

# THE MAN GAZES AT THE SKY

INTERVIEW



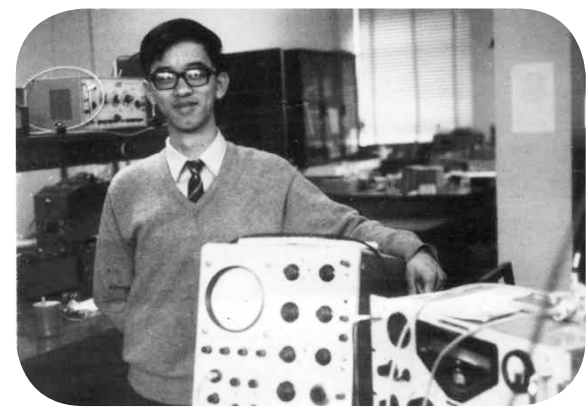
Distinguished  
Alumnus

**MR CHIU YING LAM**  
1971 BSc (General) Graduate  
1972 BSc (Special) Graduate

Sitting in a wooden chair, drinking fine green tea, Mr Chiu Ying LAM talked about his fruitful life from the past to the present. The room was quiet until Mr Lam spoke in his deep, confident and resonant voice.

### Passion

“My love or craze for astronomy has done me a lot of good,” Mr Lam started, looking fondly back at when he fell in love with astronomy and stargazing at the tender age of 13. At such an age he already knew that he wanted to study physics and work at Hong Kong Observatory to become closer to astronomy. Driven by a hunger to know more about astronomy, he quickly conquered all the relevant books in the small library of Sai Ying Pun and desperate to learn more, he ventured to the City Hall Public Library to read — starting from



simpler books in Chinese to large thick books written in English, a language new and foreign to the young Mr Lam.

Thanks to his extraordinarily good performance in school and having his English improved from reading, Mr Lam earned a scholarship to study at The University of Hong Kong, something he had never thought was possible coming from a modest background, went abroad to study at Imperial College and came back to join the one and only Hong Kong Observatory.



### Service

‘Caring and benevolent towards his people and the public’ would be a fair way to describe Mr Lam during his time as the Director of Hong Kong Observatory. He explained that it is important that ‘we serve society and do work useful for the society’. Issuing the hot/cold weather warning was a key achievement of his and it ‘allows people understand that ‘12°C, 15°C, 19°C are very different indeed’, as it is important to translate science/numbers into something society can digest. He explained that whatever we do — whether it be as a student or director — should be

beneficial to the society. His benevolence was also reflected through his management philosophy, always prioritising the wellbeing and happiness of his staff.

### Living Life Fully

“‘Open and straight’ are words that best describe me,” Mr Lam reflected. “Sometimes being like this makes me a few enemies but enemies make life more complete,” he laughed and explained that ‘it is always good to live life fully’. “Life can be hard sometimes and we have to keep afloat by keeping life colourful and musical”. Mr Lam certainly kept his life colourful and developed a myriad of hobbies ranging from bird watching to ballroom dancing. Even in his hobbies he excelled — Mr Lam has co-authored the book The Birds of Hong Kong and South China, a bible for Hong Kong and Chinese bird watchers. A man that truly lives life to the fullest. At the end of the interview I asked for advice. “Don’t let your inquisitive mind die, otherwise life will get really boring” he said and smiled.



### Major Achievements

- Director of Hong Kong Observatory 2003-2009
- Vice President of the Asian Arm of the WMO 2003-2008
- Honorary Fellow of the Royal Meteorological Society 2010-present
- Chairman of the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society 1997-2004
- Honorary President of HK Bird Watching Society – present
- Co-author of the book, *Birds of Hong Kong and South China*

“Don’t let your inquisitive mind die, otherwise life will get really boring.”

### STUDENT REPORTER

“I thought Mr Lam was a truly inspiring individual and I very quickly gained a lot of respect for him as he told me about his past, his life and the achievements he is proud of. It is clear that he’s an incredible individual and he said a lot of really insightful and meaningful things/advice which I took away from the interview. He was also very friendly, pleasant, funny and easy to chat to. I feel really lucky to have had the privilege of meeting such an amazing alumna.”



**Melanie Halim, BSc Student**  
(major in Chemistry)