

## FEATURE

# Our Good Friend - Dr. Tzy Cheng Peng

Edited by Walter Ko from contributions by Walter/Lily Ko, Donna Coble, Hua-ling Hu, the late Sheng Yen Lee, Behrad Majidi and David Oughton

### Dr. Tzy C. (T.C.) Peng

*Growing-up in China; Living in the U.S. since 1952*

*Familiar with Confucianism and American democracy-*

*Born 28 December 1929. Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, China*

*BS in Mechanical Engineering (1951), [National Taiwan University], Taipei, Taiwan, China*

*PhD - ME (1959), Northwestern University, Evanston, IL*

*Worked in NASA (Moffet Field, CA 1958-60), Boeing (Seattle, WA 1960-63), General Motors (Goleta, CA 1963-67), McDonnell Douglas, St. Louis, MO 1967-91, retired since 1 January 1992).*

*Did research in air-plasma, carbon oxidated erosion, Ti-Alloy Rapid solidification.*

*Visited relatives in China 5 times (1979-2001). While visiting with his beloved wife of 47 years (right), the former Helen Hwang Wen from Taicang, Jiangsu, a career nurse of 25 years in the intensive care units for infants, who retired in 1998. Dr. Tzy C. Peng explained the essence of American democracy to the Chinese people. Whereas in the U.S., he explained the essence of China and Chinese culture to American audiences.*

While working, Dr. Peng always found time to participate in community affairs. After his retirement, he continued to serve the Chinese American community and the society at large. Thus, Dr. Peng volunteered to serve in the United Way Organization (1995- 96). Lily Ko, a community service commissioner of Missouri State said, "From 1997 to 2002, Dr. Peng was an inter-cultural consultant of St Louis Minority Advocacy Coalition which promotes awareness of community elder services and resources. He also helped Chinese-American seniors in **Village of Many Colors**, an annual festival for minority



seniors, sponsored by the Coalition and other related agencies.

Dr. Peng cares about families. He was a cultural advisor (1997-2004) to **Families with Children from China (FCC)**, a group of American parents in the St. Louis area with adopted Chinese children. He informed that group about the concepts and traditions of Chinese heritages, and helped to organize Chinese Cultural Day sponsored by the FCC. Many St. Louis FCC families have shared their stories of adoption in the "Spanning the Cultural

Bridge" series in Chinese American Forum (CAF), a non-profit Cultural Quarterly that Dr. Peng chaired (1997-2004). According to Donna Coble, a past president of FCC-St Louis and an adoptive mother of a girl from Hunan Province, "Dr. Peng has been an invaluable asset to our local FCC group. He has provided cultural insights and education and has worked tirelessly to be a voice for Chinese Americans. We have been very lucky to have him as our advisor for many years." Dr. Peng also worked closely with Worldways Children's Museum of St Louis in a seminar called "*Chinese Heroes for a Better Understanding of Chinese culture.*"

Dr. Peng has been actively involved in mainstream society too. He frequently lectures in local high schools and colleges on Chinese culture and religion. Regarded as a scholar on Confucianism, he has been, for more than 10 years, a regular participant in Dr. David Oughton's **St. Louis Dialogue Group of the World's Religions and Philosophies**. He was able to convey the life and teaching of Confucius in Chinese culture and Confucianism as a universal social philosophy applicable to the rest of the world. He explained family, social and moral values with Confucian sayings (proverbs) and vision, such as "The Commonwealth State" (an essay). "Adopting the teachings of Confucius, Dr. Peng is an example of humanity at its best," said Dr David Oughton. Dr. Behrad Majidi, a scholar and follower of the Baha'I Faith said, "Dr. Peng is a living example of Confucius philosophy and ethics through his character and conduct. It is in a sense Confucius' definition of a true gentleman. Even though he is proud of his Chinese roots and his American citizenship, he is truly a world citizen."

Dr. Peng is an advocate and activist for humanity with justice and racial/ethnic equality. He empathized with American victims of terrorists attack in recent years and with all victims of Japanese atrocities in Asia prior to and including WWII. Dr. Hua-ling Hu, the author of the book, American Goddess at the Rape of Nanking: The Courage of Minnie Vautrin,

recalled how she appreciated Dr. Peng's visit to Carbondale, Illinois to see her in person and conduct a thorough interview. She said, "During the interview, he repeatedly encouraged me to relax because he knew that I was suffering with dizziness and anxiety disorder after having finished my book." His recent CAF article, "Biological Warfare, Part 2", (CAF July 2004, pp.24-30) on the atrocities of Japan's germ and chemical warfare in WW II alerted the general public on the danger, horror and mass destruction of these barbaric Japanese war crimes.

Dr. Peng is a leader in the Chinese-American Community. He was President of the St Louis Chinese Society in 1973, and for the first time opened the traditional Chinese New Year's celebration to the general public. In August of that year, under his leadership, the Chinese Society and the St. Louis Chinese Gospel Church jointly conducted the first Chinese Cultural Festival in St. Louis County. Dr. Peng was the President of the **Organization of Chinese Americans, St Louis Chapter (OCA-St. Louis)**] from 1990-92. He started a close correlation with the University of Missouri at St. Louis (UMSL). He initiated an Oral History project to retrace the livelihood of Chinese immigrants in the early 1900s. This initiative resulted in a publication (December, 1993), by OCA-St. Louis, entitled *Ironing Out the Fabric of Our Past*] in both English and Chinese.

