Rehabilitation: A Life's Work

By Harry Fang Sinyang with Lawrence Jeffery



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A Public Life

ne morning in the spring of 1974, I received an urgent phone call. I was

seeing a patient at the time. When I picked up the phone I immediately recognised the voice of Governor Murray MacLehose. His voice was steady but grim. 'My daughter has just had an accident in Scotland. She's paralysed. She's also five months pregnant. I need some advice. Could you help me?'Within the hour I was at Government House.

The governor explained that his daughter's car had collided with a car driven by an American driving on the wrong side of the road. He went on to give me a more detailed briefing of her medical history and current condition. I told him that it was very important that she be admitted to a rehabilitation centre immediately. She would be able to carry the baby to full term and deliver it by Caesarean section. I went on to explain that her home would have to be modified to suit her needs. I reassured the governor that, with the aid of a wheelchair, his daughter would be able to lead a near-normal life.

Happily, Sylvia, Governor MacLehose's daughter, delivered a healthy baby and went on to lead a happy and productive life. In fact, as a result

I'm sure that my appointment to Legco in the fall of 1974 had something to do with the advice I offered the governor. If nothing else, it made him aware of me and my interests and expertise. If the Governor appointed me to agitate for changes in the health-care system, I did not disappoint him. I introduced the first policy paper on rehabilitation, *Integrating the Disabled into the Community: A United Effort*, in 1977. I was also keen to see some fundamental systemic changes to the whole health-care system in Hong Kong. My efforts in that area led to the creation of the Hospital Authority in 1990.

Governor MacLehose consulted me again when he started to experience almost constant pain in both hips. He had developed primary osteoarthritis in both hips in part because he was a very tall man who enjoyed walking. (The MacLehose Trail was inspired by the governor's long walks in the countryside.) His

official duties also exacerbated his condition.

As governor, he was obliged to host innumerable cocktail parties and receptions, at which he remained standing for long hours at a time. By the time the governor approached

Governor Murray MacLehose presenting me with the CBE in 1980.

me for treatment, his hips were beyond repair. The only solution was to have a total hip replacement.

I arranged for Dr John Older to perform the operation. Dr Older was a direct disciple of Sir John Charnley of Manchester. Sir John had invented the total hip prosthesis. The operation was to be performed at the Midhurst Hospital in Essex.

I was in the operating theatre during the operation. This was my very special patient and I wanted to make sure everything went off without a hitch.

The operation to replace both hips took several hours. After the operation, the governor was returned to his private room. When he woke from the anaesthesia, he opened his eyes and saw me sitting at the end of his bed. He said nothing. When he woke a few hours later, I was still there. He looked at me but said not a word. Three days passed.



Finally, tentatively, the governor asked, 'Surely, Harry, you must have something on your mind?' I leapt at the opportunity, 'Yes, sir, I do. I need a piece of land and funds to build a rehabilitation centre on Hong Kong Island.' He said nothing. He closed his eyes and went back to sleep.

In time, we each returned to Hong Kong and the routine of our daily lives. And then one day I received a call from the governor's aide-de-camp. He said that the government was prepared to grant us a piece of land in Sandy Bay and the funds to build a rehabilitation centre on Hong Kong Island.

There was, however, one condition to the grant. I would have to raise twenty per cent of the cost privately. This was not unusual. It was the way most of the schools and hospitals were built. Being obliged to raise some of the cost makes everyone a bit more careful about how those funds are spent. It also tests the resolve of the recipients. If you can't raise the money, then maybe you don't want it badly enough—or need it as much as you thought. Whatever the logic, it was a system that worked.

I had little difficulty raising the funds. Curiously, it was one of the few buildings or projects to which Governor MacLehose agreed to lend his name. It is now one of the best rehabilitation centres in the Far East.

One of the most important contributions the MacLehose Centre has made over the years is as a training centre. Thousands of Chinese health-care professionals from Hong Kong and the mainland have passed through its doors. Currently, it is recognised as the appointed centre of excellence of the World Health Organization.

