

Professor ZHU Zunquan

1919–2012

“I do hope that in another twenty years, 2028, CORESTA would meet in China again and I certainly would be here in welcoming you”, said 89-year-old Professor ZHU Zunquan, at the 2008 CORESTA Congress, where he received an enthusiastic ovation for his sincere wish. It was very sad to hear the information that he died on July 16, his magnetic voice is still lively in my mind.

I have met Professor ZHU so many times since my first visit to the Zhengzhou Tobacco Research Institute in 1984. Having worked in CORESTA and as a consultant in China for many years, I knew that he had been actively pushing the China tobacco industry to play roles in international tobacco research organisations. In 1988, the CORESTA Congress was held in Guangzhou due to his unremitting efforts, this was the first CORESTA Congress ever held in China. He made an invited report and became a member of the Scientific Commission from 1988 to 1990. In 2008, he received the award of the CORESTA Prize at the age of 89, acknowledging his life-long work in tobacco science. During the congress, he made an impressive report “Leaf Tobacco Production in China: Past, Present, and Perspective”.

Over the years he has been truly my teacher about tobacco in China and not only tobacco. Without his inspiration, I would never have enjoyed the successes that China has brought me in my professional career. Professor ZHU was well known as the expert in tobacco agronomy and cigarette manufacturing technology. He devoted himself to the

research work on reducing the harmful components and tar level of cigarettes. He put forward the concept “reducing tar level and hazard” in the early 1980s and switched it to “reducing hazard and tar level” in 2003, which guided and is still guiding the direction of Chinese style cigarette development. Also, he was the one, who developed the first Chinese low-tar blended cigarette. We shared the ideas about low-tar cigarette development. “Professor ZHU Zunquan’s death was a big loss for Zhengzhou Tobacco Research Institute of CNTC, a big loss for China tobacco industry, and a big loss for China engineering of science and technology”, said XIE Jianping, ZHU’s student and the vice president of Zhengzhou Tobacco Research Institute of CNTC.

Besides that, he has in fact helped me quite a lot in understanding Chinese culture and humour. I still remember, in May 1984, when we met for the first time, he told me the most important sentence that I had to remember in Chinese language: He showed me the wall and said: what is it? I said it’s a “wall”, then he showed me his eye and said: what is it? I said it’s an “eye”, then he showed me his knee and said: what is it? I said it’s a “knee”. Good he said, now please repeat the 3 words together, and I said: Wo Ai Ni! Indeed this was the most important sentence in Chinese language, meaning “I love you”.

I will remember professor ZHU for the rest of my life.

Dr. Nicolas Baskevitch, August 2012