

Jinzheng Cao

I was born in a small village in Jiangsu Province of China in 1976. This village is only an hour driving from Shanghai and 10 min driving from [Tongli](#) and [Zhouzhuang](#) towns, which are both famous for rivers and bridges and ranked as 5A (the highest) scenic spots by the Chinese National Tourism Administration. But back in the 70s, it was really a remote area. My parents had to walk for an hour to the closest town if they wanted to buy something. The year 1976 is considered very special in China, with the successive



passing away of Premier Zhou and Chairman Mao, and the ending of the disastrous "[Cultural Revolution](#)". That 10-year disaster seriously affected the development of the economy in China. Therefore, in my memories of my childhood, we could not afford meat or any food that we could not plant and harvest in the field. Fortunately, my father is rather skilled at fishing, and there are so many rivers and lakes around the area where we lived. During the daytime, my parents had to work in the fields. So my father would usually go fishing after work, and sometimes till midnight. Since they didn't have time to take care of me, they put me into the elementary school in our village when I was only 4 years old. The school had no extra desk for me, so my parents brought a small desk from home and put it in the rear of the classroom. On that desk, I began my student career. I went to the middle school in the town, and



then to the local high school in the county. Finally, I was admitted to the [Beijing Forestry University](#) (BJFU) in 1992, and majored in wood science and technology. My two uncles were carpenters, and my father can also do some carpenter work. So when he received my letter of admission, he felt a mixture of happiness and disappointment. Oh, finally, a carpenter, and a girl carpenter!

My undergraduate years in the university were happy. I found wood science and technology interesting, and rather different from what a carpenter would do. I got the highest credit among all my classmates at the graduation, and was successfully admitted to the Ph.D. program at BJFU. My doctoral thesis was about wood-water relations at non-equilibrium states, which is within the wood physics area. My advisor, [Prof. Guangjie Zhao](#), who has a background in both physics and wood science, gave me comprehensive and considerate mentoring during this period. He encouraged me to submit our work to the journal *Holzforschung*, and also recommended that I go abroad to Japan for one year as a short-term exchange student. These experiences were very helpful to me. Finally, I completed my Ph.D. in 2001 and was subsequently offered a position as assistant professor in BJFU.



My transition to research in the area of wood protection and modification started from a visit by [Prof. Pascal Kamdem](#) (Michigan State Univ., USA) to our university in

2001. I was temporarily asked to translate for him during his visit. At that time, he was working on a USDA program, and he kindly offered me a chance to work with him on that program as a post-doc. During my two years at Michigan State, I tried to combine wood physics with wood preservation, and studied the interaction between moisture, wood and copper-ethanolamine preservatives. From this research, we published 4 papers in *Holzforschung*, and also several papers in other journals and conferences.



I was offered the position of full professor at BJFU just prior to completing my post-doc. It was 2003, and before my 27th birthday. I felt a lot of pressure to succeed. I started my lab on wood protection from scratch, and borrowed a graduate student to assist me. I am happy that I survived that period. From those beginning till now, I have mentored 15 Ph.D. students and 18 master students. Most of the Ph.D. graduates are working in universities or research institutes. I enjoy teaching, mentoring, and doing research. I was awarded the Excellent Teacher Award of China in 2014. I am really proud of this honor.



My first meeting with the IRG family was at IRG35 in Ljubljana, Slovenia in 2004,



thanks to the financial support of IRG Ron Cockcroft Award. From then on, I have tried to attend every IRG meeting as long as the funding was permitted. I attended the IRG38 in the USA in 2007, IRG39 in Turkey in 2008, IRG40 in China in 2009, IRG41 in France, IRG43 in Malaysia, IRG44 in Sweden, IRG46 in Portugal, IRG48 in Belgium, and IRG49 in



South Africa last year. Those were great experiences for me, not only in regards to the academic aspects, but also in my view of the whole world. I am also most grateful to have had the opportunity to be a member of the IRG Executive Council during 2011-2013.

Four Ph.D. students from my group have also been granted RCA awards and have had the opportunity to attend IRG meetings, while two students were granted IRG travel awards to travel abroad and do cooperative research



I have a happy family life. My husband Liping was my classmate in university. We



met in 1992, and got married in 1999. I think I was lucky to meet him and to be supported by him throughout our time together. Next year, we will celebrate our 20th wedding anniversary. Our daughter was born in 2006. She likes Chinese dance and animation. During the holidays, we like to have family gatherings and take our parents and kid for trips.



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I hope I am able to continue my research on wood protection, and continue to be an active IRG member until my retirement. And I certainly hope that I can make more friends in IRG meetings. Let's keep in touch via IRG!