

Eulogy: In Memory of Dr. Zhongbi Wu

by: Dongfeng Tan, MD (November 16, 2007)

It is with great sadness that I inform the pathology community of the death of Dr. Zhongbi Wu, on November 8, 2007. Born in Anhui, China, in 1919, he graduated in 1945 from the National Tongji Medical College (TMC), a renowned medical school founded by Dr. Erich Paulun in Shanghai a century ago. Dr. Wu stayed as a junior faculty in TMC, where he and Dr. Shuzu Yang founded the first pathology department in China in 1946. In the late 1950s, he went to Germany to learn to use the newly developed electron microscope. Subsequently, he specialized in ultrastructural pathology. Dr. Wu, as the founding Chief of the Department of Ultrastructural Pathology at TMC, was considered a world authority on ultrastructural pathology. His research had focused on the carcinogenesis of hepatocellular carcinoma. He authored over 200 publications, edited 14 pathology textbooks, held numerous research grants, and was an invited speaker at scientific meetings around the world. Of note, his pioneering study examining the preserved organ systems from the mummies dating to the Western Han Dynasty (i.e., 2100 years ago) by modern pathology techniques provided profound insights into the lives, health and deaths of individuals long gone. His work resulted in significant contributions to both paleopathology and anthropology. Dr. Wu's academic activities were disrupted during the Culture Revolution from 1966 to 1976. He, the editor-in-chief, and his team composed and published the Textbook of Pathology in early 1978, which provided the most updated pathology material for the freshmen of eighty-seven medical schools in China. His book, now in the sixth edition, remains the standard pathology textbook in China. Dr. Wu was the founding director (1983-1989) of the Paul Ehrlich Research Institute of Experimental Medicine. He became a member of the privileged German Academy of Natural Science in 1988, and he served as Councilor of the academy and was a member of various medical committees as well as many editorial boards of peer-reviewed journals. He was the recipient of many awards and honors, including honorary doctorates from the world-renowned institutions, such as Heidelberg University and Berlin Humboldt University. In 2002, Dr. Wu was awarded the President Distinguished Service Cross with Star, the highest German decoration ever presented to a non-German citizen. Dr. Wu had an unwavering commitment and devotion to pathology and medicine. He remained an active and full-time Professor in the Department of Pathology at Tongji Medical College until the spring of this year, when he was diagnosed with advanced colorectal cancer. I am sure many of us have fond memories of him. I particularly remember the first week of the pathology course in my second year of medical school in 1979, when Dr. Wu dazzled us with his illuminating lectures, witty humor, and great inspiration; the best possible introduction to pathology for our young minds. So many students, including myself, have been inspired by his role model and gone on to pursue pathology as a lifelong career. Many well-established pathologists, such as Drs. Ruan Youbing, Zhou Xiaojun, Xu Yuhui, Xia Yifang, Wang Huijun, Shen Shiliang and Hu Zhongyi, just to name a few, have benefited further from his mentorship, as Dr. Wu trained the next generations of pathologists, both in China and abroad. I regard myself as privileged to have worked with him as one of his graduate students (1983-1987). Despite a busy schedule and the often inconvenient timing, Dr. Wu always found the time to be helpful, nurturing, collegial, and informative. I speak on behalf of his pupils in expressing our profound sadness and sense of loss at the passing of one of our most distinguished mentors. He was a rare combination of the consummate gentleman, insightful scholar, outstanding pathologist, inspiring educator, effective administrator, and treasured friend. His personal kindness and friendship was something that has touched so many people. The fact that 4200 people attended his funeral service held on Nov. 12, 2007, in the University Stadium, Wuhan, China, is a testimony to his greatness. The world is certainly a much lonelier place for his passing. An amiable gentleman, Dr. Wu loved traveling, literature, and



history. He has inspired family, friends, and colleagues in so many ways that he will live indefinitely in our hearts. He will be profoundly missed by everyone. Dr. Wu is survived by his wife, two daughters, and two grandchildren.

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