqibao in the eastern part of Shandong Province, China, on the rail line called Jiaoji, from Jinan to Qingdao. But during my formative years, I received education in the capital city of Jinan.

It doesn't matter Huangqibao or Jinan, neither of them is regarded as my hometown. The word, "hometown" from a Chinese point of view, should be related to the following: there should be the ancestors' tablets erected to be sacrificed, the genealogical tree kept to be checked with, and the ancestors' graves stood for descendants to pay tribute to if one is likely to do so. Therefore, based on these fundamentals, my hometown should be Ling County instead of my birthplace, Huangqibao.

If you mention Ling County, I am afraid that there will be a lot of people who admit that they have never heard about such a place. But if mentioning a historical figure, Dong Fangshuo (162 B C - 93 B C), seemingly, no one doesn't know who he is. He is one of the behind-the-scenes strategists of the great emperor, Liu Che, of the Eastern Han dynasty, not only a jester to entertain the emperor but also the forerunner of the blind man in the fortune-telling trade. Being sophisticated and witty, he is considered the best of the best among the Chinese intellectuals. This state-renowned figure was born in a township named Shentou in Ling County.<sup>1</sup>

To this day, about 2 Chinese Li (one kilometer), to the west of Shentou, there is still Dong Fangshuo's tomb existing.<sup>2</sup>

During the Jin Dynasty, Xia Houzhan used the Chinese calligraphic art called "Dong Fangshuo Hui Zan style" to put his life story down on the paper. The whole thing is entitled: "The Account of Dong Fangshuo" wherein Xia extolled his exemplary conduct and nobility of character to the skies, and his witticism and humor as well.<sup>3</sup>

The most famous calligrapher, Yan Zhenqing (709 - 785) in the Tang Dynasty, was the magistrate of Pingyuan County (the ancient title of Ling County) in the year of 753. When in office, based on Xia's work, he had the account rewritten in his own calligraphic art style and then, carved on a stone, named the "Yan's Calligraphic Art Monument."<sup>4</sup>

But the most pitiful thing was that when the Japanese troops occupied this area, the stationed soldiers dismantled it and spanned it on a ditch as a road crossing material. Because of the people's treading on it and the running of the cart, it became worn out, and some of the strokes of the words became unrecognizable. Despite these damages, it is still stored in the Yan's Pavilion as one of antiques.<sup>5</sup>

When in office, Yan also wrote an epitaph for "Dong Fangshuo Tomb."<sup>6</sup> And that piece of work is still kept in Ling County *Wenyuan* (Wenyuan is quite like a cultural center or art center nowadays, for writers, artists, etc. to meet or hold exhibits of their art works).

In the late 1980s, a group of archaeologists discovered that in Ling County, there were more than 70 ancient graves proved to be the Han Dynasty and the Tang Dynasty ones but only 38 of them remained existent. In addition, they found out that there were some Han Dynasty's pottery shards, and broken tiles, and some sections of wall built in the Tang Dynasty.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, it seems that Ling County becomes a holy place for archaeology studies.

Situated on the tract of about 1,120 square kilometers, the land of Ling is nothing else but fertility. Within its boundaries, there are neither high mountain ranges nor deep gorges. As far as one can see, the land looks like a pancake unlimitly enlarged.

The major agricultural products are: soybean, corn, barley, wheat, sorghum and cotton.

Between the harvest and planting times called "off-season," farmers also grow clover with green-leafed and purple-colored flowers used as fodder for livestock. However, during the lean years when the food falls short, the farmers pluck the clover and mix it with soy pulp having it cooked in boiling water as sort of food.

There is a variety of famous fruits such as date, peach, apricot, pear and watermelon growing.

And one of its wine products called "Zhenqing" (after the name of the ancient magistrate, Yan Zhenqing) gets noted in the country and it can be regarded as Ling County's speciality.

Our home village is called Large Horse Village and shares the borders with the Quis'

Village to the south and with Small Horse village to the east. Not far away from our village, there is a township by the name of Panhe, and right there, farmmarkets are regularly held on the first day and the fifteenth day of each month. During those days, equipped with an oversized sack slung on my grandpa's shoulder, he and I would have a donkey-back ride going there for shopping or selling. By the, I didn't know anything about what he wanted to purchase or sell, but one thing I did know was that once there, he always firstly ordered several hot and steamed dumplings from food stand for me to eat.

Our family had a large pear orchard producing a tremendous amount of green-colored and apricot-colored pears. When the trees were fully laden with pears and bent low. And even lying on the ground under them, with the head tilted at an angle and mouth widely opened, one was able to get the tastes of these sweet pears.

In front of our village, there was a moat built with the purpose of protecting our village if attacked. When summer came, I was out of school and followed my parents from Jinan to pay a visit to my native village. And quite often, I jumped into it and stayed under the water until I couldn't hold my breath any longer or I played with my playmates of the same age by splashing water over one another.

Once when I jumped into it, I felt there was a severe pain in my right leg. Having climbed unto the bank, I found a two-centimeter cut down in my right shin from which blood was gushing. Without doubt, I landed that shin on something pointed like a broken piece of tile buried in the mud down there. Since then, a white scar has still remained visible.

Based on my immediate uncle, Ma Jiaying's discription, the Ma clan in the Large Horse village moved from Shanxi Province to Ling County, Shandong Province, and up to my Father, there were fourteen generations having lived here.

My great grandpa, Ma Changchun, had obtained a *Xiucai* degree in the Qing Dynasty. What is *Xiucai* all about? *Xiucai* consists of two Chinese characters: the first character, "xiu," means excellence; the other, "cai," talent (Overall, *Xiucai* can be referred to a person who has passed the imperial examination at the county level). *Xiucai* is classified into three classes: *Linsheng*, *Zengsheng*, and *Fusheng*. My great grandpa belonged to the first one. The person who ranks *Linsheng* can get paid from the emperor, not by cash money but by grains. And the other two classes didn't get anything but the

titles. Without giving any thought, one would know that this title, *Xiucai*, was considered a great honor to the Ma clan and villagers. During the period of the late years of the Qing Dynasty, and the burgeoning period of the Republic of China, my great grandpa assumed a post as an education supervisor in the Education Department of the Ling County. Later, he was appointed a councilman to give timely recommendations to the county chief regarding how to run the county. And he had made great contributions. Unfortunately, he died rather young, at the age of 58, because of his kidney failure.<sup>8</sup>

My mother said that during my great grandpa's lifetime, it was the Mas' golden times. Besides there were tens of larger acres of farmland under his name, houses owned by him stood side by side, a whole block from the front to the rear. The houses became a great spectacular view, namely, a big black mass, and the whole thing was ours! He also had mules and horses in droves and traveled back and forth either in a horse-drawn carriage or on a horseback.

Up to my grandfather, Ma Chuanxu, the economic well-being of our family descended out of no reason. Worse, years of drought plagued the crops on the flat land of north China, and swarms of locusts flew across the county. Lots of people, who had been displaced and didn't have anything to eat, died of hunger while searching for foods on the road. As a result, my Father had to leave the native village heading for somewhere in the northeast of the country (the frontier-like area) in his teens and searching the alternative to make a living.

The village called Zhangjia Miaokuo where my grandparents on my maternal side live in is about 5 Chinese Li (about two and half a kilometers) from our village. Since my childhood, this village has been etched on my mind because my mother took my eldest sister, youngest brother and I to pay numerous visits to my grandparents'. In colloquialism, we called these visits, "Visiting Grandma's home, instead of visiting Grandpa's." A pilot named Zhang Lianxu who flew the fighter aircraft in the Nationalist air force was from this village. And when my mother mentioned his stories to me, I said to her that one day when I grew up, I might join the air force, too.

Another village I often visited was Jiangjia Fangzi during my childhood. Because my second aunt on my mother's side had settled down there. The most interesting thing I can remember even to this day is that Uncle Jiang was so scared of bandits that once he heard of bandits that were roaming in the neighborhood, he hid himself under the table and couldn't help pissing there. He got so terrified that even one with a lot of muscles



couldn't drag him out of his hiding place after the bandits were gone.

Later when I studied at the Municipal Jinan Secondary School, I came across a senior student named Wang Yuwen who came from the same county as I did. And he told me that in Jinan, the students from Ling County had done very well in terms of their academic performances. This can be considered one of characteristic features of the Ling people.

It is said that one of the ancient kingdoms by the name of Youge was situated near the prefecture of De Zhou of today, and Ling County was one part of it. Therefore, the so-called Yuge people might refer to the Ling people, too.<sup>9</sup>

## Chapter 2

### Nicknamed: The Little Muddle Head

Based on my mother's description, shortly after I was born, not even having the time to be vaccinated against smallpox, I contracted it. At the beginning, I ran a temperature and then fell into deep coma which lasted for seven days and seven nights. Accordingly, my mother, though feeling fragile, was not able to sleep a wink for the same period of time. She said that the line on the Ma family tree entirely depended upon me, and she tried whatever she could to keep me alive even at the cost of her life.

She bore the family a baby boy before me. But during those days, Chinese medicine fell far behind, and once an infant fell victim to sort of disease, there was little chance for it to survive. Later, she gave birth to a baby girl who is my eldest sister Zhonglan. Two years later, she bore the family another girl, and though having grown big, she died of an unknown disease. The Chinese often say that there are three things against the code of filial piety, and among them, the worst one is that one doesn't have any offspring. However, if one does, the offspring must be a boy because only a male that counts. Without doubt, my presence to the Ma family was an unusual event.

After I came to myself, my mother couldn't let down her guard. Seemingly aware of the outcome of this disease, she wrapped up my little hands with bandage scrupulously preventing my hands from scratching my face. She said that the skin rash would turn into the fluid-filled bumps, and then the bumps scabbed all over the face. And they felt so itchy. If they got scratched with hand, the scabs would be removed and the wound would discharge pus and blood. When healed, they would leave scars. However, despite she tried very hard to prevent me from touching them, there was always a loophole existing there. One day at the time, my mother was not that mindful, and I scratched my nose with one stroke of my hand, and only with this action, what a big difference was made. There have been two scars left on the tip of my nose since then. And they made me have a sense of inferiority for the rest of my life.

Because I had gone through high fever, my brain might be probably partially damaged. Thus, seemingly, I became muddle-headed in my childhood. My mother said that, it didn't matter wherever I was taken to, I would stay there. And I could stay there a

whole morning staring wide-eyed at something in a distance. And despite their calling or giving me a shout, I wouldn't react to a damn thing. Eventually, my family and others dubbed me "The Little Muddle Head."

As time went by, I got back from that state of drunken stupor, and a streak of stubbornness was clearly shown. If there was anything I wanted denied, I would cry loudly and use cry as a way to intimidate my parents. If what they had done or said to me was disagreeable to me, I would express myself in the same way. From the recesses of my memory, the most significant event that made this character fully unfolded was that one day when my eldest sister Zhonglan did something nameless to me, I was crying loudly on the one hand, I relentlessly sank my teeth into her right forearm and did the biting ferociously on the other. In 1992, the Chinese New Year Festival was approaching, and we decided to return to our native village to pay tribute to our ancestors by way of Nanjing. When that incident taking place in our childhood was mentioned, she rolled up her sleeve and showed me the scar on her white skin, though it was discolored, yet still visible.

I was fond of crying during my childhood, but when I vaguely felt that my self-esteem was insulted resulting from that kind of foolish behavior, I could stop crying right away.

In 1930s, my Father held a post in the Department of Maintenance affiliated to the Jinan Railway Station, he once had an opportunity to be transferred from Jinan to Huangqibao and did the same kind of work. And located in the middle between Jinan and Qingdao, Huangqibao was a third-class station. Small as it was, it was a beautiful small railway station in terms of its architectural style.

We lived in the dorm for the Huangqibao Railway Station workers. As far as I can remember, in front of our dorm, there was a rather large courtyard where several trees stood. When my Father got off from his work, he usually sat in the shade having tea. My immediate uncle, Ma Jiaying, also served in the rail line and when free, he often came to keep my Father company enjoying a few cups of tea and idle chat.

In 1937, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident took place, and the 8-year war against Japan was officially declared. And at the same time, the Communists tried to mobilize troops to do something as well. And the Chinese lived their lives in fear. The Huangqibao Railway Station was not a big one, and nor was a military strategic point the militants

strove for, but it was located on the rail line. For the sake of safety, my Father sent us back to our native village in Ling County to avoid the possible battle there between Chinese and Japanese armies.

That year, I was about six years old. If there had been no Japanese invasion, I should have been sent to school. But avoiding risking our lives in the would-be battleground was more important than schooling, therefore, my Father let me run wild and unruly in my native village, year after year. Not until the beginning of 1940 when he was transferred back from Huangqibao to the Jinan Railway Station Maintenance Department again having got all my family members into Jinan, did I have the opportunity to go to school.

The first school I attended was not a Western style of school but one-room schoolhouse with one teacher in charge of everything.

My Father considered himself a man who belonged to the last generation. In his mind, his child should start with studying Chinese classics (referring to *Trimetrical Classic*, *Thousand Character Classic*, *the Confucian Analects*, *the Great Learning*, *the Doctrine of Mean*, and *the Works of Mencius*.) And having studied the classics for a few years, I might be sent to the so-called Western style of school. Education in this sequence deemed by him was the best of all.

That traditional school teacher's name had long been forgotten but I still remember vividly what he looked like. He, who wore his long gown the entire year despite the changes of four seasons, was extremely lean and tight, holding a short-handled round fan called Putuan to wave from one side to another to cool himself (Putuan, a small pillow or pad filled with cotton or cattail or other soft stuff used by Buddhist monks or nuns who sit on it for meditation or use it as a praying mat, but here it refers to the size of the fan like Putuan). And he looked like a scarecrow in the field. When he spoke, he spoke gently. When he taught, he seemed to be teaching in a slow and lazy manner, a real pedant, indeed!

One day, my Father dropped by. And when he was about to leave, I saw him covering his mouth with hand and whispering something in my teacher's ear for some time. That afternoon, even though I could recite the poems that I had learned, not fluently but stutteringly, I still got the taste of corporal punishment by the ruler. And I thought to myself what was going on there? (Having got the stuff right, I still got punishment). Later, from his indistinctly murmuring to himself, I finally came to know that it was my Father

who asked the teacher to pay “more attention” to my studies than to anybody else.

I had a brother named Zhongxin four years my junior. He was a good-looking kid with willowy eyebrows and black bright eyes, but he was not in good shape. One morning when I was playing in the courtyard, all of a sudden, I heard my mother in the room crying loudly and simultaneously, yelling: “He is dying! He is dying! His face has been turning dark purple; eyes are rolling; and body is sporadically cramping. And there is no sign of breathing!” Having heard these words, we all rushed to his bedside, exploring what was happening to my brother. In time, as my Father pressed his Adam’s apple with one of his fingers, we saw my brother give forth a loud cough, and a mouthful of phlegm shot out. And he got respiratory system back into normacy, and mother burst into laughter with tears in her eyes.

Mother considered my brother one of *Xiwangmu’s* children (Queen Mother Wang of the West). And he was sent down into the world with a specific mission. With that in mind, mother made pilgrimages to Queen Mother Wang Temple and paid tributes by burning incenses as offerings. She also bought a paper-made doll to be burnt as a substitute for my brother seeking Queen Mother Wang’s permission to allow my brother to grow up in the secular society.

At present, Zhongxin was five years old, and he was tagging after me all the time no matter where I went. One morning, I took him to a creek strolling along it. Unconsciously, the whole morning was gone, and by the time we felt hungry, it was 2 p.m. And unexpectedly, this little adventure caused a big commotion back at home because my parents couldn’t find us. And they were compared to a swarm of ants running on a hot pan going here and there and trying to locate us. But when they saw us return home hand in hand safely, they ran up to us and hugged us tightly weeping and jumping for joy. Mother said that in a big city like Jinan, there were too many bad guys and numerous cases of child theft took place. And moreover, I was an inborn muddle-headed kid and easily fell to victim of child abduction. The outcome would be beyond imagination.

Our home being situated near a theater by the name of Beiyang, I often involuntarily sneaked past the check-point without paying any admittance fees. And as a standee, I stood by a red-lacquered pillar and watched the show.

One of four minor traditional Peking opera actresses named Li Shifang was a residential one in this theater, and so was another one who was on rise in the field, Ma

Lizhu, (the mother of a noted movie star, Hu Jing, of Taiwan). Though I didn't understand what they were singing, I was totally mesmerized by their colorful costumes they wore and their body language. And the sound of the stringed instruments and especially, of *erhu* (only two strings). We call it Chinese violin and I am crazy about it.

If an opera about the story of the grand general (the Chinese rank of Da Jiang), Guanyu, was on, and upon hearing the gong, the cymbal, and the drum and the shouting of his men, I would get excited. Firstly, coming on stage was Guanyu's men who brandished the banners, then, followed was his horse groom who made several beautiful somersaults, and finally, the grand general, Guanyu with Peking opera steps went on stage. The general looked awesome and heroic. And when I saw all of these, I couldn't be further excited. Once at home, with a broom held in hand, I imitated the sounds of gong, cymbal and drum via my mouth, posing as Guan Yu on the stage. And I especially, practiced the martial art of *qing long yan yue da* (the broadsword with a blue-colored dragon and a crescent moon in relief). Since then, I have been addicted to Peking opera for the rest of my life, particularly those operas adapted from the *Three Kingdoms*. One of the operas entitled: *Baimapo*, or the White Horse Hillside and another, *Huarongtao*, or the Hua Rong Pass, entrance me to the extent that even having watched them one hundred times, I will never tire of them.

## Chapter 3

### Elementary School Days

After studying in that one-room schoolhouse about one year, I was transferred to the Western education system. The first elementary school I attended was called the Municipal Beitan Elementary. It was a temple to school conversion. Therefore, once stepping into the classroom, one could feel that the whole place had spooky atmosphere.

In the year of 1938, the Japanese troops had occupied Jinan for some time, and during this period of time, Japan was under the pretext of covering up its motive for the invasion of China. A call was made by it publically, “The Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.” To expect the Chinese to assimilate into the alien culture, Japan had to start with education. I can still recall that on the first page of the textbook for the first graders in the elementary school is a big red sun with several little children. Alongside them are the words: “it is at the crack of dawn, little brothers and sisters get up hurriedly!”

With such a gloomy school environment that made my hair stand on end and the simple textbook, I got sick of going to school. Therefore, once I was free, I ran to a place called “Grand Garden” located in Jinan downtown to get some fun by listening to a professional storyteller who recited many narratives, for example: *The East Expedition by Xue Rengui* or *Xue Rengui Zhengdong*, *The West Expedition by Xue Dingshan* or *Xue Dingshan Zhengxi*, *The Story of Three Swords* or *San Xina Jian*, *The Seven Swordsmen and Five Knights* or *Qi Xia Wu Yi*, and *the Law Court Stories of Magistrate Shi's* or *Shi Kung An*, etc. Though I was muddle-headed, I had an exceptional memory. To others, once the reading materials were browsed, they would never forget what they had read. But in my case, it was different. I had excessively retentive memory by ear. In another word, I would never forget what I had listened to. Strangely enough, having listened to a story only once, I could retell it to other story lovers.

On our Guangming St., lived a Mafia figure, Fan, the Great Uncle, who frequently had his head shaved and made his skull shiny, seemingly coated with a layer of oil. Being a man with a big stomach, he didn't have anything to do but to while away the whole day sauntering back and forth on the street with a caged thrush bird on one of his hands. He was spellbound by the stories that I had got from Grand Garden. In summer, when the

sun was setting, and the weather was breezy in the evening, he, having a pot of good tea made and several platters of peanuts placed just on the sidewalk of the street or a secluded spot near the alley, asked me to tell the story that I had got. And “I was baking a cake and learning by doing.” In another word, what I got in Grand Garden in the morning was repeated to him in the evening. Having spiced the story up with antics while doing the retelling, I made him laugh his head off. He heaped praises on me saying that I was a very interesting boy with the story-telling talent, telling the story well and acting well.

The Municipal Beitan Elementary school didn't leave me much favorable impression. But there were two figures that were etched on my memory, and I won't forget them for the rest of my life. One was my English teacher, a middle-aged man; the other, my Japanese teacher, a young girl. The former conducted English classes in summer and winter vacations, while the latter taught us Japanese three hours per week. Japanese was scheduled on the core curriculum.

Although I have forgotten this English teacher's name, yet his resounding voice, looks, and the way he chuckled are still kept in my mind. With close-cropped hair, full moon-like face, and bulky waistline and white shirt and pants with black suspenders on, he didn't look like a teacher at all but to resemble a rich man in a business world, seemingly, having accumulated a lot of money and deposited in the bank. There is a Chinese saying which reads: “A man can't be judged by appearance, nor can the water in the sea be measured by bucket.” He bore no resemblance to a good teacher, but he was a really efficient one. He taught us from Daniel Jones' phonetic symbols through grammatical rules to Greek myths. Possibly, owing to his funny teaching methods, I became highly motivated to learn English. Or I might be an inborn foreign language learner. As a result, within a short span of time, I had a good grasp of the handouts he had given out. Seeing me make progress faster than anybody else in the class and love to show off, once he dragged me to a corner of the classroom introducing me to a piece of proverb, *qianshouyi, manzhaosun* or a modest person receives benefits, whereas a conceited person repeats failure.

My Japanese teacher was a pretty girl with two solid and thick braids. On her light skin face were two large bright eyes. If she didn't feel like talking, she remained silent all the time. But once she wanted to talk about something, she grinned from ear to ear firstly, and then showed her shining white teeth. Though she was dispatched to China from the interior of Japan fairly recently, she and we clicked very well.



During my elementary school days, the only bullied experience I had got was from the Japanese guards. When I passed the sentry box of a camp, I had to show my respect to them by looking straight at them without blinking eyes or making a deep bow to them. Otherwise loud yells would be heard, and in the meantime, they would brandish their glaring bayonets before my nose and bluffed me into submission.

I studied at Beitian Elementary for a year, too. Because the school district had been rezoned, I had to change school to enroll at the Municipal Caishijie Elementary School. When registration time was due, I was told that I had to pass a screening test. And the result of that test showed that with the exception of the subject, Arithmetic, I got much better grades on the other subjects in terms of a third grader. As a result, the tester said that I might be placed in the fourth grade and given an opportunity to try out. If I couldn't catch up with others as expected, I might be demoted to the third grade as originally planned.

By then, the war launched by Japan to invade China didn't get anywhere. China was too vast to be conquered. And the Japanese troops could only control the cities and townships they had taken. As to the rural areas, they had no security forces, strong enough to garrison them. Thus, being defeated was a matter of time. Furthermore, on the streets of Jinan, there was a sort of mysterious atmosphere spreading -- the Japanese military personnel were still presumptuous and bossy to the Chinese but its civilians' manner was not less than servility.

As time sped by, my brother, Zhongxin, reached the age of going to school. Every morning, mother took us to a "veggie market" to buy us breakfasts. She ordered "Shandong conge" made of soybean, and a piece of "fried twist" for each of us. After finishing them, she handed my brother over to me and told me to take much care of him. And loitering on our way to school was not permitted.

After the school was over, I took my brother straight home. In order to alleviate boredom while walking on the road, I made up the Robin Hood sort of story out of my imagination. Upon getting home, I would carry two water buckets and a wooden pole to the Little Pure River to fetch drinking water for the family. Simultaneously, I gave my family members a hint triumphantly that "Fetching water by shouldering a pole with two buckets suspended on either end, full of water, is considered leg-training exercise. And it falls in the scope of martial arts as well."

Mother loved living in the countryside. She often said that living in the rural area, she felt at home. If you were desirous of melons, you could grow them on a piece of farmland. By the same token, if you felt like having chickens on the table, you could raise them. And it seemed that there was nothing lacking there. In contrast to the life in the city, everything desired must have been purchased. Furthermore, your life was full of the hustle and bustle of the big city including the traffic jam, of course; living in the environment of this kind for a long time could make people feel upsetting and get sick. Consequently, we often accompanied her to get on a trip to our native village for a relief.

At that time, there were three forces alternately occupying the rural area: No. 1 the force called *erguizi*, or the Japanese puppet soldiers or the Japanese' running dog, No. 2 the militia force or the outer ring of the Chinese Communist army, and No. 3 the guerrilla force connected with the Nationalist army. These three forces fought the seesaw battle. And the peasants were suffering. And we dubbed them "The Bearded." When we, the kids, were naughty or did not behave ourselves, mother always said, "The Bearded are coming!" to scare us. When they took turns to raid us, we hid ourselves here and there in the safest places we could find. When they were gone, my cousins and I resumed the games we had played on the threshing-ground. I was constantly asked to sing the songs that I had learned in the cinema. There are two songs that I can recall: one of them is "the Song of Fishermen" sung by Ms. Wang Renmei, and it became a hit for some time. Even to this day, I can still remember the lyric of it; the other, "the Song of Selling Sweats," Ms. Li Xianglan. And by then, it got extremely popular, and almost everyone could sing it.

During the years I studied at Caishijie Elementary, luckily, I met two good Chinese teachers. One was Wei Zian, the other was Sun Dexin. Both of them were of slim build. And they had the bodily forms of window dressers' dummies in the window shop. During the winter days, they dressed themselves up in padded gowns with woolen scarves around their necks appearing quite cool.

When I was in the fourth grade, Wei taught us some essays written in the colloquial language by modern writers. However, he was suffering from severe stammer. Frequently, for the start of a word, it caused his face to blush and his neck to tighten. Even to this day, I still remember some of his "pet phrases" which were stammered out like this: "Anyone who....is a man, no matter what he does....must firstly try to be a good man and ....being a good man....takes precedence of all others." The other words sounded like verse lines: "The moon....is shining with the sparsely-strewn stars....and with many deaths on the

battleground, can one ask who is not the beloved one of one's....mother?" Though with pauses and blocks in his speech disorder, he sang songs as a different person. He had beautiful voice. While singing, he didn't stammer at all.

When I was in the fifth grade, Sun taught us classic essays, for example, *Wu Liu Xian Sheng Chuan*, Mr. Five Willows' Story by Tao Yuanming, *Ji Shi Er Lang Wen*, The Eulogy on the Twelfth Son by Han Yu, *Zhong Shu Guo Tuotuo*, Tree Grower, Mr. Hunchback Guo's Story by Liu Zongyuan, *Ai Lian Shuo*, On Lotus by Zhou Dunyi, *Ji Mei Wen*, Eulogizing My Younger Sister at Her Tomb by Yuan Mei, and *Ba Li Guan You Hua Ji*, The Tour of the Exhibit of the Oil Painting in Paris Museum by Xue Fucheng. Even now, more than 60 years later, I can recite some of the lines of these classic essays.

Sun was much more demanding than Wei. He said: "If you want to write good essays, you have to start with these classic essays. Writing essays via traditional writing style is much easier than via the colloquial language in terms of word economy. In addition, classic essays are concise, neither tawdry nor tautological." He also added: "If you could manage to memorize one hundred pieces of classics, you can write any kind of essay at ease."

With the war going on, the mobility of students during my elementary school years was very high. I also transferred from one school to another. As a result, I can remember few of my elementary school classmates' names. But at present, there are still two classmates whose names are still etched on my memory: Sun Daiping and Xin Yufang. The former also fled to Taiwan and settled down in Zhong Li, a city of Taoyuan County, while the latter was the prettiest girl in the class of mine. And she was compared to a yellow crane flying away and leaving no traces behind since Jinan was liberated by the Reds in 1948. In 1992, when a trip was made for paying tributes to my ancestors at their tombs back to my native village, I stayed in Jinan about a week and paid a visit to Caishijie elementary. Having tried to get someone who knew of any of my former teachers and classmates in my childhood, I found all my efforts were in vain.

## Chapter 4

### Secondary School Days

In 1946, I graduated from Caishijie Elementary and easily passed the entrance examination held for those who wanted to go to the Municipal Jinan Secondary School, junior and senior high programs combined.

At that time, it was the first year after the Nationalist army had won the Anti-Japanese war, and that war had lasted 8 years. We, the boys having just enrolled ourselves in the junior high program, were often sent to the Jinan Railway Station waving Chinese stick flags and greeting the Nationalist troops with shouts, “Welcome to Jinan!” On the streets, every door flew the national flag with its design attributes of “Blue Sky, White Sun, and the Wholly Red Earth.” Chiang Kai-shek’s portraits, the Chief commissioner of the Military Commission, were pasted up on the power poles and walls. People were carried away by a “fever pitch” and the expectation of economic recovery. However, with the days gone by, the two Chinese characters phrase, *sheng li*, victory, proved to be nothing substantive but an abstract term. Instead, the take-over officials, who were dispatched to Jinan for the administrators’ jobs left by the Japanese, were foolish and undisciplined. Thus, the period of great prosperity in Jinan was a flash in the pan, and closely followed were the prices of the commodities that were soaring, and life became very hard in this city again. Having returned to its original capital, Nanjing, the National Government, strong in will but weak in power, couldn’t get the provincial chiefs under control. The country fell apart and was thrown into chaos again.

Despite the situation of the country was such a mess, life went on anyway. Since I was in my early teens, I didn’t know anything about the political or economic stuff. There is a motto by which I lived my life. It reads: “Under the oil lamp, from 11 p.m. to 1 a.m., the following day (in the ancient time, the Chinese called this period the Third Watch), a hard-working young man dedicates himself to studying canonical texts, and so does he do the same thing from 3 a.m. to 5 a.m. when the rooster begins to crow” (the Fifth Watch).

Situated on a place by the name of *Nanyen* was the Municipal Jinan Secondary school. It was roughly a five Chinese li away, two and a half kilometers, from my home. Every day, I went to school on foot. And I strolled either along the right-hand sidewalk of

a street in the inner city or along the left-hand sidewalk, the bank of Daming Lake going through a rather big park called Black Tiger Fountain to school. For a round trip, it took me one and a half hours.

At that time, I became very much interested in English. Furthermore, I held that my English ability had already been higher than my other classmates'. Consequently, I went to the Kaiming Book Store and bought a set of Kaiming English Readers, three volumes in total, edited by Dr. Lin Yutang. While walking, I began self-educating myself by reading the lessons loudly that interested me the most, for example: "The Match Girl," "The Woodpecker," "The King's New Clothing," and "The Kingfisher," etc. On the road, during the duration of one hour and a half for a round trip, I could learn one lesson by heart.

At the time our school was located in the spot called Nanyen and the campus left me nothing impressive but a ruin. Besides several buildings formerly used as barracks were converted into classrooms which looked dilapidated, there were neither trees nor lawns. The whole campus was a large tract of gravel land. When windy day was on, there were sand and small rock fragments flying and hitting our eyes, and we found ourselves having difficulty breathing. Going to classes, students had to hike up their coats to cover their heads, moving towards their classrooms with unsteady steps. Under this circumstance, we could say that we lived in the terrible condition of sandstorm without any exaggeration. Nevertheless, in this ruin, we found that there was a full-blooming flower--a girl student who lit up all our eyes. What we had seen was that she dressed herself up in a dark blue overcoat, long black boots and a cap crocheted from white wool rolls. With her flushing cheeks, she looked quite pretty. Therefore, students dubbed her "Little Qingdao." The seaport city on the east coast is famed for its purity and cleanness.

From 1945 to 1947, our family underwent a series of crucial changes. My grandmother on my paternal side and my grandpa on my maternal side died in succession. Among them, my grandma's death came so suddenly. One night, I was sleeping like a log and was waked up by my mother abruptly. As my eyelids were leaden with sleep, I was not wide awake yet, and my mother told me as such: "Your grandma was suffering from a stroke and dying in her bed! Get up! Get up! Go to see her on this last occasion!"

Perhaps, because the stress and strain inflicted on my mother continuously, she felt tired from time to time. Her face turned pale as the color of Chinese cabbage, and her constitution was deteriorating day by day. After the diagnosis by doctor in the hospital, it

was proved that there was something wrong with her liver and gallbladder. Throughout her life, she believed in the traditional Chinese medicine, and traditional doctor ought to be sought first. However, after going through several rounds of treatments, at one time, she felt better, at the other, she felt worse.

Another event that worried her too much was her younger brother, my uncle, Du Changde, who after having worked in Jinan for some time and made a small fortune, was well-clad and well-fed, and consequently, got involved in extra marital affair. My mother tried every means to find out who that girl was and finally found that she was a hooker. And this finding made my mother dumbfounded. As a result, that night, she escorted this uncle to hop on a train saying that my grandma, his mother, was so ill that she might be on the verge of death, and as the only son, he had to return to his hometown, Zhangjia Miaokuo. But when the train pulled up at the Tezhou Railway Station, she told him the truth.

Ever since my Father was transferred back from Huangqibao to the Maintenance Department at the Jinan Railway Station, everything went well. Even though his rank was not higher than someone else's, it matches a Chinese saying which reads: "When a man gets to the top, all his friends and relations, get there with him." Therefore, our relatives living in the rural area, close or distant, came to us. Among these people, some of them, who were farm-for-a-living farmers through their entire lives, had never walked one step out of their villages for the most of time. Unfortunately, they got years of drought successively and their crops lagged behind more severely than expected, and without having any alternative, they were swarming to Jinan and trying to find odd jobs to minimize the impact of the natural disaster. Facing this kind of situation, my parents became speechless. What could they say to them if they wanted to stay for a while? Therefore, our home became their "footholds," and they burdened my mother, not only physically but also mentally.

Coming also with them were those who didn't fit in the odd jobs. They were the country gentries, who didn't have muscles capable of using the shoulder poles to carry produces around, and nor have muscles to load and unload heavy stuff by hands. But they came to the city to make money by doing businesses. One of them was Uncle Zhu Mingting who had the knack of making money. Within the shortest period of time, he could rake in a lot of money. And under the lamplight, I could see a look of pleasure came to his face as he was counting the yuan and getting them into bundles. His mood was so high that seemingly, he was over the moon. Shortly after, he committed a fraud,

got caught, handcuffed, and locked behind bars. His imprisonment pained my mother too much and once in a while she asked me to go with her visiting him with a basket of goodies.

As days went by, my mother's liver was deteriorating into the end-stage disease that the traditional Chinese physicians couldn't do anything about it. There was no alternative left but to go back to see the doctor in the Western type of hospital. But it was too late, and her abdomen became bloated having shown the sign of the retention of liquid. As we watched her thin day by day, it pained us excruciatingly. We felt sad and wanted to cry. Worst of all, there was nothing for us to do but to behave ourselves and did what we were told.

When she was dying, she was courageous, neither having anguished looks nor whining. When she breathed her last breath, it seemed as if she were finally set free and had the look of inner peace. On the following day, we, firstly held sort of simple service for our own family, and then loaded a two-wheel working cart drawn by man with her body, and finally transported it back to our native village, Large Horse, for interment.

At the time, Father was tied down by his works, he couldn't go with us to our home village, but to be able to go to one of the Yellow River piers to see us off. While we were leaving there, I saw him waving at us and making an about-turn and sobbing.

When we got to Large Horse, my grandpa whose head was snow-capped now took over everything. And after the internment service, with the watching of uncle, Du Changte and two aunts on my mother's side and one aunt, the wife of my immediate uncle, Ma Jiaying, and three of us, the casket was lowered down in the newly dug grave and buried in our pear orchard.

In the winter of 1947, my Father was introduced to a woman named Zhong Shi and got remarried.

Having studied one year at *Nanying*, the sandy campus, the Municipality Jinan Secondary School was relocated to *Jinniushan*, the Golden Ox Hills, a beautiful scenic spot. It is located on the outskirts of north Jinan, not far away from the Yellow River. No one was permitted to live off-campus.

There were students' dorms built on the hillside and they all faced south. And the rows of classrooms were built at the base of the hill. As the rolling hilly land was a

west-to-east range preventing north wind from hitting the dorms and the classrooms, and in winter, when we went to classes or slept in the dorms, we didn't feel bitterly cold as imagined.

There was one section of asphalt-paved road before our school entrance, and there were lofty white-trunk poplars on either side of the road. When the wind was blowing, the big leaves were rustling, a spectacular sight indeed!

That was the first time I lived outside on my own, and I didn't have the feeling of loneliness. On the contrary, I felt there was much fun derived from it. I was learning to live a disciplined life and made a pact with myself: "When I should go to class, I never miss it; when I should play, I go to play. Every two weeks, I return home to visit my parents. On Friday afternoon after the school is over, I'll go home. Next Monday morning, I'll return to school." For the duration of one semester, I felt that I had got the living mode of my own.

In 1948, the Communist army got many great gains on various battlegrounds in Shandong Province. In March, they took the Zhou's Village, and the counties of Zichuan, Boshan; in April, Weixian, Anqui, Yidu, Ancheu and Changle; and in July, Yan prefecture. The next target would be the capital city of Jinan.

On the eve of the Mid-Autumn Festival, there was a huge, bright and full moon shining down through the foliage of the tree in the courtyard of our house complex. Having enjoyed pomegranates and moon cakes, we were in the deep of the night, and it was so quiet. However, this was just the lull before the storm. In the rushing of the cold wind, there was a sort of spooky atmosphere arising. All in all, from the visceral feeling, a battle of attacking Jinan was approaching.

Under my Father's guidance, we dug a shelter in our yard and had our valuables buried in the varying corners of our house. When the battle between the National army and the Communist army intensified, all of us hid ourselves in the shelter. When the battle slackened, we came out to get fresh air.

Overall, at night, there was fierce fighting going on, but in the daytime, the guns fell silent.

One morning, we firstly heard someone violently knock at our gate. Then followed was a loud voice shouting: "Open up! Open up!" and at last, we heard a bellow like this:



“If you don’t open, I will toss a hand grenade into the yard of yours!” Under this circumstance, my Father risked his life and went to answer it. As soon as the door was opened, a rude “Nationalist soldier” rushed in, with a-not-knowing-what-to-do look, wielding a hand grenade and asking nervously and repeatedly: “Do you have any valuables?” and “Do you have any valuables?”

As my Father was in his late 40s having had some of the worldly experiences, he answered him in a laid-back way: “No, we don’t have any valuables, we don’t have any valuables. All things we have had are all here, take whatever you like!” After he had made an inspection tour of all the rooms, he found nothing worthy of being taken. But at this juncture, he turned around to leave and saw a pair of the Jingang brand shoes laid behind the door. That pair was mine, and I had not worn them long, rather new so to speak. He hurriedly picked up the shoes saying: “Lend me this pair of shoes to me! Won’t you?” Having finished his soliloquizing, on the one hand, he walked backward to the gate, but on the other, brandished his hand grenade. His red bloodshot eyes were staring at us all the time.

Afterwards, my Father became much more cautious than ever and secured our all doors and windows. What he had predicated was almost accurate, if not 100 percent, at least, 80 or 90 percent. He said to us that the Nationalist army had showed the sign of cracking, otherwise, how come there were stray soldiers roaming on the streets? One day, he said to us that the house-to-house fighting would be launched soon, and we could not stay at home any longer. To avoid getting trapped in the gunfire, he took us to the embankment of the Yellow River to keep us away from it.

In the middle of the night, my Father lay prone on the Yellow River embankment, and stared at the direction of our home. The exchange of the gunfire took place as if it were right over our house, and the battleground echoed back the faint noise of the gunshots intermittently. My Father couldn’t do anything but to brood over the safety of our house. I think that one word could summarize what was on his mind, “That was he didn’t like his property that he had labored for his entire life was totally lost in a flash!” At dawn when they stopped shooting, he sneaked back home and saw what happened to it.

As the night was about to descend, my step mother sent me for my Father.

Having been back and forth between the Yellow River embankment and my home

several times, I didn't see the sign of the Nationalist army's debacle, despite on the roads, there were several bodies scattered here and there on the streets. Nor did I see any victorious Communist troops. However, I did see the new propagand slogans posted. They proclaimed: "Liberating the Big City of Jinan and Capturing the Commander Wang Yaowu Alive!"

On the streets, I saw the houses standing on either side of the street with large holes on their walls. At first, I didn't understand what all these holes were for. After watching them a couple of days, I came to know that the Communists, having learned the skills from the rodents, made holes, and kept on making holes from one house to another all the way to the inner ring of the city wall of Jinan.

The fiercely defensive battle for Jinan began on September 16, 1948.<sup>10</sup> Though having outnumbered the Nationalist army and used the overwhelming manpower called "human wave tactics" and taken two outlying military strategic points, Yanchi and Maolin Knolls, the Nationalist troops fought the defensive battle very well, not as badly as thought of being in danger of losing this battle.<sup>11</sup> It was generally believed that if the defensive battle for Jinan held out a little bit longer against the fierce attacks, the Communists' strategy of "laying siege to the points (cities) and keeping the defensive forces from being reinforced" would fall apart. Because there would be reinforcements approaching from the air as well as from the land, this strategy used by the Communists might be invalid. By then, neither Nationalists nor Communists were so sure that which side would have a certain win.

Unfortunately, on August 19, 1948, the Commander of the 84<sup>th</sup> Division, Wu Huawen nicknamed renegade general rallied a group of "not well-trained troops" of twenty thousand men in the name of the Nationalist army, waved the white flags and surrendered. Moreover, they evacuated the Zhang Zhuang Airfield. Accordingly, this mutiny prevented the airlifts from reinforcements and supplies from the air. And that caused the whole defending situation of Jinan to a substantive change.<sup>12</sup>

Even though there were still several fierce skirmishes going on between the Nationalists' defensive and the Communists' offensive forces, the Nationalist army's morale collapsed. Consequently, the Jinan defensive battle held out only eight days, ending up with a total failure of the Nationalists' defending endeavors.

Garrison Commander, Wang Yaowu, had no strong willpower to defend the city to

the last ditch, but to commit himself to the belief: “The Chinese should not fight with the Chinese.” He saw the situation was not to his advantage, but he would neither surrender nor be the prisoner of war. And he thought to himself that he could flee to Qingdao following the National Government and enjoying his generalship and emolument. Therefore, he disguised himself as a merchant, and made a narrow escape from the subterranean passage in the North Pole Temple of Daming Lake out of Jinan. Afterwards, on his way to Qindao, in Shouguang County, he was identified as somebody in the Nationalists by one of the Communist militiamen.<sup>13</sup> Because when he pooped in the outhouse, he was handed in toilet papers by one of his men. Overall, he, having once been ranked among the top 10 generals and cited by the National Government during the Anti-Japanese War, became a prisoner of a civil war in this way, pitiful and regrettable, indeed!

## Chapter 5

### A Group of Five on the Road to Qingdao

Two days after Jinan was taken by the Communists, I stayed at home being extremely bored with nothing to do. Accordingly, I was like a mustang, not on leash, of course, running amok. I firstly ran to the new Jinan downtown area located on the outside of the outer ring of the city wall and saw what happened to it and then to the inner ring of the city wall where I saw bodies that were kept afloat in the Little Pure River. At last, I ran to the other side of the inner ring of city wall and saw bodies stacked up crisscross at the base.

Walking back to the new downtown area outside the outer ring of the city wall again, I saw nothing there but empty streets. In reality, what I had seen was a few of Communist militiamen dressed in peasants' garbs, with the rifles hanging upside down on their shoulders. On the one hand, they spoke to one another bursting out laughing, but on the other, seemingly, they were in a hurry heading for a place. The new posters such as newly-issued city maps of Jinan, the new titles for roads and streets, and the newly organized administrative units, Bao (100 households) and Jia (10 households) were pasted up on the walls, and so were there new propaganda slogans and one of them proclaimed: "The Chinese People's Liberation Army Doesn't Take a Needle and a Thread from the Masses!"

However, there was the kind of oppressive atmosphere hanging over the city of Jinan.

One morning, I went to my school to see what happened to it. In front of the school entrance, and in the shade of the white-trunk poplars, I met with a group of 10-some odd students who looked sad, and each one carried a simple piece of baggage. Asked what happened to them, they said that they rallied there and made themselves ready for going back to their hometowns. (superficially, they left school on the pretext of returning home, and, in fact, wanted to go to Qingdao continuing to follow the National Government).

They were peasants' offspring. Originally, they studied at the local schools in their hometowns. After their hometowns had been taken by the Communist army, they swarmed to Jinan, and enrolled at the school which had just been moved back to Jinan

from the “Home Front.” With its original students and new arrivals from the rural area, the school was reorganized and renamed as the Provincial First Jinan Temporary Secondary School. When this school was fully filled, the 2<sup>nd</sup>, the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> were set up. And when these newly established schools were filled again, the new waves of arrivals, without any option, had to be placed either in the municipal schools or in the privately funded schools temporarily. Within my knowledge, only one private secondary school named Yuying that accepted the students of this kind.

After Jinan was lost to the Communists, some students wanted to go back to their hometowns, others decided to stay put for a while waiting to see if there was any change under the rule of the Communists, and still others imitated their predecessors' doing during the Anti-Japanese War and wanted to go to the “Home Front” to stand with the National Government.

Moved by their patriotic passion, I didn't even let my Father know what I would be doing, (fearing if I let him know, he wouldn't let me go), and right in that afternoon, I went down on the road to Qingdao with them.

Having got out of Jinan, we walked on a road parallel to the eastbound rail line called Jiaoji, neither meeting with the Communist security forces to block our way on the military checkpoints on the main road nor seeing the “prisoners of war” who looked dishevelled and dirty. What I had seen were the small groups claiming to be the “ordinary people” who, with backpacks on their backs, heads hanging, went one step after another eastward. It seemed as if all of them were with pieces of rock in their chests, so was I. And there was a time that I had a feeling of remorse about running away from home and leaving Jinan this way. And I questioned whether this sort of act was right or not!

All the way, my fellow students shared with me the food that they had carried so that I didn't get starved. When we got to the township by the name of Fangze, the militiamen intercepted us, and herded us one by one into a ruined and abandoned theater house. They asked us to be there patiently for just a temporary stay, waiting for further instruction.

The theater house was an extremely worn-out one facing the west. After being shut in, we felt extremely exhausted resulting from trudging on the road days and nights. Despite the squalid and damp earthen floor, we made our beds on it right away, and lay down to sleep with our clothes on. At first, there were a few of people living in there, and later when more and more people were locked in, it developed into a jam-packed

situation, the beds made one by one, and the people pressed closely together when sleeping.

To prevent those who had had the idea of escaping, they had all the windows and exits sealed with wooden planks except one main exit where guards were mounted to watch. Owing to poor ventilation, the temperature was shooting high. And this theater-prison house, in turn, was getting hotter and hotter. We sat there half-naked letting the sweat pour down along the spine cord. Worst of all, there was only one rest room. After it had been excessively used, the bowls got clogged and then a tremendous amount of excrement and urine overflowed, and the foul air pervaded the whole building.

Another thing that inflicted us was mental abuse. Since they had little knowledge of this group of refugees' backgrounds, they didn't know how to deal with us but to put us under the severest surveillance. In the daytime, they kept us sitting still, no whispering with one another. At night, we were ordered to do nothing but to sleep. In case, we needed to go to the restroom, we had to report to the guard, and got permission. If approved, we might have a relief as wished.

Rumors began spreading in the theater-prison, and we heard that the superiors were about to be here interrogating us, but in a minute, the rumor broke of itself. There was nothing for us to do but to idle time away. As we had stayed in the house long enough, we came to know their strategy--they wanted us to know there would be so many obstacles lying ahead of us that we might cancel our plan. In another word, those who changed their minds to return to Jinan would be immediately set free. Anyway, those who insisted on going to Qingdao would have to wait.

In the days that followed, they began to single us out from other detainees. And those who were students were transferred from Fangze to the city of Wei County. And this change made an immediate difference in terms of the living condition. On one morning, there was an officer appearing before us. He was in yellow uniform legging and wearing a service cap with a red star on the center. Stocky as he was, he lectured us: "After Jinan has been liberated, our liberating war is moving to the winning side and the liberation army will be invincible in terms of offending. What you have said: 'you are going home,' is true, that is fine. And if you go to Qingdao with other purposes, we are going to liberate Qingdao, to Shanghai, be sure we are going to liberate Shanghai, and to the horizon where the sky and the earth meet and every corner of the sea, we will definitely be there." In addition, he was a logician, endeavoring to elaborate the doctrines

of new democracy and the theories of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The most pitiful thing was that his lecture didn't produce anything as expected. Conversely, "the students who want to go home" became more and more in numbers! To stonewall this tide, deemed by them as "preventing students from going astray," they worked hard to arrange a series of recreational activities including taking us to tour a secondary school named Changwei, a university, Huadong, and had the volleyball team of ours set up to play against theirs.

In the city of Wei County, everything went well in terms of board and lodging. What mostly troubled us was the reality that we were not allowed to leave. But "finding a way out of a predicament" is always possible. At this juncture, in a trance, I sneaked in an office without any man seen inside. That was a simplest office that I had ever seen. Besides an enamel basin and wooden tripod, there was only a desk and a chair. Having seen the drawer of the desk was locked, I took up a safety pin and got it changed into a tiny hook at one end and put into the hole of the lock, poking and turning this way and that way randomly. A miracle exploded right before my nose, and the lock clicked open instantly. I yanked the drawer out of its runners, and it scared me a lot because lying in there were stacks of green-colored yuan! And from my gut reaction, I snatched a handful of them and intended to run away. But just at that time, I cast my nervy eye downwards and caught the sight of a stack of travel papers, blank but officially stamped, beneath the money. Weren't they what I had dreamed of? I immediately returned the yuan back to its original spot and pulled out a sheet of the travel paper and fled. While running, I thought to myself that if I had been caught redhanded, I would be either beaten to death or placed behind bars.

In fact, what I had made away with was not one blank form of the travel paper but five of them on one sheet of paper, with a consecutive serial number on each one of them. These blank forms are dividable from the top to the bottom by dotted lines. Along the lines, one can tear them apart, and they can be filled out for five documents. I originally made a plan to find four of my fellow students from the Municipal Jinan Secondary School to flee to Qingdao. Ever since we moved to Wei County, I didn't know where they were.

I stayed in a small alley being in the cold sweat and feeling my heart was revving up. I thought to myself what would be my next move! While puzzled, I saw four senior students out there on the main street walking to the opposite side of the street where a hot

pot restaurant was located. I rushed out, pulled them into that alley, and sought their advice. Among them, besides Gao Weixu who studied at Shandong Agriculture College, the rest were all senior students from the Provincial Jinan Senior High School. They are: Qi Fengjin of Laiwu County, Zheng Zunzhe of Changqing County, and Gao Dunchong of Rizhao County. They saw me holding the blank travel papers and standing there petrified. Initially they were dubious, and then their eyes sparkling with joy, and finally considered that this was the hardest-found opportunity to leave that detention center. Consequently, we set up a rendezvous with one another. And on the late afternoon of that day, we, five of us, fled Wei County.

Three decades later when Qi Fengjin, Zheng Zunche and I met with one another in the southern part of Taiwan, and recalled the old detainees' days in Wei County, we couldn't help heaving long and deep sighs, and wondered where did our guts come from to flee that county? As far as I know, Gao Weixu went to Sichuan Province when we were on our way south. The other two, Qi Fengjin and Zheng Zunche were admitted to Navy Corporal Academy through entrance exams at Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang Province, and with that academy, they retreated to Taiwan. Later, they, again, went through the screening process and this time, enabled themselves to get in Navy Academy. After their graduation, they contributed what they could to the country for some years, and eventually quit the navy. At present, the former emigrated to the U.S. and resides in Los Angeles; the latter threw himself into the world of education at Kaohsiung County and resides in a township named Gangshan. As to the third one, Gao Dunchong, he and I never had a chance to meet each other in Taiwan. All I know is that he also engages in educational work for the younger generation, somewhere in north Taiwan.

We, five of us, got out of Wei County at sunset. Going eastward, we tried to take paths instead of roads. To Qingdao, we ran at breakneck speed! Sometimes, we slept in the daytime when we were exhausted, at the other times, we kept on going on the path at night, and once in a while, we didn't care about what time it was, evening or morning, but to keep moving. While running on the path, we had reached a consensus on that if we were stopped and questioned by the Communists, we would reply in unison: "our homes are in Qingdao. And all of us have the travel papers because we have special missions to do in that city!"

When we got to a special zone, geographically called the Jiao-Lai Trench, we suddenly became terribly nervous for this was the buffer zone between the Nationalists and the Communists, and that was that, neither side having the jurisdiction over it. In



between, we saw neither villages nor any crops. All we had seen was the gravel land beneath our feet. Cradled in the trench was one low-lying tract of land in the middle by two heights sandwiching it. Once entering the lowest spot, we looked like as if having entered a jute sack. If any side, Communists or Nationalists, had come to get us, we would have had nothing to do but “to be at bay by sitting there to be arrested or killed!”

That the most terrible thing could happen to us was that if we were mistaken for the Communists to do some activities down there by the Nationalists, without doubt, they would blow our heads off. And the other way around, if we were mistaken for the Nationalists by the Communists, we would get shot, too. Given that any one of these two cases occurred, all our efforts made to go to Qingdao would become bubbles.

Thanks to our youthfulness, especially good legs and feet. Sometimes, we run at steady gentle pace, and at the other times, we, walked as usual, and once in a while, we sprinted. Within two hours, we entered the area controlled by the Nationalists.

As we looked back to the path we had travelled, we were in danger of being caught several times. However, with the blessing of God, all the fearful dangers became nothing.

As the sun passed the meridian line, we got to the Nanquan Railway Station. With the permission of the station master, we hopped on a car of a freight train with no tarpaulin awning. The feelings of ours were nondescript neither thrilled nor grief-stricken. All we felt was that our hearts were still pounding quickly. But as the train was being drawn closer and closer to the city of Qingdao, and when we saw the national flag “with the colors of Blue Sky, White Sun and the Wholly Red Earth” flying, tears welled up in our eyes.

## Chapter 6

### Selling Shoes at Qingdao

Among the five escapees of us, with exception of me, all of the others had some connections to turn to seeking helps either from relatives or friends in Qingdao. When we got out of the Qingdao Railway Station, and after bidding farewell to one other, I didn't know where I was heading. I had only two 10-yuan banknotes, the newly-issued currency called *Jinyuanjuan*, the Gold Yuan Certificates with me, but one of them was borrowed from Zheng Zunche. And I got it estimated that this sum of money I had would only be enough for food for one week. As the sage-teacher said: "Man is able to live with what he has got." However, based on this kind of financial difficulty, how did this saying inspire me? But thinking the other way around and thanks to these two 10-yuan banknotes, and if I didn't have had them, I would have tried to survive. Wasn't that true or not?

I was walking around before the Qingdao Railway Station, not aware of the fact that it was getting dark. Though I was hungry, my stomach growling, I thought to myself that getting a "foothold" somewhere was the priority. Therefore, I walked to a road called Huantai which was only a stone's throw away from the station. And I was wondering if there was the sort of hotel that fit in with my status, "a little refugee." At last, I went up to a hotel that bore the same title of the road, Huantai. Hanging around, I watched what kind of people come out and go in. I kicked my heels for a long time there, but I couldn't dare to step into it bluntly. Fatigue and anxiety attacks sent me reeling. And as my knees were about to give way, I immediately realized that if I kept going like this, I would collapse and die instantly right there.

In a trance, I walked into that hotel and said to the hotel manager who was kindly-looking, "I am a student and made an escape from the city of Jinan, and I'd like to check in this hotel!" He gave me a sweeping gaze from my head to my toe and then asked me just one question: "Don't you have any baggage?" Not waiting for my answer, he led me through a flight of narrow stairs up to the second floor where there were *datongpu*, or two platform beds, on either side of the aisle. And right on that floor, he pointed to the right-hand side saying: "You may sleep there!" In the meantime, he grabbed a piece of woolen blanket, and tossed it to me.

After settling in that hotel and resting a while, I decided to take a walk on the street seeing if there was any inexpensive food available for me to buy so that I could satisfy my stomach.

Out of the hotel, I walked south on Huantai Rd. And I didn't dare to make any turn into the side-road. If I did, I was afraid of getting lost. I was strolling down, and involuntarily, I came to a night market.

As the night set in, all the lights were on. And it was also the dinner time. There were lots of people walking back and forth in the night market. Some of them went into the restaurants in small groups; others seated themselves on the benches around the food stands enjoying a variety of local specialties.

As I walked in the crowds, I held on those two 10-yuan banknotes with one of my hands in one of my trouser pockets thinking about what was the cheaper food I could afford so that this limited amount of money could hold out longer? If I only picked baked sweet potatoes or steamed buns, the money I had could support me about eight or nine days. But if big steamed or Shanghai soup dumplings were ordered, I would certainly run out of this amount of money in five days.

At last, I sat at a food stand with a gaslamp on, the gas stove burning blazingly. And sitting on one of the stove burners was a big brass kettle from whose mouth, a stream of hot air was shooting out with whizzing sound. And the air from the mouth shot very high as if "having reached the Pole Star" in the dark night. After thinking for a while, I finally ordered two steamed buns and a bowl of watery stuff, its ingredients consisting of flour and tea.

Back to the hotel, there was no one on that huge bed but me. As I lay there, and though felt tired physically and mentally, I found that it was very hard for me to fall asleep.

The images of my Father, step mother, Zhonglan and Zhongxin, like the waves of the sea, were crashing on me again. Thinking of a situation that they were anxiously combing the streets to find me in Jinan, I felt the tears coursed down my cheeks. Later, I tried to think the opposite. If a boy didn't get out to see the world, then "what kind of man he will be?" In addition, it was my belief that sooner or later the City Government of Qingdao or the Red Cross in Qingdao would come out to provide relief for the students who fled the city of Jinan. Once thinking this way, I was in high spirits. And shortly after, I fell asleep.

However, the reality betrayed the wish. The City Government of Qingdao didn't take our problems into account at all, nor did Red Cross give a hand in time.

One day, as I used up those two 10-yuan banknotes, and there was absolutely no way out. Being so hungry, I resorted to a strategy called “sleep” to deal with this misery. However, with gnawing hunger inside, how could I fall asleep? Lying there wide awake, I had nothing to do but to sob under the blanket.

At the time, the hotel had become crowded. Originally, there was only me who slept on that sort of bed, but owing to the deteriorating development in the battlegrounds on the Nationalists' side in the northeast of the country, the hotel was filled with “people from all walks of life” who had been retreated to Qingdao. While staying here, during the daytime, some of them went out to explore the possibility of locating jobs to survive at Qingdao, others were on missions for their units that were still on the way to Qingdao. Only at night, did they return for staying overnight.

Among them, there were two figures: one was a captain from Hunan Province whose family name was composed of two Chinese characters, Ou Yang, and as to his given name I can't remember. With his bushy eyebrows, round eyes and resounding voice, he was open-minded and quite outspoken when he was commenting on the civil war; the other, a woman, who had the curved contour of a female body with slender waist and legs, appeared quite charming. During the nighttime, she saw the captain climbing up the stairs, she was thrusting her fair-colored legs out of her woolen blanket to pose sexy. But when she saw me running up, she was hurriedly pulling her legs in and having her head moved under the blanket to feign sleep. Mr. Ou Yang slept to my right; she slept to my left but at the corner of the bed. In the middle of the night when everybody was in sound sleep, the captain crawled around my feet quietly from my right to my left to her and had that “thing” done. Afterwards, he got right back to where he had been. When this sort of thing kept on going long enough, there was a rumor spreading through the hotel that she was a whore with no underwear on, wide open, operating her business with no “prime cost” at all.

On the night of that day, the captain came back to the hotel and when he found out that I was sobbing under the blanket, he had it rolled back from my head and asked what was happening to me. After getting the whole picture of it, he couldn't help shouting loudly, “Ah! Ah! my little brother, why didn't you tell me earlier that you hadn't eaten anything yet? Come on! Come on! And come along with me, and we go out to eat dinner

together!” He also invited that woman, and together, we, three, walked out of the hotel. After we seated ourselves in an eatery, aside from the *yangchun mian*, noddles with a few pieces of veggies and ground pork, and a platter of double cooked pork belly with Chinese master stock, he ordered the small bowls of the Qingdao noodles made of lotus-root for each one of us.

While enjoying our dinner, the captain talked a little bit about himself. He said he had been a quartermaster in one of the units in the Nationalist army and stationed in the northeast. After the collapse of his unit, he made an escape firstly to Qinghuangdao and then to Qingdao. He further noted that if the military debacle of the Nationalist army couldn't be thwarted, he would return to his native village in Hunan Province to work on the farm. His talk was suggestive of pessimism regarding the ongoing civil war. In contrast to the captain, the woman was quite reserved, revealing much less than the captain, and throughout the entire dinner, she only said that she had lost her husband en route while retreating. Perhaps, with me, “no longer a boy but not yet an established adult,” between them, she didn't make any pass to the captain. And using her chopsticks to try dishes, pick up the noodles and spoon up her soup, she did conform to the table manners.

Anyway, after this dinner, relationships among us became closer than ever. A part of rhyming couplet could be used to depict it which might be paraphrased as follows: “Being in the same homeless situation, people are apt to show empathy with others.”

Back to our huge bed, the captain used one of his hands to scratch his skull continuously. On the one hand, he kept on scratching, on the other, he said to me: “We have to find a way to get your problem solved! We must find a way to get your problem solved!” Suddenly I saw him rolling his eyes, and then he said, “I've got an idea: why don't you go to sell shoes?”

During the times of turmoil and chaos of the civil war, anything so ridiculous could happen. As it was customary, *quiba* or the servicemen and *quijiu* or the refugees, could take the train without paying any fare.

His thought-through idea was that he would loan me a 10-yuan banknote (Gold Yuan Certificate) to purchase the Wuhe brand shoes made of plastic, and then let me go by train to Lancun, not far away from Qingdao and sell them there. These shoes were priced at 2 yuan per pair when I bought them in, 5 pairs totalling up to 10 yuan. When I sold

them out there, each pair was priced at 2.50 yuan, and if all 5 pairs were sold out, I would get 12.50 yuan. The net profit would be 2.50 yuan. And this income would be the everyday money used for my three meals. Namely, I used the 10 yuan loaned as my principal, and the income made by selling shoes was used to defray the “daily expenses.” The first day’s business was very important, if it worked, the rest of days would follow the suit. And that way, I didn’t have to worry about the money for the food.

