

The sudden passing of Norm Wang 王能鸣 is indeed shocking. He was in good health. Blood pressure, cholesterol, and weight are all normal. He was not diabetic, and exercised regularly. He was an expert bridge player. That day, at the end of a day long bridge playing, he complained about discomfort in stomach, and suddenly collapsed. He was rushed to hospital, and passed away before midnight.

I am one year younger than average in my class, and he was one more year younger than me. I have known him since 1949 when we were in senior year at Shi Yuan Fu Zhong 师院附中。 We all agreed that he was the brightest among us, although he was just a shy young man from Chong Ming Dao 崇明岛.

We enrolled in Tai Da in 1950 together. He was in the Electric Engineering Department and I was in Civil Engineering. We had a bridge club in Taida called BTU (Bridge-club of Taiwan University). I was one of the members at its revival from the dormant status. I introduced him to join. Soon he excelled and his team went on to become the champion in a provincial competition, while I gradually withdrew from BTU, because it was taxing too much time from me.

After a year in college, he decided to transfer from the Electric Engineering Department to Civil Engineering. One reason was that the faculty in CE were much stronger than EE at that time. Another reason was that we had quite a few old classmates in CE, and it was much fun to be in CE. He did that against the wish of his father who was an EE graduate from Jiaotong University and was the director for telecommunication in Taiwan.

When I initiated to organize the Rong Rong Club 融融社 in our junior year, he was a loyal and supportive member. In the summer of 1953, the University threatened to disband Rong Rong Club if we did not participate the activity of greetings and services to army stationed in Quemoy 金门. He joined with me and a few others spending about a month in Quemoy.

We were very close. I am the youngest among my siblings. He was like a younger brother to me.

He came to US in 1956, a year after me, and enrolled in University of Texas at Austin. In the summer of 1957, we met at Urbana, Illinois to visit TUAN Jian-Nan 段建南 who had just came to US. I then went to Caltech afterwards.

When he finished his master degree at Texas in 1958, he was offered assistantship to study for PhD at Caltech, also in the Department of Engineering Science, the same as mine.

DONG Le Qiong 董乐群, our classmate in Taida and also in Nankai with me, was also studying in UT. His younger sister was an art student in Taiwan Normal College 台湾师

范学院。 She fell in love with her teacher who was an associate professor and already married. The family decided to send her also to study in Texas under the “protection” of her brother to break up the relationship. Norm loved her.

There is a lake in the public park in Austin. One day in 1958, DON went for boating with his fiancée. Somehow the boat capsized, and he was drowned. Now his sister was free from her brother’s “protection”.

At that time, her art teacher was in Paris taking a leave from his college. She wanted to go to Paris with him. But she had no money. In 1950s, the airfare was very expensive. As I recall, when I came to US in 1955, the airfare from Taipei to San Francisco, in a charter flight, costed more than \$400, while the Brown tuition was only \$800 a year. She asked Norm for help.

In early July, Norm sent me a letter asking for a loan of US\$300. I did not ask why, and sent him the money. Later when he repaid me back, he told me that it was for her airfare to Paris. I do not know whether she paid him back.

Her lover and later her husband was CHU Teh Chun 朱德群, a world class artist in later years. Two of his classmates in Hangzhou Art Academy 杭州艺专, ZAO Wou-Ki 赵无忌 and Wu Guan Zhong 吴冠中 were also world class artists.

I had seen CHU’s painting in an exhibition in Taipei in the ‘50s. At that time, his style was similar to those of 19th century impressionists. In 1960, I was attending a conference in Paris. I visited an art gallery which handled his paintings. His style had become quite abstract. A portrait of his young wife won a silver medal at the Paris Salon in 1950’s. In 1997, there was a special exhibition of his paintings in Hong Kong. The paintings were all very abstract, but had a hint of Chinese flavor.

CHU was the first Chinese artist to be elected to the Academie des Beau-Arte of France. In 2013, one of his painting was sold in a Hong Kong auction for 9.1 million US dollars. He never went back to Taiwan.

Norm arrived at Pasadena in September 1958 and started the study at Caltech in the Engineering Science Department. He was the first PhD student of James Knowles, a young assistant professor from MIT, working on solid mechanics. He finished his PhD study in summer of 1962, and married his wife Jane in early 1963.

