A Lifetime in Academia

An Autobiography by Rayson Huang

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The Early Years: My Father and Munsang College

I was born on the nineteenth day of the seventh moon in the year of the Monkey. This was the birthday I knew and celebrated until I was seventeen years old, when I applied for admission into the University of Hong Kong and had to supply on the application form my date of birth on the solar calendar. It was then that I made the necessary enquiries and found that this was the first of September 1920.

My birthplace was 150 miles from Hong Kong up the South China coast in Shantou (Swatow), the main seaport of Chauzhou, a region composed of nine districts in the south-east corner of Guangdong province. Chauzhou is a densely populated area with a population of over nine million whose livelihood depends mainly on agriculture. We Chauzhou people have a dialect of our own. It bears little resemblance to Putonghua or Cantonese, and is one of the most difficult to learn. Rather cut off from the rest of the province until more recently, we developed a style of living and customs of our own. Our tea-drinking tradition and art of cooking are well known all over south China. Culturally, we are relative late-comers compared with the people in the central parts of China, although we can still boast of a history of some thirteen hundred years.

It was during the Tang Dynasty that Chauzhou's culture underwent an unprecedented uplift after the arrival, as governor of the region, of one of China's greatest of scholars, Han Yu. Having, as a senior official in court, incurred the displeasure of the emperor, he was banished to rusticate in remote and undeveloped Chauzhou. Han Yu's misfortune, however, turned out to be the Chauzhou people's blessing, for during his stay he brought prosperity and civilization to the region and has been for us the greatest saint ever to have come to our native place. As a scholar he is best remembered all over China by the numerous essays he wrote. I started learning some of these from the time I was in junior middle school. Parts of them I committed to memory, and enjoyed quoting them in the essays I wrote.

Whatever glorious achievements accorded the Huang Clan in the ancestral records, we — the recent generations of Huangs — came from a humble farming family in the district of Jieyang, to the west of Shantou. As a teenager, my grandfather, Huang Shoting, met a misfortune that took him away from his native place and brought about a complete change in his life. While working in the field he suffered a serious cut in his right foot which did not respond to herbal treatment, and the wound soon became septic and unmanageable. As he became incapable of working in the field, he found himself less and less popular with members of his large family who came to regard him as someone that ate his meals without contributing to the work needed to produce them. The young man finally decided to seek treatment in nearby Shantou where there was a mission hospital, the Fuyin (Gospel) Hospital. He found his way to the hospital and was admitted.

The misfortune thus turned out to be the turning point in his life. It took many weeks to clear up his infected foot, but in the meantime he made himself useful in the hospital kitchen, where he cheerfully lent a hand whenever help was needed. He also attended the daily services in the hospital held for its patients. By the time he got well, he had become a popular member of the hospital family.

He was soon baptized and encouraged to pursue theological studies, and in due course became an ordained minister. In this

capacity, he spent all his working life in Shantou until his retirement. At the invitation of my father, he came to stay with us in Hong Kong at Munsang College. That was around 1936 when I was in my last year at school. I came to know him well as I frequently went with him to churches and gospel halls when he was preaching. As a retired pastor and one well known for his sermons, he found himself in great demand by churches and gospel halls all over Kowloon and was frequently invited to preach at services on Sundays and prayer meetings on other days. As he could speak only the Shantou dialect and the congregations understood only Cantonese, his sermons had to be translated and I often found myself called upon to do this. Some of his sermons, in fact, I remembered rather well and made good use of when I was in China a few years later, and was called upon to preach, at the True Light Middle School in Samkong and at the YMCA of Kwangsi University in Kweilin. Two of these sermons were entitled 'Gospel of St John's, Chapter 3, Verse 16' and 'Jesus Christ and the Samaritan Woman'. As these were my grandfather's sermons, not mine, one need not be surprised they made quite an impression on the congregation.

I continued to see my grandfather after the fall of Hong Kong to the Japanese, until my brother and I decided to leave for Free China. We bade him farewell in mid-1942 for that perilous trip, which, for me, turned out to be the beginning of a round-the-world trip taking me nearly eight years. It was late in 1949 that I managed to see him again when my wife and I passed through Hong Kong on our way from Chicago to Singapore. He was then 89 years old and passed away not long afterwards.

Like my grandfather, my father, Rufus Huang Ing-jen, lived a long and distinguished life. He did not, however, enjoy happy adolescent years. At an early age he lost his mother and upon my grandfather's remarriage to a very harsh and selfish woman, life for him became a miserable existence. He had to get up early every morning to fetch water from the well for the whole family, and was kept working long hours in the kitchen after school, often carrying his baby brother or sister (the stepmother's children) on his back

while doing household chores. Carrying water on his shoulder every day had caused a deformity in the right shoulder, which was visible even in the photographs. He was beaten mercilessly when he somehow displeased his stepmother, and was treated more like a slave than the eldest son of the family.

Just as my grandfather before him, however, this misfortune turned out to be a blessing in disguise. It happened this way. When my father was in his teens, there came to Shantou a Miss M. Harkness, a new member of the mission who was attached to the same church as my grandfather. She was actually a woman of some means, and had taken up missionary work as a volunteer. She took a strong liking for my father and was shocked to see the way he was treated in the family. Eventually, she offered my grandfather to send my father, at her expense, for schooling in Hong Kong. My grandfather was naturally delighted with the offer, which he promptly accepted. Thus at the age of 18, my father was able to go to Hong Kong to study in a famous mission school — St Stephen's College. For him, a new life had begun.

At St Stephen's, my father worked very hard indeed so as to catch up on lost years, and through accelerated promotions, managed to complete five years' schoolwork in about half the time. Before he finished the last year of school, he sat the entrance examination of St John's University in Shanghai and was admitted. This was in 1912 and he was already twenty-one years old. Miss Harkness, who was immensely pleased with his progress, continued her financial support. My father studied electrical engineering at St John's and completed his studies in 1916. He was now a graduate of one of the prestigious universities in China, and in those days a university graduate was something of an élite in society as university education had only started a few decades before that.

About his St John's days, I can remember two stories he told me. In his final year there was a serious typhoid epidemic in Shanghai, and he and a number of other students fell victim to it. He was already declared a hopeless case; together with three of his fellow students in the same category, he was left lying in a room in the hospital to await

their time. Two of the three in fact soon died. My grandfather sailed from Shantou, a voyage taking four or five days, to see him for the last time. Miraculously, however, he recovered. He told me that this was the time when he resolved that since his life had mercifully been spared, he would devote it to the service of his Creator.

The other story my father told me was how he decided to take up the violin after listening to one of his teachers, Professor Walker who taught him physics, play the instrument. He got himself a violin and was fortunate to be given free lessons by the professor. He continued to play the violin after returning to Shantou, and often used it to pacify my elder brother, Raymond, when he was a baby. Raymond would stop crying once he heard my father playing a tune to him. This violin of his, incidentally, was left in Shantou when he took the family to Hong Kong in 1923, and some ten years later was given to one of my cousins (son of one of my father's sisters) when he expressed an interest to learn to play the instrument. He took good care of the violin, but some time later when his house was wrecked and flooded by a typhoon, the violin was scattered in several places. He, nevertheless, managed to piece the instrument together, quite amateurishly but not badly at all, and continued playing it.

Shortly after my father died in 1991, my brother and I were surprised to receive a letter from this cousin, now a retired doctor, telling us that this violin still existed and offering to return it to us. We accepted this kind offer gladly, and on one of the occasions when I visited Shantou in connection with my commitments with the university there, I paid a visit to my cousin, and over a simple ceremony received the violin from him. It was only an inexpensive factory product: the purflings, for example, were simply painted lines, and the wood used was of very ordinary quality, although it produced a tolerably good tone. But this was to be expected as my father was by no means an affluent student: this was his violin and that meant a good deal to us!

