In Memory of

Professor Feng-sheng (Frank) Hsueh

緬懷 恩師 薛鳳生教授
Professor Feng-sheng (Frank) Hsueh 薛鳳生教授 was an excellent scholar, as well as a caring, patient, and wonderful mentor. He is also remembered as a dear and sincere friend, a good son, and a lovely parent. He is a great role model, and he had a great impact on many of us.

In 1992, when I started my graduate study at the Ohio State University (OSU), I was very fortunate to have the chance to be under Professor Hsueh’s professorship and chairmanship at the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures (DEALL). I was a research assistant for his Classical Chinese text and linguistic analysis project. He was a great thinker. Throughout the project I learned that he could perceive subtle and detailed differences, allowing him to discover linguistic phenomena that had been overlooked for centuries. He would look at linguistic phenomena from different angles and provide very detailed and systematic analyses. His pioneering thoughts and discoveries have been admired by scholars and have greatly impacted the Chinese linguistics field. His ideas and analyses regarding the special characteristics of Chinese language have helped us to better understand the Chinese language as an internally consistent system. His detailed, systematic and analytical scholarly attitude inspired me as I worked on my MA and Ph.D. studies under his advisement.
I have great memories of Professor Hsueh’s wonderful linguistics seminar courses. In class discussions he would encourage us to think critically, to dare to question, and to engage the work of famous scholars. He would also encourage us to provide new thoughts, and to seek out systematic and constructive ways to better explain the language phenomena we observed. When we had questions, he was always there to kindly guide us and to help us think in a more systematic and analytical way. If there were any great articles that inspired him he would happily introduce them to the class, providing praise for the articles and their authors and guiding us in appreciating why the articles were so inspiring. We could see enjoyment in his sparkling eyes and wonderful smile, as if he had run into his best friend or a great soul mate. He was so passionate about his teaching and learning, and he greatly enjoyed pursuing and sharing the results of his scholarly work. He was a natural, talented educator, and through his mentorship he inspired in us the dream to become wonderful educators like him, and to be passionate about the scholarly work we do.

Professor Hsueh encouraged and helped us to network, and to communicate and interact with other professionals. He helped us learn what academic careers were like, and gave us the knowledge we needed to help our academic careers be smooth and comfortable. He not only cared about students’ academic success but also hoped for all of his students to have smooth and successful careers and lives. He and Mrs. Hsueh, who is famous for being a great and talented chef, frequently invited students, visiting scholars, and colleagues to their Columbus residence for holidays and other get togethers. I remember one white Christmas time when we were invited to his house: the wonderful hospitality, the delicious Chinese food and happy atmosphere that warmed our hearts and helped us overcome our holiday homesickness.

Sometimes he would show us produce from his great garden, such as Chinese chives, and tell us which parts were most tasty. We have a small patch of Chinese chives in our yard in Pittsburgh, and every spring when they grow back I am reminded of Professor Hsueh’s chives.

Professor Hsueh treated his students not just as academic students, but also as close friends and colleagues. He acted as a father figure to us. After we graduated and went on to our academic jobs he still cared about our progress and was always there to help and encourage us to move forward.
Without his tremendous help and time, we would not have been able to reach some of our milestones or accomplish some of the things we have in our research and teaching.

In 1997, after I graduated from OSU we moved to Boston for my Harvard job. After Professor Hsueh retired he continued to stay in touch with us, and I had the great honor to co-author a Classical Chinese textbook with him and some of his longtime dear friends, Professor John C.Y. Wang of Stanford University and Professor Shaoyu Jiang of Peking University. Professor and Mrs. Hsueh also visited us at Harvard in 1997. Baozhang He hosted and invited many of us to his Boston residence, including Wenze Hu and I, to hang out with Professor Hsueh and Mrs. Hsueh. Professor Hsueh enjoyed learning about his students’ achievements, and happily cheered us on. He also introduced us to his son Patrick and daughter-in-law Susie, who lived in Providence at that time. When I accepted a position at Carnegie Mellon University and Mark and I moved to Pittsburgh in 2000, we remained in contact with Professor Hsueh and talked on the phone from time to time. During our conversations he was keen to learn how all his students and their families were doing, and he hoped that all were doing great. I can remember his joy at following the lives, scholarly work, and achievements of his students.
In 2001, when I had my second daughter, Professor Hsueh, Mrs. Hsueh, and their daughter Feifei visited us. I saw that it was a joy for him to hold my 2-year-old daughter, Carrie, and my newborn, Marion. They sent us their grandkids’ photos to share their joys and wonderful family with us, which made us feel so blessed. They are great models of caring and balancing between work and family.

We also remember how Professor Hsueh was a great son to his parents, always concerned and doing his best to take good care of them. He is a great role model for us of how to be caring children for our parents and lovely parents to our children.

Mrs. Hsueh has noted that Professor Hsueh was fond of Taoism, especially the Zhuangzi 莊子. He was a person who would follow nature, abide with the flow, enjoy, and be happy. As his students, we saw that his easygoing and relaxed attitude toward life reflected the words of the famous Chinese Song lyric poet, Su Shi 苏軾, <<定风波>>:

(June 2001, Pittsburgh: Professor Hsueh with Sue-mei Wu, Carrie Haney, Mark Haney, Mrs. Hsueh, and Marion Haney)
“回首向來蕭瑟處，歸去，也無風雨也無睛。”

薛先生是如此淡泊名利, 過得灑脫,自在與看得開。

Professor Hsueh was not moved by concern for fame and profit. Rather, he was easygoing and optimistic.

Professor Hsueh was a wonderful scholar, great mentor, and a great model for all of us. His passion for his scholarly work, teaching, and caring for his students will live in our hearts, and will continue to grow through us as we strive to echo his positive impact on our society and world.

Professor Hsueh, we will miss you, and you will always be in our hearts!

Respectfully,

Sue-mei Wu 吳素美
(1994 MA and 1997 Ph.D. Advisee of Professor Hsueh)