Life in the Legislative Council

I joined the Legislative Council in 1974. At that time, Legco was composed of the Governor, four ex-officio members (the Colonial Secretary, the Attorney-General, the Secretary for Home Affairs and the Financial Secretary), ten official members and fifteen unofficial members.

During my time on Legco, I was joined by seven distinguished citizens. We all came from different professions or interest groups: Lydia Dunn was a director of the British trading house Swire; Lo Tak-shing was a senior partner in a law firm; Francis Tien was an industrialist; Ko Siu-wah



Speaking at the Legislative Council before acting governor the Honourable David Akers-Jones.

was the chief executive of the YWCA; Wong Luen was a bus inspector; Alex Wu was a publisher; and Henry Hu was a barrister. Henry Hu was also head of a tertiary learning institution.

I join the inner cabinet

In 1978, four years after my appointment to the Legislative Council, I was appointed to the Executive Council. The governor's closest advisors—or inner cabinet—were the Executive Council. The Executive Council was the highest-level policy maker in the colonial system. It was composed of five ex-officio members (the Commander British Forces, the Colonial Secretary, the Attorney-General, the Secretary for Home Affairs and the Financial Secretary), one official member and nine unofficial members. My fellow unofficial members included Sir Yuet-keung Kan, Sir Sidney Gordon, Sir Sze-yuen Chung, Oswald Victor Cheung, John Bremridge, Roger Lobo, Li Fook-wo and Michael Sandberg. We were obliged to declare all of our interests and take a vow of secrecy. I can say that in my five years of service on the Executive Council, the governor did not once act against the advice of the council.

The first direct elections for seats in the Legislative Council did not occur until 1985. After the elections, there were eleven official members (including four ex-officio), and forty-six unofficial members.

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Of the unofficial members, twenty-two were appointed by the Governor, twelve were elected from functional constituencies, one was elected from among members of the Urban Council, one was elected from among members of the Regional Council, and ten were elected by an electoral college made up of members of all district boards.

These were boom years for Hong Kong. Throughout the next decade, we experienced double-digit economic growth. The government could afford to introduce massive housing projects, nine full years of free education, the Mass Transit Railway (MTR), and a huge rehabilitation program for the disabled and the disadvantaged.

Hong Kong really started to move onto the world stage in the 1970s. We had our first major stock market crash—and survived. We also survived the passing of Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai. Their passing was not unexpected. The succession was. For a time it looked as if China might end up being run by Mao's widow, Jiang Qing, and a few of her cronies—the infamous 'Gang of Four.' Fortunately, their reign did not last very long. The man who emerged from the shadows was Deng Xiaoping. He was already in his late sixties and smoked like a chimney. Would he live long enough to consolidate his power and initiate the reforms he proposed? We had reason to be worried in the 1970s. It was certainly a very interesting time to be in government.

Fortunately, we had a strong and confident governor. Sir Murray MacLehose served as governor of Hong Kong from November 1971 until May 1982. He was the first Hong Kong governor appointed from the British diplomatic corps—a clear signal of Britain's concern over Hong Kong's future. MacLehose made a number of critical decisions, such as creating the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), which reinforced the purpose and integrity of our government and the judiciary. We needed tough action to address tough problems—and we got it.

The Independent Commission Against Corruption

Throughout the sixties and seventies Hong Kong experienced both a rapid population growth and a rapidly expanding economy. The gap between the rich and the poor grew. This was fertile ground for the development of an underground economy. Citizens were forced to pay 'tea money,' or 'black money,' to arrange for many essential services. There were incidents of ambulance attendants demanding tea money before taking a patient to the hospital. Some hospital attendants asked for tips before giving patients a bedpan or a glass of water. It was not uncommon to pay bribes to officials for applications for public housing, schools and other public services. Corrupt police protected vice, gambling and drug activities.

In the 1970s, police officers, and the rank and file were very poorly paid. They also came to the job with a relatively low level of education. They were so poorly paid that it was difficult for them *not* to take a bribe. One case in particular brought the world's attention to our problems with corruption. A number of senior police officers were implicated in bribery involving huge amounts of money. Superintendent Peter Godber was the best known of the group.

