

Xiamen University America Alumni Association

Xiamen University Alumni Association of the Americas



廈門大學美洲校友會
Xiamen University America Alumni Association



A Xiamen University Student's Choice at a Critical Moment of National Crisis

Posted on [March 22, 2021](#) by [Wenqiang Xiao](#)

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Translated September 20, 2025

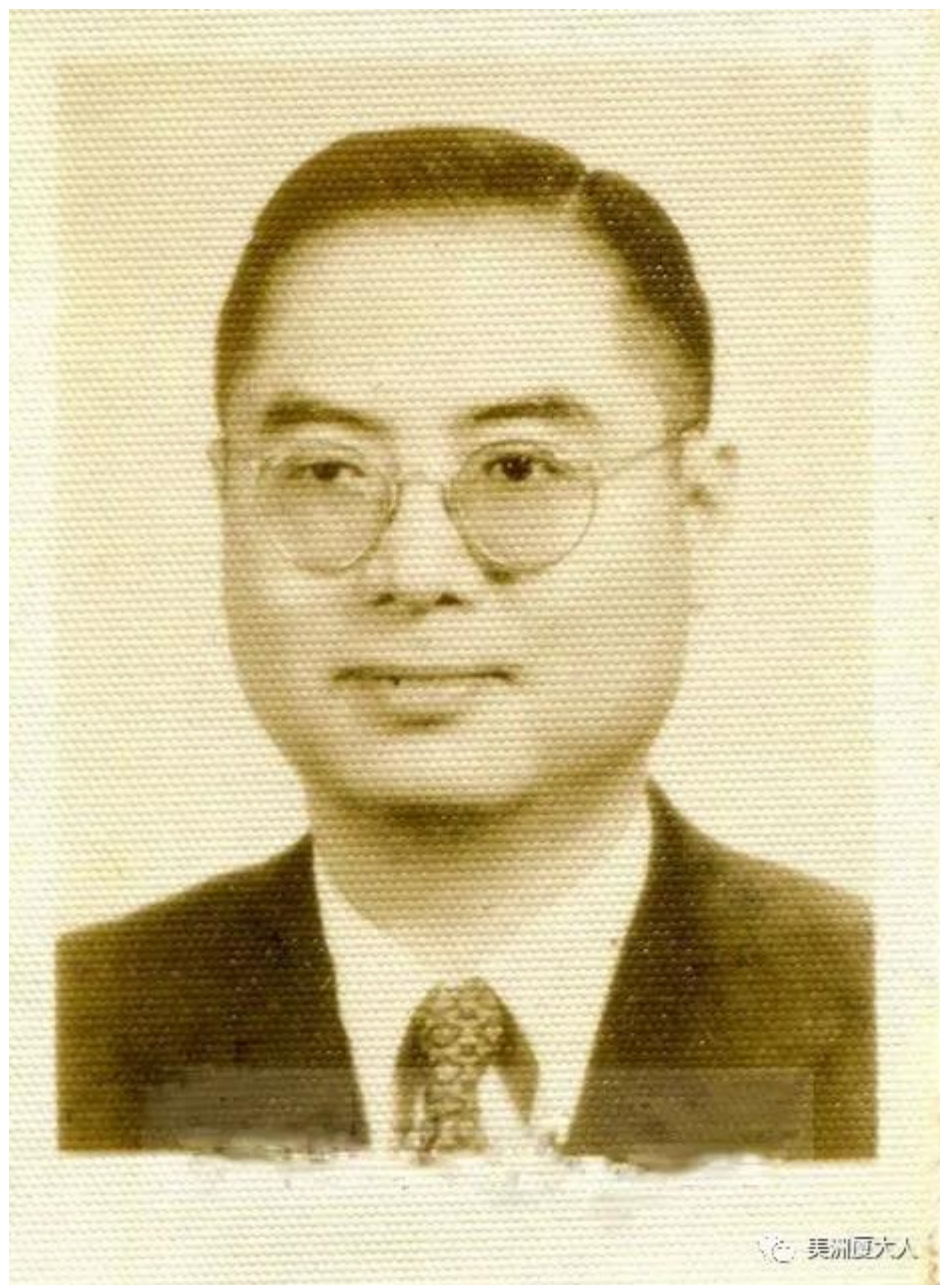


廈門大學美洲校友會
Xiamen University America Alumni Association



A series of commemorative articles celebrating the centenary of our alma mater.
Dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Chemistry discipline of our alma mater.