He gave me a large-sized military towel and taught me how to carry the shoes. He also instructed me how a “territory” in the fair was taken, how the shoes were displayed on the ground, and how a bargain was stricken with a customer.

I considered him a savior sent from Heaven.

On the following morning, I went to the hypermarket to get the shoes, and not until the third day, did I get up earlier in the morning and headed straight for Lancun.

Sitting on the train, I felt that my thoughts were racing. And I thought to myself that I ran away from home for doing something great and now looked at what a business I got into, selling shoes as a peddler. Once I thought of this, I couldn’t help sobbing again, tears rolling down my cheeks. But I stopped doing this immediately, and as I thought differently, I calmed down. That was that even though I was stuck in the difficulty of this mess, I had not starved to death yet. And I should deem myself as one of the luckiest guys in the world.

I found the Lancun fair very fast. In the hottest spot thronged with people, coming and going, I managed to take “a territory” under my control. I firstly spread my towel on the ground, and then had the 5-pair shoes arranged side by side, tidy and neat on the towel! And finally, I stood straight and coughed several times in the hope of that the cough sounds might attract people’s attention, and they might be aware of the fact there was a teenager like me who was there selling shoes and waiting for the buyers.

Unexpectedly, sooner than I expected, there were buyers coming to inquire the prices of the shoes. I initially planned to hike the price to 3 yuan per pair, or at least held the originally-fixed price at 2.50 yuan per pair, but when an idea struck me--having them sold out at the earliest time as possible, I changed my mind. And I would like to make a deal with a guy when he bargained down the price. If there was anyone bidding 2.30 yuan per pair, I would hurriedly nod my head to strike a deal with him. In the twinkling of an eye, I got all my shoes sold out.

That was the first time of making money in my life. I was more than happy with that kind of experience.

My shoes selling business held out no more than five days. In Qingdao, suddenly, there was a charity event held by Red Cross in a big temple for students. They were doling out congee. At this juncture, I thought there was no need for me to keep on selling shoes. When I returned the money borrowed from the captain, he declined firmly, and wanted me to keep it with the view that I might need it on my way south in the future. He said that no one knew what would happen next!

At the time I left Qingdao, the number of the students from Jinan had got to a rather big one. Every morning, all of us went to that big temple together and queued up there getting “watery rice.” After consuming our rations, we took to the street loitering and furthermore, ascertained if there were any other possibilities for getting some relief aids from other organizations. Once I followed some of the senior students to get a sack of flour given out by the Salvation Army of the United Nations in Qingdao. Because I didn’t cook by myself, I sent it to the manager of the hotel as a token payment.

## Chapter 7

# Shanghai! Shanghai!

With the Nationalists army's more losing on the battlegrounds in the northeast of the country, the number of students who came to Qingdao was increasing rapidly. How to provide them with board and lodging became a problem. As the authorities had seen such a severity developing, they had to adopt emergency measure to deal with it. After several bouts of negotiations with China Merchants Holdings (International) Company Ltd., it came up with a solution finally. That was to transport this group of students to Shanghai. And an agreement had to be signed in advance. Since it was a passenger ship, and under no circumstances, were the students permitted to stay in the cabin once they went on board. However, given that students managed not to block the traffic in the hallways, they had the freedom of making makeshift beds as wished. When we heard this news, we were overjoyed at what had been done. This passenger ship named Jingxing was the luxurious one in terms of its class. As we were students from the interior of Shandong Province, naturally, we didn't have any idea of what a vast sea looked like, let alone the experience of voyage. Now, we could take a ship like Jingxing, which would sail against the wind on the sea with waves trailing behind, and especially with the vision of the destination--cosmopolitan Shanghai, how couldn't we get excited?

The exact number of this group of students, who had fled Jinan and gone on board the ship of Jingxing, was unknown to anybody. But based on my memory, at least, there were 200-some odd students. After getting on the ship, we packed the hallways, forgetting "that agreement" that had been signed before. After getting our belongings fixed in any places possibly found, and in small groups, we went to the bow or to the stern of that ship to shoot the breeze.

Standing on the forepart, we watched the seagulls flying nearby and hovering high with their wings outstretched. Sometimes, they flew low slowly passing the bridge of the ship, diving into the sea and staying afloat on the surface of the sea.

Turning our eyes to the horizon far away where the sea and the sky met, though we saw nothing there, yet, unlimited imagination got us everywhere.

As I walked to the aft part, I saw Qingdao City just opposite me. The three-week



stay made me fall in love with it because it was an extremely clean city.

By then the tributaries across Shandong Province joined the mainstream at the meeting point connected with Jiaozhou Bay Harbor Estuary. Now, I was taking leave of Jiaozhou Bay as if I bid farewell to Shandong, and in the same token, I felt that saying “Goodbye” to Shandong was something equivalent to saying “Goodbye” to my hometown.” How couldn’t I feel sad?

Recalling the details of that voyage on that luxurious ship to Shanghai at the present moment, I, even though racking my brains, can only get a vague picture of them as if having appreciated flowers in the heavily foggy weather. However, there are two things that have never been misremembered. They are still there as if they had happened to me yesterday.

The first thing was the cooked rice on that ship. Whenever the lunch or dinner was served, we saw two crewmen carry two big wooden containers of cooked rice with clouds of hot air hanging over, and place them on either side of the deck. And then all of us queued up and moved forward orderly to have our bowls filled. As well known, we are all brought up in the north and fed on steamed buns, noodles and dumplings made of flour, rice becoming a rare food for us. Not until the Chinese New Year Day, do we get a bowl of cooked rice. On the ship, we were provided with the kind of rice cooked just right without getting gluey. While enjoying it, we felt it tasted quite delicious, able to satisfy our palates. To compare with the kind of “watery rice” served to us in the temple in Qingdao, there was a big difference between them, not in the same breath at all.

The second thing I can remember was that when there were no wind and waves arising, we could engage in idle chats, laughing a lot together. But when the wind designation was getting up to the level of gale, and the sea became rough, all of us began to feel seasick. Though feeling dizzy and extremely tired, we found it was hard for us to fall asleep.

When we got to Shanghai, we moved into Shandong Association Hall affiliated to the provincial government of Shandong. In the daytime, we were on the streets loitering, at night, we came back just for staying overnight. The “so-called staying overnight” was nothing else but to lie on the concrete with sheets or old newspapers spread out beneath, and we slept with our clothes on.

The changes of the traffic signals in Cosmopolitan Shanghai dazzled us. As for

trolley buses which were running back and forth, super fast, we felt curious. Like street boys, we, in groups, had nothing to do but to walk and walk aimlessly on the streets every day. Another frequently haunted place was the Huangpu River, and standing on its bank, we took a long look at those high-rises telling the differences from one to another.

Another “pleasure-seeking” way was to see the incense burning in the Temple of City God. Following numerous female and male Buddhists’ doing, we, having put our palms together, bowed to this local deity in the hope of that this divine figure might not only protect the residents if the Communists attacked Shanghai, but to keep us safe, no matter wherever this group of homeless students from the north would wander to in the future.

I also involuntarily followed some of the senior students to Grand Gold Theater to watch Peking opera. The opera entitled, “Yuzhoufeng,” was about a love story featuring the then-noted actress, Yan Huizhu. At that time, I was just a mid-teenager, loving to watch the action show, in which warriors would engage in fighting with one another by using swords or lances, killing or being killed. As for the kind of the show acted by a “virtuous woman,” I was a down-to-earth layman. And even concentrating on listening to the long-drawn tone for a long time, I was unable to grasp what she was singing. What she impressed me the most was that she looked great in costumes and danced gracefully with some of the long, long, and long sleeve-throwing touches.

The Dancing Hall of *Bailemen* or The Paramount or the Gate of 100 Pleasures was a very famous one throughout the country. Since we were in the city now, we didn’t want to miss it. Thus, with several fellow students, we got there. Even though our life was terribly bitter then, yet we were still able to get fun.

We saw that Ms. Zhou Xuan’s and Ms. Bai Guang’s framed portraits hang on the wall, but what we had really got was not the songs by either of them: Ms. Zhou’s singing was clearer than the sounding of a bell and as lovely as a lark’s, Ms. Bai’s alto, soul-stirring and pleasing to the ear. What we had got that day were the songs by minors. And though their singing skills were much and much inferior to those two, yet they were young, good-looking, and charming.

We stayed in Shanghai about five days, and then had to go to report to the Jinan First United Secondary School located in a small town, Changanzhen, in Haining County in Zhejiang Province.

## Chapter 8

### Students' Protest at Changanzhen

Changanzhen, based on its size, is a typical of a small town, south of the Yangtze River. When we got to it, it was winter. Trees were stripped naked and lined on the either side of its sole street, and in the rice paddies, water was drained to the extent that only the dried clods presented. And all nature looked bleak; a scene of desolation met the eye on every side.

The Jinan First United Secondary School was established in two disused and deserted silk factories. The junior high program was in Changan Silk Factory; the senior high, in Lianyuan.

Originally, I had finished the second year's and the first two weeks' studies in the third year of the junior high program at the Municipal Jinan Secondary School. But having gone through the battle of Jinan and due to the squandering of the days on the road south, I came to know that it was almost an entire semester gone. When it was the time for me to report to the school in Changanzhen, I seemed reluctant to accept the reality that one semester had been lost this way. Therefore, as I was in the Registrar Office of the school, I simply filled out the form based on the self-acknowledged level as the first-year student of a senior high program. In reality, during the civil war era, and the whole country was in chaos, was there any inflexible system to follow? One could fill in any grade in the form as wished. And any grade or year you wrote in the form would be approved.

After going through the registration procedure, I was assigned to Unit 9 (similar to the organization in the army).

Included in the same unit with me were the classmates whose names still embedded on my memory are: Liang Eryu, Ma Nianyue, Liu Tailai, Liu Canyu, Wang Enjin, Chen Shihrui, Ding Lizhun, Mao Xuiqing, Zhu Lianye, Ding Weijie, Cao Aiyun, Guo Gang and Luan Qin. The last two classmates later assumed important posts either in the National Government or in the air force in Taiwan: the former took up posts as director, deputy minister and ambassadors, stationed in Colombia, Ecuador, and Dominican Republic; the latter, president of Air Force Academy and deputy commander-in-chief of the Combined

Logistics Command affiliated to the Ministry of Defense.

Nominally, the First Jinan United Secondary School was a sort of school, but in fact, everything in it was simplified in terms of its education facilities and equipment. If we called it “refugees’ camp,” it may conform to the rule of nomenclature. Dorms were also used as classrooms. And at night, we spread our bedding out on the floor and slept on them; in the daytime, we just rolled up our bedding on which we sat as study chairs during the class time.

The deepest impression left on me was my English class because my English teacher was the youngest one among the teaching staff. Though I forget his name now, his advice about how to learn English is still kept in my mind. He said: “The secrets of English-learning lie in reading out loud, one paragraph after another. If one can read one paragraph fluently, one can move on to the next. Lessons should be done in the same way, one lesson after another. As time goes by, you’ll find your pronunciation has been naturally improved.” Furthermore, he noted: “Our school is surrounded by the rice paddies, and that perfectly fits in with the environment conducive to the practice of reading English aloud. And even though you read out in the loudest voice, you will not bother anybody else.”

There was an interesting episode derived from doing that stuff.

One of our classmates was a veteran, who, having joined the Nationalist Youth Army, and in one of the battles against the Japanese, got hit by a flying metal splinter of a shrapnel blast. Aside from the fact that he was suffering not only the physical injury but also the emotional stress. And the most heart-rending stuff was that he was hit mute. When we communicated with him, we had to use the body language most of the time.

He stuck to our English teacher’s advice. In order to put it into practice, he got up very early every morning getting onto the causeway of the rice field to read English aloud, “Ah! Ah!” repeatedly. One day, a miracle exploded, and he got his voice back and could speak. He said: “One of the possibilities is that there is a tiny piece of metal splinter stuck in his vocal cord which dropped due to the vibration that he had made while reading English out aloud.” This was the way for him to unintentionally recover his voice he had lost many years. The news made the whole unit feel more than happy for him.

Another story spread through our unit was that one of our classmates who being averse to the learning environment ours, too noisy to study in our dorm, often went to a

local temple by himself studying there. When he was about to leave, he usually scraped some burned wax residue from the base of candle holders into a bowl and brought it back for another bout of studying in the deep of night. Unfortunately, he was being seen by a native girl when he was doing the scraping. And the girl accused him of stealing the property of the temple saying that “I will suit you.” However, no one expected that this kind of “rural myth” about “a rich girl” and “a penniless boy” would develop into a love story. More than a decade later when I was admitted to the Base Hospital 52 in Taoyuan County in Taiwan, and in order to kill time, I wrote a short story entitled “The Candle Karma” based on this episode and got it published in the *Wild Wind Literary Magazine* edited by Tian Shi.

During those days, we were at that sort of school at Changanzhen. As to the food, rice was firstly rationed to per head at eighteen taels (675.18 grams) daily. And later, as the authorities found that the ration couldn't satisfy our hunger, they, this time, increased the ration to twenty-four taels (900.24 grams). The fee for the vegetable, meat and others was set at only three yuan per day, per head.<sup>14</sup> Although both the principal staple food and the fee for the greens and meats at the Jinan First United Secondary School were much better than any other schools of this kind, yet we were at the age of puberty. And after taking our meal for less than half an hour, we became hungry again. Therefore, I often went to the fields after harvesting in fall looking for something left there and gleaning the residues of radishes and carrots to be cooked as snacks.

I had no cooking experience. After getting the fire started on a make-shift stove which was made of a few pieces of stones and broken tiles, I even didn't pay any attention to which way the wind was blowing. Once, I hunkered down there, on the one hand, cooking, on the other, scooping out some bits of the stuff to enjoy. And in the meantime, I was wondering why between my legs, there was something burning. When lowering my head to take a look at what was happening, I discovered my padded pants were on fire, and that made me get into a situation of jumping to my feet and putting the fire tongues out with both of my hands.

Because of the wet weather, south of the Yangtze River, I was afflicted with scabies. There were rashes beginning firstly developing on my inner thighs. Later, they became bumps with liquids sealed in. After getting lanced, the yellowish-brown liquid was drained away and then the bloody stuff was exposed. When dried up by weathering, they became scabs. They felt firstly itchy and then burning. And I had never had such a bitter ordeal of survival before.

The civil war was raging and the living condition was deteriorating at Changanzhen. Thanks to our principal, Liu Zemin. With him in charge, we were at ease.

Liu was a native of Hoze County, Shandong Province. He graduated from the Department of History at Furen Catholic University in Beijing. Throughout his life, he liked to play basketball. During his undergraduate years, he was one of the best players selected into the Beijing University Basketball Alliance Team co-organized by Beijing University Basketball Association. And this basketball team was sent off to compete against different university teams across the country. Later, it was sent off to Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, and Vietnam to play against its counterparts on their home courts.<sup>15</sup>

In 1937, he graduated from the university, and there was the Marco Polo Bridge Incident taking place. He returned to his hometown helping organize the peasants to defend it against possible Japanese attacks. In the meantime, as the bandits ran rampant and with sorghum plants as tall as men in the farmland, he was entrusted with rendering big cash escort services. After Jinan was taken by the Japanese army, the provincial government disintegrated. The newly appointed Governor of Shandong Province, Shen Hunglie, escaped to Cao County to assume office in exile and held Liu responsible for taking care of two official seals, namely, the seals of the provincial government and the security forces headquarters. In addition, he was also charged with the cash money of \$50,000, a telegram set with a copy of code book. Afterwards, he had undergone from the terrible ordeals of bombardments at Dongliidian, the bloodbath on the hillylands in southern Shandong to the imprisonment in a place named Zuantiangou. The most crucial incident was that he was once kidnapped by the bandits and threatened at gunpoint to dig a pit with a long-handled shovel for burying himself alive. While facing with such an extremely dangerous crisis, he managed to calm himself down and took advantage of their negligence and used the shovel to break their craniums one by one.<sup>16</sup>

In the year of 1943, Liu was transferred from the provincial government to the field of education. He was firstly teaching PE classes and then history at the National Secondary School No 22. And later, he assumed a new post as Director of Students' Affairs at No 21. Finally, he became a pick to lead the Jinan First Temporary Secondary School after winning the victory over Japan.<sup>17</sup> His life was marked by vicissitudes, sweet and bitter, joy and sorrow. And consequently, he accumulated a lot of experience in running the school, especially, the school set for those who were “homeless students.”

As winter was approaching, students still wore summer clothes shivering in the

freezing wind. With such gloomy views in his eyes, he felt sad in his heart and mind. Therefore, he ran to wherever it might be, getting help. Despite his utmost efforts, he could only collect 80 percent of winter clothes. The rest, 20 percent short, remained unresolved.

The Commander-in-chief of the Shanghai-Nanjing Garrison Headquarters, Tang Enbo, who was stationed in Shanghai. He went there to get an audience with him seeking help. Unexpectedly, Commander Tang, consented without one minute's hesitation that he would like to make the 20 percent short up. And in addition, four thousand pieces of mosquito nets were allocated.<sup>18</sup> With the date to be fixed for dispensing them to students, a demonstration suddenly broke out and screwed up the whole thing.

At that time, there was an eerie atmosphere spreading through the campus, and a kind of rumor was going around that our principal was accused of grafting. They said that the principal not only created fake students in the documentation but also translated *chikongque* or putting false names on the payroll into practice. Furthermore, that he took advantage of keeping the padded clothes in the warehouse was a stratagem. By doing so, he could restricted the students' freedom of speech. Otherwise, why didn't he distribute them to us, now when they were all here? Was there any justification for the act of his that the winter clothes would rather be stored in the warehouse than be dealt out to students and let them freeze in such a chilly weather?

This bunch of protesting students was rarely seen on the campus. And we didn't know where they came from, let alone their backgrounds. Our gut feeling was that they were older than ordinary students, their language, abusive and cutting; their behaviors, presumptuous and daring.

One evening when I was coming back from that one-street town after taking a walk there, I saw a military training instructor who was being taken away by a group of students on the road from the Changan campus to the administration building located on the Lianyuan campus. They adopted the stop-and-go method. While walking, they gave him loud shouts. While stopping, they condemned him for his wrongdoings, surrounding the officer and seizing him by the collar. And I saw a tall and strong guy suddenly slap him and get his service cap down to the ground. Once violence began by a starter, all the rest students tried to throw him to the ground and pigpiled on him. When he got out of "the mob," I saw his face full of blood.

They finally got to the principal's office. Because that day, the principal was out of the town and led the school basketball team to Xieshizhen, a township, for a basketball match, they were unable to see him and had no one to argue with. The only vent for releasing their resentments was to chant slogans and stomped their feet on the floor rhythmically. In the middle of the night, their moods became so high that the abusive language was heard such as "hit them and kill them." They began not only striking bystanders but also turning the desks and chairs upside down, and furthermore, smashing the doors and windows. In a moment, the principal's office was left in a heck of mess.

The "students" in charge of this protest found it hard to swallow the anger and led the group to tear open the door of the warehouse, pulling out bundles and bundles of the padded clothes to be given out, saying that anyone who was on the scene would get a suit. This news spread as fast as the wind, and in a wink of the eye, the Lianyuan campus was swarming with "ten thousand" of bobbing heads. And everyone was struggling to get a padded jacket and a pair of padded trousers.

The students' protest came as quickly as it went away. Within a very short period of time, the campus was restored to its normacy. However, we didn't resume going to classes. As we had nothing to do, we gossiped in small groups. Or we stood against the wall outside the school to watch the southbound or northbound trains passing. And some students strolled on the street of Changanzhen; others went to tour *Xihu*, West Lake, in Hangzhou, the capital city of Zhejiang Province.

In a week or so, there was word spreading through the campus that the principal would launch a campaign with a large group of students served as a kind of school protection force to return to school. And another sort of rumor was that each member of them would carry a stick claiming that they returned to school with "firearms." Added to these rumors was that once the principal got this operation successfully done, he would severely punish those troublemakers. Simultaneously, the students and teachers who remained staunch to the principal in the school didn't keep quiet any longer having organized an "army" to welcome the principal back. They served as a sort of "inner circle" coordinating with the principal's campaign under the leadership of some teachers.

Mr. Liu and his security force staged an easy come-back without resorting to much effort.

Though he didn't rally students before him to give a talk, students immediately



gathered around him on the Lianyuan campus in the hope of that he would say something about this incident. He was a man of integrity speaking his mind. Firstly, he rebutted the rumor that he had padded the payroll. Even to this day, more than six decades later, I can still recall his resounding voice:

“Our school has 2,463 students. If one less, you can chop my head off!”

Closely followed was his clarification why he put the clothes on hold.

He asked a series of questions: “Who is not willing to see his students put on the padded clothes as soon as possible? But with 20 percent short of those padded clothes, how could I give them out? If insisting on distributing them to you, who has got the priority? If ignoring the consequences, those who have got them are happy certainly. How about those who have not? And they would nurse grievances against me. If they come up to me to protest, I’ll become speechless to them.”

“All of you have been with me since our hometown was taken by the Communists. Do I have any ground to prefer this student to that one in terms of distributing clothes? Haven’t I filled the gap of the shortage yet? There was nothing seriously wrong there but to delay a couple of days. Look at what they have done now? How can I clean it up? What a mess has been made? How can I clean it up?”

Further, the principal in his speech indicated that he would mete out severe punishments to the leaders and forgive those who were just ignorant followers.

That the civil war situation on the Nationalist side was deteriorating so rapidly got everyone confused, and in another word, there was no way to predict what would happen next moment. After winning the Hsupen campaign (referring to the Hueihai campaign in the term used by the Reds), the Communists’ invincible forces moved south fast like the lightning bolt. The days for crossing the formidable barrier, the Yangtze River, were numbered.

The Jinan First United Secondary School was put under duress.

One afternoon, all of us were summoned to the Lianyuan campus for a pep talk. The speaker was our Chinese teacher, Mr. Hu Bitao. The contents of that talk I can’t recall now, but after his talk, his look of reciting a piece of poem entitled: “Marching Out to the Frontier” by Wang Changling is still kept in my mind:

The moon of Qin shines yet over the passes of Han;

Our men have not returned from the distant frontier.

If the Winged General of Dragon City were there,

No Hu horses could cross the Mt. Yen.<sup>19</sup>

Where were those “winged generals” in the Nationalist army under the National Government? They were graduates from Whampoa Military Academy. And the number was too big to count like *guo jiang zhi ji* or a large school of the carp fish teems in the Yangtze River trying to swim across. These generals either became turncoats or captives one by one while fighting the Communist army. To die a patriotic death in the campaign became a rare thing. As the rumor was in the air that our school would move south to Guangzhou, I took advantage of this good opportunity to head for the Maintenance Department of the Longyou Railway Station to see my immediate uncle.

## Chapter 9

### The Trip to Longyou

My grandfather, Ma Chuanxu, and my grandmother, Zhu Shi, raised two sons and three daughters throughout their entire life: my Father, Ma Jiafan, uncle, Ma Jiahxing, and three aunts. These three aunts left some impressions on me, but as to their names, I don't remember any one of them.

When my Father worked at the Maintenance Department of the Huangqibo Railway Station, though my immediate uncle, Ma Jiahxing, often paid visits to us, yet at that time, I was very small. What he looked like left nothing on me at all.

When I grew older, he had left Shandong Province and worked somewhere, south of the Yangtze River.

Because I lived in Large Horse Village for some years during my childhood, I still have some memories of these three aunts.

My first aunt was ladylike. But she was great at doing housework, often seen giving orders to the juniors of the family to do this or that. She could be compared to *pigjisichen*, a hen crowing in the morning in place of a rooster. Her way of giving orders to do the household chores was seldom seen during that patriarchal era.

My second aunt was a traditional Chinese girl. She shut herself up in her chamber every day, seldom going beyond the threshold, not mention going out of the gate.

That my third aunt was etched on my memory was the most impressive one. Because when she was being married, I, a small boy, was assigned a task: sitting in an ox-drawn cart and keeping an eye upon her dowries. Unluckily, less than a year after her wedding, she contracted child fever and died while giving birth. She left a baby girl behind.

This uncle I was going to visit had been married during the years when he stayed in Large Horse Village, and his wife bore him two daughters: the older one was named Qin, the younger one, Qing. Perhaps, he held that the marriage was an arranged one, and she was incompatible because she was illiterate. Therefore, after working at the Jinan

Railway Station for several years, and without bidding farewell to anyone of the family, he went to work at the Maintenance Department on the rail line from Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province to Nanchang, Jiangxi Province. And there might be a lot of reasons for him to do so but that arranged marriage, I firmly believe, was the major one of them.

After this uncle left for Zhejiang, my Father took us to Jinan. Later, as my three aunts got married one after another, there was no one left in my native village to take care of the family house, lands, and my aged grandparents but this aunt. Everything depended on her. With two little girls by her side, she lived in that big family house playing the caregiver role without bearing anybody any grudge. Though she was a little bit rough and unrefined, she was a genuine person. I can still recall that in the early fall of 1947 when my mother's body was carried in the cart drawn to the family house in our native village, and put on a bier, she was with us to keep vigil days and nights. And she mourned the loss of my mother loudly, tears streaming down with handfuls of mucus blown out from her nose. Her way of mourning for my mother's death truly moved three of us.

Now, I was on my way to see this uncle. Thinking of this “disowned” aunt in my native village, I had sadness in me.

Situated in the central-west of Zhejiang Province, Longyou County borders Jinghua County on the east, and is bounded on the west by the Qujiang River. And Qujiang City is contiguous to Jian De County in the north under jurisdiction of Hangzhou.<sup>20</sup> Rice, tea, and tangerine are major agricultural products of Longyou.

The Longyou Railway Station was a medium-sized one on that rail line. And that afternoon, when I got off the train, I discovered that vendors on the platforms sold neither fruits nor tea. What they tried to sell were spiced bean curds.

“Delicious bean curds!”

“Delicious bean curds!”

These vendors were with trays hung around their necks, and on the trays, there were purple-colored bean curds stacking. When trains stopped, they came up to do businesses with the passengers who sat in the window seats. Regrettably, by then, I was *Ruannang Xiuse*, having no money at all. *Ruannang Xiuse* is a proverb referring to a story that the guy named Ruan Fu in the Jin dynasty, whose sole belonging was only a black sack. And with it, he toured Kuaiji County in Zhejiang Province. Asked what was in his sack, he

answered that there was only one copper in it. As a result of that single copper, the sack wouldn't feel ashamed of itself, and at least, it had something to be watched for. And since then, *Ruannang Xiuse* has been used to refer to a guy who is in extremely financial difficulty.<sup>21</sup> Otherwise, I would get some and have tastes of them.

I stood around the exit waiting for the crowd to file off and disperse. Afterwards, I asked a guy who collected the stubs from the passengers how I got to the Maintenance Department. As he saw me, a teenage student in rags, giving me the cold shoulder. But when he heard my uncle's name mentioned, there was an immediate change from a poker face to a smiling one. Instantly, he passionately drew a simple map on a piece of paper and said that my uncle lived in a public dorm complex, though there was some distance from the railway station, it was not far away.

Guided by that simple map, I easily found the address with the plaque hanging on the wall with the words "Dorm for Longyou Maintenance Staff." Standing on the doorstep, I got my head in and saw a man who bore a resemblance to my grandfather sauntering back and forth in the courtyard. Furthermore, his big frame made me more believe that it was he who was my immediate uncle I was coming to visit. Therefore, I asked him: "Excuse me, are you uncle, Ma Jiaying?" This question caught him off guard but for a second, and then he seemingly understood what it was all about. He denied it repeatedly, and in the meantime, said to me: "Follow me!" He led me toward a wooden building, and on the way, asked me: "You are Old Ma's nephew, aren't you? He has mentioned you to me before!" Surprisingly, he was the immediate boss of my uncle's.

My uncle's countenance is quite different from the one imagined. In comparison with my Father, there are few likenesses between them. My Father is tall; he, short. My Father's face is rectangular; his, square. And around the age of 50, my Father is a man with full head of black hair; he, several years younger, white hair like snow. However, on his face, there are two dimples like my grandmother's. And the way he smiles is like the way my grandmother does. When I firstly saw him, I felt awkward and aloof. Shortly after, I was melted by his native dialect spoken in Ling County.

He told me that when he was in the South in the earlier years, he worked at the Maintenance Department in the Yushan Railway Station in Jiangxi Province. He got remarried to a native girl there and right now had two kids: the first one was a boy; the second, a girl. He named the boy Chensheng who was two years old now; the girl Guangyun, just a few months old baby still wrapped in swaddling-clothes.

Long time ago, he was baptized a Christian and because of Lord's grace, he said he had gone through numerous hardships and difficulties.

That night, he and I talked about the memories of my hometown. Some of them were old stories I had heard of; others, I had no knowledge of at all. He was in high spirits and made an exception to have a few drinks with me.

This aunt was southern bred, at least, twenty years his junior. She had a sunflower seed-shaped face with two bright black eyes. She was a good-looking woman glowing with a sort of childlike charm. Even up to the present moment, I recall the days that I was in Longyou, and feel so sorry for what she did for me. With her delicate hands, she washed my dirty clothes with blood stains resulted from the scabies I had suffered from. The language she spoke was the dialect of Jiangxi Province, and I did listen to it carefully, but I didn't understand it at all. However, a word that was clearly made out by me was: "If you are not my nephew, I will definitely not do the dirty laundry of this kind even if you pay me a plenty of money!"

My uncle put me up on the second floor in that building.

In the daytime, it was okay with me to tour the neighborhood or talk about the hometown with my uncle when he was off work. But as bedtime was up, I lay on an antique bed with the dimmed lights on the ceiling and the unrelenting spring drizzles, (weather pattern in the South in this season), outside the windows, and felt extremely lonely. Thinking of the fact that I had been with my uncle one week already, and what I should say to him, it had already been said; what I should talk to him, it had already been done. I figured it out that it was the time for me to go back to Changanzhen. If I delayed my return to school further, I wouldn't be able to catch up with others--getting on the train for moving to Guangzhou. As a result, I would be left behind like a bird that was doing the wild goose chase.

No sooner had I expressed myself that I wanted to go back to school than my uncle shook his head violently and said "No!" to me firmly. He further explained: "China's ruling party, the KMT, is doomed, and the whole picture of the civil war is getting clearer and clearer. No matter where you go, you are definitely to be 'liberated' by the Communist army." As he saw me cling to my own course, he made a special effort by asking two engineers in his department to talk to me for a detailed analysis of the civil war going on in the country. What they implied was "the civil war is nothing but a change

of the dynasty. After being “liberated,” we will follow the decree issued by the new ruler as obedient subjects, and everything will be all right. As days go by, we will be able to get ourselves accustomed to his rule.”

I still held on my own view: “As a boy, I should ‘dash around’ and to do something greater!” Since I did not get to the end of my odyssey, I would never give up that “dream.” Finally, my uncle found out that there was nothing he could do about the principled obstinacy. At the end of his tether, he gave me a piece of paper and a pen and forced me to write a note to my Father: The contents should be: “Today I am going to leave my uncle’s out of my own accord, not out of my uncle’s.”

He said to me that with this note in his hand, he would have no problem to explain what had happened to me to my Father in the future. In addition, judging from the potentially retreating rail line southward to “the Home Front” we might take, he made a list of the railway stations along the line saying, “When you get to any of these stations and if you have changed your mind, you can go to see Mr. so and so, a friend of mine, who will help you to get a ticket back to Longyou!”

When I said “Good-bye” to this immediate uncle, he stuck five silver coins into my pocket. He said profoundly that he had a family to rear, and this extra amount of money given to me was just the sum he had saved up to this moment. And it was also his maximum amount of money he could afford. Furthermore, he repeatedly told me that once I settled down somewhere, I would have to visit the church.

## Chapter 10

### Rough Road to Fuzhou

Quite unexpectedly, the train that took me back to Changanzhen was the last southbound one designated to ship the last group of students of the Jinan First United Secondary School to Guangzhou. When the train chugged in the station, I was still sleepy and bleary-eyed without noticing what sort of passengers crowded the platform. After I got off, I discovered right away they were the students from my school. They jostled their way to the front and those who cut in line got on the train easily. Those who fell behind threw their belongings through the windows and tried to climb into the cars. And they landed their waists on the window tracks letting their upper parts of bodies inside shake forward with their legs' thrusting outside. What they were doing were as if they were conducting the frog style in the swimming pool.

Shortly after the whole train got filled including the door landings and the buffers.

At last, they began climbing the train to the roof, and in a flash, the roof got filled, too.

As all the students fought desperately to get on the train, I was the only one who was foolishly and motionlessly standing on the platform watching this getting-on-the-train scene. Suddenly, out of nowhere, I was slipping back and realizing that if I couldn't get on this train, there wouldn't be "another chance for me to flee the danger of the forthcoming battle."

Having settled on the train roof, I spoke inarticulately to my fellow students: "I have my belongings left in the dorm on the Lianyuan campus." But they said: "There is no time for that. If you are going to fetch them, the train might leave any minute!"

When I got my head together on the train roof, I was seized by deep remorse! I thought to myself that If I had been alive to the development of the situation earlier and figured out that the train taken by me back to school was the last one for us to retreat, no matter what happened, I would have occupied that original seat there. If that had been the case, I wouldn't have worked my way to the train roof and been left in the open. Furthermore, I could comfortably sit on that seat all the way to Guangzhou. Look at what



I had done! Now, it was too late crying over spilt milk.

As night descended and as we were in a trance, the train started moving.

There were only several calls between Changanzhen and Hangzhou. In a flash, we got to Hangzhou. And at this juncture, the Hangzhou Railway Station became overcrowded with all walks of life. It included: civilians that wanted to flee to the safety, troops withdrawn from the battlegrounds, a few bunches of military dependents, and homeless students. That these people sat and stood or milled around in the station echoed nothing short of the chaos of the wartime. The representatives from all these groups surrounded the station master, screaming and shouting at him and asking for him to get more trains to send them out of Hangzhou.

As we saw such a mess going on the platform, who dared get off the train for a stretch? There was nothing for us to do but to sit where we had been, waiting for refilling water up and refueling. And we anxiously wished the train would have switched to the Zhegun line from Zhejiang to Jiangxi, the sooner, the better.

Eventually, the train chugged out of the Hangzhou Railway Station. Unluckily, after it went through the Qiantang River Bridge, it drizzled and kept on going. At first, we pitched blanket tents over our heads keeping us from getting wet, and then as the blankets got soaked and lost their protective functions. Consequently, we simply rolled the blankets up and put them under our buttocks readily receiving the baptism of rain.

On the retreating journey this way, we became exhausted, either dropping off or entering the dreamlands. In a half-conscious state, we seemingly heard something falling off the train roof and hitting the ground, a thud echoing back. We immediately knew what this was really meaning! Nevertheless, during the fleeing time from war, everyone was for himself and nobody was able to give a hand.

When the train was drawn closer to the Shangrao Railway Station, word was passed down from the front car to us saying that the Communists army had crossed the Yangtze River and taken Ichang and Jiujiang Counties already. We were cut off in the middle to Nanchang, the capital city of Jiangxi. There was no alternative for the operator to do but to back the train to Jiangshan County in Zhejiang. As the train made a clanging stop there, the operator ran away at the first opportune moment.

We had sat through more than ten hours on the train, though feeling that we had sore

sides and pains in our backs resulted from the long sitting, we were not out of Zhejiang yet. Right now, we were dumped into the wilderness as human cargoes by the train operator and had no idea of what to do and where to go! Therefore, we had no choice but to get off the train for stretches, the boys running to the faraway places for relieving, while the girls squatted themselves down under the opened-up umbrellas or the covering of the coats for pissing.

After voicing a lot of different opinions and careful studies, we decided to go to Fuzhou, the capital city of Fujian Province. And from there, we would take ship to Guangzhou. This was the only way for us to rejoin the “mainstream” in Guangzhou.

We were arranged in two columns and under the guidance of Zhao, a military training instructor, we started marching toward Fuzhou.

At the beginning of our march, students carried rather heavy backpacks, and afterwards, when climbing the zigzag highway, we felt unbearable and threw away the items considered non-essentials. Walking on and on, and when our muscles for carrying this sort of load became weaker and weaker, we discarded some of the items again. At last, only the woolen blankets were left and draped over our shoulders slantwise.

Pucheng, a county city, was the first stop after we stepped into Fujian. As we got in, we found it had been a ghost town already. Every door was locked, and there was neither a soul nor a wild dog visible.

Right there, some of the students, being unable to endure such a long march, gave up, and wouldn't make any steps farther saying that they would stay in this city until it was to be liberated by the Reds. And after that, they wished they could go back to their hometowns in Shandong. Others, who though followed us and kept walking on, yet afterwards, dropped behind and then became stragglers. And at last, they passed from view.

We kept walking days and nights. While hungry, we plucked the greens or herbal plants in this hillyland to satisfy our hunger. While thirsty, we got water with our hands from the springs in the hillsides to slake our thirst. In the month of May, it rained all the time in Fujian, and the road became thoroughly soaked and extremely slippery. On it, we were tottering forwards. If we were not careful, we might make heavy falls on our all fours with faces downwards. And being in a prone position, we were compared to a wild dog with its outstretched limbs enjoying human wastes. Or we might be sent flying out

and landing in the mud in the supine position, with our arms and legs outstretched in the form of a Chinese character, “大,” or *da* equivalent to the word, “big,” in English.

The most difficult part of this journey was the one when we climbed up a monastery.

It didn't matter from which part, the eastern side or western side in terms of going up and coming down the mountain, we had to climb ten Chinese li or several tens of Chinese li. Between the base of the mountain and the monetary, there was neither a village for us to get a break nor an inn for us to get something to eat. All we saw was that there was a lonely huge monastery standing on the top of the mountain. Having got drenched with sweat, we not only felt cold but hungry desperately dragging ourselves along. When we finally got there, we couldn't help collapsing before the gate of the monastery.

The monastery is the largest one incomparable to any other one that I have ever seen. Along its axis line from the front to the rear: Firstly, there is the gate, secondly, the grand palace, and finally, the library for housing sutras flanked by the east and west wings. A lot of monks came out to meet us. The lead monk saw us in such a mess and chanted “Amitabha! Amitabha!” repeatedly. And then he led us into one room of a wing asking us to take a good rest there, and in the meantime, ordered other monks to start a fire in a red brick-made stove to cook a dinner for us. When he left us, he warned us not to walk around at will because this was the divine and pure land of Gautama Buddha, and nonbelievers were not permitted to inadvertently profane it out of ignorance. He told us that if we needed any other thing for them to do, we just made a request to anyone of them, and they would cooperate with us.

As to us, a bunch of homeless students who fled the horrors of civil war, what else did we need but a good night sleep and a meal?

On the following day, we, led by Zhao, walked down the mountain and marched toward Fuzhou.

The city of Jiangyang had been taken by the Communist army already. And the highway leading to Fuzhou was cut off again in the middle. Right now, there wasn't anything else for us to do but to wade across the Min River. And then from the opposite bank of the river, we got on the trail and had to detour two county cities, Shuigi and Jiango. By doing so, we could get back to the highway again leading to Fuzhou.

We were hand in hand to get down into the river. Despite the the snags hidden in, treacherous whirlpools and the bone-chilling water, we were wading across the river bravely. But moving on this way made us stumble in the river. That we fell down into the water and rose up from the water made the crossing slow. When we climbed up the other bank and set the foot on the trail, I saw a male's body floating down from the upper river with his face downwards and limbs outstretched in the form of a Chinese character, *da*, or “大.” And it was being swept round and round on the surface of the currents.

There is a saying which can be paraphrased as such, “the daunting route into the region of Shu, Sichuan Province, is more daunting than climbing the sky.”<sup>22</sup> However, to me, I felt disheartened by then, the route to Fuzhou was also hard to the extent that it would kill one while climbing.

In the daytime, climbing on the trail called *yangchang xiaojing* (as narrow as a lamb's intestine, and that is exaggerated way of speaking), we were at ease. All we had to do was to stay in control of our steps having the pressure evenly distributed, and keep ourselves poised so that we could start climbing uphill. But as night set in, it became pitch-dark, and we had to feel our way. That we moved on the trail was as if having walked on the brink of death. And on the one side was the high steep mountain, but on the other, “the ten-thousand feet abyss gorge.” If we hadn't come into the focus of walking, we might have fallen off the trail, either getting us broken up or getting us torn up by the hundreds. For the sake of safety, each one of us got a length of bamboo stick in hands. You held one end of my stick with your hand, and in turn, I held another end of the other's stick, next to me, and so on till the last one. This way we formed a long line of bamboo sticks. The “lead sheep” used his bamboo stick to strike the trail. If the sound of ‘Pu! Pu!’ was heard, meaning that he hit nothing but the leaves of bushes. If the sound of “Bang! Bang!” was produced, indicating that what he hit was the solid ground. By so doing, we moved forward, one step after another. No one knew how many Chinese li we had covered that night and all we knew was that we could fall asleep while walking.

When it was at the crack of dawn the following morning, we had climbed up the top of a hill. We were so exhausted that we couldn't raise our legs any more. Seeing this, Zhao had no alternative but to let us take a break. But he remarked significantly: “This is the critical time that can be interpreted as the moment of life and death. We must grit our teeth to move forward and keep on walking. If the route being blocked off by the Communist army again, we'll never have another chance to join the mainstream in Guangzhou!” Upon finishing this, all of us slumped down to the earth, lying there

disorderly, and a quite large area was covered by the students who fell asleep immediately.

In a flash, the rumbling of big guns was within our earshot. I felt that I got several powerful kicks on my thighs, very painful. Suddenly, I became wide awake and saw that not far away, there were artillery shell explosions going on, grey clouds of smoke spreading. Within sight, I didn't see a fellow student nor Zhao. In panic, I was running amok trying to find them from this side to another side and vice versa on the hilltop. Alongside the circumference, I ran around and around. At this juncture, there was a shell descending from the sky and landing behind me with explosion sound. The smoke, clods of earth, and bits of rock hit me. I was thrown off the balance and fell off a cliff.

I was sliding down and down on the slope all the way.

When I stood up, I found my feet got deeply stuck in one of the rice paddies. Having climbed up the causeway, I made a quick check with my body and found out that on my left shin, there were three bruises, each ten-centimeter in size; on the right thigh, there was a two-centimeter laceration, and down to the ankle of the same leg, a bruise there, too. In addition to these wounds, my pants were torn up to shreds. Luckily, my head didn't get any cut, nor did my face get any scratch.

By then, the panic of being left alone surpassed any wounds and pains, and worse than that, I felt that there were some ghoulies, ghosties, and long-legged beasties chasing me behind. Therefore, I desperately climbed up a path and sprinted as fast as I could due south with the scorching sun overhead. After this sprinting, I got to a spot where there was a path bisecting the landscape, standing there for a while, not knowing what I wanted to do. Making a right turn or left might lead to a different fate. At last, I pointed to one of them, saying a prayer to God, "The Nationalist-held area or the Communist is totally dependent on you!"

On the path that I had picked, I run through groves of trees one after another. Suddenly, loud shouts and yells scared me.

"Halt! Halt!"

I quickly made a stop.

"Hands up, and put them over your head!"

I did what I was ordered. And I saw several soldiers coming out from the opposite grove of trees with loaded rifles. As soon as I saw the military uniforms they had on, I was relieved immediately as if a piece of stone were dropped from my chest. On the one hand, I was thrilled; on the other, I shouted at them.

“I am a student from Shandong! I am a student from Shandong! Have you ever seen a group of students be from Shandong?”

They continued letting me put my hands over my head, and this time, ordered me to move forward slowly to them. As I was at the close range, they commanded me to stop walking. And I saw, out of the corner of my eye, that there were still several other soldiers hidden behind the trees with the rifle butts against their shoulders. They aimed at me and had their guns cocked as if they were going to press the triggers.

The one in charge sized me up for a while telling me that he didn't know where that group of students was from Shandong or from anywhere else but he did see a group of students go by about forty minutes ago. And he asked me to accelerate my step rate to catch up with them.

On the entire retreat way, as I had seen and experienced, this was the only one military operation that was “normally” executed by the Nationalist army.

As far as myself concerned, I saw the worst debacle of the Nationalists. The situation is in line with a Chinese saying: “An army defeated can be likened to a mountain collapsed.”

As far as the military power concerned, just one Communist company could send a Nationalist regiment to flee, chasing them as if they were herding a flock of sheep. Despite equipped with the American weaponry, the Nationalist army not only lost its power to fire back but also suffered low morale having lost its guts to hear a word of: “the Communist army is coming!” Along the retreat route, there was a lot of stragglers hanging their best rifles on the trees. And they lay with their backs on the hillsides waiting to be captured, and their faces were expressionless. Even up to the present moment, that scene is still embedded in my memory.

When we started our “Long March” from Jiangshan County, this group consisted of about three hundred students. After going through those rugged trails in the hillylands and the mountain area for twenty odd days, we had roughly fifty-some odd students left.

Having entered the city of Fuzhou, we stayed by the entrance of a school and lay down there to take a rest.

That was a clear afternoon, and it was very swelting by then. Since we didn't have a bath for a long time, there were whiffs of odor exuding from our sweat-drenched bodies. We sat or lay on the concrete looking like a bunch of beggars with disheveled hairs, our faces being coated with layers of dirt.

Fuzhou had entered the crucial time to prepare for a defensive battle. Here and there, we could see the walls with propaganda slogans, "By death, we'll defend Grand Fuzhou to the last ditch and to the last drop of blood!"

A human being is always a human being. It doesn't matter at what time the human nature can always be exposed. In a flash, people from all sides gathered around us. When they had seen us, a group of teenagers, were in such a mess. Aside from heaving sighs, some asked what had happened to us, and in the meantime, tossed in coins and yuan out of their own pockets. Others who lived nearby went home and came back with teapots and cups to comfort us. Still others fetched cooked rice and dishes to us.

There were waves of enthusiasm crashing upon us, homeless students, who were dressed in rags. Without having their sympathy, we could control ourselves for the sake of self-reliance and dignity. Once we had their sympathy, we immediately had emotional breakdowns as if the waves of the Yellow River made breaches in the banks during the flooding season. And tears coursed down our cheeks without stopping. Followed were our sobs.

That was the saddest scene we cried together. It was also the only saddest scene in which I cried my head off during the days on the wandering roads south.

## Chapter 11

### On the Jiho Ship

Since banyan trees were seen everywhere in the city of Fuzhou, the city was also called *Rong Cheng*, the city of banyan trees. If there had been no war threatening the city, people would have sat under the 100-year old trees with aerial prop roots, sipped tea and played *xiangqi*, Chinese chess. And if that had been the case, how happy would the people have been? However, at the time the civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists was spiking, people felt panicky. Was there any spare time for playing that game and sipping tea under the banyan tree?

Although the defensive battle for Fuzhou was not begun, residents crowded the temple for kowtowing to the deity. Following my seniors, I paid a visit to Nantai Temple. People had scary faces but still wanted to be on the road to this temple in an endless stream. And they kowtowed to the deity in this temple for safety.

Our wishful thinking was, of course, to get on a ship which shipped us from Fuzhou directly to Guangzhou, once for all. After contacting the shipping company several times, we found that this sort of thinking was not pragmatic. As we thought about the situation when the city was under siege by the Communist army, was there any cooperative shipping company that could provide us with a ship to transport us to our destination? As a result, we modified our strategy to get this “Mission Impossible” done by medley relay, namely, to get to one southern seaport first by one ship, and then to another farther seaport by another, and finally to get to Guangzhou. Whenever there was a ship available to go south, we’d like to get on board, one voyage taken, one voyage counted.

While staying at the seaport city, Xinmen (Amoy), on the southeast coast, we fell short of food. Luckily, there were some naval officers and blue jacks from Shandong at the naval base there. When they heard that we, students, from the same province had nothing to eat, they carried the left-overs to us. Our food problem was so resolved.

By the end of May, a passenger ship named Shihmen carried us to Hong Kung. Because we didn’t have visa, we couldn’t get into Hong Kong except for that we stood on the starboard or on the dock to get a glimpse of the night view of it.



At daybreak, the same ship, Shihmen, took us to Guangzhou.

We, 50-some odd students retreating to Fujian, suffered a lot to have gone through the hillylands and the mountain area in the northern part of Fujian Province but the groups of students who withdrew preceding us were no better than us--they firstly retreated to the city of Hengyang in Hunan Province and then to Guangzhou. It was said that the rail line they were on from Zhejiang to Jiangxi was very “bumpy and rough”: sometimes, the trains travelled as fast as the wind; at other times, the trains crawled sluggishly like snails. Downpours occurred, and they had nothing to do but to idle their time away in boredom. Those who sat on the train roofs got completely drenched to the skin. And hunger and bitter coldness alternately gnawing and hitting them, they became weaker and weaker as if they were dying. What made them feel more unbearable was the sponge cushions in their plastic shoes that became so sticky because of being soaked so long in the rain water that the sponge cushions and the calluses on the soles were glued together. Therefore, when taking off shoes, they found there were bloody wounds. They felt so painful that they couldn't put their feet on the ground.<sup>23</sup>

More unbelievable than anything else was Mr. Hu Jiajian's stupidity and absurdity. He was the head of the department of secondary education in the Ministry of Education having just got to Guangzhou. He didn't speak anything praiseworthy for these groups of passionate teenagers who carried their simple belongings to follow the National Government despite the long journey and difficulties on the route. Conversely, he rebuked us by using the most abusive language: “Our country is totally messed up and ruined by you, the groups of homeless students!” Upon hearing what he had said, our principal, Mr. Liu Zemin grabbed him by his necktie giving him two slaps on the face. Furthermore, Mr. Liu, yelled at him outrageously: “I want to beat you to death, you, son of bitch!” Thanks to the Minister of Education, Hang Liwu's and the Deputy Minister, Wu Junsheng's timely coming to his rescue, Mr. Hu was set free. Because of this fight, our problems of the board and lodging in Guangzhou got immediately solved.<sup>24</sup>

Initially, Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall and the 53<sup>rd</sup> Elementary School in the eastern district of Guangzhou accommodated the students of the Jinan First United Secondary School, and then they got relocated to Donggao Elementary.<sup>25</sup>

When two military trucks carried us, the last 50-plus students in, and unloaded the human cargos at the campus. Surrounding us were our fellow students on the scene who thought we had just crawled out of an inferno. We were haggard, dressed in tatters, and

repulsive indeed. When they finally recognized that we were their fellow students who had been through the most terrible ordeals on their way to rejoin them, they immediately came up to us, putting their arms around us and giving us the warmest hugs. And we were in tears, the mucus blown out. Sadness and joy filled the air.

Sometimes, man is a very strange living being. While I ran desperately for my life in hillylands and the mountain area of Fujian Province, regardless of challenge trails ahead of me, and the Communist pursuers behind, I didn't get sick, conversely, being able to keep myself strong. However, after stepping in the city of Guangzhou, I felt as if there were time for me going sick. Once relaxed, I felt as if my entire body were melted. And then I was stuck in fever with chills by fits and starts. Once I lay down on my bed, I couldn't get up. Some senior students told me that I had contracted malaria.

Guangzhou was one of the earliest trade cities, and once described as a revolutionary Mecca against the Manchurians' rule. And there were lots of scenic spots for us to visit. Every day, I saw my fellow students happily go out doing the sightseeing, and after returning, they depicted what they had visited such as 72-Martyrs' Graves, the locale where the rebel general, Chen Jiongming, attacked Presidential Hall by big guns, and other geographical attractions, and I became extremely depressed because I missed the opportunity of doing the same sort of things as they did. I could create visions of those spots, but never be capable of visiting them in person.

At that time, it was in the month of June, temperature reading was very high. Sweating days and nights, I felt damp and clammy all over my body. Though provided with the wash stand right in front of our dorm (classroom), I was so weak that I didn't have any energy to clean my body with a wet towel.

Some students saw me get sick, and took me to the hospital to see doctor. In the waiting room, I reclined on an armchair, so feeble as if I were dying. With my eyes closed, I patiently waited for my turn.

As to when a woman and her child seated themselves nearby, I had no idea at all. Initially, in a hypnotic state, I vaguely sensed that there was the shadow of a woman there. And then gradually I saw her clearly who was covering her nose with a handkerchief and manifesting herself in undisguised contempt. I looked around and found that there was nothing which gave off unpleasant smell. However, when I turned to my own bony body, I immediately realized that it was I who was the cause of that awful smell. This

embarrassing scene I had experienced had a great impact on me that I will never forget it for the rest of my life. Thus, right at that moment, I made a vow that “If I have survived this malaria, I will make myself be ‘somebody’ in the future. Only when that happens, will I return to my home province--Shandong.”

As the schools of this kind withdrawn to Guangzhou gathered together here, we came to know that there were still 8 of them in total. Despite the number of students got dwindled on the retreat routes, there were still 8,000-some odd students who succeeded in getting to “the Lamb City,” another name for Guangzhou.

The eight different schools were led, of course, by eight different principals. In many heated debates, they couldn’t reach a consensus about what to do and where to go from Guangzhou. Some principals proposed that we should follow the way of those who had gone to the Great Southwest during the 8-year Anti-Japanese War, and even though had the whole situation estimated--the road of Sichuan Province was inaccessible in the mountain region. An old Chinese saying which reads: “The daunting route into the region of Su is more daunting than climbing the sky.” Thus, it is easier to defend than to offend. The KMT might get the chance to recuperate and pull itself together there. Viewed from that prospect, the Nationalists might be able to stage a comeback.

Others noted that we could take train to get to Guiyang only, the capital of Guizhou Province, and beyond that city, there was not any railway installation. As to the rest of journey, we had to go afoot. Because of the fact that the KMT had been badly defeated in the various battlegrounds so that there was no way for it to be recovered. We were not sure that the day when the schools got to the “Great Home Front,” it was also the day for the “Great Home Front” to be liberated by the Communists.

Still others in the majority agreed that we should go to Taiwan, especially, our principal, Liu Zemin. His famous saying sounded most convincingly: “The strategy to fight the Japanese is dependent on the mountain, while the strategy to fight the Communists is dependent on the sea.”<sup>26</sup> Other comments of his were that “On the Mainland, soldiers have been demoralized and lost the fighting spirits; generals have had the ideas of surrendering. And not one piece of land on the Mainland can be defended. If we go to Taiwan, we will be safer. At present, the Communists have no navy, and there is no way for them to liberate Taiwan despite their high morale in the Chinese People’s Liberation Army.”<sup>27</sup>

During that period, the military authorities affiliated to the KMT ruled Taiwan by martial law. With the exception of the military personnel, the ordinary people who wanted to apply for getting into Taiwan were severely restricted.

After withdrawing to Taiwan, General, Li Zhenqing, was appointed Commander of the Penghu Islands Defense Command. He saw his opportunity arising and negotiated with the principals to reach an agreement: male students who were above seventeen years of age were enlisted in the so-called “the Youth League” in Penghu. It was stipulated that once in “the Youth League,” we would receive “regular education” as the curriculum set in the ordinary school. If it was further elaborated, they set aside half a day for us to get the kind of education we were supposed to receive, and the other half-day for us to have the military training. If having passed the tests of a set of courses, we could get senior high school diplomas. Those students at the age of less than 17 including female students would be placed in a newly established school named the Dependents’ School for the Penghu Islands Defense Command personnel to continue their schooling.<sup>28</sup>

General Li is a native of Linqing County, Shandong. We thought that we had sort of closer relationship with him for we all were from the same province. Originally, we had the idea that under his tutelage, we could get the opportunity to resume our schooling as we wished. No one knew such a thought would lead to another inception of a horrible nightmare.

On June 22, 1949, we got on a freighter docked at Pier 5 at the Huangpu port. It was rebuilt from an amphibious assault ship named Jiho. When we were boarding, each one of us was given 4-pound crackers.<sup>29</sup> And they made an announcement that this ration was the only food available and afterwards, there would be no other food catering for us in the whole course of voyage.

In our hails and excitement, the rudder of Jiho started churning.

When she was on the public sea the second day, we saw lots of sea dogs on either side of the ship. We couldn’t help praising: “The Almighty God whose magic power is unparalleled creating such a creature in the sea. Its agility is just marvelous.” Simultaneously, we gave another thought that this might be probably ill-omened--a ship accident. If it had really happened, we would have been drowned and landed ourselves in the stomachs of these sea creatures eventually. If it was not inauspicious, why did they go with our ship continuously?

Nobody proved the hunch was right but a fire broke out on the freighter suddenly. Firstly, we saw sparkles shooting out all over, and then clouds of smoke and fire tongues rising. Students became panicky immediately. Fortunately, the captain and his crewmen came to our rescue timely and put the fire out and within a short period of time, the mechanical problem of the boiler got resolved. And everything was back into its normacy again.<sup>30</sup>

When an amphibious assault ship is converted to a freighter and used as a vessel to transport passengers, the key problems lie in its water displacement and its huge flat-bottomed structure. When encountering high wind and huge waves at sea, such a converted type of ship will be pitching or rolling violently. And it may be led to danger of being capsized. To solve this problem, the military authorities concerned ordered more than ten tanks to be driven in to increase the water displacement and used as ballasts so that the ship would be kept in good balance.<sup>31</sup> Despite all these efforts made, lots of students still got seasick.

We lay on the deck unruly trying to get some sleep. Some fell asleep; others just took a rest, and still others leaned on the rails, seemingly, thinking of whatever would be on their minds.

On the third day of our voyage, we ran into a rainy weather. Although it was not a downpour, it rained all day. We retrieved our old tricks to keep the raindrops out by covering our heads and bodies with our woolen blankets. When they were wet enough and the rain seeped in, finally, we let the rain take its course streaming down us.

The worst thing was the cracker rations laid on our laps. The crackers once soaked by rainwater became sort of batter. When I was not able to bear the gnawing pang of hunger, I would scoop it up with my fingers as a spoon to fill my stomach. This type of batter-like food was in my mouth though possessing the taste of sweetness, yet diluted, and having lost its original flavor. It got stuck in my tooth cavities, sticky and gluey, I found no words to describe the exact flavor of it.

## Chapter 12

### Joining the Army on the Penghu Archipelago

On June 25, 1949, Jiho, carrying us, the students from Shandong, steamed to the waters of the Penghu Islands.

After a four-day and three-night voyage, we eventually reached our destination, and woke up from a sort of dreamy state, gathering on the deck to orient ourselves.

Looking eastwards, we saw the sun rising, and looking down, we saw the expanse of the sea, deep and glossy smooth, and turning southward, we saw Yuwendao or Fisherman Island, that was afloat on the surface of the sea, and seemingly, a lot of monsters haunting that entire mysterious area. And a pitch-dark mass of land remained so quiet there.

When it was gradually turning into a broad daylight, we saw fishermen rowing their boats towards us. And after they got their boats just below our vessel, we became aware that they were coming to do businesses with us. Their boats were loaded fully with cigarettes, bananas, wine, candies made of peanuts and small dried fish.

Because of our long journey on the roads, we had no money left in our pockets but only a few pieces of clothes and quilts. Common sense be told that in Taiwan, spring stays all year round. And keeping a woolen blanket, and two or three light T shirts and several pairs of light weight pants could be enough. Therefore, though having carried them all the way down to the Penghu Islands, some of the students traded their quilts, padded jackets, and padded trousers for the fishermen's few kilograms of bananas.

We waited aboard for an entire morning and almost half an afternoon. Not until 4 p.m. were we allowed to get off the vessel and went ashore.

We were firstly led to the Neian Elementary stadium for an assembly, and then put up at the barracks left by the Japanese army.

After settling down in the new home, we hurriedly got out and walked around. Within our view, there was nothing else but the tracts of gravel land, bleak and barren. There were no crops visible, not mentioning a lofty tree seen around. The only thing that lit up our eyes was a lighthouse in Waian village, high and solid.

In the first several days, the “receptionists” in plain clothes kept us at arm’s length, and afterwards, we found out that there were progressive changes in their attitudes. Even though they treated us courteously, we found there was something hard line with them, not an inch of the ground yielded at all. At last, they took off their masks but with facial expressions that an order was once out, that had to be executed. The ways of raising their eyebrows and winking their eyes signaled that they were our would-be superiors. We had been fated to be soldiers, and coercing us to join the army was unavoidable.

Before they placed us in the units, they had us go through a screening process.

They made an announcement that those who were seventeen years of age came forward and lined up on the left; those who were not, on the right. (In China as well as in Taiwan, there are two ways of reckoning a person’s age. One is called “Western age” starting the counting from the day one is born, while the other is called “Chinese age” from the day a mother gets pregnant.) Because I was sixteen years old based on the western way of reckoning, I was in a state of rapturous joy walking to the right. But as I walked to the spot ready to move into the line, a robust guy quickly ran before me yelling at me angrily: “You can’t go there! You can’t go there!” and pulling me back. I was out of balance almost making a fall. In the meantime, he marched me away to the left-hand side. In this way, I was forcibly placed into the army. In a few days, I was transferred from Waian to a unit called “The Third Brigade affiliated to the Youth League” stationed at the Bamboo Pole Bay.

Several days later, I heard about the news that the Penghu Islands Defense Command HQ summoned the students to a stadium on the biggest island of Magong, and the process of placing students into the army was more violent and cruel than I had gone through.

Commander, Li Zhenqing and Commander of the 39<sup>th</sup> Division, Han Fengyi, had students corralled in the stadium of the Penghu Islands Defense Command, and deployed the security forces around the stadium with the machine guns mounted. Standing on the reviewing stand, Han announced to the students with a deadpan face: “Welcome all of you to Penghu. However, our country is facing the crisis of life and death. I think that fighting for the survival of our country is much more important than your schooling.” And he added: “Today is your best opportunity to serve your country when you are needed. Because serving in the Nationalist army as a soldier is a glorious thing, I don’t think you’ll refuse this opportunity.”<sup>32</sup> Shortly after his speech, there were some loud

complaints heard, and some of the students down below cried out and protested: “We don’t want to be soldiers! We want to study! We don’t want to be soldiers! We want to study!”

