



CC as a Mentor and Friend

Ran Wei

李金銓教授榮休紀念

Ran Wei is Gonzales Brothers Professor at University of South Carolina, USA, and a Chang Jiang (長江學者) Chair Professor. He earned his Ph.D. from Indiana University in 1995.

I have a disclaimer to make: I'm not a member of the Minnesota-Wisconsin mafia in the U.S. academy, although I went to a Big 10 league school, Indiana University, for my Ph.D. in mass communication in 1990. I came to know CC as a mentor and friend primarily in accidentally becoming a member of an invisible CC College worldwide.

Zooming back to 1993, I started my dissertation research, which aimed to analyze changes in news coverage of Mainland China in Taiwan's press (at its peak growth years following the lift of martial law on the island). Trained as a TV reporter and had completed a M.A. thesis on BBC TV News, I knew a thing or two about television news, but nothing about Taiwan's newspapers. A reason to panic!

Considering the separation of Taiwan and the mainland since 1949, pursuing such a dissertation topic would run into countless practical challenges in fieldwork (in the early 1990s, no mainland students or mainlanders for that matter, had ever travelled to Taiwan). Whether I could pull it off and graduate on time was something uncertain. Another reason for some sleepless nights!!



Joining a conference with CC and colleague Huailin Chen.

Under these circumstances, I almost camped out in the reading rooms of IU's library in Bloomington. On a cold spring day, I stumbled into a book titled *Voices of China* edited by CC Lee (1991). I jumped on the book as if finding a piece of treasure. The book was so helpful to me as a rich source for building a literature that for the first time I saw some hope in moving ahead in my dissertation research.

Because CC was already a big name (學霸) in journalism and mass communication circles, I was not sure if anything would happen if I approached him. I contacted him by email anyway (I was so glad that I did; my luck changed with that email). In the email I hit him with a bunch of questions I had from reading his book. To my total surprise, CC replied to me in a few hours the same day. In his reply, he laid out the history and structural background of Taiwan's dynamic press and offered his observations of changes in covering the mainland as a business strategy and a cultural bond. Those insightful analyses gave shape to two chapters of my dissertation.

Moreover, after hearing my plan to do fieldwork in Taiwan in summer 1994, he provided a list of prominent journalists, editors and academics in Taiwan. I had no idea that CC was the Director of the China Times Center for Media and Social Studies at University of Minnesota at that time. His list of contacts at China Times and the United Daily News opened doors for me to conduct my fieldwork as planned (my interviewees were respectful of CC, and one of them later became the National Security Advisor to the president). In an accidental way, I found my dissertation savior (貴人) in CC.

It's no exaggeration that without CC's help, my dissertation would not be completed as planned, for that I'm always grateful for his generous time, insights, and guidance. Not only did I pulled it off and graduated in spring 1995; my dissertation also won \$8,000 scholarship in an open competition under the auspices of China Times Foundation in the U.S.

CC's mentoring of me continued at Chinese University of Hong

Kong, which I joined in fall 1995. He invited me to present my dissertation to conferences he organized at University of Minnesota and CUHK. One of my dissertation chapters was included in his edited volume on Chinese media—*Power, Money and Media* (2000, Northwestern University Press). From reading a senior scholar's work that you admired to being a junior collaborator in his new work, it was like a graduate student's dream coming true. I consider myself the lucky one in connecting up with CC. Over those years, we also became friends.

No matter where my career takes me since 1995, CC always stands tall both as a mentor and a friend (亦師亦友). I wish him happy retirement!