The attorney-general had released Godber from custody and given him one week to explain the source of his considerable wealth. Somehow, Superintendent Godber was able to slip out of the colony undetected. There was a tremendous public outcry. Students held demonstrations and confidence in the government evaporated.

A Commission of Inquiry into Godber's escape released a report that argued for an anti-corruption office separate from the police force. Governor MacLehose proposed an independent anti-corruption organization in a speech to Legco in October 1973, saying 'I think the situation calls for an organization, led by men of high rank and status, which can devote its whole time to the eradication of this evil; a further and conclusive argument is that public confidence is very much involved.'

The Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) was established in February 1974. The first task of the newly formed ICAC was to bring Godber to justice. The ex-superintendent was extradited from England to stand trial. He was found guilty of accepting bribes and was sentenced to four years in prison.

Jack Cater was appointed the first commissioner of the ICAC. John

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Prendergast was appointed the commissioner's deputy and operations director. (John Prendergast had been sent out to do the job by Scotland Yard.) The ICAC developed a three-pronged approach in its war against corruption. There was a department of Operations, a department dedicated to Corruption Prevention and a department of Community Relations.

In its first year of operation, the ICAC investigated some 8,000 complaints. Unfortunately, forty-two per cent of the investigations conducted by the ICAC in 1975 involved the police force. Tension grew between the force and the ICAC. Members of the police felt that they were being unfairly targeted. There were demonstrations and confrontations. Finally, in November 1977, Governor MacLehose announced a 'partial amnesty.'

The amnesty meant that the ICAC would not pursue complaints of corruption that had occurred prior to January 1, 1977. It was received with mixed emotions. Nevertheless, it restored the relationship between the ICAC and the constabulary.

Public housing

Public housing had been one of the primary concerns of the government since the end of the war. Many refugees lived in huts on hillsides scattered around the colony. In 1955, there was a large fire



Squatter huts in the 1950s

at one of these squatter sites near Shek Kip Mei. The fire, and the conditions under which so many lived in these squatter sites, prompted the government to develop the first large-scale resettlement housing.

These housing blocks were fairly crude compared to today's standards. They were six stories high and built around a central courtyard. The residents shared kitchen and washroom facilities.

In the 1960s, the government established the Housing Authority and the Housing Society. These quasi-government departments oversaw the construction of more comfortable multi-storey housing blocks at Java Street in North Point, Ho Man Tin and Tai Hang Road.

By 1972, 1.6 million people were housed at low rents in government housing estates. Another 300,000 people still lived in squatter huts or temporary shelters. Many of the resettlement estates suffered from overcrowding. Governor MacLehose believed that the housing issue was the greatest source of ongoing friction between the government and the general population. To ease this friction, Governor MacLehose drew up a ten-year plan to eliminate both the squatter sites and general overcrowding.

This was a critical change in thinking. Instead of providing shelter for refugees, the task was to provide accommodation for residents. Markets, schools and community halls were constructed alongside the housing estates—creating miniature satellite cities.

Integrating the Disabled into the Community: A United Effort

On October 13, 1976, we tabled a Green Paper in the Legislative Council called *The Further Development of Rehabilitation Services in Hong Kong*. A Green Paper is a proposal for new legislation. In Hong Kong, it is a document with a green cover. The green colour is meant to signify that the legislation is 'in development,' The Green Paper is circulated among all interested parties. Legislators and other interested parties can debate the issues outlined in the Green Paper inside or outside the assembly. Several Green Papers can be issued on the same subject. After a suitable period of debate, the Green Paper is edited and reassembled as a 'White

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Paper.' The purpose of the editing is to reflect the changes the paper has undergone as a result of debate. When all the ideas are sufficiently 'mature,' the government issues a 'White Paper,' in a white cover. This document is then placed before the Legislative Council for a vote.

It took almost a year for the Green Paper, *The Further Development of Rehabilitation Services in Hong Kong*, to become the White Paper, *Integrating the Disabled into the Community: A United Effort*. The White Paper was released in October 1977. Essentially, it outlined the course of action that the government proposed to take in order to address the needs of the disabled in the decade from 1976 until 1986. The paper proposed three major objectives:

- 1. The establishment of a statutory co-ordinating body.
- 2. The adoption of a ten-year programme plan.
- 3. The appointment of a Commissioner for Rehabilitation.