But the cadres implementing what General Han had announced lined up the students in the order of decreasing height. And they walked back and forth between the rows using a rope to measure them based on the length of type 38 rifle. Any one whose height is the equal to that of the rifle, and anyone who looked healthy should be placed in the army despite one’s age, 13-year-old or 14-year-old. In another word, only height and health count.<sup>33</sup>

The consequences of forcibly implementing the announcement to place the students into the army provoked more violent protests. However, in order to warn the students, soldiers began purposely shooting blank shots, and two students were bayoneted and got seriously wounded. And there were also some students whose buttocks and legs got hit by stray bullets. At this juncture, there was a great commotion going on, and the students were crying together and saying: “we are not against military training in the army, but we also want to keep our education going on as promised!”<sup>34</sup> But they just ignored what the students’ outcry. Before many teachers’ and principals’ wide-opened eyes, they insisted on having students take off their clothing and put on military uniforms.

This tragedy is called the 713 Incident because it happened on July 13, 1949.<sup>35</sup>

The Bamboo Pole Bay is situated on the west coast of the island. And the topographical features of the area differ tremendously with hills and vallies in between. On the coast, scattered here and there were steep cliffs and strange coral grottoes. And the huge sea waves crash upon the coral walls of these grottoes echoing resoundingly the same tune today as well as in the distant past. Most of family houses on this island are built on the gravel land with the coral fragments around them as walls.

Overall, though Fisherman Island was sparsely populated, it was an important military strategic point. It was also a good place for the field training program.

We were firstly stationed here for military basics. After that, we had the field training programs. Though we could stand physical abuses, yet mental abuses were the most unbearable of all.

Most of cadres such as platoon and squad leaders were illiterate, recognizing few of



Chinese characters. They not only spoke rudely but also acted tyrannically. Worse, they didn't have know-how and how-to to lead these student soldiers and thus, caused the interactions and the relationships deteriorating. We superficially obeyed them, but in the deep recesses of our minds and hearts, we defied them. But how could the attitude of this kind be concealed long and not to be detected by their mind's eyes? They began training us by using abusive language and corporal punishments. While dealing out blows to us, they insulted us by using the vulgar expressions: "What a country bumpkin you are!" Or they simply condemned us: "You are unhappy with this treatment, aren't you? When you are unhappy, you'll get beaten up, while I am unhappy, I'll beat you up!"<sup>36</sup>

The Headquarters of "The Youth League" was located at a village called Xiaochejiao. It took about forty minutes from our camp to get there by marching. And the regular assembly was held every Monday and we had to get there to listen to a pep talk by our "regimental" Commander, Han Bin. And occasionally, there was an officer from the political warfare department coming to give us a talk analyzing the domestic situation and the international as well.

When Commander Li Zhenqing came to inspect the Fisherman Island, we had to go to Xiaochejiao to listen to his harangue. Originally, he was in General Pang Bingxun's poorly-trained army. By chance, he was promoted quickly from the rank of adjutant officer, brigade major, brigade commander, assistant division commander, division commander, deputy army commander, to the highest position, commander of the 40<sup>th</sup> army. Luckily, in the Anti-Japanese war, he had scored one or two victories in some of the battlegrounds. At last, in Anyang County, Henan Province, he was captured by the Reds, and later, set free. By then, he collected some of the officers and soldiers who had suffered defeats and reorganized them as sort of special forces group. And finally, together they retreated to Taiwan. Because of his loyalty to the national government, he was recognized by Chen Cheng, the executive chief of the Military and Administrative Headquarters for Southeastern Region (referring to Taiwan) who gave him the second chance and appointed him the Commander of Penghu Islands Defense Command.<sup>37</sup>

As Li had received limited education, he often made a fool of himself. His cliché on his lips was: "An egg is the equal to ten peanuts in nutrition!" Therefore, he asked us to eat more peanuts. Furthermore, he asked us not to smoke. Because of his little education received, what he had said showed nothing but trite expressions or numerous monotonous repetitions. In a speech he wanted to deliver, it always consisted of "this is," for example: "This is so." or "This is not so."

Amidst the student soldiers, there was a plenty of funny stories about him going around.

There was one derived from his talk like this: once after giving a talk to a formal troop assembly, he was in the highest spirits, and tried to lead them to shout slogans. The first several slogans he shouted went well. However, the last one he shouted was originally composed of six Chinese characters as such: “guo fu jing shen bu si!” (our national Father’s spirit is immortal!) But he shouted out of the line as such:

“guo fu bu si!” (our national Father is immortal!) When this slogan was shouted out, the student soldiers were confused.<sup>38</sup>

He, of course, immediately was aware that he had left two characters out, and redressed it: “He still has jing shen (spirit)!”

He looked like an honest man. And President Chiang Kai-shek was very fond of this type of general, staunchly loyal. Once he made an inspection tour to the Penghu Islands, General Li intended to take advantage of this opportunity to please him by pledging his allegiance to Chiang to the utmost. When asked such a question: “What do you think of the present situation in Taiwan, General Li?” He replied:

“Mr. President, I don’t have any idea. All I have had is that I am a draught animal of yours. I will go to wherever as I am told by you.”<sup>39</sup>

I cannot remember how much money was fixed for food per head everyday. All I can remember is that they had fed the worst kind of rice and the worst dish to us.

There were 10-plus buddies in a squad. All of us squatted down in the open and surrounded an iron basin full of salty soup made from pumpkin, and a few drops of cooking oil and a few slices of white-colored pig fat which were floating on the surface. The cooked rice was not only unhusked but also mixed with sand. Once in our mouths, and while chewing, we heard the *ga ba, ga ba*, sound producing. And as each one of us was afraid of that there wasn’t enough food, I had to learn the kind of stratagem to get as much food as possible: “At first, I just get a half bowl and after wolfing down the half bowl of rice, I quickly run back to get a full one!”

By then, I was very short and the second last guy in my squad when lining up, and ranked private, the lowest rank in the army. Accordingly, I was paid the lowest, around

7.50 yuan per month, based on the Old Taiwanese Monetary System. By then, I was always craving for something edible to satisfy my insatiable appetites and once, a tea-colored envelope with cash money sealed in was handed over to me, I hurriedly ran to a small low-lying grocery store to get a few pieces of candies made of peanuts to eat.

The news that they had launched a “mole hunt” campaign spread out. And as we were lying on the bed in the night, we always felt that our whole camp was haunted. The next morning when we rose, we found out that two or three of our fellow students had been vanished from the earth. Having made an inquiry, we got nothing else but the same answer: “They have been transferred to another unit.” There was a saying which read: “They would like mistakenly to kill one hundred innocent people rather than to let one mole get away.” This was the warning we had often heard in those days.

The news for Principals Zhang Minzhi and Zou Jiang who had been arrested was spreading by word of mouth continuously. Mr. Zhang headed the Yangtai United Secondary School; Mr. Zou, the branch of that school.

They were the ones who strongly opposed this shabby deal to have students illegally drafted into the army, and vehemently resented that some of the younger ones were “ruined” this way. They sent out plenty of letters by mail to seek assistances from everywhere. Furthermore, they invited the director of the Department of Education of Shandong Province, Mr. Xu Yiqian, to come down and get those 16-year-old students or younger ones out of the army. These measures infuriated General Han, Commander of the 39<sup>th</sup> Division. He blindly accused them of “violating the martial law of army buildups” and furthermore, put labels, “communist agents,” on them intending to get them executed.

Mr. Zhang was falsely accused of being “the member of Executive Committee of the Communist Party in the eastern Jiaochow region,” and Mr. Zou, “the member of the Yangtai City Communist Party and the director of the New Democratic Youth League of the City.”<sup>40</sup>

Allegations were easily made, but evidence was hard to get.

Han Fengyi was a malicious man aiming to keep his position as Division Commander and tried very hard to avoid the embarrassing situation that cadres outnumbered soldiers. Thus, he urged his henchman, Li Fusheng, to use every means to fraudulently get false confessions from the students. If not obeyed, they would be

severely punished by sleep deprivation, hanging by the wrists and whipped, getting shocks from electrical generators, waterboarding, and rolling on the piles of dead and dried corals. Amidst these victims, one of the survivors named Liu Tinggong wrote one short piece of doggerel which could be exemplified to show the very true picture he had gone through. It reads:

“They stood me up there against the wall

My hands were tied up behind and weighted down with stone

Stone jabbed me till my ribs were bleeding

And my legs were flogged by the rifle butt with the bayonet on

Falling into unconsciousness due to numbness and cramping

With bleary eyes, I vaguely entered the world of Hade

A can of icy water was poured over my head

Having woken up, I discovered I became a prisoner with blackened legs.”<sup>41</sup>

Those who had been transferred here were under the threat of these cruel tortures. Therefore, whatever the false confessions they wanted could be gotten. In another word, they could get whatever they wished. In addition, to legalize these “confessions,” they asked the teenagers who didn’t have knowledge of law to sign or affix their thumb-prints on the false confessions.

Once these false confessions were available as the evidence, the Taipei Security Headquarters got the two principals convicted. At 10 a.m., Sunday, on December 11, 1949, they were executed at the spot called Machangting in Taipei.<sup>42</sup> When executed, there were five students who were, in the name of the Communist agents, shot to death, too. (Originally, there were six students, but one, whose name was Wang Ziyi, got sick and died in the jail before the doomday) Among them, the youngest one was only nineteen years old.

Though these two principals and five students died of fake accusations, at least, they had been through a form of the kangaroo court during the period of so-called “the White Terror.” The cruelest measure to commit the atrocity was that more than ten suspected

students, “the Communist Agents,” were arrested, shipped to the outer sea by a fishing boat, dumped into the jute sacks tied to a piece of rock, and thrown overboard, letting them go down to the bottom of the sea and get drowned there. They gave this “Death Penalty” a name: “Casting Anchor.”<sup>43</sup> The rest of about fifty students of this kind were put into a program called: “The Newborn Camp.” And they were under severe surveillance.

Though some of these unlucky students died with the principals, others died of drowning, and still others were detained for reform, the way they treated us in the army was not much better than these. The tricks they tortured us were getting crueler and crueler. Included in their worst ones were: letting us imitate the turtle’s crawling on the concrete floor; ordering us to put the hands atop our heads and sit on our hunkers to do the jumping as the frogs are doing. And under the scorching sun, they had us run laps around the stadium with backpacks on our backs and rifles in our hands about 5,000 meters.

When military basics were being conducted, the key points of “attention!” should be accurately executed. They include: keeping our heads erect, facing straight to the front, holding the bodies erect and shoulders back, lifting and arching our chests and lowering our chins. Even if we thought that we had these key points correctly done in terms of standard of an “attention,” we had to go through the unexpected tests inflicted on us. That means they would give us kicks upon the back parts of our legs from behind. And if we could withstand the kicks without bending our knees, there was nothing for them to condemn of, otherwise they tongue-lashed us: “What a country bumpkin you are! What a country bumpkin you are!” And in the name of training us to be absolutely obedient soldiers, they, in fact, nursed revenge for our contempt shown to them.

To me, the most bitter thing was the condition that I didn’t have the availability of “that half a day’s education promised.” I couldn’t learn new things but what I had learned that little bit of stuff in the past would slip from my mind. Whenever I thought of this, tears welled from my eyes.

## Chapter 13

### Life and Death on the Penghu Islands

After two principals, Zhang and Zhou, were executed, they found that there was nothing else preventing them from doing whatever they wished to do. Therefore, forging the cases of “the Communist agents” was halted.

Though no one knew that the exact number of this group of the students of Shandong was “drafted” into the army illegally, the number that could fill the following units was unquestionable: on the Fisherman Island, the units were the 115<sup>th</sup> regiment, an assault platoon and an artillery battalion; on the main island, Ma Gong, the 116<sup>th</sup> regiment, a special task battalion and a communication battalion. I was placed in a mortar squad, the increasing order of the units being the 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon, the 5<sup>th</sup> company, the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion and the 115<sup>th</sup> regiment.

In the fall of 1950, we were transferred from the Fisherman Island to a boot camp named Shiquan in Magong, the largest island of the Penghui archipelago. Once getting settled, we got another round of training started, of course, from basics again, “Attention!” “At Ease!” “Right Face!” and “Left Face!” During the period of bayonet drill, we had to shout in unison, “Get them! get them!”

Suddenly, there were desertions taking place in our company.

In my squad, there was a buddy named Wang Anshun who often absented himself from rigorous training sessions by asking for sick leave. But whenever there was an opportunity to gather together to have drinks, puffs, and idle chats, he suddenly came alive. Being possessed of wit, eloquence, and a sense of humor, he was greatly liked by all in our company. We were of the same age and height so that the other buddies of ours considered that he was the double of me, and vice versa. He considered me the closest comrade of his and I thought that he was the best friend of mine.

One night everybody slept like a log, he quietly woke me up and took me by hand and led me outside our barracks. As I saw him act weirdly, I felt a little bit restless. And then he covered his mouth with one hand whispering to me: “My dearest friend, since my older brother in Magong had got everything arranged for me, tonight, I’ll leave here!”

Pausing for a while, he added: “When I’ll get settled down somewhere in Taiwan, I’ll surely contact you!” Up to the present moment, I realized the whole story he was about to tell me--he wanted to be a deserter. And I was dumbfounded there facing him and not knowing what to say. When I was just coming back from somewhere and wanted to say something to him, he said nothing more than “Take Care!” waving his hands to me and entering the darkness of the night.

On the following morning, the news of Wang Anshun's desertion spread through the entire company. Our company commander was extremely angry about this happening and vowed to get him back at all costs and have him severely punished. Since desertion might be contagious, therefore, getting him back could be served as a warning to others who had such an idea. Conversely, we felt happy for him. Our Company Commander, Wang Yubing, was not capable of getting Wang Anshun back as he had vowed. And following suit, another deserter named Lu Mingshen, a student from the Yangtai United Secondary School, ran away, too.

To get in the ROC Military Academy by taking the entrance examination was another way to leave Penghu.

Lieut. General Li Zhenqing originally thought this group of students might be his own “assets.” In the future, after launching a counter-offensive by the Nationalist army successfully, he might use us as cadres to expand his own force in the Mainland. Therefore, we were not allowed to take part in the entrance examination held by the academy.

Around 1951, President Chiang Kai-shek took an inspection tour to the Penghu Islands reviewing the armed forces. He found out that there were such young and tall student soldiers (Shandong man is usually tall). Nodding to us frequently, he instructed both Li and Han to let us join the ROC Military Academy entrance exam.

However, both Li and Han publicly obeyed President Chiang’s “edict” but privately they just let two or three in one company to sign up for the exam in a sort of formality. Totally, in our company, there were only three of our buddies, Liu Hehsin, Fan Zijing and Yang Diancai who had passed the entrance examinations. The first two enrolled in 1951 class, the third one, in 1953.

But thereafter, through a variety of channels to reflect the true picture of restricting students for getting the permission to participate in the entrance examinations held by a

variety of military academies to the highest level of military hierarchy, Li and Han had no option but to loosen their grips on this matter. Consequently, all kinds of military academies or schools came to Penghu to recruit cadets: The ROC Military Academy got more cadets than any other school (especially the 1951 and 1953 classes); Political Warfare Cadres Academy ranked second; Air Force Academy, Army Communications School and Academy of Management also got the certain percentage of cadets respectively. Because my health was not that good, I didn't sign up for the test held by any of these academies.

When we were stationed at a port called Suo Guangang, President Chiang created some famous military slogans which read: "In the first year, preparation is done; in the second year, counteroffensive is launched; in the third year, all the battlegrounds are cleared up in the Mainland; and in the fifth year, victory is obtained!"<sup>44</sup> He demanded that we should put our weapons under our heads as pillows at night, exercising vigilance until the crack of dawn and in the meantime, to step up our training without letup. If the Communist army dared cross the Taiwan Strait and attacked us, we would certainly deliver a hard blow to them defending Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen, Matsu, and finally, taking advantage of the opportunity to launch a counteroffensive to recover the Mainland.

When political study session was on, we were demanded to study two booklets: *Junrenhun* or the Serviceman's Guiding Principles and *Gemingjiahun* or the revolutionary's Guiding Principles. By so doing, they inculcated in us the values of justice, courage and integrity.

When the fitness program or the field training program was on, we were highly demanded to run faster, jump higher and farther, and shoot better. Overall, they wanted to train us to be one Nationalist soldier who was worthy of ten Communist soldiers, ten, one hundred, and so on, an army of invincible troops as strong as iron and steel.

However, our shoes became a big problem. Made from poor qualities of plastics and frayed by the gravel land we trod on, a pair of black plastic shoes newly distributed to us was broken up on the soles for less than a month, so were the uppers of them, our toes were beyond the edges of the shoes. Henceforth, our squad leader taught us how to make straw sandals. Firstly, we were instructed to put our feet evenly on the ground, and then draw along our feet to get the measurements of our sandals with a piece of chalk, and at last, strike the wooden stakes along the lines of the blue-prints into the ground.



Produced in abundance on the Penghu Islands and deemed as the excellent material for making straw sandals, was the plant called agave. The first step was to get a bunch of agaves soaked in the pond letting them rot there. The second step was to spread them out on the ground under the scorching sun to be weathered. And the last step was to shake them clean by hand, and right before our noses, there were white agave fibers appearing. And making them into the finger-like cords, we used them to make our straw sandals.

On the Penghu Islands, the sun in summer was as swelting as fire. All of us being stripped to our waists, with only red sports shorts and straw sandals on and rifles in our hands, we were severely trained on the rolling hills with the aim at getting the highest level of combative skills.

Once the training was off, we were sent to the seashore to build bunkers immediately. As a boulder, the basic material, was too heavy to be removed, we had to apply ropes and poles to carry it over. Each one of us was equipped with a hammer sitting on the sort of flat rock, beginning to break it up into small pieces, and then, having the small pieces broken up into the smaller ones. As far as the eye could reach, we saw nothing except for that there were dense clouds of dust flying, and our heads and faces were coated with a layer of dirt. And what we heard was the striking sound of “Da! Da!” together with the waves lapping on the beach, “Shua! Shua!” After getting the cube-like pieces, we poured water, sand, and lime into a mortar and blended them well. The last step was to bring this newly-made stuff into the layout of a bunker by a shoulder pole and two buckets. And every step had to be perfectly executed.

Owing to the long-lasting effects of undernutrition, non-stop rigorous training, and non-stop work on the bunkers, there were lots of buddies in our company suffering from night blindness. And I was one of them. In the daytime, my eyesight was normal. But as night set in, I saw nothing but a mass of yellow-colored opacity. When the time was due to turn in, I had to grope from the outside of our barracks into the inside slowly, step by step, feeling for the double bunkbed bedroom to the right spot where I enabled myself to climb up onto the upper deck of my bed.

In order to cure night blindness, our superiors distributed bottles of fish oil capsules to us, and furthermore, demanded the quartermaster of every company to purchase shark fish from the local fishermen to supplement the insufficient fish oil rationed.

Seeing those who had run away and those who had become cadets of a variety of

military academies with bright future ahead of them, I felt extremely depressed. However, the worse form of unluckiness befell me on the heels of my night blindness.

In 1952, there were two fatal infectious diseases spreading through the islands: No. 1 scrub typhus; No. 2 typhus.

One day, when we came back from our field training, I suddenly went sick and tired. Firstly, I felt that I was running a temperature, but a low grade, and then followed was the high fever of 40.1 C. And I also felt dizzy, eyes blurry. Worst of all, I couldn't sit bolt upright nor stand straight. Not until a day was over, did four buddies collapse in our company. The most horrible thing was that a private named Lu Shangyun passed away the following day. And his death had caused us so much panic that we were afraid of being infected, and the majority of our buddies were trying to keep away from the infected as far as possible. Our Company Commander quickly gave an order to have the infected including me firstly carried out of the barracks, and then tried to locate one of disused houses owned by civilians to accommodate them.

I was dumped into a sort of bed covered with straws under which there were coral fragments and sand. At this juncture, I was in a coma due to high fever. And in the meantime, I was raving.

The only thing that I knew was to drink water. The capacity for intake of water one night only, I was told after my recovery, was nine canteens. In another word, I kept drinking and simultaneously, urinating on the bed.

There were two close buddies of mine named Liu Bocheng and Yuan Lijun who were not afraid of this infectious disease and took turns to get water for me. After delivering the water, Liu or Yuan, staying far away, watched how I was doing. In case, I was trying to stand up and do things that were dangerous due to my high fever, Liu or Yuan came to my rescue. If I was seen to fall asleep, they just stayed there watching for some time, and then went away.

They are my saviors. Especially Mr. Liu to whom, I am greatly indebted, because only he who got involved in a heated argument with our company commander, "As Ma Chungliang is still breathing, you cannot have him carried out and buried alive!"

At that time, neither enough medicine nor enough doctors and nurses were available on the island. As I was abandoned in that small house by the seashore a week, I couldn't

get admission to Magong Hospital, let alone the doctor's diagnosis. I thought to myself that there was nothing for me to do but to let fate take its course! I kept on drinking water for another two weeks. Though the high fever was still there, my case was not deteriorating.

One afternoon, I was in a sort of the condition of unnatural deep sleep. Suddenly, I felt that my eyelids were forcibly opened up. And in the meantime, I was blinded by the glare of a flashlight, and I thought to myself that something bad would happen to me soon and that the little ghostly figures were sent to get me by Yama, King of the Underworld. Shortly after, within my earshot were these words: "What he is suffering from is typhus, and it is in the peak period of its development. If he can hold out this way a week, he will turn better. I don't have any medicine for this kind of disease at home, and let him alone power through it!" When recovered, I knew that he was one of the combat medical technicians trained in the Japanese army during the Second World War. When Japan was defeated, he got the opportunity to return to his native island and serve his own folks.

I totally depended upon the intake of water to have gone through this fatal disease. And one month after my recovery, the lost weight began fleshing out, and the hair that had been lost began growing. Shortly after, the hair on head and body grew fully back as they had been before.

Though I was drilled to the bone unrelentingly and went through typhus, the matter of life and death, I survived despite all these trials. However, there was a buddy named Hu Chengye who was unable to get himself out of the deep black hole of depression. And during the hours, he was playing the sentry role for the security of our camp, and with the muzzle of his gun against his belly, he committed suicide by pulling the trigger of his gun with one of his toes. The aftermath was that his stomach was blasted open; intestines exposed. His suicidal act left an indelible impression on me. Not until 2000, did I suddenly have the urge to write a piece of poem entitled: "Words from the Grave" to commemorate him. Because he is the only son in his family, I wrote this poem from his perspective. The whole thing is as follows:

At high tide

At low tide

In a wink of an eye, I have been buried here fifty years

The monsoon wind blows over me once a year

My bone and flesh become chemicals that have long eaten into the hardest rock of the cliff

Martial laws have been lifted for several decades

The wild geese have traveled back and forth countless times

I am the only person who has been interred here

Having no chance to see the leaves on the white-trunk poplars

Nor do I have the opportunity to see the footprints on the snowy ground at my hometown

Having come here, we are of the same fate

Some are the sole trunks of their family trees; others, branches

Only the family tree of mine is uprooted and withered away as the lean column cloud of smoke from an incense stick

And it also seems as if I were the embarking light on the masthead of a sinking ship

Having flashed on and off few times, it goes down to the bottom of the sea.

The stars are twinkling in the sky overhead

Silently I have been counting the mighty tides in my mind

Buried here, and acting as a “divine figure,” I am watching days and nights

As if I were watching the waves of barley in the field in my home farm

I contributed this piece of poem to *The Epoch Poetry Quarterly*, and the editor-in-chief, Zhang Mo had it run on the Autumn Issue, in the year of 2000. Right now, *waishengren*, the mainlanders in Taiwan are permitted to travel freely to China and Hong Kong, and I wish the spiritual soul of Hu Chengye's, could pay a visit to his home village in Shandong Province and tended his barley or wheat field as he did in the Penghu Islands.

## Chapter 14

### My *Wenyi*, Literature and Arts, Friends in the Army

In Magong, the largest island of Penghu, as the days went by, they loosened their grips on us in the stringent rule, neither corporal punishment nor tongue-lashing any more. And even a cussword was hardly heard. Furthermore, though not publicly announced, “We can pick up our textbooks to study,” yet when we studied them, they were not to be confiscated. However, the books written by the left-wing writers were still prohibited.

At this juncture, I saw a buddy named Wang Yuhuai begin writing. He was one of the students from the Yangtai United Secondary School and conversant with Chinese classics and especially, loving the poetry of the Tang dynasty, the *ci* (another form of poetry) of the Sung dynasty, and the *qu* (a kind of song form) of the Yuan dynasty. To this day, I still can recall the look of his when he was teaching us a piece of poem entitled: “To the Tune of Pu Sa Man” (The tune of Buddhist Dancers) by Li Bai.

He has a strange habit snorting as a donkey does. Interestingly enough, after speaking a few words, he couldn’t help contracting his nose. And when inspiration struck him, he could come up with a string of witticisms. His Mandarin is tinged with Yantai accent. With the exception of the Yangtai dialect, what he has said is not hard to be understood if you listen to him closely.

When the fitness training session was on, one of the items he feared the most was *tiaomuma* or jumping over a wooden box longitudinally. No matter how far the starting line was and how fast the speed he picked up, it always came to the same result that he always landed his buttocks on that wooden thing.

We, the group of the students from Shandong, got paid based on the ranks of *erdengbing* and *yidengbing*, the lowest ones called privates but there is slight difference between them, the latter is higher than the former by one rank in the Chinese Nationalist army. There were few of us got paid based on the rank of *Shangdengbing*, the private, the first class in a company. Because this rank was, of course, higher than the other two, *Shangdengbing* should possess good physique, impressive appearance and tall frame that qualified him to be ranged at the head of a squad.

By then, the pay for *erdengping* was raised to 8 dollars, *yidengbing* 9, and *shangdengbing*, 11. If further elaborated, our whole month's income was the value of less than twenty packs of the Banana brand cigarettes, each pack sold at 50 cents. If we wanted to buy two realms of lined papers on which we wrote our essays, half a month's pay would be gone.

Every night, after the lights-out and all buddies had been in a sound sleep, Wang Yuhuai quietly got up and lit up half the length of a candle he had kept beginning to write the first draft of a short story on the bad quality of toilet papers. The title of that short story has long been unremembered, but a couplet as its subhead is still embedded in my memory:

“In the floral garden of heaven, there is a flower blooming

Simultaneously, there is one withering on the earth.”

He was writing about a young tongue-tied guy with spiritual perspective. This guy had a great ambition. And in order to deliver the people from misery and want, he sacrificed his own life to have died in a pool of blood. In 1950s, there were two popular *wenyi*, literature and arts, magazines in Taiwan: one was the *Wild Wind Monthly*; the other, the *Wenyi Magazine Semi-monthly*. When he had finished his last touch, he mailed it to the *Wild Wind Monthly*. No sooner had his short story been published in that magazine than the whole company scrambled for it to read.

As Wang's handwritten thing of that short story was converted into that of a printed version and inspired by his example, I secretly imitated his doing by writing a piece of a sort of diary-style stuff entitled: “A Private's Days in the Army,” roughly 3,500 words. And I contributed it to the *Wenyi Magazine Semi-monthly*.

The education I had received on the Mainland only got to the level of having finished the second year and two weeks in the third year at junior high (which is roughly the equal of the eighth or ninth grade in the U.S.) That my Chinese was not good enough to do this sort of thing was clearly understandable. Fearing that my work would be rejected, and became a laughing butt in the company, I wrote a P. S. at the end of that essay: “Dear Editor, if it is not publishable, please dispose of it at will and don't send it back to me!”

Unexpectedly, in two months, when Wang Yuhuai serving as a “Mess Officer” went

shopping for our kitchen stuff and came back from Magong City and told me that the piece I had written was published in the *Wenyi Magazine Semi-monthly*. In order to see what the printed version of my own writing looked like early, I asked for a leave and went all the way to Magong and bought a copy back out of my own pocket. The editor of that magazine didn't pay me for my work nor give me a free copy. He thought that my acquiescence to what he had done to me, a budding writer, was taken for granted.

Paralleled to Wang in terms of “accomplishments” was Yang Zhenying except that Yang's Chinese calligraphy with brush and ink was beautiful and exceptional. He also possessed the gift of drawing. When the wall paper contest was held in the camp, he was held responsible for copying the selected writings down on paper and drawing something as “masthead” of it.<sup>45</sup>

Both had brought with them a lot of poems written by reputed poets from the Mainland. The poets included: Xu Zhimo, Yuan Kejia, Sun Yutang, Li Sha, Cang Kejia, Ai Qing, Bing Xin. Yang copied them one by one into a small notebook. You didn't have to bother about what the contents of these selected poems meant to you, only the beautiful art of his handwriting with the fountain pen would be greatly pleasing to the eye. When our training session was over, they took out the notebook to read. When they didn't read, I borrowed it from them.

As to their character, Wang was outgoing and open-minded, while Yang tongue-tied and standing on his own feet. They firstly wrote short stories and then poems. I found out that there were streaks of Chinese classics in Wang's poems. For example: “Has any forested mountain kept silent through my mind's eyes?” But Young's poems had the “tastes” of modern times. However, I cannot recall any of his verse lines.

Overall, when they wrote short stories, I followed suit; when they wrote poetry, I did the same thing.

One night, suffering from insomnia, listening to my buddies' rhythmically snoring, looking at the moon through the window, and worrying about the wretched condition in which I got trapped--being unable to continue pursuing my studies, I was so sad that tears welled from my eyes as if the flood had breached the river bank. However, as this sad moment elapsed, a piece of modern poem entitled: “Moonlit Night” came by itself, and I jotted it down. At dawn, I became impatient and hurriedly handed it over to Wang for reviewing. Having read it, he contracted his nose several times, and quietly had it fixed as



follows:

The tick-tock clock is like a whip whipping my heart  
My eyes contain the tears of struggle  
In the deep of the night, I quietly lie on my bed with the moonlight  
Through the window, I gaze at the vaulted sky  
A crescent moon takes care of the little twinkling stars  
The night is likened to a decent lass  
Quietly glowing with mysterious charming  
The blue dream has just been embroidered but soon broken up again  
I see a metric star gliding in the night sky  
And I hear the footstep of spring silently go by.

There is no poet who does not cherish his virgin work. In fact, “Moonlit Night” is a half piece done by me; another half by Wang. I sent it out and got published in a magazine called the *Island Literature*.

On the Penghu Islands, the camps in which I had dwelt were: Waian, Neian, Bamboo Pole Bay, Shiquan, Suoguangang, Wukan, Aimen, Baisha, and the last one called Jimowu.

I cannot recall the details of how and when I became associated with a poet named Li Chunsheng, but I can remember that at that time, he was a guy, extremely melancholic but quite passionate.

On Sundays, he frequently visited me. As soon as he saw me, he took my hand and shook it firmly and called me by my given name in Mandarin tinged with strong Shanxi accent. We talked about literature and arts, modern poetry, life, et cetera. When I sent him back to his camp, I walked him along the coast line of Jimuwu. While walking, I listened to him to recite his new poetic works. And once we were a stone’s throw away from his camp, he would get an excuse by saying that he wanted to do the same thing as I did to

him. Thus, I was accompanied back to my camp by him. And I repeated doing the same thing to him; he did to me likewise. As sauntering along that coast line back and forth four or five times, we came to know that a whole Sunday holiday had been gone.

Zhu Guanghe, another poet, usually wrote traditional poetry. After making friends with us, he began writing modern poetry. His writing materials were mostly from what he had collected on the islands: the gravel land, the strong monsoon wind, the sea, the kids who gleaned seashells on the beach, and the girls who worked in the fields, with their half faces covered with towels, forearms and shins wrapped up in motley fabric.

On one of Sundays, we met with one another on the street of the city of Magong by chance, and having reached a consensus, we went to a photo shop for having a picture taken. And as a result, since then, each one of us has kept a valuable photo. The inscription which was written by Li Chunsheng sounded poetic, simultaneously, revealing sort of our wishful thinking: “We have sown the seeds of our faith in the desert of life, and we will passionately sing a song about our future ahead!”

He sent this photo and our works to his No. 4 uncle, Li Sha, the only senior poet we had known for consultation in terms of learning how to write poetry. Li Sha saw us, all teenagers in uniforms who were fond of literature and arts, accordingly, giving each one of us a pseudonym: Li Chunsheng (Li Qing), Wang Yuhuai (Wang Gu), Yang Zhenying (Yang Yi), Zhu Guanghe (Zhu Long), Ma Chungliang (Ma Ding). And another guy was Sun Jingfu who didn't write poetry, and therefore, he wasn't given any pen name. Further, Li Sha recommended our better works to literature and arts magazines to be published.

Another group of literature and arts friends who were associated with me included: Guo Guangren (pen name, Guo Wu), Wang Chuanpu (Wang Pu), Wang Jinfang (Wang Shu), Cao Jizeng (Ji Wen), Zhou Yamin, Ding Chengzhong (Lu Ding), and Wang Xuekuan.

Guo Guangren whose original pen name was Ziren, meaning an industrious person, was awfully hard-working in pursuing his writing career. Those proses of his, “the real thing, love me true,” were within the limits of 1,000 words and published frequently in the supplements connected with the major newspapers in Taiwan and won great admiration from us as well as from readers. Later he changed his pen name from Ziren into Guowu at the time he got his novelette, “There Are No Traces in This Dream” serialized in the *Central Daily News*. This work became so popular with readers, and was

a must-read. Every morning, there was a lot of readers getting up in the early morning to buy a copy of the *Central Daily News* to read this serial. It was said that the most renowned writer on the island, Suma Zhongyuan, was no exception. When the whole thing finally came to the end by installments, readers complained the story ended up in tragedy boisterously demanding that the writer should rewrite the last part of it into the denouement of having the hero and the heroine married and of “they live happily ever after.”

Wang Pu was a talented writer getting three genres of literature under his control, namely, he could write prose, novel and poetry. He was also great at translation--rendering English works into Chinese. He translated Pearl Buck's *Letters from Peking* and got it published in the *Crown Magazine* in installments. And one of the radio stations in Taipei had got it on the the air. Among his novels *The Everlasting Confessions* is the masterpiece. Later, he utilized video camera to have the 65-year-old writers' biographies taped. The project was called, *The Videotaped Biographies of Senior Writers in Taiwan, ROC*, having got him to the acme of his career. As a result, somebody called him the contemporary Su Maqian, the great Master of the Eastern Han Dynasty famed in the field of history and literature. At present, his unprecedented undertaking of this kind not only made him reputed in Taiwan, the Mainland, and the world as well. And a lot of libraries have stored a set of his works--the *Videotaped Biographies of Senior Writers in Taiwan, ROC* (disk edition).

Wang Jinfang (Wang Shu) was a loner, not socialized himself with people at all. He held himself so high that he was too opinionated to change his views even if he was proved wrong. He wrote a few pieces of modern poems tintured with freshness. By then, we didn't know he possessed drawing gift. Unexpectedly, several decades later, he became one of the giant water colorists in Taiwan. He not only relished the fame of being the top water-colorist at home but in the world as well. He is residing in Australia, now.

Cao Jizeng's poetic works were rich in prose; Zhou Yamin was a versatile young man; his wife, Ai Ya, noted for her prose works. More than a decade later, Zhou got into the world of broadcast.

When the Chinese New Year Festival was in the corner, aside from enjoying our feast and setting off fire crackers for celebrating the occasion of saying “Goodbye” to the old year, Zhang Youn, from the 6<sup>th</sup> company, Gong Weiyang and Wang Wenxie, from the 4<sup>th</sup> company (Several decades later, Wang took up the posts, Commander, Combined

Logistic Command and Deputy Minister of Defense), and I, Ma Chungliang, from the 5<sup>th</sup> company, staged a “home-made” play. Based on the economic principles, we were the picks with the aim to get the rank and file entertained. There was only one female lead role in the play. Wang Wenxie and I disguised ourselves as this girl, and he played the girl in the first part of the play; I, the second.

In 1952, without having had much of substantive changes, only the 39<sup>th</sup> division was renamed the 57<sup>th</sup> and the 115<sup>th</sup> regiment changed into the title of 169<sup>th</sup>. This time, I was transferred to a unit called Headquarters company, which was under the direct control of the regimental commander. The commanders of the battalion and the company remained unchanged. Only the regimental commander, Colonel Han Bin was replaced by Colonel Yuan Zijun.

## Chapter 15

### Chenggongling: A Military Training Base in Taiwan

In 1954, we finally got the opportunity to be transferred to Taiwan, the largest island in this region, and left the Penghu Islands where we had been stationed for five years.<sup>46</sup>

After stepping out of our ship and getting on the dock at Kaohsiung harbor, we began marching north. On the road, while walking, we simultaneously conducted mock battles toward Chenggongling, a military training base, located in central Taiwan. When the night fell, mostly we borrowed classrooms from the middle or elementary schools for overnighing. We made our make-shift beds by pulling two or three desks together and slept on them with our clothes on. Sometimes, we were quartered in villages for spending nights. We made our beds there by firstly having the spots under the eaves of houses cleaned, and then putting the hay on as mattresses, and finally, spreading our woolen blankets out.

Once, our squad was allocated to a farmer's house to stay overnight.

There were a few members in this family: an old couple and a young couple. After a good night's sleep, we found out that all the household chores were totally dependent on a daughter-in-law. We saw that firstly, she did the cooking job for the family; secondly, she did the laundry; thirdly, she fed pigs with pigswill; and fourthly, she went to the checkered vegetable fields to get some greens back. She got all the routine duties done one by one orderly.

She was a girl of few words and did all the household chores but no complaints passed her lips. And that won my admiration. I thought to myself that if one day I could be discharged from the army working on a piece of farmland somewhere, marrying a peasant girl like her and spending my entire life in the countryside, I wouldn't feel discontented.

After the Dragon Boat Festival, the weather in Taiwan is getting hotter day by day.

With helmets on our heads, backpacks on our backs, the scorching sun overhead, and the steaming of the asphalt-paved road beneath our feet, we felt terribly bad, and the

feeling of this kind was beyond description.

When the march started from the Kaohsiung dock, we performed very well as crack troops. But after passing by the township, Tian Zhong, the entire company was like sheep without a shepherd. Worst of all, after several days' walking on the road, some buddies had blisters on their feet. With blisters on our feet bleeding, they became lamemen limping forward as slowly as snails' crawlings.

When a man is in pain, the best way for him to alleviate it is letting his imagination take him somewhere, out of old track so to speak. Firstly, I let my thought go wild dreaming of marrying a peasant girl and then, dreaming of being a poet. Walking on and on, I felt as if I were hit by electrical shock, and a poem, "Snail" was formed in my mind. When we got to the place to stay that night, I busied myself jotting it down on a piece of paper. Here is the whole thing:

I am a snail

Living in a dark and damp corner

People ignore me simply walking by

But I am still happy even if nobody is paying any attention to my being

Though I have an ugly face

Yet I have a shell to protect and defend myself well

The antennae are my mind's eyes that could detect when it is sunny or rainy and the rough path ahead

You are a bird with wings flying as high as you can in the blue sky

Or you are a fish in the river swimming as freely as you wish

All the glory and the happiness belong to you

Tossing your sarcasm and eye-rolling to me

I will be able to bear them all

Crawling on my own path

Despite the wind blows or the rain pelts and the unknown future is ahead

I'll definitely crawl for my life with hope.

This is an easily-grasped piece of poem. The *Vineyard Poetry Quarterly* ran it on its 67<sup>th</sup> issue. Later, Mr. Wen Xiaocun, the chief editor, selected it into a collection of poems entitled: *The Analytic Studies of 100 Modern Poems* which is to be used as sort of the teaching material targeting teenagers who are interested in poetry. Wen compiled it into the Chapter of Animals in the collection and that year, the Cultural Bureau connected with the Provincial Taiwan Government awarded him a prize.

It took us a week to get to Chenggongling on foot.

As I recall when we got to that military training base, a sunseting scene was in the west. Though exhausted, we were curious about our new environments.

All units moved into different barracks but in the same military base, of course. Thus, visiting became easier. Though belonging to the different units, we, the group of verse lovers, who had no verbal promise, rallied at Guo Guangren's office spontaneously. He worked at the regimental headquarters, a bigger target and easily to access. With Li Chunsheng's pushing, we decided to have a mimeographed poetry magazine published--The *Green Apple Poetry Monthly*, to spice up our daily life in that military training base.

There was no shortage of poets who could contribute their works to the *Green Apple Poetry Monthly*. They were Wangpu, Shulan, Jiwen, Zhulong, Wangshu, Li Chunsheng and me. However, only Guo Guangren, himself, rolled up his sleeves and did the work from the editing, the stencil-engraving to the mimeographing.

We had a new friend named Shan Yizhen who had been writing poetry for years and his pen name was Shanren. He was also the immediate boss of Guo Guangren and ranked first lieutenant. We had to toe his line in everything. If he gave us the nod of approval, everything got settled. In fact. The *Green Apple Poetry Monthly* was the sideline of a military newspaper, *The True Words*, issued by the Headquarters of the 57<sup>th</sup> Division which was dubbed "The Great Wall Army." On principles, our poetry publication was not for the public.

The *Green Apple Poetry Monthly* was not well organized in terms of its hierarchy

nor were there any rules for contributors. But we took it seriously getting the mimeographed magazine out on time. Once out, each one of us had a copy in hand and discussed with one another the strengths and the weaknesses of our works. And we got a lot of fun from it.

Even up to the present moment, I still can recall the argument with one another about accepting or rejecting one poem written by a senior poet named Chen Dong. Li Chunsheng said, “Despite Chen Dong is a senior poet, the piece of his is not publishable in the *Green Apple Poetry Monthly*, and the publishing of a work is completely dependent upon the quality, not on the repute of a poet!” But I refuted him by saying that the reason Chen Dong mailed his work to our monthly magazine was totally out of goodwill to encourage us, nothing else. However, from this argument, we could see how seriously we valued the *Green Apple Poetry Monthly*.

Our poetry magazine was run for some time, and there were two of our buddies passing the entrance examination and enrolling at Fuxinggan Military Political Warfare Cadres Academy located in north Taipei; another one or two friends were transferred to other units. “We were torn apart.” Thus, our endeavor couldn’t continue, and naturally it came to the end.

At Chenggonling, another event worthy of recording was that General Sun Liren, Commander-in-chief of the Army, came reviewing us and gave us a talk: “Firstly, throughout my life, I wear woolen socks throughout my life, because they absorb sweat and moisture so as not to be easy to contract Tinea Pedis--Hong Kong feet. Therefore, I ordered my quartermaster to have woolen socks distributed to you. Secondly, after marching, no matter how exhausted you are, do not go to bed immediately, taking a shower or a bath, otherwise at least, getting your hands and feet cleaned. Undoubtedly, this act can beat your fatigue, and further, make you sleep like a log.”<sup>47</sup>

Our unit, after going through the training at Chenggongling, was transferred to Guguan, a remote mountainous area, for a sort of “mountain training.” At that time, our company commander was dismissed, and the newly inaugurated commander saw that my penmanship and my writing skills were good, promoting me from corporal to sergeant. Actually, I was doing the senior sergeant’s work which consists of the paperworks, filing, archiving, and the others, that should be done by a non-commissioned officer.

The days at Guguan were the happiest ones during my entire serviceman’s career.



Perhaps, owing to the fresh air in these mountains, I was highly spirited, and my health was getting stronger and stronger. After the dinner, I followed the buddies to see the falling and splashing of cascades, and a variety of birds sailing back to their nests. And I was productive in poetry writing. The *Wild Wind Monthly* was the major magazine to run my works, and occasionally, a few pieces got published in the *Modern Poetry Quarterly* and the *Page of Poetry Weekly* connected with the supplementary edition of the *Taiwan Gonglun Bao*, (Gonglun means public opinion).

## Chapter 16

### The Taichung Incident

Originally, there were roughly 8,000 students. Aside from those who were placed in a newly established school called Magong School, a combination of secondary and elementary school programs (its exact name is the Military Dependents' School for the Penghu Defense Command), those who passed the entrance examinations and enrolled in the various types of military academies, those who were discharged from the army because of chronic diseases, those who were dumped into jute sacks and thrown overboard and got drowned, those who were executed with two principles, those who committed suicides, and those who died of various diseases, right now only 900-some odd students were left in the army. And they were either all non-commissioned officers or the rank and file members.

Of the 900 students, the majority of us didn't want to stay in the army. No matter how hard our superiors did the brainwashing, we made up 100 percent of our minds to quit the army. Our only demand was going back to school. The school was still there, and we wanted to finish our incomplete studies. However, this long-awaited wish finally developed into a *jitiqingyuan* or a collective petition which really means collective protest in the Chinese way of thinking.

In the Nationalist army, launching a collective protest to the authority is a big deal. The man who organized the protest might be imprisoned if the case is found less serious. If it is considered extremely serious, he might be executed. Therefore, we should stipulate that firstly, everyone was an organizer and “no heroism”; secondly, we should have a good excuse for this collective protest and be able to enumerate concrete examples to prove that we had been unfairly treated; thirdly, our present predicament should be thoroughly understood, and we should win a group of unbiased celebrities' collection of sympathies and supports regardless of the parties they belonged to, the ruling party or the opposition one; and fourthly, every collective protest rally should adopt “non-violent means.”

There were also Four Proclamations as follows: 1. No gun-carrying; 2. No rioting; 3. No oath-taking; 4. No revolting against the country.<sup>48</sup>

On April 25, 1955, in Houli camp in Taichung County, there was suddenly a rumor spreading by word of mouth that a collective protest rally was to be held in Taipei.<sup>49</sup> Our moves were swift as if the cloud were amassing or as if the sound were traveling in the air. We stepped out of our camp and headed for the Taichung Railway Station to assemble there. And we hoped that if there was any train available, we should get on, no matter what it was, passenger or freight. In another word, we thought of nothing else but to go to Taipei to protest.

As we were gathering boisterously together in front of the station, there was a lot of military policemen rushing in timely and laying siege to us immediately. We adopted the strategy of keeping our mouth shut and they dealt with us by the trick of pacifying us and kept us under “flexible” surveillance. “In order to prevent any fish from escaping the net,” they gave an order to the stationmaster to postpone all the northbound trains so that they could run back and forth through the cars and have thorough checks.

In front of the station, we stood or sat around a small park in which there was a bronze statue of the late President Chiang Kai-shek. Initially, about 50 students were there, and later, there were 300 or 400 plus students getting in. Some students got down on their knees adopting the kneeling postures on the concrete silently protesting they were unfairly treated; others sat there with their eyes tightly closed and prayed. And the majority were sitting there and keeping their eyes downcast.

We had nothing else to do but to sit there whiling away the time.

More and more people were gathering around the park to see us. And no reporters were permitted to interview us, let alone take a picture of us. But it was rumored that there was a correspondent of *The New York Times* trying very hard to get the story, but there was no way for him to get what he wanted. However, this correspondent didn't give up, keeping on inquiring, and finally, he got an answer like this: “These soldiers are extremely patriotic and want to go to the off-shore islands to fight the Reds! Because their demands have been denied, they have no alternative but to stage a sit-in!”

As time sped by, second by second, minute by minute, more and more students were coming. The order was: the students could come in, but not go out.

The crowds bursted with curiosity about it keeping on watching, standing around, and wholeheartedly wanting to see how this “drama” ended.

With the crowds' watching, the military authorities didn't dare to give an order that each one of us be handcuffed, fettered and carried out to military trucks to be transported back to our camp, nor did they dare take us away by two-on-one or four-on-one from the scene by overwhelming manpower, not mentioning having the guts to disperse us by firing the guns. If they adopted any of the above-mentioned actions, it would cause a big commotion. The best way they could do to us was to persuade us not to keep sitting like this and said repeatedly to us: "Everything should be viewed from the interest of the country, the R.O.C. first!" Further, they advised us to return to our camp voluntarily. If the persuasion didn't work, they would wait until the middle night, when people were gone, crackdowning on us.

A five-point consensus among us was reached as follows:

1. In 1949, the country was in a storm, we were illegally drafted into the army having served the country six years already and defended Kinmen, Matsu, the Penghu Islands and Taiwan. And the Sino-American Mutual Defense Treaty had been signed, and the situation of the R.O.C. on Taiwan was getting steadier and steadier than ever before.<sup>50</sup>
2. Based on the same status, the students of colleges and universities, who followed the Nationalist army's retreat from the Mainland to Taiwan, were not placed into the army, nor were the students of the Changbai Teachers' Training College in the northeast China. Instead, all of its students enrolled at a school called the College of Administration established by the government, and were better taken care of.<sup>51</sup>
3. In the same case like ours, in 1953, the National Yuheng United Secondary School students, who returned to Taiwan with General Huang Ji's troops, were all admitted to the Provincial Yuanlin Experimental Secondary School. At the beginning, they fled the Mainland to Phu Quoc, Vietnam. Four years later, they picked Taiwan as their own country.<sup>52</sup>
4. Again, based on the same status, those students retreating from the Dachen Islands to Taiwan in 1953 were totally accepted by Yuanlin.<sup>53</sup>
5. After the year of 1949, various groups of students, firstly, stowed away from the Mainland to Hong Kong and resided in the refugees' camp called Diaojingling, and others escaped to Macau. And finally, all of them came to Taiwan through different channels. And they were all allowed to get in the school, Yuanlin.<sup>54</sup>

After going through of the process of the comparison of the case of ours with that of the foregoing and on the same status, we found out that there was a huge difference between them and us in the management of the government. We were very angry at the government and thought that the government really mistreated us. Furthermore, we felt that it was reasonable for us to stand up. Under any circumstances, united, we had the power, and only united, we could avoid being punished individually. And in case we would get punished, we would get collectively.

The crowds surrounding us kept watching. People came and went. When the clock struck 1 a.m., Director of the Department of Political Warfare in the First Army-group, Major General, Yi Jin, got to the scene.<sup>55</sup> Before he came, we all sat on the spots as we wished. Once he appeared on the scene, we all adopted the tall kneeling postures, and faced upward to the bronze statue of the late President Chiang Kai-shek. He stood on a military truck giving a talk to us through a loudspeaker and asking us to restrain:

“Brothers, I understand what your problems are, and will pass them up to my superiors. And within a very short period of time, I am sure you will get answers. But firstly, you have to get up and return to your camp and wait there.”

We didn’t respond to what he had said. Seeing this, he repeated what he had just said.

At this moment, it was extremely quiet, and the air was like lead.

Again, seeing us with heads down and tight-lipped, he pounded his chest and guaranteed us:

“I might be your older brother or your father. The protest you are doing now is tantamount to the kind of a behavior murdering your older brother or your father. As you all know, solving the problems needs time. Let us get up, all get up, and go back to your camp, and I guarantee you within the very short spell of time, the answers will surely be given to you!”

As the hour drawn to 2 a.m., the deadlock was still going on. The military authorities moved a division force to deal with us.<sup>56</sup> And they thought that if they let this group of soldiers be “monkeying” on and on, it did not only damage the image of the army but also have the great impact on the repute of the country. If the strategy of persuasive talks didn’t work, they would plan to crush us by dragging us away.

Having been aware of the fact that we were locked in on all sides, we knew that the fire of hope to Taipei for protesting was extinguished, ashes blown away and clouds of smoke gone. And we had nothing to do but to adopt the tactic of expedience to deal with this kind of situation. We had to beat “the metal-sounding call of retreating,” firstly going back to our camp, and then waiting for another opportunity to stage a come-back.

In our judgment, the problem of resuming schooling at Yuanlin wouldn't be resolved within a short span of time. And we also predicted that the worst thing would happen to us. That was to use whatever the means available to disintegrate us and position us in different units stationed in the various parts of the island.

Once they got this attempted move done, it was extremely hard for us to launch another collective protest. Therefore, thinking this might happen soon, we couldn't wait any longer but to take action launching a new wave of protest in Taipei.

The military authorities saw this kind of act developing rapidly and took an immediate measure in a decisive manner by utilizing different military vehicles to transport us, groups of twos or threes, to different units. The majority of us were placed into the 81<sup>st</sup> division. And there were 39 students arrested. And of them, four students were sentenced to different years' imprisonment: Chang Yongbin (10 years), Chang Yonggeng (7 years), Chang Songshan (7 years) and Xu Xiuqi (7 years). The other 35 students were shut up in a detention center and half a year later, they were transferred to a place for reform.<sup>57</sup>

Shi Liquan, Li Jilun, and I were dumped unto a vehicle that carried us to a camp named Longgong in the Zhongli district of Taoyuan City, the Communications Corps of the First Army-group. After reporting to them, they had us sent down to the communications company right away. The company commander of that unit, upon seeing us, gave each one of us a sheet of paper and a ball pen requesting of us to write about ourselves. I can't remember what I put down on the paper now, but I am pretty sure that in the last paragraph, I put such a word in: “My ambition is going back to school and finishing my incomplete studies.”

The new unit appointed all three of us to do the “paper works” for the entire corps. Our job descriptions were clear; other related duties well defined.

And a few days later, we were on the right track. Furthermore, our superiors were greatly moved by our stories, and they were sympathetic with us, and encouraged us to sign

up for “The Classes in the Supplementary Education Program for the Servicemen in the First Army-group.” These classes were designed to promote the qualities of servicemen in the field of humanities. This program was regarded as one of the good policies of the National Government.

Mr. Wang Yuanheng, who taught us English, was the most interesting teacher of all. Prior to his entering the classroom, he might have a couple of drinks. Once he was in, the whole room was filled with the smell of liquor, and under the influence of alcohol, he got so excited that he became long-winded. Included in his teaching was a lot of anecdotes about the “giants,” Prof. Wu Bingzhong, a famous English teacher and Gu Weijun, a prominent diplomat.

Once, during the class time, he gave us a written test on a whim demanding us to write a piece of 300-word essay. We could pick any topic to write but it must have been a real experience related to our everyday life. I wrote quite well and won me admiration from the class. And he praised me: “You are possessed of ability for writing something in English.”

At that time, I also wrote two pieces of prose in Chinese, too. One is entitled: “Mr. Wei--My Elementary School Teacher”; another, “My Eldest Sister.” I contributed them to one of the military newspapers, *The Jing Zhong Bao*, Jing Zhong meaning allegiance, Bao, newspaper, issued by the Chinese Army HQ, in Taipei. This was the only newspaper available in our company, then. After their publications, I jumped for joy for a few days. It is regrettable that the clippings of those two pieces get lost. Otherwise, I will certainly have the writing: “My Eldest Sister” duplicated and mailed it to Zhonglan who is residing in Nanjing now.

## Chapter 17

### Days in the Hospital

When I stayed in that company under the Communications Corps affiliated to the First Army-Group at Longgong camp, Zhongli, I lived a rather good life. If I didn't think about the issue of resuming schooling. Simultaneously, I made a pact with myself: "not thinking of the issue of going back to school at all in play." If incautiously, that thing appeared in my head again, I would remind myself that I had to make an immediate stop.

I clearly sensed that by then, I was full of pessimistic thoughts. If I let them go unchecked, I would certainly fall into the black hole of depression and never have a chance to get myself out of that insanity. Furthermore, I might go mad and at last, I would commit suicide.

I tried worrying about nothing. I simply had a day-by-day mindset. In another word, I tried to live "a day at a time and tomorrow will be another day." And continuing to live on was a good philosophy of mine.

However, one form of unluckiness befell me, again. One day after having my lunch, I lay on my aluminum framed bed in the room and relaxed myself for a nap by regulating my breath. Being humid and hot that day, and stripped to the waist, I fell asleep with only a pair of underwear on, my legs splayed apart toward the opened window; my head toward the aisle between the two rows of double deck bunk beds sidelined. That was one of sweet and sound sleeps that I had ever had. When I woke up, I felt that everything around me was extremely brilliant. Flowers and grasses outside bent their heads as if they were smiling at me.

Gradually, I felt that there was a dull pain in my left knee. Getting up and taking a good look at it, I was shocked at what I saw--there was an egg-sized swell there. A senior sergeant, Yu Huaqing who takes care of personnel record, told me that it was not a serious matter. If I applied a hot towel to it, and though taking some time to completely recover, it would get better and better.

In a few days that followed, it didn't turn out all right as wished, conversely, it got worse. Being so painful, I couldn't put my left foot on the ground. And I was sent to the



805<sup>th</sup> Field Hospital to be treated. After the usual procedure of X-ray examination, blood test, and raps and taps on my stomach by doctor, he diagnosed it as rheumatism, and the X-ray film also showed that my heart was one finger larger than it should be. It is called cardiomegaly. Therefore, I needed hospitalizing and treating for some time.

In the 805th Field Hospital, I made two friends: one was Gao Wu; another, Sun Zongliang. The former was a nurse, the latter, a resident doctor. And they were also verse lovers. The former had her poetic works published by real name; the latter, in the supplements connected with newspapers or magazines by pseudonym, Lu Song. At that time, they were in love and seemingly had a very close relationship, and even when making the rounds, they went hand in hand together.

Originally, I was greatly optimistic about life. Even though I was dangling between life and death on the Penghu Islands, I never gave up. At present, facing the hopeless prospect of going back to school and bed rest, I felt as if I had been in the lowest mood. And in turn, I came up with some of the so-called “modern poems,” with negative views. One piece of poem entitled: “My Poetry” could be served as an example of the degree of negativity about my life at the time:

Perhaps, one day I'll pass away suddenly

Crossing a river at fords

And in the woods, I'll live in a grave forever

By then, I think my poetry might be transformed into a talking bird

Fluttering its wings in the foliage of a tree

Merrily singing the sweetest songs of the world

Only at that time, will I smile heartily with my eyes closed

Despite my tomb is covered with thistles and thorns

And the base covered with the thick moss

Perhaps, I think my poetry might resemble the yellow leaves

Rustling firstly in the wind, and then, one leaf after another is shaken off

Crushed under the feet of human beings, and run over by the vast wheel of time

My poetry and the sludge will be a blend

Like me, my poetry will be forgotten

Perhaps, there might be no comparison between my poetry and anything else

As I am deceased, my poetry will be entombed with my remains there.

The *Page of Poetry* on the *Gonglun Bao* published it in its issue No. 162 on August 16, 1957.

When I was in the 805<sup>th</sup> Field Hospital, Wang Chuanpu, Guo Guangren, Wang Jinfang, and Zhu Guanghe from different camps in Taiwan came to see me and shared the brotherhood with me.

Wang Chuanpu had just graduated from the Department of Journalism at Military Political Warfare Cadres Academy and got the know-how of photography. Since we had gathered together, we were certainly glad to have a group picture taken. Thus, Wang picked a tree as the sitting. Coincidentally, that was a very strange tree with branch-branch crotches, one of its boughes growing slantingly, so low that we could either stand or sit on it posing for the picture. While it was being taken, “Smile everybody! Smile everybody!” Wang shouted at us. Afterwards, he told me privately, “Chungliang, you look so down!”

Suffering a sort of unluckiness as I did but in a different form was Li Chunsheng who had passed the entrance examination and got admitted to Military Political Warfare Cadres Academy already. Dressed himself up in the cadet’s uniform with service cap on, he had a picture taken in the photo shop and mailed each one of us his head shot to share his glory. Holding it up, I took a long look at it feeling that Li in the picture was a different guy now who looked cheerful and ambitious. Between his bushy brows, seemingly, there was something puffed and proud. And it looked like the way that nothing on him was relevant to the former Li, the poet. Where did I find that Li afflicted by melancholia in the past? I immediately wrote him a letter congratulating him on his marvelous achievements.

What a pity it was! He was at Fuxinggang, the locale of the academy, for just a month. The school authorities found out there had been some of “misconducts” recorded

in his personal information. He was kicked out of school without any delay. The expulsion from that academy was a great blow to him as a thunderbolt out of the blue. And this led him to nursing more grievances against his superiors. His bizarre behavior was going from bad to worse. The outcome was that he was transferred to the off-shore island, Matsu. On that island, he became more impervious to reason and advice than ever. At last, he was viewed as a “bad apple” to be prosecuted, and firstly, handed over to a reform center located in Yilan County to be corrected, and then, he was sent to Yanwan Reform Center in Taitung County.

In a letter to me, he asked for a copy of the Holy Bible in the hope of that God’s words might pacify his emotional breakdown and heal his traumas: “A bruised reed he will not break and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.”<sup>58</sup> And I mailed the sole copy I had had to him.

The 805<sup>th</sup> Field Hospital is the frontline one, on principles, only receiving the wounded or patients who need treating in ICU cases. If recovered, patients must be discharged and returned to their respective units; if not, they must be referred to the base hospital for further treatment. Because I suffered from the kind of chronic disease, I needed to stay in the hospital for a longer treatment. And coincidentally, I had a classmate named Liu Tailai from the Jinan First United Secondary School who was working in the 52<sup>nd</sup> Base Hospital in Taoyuan County as a resident doctor, and I appealed to the person in charge in the 805<sup>th</sup> Field Hospital to send me there.

The scale of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Base Hospital is larger, equipment and facilities being better. Aside from the three rows of the wards in the rear accommodating patients who suffer from tuberculosis, the other three in the front are committed to receiving “elective patients.” I was sent into one of the wards in the second row where there are several trees in the courtyard. One ward has six beds, one side lined with three beds; the other, three, too. They all stand against the walls. In between, there is an aisle.

My bed was between an old patient’s (an old soldier) and a young patient’s (a raw recruit) beds. The old one suffered from duodenal ulcer while the other, kidney failures (self proclaimed). Although their cases were serious, they were more active than the other patients in the ward. By then, on Sundays, the movie theaters throughout Taiwan were required to schedule an extra early morning show, free for the servicemen in the armed forces. After taking their breakfasts, they were in a hurry to head the largest movie theater in the downtown area of Taoyuan City.

On one of the Sunday mornings when the show was over, and this old guy came back and complained of stomachache. The on-duty doctor came to see him rapping and tapping on his stomach. Furthermore, he carefully examined him with his stethoscope to listen to his vitals. Having finished the examination, he told him that he might suffer from appendicitis or perhaps, he was poisoned by some contaminated food. He let him take the prescribed medicine and waited to see what would happen to him.

