

Honorary Professor Guanrong Chen

(Introduced by Jorge L. Moiola)

“If one can write a page per day, one can write a book in a year”. This sentence appears on Professor Chen’s web page. At first, this was intimidating because it seems to size the caliber of the researcher behind that. After knowing him through the years this phrase has a great symbolism to me. Let me explain it.

First, I would like to emphasize on his personality since Dr. Chen’s scientific achievements are just well known, for example, through reading our University Superior Council document. I would like to tell you two or three simple incidents that reveal his mankind and exemplary life. He suffered the cultural revolution in China at the beginning of his university age, so he could not study mathematics as usual in a university because all schools were closed at that time. He studied mathematics on an island when all the workers tried to rest, at nights, after hard working during the days. The university education was prohibited at that time by the central government. So he spent near ten years working as a farmer, faraway from any normal educational institution. When the universities were reopened in China he passed all required examinations and quickly completed a Master degree in Computer Science. He studied English feverishly, even reading small books in times when commuting from place to place in bus. He thought that he needed to push himself to the limit (scientifically and academically speaking), and so the next stage of his life was completed in the United States where he received a PhD degree in Applied Mathematics in 1987, exactly twenty years ago. It is perhaps understandable that his love with science did not suggest him to attend the ceremony of graduation of his doctoral degree because he was about to finish writing his very first book. For any of us, the ceremony of graduation is one important part of a culmination of hard work and achievement, and no one wants to miss it. However, he thought that writing one, two or maybe ten pages on that day was more important than to receive the diploma from the hands of the president of the university. This has a great symbolism for me, therefore I appreciate very much that Professor Chen can come here for this recognition today.

Professor Chen has some disciples around the world, and all of them recognize a master when he comes nearby. Any time when he arrives at Houston, for example, all of his disciples welcome him in a party. I can imagine that similar events happen in some cities in China ...

“If one can write a page per day, one can write a book in a year”. This sentence has a lot of meanings today because one can build a strong career by making several small steps, in a definite direction and with a determined goal, during some years. Please allow me to define it as a kind of “Chinese patience”. If you can put a brick per day, you can build a wall in a year, and maybe a house in five to ten years. These simple things make institutions, regions and countries larger and stronger. Professor Chen has realized this meaning several years ago, when he started a large network of colleagues, friends and students around the world to work together on some research topics of electrical engineering, applied mathematics and computer science.

I thank Professor Chen very much for his help during these years, to improve our department and academic staff with his vision, disposition and paradigm. This honorary degree is granted to him not only for his relevant contributions to science but also for his benefiting the interactions with the people of our department and university. We appreciate very much the time, efforts and resources that he invested to train good researchers and technical people in this institution.

Professor Chen, this has been our contribution of writing one page today. Your duty is to write a book, and you have done part of it remarkably. Thank you.

*Universidad Nacional del Sur
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