Over the years, the amount of money the government has contributed to the care, treatment and education of disabled people has grown tremendously. It has also been spent more wisely. Before the first government paper on the disabled was published in 1977, Integrating the Disabled into the Community: A United Effort, there were no accurate records of exactly how many disabled people there were in Hong Kong. Nor did we know how different disabilities were distributed throughout the population. The records taken prior to 1977 were gathered together by volunteers and participation was on a voluntary basis. Many families with disabled children did not want to participate.

More than anything, the 1977 paper signalled the government's serious commitment to addressing the problems of the disabled. It became imperative therefore that a registry of the disabled be established. How else would the government know how much money to spend on the deaf or the blind? It was critical that government funding be distributed evenly and fairly amongst the different disability groups.

In 1978, the government's first serious attempt at assembling a registry produced these results:

Profoundly deaf:	3,500
Partially deaf:	15,000
The blind:	7,500
Psychiatric impairment:	17,000
Severely mentally retarded:	3,500
Moderately mentally retarded:	12,600
Mildly mentally retarded:	65,000
Seriously physically handicapped:	15,000

However inaccurate these numbers may be, the message they deliver is that the needs of the disabled are multiple and varied.

The government's first White Paper was an attempt to describe the conditions of the disabled—as far as they knew them to be—and propose a series of programmes and facilities to address these conditions over the long term. At best, they were trying to describe the shape of the iceberg below the water-line. All they really knew was that it was big.

Of course, all these assumptions were aimed at determining how much money the government should be spending to address the needs of these citizens. Secondarily, by understanding the make-up of this

group, the government might be able to put in place preventative programmes to slow the growth of a particular group. If the number of disabled children began to grow because of polio, the government could institute an aggressive campaign to inoculate all the children in the colony.

The objective of the White Paper was, 'To provide such comprehensive rehabilitation services as are necessary to enable disabled persons to develop their physical, mental and social capabilities to the fullest extent which their disabilities permit.'



Rehabilitation in action

A coordinating committee was established to oversee the implementation of the White Paper. One of the most interesting aspects of the work of the coordinating committee was prevention. Many disabilities are congenital. Families carrying the gene for certain disabilities can choose to adopt rather than have a child of their own. And early detection and treatment—in the womb—or within days of birth, can reduce or minimize the need for rehabilitation.

I was very honoured to be appointed the chairman of the coordinating committee—a position I held for ten years. I must say that these were the happiest and most rewarding years of my life. I had the support of an official committee for the disabled and a senior government officer to see the implementation. We were able to make a tremendous amount of progress during these years.

In the White Paper, we noted that there was already a sound basic infrastructure of rehabilitation services in Hong Kong. Many of these existing services had long-term development plans in place. But there was no development plan in place that included all the different services.

Much of the document focused on an improvement of the coordination between everyone and every institution involved with the disabled. By improving coordination, we would eliminate the duplication of services and the waste of resources. In order to address the issue, we proposed the establishment of a Rehabilitation Development Coordinating Committee.

A second White Paper on the disabled was published in 1995. It was entitled Equal Opportunities and Full Participation. This White Paper led to the establishment of an Independent Commission on Anti-Discrimination on Sex and Disability. In a curious way, the disabled and women have much in common. They have both suffered discrimination. Fortunately, as more and more women enter higher positions of power and influence, the issue of discrimination against the disabled gains ever stronger allies.

I have developed strong and enduring relationships with a number of women in my life. Of course, my wife and my daughters occupy the central 'core' of my female 'friends.' But there are others whose friendship and support have made a significant difference to the course of my life. One such woman was Mary Wong. Mary was the head of the Association of Volunteers for Service. She did a great deal of work for the underprivileged and supported welfare for the young and the aged.

Mary was appointed to Legco in 1972. In 1973, I attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the Duke of Windsor building, which would house both the Medical Association and the Hong Kong Council of Social Services. Mary was council chairman by that time. Mary had just begun her speech introducing the distinguished guests when she suddenly collapsed. Everyone assumed that she had fainted. I rushed to her side and held her in my arms. It was clear to me that she had passed away. It was indeed a great loss to Hong Kong. I also lost a good friend.