The following day, the attending physician came to see him. He went through the same procedure as the previous doctor had done before and came to the same conclusion of the previous diagnosis. However, this old guy still complained of the stomachache unceasingly. At noon, this doctor brought another two doctors in for consultation. One of them said that he “might” suffer from appendicitis but in a progressive inflammatory process. The reason was that when he pressed the spot of patient’s appendix hard with his hand, the patient indicated that he felt his pain was a little bit reduced. But the third doctor was doubtful about this kind of tentative diagnosis and claimed that based on this patient’s statement, on his way back home from that free show for the servicemen, he took a bowl of beef noodle. And he felt that bowl of beef noodle with spicy ingredients might cause all of this trouble.

At last, these three doctors made a decision to conduct an operation on him and saw what it really was.

When these three doctors were getting themselves ready, he was suffering severe pain, and drenched in cold sweat. When the paramedics saw him roll eyes and his spasmodic contraction of muscles, they hurriedly put him on a stretcher and rushed to the operating room. Alas! It was late, and one step short of that operation, he died on the way.

After anatomy, the doctors found out that there was “a hardened piece of waste” in his large intestine. What a pitiful death it was! This old guy died from an intestinal obstruction!

The young inmate sleeping to my right-hand side was 23 or 24 years old of age. When I first saw him, he didn’t look like a human being any more. His face was sallow as the yellow waxed paper. His hands resembled chicken’s claws. His legs were bony like young bamboo sticks. And there was no hair atop his head. His whole body shrank except for that his belly bulged with the retention of liquid. On the skin of this tautly-stretched part of his body, there were blue-colored blood vessels spreading like spider’s web, every

vessel seen clearly. Despite all these, there were two bodily organs functioning well: his eyes and mouth. The former registered wisdom; the latter, smile. The doctor and other patients didn't hold any hope for his recovery but he himself was never seen depressed. When talking about his case, he was quite confident about it:

"I am not suffering from cirrhosis, the final stage of the scarring of the liver. What I have got is kidney disease. If I take the right medicine and follow the appropriate regimen, everything will be turned out right!" He looked rather optimistic and carefree.

"How do you know?" asked the doctor.

"Because this is a genetic disease. My mother told me that!"

"If it is something wrong with your kidney...." The doctor couldn't continue.

"Don't worry about it! Doctor, I will be all right! And I will be recovered!"

What surprised us the most was that he was a patient with a big belly of dropsy getting on a walking tour of the whole hospital from one ward to another and making small talks with other patients. When the attending physician was making the rounds in the ward, he always answered the doctor by using the same kind of words, confident and straightforward: "I will walk out of the hospital alive!"

One day, he complained: "Last night I ran to the restroom four or five times, and now I am almost tired out." This time, he behaved himself diametrically different from the usual way with confidence gone. And he lay on his bed groaning in self-pity.

As he took the medicine prescribed by the doctor less than two days, a miracle happened to him, not only his diarrhea was completely controlled, but also the extra fluid in his body was gradually cut down day by day. The doctor didn't believe his eyes simply shouting repeatedly: "It is incredible!" again and again. He suggested to him that the standard amount of food should be practiced: "Many meals are taken but less quantity in each meal." By doing so, he could regulate his digestive system. Consequently, in a space of less than one month, he fleshed out as he had been before. And the soft fine hair grew back atop his head and elsewhere on the body.

Less than half a year, he was able to get to what he had said, "I will certainly walk out the hospital alive."

In the 52<sup>nd</sup> Base Hospital, as I had seen the young patient's struggle for life, and the Death gained the upper hand of an old guy, I came to know instantly that nothing was permanent in life. I recalled my uncle's word, "No matter where you will be, once settled down, you should go to church."

In 1958, I was baptized in a small church affiliated to Lutheran denomination in the city of Taoyuan. The biggest difference between this church and others lies in the baptizing ceremony. The pastor of this church baptizes his followers by sprinkling a few drops of water on their heads with his fingers; the others baptize their followers by soaking their whole heads or whole bodies in the water tanks. The pastor who baptized me was an American pastor named Anderson. He was born in Henan Province, and got educated there. Prior to 1949, he spread the Gospel in Henan. And he could speak down-to-earth dialect of Henan Province.

## Chapter 18

### Mr. Li Pingbo's Wisdom

At the time we, the students from Shandong, still served as non-commissioned officers and privates in the army and if there had not been a guy whom we dubbed “idea man” like Li Pingbo, the date for our discharging from the army would have been further delayed, and the plan to carry out such a discharge from the army wouldn't have been mapped out so perfectly.

Li Pingbo is a native of Jining County, Shandong. In the early years, he didn't go by his first name, Pingbo, but Yuanfeng. And I really don't know when he did have his first name changed. When they reorganized the “Youth League,” into a military unit called the 39<sup>th</sup> Division, he and I were placed in the 5<sup>th</sup> Company whose increasing order of units was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, and the 115<sup>th</sup> Regiment. We were in the same company and had dined in the same mess hall for years, but we were in different platoons and different squads. And there was neither an opportunity for me to be with him nor an opportunity for me to talk with him. In 1952, I was transferred to the Headquarters Company of 169<sup>th</sup> Regiment. And there was no way for us to meet with each other.

One day, he was admitted to the 52<sup>nd</sup> Base Hospital. And as we had been in the same unit before, and right now, unexpectedly, met with each other in this hospital, we were overjoyed hardly controlling ourselves despite the miserable condition that both of us were in patient clothing.

At this time, Li acted very cautiously in daily dealings with other people. In addition, everything he wanted to express was by way of euphemism. And every sentence, he wanted to speak, was weighed again and again in his mind. He churned out words, one by one with the subtlety of Mandarin. He, himself, and his body language, exemplified the qualities of the greatest strategist, Zhu Geliang, in the classic novel of *The Romance of Three Kingdoms*.

As time went by and staying in the same hospital long enough, I came to know that he single-handedly engaged in a self-imposed job running back and forth between Taoyuan and Taipei trying to resolve the problem of Shandong students' going back to school. Every three or five days, he took a trip to Taipei always leaving in the early

morning and returning in the late evening. When a progress had been made, he never showed any sign of happiness, and when progress had not been made, he never looked crestfallen, either.

Based on my observation, firstly, Li Pingbo's strategy was to remind the authorities concerned to pay much attention to the reality. Though they disintegrated these student soldiers and positioned them in different units, the problem still remained unsolved. And without doubt, there would be some "guys" trying to launch a series of demonstrations in Taipei continuing to make collective protests to the authorities concerned. Secondly, he had the injustices and mistreatments we had suffered put down on the paper and sent to the print media, creating sort of pressure on them.

When he saw the stand of the Ministries of Defense and Education melt down and both ministries were desirous of establishing a channel seriously for dialoguing with students through him regarding the problem of our returning to school, he firstly took their side looking at the problem in their shoes; secondly elaborated the standpoints of the students' and spoke for them. He tried to untie the knots these officials had had on their mind. And it doesn't matter how complicated the knots were, he did his utmost trying to get the knotty points unraveled one by one.

The problems for going back to the Provincial Yuanlin Experimental Secondary School include: No. 1 classrooms are not enough; No. 2 the equipment and facilities are inadequate; No. 3 the school lacks financial resources; No. 4 how do they place this sort of 30-old-year students in school? Do all of them enroll in a specifically designed teacher-training program or is there any other alternative? And No. 5 mostly important, with such a large number of students collectively returning to school, and aside from classrooms, there are more dorms needed. Yuanlin doesn't have a capacity of 600 or something, and how do they get the problem of this kind to be solved?<sup>59</sup>

After racking his brains again and again, Li made some of the practical suggestions for resolving these problems to them.

Furthermore, he hinted to the authorities concerned that the student soldiers remaining in the army were "human dregs," neither being able to get themselves in various military academies due to their poor academic performances nor being able to be the active duty personnel in the army because they were either physically disabled or mentally unstable. In another word, they disqualified themselves for doing the active duty



service. If kept in the army further, they would only be there to waste the staple, and there would have some impact on morale. This kind of saying, “self-depreciation” made the officers in the Ministry of Defense feel that the student soldiers from Shandoing were worthless now like the “chicken bones,” meaning that though with some bits of meat on, nothing inviting left. To solve the problem once for all, the earlier, the better, would be a good policy. Otherwise, to have them stay on would have harmful impacts on the army.

Li Pingbo used a double-edged sword of strategy, actually every possible means, hard and soft. He kept himself extremely modest in his attitudes, especially at the time the Garrison Headquarters was about to investigate him why he, not other guys, engaged in doing this sort of stuff. He used the stratagem--admitting that it was his fault first, and then he committed himself to having it corrected.<sup>60</sup> This tone of his speech was proved to his advantage that he could command the sympathy of all the officers of the Garrison Headquarters that had heard the case of the student soldiers’ from Shandong.

As he had met with these “superiors” innumerable times, they became sympathetic with him and understood the whole thing. And thus, the officers of the Ministry of Defense, the Vice Minister of Education, Legislators of Legislative Yuan and he made a concerted effort trying to solve the problem.

The biggest concern was who should be held accountable for our discharge from the army.

President Chiang Kai-shek had once been to the Penghu Islands and was aware that there were these student soldiers there. If there was a day, on a whim, he asked where these student soldiers were, and who would be the one that was responsible for giving an answer to him?

At last, it developed into a situation that nobody stood up to take up the responsibility but the Legislative Yuan. The legislators said, if asked by the president, “the whole Legislative Yuan (judicial branch) will be held accountable.” Thus, the biggest bottleneck of resuming schooling for the student soldiers from Shandong was finally resolved.

The whole case regarding the student soldiers’ discharging from the army was called “The Mu Lan Special Project.”<sup>61</sup> Though there were some nuts and bolts to be dealt with, overall speaking, it got settled. One day, Li Pingbo told me quietly that “the case of our honorably discharging from the army is 80 or 90 percent of success, but we cannot call it

a complete success unless we have held our Discharge Certificates in our hands. And that piece of paper counts!”

## Chapter 19

### The Waishuang Stream

At the time I was in the 52<sup>nd</sup> Base Hospital for convalescence to the summer of 1959, I was neither getting better nor worse. In the meantime, I felt that since there was a great hopefulness about our case--going back to school, I would rather get in a new unit to quietly stay there waiting for the order to come down to me than stay in the gloomy atmosphere of a hospital. Accordingly, with the help of a Shandong man, I was transferred to the Military Administration Academy at the Waishuang Stream Park in Taipei. After reporting to the school, I was sent down to a supporting unit called "Services Company." And I was appointed a staff sergeant, doing paperwork for this unit.

The commander named Pan Peitian is from Anhui Province. As soon as he saw me, he told me flatly that he had already reviewed my personal information and indicated to me that I had two choices to make: "No. 1 is that in our unit, there is a vacancy of a warrant officer between staff sergeant, and second lieutenant. You rank sergeant now. If you like to stay on, you will, firstly, be promoted to the rank of staff sergeant, doing paperwork and then, advanced to the rank of warrant officer. Finally, to qualify yourself for that rank, you must go through a training program, and the place for getting that training is nowhere else but this school. No. 2 is that you can take part in the Joint College Entrance Examination (JCEE) for going to university."

I told him right away that I preferred the JCEE to the warrant officer.

The "so-called" paperwork of this service company was the simplest one compared with that of I had done in my former military units. There were neither planned projects for me to copy nor many documents for me to give my preliminary opinions about how to deal with them before I submitted them to my boss. The real works that needed me to do included: making a pay-sheet when it was due for buddies to get paid, rationing the packs of cigarettes for those who smoke, and filling out the requisition forms when tools such as shovels, spades, brooms, dustpans and the others were demanded.

All the buddies in this company were from the Mainland, and naturally, their backgrounds were different. They were not on the same level in education. Some of them

didn't get one day's education.

There was a wide variety of works for them to do: cooking, driving, gardening, guard duty, couriering, switchboard operator jobs and cleaning. To them, the most challenging job was to clean up the mess after a typhoon had hit that part of the island. The school stood on a large tract of acres, and there was a lot of dark and out-of-the-way places that needed not only all the company to do the job, but also several muscular guys and their agility. And scaling up and down the walls of buildings was a must.

In our unit, there was a guy named Dong Tianchao from Sichuan Province, who was the best of the best, having brawny arms, worthy of several guys combined, doing the cleaning work. He was being seen climbing up and down the walls of the buildings easily, and not until the duration of finishing smoking a cigarette, did he get all the broken branches off the roofs and have all the fallen leaves on the ground cleaned up. His only "hobby" was smoking. He was so addicted to tobacco that he could consume two packs of cigarettes a day. Whenever there were some cigarette leftovers after rationing out, I often gave them to him free.

One day, I discovered that the money I had locked in the drawer for paying the cigarette rationing was gone. Being greatly shocked by this unusual theft, I immediately reported to our company commander, Pan, who initially frowned at this stealing but then, said to me quietly, "Leave it to me! Leave it to me!" When the time for the roll call was up in the evening, he announced this theft to all the buddies:

"How is our staff sergeant Ma doing for our company?" Our commander tossed out such a question, and they didn't have any idea of what had happened, and got lost somewhere.

"He is doing very well." All of them replied in unison.

"Is he a good man or a bad man?"

"He is a good guy!" Following the reply, all the buddies asked the commander puzzlingly:

"What has happened?"

"The money he has collected for paying the rationing of the cigarette is gone!" Our commander raised his voice and continued to harangue the whole company about the

theft: “I don’t want to investigate this. And among you, anyone who has made away with this money, is aware of what you are doing. I give you three days to think about it. No matter what kind of method you use to return it, no punishment will be meted out, and it seems as if there were not anything happening at all. Otherwise, if I find out who did it, I will give him....”

When the first day was passed, no one owned to having made this theft. After the second day, there was nothing new. But all the buddies felt as if there was something remaining there to depress them. And they had nothing to say but to have a lot of pent-up anger, having difficulty taking a breath.

Our commander, Pan’s warning not to mete out any type of punishment had the greatest effect upon the offender. On the third day, he secretly stuck a big yellow envelope into my pocket that contained the money I had lost, and hinted that Dong Tianchao was the guy who did the stealing.

Among all the buddies, there was an old guy named Wang Guishan who was 15 or 16 years, my senior. He was very reserved, just speaking a few words a day. He didn’t get along well with others but me.

He often dropped in my office. Once he was in, he just sat there and took a few cups of tea quietly watching me to do paperwork. He waited there until everything got done and if possible, we usually went out and took a walk along the Neihuang Stream toward the mountain area. We often made some pauses to appreciate the scenery on either side of the road.

While walking, he told me: “When I left the Mainland, I had been married. Now, since the hope for a counter-offensive war to recover the Mainland cannot be fulfilled, what should I do?” On the one hand, he spoke with his eyes glistening with tears, but on the other, he heaved deep sighs.

But I told him, “the case like yours is countless, yours is the only one of them!”

Waishuang Stream Park is a scenic spot famed for its ranges of evergreen mountains and crystal-clear water. Upon getting to it, I wanted to write a poem to eulogize its beauty. However, its beauty lies in many phases: mother nature--of course, there are green mountains surrounding it; cultural stuff: institutions of higher learning--Suzhou University and the Military Administration Academy; this was also a potential place of

tourisim--a tract of hundreds of acres designated for constructing a national palace museum. I thought to myself that based on my so-so talent, no matter how hard I racked my brains, I didn't think I could get its beauty fully unfolded by the poem. Almost on the brink of giving up, a piece of prose came to me by itself. It was entitled: "Strolling along the Waishuang Stream." When I had just finished the draft, I counted the number of words, less than 800. Because it involves a story, I must get the whole thing down here:

*If the city could be compared to a "complex symphony," and then, the countryside might be likened to a rural "serenade." Based on my own calculation by fingering the days, I have been transferred to the Waishuang Stream Park in the Shilin district, more than three months already. Every evening, when the sun is setting, I always take a walk along the bank of the Waihuang Stream watching the sun going down and the birds returning to their nests. The red sun now has finished travelling the whole day's journey, and seemingly doesn't let go of the worldly affairs, struggling to the last minute to hang on there. The beams sent out by the sun can be the colors of red, violet, yellow, and blue, etc., not only making something beautiful such as sunset clouds in the evening sky but also resembling the eruption of a volcano, with flames shooting randomly. The sun setting scene provides people with unlimited imagination, and certainly the imagination can take you everywhere.*

*Those nameless birds after one day's works sail low above the tops of trees circling and circling and darting into the bosom of the forested mountain. And at last, everything goes quiet. Beneath my feet is a "causeway" between the green rice paddies. When a gust of wind is arising, you seem to see rice stems bending down and up like the sea waves crashing upon you. After a while, they return to their upright positions staying as quiet as they have earlier been. If you stare at them, you cannot help giving them a huiyidi weixiao in Chinese or a smile of understanding because they tend to nod to you as if they were saying "Welcome!" repeatedly. Staying "silent" and "shy," they could be personified like a group of peasant girls. They do not understand the ugliness, hypocrisy, and fraud of the mundane world, but always to glow with youthfulness and show exuberant vitality.*

*Behind me is the Waishuang Stream, its water being crystal-clear. Springwaters, originating in the mountains and flowing down, are with their waterheads getting into the stream. And because of these new reaches the stream expands, without doubt, bringing the benefits to the residents on either bank of it. Owing to the M-shaped boulders in the upstream, there are the rapids rushing, and in the meantime, the echoing emanated from*

*the currents against the rocks are quite pleasing to the ear. Bubbles are formed and then broken up. In the downstream, somewhere in the deepest part, there are small groups of soldiers swimming, some keeping their heads above the water by treading water or floating, the others pinching their noses go down under the water. And they play the water-splashing game over one another. laughing, hooting, yelling, and acting like kids.*

*On the opposite side of the stream is Suzhou University. The high-rise buildings standing on the terraces of the mountain are very impressive. Though during the summer vacation, there are no students and faculty presenting on the campus, and the school still has the particular quality of solemnity in terms of an institution of higher learning. From somewhere in the distance comes a shrill siren signaling that the yellow bus 29, is making its return trip to Taipei. Behind it, there are clouds of dust rising, and on either side of it, there are boys racing with it. They are yelling and shouting. And since there is no way to beat the bus in running, eventually they are returning languidly. Thereafter, everything goes deadly quiet.*

*I gaze at the scene with my big eyes and indulge in unlimited imagination. Unknowingly, it is getting darker and darker with several stars twinkling overhead. And I have made a stretch with a yawn. Along the path that I came from, I am walking back to my nest. On the way back home, I think of the saying of one of the unknown Western philosophers named Jiaerbin in Chinese. It reads: "One hundred percent of quietness can generate the swelling feeling of happiness."<sup>62</sup> I think that is the feeling I have had now.*

I contributed this short essay to the supplementary edition connected with the *Young Warriors News*. And in about three weeks, I got an answer from the editor without signature saying that "Strolling along the Waishuang Stream has been accepted, and it will be published shortly." However, in the P.S. of that notice, the editor asked for me to purchase a copy of book written by him. As soon as I mailed the money to him, the essay I had contributed was published. The book that he mailed to me was something like *Introductory to Western Literature*. And because I had made several moves, that book got lost. I have no idea of where it is now.

## Chapter 20

### Way to Higher Education

In the Military Administration Academy, for the whole season of fall, I did nothing, except I tried to pull myself together. Gradually, I was pondering over taking the Joint College Entrance Examination thing seriously. All the subjects that needed testing, such as Three Principles of the People, Chinese, English, History of China and World, and Geography of China and World, could be studied by myself, except that Mathematics must have been prepared systematically under the guidance of a teacher. At the time, Math test was a must for all college goers. It didn't matter what programs, A, B, C, and D you wanted to get in: A was science and engineering, B, humanity studies, C, medicine, and D, agriculture and biology. If you got a zero on Math, you wouldn't be admitted to any university despite you did well on other tests. Therefore, I decided to go to the so-called cram school to see if I could sign up for the Math class only. After exploring it, I came to know that the teachers in that sort of school had special "skills," and within a very short span of time, could get the testing materials arranged in order for each of the test subjects. This way, it was easy for students to enhance their reading comprehension and memory power. Overall, they played the key roles to help students get in universities. After weighing the pros and the cons, I decided to sign up for all the classes on offer.

In the academy, there were buses shuttling back and forth between Taipei and the Waishuang Stream Park during the weekdays. When we were off in the afternoon and the bus was leaving for the downtown area of Taipei, I took it to go to Jianguo Cram School located on Guanqian St. When the school was over around 10 p.m., I took bus 10 to Shihlin stop first. And from there I caught bus 29, the end bus, back home.

Jianguo Cram School was touting its business by claiming that all of its teachers were the best of the best. They said that the classes they had scheduled could guarantee each one of the enrolled students to be able to get in one of the universities in Taiwan. Even up to the present moment, I can still remember some of the names of those well-known teachers: English, Lou Zifeng; Chinese, Ba Hutian; History, Zhu Gui; Geography, Wang Hungwen; and Math, Wu Gongxun (also a famous physics teacher). Of them, two of them helped me more than others. What they had taught was of great help to get me in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature (the DFLL) at the



National Cheng Kung University (NCKU). One was Geography teacher of China and World, Wang Hungwen, another, Math, Wu Gongxun.

As Wang had taught Geography of China and World many years, he had a great command of geography. He had very good memory. During the class time, he didn't bring any handouts edited by him, none whatsoever. Every time when he came to class, he invariably asked for the information from the one who sat in the front row regarding what the geographical region it was he talked about in the previous session. Once told clearly, he turned around and drew the map on the blackboard for this teaching session. And then, based on the map, he began lecturing on and on without letup.

He demanded that students should commit the geographical features of a region to memory and have it written into one topic sentence which must have been easy to remember. And then, based on that topic sentence, students could get not only the right answer but also the other information related to your topic sentence inferentially. For example: “the climate type determines the essence of the agriculture, in another word, as you have subtropical climate, you’ll have subtropical agricultural product; the sort of mineral produced determines the type of industry. To solve the given question deductively and inductively step by step, you’ll get the correct answer desired. In another word, students don’t have to learn Geography by rote.”

I was scared of Math. Therefore, once I got a chance, I would constantly ask Professor Wu to tell me the secrets of ridding the fear of this terrible subject. He told me: “the Math test for the B program students has always a high rate of Determinant on the question sheet every year. If there is such a question presenting, I guarantee that you can get 5 or 6 points on your Math test. If you try to understand the true picture of a Determinant question, it will take a lot of time, and that needs racking your brains to get it straight. All you can do is to remember a simple formula, that is to add the numbers on the horizontal lines into a total number; then to add the numbers on the vertical lines into another total number. At last, using the former total number to detract the latter total number or vice versa, you will get the right answer.” He felt his explanation had not satisfied me and kept on elaborating the Math test as follows: “Every year, the Board of the JCEE will get the problem on the agenda to be discussed regarding whether the students whose Math scores are zeroes can be admitted to universities or not. In the past, there were some cases concerning students who scored zeroes on Math being able to get admitted to the institutions of higher learning. Furthermore, the day for holding the JCEE is still a few months away, if you come to the Math class regularly and do the homework

assigned getting several Math questions solved every day, you will find Math is an interesting subject.” How did he know I had only the eighth grader’s level of Math?

On the one hand, I was obsessed with fear of getting a big zero on Math so that I couldn’t get admitted to university, on the other, I also doubted if I was able to be honorably discharged from the army.

However, in the twinkling of an eye, I realized what I had concerned about and doubted was groundless. Since Professor Wu said that the percentage of a Determinant question presenting on the question sheet was very high, I didn’t have to continue worrying about it, and since Li Pingbo said that the case for our discharging from the army had already been settled, it seemed that there was no reason for me to doubt of it, either. On no account, would my dream of getting in a university be compared to sleep talking in which a fool kept on talking a lot of nonsense.

I was also likened to “a dangling man” swinging between “success” and “failure.” However, I had turned in the fee already and was aboard a vessel going in the right direction to university and the vessel was voyaging in the middle of its course. And there was no way for me to get off but to attend the JCEE.

The day for holding the JCEE was getting closer and closer. Besides weekdays, after office hours, I went to that cram school, and so did I go to on Saturday mornings. Furthermore, as the examination day was just a few days away, we were all gearing up for that examination. And even on Saturday afternoons and whole Sundays, the school scheduled classes, too. In another word, we would use every minute in hopes of that within the limited time left, we might be able to go over all the important test materials of all subjects that students had tackled in the three-year program of a senior high.

As I recall that it was noontime after those Saturdays’ morning classes, I went to New Park for a lunch break: I firstly got a piece of egg roll and a drink on Xuchang St. and then walked eastward. On the one hand, I was walking, on the other, I was eating and drinking. Upon my arrival, I finished my lunch.

Lying on a built-in bench in a pavilion, I quickly fell asleep. Having waked up from that nice nap, I found I was quite refreshed and highly spirited. As far as my eyes could reach, I saw many young couples in “their own little world” doing “the touchy-feely” stuff. And I couldn’t help thinking of myself that I was stuck that I was not allowed to get married. Who had made such a lousy law that non-commissioned officers and private

soldiers were not allowed to take a wife? By doing so, there would be no offspring continuing their family trees. And were there any justice and fairness under the heavens?

I had received two notices from the Ministry of Defense successively: the first one was to find out how many student soldiers from Shandong who wanted to be discharged from the army; the second one was trying to find out if there was anybody who wanted to participate in the 1960 JCEE. If there was, and then, how many? The former required us to fill out the form with name, service number, birthplace, age, the date and place of joining the army, the title of the earliest unit, and the current rank; the latter, only the name was needed. From all the signs shown, we were about to be discharged from the army and our dreams would come true.

The serviceman permitted to take part in the JCEE for going to university was classified into two categories: one was those who were still in the active service at the time; another, the veterans as the Reserve. The former was only permitted to take the tests getting in the programs related to the needs of the national defense industry. In another word, they were only allowed to take part in the tests of science and engineering programs; the latter was free of these lousy restrictions, and furthermore, they could enjoy the special privilege of having extra points they had not actually earned be added. (For this, I couldn't help giving another credit to the National Government for the veterans). In order to get this kind of privilege, we, especially, appealed to the Ministry of Defense to have a name list made for those who would like to participate in that year's JCEE, and simultaneously, sent a letter to the Ministry of Education requesting of the person in charge to inform the 1960's JCEE Board to let us take the exam first based on the veteran status, and later, when our Discharge Certificates were out, we would send them to the board to have the veteran status verified.

After going through several challenges, the problem for entering our names for the JCEE was finally settled. I thought to myself that if there was no zero on Math, I should be able to get in one of the universities "easily."

On the night before the JCEE, I couldn't fall asleep, tossing and turning on the bed. Having counted thousands and thousands of black and white sheep, I couldn't sleep a wink. Despite I had made up my mind not to think of anything else but to focus on the tests held tomorrow. However, it didn't work out that way. The events that I had gone through were compared to ocean waves overwhelmingly crashing on me: How I left the Mainland, how I was illegally drafted into the army on the Penghu Islands by Generals Li

Zhenqing and Han Fengyi, and how I was transferred to Taiwan. Once discharged from the army, if I had had money, I would have got into the business world and try to learn how to be a businessman. If I had had a wealthy relative living in Taiwan, I would have gone to him to seek some help. There was no need for me who was going on 30 years old of age to go to university. Since I had none of these and as there was only one way left for me to take, and that was to go to university to get a diploma that would qualify me to get a job so that I could survive in the society of this kind in the future.

As my mind was filled with the thoughts as previously revealed, not until the stroke of four or so, did I drop off. Overall, for the whole night, I got less than two hours' sleep. And once awake, I was in a hurry to catch the bus heading the examination site set at Shida Senior High affiliated to the National Taiwan Normal University.

After the first period, Chinese test, was over, I deeply regretted that I had not paid enough attention to the instruction of how to reply the answers to the first question in which there were 10 subquestions. Because I misread the instruction, I explained the meanings of the whole sentences in classical Chinese writing instead of the key words within the single quotation marks. For example: the sentence reads: "Those who are meat eaters are 'short-sighted' and cannot be compared to statemen with vision." All the examinees requested of doing the answering was to explain the meaning of the key word, 'short-sighted,' not getting the whole sentence done as I did. And I had all of them annotated by whole sentences, not by "single" words marked. If a professor who possessed the element of patience and carefully read through the whole things, maybe, gave me some points based on the right parts of the answers. If the professor, who wanted to keep up with the progress done by other professors in marking examination papers and saw the answers that "go off on a tangent," without doubt, must have given me a 0 on this 20-point question. Fortunately, I did quite well for the next two tests, otherwise I might quit the whole thing.

On the following morning, the first period was Math test. When I got the question sheets, I was panic-stricken feeling my heart was pounding very fast, and having thumbed the pages, I surprisingly saw there was a question, Determinant, there. And I was overjoyed at it, and within several minutes, got the answer. Henceforth, I kept sitting on my seat with my head down and held my breath without kicking up a fuss. At the time, there was a regulation by the Board of the JCEE that examinees were not allowed to leave the classroom until the end of a period of 40 minute. Within that time, even though an examinee got the whole thing done, he could not leave the classroom. I sat through

that time limit and turned in the examined papers quietly and left the classroom.

I picked English as my majoy. When I filled out the choice card in terms of university priorities, they were in the decreasing order of Taida (Taiwan University), Shida (Taiwan Normal University), Zhengda (Zheng Zhi University), and Chengda (Cheng Kung University). The Department of Foreign Languages and Literature of Taida was my first choice, The Department of English of Shida, second, the Department of English of Chengda, third, and the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature of Chengda, fourth.

After taking the JCEE, I held a copy of the following day's newspaper with all the standard answers on for the test takers to check with. As the result of that check was quite satisfactory, I felt I might be able to get in one of these four institutions of higher learning. Though Taida was my first priority, yet the most ideal one I wanted to get in was, of course, the Department of English at Shida because it provided students with public grants, and when graduated, one would be certainly assigned a teaching job at a junior or senior high somewhere in Taiwan. This is called *tiefanwan*, or iron rice bowl meaning, you don't have to worry about your livelihood from now on.

By mid-July 1960, we, the group of student soldiers from Shandong was eventually notified to gather at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Municipal Taichung Senior High School waiting for going through the process of discharging from the army and resumption of schooling. Because "time and place" was changed, nothing was the same as it had been before. And I completely forgot the entire JCEE stuff.

Before the Provincial Yuanlin Experimental Secondary School (the school was firstly established at Magong City, Penghu Islands, and later relocated to Yuanlin township in Zhanghua County) officially accepted us, Hualian Teacher-training College set up a Special Teacher-training Program (HTTC-STTP) for us. This program was commissioned by Veterans' Association under Executive Yuan (executive branch). They came to Taichung to give us screening test.<sup>63</sup> If we could pass the test, we would receive one year's teacher training at HTTC. And furthermore, if we could pass all the compulsory and elective courses offered in that program, we would be assigned to various elementary schools across the island and assume the elementary school teachers' posts. I thought to myself that being an elementary school teacher to educate the younger generation was a holy job. Without doubt, I could get a "footing" in the society, and earned a decent living. Therefore, I started learning *Zhuyin fuhao*, Mandarin Phonetic

Symbols and read out loud “brief comments” or “editorials” on the newspapers in the hope of that when interviewed, I could give them the answers in standard Mandarin. Or when I wrote a composition, I could come up with a piece of good writing with the help of prepositions and conjunctions. In addition, spoken Mandarin, Chinese, and Social Studies would be tested. Because I had just gone through the JCEE and what I had learned in the cram school was still kept in my mind, I didn’t think I had any problem to deal with those subject tests. And to the best of my remembrance, there was no Math test.

When a name list for those who succeeded in passing the screening test was out, I saw my name on it. At the time I left Taichung City, I was given the Discharge Certificate on which there are some Chinese characters in the box for the reason to quit the army: “Based on the personnel management,” that literally means this guy quit the army because the army had already been overstaffed. Besides that certificate, what I had got were: a set of mosquito net, a suit of plain clothes, a pair of black leather shoes, and a quilt. As to my lump sum for leaving the army, I was only given \$940 called “return fare” for going home.

This group of student soldiers, who had passed the screening test held by the HTTC-STTP, boarded the train firstly to Keelung Harbor, and then from there, we were shipped by a freighter to Hualian.

After we settled down in Hualian County two weeks, a typhoon hit that county. The traffics by land and sea were completely disrupted, and so were the airline flights. For that reason, there was no way to get newspapers. Furthermore, I was unable to get any news from the Board of the JCEE that was held accountable to release the news about the examinees who had successfully passed the JCEE. The news that I got in a university was a buddy who happened to listen to the radio and accidently got it, and when that news passed down to me by word of mouth, I was still dubious about it.

When the typhoon died down, newspapers hit the street. And I checked with the paper and it was proved that my name was in the list of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at Cheng Kung University. I was overjoyed because my dream to go to university finally came true. However, in the meantime, I worried what I had got was only a small amount of money called “return fare” given to me just for returning home (I have no home to return in Taiwan). How could it defray the expenses to study in a university for four years to come?

Based on the saying: “Everything will work out in the end.” I made use of that saying to cheer myself up.

At the same time, Wang Yuhuai with whom I had been in the same squad during the time we were in the 5<sup>th</sup> Company. He had graduated from the Department of Journalism of the Political Warfare Cadres Academy at Fuxinggang and was stationed in Hualian County. I didn’t know how he got the information of our arrival at that county. In one of the holidays, he unexpectedly appeared before our noses. With his leadership and with some of the former buddies from the same company, we firstly went to an eatery to have a “feast” and then to have a group picture taken under the pretext that “we wanted to celebrate this gathering at Hualian!” But when the picture was processed out, there was an amazing line inscribed down there. It reads: “Congratulations on Ma Chungliang’s success in being admitted to Cheng Kung University.” Having finished reading that line, I cried an inaudible cry, tears running silently down my cheeks.

I stayed in Hualian County for another week, and then hastily headed for the Provincial Yuanlin Experimental Secondary School. And right there, I would wait for the notice from the Board of the JCEE. When I signed up for taking the examination, a mailing address was required. But because at that time, I had not completely gone through the process of discharging from the army, therefore, I had no way to have *hukou*. or residence permit. And accordingly, there was no residential address to be used to fill out the address box on the application form except Yuanlin as my mailing address.

Based on the specifications listed by Cheng Kung University for the tuition and miscellaneous fee, I, as a veteran, would be exempted from all of tuition, and enjoy another privilege, a half miscellaneous fee. Besides these two fees, there were many others that I needed to pay, for example: housing, textbooks, uniforms, and food. Added up, if I hadn’t had the cash money like the sum of \$1,000 or \$800 in hand, I wouldn’t be able to get the registration done at all. But I made another way of calculation. If I didn’t want to live in the on-campus dorm, and lived off campus and shared the rent with a fellow student, how much could I save? If I bought the secondhand textbooks, how much could I save? If I still wore what I had had on instead of having a suit of school uniform tailored, how much could I save? And if I didn’t eat in the campus cafeteria, and cooked by myself, how much could I save? Counting this way, I felt that I could deal with this financial “crisis” with the cash money in my pocket.

For the first-year students, registration was conducted on the upper floor of the

general library located on the Shengli (victory) campus. I was standing in line, and when my turn was due, I submitted my Discharge Certificate to a stocky colonel respectfully to be checked. By then, I sincerely hoped that I could get approved. And once his chop was affixed on my registration form, I could move on to have all the privileges I deserved processed: no tuition and only a half miscellaneous fee. But he held my thing and took a long look at it, and then, said to me very rudely:

“In your case, the fees cannot be exempted! In your case, the fees cannot be exempted!”

I felt as if I had been struck by a thunderbolt, and my mind went blank. I couldn't speak a word.

“I have the legal paper, Discharge Certificate. Please tell me why can't I be exempted from those fees?”

“Because the box on your certificate in which the reason regarding your discharge is marked with “Quitting the army based on the personnel management, not marked with the word, disability.”

“Please tell me, based on the provision regarding the exemption from the tuition and a half miscellaneous fee for the veterans, is there any difference between these two types of veterans, discharged due to personnel management and disability?”

“As I said that you couldn't get exempted, that was it!” He was apparently exasperated by my retort. On the one hand, he returned my certificate to me, but on the other, he hinted that I might go away without bothering him any longer. Following what he had just said, he came up with such a mumble: “You are so young, why did you quit the army so early!”

It didn't matter how I pleaded with him for reconsideration, he remained tight-lipped with a deadpan face.

Such a blow made me lose my head, and I didn't know what to do. At this juncture, there was an administrator, aged about 50, who got up from his seat, pulling me downstairs. He said: “It is not reasonable! You may go to the Headquarters of Tainan Regimental District for the Reserve seeking help from Commander, Lt. General Shoin and asking him to issue you a sort of document in the name of that organization. Anyone



who has served in the army 10 years and held legal Discharge Certificate is eligible for enjoying the privileges of exemption from tuition and that half of miscellaneous fees if he has passed the JCEE and been admitted to a public university!”

After hearing my appeal, the officer in charge checked with everything against the provision regarding the fee exemption for veterans who had got admitted to colleges or universities and said: “There is no such thing like the guy who has done to you!” He instantly issued a document with the official seal on, and signed by the commander asking me to register with Cheng Kung University, again. I presented it to the same colonel who had turned me down before. Pointing at my nose, he was still quite arrogant and overbearing and said bluntly:

“This is not lawful! This is not lawful! Do you know this?” I could see that he had pent-up anger, cross-eyed and brow-tightened. But he held that document issued by the Tainan Regimental District Headquarters for the Reserve, and for a while, didn’t know what to do with it. Finally, he became sullen but said: “I let you go this time for the sake of Lt. General Shoin. Next time, I cannot endorse your exemptions!”

He stamped my Registration Form with his chop. After that, I had nothing to worry. And based on the ground that everything was legal, I became driven to argue with him to vent my pent-up rage. But with consideration of returning to the civilian life, I thought this was the first challenge. And anything I wanted to do must have been in conformity to the code of the virtue of patience. Therefore, I decided not to do any retaliatory act against him.

## Chapter 21

### University Days

In 1960s, Cheng Kung University was a provincially-funded university, not a nationally-funded one.

There were only two campuses: Cheng Kung (success) and Sheng Li (victory). As to colleges, there were only three: engineering, business, and science and liberal arts. And these three colleges were situated on the same campus, Cheng Kung; the rest, such as library, students' dorms and cafeteria on the Sheng Li campus. In addition, on the Cheng Kung campus, there were a 400-yard stadium and four basketball courts. There was neither a sort of river flowing through the campus nor a sort of lake. The greatest features of the campus were: 1. Engineering Boulevard, 2. department buildings with the Japanese architectural style, and 3. lofty evergreen trees.

On the first day of school, we, the whole class of 66 freshman students of the DFLL from all the parts of Taiwan, rallied on the southernmost basketball court. Li Guangcheng, a Shandong man, who was from the Office of Military Training Program holding responsible for students' safety and military education, lined us up. And as he saw me much older than other students, he hand-picked me as the class leader.

Li's "appointment" was not appropriate from my point of view because I had just left the army and didn't know anything about the "university culture." I would habitually lead the class by a set of rules practiced in the army. That I made a fool of myself was not a big deal, but that my leadership made some of my classmates furious with me about the way they had been led was the most embarrassing thing. Thanks to my prescience, I did the serving based on the saying: "Happiness comes with service to others."

Having lined us up on the Cheng Kung campus, he made us file in Cheng Kung Auditorium. After seating ourselves, we waited for the orientation ceremony to start. On that day, President Yan Zhenxing, Dean of Academic Affairs, Zhuang Jundi, Dean of Discipline, Ding Zuoshao and Dean of General Affairs, Liu Xianlin all delivered speeches to us. But at present, as to what they dwelt upon, I am unable to recall. The only thing that has still been embedded in my memory is the president's Mandarin tinged with the strong accent of Henan Province: "Cheng Kung University has made a lot of

progresses on many aspects in the recent years. And everybody has known this very well!” Afterwards, I mimicked the way the president had spoken to a junior student named Liu Zhaoxian at the Department of Industrial Management (He was also one of the “student soldiers” from Shandong, several years later, assuming the position as Chief of the First Section in the Auditing Bureau in the National Government). He said that the president’s cliché had been transformed into a sort of mockery with some of words added: “Cheng Kung University has made a lot of progresses in many aspects in recent years. And everybody has known this very well! Zhenxing’s health is excellent, except that my neck is a little bit short!” Of course, this quote should be spoken in Henan dialect, otherwise, you didn’t feel that funny.

At that time, we didn’t have department building of our own. The DFLL was just the satellite of the Department of Physics in terms of education facilities. One classroom was borrowed from that department and divided into two rooms by means of partition, one being the chairperson’s office; another, the room for staff members. And even our classrooms were borrowed from that Department, too. As that small and limited space was thronged with too many students, we felt very uncomfortable. Fortunately, in front of our classrooms, there was a small yard with flowers and plants for us to move around and have idle chats during breaks between classes.

Located several yards away to the south of our department and just behind the Administration Building is a small auditorium called *Gezhitang* (Way to Knowledge) which has been built by the Japanese. It is of unique architectural distinction. Designed for multipurpose, for example, it can be used as auditorium for public gatherings, large classroom instruction, and site for holding different examinations for different classes at the same time if there is such a need.

Our department building was bounded on the north by the chemistry department building. And on its right-hand side on the second floor of that two-story building, there were more modernized classrooms with custom window curtains, spacious and comfortable. And a Chinese American instructor named Amy Lin had taught us one short story written by Joseph Conrad, “The Witches’ Inn” and others there.

Our chairperson was professor Fu Chongte who originally taught at the DFLL at the National Taiwan University. Though he was in his early fifties, not quite old, yet he was balding. With a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles on, he looked quite scholarly.

He taught us Freshman English. He was a superior grammarian but he was especially good at the usages of past participles. As a result, when our mid-term and final exams were due, he always got sets of questions ready asking us to state the functions of past participles in sentences. Questions like these we went through were too many, and in turn, we dubbed him Mr. Past Participle, and simply called him Mr. PP.

Another trick for showing his attainments in the field of English grammar was to diagram sentences. It didn't matter how long and how complicated a sentence was, he could draw a diagram and illustrate grammatical functions with lines and curved lines: "This adjective modifies this noun; this adverb qualifies this adjective; still this adverb can be used to qualify the adverb that follows. All of their functions are tied up and dealt with meticulous care." In the textbook edited by him for the freshman English class, we often saw the sentences written by reputed writers present themselves in the forms of various diagrams.

Our Conversational English teacher was Father Callier. He was an American, heavysset. We frequently saw him come to our classes by motorcycle with a big stomach. He was a chain smoker, so addicted to tobacco that he could not stand for a minute without a cigarette held between his lips. During the class time, on the one hand, he was lecturing, but on the other, he was puffing. He was highly spirited and overjoyed at what he was doing as if he were an Arhat. The most embarrassing moment for him was that he forgot to bring enough packs of cigarettes for him to consume. Once his last cigarette was gone, he had to borrow cigarettes from the students who smoke. If unavailable, he had to put his fountain pen between his lips as a substitute. The textbook he used was the simplest one that I had ever studied. He laid the greatest emphasis on everyday English, every sentence counted!

Professor Hu Hanjie taught us Phonetics. He had just come back from the Great Britain and spoke British English fluently. He often enumerated pronunciation mistakes by comparison that the Chinese students frequently committed, for example: mispronouncing "of" for "off"; "live" for "leave" and "world" for "word".

He had a set of valuable handouts for teaching Phonetics but when I got through this course, I deeply felt it was applicable and practical. However, after leaving school so many years, I forgot what I had learned from him. With his tall frame, neat features and a pair of sun glasses on, he looked so cool.

The courses of Modern History of China and History of the World were conducted by Professor Wu Zhenzhi. Although she is from Zhejiang province, she can speak Mandarin very well. She conducted the classes at her own pace, neither fast nor slow. She was able to untangle the knotty points of history one by one through inductive or deductive reasoning. She especially paid much attention to students' pride and dignity. If some of the students failed in the middle term, she would secretly hand him or her a slip of paper warning him or her to work harder and be more careful about giving the answers to the questions when the final was due.

When I was in my freshman year, what troubled me the most was short of financial resources. One of my classmates named Liu Guanghua was in the similar condition, and initially, we planned to co-organize an after-school program, and later, I found out that our efforts were in vain because there was a limited number of students to sign up for this program. The total income we had made was only enough for one person's living expenses. If I was included, it wouldn't work. As a result, I withdrew myself from that after-school business. However, I had no other choice but to save the money left after registration. I often went to class with hunger pangs or on a full stomach. I was struggling for not being a drop-out.

Zheng Zhendong, one of the military training instructors, run the after-school Math and English program in his own house at New Village 96, and was aware of my financial difficulty letting me teach a junior high English class. And this way, I enabled myself to get through the difficult time in the first semester of my freshman year.

When the second semester started, two buddies of mine in the army, Wang Chuanpu and Guo Guangren, made special trips to Tainan to see me, and when they left, they gave me all the money they had had in their pockets: Guo Guangren gave me the sum that he had just cashed for a check paid for one piece of his prose work published in the newspaper; Wang Chuanpu, some cash money that could afford me to pay for, approximately, a half month's food. Coming from the same county in Shandong, Zhang Chunsheng who was in the graduating class of 1954 at the ROC Military Academy, just by then, was stationed at Tainan Artillery Training Center providing me with \$400. Zhou Tingkui and Wang Jinfang, who lived in Hualian County, mailed me checks respectively, too.

During my sophomore year, Mr. and Mrs. Caruther, who remain unforgettable, were from the British Isles and engaged in teaching at Tainan Theological Seminary on a

full-time basis. When they were free, they liked teaching at the DFLL at NCKU on a part time basis: Mr. Caruther conducted a course called the Outline of Western Literature in our class; his wife, English and American Novels, in the junior's class. As the scope of the Outline of Western literature is too big, even in the definition of the word, "outline," no man can get it done within one or two semesters. Therefore, he had the whole book, *The Outline of Literature* by John Drinkwater simplified in the tabular form and printed out as handouts to facilitate our learning. And he asked for us to study the book by referring to his handouts. And we found out that studying the textbook this way was quite effective. He was an interesting man, and during the class time, he often made a lot of witty remarks that sent the whole class in a roar of laughter. As Tainan is in the region of tropical climate, women who live in such a climate are easy to get pregnant, and one day, he stepped into the classroom announcing: "My wife gave birth to a baby boy last night!"

The lady, who taught us American Literature, was Mrs. Eaton. Because she often pronounced the preposition "about" as "a butt," henceforth, we called her "Mrs. A Butt" mischievously. She taught us a plenty of poems by American poets but at present, I only remember the masterpiece of Annaba Lee by Edgar Allan Poe. She and her husband were missionaries to have spread the gospel many years in Taiwan. And they considered Taiwan their first home country. Unfortunately, one winter, when they returned to America for Christmas, and a great blizzard hit their hometown, her husband died of a stroke while shoveling snow in front of their door.

Even though with the great pressure of our homework in our sophomore year, I was the one who took the lead in setting up an "English Speech Club" in our class.

In our club, there was no charter, nor were there any verbal promises about how to run our club. Classmates could join as members at any time and withdraw likewise. The only requirement was that we went to our international teachers' homes by bike-riding on Saturday evening to practice our conversational English. If any of the members was willing to donate some refreshments and nonalcoholic beverages sharing with the rest of us, it was fine, otherwise, we did not feel anything wrong or weird if there was no one to do that sort of thing.

Whenever we saw our international teachers standing at the doors to welcome us cheerfully, we felt as if we had been soaking up some of the Western culture. Initially, we didn't have any topic, but just to ramble as we wished. That way, it didn't get what we had wanted. Later, as we had some topics fixed in advance and got ourselves ready, our

talks in the conversation became sort of something meaningful and seemingly led us onto the right track. Furthermore, on the one hand, we felt our horizon had been broadened, on the other, we felt we had made much progress in our spoken English.

This “English Speech Club” benefited me a great deal. And I felt it got rid of my bashfulness while speaking English. Furthermore, I developed a good habit of loving to express myself in English since then.

As I recall, we, only once, went to one of Chinese teachers’ home, Professor Zhu Yaolong’s, for this sort of activity. He encouraged us not to be afraid of making mistakes. The fluency of spoken English came from constantly practicing.

At the beginning of my sophomore year, the Veteran’s Association made an amendment to the provision of its financial assistance as follows: “Those who are discharged from the army based on the personnel management are included for financial aids.” Three hundred and fifty dollars had been appropriated to each one of us per semester for funding parts of our living expenses. That reduced my financial stress a lot.

I met Mr. and Mrs. Anderson when I was a junior: the former conducted a course entitled: Biblical Literature; the latter, Greek Literature. They were from the Great Britain, too and taught at Tainan Theological School. They were invited to teach two hours per week respectively at our department on a part-time basis.

Mr. Anderson, who has the quality of an elderly man, is very honest in terms of daily dealings with other people. Though a missionary, he has a great sense of humor. His teaching materials are mostly from *The Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Esther, Job*, and the four gospels of *The New Testament*. He said: “*The Old Testament of the Holy Bible* emphasizes commandments, and in another word, Israelites must obey the 10 Commandments. *The New Testament* gives all the attention to grace. Namely, followers are saved due to the love of God. The Holy Bible is one of the sources from which the western literature is derived, and very few accomplished writers are not influenced by it.” In addition, he taught us the Bible based on logic and enabled us, even non-Christian students, to accept what he had elucidated. Overall, his teaching method interested students to study the Bible.

Mrs. Anderson is an extremely charming lady. She is quite eloquent. Because she has expressive eyes and expressive mouth, she is able to get the Trojan War in *Iliad* completely unfolded. Once, she asked us such a subtle question: “In the Trojan War, there

are two great heroes, Achilles and Hector. Which one do you like the most, the offensive hero, Achilles or the defensive hero, Hector?” We chorused our answer, “Hector!” She said: “She prefers the latter to the former, too: Achilles is too overbearing and Hector is modest. But Hector is a tragic hero, and historically speaking, a tragic hero can evoke more sympathy than any other type of hero. People shed tears for him.”

By then, William Shakespeare course was an elective one but we felt that one, who studied at the DFLL without taking the course, was not like the student of the DFLL. As a result, this course was elective in name but compulsory in reality. Each one of us had that thing, fat and heavy, 37 plays in total. And we carried in our armpits walking back and forth on the campus and looking like sort of students who were truly fond of Shakespeare’s plays. In fact, of the 37 plays Shakespeare wrote, we only studied three plays from the beginning to the end: *As you Like It*, *Hamlet*, and *Merchant of Venice*. Aside from these three, we studied only the best parts of *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, not in the same token of studying the foregoing. The rest of 30 other plays we didn’t tap at all, and even couldn’t commit the entire titles of the plays to memory.

The one who offered the course was a senior professor, Zhao Mo, at the department. The methodology he conducted the course was teaching the whole thing by reading, word by word and sentence by sentence. In another word, he interpreted the verse lines by referring to the footnotes listed below, and used the analysis to get the difficult grammatical problems done repeatedly till we totally grasped them. If he found out that students were still trapped in the daze state, he started all over again. He had such a wonderful voice, sounding as loudly as bell ring. During the break, we often saw him with sweat all over his face, and he wiped it off with his handkerchief.

By then, the elective courses at the DFLL were under our chairperson’s control. If he found out the course offered by Mr. so-and-so and if he thought the course was very helpful to students, he would have that course changed into “a compulsory one” that students had to take even though it was nominally listed as an elective one. For that reason, some of the elective courses, if without chairman’s support, could result in a sort of condition that no students wanted to sign up for them. On the second semester of my junior year, I was seemingly driven by a mysterious force, not clearly knowing what I was really doing, having taken an elective course, Introduction to Western Philosophy. Accordingly, I became a “disciple of Professor Feng Weiren.”



Since there were only three students taking that course, it really conformed to the “mode” of a small class. As time went by, Professor Feng became aware of my story that I was a veteran having no close relatives to financially support me in Taiwan, and it went without saying, life was tough. Accordingly, he helped me get a scholarship from Southern Taiwan Compass Club. Though the sum was not big, it helped me a lot.

At that time, the members of the club were Americans in majority. And they were technicians stationed in the Tainan area doing different advisory jobs. Besides holding lunches or dinners regularly, they often conducted various sorts of charity activities, one being the awarding of scholarships to students who were impoverished by varying reasons while studying at the different levels of school. When the Chinese New Year Festival was in the corner, the club held a party and invited all the recipients to attend, of course, including me. As a result, I prepared a “Thank-you” speech, rich in the contents and good in the style, to deliver to them. But there were several sentences polished by Professor Feng.

When I was in my senior year, Mr. Daniel Beeby taught us Western Drama. Even up to the present moment, I still can recall the look on his face when he taught the play: *An Enemy of the People* by Henrik Ibsen. He was indignant at the way those ignorant people acted, and in the meantime, was sympathetic with them. Mr. Harris was our Public Speech instructor. We were mesmerized by his standard British English which was very pleasing to the ear regardless of the contents of the course.

The course of History of English Literature was conducted by Feng Juenlai. His teaching methodology is the one unmatched by no one else’s. He had the whole thing of *English Literature* by Dr. Guy E. Smith transformed into the question forms based on the passages, paragraphs and even chapters. In another word, to locate answers from wherever they are in the textbook is his teaching methodology. If you could answer all the questions listed by him, there wouldn’t be any problem for you to grasp the whole thing of English Literature. Truly, the way, the questions that he had made and the answers we had got, was very effective in terms of teaching and learning. And it deepened our knowledge and understanding of the history of English literature.

Mr. Feng was then capped with snow white hair, not a colored one found, his frame being angular and thin. And senility rendered his looks much old for his real age. One of my classmates told me secretly: “He bears a resemblance to a withered tree fully exuding the smell of a piece of rotten wood. However, there was something special about his eyes.

They are full of wisdom.” We were really worrying that he would collapse while teaching due to frailty.

He was a native of Jiangsu Province, speaking Mandarin tinged with Jiangsu accent. What he had taught was not understandable. Therefore, he went on his own way; we, on ours when we were sitting on our seats and trying to locate the answers to the questions that he gave us by referring to the textbook.

In addition, he liked making roll-call. At one time, he called a girl student’s name, Huang Shuxia for Huang Douya, sounding similarly in Mandarin. Her family name is pronounced Huang meaning yellow; Shuxia mispronounced as Douya, meaning “bean sprouts. And that sent the whole class guffawing.

Originally, I lived in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dorm on the Shengli campus. But after living there one school year, I felt that I was constantly annoyed by the noise made by 8 roommates (there were 8 beds in one room.) Therefore, Zheng Jizhong and me rented a room in a remodeled house located on Lane 8, Daxue Rd. for leasing to students only. It was a furnished room with two beds, one desk and two chairs. Since Jizhong and I had the similar background, therefore, we got along very well. Apart from paying for food, clothing, rents, and used textbooks, the university students’ basic necessities like ours, we couldn’t afford anything else. We usually went to our classes by riding our old and wobbling bicycles. Poor as we were, we tried to have fun the way the poor could afford. While on our way to classes, on the one hand, we were pedaling, on the other, we were whistling.

At the time, there were two biggest events taking place both in Taiwan and abroad.

On November 21, 1963, President of the United States, John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas, and shocked the entire world. The most absurd thing was that the alleged suspect, Lee Harvey Oswald, who had been caught by the police and shortly after, before everyone, with maximum-security escort, was gunned down by a guy named Jack Ruby. Such a drastic happening made us feel that the U.S.A. was “unpredictable.”

In the evening around 8 p.m. January 18, 1964, when Jizhong and I sat on our chairs facing each other at our desk and struggling for the final exam of History of English Literature held the following morning, suddenly, we felt the ceiling overhead and the floor beneath our feet were shaking. We immediately realized that it was nothing but an

earthquake. At first, we didn't care much, but within a matter of seconds, the ever-increasing power was felt. In panic, we hunkered down under the desk for safety. When it was gone, we came out of our hideout, and looked at each other unblinkingly, feeling that we began forming a sort of relationship which was like the affection of blood brothers. That quake was a 6.1 one on the Richter scale figures of earthquake magnitude. Its epicenter was in Baihe township, Tainan County. There were 106 people reported killed, 650 others injured.<sup>64</sup>

The building of the Department of Chinese Literature was adjacent to that of ours, and I often saw an old bony lady with an oversized coat on walking through the hallway in front of our classroom every day. As days went by, I came to know that she was a septuagenarian, one of the giants in the field of literature in the May 4 Renaissances Movement of China. Her name is Su Hsulin.

As I recall my freshman year, our Three Principles of People teacher was Chen Zhenwu. Though Professor Chen was dumpy, he could engage every part of his body, especially, the lower part of abdomen, called *dantian* in Chinese to get his high pitch voice out as if *shengzhenwuwa*, or his loud voice could penetrate through the roof and made the tiles of our classroom building shake. I saw Professor Su, from the corner of my eye, who was walking through the hallway with her head down. It seemed as if she got stunned by such a loud voice. She stopped walking, firstly listening to it carefully, secondly shaking her head repeatedly, thirdly covering her mouth with one of her hands and finally going away smilingly.

Professor Su was one of crusaders against Communism and Lu Xun, a left-wing writer, in the Mainland. And her frequently walking through the hallway of our department building becomes one of the most memorable scenes up to the present time when I recall my undergraduate years at NCKU.

## Chapter 22

### Nantou Secondary School

Besides me, another two classmates possessing veteran status were Xu Zhaolin and Miao Lizhong. Some years later, Zhaolin assumed the office of the Deputy Director of the Bureau of Foreign Trade affiliated to the Ministry of Economy, and more than a decade later, Lizhong was promoted to Associate Professor at the DFLL at NCKU. Though we, three of us, were ten years older than our other classmates, we didn't fall behind in academic performances.

In June 1964 when Delonix Regia, flame tree, was turning red like fire and the loudspeakers were blaring out Auld Lang Syne on the campus, some of the male students would go home waiting for the draft notice for doing the mandatory services in the army, some of the female students, who had got admissions to graduate school programs, would get ready to further their studies in American universities, still the overseas students, who had packed up, would return to their homes in different foreign countries. Since three of us had done the military service already, we were exempted from the active-duty service. Furthermore, amid three of us, Xu Zhaolin who, before our graduation, had found a job already, and only Miao Lizhong and I worried about whether or not we could land jobs after leaving NCKU.

Based on my own mental leaning, I thought the job that suited me was teaching somewhere in Taiwan. Accordingly, I worked hard with this end in view.

At that time, there were two persons who would like to help me find a teaching job: one was Zhang Zhixing, a senior student at the Department of Mechanical Engineering; another, Professor Liu Xianlin, also Dean of General Affairs, with whom I took the course of Political Science in my freshman year. Zhang said that he had a close friend who worked as the section chief of the General Affairs Office at the Provincial Nantou Secondary School. And he could write him a letter to explore the possibility. Professor Liu recommended me to Da Cun Junior High to teach English in Zhanghua County.

Both had the same sort of opinion, indicating that if I wasn't so picky about the locale, willingly keeping away from the cities and townships along the north-south rail line in the western part of the island, finding a school to teach in the rural area was not

that hard. By then, I thought to myself that getting a teaching job to get settled was my first priority. For a guy like me, there were not many choices left.

Firstly, I went to see the Principal of Nantou Secondary School, Sun Hungzhang, for an interview. At that time, in Taiwan, there was not such an education policy stipulating that senior high was funded and run by the provincial government; junior high, by the county government. Nantou was a “comprehensive secondary school,” the junior high and senior high programs combined. Its administration building was great and spacious, classrooms on a horseshoe shape bend. Outside the school, there was a big stadium. Judged from its size and others, the school looked great.

Sun interviewed me in his office. After the exchange of pleasantries, he asked me to have a seat. And then he abruptly tossed out a question like this:

“We know you served in the army. Please tell me how many years you have been in.” On the one hand, he sized me up, on the other, he thumbed through my personal information.

“I have been in the army 11 years.” After I answered him that question, I immediately noticed that there was a sort of hesitation appearing on his face.

“We have an English teacher who has tendered his resignation to me recently. However, he changed his mind yesterday, and wants to retract his resignation saying that he would like continuing to teach here. How is that we will keep your resume in the file, and if there is an opening arising, we will hire you?”

Without doubt, I was rejected not bluntly but the way of a polite saying. If there had been no opening, how could you ask me to travel such a long way from Tainan to this county city, Nantou, for an interview? I realized that the key factor was attributed to my “veteran status.” To grasp what was on Sun’s mind was not that hard, and I believed that by then, I had that sort of sensibility: “Firstly, you participated in the JCEE on the veteran status, and can your academic performances be on a par with those who are “regular” students? Secondly, is your English good enough to teach our students?” (At the time Nantou was the best secondary school in the whole county). For the time being, I found our conversation was unable to continue, and I had nothing to do but to rise, and be ready to leave. When I accompanied by him walked to the doorstep, suddenly, inspiration struck me that there was a copy of transcript in my trouser back pocket. And I fished it out and handed it to him:

“Here I have just had this copy of transcript for the second semester in my senior year which is used to apply to the Veterans’ Association for sort of scholarship. There is a provision stipulating that those veteran students in universities, who have got an average over 80 points of academic performances on a one-hundred scale in each semester, can get \$200 as “incentive money.”

He held that copy closer to his glasses and looked at every subject very carefully with its grade listed below. And I noticed that that copy of transcript caused a change in his facial muscle. And then he stopped me and intended me to go back to retake the seat. In the meantime, he said to the director of General Affairs, Mr. Ye, who stood beside him:

“Get the director of the Personnel Office here, Mr. Ye!”

In a little while, the director came running to the office. Sun introduced him to me on the one hand, on the other, said to him:

“Right now issue a contract to Ma Chungliang, and we offer him a teaching job and let him teach elementary and advanced English in our junior high and senior programs.” This way, I got my first contract in my life.

After leaving Nantou, I was heading Da Cun Junior High for another interview.

Da Cun Junior High was a typical of school in the rural area in Taiwan. I should use four Chinese characters, *pu shi wu hua* or the culture of simplicity and practicability to describe it.