Please follow the "Xiamen University of America" official account



My older alumnus Jin Tai Shen 沈觀泰 (September 13, 1911 – September 9, 1985), a native of Minhou, Fujian Province, graduated from the Department of Chemistry at Xiamen University in 1934. He went to study in the UK in 1937. In 1939, he received a master's degree in petroleum chemistry from the University of Birmingham and continued his doctoral studies. At the time, the Pacific War had not yet broken out, and Japan was fully engaged in its campaign against China. China's war of resistance entered its most arduous phase, and the survival of the Chinese nation hung in the balance. Just months away from receiving his doctorate, Mr. Jin Tai Shen resolutely sacrificed himself, interrupting his studies to return home to fulfill his ambition to serve his country. This spirit of self-sacrifice, prioritizing the nation and its interests in times of national crisis, is forever worthy of our admiration at Xiamen University!

Jin Tai Shen is a distinguished alumnus of Xiamen University, his alma mater. He has achieved extraordinary achievements throughout his life.

After returning to China, he worked as an engineer at a power oil plant jointly run by the National Resources Commission and the Ordnance Department of the Ministry of Military Affairs. He used vegetable oils such as rapeseed oil, tung oil, and peanut oil as raw materials, cracking them to produce gasoline, diesel, kerosene, and lubricants, making significant contributions to the arduous War of Resistance.

The highway between Gansu and Xinjiang is a vital international route. During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, it served as a vital artery for transporting military supplies. To address the fuel shortage, the National Resources Commission of the Nationalist Government and the Gansu Provincial Government decided in 1941 to establish the Gansu Alcohol Factory. Mr. Jin Tai Shen was appointed Factory Director. In the remote northwest, where supplies were extremely scarce, Jin Tai Shen made do with what little he had, overcoming numerous difficulties and creatively producing alcohol that could replace gasoline. In the later years of the war, the alcohol factory merged with a chemical plant to form the Gansu Chemical Factory, which

produced urgently needed wartime chemicals such as sulfuric acid, nitric acid, and hydrochloric acid.

After the victory of the Anti-Japanese War in 1945, Jin Tai Shen was dispatched to Taiwan to assist CPC General Manager Jin Kaiying (金开英) in taking over the Japanese oil industry in Taiwan. He subsequently served in enterprises affiliated with the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) in Taiwan, holding positions such as Plant Manager, CPC Assistant Manager, Acting General Manager, and Director of the Research Institute. In 1969, Jin Tai Shen was appointed an Advisor to the Executive Yuan's Council for International Economic Cooperation and Development and the founding Chairman of the China Petrochemical Industry Development Corporation. He was a key figure in Taiwan's petrochemical industry and made significant contributions to the development of the Chinese oil industry in Taiwan.

In his work, Jin Tai Shen prioritized the role of Xiamen University alumni. In 1941, at Jin Tai Shen's invitation, Huang Daxuan 黄大烜 (Class of '35, Chemistry) went to Gansu to assist with factory construction. He later hired fellow Chemistry alumni Li Zhaoxi 李兆禧 and Accounting alumnus Weng Lida 翁礼达. While director of the Chiayi Solvent Plant in Taiwan, he hired alumni such as Li Lianhuan 李联欢 (Class of '47, Chemistry), Chen Zhide 陈至德 (Class of '47, Chemistry), and Tao Shuren 陶树人 (Class of '49, Chemistry).

He encouraged alumni to pursue further studies abroad. His encouragement led all three Chemistry alumni to study in the United States, eventually settling in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, respectively. Xiamen University alumni who worked under his leadership lavished praise on him. In several memoirs published in the Xiamen University Alumni Association of Americas' "Alumni Newsletter," Li Lianhuan (李联欢) spoke of Jin Tai Shen calling him the best boss he had ever met.

Mr. Jin Tai Shen lived in the United States in his later years. He was one of the earliest members of the Xiamen University American Alumni Association, established in 1984. In 1985, even though he

was seriously ill, he still wrote letters and sent checks from his sickbed to the American Alumni Association's Education Fund. Learning of his patriotic act moved fellow alumni. This spirit of devotion to our alma mater is worth emulating and remembering for future generations.

