

Nuclear sub designer, 93, is honored

The chief designer of China's first generation of nuclear submarines rose to national prominence again recently when he was greeted by President Xi Jinping at a recent ceremony.



Huang Xuhua, director emeritus of the Nuclear Submarine Institute of China Shipbuilding Industry Corp [Photo/China Daily]

Huang Xuhua, 93, director emeritus of the Nuclear Submarine Institute of China Shipbuilding Industry Corp, led research and development on the nation's first nuclear submarines – the Type 09I nuclear-powered attack submarine and the Type 09II nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine – from the 1950s to the 1980s.

His name remained classified until 1987 when a magazine in Shanghai was allowed to publish a report about him using only his family name – Huang.

As the Chinese Navy has gradually declassified its first-generation nuclear subs, the stories of Huang and his fellow designers have become widely known and their reputations have been burnished. Huang is known as the “father” of China's nuclear submarines.

On Friday, in a ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, the title of National Model for Virtue was conferred on Huang, and he spoke on behalf of himself and 57 other recipients honored for their contributions in many fields. At a group photo session before the ceremony, organizers arranged for the elderly Huang to stand behind Xi, but Xi invited Huang to sit next to him and personally moved the chair in front of Huang to make way for the distinguished researcher to come forward.

The move was captured by the China Central Television and was shown in the prime news slot that day. Xi's consideration for elderly people and his esteem for science and technology researchers made headlines after the

broadcast.

“I was really surprised and excited when the president invited me to sit next to him. I didn’t know what I should say,” Huang was quoted as saying in a news release from China Shipbuilding Industry Corp. “He then asked me how was I doing and if the event tired me. He also recognized our work and told me to keep healthy.”

Huang said he was deeply moved by Xi’s respect for researchers and for the elderly. He said the president seemed “very familiar” with the naval hardware industry.

Dedicating his life to the country’s nuclear submarine fleet, Huang was often too busy to take care of his family. So it was virtually his wife alone who raised their three daughters, the release said.

Even at the age of 93, Huang comes every weekday morning to his office at the submarine institute in Wuhan, Hubei province, to review and compile records of his know-how and experience. He also counsels young researchers on technical issues.

The first nuclear-powered attack submarine designed by Huang and his colleagues – a Type 09I – has been decommissioned after more than 40 years of service and is now on display at the Chinese Navy Museum in Qingdao, Shandong province.