

# Shi Changxu — a great teacher and mentor for materials scientists

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I have met Professor Shi Changxu only a few times at meetings in China. One encounter that I can never forget is a meeting held in Beijing late December 2002. I was invited to participate in the inaugural meeting of the Centre for Interfacial Materials of the Institute of Metal Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences, under the CAS program of “Outstanding Overseas Chinese Scientists”. Professor Shi was the Chair of the Experts Panel at the meeting. Of course the meeting went very well, and the centre was supported generously by the Chinese Academy of Sciences which has led to a range of outstanding research outcomes including a large number of high quality publications and patents in the subsequent years. Following the meeting, Professor Shi invited a few of us to visit his home, before hosting a dinner for us. I was struck with disbelief that he and his wife lived in a very modest and small apartment in Zhongguanchun area, without any trace of luxuries inside. The very ordinary furniture and shelves after shelves of books, manifested to me that Professor Shi is a true scholar that cared little about material things in life. He then invited us to dinner at a restaurant “Guolin Jia Change Cai (Guolin’s home dishes)”, and told us that he was now ‘rich’ because he often received honorarium for his contributions to scientific meetings and expert consultation processes. As it turned out he often gave his colleagues and students “treats” following a payment of an honorarium. This encounter with Professor Shi left with me a deeper impression and heartfelt respect for him, as humble and respected individual on top of his great scientific achievements being one of the pioneers in China in the areas of high-temperature alloys. As we all know, he received numerous awards and honours, among which the National Science and Technology Award-highest honour in China, bestowed by the Chinese President Hu Jintao on 14 January 2011. Besides his leadership role in materials science in China for more than half a century since his return from the US in early 1950’s, Professor Shi has been an exemplary teacher and mentor for generations of materials scientists in China. Among his former students and junior colleagues ever mentored, there are numerous leading scientists and academicians of both the Chinese Academy of Sciences and National Academy of Engineering. He was instrumental in establishing the National Academy of Engineering and served as its Vice President for many years. Professor Shi has been a devoted leader and tireless advocate for the National Natural Science Foundation where he serves as Director-General and Vice-President. He has been very active in promoting the career development for young scientists and until recently has kept giving lectures and talks to graduate students around the country, not only about science but also about the meaning of life, one’s responsibilities to the country and the world.

On the occasion of Professor Shi’s 91st birthday, I would like to take this opportunity to express my great admiration, respect and gratitude to him, for what he has done for Chinese science and technology, and for generations of materials scientists around the world. I give my best wishes to Professor Shi for many happy and healthy returns in the years to come.

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