My father's interest in music was passed on to each of his three children, my elder brother Raymond, my younger sister Rayann and myself. Rayann started learning to play the piano when she was a little

girl, and when she passed with distinction Grade 6 (or thereabouts) of the Trinity College of Music in London, she was rewarded with a Morrison piano which was the best make in Hong Kong at the time. It cost over five hundred Hong Kong dollars, more than three times my father's monthly salary. Raymond began learning to play the violin when he was twelve, followed by myself two years later with him as my first teacher. There was frequent music playing in the family; I well remember the music book my father brought home one day: it was a book of trios for two violins and piano arranged from Beethoven's piano sonatas.

Returning to the period of his life spent in Shantou, my father on returning from Shanghai was made vice-principal of the mission secondary school at Jiexi, across the harbour of Shantou. In 1920, he was offered an opportunity to go to the United States to further his studies. Encouraged by my mother even though she was at the time expecting my arrival, he betook himself to the Teachers College in Columbia University in New York where he enrolled in the MA course in education. Unfortunately, he found the subject he had to take quite uninteresting, and left New York for Chicago where he gained admission to the Armour Institute (the forerunner of the Illinois Institute of Technology). He returned to the field of electrical engineering, and was awarded a graduate diploma in due course. He earned his way by selling embroidered linen sent from Shantou, and made enough money not only to keep himself going, but to support his family back home. On returning to China from the United States, he was appointed principal of the school to which he had been attached.

In 1923, he moved with the whole family to Hong Kong, and was employed by his alma mater, St Stephen's College, as a teacher of science and mathematics. Shortly afterwards, he was persuaded to take up a challenging job as principal of a new private school, Munsang College, which was about to be set up in the new development district of Kowloon City. It was a district consisting of nine short streets under the Lion Rock, overlooking Kowloon Bay and adjoining Hong Kong's only aerodrome, tucked away in one corner

of Kowloon. As founding principal he was given full discretion to develop the school as he saw fit. This to him was a great opportunity and a challenge, which he accepted enthusiastically, and moved the family from the western end of Hong Kong to eastern Kowloon. When the school opened its doors for students in 1926, I enrolled as one of the first pupils in the primary section and continued from Primary One to Senior Middle Three in 1937.

Before long, Japan's invasion of China began. The occupation of the Eastern Three Provinces ('Manchuria') in 1931 was followed by the invasion of Shanghai the following year, when the Japanese troops were for a while gallantly repulsed by China's 19th Route Army despite its inferiority in numbers and equipment. One of its senior officers — a returned student from France and a Shantou man — was indeed a friend of my father's, and his son a schoolmate of mine at Munsang. Invasion on a large scale started on 7 July 1937, as my brother and I were about to leave for St John's University in Shanghai. We were in fact already equipped with our personal outfits and had booked passages on the SS *Empress of Canada* leaving for Shanghai on 28 August but the war broke out in earnest on the 13th and grew in scope until total war engulfed all China. There was no choice but to stay on in Hong Kong and await developments. In the following year, I found my way to the University of Hong Kong, having been fortunate enough to be awarded a scholarship on the results of the matriculation examination.

Munsang was like no other school. My father had his own ideals about primary and secondary education. He was a devout Christian, and believed in Christian education as the most desirable for the building of character. Munsang was a Christian school, but not related to any church or mission. It placed great emphasis on the moral and spiritual development of its pupils, and set great store by the cultivation of an *esprit de corps* for the alma mater. It prepared its students for the public secondary examination and for entrance to the University of Hong Kong, which required an adequate command of the English language. It also sought to put in a good grounding for the mastery of the mother tongue first, before bringing in English in heavier doses.

Unlike most other schools Munsang was an independent school, not attached to any religious or other organizations and receiving no financial support from any of these, nor from the government. Its language policy ran directly contrary to that of the government Education Department. While all the government schools and aided schools (including most mission schools) taught English as the first language and Chinese as the second, indeed a poor second, Munsang began teaching its pupils classical Chinese (*wenyan*), followed by modern literary Chinese (*baihua*). English was introduced in increasing doses and as the teaching medium in an increasing number of subjects until in the final years when the students were proficient in both. Munsang's graduates were thus able to find their way not only into the University of Hong Kong, but also the well-established universities in China, such as Yenching, St John's and Lingnan. Apart from this stress on the mother tongue, adequate time was devoted to the teaching of the history and geography of China, and in keeping us informed of affairs on the Mainland. Thus although brought up in a colony, we were conscious and proud of our cultural heritage, and were aware of what was going on in the home country.

Another special feature of Munsang was the teaching of Mandarin (Putonghua) which my father insisted that all of us should learn. Although it was the national language of China, it was hardly spoken in the colony at the time. Apart from having some of the subjects taught by Mandarin-speaking teachers, we used to devote the last hours of every Saturday morning to public speaking in Mandarin, and we were required to take turns to participate in the contest. It gave us not only opportunities to practise Putonghua, but also experience in public speaking.

It was at some cost that my father held on to his ideals and maintained the emphasis on teaching the Chinese language was maintained at considerable cost. Munsang started with only a small endowment of ten thousand dollars from each of the two donors, Mr Au Chak-mun and Mr Mok Kon-sang (hence Munsang). The money did not last very long beyond the opening of the school. To keep the school going while maintaining an adequate standard, a

continuing source of financial support was essential, but there was no other source available except government funding. The Education Department, however, thought Munsang fell foul of the rules applicable to aided schools in the teaching of languages, but on this score Munsang would not compromise. In the meantime, resources were beginning to run out. That was the darkest hour in the life of the school and a time came when members of the college council fought shy of attending meetings for fear of being called upon to share the burden. For one of these convened meetings, only the chairman, Dr S. W. Tso, and my father turned up. The chairman went as far as suggesting to my father that the school be closed. To this day, I remember hearing him telling my mother the depressing news when he came back from town after the aborted council meeting.

The Education Department actually did not take Munsang seriously for years, apart from sending annually its inspector of schools, one Mr Brown, to the school for a routine visit and report. I remember Mr Brown on one of the occasions of his visit. One day when I was in Junior Middle One, he was shown to our classroom by my father. He was a very big, rather fat man, and had a red face. He quickly sat down facing us, and asked a few simple questions. He seemed very relaxed and very sure of himself, and simply floated out of the room after a little while. Among the things he told my father, the most important was that the school was spending too much time on the teaching of Chinese. Presumably, this was highlighted in his report.

In this fashion Mr Brown came for a number of years, each time turning in much the same report after an hour or so of a casual visit. As time dragged on, and as the need for a government grant became more urgent, my father took it upon himself to make a representation to the Director of Education. He requested an in-depth examination of the school and, rather boldly, asked for someone other than Mr Brown to undertake the job. To the credit of the director, he took this petition seriously, and picked the headmaster of Queen's College, the most prestigious among the government schools, one Mr Handyside, to undertake this assignment. Mr Handyside's examination of the

school took him three mornings. Subsequently, he presented a report to the director, listing the qualities of the school and recommending that while Munsang could not be given an annual grant in the usual way, it deserved support in the form of a special grant. This report was accepted by the director, who approved an annual grant of $6000, a sizeable sum in those days. Thereafter, Munsang occupied a special position among aided schools, as reflected in the salutation in official communications which the department sent to the schools in the whole territory which read, 'To the Heads of all Government Schools, Aided Schools, and Munsang College.'

At about this time, Munsang was visited by two people who had done much to influence my father's life: Miss Harkness, my father's benefactor, and Dr Pott, president of St John's University. Miss Harkness was delighted to see what her act of kindness to an unfortunate lad had brought about and thought that was the best thing she ever did in her life. Dr Pott was equally delighted, and I heard him telling my father, 'Rufus, I am proud of you.' Thereafter, all Munsang graduates were accorded direct admission into St John's University.

Through the thick and thin of those fateful years, the person who was constantly at my father's side was my mother, Roseland Liu Sze-lan. Born into the family of the minister of the other church in Shantou, she was educated at the teachers training college in Xiamen (Amoy), run by missionaries. I knew little about my mother's father as I left Shantou at the age of three and saw this grandfather thereafter only once, when we returned for a visit some years after. As the kindly, sympathetic wife of the headmaster, my mother was a friend to the teachers and a mother to the students, especially the boarders, of whom there were quite a number, coming mainly from Shantou. It was a terrible blow to all of us when she died in late 1936, at the age of forty. In 1938, my father married Miss Kathleen Luey Yan-po, a teacher in the primary school, and by her had four sons, Rayton, Rayland, Ray John and Raywin.

