

In Dearest Memory of Alumnus Benjamin Cheng

On Oct 14th, 2018, Chiao-Tung University alumni association in America lost our beloved senior alumnus, Mr. Benjamin K. Cheng (鄭國賓先生). Ben had been the backbone and guardian of our organization. He was deeply loved and greatly respected. We are all very saddened by the huge loss.

Chiao-Tung University Alumni Association in America (CTUAAA) is affiliated with the five Chiao-Tung/JiaoTong universities, from Shanghai, Xi'An, ChengDu (SouthWest), Beijing and Hsinchu. It connects alumni who currently reside in North America from these schools. CTUAAA was reestablished in 1950s in US. It is, among the universities in China, the largest alumni association in north America, and also with the longest history.

Ben had been one of the most dedicated organizers of CTUAAA. The grand reunion, a main event of the CTUAAA, was held every five years starting in 1964, and in cities across the United States. Ben attended every one of them, no matter how far the event was held. The latest one was held in Los Angeles in 2015; 90 years old Ben still flew all the way from New Jersey to attend and support the event. Ben was the president of the sixth grand reunion held in 1990 in New Jersey; he planned and managed every detail of that event. Seventh grand reunion was part of Chiao-Tung/JiaoTong university centennial celebration in 1996. Ben was the president, and together with Dr. James S.C. Chao (赵锡成), arranged the reunion to include a grand tour of the five Chiao-Tung/JiaoTong universities. Ben overcame the tremendous difficulties at the time when there was no Internet, only limited phone access and limited travel resources, to put the tour plan together. Ben travelled to China and Taiwan multiple times in advance to ensure all the details were in place. Over 200 alumni and family members joined the grand tour of the five schools. It was a great success, that significantly strengthened the strong bonding among the alumni and the alumni with each school. Ben also donated over \$200K to support the event and the alumni activities afterwards. He then spent tremendous effort to compile and publish the reunion album. Ben was also the president of CTUAAA New York chapter in 1980s, and chairman of the Chiao-Tung University Alumni Foundation of America (CTUAFA) in 2000s.

Ben had contributed instrumentally to the educational development of each Chiao-Tung (JiaoTong) University, and the technology development in Taiwan, Mainland China and US. Ben was one of the few alumni who had visited each of the five universities multiple times, and met the leaders from all of them. He paid great attention to the development of each university, and generously shared his suggestions of school development to each of them. Together with Dr. Wen-yuan Pan (潘文淵) and Prof. James Wei (韦潜光), Ben was instrumental in founding the Modern Engineering & Science Seminar in 1966, which is still held every two years in Taipei and has successfully promoted the technology exchanges between the US and Taiwan. Ben was also instrumental in support of Mr. Kenneth Chung-Ho Tai (郟中和) to establish the Chiao-Tung/JiaoTong University Alumni Global Business Leader Summit (交通大学全球校友商界领袖峰) in 2003, which is hosted by one of the five universities or CTUAAA every two years in Mainland China, Taiwan or US. There have been nine summits so far, and Ben had travelled and joined most of them.

Ben had been the bond that held CTUAAA together. He took care of many alumni. Ben organized the funeral for Mr. TC Tsao (赵曾珏), who founded CTUAAA and was also instrumental in founding NCTU in Hsinchu. Mr. Tsao passed away at the age of 100 in 2001. Ben celebrated alumnus Mr. Chin-qi Fang (方贤齐)'s 102 birthday in 2014 in New York. In 2015, Ben organized the 100th birthday celebration of Ms. Julia Wen-Tsai (Shen) Pan (潘文渊夫人沈文灿) in Princeton NJ, taking care of the logistics of over 50 attendees from all over the US and Taiwan, when he himself was already 90 years old. Ben had been a caring senior to all younger generations of alumni, passing down the proud tradition, and supported all the events they have organized. Ben was remarkable in making everyone who had interacted with him feel cared, assured and encouraged. After the 11th grand reunion in Los Angeles in 2015, at age of 90, Ben's boundless energy carried him continue the travel in Los Angeles and then to San Francisco by himself, to bring his love and care to his old friends. Ben made every alumni of CTUAAA, senior or junior, in east coast or west coast, or across the Pacific Ocean, feel ever more close and unified.

Ben had been the encyclopedia of the CTUAAA history, and a sought-after advisor for many alumni. Even after 90 years old, Ben's mind was still incredibly sharp. He could vividly describe an event happened years' ago with perfect recount of the person, time and the location of the event. Alumni seek his advice on starting a business, on career growth, as well as on organizing CTUAAA events. Just in August this year, two months ago, CTUAAA DC chapter had met with Ben to consult with him on organizing the 12th grand reunion in DC in 2020. Ben had always been like a close friend of yours, except with the white beard showing his seniority, ready to give you a hand or a piece of suggestion, always candid and right on the point, but never make you feel obliged. Ben had also always brought with him not only his wisdom, story and advise, but also thoughtful gifts like a book, or a box of books, a drawing, or even a rare two-dollar bill, as a blessing to cheer you up.

Ben had been the guardian of the CTUAAA community. He had motivated many of us to grow in the community. Many of us can recall the moment when Ben called to persuade us take up more responsibilities, and the feeling of the great trust he empowered on us. He guarded the proper transition of CTUAAA organization from generations of leaders to the next, and welcomed alumni of diverse background to join.

Now with Ben's passing, a tremendous hollow has daunted on us. We feel a great part of CTUAAA history has gone away with Ben that we will not be able to find out anymore. We lost a guardian, the backbone of our community, and a dear mentor. With this great loss, we seek the strength to continue build our community. As we can still feel the warmth and the strength that Ben had carried around with him, Ben's enthusiasm and wisdom will be with us forever. Ben's lifelong devotion to the CTUAAA community and the Chiao-Tung/JiaoTong universities will continue inspire us. We will carry on, although with deep sorrow.

May our dear senior alumnus, Benjamin K. Cheng, rest in peace.