Community-based Rehabilitation

While serving in government, I still managed to remain engaged in my first love: rehabilitation. In 1969, I received an invitation from the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva to attend a special conference for specialists on rehabilitation. The WHO is an agency of the United Nations. Like all UN agencies, its offices always work through the local government. Hong Kong is, however, an exception. The Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation was made a World Health Organization Collaborating Centre in Rehabilitation. I was director of the centre and was able to use many of the resources available to me to develop services for the disabled in China.

The conference in Geneva in 1969 led to two resolutions: there was consensus that something needed to be done immediately to help the world's disabled and there was agreement that more emphasis should be put on community-based rehabilitation methods.

In 1970, Dr Einar Helander came through Hong Kong and gave me a copy of a manuscript he had just completed entitled *A Comprehensive Problem-Solving Handbook on All Disabled for Rural Communities*.

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The book was full of illustrations of practical solutions for use in rural communities. The book also provided some simple tables that could be used to evaluate results. The volume itself was made up of loose-leaf chapters that could be removed and shared amongst others. The language Dr Helander employed was simple and direct enough to be understood easily by lay helpers and family members.



A group of my colleagues at Tongji University translated Dr. Helander's book into simplified Chinese.

Dr Helander had written the book for work he was doing in Africa. I thought it was a particularly apt work for the WHO to publish and distribute. I had it translated into Chinese and have used it extensively during rehabilitation training sessions in China.

The reason I think that the manuscript is so effective is that it's applied to a very specific context. It's not meant to be used in urban communities or welldeveloped countries. It is designed exclusively for rural areas. The philosophy behind the text is to help the disabled help themselves and to

encourage them to make full use of the resources available locally.

In 1972, I was elected vice-president and chairman of the Asian Regional Assembly of Rehabilitation International. Asia was the first region to create a regional committee of Rehabilitation International with an independent, self-contained constitution. Because the region is so poor, we felt it best if all the countries pooled their resources and worked together. Countries that were too poor to be able to pay

membership fees but still wanted to avail themselves of the assistance and information that RI offered were allowed to join the organization's regional committee free of charge. I had to fight for this concession before RI's general assembly. I always believed that it was better for us to have all the countries in the region join and participate.

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Education

One of the most effective tools to improve society is education. Not only does education help you find a better paying and more interesting job, it also enriches the quality of your life. Music, literature, and painting are among the highest achievements of any society. The more education you have, the greater is your ability to understand and explore great works of art.

I was very proud to have been in the government during a period of such dramatic and fundamental improvements to our educational system. In 1971, the government introduced six free years of education to all residents of Hong Kong. In 1978, the government expanded the benefit to include nine full years of free schooling for every child. It's critical that the government do as much as it can to ensure that our students are able to perform at their very best.

The whole education system was restructured to accommodate the students entering secondary education. In 1976, construction began to accommodate an anticipated 36,645 additional junior secondary places. In the end, fifty-one new schools were constructed between 1979 and 1981.

Secondary education is not only free, it's compulsory. Parents who do not send their children to school will be served with a school attendance order from the director of education. And laws prohibiting child labour will be enforced to ensure that *all* children benefit from a free and full education.

My Governor, my friend

Lord MacLehose passed away peacefully at the age of 82 at his ranch house in Glasgow, Scotland, on May 27, 2000. The news of his death

filled my mind with many memories. Lord MacLehose was Hong Kong's longest-serving governor; as already mentioned, his term ran from 1971 to 1982. During this time, the government developed massive public housing, progressive land policies, and nine years of free education. His role in establishing the ICAC has already been outlined. He also initiated policies for the care of the disabled. During his term, Hong Kong enjoyed successive years of prosperity, surplus budgets, and low taxation. His initiatives turned Hong Kong into a truly international city. He brought us onto the global stage.