With the strong recommendation of Knowles, he was offered as assistant professor of mechanical engineering at the University of Texas. At that time, the General Motor Company just established the new research laboratory. I had visited the new Technical Center of GM two years earlier. It was very modern, and the environment was nicer than many universities. GM was then the number 1 company in the nation. There was the saying: “What is good for General Motor is for America.” GM gave him an offer

which must be more lucrative than that from UT. He decided to accept the offer from GM, to the disappointment of Knowles. He and Jane left Pasadena in September 1963.

In April 1967, I went to Ann Arbor to attend a conference. He came to pick me up to his home in Warren. They had already a son and a daughter, and his mother-in law was living with them. It takes one hour driving from Ann Arbor to Warren. So that day, he was 4 hours on the road for my visit.

In August 1968, we moved from Caltech to Brown. We flew to Detroit, stayed in their home for four nights. They let us use their master bedroom. He helped us to purchase a car, and showed us around the area. We then drove a brand new Pontiac Catalina to Providence.

In May 1970, I went to Detroit for a conference and visited them again. His parents were also there. The last time I saw them in Taipei was in 1955.

On May 13 1972, I went to Washington D.C. to participate the second mass demonstration to defend DiaoYuTai (the first one was held a year before). Surprisingly I saw him there. He had actually drove 600 miles from Detroit to DC, taking a carload of young friends. The participants of the DiaoYuTai Movement were mostly students. Very few older persons joined actively the movement, even rarer those working in industries. I could not but help to admire his dedication to the just cause.

In August that year, his whole family took a camping trip to visit us in Providence. We had to stay home because it started to rain when they arrived. The next day, we took a one day trip to Cape Cod, the Kennedy Compound in Hyannis, the Plymouth Rock where the Mayflower landed, Boston, and Harvard Square. It was a very pleasant and memorable day.

He had been thinking of going back to motherland to serve ever since he came to US. They went back to Taiwan for a visit not long before. The children did not like that idea at all. So he gave up the idea for the time being.

After getting together for two days, they went northward to continue their trip. This was the last time we saw Jane.

We did not get together for many years, only occasionally wrote and phoned to each other. We then learned of Jane's passing in 1985 after a long illness. Norm had nursed her for many years with utmost devotion.

Norm came to visit on July 1, 1988, and stayed with us for three days. He had changed jobs, moving from GM to Ford and now to Chrysler. He also now had a partner, a supportive family friend. We were glad to hear that.

The next day, we went to Newport. Strolling on the Cliff Walk, he said that the bureaucracy of American big corporations is as bad as that of China. Comparatively, Ford was a little better.

He left on July 4. On parting, he said that we old friends should connect with one another more often. But a little over one year later, we moved to Hong Kong. We were even further apart from each other.

On October 9, 1993, I flew to Detroit to visit him, and stayed for two nights. He had moved from his original big house and lived in a comfortable townhouse. He was still with Chrysler, working on stamping models which involve complicated problems in plasticity. He intended to retire in three years, and would like to write a book on his research experience before retirement.

His son was soon to finish his PhD on political science, and his daughter had completed her medical study.

His father was already 93 years old, and his sister had gone back to Taipei to take care of him. His older brother and wife were living in Shanghai. They had gone back to Taiwan to visit his father.

Norm showed me the Technical Center of Chrysler. Then I met Min, his partner at the lunch. Min(丁月敏医师), a radiologist, is a few years older than us. She is an elegant lady very much versed in western culture.

When we moved to Monterey Park in 2000, they had already settled in Palo Alto. He came to Los Angeles area to visit us and other old friends in June. We paid a return visit to Palo Alto in October and stayed in his nice condominium. Every time we went to Bay area in later years, we had stayed in his place, just outside the Stanford University. He and Min had also come to Southern California quite a few times. Then we would have a mini-reunion of our high school classmates.

When we stayed in his place, I found that he was a subscriber of The Nation, a left-leaning liberal magazine. That is indeed very rare among our circle of friends. He had not yet lost his youthful idealism.

