

# Preface

## 前言

After I stepped down as dean of engineering at the University of Hawaii, some of my colleagues and friends suggested that I should write a book on my career, engineering, and higher education based on my 40 years of experiences as a researcher, educator, and engineer. I have been thinking about that suggestion from time to time. Recent advances in computer technology have made it easy for one to write and produce a book with the help of “*Word*” software, digital photos, and Internet communications. When combined with the desire to reflect on my own career and life, and my struggle as an American immigrant; as well as to document some of my students’ careers, their achievements and family lives led to the preparation of this book.

This book describes and evaluates three main events: *my career* and my path of establishing an engineering reputation; *my life* as an eye witness of the rise of China; and *my struggle* in achieving an American dream. I understand there is a limit to the extent to which a personal autobiography like this can be truly objective. The idea of writing this book is therefore to share with the reader some of my personal thoughts, experiences, and perspectives on these events through my own life journey and reflections over the last 40 years.

My engineering career basically involved three topics of interactions: *mechanics*, *materials*, and *computing*. I have witnessed the tremendous growth and interaction in these three topics over the years because of the rapid changes of computing power. It has had a profound effect on my research and our engineering practice in general. Changes over the 40 years of my career have been dramatic and exciting. More change is

inevitable and more so in the years to come. So we must continuously adjust to change, and to learn. My life journey in the path of engineering science and structural engineering in rapidly changing times is described and evaluated in this book.

I was born in China during the Sino-Japan War (中日戰爭); and grew up in Taiwan during the Civil War (國共內戰). I was amongst the first group of Chinese-American scholars who visited China right after President Nixon's historical visit (中美建交). I gave lecture tours in China right after its open-reform policy (改革開放). I happened to be in Beijing during the students' demonstration in Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989 (六四運動); and witnessed the rise of China over the last decade (和平崛起). My life journey with a changing China has provided an eye witness on these historical events that will become part of modern Chinese history.

I came to America as a graduate student studying civil engineering. I have learned continuously throughout my life and appreciated the American values: *freedom, democracy, and market economy*. My American education has a profound effect on my aptitude for problem solving; on my attitude toward world affair, and on my scale of values for life and humanity. It has become part of the better me. My life's journey, I hope, will provide an incentive to new immigrants learning the English language and Western culture. For these are indispensable tools to become a global citizen for the understanding of the world of today and tomorrow.

I dedicate the book to my wife, Linlin Hsuan Chen (陳宣玲玲), and to my sons, Eric (陳中傑), Arnold (陳中毅) and Brian (陳中宇); and to my students who have contributed much to my career achievements. I hope they will find the book interesting, easy to read, entertaining, and inspiring. To the younger generation and international students, my personal experiences and shared wisdom will, hopefully, provide them with aspirations to achieve their American dreams.

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