

A My teacher Mr Anthony Ho

Mr Ho was born in China and bred in Guangzhou where he attended primary school. Then he went to Hong Kong and enrolled in Queen's College through examination. Of those days he once told me in an email, "Mr. T.C. Lai was my Form 3 Form-master at Queen's College in 1952-53. He taught English. I entered QC after taking the Colony-wide Government Junior Schools Exam (Form 2) in 1952. In those years, facing QC was the Typhoon Shelter Bay which was reclaimed later as the present Victoria Park. Form 3A classroom was on the second floor of the school building facing the Victoria Harbour. I sat on the window row of seats with the harbour view. Those were the days...." While in school, he often submitted Chinese articles to newspapers on various topics using a pen name, to earn money for schooling. His teacher Mr Lai studied English Literature at the University of Hong Kong and also went to the University of Manchester. He was to become a famous writer of Things Chinese in the medium of English, translator, calligrapher and painter. Mr Ho's interest and proficiency in Chinese and English had early roots.

After secondary school, Mr Ho went to a 2-year teacher training college, Northcote. That was from 1955 to 1957. Upon graduation he joined Wah Yan Kowloon as a certified master (CM). And it was in 1957-58, when I was in Form 2D, that Mr Ho taught our class arithmetic and geometry. I have no aptitude for the sciences but I liked geometry, with its juggling of spatial dimensions and equivalences. Mr Ho used 3D paper models to show the correspondences of areas and volumes, and made the subject interesting. In school, quite quickly, he took on form-mastership and scout-mastership from 1958 on. Another year on, he was appointed Acting Group Scout-master, to take over from Mr Choy Shing-Pang matters of scouting. They became his pride and joy.

Then in 1967 Fr Reid appointed him Assistant Principal. He was the first lay Chinese teacher to take up such a position. The timing was significant. For in 1967, there was the riot. It was a wise and far-sighted move on the part of the Jesuit fathers, Fr Reid in particular, to involve a lay Chinese teacher in the administration

of a school catering to Chinese boys. Mr Ho had proved his talent as a professional, in teaching, learning, extra-curricular activities and administration. No sooner had he joined the school than he and Mr Tam enrolled in the external BA course offered by London University. The subject was Chinese, studied through the medium of English. In that way, he and Mr Tam became adept at the two languages and cultures.



Mr Ho in Cheltenham (photo provided by Ms Gertrude Chan, digitized by Iggy Chong, '71)

When he got the first degree and became a graduate master (GM), he received a British Council scholarship and went to Cheltenham, England in 1962-63 for a postgraduate course in Teaching English as a Second Language, the same subject as Mr Tam's. Mr Tam carried on with his studies, studying for an M Phil in the Chinese Department of Hong Kong University on the Jesuit painter Wu Li (吳歷) of Macau, a topic suggested by Fr Albert Chan. He later devoted himself to art and art administration. The art world's gain was Wah Yan's loss. Mr Ho was tempted, but stayed his course as a teacher.

He became Assistant Principal in 1967; I had left WYK in 1963. But I learned about a few measures he took which showed his good judgement. He introduced stricter discipline in the behavior of the student populace in general and unruly ones in particular. His daily round took in even the toilets. In fact, he was perceived as draconian at times, which earned him the nickname of "Curry Ho" -- hot and pungent! Another example was the admission of a tennis star from another school into Form 3 whom Fr Finneran wanted to recruit to play for WYK. In talking about the writings in the WYKAAO website with me in Toronto this September, Mr Ho took delight in recounting the story, for that boy turned out to be also a good prolific writer. Fr Reid gave Mr Ho complete authority to deal with the case. "It's a hot potato" was how Mr Ho described it. He was still new to the job (it must be about 1968), and a decision that seemed to pander to the whim of a sports-enthusiastic father might not be seen as a fair decision. He gave the student tests in Chinese, English and maths just like in the public examinations. Happily, except for English, the results were good. So WYK gained a tennis player who continued the school's winning streak in Singles for ten years as well as a multi-talented student, and "procedural justice" was observed. Another measure stemmed from the fact that Mr Ho had high respect for Fr Albert Chan (who graduated from Sacred Heart School in Guangzhou before joining Wah Yan), and in the recruitment of teachers of Chinese, would involve Fr Chan in the selection. In 1961 or 1962, they recruited Mr So Man-Chok, the learned scholar and later university professor. I was lucky to become his student in Form 6 and 7.

Mr Ho worked solidly in WYK for twenty years. He was form-master to eleven classes, scout-master for nineteen years, and assistant principal for ten years.

He spent half of his life in China and Hong Kong and half his life in Canada, an even split of 42-41. The most amazing thing is that he continued to serve Wah Yan in the past 40 years, and in this way, his is a lifetime of Wah Yan (一世華仁情).

B Wah Yan College Kowloon Alumni Association of Ontario (WYKAAO) and the Wah Yan spirit

Away from Hong Kong, Mr Ho served the community of Wah Yan through the alumni association he helped rebuild some time after its founding in 1983. It just celebrated its thirty-fifth anniversary this October. Indefatigably he met alumni that passed Toronto or in Hong Kong. It is impossible to measure the workload of meetings and gatherings and anniversaries and teas and meals involved. Counting only our cohort, 1961, I find no fewer than 20 classmates passing Toronto from different parts of the world in the last 20 years, and singly or in groups of 2 or 3 once or twice, they met Mr Ho over a meal with other classmates. There would be cordial exchanges, Mr Ho showing genuinely interest in the visitors, asking about them and mentioning what he remembered of them from his prodigious memory, usually something funny, all reliving some moments of the good old Wah Yan days. There are about a dozen 61's resident in Toronto and they too met with Mr Ho on his birthday sometimes and in milestone anniversaries. Two anniversaries stood out, 2005 in Toronto and 2011 in Hong Kong. On both occasions, Mr Ho was an honoured guest. Multiply the number of gatherings by the number of cohorts Mr Ho had association with (say twenty) and one can begin to get an idea of the tight social networks he had worked to build to keep the spirit of Wah Yan alive. WYKAAO has become the hub for the exchange of news and life experiences of Wah Yan past and present, old and young.

