

A SYMBIOSIS—LANYANG CAMPUSE AND TAIPEI—YILAN FREEWAY

英文電子報

For the Founder of TKU, Dr. Clement Chang, the trip back home to Lo-Tong, Yi-lan County on June 16 was unlike no others. He explains:

This journey was particularly sweet and joyful. I didn't take the usual routes which are either along the coast or through the hills. Both would take me at least more than 2 hours. Instead, this time I was traveling along this scenic route that took me slightly over half an hour to Tou Chen where a ceremony was held to celebrate the opening of the Hsuehshan Tunnel to traffic. It was a historical moment for all folks in Yi-lan County and I was honored to be there to witness and share the joy with everyone concerned.

When our car drove in the nearly 13 miles long Hsuehshan Tunnel in a slow and steady speed, cruising down the wide space in an unhurried pace, it was hard to imagine that this place was once filled with treacherous underground water and layers of rocks that had been formed along some complex fault lines through millions of years of shifting and shoving. I could not help but admire the hardship, ingenuity and tenacity people put in to make the tunnel possible. In the past fifteen years, over 20,000 people have dedicated themselves day and night to combat intolerable working conditions that include inferno-like temperature, poor lighting, muddy ground, and deafening drilling noises to create the longest tunnel in Asia and the fifth longest in the world. The level of engineering was so difficult that it has earned itself a place in the Encyclopedia Britannica as an engineering wonder. This construction is the pride of Taiwan: An achievement deriving from concerted efforts of manpower, various resources, and above all, sacrifices of unknown heroes who shed their blood, sweat, and at times, human lives to make our dream a reality.

To me, this reality has a special meaning. Yes, the tunnel have indeed shortened the distance between Taipei and Yilan which in turn also the distance between Tamsui and Lanyang Campus. Distance aside, it has in fact fulfilled a dream that could be traced back to my family several generations ago.

This dream surfaced to me vividly as the colorful balloons and confetti dropped from the sky during the inauguration ceremony. I remembered that when I was a child, my father often told me how he had walked three days through the Tsao Ling Trail from Lo-Tong to Tamsui to attend a high school there. This story had left a deep impression on me, and as the railways connecting to Taipei were completed in my elementary school years later on, I thought to myself naively of why no one had thought about simply drilling holes through those hills to shorten the distance? I remember me wishing naively to build a tunnel to make traveling not so much a hassle. Of course, it did not occur to me the actual adversities involved for engaging in such an operation.

However, as fate has it, I became the Speaker of the Taipei City Council as well as the Chair of the Association for Yi-lan' s Folks and Affairs about 20 years ago that put me in a position to rethink my naive dream seriously. As the folks and I from Yi-lan gathered together discussing the causes of Yi-lan' s trailing behind other places in terms of industrial and commercial development, we concluded that an effective way of developing the place and preventing talented young people from leaving the area would be to improve the transport situation. In light of this, a Commission for the Construction of Taipei-Yilan Freeway was set up to push the government into action. I was elected as the Chair responsible for fund raising, promotional activities that included brochures and media exposure. I even brought this matter to the attention of Chiang Ching-kuo, who was the Premier of Executive Yuan then. Despite his sympathy and understanding, he was too busy to give our proposal a more serious thought.

We had not been discouraged by this inaction, as we had continued our campaign whenever and wherever we could until I became the Minister of Transportation and Communications in 1989, when our dream made a big step toward reality. At the beginning of my term, the government initiated the project of Taipei–Yilan Express Way, but through my careful suggestion, the government upgraded the project of express way to that of a high way, which would trigger longer and more profound benefits to Yi–lan’ s development in the long run. The government also agreed to raise the budget to over 60 billions NT dollars. In order to safeguard the ample funding, I went around to see Chien Fu, the Chair of the Council for Economic Planning and Development then to plea our case personally. It paid off as the expanded project along with the budget were approved that sealed the auspicious fate of this highway.

