

My friendship with Pauchy Hwang

Pauchy Hwang was a good friend. We met some 20 years ago, shortly after I arrived in Taiwan to take up my position at Academia Sinica. We had little in common professionally during those days. He was a physicist of some note. I was just a biochemist, who worked on membrane proteins. Our intellectual interests did not overlap much. Pauchy tried to get me interested in his physics, his world of cosmology and his research in the standard model. Because I showed some interest in what he was telling me, Pauchy would welcome me into his circle of distinguished physicists from the US and Europe. I would hear about quarks, mesons, the Higgs Boson, dark matter, his ideas on black holes, etc. That made me feel important. Later on, he even made me a honorary member of his Club of Taida Distinguished Physicist Alumni and Friends. I was flattered to become a “pseudo physicist”. Quite an honor for me, as a biochemist. Interestingly, Pauchy subsequently developed an interest in biology after his son Justin became a graduate student in cancer biology at Tufts Medical School. Pauchy would ask me questions about DNA, the human genome, oncogenes, genome editing, etc. He was not only curious, but dead serious about knowing more about these subjects. We all knew Pauchy as a man of few words, but he was a great listener. A great intellectual and a very wise human being.

Pauchy and Jane embraced me as part of the Hwang family and invited me to many lavish dinner parties, including Justin’s wedding. We also celebrated many of my own birthdays together with a dinner party. He always seemed to remember my birthday and would email me to remind me that it was time to celebrate another birthday together. Pauchy, Jane, Tien-Yau Luh and [Shou-Jen](#) did share many of these fine meals together. Pasta East West (紅廚) was one of our favorite restaurants. Pauchy enjoyed his 8-ounce sirloin steak and I would have my mushroom pizza or lobster linguine.

Another restaurant Pauchy introduced me to was the 頂鮮101美食美景餐廳 on the 86th floor of Taipei 101. Pauchy and Jane would host some of the finest dinner parties there. Around the biggest dining table I have ever feasted at, Pauchy would enjoy his shark-fin soup and toast one another with the finest red wines, and I had my Peking Duck. It was all very memorable.

But in the end, I think that it was our common value system that brought us together. His emphasis on excellence in the way we should live our lives, the way we should raise our families, the way we should think about the world, the way we should do our science, and the way we should interact with our peers, is what I cherish the most about Pauchy. Pauchy showed me how to become more philosophical in my day-to-day living as I got to know him better, and I have become a happier person as I grow older. Thank you, Pauchy.