

Y King Liu, a Charter member of ISSLS and a Senior Member, passed away while visiting a friend in Europe soon after the ISSLS annual meeting which he attended in Athens Greece. He lived in Petaluma, CA. Prof. Y King Liu, fondly nicknamed as “King”, was born in mainland China and spent a few years of his childhood in Calcutta, India. From there, his family migrated to US and settled in California.

Besides being a theoretical continuum mechanics-base researcher, King was a pioneer in the field of computer models on the head and spine. During his tenure at Tulane University, in the early 1970s, he was instrumental in developing the first dynamic models of the spine, with some including wave propagation effects. These models have been applied to automotive and military environments. During his tenure in Iowa, his theories on the stiffest and second stiffest axes of the cervical spine have been applied to sport environments. He has educated students and younger faculty both in and outside his institutions, some of whom have reached the highest levels of academic cognizance and international reputation, not only in spine biomechanics, but also in many other disciplines.

King had a fascination with different languages. Although, I knew him due to his enormous contributions in the field of biomechanics, I recall that Dr. Panjabi and I met him in Paris, France during one of the ISSLS meetings. While viewing the posters, I hear “how are you” in Hindi from behind me. As I turned back, it was King to my surprise. Eventually, he recruited me to Iowa, where he himself moved from Tulane University with his entire staff. While at Tulane, he took training in acupuncture from an expert in Paris. He briefly treated patients with acupuncture while he was in Iowa City. King was a multi-talented person: passion for research, training of students & other health care professionals, eager to learn new things, and biomedical engineering education – an emerging field in early 1980s. Within his research group at Iowa, King had another nickname: LBP - Liu’s Back Pocket. As and when anyone in the group needed resources we all would say, try “LBP”, and we were never disappointed. I was not surprised to learn that he left University of Iowa to his roots in California to establish the University of Northern California (UNC), in Petaluma. He spent the rest of his professional career making it a well-respected University. Its website states the following:

*“The UNC Foundation provides leadership in expanding the outreach of the University of Northern California (UNC). Both the Foundation and UNC were founded by Dr. Y. King Liu in the middle 1990s with a focus on biomedical engineering education and research. Dr. Liu was a pioneer in the origination of the biomedical engineering field.”*

King saw the opportunity to use his understanding of the principles of biomedical engineering for assisting attorneys in the medico-legal cases. Besides serving as an expert in court cases, he used to hold 1-2 day training workshops for the attorneys in various parts of the country. King enjoyed traveling. A few days prior to his heavenly abode, King attended the ISSLS annual meeting in Greece. He loved sharing his in-depth understanding of spine biomechanics with colleagues, and students alike until his last day on earth. As his former colleagues within the ISSLS, we recognize his contributions to the Society, and will miss him a great deal.

*A personal reflection from Dr. Panjabi: King was a personal friend of mine — beyond our shared love of spine biomechanics. I am grateful for the time we shared together over the last forty years. I miss him dearly.*

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