



*Rong Yu Wan*

## RONG-YU WAN

1932–2009

Elected in 2000

*“For accomplishments in metallurgical research and industrial practice,  
and for teaching, supervising, and inspiring students, researchers,  
and industrial colleagues.”*

BY JAMES A. BRIERLEY AND CORALE L. BRIERLEY

**R**ONG-YU WAN, a world-class metallurgical engineer, died September 22, 2009.

Dr. Wan received her B.S. in chemical engineering in 1952 from Chiao Tung University in Shanghai, China. After graduation she became fully involved in China’s industrial reconstruction. She was a process engineer with Engineering for Nonferrous Metallurgical Industries from 1953 to 1957. From 1958 to 1964 she was project manager at the Beijing Mineral Processing Research Institute. She then served from 1964 to 1980 at the Beijing General Research Institute of Mining and Metallurgy as research scientist, supervisor, and chief of metallurgy.

In 1980, at the age of 48, Dr. Wan made a courageous decision to temporarily leave her family and immigrate to the United States to further her career in metallurgy through graduate studies with Professor J. D. Miller (NAE) at the University of Utah. She received her Ph.D. in metallurgy and metallurgical engineering in 1984. Her family, husband Ke-Zhong Wang and son Joseph, then joined her in Salt Lake City to begin a new life in the United States, where she served as a research associate professor at the University of Utah until 1987.

In 1987 Dr. Wan moved to the business sector when she joined Newmont Mining Corporation's metallurgical services research and development team. Later she was promoted to chief research scientist of hydrometallurgy, retiring in 2001. Newmont Mining Corporation's Chairman and CEO Wayne Murdy awarded her the Chairman's Award "in recognition of lifetime achievements in the areas of process development, hydrometallurgy, pyrometallurgy and operations support through her tireless dedication and loyalty." Throughout her business career she demonstrated her dedication to education by advising and offering encouragement to many students pursuing their education goals. After her retirement she continued to work with the staff of Newmont Metallurgical Services as a consultant, mentoring colleagues and advising on research projects until shortly before her death in 2009.

Dr. Wan was elected to the National Academy of Engineering in 2000. Her citation reads "for accomplishments in metallurgical research and industrial practice and for teaching, supervising, and inspiring students, researchers, and industrial colleagues," reflecting her dedication to research and education. Dr. Wan served the NAE through participation on the Bernard Gordon Prize Committee (2004–2006), the Earth Resources Engineering Peer Committee (2004–2007), and the Committee on Membership (2007–2009). She also participated on the National Research Council's Committee on Technologies for the Mining Industries (2000–2001) and the Committee on Earth Resources (2004–2006).

Rong-Yu Wan was a generous contributor to mining engineering through her participation in professional committees. These contributions were recognized in 2001 by the Society for Mining, Metallurgy, and Exploration's Antoine M. Gaudin Award, one of the society's most prestigious awards. She was cited "for her tireless efforts in the development of new processes for the treatment of refractory gold ores through the application of mineral processing fundamentals to plant testing." This award reflected Dr. Wan's work in process development testing of critical design factors for Newmont Mining Corporation's 10,000-ton daily roaster operation in

Carlin, Nevada, and the development of thiosulfate leaching technology for preg-robbing carbonaceous ores and as an alternative lixiviant to cyanide. Dr. Wan's efforts resulted in the granting of six U.S. patents authored by her on gold leaching and gold recovery processes.

Dr. Wan was truly a kind and respectful person in both her professional and private lives. Her colleagues will never forget her compassion, pleasant personality, excitement for researching new processes, and boundless enthusiasm and energy. She taught all of us valuable life lessons through her dedication and commitment to excellence and her enduring passion for science and engineering. Rong-Yu never dwelled on obstacles she faced in her life and career, always conquering challenges to excel in personal and professional development. Dr. Wan is survived by husband Ke-Zhong Wang, son Joseph Wang and his wife Flora, and grandchildren Adeline and Andrew.