

REMINISCENCE OF THE PAST REFLECTION ON THE PRESENT AND LOOK INTO FUTURE



Distinguished
Alumnus

MR FRANCIS SUEN WAI HO

1976 BSc Graduate

Major Achievements

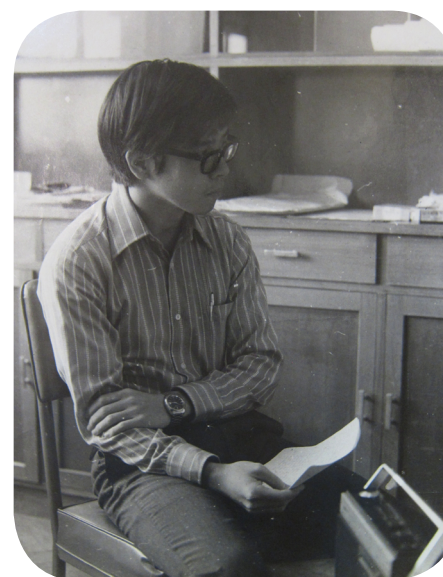
- Establishment of the Environmental Protection Department in 1986
- Assisting the University in setting up a Department of Speech and Hearing Science in 1988
- Planning, legislating and organising the first direct election to the Legislative Council in 1991
- Formulating and implementing the first innovation and technology programme (including the Hong Kong Science Park, the Hong Kong Applied Science and Technology Institute and the various funding schemes) 1996 to 2007
- Introduction of digital terrestrial free television in Hong Kong 2003 to 2007
- Overseeing the planning, funding and implementation of major transport infrastructure projects including the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau bridge, cross-border high speed rail and various railway projects in Hong Kong 2007 to 2012

As a senior official who has previously served more than 30 years in the Hong Kong government, Mr Francis Suen Wai HO is an iconic figure in the city's developments of technology, innovation and infrastructure. In a recent interview with HKU BSc student Jackie Tsoi, Mr Ho brought us back to the old days of HKU and shared a message for us young inquirers.

I felt his warm aura as I shook hands with Mr Francis Suen Wai HO inside our Faculty's conference room. A room too cold for the interview was immediately filled with comfort. The grey chairs and the plainness of the long, oval table were now brightened up by the purple vest he was wearing underneath his suit. Between red and blue, neither sharp nor dull, purple was the color of balance and peace.

Behind the rectangular pair of glasses was his pride in solitude. "I think I spent 90% of time on books, labs and fieldwork when I

was in university." Much more different from many others, Mr Ho's HKU days provided him the freedom to pursue knowledge at greatest depths and to fall madly in love with science. "Yet I was not a loner; I was well connected to classmates." His expression exhibited a ray of warmth as the sun shined into the room. It was his fellow classmates who made his quiet life at HKU a precious memory filled with friendship and joy.



Mr Ho was also enthusiastic in sharing the HKU campus he lived in once as a student. It is hard for current students to imagine attending small classes only with 4 or 5 students instead of lectures inside big halls. "After my retirement, I came back and looked at

the Lily Pond. And I thought, 'Wow! That was the Lily Pond!'" Through his eyes I saw the lovely pond situated right at the heart of the HKU in Mr Ho's days. "The grass, the lawn... So much has changed. You know I lost my way when I came here!" Witnessing laughter inside the conference room, there remains the HKU who watches its students learn, grow and step into the outside world.

When asked about advice for the young generation, Mr Ho pointed out that there were many new challenges for us to tackle. "In my days, it was an uphill battle to get information." Mr Ho recalled using punch cards during computer science class in the older days, "But now, information comes too easily." Critical thinking, in dealing with problems such as fake news, is the essential skill we all need. "When you travel to Korea, for example, think about why its economy has developed so impressively in the

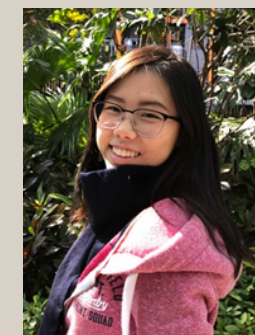
past 20 years, instead of just looking at its movie stars and beauty industry." Indeed, always keeping an attitude eager for knowledge and reasoning is crucial for critical thinkers and global citizens. Mr Ho had never paused the habit of reading, and through reading across different areas, he believed one is able to expand one's horizons and obtain different opinions from many great minds. Previously working for the Hong Kong government, Mr Ho added that he met some very promising young men and women who were bright, committed and prepared to serve the Hong Kong society. He believed that the young generation will be able to take on these challenges and bring the society forward.

As I returned to the conference room after Mr Ho and I took pictures outside, I was reminded of the warm atmosphere he had created. Though no purple vest was present, the peace of a lovely morning recollection of HKU memories and outlook of the future remained.



STUDENT REPORTER

"Meeting with Mr Ho was a lovely experience. From him I learned about many great attributes one should have for one to become a life-long learner. As Mr Ho shared his past experiences at HKU, I was reminded that it is crucial for me to fully utilize the wonderful resources offered here to develop myself into a well-rounded global citizen."



Jackie Tsoi, BSc Student
(major in Statistics)

"Talent is formed in solitude, character in the stream of the world."
– Wolfgang Goethe