One of the advantages I reaped from my father's long tenure of office as headmaster was my being able to receive all my education,

from Primary One to Senior Middle Three, in one single school. To this day I still bear many a happy memory of my school days, and during those twelve years, I was fortunate to be taught by a number of caring and devoted teachers whose memory remain with me until this day.

There were the Confucian scholars who had in their time succeeded in securing the titles of Siu Chai, Jü Ren, and Kung Shen in the imperial examinations of the Qing dynasty. They taught us the classics including the Confucian *Analects*, as well as composition in the classical style, and corrected our weekly essays without fail. Our highest achievement which we attained in the last year of school was to compose, within two hours, an essay of some 300 characters, in our handwriting executed in ink and brush. Activities were also organised to give us opportunities to practise using the language. The most important one was the Mandarin public speaking contest held weekly on Saturday mornings, at which we had to take turn to participate. These contests gave us the opportunity not only to practise our Mandarin, but also experience in public speaking. The Chinese YMCA, indeed, also supported the learning of the national language by organising an annual inter-school competition in Mandarin public speaking. Munsang College participated in this contest every year, and sent me for the contest in 1936. I did not fail the trust my school had in me, and managed to win the championship. I carefully kept the shield awarded me and recently presented it to my alma mater.

There were native English-speaking teachers who taught us English, right from primary one when we began to learn the alphabet. Among them I remember particularly well Mrs Anne Luck and Mr John Blofeld. The latter soon became our most popular teacher for all time, and was to become a lifelong friend of mine after I left school. He was friendly and understanding and his respect and enthusiasm for China and Chinese things moved us deeply. There was simply no Englishman like him in Hong Kong! He taught us English, written and spoken, and he taught well, but he also learnt Chinese (Cantonese) from us. We were very sad when he had to leave us for China, in 1935, to teach in the Hobei College of Technology in Tientsin, near

Beiping (Beijing). He utilized his years in north China well, not only in teaching but also in seriously learning Chinese, written and spoken (Mandarin). But his time to do this was limited, as Beiping was before long occupied by Japanese forces, in 1938, and he had to return to Hong Kong. Munsang College was glad to have him back for a while (I was then a student in Hong Kong University), until 1939, when he headed for England to complete his studies at Cambridge. Subsequently, he joined national service as a volunteer, the war in Europe having started in earnest. John was already 27 years of age when he joined up. Being very much a scholar, in substance and in appearance, he did not get on well as a private, and on occasions caused amusement, or annoyance, to his immediate superiors, the corporals and sergeants, who used to crack jokes about him and in general made his life miserable. This state of affairs did not last long, for within a few weeks his knowledge of China and expertise in the Chinese language came to be known by the army authorities and he was transferred to the intelligence division in London with promotion to captain. Less than two years later, in early 1941, came an offer of the job which he could not have hoped to get even in his dreams, the post of Cultural Relations Officer in the British Embassy in Chungking.

There were also the teachers of Mandarin and history, graduates from universities in China including especially Mr Yen Ren-jin and Mr Yang Si-tuan. And I must not fail to mention an outstanding teacher of science and mathematics, Mr Mak Kai-hung, a graduate of the University of Hong Kong, whose daughter Euphine Mak Yiu-fan (Mrs Chung) I encountered with great delight when I returned to the university in 1972, to find her Librarian in the Medical Faculty.

The Confucian scholars were distinctly a class by themselves. Well versed in the teaching of the Master, they conducted themselves with great dignity and civility. Their conversation, usually enriched with quotations from the classics and with clauses in *wenyan* of their own composition, was a delight to listen to. One of them had a weakness for wines and not infrequently came to class after lunch genial and expansive, having obviously indulged in a glass or two. He would compose impromptu couplets right and left, and have us follow him

chanting the classics, which we did with glee. On one occasion, the singing was so enthusiastic that my father came round to see what was going on. But he was always rather indulgent to these aged, erudite scholars. After all, there were not many of them left in the 1930s as imperial examinations had long been abolished by then.

Our scholar-teachers treated the *Analects* with almost religious reverence. These did, of course, play a great part in their lives. For hundreds of years, the imperial examination was the only avenue through which all scholars, from however poor or humble a family, could rise to high positions in the imperial court through distinguished performance in the examination. Some indeed reached a position described as being 'under one man but above thousands and thousands of others', i.e. that of the prime minister, the 'one man' being of course the emperor. The ultimate objective of the scholar, after years and years of hard work, was to achieve such success and thus bring honour to his ancestors and his family, and incidentally to start a lifelong career.

The language of the *Analects* is dignified and very concise, and often open to more than one interpretation. One of the verses, for instance, contains only eight characters, but our teacher took one whole forty-minute lesson to expound on four of these characters. The commentary on this verse, which was written by a scholar called Zhu Xi and came with the textbook, contains three hundred characters.

Although we spent a good deal of time each week learning the classics and quite a lot of it by heart, learning to read and write *wenyan* and practising calligraphy with ink and brush, looking back today I do not think it was a waste of time. In fact, if I were given an option today, I would probably still choose this form of education. There was, at times, also some fun learning the classics. While our teachers treated the teachings of the sages with the utmost respect, we tended to regard them less seriously. We were in an age when a modern generation of scholars had emerged. They often gave a different interpretation to the *Analects* and sometimes even tried to put the masters in their places. There was among the publications by these scholars a journal, entitled *Luen Yu* (the same title as the Book

of *Luen Yu*), which was particularly critical and which occasionally even ridiculed the Master's teaching.

In one of the chapters in the *Book of Luen Yu*, it was recorded how Confucius, having paid a visit to the great beauty of the time, a woman called Nan Zhi, and incurred the disapproval of one of his disciples, Zhi Lu, had to explain why he took the trip and went as far as swearing that he had done nothing wrong and that if he did, he was willing to be subject to the scorn of Heaven. The *Luen Yu* interpreted this episode as showing that the Saint had a weakness for the opposite sex, and that going to the length of swearing merely showed that he was nursing a feeling of guilt for the visit. Another pupil, it was recorded, was scolded unceremoniously by the Master for taking afternoon naps. As I myself indulge in this habit nowadays, I suppose I no longer qualify to be a Confucian scholar.

The *Book of Luen Yu* also recorded some of the living habits of the Master, which made interesting reading for us. 'The Master invariably had ginger in his food.' No doubt this is why this substance is a must in all Chinese cooking. 'The Master did not talk at meals, nor when he went to bed. The Master did not eat any food that was not cut into the proper size and shape.' What a fussy man he was, we thought.

Among all my teachers, the one who had the greatest influence in my life was Mr John Blofeld. He was actually only seven years my senior. He came straight from Cambridge when he ventured east to see the China of his dreams, and landed in Munsang College as a teacher. I came to know him well and I looked upon him as my mentor. We became great friends and met for many years after Munsang, in Kweilin and Chungking during the war and afterwards in England, Malaya and Hong Kong, and many a time in Bangkok where he spent the last thirty years of his life.

