Biography of Stephen P. Shao



A Life in Two Nations

Sourced from Internet & AI generated, for reference only, please advise if corrections needed Whatsapp +60193377742

Chapter 1
A Young Man from Zhakou (1924–1946)

On 24 January 1924, a baby boy was born into an impoverished family in Zhakou, Yixing, Jiangsu Province. His parents named him Pinyi, although he later became known by the name Pinyan. He was one of eight children in the family. His father served as the town mayor of Zhakou, while his mother worked tirelessly to raise their large family.

Stephen P. Shao spent his childhood amid the hardships of war and famine. His education was repeatedly interrupted by the Sino-Japanese War. In his determination to continue studying, he travelled from Jiangsu through Shanghai, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Anhui, Fujian, Guangdong and Guangxi, crossing almost half of China. He later recalled that on his journeys to school, “the sounds of gunfire and bombing were an everyday occurrence.” Yet his father instilled in him a lasting conviction: education was the only means by which a person could change their destiny.

In 1946, Shao graduated from the National College of Commerce in Hunan, earning a Bachelor of Business Administration as the top student in his class. After graduation, he worked for China's National Resources Commission for two years. In August 1948, he boarded the American military

DRAFT

transport ship General Meigs and crossed the Pacific Ocean, beginning the second chapter of his life.

DRAFT

Chapter 2
From Baylor to Texas: The First Chinese American to Earn a Doctorate in Business Administration (1948–1956)

After arriving in the United States, Shao enrolled at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, where he earned a Master of Business Administration in 1949. While pursuing his degree, he worked as a chief accountant for the Texas state government.

He subsequently entered the University of Texas at Austin, pursuing doctoral studies in statistics, management, transportation and economics. In 1956, he earned a doctorate in Business Administration, becoming the first Chinese American in the United States to receive this qualification. This pioneering achievement represented not only the pinnacle of his personal academic journey but also a landmark breakthrough for a Chinese immigrant within the American higher education system.

DRAFT

Chapter 3
Four Decades in Education: From Bluefield to Old Dominion (1956–1993)

After receiving his doctorate, Shao began a teaching career that would extend over more than forty years. He taught successively at Bluefield College in West Virginia, the College of William & Mary in Norfolk, and Old Dominion University. In 1958, he was promoted to the rank of full professor. In 1978, he received the title of Distinguished Professor at Old Dominion University.

At Old Dominion, he taught statistics, management information systems and finance, influencing successive generations of students. In 1977, he was invited to Taiwan as a visiting professor at National Chengchi University and National Taiwan University. In 1980, at the invitation of the United States Departments of State and Commerce, he visited China and delivered lectures on management science at approximately forty universities in Beijing, Harbin, Shanghai, Nanjing and other cities, reaching a combined audience of more than 50,000 people.

His academic output was exceptionally extensive. He authored more than fifty university textbooks and manuals covering financial mathematics, business and economic statistics, management mathematics and related disciplines. His works

DRAFT

were translated into several languages and adopted by numerous universities. He was also a founding member of the Decision Sciences Institute in the United States and the founder of the Old Dominion University Credit Union.

DRAFT

Chapter 4
1986: A Chinese-American Independent Candidate on Capitol Hill

In 1986, Stephen P. Shao undertook something that no Chinese American had previously accomplished: he ran as an independent candidate for the United States House of Representatives in Virginia's Second Congressional District.

He became the first Chinese American to have his name printed on an official ballot for the United States House of Representatives. In that election, he received 8.6 per cent of the vote. For an independent candidate without the backing of a political party or substantial campaign financing, this result reflected the recognition he had established within his local community. He was ultimately defeated by Democratic candidate Owen B. Pickett. Two years later, he ran again but was once more unsuccessful.

Yet the significance of Shao's candidacy extended beyond electoral victory or defeat. Through his participation, he demonstrated that a Chinese immigrant who had grown up amid the devastation of war could make his voice heard within the American political system. His obituary later identified this achievement as one of the accomplishments of which he was most proud.

DRAFT

Chapter 5
Six Doctorates in One Family: An Extraordinary Educational Legacy

Stephen P. Shao's family was itself a remarkable story of educational achievement.

In 1953, he married Betty Lucille Otten, and the couple had four sons. In 1966, Betty died at the age of thirty-three, leaving behind four young children. Shao assumed sole responsibility for their upbringing and education. He established one important family rule: “Throughout your lives, you may freely choose whatever you wish to do, but you must promise me that you will first obtain a doctoral degree.”

