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Rescue Jude Shao – All-Out Efforts by Stanford Classmates

by Mei-hui Huang

Jude Shao, who was sentenced to 16 years, has already served more than 8 years or half of his term. He is now eligible for parole by the Chinese government. Chinese President Hu's visit to the U.S. later this month gives new hope to the team of Jude's classmates to get him an early release from prison.

Jude was born in Shanghai, came to the U.S. for school in 1984, and received his MBA from Stanford University in 1993. He became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1997. He was operating a wholly owned foreign company in Shanghai, when he was sentenced to 16 years based on charges of "forged value added tax receipt and tax evasion", which his friends and relatives believe to be unfair.

There is a "Gang of Five" among Jude's 1993 classmates, including Chuck Hoover and Cynthia Dai (she is the only Chinese-American among the five). Over the years, they have never given up their efforts to free their classmate Jude. They have a website www.freejudeshao.com.

This Gang of Five has been very active recently, due to Chairman Hu's upcoming visit and the fact that Jude has served half of his sentence already. Cynthia Dai learned that when State Secretary Rice visited China last year, she had brought up Jude Shao's case to voice U.S. government's concerns.

On April 7th, Anna Eshoo, a Silicon Valley Congresswoman, began passing around a joint letter to President Bush among the 53 California-elected members of Congress, in which they urge President Bush to personally request China to release Jude Shao. Cynthia Dai indicated that Senator Feinstein has also offered to help in the Senate, and that Senator Boxer is being contacted for the same cause.

With assistance from other alumni, the Gang of Five also wrote letters to senior executives in Boeing and Microsoft's Steve Ballmer, because Chairman Hu is scheduled to visit these two large enterprises in Seattle.

Several mainstream media outlets may publicize the case about Jude Shao. ABC's World News Tonight has been to Shanghai to interview Jude's mother and sister. They have also interviewed the Gang of Five, and the program is expected to be aired later this week.

In June, 2004, Jude's family requested Jude's parole due to health reasons, which was also requested by U.S. ambassador to China, but there has been no response. Until his death several years ago, Jude's father had never received any word about a possible early release of his son.

"I told ABC reporters that as a Chinese-American, I wanted to make an effort for Jude, because what happened to him could have happened to me." Cynthia Dai said, "It's him today, it could be me tomorrow." She also knows that ABC Nightline will cover Jude's case in advance of the meeting between President Bush and Chairman Hu on the 20th.

Jude Shao was detained on April 6, 1998. He has been studying the legal code in China while in prison. He reasons that he has served his sentence starting from that date, and not the sentencing date of May 8th of 1998. Therefore, it has already been 8 years by the 6th of this month. Cynthia Dai hopes that China may want to send a goodwill message to the U.S. either before or after Chairman Hu's visit. "We are all hoping for good news."