



Lee talks with local media in Dongguan, South China's Guangdong province, after a public speech on Dec 3, 2009. CHEN FAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

>> FROM PAGE 10

to the rank of captain, before he and his wife, Margaret, immigrated to the US.

After witnessing violent police interrogations and even the torture of criminal suspects in Taiwan, Lee said he felt such tactics were cruel and ineffective, as they weaken the credibility of evidence and confessions.

Instead, he decided to study forensic science. Between 1972 and 1975, while working part-time jobs — including as a waiter and a lab technician — Lee obtained a bachelor's degree from City University of New York, and a master's and PhD in biochemistry from New York University. He went on to teach at the University of New Haven, Connecticut.

In 1985, while director of the Connecticut State Police Forensic Laboratory, Lee was invited by China's ministries of public security and education to lead a monthlong training course for police officers, legal professionals and lab technicians at Renmin University of China.

The trip was his first time back to the Chinese mainland and marked the start of decades of exchanges between Lee and scientists and criminal investigators nationwide.

"After an increase in child kidnappings in the 90s, I returned to my homeland again. I introduced how to use DNA and advanced chemical reagents to identify suspects and solve such cases," he said.

It was also around this time that Lee became commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Public Safety, making him the first Chinese-American to lead a state-level police authority in the US. He held the post until his retirement in 2000.

Over the past 18 years, Lee has continued to consult on criminal cases around the world, as well as direct the Henry C. Lee Institute of Forensic Science at the University of New Haven, Connecticut.

He returns to China seven to eight times a year to give lectures, sometimes to students



An award winner poses with Lee after the 2016 Shanghai Magnolia Award ceremony, on Sept 7, 2016. Lee was one of 50 foreign winners of the award. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

at colleges or high schools. "I want to educate them to be good people," he said. "I tell them not to always be looking at their smartphones, to go see the world."

Reflecting on his early years in the US, he said he faced discrimination in his field. "American people sometimes looked down on me for my foreign background. But I didn't give up. I was determined to prove myself."

He went on to become a leading authority, working on high-profile cases such as the O.J. Simpson murder trial, a reinvestigation into the assassination of US president John F. Kennedy, and the hunt for the Washington sniper in 2002.

Lee said the reform and opening-up policy introduced by China in 1978 led to rapid eco-

nomical and societal developments, allowing many Chinese to study or live abroad.

"A good thing is that more Chinese are going out to further study forensic science. They will come back to use that knowledge to serve their country," he said.

"I'm happy to see more Chinese now working with Americans in forensic labs, but I always advise them to be leaders in the workplace. We should break Western stereotypes by showing our abilities and leadership."

Lee also suggested overseas Chinese should be diligent and cohesive, to uphold their national dignity and preserve their traditional cultures.

"Only in this way will we speak louder to the world," he said.

Q&A

What were your impressions of China when you returned for the first time in 1985?

When I was invited by the Ministry of Public Security and Ministry of Education to provide training for judicial workers, it was my first trip back after many years of living and studying overseas. Beijing had changed a lot, although the change could not be compared with nowadays. I still remember many foreigners stayed at the Beijing Friendship Hotel, which at that time was the city's only large hotel.

What are the biggest changes you have witnessed over the years?

Since the launch of reform and opening-up, China has developed in many aspects. The country has more cities, more job opportunities, and it has become more civilized and brought fast development to the global economy. As for my industry, I'm happy to see the growing number of Chinese willing to work in forensic science, and I'm glad to see that the country's forensic devices and capabilities, such as those for identifying fingerprints, have become more powerful.

How do you view China's efforts during the past four decades of reform and opening-up? And what role have you played?

Take forensic science for example. More students, teachers and employees engaged in or working in science-related industries have gone overseas to learn more advanced knowledge and receive forensic training. Thousands of Chinese have also come to me to listen to my speeches — and these people have made great contributions to the industry in China. What I have done is share my experience, provide education and offer advice in criminal investigations.

What would be your advice to China on further reform and opening-up?

What is important for China during its fast development is to uphold the country's traditions and cultures, such as respecting elders and taking care of your family, and passing these traditions on. As the world becomes more prosperous, Chinese shouldn't blindly focus on catching up with Western countries and forget what we already have.

What does an open China mean for the world?

The world has become a big family since we entered the 21st century. I don't want to see us argue or fight over economic gaps, and I don't want the world to move away from peace and openness. Openness improves our lives and beautifies the world. An open China means to be friendly to others as well as to join hands in the face of challenges or difficulties caused by disease or threats to the environment, security and the economy.

CAO YIN