His sudden passing on April 26 2013 was so shocking to me that I could not believe it when I was informed of the next day. Then I thought that it was really fortunate for him to go without much suffering. The loss was mine. Getting older every day, the friends I can converse with similar ideas and views have almost all gone. Almost no one is around that you can open your heart fully to chat. I can just imagine that he were still four hundred miles away, just getting lazy to write and phone.

王能鸣的突然离世着实令人震惊。他身体状况不错，血压、胆固醇、体重都很正常，没有糖尿病，规律地健身运动。他是桥牌高手，那天，打了一整天牌之后，他说肚子疼，然后突然就倒下了，他被立刻送往医院，午夜前辞世。

当初我比班上同学平均年龄小一岁，他比我还小一岁。我从 1949 年在师院附中高中起认识他，班上大家公认他是最聪明的，虽然他不过是崇明岛来的一个羞涩的小男生。

我们 1950 年一起上了台大，他读的电机系，我在土木系。我们在台大有桥牌社称为 BTU，我是 BTU 从蛰伏到复兴阶段时的一个成员，我介绍他入社，他很快就脱颖而出，他们队在全省比赛中夺冠。因为过于耗时，我则渐渐脱离了 BTU。

上了一年大学后，他从电机系转到了土木，一个原因是土木的师资比电机强很多，另一个原因则是土木我们有好些老同学，更有意思。他转系是违背了他父亲的意志，他父亲是交大电机系毕业，当时总管台湾的电信。

我二年级创办融融社时，他是忠实的支持者，1953 年夏天，学校威胁说要是我们不去参加犒劳金门的驻军，就要解散融融社，他和几个人跟我一起在金门待了一个月左右。

我们非常要好，我是家里最小的弟弟，他就像我的小小弟弟。

1956 年他到美国，比我晚一年，就读奥斯汀德州大学，1957 年夏我们去伊利诺伊州厄班纳看望刚到美国的段建南时见了面，接着我就去了加州理工。

他 1958 年从德州拿到硕士学位后，拿到加州理工的资助读博士，跟我一样在工程科学系。

董乐群是我们在台大的同学，也是我念南开时候的同学，他也在德州大学读书。他的妹妹在台湾师范学院学艺术，跟一个已婚的副教授谈恋爱，家里决定把她送到德州念书，在哥哥的“保护”下拆开这场恋爱。能鸣爱上了她。

奥斯汀公园里有一个湖，1958 年的一天，董乐群和他的未婚妻去划船，发生了翻船事故，他溺水而死。他妹妹于是解脱了这种“保护”。

七月初的时候，能鸣写信向我借 300 美元，我没问要钱做什么就寄给他了。还钱的时候，他告诉我是给她买去巴黎的机票用的，我不知道她还给他了没有。

当时，她的那个老师从学校出访巴黎，她想去巴黎找他，可是没有钱。50 年代的飞机票很贵，记得 1955 年我来美国时，乘包机从台北到旧金山的机票超过 400 美元，而布朗大学一年的学费也不过 800 美元。她找了能鸣帮忙。

她的情人和后来的丈夫就是朱德群，后来成为了国际级的艺术大师。他在杭州艺专的两个同学，赵无极和吴冠中也是国际级的艺术大师。

朱德群是首位入选法兰西艺术学院的华人艺术家，2013 年，他的一幅作品在香港以 910 万美元售出。他后来再也没有回去过台湾。

能鸣 1958 年九月到了帕萨迪纳，开始了在加州理工工程科学系的学习。他是从 MIT 来的年轻助理教授 James Knowles 的第一个学生，做固体力学。他 1962 年夏天博士毕业，1963 年初跟 Jane 结婚。

Knowles 倾力推荐下，他拿到了德州大学的助理教授位置。那时候，通用汽车公司刚刚建起一个新的研究室，在此两年前我访问过他们的新的技术中心，非常时髦，环境比任何大学都好。通用汽车是全国第一的公司，有一个说法：“通用汽车好就好在为美国”。通用汽车给他的待遇一定比德州大学好得多，他决定接受通用汽车的聘用，这让 Knowles 很失望。他和 Jane 1963 年九月离开帕萨迪纳。

