

Remembering YunYun Chen, a Chinese Doctoral Student who Died When

Struck by Lightning on the Great Wall at Age 27

Carl Fey's Reflections on YunYun Chen

YunYun Chen, age 27, who was a doctoral student at Peking University's Guanghua School of Management, died tragically on June 13, 2009 when struck by lightning when walking on the Great Wall near Beijing with her husband whom she had recently married. YunYun had just returned to China on June 1 after spending a year based at Stockholm School of Economics in Sweden. YunYun was truly an exceptional person as a scholar and as a person and our collaboration while she has been a visiting doctoral student working with me at Stockholm School of Economics in Sweden over the past year exceeded all of my expectations in terms of what she could accomplish academically and in developing a friend. She was the hardest worker I have ever met, extremely smart, and fun to be with. I have rarely met someone with such a drive to succeed. And, for a young Chinese doctoral student, she was surprisingly willing to engage in interesting academic debates with me which were stimulating while still being respectful.

Most amazingly was how eager she was to learn and how quickly she learned. Her development while here over the last year was impressive and exciting to watch. We made quite a bit of progress on research this year including getting one joint article written by YunYun, Yichi Zhang, and myself accepted at the International Journal of Human Resource Management and work on other more ambitious articles. Her eagerness to learn about the research and publishing process and her excitement when she got her first international publication accepted and about research in general, helped to even further excite me about research and remind me about the best parts of research and teaching.

YunYun grew up in a small village in China and showed that with hard work, intelligence, and parental support, one can achieve much. She often spoke appreciatively of all her parents had done for her and in fact mentioned that she planned to save some of the money she had made while here to help her father, who was a farmer, to develop and market a natural medical drug which he had discovered. She was also a great ambassador for China exciting many here about the possibilities and wonders of China.

I will miss her very much as will all of her family, friends, and colleagues in Stockholm and China. It is of course very sad to lose someone so young, but I certainly consider myself lucky to have had a chance to spend some time with YunYun. Let us remember YunYun by following her example of being very excited by management research and fully appreciating how lucky we are to have a chance to conduct management research. Among other things, the YunYun memorial doctoral scholarship has been set up in memory of YunYun. Contact Carl.Fey@hhs.se for more information.



From left to right: Andrew Delios (visiting from National University of Singapore), YunYun Chen (Peking University /Stockholm School of Economics), Sergey Morgoulis-Jakoushev, Carl Fey, and Emre Yildiz (all others from Stockholm School of Economics)