The principal was a very lovely and down-to-earth person. Hardly had he finished exchanging a few words with me when he bluntly asked me to clarify my marital status. When he knew that I still remained single, he said he would act as a go-between to introduce a decent girl to me if I would like to sign the contract he offered. He further indicated that before I came for interview, he had already made the decision to hire me because Professor Liu Xianlin had been his superior before, and he trusted him completely. I told him that his frankness with me was greatly appreciated.

On my way back to Tainan, I stayed at Yuanlin for one or two hours visiting my classmate, Yen Yunpeng. Some decades later, she became the proprietor of the *Commonwealth Magazine*. Having not finished a listen to my entire story about landing a teaching job, she immediately jumped on her bicycle to the Provincial Yuanlin

Experimental Secondary School giving a try for me. As expected, there was no job opening for an English-teaching post. Clearly, the teaching job openings in the schools located in the little bit bigger cities or townships along the rail line from Taipei to Kaohsiung were all filled in 1964. Though I didn't get the job on the locale I liked, what Yen Yunpeng has done for me is still kept in my mind.

After thinking about the pros and cons of both schools over and over, I carried my simple luggage to Nantou County and reported to the school.

Upon moving into the sole dorm set for the unmarried faculty, I discovered that I didn't have the feeling of loneliness. There were two colleagues who were also from the Shandong schools: Qu Liheng and Dong Jinyue. The former was one of the teachers but not to be in the same school of mine in the old years; the latter, a fellow student in the same token. Now Qu taught Chinese in the senior high program in this school; Dong, History, in the junior high. Besides these two men from the same province, there was another teacher in the same nature, Ma Xianxing. According to his description, during the time when the majority of students were illegally drafted into the army on the Penghu Islands, he was 12 or 13 years old, extremely short for his age, and thus, made a narrow escape from the disaster of being put into the army.

The Provincial Nantou Secondary School was deemed as a "hide-away place" in which there were many well-known "giants," metaphorically depicted as *canglong wohu*, or coiled dragons and crouched tigers. In other words, among them, there were two figures surnamed Deng and Sun who outshone others. The former commanded tens of thousands of crack troops as commander of a division; the latter, Sun, once the chief of one of the counties in the Mainland which is about hundreds of Chinese li in circumference. Their stories became "a barrel of laughs" and "a refresher" making us feel cool and "slaking our thirst in the heatwaves." Even having listened to the stories of theirs one hundred times, we would never get tired of them.

One of the most interesting events that had happened to Deng was told like this: in the early 1940s, there was a military encounter between his men and the Japanese force on the area straddling the border line of Henan and Hubei provinces. In the daytime, his men fought the Japanese fiercely, but neither side really won this encounter battle; at night, both sides began groping for each other in the pitch-dark night and trying to get each other by raiding, but no breakthrough was made except for getting into a deadlock. At last, both sides sounded the metal-retreat and redeployed their troops to get ready for

another round of life and death fight.

One day, when Deng's men got to a township, and had the division headquarters settled, his adjutant was busy trying hard to get the commander's wife to keep him company. But out of "mistakes," he snatched a bride to him as a substitute. And that poor girl's head was still covered with a piece of red veil. Consequently, the captive became the new Mrs. Deng. And at last, they retreated to Taiwan together and settled down in this school, living happily and depending on each other.

Having been the county chief in Xunhe Province in the Mainland, Sun had an air of the witty hero, Cao Mengde in *Romance of Three Kingdoms*. With his broad back like tiger's, waist line like bear's, bushy eyebrows and huge eyes, he walked on the campus with his hands behind, intertwined. While walking, he acted out in a way that firstly he got his left foot on the ground to the direction of 9 a.m.; then, his right foot, 3 p.m. Seemingly, steps of this kind are tantamount to those of an actor who played the role of Cao Zhengxiang (prime minister Cao) in Peking opera. But in Taiwan, we call it traditional Chinese opera.

Though he spent years studying Three Principles of the People, Constitution of the Republic of China, and the Doctrines by our founding Father, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, he became a laughing stock in grading examination papers. One of the stories was told like this: he graded papers not based on the answers, right or wrong, but by the number of words put on the papers, meaning the more words a student wrote on, the more points, he would get. So, students knew this secret of getting higher points and consequently, put more, more, more irrelevant words on the papers to suit his fancy.

Once when the final was due, one of the students got a question sheet. And of the questions, there was one puzzling him, and he didn't know how to deal with it. and suddenly, inspiration struck him that he put the lyrics of the theme song from the movie, *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yintai* or Romeo and Juliet as the answer. As Sun saw that the answer sheet was filled full with words, not caring about what the student put on, he simply twirled his red pen and gave him 95 points based on the 100-point scale.

When I began teaching at Nantou, I was assigned to teach two English classes by the Office of Academic Affairs: one class in the junior high program; another, in the senior high. Owing to the favorable feedback to my teaching and on the following school year, I was assigned to teach all senior high classes including one class for gifted students.



Overall, of all these classes, the deepest impression left on me was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Class students in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of senior high program. They were all male students, though their academic performances were not that good as expected, they were all nice and highly motivated.

**On February 30, 1966, this photo was taken with the third class of Nantou senior high in their second year. By then I was their classroom teacher**



**On February 30, 1966, this photo was taken with the third class of Nantou senior high in their second year. By then I was their classroom teacher**

Teaching the students in the secondary school like this one needed a lot of patience. In another word, if the students didn't get what I had taught, I had to repeat the same stuff, once, twice, or thrice. After that, if there were still some students unable to catch up with others, I had to conduct an individualized program to help them. In the course of the second semester of that school year, there was an incredible event that happened to me. One day when the lunch break was on, there was a guy from the Section of Purchases and Maintenance in the Office of General Affairs coming to inform me that "You have a visitor, and he was waiting at the entrance!" And as I was wondering who that guy might be, I saw a man, aged 40 odd years old, walk up to me. And he took my hand to shake: "I am from the Ling County the same place as you are. And I am the Deputy Commander, the Coast-patrolling Headquarters of Taiwan. I travel to Nantou because I am invited to attend a meeting held by the Provincial Government. As it is near Nantou, I come to see you. My name is Hou Jahju."

I had never heard of such a man whose name was Hou Jahju from Ling County in Taiwan, but from his behavior and the way he was talking, it seemed to me that he was not a bad guy. Therefore, I invited him to my simply furnished room in the dorm for the unmarried faculty for a chat. After being seated, he began telling me how many people from Ling County in Taiwan. He told me that in Kaohsiung City, we had Cao Zefang, in Taichung City, Xia Shuyuan, the only representative elected from Ling County into the National Assembly, and in Taipei City, Zheng Daoshu. After finishing counting the people from Ling County, he got up pretending to leave:

“My chauffeur is waiting for me out there, and I have to leave now. Later, if I have another opportunity, I’ll be back to see you again!”

“Well, as you can see, lunch time is due. And it is on me. How is that?”

He didn’t say “yes” nor say “no.” Subsequently, we walked shoulder to shoulder to the street and then went into a restaurant. While I was ordering the dishes, out of one of his breast pockets, he took a cigar and held it between his lips. On the one hand, he was puffing, on the other, he gave me a sweeping gaze from my head to my toes.

Aside from three dishes and one big bowl of soup, I ordered a bottle of Shaoxing wine. His talk was not cliché-ridden but full of witty remarks. It seemed to me that he was a man who had studied some of Chinese classics. After three rounds of drinks, he loosened his tongue, beginning to talk big. But as I noticed, when he came to the “real stuff,” he immediately held what he wanted to say. When he said, “Goodbye” to me, he repeatedly encouraged me to work hard so that someday, I would become an honor of our home county, Ling. But unexpectedly, when I returned and was passing the entrance of the school, I was delivered by the doorman an express mail. Having opened it, I found that the letter had been written by Cao Zefang (I usually call him Uncle Cao) who lived in the city of Kaohsiung. Its contents were as follows: “Recently, there is a guy named Ho Jahju claiming that he is a Ling County man but actually, a fraud telling a lot of lies to get ill-gotten gains everywhere. I have fallen to victim of him once. If you see this guy, please rush yourself to the police station!” At this moment, I realized that I had really been defrauded. Fortunately, I felt that he didn’t get much out of me except for a meal I shared with him.

Shortly after, I read an announcement published on the supplementary edition affiliated to the *Taiwan Shin Sheng Daily News (New Birth)* that they would like to have

some short essays about “The True Story of Being Defrauded.” I was stimulated by a strong urge and wrote a 500-word essay entitled: “The Deputy Commander Who Comes from the Same County as I do.” In about a week after I mailed it out, it was published.

Another interesting episode was so funny that even to this day, whenever I think of it, I cannot help bursting my sides. That was that the rate of Nantou students’ entering colleges and universities that school year, was not that low at all. To make the school’s fruits of this kind known to everyone, the Office of Academic Affairs got out a special issue of publication to promote the school. But it was a pity that the proofreading work was not done correctly and made a big irrevocable mistake such as: “In our school, for this school year, there are 33 students who have passed the JCEE getting in colleges and universities. Instead, it is mistakenly printed as 33 students who have failed.” Because in the Chinese language, the two characters *qu* (取 pass) and *bai* (敗 fail) have the similar appearances. The guy, who was held responsible for the proofreading work of this special issue of publication, should be severely spanked.

During the time I stayed at Nantou for one and a half years, there was someone who liked to act as an intermediary trying to introduce girls to me so that I could change my marital status from single to married. However, due to many a factor, I almost got there but finally failed. Though there was a girl student who had taken a shine to me wishing me to stay at Nantou, yet after thinking about the insurmountable age gap, I couldn’t get her wish done--continuing to stay at Nantou. I quit the school and responded to the call of my alma mater to assume an assistant post at NCKU.

## Chapter 23

### The Eating and Drinking Club

In the fall of 1965, Tian Tingfu, who, at that time, was a teaching assistant at the DFLL, later, dean of general affairs at NCKU, wrote me a letter indicating that Wu Renmin, dean of the College of Science and Literal Arts, needed an administrative assistant, and that Dean Wu sought chairperson of the DFLL, Fu Chong-te's help to get such a candidate who must have been a graduate from the DFLL.

This administrative assistant's duties involved doing the miscellaneous works for the college but he had to be an English major for there were some works that had to do with English. And it was stipulated that if in the future, this "extra-pair-of-hands" was not needed and if there would be a teaching assistant job opening arising in the DFLL, this guy had the priority.

At that time, I initially thought to myself that I had just settled down, and staying on this teaching job was better than going anywhere else. Moreover, the colleagues and the students of Nantou Secondary School treated me very well, and I enjoyed the feeling of being respected. And thinking of the reality that I was alone in Taiwan and though having limited resources, yet I was able to get a teaching job in a provincial secondary school like this one and felt quite content with it. What a high-flying life goal did I dare to pursue?

But later when I calmed down, I thought that if I missed such an opportunity, there wouldn't be another one arising. An assistant of today in the university would be a professor of tomorrow. There is a saying that reads: "Man struggles upwards; water flows downwards." This is a long-standing principle from the Chinese ancient time to the present day. Why did I want to adopt a "counter-trend" action? Furthermore, in the university, I might have many academic opportunities and research links. And every day, I could learn some new stuff.

With that enticement dangling in front of me, I began considering this "windfall" seriously and made up my mind that I would quit Nantou next January, at the end of the first semester of the 1966 school year.

Both my colleagues and students, especially, those students who were in Class 3 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the senior high program hated to see me leave. But as they thought that there might be a career with a bright future ahead of me, they had no choice but to let me go.

Back to NCKU, I moved into a “temporary dorm” renovated from one of students’ dorms for unmarried faculty members. Among the roommates were my classmates Zheng Jizhong--later, professor of the Chinese Language program affiliated with the Department of English at San Francisco State University; Lian Wenxiong--later, Associate Professor at the DFLL at NCKU; and Zhang Shunan--later, Deputy Director in the Bureau of Foreign Trade connected with the Ministry of Economic Affairs. The first two guys, who had long been admitted as being outstanding students and, after their graduation and the military service, was employed as teaching assistants by our chairperson, Fu Chong-te. The third one had just found a job in Asia Airlines. For the time being, he couldn’t locate a good room for rent. Therefore, he attempted to temporarily live with us for a few days.

At that time, the Office of the Dean of College of Science and Liberal Arts was situated on the second floor in the department building of Chemistry. And it was within walking distance, just 5 minutes only. Everything went well for me.

Dean Wu received higher education in the U.S. in his earlier years, having a Master’s degree in the field of Physics. Having taught many years at NCKU, he became a senior professor at the Department of Physics.

He was a true scholar. When free, he always took up a book to read. However, he was old, and often seen sitting in the sofa, having thumbed through a few pages, and dropped off with his head down, his book slipped his hand and fell to the floor.

He worked in the way as an American does. If I could get my job done during the office hours, the time after getting off my work was totally at my own disposal. He neither assigned me any extra work to do nor found fault with the work that I had done.

He had another teaching assistant from the Department of Physics to help him. In case, he was out of town, this assistant would teach the course of Freshman Physics as a substitute teacher. This assistant’s routine works included reviewing the students’ homework and grading mid-term and final papers. His name is Sun Zhongguang.

As to paperwork, he had an assistant named Zhuo Xiuyan, the then instructor from

the Department of Chinese Literature to help him.

After I worked in his office a year, a teaching assistant job vacancy became available at the DFLL. And since then, I became a real teaching assistant in the department, getting the title and the reality matched in name and in reality. And accordingly, I was qualified to move into a dorm located at Dongning Rd. which was set up specifically for faculty and staff. Its official title is the NCKU Single Faculty and Staff Members' Dorm.

At that time, there were six teaching assistants allotted to the DFLL based on the human resources planning. And the major works involved providing services for those who were associate professors, full professors and international teachers. Each one of us was assigned to support three to four of them. Our services included reviewing students' homework, supervising examinations, grading mid-term and final tests, copying grades into grade reports, and working as liaisons between the personnel office and international teachers, and checking with the cashiers for their pays based on the hours they had taught.

We were also assigned administrative duties: scheduling, paperwork, students' services, making inventories of properties and management.

Aside from the foregoing, I had once acted as a “feeler” for our chairperson, running here and there and exploring the possibility of getting some international teachers. The majority of them were pastors or nuns of Catholic churches, who, having lived somewhere in the Tainan area, would like to teach at our department on a part-time basis. The best candidate, of course, was the person who was a master's degree holder with English and American literatures as his or her major.

For teaching assistants, the greatest pressure came from promotion. Having met the three-year services requirement in the department was only one of them. The rest involved moral conduct, services and papers. The first three requirements were much easier to be met; the last one, producing the high quality of papers, was the hardest. For that reason, our chairperson spared us several hours per week to sit in classes to sharpen our academic calibers.

To me, getting promoted might be a crucial thing, but getting married was more critical because I couldn't remain single for the rest of my life. Accordingly, I rekindled the idea of getting married.

I was 36 years old, now. Old as I was, I had little money deposited in my bank account. In that case, who would like to tie the knot with a “miserable poor scholar” like me?

However, I was not going to downgrade myself. Even though, people targeted nothing else but money in the society, how many of them were able to grab an opportunity as I was, being a teaching assistant in the institution of higher learning today? If I was highly motivated and willed it enough, there would be a day for me to climb up the academic mobility ladder to the rung of an instructor in the university. And only then would I be able to dismantle the inflexibility of the office hours from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. set for only teaching assistants.

My classmate, Ren Shiyong, later, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at NCKU, who taught English somewhere in Pingdong County, wanted to pay a visit to his family in Taipei. And on the way back home, he made a stop at Tainan and came to see us in the department. Knowing of my marital status, he acted as an intermediary introducing a Taipei girl to me. Her name is Wang Paolien.

Having gone through various challenges, two years later, I happily ended up marrying this girl on May 4, 1968, and the wedding ceremony was held in Nanhua Hotel, a rather large one, on *Minzu Rd.*, or People’s Road in downtown Tainan. And on the early morning, around 6 a.m., March 16, 1969, she gave birth to a baby boy, in the hospital called Chongai on Zhongshan Rd., and according to our genealogy book I could recall, I named him Taohung.

In the late 1960s, a teaching assistant could only make around \$1,200 per month. That salary “to keep the ball rolling” for two persons’ basic necessities was barely enough. As a newborn added, only the cost of milk powder make my income unable to meet ends let alone other costs.

The most unacceptable thing was the criteria for promotion, all the openings having been filled at that time.

The number of classes we had opened and the number of students we had got dictated the quota of faculty members. In another word, the quotas of professors, associate professors, (at that time, the title of assistant professor was unheard of,) instructors, and teaching assistants had been prefixed. In our department, the personnel management looked like the way of growing radish, one radish had its own pit from

which it grew. And all pits (openings) were occupied. If there was no pit for being professor, how could an associate professor get promoted? In turn, if there was no pit for being associate professor, how could an instructor get promoted? In this way, there was no promotion for teaching assistant. Even if there was an opening for the rank of instructor arising in the department, it must have followed the first come, first served rule to determine which teaching assistant got the priority for promotion. If the candidate who was rejected, most reasons due to the qualities of the papers submitted, he still had the second chance to apply for promotion. By so doing, there was no way to figure out when my turn was due. To what year and to what month should I have to wait in this kind of situation?

At the time I was 39, and I couldn't wait any longer. After consulting with my wife, I made up my mind to go to the U.S. to get an advanced degree. In the winter of 1968, I passed TOFEL, and based on my self-assessment, began requesting application forms from three American universities by air mails. At that time, how many Social Science and Humanities majors could get scholarships? If one could get a tuition waiver, one was considered the luckiest.

Consequently, all three universities to which I sent application forms accepted me.

I decided to go to the University of Oregon to study Curriculum and Instructions. The reasons are: firstly, it is "easier to get the degree from the field of education," because in this field, the English vocabulary needed "is limited," secondly, I was quite old then, almost 40, and furthermore, I had a family in tow, thus, the degree should be gotten, the earlier, the better, and thirdly, the University of Oregon gave me a tuition waiver, demanding US\$1,400 for one year's living expenses, the lowest as far as I knew. If I had this amount of money, I would be able on my way to the University of Oregon.

Even though in the year of 1969, the amount of US\$1,400 was not a big one as imagined, but at that time, to me there was no way to raise such a large sum. However, thanks to the members of "the Eating and Drinking Club," the so-called "wine and meat friends" who offered their timely financial help to me.

The so-called "Eating and Drinking Club" was an informal organization, mainly consisting of those who lived in the Unmarried Faculty and Staff Members' Dorm on Dongning Rd., with the main purpose of occasionally enjoying food and booze outside.

Initially, we gathered together, seeking the pleasure of food by enjoying Tainan



specialties and a couple of drinks, and later, all of us became the “outlaws” in *Water Margin*, toasting one another with large gulps of the hottest stuff served out with big bowls and wolfing down bigger chunks of meat. Furthermore, if we didn’t go out boozing, we just forgot it. However, once we gathered together wanting to have drinks, what we drank was nothing else but *Gaoliang* made from sorghum or Daqu in the same nature.

We didn’t have the rule about how often we gathered together for this kind of binge drinking, nor did we have any regular spot in which we intended to gather together. To surrender ourselves to the pleasure in eating and drinking completely depended upon a whim. Members were from the Department of Mechanical Engineering of the College of Engineering in the majority. There were also several of them from the Department of Physics at the College of Science. And only two members were from the College of Liberal Arts: Ms. Xu Xiaoyun nicknamed *xiaoya*, or the little girl, from the Chinese Department, and me from the DFLL.

Most of these “meat and wine friends” thought that the post for a teaching assistant was only a “springboard” and once they got scholarships from graduate schools abroad, they quit and left without any hesitation. When I got admission to the University of Oregon, these buddies had already got scholarships or fellowships in their hands and would be on their ways. When they heard of my financial difficulty, they offered what they could, helping me out of their own accord. In general, each one of them lent me US\$100. But there is always an exception that one of them lent US\$600 to me. These buddies were Liu Hanlie, Wang Weiqiang, Huang Zhihung nicknamed Yellow Cow, and Huang Zhiyuen, Yellow Fish.

Another biggest factor that emboldened me to go abroad was due to Paolien’s family. Hardly had her parents heard the news that I wanted to further my studies in America when they immediately gave their endorsements and furthermore, said that during the period of my absence from Taiwan, Paolien and Taohung could move in their home on Taiyuan Rd., Taipei. Their proposal created a state of peace of mind of mine when I was studying in the U.S. How lucky was I who had such kind of father-in-law and mother-in-law with such a “tacit understanding?”

The Veterans’ Association under the Executive Yuan (executive branch), had a provision for the veterans who wanted to advance their studies abroad. That was that those who had got admission to the universities abroad were provided with one-way air fare. I should give a credit to the National Government again, and it was a big financial

help to me at that time.

The buddies, who resided in the Unmarried Faculty and Staff Members' Dorm on Dongning Rd. and enjoyed eating bigger chunks of meat and drinking hot stuff with bowls, are now scattered in all the parts of the world. Some of them have had great accomplishments in the field of engineering in the U.S., for example, Liu Hanlie and Wang Weiqiang. And they have settled down on the East Coast, Washington D. C. and New Jersey. Huang Zhihung (Yellow Cow) died young. Huang Zhiyuan (Yellow Fish) who was the first one returning to NCKU, contributed what he had learned in the U.S. to our alma mater. Later, he became the chairman of the Department of Chemistry (1978-1981).

In the fall of 1998, I was invited to join the tourist group organized by the NCKU Alumni Association and paid visits to the alumni in the U.S. In Washington D. C, I met Liu Hanlie and mentioned the loan stuff in the past. And he grabbed one of my hands and shook it firmly with his right hand, while covering my mouth with the other, meaning, "don't mention it."

## Chapter 24

### The First Trip to the U.S.

I can still recall the scene, 43 years ago, on September 15, 1969 when I left Taiwan. That day, the Taipei City was shrouded in mist.

As the time was not up for Northwest Airlines to process the passengers, I was queuing in the hall of departure in Taipei Songshan Airport. As I saw Paolien with a big tummy, her second pregnancy, and a 6-month old son, Taohung, in her arms, accompanying me in line and occasionally giving me a strained smile to see me off, I said in low voice to her: “I hate to leave you!”

Aside from my mother-in-law and two sisters-in-law, Baoxia and Baohua, who put a wreath around my neck, and waited quietly in the hall, unexpectedly, one of my best friends, Wang Chuwanpu, who lived in the Nangang area of Taipei, rushed to the airport in time, and hurriedly had some pictures taken. And those pictures are considered the most valuables that I have ever had in my life.

Before we went abroad for furthering our studies, the International Cultural Exchange Bureau connected with the Ministry of Education had held a one-day orientation program for us. It was conducted by a “young scholar” who had just finished his advanced studies in the U.S. and returned to Taiwan. Included in this program were table manners, cultural shocks, the know-how for taking courses, library ordinances, and housing problems such as living on-campus or off-campus, students’ insurances, and how to handle a car accident. He explained everything in detail and held a Q & A session to clarify some confusions in our mind. Of these various problems mentioned, the opportunity of getting a part-time job interested me the most.

We flew Boeing 737. And it was a flight scheduled for the students who went to the U.S. for furthering their studies that year.

After boarding the plane in Taipei Songshan Airport, we felt as if we had already been in the U.S. because all the stewardesses were blondes with blue eyes and others and when we turned to them and had eye contacts, they grinned at us, their shining white teeth broad shown. We were a little bit shy but to wave hello. The plane landed in Narita

Airport for a two-hour stopover in Japan. And hardly had we finished touring a few of duty-free stores in that airport when we had to rush to the departure gate for boarding.

Shortly after, on board, we enjoyed the first Western-style food.

When the dish on the tray was laid on my little movable table, I thought that I had to use what I had learned from the orientation. Firstly, spreading the paper towel on my lap, secondly, squeezing the lemon juice on the steak, knife in my right hand, fork in my left, I cut the steak into small pieces like the shape of cube and dipped them into the A 1 sauce and finally, put them one piece after another into my mouth. And while chewing, I was on the alert keeping my mouth closed, not letting any smacking sound out.

I cocked my head a little to one side and saw my neighbor cut his steak into three or four pieces and put them between the bun like a sandwich, biting off a large piece of it with his teeth, and completely ignoring the way of taking the steak we had learned. In the meantime, he winked at me and then, said: “Any way of taking this will be all right as long as you can put it into your mouth!”

After several hours’ sound sleep, the plane was approaching Seattle.

As the plane was gearing up to land, it bumped into the most severe turbulence. And it pitched and rolled violently. And before long, there was the retching sound letting out in the cabin, and I saw a student, who was hunchbacked, sitting to my right but one row before me and vomiting. And worse, he had shortness of breath falling into coma. The stewardesses masked him up with the built-in oxygen installation, further, performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation on him. And to this day, this is the only CPR operation that has ever been seen by me in person on the airplane since then.

Worse, heavy mist blanketed the entire Seattle Airport when this inbound plane was about to land. And the visibility was very low. After the plane was circling several times, the captain announced that there was no way to touch down. And he had no choice but to pilot this jumbo jet toward Portland Airport in the state of Oregon.

Although the captain landed the Boeing 737 there safely, we were not permitted to get off the plane because at that time, the airport had no immigration and border protection establishments. Therefore, we had to wait until the mist dissipated in Seattle. Only at that time, could we get back to Seattle Airport in the same plane.

Having been through the Customs and finished claiming my baggage, I headed the Greyhound Bus Station.

Between the airport and the bus station, there was an arch bridge. Though my canvas drawingstring bag was equipped with spinner wheels at the bottom, yet encountering a flight of stairs, I found that the spinner wheels lost its function. I was stuck in a difficult condition of getting to one stair myself first, then lifting up my bag with both of my hands to the stair on which I stood. This way, I went through the whole thing. When I reached the top of the bridge, I was drenched in sweat. I thought to myself: “Isn’t this the first trial on the way to get Sutra described in *Journey to the West*?”

After getting the ticket and having the baggage fixed in the “baggage compartment” of the bus, I inserted coins into the slit of a vending machine and got a cup of hot coffee. On the one hand, I enjoyed the drink, and on the other, loitered outside the station.

When it was around 7 p.m., I got on the bus and was on the way to Eugene, Oregon. Usually, it won’t get dark until 9 p.m. on the West coast in the month of September. When I looked at the sunset, the sun was beaming on the red, yellow and purple leaves of maple trees on the one side of the hillside and its refraction of light on the opposite side of the highway making me feel as if the greyhound bus had been running through the paintings by famous watercolorists.

It took about seven and a half hours from Seattle to Eugene by Greyhound Bus.

When the bus finally got to Eugene, it was around 2 a.m. Additionally, as I was a guy as *Alice in Wonderland*, where could I find a hotel which was still open at this hour? Under the circumstances, I was compelled to call Mr. Peach, one of the international students’ advisers in the university by inserting coins into the pay phone installed in the station. Thanks to him who said that he would pick me up in the deep of the night at the bus terminal, and temporarily arranging me to stay in a sort of the hotel like the hotel run by YMCA on Xuchang St. Taipei, he said: “Throughout the whole city of Eugene, you cannot find any hotel less expensive than this one. They charge you the going rate of three dollars a night.”

When the school started, in order to sharpen my oral English, I moved in the dorm, Carson Hall, for graduate students. The building stood four stories high: the lower two for male students, the upper two for female students. Besides there was a TV room in the basement, each floor was provided with a student counselor, the posts assumed by senior

students. Up to the present moment, I can recall my counselor's looks. Though young, he wore thick sideburns similar to Walt Whitman's (the author of *Leaves of Grass*.) His name is Joe.

Chinese students are great at English grammar, reading and writing but bad at listening and speaking. Without half a year's or a year's practice, no one can be sitting in the classroom comfortably.

There was one of the students whose family name is Li coming from Taiwan and studying Journalism. After attending classes for some time, he was bothered by his poor listening ability. One of those days, he dragged me down into the basement sobbing out the story of his being unable to go on, and decided to give up. I told him: "Studying Journalism is not easy for there is a large vocabulary involved, including the rarest ones. And Journalism is a subject beyond the scope of our mind. And to anyone who is from a non-English speaking country like Taiwan, being unable to understand what the instructors' teachings is natural. Don't panic." Furthermore, I advised him to keep on attending classes as scheduled, and progress would be made as time went by.

I also told him that in an American university, applying for transferring to another department or to another graduate school program was an easy thing. Among the numerous departments and graduate school programs, he could find the one that was suitable to him. Finally, I consoled him by saying: "Keep going the way you are doing now for some time, and later, if you find you are still unable to deal with it, certainly, you can take the thing you have talked about with me into consideration, again."

At last, he got himself ready for the unbearable embarrassment of that kind when he would face his parents back home in Taiwan, packing up all he had had and heading home.

In Carson Hall, living on the third and fourth floors were female students. This kind of arrangement was a brand-new idea to the students from Taiwan then, causing a lot of curiosity. As male and female students lived in the same dorm building, the outcome would be that there must have been many pairings arising. It was rumored that American girls applying for graduate school programs didn't intend to seek expertise but to find a life-long spouse.

Ronald Hendricks, my roommate, was handsome majoring in Architecture. It didn't take him long to get a girlfriend. Another graduate student named Mary in the Phd

program of English was good-looking with exceptional personality traits, having a boyfriend by her side without taking much time. That they socialized themselves with one another didn't mean that they would end up being wedded in the church but to make friends with the opposite sex first. Everyone had "a bottom-line" on his or her mind, possessing the absolute freedom of getting whether a life-long spouse or not.

Mary was a good girl. One afternoon, she saw me sit alone in the lobby coming up to strike up a conversation with me and saying that there would be a beer party held at the upcoming weekend. And she hoped that I could attend to experience what a beer party in America looked like. Driven by curiosity, I immediately promised as told.

Once in the beer hut, I became aware of the fact that only drinking wouldn't suffice, and dancing was a must. I was shy and nervous. Though dancing is one of the basics for social activity, I haven't learned it, let alone experience it. Accordingly, I made up my mind only to drink, not to dance. However, with a pitcher of cool beer down, I couldn't help surrendering myself to going down on the floor and dancing to the music among them.

As Mary knew that my wife had given birth to a baby girl, she asked for the address of ours in Taipei. Two weeks later, Paolien wrote me a letter saying, "There is a girl named Mary sending me two suits of baby clothes. If you see her on the campus, you must thank her for what she has done for us!" And when I saw Mary and did what I was expected, Mary was just grinning, making a gesture with opened palms as if having said: "it is not a big deal!"

At the beginning of 1970, the Vietnam War was raging. The Anti-war demonstration ran rampant throughout the country. The University of Oregon was no exception. On the campus, there was a sit-in demonstration going on. And it was conducted in the president's office.

President Richard M. Nixon, reelected less than two years, emphasized his policy repeatedly on the air, "The Vietnam War should be Vietnamized!" However, this policy didn't stop the bloodshed tragedy taking place in Kent State University. The close-up shot of an anti-war girl student, who had leaned upon the gunned-down male student by the national guards, was on the front pages of major newspapers and televised by the big three networks on the following day. Accordingly, it brought the nation-wide demonstration to the acme of the Anti-Vietnam war. President Nixon suffered a sleepless

night, walking back and forth on the White House lawn. And this newsreel footage was broadcast on the big three TV networks without leftup.

During the Vietnam War period, streaking became a fad on some of the campuses in the U.S.

One afternoon, while drizzling outside unrelentingly, there suddenly appeared a bunch of students on the campus. They rallied on the lawn located on the east side of Carson Hall and held a streaking activity. They stripped themselves naked. And against the rain, they were arranged in a column beginning to run from the starting line, running and keeping running. And when they got to a landmark, they prostrated themselves with their limbs outstretched and bellies against the lawn, sliding all the way down and making the rainwater accumulated in the lawn splash. They yelled and hooted, on the one hand, and on the other, they burst into peals of laughter, looking extremely excited.

From my room on the second floor, I could see clearly all kinds of their weird behaviors and felt that the whole thing was unbelievable. I asked my roommate: “America has had enough freedom already, is it necessary to further show their little birds in this way?”

The university of Oregon adopted quarter system by then. Namely, there were four terms in accordance to the four seasons in a school year. And roughly, one term has 10 weeks. The majority of students enrolled in the fall, winter, and spring terms taking a break in summer. However, some of the departments and graduate school programs wanted to meet some students’ special needs and offered courses in summer, too.

In the graduate school program, term paper was the major way for assessing students’ academic performances. Certainly, some professors liked to give two tests, midterms and finals. The advantages of the quarter system are: No. 1 the length of time is shortened but it enables students to concentrate on their studies to the effect that within a short span of time, they can get bigger improvements, in Chinese we call it “Half the work with double results.” and No. 2 the reading materials can be “condensed” in such a way, the best kept, while the outmoded, removed.

A 10-week term passed as fast as “a horse's galloping.” There was a kind of feeling, the term to start was seemingly the term to end. Once professors passed out the list of reference books, I had to rush myself to the library and located the books quickly, otherwise somebody else would grab them before me. And it would be harder to wrap a



good term paper up in time.

In the first quarter, I took three courses. Unless meeting with the unique terms related to the big events in the history of American education, and the special terms for education bills, I found that there were not many other difficult words in the textbooks. Even if coming across some words with hard pronunciations, and because of the increased chances of reading and hearing these words day by day, I found out they were eventually learned by heart. At the end of that semester, two As and one B were on my Grade Report.

Among a bunch of professors in the university, the one I admired and respected the most was Professor Hugh B. Wood. He had a lot of life experience possessing the best qualifications of an expert in education. Since he had once been invited by the Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization in the United Nations as an education consultant to Bhutan, Nepal, and India, he understood the education issues in those developing countries. For that reason, he could often create the kind of education theory which could be used as the universal model, namely, a “one-size-fits-all” approach.

He had once taken us to pay a visit to a vocational school which had no tests held. Whether students could do the job or not was the key, for example: the skills for repairing car, television, radio, and all sorts of other electrical appliances. If a student could get the job done, he could graduate from the school; otherwise he had to be kept in school to be a repeater practicing and practicing until he was able to master his specific pursuit. There was no time limit for graduation, nor were there any other tests held for the courses like Humanity studies and Social Science.

In the summer of 1970, I followed other Taiwanese students to Reno--the Biggest Little City in the World in Nevada to get a summer job. In the casino connected with Holiday Inn, I held a dustpan in my left hand, a broom in my right, picking up the trash around the slot machines. Aside from my regular pay, I often picked up some coins of quarters, dimes, and nickels strewn on the floor. After I got off the day shift, I went on another job, washing dishes in the kitchen of Silver Spur Casino. Two and a half months' labors enabled me to earn the living expenses for the next quarter of that school year.

In the autumn of 1970, in order to experience off-campus life, I decided to rent a room nearby the school. Owing to a Taiwanese student's recommendation, I moved in Mrs. Mobley's house.

Mrs. Mobley's house was a two-story building, wooden-framed. On the second floor there were two rooms for rent, and in the courtyard, there was one room, a renovation of a storeroom. In addition, there was a kitchen down the basement where all the cooking utensils were obtainable. There were several Datong brand rice cookers left there by the Taiwanese students who had graduated from UO.

Mrs. Mobley was very picky in the way she rented out her rooms, totally based on races. She didn't rent her rooms to the whites and blacks nor Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. She only wanted to rent them to the students from Asia, her most favorite prospective tenants, Chinese. She said that the Chinese students who were affable and quiet, most of the time, studying hard and getting things done without making fuss. And most important of all, they seldom held parties, not mention getting drunk and making scenes.

Every Monday morning, she took advantage of the time when we had gone to classes to clean our rooms. Several weeks later, she found that there was no need for her to clean mine. All she did was to get the sheet straight on the bed. Once she asked me how I could all of the time keep thing in order, and the windows and desks squeaky clean. And I answered her by saying that: "I have been in the Chinese Nationalist army for eleven years and the habit of keeping a room tidy and kempt has gotten into my bones."

Somebody says: "For the elderly, America is deemed as the grave." This saying cannot be applicable to Mrs. Mobley.

She busied herself working all day: at a time, she was in her "Green House" providing plants with fertilizers and watering them; at the other, worked in her backyard pruning the apple trees and spraying pesticide on them. Again, at a time, she raked the dead leaves off from the turfs; at the other, cleaned the trash on the sidewalk in front of her house.

One of her routine works that I had observed was to frequently call or write to her son or daughters who lived somewhere else in Oregon. When she had nothing to do, she sat in her rocking chair, rocking back and forth, and at the same time, with her cat on her lap, talking to it.

She and her husband were of Irish stock. Ten years ago, Mr. Mobley suffered a stroke and passed away. During his lifetime, he worked in the lumbering industry, and with her, started this family. She bore him three children, one son and two daughters, and all of them got married and set up their own families respectively.

She didn't agree to intermarriage. She said that with different cultural backgrounds, customs and habits, and language barriers, there wouldn't be a happy marriage.

Once I described to her what I saw somewhere on the street a young man and a young girl hug each other and do the French-kissing as a kind of cultural shock, she thought for a while and retorted me by asking: "In China as well as in Taiwan, don't you, Chinese, do the same sort of thing privately as this couple of young folks in public?"

## Chapter 25

### Working Days in San Francisco

At the end of spring quarter in 1971, and also on the same day when UO conferred Master's degree on me, I initially planned to pack up and go back to Taiwan for family reunion. But when I thought of how to clear myself from the debt, I immediately fell into the state of hesitancy. Furthermore, in March, the timing for returning to Taiwan is not right because all colleges and universities hire people either before the beginning of the school year or after the end of the first semester. Is there any reason for them to hire people in the middle of a semester? Accordingly, I decided to go to San Francisco getting sort of work and making some money to pay the debts that I owed my buddies when I flew out of Taiwan in 1969. As for the other problems, I had to leave them to the future to resolve.

Using the same old ruse to travel from Seattle to Eugene, I took the Greyhound Bus to San Francisco.

Around the area adjacent to Chinatown San Francisco, I rented a room on the street called Pine. After turning in the first month's rent and deposit, I had the amount of cash money in my wallet only for two weeks' living expenses.

At that time, there were two ways to find a job in San Francisco: one was to read the classified ads in the newspaper; another was to seek help from the employment agency. In order to solve this urgent problem, aside from that I registered with one employment agency, I bought two types of newspapers, Chinese and English, searching through the classified columns of help-wanted ads. If I came across the jobs deemed potentials for me to get, I drew circles around them by pen, and then, made calls one by one. But as a couple of days went by, I didn't get anything. As I was in the state of *zou kun chou cheng*, or be walled in by my own worries, suddenly inspiration struck me: "Goodness me! haven't I served in the Chinese Nationalist army for 11 years? Why shouldn't I try to get a security guard job in a company?"

From the ads of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, I got the telephone number of a security company, and unexpectedly, having made just one call, I got a positive answer. The Pinkerton Security hired me.

This security company conducted its operations by phone. And following the instruction on the telephone, I went to one of the hospitals taking up a patrol job, and I was assigned the evening shift, from 4 p.m. to 12 p.m. In addition, I was assigned a mission to escort the nurses who got off at 12 p.m. to their dormitory located on the opposite side of the street.

The first day I got on the job and found out that this area had security challenges. John White, who worked day shift, warned me that if I ran into some drunkards and drug addicts, under no circumstances, did I show the weakness in self-defense. Sometimes, brandishing the long-handled flashlight and showing one of the postures from the Chinese Martial Arts were effective to deter them. (John believes that every Chinese knows Chinese Kung Fu.)

One night, I didn't meet with any drunkard but a drug addict. He was hysterical, two eyes bloodshot. He spoke incoherently, but to try to speak to me, and from his long soliloquy, I made out only one word that was: "Hi, how could you get this easy job?"

Every Pinkerton man wore a sort of police's uniform with a pin badge. At night, a long-handled flashlight was carried and often mistaken for a bludgeon if it was not closely checked. As he saw me with livid looks ignoring him, he went away lifelessly.

Every night, I met with different cases, and every night, I had my heart in my throat. For that reason, after working for a while, I decided to quit, and simultaneously calculating if I couldn't find a new job right away, the balance on my checking and saving accounts would ensure that I wouldn't go hungry. However, when I called my boss whom I had never met in person and reported to him about my attempted resignation, the answer I got was: "You don't have to quit, and I will transfer you to San Francis Hotel!"

The hotel is situated on the opposite side of Union Square in downtown San Francisco. And this is the busiest area of commercial activities, accessible by all kinds of vehicles. It was not far away from my residence on Pine St., and a round trip, getting on and off work even if on foot, took no more than 30 minutes.

I was assigned to work at a checkpoint down the basement watching the employees clock in and out and keeping an eye on that if there was any outsider disguising himself as one of the employees sneaking in the hotel, or that if there was any employee who, when getting off, walked out with hotel's property, (a euphemistic expression of stealing). I was assigned the graveyard shift. And though this shift I worked was the opposite of the

day shift, yet to me, working at night was nothing. What I needed was to get the sleeping time in the night changed into the daytime, and there was no problem for me to practice self-regulation.

To avoid falling asleep during the quietest hours in the depth of the night, I bought many English literature masterpieces of the world to read from the used-book bookstore, for example: *The Flowers Drum Song* by Li Jinyang, *The Good Earth* by Pearl S. Buck, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte, *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness* by Alan Burgess, and *Red Star over China* by Edgar Snow.

I wrote out two essays about what I had observed and heard about San Francisco: one is entitled: "The Setting Sun in San Francisco"; the other, "What Americans Value While Being Employed?" I contributed them to the *Chinese Literature and Arts Magazine Monthly*. When I received two free copies of that magazine, a note was enclosed in one of them indicating that Yin Xueman, the chief editor, intended me to start a "column" in the magazine and asked me to write a series of essays about the U.S.A. The column is entitled: "America through Chinese Eyes." Regrettably, at that time, I didn't have the willpower to keep it going. His wish couldn't be fulfilled by me.

The room on Pine Street was a very good one and suited me quite well but I had to turn in 40 dollars each month, and if telephone, water and gas bills were added, I could deposit only few of dollars in my checking or saving account monthly. And if I went on like this without doing anything else about it, I really didn't know when could I clear myself from my debts?

One day, when I was sauntering along one of the streets in Chinatown, I ran into Professor Feng Weiren with whom I took a course called Western Philosophy, back my undergraduate years at NCKU. "Though the sky overhead seems so unlimited; the earth beneath our feet seems so vast, and human beings are tiny creatures living between them, yet it is a small world indeed. And there is still a chance for men to meet one another despite wherever we are!" It was unbelievable. I knew that his wife, Qiao Aili, a German national, son and daughter and he had emigrated to America before. But at that time, I had no idea of which state they lived in.

Professor Feng indicated to me that after becoming an immigrant in the U.S., originally, he would like to apply to the colleges or universities in California for a teaching job planning to offer courses related to oriental philosophy--his dissertation was

on Laozi when he studied in Germany. However, “Heavens decline to accept his wish” Though he had almost got there several times, eventually, he got nowhere. Afterwards, he wanted to use his unique, self-invented skills of Chinese landscape painting in the hope of that he could blaze a new trail for making a living. However, though exhibits were held, and all his paintings were lowly priced, there were few buyers. The thing that made him so down was his wife, Qiao Aili, who couldn’t tolerate his “slovenliness” and “pedantry” any longer and booted him out of his own home. Any time, he thought of this, he became so furious that he couldn’t control himself.

The dialect, Cantonese, was helpful. He finally got a job in the Chinese Chamber of Commerce as a secretary, otherwise he would become a homeless person and live on the streets.

He rented a room on the second floor in the same building where he worked. It provided him with a place for sleep in the night. As I saw the room was big enough for a desk and two beds, thus, I proposed voluntarily that both of us should share the rent so that we could save a little bit in terms of economics. And furthermore, he had someone to keep him company. He thought it would do. As a result, Professor Feng became my roommate for some time, not by a “predetermined plan” but by chance and I, for that reason, was able to make the money-saving stuff go faster. Without much time spent, I was set free from the burden of debts.

Chinatown San Francisco was and is still regarded as the best one in the U.S. based on its booming business. It is attributed to some of its earlier Chinese immigrants who were able to pick out this place, auspicious from the view of *fengshui*, or geomancy in Chinese.

Where there are the Chinese, there is nothing short of *luwei tian* shops, or braised shops that sell braised dishes including freshly roasted ducks, Chinese herbal medicine stores, kungfu schools, antique and jewelry shops, galleries, fortune tellers’ stands, and newspapers stalls. There are restaurants, big enough for holding wedding ceremonies, and eateries noted for their mouth-watering delicious foods, too. The biggest joys I could get here were: I could have my favorite noodle, for example, the big bowl of beef noodle, and I could also have the opportunity to read the Chinese Newspapers like the *Xing Dao Daily News*. Most of all, I could watch martial arts action films.

Broadway Avenue is located at one stone’s throw away. What a big difference

between it and Chinatown in cultural atmosphere? When all the lights were on, and in order to experience how hot erotic modeling was by myself, I traveled back and forth several times on that avenue. I couldn't recall who that romantic poet was but his remark: "You either get in to see the show or turn your head around and go away!" The avenue was filled with the most bizarre stuff: There was a guy standing in front of the theater house touting loudly the business; another on the sidewalk amid the crowds shouted: "Sex is nothing!" "Repent! Repent! "The wages of sin are death."<sup>65</sup> "Come and believe in God," and "I am the way, truth, life, no one can come to our heavenly Father but me."<sup>66</sup>

Sometimes, I took the cable car going down to Fisherman's Wharf and Pier 39 for cruises. And while on board, I was watching the seagulls soaring freely overhead with the ongoing ship. And the sea lions were seen as well lying on the rafts and basking, their nostrils held widely open to breathe. Their lazinesses looked funny.

Half a year later, Zheng Jizhong, my classmate at NCKU, a Library Science major, graduated from the graduate school program at UO, made his appearance in San Francisco. He had already got a job offer from the San Francisco State University Library. Before he went on, he still had some time at his disposal. Therefore, he decided to apply to San Francis Hotel for being a security guard to "jump on the bandwagon." Having been hired by the hotel, he was assigned evening shift from 4 p.m. to 12 p.m. And I worked grave yard from 12 p.m. to 8 a.m. What a small world it is! In a large country like the United States of America, chance mattered and brought us together and worked together: "The affection of brotherhood having been established at NCKU was once again renewed at the particular time like this, and at a particular place like this."

I kept on working as security guard until the summer of 1972. And at that time, I got a job offer in Taiwan. And I packed everything up I had and headed the place where I had come from.

Zheng Jizhong married one of my classmates named Li Yunshan from the DFLL at NCKU. Later she changed her first name from Yunshan to Lande. They had one son in the earlier days, and later, she gave birth to the second baby boy named Jiaxuan. And as he was one month old, they felt they were not capable of taking care of two kids because both of them were working. Taking advantage of my going back to Taiwan, they asked me to do them a favor--taking Jiaxuan back to his grandparents to rear. I held him to my chest closely when I got on the China Airlines flight, and he, after crying a while, slept



through the whole journey to Taipei.

## Chapter 26

### The Taipei College of Business

Jiaxuan and I arrived in Taipei Songshan Airport safely. Once out of the international arrival lobby, I felt there was a blast of hot air hitting my face, and I felt a little bit hot-headed immediately.

That day, there were two sets of families coming to meet us: My wife, Paolien, held my two little kids' hands, came to meet me; another, Jizhong's parents turned up for picking up their beloved grandson.

As I handed Jiaxuan and his things including dampers, pacifiers, and powdered milk over to this old couple, they thanked me repeatedly. And we exchanged our telephone numbers.

Having got on the yellow cab, I got the opportunity to talk with Paolien. Firstly, I discovered that my son, Tao, was very conversational, trying to communicate with me in Taiwanese with the help of his body language. And then, I noticed that my daughter whose both arms were covered with a layer of white-colored ointment because she was suffering a sort of skin rash, or sweat rash. Sitting on the rear seat, she was stunned by my presence, most of the time, keeping quiet.

As far as my eyes could reach through the windows, I felt that Taipei remained unchanged as it had been. The lofty palm trees on either side of the street still swayed their fronds gracefully in the breeze. However, there were lots of propaganda slogans here and there proclaiming: *zhuang jing zi quang; chu bian bu jing*, or reworded as that: when the country is faced with crisis, do not panic, and live by the guiding principle of independence and self-reliance. Hot and humid as it was in the month of June, there was a bone-chilling flow in my spine. Was it true that Taiwan became a sort of "orphan," diplomatically isolated from the international community?

After Taiwan's withdrawal from the U.N. in 1971, there were many graduate students who would rather take the odd jobs in America than return to serve their own country back home. I was one of the students who went against the dominant trend at the time when Taiwan's situation was unstable.

Not until I reported to the National Central Library situated on Nanhai Rd. in Taipei, did I become aware that the guy in charge of the library appointed me one of the chief editors. Having worked for two weeks, I felt that this sort of sedentary job, verifying data, writing, rewriting, and editing, didn't fit in with my personality. I was longing for a teaching job as I had done at Nantou Secondary School before. During the class time, I enjoyed the complete freedom of shaking my head and writing something on the blackboard. And I even had the freedom of walking around on the platform while teaching. Working in the library, desk-bound, I couldn't have freedom of that kind. Further, when having class to go, I would go to teach; when having no class, use all the time I had to prepare myself; and this kind of life would never be deprived by anyone else. Even if under the rule of an imperious emperor, he couldn't interfere with a civilian's routines. What good old and sweet days they were at Nantou!

Zheng Jizhong's uncle named Wang Xianhua who was teaching at the Taipei College of Business came to visit me one day, and said: "The president of the College, Wu Shihan, would like to offer you an English-teaching job. Think about it. Take it or not!"

To me, there was no need to think about it, and I immediately grabbed this opportunity following him to see the president. On the same day, I signed a contract with the college.

Moving in my father's-in-law home on Taiyuan Rd. for a temporary stay was the tactic of expedience. But living there forever in a large family was not what I wanted.

At the time, the shock of Taiwan's withdrawal from the U.N. was still keenly felt. People felt panicky. As a result, the exchange rate in the black market had gone from NT\$30 to the dollar and from NT\$40 to the dollar. And it finally fixed the exchange rate of NT\$45 to the dollar during the hottest moment. Though the amount of the American dollars that I had taken back was not big enough to buy a single house desired, yet making the first down payment for an apartment was more than enough. Consequently, taking advantage of the housing market that was in the downswing, I couldn't miss this opportunity. Therefore, I immediately took action to make an offer with the company for one apartment which was under construction, located on the 4<sup>th</sup> section, Zhongqing N. Rd. And it would be delivered to us one year later.

The Office of the Third Section at the Veteran's Association, charged with the

responsibilities to help veterans locate jobs and go to colleges or vocational schools, scheduled a time for me to see Minister Zhao Juyu. In the meeting, besides he lavished praises on me for my patriotism by citing two verse lines which read: *jifeng zhi jing cao;ban dang swhi Zhong chen*, “Sturdy grass withstands a strong wind and an official loyalist can be found during unrest.”<sup>67</sup> Other than that, he would like to have me on the teaching staff at the Huaxia College of Technology founded by him. But after weighing the advantages and disadvantages of teaching in these two types of school, public or private, I decided to stay at the Taipei College of Business.

At the time, the students that I was teaching at the TCB were in the five-year-junior-college-system. (In this system and in the first three years, they are the equivalents of senior high students, and in the last two years, they are the equivalents of freshman and sophomore students in a four-year college or university). Moreover, they were the best of the best coming from various junior high schools in Taipei. They were job-oriented students who would rather give up the opportunity of going to university than come here to get the kind of professional skills such as: accounting, statistics, booking, banking, currency exchanges, international trade, and business administration. They were the smartest students that I had ever taught. When I explained something to them, they were quick on their uptake.

I also taught at a privately-funded junior college on a part-time basis. Without staying on long, I learned of how hard to run the private college like this one. Students were the financial resources to keep the ball rolling. As a result, honestly speaking, the school shouldn't be too demanding nor “letting all go” in “students’ academic performances.” And they had to strike a balance between these two polar extremes. If too demanding, more than 50 percent of students could be flunked out, and where did the financial resources of the school come from? Conversely, if every course had been a pipe one and every student could pass, the school would be notorious for its only profit-making business.

After the holding of the Joint Junior College Entrance Examination, teachers from different fields and from different schools gathered together in an auditorium to grade examination papers, and I was one of them to grade English. Because of the oppressive heat and worse, the air-conditioners acting weird, off and on, we were feeling upset. It seemed that we were like those air-conditioners, off and on, getting several papers marked, and then standing up to walk around. And simultaneously, we wiped the sweat off with our handkerchiefs. At this moment, a funny answer to a question in the History

and Geography section spread through the auditorium and “cooled us off.” This was a question regarding World Geography: “Please specify the differences between North Korea and South Korea in their geographic locations, produces and climates. One of the students wrote the answers as follows:

1. Location: the differences between both two countries are: South Korea is south of North Korea while North Korea is north of South Korea. South Korea faces south; North Korea, north.
2. Produces: South Korea has some of produces North Korea doesn't have, while North Korea has some of produces South Korea doesn't have.
3. Climates: it is not hot but very cold in North Korea; it is not cold but very hot in South Korea.

These answers are really in the scope of truth, not necessarily to be told, and no relevant to the answers of the questions at all. Despite these students' academic performanes were far under the average, I still wanted to lavish some praises on them who wanted to enroll at the private colleges of this kind. Our country needed all types of young “talents.” Someday when they would graduate and step into the society, doubtlessly, there would be openings in all trades for them. To say the least, if we could hold this type of students in the schools letting teachers lead the way and books spark their spiritual enlightenment as a Chinese saying goes: *chunfeng huayu*, or having the spring wind pick up some of water vapor and finally getting it changed into rain, they would be in more advantageous positions in school than be left out roaming on the streets. If they were on the streets with nothing to do, they were “goofing up,” including fighting, etc. From this point of view, keeping them in school was the better stragety.

In fact, there was no difference at all between these two types of school, public or private, in management and administration, for example: while teaching, I often noticed that there was an administrator from Office of Academic Affairs standing outside to check with the attendance rate.

In these two types of junior colleges, there were two men worth recollecting: one was the president, Wu Shihan, of TCB; another, a historian, the son of a renowned navy officer named Li Zhun in the late era of the Qing dynasty. However, I could remember his last name, Li; his first name, forgotten.

President Wu Shihan was really a father figure helping and caring about the welfare of the junior faculty in his capacity as the president of the college. He understood that young scholars laid much emphasis on pride. If they had something that bothered them, they were reluctant to get out. Thus, before they took any actions, the president had already grasped what their problems were and voluntarily helped them out. In addition, he knew both sides of human nature, dark and bright. If one committed a mistake, he would save one's face in public. His catchphrase was: "There is nothing there. If you can get it straight, you will be okay!"

Professor Li was over 90 years old when I met with him. He could see and hear well, capable of moving around by himself. Having almost outlived one century, two dynasties, he, himself, could be regarded as a volume of the living history of the Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China. Of course, he had many legends and real stories to tell.

In his prime, he once studied in Germany and married a German woman. Right now, when his "glorious years have been gone," he found himself dwelling in Mt. Yangming and living by himself. He said that he had self-educated himself into the condition of "facing death as if he was returning home." He came out aiming to get some fresh air, and teaching little ones was a way he entertained himself during his final stage of life.

After teaching English to the students like those who were in their senior high program two years, I figured out that this was not what I wanted. What I really craved for was to do something greater than this teaching job. Therefore, I felt inclined to throw myself into an unknown future, again. But how could I achieve this vaguely-conceived life goal? Finally, I decided to return to the U.S. to get my doctoral degree.

## Chapter 27

### The Second Trip to the U.S.

In the fall of 1974, I got on the trip to America again for my doctorate. But this time, I went to Southern Illinois University located at Carbondale in the southern part of Illinois. The reason for choosing that school was that it had the Department of Higher Education.

One week before departure, I went to the Shezi area in western Taipei to bid farewell to Dr. Wang Runen, one of my closest friends, who ran a clinic there. Upon hearing my story, he didn't ask whether I needed any financial aid or not but to generously hand me a stack of money out of his coffer, "This is it, take it with you and use it whatever it is needed!" And it seemed as if there were a tacit understanding between him and me. How many friends of this kind does one have in one's lifetime?

By then, Carbondale was a university city with its population of around 30,000, and among them, the student population accounted for two-thirds. In the first year, I was struggling single-handedly for my doctoral studies. In the second year, I asked Paolien and my two children to join me, the whole family standing together to "beat the odds."

In the previous year when I was by myself, I rented a room off campus in a boarding house. After Paolien and my children got to Carbondale, I shared the rent of a two-story single house with a newly-engaged couple, the male student whose surname is Xie. They lived upstairs; we, a family of four, on the flat.

Paolien and I taught Taohung and Hungling the "modern" English alphabet, 26 letters. When they had learned them by heart, we sent them to schools which were quite different from Taiwan in terms of the learning environment, Taohung enrolling in the first grade in an elementary school; Hungling, a preschool program.

I also told Taohung and Hungling to abide by a simple rule, following teacher's teaching. In whatever a way the teacher taught, and so did they learn in the same way. At this point, that they didn't understand what the teacher's teaching didn't matter. The most crucial thing was that they should concentrate on listening to what the teacher's saying and paying attention to what the teacher was doing. Taohung went to a school called

Thomson Elementary while Hungling, Kindergarten called Spring. Both of them were situated in our neighborhood, and everything went very well.

Later, we moved in the married dorm for graduate students, firstly, the Southern Hills Apartment, and then the Evergreen Terrace. Accordingly, Taohung and Hungling were transferred to United Points Elementary. And the school provided bus services for picking them up in the morning and dropping them off in the evening. Furthermore, free lunches were supplied, and so were children's readers.

They spent seven and a half hours in the school from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. When the school was over, the yellow bus would be seen in our compound. And we saw these little kids get off the bus looking as cheerful as little birds. After chirping a while, they returned to their own nests.

Carbondale is located far away from metropolises. And by then, there was a few of Chinese living there. For that reason, the practice of sending children to learn Mandarin on Saturday or after school was never heard of. Children are quite curious, and at that time, there was a fad called “sleepover” flourishing: “You sleep one night in my home, and I sleep one night in yours.”

I was granted a full scholarship, \$500 per month. After paying 150 for the rent, utilities and telephone bills and necessities, there was not much left. To eke out an income with odd jobs, Paolien following other international students' wives went to work as seamstress in a clothing factory. After she got off, she immediately went on another part-time job in Mrs. King's Grill.

In the earlier days, I couldn't afford a car. It took me 40 minutes to go to school by walking. When our financial condition was getting better and better, I bought a used Dodge car. It was priced at \$800.

In one of winter days, there was a heavy snow falling. Because I didn't get any information from the radio that classes were called off because of this bad weather, I insisted on that I had to go to my supervisor's class scheduled that day. I was extremely frustrated by my used car. And though I made an all-out effort trying to start it, it didn't work out as expected. Having no choice, I had to get there in the snow on foot.

With snow flying on the road, I was helplessly pelted by snowflakes. On the one hand, I kept walking, but on the other, I was thinking of those old snowy days in my hometown,



Jinan, Shandong Province. I couldn't help asking myself the following questions: "Is that snow-capped family house of ours still there? Is it still being occupied by my family? And how are the playmates in my childhood with whom I got into fierce snowball fights going?" As it was snowing on, I was obsessed completely by these questions. And the snow made me reminiscent of everything in the past. As a result, I had a strong urge to get something down on the paper. Later, I jotted down what was on my mind in the form of a short story tinged with the taste of "stream-of-consciousness." It is entitled: "Walk in the Snow" and it got published in the *New Literature and Arts Magazine*.

At that time, the so-called Department of Higher Education was only established in a few of American universities. And in their previous existances, these universities were usually teacher-training colleges. And Southern Illinois University was one of them.

Amidst professors, Dr. John E. King, the then chairman of the department, was the one I admired and respected most. Having been the dean of a college before, he was not only an experienced university administrator but also well-connected. And especially, he was broad-minded treating his colleagues who even were opinionated about running the department with respect and admiration. In another word, he exercised patience to deal with them. To international students, he did his best to look after them, giving them the kind of help at the right moment.

In the middle of 1975, the state of Illinois had slashed higher education funding. And in turn, the number of students in the university to get full scholarship was getting smaller and smaller. As he knew that I had a family in tow, he did his utmost to get a full scholarship for me. To show my gratitude, I wrote an article in Chinese entitled: "Professor King" and had it run on the supplement affiliated with the *World Journal*.

My supervisor was Professor, Paul Morrill, who was my unforgettable mentor. Originally, he was a senior professor in the English Department. Later, he was summoned to be the president of a college. When the term of that work expired, he was invited back by Professor John E. King to teach in the Higher Education Department offering a course, College Teachers and College Teaching. He had an excellent command of the English language and produced a plenty of high-quality papers. Even in his twilight years, he still hung on there coming up with a novel that attracted the attention of one of reputable publishing houses to get it published. This was not easy at all.

When he got the news about his eldest son who was drafted into the army to fight

the Vietnam war from the drafting board, he became excruciatingly angry and with smouldering hatred, shouted, “Why do I send a healthy son to that remote country to get killed? And I have nothing to do with that country, don’t I?” He encouraged him to be a draft dodger fleeing the U.S. to Europe by way of Canada.

He polished my dissertation, word by word, sentence by sentence, patiently without grumbling. When he came across one well-written paragraph, he never missed the opportunity to praise me, “Jim (my English name), you wrote this paragraph quite well!”

He had visited Taiwan before, and this island country made a positive impression on him. The best thing left on him was his travelling experience obtained from the Taiwan railway services. By then, the Taiwan Railway policy provided passengers with free tea. The guy carried a large metal kettle with one hand and glasses with tea bags in with another, pouring the hot water from the air accurately and dexterously into the glass with the exact quantity of water without any spilling. He asked: “How long has this guy practiced to get this extraordinary skill?”