Mr. Jin Tai Shen tragically passed away in Los Angeles on September 9, 1985. Alumni were deeply saddened by his passing. *(This article is by Fu Zhidong, a 1982 graduate of the Department of Chemistry. He currently lives in Atlanta.)*

After Mr. Jin Tai Shen tragically passed away in Los Angeles in 1985, his wife, Yu-Fen (Jenny) Chen Shen (沈陳郁芬), was deeply grief-stricken and wrote an article titled "Sorrow," which was published in the World Journal on February 15, 1987. The article was also reprinted in the second issue of the Xiamen University Alumni Newsletter in the United States.

傷懷

沈陳郁芬

本文由陳文淵學士長

剪寄本刊。

原載世界日報(一九七

年二月十五日)。

——編者——

我的丈夫沈觀泰去世已一年多，說起來似乎很快，然而痛苦的日子是漫長的。他在我心目中永遠是一個美善的完人，聰明不外露，不太會說話，可是會用流利的中英文演講。他不會逢迎，更不吝奉承，巴結，從不做違心的事，好像不喜台詞派，也是他不能飛黃騰達的原因，但是我們生活過得很心安，我們相愛，我們快樂。

觀泰是福建閩侯人，出生在江蘇鎮江，先外高祖林文忠公(則徐)先曾祖沈文肅公(葆慎)皆清室名臣，先祖母林琴史女士就讀日本時，因與吳稚暉、胡毅齋兩先生相識，經胡先生介紹參加同盟會。時值秋瑾女俠遇害，祖母召集女同學集會抗議，上書質問浙撫，先兄沈觀岳曾任菲律賓交通銀行副總經理及總經理數十年。堂兄沈觀鼎曾任我國駐日本及伊朗等國大使。侄沈祖馨、沈祖澐等均服務於台灣，對社會頗有貢獻。

觀泰早歲入廈門大學攻讀化學，畢業後負笈英倫，入伯明罕大學研修石油化學，獲碩士學位。抗戰開始，他為了報效國家，不惜犧牲數月就得到的博士學位，東裝返國，初任經濟部資源委員會工程師，繼任甘肅省化工廠廠長，於物資極端缺乏之下，致力領導工廠生產，以資軍民之需，貢獻至多。政府遷台，奉派接收高雄煉油廠，當時台灣工業設備大多遭戰爭破壞，百廢

待興，幸蒙親率員工日夜匪懈，終使該廠恢復生產。後任嘉義裕剛廠廠長，茲後升任中國石油公司協理、代總經理，後又調經濟部聯合工業研究所所長，行政院美援運用委員會第一處處長。一九六四年由華盛頓回台灣，曾於一九六二年、一九六三年、一九六九年返台，任中國石油化學工業開發公司董事長，兼行政院經合會顧問，一九七三年再度由聯合國借調到泰國工作。觀泰曾數次代表國家出席國際原子能運用委員會，並受聘為該委員會顧問。

觀泰一生為事業，為國家奮鬥，苦幹、清廉盡責，愛同仁，從未為自己打算過。他信奉耶穌，是虔誠的基督徒，從未做過昧良心的事，不討上帝喜悅的事，儘管有太多輕而易得的機會，卻無絲毫苟且，他為眼疾來美動手術，未能及時趕回國辦理公務員退休事宜，一生辛勞，結果未領到半分錢的退休金，但沒有絲毫的怨言，真正的寬恕虧負他和欺騙他的人，毫不勉強。他對家庭負責，愛護我們和孩子們無微不至，我同他到過不少的地方，也見到很多場面，我們共了很多的甘苦。我的丈夫總是健康活潑，在我的眼光中，他非常出眾，我以他為傲，以他是我丈夫，姓他的沈為榮。他比我大，經常教我為人處世之道，教我讀書、做運動，我們一起讀聖

經，我喜歡唱京戲、昆曲，他非常鼓勵我，總是以我的興趣為興趣。有時我會無理取鬧，但他從不與我計較，不但是我的好丈夫，亦是我的良師益友。

在泰國時，我因婦科的疾病回台灣檢查，結果醫師斷定要動手術。我哥哥因要為我的手術簽字，通知觀泰，觀泰非常著急，但因公務關係，不能立刻趕到台灣看我，於是心神不定，坐立不寧，藉酒消愁。但他從不喝酒，於是酒使他病倒，經友人送醫院急救才脫險。