I'm proud to say that I was one of Governor MacLehose's closest advisors. I'm prouder still to call him a friend. Governor MacLehose was not an easy man. He had quite a hot temper. But he also possessed a keen sense of humour. I think one of his greatest achievements was the subtle way in which he managed people and ideas. His approach was Eastern rather than Western. I don't know if this was something innate, or something he learned from living in the East. Essentially, he managed to have people come around to his thinking through subtle-almost imperceptiblepersuasion. He never forced people to do it his way. He never commanded. At meetings of the Executive Council, he would introduce issues or ideas indirectly. He would say that Mr X had this idea on solving that problem. Of course, some of us knew that the views ascribed to Mr X were also those of the governor. If a member of council responded positively to Mr X's idea, the governor would quickly—and effusively—congratulate the member. He would ascribe tremendous perspicacity to the member and congratulate him or her on the insight and understanding of what was a truly complicated and daunting issue. Flushed with flattery and pride, the member would be incapable of refusing the governor's request to head up the implementation of this new idea.

Lord MacLehose was a kind and decent man in the best and most traditional sense of those words. He was a gentleman of great stature—both physically and in his achievements. I learned a great deal from the man. I will miss him.

The Handover

any of us thought David

Wilson would be Hong Kong's last governor. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had appointed him in 1987. Wilson spoke Mandarin fluently and had spent many years in the Foreign Service.

During his term, Governor Wilson oversaw the colony's first truly democratic elections. On September 15, 1991, Hong Kong citizens went to the polls. Of the eighteen seats open for election in the Legislative Council, twelve went to the United Democrats. Three others went to parties allied to the Democrats and three to independents. None of the Chinese-backed candidates was elected. Of the remaining forty-two legislators, half were appointed by the governor and half were chosen by members of 'functional constituencies'—professional groups such as lawyers, teachers and bankers.

Unfortunately, Governor Wilson was often criticized for being too willing to bend to China's demands. Wilson unveiled an ambitious,

US\$16 billion airport scheme for the colony in October 1989. Hong Kong was still suffering in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square incident. The aim of the project was to revive the economy and restore Hong Kong's confidence.

China did not see it quite that way. Some suspected that Britain would award most of the lucrative contracts to British companies. Others argued that the British had no right to proceed with such a project





My family in the courtyard of Buckingham Palace after I received my knighthood in October 1996

without formal consultation with China—as was required by the Joint Declaration. But consultation with China was only necessary if the project was to be completed after July 1, 1997. In fact, Britain intended to complete the airport prior to July 1, 1997. Sadly, for many



concerned, work on the airport suffered many delays and was finally opened a year after the intended completion date.

The Chinese cut off discussions on the airport. They demanded a halt to all airport work until the two sides could come to some kind of an agreement. Finally, China insisted on a visit by British Prime Minister John Major, Mrs Thatcher's successor, as a condition for approving the new airport. To break the deadlock, Major was forced to travel to Beijing to sign a memorandum of understanding. This visit by a European leader helped break the West's boycott of the Chinese leadership following Tiananmen Square.

Many people believe that Governor Wilson was replaced by Chris Patten in July 1992 because of this loss of face by the British. Chris Patten took office as the final and 27th governor of Hong Kong on July 9, 1992. Patten had been chairman of the British Conservative Party. His past government appointments included serving as parliamentary undersecretary of state for Northern Ireland, minister of state at the Department of Education and Science, minister for overseas development at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and secretary of state for the environment. Patten had no previous China experience. More significantly, he was a politician, not a member of the Foreign Service.

One of Patten's top priorities during his term was the re-inflation of Britain's self-esteem over Hong Kong. Since the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984, there had been criticism that the accord was a sellout by Britain rather than a triumph of diplomacy. And of course, the Joint Declaration of 1984—and its implications—were now seen through the light of Tiananmen. There was a heightened sense of concern for the fate of the citizens of Hong Kong after July 1, 1997. The British felt that the best protection for the people of Hong Kong were the tools of a democratic society: individual rights, rule of law and a representative and effective legislature. Patten was charged with both restoring British honour and providing the people of Hong Kong with a more democratic society—even if it meant confrontation with China.