The Wah Yan spirit is not just a conception; it is a conception that is lived, and Mr Ho can be said to be an embodiment of many aspects of it. Many favourable adjectives have been used when people describe him: gentle, wise, considerate, disciplined, determined, hard-working, visionary, uncomplaining, and so on. For me, I see above all a caring person, one sensitive to others' needs and feelings and bring out the best in them. I will never forget how, in the Terry Fox Run on September 16 this year, after the WYKAAO Team had started the mile-long sprint,

he held his walker in front of him and step by step traversed the length of the block at the starting point and back. Chu Sing-Ling and I walked along with him, each on one side, moved by his example. Living in British Columbia, I understood that Mr Ho was honouring the spirit of Terry Fox who attempted to walk the width of Canada with one normal and one prosthetic leg, with cancer gnawing him all the while. Though he succumbed without finishing the journey, he became a hero and an example for all Canadians. Mr Ho was doing exactly that and setting an example for all who know him. He had taken part in the Terry Fox Run with WYKAAO executives and members for decades, raising money for the foundation.

C What I get out of the WYKAAO website.

A tool at Mr Ho's disposal in uniting Wah Yan alumni all over the world was the website he managed and was chief editor of. There his editorial and linguistic skills were put to good use. It has become a focal point for Things Wah Yan, for the exchange of rich and diverse information and experiences that collectively form the totality of Wah Yan's past history and present concerns. With help from executives who are IT professionals, Mr Ho published news, pictures, blogs, features, translations, analyses and links for all who are interested in Wah Yan. The latest web statistics (from 2012/5) showed that almost 300,000 pages were accessed by viewers each month. It won a prize in web design too.

Speaking only from my experience, I'd like to acknowledge that that website has influenced me and kept up intellectual, emotional and personal links between me and some readers of the site. First, I have been able to keep in touch with the latest from Wah Yan Kowloon and WahYanites of different cohorts (via Your Class). I have also gathered a lot of varied knowledge from the blogs and articles, especially articles in the Features section. Erudite scholars, prolific writers, chefs, travelers, photographers, philosophers, doctors etc. have contributed the fruits of their earned experiences and expertise. Second, through the website and Mr Ho, I was connected with the sister and nephew of my late mentor Mr Patrick O'Flanagan, and was able to show my appreciation of him in a small way. That meant so much to me. Again, through Mr Ho's introduction, I have made friends with some writers; an excellent translator from whom I learned a lot about Chinese and

English has become a firm pen pal. Third, I have had responses to some of my writing, and nothing comforts a writer more than that. An article I wrote on learning English in Wah Yan Kowloon attracted one about the same subject twenty years later, and so I could gauge educational changes in some way. The same article caught the attention of an applied linguistics professor in England who turned out to have overlapped with me in a university for a year thirty years ago. Fourth, some articles have been useful to many teachers and students somewhere; they tapped the site for resource, e.g. the titles of the 100 poems voted as favorites by the English. Fifth, I have been able to indulge in my own pursuit of better expression in English and Chinese in contributing to the site. My knowledge of the history of the alma mater has deepened in researching into some topics like Fr Albert Chan's friendship with John Lam and Dr K. B. Lee. James Tong shared with me the poems of Fr Albert Chan and his own connection with Bernard Ng Mau-San. My sense of debt to the past fathers, teachers and classmates has been renewed by assisting my good friend Wong Hin-Shing in compiling a series of over 30 In Memoriams. My personal emotions have been calmed by being rendered into more permanent shape and more shapely patterns. For all these, I owe Mr Ho the initial impetus to write, around the year 2008, as well as his subsequent constant encouragement and acceptance.

D A great educator

As a teacher, junior compared to Mr Ho by nine years, I think I can appreciate his life-long concern for education. In the context of his time and place, he lived a life of Wah Yan, for Wah Yan. To my mind, he is a great educator. He worked in the educational profession for forty years until he retired in 1997. His educational endeavor manifested itself in many ways, primarily and in phase one as it were, service to WYK as teacher, form-master, scout-master, vice principal for 20 years. In phase two, he set up a school in Canada, and taught and administered for another 20 years. As well, he kept alive the spirit of Wah Yan overseas for 40 years, nurturing the bond among the WYKAAO and other communities by providing a vital link in his own person and the website. He set an example of caring for others in taking part in charitable events like the Terry Fox Run, year in year out. Like Terry Fox, he strove to accomplish his goal until he drew his last breath. The quality educative website holds so many precious memories and fulfils so many functions. He set an example of wisdom, fortitude and caring. Education

is about nurturing and fostering in oneself and others the potential, the individualistic, the worthy, the interesting, the true, the right and the good. As an educator, Mr Ho spent his life doing that. He had earned the respect and devotion of many students, who called him in English “mentor”, “great teacher”, and in Chinese “良師”, “恩師”, “仁師” .

I shall miss his gentle advice, humour and caring irreplaceably. May he rest in peace!

November 12, 2018, Vancouver

(Note: The article is based on conversations and emails I had with Mr Ho and latterly with Ms Gertrude Chan, and with other alumni. If there are any errors of fact or biased views, the responsibility is mine and mine alone. Wong Hin-Shing read drafts of this article and made useful suggestions. To him a big thank you is due.)