Although not related to any church or mission, Munsang was, with my father as headmaster, a Christian school. On week-days we started the day with short morning services and on Sundays held Bible classes and services in the assembly hall. During my last year at school I was, in fact, a teacher in the Bible school, teaching

little boys and girls. We had a teacher who was in charge of all these religious activities. He was one Mr She Kwong Tong, a graduate of Northwest China Theological Seminary in Shandong Province. On one occasion he approached me late on Saturday to do something I had never done before. He had invited an evangelist from Amoy (Xiamen) visiting Hong Kong to be the preacher at the service the next morning but discovered, rather late in the day, that this preacher could speak only in his own dialect, and asked me to interpret for him. Mr She somehow had the impression that Amoy and Shantou, being fairly close to each other, should speak much the same dialect. I had never heard the Amoy dialect before but on his insistence had to comply with his request, as otherwise there would be no sermon at the service. But when the time came and I joined the preacher on the pulpit I realized what a job I had let myself in for. The Amoy dialect, though similar to the Shantou dialect in some respects, was quite a different dialect by itself. It was much too late to withdraw. Lucky for me, the preacher's sermon consisted mainly of quotations, at length, straight from the Bible, and once he had gone some way through each quotation I could recognize it, and from memory quote it in Cantonese for the congregation. In between quotations I managed to fill in with a sentence or two and in this way delivered a sermon, which no-one, including myself, knew whether it was an accurate translation of what the preacher had said.

My life-long teaching career could be said to have started while I was a pupil at Munsang, in the junior middle section when I was in my teens. In Hong Kong in those days there was practically no free education, and for the children of the poor there was simply no provision for education at all. There were some church and missionary schools which offered these children free education, and a number of free night schools run by charitable organizations. Munsang ran one such night school, in the evenings on weekdays, from six to eight p.m. We the students of Munsang were encouraged to be voluntary teachers at this school, and I was one of those who joined up. I enjoyed teaching those little children, spending an hour or two with them some weekday evenings before starting my own evening

study session. This could perhaps be considered the beginning of my teaching career. When in senior middle section I continued to take part in teaching whenever an opportunity presented itself, filling in for teachers who had to take leave of absence.

For the first ten years or so of Munsang's existence, the school was housed in rented quarters at Kai Tak Bund and Kai Yen Road, with a large playground adjoining the main building. With expanding student numbers, my father began planning to acquire a campus of the school's own. A fund- raising campaign was organized in 1935 to meet this objective to which the whole school, teachers and students, rallied enthusiastically. My class of 1937 (Senior Middle One), of about twenty pupils, organized a variety concert, complete with a short play entitled *Good Son* in which I participated, the one and only play in which I appeared in all my life. My brother and I also took part in a violin quartet led by his teacher, Mr Matthew Lum. Several months' work was expended on this concert which fetched eighty-three dollars. It was not much of a financial return, but in terms of rallying to the call of the alma mater and of promoting the *esprit de corps* for which Munsang was well-known, it was worth the effort.

A large piece of farmland at the end of Grampian Road, opposite the ancient walls of Kowloon City, was acquired. Application to the government for converting it into a building lot was approved. Soon the first building was put up, consisting of two wings housing twelve classrooms, and a central section housing the assembly hall and the school offices. There was ample ground for sports activities, which the school had always encouraged, and until today Munsang can still boast of being one of the very few schools in Hong Kong which enjoy such spacious sports facilities.

Thus when my father left the service of the school in 1940 after fourteen years as headmaster, Munsang was already well established as one of Hong Kong's foremost schools, with a distinctive character of its own. And as Munsang came of age, her alumni grew in numbers and in stature. These were an active and cohesive lot at all times, loyal and supportive to their alma mater. Their many contributions to the

school constituted a major source of pride and satisfaction to my father in his latter years.

I was extremely fortunate to have the father I had. To me he was not only my father, but also my teacher, and my headmaster. With great patience he taught me a good many things, by example as well as precept. In keeping one's promises, for instance, he himself never broke one promise he made to his children, be it a promise to take us to the cinema, or to our favourite restaurant for a meal. In being truthful I remember how strictly he himself kept to what he taught us. So much so that all through my life I would somehow feel uncomfortable whenever I have been tempted to depart, however slightly from the truth. With fondness I can recall the little things he taught me. For instance, 'waste not, want not' — be it food or water, or electricity. When crossing a busy road, never jay-walk, but take a perpendicular route across as this reduces to the minimum the time I am exposed to danger from the traffic.

My father also told me many stories. The one I remember best is the one about himself when he, as a young man of about twenty, had to cut off his pigtail. It was in 1911, when Sun Yat-sen managed to overthrow the Manchus and set up the Republic. During the Qing dynasty men were required to plait their hair into pigtails and wear them as a manifestation of manhood. The new government had decided that this was a custom to be abolished and upset many young men, including my father, who not only felt a loss of manly dignity but were also worried about the restoration of their pigtails should the Manchus unexpectedly come back!

I was so grateful that, after spending thirty years away studying and working all over China, England, the USA, Singapore, and Kuala Lumpur, I managed to get back to work in Hong Kong, the place where I was brought up, and was within easy reach of my father during the last nineteen years of his life. When he was no longer able to leave the house I used to go over to see him, several times a week. It was quite a trip to to 'Raycrest' in Shatin, where he lived, from Stubbs Road, where I lived. He spoke little, but was obviously pleased to see me. He ate little, but would accept food I offered him, even

on days when he declined offers by other members of the family. He passed away on 11 July 1991 at the age of one hundred. He did better than his father by eleven years, and if I try to emulate him, as perhaps I should, I would have to hold on until I am a hundred and eleven!

Those were comfortable and well-protected childhood and adolescent years which I enjoyed, studying in my father's own school. Although the China mainland suffered much of this time from civil war among the warlords north and south, Hong Kong, being a British colony, was unmolested. Even the invasion and occupation in 1931 of the 'East Three Provinces' (Manchuria) by the Japanese did not unduly upset Hong Kong. But more serious events were soon to come.

For us in Hong Kong it was not until 1937 that the really serious effects of the war began to be felt. On 7 July Japanese troops invaded Shanghai, just as my brother and I were about to go there for our university education. Hong Kong remained safe, however, if somewhat precarious, and I was able to spend several years studying at the University of Hong Kong. In the meantime the territory around Hong Kong had all fallen, and when the time came it was a beleaguered, tiny island which the Japanese army, coming from the north of the New Territories, took over in a fortnight.

12
Post-Retirement Activities

My first activity after retirement was perhaps a little out of the ordinary — I enrolled myself in a violin-making course in Cambridge conducted by Juliet Barker. By then I had come to possess five violins, one of which was by Ettore Soffritti dated 1924, and two by my friend Xu Fu, one of which, dated 1985, was one of his masterpieces and had my name inscribed inside it. By now I had developed a great interest in violins not only in the beautiful sound they produce, but also in the instruments as works of art. When one looks at the graceful lines and curves produced by the workmanship of master makers, one cannot help being fascinated and getting excited, and I began to ask myself what better way there was of educating myself about violins than learning to make one.

The course for me lasted a fortnight. It was held in the summer and was very popular. The large majority of the students were, like me, over sixty. They came to the course each year, bringing their violin-in-the-making with them, and took about four visits to complete. They were a friendly lot, and I enjoyed their company as much as my new hobby. The person who did not have much to do however, was my good wife, Grace, who had little to occupy her

during the day at the hostel where we were put up. Cambridge was a strange place to her, although our elder son Christopher was not that far away in town. However, appreciating my great enthusiasm in my new hobby, she put up cheerfully with the boredom for two weeks.

I never knew I could stick to a job like that for so long, many hours a day, most of the time on my feet, chipping and scraping away on a piece of wood. My main achievement was the completion of the complete rib, and starting the contouring of the top and the back plates, and cutting the scroll. On one occasion, one careless move on my part and I chipped off one tiny bit from a corner of the rib near the right f-hole. This took me hours to make good. The part chipped off was only about 1 mm high, but because the rib had to be perfectly flat so that when finally the top and back plates are glued onto it, the fit is absolutely perfect requiring no pressure to be applied to any part of the plates, I had to reduce the height of the whole rib by 1 mm.