During negotiations held during the term of Governor Wilson over the democratization of Hong Kong, Britain and China agreed that eighteen of the sixty members of the Legislative Council would be chosen by

direct election in 1991, and twenty in 1995. By exploiting loopholes in the joint agreement, Patten pushed forward a series of electoral reforms. Nine new constituencies were created with the electoral rolls expanded to include all working persons, instead of the limited corporate and professional electorates of the old constituencies. By doing this, he hoped to enlarge and broaden the nature of representation in Legco. The reforms he proposed went contrary to the changes already agreed to by both parties..

Not surprisingly, his activities raised the ire of China. The Chinese government felt the reforms contravened the Joint Declaration of 1984, the Basic Law (passed in 1990), and a series of negotiations between China and Britain in the early 1990s concerning the question of political convergence.

Patten's reform package was passed by Legco in July 1994. On September 17, 1995, nearly one million of Hong Kong's 2.6 million registered voters went to the polls—twice as many people as had ever voted in the colony before. Of course, China declared that the 1995 elections would not be recognized after the transfer of sovereignty and that it would set up a new Provisional Legislative Council before the handover in 1997.

Though I was not a party to the negotiations leading up to the handover, I still occupied a privileged vantage point. I know most of the major players personally, and heard first-hand accounts of the many conflicts and tensions—both in Hong Kong itself, and between Britain and China.

I am particularly close to three individuals who participated in both the negotiations leading up to the handover, as well as the ceremony itself. The first two were colleagues of mine in the Legislative Council, Sir S.Y. Chung and Baroness Lydia Dunn. The third individual is my niece, Mrs Anson Chan.

In my opinion, Sir Sze-yuen Chung is what I call a 'proper' gentleman. He is always impeccably dressed and tolerates no nonsense whatsoever. As the senior man in both the Executive Council (Exco) and the Legislative Council (Legco) he always had time to give his juniors advice.

Sir S.Y. has a disciplined and determined mind. He was instrumental



in pushing the government to adopt some of Hong Kong's most courageous legislation. He led the fight for nine years of free education, the establishment of the ICAC, massive housing projects, the mass transit railway and—finally—the negotiations leading up to the handover.

There is a wonderful story about Sir S.Y. that clearly illustrates his character—and his sense of chivalry. At one point during the negotiations for the handover, all the Exco members travelled to London to meet with the people at the Foreign Office. After the official dinner, most of us were still a bit hungry. Someone suggested that we go to Chinatown in Soho for a snack of Chinese congee. We hailed two taxis. Sir S.Y. escorted the Honorable Lydia Dunn in one taxi, and we followed in another.

S.Y. and Lydia arrived first. They didn't know which restaurant we were going to so they decided to walk around a bit. At some point, S.Y. asked Lydia to wait for him under a lamppost while he walked to the end of the street to try and spot our taxi.

Lydia took out her mirror and began applying her lipstick. At that moment, a gentleman in a very grand car whose attire was clearly Middle Eastern, began to slow down as he approached Lydia. S.Y. saw what was happening and quickly began running back towards Lydia shouting, 'She's mine! She's mine! She's mine!'

The Middle Eastern gentleman sped off into the night. S.Y. had rescued the damsel in distress. This has become a favourite after-dinner story. Lydia still teases S.Y. that if he had not interrupted, she might now be the wife of a very rich sultan.

S.Y. took a much-deserved retirement in 2000. He has recently published his memoirs, *Hong Kong's Journey to Reunification*.

Baroness Lydia Dunn—as she is now properly known—was born in Shanghai and raised in Hong Kong. She attended St. Paul's Convent School. Most of her commercial career has been spent at Swire, the British trading house. When she joined Legco, not long after I did, her first assignment there was to oversee the development of the Trade Development Council. She travelled around the world successfully promoting trade with Hong Kong. Her last major

project before retiring to London was the development of the Hong Kong Convention Centre—the site of the handover ceremonies of June 30, 1997.

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Serving Hong Kong-however and whenever I can

I was in Beijing in the summer of 1995. Naturally, I was staying at my hotel, the Hong Kong Macau Center/Swissotel. I received a phone call from Lu Ping, who was head of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office in Beijing and one of the people at the very centre of the negotiations for the handover in 1997. Lu Ping asked me if I would be so kind as to drop by his office for a short meeting.