For a Phd student who studies education and wants to wrap up his dissertation, there are two ways for him to take: No. 1 is finding untapped resources or illogicalities committed by former researchers by referring to primary historical resources and the others. In another word, he needs to trace back to the sources of reliability from numerous books. If he has found them, he has to have them supplemented, verified, and rectified by quoting as saying, for example, “This is true by Mr. Smith; this is not true by Mr. Thomas.” This way, the findings will be used for future reference or provide readers with true pictures of the reality. This is called historical type of research of education. No. 2 is developing the hypothesis in a questionnaire and selecting the subjects. And then, when the returned questionnaire is validated, the student can use educational statistics of T-test, F-ratio, or K-square to analyze the data to prove whether his guessed questions in the questionnaire are okay or not. The last step is to provide the statistical data for the institution or organization concerned and the prospective researcher for future reference if they are going to do the same kind of research. This is called the analytic type of research of education.

Dr. Loren B. Jung was a specialist in analytic research and helped a lot of students wrap up their dissertations in the department. As he saw that I had difficulty getting my dissertation done, he suggested to me that I should endeavor to find a topic in the last school that I had taught in Taiwan. Because I had been at the TCB two years, I was sort

of familiar with commercial education. Accordingly, I finally took a topic entitled: *The Commercial Education in the Republic of China: An Evaluative Study*. I wrote out the first part of it regarding the historic setting, of course, with my supervisor's polishing, and finished the second part of it with Professor Jung's hand in regarding the analyzing.

To tell the truth, the hardest part in a doctoral program is whether one can come up with a dissertation of originality. With the wide range of American Education, it is not easy for a Chinese student to get out something really meaningful, especially in English. Having crossed out a lot of potential topics, finally, I couldn't help returning to the field of Chinese Education in Taiwan in which I had long been involved. However, at the present moment whenever I think of that hardbound copy of my dissertation, I feel ashamed of it even though I did my best. Here is the conclusion for wrapping up my dissertation, and it is fairly said that I have only learned the methodology of how to do it.

In the late 1970s, the Carter Administration became impatient to establish diplomatic ties with the Chinese Communist regime. And there was an eerie atmosphere spreading through the Chinese students' circles on the campus, one group echoed every word of their leader from the Mainland: "The Chinese Communist party that has occupied the entire China with such a large population and such a huge territory unrecognized by the United States is a big joke," while the other group, of course, "the staunch but foolish loyalists from Taiwan," claimed: "Even though the Republic of China withdrew to Taiwan, the Penghu Islands, Kinmen (Quemoy), and Matsu, she has not been completely annihilated by the Chinese Communist military forces. Spiritually and traditionally, she is still the legitimate government that stands for China!"

No matter whatever the reason was, the United States for her own interests had decided to switch her diplomatic links from Taiwan to the Mainland. And this was an irrevocable reality. For that matter, I wrote President Carter a letter to protest his unilateral act. It availed me of nothing except I had done my part to support the National Government in Taiwan.

The conflict between these two groups didn't develop into the situation of a showdown, but in fact, the tension was mounting and mounting almost to the brink of snapping as if a string had been tautly pulled on the bow, and a sword had been drawn out of the sheath. Once, they invited a scholar in from the Mainland to give a talk, and the topic and the contents of that talk have long been unremembered, but that he confused the English word, "concubine," (Qin Shi Huang has a lot of cucumers instead of concubines)

with the word, “cucumber,” became a huge joke. Even to this day, that funny thing has still been kept in my mind.

In the summer of 1978, I successfully passed the oral examination of my doctorate. When my supervisor made the announcement to me, I shed tears of joy. To others, the degree was not of that significance, but to me, the degree not only stood for my all-out efforts but for the sufferings and hardships my whole family had gone through with me.

At the time when I graduated, there was no job offer for me back home in Taiwan. I applied to the department for getting on a three-month post-doctor program so as to have more time for readying myself to return to Taiwan. Simultaneously, I didn't forget my hobby--writing. I wrote five essays and had the first two, “If I were an International Student Again” and “Getting Haircut in America” published in the supplementary edition connected with the *World Journal*; the last three, “Ms. Glenne's Story,” “Flying East,” and “Professor Feng,” in the *New Literature and Arts Magazine*.

When the time was ripe, I, accompanied by my wife and two children, returned to Taiwan by way of Hawaii.

## Chapter 28

### Return to NCKU Again

When Southern Illinois University officially conferred doctorate on me, I attempted to apply to junior college for a teaching job in the city of Taipei. The reasons why I chose the college located in Taipei were that firstly, I had once taught at the Taipei College of Business for two years, and got used to the city's living environment, and secondly, Taipei is also Paolien's hometown, and her parents and siblings lived on Taiyuen Road. She could see them at any time, taking good care of them or being taken care of if needed. The main reason was that I was quite aware of the degree that I had earned. It was the doctor of education. If going back to the DFLL at NCKU, I didn't know whether I fit in with the criteria set by the department or not in my specialization.

However, my former colleagues, Tian Tingfu, Zhang Farun, and Miao Lizhong at NCKU, thought that because I had had the degree, teaching in a comprehensive university like this one was not a controversial issue. Professor Fu Chong-te, former chairman of the department, also thought positively that though the field of my study was education, yet it was not irrelevant to English. English education is a kind of education, a part of general education, and improving English is one's lifelong business. Based on this point of view, there seemed no dispute for me to get in the department despite the kind of degree that I had held.

By then, the Ministry of Education was promoting a project entitled: "The Massive Project for Recruiting Overseas Scholars." A newly minted Phd holder would be employed as associate professor, and in addition to regular payment, he could get the living quarters allowance of 6,000 yuan per month for a period of two years.

As this biggest housing problem got resolved, I didn't care about anything else and therefore, I immediately made a decision to return to NCKU.

At the end of December 1978, I started packing up the "valuables." And I packed those items I could carry and disposed of all those items I couldn't by either discarding or selling them. My used Dodge car that had served me back and forth between my home and the school for three years was sold to my neighbor who had just moved in at the price of \$200, while the Brother Manual Typewriter I had used three years, 30 to a student

from India.

After the Chinese New Year Festival, because the start of the second semester of that school year was one month and a half away, we decided to accept Li Changgeng's invitation to Hawaii when returning to Taiwan. By then, he was working at the State Government of Hawaii. Guided by him, we had the opportunity to be able to walk on Waikiki Beach and left some footprints in the sand. Simultaneously, we had the opportunity to watch the graceful and slow-motion Hula dance. Even to this very day, as I recall those days in Hawaii, I am deeply grateful to Li and his wife, Yuhuan, for their cordial friendship.

At the beginning of February 1979, we got to Tainan.

At that time, Professor Zheng Zhongxin was at the helm for the DFLL at NCKU. He was no one else but the one who, a professor at NCU, was asked to be Acting Dean of the College of Liberal Arts on a temporary basis by our former president Ni Chao. By chance, he was asked to do another administrative work as acting chairman of the DFLL. Having consulted with him, I finally had the courses that I was going to teach fixed temporarily not permanently: Newspaper English, Freshman English, and Writing. The first course to be offered was due to my suggestion; the other two out of his idea.

Newspaper English suggested by me was based on two reasons:

Number one was that the course of Newspaper English or Journalistic English is a practical one in nature. A piece of well-written English news always consists of the most frequently used words. Grammatically speaking, declarative or simple sentences are commonly used in English news writing, easy to read and easy to grasp, not like the sentences written by novelists whose writings are full of compound, and even compound and complex sentences. When we read those sentences, we had to spend a lot of time and energy to do the analyzing. Furthermore, Newspaper English covers a large range of fields. When we have been reading English newspapers long enough, we are able not only to get the new stuff but those specific words and technological terms from a variety of trades and fields spontaneously. Certainly, we can get the secrets of translation. No. 2 was due to Zhu Yaolong's legacy. Zhu, though taught at the DFLL at NCKU on a part-time basis, he was extremely popular with students. Originally, he was the editor-in-chief in the *Chinese Daily News* and produced a plenty of good essays and had them published by the pseudonym of Zhu Yuenon. He also had them published in book

format entitled: *Holidays in Europe*. And it turned out to be the best book of his all. He was a knowledgeable and experienced person. During the class time, he often told some of the “inside stories” that had happened in the press. And for that reason, our horizons were greatly broadened by simply lending him our ears. In addition, the students who had signed up for the course of Newspaper English, might be able to blaze a new trail in landing jobs after graduation. With this one course taken, some of us might create our careers in the newspaper agency and culture centers. Having gone through the curriculum offerings of the DFLL in that school year, I found out that there was no such course on offer. I recommended myself to teach the course and got this course back as an elective one on the list.

The course was open to senior students. My teaching method was to utilize the current news published on English newspapers in Taiwan as teaching materials (most of the clippings are from the *China Post*.) In the teaching strategy, I explained the headline, lead paragraph, body of the news, and conclusion if there was any. I selected two textbooks: One was *Newspaper English* edited by senior professor named Li Jianying who taught at the Department of Journalism at Cheng Chi University, another was *The Professional Journalist, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*, by Professor John Hohenberg.

The course of Freshman English was the English continuation of senior high. It was a compulsory course for all the first-year students, and the toughest course as well for any teacher to teach. The reasons were listed as follows:

1. The number of the freshman students in English class was too big.
2. All the freshman students admitted to different departments had different levels of English ability.
3. The textbook edited by the DFLL was not able to meet the needs of all the freshman students from all the departments of the university.

I also used the textbook edited by the DFLL. However, the lesson that I singled out to teach were largely based on students’ interest. Interesting students to learn English, as I thought, was the most important of all, interest first, others less important. If there were not enough lessons of this kind in the textbook, I would like to use some of the features with human interest from the English newspapers issued in Taiwan as the teaching materials.

The English writing course was one of the courses that caused headaches for teachers who were assigned to teach.

In 1980s, the DFLL was the first choice for B category students who studied humanities. In all the universities, there were 60-some odd students enrolling in the DFLL. As a result, even though the English writing class was divided into two groups, each group still had 30-plus students. And if I assigned each one of them to hand in one piece of writing per week, there were 30 pieces to be polished. Who could have this sort of energy and endurance to do the job of this kind? Furthermore, students' writing skills were not good as expected, and they often came up with a lot of "English sentences" with the Chinese way of thinking. To correct them was not an easy job. If I wanted to get their stuff completely done grammatically or idiomatically, I had to rewrite them piece by piece. Did I have such kind of ability?

Having done tens and tens of their writings, I compelled them to use *The Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* edited by A. S. Hornby. The greatest advantage of this dictionary is that there are 25 verb patterns exemplified. If a student has run into the bottleneck in the usage of a verb, he can look it up through this dictionary getting the knowledge of the usage of it and putting it into the pattern as shown. And the verb is used this way and the sentence is written likewise can be guaranteed right. I believed then as I believe today, anyone who can manipulate the verb well, has a good command of the English language.

This was the way I taught the writing course a year.

By the end of the second semester of that school year, the acting chair Mr. Zheng had run into a problem while doing the scheduling for the next school year. One day, in the hallway on the second floor of our department building located on the Guangfu campus, he and I had an unscripted encounter. At first, he mumbled to himself, and in a second, bluntly told me that he had not got a right person in hand to teach the course, English Literature, and required me to take such a tough job even if I felt disinclined. His suggestion made me speechless but I only responded to him by having him try other more qualified teachers than I one more time.

My Master's degree is in education, and so is my doctorate. But during my undergraduate school years, my major was English, and I took many compulsory and elective courses related to English, American and world literatures: History of English



Literature, Shakespeare, Greek and Biblical Literatures, the Outline of Western Literature, Western Dramas, Selected Readings of English and American Novels, and American Literature. Furthermore, when I studied in the U.S., once free, I tried to read some of the books related to English and American literature. Having weighed the whole thing, I didn't think that I was a layman in the field. Consequently, I had the idea of "overstepping my bounds," and decided to accept the challenge because my assumption was that I was placed on to deal with an "emergency case" instead of the case that "a dove takes a magpie's nest," meaning "a teacher who is less qualified takes away the job from the person who is more qualified."

By then, for the course, the textbook commonly used by various universities throughout Taiwan was the fourth edition of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Even up to the present time, I still remember some of the works that I selected to teach. They can be listed as follows: *Beowulf*, *The Wanderer*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Piers the Plowman*, *The Canterbury Tales*, *Dr. Faustus*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, *The Rime of Ancient Mariner*, "Ode to the West Wind," "The Secret Sharer," *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Dubliners*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. I totally emphasized textual reading, seldom mentioning criticisms from a bunch of critics. In another word, paying much more attention to student's initially felt responses was my teaching methodology.

If a student could strenuously work through and understood the texts, he was considered wonderful in his academic growth. If he grasped the historical settings of those masterpieces and knew the authors' biographical sketches, I considered him a "genius."

In order to get the general picture of English literature, I reread *English Literature--Its History and Its Significance for the Life of the English-speaking People* by William J. Long.

The textbook, *A Handbook of American Literature* by Martin Date, is one of the most admirable literary critical works that I have read. Especially, I like his analyses about the novelist, Ernest Hemingway. They rekindled my passion to reread his novels, and in consequence, made me have a strong bid to offer a course entitled: Selected Readings of American Novels. Nominally the course was titled as such, but in fact, I just concentrated on teaching Hemingway's works. I also chose one short story, "Of Mice and Men" by John Steinbeck as one of my teaching materials.

After teaching Hemingway's four major works, there was a strong urge to write something about them. One day, I felt there was nothing I could do to dampen that kind of feeling, and a work entitled, "A Tentative Analysis: *For Whom the Bell Tolls*," around 5,000 words, was produced. I sent it to *The Literature and Arts Magazine Monthly*, and it got published in its 53rd issue in April 1984. The editor, Yu Yunping, praised me as such: "The article is well-written but with many scholarly strokes in it. If the language had been modified as colloquially as possible, it would have been much better."<sup>68</sup>

One thing in my mind made me feel uncomfortable, and even up to this present moment, it still rankles in my mind whenever I think of it. That was when I made that decision to return to my alma mater, I was promised to be given by verbal promise the chairmanship of the DFLL by the then president, Dr. Wang Weinong. But he didn't keep his promise as expected. When Zheng Zhongxin's term as acting chairman was terminated, the announcement made by the president to replace him was not me but Lu Naizheng. Lu was a senior professor and a real gentleman in our department with wonderful personality traits. He was well-read, too. And based on these qualifications, there wouldn't be any grievances and complaints against this appointment. However, as the president of a university, Wang should keep his word.

Once I had an opportunity to be alone with President Wang. I bluntly asked him the question: "What was really going on there?" And he beat around the bush, not telling what on his mind. Finally, he told me that I would still have the opportunity to get that post in the future.

The president's sudden death, at the age of 44, the prime time of his life, made all faculty and staff members as well as students in the university feel grief-stricken and regrettable about the loss of him. On the day scheduled for the funeral service, the then President Jiang Jingguo of the ROC, putting off all his important works he was doing, showed up and caused a big sensation on the NCKU campus. After he personally paid his tribute in the service and bowed to the body on the bier behind the curtain, he left. And we followed the suit and did the same thing. When I bowed to the body, I saw that Wang's face was shrunk but remained peaceful as if he had been in a profound sleep, I murmured a prayer to him: "Mr. President, as for the matter of appointing me chairman, it comes to the end. I wish you on the road to another world safe and well!"

That I was able to return to NCKU was due to all the faculty and staff members at the DFLL who were willing to accept me, and especially to Tian Tingfu for his all-out

effort to get me back in the DFLL, again.

Professor Xiong Xuehong, who was my mentor as well as my friend, was extremely kind and thoughtful remarking: “You are the first graduate with Phd. from the DFLL at NCKU and return to your alma mater to teach.”

In a month after officially reporting to the university, I was scheduled to give a talk, open to all the students of the university with Professor Xiong’s help. The topic was “Pursuing Studies in the U.S.A.” And he wanted me to talk about nothing else but what I had gone through in that country, and how I had felt during my stay there as an international student. An A & Q session was followed. And within my knowledge, I gave all the best answers to those who wanted to further their studies there.

## Chapter 29

# Heading the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature

Following the death of president Wang Weinong, the presidency was taken over by Dr. Xia Hanmin. Of course, the top university administrators had to be shuffled. And after that, the university was moving in a new era.

President Xia is a hard-working man. Having assumed office, he immediately mapped out a plan for the development of NCKU. His first priority was a huge project -- getting a college of medicine and NCKU hospital established. Aside from the fact he led a team to work on the blueprint, simultaneously, he launched a campaign requesting of all the city mayor, the county chief, the legislator, and the council man and woman to use their political powers on his behalf to tell the Central Government that the college of medicine and the hospital were really needed in the Tainan area. As a result, in 1981, the college of medicine of NCKU and its affiliated hospital got approved by the Executive Yuan, and furthermore, the whole thing was listed as one of the 14 major economic construction projects in the country.

Professor Wu Zhenzhi was appointed dean of the College of Liberal Arts. With her, I had taken two courses during my freshman year: Chinese Modern History and World History.

Professor Wu was a devout Christian, modest in her daily dealings with her colleagues, quietly getting things done without much of a fuss. As you saw her smiling face, you felt immediately that she was very warm like sunshine. Therefore, the mounting tension and years of disputes in the college got melted by her icon of this kind. Involuntarily, all of us reached a consensus on that the college must have been in the state of stability in which we were able to pursue our own career goals and its development. The most regrettable thing was that because of her church works, and at the end of her first 3-year term, she made up her mind to resign.

In the year of 1983, President Xia appointed Professor Yu Dacheng to head the College of Liberal Arts. Dean Yu was a follower of Taoism running the college by the

philosophy of “governing by noninterference.” He was very kind and big-hearted having the great potential for being one of the greatest Chinese calligraphers. And with brush and ink, he executed Liu Gongquan’s style of writing, a noted Tang dynasty’s calligrapher, to the best. However, what we were concerned about him the most was that he had gone through a heart surgery, having one of his malfunctioned heart membranes replaced by one of a hog’s as a substitute. If getting a little bit excited, he would feel terribly uncomfortable.

Once he hosted a talk given by a scholar from the outside, and after he presented the speaker to the audience, he seated himself on one of the chairs in the front row and enjoyed listening. He strained his ears keeping on listening, and suddenly, he slumped down to the floor and passed out. This incident made the talk suspended for a while, and hurriedly sent him to the ICU in the Field Hospital 804 which was just located on the opposite side of Xiaodong Rd. Because he was rushed in timely, the emergency physician saved his life. Afterwards, I paid him a visit at his sickbed and saw him sleeping like a log on his side inside the mosquito net with his upper part of body slightly arched and his legs bent up as if he were a baby boy.

In the summer of 1983, our chairman, Mr. Lu’s application to one of American universities for advanced studies for one year was approved, and he recommended me to be the acting chair. After assessing the ongoing events of our department and thinking of the fact that I was just an acting chair, I thought following the suit was my best strategy, having no guts to make the change of any kind. Accordingly, I enjoyed the chairmanship for that year in a way that I just “kept the ball rolling.”

In 1985, shortly before the beginning of the summer break, I got a call from the office of the president that asked for me to see the president immediately. After taking a seat in the office, without further ado, President Xia said bluntly to me: “The DFLL is yours!”

He hoped that besides doing the routine duties for the department, I could do as much as I could to improve the students’ English listening and speaking skills for all the students of the university. And apart from the feeling that the appointment came so abruptly, I didn’t say anything to the contrary. Instead, I was delighted to accept the challenge.

Following the dictates of conscience, I could say that there was a little bit of friction

existing in our department. However, as I recalled when I studied in Southern Illinois University, my supervisor had once mentioned the word, “friction” to me. He said that if there was no friction in the department, there wouldn’t be any progress. I thought to myself that if I was broad-minded considering the grievances of the others’ good-natured, any conflicts in the department might be resolved or alleviated. And if I could abide by a guiding principle practiced by the Chinese: “When I have disagreement with others, I want to focus on the knot of the disagreement, not on the person, himself.” By so doing, any conflict of this kind in the department would go off without a hitch.

The so-called big “accomplishments” I had done for the department when I was in office could be listed as follows:

1. Working out a way for the teaching assistants to be promoted

The work for the chair to do in the DFLL was endless. In another word, no matter to what level you brought the department unto, there was always a room for improvement. Namely, I couldn’t keep the department running in place. Getting the department better and better was the right policy. The first problem I had noticed was about our teaching assistants.

There was a huge difference among the College of Liberal Arts, the College of Science, and the College of Engineering regarding the teaching assistants. An assistant, who was once employed by the CLA, considered the school his home, working hard within this big family in the hope of that one day, he would be able to get promoted to instructorship. And that way, he could get the rigid office hours schedule off the hook. But an assistant, who was hired by the CS or CE, considered his job a springboard only. Once he got an admission to a graduate school program with scholarship or fellowship abroad (mostly an American university), he would immediately quit. Three or four years later, he would earn his doctorate. By then, if returning to his alma mater, he would be employed as associate professor. In another word, he could skip three ranks to the highest but one. How couldn’t he be admired?

The most unfair rule in the CLA was that though the teaching assistant was regarded as “faculty,” yet he was mistreated as such: he couldn’t get the real opportunity of applying for advanced studies abroad and taking a leave of absence without pay. According to the principle of equality, I made a suggestion to President Xia in hopes of that the teaching assistant in the DFLL should be treated as the member equivalent to the

instructor, who, going abroad for advancing their studies, could have the right to take a leave of absence without pay. President Xia was the type of person who would like listening to people for good advices and willingly get them translated into practices. As a result, there were three teaching assistants in the DFLL who, one after another, went abroad to get their masters' degrees. Amid them, one did quite well and later, was able to scale up to the top echelon, chairmanship of the department.

2. Hosting the Second Annual Conference of English and American Literature, R.O.C.”

By the end of 1985, I was invited to attend “The First Annual Conference of English and American Literature, R.O.C.” hosted by the National Chung Hsin University located in Taichung. At the end of that conference, the chairperson, Zeng Xuanyi, of the DFLL in that school asked me whether the DFLL at NCKU would like to host the next conference? My visceral feeling was that the key point for hosting a conference lay in the availability of financial resources. If the financial resources were not obtainable for holding such an academic activity, how could I do it? Based on this assumption, I gave him an indefinite answer, “Once back to my school, I will report it to my boss. And if I can get the financial support, I will certainly like to do it as suggested. Otherwise, there is no way for me to hold a conference like this one.” Upon returning, I reported it to President Xia right away. And he said to me that he fully supported me. Furthermore, he said that “If we don't want a conference to be held at NCKU, we just forget it. Otherwise, the scope of it should be enlarged. Aside from inviting domestic scholars and specialists in the field to attend the conference, we will also invite overseas scholars from Hong Kong, Singapore, and America to come to NCKU to attend such a conference. All expenses including the round-trip air fare, board, and lodging will be defrayed by NCKU.”

With this verbal promise, I became extremely excited, and instantly gave Zeng a call saying that the Second Annual Conference of English and American Literature would be hosted by NCKU. Moreover, on the phone, I was seeking his advice about how to host the conference of this kind, and the key points needed for preparing it in detail.

Once, I read an article by Professor C. C. Hsia that had been published on the supplementary edition affiliated with a major newspaper in Taiwan. In it, he heaped a lot of praises on Dr. Chuang Hsincheng's academic accomplishments including his powerful writing style, sophisticated language, and wonderful personality traits. I was deeply moved. Therefore, I got Dr. Chuang's address in New York with the editor's help of the

supplementary edition connected with that newspaper. Surprisingly, I got his big “Yes” in his reply immediately.

The second one that I got was Dr. Zhou Yingxiong at the Chinese University of Hong Kong where he was teaching as visiting professor. He is a Phd. holder in the field of comparative literature from the University of California at Santiago. He specializes in modern literature and literary theory. What he has cumulatively attained in the field of English and American Literature cannot be ignored. In addition, the greatest ability of his is that he speaks English with fluency, and the audience is greatly moved by his melodious euphony of his words he has used in his speech.

After making the call for papers via mail to all the Departments of Foreign Languages and Literature in all the universities throughout Taiwan, we received a tremendous amount of feedback, and at intervals, collected 23 papers. Having browsed them and classified them according to the genre, we had the conference with parallel sessions scheduled and moderators and commentators fixed. The only drawback was that by then, we were still at the stage of learning how to hold this sort of conference. And to encourage young scholars to take part in the conference was our goal. Therefore, the papers came in the mail were not put through the process of reviewing. As a result, there was a phenomenon shown, a mix of good and bad papers together.

To express myself in terms of thoughts and feeling about the academic activity of this kind and to promote our first academic conference, I especially wrote a short essay entitled: *jianshu bujianlin di chouchang*, its literal translation should be: “An Indefinable Sadness Comes over Me When I Can’t See the Wood for the Trees.” And it was published on the supplementary edition connected with the *United Daily News* on the same day of our conference.

The Second Annual Conference of English and American Literature, R.O.C. was officially under way on November 14, 1987.<sup>69</sup>

The last session was, especially, designed for a panel discussion. And on purpose, I wanted to make it different from the previous one by having a topic pre-fixed: “The Writing Skills in Western Literature and Their Transferability.” I have often heard that novelists who are capable of writing fictions may not know literary theories, while literary theorists who know many approaches to literature may not be able to write novels. Oh heck! What are some of the writing skills in the Western literature that can be used by



us, the Chinese writers? And what are some of their skills that can be considered worthless through the Chinese eyes? I didn't have the answers to these questions by then. I was simply tossing out such a topic on a whim letting "scholars and specialists in the field" think about it and talk about it.

The audience packed the auditorium of the session of the panel discussion. No single seat remained unoccupied. Furthermore, owing to these scholars or specialists who were the best of the best in the field, what the opinions they voiced were not "rubbish" but real stuff. Accordingly, the whole auditorium was fully shrouded in the academic atmosphere. There had never been such a grand conference ever held by the CLA at NCKU before. And it also served as a sort of stimulant that was used to boost the morale of the DFLL.

After the conference, following the example of "The First Annual Conference of English and American Literature, R.O.C." hosted by NCHU, I did the editing by getting the 23 conference papers into a book form, and created a cover page with *wenye* color, or arts and literature "taste." The initial coat of color is millet with some titles of the papers and presenters in light black superposed with a few of English and American writers' head shots. With the techniques of the color process screen printing, the colors fit in with one another perfectly. The front cover page of this conference papers in book form appears quite elegant and refined with the "style" of Western literature.

I wrote a piece of about 800-word preface describing the whole story of holding such a conference by NCKU and handed the whole thing over to Bookman Books LTD. Taipei, Taiwan for publishing. The man in charge of the bookstore was Su Zhenglong whose guiding principle of management of his business was nothing else but honest. What he intended to do was not only to earn a decent living but to promote the English education of Taiwan. In another word, he was a guy with unusual broad-mindedness. He promised not only to have the reported number of copies of this book printed but to strike off more copies to be distributed to all the departments of foreign languages and literature for future reference.

Out of his own pocket, he generously donated 20,000 yuan to the DFLL at NCKU. By then, that was a big sum.

President Xia was extremely happy and considered the conference successful. Making an exception for the chair of an academic administrative unit and his team in the NCKU Merit and Recognition Program, he authorized the personnel office to award

us commendations and merits by issuing an official document in the same way as he did to administrators to cheer us up. The message serial number of the Official Document is (77) NCKU 0105.<sup>70</sup> And the contents of it are listed as follows:

Ma Chungliang: one merit, for the record.

“The DFLL of this university hosted the Second Annual Conference of English and American Literature, R.O.C. on November 14-15, 1987. Aside from playing the lead role in organizing the conference, Mr. Ma had a well-thought-out plan mapped out, inviting overseas scholars to deliver papers, compiling the conference papers into book form, seeking reputable scholars or specialists as commentators, and fixing a great panel discussion. And what he did won all participants’ thumbs-up from the field as well as from others. These contributions he made would redound to the fame of this university. Therefore, he should be given one merit as a sort of encouragement.”

Huang Yingfu: one merit, for the record.

“Mr. Huang helped make a master plan to support the general affairs for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of English and American Literature, R.O.C. During the conference time, he was in charge of all miscellaneous duties, for example: booking the railway tickets and making all the arrangements for the participants’ accommodations, etc. What he had done made every participant feel at home. He was efficient and got his works done excellently. He should be given one merit in recognition of his services.”

Liu Kailing: one commendation, for the record.

“Ms. Liu was the secretary of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of English and American Literature, R.O.C. in the planning committee. She was held responsible for getting all the materials related to this conference well prepared including disseminating and filing. She also readied herself to support those who needed extra hands. She stayed, as always, patient and uncomplaining. Accordingly, she should be rewarded one commendation as a sort of patting on the back.”

Lu Huiyang: two commendations, for the record.

“Ms. Lu was the secretary general of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of English and American Literature, R.O.C. serving as a link to deal with the correspondence from the domestic and international participants and fielding the stream of phone calls. And she

was the proof-reader for the editing of conference papers. Furthermore, she was held accountable for releasing news to the press and doing the receptionist's works for our honorable guests. She did an excellent job. Therefore, she ought to be awarded two commendations in recognition of her services."

Lu Hunghui: two commendations, for the record.

"Mr. Lu did the budgeting work for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of English and American Literature, R.O.C. And he had all the conference rooms reserved, not only properly cleaned but also properly decorated. He did a variety of services, too. No grumbling and no groaning. Therefore, he ought to be given two commendations for his contributions."

Though the conference was considered "successful," much to my regret that an episode had taken place, and its subsequent development remained unknown to anybody else but me.

As was customary, the opening of a conference includes: No. 1 the head of the home institution should deliver a welcome speech to participants and audience. No. 2 one or more than two guest speakers ought to be asked to speak something congratulatory to the home institution and supportive words to the participants. Along this line, I, firstly, asked President Xia to give a welcome speech, because he was the incumbent president of the host university; secondly, I asked Professor Zhu Limin, former dean of the College of Liberal Arts at the National Taiwan University, to say something encouraging because he was the man who was the founder of the Association of English and American Literature. When President Xia addressed the audience and besides he said, "Welcome to the NCKU" to those honorable guests, he also expressed his gratitude to those home or overseas scholars and specialists, who had braved some of the hardships and difficulties to get here by land, sea and air to attend the conference for delivering their papers.

Unexpectedly, when the former dean Zhu gave that speech, he spoke with a tinge of sarcastic tone as such: "Visiting monks do the chanting better!" That means "the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence." With this out, the audience first got dumbfounded, and then looked confused. They questioned in their minds why dean Zhu on this occasion addressed the audience by using such a bitter word!

However, I immediately sensed that Zhu was the founder of the association of English and American Literature and senior professor in the field. And because of his

seniority, he shouldn't be sidelined. In another word, I ought to invite him to be the keynote speaker instead of Zhuang Xinzheng from New York and Zhou Yingxiong from Hong Kong as "ice breakers." From this "incident," I can surely say that experience matters! Nevertheless, this was neither my fault nor my neglectfulness. Because inviting overseas scholars to be keynote speakers was not my idea, I just followed my superior's order. In another word, blaming me was not fair.

During the break, a senior professor named Li Junqing from Su Zhou University came up to me and repeatedly flayed him for saying such an inappropriate word on such an occasion.

However, Professor Zhu was a senior professor, experienced and sophisticated, and a few days later, I received a postcard from him with such words, "When I am addressing the audience in the conference, the rhetoric that I used is not of propriety. Would you like to forgive me?" I thought to myself that this "thing" had become outdated already. Keeping the postcard was of no significance. And therefore, I disposed of it immediately.

### 3. Getting more books for our department library.

As well known, NCKU was noted for its College of Engineering. It was rumored for a long time that the school authorities had had a bias against the College of Liberal Arts. But based on my own observations, this was not true. And at least, when President Xia was in office, he had done many things to improve the College of Liberal Arts, for example, making a plan for constructing a new college building modeled on the blueprint of the Ministry of Education Building in Taipei was one of them.

One morning, President Xia suddenly dropped in the Department for sort of inspection. At the time, aside from the general library, each college had its own library; each department, its own, too. Accompanied by me after his inspecting other facilities and equipment, he finally stepped into our department library. As he saw a few of books stacking disorderly on the shelves, he blurted out something that I would never forget for the rest of my life, "As I see that you are a man who can get the thing done, therefore, besides the budget for books and equipment that has been dealt out this fiscal year, the university will additionally appropriate two million dollars to your department to buy books. And I hope that you can get the requisition form filled out at the earliest date as possible!" This was a piece of good news, indeed, and I immediately informed my colleagues to work on what books they needed, and simultaneously asked for the helps

from the deputies of Western books to mail us their catalogs so that after getting the books selected, we could order them.

Helping edit the “College English Reader.”

The work for editing the “College English Reader” for freshman students gave all the chairpersons of the Departments of Foreign Languages and Literature a headache in the universities throughout Taiwan. No matter how hard the chairpersons worked, naturally, the “Reader” edited couldn’t meet the needs of the students from different departments of the universities.

At that time and on principle, the DFLL at NCKU revised the “College English Reader,” every two years but sometimes, every three or four years, as necessity dictated. The purpose for doing this was to get the newest and best essays in the “Reader” in time, and simultaneously to get rid of those essays that had become outmoded.

Every time when we tried to renew our “College English Reader,” we would set up an editing committee. Firstly, the committee let members pick essays from what they had read, and secondly, had the potentials duplicated and distributed to each member of the committee to review. Finally, whether a recommended essay would be accepted and compiled into the “Reader” or not totally depended upon the decision of the committee members in the meeting (usually by tallying up the votes). Unfortunately, among the members of the committee, there were always heated arguments arising. In the committee established when I was in office, there were two members whose opinions about one recommended essay were so different that they argued fiercely and endlessly. And the voices they used brought the committee meeting to an early adjournment. Furthermore, a sort of resentment was nursed, and they hated each other beautifully. Furthermore, they got another issue involved about teaching. This American instructor deliberately questioned his opponent viciously: “It is even hard for an American like me, to understand *Faerie Queen*. How can you take the material of this kind to teach students?”

Since some of the committee members were busy teaching, researching and doing the counselling works to students, they couldn’t hand in the works assigned to them on time, for example, the “biographical sketches of the authors,” the “introductions to the essays,” and “footnotes.” And repeat notifications sent to them were of no avail. If it dragged on like this kind of progress, there would be a severe impact on the time of publication. Finally, the guy, who chaired the editing committee, turned in the draft of the

newly edited “College English Reader” to the chairman of the department to be resolved. It went without saying that the chairman had to do the “clean-up job.”

Despite there were numerous arguments and difficulties to get the “College English Reader” out, historically speaking, our “College English Reader” published by Bookman Books LTD that year, was undoubtedly the best one the DFLL at NCKU had ever got. The preface written by Dr. John Scott was hitting the nail on the head based on the contents of the “College English Reader.”

To improve the teaching quality when I was in office, I invited Professor Peter E. Firchow of the Department of English and his wife, Professor Evelyn S. Firchow of the Department of German from the University of Minnesota to NCKU as Visiting Professors. The former offered the course, English Literature; the latter, Advanced German.

For preparing to set up our master’s degree program for the department, I got Professor Yang Chenying of Taipei in. In a flash, it seemed that the DFLL readied itself as if it were an eagle that fluttered its wings starting to fly.

## Chapter 30

### Recruiting ESL Teachers in the U.S.A.

Aside from that President Xia supported the academic activities held by the DFLL, he also launched another unprecedented venture by sending me to the U.S. immediately to recruit three native English speakers whose majors must be in the field of ESL, to improve all the students' English-speaking and -listening skills at NCKU. The time limit for this mission was only one month. And the three vacancies for these three teaching jobs were provided by the university on a temporary basis.

When I was following this order to get my visa, in the meantime, I felt that I couldn't agree with him any more.

I thought to my myself that the best way to get president Xia's "plan" implemented was to hire these three native English speakers and put them on the staff in the language center under the CLA. And these three guys would do nothing else but to conduct the audiovisual course for all the students of the university. And the course should be offered as one of core courses based on curriculum development.

Another way to do this is that we must have this plan mapped out half a year earlier and gradually contact the U.S. universities that have the ESL programs affiliated to the Departments of English. Simultaneously, we have to get the "recruitment information" out, for example, qualifications, salary, housing, and free roundtrip airfare, letting them post on their bulletin boards. If there is anyone who is interested in teaching in Taiwan, he can contact the DFLL at NCKU individually and directly.

The worst way to do this was the president's way on a whim. As there might be a large number of qualified candidates in the U.S., where should I turn to and find the right ones that we wanted? Even if I had been a superman, I might not be able to get this "mission impossible" done as expected.

Although there was no clear picture of how to do this job in my mind, an order was an order, and "I don't have the guts to defy it." Slowly getting myself calm down, I got two things done before getting on "The 10,000-mile recruiting journey" to the U.S.

Number one was that via mail, I asked the Youth Commission under the Executive Yuan in Taipei to get the ESL teachers recruitment information published in its English journal issued for overseas Chinese and foreigners. (At that time, there was no internet access).

Number two was that I wrote an “all-purpose” letter of recruitment in English and made many duplicate copies. I signed some of them and sent them out by airmail to various universities in America. In addition, I carried dozens of copies with me in case they would be needed while traveling to America.

In such a rush, I made a decision to go to four places in the U.S.: San Francisco, New York, Minnesota and Hawaii to give a try.

#### The First Leg: San Francisco:

San Francisco is one of my most favorite cities in the U.S. It is neither bitterly cold in winter nor extremely hot in summer. Moreover, there is a life-long friend, Zheng Jizhong, living there. By then, he worked as a librarian in the oriental section in the San Francisco State University library, and in the meantime, as a professor on a part-time basis, teaching Chinese classics and modern literature in the Chinese Language Program connected with the Department of English. Thinking of having this opportunity to renew our camaraderie, I felt extremely happy. I said to myself that if I was lucky enough, I could get the three teachers there in one go, and then the rest of journey could be at ease: eating, drinking, and having fun as a tourist to cruise America.

After getting to San Francisco, with the knowledge I had got in the early 1970s about the city, I could easily check in the hotel I had stayed ten years before. On the following morning, I took the city bus heading San Francisco State University. Walking on the campus with patches of lawn, I watched students with their heads down, necks in against their bodies to keep warm, books carried in their armpits, full of energy, shuffling back and forth. And I felt as if I had been back to my graduate school days on the campus when I furthered my studies in the U.S.

There was a squirrel ahead of me, seemingly, leading the way. And it arched its back and raised its forelegs high. As I noticed that it, firstly, checked the surroundings with its eyes and then, picked up any sound with its ears and finally, jumped with the lifting of its forelegs and the pushing of its hind ones, one leap after another, running to the base of a tree in the grove, climbing up in a circuitous way, and vanishing in the foliage.



Everything remained placid with beauty, and harmonious relationships unfolded on campus. Behind the grove of the trees, the building of the English Department was located.

After entering the building, I walked to the bulletin board to see if there was my duplicate copy there. Raising my head high, I strained my eyes, searching for my ad from the left to the right and from the top to the bottom, and though having seen a variety of stuff there, yet I didn't see the letter mailed on it. In the beginning, I had a strong urge to see the chairperson in his office but as I thought to myself that there was no appointment made with him in advance and rushing myself to see him would be an inappropriate and reckless act. As a result, I took a duplicate copy out of my suitcase and nailed it on the bulletin board with my current telephone number added. And then, I returned to my hotel immediately.

In the evening, I went to Jizhong's home for dinner according to the time we had fixed on the phone. Since we had not seen each other many years, I felt that the wheel of the time had left some "gullies" on his face, the hair around his temples turning white. He is a genuine person always speaking his mind. In addition, as he has steeped in Chinese classics for long time, and even when engaged in idle talk, he chats with you with a faint air of dignity and pride shown by Chinese literati. Since San Francisco is one of the important seaports for entering the U.S. and his home becomes the link for the writers and celebrities from China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, he often picks them up at the airport when they arrive and drop them off at the airport when they depart. People of this kind include well-renowned writers: Shen Tusingwen, Shao Jun, Shao Hung from the Mainland and Chi Pongyuan from Taiwan.

During the dinner time, we talked about Professor Xu Jieyu who had been killed by a catastrophic flooding. And we sighed repeatedly for his wretched death.

Professor Xu came to the U.S. for advanced studies in 1940s. At that time, the Anti-Japanese War was boiling in China. Having been in the U.S., firstly, he studied Journalism, then, switched to the field of literature and finally, settled down with a teaching job in San Francisco State University. By chance, he married a French American woman. He spoke American English fluently. Superficially, he had long been assimilated into the mainstream of American society, but on the contrary, he was still deeply rooted in Chinese culture often looking back nostalgically on those good old years in China. In the daytime, he was in a different culture, living like an American; at night, thinking of the

reality that death would eventually come, he would become a ghost haunting around in this foreign land. How couldn't he rethink of his life in exile? As a result, he called upon the Zhengs as a habitue. Having got several drinks down, he sang anti-Japanese songs and recited the poems of the Tang dynasty and the Ci poems of the Sung dynasty to banish the bad thoughts in his mind. And up to the present moment, I can still recall his look when he recited the piece of poem entitled: "A Suggestion to Liu Shijiu" written by Bai Juyi: "Newly brewed is the rice wine with green foam, and there stands a red-colored clay stove with fire light, and as there is the highest percentage of snowing at dusk, would you like to be my guest having a drink with me?"

Professor Xu and Li Jinyang, a writer, were the international students of the same time in the U.S. Their English proficiency was next to none, and each one of them had strong ambition trying to come up with an English novel to kick the door open in the field of American Literature. The agreement they had made was that anyone, who, being able to get a novel firstly published and recognized, would treat the other "a roast chicken." Consequently, Li Jinyang greatly surprised the readers at one blow by *The Flower Drum Song*. Moreover, the novel was adapted to a play and staged, having charmed the large number of audiences throughout America. Professor Xu said: "Li Jinyang has not fulfilled his pledge yet, and he still owes me a roast chicken there."

One year, there was a terrible downpour in the San Francisco area. Torrential rain caused a series of damages on the hillside. And not only Professor's house located on the hillside was swept away but also Xu, himself, was killed, his body being washed down to the Pacific Ocean. When retrieved, it was full of bruises and wounds. He really died an ugly death.

He wrote a small book entitled: *Gu Guo Xing*, or Our China Trip, and had it published not for the common readers but for himself and his inner circle to read. The title of the book is a pun alluding to: on the one hand, the word "Gu" means "old" referring to a trip to his home country, but on the other, the word "Gu" means "death," too, referring to his home country that has been dead. Jizhong said that "the purpose of his writing this small book in English is purely to relieve his pent-up fury while he was detained in the Shanghai detention center."

On the following morning, I got a phone call from an American who firstly spoke with me in English, and then switched to Mandarin, saying that he was very much interested in teaching the audio-visual class in Taiwan as announced, and hoping that I

could see him as soon as possible.

His Chinese name is Ma Ming. As to his English name, I have forgotten. When we met, his first word was: “I am easy-going but disciplined,” meaning that though easy to get along with, he has his own principles to live by. Deeply impacted on me was his English pronunciation and wording. Besides he spoke with great passion about what to do for us, he was full of facial expressions. He was not only a grad with the master’s degree but also a Mandarin speaker. I considered myself lucky to have him. “This is the best candidate that I dream of.”

When everything got settled, I suddenly became conscious of his marital status, single. He is tall, of slim build, with handsome features. If he appeared on our campus, there would be “the kind of romance occurring amidst the teacher and the girl students.” If that happened, it might break up the taboo practiced in our school. Hardly had I led up to this topic indirectly when he expressed clearly that he had spent some of his days in Chinatown San Francisco and learned of some of Chinese culture: “The hare won’t gnaw the grass nearby, will it? I don’t want to fall in love with anyone, that’s it, period. Otherwise, I will court a girl off campus like the movie actress Ms. Chen Chong!”

#### The Second Leg: New York

A week later, the dream of getting all the three ESL teachers at one sweep in San Francisco came to an end. I had no choice but to head the second leg--New York I had fixed on my itinerary.

That evening, when I reached the La Guardia Airport, I found that our plane was caught in the heavy rain and the visibility was very low. Accordingly, the plane couldn’t make a safe landing, instead the captain announced that the aircraft had to stay in the air for 15 minutes or so, and then to try to land again.

The airplane circled and circled trying to land but as it was coming in close to the runway, the captain found out that he couldn’t make it and decided to apply full power to the engines having the aircraft climb into the traffic pattern for the circuits required. Not until the rain was slackening, did the aircraft touch down at the La Guardia Airport.

Having settled in a yellow cab, I watched the night view of New York through the windows. With countless lights shooting out from the windows of the high-rise buildings, the night view of New York became so beautiful in the drizzling rain which was falling

down vertically. And seemingly the city was completely shrouded in mist, having sort of beauty called “beauty of hazy mood.”

On the following day, I used the same old trick to go to the Department of English at York City University as I did in San Francisco, trying to check my recruiting letter by going to the bulletin board: “Is there my duplicate copy there?”

Disappointed, I nailed a copy on it out of my suitcase, again. I dreamed again if I could get the two ESL teachers with masters’ degrees here, I might or might not go to the next two stops, Minnesota and Hawaii. And if my dream would come true, whether keeping on going through the whole thing or not might totally depend on the mood in which I would be. But the thing didn’t work out that way. I didn’t get any phone call at all.

Out of desperation, I was put to use the stratagem of seeking help from the New York City Teachers Union via yellow pages and made a call requesting of them to get the “English teacher-recruiting information” broadcast. This act was proved effective. And in succession, there were applicants calling me and asking for more details. Among them, two applicants were a young couple.

By then, New York was at the end of winter. And in the beginning of spring, it was bone-chilling. As I was waiting for this young couple to come for interview in the hotel restaurant, I felt there was something warm running in me. And in the meantime, I prayed to God: “Please let me have two qualified applicants! Please let me have two qualified applicants!” Otherwise, when was this agonizing pain for the ESL teacher-hunting business to an end?

They came at the time as set. At a glance, I felt that they were a good couple: male, good-looking and tall; female, pretty and charming. Both, aged around 30, spoke standard American English which was pleasing to the ear. When they spoke, they spoke with low pitch, plus they used the body language properly. And that reflected the good education they had received. Most importantly, they were masters’ degrees holders from the English Department.

I told them bluntly that the salary in a nationally funded university in Taiwan was not as high as expected from an American’s perspective, but there were many side benefits. And based on two instructors’ income, they could live a pretty good life in Taiwan. Furthermore, for them, teaching audio visual classes is “as easy as the action of

raising one's hand and thrusting one's leg." After listening to the whole story that I had told them, they, with pleasantly expressive eyes and mouths, indicated that they had strong interest and decided to give a try in Taiwan.

I was very happy to have this sort of outcome for this interview. Because of a sudden decision, I said to them that I wanted to treat them a lunch. During "feasting," I became aware of a tiny part of their married life. Though they had been married many years, they were unable to have babies. I told them that Taiwan is located on the belt of subtropical region, and as far as I knew, lots of foreign couples, unable to get babies for many years, could have them when teaching in Taiwan. At the time, they wanted to quit and return to their home countries, the U.S. or somewhere else, they found there were babies lying in their arms. Upon hearing this, they couldn't help smiling but make no comment.

At this moment, I finally got the "mission impossible" of recruiting three ESL teachers done. But the appointments made for interviewing others had to go on. Perhaps, I had "the idea--the young couple interviewed are the ideal ones." Therefore, the following interviewees, though with higher degrees, they were either older or unsuitable for our students. If they had been hired, there might be a generation gap between them and our students. From this point of view, I turned all of them down without hesitation.

#### The Third Leg: Minnesota.

The couple, Professor Peter Firchow and his adorable wife, Professor Evelyn Firchow taught at the University of Minnesota. When I was the acting chair of the DFLI at NCKU, I invited them to our department as visiting professors for one year. Having returned to their home institution, the University of Minnesota, the former taught English Literature and Literary Criticism in the English Department; the latter, Advanced German and Linguistics in the German. Peter has an excellent command of three languages, German, Spanish, and English; Evelyn two languages, German and English. The most valuable thing of their personality traits is that they like to make friends with all walks of life. When in Taiwan, they made a friend with a man who sold pastry made of ingredients of flour, cooking oil, and green onion on their food cart on the street. They called the products, Chinese Pizza.

Because I had already got the three ESL teachers, I flew from New York to Minneapolis with nothing important to do but to visit old friends.

When I got to Minneapolis, it was snowing, and the freezing wind was cutting and getting into the marrows of my bones. Peter said: “Only the toughest people can survive this abominable weather.” And by then, one of my colleagues, Associate Professor, Cao Dingren of our department, a grad from the Phd. program of the Department of Journalism at this university, happened to be here paying a visit to her alma mater. Accordingly, she was invited as a guest in the Ferchows, and three of us, each held a large mug of beer in hand, and reclined sluggishly on the sofa and enjoyed the warmest friendship in the heavy snowstorm weather.

Peter admired and respected the English novelist and critic named Aldous L. Huxley. As to the American novelists, he was reserved. I said to him that the number of novels that I had read by English and American writers were limited. Honestly speaking, I had only read Ernest Hemingway’s works. He said that he liked his first novel *The Sun Also Rises* the most and considered it the best among his whole things. But to me, his novelette *The Old Man and the Sea* is the best and worthy of being recommended.

He had some biases against the DFLL at NCKU, “No. 1: the class is too large, out of control. And when marking examination papers, a teacher finds it isn’t easy to mark the papers properly and give each student a fair grade as he deserves. No. 2: there are some “moles” from the KMT disguised as students in his class. For that reason, many of the students, who are “obedient,” have to look up to these “moles” if they want to hold any activity.” I agreed with him on his first point; absolutely disagreed with him on the second one, telling him that it was unbelievable!

He took me to tour the university library, bookstore, and the Department of English. When the cloudy sky cleared up, he took me to tour the neighborhood by car, and looking out through the front and side and back windows, we appreciated the scenery with snow everywhere.

Having stayed in Peter’s home four or five days, I flew United Airlines to Los Angeles. Originally, I planned to go through the whole thing as scheduled, the fourth stop--Hawaii, but due to the “mission impossible” that had been completed, and by then, I became mentally and physically exhausted. And I had no choice but to make a change on my itinerary. I flew China Airlines making an earlier return to Taiwan.

## Chapter 31

### Acting Dean of the College of Liberal Arts

Throughout the traveling experience in my life by air, there was nothing comparable to that China Airlines flight from Los Angeles to Taoyuan International Airport in terms of its emptiness. There was a handful of passengers taking that Boeing 747. I thought to myself that this was so cool that I could sleep through a 13-hour flight comfortably to Taiwan.

Human beings, sometimes, are so “cheap.” When you are faced with a full house of passengers, you wedge yourself into the seat. And the fellow travelers’ elbows on either side of your seat, almost touch your arms, and with the feeling of oppression, you can still hold your breath and calm yourself down and drop off. Now, look, enabling myself to lie down there and with my head on a pad, I could not fall asleep no matter how hard I tried. Human beings are really “cheap,” aren’t they?

With the airplane cabin sound during the flight, my thought was simply racing. It could be compared to videotaped autobiography of my life played in reverse from the present to the not-too-distant past to the distant past: “How could I return to NCKU? How could I get on the two trips to the U.S. for advanced studies? How could I get into the undergraduate program of a university to get education? How could I be discharged from the army? How could I go through that experience of life and death? How was I illegally drafted into the army on the Penghu Islands? How could I run into those rough trails and be a survivor by taking herbal plants as food in the eastern part of Fujian Province? How could I go to see my immediate uncle at Longyou County? How could I study in that dilapidated dorm at the Jinan First United Secondary School at Changannzen? How did I sell shoes to go through those hard days in Qingtao? How did I leave my hometown? Is my Father still in Jinan now? And how are my older sister, Zhonglan, and younger brother, Zhongxin?”

Back to the reality I was perplexed by two questions: “Am I the guy who can handle both the administrative work and the research work simultaneously? Am I really a guy of the highest caliber to do these two jobs equally well? In addition to that the three recruits I have got can be used to sharpen the whole university students’ English-speaking

and-listening skills, how can the DFLL, itself, get their help, too?”

With the questions in my mind, the airplane was approaching Taiwan. I was fully awake and overexcited. Around 10:30 p.m., I checked out of the customs. Once getting on the Union Bus, I felt the bus flew like a dart directly to Tainan. On the early morning, around 3 a.m., I got to the doormat of my home.

Upon returning to the office of mine the following day, I immediately reported to President Xia the fruits that I had got in the U.S. And I assured him that once the fall semester of the new school year started, the entire school would have a new façade of the English-learning environment. After listening to what I had done on my mission to the U.S., he lavished some praises on me.

In those days, seemingly, I was a bit euphoric. On the way to my office, I felt as if the soles of my shoes had been equipped with springs. I was striding, not walking. Shortly after, I received a letter from the couple recruited in New York saying that they had found jobs in that city already, unable to keep the promise they had made. The maxim by Laotse: “What one calls calamity may often give rise to fortune; what one considers fortune may often end with disaster. Who knows what the outcome would be? How can there be an absolute right answer?” or another simpler way of saying this, “No weal comes without woe.” It really proved what I had gone through, then. No kidding at all.

Thanks to the action that I had taken before my leaving for the U.S.--getting the information about the ESL teacher recruitment publicized via the English journal issued by the Youth Commission, Executive Yuan, and the duplicate copies of my letter sent out, right now, I saw they brought something worthwhile back to me--some application letters came in. Among these applicants, there were three Phd holders in the field of English and American literature and one who possessed master’s degree in the field of ESL. Dr. John Scott and his wife were the most ideal candidates completely meeting the requirements that we had set. I immediately wrote back asking them to report to our school one month in advance before our fall semester started.

Another two were true scholars named Bertrand Mathieu and Richard de Canio. They were graduates from esteemed universities in the U.S. and had a lot of papers and books published. The former was residing in Paris; the latter, in Seattle.

At that time, one of our Associate Professors, Cao Dingren, still stayed at the



University of Minnesota, and likely returned to Taiwan shortly. And I asked her to fly back to Taiwan by way of Seattle, interviewing Richard de Canio on behalf of me. The outcome of that interview was: “Richard is a distinguished scholar of English and American literature, but a really naïve man.” The implication of this remark was: “He is probably a person who is hard to get along with.” But after I had closely reviewed his three recommendation letters by his former professors, I felt that he would abide by all the regulations of our department.

I hired both to come to NCKU to teach based on a 2-year contract out of a specific design: “The Massive Project for Recruiting Overseas Scholars.” And their hirings were only by chance, not by scheme, but it could be regarded as “an extra chapter” in “The Recruiting Story of 10,000 Miles of Mine to the U.S.”

In the year of 1988, President Xia was promoted to the director of the National Science Foundation. The presidency of NCKU was filled by the former dean of the College of Engineering, Dr. Maa ZheRu.

At this moment, there was a knot waiting to be untied in our college: that was which department should be legitimately held accountable for the Graduate Institute of History and Linguistics cofounded by the Department of Chinese Literature and the Department of History?

When the institute was in the process of applying to the Ministry of Education in 1985, the school authorities mobilized all the resources from both departments for its establishment, and divided it into two parts: The Department of Chinese Literature was held responsible for linguistics program; the Department of History, history. However, as a Chinese saying goes: “Two fierce tigers cannot live in one mountain,” and with the days gone by, there must be frictions arising between them.

When Professor Yu had finished his first term as dean of the College of Liberal Arts at NCKU, he wanted to be on a convalescence leave in Taipei. Since the summer of 1985, Professor Huang Yunwu wore two hats, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and director of the Graduate Institute of History and Linguistics. To be the dean was easy; the director, very difficult.

In 1988, the two departments had reached an impasse about the objectives and curriculum offerings of the institute, and no one liked to give up something in order to keep it going. Because Dean Huang was a Chinese major, it was very hard for him not to

be suspected to take sides with the Chinese Department. In fact, at that time he had signed both of the contracts of directorship and deanship. And worse, the start of the new school year was a month away. As he was a very smart guy, he would be fully aware of the situation ahead of him if he kept going as the heads of two academic units. And suffering nervous breakdown was inevitable, and there was no end to it. As a result, the way he used was to settle them once for all by *kuaidao zhan luanma*, or cutting the knot of hemp ropes with a sharp knife, and returning the two signed contracts back to school. Furthermore, he made up his mind to leave NCKU.

As it occurred suddenly, the newly inaugurated President, Dr. Maa JerRu, was immediately thrown into the state of not knowing what to. I met his wife, Dr. Young Youwei, in the NCKU Bank, (Undergraduate Internship Program), on the Cheng Kung campus, who was a senior professor at the Department of Physics saying to me: “Something is really troubling him!”

President Maa’s first name, JerRu, consisting of two parts, matches seamlessly each other, echoing what he is. The first part, Jer, refers to that he is philosophically oriented; the second part, Ru, he is well-read, and overall, he is wise and knowledgeable. Furthermore, he is characterized by modesty, broad-mindedness and magnanimity. Every day, he was seen on his bicycle getting on and off his duty as president. If he saw a professor or a staff member he knew walk on the campus, he didn’t do anything else but to get off his bicycle and accompanied him to walk for a while. The action of this kind he had demonstrated got the conflict between the blue (the KMT) and the green (the DPP) resolved if there was any. Even to this day, after his presidency has been terminated for more than 20 years, he is still remembered and repeatedly praised by all the faculty and staff members on two things that he did while in office:

Number one: on the eve of Chinese New Year, he carried the so-called “comforts” to the gatehouses of the respective campuses and distributed them to the security officers who couldn’t toast their loved ones in their Chinese New Year dinners.

Number two: prior to the Chinese New Year, he had to spare some time to pay visits to those retired professors who were the oldest.

Professor Yu Xiwu, with whom I took a course titled, English Grammar and Rhetoric, in my freshman year, was over ninety years old, suffering from a variety of ailments for years. Despite totally deaf and wobbly on his legs, he booked a grand dinner

treating President Maa at Ambassador Hotel on Dongxing Rd. and invited us to that dinner party to help entertain the guest of honor. While “feasting,” Professor Yu frequently crooked a finger at us to try the delicious dishes on the table. Throughout the whole dinner, he said only one word: “I greatly appreciate President Maa’s way of treating people!”

By the end of August of the same year, President Maa sent a one-year contract to me asking me to be the acting dean of the College of Liberal Arts. The reason for such an appointment was understandable: I belonged to neither the Chinese Department nor the History Department. I was an outsider standing on the middle ground between two departments. I belonged to the DFLL. And there was no reason for me to side with one department more than with another. Furthermore, I am an acting dean in nature, “smaller in terms of target, let alone the target of attacks.

By then, I had completed the first three years’ term as chairperson and knew the ropes better in administration. It didn’t matter what kind of meetings, large or small, I attended them all: *yi ji zhu guan hui yi*, the top level meeting including president, dean of academic affairs, dean of students’ affairs, dean of general affairs, and deans of all colleges; *xiao wu hui yi*, the university assembly, aside from the foregoing, chairpersons, representatives elected from colleges and departments; *xing zheng hui yi*, the administration meeting related to the policy about how to run the university; and *jiao wu hui yi*, the meeting held by the Office of Academic Affairs mostly for discussing the teaching and research stuff, and the problems of students’ academic performances, etc. As to the meetings held by the College of Liberal Arts that needed me to play the host role and the meetings for continuing education held by our Language Center, I do not remember I missed anyone of them. I thought to myself that right now, I was the man who was working as both chairman and dean at the same time, and the workload was heavy, but I thought this period might be the pinnacle of my career. Therefore, I often warned myself not to play with the fire: I should make all-out effort to keep what I had got, and avoided being unseated by my rivals. Furthermore, I should adopt self-reliance and self-protection strategy. Under no circumstances, could I allow myself to commit any “misplay” while in both offices. If there had been one, I would fall out as if having been thrown into an abyss, never having another chance to be rehabilitated.

Here was an example to illustrate that I was not bogged down by egoism even as something was considered so tiny and so worthless:

Though I wore two hats at the time as chairman of the department and dean of the college, I only got one “command pay.” However, as the college has it that as dean of the college, one has also to be the head of language center in name. Because of this, I, sometimes, get some extra money, though the amount is very small but legal, for example, the balance left by running the continuing education program in the summer break is usually shared by us.

After the close of all the classes in summer, 1989, and based on the name list submitted by the language center, the balance had been evened up and was given out to the workers involved. But one mistake was made. That was one share belonging to the man, secretary of the office of the College of Literary Arts, was left out. This made the man in charge of the whole thing feel restless and unaware of how to fix it. During the hottest spell of weather, people came in and helped run the program. And once they had put their shares into their own pockets, who would like to take out the money that had been dealt out, even “a tiny part” of it? Consequently, the problem remained unresolved, and the situation became an embarrassing one for all of them. When I walked into the office by myself with my suitcase and knew what had happened, I, immediately, without one second’s hesitation, had my share which had already been sealed in an envelope and laid on my desk, handed over to the person in charge and forwarded to the secretary. I didn’t want anything so trivial as an obstacle in my way. This act done by me made everybody happy!

At that time, there were two comprehensive universities located in southern Taiwan: NCKU and NSYS (National Sun Yat-sen University). Professor Yu Guangzhong was the founding dean of the College of Liberal Arts at NSYS. Under him, there was a lot of outstanding young scholars. And he thought he might make some contribution by combining the human resources from these two universities to do something. He firstly suggested that “An Annual Literature Conference -- Southern Taiwan” might be held to boost literary studies in the College of Liberal Arts. By so doing, the College of Liberal Arts might be ideally ranked. As well known, Professor Yu was a whiz at Western and Chinese literatures, especially in the field of English and American literature. When free from teaching, he engaged in poetry- and prose-writing, noted for his writing “skills,” poetry with “his left hand”; prose, “his right hand.” Because his big name appeared on the posters on our campus for the conference, that year’s conference held at NCKU was extremely successful.

One more thing which is probably worthy of mentioning here is that in 1990,

professor of Columbia University, C. T. Hsia was invited to come to our school to give a talk. His topic is Chinese modern literature, and I played the host role.



On 10/15/1990, Professor of Columbia University, C. T. Hsia was invited to come to our school to give a talk.



