

Len and His Other Half

By Liming Liu

I forget how I became close friends with Len and Shaoping. All I remember is that the two of them often went to Five Colleges' talks and lectures on China or Chinese culture when they first moved to the Pioneer Valley. I, too, liked to attend those events. Later, when I frequented their home in Amherst, Shaoping and I would talk about things of interest to us in Chinese while preparing dinner, and Len would join us at the dinner table. Shaoping always had to go upstairs to Len's study to call him out for dinner and then we would continue the conversation while eating Shaoping's improved versions of Chinese food that Len loved. Then our conversation would be carried on in English.

Though our conversation topics covered a great range—from local public and private schools to US foreign policies, to generation gap, and to Chinese history—the ones we discussed most were cross-cultural issues, and things Len loved to dwell on were his Fulbright years' experiences in China when he found his true love, Shaoping! Every time we came to this topic, I would hear Len say: "I had gone across half a world and spent half a century to find Shaoping."

As a close friend and someone whose academic interest is in acculturation, I can see Len and Shaoping very much merged into each other's culture, as well as their deep commitment to each other! Not only did they share their political and cultural views, but they also loved the same exercises like swimming and walking, and enjoyed the same types of food. Not to say their always-unified child rearing opinions and practices. Of all the interracial marriages I knew of, Shaoping and Len were the most harmonious couple. In them, I saw the perfect fusion of Chinese and American cultures. I also came to know what true respect for each other meant.

For me, the way Len cherished for his other half truly marked who he is in addition to his many great qualities!

Amherst, MA, Sept 13, 2020