1967 年四月，我去安娜堡开会，他从华伦的家里来接我，他们有了一对儿女，岳母跟他们住在一起。安娜堡和华伦之间的车程是一个钟头，于是那天为了我去，他在路上开了四个钟头车。

1968 年我们从加州理工搬到了布朗大学。我们飞到底特律，在他们家住了四个晚上，他们让我们住的主卧，帮我们买了新车，带着在周围转悠。我们然后开着崭新的庞蒂亚克卡特里娜去了普罗维登斯。

我 50 年代在台北的画展上看过朱德群的画，那时他的风格与十九世纪印象派的接近。1960 年，我在巴黎开会，参观了负责他作品的艺术馆，他的风格变得挺抽象，他为年轻妻子作的肖像画在 50 年代巴黎沙龙上获了银奖。1997 年，香港举办了他的个展，作品全都非常抽象，但是有一种中国风格的影子。

1970 年五月，我去底特律开会又去看他们，他父母也在，之前我还是 1955 年在台北见到过。

1972 年五月 13 日，我去华盛顿特区参加第二次保钓集会（第一次是一年前组织的），令我诧异的是他也在场，他从底特律开了 600 英里到华盛顿，带着一车的年轻人。钓鱼台运动的主要参加者都是学生，很少有年长一些还积极参加的，在企业界做事的参加者就更少了，我对他为正义事业献身的精神感到由衷钦佩。

那年八月，他全家来普罗维登斯野营旅行，看望我们，由于来的那天下雨，我们只能住在家里。第二天，我们花一天时间去了科德角、海雅尼斯的肯尼迪中心、五月花号登陆的普利茅斯岩、波士顿、哈佛广场，真是非常愉快而值得回味的一天。

相聚两天后，他们接着向北旅行，这是我最后一次见到 Jane。

后来我们好多年没有见面，只是偶尔写信或电话交流。后来我们得知了 Jane 久病不愈，于 1985 年辞世，能鸣竭尽全力地照顾了她很多年。

能鸣 1988 年七月 1 日来我们家住了三天。他换了工作，从通用汽车到福特又再换到克莱斯勒。他有了一个伴儿，是个非常帮忙的世交。我们很高兴听到这些。

第二天我们去了新港，在悬崖步道漫步，他说美国大企业的官僚主义跟中国一样糟糕，相比较之下，福特公司略好一些。

他七月 4 日离开。走的时候，他说我们老朋友们应该多聚聚。不过一年多点之后，我们去了香港，离大家更远了。

1993 年十月 9 日，我飞到底特律看他，住了两个晚上。他从原来的大宅子搬到了一个舒服的连栋住宅里。他还在克莱斯勒上班，研究有着复杂塑性问题的冲压模型。他想三年内退休，打算退休前写本关于自己研究经验的书。

他的儿子当时很快就念完政治学博士，女儿也完成了医学方面的学业。

他的父亲当时 93 岁高龄，姐姐回到台北照料他，他的哥哥嫂子住在上海。他们都会台湾去看望父亲。

能鸣带我看了克莱斯勒的技术中心。然后我在午餐时见到丁月敏医师，她是放射科代付，比我们略大一点，很有风度，熟谙西方文化。

我们 2000 年移居蒙特利公园市的时候，他们也已经是在帕罗奥托住了下来，他六月和一些朋友来洛杉矶地区看我们，而我们也于十月回访帕罗奥托，住在他的舒适的公寓里。后来我们每次去湾区，都住在那里，就在斯坦福大学校园外边。他和丁月敏也来过好几次南加州，我们就会组织一次小小的高中同学聚会。

住在他家里时，我注意到他订阅了偏左派的自由主义期刊《国家杂志》，这在我们这圈朋友里是比较罕见的，他还没有丧失年轻时代的理想主义精神。

他 2013 年 4 月 26 日过世的消息令我非常吃惊，我是第二天听到消息的，完全不能相信。后来我觉得他是很幸运的，离开的时候没有遭受多少折磨。是我承受着损失，随着日渐老去，我有着类似思想观点、能够倾谈的朋友几乎都已走了，周围几乎没有什么人可以打开心扉地交谈。我想象着他还是在四百英里之外，只是变得懒于写信打电话了。