

who staged a demonstration on the anniversary day of the June 5 massacre in Tiananmen Square, with a simple poster that says, 'We will never forget the blood of Tiananmen.' Today, he is still serving in the Beijing Psychiatric Hospital."

Li said he eventually realized that freedom was for everyone, not just himself.

"Had my own experience been a unique one, there would not have been a student protest," he said. "All of my generation and the young generation of China have gone through similar experiences. They were born to the Cultural Revolution. We have seen the suffering and we know for sure that we do not want to repeat the lives which our parents and their parents have led. We were able to learn about Chinese in other places and Western countries through books and television that were not available before. We saw the differences between what life was, is, can be and, indeed, should be.

"For the first time in 40 years, there we were: a whole generation who had glimpsed the possibility of thinking independently. We were infused with a longing for an independent life, free from total and oppressive control of the state. We have deliberately chosen democracy and individual freedom as our ideals.

"On the opposite side of the generation of young Chinese is a group of old men in their 80's who fought a bloody civil war to win power and tried desperately to fill seats of power with their feeble hands and walking sticks. In a very true sense, the whole Tiananmen Square movement was a struggle between a special group of old Communists and a whole generation of young Chinese."

On May 4, 1989, 100,000 students staged a march in Beijing demanding freedom. But on June 3 and 4, the movement was crushed by the Chinese Army.

"We learned another painful lesson about freedom," Li said. "Freedom is not free. It costs. For us in China it was a proposition between life and death. But what is our alternative? To continue our slavery under Communist rule where the dream of freedom is so clear and dear to our hearts? We were prepared to fight. In a manifesto, we declared that democracy is life's greatest safeguard to the preservation of our well-being. Freedom is a heaven-given right since the beginning of man. We have to fight for it with our lives. We have no other choice but to go to the streets.

"I thought for a brief moment of my life that something was missing. I had never known the harmonious relationship of a marriage, never had offspring. I was 23. So that night I declared I was going to marry with my girl in Tiananmen Square. Some 30,000 students came to my wedding. So I told them, we have come here not to seek death. We have come here seeking a genuine life. We need to fight. But we also need to marry.

"That was the last time I saw my bride."

Li said that keeping the dream of freedom alive had its cost, but dreams never die.

"I realized that even with guns, tanks and bullets, the Communists have failed," he said. "They have failed to break the hope of millions of Chinese for a better life. They can control your life, but they cannot control

your mind. They can kill your body, but they can't kill your dreams. Ideas never die. Truth lives forever."

After the military crackdown, Li escaped to Hong Kong, Paris and finally the United States. He is now at Columbia University in New York, simultaneously working on degrees in economics, business and law.

"After the massacre, I escaped to the West, only to learn another lesson about freedom. Freedom is neither easy to understand nor easy to achieve, and mostly difficult to preserve.

"In China, we paid for freedom with our lives. Here you earn freedom by voting. How can freedom be preserved when half the people don't vote? How can educated young men make responsible choices when a teenager has to risk being shot going to school in the inner city? How can a great country with such great wealth as the United States allow pre-college education to continue to degenerate at such a desperate rate?"

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Li's last protest movement was a hunger strike he staged in 1991.

"The news came about a hunger strike of two political prisoners in China," he said in a private interview. "I knew both of them and respect them a great deal."

But the hunger strike in jail was a desperate and most likely futile event. To help bring attention to their cause, Li decided to fast as well — in front of the Chinese embassy in Washington, D.C.

"It became a sensational event," he said. "The strike lasted 15 days. When I first started, there were about 20 to 30 friends supporting me. By the fifteenth day, I was invited to speak in front of 300,000. I was very moved."

The prisoners were given the medical attention they needed after the strike ended,



Susanna Gaddy speaks with Li Lu at a reception in the Student Union.

Li said.

Li said his fight for democracy in China is far from over. He wants to eventually return to China to reform the nation.

"I want to train myself to be expert in economic affairs and legal affairs to eventually reform the legal system and set up economic institutions in China," he said.

Will China be free someday? An audience member asked this of Li Lu in a question-and-answer session after his Bicentennial speech. He answered with an ancient Chinese proverb:

Once upon a time, a husband, wife and child lived a comfortable life except that there was a large mountain between their home and their fields. So they decided to move the mountain, piece by piece.

A wise man passed by and asked, "How is it possible for you to move this mountain?"

The man answered, "I have a child helping me. He will have a child. And he will have a child, and so on and so on. The important question is not how to move the mountain, but whether or not it should be moved."

Li said: "The mountain is still there. Yet I believe it will be moved."

### What can we do?

The fight for democracy in Tiananmen Square occurred over four years ago across the globe. But, according to Li Lu, there are still things that we can do here at UNC to keep the fight for democracy alive.

1. Help Amnesty International, a group that uses letter-writing campaigns to pressure governments to stop human rights violations.

2. Keep the issue alive by talking about it. "As long as people talk about it, people always find a way to help," Li said.

3. Get political officials to help the cause in China. Next June, Li said, the U.S. government will decide if China's Most Favored Nation trading status will be renewed. Writing to local and national politicians might affect their votes.

4. Be a responsible U.S. citizen. "Everyone will benefit from having an additional good man or woman to plant the seed of public responsibility in the community," Li said.