I will never forget the relief I felt when that happened however, the job of bringing development and prosperity to Yi–lan was only half done with the highway. We also needed a measure that would keep the talents in the county to build up the place. In parallel, we needed to attract talented people that had left Yi–lan to return so as to be involved in local industries, education, medicine, and so on. Therefore, to me, to raise the educational level of local people became the best option for the place. After having had thought through this issue, I started the mission of launching a university earnestly. The blueprint of the university had been shuffled back and forth among several governmental agencies—the Ministry of Education, Environmental Protection Administration Executive Yuan and the Ministry of Interior —for seven and eight years until we received an approvals of various licenses for the construction. It had been a long and hard process, but the university was finally completed last summer, and students moved in in February this year. These young and energetic youngsters have injected some academic agility to Mt. Linmei—seeing them striving in this environment made all the hard work worthwhile.

I was originally hoping the opening of the university and the tunnel would

synchronize, as for me they were my twin babies that had stayed in the womb for 17 years. It would have been great had they been “born” at the same time. Yet, through some complication, the tunnel ‘arrived” a few months later. Although they are a few months apart, my dream of bringing prosperity to my hometown by building a highway and a university was eventually realized. I am extremely gratified and grateful.

My family has been here for five generations from my great-grand father who came over by boat from Chang-pu, Fu Jien Province of China, following pioneers such as Wu Sha to tame the wilderness in Yi-lan over two hundred years ago. It was them who cut through the hills that set Yi-lan and Taipei apart to pave the Zhao Lin Trail. On this trail, many grass-made sandals would have been worn out just to make one trip which would take three whole days. When it came to my father’s generation, railways were built, so the trip was shortened to within 3 hours. I am the fourth and my daughter, Flora, is the fifth generation of the family and it will only take us slightly over half an hour to get to Taipei! This really puts me in awe with the development of technology—the wonder it can do—I certainly hope that through such a convenience Lanyang Campus will be able to take off in all areas of development. Fly high, my Lanyang Campus!

To me, Lanyang Campus and Taipei-Yilan Freeway are twins not being born on the same day, and they are by all means a symbiosis. One would not have existed had it not been for the other. Even today they have an interdependent relationship that will generate mutual benefits. For Tamkang University, through the completion of the highway, it will be much easier for the four distinctive campuses, particularly that of Lanyang, of Tamkang to integrate and share resources. In this way, the four campuses, without losing their individual color, can be synchronized in their development. In other words, despite the four separated campuses, we are still one great university with one united spirit and we have only one united front dealing with the outside world. There are some ways to instill this understanding to our students in all campuses. First of all, all new students will have

to climb the 132 steps of the Ke Nan Steps to enter the university. When they graduate, they will climb the 64 steps of the Five-Tiger Steps to the Shao-Mo Memorial Gymnasium for the commencement ceremony. Furthermore, the 200 strong student clubs at the Tamsui Campus will have to hold at least one event at Lanyang campus each year, otherwise they will risk having their club canceled. Finally, big events held by the university, such as the anniversary celebrations, university meetings or board meetings should alternate the venue between Tamsui and Lanyang. All these measures mentioned above will definitely bring about what I envisage as “Diversity within Integration: One Great University, Four Distinct Campuses .” And this is our future.

In the end, I must say that my experiences either as the head of a university or national transportation affairs have taught me some invaluable lessons of life and one of them is that the beginning of a great project is always the most difficult period. It takes a great deal of patience, persistence, and faith to overcome colossal obstacles and challenges. Once you have done that and see the fruit of your hard work right in front of you, you begin to realize that one should never speak of giving up in any circumstance, be it in the face of success or adversity. Perseverance will sail us through. Now with both Lanyang Campus and the Freeway up and running, they will not only benefit the people of this generation, but also those of many generations to come. I have witnessed how Tamsui Campus has grown with Taiwan’ s economic development in the past decades, and I am convinced that through the Hsuehshan Tunnel, Lanyang will grow together with Yi-lan. Yi-lan has been blessed with lustrous greens, ample supply of water as well as other resources, and talented, and hardworking people—they deserve this good fortune. It will shine brightly one day and let Lanyang Campus shine with it!