Hidden Figures Behind The Man of Value

The corridor echoed with sturdy footsteps in a steady pace. A man entered the room, wearing an energetic grey windowpane wool suit. Wrinkles of wisdom came in sight as his cheek raised with a warm smile. Mr Kai Man WONG greeted us in his tranquil voice, laughed humbly and said, ‘It’s great to be back!’

"One of the most valuable assets that you can gain in university is lifelong friendships."

As Mr Wong emphasised his gain, he was staring at his own reflection on a glass cup. Memory flashed in eyes, as if time rewound back into 1970s when he was still an undergraduate science student in Faculty of Science, The University of Hong Kong.

It was a post-war era, a time where university students were actively involved in political issues. At years where most students lacked a complement understanding about China, Mr Wong remembered how courageous President of HKUSSU 1971 was, as he led a group of students to visit Beijing, and met Mr Zhou Enlai, first Premier of the People’s Republic of China. “This period is regarded as ‘Fury Years’,” said Mr Wong, ‘Back in those days, students were simple and true.’

Bachelor of Science (General) used to have 2 separate streams. Mr Wong chose to study Physics/Maths/Chemistry for 1st year and furthered on with Physics/Maths for 2nd and 3rd year. Mr Wong believed that Physics and Mathematics had helped him in many ways unseen. “In calculus, problems can be separated into manageable size.” And this technique was being applied into his financial works.

When asked about his unforgettable memories as an undergraduate student, Mr Wong turned his head towards me and said seriously, “There’s no examination on my 2nd year.” The room immediately burst into laughter as I sighed with envy.

“I had unlimited spare time to do anything as I wish, therefore, I participated in almost every orientation camp available during the long boring summer.” There, Mr Wong met many friends in various disciplines from other Faculties, but little did he know that these friendships brought by fate could last for more than 40 years and would affect each other in the future. In 2000s, a few friends of him from education, engineering and social sciences sectors was setting up a primary school and a college sponsored by HKUGA Education Foundation. His friends approached Mr Wong for his profession as an auditor, and Mr Wong agreed to help without any hesitation.

“In recent years, we still contact each other.” In Mr Wong’s eyes, these friends are still his most valuable assets.

“People have been asking me why I am an accountant instead of a physicist. And I said it’s just a coincidence that I entered the finance sector.”

Mr Wong never considered himself as a successful man. He believed that ‘success’ was a self-centred feeling that had no benefits. In contrast, Mr Wong chose to be ‘a man of value’. He believed that the ‘true’ value a man held was how much he or she could serve the society. Perhaps this was why Mr Wong had been involved in various civic duties, NGOs, statutory bodies and university councils, including the HKU council.

“As a leader today, it is important to clear the way for others to ride on their crests of success, rather having them to chase your footsteps.”

Mr Wong was thankful to his predecessors because they allowed their crests of success, rather having them to chase your footsteps. Mr Wong was thankful to his predecessors because they allowed him to trial and error, and he was now doing the same thing, giving chances and supports to his successors.

At the end of the interview, Mr Wong said to me, “Be a man of value.”

Sure will.

Try not to become a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value. — Albert Einstein