I brought what I managed to complete back to Hong Kong, but could not carry on as I found myself busier than I had expected to be and, which was more serious, that I had neither a teacher nor the equipment although I had reserved a place for a working bench in our new home. To complete a violin, I was told, would require over a hundred pieces of equipment even though some of them would be needed only once in the whole process. I finally 'cheated' and brought the unfinished violin to Xu Fu and asked him to let me have the violin 'in the white', i.e. unvarnished, so that I could have Lee Kheng-hoon, in Kuala Lumpur, do the varnishing for me. Kheng-hoon put no less than fifteen coats of his varnish on it and produced as the finished produce a handsome, shining instrument. I named it the 'Huangxuleeni' violin, to honour the men who had a part making it — Huang, Xu and Lee, 'ni' being added to make it sound Italian, as the Italians are known to make the best violins in the world. I used my violin on a number of occasions, before and after it was varnished, to entertain the general assembly of the Basic Law Drafting Committee at its banquets in Beijing and in Guangzhou. It has a sweet but rather soft tone; the latter was no problem as I was able to request the pianist accompanying me to go soft on the piano, as she

was in fact one of Grace's nieces, Ying Shizhen, professor of piano at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing.

Attendance at the violin course was very interesting, and refreshing after a long spell as an administrator. Although I managed to complete only about a quarter of my violin, by being able to mix freely with the other students — some 15 of them, who were in varying stages of completing their instruments — I was able to get to know the whole process.

Two other, more serious, music-related activities I undertook were the chairmanship of the Committee on Music Education which was very capably managed by the honorary secretary Dr Anne Boyde, and membership of the council of the Academy for the Performing Arts, for which I had earlier chaired a committee to review its development. I also learnt a good deal serving for a number of years as a member of the Consultative Board of the IBM China–Hong Kong Corporation and as a director of the Ming Pao Enterprise Corporation, Ltd. *Ming Pao* is one of the leading newspapers in Hong Kong — the paper of preference for the intelligentsia, including teachers in schools and universities. Its founder and one time editor-in-chief, Dr Louis Cha, a friend of mine for whom I have the highest regard, is a renowned writer and a scholar of the history of the Ming and Qing dynasties, and a generous benefactor to many educational institutions in Hong Kong including the University of Hong Kong, and in Britain including Magdalen, my college at Oxford.

In the field of education, one organization which I continued to serve after retirement was the Croucher Foundation, of which I was a founding trustee and as such a life member on the board. The foundation was founded by Mr Noel Croucher in late 1979, with the following aims:

(a) To set up scholarships to enable young Hong Kong Chinese of outstanding ability in the fields of science, technology and medicine to develop their talents further through postgraduate study and research in the United Kingdom or elsewhere in the Commonwealth.

(b) Through provision of research grants to help the universities in Hong Kong attain high international standards and to promote the welfare and prosperity of Hong Kong.
(c) To promote contacts and joint research projects between universities in Hong Kong and their counterparts in the People's Republic of China.

As founding trustee I was privileged to serve the foundation with Mr Croucher himself, and with Lord Todd, Professor Sir John Butterfield (later Lord Butterfield and vice-chancellor of Cambridge University), and Mr Ian MacCullum (Mr Croucher's lawyer). Croucher died soon after the foundation was set up, and the remaining four of us worked closely together to get activities of the foundation started about a year or so later. In the years that followed, we were fortunate to have a number of very distinguished people joining us. These included Lord Lewis (Master of Robinson College, Cambridge), Sir Michael Sandberg (now Lord Sandberg, for a long time chairman of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank), and Professor Y. W. Kan who is the current chairman.

The foundation, the first of its kind in Hong Kong, has brought immense benefit to the territory. As of 1999 it had awarded a total of 169 fellowships, 321 scholarships, and 157 studentships, at a cost of over US$21M. Research grants dispensed during the same period amounted to about US$19M. Additionally, the Foundation has sponsored 135 international scientific conferences held in Hong Kong and, more recently, financed the attachment of over 150 scientists from mainland China to universities in Hong Kong on six-month visits. For a well-documented account of the colourful life of Noel Croucher and the formation of the foundation bearing his name, the reader is referred to the excellent book by Vaudine England entitled *The Quest of Noel Croucher*, published by Hong Kong University Press.

In the field of higher education I was also fortunate to be accorded an opportunity to serve my native place, Shantou. Comprising nine counties and the city of Shantou, it is situated at the

eastern end of Guangdong Province and has a population of over nine million in the early 1980's and an area of 10 580 square kilometres. It has an industrious people and a fertile soil, and abounds in historic relics and places of great scenic beauty; it has also a rich cultural history dating back to the Tang dynasty and beyond. It boasts of 3500 primary and secondary schools although, until the early 1980s, there was no provision for university education, and the college set up to train doctors offered a course lasting only three years. It remained for one of its sons, Mr Li Ka-shing, to return to his native land to establish its first university.

Li Ka-shing, who left Caojou when he was a teenager to make a living in Hong Kong, succeeded in making much more than just a living as he became one of the greatest entrepreneurs the territory has ever produced. There is, however, a big difference between him and most of his fellow men of success in that he never hesitates to dispense, from his vast fortunes, financial assistance to charities and education, especially in the land of his birth. Thus the early 1980s saw the establishment of the much-needed and long-awaited Shantou University, with funds provided solely by Ka-shing, and it was no less than a comprehensive university complete with a medical school and its own teaching hospital. As I was about to retire from the University of Hong Kong, I was asked by Ka-shing, whom I had known for some time, to join him in this great venture as his advisor. This invitation I was more than happy to accept. Not only was it an honour, but it also gave me a welcome opportunity to make a contribution to the place of my origin.

To start a university in China, and to ensure its success, there were special requirements to be met. For a university in Shantou tucked away as it were in one corner of Guangdong, there were even more requirements. These were all provided for by Ka-shing who gave, in addition to funds to meet the building cost of the whole campus and the purchase of equipment, a very substantial grant annually to meet the running cost of the university. In my time I have seen many generous donors to higher education but very few of them, if any, went as far as donating brick and mortar as well as equipment,

and none ever contributed, on top of this, to the running cost on a regular basis.

One special requirement for building a university in China is the provision of residential facilities for its staff, teaching and administrative. Provision of housing by the employer is taken for granted and such accommodation is often kept by the employee after he or she retires. Thus in some of the oldest universities which I visited, I found that among the university population there were quite a number of people who had nothing to do with the institution — they were simply descendants of former staff. For Shantou University, additional units had to be put up in another part of town to take care of retiring staff.

The annual grant Ka-shing has been giving the university is a very substantial one. It amounts to more than twice the subvention provided by the state, which is based on the number of students taught. The main purpose of this grant, partly generated by a foundation established by Ka-shing for the purpose, is to ensure a high standard of teaching, by attracting well- qualified staff to Shantou and retaining their services through relatively attractive terms of service. The grant makes possible the payment of various allowances to supplement the rather low standard salaries paid throughout the country. There is one other difficulty peculiar to Shantou which makes recruitment of staff relatively difficult. Unlike well-developed university centres elsewhere in the country, such as Beijing, Shanghai or Guangzhou, Shantou has only one university. Many teachers in China who are married depend on two salaries to keep their family going, and in places like Shanghai the spouse can usually get employment with an abundance of universities around, not so in Shantou.

Among universities in China, Shantou is unique not only in having the much-envied, continuing and substantial source of finance from Hong Kong, but also in its readiness to entertain new ideas from outside China. Thus a suggestion from us in Hong Kong for the establishment of a council to be composed along the lines of similar bodies in many Commonwealth universities, with

official as well as academic representation to allow for some measure of academic participation in the planning and governance of the institution, was given due consideration, and Shantou University became the one in China with such a council. When constituted it had as chairman Mr Wu Nanshen, chairman of Guangdong Political Consultation Conference and an array of influential people such as the deputy Secretary General of the provincial Government and the Director of Higher Education. In additon there were two members appointed from among the professors of the university and no less than five members from Hong Kong, including Ka-shing as honorary chairman, two vice-chairmen (of whom I was one), and two professors invited from the University of Hong Kong. The council met twice a year, and although not in a position to function as the executive committee of the university, it served for years the useful function of an advisory body, and was also able to oversee the development of the institution and plan its continuous expansion and, not least, served as a forum on which university plans and policies could be explained and discussed.

