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TUFTS UNIVERSITY

RESOLUTION ON THE RETIREMENT OF PROFESSOR LI-LI CH'EN

ADOPTED BY THE FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
OF TUFTS UNIVERSITY

May 17, 1993

The members of the Department of German, Russian, and Asian Languages and Literatures, and the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Jackson College of Tufts University, would like to express our appreciation to Professor Li-li Ch'en, who is retiring after twenty-one year of dedicated service.

Li-li was born in Peking, China. Her father, Ch'en Shu-jen, was a Mandarin, a member of the scholar elite that governed China for centuries. The affluence and privilege of the old city was threatened by China's protracted war with Japan, and then brought to an end by the Communist Revolution. The Ch'en family fled to Taiwan, where, even as a young girl, Li-li proved to be liberal in outlook and an outspoken critic of the government. Fearing for her safety, her parents sent her away to live in the land of the forthright, and this has been both her sanctuary and her reservation ever since.

She studied at Wilson College, where she was elected to the Phi Beta Kappa. She received the President's Prize for graduating at the top of her class, and the Lois Montgomery Award for exceptional achievement in literature. In 1980, her alma mater recognized Professor Ch'en's continued accomplishment by granting her an honorary doctorate.

Li-li went on to earn a Master's degree at Radcliffe College, and, in 1969, was awarded a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Harvard's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Studying under J. R. Hightower, Harry Levin, and Albert Lord, she earned her degree with the dissertation, A Study of the Medley: Chinese Chantefable of the Late Twelfth Century. In 1972 she came to Tufts to establish, for the first time, courses in Chinese languages and literatures, and she has remained the Director of the Program in Chinese ever since. In 1978 she was made a full Professor of Chinese Language and Literature.

If Li-li were ice cream, she would be Heavenly Hash - a cosmopolitan mixture of many different ingredients. At home in

English, Chinese, French, and Japanese, she has studied at Cambridge University, the Academic Sinica in Taiwan, Universite de Paris, and Kyoto Daigaku in Japan. Not only does she live and work in many languages, but the range of her writing is impressively wide and accomplished. Her scholarly articles on the chantefable are required reading for Ph.D. candidates in Chinese literature. Her translation, Master Tung's Western Chamber Romance: Tung Hsi-hsiang Chu-kung-tiao, published by Cambridge University Press in 1976, won her the National Book Award for Translation. And her short story, "Peking! Peking!", based on her experiences in China during the years of the Communist Revolution, was awarded the National Magazine Award for Fiction, Criticism, and Belles Lettres. I might mention that in winning the National Magazine Award, she prevailed over lesser talents such as John Updike and Ken Kesey. Considering Li-li's ability to do what she does to perfection, Ted Williams can only be relieved that she did not take up the baseball bat. And Meryl Streep can be glad Li-li did not move her charm and charisma from the class room to the big screen.

Li-li has been a forceful presence at Tufts. She is one of the founders of the Asian Studies Program, and was instrumental in establishing not only Tufts' Chinese Program but its Japanese program as well. She has been an excellent advisor and teacher, described by one of her students as "driven, intense, and uncompromising in her standards." (Kevin Bogardus, '93) Li-li has been generous and dedicated. "As a language professor--" writes another of her students "--Li-li Ch'en brought to her work and indomitable vibrancy and spirit which sprung from her genuine zest for life, her love for pedagogy, for the language, and for her students. Her brimming enthusiasm was infectious..." (Tsui Yee, '93).

Speaking of infections, we hope that Li-li will have none and that she will enjoy many more fulfilling and productive years ahead. We understand that she plans to divide her time between Cambridge and the South of France, where, basking in the golden light that Matisse found so stimulating, she will listen to the bleating of goats and write a wonderful novel or two.

Please know, Li-li, that your presence here at Tufts will be deeply missed and that we send you off with our appreciation and love.

For the Faculty, by Committee to Honor the Retirement of Li-li Ch'en.

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