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A FRIEND REMEMBERS Y. S. SUN

■Joe Moore

I met Y. S. Sun in April 1952 during my first visit to Taiwan. He was Chief Engineer of Taipower and I was an engineer with the U.S. Aid Program. For 40 years we have been close professional colleagues and good personal friends. A comfortable relationship in which we have welcomed any opportunity to see each other and help each other on any problem or project.

During that first visit to Taiwan, Y. S. and other senior Taipower officials went with me to visit various power stations. At the Wulai hydro station the turbine was shut down for maintenance, and I asked about cavitation in the scroll case. As the superintendent asked a worker to check on this, I suggested that we go in and see for ourselves. This proposal was somewhat culturally insensitive: company officials were not supposed to get too close to the machinery. As I crawled into the scroll case, I began to feel the awkwardness of the situation, but Y. S. saved me from any embarrassment. He and the others crawled in right behind me and we checked for cavitation. In later years Y. S. and I visited many power stations together, including some on the East Coast where we had to walk long distances and ride on logging railroads. We always took a good look at the machinery and I am sure the operation and maintenance technicians respected us for it.

Once in the late 1950's when Y. S. and I were on our way to Keelung to visit a construction project he commented on the political systems of the world. "In Russia," he said, "they have purges which kill off the old political leaders and bring in new ones. In the U. S. you have elections to get new people into office. But here we just play musical chairs with the same old leaders changing positions from time to time." We laughed, but we both hoped for the day when capable new people would become leaders in Taiwan. That hope was fulfilled when Y. S. was appointed to cabinet positions and then became Premier in 1978.

Y. S. enjoyed playing bridge, although he didn't have time to play very often. On my first visit to Taiwan, in the spring of 1952, he and Paul Chien and Happy Wang would ride

their bicycles to the guesthouse where I was staying, for a few hands of bridge. Later, at

our family Christmas parties, Y. S. and I would retire to a separate room with other Taipower engineers for our Annual Game. Y. S. was a bold player and on one hand, before bidding seven clubs, he remarked " I don't know whether we will make it, but I am going to bid it anyway ! " He played the hand well and made the contract.

Y. S. had a steady hand and a keen eye. He would demonstrate his skill by picking up four shelled peanuts-in series-with a pair of chopsticks. This required some care in the selection of the peanuts, and just the right pressure in picking them up. His favorite place to perform this feat was at the old Kukuan Guesthouse following meetings of the Consulting Board for the Ta Chia River Hydro Projects. The foreign consultants on the Board would try to match his performance but only one of them ever succeeded.

Y. S. is a very sensitive person and can present a case quite diplomatically. But when the chips are down he can fight like a tiger. Many years ago, during one of the recurring power shortages, Taipower proposed to buy some gas turbines as an emergency project. This type of turbine is inefficient and expensive to operate but can be delivered and installed much sooner than conventional generating units. Even I had some doubts about whether we should buy them. But at a high level meeting, Y. S. stood up and said, " Taipower is responsible to supply electricity if it is humanly possible and we need these turbines to do it. You must approve this project." He got the turbines.

In 1964 when Y. S. was selected to be the Chief Executive Officer and General Manager of the Electricity Corporation of Nigeria, we spent a whole morning together talking about the terms and conditions he should request in his contract and the authority he would need to manage the Nigerian enterprise effectively. We agreed that he must be authorized to hire and fire, and to promote and assign his subordinates. As we wrote down these conditions, he remarked with considerable sadness, "You know, Joe, that as President of Taipower I have never had that authority. That is why the task has been so hard," I understood his frustration and it still bothers me that even now the President of Taipower does not have the authority needed to manage effectively.

When Y. S. came back from Nigeria he was temporarily assigned to the small engineering consulting group of which I was Project Manager. I never considered myself his "boss" although it is nice to look back and remember that the Premier-To-Be of the Republic of China once worked in my office ! while in that assignment, he was appointed to be Miinister of Communications. Our group had a big party to celebrate this happy event and on the door of his small office we put a large sign which read:

PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT
OUR SPECIALITY: CABINET MINISTERS

I still have that sign, which reminds me of our close association down through the years.

Y. S. always remembered the hardships of his early years. Once at a dinner in my house, a guest recalled how delicious the tiny early-picked green peas had tasted in his childhood home on the Mainland. Y. S. then remarked, politely but pointedly, that in his home in Shan Tung they could not afford to pick the tender peas but always let them grow to full size because food was not plentiful.

As he rose to higher positions, Y. S. never lost his interest in the "ordinary people" of Taiwan and never forgot his old friends. Even when he was Minister of Economic Affairs he would visit our office-and many other offices-during the Chinese New Year to thank

us for our hard work and wish us good fortune in the year ahead. The secretaries and drivers especially appreciated these visits.

Our personal friendship extended to our families. Each of us had four children-two boys and two girls of about the same ages in each family. We often enjoyed afternoons and evenings together at the guesthouses at Pei Pu and Wulai and in our homes in Taipei. His youngest son, Joseph, was born on my birthday (November 29). His wife, Lily, and I were born in the same year so I affectionately called her "Little Sister."

Y. S. and I never talked much about religion, although I made no secret of my belief in Christianity and he always demonstrated the filial piety for which Chinese culture is famous. But many of us prayed that the Lord would bless and guide him, personally and officially. Several years ago when I visited him at his home, he said, "Joe, I am a Christian now. I was baptized last Easter." I rejoiced as I replied, "Y. s., you'll never know how long and how many of us were praying for this."

I was among the millions who were shocked and distressed in 1984 when a severe stroke forced Y. S. to resign as Premier. But I am happy to see the progress-though slow and painful-that he has made since that time. Each year as I return to Taiwan for a few months, I look forward to a visit with Y. S. and Lily in their home. We talk frankly about current conditions and I know we both will always care deeply about rational power development and responsible political and economic freedom in Taiwan, despite the continuing difficulty of fully achieving these goals.