The members from Hong Kong usually went to Shantou together, augmented in expertise as the occasion required by a team composed of an architect, engineer, and/or an accountant drawn from Ka-shing's firm. Ka-shing himself was probably the most hard-working man of the whole group, as he had to work not only on matters relating to the agenda but also new proposals requiring financing which were frequently brought up for his consideration. As he almost always gave a definitive answer to these new requests before he left Shantou, he usually had to work till the early hours of the morning. Thus for him many such trips to Shantou also meant being out of pocket by some millions of dollars.

I found Ka-shing a delightful person to work with — open, generous, and without airs. He always kept his word. One other feature which distinguished him from most other philanthropists was his insistence on anonymity in all his donations. My first experience of this came when some years earlier we visited the main hospital in Shantou to which he had donated some equipment. When he saw

plaques attached to these instruments with his name inscribed on them, he requested that they be removed, at his expense. Years later, when the great hall in the university was built and all his friends wanted to have this one outstanding structure on the campus named after him, they came to me for advice. I suggested that, as it was a foregone conclusion they would not get Ka-shing's consent, they might instead suggest that the hall be called the 'Yet-to-be-named Hall', to await the day he might come round. (I got the idea from the 'Yet-to-be-named Lake' in Peking University which I had visited some months earlier). But Ka-shing, having somehow got wind of the origin of the proposed name, turned down the proposal.

By 2009, Ka-shing's total contribution to the university exceeded HK$3.3 billion, and he had committed to further donate HK$2 billion in the coming eight years to support the development of Shantou University and its Medical College. In view of the much lower cost of construction and equipment, and the cost of living in mainland China, this fund actually went a much longer way than in places outside the country. The Medical College now has five affiliated hospitals with more than 1,800 beds in total. Full-time students numbered over 8,000 with an additional 10,000 students enrolled in various programmes in adult education. Teachers, staff and medical personnel reached more than 3,500. The university offered 1 Post-doctoral program of Preclinical Medicine, 7 second-level Doctoral programs, 2 first-level Master's programs and 47 second-level Master's programs. The institution of higher degree courses did not come easily because such courses were closely monitored by the Degree Committee of the State Council to ensure availability of adequately qualified teachers, and teaching and research equipment. The university has also taken in students from Hong Kong and overseas, and started developing academic exchanges with universities outside China.

It was with great reluctance that I resigned, in 1994, from the vice- chairmanship of the council when Grace and I left Hong Kong to reside in England. My eight years' association with the university was a great privilege and gave me a good deal of satisfaction, and my

warm regards for the university will long remain. With all my heart, I wish it continued success.

It was a happy coincidence that my last contribution in the field of education was associated with the establishment of the second university to be put up by a Chinese community overseas, this time in Thailand. Like Nanyang, it was financed completely through private donations from that community, but unlike Nanyang, it enjoyed official blessing right from the start. Its name, the 'Huachiew Chalermprakiet University', was indeed given by no less a person than the King of Thailand — 'Huachiew' meaning 'overseas Chinese' and 'Chalermprakiet' meaning in 'Veneration of the Sages'.

Until the 1980s teaching of the Chinese language in Thailand was confined to private primary schools in the Chinese community, but with closer relations being developed between Thailand and China, and the increase in trade between the two countries, the teaching of Chinese as a second language in some secondary schools was introduced. The need for a university which could offer courses in the Chinese language and other aspects of Chinese studies was now felt and Mr Udane Tejapaihul (Mr Jeng Wu-lou), Chairman of the Bangkok Metropolitan Bank Public Co. Ltd., a highly respected leader in the Chinese community, took upon himself to promote its establishment. Mr Udane's campaign started in 1990. He succeeded in gathering around him, as sponsors for the project, over 50 of the leading entrepreneurs from the Chinese community, all of whom contributed to the building fund which rose to over a billion baht. With the donation, jointly by Mr Udane and a charity foundation, of a site near the city, construction began in 1992. I was honoured to be invited to be an advisor for the project and visited Bangkok on several occasions to meet the sponsors prior to the completion of the university buildings, and later in 1994 to attend the official opening of the university by the King. As of 1997, the university had built ten schools, offering courses in Chinese and English, and in professional subjects such as accountancy, business administration, marketing, computer science, social work and nursing. There were in that year 240 teachers, about 300 administrative and technical staff, and over 6000 students.

Unlike Mr Tan Lark-sye, Mr Udane has had the benefit of a good education and has an excellent command of both the Chinese and Thai languages. He is well versed in classical Chinese literature and his accomplishment in Chinese calligraphy is something anyone can be proud of. Apart from Bangkok, he and I met in Hong Kong on many occasions. At one stage, he had hoped that I might be able to move to Bangkok to stay for a period of time during the initial stages of the development of the institution, but I had to decline this invitation as I felt that, among other things, my less-than-rudimentary knowledge of the Thai language would make this impracticable. I am very grateful nevertheless for this opportunity to be of service, however small, to the second university to be established by my fellow countrymen overseas.

In September 1984 came the long-awaited joint declaration by the two governments, in Beijing and London, after two years of confidential negotiations. The future of Hong Kong after 1997 at last became well- defined. Hong Kong was to become a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China, the first of its kind in China's long history. As such it would enjoy a high degree of autonomy and retain its way of life, under Deng Xiaoping's concept of 'one country, two systems', for the next fifty years. Thereupon Beijing lost no time laying the legal foundation for the future SAR by appointing a committee to draft a Basic Law for the region. This amounted to a mini-constitution, within China's constitution, for the future Hong Kong.

The joint declaration was well received by the people of Hong Kong. Among manifestations to this effect was the result of an opinion poll involving more than six thousand people over 18 years of age, which showed that no less than 70 percent of the respondents considered the joint declaration 'good', and 10 percent 'very good', while those who were unhappy with it came to less than 1 percent.

The committee set up by Beijing to draft the Basic Law, which started work on 1 July 1985, consisted of 59 members of whom 22 were from Hong Kong. In terms of numbers, Hong Kong members constituted a large minority, but this was not of great significance:

we were not a team or delegation going in to China to cast our votes, but to participate as individuals to represent the views of Hong Kong from as wide a circle as possible. Among us there were four lawyers including a former appeals court judge, the Buddhist and Anglican bishops, the vice-chancellors of the two older universities (including myself), and one each from the leading professions — a doctor, accountant, schoolteacher, trade unionist, and so on — and no less than seven businessmen and entrepreneurs. Some people felt that business was rather too heavily represented, but others argued that as Hong Kong was a centre for trade and commerce, this composition of the committee was justified.

The committee set up five specialist committees to deal with the following aspects of the Law to be drafted: the relations between the central authorities in Beijing and the special administrative region; the fundamental rights and duties of the residents therein; the political structure, economy and external affairs of the region; its education, science, culture, sports, religion, labour and social services; and last but not least, the interpretation and amendment of the Basic Law.

I was asked to be co-convenor and co-chairman for the first specialist committee, on Beijing–SAR relations. My counterparts were Mr Shao Tianren, an official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a former judge and a scholar. We worked very well and amicably together and our committee managed to complete four of the twelve chapters, as well as the preamble, in the final draft. Apart from the chapter on relations, we also drafted the chapters on general principles, external affairs, and the interpretation and amendment of the Law. Drafting of the Basic Law, I found, was by no means a purely political exercise but had considerable academic interest attached to it.

During the four and a half years of the drafting process, we held a total of nine plenary sessions, and my specialist committee met about twice as frequently. These were held mainly in Beijing and Guangzhou although the subcommittees occasionally went out to other parts of China such as Xiamen, Shenzhen and Kunming. In all I was in China for no less than twenty-six times, not counting

the trips I took with the other committee on the Basic Law — the Consultative Committee.

Contrary to the speculations among certain circles, our views were taken quite seriously by our counterparts in the Mainland, as were theirs by us. Although geographically an integral part of China, Hong Kong had been cut off from the Mainland, not only politically but also socially and culturally, for a very long time and there was much to be learnt about each other from either side. Issues on which there was a wide diversity of views were given ample time to be thrashed out in detail, at meeting after meeting of the subcommittees, before presentation to the plenary sessions. It was a far-sighted decision that Beijing made to give the drafting process no less than five years. In a spirit of mutual accommodation the subcommittees went to work in earnest, and the draft finally presented to the General Assembly bore little resemblance to the first version which greeted us when we met for the first time in 1985.

