

Professor Wu ZhengYi - A Tribute

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We first met the happy, friendly, good-natured Professor Wu ZhengYi in 1978, soon after we arrived in the People's Republic of China as members of a 10-person delegation selected by the Botanical Society of America to participate in a month-long tour of botanical institutes, laboratories and gardens in the PRC. Our delegation had been invited by the Chinese Science and Technology Association, following an earlier visit by Yale Professor Arthur Galston, and was organized by BSA President Dr. Peter H. Raven (Missouri Botanical Gardens) and led by Professor Lawry Bogorad (Harvard), both outstanding plant biologists and members of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences.

For the members of our delegation, this was a wonderful opportunity to learn about and see first-hand Chinese botanical science, and to meet the PRC leaders in the field such as Professor Wu ZhengYi. Our visit, before formal normalization of relations between the PRC and the USA, had been facilitated by the bilateral "ping-pong diplomacy" of the previous years and, as the first visit to the PRC by a delegation of American scientists - to be followed the next year by a reciprocal visit to the USA by our Chinese colleagues, including Professor Wu - it represented an initial step to establish trust and friendship between the two countries after many decades of dormancy.

In retrospect, it is easy to see that this first small step, followed later by many such advances, played a role in the opening of interactions among scientists of the two countries that has been highly beneficial to all concerned. Like Professor Wu and his colleagues, we are pleased and proud to have a part of this venture. But for the two of us the visit was even more eventful, for it was during this visit that we first met. Two years later we married and have been companions, supporters, and best friends now for more than 30 years. It may be true that the 1978-1979 exchange visits of American and Chinese botanists played a role in international relations, but it is certainly true that our participation changed our lives!

When we think of Professor Wu ZhengYi, we think of Kunming. Goodness gracious! What a beautiful place with its endless subtropical botany, exquisite cuisine, and intricate Karst Forest - a geologic wonder, resulting from the rise of the Himalayas, to the west, and weathering of the uplifted carbonate rocks. But the shining light of our visit was the knowledge and professionalism of the Kunming botanists with Prof. Wu ZhengYi, a famed plant systematist-taxonomist leading the charge.



A poem by Kuo Mo-Ruo¹ (郭沫若), President of the Academia Sinica, lighted our way as we entered the hall of the Kunming Institute of Botany:

奇花异卉，有色有香，	Wondrous flowers, magnificent blooms,
怡神悦目，作衣代粮。	Differing colors, varied perfumes,
调和气候，美化风光，	You sooth our spirit, you please our eyes,
要从地上，建筑天堂。	You clothe our bodies, you sustain our lives,
	You harmonize the air, you beautify the land,
	On this Earth you forge a Heaven!

This verse, so very beautifully appropriate, chronicles Professor Wu's work - his expertise, his life, and his overall harmonious joy that infectiously affected us all. Thank you, dear Professor Wu ZhenYi. We celebrate and salute you!

During the reciprocal visit in 1979 to the USA of a 10-person delegation of senior botanists from the PRC, led by Professor Pei-sung Tang (Beijing Institute Botany), we became even better acquainted with Professor Wu. In order to host this month-long visit, we took leave from our home institutions (JWS from the University of California, Los Angeles, U.C.L.A.; JSM from the US National Science Foundation). Accompanied for parts of the journey by Drs. Shain-dow Kung (University of Maryland) and William Tai (Michigan State University), we had the great fun of squiring this group from the east, to the mid-west, to the California west of the USA.

Early during this visit, at the University of Maryland, we came to understand a small but humorous difference between Chinese and American cultures. For reasons that neither of us really understand, US universities have mascots, most commonly a rather fearsome animal, that provides an epithet used to refer both to the institution (e.g., the U.C.L.A. "Bruins, Bears") and, particularly, to its sports teams. This, we learned, is not the practice in China. So, when we arrived at the University of Maryland, the Chinese delegation noticed a huge sign at the entrance to the campus that featured a large turtle (this university being known as the "terrapins"). We were then asked, "What's the meaning of this turtle?" We explained - and Wu and his colleagues laughed and laughed, finding it incredibly odd that a university should be named after such a lowly creature (in Chinese, a "wang-ba 王八"), the lowest of the low, surpassed only by a turtle's egg, "wang-ba-dan, 王八蛋").

"Days-in and days-out" we accompanied this prestigious group of Chinese botanists, who had arrived freshly on the heels of the official normalization of relations between the two countries and at a time that in China was known as the glorious "springtime of science"². Wu ZhengYi was second in command of the China delegation. Each morning, without exception - after all of the other members of the delegation were in place and ready to depart - we observed the breathless hustling Leader Wu, invariably late, at the back of the pack. After awhile, the two of us, privately and with fondness, accorded him the nick-name "Wu-the-Slow". His always late, plodding habit, however, in no way detracted from his wonderfully friendly

1 Shen-Miller, J (1979) The BSA Delegation trip to the Peoples Republic of China. *BioScience* 29 (5) : 300-305.

2 Tang, PS, prologue by J Shen-Miller (1980) Fifty Years of Plant Physiology in China: Aperlude to the New Long March. *BioScience* 30 (8) : 524~528.



demeanor - he was, after all, both a kind and generous colleague and a world-class plant biologist - nor did it detract from his monumental accomplishment as Editor of the multivolume monograph on the Flora of China. Between the two of us, and though we never told him of this special salutation, we have always used this affectionate tag - as we smile with admiration, respect and fondness for our favorite "slow-mover."