來美後我找到工作，下班時他總是站在門口等我，喝寒問暖，並給我預備吃的食物。間或帶工作回家這些，他不放心即電回關心。他非常愛我，不許我生病，非經醫師所允不容。回憶過去似海恩情，使我不能自制，常以淚洗面。夫妻三十五年如一日，對我說來實在太短了，我們沒有好狗。(觀泰於民國七十四年(一九八五年)九月九日去世，享年七十五歲)。

觀泰、我和兩個聰明可愛的兒女，我們一家四口，生活得非常幸福而滿足，但說起來真慚愧，我從未向神謝恩地給我的一切，我懵懵懂懂覺得我所得的是理所當然的。他有病我一直不讓醫治，求神醫醫三的手醫治他，我多次的禁食為他祈禱，並求神將我的戒數分十年給他，我向神大多天的哭求，但均未去靈應，觀泰還是離開

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下去



Yu-Fen (Jenny) Chen Shen (沈陳郁芬), the wife of Mr. Shen, sent two memoirs to the Xiamen University Alumni Association in the United States, commemorating and recounting Mr. Shen's life. These articles appeared in the fourth and fifth issues of the Alumni Association publication in the United States, published in August and December 1988, respectively. Titled "Remembering My Late Husband Jin Tai Shen," the article expresses Mrs. Shen's deep affection for Mr. Shen. Reading them is truly heartbreaking.

(十二) 念亡夫沈觀泰 沈陳郁芬

先夫沈觀泰辭世安息主懷將三載，說起來似乎很快，然而悲懷哀痛的日子是漫長的。他在我心目中永遠是一個美善的完人，他聰明不外露，他不太會說話，可是他會用很流利的中英文演講。他不會逢迎，更不會奉承，從不做違心的事，好像不甚合潮流，也是他不適於仕途的原因。但是我們生活過的很心安。我們雖清苦，我們相愛，我們快樂。

觀泰是福建閩侯人，民前一年七月廿一日（主後一九一一年九月十三日）出生於江蘇鎮江。為先曾祖文肅公（葆楨）第三子先祖璜慶公之次孫。以稚齡出繼與文肅公七子先祖璜慶公為長孫。蓋璜慶公獨子先翁綱公負笈日本學成歸國，服役於遜清新軍，早年罹病逝世。先祖母林蓉史太夫人，為先外高祖林文忠公（則徐）之孫女，既痛子未遂青雲之志



興趣，尤重視理論化學，認為必需全力以赴來研究工作之基礎。在學時對從侄祖馨及低亦常以此相囑。

觀泰廈大畢業後，應上海中國酒精廠之聘辦化學研究之責，三年後負笈英倫伯明罕(Birmingham)大學研修石油化學，獲碩士學位，繼博士課程。適抗戰軍興，他不惜犧牲僅差數週的博士學位，毅然棄學回國。

(十二) 念亡夫沈觀泰 沈陳郁芬 (續上期)

觀泰對研究發展之興趣為多方面者，他是台灣利用乾冰及碘化銀於「人造雨」之創始人，並曾為中油、台電、糧食局三機構籌組人造雨研究所，當時電力公司以水力發電，糧食局農作物亦需水灌溉，人造雨對於增加台電發電量，以免工業用電受限，同時糧食局亦增產農作物以紓民困，對於國計民生不無貢獻。觀泰也是「綠藻」培養研究之先驅。後



3/4/88

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The 4th and 5th issues of the Alumni Newsletter of the American Alumni Association (1988) published a memorial article by Mrs. Yu-Fen Chen Shen.

The article begins by saying, "My late husband has passed away peacefully! It seems quick to say, but the days of sorrow and grief are long. He will always be a beautiful and perfect man in my heart. He was smart but not ostentatious. He could speak fluent Chinese and English, but is reserved and talked little. He was not good at overpraising, let alone flattering, and never did anything against his will. It seemed that he was not in line with the trend, which was also the reason why he was not suitable for a career in politics. We lived a very peaceful life. Although our lifestyle was not well-off, we loved each other, and we were happy."

The following is excerpted from the first part of the article.

