

In Memory of Wen Wang

Jerry Zhao, zrzha@umn.edu 10/04/2018, on my way to Denver

In this special event, we gather together to remember Wen Wang.

As I think of him, Wen is an excellent scholar, but importantly, he is such a wonderful person, and a best friend, to me, and probably to many others, here or in somewhere else.

Wen was born in the year of 1970, in a little city in Sichuan Province, China. Sichuan is a place with amazing food, beautiful scenery, and nice people. Many of you may have known it already. Or you may get to know it through Wen.

Wen grew up, with his brother and sister, in the campus of a middle school where his father was a teacher. Wen's brother told us several fun stories of Wen as a little boy, of him playing pin pong with kids older than him, of him crafting a smart device that could tell the time of the day by the angle of shadows cast by the sun on the wall.

Wen went to Nankai University in Tianjin, in 1988. After he graduated, he worked for the international exchanges office in Beihang University, Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics (BUAA), and then for the China National School of Governance. During the period, he served as interpreters for high-level leaders in China when they visited other countries.

In the year of 2000, Wen came to this country, and that is how I first met him, as we both went to University of Georgia at the same time to study public administration.

Wen and I took classes together, we played badminton together, and we partied together. We had lots of fun together long before we wrote papers together. We collaborated together in Chinese Student Association at UGA long before we worked together for CAAPA, China-America Association of Public Affairs.

People coming to a new country are like being born again. In this sense, wen and I were both born again in Georgia in 2000. We are born fiends. In the slides, you are seeing some pictures of us in these good old days.

In 2002, wen moved to Syracuse University to pursue his Ph.D. degree, where he met the most important person of his life, Zhang Lei, who later became his wife. She is here, with one of their lovely kids, Duoduo.

That might be about the time many of you got to know him, in the ABFM circle, and in other academic events, as a public budgeting scholar.

After getting his Ph.D degree, wen worked as an assistant professor for East Carolina University for two years, during the period he was also an Asia Fellow at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

He then worked at University of South Carolina, City University of Hong Kong, and Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis, where he got his tenured. At various places, he taught many students, he made many friends, and he influenced and touched many people.

Between 2016 and 2018, Wen moved east to work at Rutgers University, before he untimely pass away early this year. In many ways, I still can believe that he has left us.

The last day I saw Wen, that was January 13, this year, when Janey, David, and me visited his home at San Francisco. He was apparently weakened by illness and the treatment in body, but was still warm and upbeat in heart. He greeted us, asked about our new semesters, and talked about some long-term old friends.

When we stepped out of his house in that afternoon, it was warm and sunny outside. I know that I would already remember the bright and beautiful sunshine. That is exactly how I feel every time I think of Wen, such a wonderful person, and a best friend.