In 1998, I hosted "An Academic Exchange Conference --- Southern Taiwan". I was standing, President Ma and Professor Yu Guanzhong are to my left.

## Chapter 32

### The Days as the Dean of Discipline

According to the dictates of my conscience regarding the three deans, academic affairs, discipline, and general affairs in terms of their duties, I think that relatively speaking, the first and the third dean's duties are lighter than the second one's. But, of course, it refers to the "heyday of peace." If there is a stream of student protests going on on the campus, the duty of dean of discipline is heavier than the other twos

In the school year of 1989, students, who, on all the campuses in Taiwan, got themselves ready to launch protests. And this "hidden agenda" could be put in other words: "The wind comes before the storm."

As it was customary, after the Joint College Entrance Examination was over, the summer vacation was under way. The school had it that all the administrators were required to work half a day only, another half, at their own disposal. Around 10 a.m., one day, President Maa JerRu firstly gave me a ring saying that he would come down to see me in my office and asked me to wait for him. And then he cycled to my "camp," and once stepping over the threshold of the door, he bluntly asked me to take up the post, dean of discipline. My visceral feeling to this appointment was that I didn't have that sort of stamina to do a big job like that. I got myself estimated that heading a department was in my element. If asked to do the job as dean of discipline to deal with more than 20,000 students, I couldn't do it. And even if I wanted to do, I presumed that it was beyond my ability.

But as I saw the president sweat all over and heard him say: "We are blood brothers," I immediately changed my mind and asked him to give me a few days to think about it. The outcome of that long brooding over the appointment was certainly that I was moved by those four words, "we are blood bothers." Accordingly, I decided to play the role of "a good Samaritan."

To me, student protests on the campus were not that terrified. The most fearful thing was that we didn't know how to defuse the tense moments of protests as they were about to explode. The homework for me to reduce student protests was trying to dig out the causes of them based on the political climate and then, going along with them,

manipulating them to our advantage. In another word, letting the protests dissolve by “inherent changes” and never dealing with student protests the other way around.

In the 1990s, under the influence of the changing of political climate in Taiwan, the students on the campuses began acting weirdly and presumptuously demanded reforms for this and that. And the then President Li Denghui, being great at internecine fightings, appointed the military strong man, General Hao Bocun, Prime Minister of Executive Yuan, but *in fact, to strip his military power* (my italics and this is common knowledge throughout Taiwan), and henceforth, stoked up the fire which had been blazing. In consequence, coming out from the university campuses across this island country were the paropaganda slogans: “Firmly oppose military man who has been appointed the premier of the newly reshuffled cabinet!”

The students on the NCKU campus fired the first shot demanding that “the right for running Sheng Li Cafeteria should be handed over to the students by the school authorities due to mismanagement.” NCKU is noted for the stringent rule over the students’ academic performances. Though working hard, day and night, they might not ensure whether they could pass the courses taken or not. In the same token, did they really have any extra energy and time to shoulder such a heavy responsibility for operating the cafeteria? Even if they did, young as they were, how long could they hold on, probably “five minutes.” If the right to run the cafeteria was handed over to them, they might be compared to “unmotivated soldiers,” in the middle of a combat discarding their guns and helmets and deserting as generally surmised. And that would mess up everything. In case, Sheng Li Cafeteria couldn’t be operated as usual, and the students couldn’t be provided with proper meals, who was held accountable for this?

However, to launch a student protest must have had a pretext to appeal to the students in the majority. And the students were furious with Sheng Li Cafeteria at what the poor food, they had provided, was! And that became “the tipping point” to detonate the muted explosion of the protests on our campus. But from my point of view, if there had not been the Sheng Li Cafeteria issue, the students would look for another issue “to challenge the school authorities.”

Once in office, I proposed that the school and the students should co-organize “NCKU Student Dining Services Committee.” When we worked on the charter for the committee, we stipulated that there was a certain number of representatives from students, and so was there from faculty and staff members. Of course, nutritionists, and executive

secretary were included. Though it was titled: “NCKU Student Dining Services Committee” in name, in fact, the cafeteria was really operated with the help of the faculty and staff members and a secretary. And the secretary was usually the guy who was doing the counseling works related to the students’ campus life under the office of dean of discipline. This way, each party yielded a little bit on the ground, reached “a compromise” and ended this wave of protest due to the food issue at Sheng Li Cafeteria.

Following the suit, I also proposed that “Students’ Self-ruled Committee for Students’ Dorms” should be established. Henceforth, the students’ opinions about bed assignments, the rate of fee and ordinances on these dorms were included. In addition, a rule for charging those who wished to live on campus during the summer and winter vacations was so made that the school was able to track down the students of this kind.

The Student Government Association had been on the NCKU campus for years. In the past, no student was interested in this organization. But with the change of the political climate, suddenly, campaigning for the president of the SGA got fired up.

As it was still far away from being a candidate, the student, who was campaigning with his aides, came to the office of the president at NCKU and requested the president to clarify the status of the presidency of the SGA in the school. Sitting cross-legged, he shook his head. The most incredible thing was that he demanded the president of the university to give him an office and appropriated certain percentage of fund for the administration and management of the SGA. Furthermore, he thought that in a democratic society, the presidency of the SGA equaled that of the university.

The Charter of the Student Government Association should be modified if it was outdated. However, we could not accept the “monkeying” he had demonstrated at all. In order to get an effective and workable SGA, Mr. Huang Huanchien, the incumbent director of the Section of the Student Guidance Services (also a military training instructor) and I, myself, participated in the meeting held by the students for revising its charter. If there was anything that could be amended better, we would let it go. However, under one condition, anything printed in black ink and on white papers and defined by the Ministry of Education or recorded in the minutes of university assembly couldn’t be compromised at all.

When the election of the president of the SGA was being held, flags and banners were flying everywhere looking as if the campus suddenly became a hustling spot. But



the majority of students had little interest in this kind of activity. Quite often, the students, who had showed up to cast their ballots, were less than one-tenth of the students. So, the president who got elected in this manner lacked representativity. And another election should be held. Nevertheless, to get the president of the SGA elected once for all, we asked for the Student Council to modify the election system by lowering, the number of students to its “threshold indicator,” say, from 35 percent of voters to 25 percent. And by so doing, we would be able to get the SGA president legitimately and legally elected.

But in this way, the president who got elected by this number of voters only represented the radical students, and he could call upon all students to launch all sorts of protests on campus. Thus, the radical students wearing face masks not only staged sit-ins but also summoned “sympathizers” to parade on the campus in the name of opposing the military man’s interference in the cabinet-resuffling.

The students intentionally applied for holding a parade. If disapproved, they would step up. If approved, the campus would be flooded by shout slogans. Therefore, I had to adopt a flexible measure: when not in session, such as the lunch break or the late afternoon, when the school was over, they would be allowed to hold a parade and get their voices heard. The routes must have been carefully mapped out and clearly marked out. And furthermore, there must have been teachers as guides keeping it in order. Overall, we couldn’t afford to let their “monkey business” go wild. Though this “tricky ruse” was dangerous, it defused the protest crisis.

At the time the 1<sup>st</sup> KMT Youth Branch affiliated with the Southern Taiwan’s KMT Youth Headquarters had been on the NCKU campus for years. During the times of authoritarianism, there was nothing wrong in its legitimacy, legality and operation on the campus. And no man had guts to say “No.” However, in the early 1990s, the KMT’s grip on authoritarianism was loosened, and the KMT on the university campus became a symbol, the ear of a deaf man, not only totally being inactive but also off-the-hinges. The meetings to be held for the KMT cadres at NCKU became a matter of formality, and the meetings for the lower-level members called “Discussions in Small Groups” were held in the same fashion.

The glorious KMT office on the campus in the past became a gloomy one now. Though it was nominally staffed by “volunteers,” yet actually, they were selected from a variety of sections under the office of the dean of discipline working in the KMT office. At the time the persistent outcry, “the KMT gets out!” flooded the whole campus, and the

office couldn't bear the brunt of pressure giving in and hiding itself in a secluded place, not to mention operating. And even the plaque bearing the title of the KMT office was dislodged clandestinely from the wall of the building. No students from the opposition party knew which building the KMT office was in.

But there were some “serious” students led by some “serious” teachers keeping on “tracking the KMT down all the way.” And “they wouldn't stop searching until they found it.” After making all-out efforts, eventually, they found the building. And on the base of that building, they set up grills bluffing that if the KMT office didn't withdraw from the campus in time, they would mimic the strategy of *Chi Bi Warfare* or Red Wall Warfare in the *Three Kingdoms*, utilizing fire to attack that office.

I was extremely panicky, busying myself getting sort of directive to resolve this problem from Bu Tianpeng, the then secretary general of the Southern Taiwan's KMT Youth Headquarters. But he said to me: “As the KMT is still the ruling party, there is no reason for it to withdraw from the campus, isn't it? You must stonewall the tide and try to negotiate with the students!”

Having found out that the appeal to the secretary didn't get anywhere, I turned to President Maa for advice. Maa was non-committal, and didn't know how to deal with it either, and obviously in his mind, there was not a way out, at least for the time being.

I sat on my hunkers in the distance, watching them surrounding a gridiron barbecue. And peering through the crack on the human wall, I saw the fire flaming up. And I thought to myself if this ongoing activity couldn't have been dealt with right away as an emergency case, there would be a great possibility for the students to smash the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor glass windows of the building by firstly throwing rocks and brickbats, and then tossing in torches. By then, the whole KMT office was on fire. If that happened, it would be a devastating damage on our school, too big to cope with. And I really didn't know how to clean up this sort of mess.

Therefore, I made up my mind to take immediate action. And with the help of Mr. Chi Canhui, party secretary of the KMT office at NCKU, a volunteer worker, Cheng Shuyen, Paolien, my wife, and I in the deep of that night, we had the important stuff on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the building carted off to the upper floor of the North District Household Registration Building, and all the other items, books and magazines, to Chi's house and mine.

On the following day when they found out that the KMT office at NCKU had been empty, they discontinued barbecuing down there, and a possible man-made disaster was narrowly escaped.

November 11 is the date of the anniversary of the founding of NCKU. According to the usual practice, the school has to hold the NCKU athletic meeting. And the “Exercise Show by Students” is one of the “items,” and it is the “No. 1 item listed on the NCKU Athletic Meeting Program.” Accordingly, teachers from the Department of Physical Education demanded that all the PE classes involved spare ten minutes to rehearse the show. Unexpectedly, this sort of action caused the student fierce protests. They thought the rehearsals had unduly deprived them of “their regular class time,” not only asking the teachers to apologize, but also lodging complaints to the office of the dean of student affairs to prosecute them for their derelictions of duties. The most disgusting stuff was that the complaints sounded bluffing. They proclaimed blatantly that if they couldn’t get a satisfactory answer, they would “boycott” the “Exercise Show” all the way from the beginning to the finish.

What I considered was that the students were deliberately giving us a hard nut to crack. On the one hand, I continued negotiating with the president of the SGA, but on the other, got a severe measure of crackdown on them ready, and had it tested in a way as in the “mock battle.” If on that day, there were students walking out to protest, we would let the security guards to disperse them or drag them out of the stadium. Without doubt, having scented the hard-line stand of the office of discipline to crush them, the president of the SGA began to show signs of caving in. She indicated that if dean of discipline could give a clarification of this question: “The PE teachers use the class time to rehearse ‘Exercise Show.’ Is that right?” If the dean could, she would persuade the students not to boycott the “Exercise Show.”

As dean of discipline, how could I be considered a guy who “revenged” the students. If there was still room to move around helping rid the protest, I would do whatever they wanted to meet their demands. As a result, I presented myself before the students who had lined themselves up for rehearsal in the stadium according to the time as scheduled.

Prior to my speaking, she spoke to the students down below from the grandstand, “That the school allows the Department of PE to deprive the PE classes of their scheduled time to rehearse the ‘Exercise Show’ for the athletic meeting is just not right. But Dean Ma is here trying to have a frank conversation with us face to face and

clarifying it. Please keep quiet!”

I took over the microphone saying that “the ‘Exercise Show’ has been done for years at NCKU, one of the indispensables in the athletic meeting held by the university. And it can also be used to show our students’ youthful enthusiasm and high spirits. As to whether taking away 10 minutes from the class time for rehearsal is right or not, I would like to rethink about it!” Once this word was out, seemingly, she found an excuse to get off the hook, and immediately asked me to hand the microphone over to her. Along the line of mine, she said: “Dean Ma has already promised that he will rethink about it, and that can be regarded as the right answer from the school!” Having finished speaking this, she took advantage of the opportunity to run down a flight of stairs from the grandstand hastily.

The students down below were dismissed right away. But when I was about to leave, I still saw some of the students staying in the stadium and discussing the protesting stuff with one another without letup.

**Leading the alumni and students into the 1990 NCKU Athletic Meeting opening ceremony**



On the day we celebrated the anniversary, and when the “Exercise Show” was on, there were still, of course, some students, holding placards in the stadium to protest. Nevertheless, when they saw the teacher-leader, who directed the whole show, was so composed and carefree, and the students, who participated in the show, were extremely cheerful, they had no choice but to throw away their placards joining in. And all of them stretched their arms and thrust their legs to the beat of the music as rehearsed. That day,

the whole thing done for the “Exercise Show” was extremely beautiful and showed that the students at NCKU were full of energy.

The original rule governing motorcycles was not as flawless as deemed because it stipulated that: “only faculty’s, staff members’, custodians’ and janitors’ motorcycles are permitted to run on the campus when they get on and off works, but during the class time, the engines must be shut off, and the ‘machines’ have to be pushed with hands to the parking lots. As to students’ motorcycles, they are prohibited to enter the school at all.” Though the rule had been imposed on the campus for years, it was flayed by students. With suggestions from some faculty and staff members, I agreed that on each NCKU campus, side doors were built, and furthermore, on the grassy glades adjacent to the side doors, parking lots for the motorcycles were staked. With iron rails erected on three sides, the motorcycles could be prevented from rampaging through the campus. The original rule for motorcycles became invalid and rewritten as such: “All the motorcycles are prohibited on the campus despite faculty’s, staff members’, custodians’, janitors’ and students’”.

At that time I had almost been in office for 6 years, and the thing that grieved me the most was that there were 26 students who had been killed in accidents. Among these deaths, the most impressive accident was that two students from the Department of Industrial Management in the College of Business Administration drowned in the waters near South Guenshen Bay.

Around May, in the Tainan area, there was a hot spell in summer. On a weekend, there were more than ten students who had made an agreement to go to the beach of the bay for playing the volleyball game.

After playing for several rounds, all of them were drenched in sweat. Despite a sign bearing the warning: “No Swimming! Waters deep and dangerous,” one of them from the township, Hehu, in Zhanghua County, ignored the sign and walked into the sea. While wading forward, he splashed water unto his body. Keeping on going one step after another, suddenly, he went out of sight. At this juncture, everyone on the beach got panicked and stood on the beach shouting at the sea. At last, they saw him bobbing up and down in the waters and being swept towards the expanse of the sea.

On the beach, there was a great commotion going on: some students ran to the nearby police station to report the accident, others kept on shouting at the sea. One of

them from Heyu, one of the Penghu Islands, had confidence in his swimming skills recklessly jumping into the sea and trying to come to his rescue without considering the consequences of his recklessness at all. God knows his rash act and foolish behavior called *fenbi dangche* cost another precious life. *Fenbi Dangche* refers to a fable story about a mantis which showed its bravery by stretching out its forelegs to blockade a carriage, and run over. A man shouldn't do what he cannot.

Two days later, their bodies were found: One was washed back onto the shore of the bay; the other, netted up from the sea by fishermen from the seaport of Chijing.

When I participated in their funeral services respectively, I saw two sets of family greatly mourning over their boys' deaths by prostrating themselves before the caskets, pointing their fingers at the sky and stomping their feet. And I empathized with them, shedding useless tears. I became truly conscious of the reality that the work for student safety was extremely important. I had to take action immediately by getting a project mapped out. Consequently, I firstly got the typical and lethal accidents, which had occurred on the NCKU campus, written, edited and printed chronologically in the form of flyers, and then distributed them to all the students of the university in hopes of that they could enhance their awareness of the importance of safety so that even if the deaf people could hear the warning, *zhenlong fakui*, or turning up the volume to the highest in the sound waves and letting the persons, who are even born deaf, get the message.

The thing that made me feel the happiest was the performances of various students' societies established at NCKU. And the majority of societies ran very well based on their guiding principles. Without doubt, some of them couldn't stand the test of time "withering on the vine" due to poor managements. Among them, the most popular ones were the societies with service objectives. Members were not afraid of how rough the roads were in the remote mountainous area, going to help those disadvantaged children with their homework or sacrificed their Sundays as guides to lead the blind people for a one-day tour. Furthermore, some of them went to *renai zhijia*, or the nursing home entertaining those lonely old souls by singing and dancing as if they were troupers of a song-and-dance troupe.

In the universities across Taiwan, only at NCKU, there is such a unique student service that has been offering for decades. That is the NCKU student cart team. In fall, each year, when the school is about to start, the team members are pedaling the two-wheel cart to the Tainan Railway Station to help carry the freshman students'

belongings. While pedaling, they are whistling and laughing all the way, echoing the traditional fraternity that has long been developed and valued at NCKU.

There were numerous student societies on the campus and they often held training sessions in different spots. If dean of discipline timely appeared among them, it meant a lot to them. Therefore, when free, I would certainly go to see them no matter wherever they were, at the seaside, or in the mountains. Accordingly, I had been to the offshore islands, Kinmen (Quemoy), Matus, and the Penghu Islands, let alone all the nooks of the island, Taiwan.

In 1993, the NCKU's basketball team cracked all the universities' teams in the island and won the championship and intended to improve the basketball-playing skills via competing with the counterparts in the Mainland. From the inception of competing with the Fuchien University's basketball team and the Fuchien Normal University's in Fuchien Province, the NCKU basketball team won all the way by wide margins, ditching them as if having easily cut the bamboo sticks except for the Zhejiang University's and ours played to a draw. When we got to Nanjing that day, the *Yangtze Evening News* reported that the NCKU Basketball Team, consisting of 19 members, was paying a visit to the city, the ancient capital of six dynasties in the history.

Young Chitung, Director of the Students' Advisory Committee in the Ministry of Education, saw that the student protests were running amuck on all campuses throughout Taiwan, and accidents occurred one by one without letup, he intentionally set up three student services centers in the northern, central, and southern parts of Taiwan entitled: "The College and University Coordination Center for Student Affairs" in hopes of that the stories of "protests and accidents" that had taken place on different campuses, and the ways they got them resolved, were collected, and a book was compiled and published and distributed to all of the schools for future reference. Furthermore, by so doing, "the unpredictable and potential ones can be prevented in advance." Since the center in the south was fixed at NCKU, naturally, I, as dean of discipline, became the director of the center. And because of this positioning, I had the opportunity to visit all the campuses of the colleges and universities located in southern Taiwan, the geographical boundaries are: Gah-I County to the south and Taitung County to the west.

Since 1993, the office of discipline has been renamed as the office of student affairs, simplified as *sho wu chu* targeting services for students in the main. What a pity! the meaning of the word, "discipline," is lost. And worse, in Chinese, the abbreviated title is

often mistaken for another one, *geo wu chu*, the office of academic affairs because only the first two Chinese characters are different, *sho* and *geo*; the other two, *wu chu*, the same. They need arduous explaining.

On July 31, 1995, I finished up two terms of six years in office. The incumbent president and the academician as well, Dr. Wu Jing lavished some praises on me in the farewell party held in my honor using the words like these: "... Dean Ma, over the past six years, gave the NCKU campus the most wonderful days. He is my winning card or trump card on my staff." Upon hearing this remark and thinking of what I had done for the school, I didn't think that I had been that great. Instead, I felt sort of embarrassed.

Overall, I worked five years as dean of discipline during Maa's presidency; one year, as dean of student affairs during Wu's.



## Chapter 33

### Reunion with My Sisters in Hong Kong

From the year of 1948, when I left the city of Jinan to the year of 1978, when I got my doctorate in America, there were totally 30 years' duration that I didn't contact my family in Jinan.

When I was in the army, I was not allowed to write them due to the reality that I was an active-duty serviceman. Afterwards, discharged from the army and returned to civilian life, I became a civilian again, and because I was working in public school, I was regarded as civil servant and forbidden to contact them. Even though the image of my Father frequently flashed into my mind, I couldn't do anything but to stand on the seashore to watch the horizon and heave deep sighs.

When I was about to leave Southern Illinois University, I thought to myself that if I didn't write my family in the Mainland at this moment, when would it be the right time to do this sort of thing? As a result, I wrote a letter and mailed it to my home address in Jinan by using my friend's address as sender's. He was, at that time, working in the International Student Office in the university. And I told him that upon receiving any reply from the Mainland, he could put it into a larger envelope and forwarded it to Taiwan. This was my first time to try to contact my family, and I was ambivalent about it, puzzled, but to look forward to hearing from them.

About half a year later, I received two letters forwarded to Taiwan: one was from my eldest sister, Ma Zhonglan, who was residing in Nanjing now; the other one, from my little sister, Ma Yulan, who was living at the original address in Jinan and with whom I had never met because when I left, she was not born yet. She is my half-sister.

Zhonglan depicted briefly several changes in my family after I left Jinan. The most important stuff was that my Father passed away in the year of 1953.

After Jinan was liberated by the Reds, my younger brother, Ma Zhongxin, ended up being a sort of vagabond and wandered to the northeast shortly. At the prime of his life, aged 36, he died of rheumatic heart ailment. He was survived by his wife, Yu Shumin, three daughters, Ma Qing, Ma Hung and Ma Jun. And they were now residing in the city

of Mudanjiang which borders Russia.

In 1951, my stepmother, Zhong Shi, gave birth to a baby girl named Yulan. They lived in the same family house in Jinan as I had done. Afterwards, my stepmother passed away. And this little half sis was brought up by the granny on her mother's side. Upon reaching adulthood, she wed a man named Chuang Sheng and bore him a son called Chuang Peng.

Zhonglan worked in Jinan military clothing factory. When a move was made to Nanjing, she went with it. And there, she married a man named Ying Weicheng in 1956. Later they got two boys to raise: the first one was named Jianning; the second, Jiankang. When both came of age, they set their own families up respectively, and then had their own children to rear. Zhonglan's husband, my brother-in-law, was once the principal of a secondary school. Its name is Ninghai.

My little sister described what a surprising news it was when she received my letter: "Since my childhood, I have been told that I have an eldest brother who has got lost somewhere many years. All of us don't know where you are or whether you are alive or not.... Aside from immediately calling our eldest sister in Nanjing, I have your letter forwarded to her right away!"

These two letters caused great waves of grief in my heart. I always wished that someday, I would be able to see my Father and younger brother in person, and now this "announcement" threw me into an abyss of despair. And there was a period of time in which I could neither sleep nor eat. I sobbed bitterly and privately looking like as if I was a ghost figure wandering from one place to another and murmuring: "This is not true! This is not true!" My colleagues, Tian Tingfu and Miao Lizhong sympathized with me not only paying visits to me but making many phone calls.

In the year of 1987, the government officially announced to unban the Martial Law and permitted the *waishengren*, or the mainlanders who had withdrawn to Taiwan with Chiang Kai-shek in 1949 to see their relatives in the Mainland. But I was teaching at a nationally funded university at that time, being considered a civil servant, and still prohibited to go to visit them. Not until to 1989 and as the Chinese New Year was in the air, did I feel that I could endure this inhuman treatment any more, and decided to invite my both sisters to go to a third place, Hong Kong for a family reunion.

Zhonglan is four years my senior. She is open-minded having fast hands and fast

feet. In our childhood, we often got together and played a game called “shuttlecock-kicking” in our courtyard. She beat me every time.

Smarter than I, she is particularly great at the numbers. I often saw her blinking her eyes while calculating on something.

When summer was on, she, wearing a light blue gown, came home from downtown Jinan by rickshaw creating a great sensation on Guanming St. And there was a lot of young guys whistling and yelling.

Though she had a wrinkled face in the 3.5 x 4.5cm photo she had mailed me, she still remained unchanged looking attractive despite her age.

My half-sister looked like my stepmother, the double of her mother, having two big round eyes, and two black solid braids. Based on her looks, she would look much prettier if she dressed in fashion.

As I had these two photos in my hands, I didn't think I would have any difficulty identifying them at the Kowloon Railway Station.

Paolien and I had got to Hong Kong one day before they did for booking hotel. On principle, if we could save where we could, we would do so. Because when the time was up for us to say goodbye to them, I could afford to buy each one of them, one of “the three big items” approved by the then Chinese customs: a television set? A motorcycle? Or a refrigerator?

As I can still recall, that morning, when the grey cloud was gathering around the Kowloon Railway Station area, it was extremely chilling, seeming as if having added something gloomy to our “sibling reunion.”

Coming to meet with my sisters who had been separated from me 40 years, I didn't think it was hard to imagine what kind of the upcoming scene it would be! I tried to control my strong emotion and frequently reminded myself that only smiling face was shown, and under no circumstances, was I allowed to cry. Because we had survived the biggest upheaval of the “great” times, we came to celebrate the reunion that was long overdue!

Finally, I saw my second nephew, Jiankang, who led my sisters walking towards us tentatively. At this juncture, I couldn't control myself but to run towards them taking all

of them into my arms. I forgot anything else and cried my heart out for this reunion and screamed myself hoarse.

The passengers, who had seen lots of scenes like this one in front of the Kowloon Railway Station, were not surprised at all. After crying for a while, I called a cab to take us to our hotel located in the Sheung Wan area in the western part of Hong Kong.

Once settling in that hotel, Zhonglan repeated the changes of our family. However, when she was about to talk about the details related to my Father's death, she intentionally skipped the important parts of it only by saying something trivial and using few of words to make a quick conclusion. It seemed that my Father's death had become the saddest story, a taboo. Overall, that stuff had long been sealed in her mind. Under no circumstances, would I like to tear it open, and nor would I like to keep asking why and how that "real thing" happened. If I kept tracking it, she would feel "stabbed" on the back again. What I could do was that in the deep of the night when everything became quiet, I tried to piece a picture together about my Father's death through the guesswork from what she had revealed.

My younger brother, Zhongxin, whose death was another miserable story. In order to pay off the debt, he went to sell blood. And for supporting the family, he went to work with ailment. As a result, his rheumatic heart disease was deteriorating with face puffy and limbs swollen. He wound up to the extent that no medicine could be good for him and doctor was at his wits' end. When he was dying, Zhonglan, despite a thousand Chinese li away, went to keep him company for the final days of his life in the northeast.

What Zhonglan had gone through was so dreadful. While listening to her story, I was sweating. She married a wrong fellow in her first marriage and then got beaten up violently. And once so down and unable to pull herself out of that depression hole she was trying to commit suicide by lying on the train tracks. Fortunately, she met a Zen master who helped her out. And she was saved.

Her ability to use her hands and feet on a sewing machine was unmatched. She was hard-working and won the honor of model worker in her military clothing factory. After she and Weicheng married and built their own family, she bore him two sons. And henceforth, it seemed that she got something to rely on. Moreover, she got *hukou* or residence permit in Nanjing. Sometimes, when she was free, she thought of me and wondered where I was or whether I was still alive or perished from the earth.

My little half-sister was reserved. Overall, she withheld a lot of information from us when she talked about our Father's death. However, the key point was that at the time of our Father's death, she was only two years old. Afterwards, she was left alone when her mother passed away. And having stayed with her second brother Zhongxin for some time in Jinan, she thought that he was the only person whom she could trust. After Zhongxin moved to the northeast, she hardly had any opportunity to see him again.

The most touching story was that once, Zhongxin, she also called him *erge*, the second older brother in Chinese, came back to pay a visit to her. When time was up for saying goodbye to each other on the platform of the Jinan railway station, he gave her \$20 banknote that was the only money he had. And as she suddenly thought of the long journey ahead of this *erge* that he would go hungry all the way to his destination in the northeast without this money. She rushed herself to return it but alas, it was too late because the train started chugging and leaving her no alternative. She stood there stomping her feet on the platform but in vain and saw him go far, farther, farthest, and finally out of sight.

Zhonglan said: "Zhongxin loves this little sister dearly, and all of our family love her because when she joined our family, we were all grown-ups. Our Father loves her the most."

The Chinese New Year, 1989, was gone with the good mix of love and sadness. On the third day, the streets of Hong Kong were fully thronged with people, cars and buses. Paolien and I took them to tour the city. Zhonglan exclaimed: "This place is really more prosperous than any other one she has ever seen!"

At that time, though Hong Kong was compared to the pearl of the East and if there had been no such an opportunity for our family reunion, we would get on a sight-seeing tour to it probably a few years later.

## Chapter 34

### The Seagull Poetry Semiannual

If one wants to talk about the *Seagull Poetry Semiannual*, one must turn the clock back to the time when the Seagull Poetry Club started. Poet, Qin Yue wrote an essay entitled: “The Seagull with Broken Wings” and published it in the 39<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Seagull Poetry Semiannual*. In that essay, Qin described the history of this poetry magazine as follows: “In 1955 when Chen Jinbiao, a student-poet, was studying at Hualian Senior High, and encouraged by senior poet, Hu Chuqing, he set up a poetry club called, the Seagull Poetry Club. Included in it were members: Yi Sheng, Chiu Ping, and others. Their works were published in the *East Taiwan Daily News*, whose editor-in-chief, Jitang Zeng, supported them, and furthermore, half a page of the supplementary edition called the *Wenye Weekly* or the Literature and Arts Weekly was saved to run their works once a week. And this half page used to publish only poetry was given a title, the *Seagull Poetry Club Page*. And it could be compared to its counterpart, the *Modern Poetry Page* in the *Independence Evening News* in Taipei. After issuing its No. 90, the *Seagull Poetry Club Page* came to the end suddenly. With its title changed into the *Seagull Poetry Page* with the word, “Club,” left out, they wished to keep it going. Nevertheless, when the newspaper was transferred to a new owner, it was closed.

In 1957, Qin Yue and Li Chunsheng fell to victims of the informants in the army, literally translated as “political warriors,” who accused them of their wrongdoings, including Marxism thought. They were sent to Yanwan Reform Center in Taitung County for correction. However, the officers who were held responsible for reforming them could tell that they were not “bad apples” at a glance. And instead, they considered them the young talents who were greatly fond of Chinese literature and arts, being capable of independent thinking. They had not only writing skills but editing. Aside from that they were demanded to live sort of disciplined life in the center, they were not under surveillance any more in terms of ideology.

They were compared to two pieces of stones in the dirty latrine, though stinky but steely. And in the worst environment, they struggled for what they wanted to do without letup. With their pens as creative tools, they wrote poems and used them to praise the best of life.

With a well-wrought plan, they had set up the East Sea Poetry Club in Taitung County. And on the supplementary edition of *The Taitung New News*, only on Sunday, they got the *East Sea Poetry Page* out, and the *Poetry-planting Page* as it was renamed later.

Even though these two pages were short-lived, they got a poetry movement started in Taitung.

In September 1961, Qin Yue and Li Chunsheng were discharged from the army and both got in HTTC-STTP program. Introduced by the same teacher-poet, Chuqing, they made friends with local verse lovers. With their concerted effort, they got the *Seagull Poetry Page* back. Of the old poets, I could name one only, Chen Jinbiao. As to the new ones, except for Qin Yue and Li Chunsheng, Wang Shou and Lu Wei (Zhou Tingkui) joined the club as well. For a moment, the students' poetry club in the school became a hot spot for a galaxy of talents, and the poets enjoyed being in this club and reading poetry. Unfortunately, after the *Seagull Poetry Page* got to its 15<sup>th</sup> issue, it came to the end as expected because most "poets" graduated and were sent to the elementary schools located in the different parts of Taiwan. Thus, the publishing of the *Seagull Poetry Page* terminated again.

In 1991, on one of those days, Li Chunsheng, Lin Ling, Lu Wei, Chu Long, Shou Lan and Sun Tsungliang gathered together at Qin Yue's home to talk about how to republish the *Seagull Poetry Page* again, and they came to a conclusion that this time, the page should be published in magazine form and the title page of *The Seagull Poetry Semiannual, The Relaunch No. 1*, should be marked with the date, August 1, as the jumping off point. It requested all of us to share the work. Without seeking my endorsement, Li Chunsheng appointed me the proprietor of *The Seagull Poetry Semiannual*.

At that time, I had not tried my hand at writing poetry for years. Even if I wished to restart, I didn't think that I could get to the level as expected. Furthermore, I did a self-assessment and concluded that I was not gifted at writing poetry at all, thus, not daring to blaspheme the Muse again. However, Li Chunsheng said repeatedly, "keep trying, you will be on your way!" With my old pal's firmly supporting, I became speechless. Therefore, I wrote a short as the preface for *The Seagull Poetry Semiannual* plus several short poems. Of them, published on the first issue, one poem entitled, "Typhoon" was highly praised by a poet named Jiang Tian who resided in the Wuhan

area in the Mainland. His kind and generous words rekindled my passion for writing poetry. Henceforth, there was a stream of my poems appearing on every issue of the “Seagull.” Meanwhile, I had my pen name changed from Ma Ting to Ma Con because in Chinese pronunciation, Ma Ting sounds like Martin tinged with Western “style.”

When *the Seagull Poetry Semiannual* had got out its 7<sup>th</sup> issue in August 1994, the 15<sup>th</sup> World Poetry Symposium was held in Taipei. And certainly, we didn’t want to miss that rare opportunity. For that reason, Chu Guenhe, English teacher by then at Nantou Senior High and I translated some of the poems that had been published in our magazine, and got them collected and edited in sort of booklet form with the Chinese-English bilingual format. And we struck out many copies and displayed them in the symposium as one of the “Readers” for the participants.

Li Chunsheng’s wife, Lin Ling, was an outstanding prose writer. She was also the behind-the-scenes mastermind for our magazine. Whenever she saw me, she never forgot to say something encouraging to me: “In our little circle, you are the greatest because you have possessed professorship in a university!” What she didn’t know was that amidst us, I was not the gifted man in creativity or anything else. Furthermore, I was the one, having limited proficiency in Chinese and in English. In fact, I was sort of guy of *ban ping cu*, or half a bottle of vinegar, meaning a bungler.

Unfortunately, in her prime, Lin Ling suffered from malignant brain tumor. When she was in Taipei Veterans’ Hospital waiting for operation, I went to see her. She looked collected as if she let go the serious matter of life and death. With her looks of that kind shown, I felt relaxed.

After Lin Ling’s death, Chunsheng moved from Pingtung to the city of Tainan and lived with his eldest son, Li Lin. Accordingly, there were more opportunities for me to visit him and hang out with him.

Poets are usually romantic. Shortly after Lin Ling passed away, he remarried a poet named Dong Xiaowen, one of grads from the Department of Chinese Literature at Henan University. Nevertheless, this talented girl couldn’t get herself accustomed to living in Taiwan. Having stayed in Taiwan only for a very short period of time, she wanted to return to the Mainland and had a long stay there with no definite date to come back to his side. As a result, this unpredictable behavior of hers made Chunsheng so restless that he called her continuously. In order to divert his attention from this beaten track, I frequently



got him out to dine with me in eateries, and then accompanied him to go to Tainan Park for a walk.

On April 2, 1997, Chen Jinbiao, the founder of the *Seagull Poetry*, summoned the members and verse lovers to Hualian County to attend the symposium held to celebrate the 42<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of the Establishment of the *Seagull Poetry*. I went with him by taking the one-flight-a-week plane from Tainan to Hualian. When taking breaks in the symposium, I saw him constantly fingering a string of Buddhist prayer beads and simultaneously chanting Buddhist Sutras. I immediately realized that he was in trouble seeking help from Buddhism. And these signs forboded something inauspicious that would befall him soon.

Around May 1997, I suddenly got a call from him at Qimei Hospital in Tainan saying that he had been admitted to the hospital, and I headed straight for Qimei. What I had seen on his two swollen legs was the millet-sized red spots all over. The doctor said that: “These are the symptoms of kidney failure needing dialysis treatment immediately. However, he is opposing to the renal dialysis unit firmly. It is stuck and hard to deal with!”

I persuaded him to accept the Dr.’s diagnosis but he didn’t give a damn care of the word of mine at all.

On July 28, he passed away in his home in the city of Pingdong.

During his lifetime, Li Chunsheng wrote poetry and poetics. The book by him, *Nine Articles on Modern Poetry*, had won the award from the ROC Literature and Arts Writers’ Association for poetics. Later, he fleshed it out by adding several other critical writings to the book, and it was republished and retitled, *Poetry: Its Tradition and Modernization*. Because of this work, he was hired by the Literature and Arts Program affiliated with the Department of Chinese Literature to be a part-time instructor at the Chinese Culture University.

That the real stuff, worthy of being exalted by his friends, had been done by him since 1978, was that he came up with two sets of poems (24 pieces) based on the Chinese Zodiac signs, totally 12 animals, each animal representing a Chinese New Year, and had them made into beautiful greeting cards. Therefore, when the Chinese New Year was in the corner, he would mail them to his friends wishing them a happy new year. He loved poetry madly wishing, during his lifetime, he could tie the “the sky of the Mainland” to

“the sky of Taiwan, though separated by the Taiwan Straits, yet to have them put into “One Sky of Poetry.”

*The Seagull Poetry Semiannual* was originally edited by him and Zhou Tingkui. After he had passed away, the editor's job fell on me. Firstly, I went to the Department of Cultural Affairs affiliated with the city government of Tainan to have it officially registered, thus, enabling the magazine to get on the catalog as one of the ROC's publications. Secondly, I made some efforts to promote our magazine having got tens and tens of subscribers, and one honorable subscriber who had donated \$10,000.

Because Qin Yue studied at the National Taiwan Normal University and during his undergraduate years, he participated in the Poetry Society established by the verse lovers on the campus, he recruited five professor-poets to join us when the *Seagull Poetry Semiannual* got to the time of publishing its 20<sup>th</sup> issue. Firstly, Gu Tianhung and Chen Pengxiang got in, and then another three, Yu Chongsheng, Zeng Zhenzhen, and Chen Mingtai became our “comrades” with the recommendation of Professor Gu Tianhung. With all these new members' joining in, the seagull was getting stronger and stronger with its wings outstretched. And in turn, it finally got on the catalog of the poetry magazines published in Taiwan.

During the time, Professor Gu Tianhung worked as the editor-in-chief, aside from the proof-reading work that needed sharpening, the others such as the qualities of poems and poetics became obviously better. As to the poems, he proclaimed that he preferred long ones based on what had happened in Taiwan to short pieces. As to poetics, he advocated getting the foot out of the mire of surrealism. Pitifully, later, he was transferred from nationally funded university, Shida, to a privately funded university, Ciji in Hualian to teach and found himself unable to do the editing any longer. And as a result, the glory of the *Seagull Poetry Semiannual* fell out as if a meteor were falling from the sky.

All in all, Qin Yue did all the works: the most important one was managing the publishing of the magazine; the less important, editing. Though laboring through these trifles, he never grumbled. And especially, during the last few years of his life, though being on dialysis, he strove to get the new issue of our magazine out on time till the last issue. He contributed most and deserved all the credits.

Having gone over the whole thing, I concluded that there were two reasons for shutting down the *Seagull Poetry Semiannual*: No. 1 was that the owner, also the

manager of the print shop with whom Qin Yue signed the contract, ran his shop so badly that the membership fee we had turned in was lost (according to the contract that has been signed via Qin Yue, if the print shop cannot have its obligations fully realized, the owner should return the membership fee to each one of us unconditionally). No. 2 was that the original members were getting older and older, while the younger ones needed to make a living. Most importantly, in this modern society, as everybody looked up to the monetary stuff, was there anyone who was willing to contribute money, time and energy to do the work of this kind without pay? I attributed all these failure factors to one word, “karma.” When the “karma” was over, nobody could hold us together. Therefore, nobody should be blamed.

However, to make an exhaustive review of the entire thing, I figured out the *Seagull Poetry Semiannual* benefited me as follows:

1. When the students’ protest was spiking on the campus, I found I had no way out. And there was such a magazine there that held me to rack my brains to conceive a piece of poem, jot it down on the paper, and send it out to get published, and to me, the magazine became an excellent outlet for unwinding.

2. In October 1995, I collected 60-some odd pieces of poems published in the *Seagull Poetry Semiannual* and delivered them to a publishing house named Literature Avenue in Taichung City. And I entitled my first anthology, *Birding in the Winter Time with Binoculars*. Unexpectedly, I received some of favorable feedback from readers and critics. And there are two pieces of critiques considered more significant than others: one is “A Combination of the Modern Lyric Thought and the Classical Rhythm, Rhyme and Alliteration” by Professor Wu Kaijin of Shandong University; the other, “The Analyses of Ma Cong’s Three Poems” by Associate Professor Liu Qintai at NCKU.

3. One of my poems, “No Title,” was published in the *Seagull Poetry Semiannual*, and selected by a renowned poet, Bai Ling, the chief editor for the *1995 Anthology of selected Poems, ROC*. Attached to this piece was a short critique by senior poet, Xinyu. This was the first time I was recognized as a poet since I started writing poetry in 1952. The whole poem is as follows:

Ever since a squad of soldiers planted in my head a row of windbreak trees

I have lost my freedom to go out to the vastness of the sea

And the goal in my life has also been in a blur

Like a stray soldier,

Lifting my gun

I aim at nothing

But scaring away a flock of birds perching on a tree

The sea is beyond the island

And the sky is beyond the sea

On the poorly lit horizon where the sun is setting,

Birds are making noises to the utmost they can

The core value of the two-word combination of hometown is an abstract noun

Further, the hometown of today is not that of the past

You cannot comb one of the phoenix's feathers out of a crow.

Therefore, I am like:

One base-isolated building in the storm

One piece of stone in the mud

(I hate human feet)

One length of night in the pitch-darkness

One tree denuded of leaves

Against the wind

I am listening to

The spring tide in the distance rolling to me

As I recall my poetry-writing career, if there had not been a guy like Li Chunsheng who constantly encouraged me to keep writing, my interest in poetry would have been lost. And if there had not been him, I would not have joined the Seagull Poetry Club.

When Li passed away, I wrote two reports about his death published in the supplementary edition connected with the *Taiwan News* in Kaohsiung, and the supplement affiliated with the *United Daily News* in Taipei. Moreover, I was asked to write an article by the editor-in-chief, Feng Taping, of the *Wenhsun Magazine Monthly*, Newsletter for Writers to commemorate him. And the title of the article was “The Sky of Poetry.”

In December 2009, I resided in a small city of Cupertino, California, U.S.A. and one day, suddenly, I thought of him again and the old story of how to strike up our friendship was brought back to my mind again. As my thought was racing, I couldn’t help feeling like to write a poem. After having racked my brains, I came up with a piece entitled, “In Remembrance of My Friend, Li Chunsheng”:

Northern geese flew south

But the way of their honking was different

One was craning its neck and honking with strong Shanxi accent

The other was craning, too, and honking with bad Mandarin

But we had a lot in common when we were teenagers

Living a miserable life in the same army on the Penghu Islands

And writing verses

In the strong monsoon wind

We practiced our marketman's skills

Swallowing the husked and cooked rice mixed with sand

We tried to make our stomachs as strong as wrought iron

Having red shorts and straw sandals on under the scorching sun

We wanted to boost our revolutionary spirits

Watching the fishing lamplights flash on and off on the sea

We tried to write modern poetry

We relied upon each other for mutual encouragement

Based on the example set by the wild cactus in the field

We were growing up in the desert

To the sea lapping the beach

We sang a song about our love for life

The *Epoch Poetry Quarterly* published it on its 162<sup>nd</sup> issue, in March 2010

## Chapter 35

### The Tomb-Sweeping Trip

In 1991, the government continued loosening stringent restrictions on mainlanders to visit their relatives in the Mainland. And this time, “civil servants” who were teaching in the public schools were included.

I still remember that when my mother passed away, her body accompanied by Zhonglan, Zhongxin and me returned to my native village for interment service in the Mas’ pear orchard. The mound grave was only a pile of freshly turned earth. After my Father’s death, though buried in the same grave with my mother, there was no headstone erected.

Before my leaving for the Mainland, I got the idea of erecting a headstone for my parents. Therefore, I asked Professor Xu Jingzhong at the Department of Chinese Literature at NCKU to write an epitaph by using Chinese brush-art calligraphy and had it mailed to Zhonglan in Nanjing. And I also asked for her to get the best headstone material in Jinan and further, find the best stonemason to do the carving.

In May, I received her reply as follows:

May 25, 1991

My Dear Brother, Chungliang:

“When I got your letter, I wrote our little sister, Yulan, in Jinan, about going back to our native village to erect gravestone for our parents. On May 12, your brother-in-law, my husband, and I went to our little sister’s home in Jinan, and on the following day, based on the epitaph you mailed to us, we went to a local masonry to get the stone material fixed. The headstone is 1.2m high and 0.5m wide with a base. Fifteen days later when it got done, your brother-in-law, me, our little sister and her husband shipped it to the Large Horse Village on the same day.

Back to our native village, with the help of our relatives and villagers, we located the grave very quickly and added fresh earth on the mound and erected the headstone successfully. A ritual was held in front of the grave. And in the meantime, though you are

in Taiwan, we said a prayer to our parents underground on your behalf.

We stayed in our eldest aunt's home on our father's side for two days, and then headed for Jinan on May 19. We were scheduled to return to Nanjing on May 25. When you'll be in the Mainland, we will go to our native village to pay tribute to our ancestors.”

With the best wishes.

Zhonglan<sup>71</sup>

At the beginning of 1992, we decided to take a trip to my native village. And we planned to celebrate the Chinese New Year in Nanjing with Zhonglan. After that, we would set out together for the Large Horse Village by way of Jinan, and it would take us three weeks as planned to get the whole thing done.

I was told by those who had returned from the Mainland for the same purpose that though the ordinary people in the Mainland were not worried about food and clothing any more, yet the latest clothes in fashion for women were outmoded. Paolien specifically picked out some of half-new dresses and stuffed them into two large canvas bags full, seeing if these clothes were given to them, in what way could they be put to good use?

As our daughter, Ma Hungling, a NCHU undergraduate student, was on winter vacation having nothing to do, she indicated that she was willing to go with us to experience the customs and habits of my native village in person and see that part of the world in Shandong Province.

Like others who had already made the trips to their hometowns for paying tributes to their ancestors at graves, and once, boarding the plane, I couldn't help sobbing with tears rolling down my cheeks. At the time of changing airplanes at Hong Kong to Nanjing, I did the same thing. Those old memories that had been kept in my head for 44 years came alive now as if they had been eagles with wings outstretched swooping down on me. They were too many to count. I couldn't get them straight, nor could I put them into the right sequence. Not until the plane got to the Nanjing area, did I come to myself stopping digging into those memories and being brought back to the reality.

The aircraft landed at Nanjing military airport with tight security.

When we went through customs, the security officers, seeing us pull two small



carry-ons with another two large canvas bags, mistook us for sort of self-employed businessmen who engaged in selling second-hand clothes. Accordingly, they presumptuously told us: “These two large pieces need disinfecting, first, go to the window on the right-hand side, and turn in fee, and then pull them into the room on the left-hand side where there will be a guy who takes care of them. One hundred Renminbi is charged per piece!”

We did as we were ordered. Having turned in the fee, we pulled them to the specific room to be disinfected. What we saw was a guy who carried a fire extinguisher-like thing and did a symbolic gesture of spraying. Afterwards, he said “Okay! Okay!” This was not disinfection at all but being in a flagrant way to rip off his fellow countryman from Taiwan.

After checking out, my two nephews, Jincong and Jinning were waiting for us at the arrival gate. They said to me abruptly that “this was the airport from which the KMT withdrew four decades ago. And a new international airport is under construction by the People’s Government of Nanjing City somewhere else!”

Having got on the van sent by their unit, we were on the way to the city of Nanjing which had been designated as China’s capital of six dynasties.

Along the road, I saw a lot of scattered farmhouses among tilled lands and wildernesses. As it was in the winter, the trees on either side of the road became skeletal, with the branch fingers, clawing at the blue sky and rustling in the bitterly cold wind. This is a typical of winter scene or a bleak winter scene in the season. When our van was nearing the city, I saw the magnificently brick-built wall renovated during the reign of the Ming court.

There was a row of bungalows on Ninghai Rd. Of them, one was Zhonglan’s. One couldn’t call it a house because it was too simple to be called with its kitchen in the open, the space for living on was terribly limited. Unexaggeratedly speaking, it could be called *guaju*, or the “shell of a snail.” In this home, I saw my brother-in-law, Zhonglan’s husband, the first time, and so did I see my sister-in-law, Zhongxin’s wife, Yu Shumin and her third daughter, Ma Jun. Both of them travelled a long way to see us from the northeast China.

They installed us in a room with toilet facilities in a sort of hotel. In the daytime, we went to Zhonglan’s home having nice chats and getting meals; at night, we returned to it

for the overnight stay. Moreover, my older nephew, Jinning escorted us back and forth for fear that if by ourselves, firstly, we might get lost in the city; secondly, we might get hit by countless cyclists while crossing the street. The number of cyclists could be compared to *guojiang zhiji*, or the carp fish are teeming in the Yangtze River and struggling to get across the river together. Though we kept reminding ourselves that we had to be extremely cautious, yet Paolien still got knocked down by a cyclist. Fortunately, she got only bruises, no bone fractures.

On the Chinese New Year eve, Zhonglan prepared a tablefull of dishes including the type of Shandong dumplings. After I had got three *ganbei*, or drinking the good stuff bottoms-up three times, and the majority of dishes tried, I became slightly intoxicated. And simultaneously, watching my sister's white hair and keeping relishing the dishes she had cooked, I became sad, and did the utmost to contain my tears in my eye sockets saying: "This is the first time for me to have a Chinese New Year dinner on the homeland since I left in 1949. Let bygones be bygones. And we should toast one another for the welfare of ours now." And I noticed that my sister firstly looked sideways and then covered her face with one of her hands, and finally faced me smiling, eyes glistening with tears. She said: "Yes, we ought to do what you have said!"

Having been back in the hotel in the middle of the night, I lay on my bed with my clothes on and was between the borderlands of sleep and wakefulness. I heard firecrackers crackle from time to time. Though there was no difference in terms of the explosion sound between Nanjing and Taiwan, why did I feel that lonely here?

On the first day of the Chinese New Year, my little sis, Yulan, and her husband went back to Jinan with the purpose of preparing the tomb-sweeping stuff.

In Nanjing, for the rest of the five days, we found nothing else to do but to do the sight-seeing. This time, my younger nephew, Jingcong, acted as a local guide, taking us to tour the scenic spots: *Ming Xiaoling*, tomb of the Hongwu Emperor, founder of the Ming dynasty, *Zhongshanling*, Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum, *Fuzimiao*, Temple of Confucius, the Qinhuai River, Xuanwu Lake, the Yangtze River Bridge, and Yuejiang Tower. My brother-in-law said to me: "Walk around. If there is inspiration striking you, put it into words."

Because I was teaching at an institution of higher learning in Taiwan, my brother-in-law took me to tour Nanjing University which was just located a stone's throw

away. Furthermore, one of his old friends who had once worked in the university was asked to act as a guide. Like many other esteemed universities in the Mainland, Nanjing University was founded by missionaries as well. The earliest name was Huiwen College affiliated with a Missionary University. In the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the Republic of China, it was upgraded to a publicly-funded institution of higher learning named the National Southeast University. And later, in the 16<sup>th</sup> year, it was renamed the National Central University, and finally, its name became the National Nanjing University. Dr. Wu Jiahong, a physicist, recognized as the Chinese Madam of Curri, was one of its alumni. The school legacy consisting of two four-character couplets is “*Cheng Pu Xion Wei; Li Xue Dun Xing*.”<sup>72</sup> The first part is referring to the virtues of integrity, simplicity, fortitude, and greatness; the second part is composed of two verbs, the first verb, *Li Xue*, meaning that students in the school ought to be encouraged to pursue knowledge diligently; the second, *Dun Xing*, what students have learned ought to be put to good use. Obviously, the university lays much emphasis on the balance between the inner and outer self, namely, implementing the “holistic education” policy.

The holidays of Chinese New Year finally came to the end, and so did the sight-seeing tours in Nanjing. On the night of the 5<sup>th</sup> day after the new year, we, a group of 8 people: Zhonglan, Weicheng, Shumin, Ma Jun, Jingcong, Paolien, Hungling, and I got on our tomb-sweeping trip starting from the Nanjing Western Railway Station (another name is Xiaguan Station) to Jinan. Because we had the travel papers called “The Mainland Travel Permit for Taiwan Residents,” Jingcong could get us three tickets for *ruanwo* or soft sleepers. Weicheng, Zhonglan and the rest, took *yingzuo* or hard seats. Once I intended to exchange our *ruanwo* with their *yingzuo* and let them have a light sleep, but the security guards mounted on the train said: “No!”

Having crossed the Yangtze River, the train flew on the flat and open land of central China like a dart. And those old memories like waves in my little head began crashing upon me again.

My Father is moderate and cautious in his daily dealings with people. In my childhood and early teens, I often saw him that once, getting off his work, he closed the front gate earlier than expected. He could lock himself down in his room all the time. And there was nothing on the street that interested him, no matter what a scene of hustle and bustle was going on there. Moreover, he never struck up a conversation with anyone he didn't know well, and nor was he seen to socialize himself with our neighbors. However, if a close friend of his came to visit him, it was not a rare thing that they sat talking deep

into the night.

My Father is a quiet breed. When he has something to say to us, he just uses just a few words, for instance: “don’t make the same mistake again if you come across the same thing next time!” and “one cannot become smarter until one has got burned!” The only time he gave me a tongue-lashing was when I used my Chinese brush and ink to learn to write Chinese characters, the brushstrokes I executed were not in the box. He shouted reproachfully: “you must write within these red-lined squares!”

In the early 1940s, because the battles plagued the country one after another, and in a city like Jinan, it was not easy to support a family with 5 mouths. He was not only able to keep it going, but also able to abide by the saying: “Little drops of water make a might ocean.” And within a span of less than three years, he bought a *Siheyuan*, housing complex, in the Tianqiao district. If not sharp enough, how could he make it?

My mother was a daughter of filial devotion, her virtuous deeds spreading through her maiden home village. When my grandpa on my mother’s side became very ill, he had difficulty passing stools. And my mother used her fingers to dredge out the hardened stuff stuck within his anus one piece after another to the final “clearance.”

Though a female, my mother was able to keep her head on her shoulders in the midst of crisis. Once, she and I were on the way to Zhang Jiamiaoguo and holding our heads up, we saw three Japanese fighters flying by at the lowest altitude with their wings slanting. She hastily pulled me down to the ground. Seeing that I was terrified and shivering without stopping, right there, she said: “Don’t panic! Don’t panic! These planes don’t lay eggs!”

My mother did what she was supposed to do without irresolution while facing adversity. Once, we, the whole family, was fleeing a sort of engagement, and my younger brother, Zhongxin, for an unknown reason, was howling and misbehaving himself on end. The more, she indulged him, the worse, he became self-willed. Outrageously, she dumped him onto the roadside letting him cry on and on until he quit of his own accord. Furthermore, she commented on this misbehavior abruptly: “we cannot let you, just one kid, get the whole family killed!” At the time, we were half a Chinese li away from him, one of my uncles named Jiang Guitian, went back to fetch him.

Throughout this whole journey, I did nothing but to try very hard thinking back to my dim and distant past. When it was just dawning, we got to Jinan safely.

Once, we stepped on the platform, several young folks rushed forward and pulled our belongings to run. At the beginning, I thought that we had bumped into “Shandong bandits,” and in a wink of the eye, I realized that they were the so-called redcaps, porters, offering services to make some money by carrying passengers’ baggage. Seeing what they were doing, I had to run after them elbowing my way through the crowds and out of the Jinan Railway Station. Holding up my head, I saw Yulan and her husband were waiting for us there.

With the rapidly increasing number of the people who wanted to return to pay tributes to their ancestors at mound graves, the prices for carrying passengers’ luggage were hiking up. Initially, they charged \$10 a piece, then, up to 20 and 30 and finally, 50. The service charge of this kind soared successively as much as 4 times. If there was a large piece, they charged extra fee. As we had three pieces in total, they randomly charged us \$200 for them. After haggling over the price, we drove a hard bargain, and the deal was \$160.

After getting settled in the cab, I was in the state of drunken stupor, imagining that the *siheyuan* or complex I had not seen for 44 years must have been in a dilapidated condition with the wall partly damaged, and the paint on the front gate was sooty and chipping. Nothing original remained but a ruined *siheyuan*. However, as we got to our doorstep, we saw the blue tile-roofed and red brick-walled houses, standing bolt upright. All these good maintenances ought to be attributed to the present occupiers, Yulan and her husband, who obviously took good care of it.

Guang Ming St. remained the same as it had been but neighbors became all strangers. Here I could find neither my childhood playmates Liu Peiji and Wei Xingan nor Zuo Shaohu whom I called big brother. Zuo and I went to the same school, the Municipal Jinan Secondary School but in different grades. On the whole street, there was no one whom I knew except for another big brother, Mr. Bi and Mrs. Bi whose house was located at the east end of the street. Bi had once served in one of the units in the Nationalist army ranking first lieutenant. When withdrawing from the Mainland in 1949, he had already reached Xiamen also known as Amoy and couldn’t bear to part with his newly-wed wife and returned to Jinan.

I paid a visit to the son whose father was my Father’s teacher named Zhang Huailin in the traditional school. The son’s name was Zhang Hede. Though I called him Little Uncle Zhang, in reality, yet he and I were of the same age. After the liberating of Jinan,

he once assumed Office of Party Secretary of the Communists in the People's Government of Jinan City. High and important as his post was, he never forgot to spare a little bit of time to take care of our family members who still lived there. When I called upon him, he said nothing to me, but to pick up his Chinese brush with ink writing me two big Chinese characters: *qui yue* or autumn moon like the size of two rice containers. The first character was written in the Chinese classical language. If taken apart, *qui* can be divided into two individual characters, each one has different meaning. The character on the left is *he*, or stalk while another on the right is *qui*, or tortoise. Putting them into one character of *qui* in the Chinese classical language form, I find that there are 21 strokes in it. To me, it is a classical stuff, very interesting indeed.

Zhonglan often spoke of him to me and lavished praises on him: "Every Chinese New Year's Eve, he makes a phone call to Nanjing wishing me a happy new year. Nowadays, people are forgetting the doctrine of Confucius. Society becomes jealous. The philosophy of putting oneself in somebody else's shoes is seldom practiced. Making a phone call is a petty stuff, but it can prove that what kind of person he really is."

I retoured the scenic spots as I had done in my childhood: Daming Lake or Lake of the Great Splendor, Baotu Spring, Black Tiger Spring, Lixie Pavilion, Ancestral Hall of Lord Tie or Tiegong Ci, Beiji Temple, Memorial Hall dedicated to poet, Li Qingzhao. I also paid a visit to the elementary school I had attended exploring the possibility if there was anyone who knew where my former teachers and classmates were. They said to me that because of the dim and distant past, the names I had mentioned were never heard of.

The unit of my half-sister's husband, Chuang Sheng, provided us with a van. On the fifth day, we set out for Large Horse.

When we were crossing the Yellow River bridge, and as it was in the period of the lowest water level in the winter, we didn't see the muddy water rolling. What we saw was a narrow yellow stream in the center of the broad river bed. However, as it had frozen, and under the sun, the refraction of light rays hit our eyes.

Along the way, I saw some places which looked either familiar or foreign to me.

When we got into Ling County, the van firstly darted on the wide asphalt-paved road, and then turned unto the dirt one. It began moving jerkily. Aside from the farmlands on either side of the road, many a two-story high oil-drilling machines stood. Unexpectedly, there were oil deposits, black gold, in my native county! This oil zone is called "the

Victory Oil Land.”

Everything had to be done according to Zhonglan’s detailed itinerary: Firstly, we would have an overnight stay at my eldest aunt’s home in the village of Li, and from there, they would be able to release the news to our close relatives: “The prodigal has returned home!” And then, on the following morning, all of us would go to pay a visit to my immediate uncle, Du Zhangte on my maternal side in Zhang Jiamiaoguo. Finally, at the noon hour around 11 a.m., we would gather together at Large Horse to offer sacrifices to our ancestors at their mound graves.

This eldest aunt of mine had suffered from stroke for seven years and remained bedridden more than one year. As I lowered my body to talk to her and gave her some money wrapped in a red envelope as a gift, she tried very hard by twitching her lips to say a word like this: “Finally I have seen my dearest one!” Afterwards, she kept her mouth shut without saying anything but to stare at me straight with her expressionless eyes.

Her husband, my uncle, was still lanky as he had been in those old years, nothing particularly noticeably changed but aged. But he had a good memory. When I mentioned one thing that had happened to me during my boyhood: one day, I had a donkey-back ride past a patch of his water melon farm, and he treated me seedlessly yellow-colored pulp and green-skinned melon. He shook his head violently heaving deep sighs and said: “That thing took place many and many years ago, and how do you still remember it? Look, I am an old man now and cannot work on the farm any more.”

After the hard times of the late 1940s, my immediate uncle, Ma Jiabin, moved out of Zhejiang Province, south of the Yangtze River, to one of the provinces in the northeast. And he was accompanied by his two sons to join the tomb-sweeping ceremony despite they traveled thousand Chinese li and changed trains. This was not an easy journey for his age. When we saw each other at this aunt’s home, we shook hands for the first time after I left him for Guangzhou in 1949. And then, we talked about the stuff related to our separation from each other at Longyu, especially, the part of mine. We sighed deep sighs and felt as if we had lived in a different age . .

Next day, we got our breakfast at Zhangjia Miaoguo. I saw not only Uncle Du, but also the aunt, my mother’s youngest sister who was the only survivor of my mother’s three sisters. Uncle, Du, coughed all the time now, his health going downhill, *Fengzhu*

*Cannian* or he had one foot in the grave. This aunt, No. 3, though very old, was in good health. However, I could see the lines were all over her face, noticeable signs of the aged. As she sensed that I had that kind of weird look, she deliberately said to me: “I haven’t seen you since the interment service held for your mother. You have been changed. If I bump into you on the street, I am certainly not be able to recognize you!”

