

GE — And you were drawn to the United States. How did you make a connection with Georgia Tech as a place to pursue your studies?

WEI — Well, there was a family friend who was going to school here. I was a student in Shanghai, and he said I can get you an admission to Georgia Tech. I said, great. That's how I started at Georgia Tech,

GE — Had you ever been to the United States before that?

WEI — Never. That was the first trip. In 1949.

GE — So, as a young minority engineer, emigratn

very low. I figured, I'm here just to put food on the table and don't expect anything to come along my way. That's the way it was.

GE — But you did have ambitions.

WEI — Oh, yes. Somehow, things worked out better than I expected, and I became quite prominent. I wound up doing very well in research. Better than anyone expected. In fact, the company decided to send me to Harvard Business School. So, they wanted to terminate my research career and make me a manager. Which is quite a change in my plan for myself. But later I went to teach.

GE — Tell us about how you made your first connection with AIChE.

WEI — Well, I really got interested in AIChE in 1962, when I was beginning to publish my research in the engineering literature and going to AIChE meetings. And I became involved in programming the meetings, but I also got involved in talking about things that were beyond technical. And that was, there were a lot of injustices that I really ought to get involved in addressing. Which I did. That was really quite a surprise to me because, not so much earlier, I wasn't planning to do any such thing. I was just going to fit in.

GE — What are you referring to when you say that you wanted to be involved with AIChE in more areas than just the technical?

WEI — For instance, the attitude was the black chemical engineer is not to be treated the same as a white chemical engineer. And, speaking for myself, I very much think that everyone should be treated the same, because I was a marginal character myself. So, other marginal characters and I just flocked together.

WEI — Exactly.

GE — Did you involve yourself with them then, or did you meet them through your role on the Council? I know that you were elected to the Council in the early 1970s, for the first time.

WEI — Right. But the Council was an opening for me to see what a person in a leadership position should do to make the world a better place.

And, later on I was elected president of the AIChE. It was in the year 1988. And I found a copy of Executive Committee meeting notes, dated April 9, 1988. And it says:

“The presiding person on this meeting is President Wei. And he reported that he had a discussion with Henry Brown, AIChE Minority Affairs Coordinator. And he urged Henry to establish a formal Minority Affairs Committee that should include past presidents and Council members, so as to make this effort more effective. And this will be discussed further with Council Liaison Anne Ruebush.”

So, this was intended to move the efforts from a fringe activity to a mainstream activity of AIChE, and therefore worthy of consideration as a high priority.

And I have another record from an Executive Committee meeting, dated April 21, 1988, a memo from Dick Emmert, which was (i) 3 ero h() 4 01 0 (i) 3 (m) -6 (e) JTJ ET Q 0.24 0 0 0.24324902963 444.24cm BT C

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