

Hu Hsiang-pih

1913 - 2001

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A memory of Professor Hu Hsiang-pih

In a wonderful evening in the August of 1997, the Hungarian Association of Veterinary Medicine gave a banquet in a beautiful park of Budapest to welcome avian pathologists for the 11th World Veterinary Poultry Association (WVPA) Congress from different parts of the world. All participants cheered when Prof. Hu was singing a Hungarian folk song. As the eldest participant at 84 years old, he impressed everybody. Four years earlier in Sydney, Australia, Prof. Hu honestly gave a warm congratulation to the Hungarian delegation when they won the bid for 11th WVPA by 2 votes over China. In 1997, Prof. Hu led a Chinese delegation of more than 40 avian pathologists to attend the conference in Budapest, one of the largest foreign delegations.

In 1934, Prof. Hu received his D.V.M. from the Department of Animal Science and Veterinary Medicine, Central University, Nanjing, China. Beginning in 1937, he studied at the Royal Veterinary College, in Edinburgh, Scotland, UK and received his M.R.C.V.S. in 1941. He then returned back to China during a period when World War II was on and the Japanese occupied the most eastern parts of China. He went to the northwestern parts of China still controlled by Chinese government. As the battlefield moved, he relocated and worked in several universities as a professor. At that time, the horse, cattle and sheep ranches were mainly located in these northwest provinces in

China, and he found that he could provide a valuable service to his country by his knowledge gained from his studies abroad. He made the first diagnosis of horse infection with *trypanosoma equiperdum*. During the 1940's, he successfully led projects in epidemiology and control programs for *trypanosoma equiperdum* infection, horse glanders and some sheep parasitoses. At the end of the Chinese civil war in 1949, he went to Harbin and worked in the Northeast Agricultural College as a professor under the invitation by the new communist government, and later was appointed as deputy-director of the Veterinary Institute, Chinese Academy of Agriculture, also located in Harbin, where he served until 1979. During these years, he led some research projects on horse infectious anemia, horse glanders and hog cholera. He made the first inactivated vaccine to hog cholera. He had about 80 publications in Chinese in that period.

In the mid 1970's, an intensive chicken industry started to develop in China and became larger and larger due to imported modern technology and breeders. However, there were few avian pathologists and their knowledge on chicken diseases was also very limited after the almost 30 years of "closed policy" in China. When Marek's disease (MD) spread and caused a major economic losses in many big chicken farms, many farmers did not even know what MD was, much less how to make a diagnosis and how to control it. Prof. Hu made the first diagnosis for MD in China, and also he launched and then led a national program against MD in chickens, supported by central government. He organized a big team to conduct research projects on diagnostic assays, epidemiology, prevention and control of MD. He trained many young scientists in his team to help chicken farms to control MD. Also, he helped several Chinese state-owned vaccine factories to develop production technology for lyophilized HVT vaccine. His efforts on MD played an important role in the successful control of MD in chicken farms in China. This research project on MD introduced him into the field of avian diseases, where he worked for the rest of his life.

He also translated the textbook, "Diseases of Poultry," into Chinese in the early 1980's, which made it the most famous and favorable handbook to Chinese avian pathologists. His contribution in avian diseases in China was not only limited to his research projects on MD and other avian diseases. He also helped Chinese avian pathologists and the poultry industry to have close relationships with international scientists, academic organizations and companies. In 1979, he moved from Harbin to the Center for Literature and Information, Chinese Academy of Agriculture, in Beijing. At this time, China was just starting its "open" policy. With the advantage of his experience in the UK and his considerable influence in China, he helped several international vaccine companies and breeder companies to established their businesses in China. At the same time he helped the Chinese poultry industry enter a period of rapid expansion through the use of imported modern technology, equipment and breeders.

In 1982, Prof. Hu, founded the Chinese Association of Avian Pathologists (CAAP), of which he was elected as the life-time honorary president. Now (in 2006) the CAAP has about 2000 members. In the early 1980s he helped the CAAP become affiliated with the WVPA, again using international relationships developed during his training in the UK, and became the corresponding secretary of the Chinese branch of the WVPA. Since

1985, he attended every WVPA conference, as the chief representative of CAAP and led larger and larger delegations of CAAP members to these international congresses. As the corresponding secretary of WVPA in China, he worked hard to make a close relationship between CAAP and WVPA, and to encourage more Chinese avian pathologists to take a part in WVPA. Now, there are more than 100 members in the Chinese branch of the WVPA, and China will host 15th the WVPA Congress in Beijing in 2007.

Prof. Hu had an optimistic nature with a lot of humor. He liked dancing very much and he was a good dancer. Perhaps this is why (or how) he always kept himself in good health. During a party held by the Chinese Association of Avian Pathologists for his 80th birthday, he danced for more than 2 hours with his younger friends one by one. He was a genuinely honest friend and respected teacher for the younger generation of scientists.

Dr. Zhou Jiao, a senior avian pathologist and the current president of the CAAP, recalls his friendship with Prof. Hu from the mid 1970's when he joined Prof. Hu's team in the research projects on MD and how Prof. Hu taught tirelessly every young scientist in his team. Due to the knowledge and skills obtained from Prof. Hu, Dr. Zhou and his colleagues attained a big success in developing technological processes for producing cell-associated CVI988/Rispens vaccine after they got only seed virus of the strain from Central Veterinary Institute of the Netherlands by tech-transfer agreement. As a result, China could make a MD-vaccine compatible in quality with international companies but price-competitive in the market to support the chicken industry in China.

My first meeting with Prof. Hu was in 1980 when he was holding a small symposium on neonatal piglet diarrhea caused by enteropathogenic E. coli between Chinese and British scientists in Beijing. By chance, I just finished my Master thesis on the disease and its pathogen. He asked me give a major speech on behalf of the Chinese side. At that time, I was not only the youngest scientist at the meeting, but also I could not understand or speak English. Prof. Hu even worked as my English interpreter. I was a little embarrassed but it really served as a kind of encouragement to me. In 1990 when he knew I was back to work in China after I received my Ph.D from United States, he immediately called me and asked me join the CAAP. He later recommended me as one of vice-presidents of CAAP. In 1999, he recommended me again to WVPA as the corresponding secretary in China to take over his previous responsibilities. Not long before he passed away, he still encouraged us to be active in WVPA and continue to apply for a bid to host WVPA in China. Now, the 15th WVPA Congress will be held in Beijing in September, 2007. Although Prof. Hu himself will not be present, his many friends in the WVPA family will recall the familiar smile on his face.

Biography solicited by the Committee on the History of Avian Medicine, American Association of Avian Pathologists.

Additional biographical materials may be available from the AAP Historical Archives located at Iowa State University. Contact information is as follows:

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403 Parks Library
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