



Ji Xingang uses his mobile water jet cutting machine to detonate a World War II bomb discovered at a construction site in Shijiazhuang, Hebei province.

PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

BOMBS AWAY!

After working for eight years, Ji Xingang's bomb-defusing device is now used by many public security bureaus, fire stations, as well as oil and gas companies throughout China. **Wang Ru** reports.

For eight years, Ji Xingang worked relentlessly on his bomb defusing invention, modifying and improving the device. It was originally a hobby and he never thought it would be put to use. But the timing was perfect. He completed his project in March 2010 and in June 2010, someone from the public security bureau of Shijiazhuang, capital of Hebei province, found use for it.

"I was so excited but also nervous when I received the call," says the 38-year-old.

The caller needed Ji's device — a mobile water jet cutting machine — to detonate a 1.5-meter-long bomb covered with mud, which was discovered accidentally by an excavator driver while digging. He initially thought it was a rock.

After some investigations, the ammunition expert from Shijiazhuang public security bureau, Wu Yongjin, believed it belonged to the Flying Tigers, a famous American air force group which supported the Chinese army in its fight against the Japanese invaders during the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression (1937-45).

It contained more than 100 kg of chemical explosive or trinitrotoluene.

"If it exploded, the blasting power could raze all the buildings within 600 square meters," Wu says. And that included residential buildings, a supermarket and a school.

The conventional way to defuse unexploded bombs was to transport them to remote localities and detonate them. But nobody could predict whether the bomb would explode during transportation.

Wu's unit transported the bomb to nearby open ground. More than 400 police personnel from the public security bureau were on guard everyday, to prevent anybody from approaching the bomb.

That was when Wu thought of Ji and his invention. Ji had obtained a national patent in 2009 for his invention, and had modified it further.

Before leaving for his mission, Ji researched online about the bomb. But all he got was bad news. For instance, a World War II bomb found at a construction site in Göttingen, Germany, on June 1, 2010.

After the evacuation of 7,000 people, the bomb exploded unexpectedly and killed three experienced sappers, who had defused up to 700 bombs in more than 20 years. Six people were injured.

Like Germany, China, one of the major battlegrounds of World War II, has many unexploded bombs, though the total number is unknown.

Even though Ji was depressed with what he read online, he threw caution to the wind. Together with his partner Song Xingwei, they transported the water jet cutting machine to the site to disarm the bomb on June 11. There was a fire truck

and an ambulance, on standby.

"If the bomb exploded, the vehicles would be blown into the sky with me," Ji recalls with a laugh.

No tragedy happened. Ji successfully sliced the bomb apart.

The bomb defusing machine was not Ji's first and only invention.

Since the 1990s, Ji has successfully invented gasoline saving and anti-theft equipment, which won him national patent certifications, amounting to 2 million yuan (\$317,000).

Ji says he has a knack for engineering and machinery. About 20 years ago, Ji and Song worked together at an auto repair garage.

"I could tell what's wrong with a car by listening to the sound of its engine," says Ji, who picked up his love for inventing during those early years.

In 2002, Ji's friend, Zhao Chengning, from the army, suggested that Ji invent equipment to destroy waste ammunition.

"The usual way to collect the ammunition and detonate it in the open air was unsafe and caused air pollution," Zhao says.

Ji invented an automatic ammunition disposal furnace, the first of its kind in China. It is now used widely by the army and police to treat waste ammunition.

But, the furnace was unable to dispose of the huge bomb, prompting Ji to research techniques for disposing of bombs.

"Most ammunition technicians in Western countries use advanced tools like X-ray, high-performance sensors, remote control disposal vehicles and even robots, but those are too expensive," Ji says.

Thus, he switched his focus to a water jet cutting machine, which is commonly used to slice metals and other materials in various industries.

Water jet cutters are commonly connected to a high-pressure water pump where water is then ejected from the nozzle, cutting through the material by spraying it with a high-speed water jet, mixed with other abrasives, such as garnet.

"The problem with commercial water jet cutters is the strong pressure, which could impact bombs. So, the key was to lower the pressure, and it was not easy," Ji says.

"Industrial cutters have a water speed of over 320 km/h, but we need to control it to under 80 km/h," Ji adds.

Ji picked up computer programming to create the remote control of the cutter. "He bought books and locked himself in a room, eating instant noodles for weeks," Song recalls.

According to Ji, there is a huge market for such machines. In 2008, the Olympic Games imported an anti-bomb water jet cutting machine from a German company, which cost \$200,000.

Since 2010, Ji has been selling his water jet cutter to public security bureaus, fire stations, as well as oil and gas companies all over China. In 2011, his cutter was bought for the World University Games in Shenzhen.

Contact the writer at wangru@chinadaily.com.cn.



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The dreamy taste of sour bamboo shoots

By HUANG FEIFEI and LIU CE
in Liuzhou, Guangxi

Chen Wei's dream of opening a restaurant chain in Beijing featuring a specialty from his hometown is coming true.

The specialty, called *luosifen* or rice noodles boiled with snail soup, has become one of the most sought-after dishes in the capital city, after the hit documentary *A Bite of China* listed sour bamboo shoots, a main ingredient of the dish, as the flavor of Liuzhou, in Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

In South China, people put bamboo shoots in a big ceramic jar, with water. Then, they seal the jar. A few weeks later, the bamboo shoots sour and can be used as an ingredient in a variety of dishes.

The sour and spicy taste of bamboo shoots complements the mellow and sweet taste of snail soup and rice noodles.