We are saddened by the passing of Professor Wu Zhengyi. Academician Wu's telephone number [5150660-4501] is still in our book. A scholarly portrait of our special friend, "Wu-the-Slow" of the Kunming Institute of Botany, is prominently displayed on the bulletin board of CSEOL, the U.C.L.A. Center for the Study of Evolution and the Origin of Life. We remember Professor Wu with fondness, respect, homage, and jubilation for a life well spent!

深切缅怀吴征镒教授（1916~2013）

威廉·萧普夫，沈育培

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我们于1978年初识亲切、乐观、友善的吴征镒教授，当时我们作为美国植物学会十人代表团的成员，对中国的植物学研究机构、实验室及植物园进行为期一个月的访问。我们的代表团是应中国科学技术协会之邀，该协会之前还邀请过耶鲁大学的亚瑟·高尔斯顿（Arthur Galston）教授。代表团的组织者是美国植物学会（密苏里植物园）主席彼得·雷文（Peter H. Raven）博士，由哈佛大学的劳瑞·波格莱德（Lawry Bogorad）教授带队，两位都是杰出的植物学家及美国科学院院士。

对代表团成员来说，这次访问是直接了解中国的植物科学研究，面对面结识像吴征镒教授等学科带头人的绝佳机会。访问得益于前些年两国之间的“乒乓外交”，方能够在中美关系正常化之前成行，这也是美国科学家代表团第一次对中华人民共和国进行访问，次年中国科学家代表团对美国做了回访，吴教授在受邀之列。中美科学家的互访表明僵持多年的两国关系开始迈向信任和友谊。

现在回想起来，当时的互访开启了两国科学家交流的大门，推动两国科学事业的发展，使双方受益匪浅。与吴教授及他的同事一样，我们为能有机会参与这一活动感到荣幸和自豪。于我们夫妻二人而言，活动则更加意义非凡，通过这一互访机会我们彼此相识，两年后我们结为夫妻，相知相伴至今已逾30年。如果说1978年至1979年间中美科学家互访对推动两国关系发展的作用有待评估的话，可以肯定地说这次访问改变了我俩的生活。

我们怀念吴征镒教授，也怀念在昆明的日子，怀念美丽的昆明那数不尽的亚热带植物、精致的美食，以及喜马拉雅造山运动和碳酸岩被长期侵蚀形成的喀斯特地貌石林奇观。但最难忘怀的是在吴征镒教授这位著名植物系统学及分类学家带领下的昆明植物学工作者们丰富的知识和专业精神。

当我们走进昆明植物研究所时，首先被一首由中国科学院院长郭沫若先生写的诗所吸引：

奇花异卉，有色有香，
怡神悦目，作衣代粮。



调和气候，美化风光，
要从地上，建筑天堂。

这一如此美丽的诗篇正是对吴教授工作的写照。他的学识，他的人生，以及他令人愉悦的性格一直深深地感染着我们。感谢您，敬爱的吴征镒教授，我们赞美和崇敬您。

1979年由中国科学院植物研究所汤佩松教授带领的由中国植物学家组成的十人代表团对美进行回访，我们与吴教授也从相识到相知。为了接待代表团为期一个月的访问，我们均向所在单位（威廉·萧普夫，加州大学洛杉矶分校；沈育培，美国国家科学基金会）请了假，与马里兰大学的孔宪铎博士，密西根州立大学的戴威廉博士一道陪伴中国访问团游历了美国东部、中西部和加州西部，这是一段极为有趣的经历。

在访问马里兰大学期间，我们意识到中美间一些细微却有趣的文化差异，虽然原因不得而知。美国的大学都会有吉祥物，而且通常都是一个相当可怕的动物，这个吉祥物不仅是学校的标志，也是学校运动队的称号（例如加州大学洛杉矶分校的称号是“熊先生”），而中国大学没有这种做法。因此，当我们到达马里兰大学时，中国代表团看到校园入口处有一个巨大的海龟图案（马里兰大学的标志是海龟）。我们被问道：“这里为什么有这个海龟图案？”吴教授和他的同事听完解释后大笑不止，因为他们觉得学校用“王八”来做标识实在是太奇怪了，这个称号只比王八下的蛋（“王八蛋”）好一点。

日子一天天过去，我们陪伴的这个由中国植物学家组成的荣誉代表团恰逢中美正式建交之际来访美国，那时也是中国的“科学春天”来临之时。吴征镒教授是这个代表团二把手。每天早晨，当代表团一切就绪准备出发时，我们无一例外地都会看到吴领导气喘吁吁赶来，站在队伍的后面。后来，我俩私底下打趣地称他为“吴磨蹭”（Wu-the-Slow）。当然这点绝无损于吴教授那极为友善的举止风度。他是一位亲切又大度的学者，一位世界级的植物学家，他主持编著了具有里程碑意义的巨著《中国植物志》。虽然我们从未告诉过吴教授这个昵称，但我们总是用“吴磨蹭”这个特殊的称谓以表达对他的喜爱与崇敬之情。

吴征镒教授的逝世让我们倍感悲伤。吴院士的电话号码（5150660-4501）依然保留在我们的电话簿里。加州大学进化与生命起源研究中心的宣传栏上，显著的位置就是我们这位特殊友人——来自昆明植物研究所的“吴磨蹭”那极富学者风范的照片。我们深切缅怀吴教授这位我们所喜爱和敬仰的友人，并歌颂他走过了完满的一生。

（翻译：付瑶）