Gentle and refined, Jin Tai studied under private scholarly tutorial from a young age and later attended Xiamen University, majoring in chemistry. Determined to learn, he frequently engaged in discussions and deliberations with his classmates, who envied his extensive knowledge of both English and Chinese languages. Jin Tai was deeply interested in organic chemistry, with a particular emphasis on theoretical chemistry, which he believed would serve as the foundation for his future research.

After graduating from Xiamen University, he was hired by the Shanghai China Alcohol Factory to lead fermentation chemistry research. Three years later, he enrolled at the University of Birmingham in England to study petroleum chemistry, earning a master's degree and continuing his doctoral studies.

With the outbreak of the War of Resistance against Japanese aggression, he resolutely returned to China, sacrificing his doctorate, which was only months away from completion. He was appointed an engineer at the Power Oil Plant of the National Resources Commission.

In 1941, the Sino-Japanese War entered its midst a period of intense hardship, with frequent shipments of military supplies. The Gansu-Xinjiang Highway, a key international route, was particularly crucial for military transport. At that time, gasoline fueled the primary mode of transportation inland. Every drop of gasoline is a bloody one. Automobiles rely solely on gasoline-based alternatives to ethanol for power.

The Gansu Provincial Government and the National Resources Commission decided to jointly establish an ethanol plant and appointed Jin Tai as Director.

After much arduous research, Fujia Town, Hui County, Gansu's sorghum-rich region, was chosen as the plant's site. Hui County, Cheng County, and other counties in Gansu are renowned for their sorghum-producing kaojiu, a liquor renowned throughout the province and rivaling Fenjiu. Hui County's proximity to Shuangshipi, the transportation hub of the Sichuan-Shaanxi-Gansu Highway, gave it slightly better transportation than Cheng County, leading to the selection of Hui County as the plant's site.

The arduous task of building factories in remote areas during the War of Resistance against Japanese aggression cannot be fully described in words. Although Lanzhou is known as the center of our nation's territory, Gansu remains a remote province. Not only is transportation difficult and supplies scarce, but the region is unstable, and banditry is a frequent occurrence.

Building factories in remote areas is particularly challenging. Overlooking other things, even bricks and tiles are scarce. All these materials had to be manufactured and fired in-house, so it's not difficult to imagine the hardship of others matters at this time. With no charcoal available, the wine factory relied on dried branches from the mountains to fuel its operations.

Furthermore, Fujia Town still adhered to its traditional practice of holding a market every other day. Anyone who wanted to shop or barter had to do so on the morning of the "market day". If they arrived late, they would have to wait until the next market day to trade. Therefore, if they wanted to buy enough branches to use as fuel in the workshop, they had to buy sufficiently on the market day. This gives you an idea of the difficult situation.

After receiving the order to head the Gansu Alcohol Refinery, Jin Tai initially traveled extensively throughout Gansu Province, occupying himself with surveying suitable sites for the plant. Once a site was selected, he began designing key equipment for the plant, including the alcohol distillation tower, which he custom-made in Chongqing.

He also procured the necessary equipment for alcohol production, dispatched a team to ensure its installation, and supervised its transportation. All equipment required transportation by land and water. It was first shipped by water to Guangyuan, then transported by truck via the Shaanxi-Gansu Highway to the factory. It took over three months to finally arrive, including suffering a boat capsizing during the trip, but fortunately, no damage was sustained.

At the time, the military urgently needed ethanol fuel for its vehicles. However, the distillation tower and other equipment shipped by Miqi had not yet arrived, and the arrival of Yusi was still uncertain. Even if it was to arrive immediately, installation would still take considerable time.

In this desperate situation, Jin Tai improvised a simple distillation tower to meet the demand. The tower also lacked the magnetic filler rings required, so they tried using bamboo joints as a substitute, which worked remarkably well and solved the urgent problem.

The saying "when poverty prevails, change reigns, and change leads to prosperity" is true. This is also true of the frequent emergency measures taken by those on the front lines during the War of Resistance against Japanese aggression, who bravely fought the enemy, while those working in the

frontier-built factories make do with makeshift facilities. Given today's abundant resources, it's hard to imagine the hardships of poverty back then.

Gansu was a barren land with a poor population, and everything was very backwards. Several counties at that time did not have power plants, hence at nighttime they all used vegetable oil lamps for lighting. Occasionally, candles were used, but they were considered luxury items and were often not available.

