

1.4 Speech in the Ceremony for Da Ruan at Vito Conference Hall, Mol, Belgium, 6 Aug. 2011

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Beste Greet, Alexander, Nicolas en Christiane
Dear Fei and Di,
Dear friends and colleagues,

Wat een vreselijke tijd! Wie had een week geleden kunnen vermoeden dat wij vandaag afscheid zouden moeten nemen van Da? Het nieuws sloeg bij ons in als een bom. Da, ogenschijnlijk gezond van lijf en leden, is niet meer. Hoeveel e-mails en telefoons van ongeloof en verbijstering hebben we de voorbije dagen niet met elkaar gewisseld. En de eeuwige vraag: waarom, waarom hij? Zo een in-goed en getalenteerd man! Zo een liefhebbende echtgenoot en vader! Zo een vriend van onschatbare waarde! And such a loss for our fuzzy community!

I met Da for the first time about 25 years ago when he joined my research group on Fuzziness and Uncertainty Modelling at Ghent university. That time every year China selected two excellent master students to go abroad in the framework of a bilateral cooperation between China and Belgium to work towards a PhD degree. From the very beginning of our cooperation I was very touched by his competence and hard working to tackle completely new issues in the recently developed mathematics of fuzziness. Da obtained his PhD in mathematics from Ghent University in 1990. After obtaining his PhD he could get a post-doc position at the Center for Nuclear Research in Mol, where he started his very successful career as a researcher combining theoretical as well as applied contributions and especially as the project leader of his scientific child called FLINS (an acronym for Fuzzy Logic and Intelligent technologies in Nuclear Science). Indeed unbelievable successful!

Da has authored about 120 peer-reviewed papers in leading international journals, five textbooks, about 100 book chapters and conference papers on different soft computing issues in decision support systems, aggregation operators, information management and nuclear systems, to call only a view of them. Indeed as Prof. Janusz Kacprzyk from the Polish Academy of Science wrote: “Da has been one of the most visionary people in our field who has always known how to combine theory and practice”.

Da has edited 20 research books for world publishers such as Springer and Kluwer and 17 special issues on artificial intelligence for top journals such as Fuzzy Sets and Systems, Information Sciences and International Journal of Intelligent Systems.

But as said before his major scientific achievement was the founding of FLINS with its international conference held every two years starting from 1994, first in Mol and later on in Ghent, Antwerp, Blankenberge, Bruges, Genova, Madrid and Chengdu. Da was the main editor of the proceedings, not only responsible for its contents but also for the lay-out, including the design and colours of the cover. Da was an aesthete: everything is important, not only the contents but also the presentation.

Nobody can imagine that the planned 2012 FLINS conference in Istanbul will not be opened by Da.

Two months ago we attended the World Conference on Soft Computing in San Francisco to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the founder of fuzzy logic Prof Lotfi Zadeh. At that conference Da organized a panel discussion on “Soft computing challenges and future directions in society and industry”. Da could convince top researchers from Europe, USA, Australia, Mexico to take part in this discussion on the future of our research. Afterwards I told Da that I was very proud to see him chairing this event in front of a completely full Jack Adams hall of the San Francisco State University.

Because of his highly rated scientific achievements and management capacities Da passed very strong criteria to obtain a guest professorship at Ghent University in 2005. In 2007 he also became a guest professor at Hasselt University, as well as adjunct professor in the University of Technology in Sydney and different universities in Shanghai, where he was praised for his lectures on fuzzy logic and its applications. Despite his so young age he obtained already an honorary doctorate from the Nuclear Power Institute of China in Chengdu.

Dear friends, nobody can imagine the energy Da has put into these achievements. Quoting Lotfi Zadeh, the founder of the fuzzy set theory: “Da Ruan was a leading member of the fuzzy logic community world-wide. His passing away is an irreparable loss...”

Maar Da heeft niet enkel intellectuele en wetenschappelijke verdiensten. Wat Da als mens betekende kan niet genoeg worden benadrukt. Wat de betekenis is van vriendschap heeft Da aan zo velen van ons duidelijk gemaakt. Getuige ook waarvan de tientallen e-mails die de voorbije dagen het heengaan van Da hebben betreurd. Ikzelf verlies aan Da één van mijn allerbeste vrienden.

Da was ook een fantastische echtgenoot, vader, zoon en broer.

Hoe fier was hij niet op jou Greet, en op je talenten: je zangtalent, je schrijftalent...

En dan zijn twee zonen, zijn oogappels, eveneens getalenteerd en op weg prachtige mensen te worden zoals hun vader. Hoe jammer dat hij niet meer zal kunnen genieten van jullie verdere successen!

And how full of love and loyalty he remained with respect to his parents, sister and brothers and to his beloved China. Dear Fei, we can feel your sorrow: my wife's brother passed away at the age of 48 in completely similar circumstances.

Everybody could experience the enthusiasm he showed in praising the Chinese culture to his foreign friends. We all know his passion for the good Chinese food. He was an excellent cook. I lively remember his talks with Ron Yager from New York about Chinese delicacies. You know Da that we intended to open after your retirement an exclusive restaurant with high- class Chinese food...

Dear Da, on behalf of all my colleagues I can tell you that saying goodbye to you is very hard. We will miss you so much: your true friendship, your optimism, your unselfish devoting with respect to all your commitments. Last Tuesday I went to say goodbye to your body and I saw your face expressing pride as it was saying: "I did my very best, please continue my work and be friendly to each other."

Thank you, Da, for giving us so much love and friendship.



E. Kerre received from Da the FLINS Golden Chair Medal in 2010 in Chengdu for his continuous support to FLINS conferences



A proof of a true friendship since 1987