Around 10 a.m., all of us gathered together at Large Horse.

Forty-some odd years ago, the Mas’ houses that stood one by one from the front to the rear had been levelled. Instead, a large square was before my nose. I stood there getting lost in somewhere. There was a gust of wind arising and blowing up a cloud of dust, and I got blurry vision because of tears, certainly not because of dust. And suddenly, my displaced soul was slipping back, and I realized how important this trip was in terms of “purpose.”

My cousin, Ma Zhongrong, received us, and we stayed at his home for a while and then went to the grave directly.

As soon as I saw my parents’ mound grave and the newly-erected headstone, I couldn’t control myself any longer and began sobbing. I told myself: “cry, cry, and cry my head off!” Simultaneously, I murmured a prayer: “The son without filial piety comes to do the kowtowing to both of you!”

Zhongrong guided me to my grandparents’ and my second granduncle’s and my third granduncle’s graves to pay tributes through a libation ceremony.

Having finished the whole thing, we returned to Zhongrong’s home again where he introduced the relatives and people from the same village who had attended this service, including a young girl who came from the village of Xiajia Daokou. She was the only daughter my youngest aunt on my paternal side had left behind.

With Zhongrong’s suggestion, and in order to express my gratitude to all of them, I left a certain amount of Renminbi with him to reward all involved by a “feast” hosted by Zhongrong on my behalf.

On the afternoon of the same day, we returned to Jinan.



## Chapter 36

### The Beijing Trip

After returning to Jinan, on the early morning, the following day, we bid farewell to all my relatives and got on the sightseeing tour to Beijing. With the rhythmical chug of the train, Hungling, Paolien and I sat on our seats in the car and enjoyed watching the wintry landscapes through the windows. And we felt quite relaxed.

In spite of the fact that I had not been in the Mainland for 44 years, I was still able to understand the dialects spoken in these three provinces: Hebei, Shandong and Henan, not 100 percent but almost. Furthermore, Ling County borders Hebei, and the dialect the Ling people speak is the same one spoken by Hebei people. The difference lies in that our dialect lacks retroflex consonants. Other than that, there is no language barrier existing. It was no problem for us to tour Beijing on our own.

As the train chugged in the Beijing Railway Station, we let the cabby take us to one of the hotels. Once the pieces of baggage of ours were in our room, we rushed ourselves to do the sightseeing. At the time, for the tourists from Taiwan on their own, the simplest way to get to scenic spots was to get a cabby and pay him based on daily basis, not on taximeter. On principle, the more days, the service of this kind was offered, the cheaper, the fare would be. Of course, paying by hour was the most expensive.

The first scenic spot we wanted to see was naturally the Great Wall. With the suggestion of customer services in the hotel, “the Badaling section is the most beautiful one, majestic and well-maintained. It is a typical section of the whole thing.” As a result, I thought to myself that if we were able to climb up the best part of it within two hours, getting some idea of its dimension, for example, height and breadth, and if we could stand on the commanding position and see this great wonder zigzagging up and down, we would be quite content.

At the Tiananmen Square, we got a cab and paid \$200 and made ourselves clearly understood beforehand that once having completed touring Badaling that day, we would continue our sightseeing tour to *Yiheyuan*, the Summer Palace. And by the end of the day, the cabby was obliged to take us back to our hotel.

After hopping in the car, I immediately realized that this cabby was not only a “master” (by then people called drivers or chauffeurs *shifu*) but also a “kingpin” of the trade because he struck up a conversation with us by saying something which sounded to please us, “People living in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan are all fellow countrymen, why are their admittance fees so high? They charge nationals one dollar and people like you five!”

He pulled up at the base of Badaling. Hardly had we got off the car when the cold front hit us. Though we felt that the winter clothes we had had could keep us warm, the headgears on us were no good. Therefore, we ran into one of the stores nearby and picked the ones made of fur to replace the old.

That day, the gray clouds were amassing in the sky, the north wind was blowing, and the temperature suddenly dropped to 5 or 6 celsius below zero. We sat on the parapets posing just for a few of pictures and had to climb strenuously upward. We couldn’t make any pause because once staying still, we were shivering with cold. And we couldn’t stop our teeth chattering.

In the watchtower, on the one hand, we put our hands together and rubbed each other, but on the other, we stomped our feet. And in the meantime, I thought back to the ancient days about the sentries who did the guarding in this sort of place. In such a bitterly cold weather, some of them would have surely frozen to death, not mention getting out of the check-point to fight with the enemies. How did they keep themselves warm? What did they do here with the “Chinese armour on?” Were they walking around in this cramped place or sitting against the cold wall with their weapons in their airms and daydreaming?

My nose turned red. If keeping staying in that place, we would fall to victim of hypothermia. Despite the two-hour sightseeing trip earlier planned, we had to subtract 1 from 2. In another word, we had to end it right away.

In one of the stores for selling Chinese landscape paintings, I picked three pieces: one is the landscape of the Great Wall; two others, plum flowers. All three of them were the black and white ink art. Without any delay, we got on our cab returning to Beijing.

It was 3 p.m. when we got to the Summer Palace. And as we all felt hungry, and right there, we walked into an eatery that sold dumplings exclusively. What made us feel surprised was that it sold their products by weight on a scale based the catty system, not according to the number customers ordered. By then, I had no idea of the catty and tael

system in the Mainland, and nor did I know of how many dumplings equivalent to the weight of one tael? Therefore, I just ordered four taels for three of us as I wished. And I was unaware of the fact that these four taels of dumplings wouldn't be enough to get three stomachs filled. When we felt like making the second order, it became overcrowded. For getting more time to tour the Summer Palace, we couldn't wait. Waiting would reduce the time needed for cruising the palace.

Before we got in the Summer Palace, we saw a Mongol, full of side whiskers, stand by the entrance with a rather big camel on leash. Obviously, it aimed at providing tourists for getting on and having pictures taken with it. As the guy beckoned to Hungling, she just ignored us and got on the camel right away with the help of a stool by its side. And with her sitting on it, a very nice snap shot has been kept since then.

The Summer Palace is a big garden originally designed to provide the royal family for retreat. With its numerous scenic spots, we found out that it was impossible for us to see them all within this short span of time. We just walked along the bank of Kunming Lake and toured the palaces that we liked to see the most. Therefore, only two buildings, *Renshoudian* or Palace of Benevolence and Longevity and *Yulandian* or Palace of Jade Ripples were closely scanned. At that time, the empress dowager emphasized the importance of retreat, but to embezzle the fund originally budgeted for the build-up of the navy to renovate her family garden was absolutely a "misdeed." Nor did she show the understanding of the nation's serious issues. Thus, having kicked up a lot of fuss from the courtiers as well as from the opponents was natural.

On the following day, we toured the Forbidden City, visiting the outer court: *Taihedian*, or the Hall of Supreme Harmony, *Zhonghedian*, or the Hall of Central Harmony, *Baohedian*, or the Hall of Preserving Harmony; the inner court: *Qianqinggong*, or the Heavenly Court, *Jiaotaidien*, or the Hall of Union, and *Kunninggong*, or the Palace of Earthly Tranquility. Occasionally, we followed the heels of one of the tourist groups and listened attentively to the local guide's elucidations about the history of these varying palaces.

In 1992, shortly after the Mainland adopted the open-door policy, again, China was in its initial stage of modernization groping forward in the darkness. On the one hand, "it busied itself getting rich," but on the other, "its development couldn't keep up with the pace of the modern world" The most concrete example was the attitude in the service to customers. The employer or the employee of a business in the private sector grinned and

touted the businesses to potential customers enthusiastically. Conversely, the employee for the state-run business gave the cold shoulder to the potential customers with nothing short of a “poker face,” for example, a female employee sat behind the counter with head down focusing on doing the crocheting. If you went up to ask her “how much is this? How much is that?” She just took no notice of your questions and ignored you. To her, there was no difference between those who worked hard and those who didn’t in salary. This was a state-run business, “not a damn dime short of mine!” if her attitude continued remaining this way.

Quanjude Restaurant is noted for Beijing roast duck throughout the world, and we would like to have a try.

We made a tremendous amount of effort to squeeze into the bus for Quanjude. Hardly had we gained the footing in the bus when we felt that there was a sort of grim atmosphere hanging there. What we saw on the bus was that all our fellow countrymen were all clad in one-colored Chairman Mao’s suit. And these fellow travelers were arrogant looking at us with penetrating eyes. They saw through us whose clothes were different in colors as though we had not been standing there. Although they were hostile to us, we had to be courteous to them for, later, we had to get the information from them regarding which bus stop was the right one for us to get off, close to Quanjude. Finally, with a grin, I plucked up courage to ask a guy who just stood on my right:

“We want to go to Quanjude, roast duck restaurant, would you kindly tell me at which bus stop we should get off? And which bus stop is the closest one to it?”

He looked at me as if he didn’t understand what I had said and still hung on there. His body swayed to the beat of the running bus.

I used the same words to ask the person on my left. The answer I got from this one was the same. At this juncture, all the passengers’ eyes in the bus were on us now. And there was no one speaking nor even a cough heard. The air in the bus seemingly became heavy. Turning to Paolien and Hungling, I said to them: “we will get off next stop!”

We paid the fare and elbowed through the crowds to get off. Followed were several fellows who disembarked from the bus. Among them, there was one who spoke to us now:

“You got off one stop earlier. Quanjude is located near the next stop!”

It seemed that he got a sort of compensation from what we had suffered. And I became speechless and kept silent to this late answer!

The “feast” in the restaurant redeemed this “slight mishap” completely that we had run into on the way to it. We, three, had had half a roast duck down, and had another half buckled up when we left the restaurant.

On the morning of the third day, we flew Dragon Airlines to Hong Kong. On board, I bumped into an interesting stuff. Though years have been elapsed, even to this day whenever I think of it, I cannot help chuckling. It is so funny.

Just one row before ours, a foreigner sat there, and I judged from his accent that he was an American. He looked like a good guy, but in fact, he was an alcoholic. He kept on asking for drinks from a stewardess. After finishing one drink, he turned to her asking for another: “One more please!” She refilled his glass as told. By doing so, he continued enjoying his drinks all the way to Hong Kong. After the captain announced that the aircraft would land in a moment, he continued asking for drinks from her: “One more please!” This time, the stewardess rolled her eyes and said to him impolitely: “Not any more!” getting his seat and the the tray table return to their upright positions.

We stayed in Hong Kong for three days. For Paolien and me, this was our second time to tour Hong Kong, but for Hungling, her first.



**My daughter, Hungling, enjoyed camel-back riding**

## Chapter 37

### Acting Chairman of Graduate Institute of Education

In the summer of 1995, my two-term deanship of student affairs, 6 years, came to the end. Finally, I was relieved of the burden of this kind. As a result, I returned to the DFLL to restart teaching and researching on a full-time basis.

By the end of August 1996, as I led a happy life 13 months in the department, Professor Lee Jianer, the incumbent dean of Academic Affairs came to see me exploring the possibility if I'd like to be the acting chair of Graduate Institute of Education which had just been approved by the Ministry of Education. He indicated that the appointed chair, Professor Lin from the National Kaohsiung Normal University suddenly changed his mind and returned the contract he had signed. Now the new school year was about to start, one month away, and launching a recruitment campaign was too late. For that reason, he recommended me as the acting chair.

Honestly speaking, I had been thrown into different university administrators as chair and dean for 11 years and contributed what I could and should. And I was 63-year old now feeling that I was not as healthy as before. Moreover, it was two years away from my retirement according to the age limit. For the welfare of myself, the less I involved myself in administration, the better I would be. In another word, getting retired without making a fuss was my best strategy.

However, thinking the other way around, I realized that the school had run into a “bottleneck.” Thinking that I was a Phd holder of education, they considered me the right candidate for the acting chair. Accordingly, dean of academic affairs was approaching me. If I persistently declined to take it, might I not be considered a weird guy who at the time of school's difficult time didn't want to help solve the problem? Furthermore, was I really able to avoid being regarded as a guy who gave himself airs not considering the interest of the school?

However, in another thoughtful turn, the university administrators' jobs I had taken before were in the DFLL, the CLA, and the university. Right now, I was asked to head an academic unit in a different college. And how did my colleagues of the DFLL and the college think of me? “Has Mr. Ma been addicted to power? Doesn't Mr. Ma take up that

post as the acting chair of Graduate Institute of Education for self-absorption? Can't this act of his be considered going too far?"

I was so perplexed with questions as the above-mentioned that I couldn't make a decision right away. But I let "the question of taking it or not taking it" remain the way as it had been and deemed that I needed more time to think about it. For that reason, I asked Dean Lee to give me more days so that I could concentrate my thought on getting the best way out to effectively untie the "knot."

Having gone through the process of consultations with senior professors including former president Maa JerRu in the know on the campus, I got all the feedback that was positive. Consequently, I agreed to being the acting chair and made myself understood that I would like to do the university administrator's job only, not offer any course in the institute.

After taking office, the first problem that puzzled me was finding a spot for the institute to get it started on the extensive campus. Though NCKU had 180-plus hectares of land by then, every academic unit adopted "departmental selfishness." They would rather let their extra property remain idle than let any other unit use it. Because they feared that once, they lent it to us, they could never get it back.

After going through several challenges, we were able to get two classrooms in the Mechanical-Electrical-Chemical Building on the Cheng Kung campus. Each one was partitioned into two sections: the first one was used as the chairman's office; the second one, aides' office; and the second classroom, two sections, too; one was used for students' classroom; another, conference room.

When we hung the black-lacquered wooden plate with five gold-gilt Chinese characters, *jiao yu yan jiu suo*, or the Graduate Institute of Education, on the front wall of the building, the entire faculty and staff members burst our sides with laughing. And "the so-called all of us" was only referring to five people: Associate Professor, Yang Huijin, Associate Professor, Rau Mingshuao, administrative assistant, Li Huizhen, custodian, Tung Yongshun and the chairman, me.

The second problem I had to deal with was the Teacher-training Program. Before I took office as the acting chair, I had heard of this thing that the institute would be held responsible for running the Teacher-training Program. Once in office, Yan Boliang (one of my former students) who, by then, worked in the section of curriculum development

under the office of academic affairs gave me a stack of documents and data including the first draft of “The Project of the Teacher-training Program for Secondary Schools, NCKU” of which he was one of the original writers, and *the Law of Teacher-training Program* issued by the Ministry of Education. And furthermore, he said: “documents and data are piled up so high on his desk.” Thereafter, there would be more like snowflakes falling so that he couldn’t cope with them suffering from acute insomnia every night. With a broad grin, he said: “everything is all right now!” That was an implication suggesting that he had finally found a “scapegoat!”

At that time, I didn’t know anything about the Teacher-training Program in detail. The only thing I knew during the mid-1990s in Taiwan was that there was a great deal of changes in the traditional teacher-training system. It had to break up the monopoly system that only the normal university or the teacher-training college could produce teachers for elementary and secondary schools. In another word, the teacher-training business had to be open to the top universities or colleges across the country.

The job for solely running the institute kept me busy enough. Now added to it was to run the Teacher-training Program. How could I manage two works without going crazy? More disgusting was that hardly had I got the Teacher-training Program under way when I had to prepare a report for the evaluation which would be held by the Ministry of Education. Therefore, in the school year of 1996, on the one hand, I had to work out a plan regarding how to select the most qualified students for the program on the campus and how to do the curriculum offering, but on the other, I had to figure out how to deal with the forth-coming evaluation conducted by the Ministry of Education.

That year, 12 graduate students passed the screening test and enrolled in our institute. In the days that followed, 100 undergraduate students who had succeeded in passing the given tests enrolled in the Teacher-training Program. And they were divided into two classes, and each class had 50 students

Within limited human resources and cramped space, I was trying to do my best to keep the administration and management moving along two lines: one is the institute; another, the Teacher-training Program. Sometimes, I had to use the strategy of “Do what I can and see how it goes.” Namely, based on the faculty I had, I got what they specialized in on the time schedule. The most urgent matter was that there would be courses available for students to take when the school started.



At that time, there were only two full-time associate professors in the institute: Rao Mengxia and Yang Huiqin, the former offered psychology and counseling; the latter, curriculum and instructions. These two courses were scheduled for the first-year students in the institute. As to the other core courses, we hired part-time teachers to conduct them. And fortunately, we were gearing ourselves up for recruiting a new faculty member, and Associate Professor, Lu Weiming, with the academic background of education statistics, succeeded in passing the interview of screening committee based on the “Code for Selecting Faculty Members” set by the academic committee of the institute, and joined us timely.

Having done the scheduling for our institute, I had no difficulty doing the same thing for the Teacher-training Program. And this time, I got it done easily.

Having solved all these problems, I immediately started writing the “Report of Evaluation for the Secondary School Teacher-training Program, NCKU.” Though the date for evaluative team to come to NCKU fell on the second semester of the school year, we had to make an early preparation. And we did it this way for fear that when the time was due, and if we did find some logical fallacies in the report, there would be a “leeway” for us to get them aligned. Therefore, in those days, I sat in my office day by day trying very hard to write a good report.

I was held accountable for writing the part of objectives and the characteristic features of our Teacher-training Program. As to the part of curriculum development: core courses, elective courses and the student-teachers’ teaching practice, I asked other three full-time colleagues to write them. Due to our collaboration, in less than two months, a thick copy of the report to deal with the evaluation came out of our concerted effort. As I was very proud of my capability, not bad at all, furtively, all of a sudden, I found out that there was something lacking in the report. In nowhere were there the lists of senior and junior schools or others that provided students for practicing teaching, and of reference books in the field of education found.

Getting the secondary schools for our students’ teaching practice couldn’t be done at one blow. Making a list of those potential junior and senior high including vocational schools around the Tainan area could be done immediately, but paying visits one by one and negotiating with them for signing agreements were not that easy. Only the work for making appointments with the principals would give you headaches. Sometimes, even though an appointment had been fixed and because at the scheduled time, the principal

was on an important mission out of town, I had to schedule another time to see him. As this was a matter of seeking help from him, not was I sought to help. Henceforth, I had to swallow my pride or humble myself.

Being the schools of the NCKU students' teaching practice, they didn't have to pay our students anything. Conversely, they got a lot of helps from our students as teaching assistants, homework assistants, and supervisors for labs. Was there any great deal like this one under the heavens? As a result, there was no need to pay lip services and I got all the agreements signed by the schools that I had contacted.

But there were some technical problems for me to get the signatures affixed on the agreements from the "5-star" senior high, for example, Tainan First Senior High and Tainan Girls' Senior High. They were selective in student-teachers who would be sent to their schools with such a purpose. And they indicated to me that they'd like to accept the students from the Departments of Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Electrical Engineering and Mechanical Engineering.

In order to get the enough number of these schools, and seemingly, the more schools, we could get, the better, our Teacher-training Program would appear to be. Therefore, we worked hard until we got all the junior and senior high, and vocational schools in this region on the list.

As well known, NCKU is noted for its College of Engineering. The library has countless books on engineering studies on the shelves; a Chinese proverb is good enough for describing its magnitude, *hanniu chongdong*, literally translated as that: "numerous books make a pack-ox sweat when books are carted off to a new place, and when stored, the books can fill the building full all the way to its rafters." Our institute was a brand-new setup and though we wanted to step up our effort to buy books of education, it simply wouldn't work out that way because we couldn't get the purchases done overnight. The only way to get it around was to get books, such as books of engineering education, business education, medicine education and general education in. "We cooked up the number of the books," the more books we had put on the list, the better report would look like a real one!"

Having gone through the step of supplementing, I thought that the "Evaluation Report for the Secondary School Teacher-training Program, NCKU" was remarkable. As I looked at this thick copy of report, and "under the influence of self-promotion" I

couldn't help marking 95 points on the 100-scale system in the box of self-evaluation.

Aside from giving my heart-felt thanks to three Associate Professors, Lu Weiming, Rao Mengxia and Yang Huijin for their help, I was very grateful to Lee Huizheng for her tireless efforts. She did the typing at her own pace, and in the meantime, got everything in order. Furthermore, she had a tremendous amount of endurance which stunned all of us. To catch up with the progress, she got the page typed as soon as it was handed over to her. If there were any wrong words and sentences left out, she exercised her patience to get them straight, never showing a frowning look.

During this period of time, there was one event taking place but it was not related to the institute.

One afternoon, Professor Zhou Zechuan of the Department of Chemical Engineering met with me on the Cheng Kung campus. He said to me that there was an American visiting professor, who had finished his contract, would go back to the U.S. in the near future. And he wanted to send him a bronze to express gratitude on behalf of the whole faculty of the department asking me a question, "Chairman. Ma, what is the English translation of *chunfeng huayu*?" (*chunfeng huayu* is a Chinese proverb that can be literally translated as: the life-giving spring wind may finally bring the rain to the world. But it really refers to the students who have been encouraged by a good teacher, may grow in their academic performances, from B students to A students). Though I am from the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, having taught English for years, he got me there. After returning to my office and thinking very hard about what the best translation might be, I finally got it rendered as such, "Under you, everybody is educable." In it, there is neither the word, "wind" nor the word, "rain." And it didn't fit in with the three translation principles set by Yang Fu, the greatest translator in China: *xin* or faithfulness, *da* or fluency and *ya* or elegance. However, my rendition echoed sort of essence of that proverb. My second thought was that if I got this English version translated back into Chinese again, I would think that *youjiu wulei*, or providing education for all without discrimination was also appropriate. Wasn't it?

Shortly after the second semester of that school year started in spring, the former Vice Minister of Education, Shi Jinchi, led the evaluative team to come to our school, and I was one of the evaluative team members, too. In order not to violate the rule, "The ball game player cannot be the referee simultaneously." Therefore, I asked Associate Professor Rao Mengxia to play the host role while briefing.

Aside from our three faculty members in the opening session, Professor Mao Qiwu of the Department of Electrical Engineering, one of the supervisors in the teaching practice program was also invited to participate in that opening session explaining how the “Cuble” invented by him to teach Math.

I took 10-some odd members of that team to inspect the Center of Teacher-training Program; simultaneously, let them see our teaching facilities and equipment and our general library. All of them indicated to me that within such a short span of time, the accomplishments we had made were incredible. What they regretted was that the Center of Teacher-training Program and the Graduate Institute of Education shared the same office for two different educational purposes. And they considered it inappropriate and it should be marked as a flaw. And they said that they would make recommendation to the school authorities, the Center of Teacher-training Program ought to have its own office.

The outcome of this evaluation was conformed to our own expectation. The Teacher-training Program of NCKU was ranked among the top three. Besides the outcome of the evaluation was published on the major newspapers in Taiwan, we were cited by the then President, Weng Zhengyi, for our achievements.

After I finished that “Mission Impossible,” it was about the time for me to retire. A farewell party was held in my honor, and after enjoying a sumptuous “feast,” I quit the National Cheng Kung University because of the age limit.

## Chapter 38

### Enjoying My Retirement

On December 31, 1998, I was officially retired. On the following morning, firstly, I drove to the NCKU campus, then, to Houjia Junior High, and finally, to Tainan Stadium on Jingcong Rd. to see if there was any fitness program that fit me.

In Tainan Stadium, I saw a Taiji Quan master demonstrating the 40 form (Yang's style), one after another. He had an imposing appearance, and was the highly trained and experienced man in the field. Upon inquiring, I came to know that his name was Liang Xianyun from Wushu Academy in Beijing.

I have been captivated with Taiji Quan since then. And firstly, I learned the 37 form (Zheng Manqing's style), then the 24, 42, and 48 forms (Chen's style) respectively, and finally, Five-step Quan (basics) and Ring Quan. As to Taiji Jian (Jian, a sort of hand weapon with a long metal blade and a hilt with a hand guard used for striking), I learned from the 32 form through 33, 42, 49, *Xingyijians*, or shape-will Sword, *wudangtaijijian* or Taoists's style in Mt. Wudang, *yunlongjian* or dragon-back ride with sword-wielding to *Panlongjian* or coiled snake which was moving. As for Taiji Dao (boardsword), I learned from the 33 form through Elementary, Master Chen's 48 form, Plum blossom form to Little Li's form. As for Taiji Shan, shan meaning fan, I learned from the Lotus form through Yang's and Chen's styles, Gonfu Shan: Part one and Part two, Double Fans to Mulan Shan. As to Taiji Gun (a 2m long wooden stick), I learned two forms called *longhu gun*, or dragon and tiger, and *qimei gun*, or a stick standing straight up to the height of one's brows. The Yang family's lance (2m or 4m long) also got rooted in my head. Overall, whatever our teachers had taught, I learned them all.

Every day, I got up around 5:30 a.m. After finishing toileting, I went to the stadium to practice the Taiji stuff.

Our masters were demanding and requiring us to have each posture executed correctly. But I often grumbled at what they were doing. At my age, that I could get up at such an early hour and drove to the stadium to practice a variety of Taiji could be considered great. How could I be trained as those Taoists in Mt. E. Mei who are with a goal to get in the state of immortality? As a result, I frequently and privately warned

myself that I couldn't do it exactly as demanded, but to carry out each posture as thoroughly as I could. Other than that, I wouldn't like to go beyond. If I would, I might get hurt. With this in my mind, I didn't think every posture done by me could be compared to the level set in the Taiji field. Therefore, I often felt ashamed of myself about what I had done, and simultaneously, because of this feeling, a piece of poem entitled, "Sword-practicing" came by itself. It was used as sort of self-motivation stuff.

I practice my sword at dawn

Even one leaf of a tree doesn't fall

Mist is spreading and blocking my view

And the air force (qi) flow is cut off in my arms

And my eyes can't follow where the sword is striking

My mind cannot coordinate the movements of my feet

The chessmen have crossed the river already in the Chinese chess game

Every move becomes ridiculous and deviated from track

The fire in the *dantian*, or the lower part of abdomen, has long been dimmed

But if I continue practicing the Taiji sword as diligently as I can

Sparks will be shooting out

I shall be able to run to another spring

There were lots of people in the Tainan Stadium Taiji Group who are likened to "crouched tigers in the deep mountains and coiled dragons in the deep waters," all sorts of talented people are obtainable there. Among them, there were two "masters," Messrs. Liu Ming and Liu Zuochang. The former played guitar as well as Taiji; the latter was a master of *qigong* or air strength. Though both were in their late 80s, they were healthy and full of energy. Ming taught me the 37 form, Zheng style; Zuochang, the secrets of his self-invented *qigong* named Sun and Moon.

In order not to dismantle the academic attainments I had got in those years, I

continued teaching at the DFLL on a part-time basis, 4 hours per week. Other than that, I tried my hand at writing “modern poetry” to kill time.

Unexpectedly, having just had this kind of easy life for two years and a month, I was asked to take up another “Mission Impossible.” And that “ruined” my everyday life, again.

## Chapter 39

# Setting Up the Department of Applied English for Leader College

Around January 2000, while walking on the Gunfu campus at NCKU, I met the former chairperson of the DFLL, Chen Rende. After shaking hands, he and I exchanged greetings. And it seemed that he had something to tell me, but to withhold it. At last, he let it go: “Dean Ma, (referring to the post I once held as dean of student affairs), there is a privately funded institution called the Leader College of Management which will be established. There is an opening for chairman of the Department of English. I am wondering whether you’re interested or not?”

By then, I had often heard that a NCKU professor so-and-so, who after retiring, was rehired as president of a private university, while another professor in the same token, chairman of a department by another private university. Frankly speaking, as the news of the second career after retirement spread through the whole campus, I was more than happy to see they had been reemployed. Given that how many books had a 65-year-old retired professor consumed? How many research projects had he done? And how much life experience had he had? These questions gave the answers by themselves. If he was still strong having an open mind, and if there were still students who’d like to take course with him, why did the school force him to retire because of the age limit? No other thing in the world could be compared to the squandering of human capital like this! If it was rumored that he kept the younger generation from climbing the rung of academic ladder, based on my own perspective, it was completely out of the line. If I belonged to the younger generation and was “a talented guy,” who could stop me to get promoted?

However, this “windfall” caused a ripple of excitement in me.

From the positive point of view, I had done the nationally funded university administrators’ jobs for more than ten years. Based on this background, I could set up a brand-new department with facility. Moreover, getting something started is always hard at the initial stage, and once I got it kicked off, everything should go smoothly. Simultaneously, I thought the other way around that if there was somebody asking me to



take on a post like that, it meant he looked up to me as a right candidate. If I was not qualified, though I begged him earnestly to take me, he would turn me down bluntly.

From the negative point of view, at the time I was 67 years old looking robust but aged. If somebody put pressure upon me and if because of that pressure, I suffered from insomnia and indigestion, what should I do? And I had been working in the public school all my life. Once in the private one, I probably met with some of the people who might be “snobbish.” How should I deal with them, quit or stay? As soon as I thought of this, I became hesitant. I grabbed the phone and told Chen that I’d like to thank him for his kindness to recommend me and made a decision not to take the job. Unexpectedly, he said that what I had worried was something imagined because the Board of Trustees of the Leader College of Management had hired the former chair, Professor Shik Hungchi, of the Department of Urban Planning and Development at NCKU as the first president.

Professor Shik was savvy, capable and experienced. And once a decision was made, he would never waver despite whatever difficulty lay ahead of it. When Weng Zhengyi was heading the NCKU, he was dean of general affairs. In spite of the fierce protests from the faculty, staff members, custodians and janitors of the university, he hiked up the parking fee of \$2,000 in the basement. And when he was the chairman of the Department of Urban Planning and Development, I was heading the DFLL. We sat in countless meetings. Though we couldn’t be regarded as close friends, at least, he and I were on friendly terms. Thinking of this type of relationship between him and me, I promised to go to the college giving a try.

But when I contacted him officially, he told me that a change had been made. He wanted me to assume the office of dean of student affairs.

The education facilities of the college were under construction in the Annan area of Tainan City. The site for the school was ringed by sugarcane farms and let out under a lease from Taiwan Sugar Company. Aside from the loud noises of pile-driving, “Din! Din!” and clouds of dust which blanketed the sky, there was nothing seen there. And even the preparation committee didn’t have a place for holding a meeting. Having no choice, we had to move back to the NCKU compus and had a loan of a conference room in the Department of Urban Planning and Development for such a purpose.

In the meeting, besides the designated dean of general affairs, Zhen Deying, the rest were all my old colleagues at NCKU. Of them, Professor Lee Maoxiong, former

secretary general of the president, Xia Hanmin, was appointed dean of academic affairs; Associate Professor Liu Qingtai, former dean of academic affairs in the evening school program, chairman of the department of English; and former chairman of history, Professor, Huang Yaoneng, chairman of the department of Japanese. All these old colleagues gathered together and tried to voice their opinions about the potential problems of how to recruit students. There were two things considered pointed: one was how to kick off a good start of the college; another was how to get the quota of students fixed by the Ministry of Education.

Though I was appointed dean of student affairs now, yet under me, I had neither “soldiers” nor “cadres,” namely, “a general without any following.” The most urgent thing was that I had to work on a plan in detail for the prospective students who came from afar could move into our newly-built dormitory without any difficulty when the school year started.

I didn't know where the President of the Board of Trustees, Wang Rongchang, heard of such a term, “Community Service.” And he sent me to get on a “pilgrimage” to the Zhaoyang College of Technology, in which the community service program had been conducted for years, to get sutras, or to learn the program. He said: “The Leader College of Management is a brand-new school. Once the school gets started, we must have students do some of the community service works, and instill the Spartan values in students so that students can build character, for example, self-reliance, endurance, courage, etc.”

In reality, “Community Service” was nothing else but to do the cleaning work for the school and listed as one of the compulsory courses with zero credit. And all students had to take it for one year. If failed, students couldn't graduate from the college. Honestly speaking, it was Wang's mechanism because running a private school had to take the cost of hiring janitors into consideration.

All of the staff openings in the varying sections under my office had almost been filled. And all these sections got ready to begin operating. However, at this juncture, the originally appointed chairman of the department of English, Liu Qingtai, was suddenly transferred to the office of academic affairs, assigned a new job, and held responsible for running the recruitment. President Shik asked me to do an extra job charging me with heading the department of English. He said this was nothing but to be just a little bit of extra work for me to do for the school.

As the Leader College of Management was at the stage of pioneering called *Bilulanlu*, or to blaze a trail in the hills. Therefore, “everyone is worthy of ten men, ten men, one hundred.” This way, the college could be run economically, and I certainly understood the implication of this saying. Because of this tacit understanding, I had nothing to grumble at but to accept the job at such a “crucial hour.” But I felt it was rather late because the school would start immediately.

Once I was in office, the first thing that bothered me was the translation of the title of the department. If I translated it from Chinese into English as the Department of Applied English, it would fit with the first one of the three translation guidelines “faithfulness,” not the other two of “fluency” and “eloquence.” Worse, though I had looked up through the American university catalog at the general library of NCKU, I was not able to find any title like that, only the Department of English or English as a Second Language Program could be found. Again, if I translated the title from Chinese into English as the Department of English, then what is the difference between the one focusing on literary studies and the one focusing on practical English? After giving much thought to this, I favored my first translation, the Department of Applied English. Later, I did find there was such a title in the Australian university catalog, for example, the Department of Applied Physics and the Department of Applied Mathematics. Based on these findings, I emboldened myself to get the English translation of the title of our department finally fixed, the Department of Applied English. In fact, English is English, why do people distinguish the difference between literary English and practical English? That is the ruse of expediency used by academics who have different ideas.

The second problem was the shortage of qualified teachers for the department. Getting the qualified ones to teach core courses was easy. If unable to get the qualified on a full-time basis, I could get some on a part-time basis. However, getting a native speaker in timely was out of the question. Moreover, by then, an Applied English Department, which didn’t have a native speaker, didn’t look like the Department of Applied English at all. Accordingly, I searched everywhere in hopes of that I could find one who possessed master's degree in this shortest period of time. If I couldn’t find one on a full-time basis, a part-time one would be okay. Whatever the case it might be, I had to get one for the first semester, and afterwards, I’d work out a long-range plan.

As one week was away from the start of the school, the progress for getting a native speaker got nowhere. It seemed as if I had lost in a sort of labyrinth knowing no way out. Suddenly, there was inspiration striking me that why didn’t I go to the Chinese Language

Program of the Language Center at NCKU exploring the possibility of those international students who came to Taiwan to learn Mandarin? The result was that the majority of British, American and Canadian students in our Chinese-learning program in southern Taiwan possessed only bachelors' degrees. Few of them were masters' degree holders.

When searching everywhere and “exagerratedly speaking, wearing out a pair of endurable shoes,” I couldn't find one. Fortunately, I met Chen Shuling who was serving in the Language Center by Cheng Kung Lake. She said: “a graduate named Damien Trezise from the center is Australian. He is not only a master's degree holder but also a Chinese major from Monash University in Australia. He is decent and easy-going. I can assure you that he is an ideal candidate. But right now, he is teaching English to children in Kaohsiung City, and I can call him on your behalf exploring whether he is interested in teaching in Leader or not.” I told her that if the answer was positive, she could fix a time and a place for me to interview him.

Mr. Trezise of Australia gave off the great glow of an English gentleman. At first glance, I could tell that he was a guy with middle-aged man's maturity and young man's energy. His eyes were the reflection of honesty and his lips curling up made him look as if he was going to smile. All these personality traits made you feel comfortable and free while being with him. He indicated to me that he would be very happy to have such an opportunity to teach at the Leader College of Management. However, he had been bound by a contract with someone in a preschool program in Kaohsiung. Once he made up his mind to teach at our school, he had to fulfil his contract which would expire in October. I told him: “there won't be any problem for you to do that. The classes scheduled for you will be on hold. Once you report to our school, you can find time to make the classes up.”

The original plan submitted to the Ministry of Education for Department of Applied English, Leader, was to get two classes of 100 students. Due to unspecified reasons, only one class had been okayed by the Ministry. After receiving the notification from the Ministry, I had to do my utmost by lodging an appeal. And besides explaining our desperate “needs,” what I had to do was to do the wording again and again. On the following year, we finally got what we had wanted.

I was working two college administrators' jobs: One office was located on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of our administration building (dean of student affairs), another, the 6<sup>th</sup> floor (chairman of Department of Applied English). I was running up and down between these two offices. Although hard, yet when I saw a brand-new school set up from its scratch

and grow rapidly like this, couldn't I be happy? And furthermore, in numerous meetings, I repeatedly suggested that the school authorities should increase the English-speaking and English-listening skills for the entire Leader College students. Accordingly, the school could be an institution of higher learning with the feature. Listed below are my suggestions:

1. On each floor of the student's dorm, a counselor is available to students in English-learning. And the post should be assumed by someone who comes to the NCKU Language Center to learn Mandarin. The school should provide him with board and lodging. Living together, this counselor and students will learn the languages, English and Mandarin, from each other.
2. Aside from Audio Visual classes scheduled, Department of Applied English should organize a Speech Club hosted by native speaker. By so doing, students are provided with the one-on-one opportunity in which they can sharpen their speaking and listening calibers. Furthermore, students can get rid of their fear and bashfulness while speaking the language with foreigners.
3. The Department of Applied English should encourage the graduating class to stage an English play every year so that the fruits of their learning over the past 4 years can be shown. And by doing so, Leader can display this endeavor as one aspect of students' extracurricular activities.
4. An English newspaper entitled, *The Leader Students*, will be periodically issued. Students organize their own editing committee and get all the works of interviewing, editing, proof-reading, printing, and circulating mapped out. At the time student reporters have turned in their writings, one of the native speakers will check with them and correct the grammatical errors student reporters have committed.

It was pitiful, only No. 2 and No. 3 were implemented. The rest died during the period of planning.

When everything in the school was in full swing and the Leader College of Management was nick-named "Little Chengda, little NCKU," unfortunately, I was hit by depression and exhausted physically and mentally. In the daytime, I fell into a trancelike state, and at night, I couldn't fall asleep. Consequently, I rushed myself to see doctor at the hospital affiliated with NCKU. The doctor said: "the symptoms are derived from

pressure!” hinting that I had to resign all the college administrators’ jobs I held. Agreeing to this admonition from this medical professional, I immediately did what I was told. Simultaneously, I had made up my mind that I would like to quit the school with no resitation if the resignation would be turned down.

President, Wang of the Board of Trustees and President Shek of the school, understood what my real problem was, and permitted me to quit all of the administrators’ jobs.

It took me a lot of time to get this “mental breakdown” recovered. Hereafter, I concentrated on teaching and researching only.

## Chapter 40

## “Pursuing the Star”

--written for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of the DFLL at NCKU

Around April 2007, I met the then Chairwoman, Ms. Liu Kailing, in the hallway of the DFLL building. She told me that in the immediate future, she would hold a ceremony to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the DFLL hoping that I could write a piece of “modern poem” to recite as one of a series of activities in the opening ceremony. Because I knew that writing a piece of poem to heap praises on somebody or on something was not an easy job, I wouldn't like to commit myself to giving her a definite answer right away, but to tell her that I would certainly like to give a try. I also told her that the deadline for turning in that piece was unpredictable, maybe tomorrow or never.

Writing poetry needs inspiration. If there is nothing that comes as fast as lightning, a poet won't be able to produce high quality works. Only bad poems are made from a burner of middle night oil.

From the moment I was entrusted with such a task, I walked around Cheng Kung Lake thinking very hard about how to write such a piece of poem. As well known, it is not the length of the poem that matters but the real stuff. In other words, there must be something spiritual in it. It couldn't be too complicated because it would be recited in public. It couldn't be too simple either. If it was made too simple, the poem would lose its charm. The poem couldn't be used as a calculator to calculate the strengths of the DFLL, and if so done, the poem would get into an ingratiating manner only to blindly lavish praises on the department. Nor could the poem be utilized to enumerate the weaknesses of the DFLL and if so done, the poem would lack something encouraging for the DFLL.

“Oh! Oh! What should I do?”

Under the scorching sun, I kept walking around the lake in search of inspiration. Suddenly when I heard the bell chiming rhythmically and saw a student jumping on a flight of stairs to Xiuqi Building and rushing himself to his classroom, seemingly, I had the idea of how to write the piece. By that enlightenment, I should personify the department. As a result, a short piece entitled, “Pursuing the Star” was formed in my

mind:

The bell for students' going to classes is chiming

I realize that I am knocked onto the 50<sup>th</sup> stair of the staircase

Chin up to look upward

There will be countless stairs lying ahead of me

Please don't ask me to what degree I was weather beaten in the distant past

Nor ask me how many wounds I got by the arrow

I was trained as the knight of round table with big muscles

Like a bell, the harder, I get struck, the louder, I shall clang

Ignoring those sleeping willows by Chung Kung Lake

With a gentle breeze in the evening

After taking a mouthful of water and reposing myself a while

I will surely get on this journey again



## Chapter 41

### The Course of Research Methodology

In 2003, the application submitted by the Department of Applied English at Leader to the Ministry of Education for establishing a master's degree program was approved. And this program was divided into two groups: ESL, and Literary Studies. Because Research Methodology was one of the core courses. The candidate, who was going to teach that course, became indecisive. Having weighed the pros and the cons of several potential candidates, the then chairwoman finally decided to let me teach the course, Research Methodology for Literary Studies.

In my opinion, the so-called Research Methodology for Literary Studies was nothing else but to instruct the students in the master's degree program how to wrap up their theses. Aside from the guidelines for writing a thesis, the course should be involved with literary criticism, and in turn, conducting this course by introducing literary criticism to the students should not be deviated from the right track.

There are countless books about literary criticism. Among them, I picked two books that matched the students' reading level in the MA program at Leader: one is *Beginning Literary Criticism* by Professor Michael E. Holstein, the other, *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* by Wilfred L. Guerin, etc.

*Beginning Literary Criticism* is not a hefty book but a good one, consisting only of 113 pages.<sup>73</sup> It is large in scope. It firstly begins with the first step of introducing literary criticism, the reading techniques of the genres, drama, novel and poetry, then moves on to the second step of how to find a topic and how to organize a thesis, and finally, gets on the third step of how to make the footnote and the bibliography, and to the finish. This small book is a creation of logical flow in writing. Moreover, especially, it warns the student who is learning how to write a thesis that the most precious thing of a thesis lies in its originality. The most important thing the student should do is studying the first-hand material, namely, the work itself, instead of the second-hand material, literary criticism. If the order is reversed, the student will pass off other people's opinions. Thus, the author should lay much emphasis on originality. If a right topic has been found, the student will be on his way and complete his thesis easily.

The profundity of this book is achieved with breathtaking lightness. Readers with a few years' English education and knowledge of literature can comprehend the contents without any difficulty.

There are lots of concrete examples listed about how to write a thesis. If one follows them closely and keeps on practicing one step after another, one should get the secrets of wrapping up a thesis.

As for the questions about how to make the footnote and the bibliography, it shows simple examples for the beginners to follow. If read more times, one can come to know the “tricks.”

The book also reminds the reader of the fact that the tricks of getting the deeper reading comprehension of literary criticism lies in close reading. In turn, the reader must familiarize himself with the oft-used vocabulary, and terminology. By so doing, he can harvest the “crop” by the Chinese proverb, “Half the work with double results.” In addition, three parts of speech, prepositions, conjunctions and adverbs play the pivotal roles. Writing a good thesis depends upon them. Overall, this small book leads us to the exactly right way of wrapping up a thesis.

*A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* has been highly valued by the academics in the field since its first edition published in 1960.<sup>74</sup> In 2005, its 5<sup>th</sup> revised edition came out. And it has been translated into many different languages, namely, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Spanish and Portuguese.

The book is composed of more than 400 pages, written and edited by leading author in collaboration with four other scholars or specialists. It is characterized by the following:

1. The literary theory (research methodology) is divided into nine approaches: textual, historical, philosophical, formalist, psychological, mythological, cultural, feminist, and the play of meaning.
2. Aside from the play of meaning approach, each approach uses six classics to test its applicability via *Hamlet*, “To His Coy Mistress,” *Huckleberry Finn*, “Young Goodman Brown,” “Everyday Use,” and *Frankenstein*. Therefore, students can get a clear picture of how applicable these approaches to literature are. Conversely, these six classics including the genres: drama, poetry and novel can

be served as “tools” by the said approaches to induct, deduct, and analyze to get their “real stuff.” And these classics have been proved that they have characteristic features of multifarious dimensions.

3. The authors of the book have traced each approach to its origin and development and had it clearly expounded. Once a student has finished studying it, he will get the panorama view of the approach rather than *yiguan kuibao*, or using a length of pipe to see one spot on a leopard, just partly, not wholly. Moreover, listed at the end of each chapter are the entries of the bibliography for those who are interested in learning more about it.
4. The structuralism and poststructuralism in Chapter 10 are the most difficult literary theories. Unless a reader who has long steeped in literary theories, one cannot understand the real stuff of them. But in this book, the editing members use the shortest paragraphs to summarize and analyze them so clearly that readers can grasp the rough pictures of them. These are the things considered the most valuable in studying literary theory.
5. This book emphasizes enlightenment rather than conclusion. It can be said that the literary theory is still developing. Based on what we have had, scholars can deepen it and furthermore, create a brand-new one. Even a reader can create a literary theory of his own.
6. The book is very rich in contents and the text structure is well organized, full of beautiful sentences and witty remarks, too numerous to enumerate. While reading, the reader will be extremely fascinated by it.

The course of Research Methodology for the group of literary studies students was conducted by me for four years. Every semester, there were six or seven students taking this course. I frully enjoyed being in this small class in which I profited myself by the saying: “To teach is to learn.”

## Chapter 42

### Hemingway Studies

In that Master's Degree Program and in the first semester of each school year, I offered the course, Research Methodology for Literary Studies group; in the second, Hemingway Studies. In fact, in the earlier years, I offered a course called Selected Readings from American Novels at the DFLL at NCKU. And the novels I selected for teaching that course were the Hemingway's major works. If I traced Hemingway's stuff further back to my undergraduate days, I read *The Old Man and the Sea*, which won him the Nobel Prize. Since then, I have been greatly interested in his novels, and with the time gone by, this interest doesn't fade away but to continue growing.

Roughly, there are 18 weeks in a semester. And within this period of time, I teach students Hemingway's four major novels and two short stories: *The Sun Also Rises*, *A Farewell to Arms*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and *The Old Man and the Sea*; "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," and "The Snows of Kilimanjaro." Each one of these works is interesting and intriguing. But aside from *The Old Man and the Sea*, they all have something to do with death.

The title of *The Sun Also Rises* is derived from the first chapter of *Ecclesiastes of the Old Testament of the Holy Bible*: "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher, "utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless. What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun? Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises and the sun sets and hurries back to where it rises."<sup>75</sup> In addition, the *yinwen*, or the quotation for this novel on the inside of the cover page of *The Sun Also Rises* is also from the *Ecclesiastes*: "The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again."<sup>76</sup>

From these two quotations, we see that Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* and some of his other works are not deviated from "nihilism," especially, from the main theme of the *Ecclesiastes*.

The protagonist, Jake Barnes, gets injured in his loins in the war. Therefore, he can't have sex with his girlfriend, Brett Ashley. The love both of them have been seeking

changes into such a situation that they have intense feelings of longing for it, yet it becomes useless and results in nothing (their love becomes stereotypical when the novel starts in Paris, and so does it when the novel ends in Madrid). And in between, there are the complicated plot going on that Robert Cohn and Pedro Romero are courting Brett Ashley, too. Consequently, the secondary tension is created, and that keeps these three men in rivalry. Complicated as it is, eventually, all the happenings turn into “smoldering embers and flying ashes.” And everything returns to its original place where it starts.

Under the sun, there is nothing new. Not everyday is a good day but we have to live on anyway. And when the sun rises in the east again, does that symbolize a new era is coming? Or is another kind of “nihilism” being formed? This wounded love story, in turn, alludes to “You are all lost generation.” And actually, it is the reality of the then world, so is the extreme complexity in human relationships. There are no code heroes created by Hemingway in this novel; the heaven and the earth exist forever. And only when the truth of this kind dawns upon us, do we realize what Hemingway really means what code heroes are!

*A Farewell to Arms* is a novel that describes war and love. In the first chapter, the keynote of “nihilism” has been set for this novel.

There is a group of soldiers walking along the road towards the front in the rain. After that, there is nothing left on the road but fallen leaves rolling on and on. After that, the road becomes “bare” again. In the first chapter which consists of only one and a half pages, the word, “bare,” has appeared seven times, and so has “nihilism” permeated everywhere including human beings and other living beings on earth.

Thus, the leading and supporting characters, Frederic Henry and Catherine Barkley, cannot get away from the destiny of “nihilism.” And from their first meeting, they are doomed to bareness or nothingness in the end. That Frederic wears a mask of bravado courting Catherine substitutes for his going whoring in the “Bawdy House for officers” where he plays the girls false, in fact carnally driven. In the same token, Catherine takes Frederic to fill the void left by her maiden lover who got killed in the war, and continues to play Frederic false, too. Out of expectation, this kind of sham thing develops into a true love story that even makes the heavenly father and the earth mother their sympathizers.”

However, having gone through the setback of the military withdrawal, Frederic

suffers a lot: firstly, he is arrested, and makes a narrow escape from the court-martial by jumping into the river; secondly, Frederic and Catherine almost become Italian gendarmes' arrestees while living in the hotel; and finally, they risk their lives crossing the Switzerland border. After all of these misfortunes, it dawns upon Frederic that Catherine is an indispensable partner in his life. They are compared to the "Chinese ducks" fleeing the war. And though having not gone through a wedding ceremony, they become a wedded couple in reality. They try to live sort of happy life somewhere in Switzerland. Nonetheless, at the end of the novel, Catherine died of childbirth. And everything returns to nothingness.

After Catherine's death in the hospital, Frederic walks back to his hotel alone with the rain which though suggests a sort of new birth, yet everything becomes a dream to him.

The novel tinged with the religious color is undoubtful. Given Frederic has been with the chaplain in the mess hall for such a long time, he has learned something religious from the chaplain through *erru muran*, or the way the chaplain speaks or acts. And Frederic finally grasps the essence of religion (Christianity) and speaks out such a golden word: "In defeat, we believe in God."<sup>77</sup>

The difference between this novel and *The Sun Also Rises* lies in that there is a code hero in it. That is Frederic Henry. He shows contempt on the abstract nouns: "glory," "honor," "courage," "hallow," and regards them as the empty words used as tools for hoaxing people into doing something wrong. And they are not comparable to those concrete words such as "village," "street," "river," and "troops." The former is fictive; the latter realistic.

Hemingway looks down on big shots or big organizations such as nation and by contrast, praises small potatoes or small units because they stress humanity.

The scene of the chaotic retreat is written extremely well. Apart from Leo Tolstoy's well-defined retreat in the novel *War and Peace*, no retreating scene in other novels is written as vividly as in *A Farewell to Arms*.

*For Whom the Bell Tolls* starts with how to blow up a strategic bridge. As far as time is concerned, it is a 3-day or a 72-hour story, and as the space is concerned, it is a bridge as a center. However, it develops into Hemingway's the big and fat book in all his works.

Robert Jordan has had a hunch that he won't return alive since accepting the mission of exploding the bridge. (There is a similarity between him and an assassin named Jing Ke in the Qin Dynasty of China in terms of mission. When Jing Ke bid farewell to his folks, he came up with a couplet and sang: "with the wind screaming on the frozen Yi River, the fearless shall not return). Moreover, after Pilar, one of the female members of the guerrilla group, does the palm reading for him, and showed sort of air of mystery, Robert further confirms that his doomsday is coming.

He falls in love with a girl, Maria, one of guerrilla members, and in the sleeping bag outside the cave, they consummate their love on the snowy ground. And they feel that earth is moving beneath them while engaging in sexual intercourse in the tall grasses. That signifies that the true love is there (Robert really goes for Maria, so does Maria) according to the Gypsy's astrology. Moreover, the bond of love forged in war is extremely different from the others.

With the time gone by, a series of deaths begins to occur. At the first stage of the battle, the guerrilla group led by El Sordo is stranded on the top of the mountain by the government troops, and then, as the bombers skim over the mountain and drop bombs and finally no one is survived. At the second stage, No. 1 Fernando gets hit bleeding to death on the hillside; No. 2, having detonated the device to demolish the bridge, the old man Anselmo is crushed by the fallen rock. At the final stage when Robert reins his horse across the narrow gorge on which the gun fires are converging, unfortunately, his horse gets hit by a bullet, and his left leg is pinned and bleeding under the fallen horse. Consequently, he cannot make an escape with the other members who dedicated their lives to the bridge explosion. It turns out such a miserable situation that he is left behind and alone with his rifle in his hands, waiting for the enemy to come to get him. He is stuck awaiting his death.

The most moving scene of this novel is that when Robert with a broken leg bids farewell to Maria, "Listen to this well, rabbit," (nickname for Maria), .... "Thou wilt go now, rabbit. But I go with thee. As long as there is one of us there is both of us. Don't you understand?" (philosophy of oneness)<sup>78</sup> If there is no true love presenting between Robert and Maria, "nihilism" cannot be felt so keen, especially, after their parting from each other.

*A Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* are the same in teamworkers' death that in the former, there are only two comrades killed, others run away for their lives; in

the latter, besides El Sordo's group, three, the rest totally withdrew to safety.

The title of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is derived from one of John Donne's works, the 17<sup>th</sup> century metaphysical poet, "No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent a part of its main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if promontory were, as well as any manner of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore, never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."<sup>79</sup>

Without doubt, *The Old Man and the Sea* is Hemingway's masterpiece. Being akin to a Chinese proverb, *Ouxinqixu*, or straining his heart till it is bleeding, he polishes it into a gem. Thus, this work brought him two big prizes, the Pulitzer Prize and the Nobel Prize.

After getting no fish for 84 days, the old man, Santiago, finally gets a huge and incomparable fish, the Marlin, in the deep waters. He fights for two days and three nights to subjugate the fish. This catch proves that he is *baoda weilao*, or a precious broadsword and though old yet not rusty, it is still sharp and capable of cutting things. It is also referring to the fact that he is still the greatest fisherman in the world.

The fish is longer than the fishing boat. And the old man has no other choice but to tie it to the side of his boat. When he is rowing his boat home, he whistles and calculates how is he going to sell this fish in the fish market? Out of the blue, the side of the boat is teeming with a school of sharks that follows the bloody traces of the Marlin gnawing the old man's "trophy" ruthlessly one bite after another. Although Santiago does his best to engage in a fight with the unflinching sharks, he is outnumbered, having no way to keep the greedy mouths from tearing it off. In a flash, the old man's "hope" is snatched away by the huge sharks' scarlet mouths.

The old man returns to the port where he sets out to sea. With his mast on his shoulder, he trudges uphill to his shabby shack. Left behind is the Marlin's skeleton beside the moored boat, the whole skeleton swaying along with the waves. Isn't this a kind of "nihilism?"

The other two short stories are "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber and "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" which end with denouements of "nihilism," too. However, two questions remain unanswered: No. 1: "Does Margaret intend to murder her husband, Francis, or is he killed by an accident?" No. 2: "How does the leopard get to the top of



19,700 feet high in Mt. Kilimanjaro?” And there is a variety of interpretations but nobody can give definite answers even to this day.

Without doubt, “nihilism” permeates all of Hemingway’s works. The most obvious example lies in his short story “A Clean Well-Lighted Place.”<sup>80</sup> He used the word “nothingness” to substitute for the key words in the Lord’s Prayer. It can be considered unique.

If life is futile, why do people like to keep living in this world? It dawns upon me eventually that Hemingway stresses on the course of life in which people all fight for survival. Like all apprentices created by Hemingway in his novels, we try to learn how to survive in the hard times getting rid of obstacles that we have had in our daily life. If not, how did Hemingway create such well-known quotes as follows?

“But man is not made for defeat”

“A man can be destroyed, not defeated.”<sup>81</sup>

The quotes are the greatest enlightenments that I have got from reading Hemingway’s works. Depending on these two quotes, I have gone through many difficulties in my life.

I stayed at Leader until January 31, 2008 ending up my second teaching career, seven and a half years in total. During this period of time, no matter where I was, in the Department of Applied English or in the Office of Student Affairs, my colleagues and I were getting along very well. Moreover, I enjoyed being respected.

One thing worthy of mentioning here is that during my second career at Leader in the last two years and with a concerted effort from my colleagues of the Department of Applied English, our department passed the most rigorous evaluation held by the Ministry of Education. This was a big accomplishment for a fledgling department like ours, especially, in a privately funded college of this kind.

## Epilogue

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In 2009, I quit my part-time teaching job at NCKU and retired outright intending to enjoy my retirement. At the time I was 78, and thinking of the years ahead of me, with no offspring nearby to turn to for help if needed, I had to go to America to live with my two children. But each year, we wanted to come back to our family house in Tainan staying for some time and visiting our relatives, neighbors and old friends. We also hoped that in the future, as long as our health permits, we'd like to get on the sight-seeing tour to some scenic spots in the Mainland, and there is always possibility for us to visit Zhonglan, my eldest sister in Nanjing, Yulan, half-sister in Jinan and Shumin, my sister-in-law, in the city of Mudanjiang.

In retrospect, despite I have gone through lots of suffering, the story of my life can still not be considered the typical example in the times. Among my contemporaries, some of them have gone through more struggles and bitter hardships than I. If they are willing to get their memoirs written, theirs will be of more significance than mine because they are the people who are the real witnesses of the age of upheaval. However, living in America, I have frequently been asked a question like this: "During the late 1940s, how did you get out of the Mainland?" I usually gave them a strained smile instead of an answer. However, once I started a conversation with somebody about my ups and downs that I had gone through, I couldn't make my life story straight in a few words.

In addition, at the time I taught at NCKU, I saw some of the students who were lazy and unmotivated during the class time and often took out some chapters of this memoir, for example, Selling Shoes in Qingtao, Rough Road to Fuzhou, Joining the Army in the Penghu Islands, University Days, and two trips to the U.S. to get my degrees to boost them up.

Those who had been associated with me for some time were also curious about my teen's life. How did a 17 years old boy manage to leave the Mainland? How did I survive in Taiwan? After listening to my untold stories, they thought unanimously and indicated to me, "Why don't you get the whole thing down on the paper?"

Another factor that presses me to write this memoir dated back to the Double Ninth Day designated for the elderly people in 1966. It is called Double Ninth because the

festival falls on the 9<sup>th</sup> date in September, the 9<sup>th</sup> month of the year.

A luncheon party was hosted by the Cultural Commission on the Double Ninth Day aiming to show respects to senior writers and artists. My name was on the guest list, and I was invited.

On that occasion, I unexpectedly met Ya Huen, the chief editor of the supplementary edition affiliated with *The United Daily News*, and right at that moment when Qing Yue was returning a photograph to him in which there are six young soldiers in uniforms. And I immediately handed it over to him and asked him to identify who I was in the picture. He pinpointed me in the photo at a glance. After carefully examining each one of us in the photo for a while, he said to me: “Please write the story about this picture. How is that?”

It took me about five days to finish a piece of article entitled: “My Wenyi or Literature and Arts Friends in the Army” and mailed it to him. Unexpectedly, on July 7, 1997, the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Victory Over Japan Day, it got published by four installments, namely, taking 4 days to run the whole thing. Without anticipation, this piece of writing caused a sensation among the students from Shandong Province. Some of them I knew, and some of them I didn’t, called me continuously and talked with me about our past. Accordingly, I got the opportunity to renew the camaraderie with the buddies of the 5<sup>th</sup> company of whom I had long lost track. Furthermore, we reminisced about our old days’ dining in the open. All these noises gave me an immense encouragement.

Another reason is that Mr. Chuang Hsincheng of New York who, sometimes, contacted me by sending me emails or calling me. He often said to me that since I had the kind of harrowing experience while retreating to Taiwan in 1949 and the hard days on the Penghu Islands, I ought to write a memoir. If it got published, it would be an interesting one.

The most important key factor for me to write this memoir is the encouragement of my family. And as a man, one must leave something like legacy to my descendants.

Based upon all these, I decided to give a try.

At the present time, looking back to those miserable days, I must attribute all those sufferings to the times and the fate. But in my mind, I still have had the questions that

remain unanswered:

1. If I didn't leave Jinan in 1948, what would happen to me?
2. If I was intercepted by the Communist army on the way south to Taiwan during the upheaval of 1949, what would happen to me?
3. At the age of 17, if I was not illegally-drafted into the Nationalist army by General Lee Zhenqing and General Han Fengyi on the Penghu Islands, what would happen to me?

Having calculated the years of my entire life now, I have found that I have stayed in the Mainland 16 years; in Taiwan, 61 years; and in California, U.S.A. 3 years.

Awake from the dream in the middle of the night, I have often recalled my life journey of the 80-some odd difficult years. The harder stuff, they are, the better I can remember. They are likened to the brightest stars in the dark night flashing on and off to me occasionally.

I also often recall those who helped me out during those difficult days. I call them my saviors. Without their timely helps, the first half of my life must be more wretched; the second half of my life is not easy as imagined. As a result, I want to express my gratitude in return for their kindnesses even if they are not here, and figure out how to give back the love given to me to others. And this is my important task during my twilight years.

I have been running here and there throughout my life. Have I got something worthwhile done?

The answer is negative.

However, I refuse to be discouraged. And what I can do now is nothing else but to read and write. However, at the stage of "sunsetting," I still want to do what I want but not to get myself overstretched.

I have lots of opportunities to visit the Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco, and facing the vastness of the Pacific Ocean, I cannot control my racing thought. As for what so-called "family affairs," "national issues," and "world-wide problems" suddenly seemingly were too far away from me. I cannot comb them clearly, nor can I even tell

about them sequentially. But one point that I'd like to make here is that I wish China and Taiwan prosperous. No matter whatever the situation will be in the future, and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the world has gone this far in civilization, the issues between China and Taiwan ought to be resolved by peaceful means. If antagonizing each other and starting a war, both sides will certainly fall to victim of either stupidity or insanity.

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