My subcommittee had to deal with quite a number of important and sensitive issues. As instances I would mention the stationing of the People's Liberation Army in Hong Kong, the application of certain national laws to Hong Kong, and the interpretation and amendment of the Basic Law. Each of these issues took many months and a number of meetings to resolve. These issues, together with the main achievements of the Basic Law, are briefly discussed in a speech which I gave the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong shortly after the promulgation of the Law, and is reproduced as Appendix IV for the interested reader.

Working on this subcommittee, I was privileged to make a number of friends, from whom I came to learn a good deal during the four and a half years the Drafting Committee was in session. In particular I would mention, in addition to my co-convenor Mr Shao Tian-ren, Mr Li Hou and Mr Lu Ping of the Hong Kong Macao Office, and Professor Wu Jian-fan of the Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing. Among fellow members from Hong Kong two impressed me most, Ms Liu Yiu-chu and Mr Martin Lee Chu-ming, both lawyers. Yiu-chu I came to know and admire as a woman of high

principles, who spoke up for her convictions without fear or favour. Some people thought that she tended to be 'pro-Beijing' in her views: be that as it may, she was equally outspoken and frank whenever she thought Beijing had fallen short of her expectations. She often used strong words and once said to me during a private debate: 'But, Vice-Chancellor, you are being barbaric!'. Strong words indeed, but coming from her I found that somehow I did not mind at all! I saw her from time to time after the drafting was over, and talked to her for the last time during a visit I made to Hong Kong in late 1998, while she was in her car on her way to hospital, where she passed away a few days later.

Martin was a Queen's Counsel (now Senior Counsel), and his eloquence was to be taken for granted. He used to make long speeches at the plenary sessions, but he had much to say that was worth listening to. Several other members also made long speeches and before long the rule was made limiting speeches to ten minutes in duration. Martin and I saw eye to eye in a number of important issues, but in some I did not go as far as he did, as for instance in the speed at which democracy should be introduced into Hong Kong. When the drafting process started, Martin and a few other members were supplied with individual interpreters who translated Putonghua into Cantonese for them during meetings. After less than a year, however, Martin had discarded his interpreter and not long later he began to debate and make speeches in Putonghua. Towards the end of our deliberations, he told me that our subcommittee had done 'pretty well'. Coming from Martin, I thought that was quite a compliment for us.

The reception accorded us — members from Hong Kong — on our numerous visits was warm and dignified, and greatly appreciated. We travelled economy class, and when we took our spouses with us we paid for their travel and other expenses. This was, in my view, how it should have been, as I for one did not want the people of Hong Kong to think that membership of the drafting committee carried with it any special privileges. For meetings lasting more than a few days, such as the plenary sessions, I always took Grace

with me. It was not all work and no play at these meetings, as we usually had a half day off on which we entertained ourselves visiting places of historical interest, or simply shopping. There were also the banquets after every plenary session at which the talented among the members were called upon to entertain the gathering, which sometimes included the journalists.

The Hong Kong press did a good job covering the drafting process and disseminating what news they collected to the Hong Kong public. A large number of them attended each plenary session, and even the subcommittees found them a familiar sight. It was no small task following our progress, as we met regularly and frequently. Within the first two years or so after drafting started, we held some 70 meetings representing a total of about 220 working days. They followed us wherever we met, and stayed at nearby hotels, doing nothing all day but waiting to get news from us as to the latest developments. I greatly appreciated their enthusiasm and suggested that when the subcommittees met, the co-chairmen should meet the press twice a day, after both the morning and the afternoon sessions. This suggestion was adopted. My impression those days of these men and women, all keen and young, was that they were well-mannered and restrained, and while inquisitive they were never aggressive. This in fact was the way I had felt about them all through the years I held office at the University of Hong Kong.

One important channel through which the Drafting Committee got its feedback of public opinion in Hong Kong was the Basic Law Consultative Committee. Formed shortly after the drafting began, it was a local organ completely financed by well wishers in Hong Kong. It had a large membership, comprising about 200 individuals drawn from all walks of life. It met regularly and views of members, after debate, were transmitted to the drafting committee in Beijing. Mr T. K. Ann was its chairman, and I served as one of its vice-chairmen. The committee organized two visits to Beijing for its members to confer with members of the drafting committees there. The tour following one of these conferences in late 1987 in which Grace and I participated, turned out to be one of the most memorable trips in

our lives. We went to Shandong Province where we visited Confucius' birthplace, his grave, and the temple and park dedicated to him. We went up Tai Shan, one of the holiest of mountains in all China, which Emperor Chien Lung visited on no less than seven occasions during his lifetime. And as our last stop we called at Chingdao, the one-time German colony with much of its former charms still remaining, and were feasted by the mayor of the city on our last night in China. Towards the end of the banquet, groups of participants came over to our table, glasses in hand, to wish Grace a very happy birthday. It was indeed 14 November and she was 63!

Despite the disruption, for almost six months, of the drafting process caused by the Tiananmen upheaval in June 1989, the committee managed to complete the final draft at its last plenary session in Beijing on 16 February 1990. At the last conference I gave the press, I told the gathering that with the completion of the work of the two committees on the Basic Law and at 70, the time for my complete retirement from all public activities had come. The press did not seem to have reported this, but I have kept this promise to the public and to myself.

In 1993, during one of our customary visits to Britain our two sons together persuaded us to move over to stay, at least for a while, in England where both of them had settled in academic careers. Living as we did, seven thousand miles away, we were far out of their reach if and when any help was needed, they put to us. We made up our mind fairly quickly, remembering the Chinese saying: 'When you get old, go stay where your sons are!' We left Hong Kong on 7 May 1994. For me, it was the second time, in half a century, I took leave of Hong Kong — this place on earth with so many dear friends which I hold in lasting affection.

II

Nanyang University Convocation Address

Rayson Huang
Vice-Chancellor
24 May 1969

A decade and a half ago the common people of Singapore and Malaya brought forth, in the wilds of Jurong, an institution of higher learning which they called Nanyang University. It was a venture of immense courage, for the forces lined up against this institution being born were formidable, and the prospects for its survival, not to mention its well-being, appeared very poor indeed. It was no less a deed of great foresight, for what was then the wilds of Jurong is today the vibrant centre of a nation's industry, and what was for years an unwanted institution has now been recognized by, and in fact receives warm support from, the government of the new nation. Today you find Nanyang stronger than ever, growing in stature day by day. Conscious of the trust placed in her to play a significant part in the life of the country, and well aware of her ability to make a vital contribution to forging a culture of Singapore's own that draws upon the heritage of all the peoples of this island, Nanyang looks to the future with well-justified confidence, coupled with the unshakable resolve to make herself a great institution of learning of which not only her sponsors of fifteen years ago, but all of Singapore, can be proud. What constitutes such a great institution? What must we achieve to be

worthy of such a distinction? And what are the first steps we will take to reach this objective? It is my desire to share with you some of my thoughts on these matters that prompted me to create the precedent of making a speech at this Convocation — something, I understand, not done by my predecessors.

What are the functions of a modern university? At the risk of being naïve, I would say that the primary function of a university must always be education. I hasten to add, however, that this must be differentiated from mere training. The product of training is competence in a given skill; education, however, aims at making the Man. Training equips one with the proficiency to do a certain job and hence to earn a living; education does not only that but, which is more important, inculcates clear thinking, encourages the seeking of knowledge for knowledge's sake, fosters self-respect and respect for one's fellow men, and above all, develops a social consciousness and a spirit of service to the community. It has often been stated that, as a university owes its existence to, and derives its support from the community, it should at all times be ready to serve that community. This is well said, and in terms of this service I would maintain that by far the greatest single contribution the university can make is the preparation of well-educated men and women to be the next generation of leaders, professionals and, no less important, common citizens. Thus economists and national planners often look upon higher education as a form of investment. We university teachers, however, take a more personal approach: we treat the youth committed to our charge as individuals whose talents, character, and attitudes we take pleasure helping to develop.