There is a story about *luosifen* from long ago that tells of a young man who sold rice noodles and a young woman who sold snail soup who set up stalls next to each other in Liuzhou.

One day, they had both sold out all their dishes, except for one bowl of rice noodles and one of snail soup. For their own dinner, they decided to add the noodles to the soup and thus *luosifen* was born.

However, when Chen first introduced the dish to Beijing in 2010, it wasn't popular.

"Few people knew anything about *luosifen* and couldn't accept the taste. Also, it was hard to rent a property because landlords were worried the dish wouldn't catch on and we couldn't pay their rent," Chen says.

The annual rent of his first 230-square-meter restaurant in Beijing was 1.2 million yuan (\$190,000) per year and he had to pay it in advance, plus a 100,000 yuan intermediary fee.

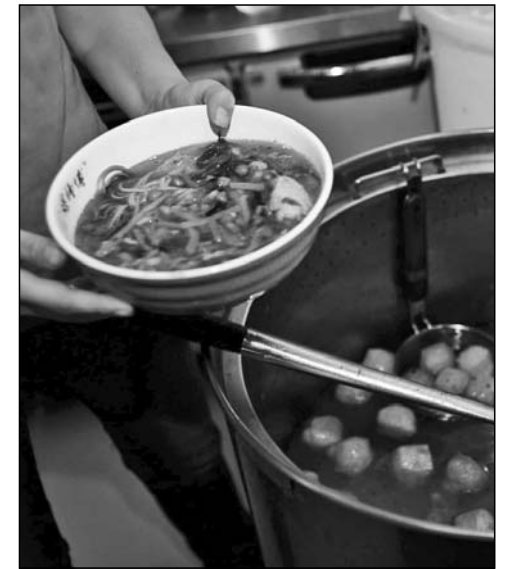
"Thanks to *A Bite of China* more people came to my restaurant, attracted by *luosifen*. Moreover, other landlords contacted me and wanted to rent me places to open my restaurants," he says.

Chen is now busy decorating his second restaurant in Beijing.

"My goal is to open 1,000 branches in Beijing," Chen says, adding the number of employees in Liuzhou and the capital has increased from four to 30.

"It's like a dream," Chen says.

Contact the writers through huangfeifei@chinadaily.com.cn.



PHOTOS BY HUO YAN / CHINA DAILY

Luosifen has a mixture of sour and spicy bamboo shoots, and the sweet taste of snail soup and rice noodles.

what's new

Hostage movie



Veteran actor Sun Honglei leads a Chinese version of *Leon: The Professional*, starring opposite actress Wang Luodan.

The film, named *Lethal Hostage*, is set on the China-Myanmar border. It tells the story of a drug

dealer and a girl he kidnapped. Sun is known for his villain roles on TV, and this will be his first big screen villain portrayal.

Young director Cheng Er directs the film, produced by Ning Hao, known for his smash hit black comedies such as *Crazy Stone* and *Crazy Racer*.

The film is scheduled to be released on Aug 17.

Aspiring astronauts

More than 40 "left-behind children" from Sichuan and Guizhou provinces gathered at the Beijing Space Flight Center on July 19, to start their four-day adventure at the 2012 Chinese Astronaut Experience Camp.

The kids visited space flight museums, underwent astronaut training, and listened to talks by famous astronauts.

There are nearly 58 million left-behind children in China, which refers to kids of migrant workers who remain in the countryside and are raised by elderly relatives.

"An astronaut must be able to bear hardships, communicate with others and fight for success. I hope these kids enjoy the camp and learn the spirit of being an astronaut," says astronaut Nie Haisheng, who was sent into space aboard the Shenzhou VI, in 2005.

Fight animal fears

Discovery Channel presents *My Extreme Animal Phobia* on CETV-3 every Friday at 23:52, starting from July 20.

The program is on how people with unusual animal phobias seek treatment from psychologist Dr Robin Zasio.

They are so terrified of some animals that it affects the quality of their lives. One of the guests in the show is afraid to open her windows or turn on the air conditioner for fear that spiders or bugs will get in her home. Another person won't spend time outside with his kids because of his fear of pit bull dogs. There is also a musician from San Francisco who is utterly terrified of snakes.

With the guidance of Zasio, they change their lives forever.

In each of the hour-long episodes, three people embark on a five-day, live-in course of intensive exposure therapy. They achieve remarkable results to beat the fear that has taken a firm grip of their lives.

Harbin music concert

The 31st China Harbin Summer Music Concert will be held from Aug 6-15 in Harbin, capital city of Heilongjiang province.

Founded in 1961, China Harbin Summer Music Concert is one of China's oldest concert festivals. This year's festival will include the 10th National Vocal Competition, an International Accordion Art Week, a parade, and a series of concerts by musicians from home and abroad.

Considered the fashion capital of China in the 1920s, Harbin had the earliest access to European classical music in China. The city of Harbin was named a UNESCO City of Music in 2010.

China Harbin Summer Music Concert is spon-

sored and presented by the Ministry of Culture and government of Harbin.

The Mole is back

The Czech cartoon series *The Mole* debuted on Channel One of China Central Television on July 13. A ceremony was also held in Beijing to celebrate the return of the cartoon, which received an overwhelming response when it was first aired in the country 30 years ago.

Czech-based PPF Group has granted CCTV with a one-year permit to broadcast the classic cartoon, which has added new series over the decades. It was created in 1957 by late Czech artist and film director Zdenek Miler.

The cartoon portrays a charmingly naive mole and its adventures. The lovely figure has become a worldwide star, with related films and books translated into some 40 languages and broadcast or published in more than 80 countries.