All four sons fulfilled that promise. Stephen Pinyi Shao, associated with the University of Maryland; Dale Hilton Shao, associated with Georgia State University; Lawrence Peter Shao, associated with the University of Tennessee; and Alan Terence Shao, associated with the University of Alabama, all earned doctoral degrees in business-related disciplines.

In 1970, Shao married Priscilla Griffin, and they had four more children. These children subsequently obtained degrees in business or engineering. Together, his eight children earned eleven postgraduate degrees, including six doctorates. People in his ancestral hometown of Yixing referred to the family as

DRAFT

"Six Doctorates Under One Roof," regarding them as an outstanding example from a community celebrated for its scholars and professors.

Shao himself always considered his family his greatest achievement.

DRAFT

Chapter 6
A Son of Yixing: The Thousand-Year-Old Crabapple Tree and the Doctoral Building

Although Stephen P. Shao lived in the United States for more than sixty years, he never forgot his ancestral roots in Zhakou, Yixing.

In 1980, he returned to his hometown for the first time after thirty-two years abroad. In Zhakou, he saw an ancient crabapple tree that had endured nearly a thousand years of changing seasons and historical upheavals. According to local tradition, the tree had been planted by Su Dongpo, the celebrated literary figure of the Song dynasty. Shao immediately discussed the matter with his elder brother, Shao Pingang, and they agreed to contribute funds towards rebuilding the Crabapple Garden. After returning to America, he wrote the calligraphic inscription “The farther I am from home, the more deeply I long for my loved ones” and sent it to his hometown, where the words were carved into stone within the garden.

His contributions to education in his hometown were even more substantial. He donated US$6,000 to establish the Gangyan Library at Zhakou Primary School. In 1999, he provided significant funding for the construction of a three-storey building at Jiangsu Yixing High School, named the Dr.

DRAFT

Shao Pinyan Building. He also donated more than 2,000 pounds of books, publications and research materials from his personal collection to be permanently preserved and displayed in the building for the use of students and scholars.

In 2005, his English-language memoir, Memories in Two Nations: China and the U.S.A., was translated and published by Shanghai Jiao Tong University Press. The book recounted his experiences of spending the first third of his life in China and the remaining two-thirds in America, tracing his personal journey through two countries whose cultures and ways of life differed profoundly.

DRAFT

Chapter 7
Concluding Reflections: A Complete Life Defined by Firsts

Stephen P. Shao's life can be summarised through one word: first.

He was the first Chinese American in the United States to earn a doctorate in Business Administration. He was the first Chinese American to have his name appear on an official ballot for the United States Congress. He was also the father of the celebrated Yixing family known for having six doctoral degree holders under one roof.

Yet behind these pioneering achievements lay a long and difficult journey from Zhakou in Yixing to Austin, Texas, and from a young student struggling to pursue an education amid wartime destruction to a Distinguished Professor at Old Dominion University. None of these accomplishments came easily. Over more than forty years of teaching, he authored over fifty textbooks and influenced countless students. Through a demanding family principle centred on education, he raised eight children who collectively earned eleven postgraduate degrees. Through successive donations to his hometown, he left future generations a doctoral building, a library and a restored garden surrounding an ancient crabapple tree.

DRAFT

On 5 September 2013, Stephen P. Shao passed away peacefully in Virginia Beach at the age of eighty-nine. Among his final reflections was a statement that captured the essence of his extraordinary journey: “My life has not been a simple one. It is the story of two lives lived within a single lifetime.”

From Zhakou to America, from wartime hardship to university teaching, and from academic textbooks to a congressional ballot, Stephen P. Shao devoted eighty-nine years to demonstrating how education could transform a life. His legacy extends far beyond the distinction of being first. It is a complete narrative of a father's convictions, the transmission of educational values across generations, and an immigrant's enduring affection for two nations.

DRAFT

References

[1] The Virginian-Pilot. (8 September 2013). “Stephen Shao Obituary.”

[2] Wikipedia. “Stephen P. Shao.”

[3] Grokipedia. “Stephen P. Shao.”

[4] Sina News. (4 August 2005). “Chinese-American Professor from Yixing Publishes His Memoirs.”

[5] Sohu. (20 September 2019). “Seventy Years of Overseas Chinese Stories: Shao Pinyan and the Thousand-Year-Old Crabapple Tree That Blossoms in the Hearts of His Hometown People.”

[6] Wikipedia. “1986 United States House of Representatives Elections.”

[7] Sina News. (5 August 2007). “A Thousand-Year-Old Crabapple Tree Awakens Homesickness Across Ten Thousand Miles.”

[8] Shanghai Jiao Tong University Press. (2005). Memories in Two Nations: China and the U.S.A.

DRAFT

[9] Goodreads. Memories in Two Nations: China and the U.S.A.

DRAFT