The search for new knowledge, i.e., research, on the part of the university teachers, may also be looked upon as a process of education. In order that he can give instruction of the highest standard, the university teacher must himself be undergoing a continual process of self-education through unceasing endeavours in research, and through constantly keeping himself abreast of new knowledge being created by others in his field of learning. It is only in this way that he can keep himself fresh and mentally active and a

source of inspiration to his students. Research, therefore, must be a way of life with university teachers.

The university is a place where the expertise in various fields is concentrated, and as such should be a body on which the nation can call to help solve its problems. When I was in Oxford during the Second World War, I noted that the majority of staff and students engaged in research in organic chemistry devoted their time to such fields as penicillin, anti-malarials, and chemical warfare, while a good many in the Physics Department worked on radar, ballistics, and in other areas connected in one way or another with the war effort. This was, of course, at a time of national emergency, but in a developing country, in which big strides have often to be taken within a short time either to make good neglects of the past, or to build up national resources in certain areas, the needs in many fields even in peacetime often come near to a state of emergency, and the academics should be ready to respond to the call for assistance. One example that comes immediately to mind is the revision and bringing up-to-date of school curricula, particularly in science subjects, in which great advancement has taken place in the advanced countries in recent years, and the organizing of refresher courses for schoolteachers to reorientate them to the new approach.

Despite the oft-criticized idea of an 'ivory tower', the university, at least at times, ought to be allowed the prerogative of being one. It should serve as a place of seclusion where one can shut himself off to do quiet, detached thinking. I once read a novel, by Thomas Hardy I think, entitled Two on a Tower in which the hero is described as an astronomer who sought the seclusive heights of his observation tower in order to meditate with the proper perspective, unmolested by the hustle and bustle of the life below. The academics, being the intellectual élite of the country, should have opportunities for such quiet, independent thinking, 'far from the madding crowd'. It is from this that new ideas emerge for social improvement, economic betterment, scientific discoveries, and technological advances. I would also like to see this 'tower' serving as a sort of sequestered cloister to which our professional men, civil servants, and even political leaders

can retire from time to time to seek solace from the humdrum routine of their offices, and refresh themselves from the fountain of knowledge, to hold discussion with the academics, and to do some thinking in peace. And whatever the outcome of such mental exercise and interaction of minds, be it new concepts concerning say social evolution, or conclusions bearing on national issues of the day, unorthodox or unpopular though these many appear to be, it is the duty of the university to make these known, without fear or favour. It must be remembered that what are orthodox and acceptable today were in many cases unorthodox or even radical when they were first brought forth, and that it is the ability to challenge the status quo which often results in human progress. In this way the university will serve as the fountain-head of inspiration for new knowledge and discovery, and at the same time the critic and conscience of society.

I have prescribed a tall order for Nanyang, or for that matter for any university, but is it not a well-known adage that one should aim high? For Nanyang, we have the feeling right now of having been given a new lease of life, and with a young, able, and dedicated staff, and the well-manifested support of the government and society at large, our morale is high and our aims justifiably lofty, and nothing will deter us in our endeavours to achieve all the objectives enumerated above.

What of the immediate plans for the development of the university? This I shall be able to go into only very briefly. Externally, we shall make every effort to establish special relationships with a number of distinguished universities in advanced countries, and through staff and student exchange benefit from the wisdom and experience of the older institutions. We already have such relationships with two universities in the USA, and it is my hope to link ourselves with more institutions in America, and with some in Britain and other countries.

Internally, we shall spend the next few years consolidating our existing departments. There will be no large increase of students (the present population is about 2000), nor of new departments. Quality will take precedence over quantity. In this connection the recently

announced College of Graduate Studies is a relevant step, as it will afford more opportunities for research and for teaching at advanced level for the staff, and in general underline the function of research in the university. The intention is to introduce a College of Graduate Studies comprising several institutes, to begin with, the Institute of Asian Studies, the Institute of Mathematics, and the Institute of Natural Science. In this project we have been much encouraged by the pledge of financial support by the Lee Foundation, to put up a building to house the said Institute of Asian Studies, and, as the Chairman of Council has just mentioned, to set up a Museum of Asian Art and Archaeology. The Alumni Association is about to launch a campaign to raise building fund for the rest of the college, and construction is expected to begin before the end of this year.

As to academic staff we are reaching that happy state, in many departments, where we can afford to be very selective, and this we intend to be. In a number of departments, especially in the College of Science, the establishments are nearly full, and we are fast approaching the target staff-student ratio of one to fifteen. There are, besides, over three hundred of our graduates studying for higher degrees overseas and before long there should be no shortage of well-qualified applicants for teaching posts in any department. We do not of course intend to confine recruitment to Nanyang graduates: this would be an unthinkable proposition. But what gives us good hope of building up a well-balanced staff, in terms of background and experience, is the increasing interest overseas scholars have shown in Nanyang, as evidenced by the very recent trend of such scholars applying for our teaching posts. For the staff already with us and those about to join us, it is our intention to provide more and more research facilities to enable them to carry out what we consider a vital function of the university.

As to students, we will continue to take a substantial number from our neighbouring countries. It is believed that this form of exchange of young people promotes close and friendly relationship between Singapore and her neighbours. As for student welfare, what we have been doing will be continued and enlarged. We are

proud of the fact that we are the only university in Singapore and the immediate neighbourhood which makes physical education compulsory and which provides a team of athletic instructors to help our students in their sports activities. We have also been in the habit of encouraging extracurricular activities of all sorts such as drama, community singing, and painting, and it is our hope to intensify our efforts in this area.

Discipline in the university during recent years has been good. It is essential for the healthy development of the university that this atmosphere be maintained. I have good reasons to believe, now that full recognition has been accorded this university and equality promised, that the greatest single cause for dissatisfaction among the students has been removed, and that unfortunate unrest of the past will not recur. Smaller grouses of sorts there will always be, but it is our intention, through the rank and file of our teachers and the student organizations, to maintain effective communication with the younger generation so that complaints will be heard and looked into. At the same time it is realized that the peace and quiet atmosphere which now prevails must at all cost be maintained and we will take stern measures to deal with any deliberate attempt to disrupt tranquillity and impede progress.

In all these plans we shall need the moral and material support from all of you. Your keen interest in our affairs all through these years has been deeply appreciated, and we do ask you now to give what you can at this crucial juncture in the history of Nanyang.

To those of you about to graduate today, I offer my warm congratulations for the richly deserved success which you have attained through your own ability, determination, and hard work. This was a very significant mile in your life's race, and a mile well run. And as you now leave your studies to enter into society, I hope you will bring with you the qualities of Nanyang which made her what she is, idealism and dedication, perseverance, a willingness to work hard and take nothing for granted — the very qualities which brought Nanyang into being and saw her through her earlier years of adversity. I hope you will bear in mind the fact that, because you go forth into

society from Nanyang, the community will take greater notice of you and your work than they will graduates from other institutions. For, as you well know, Nanyang is no ordinary university. It is an institution of which the hawker, the taxi-driver, and even the trishaw collie, have a part. It is a university in which all that is there came the hard way. It is always in the eyes and ears of the public. Mind what you do therefore, lest with the stamp of your alma mater on you, you bring her discredit.

This may also be a sad day for you, having to leave this beautiful place in which you have spent the last three or four years. However, although you now leave the campus, you do not really leave Nanyang. For what in effect you are doing is entering into a bigger but just as warm and friendly a community — that of Nanyang Alumni — a part and parcel of the same Nantah family which you joined three or four years ago when you enrolled as a freshman. There is just one essential difference and it is this: hitherto you have been receiving, but hereafter you will be expected to give. This I am confident you will do, and in so doing take a part in making Nanyang a truly great university, a living institution which is at once unique and exciting, in all ways reflecting the pioneering spirit that made Singapore.