Since 1997, he had been the Publisher of **Chinese American Forum**, a non-profit cultural and educational Quarterly magazine first based in St Louis and then in St Charles, Missouri. This nationwide magazine promotes the understanding and appreciation of American and Chinese cultures. It has a national distribution to major libraries, universities, all members of Congress and senior government officials within the 50 U.S. states.

Dr. Peng works well with other volunteers across the U.S. for donations, subscriptions, and manuscript solicitations. The endeavor of these volunteers is essential in

building up the CAF Endowment Fund. Teamwork is critical in the success of CAF and Dr. Peng is a team player. As a long time friend, he brought me in as a volunteer, associate editor, coordinator and board member. Many times, we discussed, criticized and even argued on the essays submitted. We always come to a satisfactory solution.

Dr. Sheng Yen Lee, CAF's founder, said, "There were moments of excitement and gratification, but also frustrations. Every time I complained. Dr. Peng gave me encouragement and positive vision on CAF's development. I appreciated very much the trust the CAF Board gave to me by electing me continuously for five terms, or 15 years leading CAF's work. However, as I was past seventy, it was compelling to have someone else take over." Dr. Lee chose Dr. Peng as his successor, and the publishing operation was moved from the greater Washington D.C. area to St. Louis, MO. This move led to seven more years of sustaining CAF publication and of expanding contents by establishing two major series of cultural topics: (1) "*Accomplished Chinese Americans*" and (2) "*Spanning the Cultural Bridge*," associated with the FCC adoption stories as described previously.

Since May, 2004, Dr. Peng has had a macular hole in his right eye reducing and distorting significantly his general vision. He could no longer meet the demands of managing CAF daily. Prior to his eye problem, Dr. Peng, as a volunteer, devoted nearly 70% of his time for to publishing the quarterly on time, soliciting small donations to meet the CAF financial needs and maintaining an independent CAF status, free from political interference from governments and special interest groups alike.

Dr. Peng devotes his time and energy for the betterment of our community and the society at large. Through CAF, he helps the general public understand Chinese-Americans in terms of achievement, current topics, history and religion. Dr. Peng and Dr Harold Law worked diligently in cooperation with the Center for International

Studies, University of Missouri in St. Louis, to conduct a conference entitled Chinese American Identity at the UMSL campus on 18 October 2003. That conference included 3 vital topics: (1) Assimilation and Barriers to Assimilation, (2) Continuing Chinese Immigration, and (3) Intermarriage and Adoption in the Chinese-American Community.

Dr. Peng encourages active participations of Chinese-Americans in the mainstream. He taught new arrivals English as well as American traditions and customs. He was invited to the St. Louis Ethical Society for a presentation on Confucianism in 2003 and met with an enthusiastic response. Recently he was invited to speak on global peace and world religion at meetings of Baha'i followers, the women's club at the Elliot chapel of Unitarian and Universalists (UU) and the Emerson UU chapel.

Dr. Peng is a loving husband, father and grandfather He feels that he is specially blessed for marrying his beloved wife, Mrs. Helen H. Peng. Coming into the U.S. as poor students in the early 1950s, Dr. & Mrs. Peng had to struggle on several fronts at once: the lack of adequate funds, language problems, and unfamiliarity of American culture, to name a few. Like many Chinese students in those days. Dr. & Mrs. Peng relied on determination and self reliance to pull themselves through a very hard life while getting their degrees. Dr. Peng obtained his Ph. D. from Northwestern University, and Mrs. Peng graduated from St. Joseph School of Nursing in Lewistown, Montana. They met, felt in love, and were married on November 28, 1958 in Palo Alto where Dr. Peng had his first job with NASA at Moffet Field, CA. From there on, Mrs. Peng supported her husband through thick and thin, ups and downs in his career, in addition to her own career as a registered nurse, and the duties of a wife and a mother in raising three children.

After Dr. Peng's retirement, Mrs. Peng continued her unwavering support so as to allow Dr. Peng to devote the majority of his time to community service work, and later to

concentrated work on CAF. Mrs. Peng is indeed the strong woman behind Dr. Peng, a good man.

Recognizing his service and volunteerism to the Chinese American community and the society at large. Dr. Peng was given the **Vision in America Award** in 2002 by International Channel. He was included in the Ageless, Remarkable St. Louisans, a 2003 book published by St. Andrew's Resources for Seniors, on fifty extraordinary seniors recognized for their valuable contributions. He has been working hard to establish a better America in justice, harmony and unity.

*Walter Ko grew up in Hong Kong and came to the U.S. in 1973. He was a graduate of University of Missouri at Rolla and Central Missouri State University. He has been a St. Louis resident over 30 years, and had been an Associate Editor, coordinator and now Board member of Chinese American Forum (CAF), a cultural quarterly published in St Louis, Missouri.*

*Mr. Ko has been a good friend of Dr. Tzy C. Peng for dose to 12 years. He has been a public speaker many times at local community colleges and universities on Chinese culture, Taoism and Confucianism.*