

忆妹夫“老兰”

In Memory of My Brother-in-Law, “Lao Lan”

吴建国, Jianguo Wu

我的妹夫“老兰”于 2020 年 5 月 28 日晚 11 时许去世。

My brother-in-law “Lao Lan” (Len) passed away on 11:15 pm, May 28, 2020.

我代表全家（妻：崔丽，女儿：吴雯燕，女婿：Tung Pham, 外孙：天（Tian）和凯（kai））对老兰的去世表示深切得悼念；并向小平，林林表示深切的慰问。请节哀。

I want to express our profound sorrow for Len’s passing and our deepest condolence to Shaoping and Linlin (Eli’s nickname), on behalf of my whole family: wife Li, daughter Yan, son-in-law Tung, and grandsons, Tian and Kai. We will help you to bear your grief when it feels overwhelming.

按照中国阴历行法，今年是庚子年。庚子年在中国历史上是出现大事的一年。如现今的全球瘟疫大流行，中美激烈的冲突 ... 老兰的突然离世，也是我们家族的一件大事。这里，再次表示对老兰的悼念和怀念。

According to the Chinese traditional calendar, 2020 is the year of the Gengzi. (庚子年), which runs in a cycle of every 60 years. Based on the records in the Chinese history there were always sudden eruptions of big events, such as natural disasters, social conflicts or wars during this particular year. Therefore, the year of 2020 is no exception: the rampage of the coronavirus pandemic, the vicious tension between China and the United States... and now, the sudden departure of Len is a major incident in our family. Again, I want to express our deep sorrow for his passing. We all miss him.

我与老兰几十年来共见过四次面。

During the three-plus decades I only met Len four times.

第一次是 1987 年 7 月份，小平和老兰结婚过后到青岛看望老人。当时，青岛包头路老房子刚拆迁，准备建公寓楼。全家住在破旧的临时住房里。见面第一印象是老兰瘦高，络腮胡子，眼睛有神，明亮，面向温和。

The first time I met Len was in July 1987, when he and Shaoping came to Qingdao to visit our mother after they got married in Beijing. At that time, our whole extended family stayed in a shabby temporary housing, waiting for the new apartments to be completed after our old house on the Baodou Road was demolished. Len made a good impression on me. He was tall and lanky with a beard; his eyes were bright and shining, and his manner was kind and gentle.

我曾经用北京吉普拉着老兰和我们全家沿着青岛海滨观光，并留影。我还代表全家族请老兰到青岛辽宁路的北京烤鸭店吃了顿烤鸭。当时受邀的还有医学院的潘相康夫妇。我印象中最深的一次是当我告诉老兰“中国人现在经常大吃大喝”；老兰回答说“那是因为中国人长期没有吃的”。老兰的回答很精准。

I took Len and my family in a Beijing Jeep for sightseeing along the Qingdao beaches, and also took a lot of photos. Then on behalf of the extended Wu family I invited Len to have a roast duck banquet with us at the Beijing Restaurant on the Liaoning Blvd. I remember vividly that when I told Len, “Now the Chinese often indulged themselves in lavish eating and drinking.” Len said, “That’s because the Chinese people didn’t have enough food to eat in the past.” His reply was very accurate.

第二次见面是因为小平辞去中央民族学院教室的职位跟老兰去美国。北京中央民族学院要征求家里意见。我正好要去北京拉建筑材料，就代表全家去了趟中央民族学院，还顺便给小平捎去一箱青岛啤酒。我到了北京中央民族学院办公室，表明家里同意小平辞职出国的决定。老兰还请我在外国专家食堂吃了顿饭。这次见面老兰给我留下的最深的印象是他刮胡子刮得太快了。我用他的剃刀试了一下，结果轻轻一碰脸就破了。

I met Len the second time in Beijing. At that time Shaoping had to quit her job at the Beijing Central University for Nationalities before she could get permission to follow Len to America. Her work unit wanted our family’s opinion, so I went to meet the administrators at her university while on a business trip. I informed the President of the university in his office that our family approved Shaoping’s decision that she would quit her job and go to America with Len.

Afterward, Len invited me to have a meal with him at the dining hall for the foreign experts at the Foreign Studies University. We had a nice talk while drinking the Qingdao beer I had brought from home. From that visit, what I remember most was that his impressive beard grew so thick that he needed a sharp razor to shave it. I tried it and immediately cut my face since I didn’t have much of a beard myself.

第三次见面是1993年7月份。我们全家已经搬到了包头路18号新建好的四套公寓房里。老兰小平和已经四岁的林林来探亲。由于我在后院里挖了一个水池养育，当时最担心的是别让林林掉到水池里。在临别时，我向老兰要了几枚美元硬币留念，还送给老兰一件的确良衬衫（当时中国很贵的一种衬衫）。没想到这件衬衫在26年后，又由文文从美国捎给我。此时我已经移民澳大利亚。

Our third meeting occurred in July 1993. Then our whole extended family had moved into the four sets of apartments completed on 18 Baotou Road. Len, Shaoping and their 4-year-old Linlin returned home for a visit from America. I worried a lot about Linlin because I dug up a small pond in the backyard to raise fish. I didn't want him to fall in the water and drown. Before their departure I asked Len to give me a few coins as souvenirs. Meanwhile I gifted him a new shirt that was made of synthetic fabric, the most expensive shirt in China at the time. Surprisingly, the shirt found its way back to me after 26 years. Wenwen brought it back from America after she visited Len and Shaoping at Rossmoor, Walnut Creek in California. At this time, I had already immigrated to Australia.

最后一次见面是我在网上与小平视屏聊天时见到了老兰。老兰说“你还年轻”。这时已是2019年，我已经71岁了。

The last time I saw Len was on the Internet. It happened in 2019 when Shaoping and I were chatting through Skype. Len said, "You still look young." Actually I was already 71 then.

一切都成了回忆。老兰的灵魂已进入天堂与祖先团聚。老兰，你并不孤独，请在天堂等着我们。

All of these are just memories. Len's soul has entered the eternal world and reunited with his ancestors. Dear Len, you are not alone. Please wait, and we will one day join you there.

—吴建国, Jianguo Wu

2020年7月20日晚12点, 12:00 pm, July 20, 2020

Melbourne, Australia