The first question Lu Ping asked me—after closing his office door for privacy—was if I was related to Mrs Anson Chan, Hong Kong's Chief Secretary. He seemed to know that she was my niece but wanted verbal confirmation. I obliged him by answering simply and directly, 'Yes, she is my niece.'

He said that 'they' had a problem. By 'they' he meant China's top leadership. None of them had met Anson, although they knew about her, and knew her to be the first Chinese and the first woman to hold the position of Chief Secretary.

I told Lu Ping that Anson was brilliant, honest and hard working. I told him that she would serve Hong Kong and China as long and as well as she could.

Shortly after my meeting with Lu Ping, Anson made a 'secret trip' to Beijing to meet with Qian Qichen, China's foreign minister. As it was a 'secret trip' she didn't stay at my hotel—she stayed in a guest house in the central government compound.

Lu Ping told me that everyone was impressed by this 'young, pretty and smart woman.' Lu Ping commented that it was a rare combination in a civil servant. He repeated a number of times that 'she is a very nice lady.' Apparently, China's top leadership was both impressed and reassured.



Anyone who watched the handover ceremonies—in person or on television—would have seen the Honourable Anson Chan. Anson stood in the very middle of the stage—metaphorically bringing both sides together. She wore a brilliant red Chinese *cheung sam*. I was deeply moved and extremely proud to see my niece in such an honoured position.

Anson Chan is the second child of my late brother Howard. Howard died when Anson was ten. Anson is actually one of a set of twins. Her sister is Ninson Loh. Ninson is a few minutes younger than Anson. Ninson has had a brilliant and very successful career in business. She founded Farrington Travel—presently the second largest travel agency in Hong Kong.



Chairing a meeting of the Far East and South Pacific games (FESPIC) for the disabled in the 1980s

Anson was an impeccable child. She was a brilliant student and a very serious young woman. She attended the Sacred Heart Canossian Sisters' School and St. Paul's Convent School. She took her studies in both Chinese and English. The only time Anson ever worried us was when she first began dating Archie. My mother asked a lot of questions about Archie. She was very pleased to find out that he was

a teacher. But she was very concerned when she learned he was also an auxiliary policeman.

Before entering university, Anson worked as a medical secretary in the Orthopaedic Unit and in the Medical Social Office of Queen Mary Hospital. In 1962, after completing her studies at university, she joined the Hong Kong government as an administrative officer. She was the first female officer to reach the level of Director, and the first woman and the first Chinese to be appointed Chief Secretary. On the evening of the handover, she also became the first Chief Secretary for Administration in the new government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. Throughout her career in the civil service, she fought tooth and nail for equal rights and treatment for female civil servants.

My disillusionment with politics began when the issue of the change of sovereignty became the prime topic on everybody's plate. The Chinese saw things very differently than the British. For us, Hong Kong was not being returned to some foreign devil. We were going home, that's all. For many of us, we had never really left the motherland China. Many maintained contact with ancestral villages and many had extended families on the mainland. Politics may have separated us but family always drew us back to the same shared hope of a China united in peace and prosperity.

I was invited by the British government to attend the last retreat at Tamar Plaza on the night of June 30, 1997. When the ceremony began, a heavy rain began to fall. I could barely hear Governor Patten, or the Prince of Wales. To me, it was a very sad occasion.

At midnight on June 30 I was in the Hong Kong Convention Centre for the change of sovereignty ceremonies and the swearing-in of the new government. The British were assembled on the right side of the stage and the Chinese on the left side. I was surprised and deeply moved to see that my niece, Anson Chan, was the only figure linking the two sides. She was positioned at the very centre of the stage—the British to her left, the Chinese to her right. This was perhaps a symbolic gesture—and a subtle one—as she was seen as a key transitional figure.

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The most moving moment of the evening occurred when the British flag was lowered and the Chinese flag was raised. Hong Kong returned to the mainland. We were home again. I couldn't stop the tears in my eyes.

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