

《陈光标何以成为中国“最令人感兴趣”的人》

Chen Guangbiao, a bespectacled, babyfaced Chinese millionaire, really wants you to know who he is. He wants you to know how influential he is. How charismatic he is. How beloved he is. How prominent he is. But ultimately, Chen Guangbiao really just wants you to know Chen Guangbiao.

“How many Americans know that I am here in New York right now?” Chen asked New York Magazine’s Jessica Pressler earlier this year in an interview at the Essex House in Manhattan. “How many media outlets have written about me? Out of 300 million Americans, what percentage would you say have heard of me?” Then, later, he leaned in. “Tell me,” he said. “Do you think Americans like what I do? Any of this? Will they like me?”

He’s not off to a great start. The man hails himself on his business card as the “Most Influential Person of China,” the “Most Prominent Philanthropist of China,” the “Most Well-known and Beloved Chinese Role Model” and, simply, “China’s Foremost.” But he hasn’t had much luck in the United States. It began with his failed bid to buy the New York Times — “I’m very good at working with Jews,” he said — and now encompasses Wednesday’s debacle at Loeb Boathouse in Central Park.

Last week, Chen took out an ad in the New York Times. He was wearing a thin grin and many gold medals for unknown reasons. He said he plans to host 1,000 “poor and destitute” Americans for lunch, each of whom “will receive 300 dollars.” He vowed to “fill the world with love,” compared himself to Chinese cultural icon Lei Feng, and later assured that he would sing “We are the World” in English at the lunch.

He made good on all his promises — “We are the World” was indeed sung, and sung buoyantly — but he forgot one thing: the money. The \$90,000 was instead donated to New York City Rescue Mission. And by meal’s end, the 250 homeless people who showed up for steak and green beans were calling him a “fraud” and a “thief,” according to the New York Daily News.

“The meal was lousy, the cash didn’t come,” Clarence Taylor said to the newspaper. “Prey on someone else. Why are you preying on the homeless?” Chen Guangbiao, a Chinese millionaire who made his fortune off the recycling business, invited homeless New Yorkers to a lunch Wednesday at a Central Park restaurant.

Another man, retired Vietnam war veteran Harry Brooks, told Agence France-Presse he was “highly upset” that he didn’t get the cash, but conceded he enjoyed the food “very much. I could use the \$300. Clothing for one thing.”

One man told the Daily News it made “no sense. A lot of us are down on our luck. We really needed that money. That’s why we came. All these people wouldn’t be here if they weren’t getting nothing but some steak and some string beans.”

How did Chen Guangbiao go so wrong so fast? Audacity has always been both kind and merciless to Chen. The quality dragged him out of a poor farming community north of Shanghai, where two of his siblings starved to death and where he began working at age nine, hauling water into the village to sell it cup by cup to support his family. It pushed him through Nanjing University of Chinese Medicine. And it propelled him to found his own recycling