It was about fifteen kilometers from Fujia Town to Huixian County, and to get into the city one had to use a sedan chair or trekking poles. Living and traveling were similarly primitive, as were clothing and food. In winter, everyone wore an old sheepskin coat to keep warm. In spring and autumn, people wore hand-woven homespun gowns or casual clothes. Summer was even simpler, with only a single layer of clothing covering the body. Meat was the main food, and fish was rarely seen except for frozen carp in winter. Seafood could only be tasted in dreams.

Jin Tai came from a well-off family, a family of scholars. He had experienced little hardship growing up and had recently returned from overseas when he undertook these endeavors. Later in life he shared with me the experiences he had with his colleagues during the War of Resistance against Japan.

He led the entire factory to dedicated work, working day after day, striving to increase production and fulfill his ambition to contribute to the nation through industry. I find this devotion and commitment truly rare.

Jin Tai led a very simple and conventional life, with rarely any changes to daily routines. He spent most of his time at work, and the rest in the laboratory, emphasizing research and development with a practical approach. He had innovative ideas, meticulous thinking, and a focus on efficacy and efficiency.

He was fair and sincere in his dealings and interactions with others, a characteristic that resonated perfectly with the CSRC's motto: "Fairness and Integrity." He strives to supervise his colleagues' work and shows great concern for their lives, earning him the love of his colleagues.

With the increase in gasoline production by the Gansu Oil and Mining Bureau, demand for ethanol power gradually eased. At the same time, the Gansu Xingyun Chemical Industry Company needed to expand its business.

At the suggestion of Zhang Xinyi, Director of the Gansu Provincial Government's Construction Department, the Xingyun Chemical Company merged with the Gansu Alcohol Factory. The proposal was submitted to the Fengyu Commission for approval and reorganized into the Gansu Chemical Materials Factory. The factory was nominally a joint venture between the Resources Commission and the Gansu Provincial Government, with Jin Bao appointed as its first director.

The Gansu Chemical Materials Factory was located in Miaotanzi, Lanzhou, on the north bank of the Yellow River. Its main products included sulfuric acid, hydrochloric acid, and nitric acid, all of which were important raw materials for chemical processing.

Lanzhou, the capital of Gansu Province, offers far superior food, clothing, housing, and transportation to most other counties. For years, the colleagues at the factory were trapped in Huixian County, starving for food. Whenever they reached the provincial capital, they would inevitably, in their spare time, take a raft across the river to the city to see a movie or enjoy a bite at a restaurant. Jin Tai, on the other hand, rarely ventured into the city.

The Investment Committee's subsidiaries, located in Lanzhou, included the Gansu Chemical Materials Factory, the Northwest Water Conservancy, Forestry, and Animal Husbandry Company,

the Lanzhou Power Plant, the Gansu Coal Mine Bureau, the Gansu Machinery Factory, and the Lanzhou Radio Station.

A separate Lanzhou office, headed by Yang Qing, met monthly to discuss business development and collaborations. Apart from attending this seminar, Jin Tai rarely goes out during his personal time, even on weekends. He spends most of his time in the factory reading books and magazines to use as references for developing new products.

On the eve of victory in the War of Resistance against Japanese aggression, the Gansu Chemical Materials Factory boasted a product range encompassing more than a dozen products, including triacids, various sulfates, brake fluids, and polymer pellets. All these new products stemmed from Jin Tai's conceived ideas and research, contributing not only to national defense but also to the people's well-being.

In the 1930s, in a remote province with minimal equipment, achieving such research success was no mean feat. Touched by Jin Tai's dedication, his colleagues, despite the heavy workload, worked tirelessly, shouldering responsibility without complaint. Everyone worked together to achieve a common goal. Without Jin Tai's unwavering dedication, this achievement would have been impossible.

After Taiwan's liberation, Jin Tai was assigned to take over the Kaoshiung Refinery. At that time, most of Taiwan's industrial equipment had been destroyed by the war and needed restoration. Fortunately, Jin Tai led his employees to work tirelessly day and night to overcome all difficulties and restore the refinery to production in a very short time.

This entry was posted in [Centennial Anniversary News](#) by [Wenqiang Xiao](#) .